My dear Friend:

Thank you very much for your recent communication with regard to President Truman's dismissal of General MacArthur. I have received a great many communications on this question, both from those who agree with the President and from those who seriously disagree with him. I have read your views, as I have the views of all who have written me, and believe the best way for me to reply is to state my own position clearly and unequivocally. I do hope you will accept my apology for this form letter. However, the limited staff and facilities of my office make it impossible to reply personally to the many who have written me.

CIVILIAN VS MILITARY CONTROL

In my judgment, the basic issue involved in the controversy is one of civilian versus military control over our foreign policy. In a democracy, the elected representatives of the people are responsible for determining foreign policy, and this responsibility is not vested in the military leaders. This is one of the essential elements of our historical tradition. It is part of our Constitution. Once we lose civilian control over our foreign policy then we lose the fabric of democracy. In dismissing General MacArthur, President Truman had no choice. The General -- a brilliant and able military leader -- disagreed with our government's foreign policy and with the recommendations of General Marshall and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. No government can exist as divided in policy since no government can be guided by two inconsistent foreign programs. General MacArthur, as an individual, has a perfect right to disagree with our government's foreign policy, but he has no right and no prerogative as a military commander to formulate his own policy in opposition to policy established by our government.

In view of my deep feeling about civilian supremacy, I believe the course which the President chose is the one which is unmistakably in the best interests of the United States. Furthermore, the President had no other choice under the Constitution, since under our Constitution he is designated as the Commander in Chief. I have a high regard for General MacArthur and his abilities, but I am not prepared to accept his judgment over that of the President, the Secretary of State, the majority in the Congress, the majority of the United Nations, the equally brilliant General Marshall and the combined Chiefs of Staff.

President and the Constitution

A number of the letters coming to me have asked that the President be im-
peached for his action. I well appreciate the intensity of feeling on the part of a great many Americans, but I regret this extremism. I was impressed when Senator Wayne Morse, a brilliant constitutional lawyer, and a Republican, severely chastised those few in the Senate who asked for impeachment by pointing to the Constitution and clearly demonstrating that the President was within his constitutional rights, and in fact required to act as he did. I was likewise warned by the remarks of other Republican Senators, such as Lodge and Saltonstall of Massachusetts, who came to the defense of the President and defended his powers to do as he did. My hope is that the American people can be free of partisanship as they evaluate the current crisis.

American and United Nations Policy in Korea and China

The issue of foreign policy which divides us today is primarily related to our country's relations with Red China. The issue, simply put, is whether or not, first, our Armed Forces should attack military bases on the China mainland, and, second, whether or not we should use and assist Chinese Nationalist troops in an attack on the China mainland. It is the policy of our government to do everything possible to limit the present Korean war to the Korean battlefield. It is the firm determination of our government and our allies not to extend or expand the conflict to the mainland of Asia by any action of ours. The risk involved in a further expansion of the conflict is the possibility of World War III -- the full scale intervention of the Soviet Union. The political policy of the United States and its allies is to bring the Korean war to a conclusion and to negotiate an honorable peace.

China Question and Risks Involved

The position of General MacArthur was clearly stated in his address to the Joint Session of the Congress. Not only did he recommend economic sanctions against China and a blockade of the China coast by our Navy, but also the use of the Chinese Nationalist troops from the island of Formosa and the strategic bombing of Manchurian bases by our Airforce. This program is considered by General MacArthur to be militarily sound. We must take into consideration, however, the possibility of open Russian intervention and its consequent effect upon our military position both in the Far East and in Western Europe. We must take into consideration the present military strength of the United States and its allies as compared with the Soviet Union and its satellites. One should not forget that General MacArthur clearly stated to the President, on the occasion of the President's conference with the General at Wake Island, that the Red China armies would not intervene in Korea. I call this to your attention because here was a military decision made by General MacArthur concerning the Chinese armies in the Korean war. We now know that the movement of United Nations forces to the Yalu River did precipitate the attack by the Chinese Red Army. It is reasonable to expect that an all-out attack upon the Chinese mainland could and would provoke open Soviet intervention. The questions that we must ask ourselves are simply these: Do we wish to take that risk? Are we
prepared at this time by military strength and mobilization to meet an all-out attack by the Soviet? What would be the effect upon our Armed Forces in the Asiatic area of such a Soviet attack? What would be the effect of a Soviet attack in Western Europe at this time?

