

**Monday, Apr. 23, 1951**

**National Affairs: MACARTHUR V. TRUMAN**

THE drama of MacArthur's removal and homecoming obscures a far more important fact: President Truman has brought his foreign policy into the open.

This policy, new in the sense that it was publicly stated for the first time, denies to the U.S. the efficient use of its power, guarantees to the enemy the initiative he now has, promises that the U.S. will always fight on the enemy's terms. The policy invites the enemy, World Communism, to involve the U.S. in scores of futile little wars or in messy situations like Iran. Up to now, World War III has been prevented by the fact that the U.S. is stronger than Communism. The new policy almost certainly brings World War III closer because it throws away a large part of U.S. strength.

Truman's speech marked the reversal of a trend: until April 11, Washington had been veering toward what might be called "the MacArthur view." Not MacArthur, but the pressure of events, was driving many civilian and military policymakers (including Truman) toward a positive, active, hopeful, constructive policy of how to combat Communist aggression (see "The U.S. Gets a Policy"—TIME, Feb. 26). For weeks, newsmen have been hearing from the mouths of some of Truman's closest advisers that the passive policy of Dean Acheson ("wait until the dust settles" in Asia) was losing out. George Marshall himself was said to be getting very interested in new counter-measures against the Chinese Communists.

But when Truman needed (or thought he needed) a defense for firing MacArthur, he turned to Acheson for a brief. Acheson gave him one, prepared several days before for the purpose of defending Acheson's general viewpoint. Revised for the special situation, this speech was admirably suited to the purpose Truman had in mind—charging MacArthur with trying to extend the war. Apparently, it did not occur to Truman or Acheson that the speech could have another—and far greater —effect: giving Communism worldwide possession of the strategic initiative. The new policy is an attempt to elevate Truman's absence of policy in Korea to the dignity of a principle with worldwide applications.

The public debate swirls around the firing itself. This act, however, is but the symbol of a deep cleavage over American policy.

Did MacArthur Meddle In Nonmilitary Matters?

Truman's friends say that by firing MacArthur he settled a dispute over civilian v. military supremacy. The nation's Founding Fathers were rightly concerned over the danger of such a conflict. As it turned out, this issue has rarely arisen in the U.S. (see NATIONAL AFFAIRS). The most serious instance of military insubordination to governmental authority was General Andrew Jackson's seizure of Florida from the Spaniards. Only a Californian would view this act of Harry Truman's hero as a catastrophe.

In each succeeding generation, the tradition of civilian supremacy has grown stronger. It pervades the whole outlook of men as deeply steeped in American principles as Douglas MacArthur, George Marshall, Dwight Eisenhower and Omar Bradley.

Then there is the charge that MacArthur meddled in non-military affairs. Many (perhaps most) of the important subjects dealt with by high officers of all armies are partly military and partly political or economic or social or psychological. It is no reflection on George Marshall to say that he is the most successful congressional lobbyist of his time. Reaching agreement with congressmen on the defense objectives and needs of the U.S. was a main part of Marshall's wartime job as Chief of Staff. Such a job cannot be performed without reference to nonmilitary matters.

What MacArthur meddled in was defining the strategic objective and general plan of the Korean war. Up until 10:48 on the night of April 11, when Truman finished his fateful speech, neither objective nor plan had yet been clearly defined. Everybody was in on the debate. G.I.s in Korea were writing: "What the hell are we doing here? How are we going to win this?" Colonels were proclaiming that the long-range strategic situation was "untenable." General Ridgway had said: "I would see no end to the military operations unless there were a political settlement." All the columnists were wondering over the basic strategy of the Korean war. And Mr. Truman's own Administration was hip-deep in plan after plan after plan, trying to answer the great question: Where do we go from here?

MacArthur Fought the War The Way Truman Wanted

Over the years in Tokyo, MacArthur had formed some conclusions about how to beat the enemy. If he had reached no such conclusions he would not have been fit for his job.

The main issue between Truman and MacArthur is whether the war should be limited to Korea. The record shows that in spite of his opinion, MacArthur, a thorough soldier, fought the war his commander's way, insofar as Truman's views were known. It would have been very easy for MacArthur to let "incidents" happen that would carry the war beyond the borders of Korea. Such incidents have not happened. By strict military discipline, MacArthur has kept flyers from chasing enemy planes beyond the Yalu River. Chinese shipping, bringing supplies to the enemy, has been at the mercy of ships in MacArthur's command. Yet Chinese ships outside of Korean territorial waters have not been sunk.

