

ALSO BY DAVID McCULLOUGH

THE JOHNSTOWN FLOOD

THE GREAT BRIDGE

THE PATH BETWEEN THE SEAS

MORNINGS ON HORSEBACK

BRAVE COMPANIONS

David McCullough

TRUMAN

A TOUCHSTONE BOOK

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propaganda machine that is almost equal to Stalin's," a charge for which he had publicly apologized. But nothing equaled the furo that erupted now over the Hume letter.

Hume himself, who greatly regretted that the letter had ever been made public, told reporters he was entirely sympathetic to the President. "I can only say that a man suffering the loss of a friend and carrying the burden of the present world crisis ought to be indulged in an occasional outburst of temper." But the gesture had little dampening effect.

The *Chicago Tribune* put the American people on notice that their President's "mental competence and emotional stability" were in question. A flood of letters-to-the-editor in papers across the country expressed shock over the President's "uncouthness," his lack of self-control. "It cuts to the quick to realize that we have a President who isn't even a gentleman," read one of hundreds of letters to the White House, and this from an "out-and-out" Democrat. "Truly we have chosen a 'common' man President. Yes—very common." There were suggestions also that Truman might begin to take himself and his daughter a bit less seriously. "My sympathy is with you about Margaret," wrote one man. "My four children cannot sing either."

While some who wrote took Truman aside, saying he had done only what any loving, loving father worth his salt would have under the circumstances, such sentiments were in the minority. White House letters and telegrams ran nearly two to one against him and many, from mothers and fathers for whom the incident could only be seen in the context of the tragedy in Korea, voiced a deep-seated outrage that had to have touched Truman more than he ever let on.

In times such as the present when the entire country is under abnormal duress and strain, your undue "concern" over your daughter's music career is completely ridiculous.

Why don't you apologize to Mr. Hume, and then persuade your daughter to give up singing and take up some kind of war work where the public will appreciate her efforts.

HOW CAN YOU PUT YOUR TRIVIAL PERSONAL AFFAIRS BEFORE THOSE OF ONE HUNDRED AND SIXTY MILLION PEOPLE. OUR BOYS DIED WHILE YOUR INFANTILE MIND WAS ON YOUR DAUGHTER'S REVIEW. INADVERTENTLY YOU SHOWED THE WHOLE WORLD WHAT YOU ARE. NOTHING BUT A LITTLE SELFISH PIPSQUEAK.

How many of these Truman actually saw is not known. But one letter from a Mr. and Mrs. William Banning of New Canaan, Connecticut, he both saw and held on to. It had been mailed with a Purple Heart enclosed.

Mr. Truman:

As you have been directly responsible for the loss of our son's life in Korea, you might just as well keep this emblem on display in your trophy room, as a memory of one of your historic deeds.

One major regret at this time is that your daughter was not there to receive the same treatment as our son received in Korea.

Truman put the letter in his desk drawer, keeping it at hand for several years.

V

It was Harry Truman's longstanding conviction that if you did your best in life, did your "damndest" always, then whatever happened you would at least know it was not for lack of trying. But he was a great believer also in the parts played by luck and personality, forces quite beyond effort or determination. And though few presidents had ever worked so hard, or taken their responsibilities so to heart in time of crisis as Truman had since the start of the war in Korea, it was luck, good and bad, and the large influence of personality, that determined the course of events time and again, and never more so than in late December 1950, in the midst of his darkest passage.

Two days before Christmas, on an icy highway north of Seoul, General Walton Walker, commander of the Eighth Army, was killed when his jeep ran head on into an ROK Army truck. Walker's replacement—as requested by MacArthur and approved immediately by Truman—was Matthew Ridgway, who left Washington at once, arriving in Tokyo on Christmas Day. At his meeting with MacArthur the next morning, Ridgway was told to use his own judgment at the front. "The Eighth Army is yours, Matt. Do what you think best." MacArthur, wrote Dean Acheson later, "never uttered wiser words."

That afternoon, Ridgway landed at Taegu, and in the weeks following came a transformation no one had thought possible. Rarely has one individual made so marked a difference in so little time. With what Omar Bradley called "brilliant, driving, uncompromising leadership," Ridgway restored the fighting spirit of the Eighth Army and turned the tide of war as have few commanders in history.

Since the Chinese onslaught of November 28, the Eighth Army had fallen back nearly 300 miles, to a point just below the 38th parallel, and for a while, Ridgway had no choice but to continue the retreat. Press reports described U.N. forces rolling back down the two main roads

through Seoul as a continuous flow morning until night. "The retreating ROK soldiers were the most miserable troops I ever saw," wrote one correspondent. Millions of Korean refugees had also taken to the roads. "What are you going to do when the enemy doesn't care how many men he loses?" an American officer was quoted. Seoul was in flames again. President Rhee and his government had fled to Pusan. Abandoning Seoul, Ridgway withdrew as far as Osan, near the very point where the first green American troops had gone into action in July. Now, instead of the murderous heat of summer, they fought in murderous cold.

