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KOREAN PREDICTIONS

The question isn't whether President Carter had the right to fire Major General John K. Singlaub. Of course the President, as Commander-in-Chief, had that right. The question is whether it was right (or wise) for President Carter to fire General Singlaub.

The question isn't whether what General Singlaub said is in disharmony with Carter's policy. That ;tis, is obvious. The question is whether what Singlaub said is true, and what our policy should be.

General Singlaub said that, if the United States withdraws American troops from Korea over the next four to five years, "it wi 11 lead to war." For such bluntness, he was summarily relieved of his Korean command.

Defense Secretary Harold Brown defended Carter's dismissal of Singlaub by saying that it is the resrfnsibility of an officer "to support the [President's] policy publicly if he plans to stay in the military."

But General Singlaub's statement was not one of agreement or disagreement with a policy; it was a prediction that a certain result would flow from a certain circumstance.

What is the "policy" thus brought to public attention? Does Carter's rebuke of Singlaub mean that the Carter policy to withdraw troops from Korea will NOT lead to war? All hands must agree that Singlaub is far more competent than Carter or Brown to make a military estimate of the Korean situation.

Or, does Carter's rebuke of Singlaub mean that, although withdrawing troops from Korea WILL lead to war, the Carter Administration doesn't care and intends to withdraw them anyway? If so, this looks ominously as though Carter has pulled the same diplomatic goof that Secretary of State Dean Acheson did in 1950.

(more)

In January 19 0 Acheson publicly announced the geography of the U.S. defense perimeter in the Pacific beyond which, he said, "the initial reliance must be on the people attacked to resist it.[11] Acheson's statement was construed at home and abroad as a formal U.S. diplomatic and military abandonment of South Korea.

History teaches that aggressors advance where they detect weakness or a lack of will to resist. It is widely believed that Acheson's statement was interpreted by the Communists as a direct invv'a.tion to invade South Korea without fear of interference from the United States.

This assumption was wrong. The United States did come to the immediate aid of South Korea after the Communists attacked in June 1950. But it took two and a half years and 33,000 American lives to prove that assumption wrong. What a tragic price in blood and money to pay for a diplomatic mistake!

Wars are started when aggressors think they can win cheap, easy victories. If Acheson had said in January 1950, "The United States is ready and willing to fight a two-year 'iur and to sacrifice 33,000 American lives to defend the freedom of South Korea," H is probablliii. that there would have been no Korean War.

If President Carter had not fired General Singlaub, his statement would not have received worldwide attention. Even though Singlaub is one of our most highly decorated war heroes, having survived the most dangerous duty in three **wars,** his name was not exactly a household word.

But when President Carter overreacted and hurled public humiliation at Singlaub, this made l'affaire Singlaub a cause celebre that cannot be buried even by the peace-making gesture of giving him another command of comparable rank.

After all is said and done, the cructal question remains. Is it true that, if U.S. troops are withdrawn from Korea, this "will lead to war"?