Although he was fighting the war Truman's way, MacArthur let the public know that he did not like Truman's way This was deliberate on MacArthur's part, and it is the strongest point in the case against him. A subordinate officer has a right and even an obligation to object to any proposed course of action that he considers unreasonable or unwise. He has no such clear right to make his objections public, although in these situations many high officers have done what MacArthur did—and done it more adroitly.

Truman decided that MacArthur's public expression of opinion was hurting the U.S. In that situation, Truman had three courses open to him:

1) Fire MacArthur.

2) Agree with MacArthur.

3) Get a clear policy of his own and order MacArthur to conform to it.

MacArthur has great respect for authority. During much of his career, he worked under chiefs with whom he did not wholly agree. He and Roosevelt clashed on global strategy for World War II. The fact that he differed with Roosevelt was well known. MacArthur, however, fought a highly satisfactory war within Roosevelt's overall strategy, and the disagreement never became a scandal. The MacArthur-Truman scandal grew out of the fact that MacArthur's view on the Korean war was firmly stated and well-known while Truman's view was still a matter of hot debate among the President's advisers

Every time MacArthur stated his opinion of what the strategy should be, he called attention to the fact that Washington had no idea of how to win the Korean war.

Truman Had a Right To Fire MacArthur

Whatever may be thought of Truman's judgment in firing MacArthur, the fact remains that he had a right to fire him. Such an act was clearly within his constitutional authority.

In 1862, President Lincoln removed General George B. McClellan from command of the Army of the Potomac. They had been in disagreement for a long time. Lincoln (like MacArthur) believed that McClellan's mission was to defeat the enemy. McClellan (like Truman) believed that the objective was to defend a piece of ground. McClellan (like MacArthur) had thousands of devoted admirers, and his removal was certain to bring a torrent of political criticism down on Lincoln's head.

Lincoln, however, made no public defense. Harry Truman went on the air with the best defense that Lawyer Acheson could give him.

Truman's argument gets its appeal from the fact that all sane men prefer peace to war and a small war to a big war. Truman's speech was constructed to give the impression that MacArthur was in favor of unlimited war while Truman was for limited war.

In fact, both the Truman policy and the MacArthur policy on the Far East are aimed at a limited war. The differences between them are: 1) Truman's limits are geographical, MacArthur's strategic; 2) Truman invites the enemy to set the limits; MacArthur wants the U.S. to set them; 3) Truman thinks that carrying the war to Manchuria and the coast of China would provoke the Russians to come in; MacArthur does not think so.

MacArthur has been fighting the left flank of the Red Chinese army. The center of that army has been shifting north, and may soon be flung against the U.N. forces in Korea. The right flank of the Chinese Reds is still pinned down in South China, fighting guerrillas and guarding against an invasion from Formosa.

The surer the Chinese feel that South China is safe from attack, the more men they can shift to the Korea front. Truman's speech gave them, in effect, a guarantee that South China is safe.

To Attack the Enemy? Or to Await His Blows?

The side with the initiative and the power to choose the point of concentration has an enormous advantage. In the struggle with Communism, the U.S. starts with the strategic initiative because the U.S. has the mobility that goes with sea & air power. President Truman tosses aside this enormous advantage when he takes the position that the U.S. should not go after the enemy except in those geographical areas where the enemy has recently committed aggression. This gives the enemy full freedom to concentrate and then commit aggression wherever the free world is weak. Truman's principle relieves the enemy of all concern for security.

Truman used Greece as a shining example of his policy of geographically limited war. It might be useful to consider the new Truman principle as applied to Greece—if that civil war had turned out the way China's did. In this supposition, General Markos' Greek Reds sweep the mainland. The anti-Communist Greek leader, an unpopular but steadfast fellow called Apericles, retires with an army of several hundred thousand to the island of Crete. The Greek Reds, instead of going after Apericles, attack Turkey. The U.S. and the U.N. go to Turkey's aid. The war gets difficult and General Legion, the American commander of the U.N. forces in Turkey, proposes to blockade Piraeus, the port of Athens, and to help General Apericles establish a beachhead on the mainland and hit the flank of the Greek Reds.

Under the Truman principle, General Legion should be fired for trying to widen or spread the war. It would be moral for American boys to die on the brown hills of Anatolia but immoral to help anti-Communist Greeks fight the same enemy on the brown plain of Thrace.

