



The Truman- MacArthur Controversy and the Korean War

John W. Spanier

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"The order not to bomb the Yalu bridges was the most indefensible and ill-conceived decision ever forced on a field commander in our nation's history....I will always believe that if the United States had issued a warning to the effect that any entry of the Chinese Communists in force into Korea would be considered an act of international war against the United States, that the Korean War would have been terminated with our advance north." General Douglas MacArthur in *Reminiscences* (1964) thus recalled the unyielding position he took in April, 1951, when President Truman relieved him of all his commands in the Far East for publicly opposing the policies of the United States government.

Professor John W. Spanier examines the central issue of this crisis--the grave challenge to the traditional concept of civilian supremacy, resting in the President of the United States, over the military, that was posed by MacArthur's stand. He makes it clear that this controversy was not unique, that it stemmed not only from MacArthur's personality but also from tremendous pressures to change a "limited war" into a total effort for complete victory.

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