

The Firing of MacArthur, Then and Now

On April 11, 1951, fifty-seven years ago, President Harry S Truman announced the firing of U.S. Supreme Commander Allied Powers in the Pacific, Gen. Douglas MacArthur. With this action, Truman did a huge favor for his British imperial mentor Winston Churchill—and dealt a crippling blow to the U.S. military from which it has never recovered.

“Truman was getting rid of patriots he couldn’t deal with otherwise,” Lyndon LaRouche commented. “Churchill hated MacArthur and Truman did Churchill a favor.”

What that favor was can only be understood by looking at the American patriotic tradition which MacArthur represented throughout his career. Descended from a family with distinguished military service in the Union Army, and educated both in engineering and Platonic Christian thought, MacArthur understood war in the Classical humanist sense—as a the ultimate recourse, to be avoided if at all possible, for achieving peace and dignity for all people.

MacArthur’s passion lay in the same commitment which President Franklin D. Roosevelt expressed in his frequent wars of words with Churchill. He was determined to continue the tradition of the American Revolution, by acting to rid the world of colonialism, giving all nations the same access to national sovereignty and economic development, which the United States had won in its War of Independence. It was from this standpoint, that MacArthur clashed repeatedly with both the British commanders, and Anglophile members of the Roosevelt Administration, especially the State Department, in his conduct of the war in the Pacific. Because he truly saw war as only the last resort in liberation against tyranny, he eschewed as many bloody battles as he could against the Japanese, seeking to force the war to an end with the least possible casualties.

President Roosevelt clearly trusted MacArthur to carry out these noble aims in the post-war period, making him Supreme Commander of ground forces in the Pacific in the days before his own death. FDR knew that MacArthur would act toward the conquered Japanese, as he had toward the former U.S. colony in the Philippines—providing the maximum opportunity for reconstruction and reconciliation, in pursuit of building a true community of nations.

The obverse of MacArthur’s benevolent policy toward Japan—which Churchill vehemently opposed—was his aversion to the United States starting new wars, especially against colonial nations. For this reason, he opposed the Truman Administration’s fatal error of launching a no-win war in Korea, the first of a series of no-win wars that have had devastating effects on the U.S. military. He is reported to have been brought in by President John F. Kennedy for consultations on the situation in Indo-China, and gave the same advice: Never fight a land war in Asia.

One can only imagine what he would have said to those lily-livered military commanders today, who went along with the disastrous invasion of Iraq.

MacArthur was particularly impassioned about providing the opportunity for the former colonial peoples of Asia to advance, and he took to the stump repeatedly to demand that they be permitted to do so. In his speech to the Joint Meeting of the Two Houses of the U.S. Congress just eight days after his firing, his so-called Farewell Address, MacArthur argued that Asia, with half the world’s population and 60% of its natural resources, was becoming a new force.

“In this situation it becomes vital that our own country orient its policies in consonance with this basic evolutionary condition rather than pursue a course blind to the reality that the colonial era is now past, and the Asian people covet the right to shape their own free destiny. What they seek now is friendly guidance, understanding, and support, not imperious direction; the dignity of equality, not the shame of subjugation.” He went on to say that U.S. policy must be based on this, and respect for the Asians’ striving for better living standards.

MacArthur’s policy, especially toward Japan, could be seen as the epitome of the Treaty of Westphalia’s commitment to the interest of the other.

This is precisely what Truman’s action, and the subsequent British colonial-style wars of the United States, have done their best to destroy. On this disgraceful anniversary, we could do no better than to honor MacArthur by bringing back his patriotic tradition into our military, and our nation as a whole—and defeating the British Empire politically, once and for all.