Truman did not always have this idea, unique in world history, that it is wrong and dangerous to fight the enemy in any place not of the enemy's choosing. In fact, Truman was proceeding on the opposite (or MacArthur) principle when he issued his great statement of June 27, 1950. The Reds had invaded South Korea and Truman proclaimed to the world that the U.S. would resist this aggression. He did not, however, limit his action to Korea. In the same brief statement he said that the U.S. would defend Formosa (this decision reversed an Acheson policy) and give additional aid to anti-Communist forces in the Philippines and Indo-China.

To punish the enemy for invading Korea, Truman was willing last June to fight Korean Communists, Filipino Communists and Viet Minh Communists. All that MacArthur suggested was that he be allowed to fight some different Chinese Communists from the ones who were fighting him. No, said the President on April 11, that would be widening the war.

Two Ways of Trying To Crush Aggression

Yet Harry Truman clearly recognizes the unity of the Communist enemy. In his speech he said: "The Communists in the Kremlin are engaged in a monstrous conspiracy to stamp out freedom all over the world. If they were to succeed, the United States would be numbered among their principal victims . . . The only question is: When is the best time to meet the threat, and how? The best time to meet the threat is in the beginning. It is easier to put out a fire in the beginning when it is small than after it has become a roaring blaze."

MacArthur could not argue with that. The argument is over who makes the rules for fire fighting. The firemen? Or the arsonists?

To avoid involving MacArthur in further controversy, suppose that the mythical General Legion (who got fired a few paragraphs back) and Captain Harry Truman each applied his strategic principles to the aggressions of the 1930s.

MANCHURIA, 1931. General Legion:

Bring the U.S., British and other navies down on the inferior Japanese navy. Captain Truman: Send U.S. and other troops to Manchuria. Let the Japanese navy alone. Do not attack Japanese supply lines to Manchuria.

ETHIOPIA, 1935. General Legion: Blockade Italy, shutting off oil. Close the Suez Canal to Italian troop ships. If necessary, bombard Genoa, Naples, Leghorn, Palermo. Captain Truman: Send American troops to Ethiopia. No blockade. No closing of the canal.

RHINELAND, 1936. General Legion's solution and Captain Truman's coincide here, because the area of aggression is also the place where the enemy should have been attacked.

CZECHOSLOVAKIA, 1938. General Legion: Tell Hitler to get out of there or else the free world is coming across the Rhine. Captain Truman: Send troops to Czechoslovakia, presumably by parachute, but do not widen the war by crossing the Rhine. Captain Truman's policy might have avoided World War II—in the sense that the Axis would have won the world without having to fight the war.

Provocation v. Calculation

Through the Truman speech and through much American and U.N. thought runs the fear of provoking the Reds. No man can be absolutely certain that some U.S. action (such as the Berlin airlift) will not some day anger the Communists into starting World War III. But the evidence—and there is a great deal of it—all runs the other way.

The Red bosses seem to be cool, calculating men. Opportunity, not provocation, is what moves them. Wherever they have been "provoked," they backed down. Wherever they have been appeased, they grabbed for more. The U.N. may negotiate an appeasement in Korea, but it will be merely the prelude to the next aggression.

The Russians may get into the Korean war, but they will get in when & if they think that the best thing for them to do, not because they are provoked. And no matter what the circumstances when they decide to move, they will claim that they were "intolerably provoked," a Communist phrase meaning "hungry."

Many Britons are among those who think that the danger of war lies in provoking the Communists. British influence was a powerful factor on Truman in both the firing of MacArthur and the speech defending it. Italy's Premier Alcide de Gasperi, when he heard of the firing, called it "the greatest victory of British diplomacy since the war."

In this generation, the predominant British feelings toward Asia are guilt and a sense of failure. The glorious contributions to Asia of British justice and organization are forgotten. Only the seamy side of imperialism is remembered. On many subjects, Truman could profitably use British wisdom and experience. But to take British guidance on Asia is like taking guidance on credit and currency problems from Chiang Kaishek.

Besides the British, the two other main influences on Truman's Asia policy are Dean Acheson and George Marshall. Both men, highly successful in other fields, failed on China. The failure rankles. They keep looking back. They will not face the future.

MacArthur, on the other hand, was the West's great success in Asia. Faced with Communism in Asia, he had what many other Western leaders lacked: a will to win. Millions of Japanese, Filipinos and other Asiatics respected him as liberator and guide. In the Night of the Long Knives when MacArthur was fired, the failures cut down the success.

The one note of hope that emerges from the tragedy is that Harry Truman is too patriotic and sensible a man to pursue for long the policy he laid down on April 11. The great danger is that the Reds will take Truman at his word.