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JAY FRANKLIN SAYS:

White House's Foot-in-Mouth Disease Shown Again by Truman

President Truman's press-conference confession that he had been trying to get rid of MacArthur for a year before the supreme commander at Tokyo was given the yo-heave-ho is a striking symptom of the old White House foot-in-mouth disease.

The president's purpose was, no doubt, to come to the rescue of Omar Bradley, whose refusal to testify about the confidential White House confabs that preceded the MacArthur ouster had caused minor brain storms on Capitol Hill. Whatever Mr. Truman's purpose, his remarks add to the amazing confusion created by the whole episode.

WHAT HE SAID was to the effect that, even before the North Korean attack on June 25, 1950, he had been looking around for ways and means to depose the man who had done such a remarkable job of reconciliation in Japan. He hadn't liked MacArthur's message about Formosa to the Veterans of Foreign Wars last summer but the thing that really burned him up was MacArthur's proposal of a military truce in Korea early this year. This annoyed our UN associates no end. The president called it an ultimatum, but that is merely a slip of the tongue. The general says it was the third time he had made truce proposals to the Communist generals and that nobody complained about the other two times.

Mr. Truman did not exactly help Secretary of State Acheson by revealing that our ersatz Anthony Eden had opposed the dismissal on the ground that it would create a fuss. The fuss was obvious but the real reason for going slow in this matter was the political effect in Asia of the peremptory removal of MacArthur from Japan.

The dismissal delighted the Communists. It encouraged the Red Chinese to keep on fighting. It alarmed the South Koreans who, with us, are doing most of the fighting in Korea. And it dismayed the Japanese whom MacArthur had brought into a remarkable relationship of friendship and respect. The political debts involved were much more important than the political fuss here at home. The future political orientation of the billion human beings in Eastern Asia is not a negligible consideration and it is that which state department policy has placed in jeopardy.

ANOTHER ANGLE in Mr. Truman's confession is that announcement of MacArthur's dismissal was speeded up

because there were rumors of a leak. If White House, defense and state department security is so poor that the president cannot be sure of controlling his own administrative announcements, then why have we been spending millions of dollars on the Secret Service, Central Intelligence and on elaborate security and loyalty checks of government personnel? It is hard to imagine how greater political damage could have been caused by a leak than was actually caused by the hasty midnight removal of a general whose past services alone entitled him to courtesy and respect.

But the most damaging admission remains that Mr. Truman had been trying for nearly a year to get rid of MacArthur.

This suggests that he and his military advisers are not on the level in accusing MacArthur of having done the wrong thing in proposing a truce but that his truce proposals, like the Veterans of Foreign Wars message and the letter to Rep. Martin of Massachusetts, were seized on as the pretext to justify an action which had already been decided on by those who were admittedly following a course in Asia that ran counter to the experienced recommendations of men like General Wedemeyer and General MacArthur.