The mood in Washington remained bleak. MacArthur continued to urge a widening of the war—again he proposed bombing and blockading China and utilizing the troops of Chiang Kai-shek—and as before his proposals were rejected. Dire consequences would follow, he implied, unless policy were changed.

The troops are tired from a long and difficult campaign [MacArthur reported], embittered by the shameful propaganda which has falsely condemned their courage and fighting qualities . . . and their morale will become a serious threat in their battlefield efficiency unless the political basis upon which they are being asked to trade life for time is clearly delineated. . . .

Truman found such messages "deeply disturbing." When a general complained about the morale of his troops, observed George Marshall, the time had come for the general to look to his own morale.

The CIA was advising that it would be "infeasible under existing conditions . . . to hold for a protracted period a position in Korea." The best hope was an armistice. His primary consideration, MacArthur was told, was the safety of his troops and the defense of Japan.

Under the extraordinary limitations and conditions imposed upon the command in Korea [MacArthur responded] . . . its military position is untenable, but it can hold, if overriding political considerations so dictate, for any length of time up to its complete destruction.

MacArthur called on the administration to recognize the "state of war" imposed by the Chinese, then to drop thirty to fifty atomic bombs on Manchuria and the mainland cities of China.

The Joint Chiefs, too, told Truman that mass destruction of Chinese cities with nuclear weapons was the only way to affect the situation in Korea. But that choice was never seriously considered. Truman simply refused to "go down that trail," in Dean Rusk's words.

Only once do I recall serious discussion about using nuclear weapons [Rusk later wrote]: when we thought about bombing a large dam on the Yalu River. General Hoyt Vandenberg, Air Force chief of staff, personally had gone to Korea, flown a plane over the dam, and dropped our biggest conventional bomb on it. It made only a little scar on the dam's surface. He returned to Washington and told us that we could knock the dam out only with nuclear weapons. Truman refused.

Truman also still refused to reprimand MacArthur. Rather he treated MacArthur with what Acheson considered "infinite patience"—too much infinite patience, Acheson thought, having by now concluded that the general was "incurably recalcitrant" and fundamentally disloyal to the purposes of his Commander in Chief. On January 13, 1951, Truman sent MacArthur a long, thoughtful telegram, generously praising him for his "splendid leadership" and stressing again the great importance of the whole costly effort in Korea as a means "to demonstrate that aggression will not be accepted by us or by the United Nations." But "great prudence" must be exercised, Truman stated.

Steps which might in themselves be fully justified and which might lend some assistance to the campaign in Korea would not be beneficial if they thereby involved Japan or Western Europe in large-scale hostilities. . . .

In the worst case, it would be important that, if we must withdraw from Korea, it be clear to the world that that course is forced upon us by military necessity and that we shall not accept the result politically or militarily until the aggression has been rectified.

Truman had by now declared a national emergency, announced emergency controls on prices and wages, and still greater defense spending—to the amount of \$50 billion, more than four times the defense budget at the start of the year. He had put Charles E. Wilson, head of the General Electric Company, in charge of a new Office of Defense Mobilization, appointed General Eisenhower as Supreme Commander of NATO, and in a radio and television address to the nation on December 15, called on every citizen "to put aside his personal interests for the good of the country." So while doing all he could to avoid a wider war, he was clearly preparing for one.

As General Marshall later attested, "We were at our lowest point."

But then the morning of Wednesday, January 17, Marshall telephoned Truman to read an astonishing report just in from General Joe Collins, who had flown to Korea for talks with Ridgway. "Eighth Army in good shape and improving daily under Ridgway's leadership," Marshall read.

"Morale very satisfactory . . . Ridgway confident he can obtain two to three months' delay before having to initiate evacuation. . . . On the whole Eighth Army now in position and prepared to punish severely any mass attack."

Plainly MacArthur's bleak assessment of the situation, his forecasts of doom, had been wrong and the effect of this realization was electrifying. As the word spread through the upper levels of government that day, it would be remembered, one could almost hear the sighs of relief. The long retreat of the Eighth Army—the longest retreat in American military history—had ended. On January 25, 1951, less than a month after Ridgway's arrival, the Eighth Army began "rolling forward," as he said.

Ridgway had gone about his business with drive and common sense, seeing first to the basic needs of his troops—better food, warmer winter clothing, improved Mobile Army Surgical Hospitals (MASH units). He emphasized close communications, less dependence on roads and highways, more attention to holding the high ground, and better, more punishing use of airpower and artillery. With his own confidence, his natural vitality, his frequent and conspicuous presence at the front, dressed for battle with two hand grenades strapped to his chest, he set a strong example. The Army had been Ridgway's life, as it had been for his father before him. He was keenly intelligent, austere, superbly fit at age fifty-six, and already celebrated as the pioneer of the airborne assault in World War II. But Ridgway also understood MacArthur. He admired MacArthur's abilities and knew his limitations. More important, Ridgway both understood and approved of the administration's policy. Not only did he admire Harry Truman, he thought him a great and courageous man.

