

Collier's Editorial

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MacArthur Is Not to Blame

COLLIER'S HAS NEVER TRIED to run General Douglas MacArthur for President. Nor, on the other hand, has it ever called him "Dugout Doug." This magazine has admired his courage and his demonstrated ability, both military and administrative. But beyond that it hasn't run a fever about him, one way or the other. That is, until now.

Now, we at Collier's think he's been the victim of a low and dirty trick in the form of a whispering campaign. We don't know how far the whisperers have penetrated. But we know that they have been heard along the Eastern seaboard, especially in Washington, where they have been as prevalent and oppressive as the humidity.

They have obviously reached Japan. For General MacArthur found it necessary to send a message to the President disclaiming responsibility for our unpreparedness for the surprise attack in Korea. In it the general said that "the Far East Command, until the President's great pronouncement to support the epochal action of the United Nations, had no slightest responsibility for the defense of the free Republic of Korea."

Later, after his command had been assigned the defense of Korea and Formosa, General MacArthur flew to Formosa to confer with Chiang Kai-shek. A rumor was promptly spread from Washington that the trip was unauthorized and unknown to the President and other high officials.

The general had to issue another statement. And he was backed up by W. Averell Harriman, just back from Tokyo, who said that "General MacArthur went to see the generalissimo to carry out his instructions from the President," and that the President, the Secretaries of State and Defense, himself and others had known about the journey in advance.

We don't know what the motives are behind the determined campaign to discredit the Far Eastern commander. But one thing is certain: General MacArthur was not responsible for the defenselessness of Korea. Maybe no one person was. But there are several candidates for that unhappy distinction.

Among them are the various and badly coordinated intelligence units of the government, and the persons who evaluate these units' infor-

mation. If their advice contributed to some of the embarrassing statements and decisions by the Secretary of State, it is hardly fair to hold him solely and personally at fault. Yet Mr. Acheson can scarcely escape some of the onus of blame. Neither can Secretary of Defense Johnson, with his weakening economics and his now-famous blustering talk of what we'd do to Joe Stalin at 5:00 A.M. if Joe started something an hour earlier.

An example of conflicting opinions and dubious conclusions was last year's decision that Formosa wasn't worth defending. The Joint Chiefs of Staff wanted at least to send a group of military advisers to Formosa. Mr. Acheson thought otherwise, and sold his views to the President.

A few days later, after Mr. Acheson had testified at a closed session of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, chairman Tom Connally told reporters the gist of what had been said.

Mr. Acheson had been asked whether he had sought the views of General MacArthur and Admiral Radford on the strategic importance of Formosa. The secretary had answered that he wasn't reporting on their views, and that he didn't necessarily know them. He also said he had not talked to the Joint Chiefs and didn't know their views in detail. Strategic importance, he said, was a military question and not a diplomatic one.

Three days after the committee meeting, Mr. Acheson made the apparently diplomatic announcement that America's military defense line in the Pacific ran from the Aleutians to the Philippines, including Japan and Okinawa but skipping Korea and Formosa.

It seems safe to say, from this evidence, that America's policy in the Far East, including Korea, was determined right where it should have been—at the seat of the American government. It also seems safe to say that General MacArthur, far from shaping any of that policy, was not even consulted on some of its most important military phases. His repeated requests for more and heavier equipment for his command had to be turned down because of that policy. If they had not been, the Korean story might have been a different and happier one.

General MacArthur has played a triple role in Japan. He has been military conqueror, military governor and a sort of superambassador. But in all three roles he has been under orders from his superiors in Washington, who include the President, the Secretaries of State and Defense, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Congress. Do the rumor spreaders consider all of them entirely blameless? Does the fault lie with one man, 7,000 miles remote from the city where grand strategy is planned, diplomatic policies are decided, and money appropriated to make the strategy and policies effective?

Is it General MacArthur who determined to withdraw our forces from Korea and leave an ill-equipped constabulary in their place? Is it he who ignored repeated reports of armed raids by Communists across the 38th parallel, and the urgent warnings from Korean government officials that heavier attacks were imminent?

The answers to these questions are as obvious as the whispered charges against MacArthur are ridiculous. The wrong guessing was done in Washington. And if any of the wrong guessers are responsible for the attempts to smear and slander the general, their cowardly behavior deserves thorough Congressional investigation and public exposure.