

# Pathfinder

NEWS MAGAZINE

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## MacArthur, rebel or hero

*What happens now in  
Korea will decide whether  
Truman was right in  
firing him*



**Last mile.** Douglas MacArthur enters his Tokyo headquarters for final conferences.

**“I deeply regret** that it becomes my duty as President and Commander in Chief of the United States military forces to replace you as Supreme Commander, Allied Powers; Commander in Chief, United Nations Command; Commander in Chief, Far East and Commanding General, U.S. Army, Far East.

“You will turn over your commands, effective at once, to Lt. Gen. Matthew B. Ridgway. . . .”

So ended, at 1 a.m. Washington time on April 11, 1951, the argument between Harry S. Truman and Douglas MacArthur. And so began what is undoubtedly destined to be one of the great controversies of American history.

Had the five-star general, brilliant military servant of his country for 50 years, been a sincere, farsighted prophet advocating the only course which could halt Communist imperialism and save the free world? Or had he been an egotistical, arbitrary, insubordinate soldier, deliberately undercutting his Commander in Chief in pursuit of a policy to which no United States or United Nations official would give endorsement?

Whatever the answer—and time and the Russians alone could provide it—nothing could detract from the classical human drama involved in the battle of giants between the President of the United States and the Supreme Commander in the Pacific.



**New commander.** General Matthew B. Ridgway takes the reins in the Far East.

*Douglas MacArthur*

**The Record.** Ever since the Korean War began MacArthur had needed the Administration to do more in Asia. On July 31, 1950, three weeks after he was named Commander in Chief of the United Nations forces in Korea, he flew unauthorized to Formosa to confer with Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek on possible use of Chiang's Nationalist Chinese. On his own authority he turned down for the time being Chiang's offer of 33,000 troops.

On Aug. 26 he sent a letter to the Veterans of Foreign Wars, declaring Formosa vital to U.S. defenses in Asia. The letter was distributed to the press before the President saw it. Truman ordered it withdrawn. It was.

On Oct. 15 the President flew to Wake Island to confer with MacArthur and announced they were in "complete unanimity" on the Korean situation.

In November MacArthur launched a U.N. offensive to the Korean-Manchurian border. It brought Red China into the war, resulted in a retreat of U.N. troops far below the 38th Parallel.

On Dec. 6, 1950, MacArthur received from the Joint Chiefs of Staff a Truman order that all Government officials must clear statements with the State and Defense Departments.

On March 20, 1951, the JCS informed MacArthur that the President was considering a statement that the U.N. was ready to open negotiations for a settlement in Korea. On the same day MacArthur, answering a letter from House Republican Leader Joseph W. Martin Jr., predicted that communism would be defeated in Asia rather than in Europe as the Administration believed.

Four days later MacArthur issued his own independent offer to negotiate with the Chinese commander in the field.

**The Decision.** On April 5, Martin released MacArthur's letter in a speech to the House. An immediate outcry for the general's ouster came from Allied capitals around the world. After a week of discussions with Secretary of Defense George C. Marshall and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Truman made up his mind.

"With deep regret," he said, "I have concluded that General of the Army Douglas MacArthur is unable to give his wholehearted support to the policies of the United States Government and of the United Nations in matters pertaining to his official duties. . . .

"Full and vigorous debate on matters of national policy is a vital element in the Constitutional system of our free democracy. It is fundamental, however, that military commanders must be governed by the policies and directives issued to them in the manner provided by our laws and Constitution. In time of crisis this consideration is particularly compelling.

"General MacArthur's place in history as one of our greatest com-



**Van Fleet.** He replaces Ridgway as head of U.S. forces in Korea

*Douglas MacArthur*

“General MacArthur’s place in history as one of our greatest commanders is fully established. The nation owes him a debt of gratitude for the distinguished and exceptional service which he has rendered his country in posts of great responsibility. For that reason I repeat my regret at the necessity for the action I feel compelled to take. . . .”

Yet, as Truman knew, appeals to Constitutional principles, however sound, and tributes to MacArthur, however polite, would not be enough to head off the enormous repercussions of the general’s removal. Some Republicans immediately began a drive to bring him home to testify before Congress on his policy differences with the President. And after a hasty phone conversation with Congressional leaders, the general said he would “be delighted to have an invitation” to testify before a joint session.

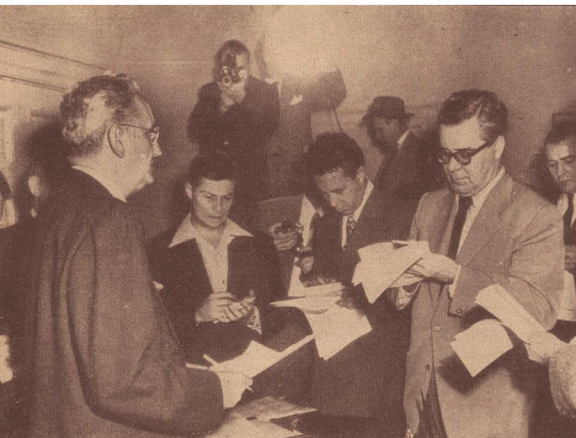
**The Reaction.** Domestically, first responses favored the President’s decision since many Americans were fed up with the long-dragging Korean War. MacArthur’s call for expanding that war—even though he said this would mean its speedier conclusion—had aroused resentment in many.

From most United Nations capitals came approval. They had feared his “impetuosity” would provoke “a full-scale war” with Red China. In Japan there was shock and dismay: Removal of MacArthur, who had replaced their own discredited God-Emperor in the minds of many, might delay for many months a final Japanese peace treaty.

In Moscow there was, at first, silence. There, too, men no doubt wondered whether this meant an end to an aggressive American policy in the Far East. General Ridgway, hastening back to Tokyo from the front, said nothing. But two days earlier he had said exactly what MacArthur said:

“I see no end to the military operations unless there is a political settlement. . . . There is nothing transitory, nothing temporary, about this situation we are in so far as a fight against communism is concerned. For Communist leaders this is a life and death struggle. The Communists will not vary their objectives. These fellows are out to destroy us no matter how long it takes.”

Harry Truman had removed a general. But he had not solved the Asiatic problem.



*Last word? Press Secretary Joseph Short (left) announces MacArthur firing.*

*(continued)*

**MacArthur's career**

**1903.** Graduated from West Point with highest grades in 25 years.

**1918.** Served in France, became youngest Division Commander.

**1919.** Became youngest Superintendent of Military Academy.

**1930.** Became youngest Army Chief of Staff in history.

**1935.** Headed mission to Philippines, drafted plan for defense.

**1937.** Retired from active duty.

**1941.** Recalled and assigned to Philippines. Commanded their defense and in 1942 escaped to Australia.

**1944.** Became five-star general.

**1945.** Assumed command of all American ground forces in Pacific. Later accepted surrender of Japan.

**1950.** Named Commander of United Nations forces in Korea.

**1951.** Relieved of all commands.