In Washington, every inclination now, as Bradley would write, was to look "beyond MacArthur" to Ridgway for reliable military judgments. Until now Washington had been almost entirely dependent upon MacArthur's headquarters for information, dependent on MacArthur's own opinions, his strategy. Now all that was over, his influence on planning was ended, a new phase of the war had begun. As far as military operations were concerned, wrote Bradley, MacArthur had become "mainly a prima donna figurehead who had to be tolerated."

With the Eighth Army on the offensive again, advancing relentlessly—to the Han River, to Inchon, then Seoul, retaking what was left of the capital city on March 15—morale in Washington revived. The advent of the new field commander was, as Acheson said, an event of immeasurable importance. "While General MacArthur was fighting the Pentagon, General Ridgway was fighting the enemy."

With a force of 365,000 men, Ridgway faced an enemy of more than 480,000, but Ridgway's use of concentrated artillery, "the really terrifying strength of our firepower," as he said, plus the spirit of "as fine a fighting field army as our country has yet produced," more than made up for the difference. By the end of March, having inflicted immense casualties on the Chinese, the Eighth Army was again at the 38th parallel.

Yet Ridgway's progress seemed only to distress MacArthur further. The American ambassador in Tokyo, William Sebald, found the Far Eastern Commander "tired and depressed." Unless he was allowed to strike boldly at the enemy, MacArthur said, his dream of a unified Korea was impossible. He complained of a "policy void." He now proposed not only massive attacks on Manchuria, but to "sever" Korea from Manchuria by laying down a field of radioactive wastes, "the by-products of atomic manufacture," all along the Yalu River. As so often before, his request was denied.

MacArthur's need to upstage Ridgway verged on the ridiculous. On the eve of a new Ridgway offensive in late February, MacArthur flew to the front and standing before a dozen correspondents, while Ridgway remained in the background, declared he had "just ordered a resumption of the offensive," when in fact he had had nothing to do with any part of the operation.

Talking to journalists on March 7, MacArthur lamented the "savage slaughter" of Americans inevitable in a war of attrition. When by the middle of March, the tide of battle "began to turn in our favor," as Truman wrote, and Truman's advisers both at the State Department and the Pentagon thought it time to make a direct appeal to China for peace talks, MacArthur refused to respond to inquiries on the subject. Instead he decreed any "further military restrictions" on his command.

To MacArthur, as he later wrote, it appeared that Truman's nerves were at a breaking point—"not only his nerves, but what was far more menacing in the Chief Executive of a country at war—his nerve."

Truman ordered careful preparation of a cease-fire proposal. On March 21, the draft of a presidential statement was submitted for approval to the other seventeen U.N. nations with troops serving in Korea. On March 20 the Chiefs of Staff had informed MacArthur of what was happening—sending him what Truman called the "meat paragraphs" of the statement in a message that seems to have impressed MacArthur as nothing else had that there was indeed to be no all-out war with Red China. His response so jarred Washington as to leave a number of people wondering if perhaps he had lost his mind—first there had been Forrestal, then Louis Johnson, now MacArthur. Years afterward Bradley would speculate that

possibly MacArthur's realization that his war on China was not to be "snapped his brilliant but brittle mind."

On the morning of Saturday, March 24, in Korea (Friday the 23rd in Washington), MacArthur, without warning, tried to seize the initiative in a manner calculated only to inflame the situation. He issued his own florid proclamation to the Chinese Communists, which in effect was an ultimatum. He began by taunting the Red Chinese for their lack of industrial power, their poor military showing in Korea against a U.N. force restricted by "inhibitions." More seriously, MacArthur threatened to expand the war.

The enemy, therefore, must by now be painfully aware that a decision of the United States to depart from its tolerant effort to contain the war to the areas of Korea, through an expansion of our military operations to his coastal areas and interior bases, would doom Red China to the risk of imminent military collapse.

In conclusion, MacArthur said he personally "stood ready at any time" to meet with the Chinese commander to reach a settlement.

All Truman's careful preparations of a cease-fire proposal were now in vain. MacArthur had cut the ground out from under him. Later MacArthur would dismiss what he had said as a "routine communiqué." Yet his own devoted aide, General Courtney Whitney, would describe it as a bold effort to stop one of the most disgraceful plots in American history, meaning the administration's plan to appease China.

The news reached Washington after nightfall.

MacArthur, with his "pronunciamento," wrote Acheson, had perpetrated a major act of sabotage. To Acheson, it was "insubordination of the grossest sort"; to Bradley, an "unforgivable and irretrievable act."

