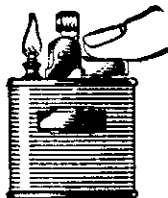




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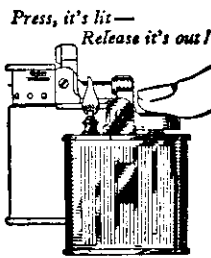
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"The Great Debate"

THE Senate investigation into the dismissal of General MacArthur became an event about which people outside the United States may have some difficulty in reaching conclusions. Even the Americans, who like all their problems to be discussed openly, have been divided on the value or wisdom of the inquiry. Yet it must have been obvious from the beginning that the circumstances of the dismissal could not be examined without facing the wider implications of Far Eastern strategy. President Truman wanted the fighting to be confined to Korea; General MacArthur believed that the campaign could not be won unless he had freedom to bomb bases in Manchuria, to accept Chinese Nationalist troops as allies, and to face the risk of a frontal clash with Russia. These questions could not be argued in public without revealing the trends of official opinion. It was not surprising, therefore, to find newspapers protesting, or to hear from General Bradley that it was "very harmful to United States security to pass on to Russia all our intentions, all our thoughts and all our capabilities."

It is difficult to know what will be made of the inquiry by the Russians. Possibly they will have learnt little that they did not know before. In other parts of the world, and in the United States itself, the debate has had great significance. At no other time in history has a powerful nation discussed the possibilities of war and peace in comparable circumstances. The central issue was always in view, and few attempts were made to conceal it. Had a third world war become inevitable? If so, should the Americans take action which might make a showdown unavoidable in the near future? These were questions towards which all opinions and all expert testimony inclined. Moreover, they were being asked simultaneously at different levels: in the room to which the Senate committee called its witnesses; in

the newspapers and in broadcasting studios, and in the homes of the people. A national heart-searching on this scale could not have occurred anywhere else. In the background, no doubt, were political motives; but the debate, once started, passed out of the control of party machines. It seemed as if all the thoughts and opinions thrown to the surface of national life in recent years were now being tested and examined.

People who had spoken wildly of a preventive war, arguing that the stockpile of atom bombs would be a supreme advantage, were reminded by the President that America could not escape atom bombing. They were told by General Marshall that there could be no promise of a quick victory. And General Bradley, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs-of-Staff, said bluntly: "We are not in the best military position to seek a showdown with Russia." These statements may have a steadying effect on public opinion. It must be remembered, however, that the debate was not merely an American event. Decisions made in Washington can tip the scales towards war or peace. For this reason the debate was watched with deep interest in British countries. In the long run, perhaps, its value will be constructive. If it be true that smaller nations are influenced by American policy, it is also true that American policy is strongly influenced by public opinion at home; and the crisis brought about by General MacArthur's dismissal, may have cleared the air, exposing ideas and prejudices which could have been dangerous. Onlookers in British countries may have found it hard to decide whether open diplomacy, carried to extreme practice, is the best way of closing a rift in national policy, especially when the policy has a direct bearing on international affairs. They will have to admit, however, that it is the American way. And a great nation must be true to itself before it can turn with free mind to the responsible tasks of leadership.



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