It is not divulging any secret when we openly recognize that we are momentarily weaker in terms of military strength than our adversary. This position will change within a year but today the Soviet Union and its satellites have a much larger army and air force than the United States and its allies. It appears to me that Soviet strategy is based on sucking us into a war on the Asiatic mainland only to strike in Western Europe, destroy our allies and over-run the western European countries. If this should happen we would lose the only allies we have. We would lose the productive power of European industry. We would lose the critical raw materials that are now under the control and in the possession of our allies. In other words, we would find ourselves without friends or allies and without vital needed raw materials.

Inconsistencies in Congress

We must seriously consider the consequences involved in extending and expanding the present conflict when we know what a difficult assignment we now have in Korea alone. It seems contradictory and confusing that the very same members of the Congress who did everything in their power to defeat the North Atlantic Pact and the Marshall Plan, to prevent shipment of arms to our allies in Western Europe and in Asia, and, finally, to prevent sending American troops for the common defense of Western Europe, are now advocating the extension and expansion of hostilities in the Asiatic area. I repeat -- the very same group in the Congress that has done everything in its power to prevent American help to Western Europe and American participation in a Western Europe army, are now the leading advocates of wholesale intervention and military action in Asia. Only a few months ago this same group in Congress was advocating that we get out of Korea; now they are advocating that we go into China.

I point out these inconsistencies because they need to be understood. It is clear to the fair-minded that you cannot expand a war from Korea to China without taking the risk of World War III. You cannot expand hostilities from Korea to China without having more manpower and a great military force. You cannot expand hostilities from Korea to China without risking the loss of Western Europe by a Soviet attack. We must face up to the facts of our present military strength. We must clearly understand that the Soviet threat is world-wide and not localized.

The logical and consistent outcome of the policy of extending military action to the China mainland was pointedly brought to light by a recent resolution in the Congress when Senator Cohn of the State of Washington proposed that the Government of the United States declare war on Red China. If this conflict is to grow, if it is to be extended, let it come only by the aggressive designs and tactics of the Soviet Union.
Soviet Intervention

If the Chinese Communist forces are assisted by Soviet air power, if our troops in Korea are attacked by concentrated air power -- then we have but one choice and that is to retaliate. This means that our efforts to limit this war in Korea have been checkmated by Soviet interference. The very survival and safety of our troops will demand that we attack the air bases and destroy this air power lest it destroy us. Let it be clear, however, that we would do this in defense. Up to now the Communists and North Korean forces have not had any major airpower. Therefore, it has not been militarily necessary to attack the Manchurian air bases. If this new Communist offensive in Korea brings with it waves of airplanes, then we must attack the nests and the bases from whence these planes take off. If in order to defend United Nations forces in Korea we are compelled to retaliate against Chinese Communist air attacks, the world will know that this was a decision forced upon us. Our allies, who are fearful that the war may spread in Asia, will know clearly that our retaliation was a defensive measure. It is important that we take into consideration the attitude of our allies. Let us hope and pray that we do not have to make this choice. Let us hope and pray that we can limit the conflict and bring this tragic Korean action to a speedy conclusion on the terms of a just and honorable peace.

International Communism now fully understands that we will resist aggression. There can be no appeasement, no retreat. My record in public life is one of firm and resolute opposition to Communism at home and abroad. This Administration has taken the most dramatic and powerful measures against Communism in the history of the world. The Greek-Turkish aid program, the Marshall Plan, Military Assistance to Western Europe and Nationalist China, aid to Korea, troops for Western Europe, and, finally, resistance of aggression in Korea -- all are positive evidence of a consistent and militant anti-Communist policy on the part of our government.

I welcomed General MacArthur's arrival in the United States and his address to the Congress. The Congress will completely re-examine our Far Eastern policy. General MacArthur, and those associated with him, will be given full opportunity to state their case. Likewise, the position of President Truman, the State Department, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, will be completely and fully presented. I would suggest that we withhold final judgment on these matters until all of the evidence is in. The important issue is not who is right, but of what policy is right. Above all, we must be united as a Nation, for the dangers we face are great.

Sincerely yours,

Hubert H. Humphrey