At eleven o'clock that night in Washington, Friday, March 23, Acheson, Lovett, Rusk, and two other senior State Department officials, Alexis Johnson and Lucius Battle, met at Acheson's house in Georgetown and talked until past midnight. Lovett, ordinarily a man of imperturbable temperament, was angriest of all. MacArthur, he said, must be removed at once. Acheson agreed and quoted Euripides: "Whom the gods would destroy they first make mad."

At Blair House, Truman sat in an upstairs study reading and rereading the text of the MacArthur ultimatum. "I couldn't send a message to the Chinese after that," he would say in later years, trying to recall the disappointment and fury he felt. "I was ready to kick him into the North China Sea . . . I was never so put out in my life. . . . MacArthur thought he was the

proconsul for the government of the United States and could do as he damned pleased."

In his *Memoirs*, Truman would write that he now knew what he must do about MacArthur.

This was a most extraordinary statement for a military commander of the United Nations to issue on his own responsibility. It was an act totally disregarding all directives to abstain from any declarations on foreign policy. It was in open defiance of my orders as President and as Commander in Chief. This was a challenge to the President under the Constitution. It also flouted the policy of the United Nations. . . .

By this act MacArthur left me no choice—I could no longer tolerate his insubordination. . . .

And yet . . . MacArthur was not fired. Truman said not a word suggesting he had reached such a decision. At a meeting with Acheson, Lovett, and Rusk in the Oval Office the next day, Saturday the 24th, Truman, by Acheson's account, appeared to be in a state of mind that combined "disbelief with controlled fury." Acheson and Lovett, for all their own anger, worried about adverse public reaction, given the mood of the country and MacArthur's immense prestige. People were fed up with the war. MacArthur was promising victory. If the President challenged that, he would appear to be, as Lovett said, "on the side of sin." Truman's decision was to send MacArthur only a restrained reprimand, a message he himself dictated to remind MacArthur of his order of December 6 forbidding public statements that had not been cleared with Washington.

Truman was moving with extreme caution. Some, later, would call this an act of political guile. Others would see it as another of those critical moments, like the Berlin crisis, when he drew on his better nature as President, refusing to act impulsively or irresponsibly, whatever his own feelings.

Meantime, on March 14, the Gallup Poll had reported the President's public approval at an all-time low of only 26 percent. And by the end of March, there were appalling new statistics on the war from the U.N. Secretariat: U.N. forces had now suffered a total of 228,941 casualties, the greatest part of them by far being South Korean (168,652) and American (57,120).

Truman was dwelling on the relationship between Abraham Lincoln and General George B. McClellan during the Civil War, in the autumn of 1862, when Lincoln had been forced to relieve McClellan of command of the Army of the Potomac. Truman had sent one of his staff to the Library of

Congress to review the details of the Lincoln-McClellan crisis and give him a report. Lincoln's troubles with McClellan, as Truman knew, had been the reverse of his own with MacArthur. Lincoln had wanted McClellan to attack and McClellan refused time and again. But then, when Lincoln issued orders, McClellan, like MacArthur, ignored them. Also like MacArthur, McClellan occasionally made political statements on matters outside the military field. Asked what he thought about this, Lincoln, according to a story Truman loved, said it reminded him of the man who, when his horse kicked up and stuck a foot through the stirrup, said to the horse, "If you are going to get on, I will get off."

Lincoln was patient [Truman later wrote], for that was his nature, but at long last he was compelled to relieve the Union Army's principal commander. And though I gave this difficulty with MacArthur much wearisome thought, I realized that I would have no other choice myself than to relieve the nation's top field commander. . . .

I wrestled with the problem for several days, but my mind was made up before April 5, when the next incident occurred.

On Thursday, April 5, at the Capitol, House Minority Leader Joe Martin took the floor to read the text of a letter from MacArthur that Martin said he felt duty-bound to withhold no longer.

In February, speaking in Brooklyn, Martin had called for the use of Chiang Kai-shek's troops in Korea and accused the administration of a defeatist policy. "What are we in Korea for—to win or to lose? . . . If we are not in Korea to win, then this administration should be indicted for the murder of American boys." Martin had sent a copy of the speech to MacArthur, asking for his "views." On March 20, MacArthur had responded and virtually all that he said was bound to provoke Truman, as Martin well knew. Since MacArthur's letter carried no stipulation of confidentiality, Martin had decided to make it public.

The congressman was right in calling for victory, MacArthur wrote, right in wanting to see Chinese forces from Formosa join the battle against communism. The real war against communism was in Asia, not in Europe: ". . . here [in Asia] we fight Europe's war with arms while the diplomats there still fight it with words . . . if we lose the war to Communism in Asia the fall of Europe is inevitable, win it and Europe most probably would avoid war and yet preserve freedom. . . . There is no substitute for victory."

