

## THE NEW REPUBLIC

## EDITORIAL

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THE "JAPS-FIRST" BLOC  
Should the War Strategy Be Reversed?

Washington last week saw an extraordinary, not to say disgraceful, attempt to turn the whole strategy of the war by means of pressure on public opinion. The leader, nominally at least, was Sen. A. B. "Happy" Chandler of Kentucky. The quality of his statesmanship is perhaps indicated by his nickname.

Before he presented himself as a military authority. Chandler was a 100-percent supporter of the President's foreign policies both before and since Pearl Harbor. But on the Monday preceding Prime minister Churchill's address to Congress, Chandler rose in the Senate to lead a three-hour floor show apparently designed to undermine confidence in our Commander-in-Chief and create distrust of our allies. Senators Tydings and Bridges joined Chandler insinging the solo parts, and the old isolationist (alias America First) glee club--Senators Books, Clark (Mo.), Wheeler, Walsh, Shipstead and Vandenberg--made up a loud chorus. They demanded that the Roosevelt-Churchill conference, then meeting at the White House, call off the war in Europe and order immediate defeat of Japan. They shouted about Japan's growing might, predicted that the United States would be deserted by Britain and Russia and left to fight Japan alone if Hitler is defeated first, then threatened Roosevelt with that fate worse than death, the kind of hostile Senate which blocked Woodrow Wilson at the end of the last war, unless he surrendered to them now.

The burden of Chandler's argument was that we have now gone far enough in Europe to let up there and start against Japan. We should substitute attrition for aggression in Europe, the better to hold in check the greedy Russians who, according to Chandler, are only waiting for a chance to walk out on us and gobble up as much of Europe as they can grab away from a similarly voracious Britain. It is not quite clear whether Chandler and his friends think the United States ought to be in there grabbing territory along with the rest, or just want us to be in a position to act as referee. Neither it is clear how he thinks our influence in Europe will be increased by turning our backs on the Continent now.

It is not easy to determine how Senator Chandler came to stand as leader in this new isolationism, this sinister rebirth of the America First philosophy. Perhaps it all started when he headed a Military Affairs Subcommittee investigating Alaskan and West Coast bases last August. There he conferred with high-ranking officers. What was said is not known except from the Senator's subsequent reports, but it is a safe guess that, like all commanders, the men with whom he talked complained that they were not getting enough men or enough supplies, that if we had had sufficient force soon enough, we need not have suffered our reverses in the Aleutians, and so on. Commanders in any one area always talk this way, and a more sophisticated statesman than the gentleman from Kentucky would have known how to discount such talk. Chandler evidently did not. He came back from the tour of investigation apparently profoundly convinced that the strategy of the war was all a mistake and that he now knew more, and had a better judgment, than the top military officials of the United States.

From that point it was just a step to becoming a chief alarmist on the Jap menace inside the United States. Chandler, early this year, managed to get himself named as head of another subcommittee, this time to look into the relocation centers for Japanese who had been evacuated from the West Coast area. Since then he has been visiting camps and denouncing at a great rate what he saw in them. There has been a persistent rumor around Washington that at an early stage in his own personal "Pacific-consciousness," Chandler received overtures from Hearst representatives, keen on strengthening their traditional yellow-scare editorial policy, who offered him nationwide publicity and backing for a national office in return for constant harping on the Japs-First and Yellow-Peril-at-Home tunes.



Regardless of the truth of the rumor, large hunks of Hearst front pages have recently been devoted to Chandler's "exposes" of Japanese relocation centers, and a Hearst correspondent in Washington, Ray Richards of the The Los Angeles Examiner, is most often the one who floats Chandler's atrocity stories about the decent methods the War Relocation Authority has used in handling our Japanese American evacuees.

While Happy was still out stirring up the Yellow Peril at home, in mid-March General MacArthur dispatched his Air Commander, Gen. George Kinney, and Gen. Richard Sutherland to Washington to plead for additional planes and other equipment. They were still around when Chandler got back to town from his Jap hunt.

