

- How General Douglas MacArthur came to be removed from his position by President Harry Truman.

NEGLECTED SALUTE TOPPLED AN IDOL

It was lunch-time in Tokyo, but in America's capital in Washington it was late evening. President Harry S. Truman who had inherited Roosevelt's mantle upon the latter's death just before the end of the war was now in his second term. He was alone in his White House study. A long conference with Pentagon chiefs, punctuated by conversations on the scrambler, phones, had just finished.

Speculation rose to gale force when just before midnight came a message from the White House Press Secretary: "The President has called a press conference for 1 a.m."

The conference chamber was crowded with silent, expectant reporters as the dapper figure of the President walked on to the platform with his short sprightly steps. They noticed his normally

twinkling eyes were grave behind silver-rimmed spectacles.

Truman sat down jerkily and without preamble began to read an announcement in a brisk neutral voice: "With deep regret I have concluded that General of the Army, Douglas MacArthur, is unable to give his whole-hearted support to the policies of the U.S. Government and of the U.N. in matters appertaining to his official duties. In view of the specific responsibilities imposed upon me by the United Nations I have decided that I must make a change of command in the Far East. It is fundamental that military commanders must be governed by the policies and directives issued to them in the manner provided by our Laws and Constitution. In times of crisis this consideration is particularly compelling."

Sensation-hardened reporters could not suppress a low whistle of astonishment. For in a few words Truman had not only sacked the United States most famous general — he had destroyed a legendary hero who had become part of American folk-lore. In those four sentences he had stripped him of four jobs — Commander Allied Powers, Commander-in-Chief U.N. Command, Commander-in-Chief Far East and Commanding General U.S. Army Far East.

Truman had sat at his desk in the White House study earlier that evening for hours before he made his agonizing decision — which he made entirely alone. Once again he lived up to the little slogan he kept on his desk which said: "The buck stops here."

Truman, a superb politician, faced up to the risk he was taking. MacArthur, the larger than life general, was a favorite with Truman's political opponents who, as he did, considered a war confined to Korea without an attack on China as Munich-like appeasement. Truman also knew that MacArthur

coveted only one job in the world — Truman's own.

When Truman pressed the bell a great career was finished for ever. MacArthur had made a major error. But how — and when?

Everyone knew he referred to Truman as 'that little haberdasher from Missouri' or 'that stand-in.' MacArthur's chief qualities were obstinacy and determination, attributes which are often assets to a great general. He made no secret of his contempt for politicians, particularly the one who had started life as a draper.

Yet he totally underestimated the steel core of the friendly, bespectacled, little civilian who had become America's Chief Executive.

MacArthur of all people should have realized the sort of man Truman was. For only a few months after Roosevelt's death, he made one of the most awe-inspiring decisions in the history of the world. In August 1945 he gave orders to drop the atom bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This act abruptly ended World War II and changed the face of the earth for ever. This

was the man with whom MacArthur had to deal — not a little haberdasher from a small American town.

MacArthur's underestimation of Truman's character is understandable when you consider his own career. He was probably the most sensationally brilliant soldier who ever enlisted in the American Army. Few commanders have ever had such a record, starting at West Point — where he was the only candidate in history to make perfect marks. His report showed 100 — out of 100.

He was the youngest American Divisional Commander in France in World War I, the youngest Major-General, the youngest Superintendent of West Point.

At 55, his career was over — to begin again. In 1937 he resigned as Chief of Staff of the American Army and took up an offer from the Philippine Government to become a Field Marshal there. His job was to re-organize the Philippine army to meet the Japanese threat.

Since leaving for the Philippines, he had not returned to the United States. He had been away for 14 years.

But what years they had been. After the fall of Bataan he left to set up his new headquarters in Australia. He made a dramatic promise: "I shall return."

And return he did, three years later with overwhelming American Forces to liberate the Philippines. His troops were poised to invade Japan when in Washington a very different type of man give the order for a B-29 to drop the world's first atomic bomb one summer morning.

After the inevitable surrender when he was named Supreme Commander of Allied Occupation Forces in the Far East, he set up his office in the Dai Ichi insurance building in the heart of Tokyo. From there he ruled a nation of 83 million conquered Japanese.

There was no doubt that MacArthur, living in arrogant, hermit-like splendor with his bare desk and wall maps like a commander in the field was changing Japan.

Then on another summer's days the whole situation changed for him. On June 25, 1950, the North Koreans, spear-headed by Soviet tanks,

crossed the 38th parallel to invade the Republic of South Korea.

Caught unprepared, the U.N. troops fared badly in the opening stages of the battle. American troops landed piecemeal, were savagely mauled.

Three months after the North Korean attack MacArthur made an amphibious landing at Inchon which broke the back of North Korean resistance and cleared the way for U.N. troops to return to the 38th parallel.

Then came the great dilemma. Should U.N. troops chase the North Koreans beyond the 38th parallel knowing that standing menacingly behind them were the forces of Red China? In any case was it the duty of U.N. troops to do so?