The letter was on the wires at once. At the White House, a new assistant press secretary named Roger Tubby took the ticker bulletin and rushed to the Oval Office, to find Truman sitting quietly reading General Bradley's book, *A Soldier's Story*. Truman appeared unconcerned.

"Mr. President," said Tubby, "this man is not only insubordinate, but he's insolent, and I think he ought to be fired."

Truman looked again at the ticker sheet. "Well," he said, "I think they are maneuvering the general out of a job."

At the Pentagon, Bradley called a meeting of the Joint Chiefs. "I did not know that Truman had already made up his mind to relieve MacArthur," Bradley remembered, "but I thought it was a strong possibility." The Joint Chiefs, however, reached no conclusion about MacArthur.

On Friday, April 6, official Cadillacs filled the White House driveway. Marshall, Bradley, Acheson, and Harriman met with the President for an hour. Saying nothing of his own views, Truman asked what should be done. When Marshall urged caution, Acheson agreed. To Acheson it was not so much a problem of what should be done as how it should be done.

The situation could be resolved [remembered Acheson] only by relieving the General of all his commands and removing him from the Far East. Grave trouble would result, but it could be surmounted if the President acted upon the carefully considered advice and unshakable support of all his civilian and military advisers. If he should get ahead of them or appear to take them for granted or be impetuous, the harm would be incalculable.

"If you relieve MacArthur," Acheson told Truman, "you will have the biggest fight of your administration."

Harriman, reminding the President that MacArthur had been a problem for too long, said he should be dismissed at once.

"I don't express any opinion or make known my decision," Truman wrote in his diary. "Direct the four to meet again Friday afternoon and go over all phases of the situation."

He was a model of self-control. MacArthur, in his own memoirs, would describe how, having read Truman's letter to the music critic, he saw himself "at the apex of a situation that would make me the next victim of such uncontrolled passion." But those close to Truman knew that "uncontrolled passion" was never a problem. Under the pressures of this tensest of times, with so much of his own stature and political welfare riding on his every move, he was at his steadiest. For the next several days an air of unnatural calm seemed to hang over the White House. "The wind died down," remembered Joe Martin. "The surface was placid . . . nothing happened."

Truman telephoned the Vice President. Given all that had happened, Barkley concluded reluctantly, a compromise was out of the question—

MacArthur would have to go. When Truman called Chief Justice Vinson and Speaker Sam Rayburn to the Oval Office, Vinson, like Marshall, advised caution. What Rayburn said is not known.

On Saturday, Truman met again with Marshall, Acheson, Bradley, and Harriman, and again nothing was resolved. Marshall and Bradley were still uncertain what to do. They were hesitating in part, according to Bradley's later account, because they knew the kind of abuse that would be hurled at them personally—an understandable concern for two such men at the end of long, distinguished careers. The previous fall, in acrimonious Senate debate over Marshall's confirmation as Secretary of Defense, Republican William E. Jenner of Indiana had called Marshall "a front man for traitors" and a "living lie." Firing MacArthur now, wrote Bradley, was certain to provoke more such savage assaults on Marshall by those Acheson called the "political primitives." Nor could he, Bradley, expect to escape similar treatment.

On Monday, April 9, the same foursome convened with the President once more, this time at Blair House. But now the situation had changed. The Joint Chiefs had met the afternoon before and concluded that from a military point of view, MacArthur should be relieved. Their opinion was unanimous.

"There was no question about the Chiefs being in thorough agreement on this," Bradley's aide, Colonel Chester Clifton, would later say:

They had become disenchanted with MacArthur . . . and on military rather than on political grounds.

A part of their dissatisfaction was with some of his strategic and tactical decisions, such as splitting his forces in Korea and jumping off on his November offensive with inadequate field intelligence about the enemy. . . .

What really counted was that MacArthur had lost confidence in himself and was beginning to lose the confidence of his field officers and troops. There is nothing in the book that more seriously undermines a commander's effectiveness than this. When it happens, he's through. . . .

And when he committed the final error of insubordination to the Commander-in-Chief—and there's absolutely no question about that—they had no trouble at all deciding what had to be done.

Now at Blair House, Acheson, Marshall, Bradley, and Harriman all agreed that MacArthur should be relieved, and only after each had spoken, Truman, for the first time, said he was of the same opinion. He had made his decision. He told Bradley to prepare the necessary papers.

"Rarely had a matter been shrouded in such secrecy at the White House," reported the *Washington Post* the morning of Tuesday, April 10. "The answer to every question about MacArthur was met with a 'no comment' reply."

On Capitol Hill, an unidentified "congressional official" told the *Post* that the President had decided against removing the Far East Commander. Representative Martin said he favored bringing MacArthur home to report to Congress. In Tokyo, according to a United Press dispatch, a member of MacArthur's staff said meetings between the general and Secretary of the Army Pace were "going forward with an air of cordiality"—thus seeming to refute rumors that Pace had been sent to dismiss MacArthur. A photograph on page 1 of the *Post* showed a smiling MacArthur welcoming an even more smiling Pace on his arrival at the Tokyo airport.

