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Today And Tomorrow

By Walter Lippmann

Agreement And Disclosure

IF, AS the earlier reports indicate, the expected Communist offensive has now begun, it is reassuring to find that General



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MacArthur's view of the outcome is in agreement with that of the Pentagon. They are agreed in thinking that the offensive can be contained in the central region of Korea. "We could hold in Korea," said General MacArthur only last week in his address to Congress, "by constant maneuver and at an approximate area where our supply line advantages were in balance with the supply line disadvantages of the enemy . . ."

There is agreement also, we may be sure, with his view that though the offensive can be contained we can "hope at best for only an indecisive campaign with its horrible and constant attrition upon our forces if the enemy utilized his full military potential."

THE disagreement begins only after the general and the Pentagon have agreed that while we can defeat the offensive, we cannot by limited war obtain a military victory. The Pentagon, as General Bradley has made clear, prefers a military stalemate to the risks of seeking victory by removing the limitations on the war. General MacArthur prefers the risks of an unlimited war to an indecisive campaign of attrition.

The disagreement is not, therefore, about the battle which is now being fought. Assuming, of course, that the Soviet government does not intervene directly or indirectly in far greater force than it has thus far, all are agreed in believing that the present battle will be a defensive success but that it can be no more than that. The generals could all be mistaken but, if they are mistaken, all the generals will be mistaken together. There is no dispute among them about the present battle. All of them in a position of command, the Joint Chiefs, General MacArthur, General Ridgway and General Van Fleet, are publicly on record that our main position in central Korea can be held and the offensive stopped, and that this can be done—unless the enemy is heavily reinforced by the Soviets—without taking the controversial measures which would expand the war beyond Korea.

THE STORY by Mr. Anthony Leviero of the New York Times about what happened at the Wake Island conference on October 15 is an extraordinary disclosure—all the more extraordinary because of what it reveals about the attitude of the President, who must have approved giving Mr. Leviero access to the highly classified documents. Its extraor-

inary disclosure, I submit, is that the President thinks he can hold General MacArthur responsible for our being surprised by the Chinese intervention in Korea.

Mr. Leviero's story says "President Truman, as the 10-conferrees sat in the aviation hut, asked General MacArthur about the possibilities of Chinese or Russian intervention. General MacArthur said he saw little chance of this." The serious aspect of this is not that General MacArthur was mistaken in his judgment about the intentions of two foreign powers. The serious thing is that the President relied on the judgment of the general in a matter which belongs squarely within the responsibility of the Department of State.

It was Secretary Acheson who was responsible for advising the President as to the intentions of China. It was Secretary Acheson who had daily contact with all the diplomats and with all the information services of this and the other governments that had any access to Peiping and to Moscow. At Wake Island the President should not have been the one who asked General MacArthur to decide whether China would intervene. He should have been the one who told General MacArthur what his and his Secretary of State's judgment was on this critical point.

GENERAL MacArthur's comment on the matter is very interesting indeed. It was in the statement given out for him by his military secretary, General Whitney, on Saturday: "The question was basically a political one, involving decisions made in Peiping and quite beyond the reach of General MacArthur's field intelligence . . . as far as I know neither the State Department nor higher intelligence agencies of the Government had the slightest evidence to warn of such a decision. Certainly no such warnings were given to MacArthur. To the contrary, all appeared to discount the possibility of such intervention at that stage."

If this charge can be sustained in the coming investigation, it will throw much light on the crack-up. For it will show how the President and his Secretary of State encouraged, indeed invited, General MacArthur to assume responsibilities which, though not his responsibilities but their responsibilities, they were failing to meet.

THE investigation will also make clear that if at Wake Island in October the question of Chinese intervention was "basically a political one and quite beyond the reach of General MacArthur's field intelligence," then today the question of Soviet intervention and whether the general's recommendations to Congress would bring on World War III is also "basically a political one and quite beyond the reach of General MacArthur's field intelligence."