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THE RECALL OF GENERAL DOUGLAS MACARTHUR
from
HIS COMMAND IN KOREA

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The decision of President Harry S. Truman to remove General Douglas MacArthur from his command in Korea was a political one, the validity of which has been subject to question. The intent of this paper is to analyze the circumstances involved in an attempt to determine the justification of the action.

General MacArthur was a distinguished military figure whose career had culminated in his command of the United Nations forces in South Korea. In this police action he became involved in a limited war which was foreign to his previous military experience and intolerable to his philosophy.

When intervention by the Red Chinese eliminated the possibility of a quick end to the Korean conflict, two alternatives were presented: the United Nations forces could wage a war to win and risk the possibility of a third world war, or they could fight a limited war in the hope of settling the matter at the conference table.

To President Truman, the risk of a major war seemed to jeopardize not only his image and prestige in the political scene of the United States, but also the future of Europe and our commitments to our allies.

General MacArthur believed that the United Nations forces must win in Korea or risk the future expansion of communism. When his views were not accepted by Washington, he took his recommendations to the public in a series of

public pronouncements intolerable to the president.

This public disagreement with the policies of the administration resulted in the decision of President Truman to remove the general from his position.

Although popular sentiment ran high in favor of MacArthur, the Senate Hearings revealed that the president's decision was supported by both political and military advisors.

In the final analysis, the differences between the general and the president were those of a civilian versus a military mind. Although MacArthur sincerely believed in his viewpoint, he was unable to see the broad picture with all the domestic and international implications evident to Truman. He precipitated his own removal with a series of insubordinate acts by using the press to counter the views of his superiors. The president had no choice but to dismiss the general.