A *Post* editorial, meantime, expressed concern that MacArthur's repeated efforts "to run away with the diplomatic ball" had "excited little more than a ripple among the American people," and blamed the administration for its "muting" of the issue. Civil supremacy was at stake. The President ought to take a firm hand. "Any reassertion of the President's authority as Commander in Chief and initiator of the country's foreign policy would win him, we feel sure, the support of the American people. That's what they are crying out for—leadership. . . ."

The morning cartoon by Herb Block showed "Captain Harry Truman" asleep on his World War I army cot, trembling in fear, too terrified to challenge the five-star general.

At the end of a routine morning staff meeting, the President quietly announced—"So you won't have to read about it in the papers"—that he had decided to fire General MacArthur. He was sure, Truman added, that MacArthur had wanted to be fired.

He was sure also that he himself faced a political storm, "a great furor," unlike any in his political career. From beyond the office windows, the noise of construction going on in the White House was so great that several of the staff had to strain to hear what he was saying.

At 3:15 that afternoon, Acheson, Marshall, Bradley, and Harriman reported to the Oval Office, bringing the drafted orders. Truman looked them over, borrowed a fountain pen from Bill Hassett, and signed his name.

They were to be sent by State Department channels to Ambassador Muccio in Korea, who was to turn them over to Secretary Pace, who by now was also in Korea, with Ridgway at Eighth Army headquarters. Pace was to return at once to Tokyo and personally hand the orders to Mac-

Arthur—this whole relay system having been devised to save the general from the embarrassment of direct transmission through regular Army communications. All aspects of the issue thus far had been kept secret with marked success, but it was essential there be no leaks in the last critical hours, as Truman made clear to his new press secretary, Joe Short, the White House correspondent for the Baltimore *Sun* whom Truman had picked to replace Charlie Ross. Announcement of the sensational MacArthur news was not to be made until the following morning.

The next several hours passed without incident, until early evening, after Truman had returned to Blair House. Harriman, Bradley, Rusk, and six or seven of Truman's staff were working in the Cabinet Room, preparing material for release, when Joe Short received word that a Pentagon reporter for the Chicago *Tribune*, Lloyd Norman, was making inquiries about a supposed "major resignation" to take place in Tokyo—the implication being that somehow MacArthur had already learned of Truman's decision and was about to resign before Truman could fire him.

Bradley telephoned Truman at about nine o'clock to report there had been a leak. Truman, saying he wanted time to think, told Bradley to find Marshall and Acheson. Marshall, it was learned, had gone to a movie with his wife, but Acheson came to the White House immediately, and like Rusk and George Elsey, he thought it would be a mistake to do anything rash because of one reporter's inquiry. As he had from the start, Acheson again stressed the importance of the manner in which the general was dismissed. It was only fair and proper that he be informed before the story broke.

Harriman, Charlie Murphy, Matt Connelly, Joe Short, and Roger Tubby argued that MacArthur must not be allowed to "get the jump" on the President. The story must come from the White House, not Tokyo. The announcement should be made that night.

Such a decision, thought Elsey, would look like panic on the part of the White House. It would be undignified, unbecoming the President. But as Elsey later recalled, "There *was* a degree of panic."

There was concern that MacArthur might get wind of this and might make some grandstand gesture of his own. There were rumors flying around that he was going on a world-wide broadcast network. . . . And in effect, the White House was, I'm afraid, I'm sorry to say it, panicked by the fear that MacArthur might get the jump.

Meantime, something apparently had gone wrong with the transmission of the President's orders. Nothing had been heard from Muccio about their receipt.

Had George Marshall been present that night—or Charlie Ross—possibly things would have been handled differently.

Truman would remember Bradley "rushing over" to Blair House at a late hour. Actually, the time was just after ten and Bradley came accompanied by Harriman, Rusk, Joe Short, and Matt Connelly. By 10:30, Truman had decided.

Short telephoned Roger Tubby at the White House to have all the orders—those relieving MacArthur, as well as those naming Matthew Ridgway his successor—mimeographed as quickly as possible.

"He's not going to be allowed to quit on me," Truman is reported to have said. "He's going to be fired!" In his diary, Truman recorded dryly, "Discussed the situation and I ordered messages sent at once and directly to MacArthur."

From a small first-floor study in his Georgetown home, Dean Acheson began placing calls to Tom Connally, Les Biddle, and John Foster Dulles, to tell them what was about to happen. At the State Department, Rusk spent a long night telephoning the ambassadors of all the countries with troops in Korea. "Well, the little man finally did it, didn't he," responded the ambassador from New Zealand.