Early in April the Australian Minister for External Affairs, Herbert V. Evatt, arrived in the United States and spoke to the exclusive Commonwealth Club in San Francisco, on his way to Washington, praising MacArthur and contending that not even the minimum supplies which Roosevelt and Churchill would regard as essential even for the "Beat-Hitler-First" strategy were being shipped to the Southwest Pacific. The next day, MacArthur reaffirmed Evatt's contentions in a statement commemorating the anniversary of the fall of Bataan. Evatt left San Francisco for Washington, and almost as soon as he arrived, statements from Australia predicated on an invasion scare were pouring in to back up the pleas he had been sent to make. General Kenney, Prime Minister Curtin and many others cried out about the peril they thought they were in. Several British papers cautioned these men to stop crying "Wolf." Secretary of War Stimson was sympathetic but unemotional in his response to Evatt's requests. "It is common to all vigorous and alert commanders to seek more equipment," he said. A few days later, Senate Majority Leader Barkley, Chandler's senior colleague, spoke more sharply on this point: "I do not know to what extent any particular general ought to go over the heads of superior officers, through newspaper propaganda, to build a fire under the high-ranking officers in order that he may get what he wants regardless of what may happen to other generals in other fields. I am not familiar with that particular type of military tactics. It may be all right, but it strikes me as being more political than military."

It was April 15 when the invasion-scare messages hit Washington. On April 16 Chandler made a long-winded speech in the Senate about the urgency of the Pacific situation. He reported at great length on what had been said to him in the course of his tour of investigation by General Buckner, commanding the Alaskan territory, and General DeWitt, commandant of the whole Western area. But that had already been eight months ago, as Senators Barkley and Hill were quick to remind him. Unconcerned, Chandler plowed on heavily, despite the sharp answers Hill and Barkley made to his flimsy arguments.

Following Chandler's speech, the crisis of our strategy began to mount. As the certainty of victory in Tunisia became ever more clear, the logic of a second front in Europe this year was also manifest to almost any interested observer. Churchill again turned up in Washington for an important strategy conference, flanked by a full accompaniment of military and naval men.

As a result of these developments, a depression could be seen to settle over some of the old isolationists and the new Beat-the-Fourth-Termers who feared that political success for their sworn enemy, Franklin Roosevelt, might accompany the military successes apparently in the offing. They began to thrash about for ammunition to use against the new plans. Perhaps they thought Chandler provided a good, untainted rallying point. Then there were such violent anti-Roosevelt leaders as Styles Bridges and Millard Tydings, who could be counted on to join in wherever they could make their weight felt in opposition to the President. There were the discredited isolationists. And then there was an additional source of strength, the residual army and navy preference for fighting Japs rather than Germans, resulting from many causes--for example, their contempt for yellow men built up in the course of tours of duty in the Pacific, and the resultant horror at having these "inferiors" overrun our men as they did after December 7. And always, ready to cooperate with these forces, the McCormick-Patterson press stood by. All those cross-currents were running in the Senate. Roosevelt and Churchill, with their military and naval chiefs, were conferring at the White House, and it was known that the Prime Minister would address Congress on the state of the war when Chandler rose in the Senate on May 17 to repeat his



April 16 oration about the Pacific, with gestures, and this time with warm support from those interest groups mentioned above.

What do you get when you put these facts together and allow for some missing ones?

Was Chandler's plea for transfer of action to the Pacific made, as he strongly indicated, at the request to top army and navy officials who dared not speak up to their Commander-in-Chief in their own persons?

Was this a new America-First drive employing a new front man?

Was it a part of the anti-fourth-term move, aimed at discrediting the judgment of Roosevelt as Commander-in-Chief, at insinuating that Churchill dominates Roosevelt in military decisions?

Or was it, as Chandler declared, just a little thing he thought up all by himself?

The right answer should become clear before long. The truth comes out more quickly now than in ordinary times.

In his speech to Congress last week, Winston Churchill gave clear and ringing answers to the questions raised by the "Japs-First" bloc. His speech satisfies the questions of many of Chandler's sympathizers, but the Senator has declared that he is standing pat on his twice-repeated but still specious argument. In other words, he intends to go on headline-hunting at the expense of much needed unity of a European second front now.

Probably the decisions made at this latest strategy conference will prove to be the most important of this war. They must not be colored by any misapprehensions about Americans public opinion based on the antics of Senator Chandler and his crew of happy wreckers. If we are to get ahead with this war as rapidly as necessary, we must learn that our Chandlers must be isolated and dealt with speedily whenever and wherever they appear to stand in the way of our fight for existence.

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