Truman emphatically thought not. MacArthur, on the other hand, quite reasonably posing as a greater expert on the Far East, scorned the idea of any Chinese intervention. His view was that China was a poverty-stricken country, ravaged by want and misery, torn by internal

strife, quite unable to fight a modern war. Chiang Kai-shek's troops, based on Formosa, could soon put an end to their infant Communist regime.

In July, a few weeks after the Korean war started, MacArthur flew to consult with Chiang Kai-shek in Formosa without consulting Washington. Not only was this a gratuitous snub, but the administration was perturbed. Was he planning single-handed to enter a Chinese civil war?

Truman felt the time had come for MacArthur to fly to Washington to talk to him and consult with the Joint Chiefs of Staff. When the message went to Tokyo, MacArthur said he was in the middle of a dangerous campaign and could not leave.

Then Truman made one of his typical gestures. One day he announced casually: "General MacArthur and I are making a quiet trip this weekend to meet in the Pacific."

This was a momentous gesture because in those days the President seldom left continental America.

Next day, on October 11th, Truman set off on his long flight to the Pacific island of Wake. He carried with him an oak leaf cluster for MacArthur's distinguished Service Cross and a five pound box of candied plums for Mrs. MacArthur.

As the President's plane rolled to a stop on the coral air-trip, General MacArthur came forward with an outstretched hand and a rare smile of welcome on his normally immobile face. It was their first — and last — face-to-face meeting.

In spite of the outward cordiality, observers noted that General MacArthur did not salute his Commander-in-Chief. That set the tone of the meeting.

What was said at that meeting in the air-conditioned hut has never been revealed by either of them. But it is absolutely certain that it was during this meeting that MacArthur made the error which ended his career.

His attitude towards the President was summed up by the small gesture he did not make — the salute that was never given.

After two hours consultation MacArthur publicly revealed his attitude to Truman when he took out a gold watch and consulted it ostentatiously saying 'I have a great deal to do in Tokyo.'

Truman, the President of the United States, had probably much more to do and certainly more responsibility, but he made no comment.

Everyone was shocked that the meeting was so brief. Scheduled to go on until the evening, it was finished well before lunch. Truman took off to fly back to America by noon. MacArthur left for Tokyo five minutes later.

Truman, the bland politician, said: 'I never had a more satisfactory conference since I have been President.' But it was obvious the meeting had not been a success.

Six weeks after his meeting with Truman, the Chinese made a massive intervention to prop up the demoralized North Koreans. This completely altered the situation — and proved MacArthur's judgment of Chinese capabilities and intentions was wrong in every particular.

. Yet he proved himself the great general he was by remaining completely optimistic and calm. This was the quality which had inspired America when he left the Philippines avowing to return — and did so. He was determined to repeat his performance in Korea.

But this time the situation was very different. MacArthur had a simple soldierly solution — ignore the politicians, attack the enemy wherever you can. This was a perfectly valid military solution but it must be accepted by the final civilian authority.

This was where the dangerous disagreement between him and Truman came out into the open. Even with Chinese intervention this was not total war — and Truman was determined it was not going to turn into one.

After the Wake Island meeting, Truman was not certain MacArthur would obey him. Possibly he remembered the omitted salute, the ostentatious watch-consulting, the general air of disdain towards his high office. There is little doubt

this attitude was maintained in their private conversation.

Truman, a statesman dealing daily with grave questions, waited for six months hoping perhaps MacArthur would see it his way.

There are many people today who are not certain that MacArthur was wrong. But that was not the issue. It was a continuation of the scene on Wake Island. He was deliberately refusing to salute again. He was challenging his President to submit — or sack him.

Truman, with that peak courage which never deserted him in moments of crisis, decided he could not risk being patient any longer. He afterwards confessed: "If I had allowed MacArthur to defy the civilian authority in this manner I myself would be violating my oath to uphold and defend the Constitution. . . . MacArthur left me no choice — I could no longer tolerate his insubordination."

It was a decision demanding the highest courage — but at that moment an idol toppled.

The news stunned the American people. Six days later the sacked general landed at San Francisco to be received like a national hero. Half a million people greeted him that evening causing one of the worst traffic jams in the history of the city. Two days later in Washington a hysterical crowd received him at the airport although it was after midnight.

He was there to address Congress. He gave an unforgettable performance. MacArthur, always a flam-

boyant orator, was at his best on a nation-wide television hook-up.

He said, 'I address you with neither rancour nor bitterness in the fading twilight of my life, but with one purpose in mind, to serve my country.'

He ended with the dramatic curtain line: 'Like the old soldier in the ballad I now close my military career and fade away — an old soldier who tried to do his duty as God gave him the light to see that duty.' — *P. Turner*.

AUTOGRAPHS AS EVIDENCE

During the War, in the Scotland Stadium in Glasgow, when the first American troops were giving an athletic exhibition, a messenger boy came to my box requesting me to come to the reception room to meet Anthony Eden.

Mr. Eden greeted me in a typical fan manner: "Mr. Robinson, my wife won't believe me if I tell her I met you unless I have your autographs."

I thought he was pulling my leg, and in responding I told him I heard in Hollywood that he had had many offers as a romantic leading man. As I signed the autograph, I told him that I, too, had to ask him for his autograph because my wife would never believe I had met him, unless I had something to show for it. — *Edward G. Robinson*.