At the White House, switchboard operators began calling reporters at their homes to say there would be an extraordinary press conference at 1:00 A.M. And at 1:00 A.M. in the White House press room, Wednesday, April 11, Press Secretary Short handed out the mimeographed sheets.

Truman, in his second-floor bedroom at Blair House, was by then fast asleep.

General MacArthur learned of his recall while at lunch in Tokyo, when his wife handed him a brown Signal Corps envelope.

If Truman had only let him know how he felt, MacArthur would say privately a few hours later, he would have retired "without difficulty." Where the *Tribune* reporter got his tip was never learned. MacArthur would later testify that he had never given any thought to resigning.

According to what MacArthur had been told by an unnamed but "eminent" medical authority, Truman's "mental instability" was the result of malignant hypertension, "characterized by bewilderment and confusion of thought." Truman, MacArthur predicted, would be dead in six months.

TRUMAN FIRES MACARTHUR

The headline across the early edition of the *Washington Post*, April 11, 1951, was the headline everywhere in the country and throughout much of the world, with only minor variations. The reaction was stupendous,

the outcry from the American people shattering. Truman had known he would have to face a storm, but however dark his premonitions, he could not possibly have measured what was coming. No one did, no one could have. One southern senator in the course of the day described the people in his part of the country as "almost hysterical." The senator himself was almost hysterical. So were scores of others on Capitol Hill and millions of Americans.

The day on Capitol Hill was described as "one of the bitterest . . . in modern times." Prominent Republicans, including Senator Taft, spoke angrily of impeaching the President. The full Republican leadership held an angry emergency meeting in Joe Martin's office at 9:30 in the morning, after which Martin talked to reporters of "impeachments," the accent on the plural. "We might want the impeachments of 1 or 50." A full-dress congressional investigation of the President's war policy was in order. General MacArthur, announced Martin, would be invited to air his views before a joint session of Congress.

Senator Nixon demanded MacArthur's immediate reinstatement. Senator Jenner declared the country was "in the hands of a secret coterie" directed by Russian spies. When, on the floor of the Senate, Jenner shouted, "Our only choice is to impeach President Truman and find out who is the secret invisible government which has so cleverly led our country down the road to destruction," the gallery broke into applause.

A freshman Democrat from Oklahoma, Senator Robert Kerr, rose to defend the President. If the Republicans believed the nation's security depended on following the policy of General MacArthur, Kerr said, then they should call for a declaration of war against Red China. Otherwise, Republican support of MacArthur was a mockery. Tom Connally reminded his colleagues that Americans had always insisted on civilian control over the military, and three Senate Republicans, Duff of Pennsylvania, Saltonstall and Lodge of Massachusetts, spoke in agreement.

But such voices were lost in a tempest of Republican outrage. The general's dismissal was "another Pearl Harbor," a "great day for the Russian Communists." MacArthur had been fired "because he told the truth." "God help the United States," said Senator James P. Kem, Republican of Missouri.

In New York two thousand longshoremen walked off their jobs in protest over the firing of MacArthur. A Baltimore women's group announced plans for a march on Washington in support of the general. Elsewhere enraged patriots flew flags at half-staff, or upside down. People signed petitions, fired off furious letters and telegrams to Washington. In Worcester, Massachusetts, and San Gabriel, California, Truman was

burned in effigy. In Houston, a Protestant minister became so angry dictating a telegram to the White House that he died of a heart attack.

The legislatures of four states—Florida, Michigan, Illinois, and California—voted resolutions condemning the President's action, while the Los Angeles City Council adjourned for a day of "sorrowful contemplation of the political assassination of General MacArthur." In Chicago, in a front-page editorial, the *Tribune* called for immediate impeachment proceedings:

President Truman must be impeached and convicted. His hasty and vindictive removal of Gen. MacArthur is the culmination of a series of acts which have shown that he is unfit, morally and mentally, for his high office. . . . The American nation has never been in a greater danger. It is led by a fool who is surrounded by knaves. . . .

"IMPEACH THE IMBECILE" . . . "IMPEACH THE LITTLE WARD POLITICIAN STUPIDITY FROM KANSAS CITY" . . . "SUGGEST YOU LOOK FOR ANOTHER HISS IN BLAIR HOUSE," read telegrams typical of those pouring into Washington. In the hallways of the Senate and House office buildings, Western Union messengers made their deliveries with bushel baskets. According to one tally, of the 44,358 telegrams received by Republicans in Congress during the first 48 hours following Truman's announcement, all but 334 condemned him or took the side of MacArthur, and the majority called for Truman's immediate removal from office.

Republicans were overjoyed. "This is the biggest windfall that has ever come to the Republican Party," exclaimed Senator Styles Bridges.

A number of prominent liberals—Eleanor Roosevelt, Walter Reuther, Justice William O. Douglas—publicly supported Truman. Douglas, who had told Truman as early as October that MacArthur should be fired, wrote, "In the days ahead you may need the strength of all your friends. This note is to let you know that I am and will be in your corner . . . I know you are right."

While by far the greatest clamor came from those in the country outraged over what Truman had done, there was no lack of conviction, even passion, among people who felt he was in the right, that a fundamental principle was at stake. And to many of these same people, how one felt about Harry Truman personally was immaterial.

"It makes not the slightest difference if Mr. Harry Truman is an ignorant person who never graduated from college, who once worked in a haberdashery shop, who was a protégé of one of our worst city bosses and came into the presidency through accident," the Reverend Dr. Duncan E.

Littlefair said in a sermon at the Fountain Street Baptist Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Neither does it make any difference if General MacArthur is a man of astounding personality, tremendous achievement, graduated first in his class in the great College of the Army and has had a distinguished career and has proven a wonderful administrator of the Japanese people or that we like him better than we do Harry S. Truman. Principle, *principle*, must always be above personality and it must be above expediency. The principle here we recognize . . . [is] that control of this country must come through the president and the departments that are organized under him and through Congress, and that any decision that comes from that person through those means is not to be dismissed because we don't like the personality who expressed it, nor is it to be overridden because we have a conquering hero. . . .

Another letter of support addressed to the President came from the Washington Post music critic, Paul Hume.

Throughout Europe, MacArthur's dismissal was greeted as welcome news. "MAC IS SACKED," declared the London *Evening Standard*. The French, reported Janet Flanner in *The New Yorker*, were "solidly for Truman." Not a single paper in Paris had failed to support his decision.

But most impressive was the weight of editorial opinion at home, despite vehement assaults in the McCormick, Hearst, and Scripps-Howard newspapers, or the renewed glorification of MacArthur in Henry Luce's *Time and Life*.

The Washington Post, *The New York Times*, the New York Post, the Baltimore Sun, the Atlanta Journal, the Miami Daily News, the Boston Globe, the Chicago Sun-Times, the Milwaukee Journal, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, the Denver Post, the Seattle Times, the Christian Science Monitor, all these and more endorsed Truman's decision. Importantly the list also included such staunch Republican papers as the Des Moines Register and Tribune and the New York Herald-Tribune, which went out of its way to praise Truman as well for his strength of character:

The most obvious fact about the dismissal of General MacArthur is that he virtually forced his own removal. In high policy as in war there is no room for a divided command. . . . General MacArthur is a soldier of the highest abilities . . . to lose his service and his talents is in a very true sense a tragedy for the nation, yet he is the architect of a situation which really left the President with no other course. With one of those strokes of boldness and decision which are characteristic of Mr. Tru-

man in emergencies, a very difficult and dangerous problem has been met in the only way it could have been met. . . .

In his "Today and Tomorrow" column, Walter Lippmann commended Truman and Marshall both for having "done their duty." And the working press, according to the *Saturday Review*, privately sided with Truman by a margin of six to one, though most reporters thought the dismissal had been poorly handled.

The clamor in the country, the outrage, the noisy hostility to Truman, the adulation of MacArthur continued, however, and would grow greater still when MacArthur made his triumphal return. Nothing had so stirred the political passions of the country since the Civil War.

At the heart of the tumult was anger and frustration over the war in Korea. Nobody liked it. Senator Wherry had begun calling it "Truman's War," and the name caught on. People were sick of Truman's War, frustrated and a bit baffled by talk of a "limited war." America didn't fight to achieve a stalemate, and the cost in blood had become appalling. If it was a United Nations effort, then the United States seemed to be bearing the heavy side of the burden. According to the latest figures, there were more than ten thousand Americans dead, another fifty thousand wounded or missing in action. The country wanted it over. MacArthur at least offered victory.

To a great part of the country MacArthur was a glorious figure, a real-life, proven American hero, the brilliant, handsome general who had led American forces to stunning triumph in the greatest of all wars wherein there had never been any objective but complete and total victory. "Douglas MacArthur was the personification of the big man . . . Harry Truman was almost a professional little man," wrote *Time* in a considerably less than unbiased attempt to appraise the national mood, but one that nonetheless applied to a large part of the populace. For someone of Truman's modest attainments, a man of his "stature," to have fired Douglas MacArthur seemed to many Americans an act smacking of insolence and vindictiveness, not to say dreadful judgment. Nor did the way it happened seem right. Reportedly, the firing had been carefully timed so as to make the morning papers "and catch the Republicans in bed." Rumors also attributed the announcement to another of Truman's lead-of-the-night temper tantrums, or heavy drinking. In a speech in Milwaukee, having called Truman a "son-of-a-bitch," Joe McCarthy charged that the decision had been influenced by "bourbon and Benedictine." Even to more fair-minded Republicans than McCarthy and others of the party's vociferous right wing—as to a great many Democrats—it seemed to have been a