

What Truman Said Then—and Says Now

President Truman's charge that General Eisenhower was guilty of serious "blunders" about the Russians was made of pretty thin stuff—so thin, in fact, that the President felt impelled to back partly away from the accusation even while he was making it. And his assertion that the general is unfitted for the presidency can be squared with his previous expressions of admiration for the Eisenhower qualities only by saying it makes a whale of a difference which ticket a candidate is running on.

What the supposedly grievous blunder charged to the former supreme Allied commander in Europe boils down to is this: He was not able to see, in the first flush of victory after the German collapse in 1945, that Russia would change from wartime ally to a threat to world peace. If that was a blunder, it was a blunder committed by many—including Mr. Truman. Indeed there was hope among the occupation forces in Germany, as General Eisenhower reveals in his book, *Crusade in Europe*, that the United States and Russia could continue to deal with one another on the basis of friendship and co-operation. It was a hope which, as Mr. Truman concedes, was held by all of us.

Although it was intended as a condemnation, it was also a tribute to the immense confidence and trust reposed in General Eisenhower by the American people, and no less by the President himself, when Mr. Truman said the general's advice "carried great weight" and consequently "did a great deal of harm." This seems to imply great presidential reliance upon General Eisenhower's opinions and advice and brings up the question: What about Mr. Truman's other sources of information?

What, we might ask, were the President's diplomatic advisers, with all their avenues of information and experience at valuating it, saying about the Russian intentions at that time? What were the intelligence agencies of the government reporting? What were Mr. Truman's personal observations when he conferred with Stalin at Potsdam in July of 1945? What did he gather from the difficult attitude of the Russians at the foreign ministers' conference in London later in the same year?

No wonder Mr. Truman felt obliged in making the Eisenhower accusation to say that "I don't blame the Republican candidate for his part in that" and to retreat from his charge by saying that he only wanted General Eisenhower to admit that he erred in his judgment of the Russians.

The worst face that Mr. Truman was able to put upon his accusation was that the general's foresight was not as good

as his hindsight. That is an affliction common to us all, and for which, unfortunately, there is no cure. It is true even of Mr. Truman that his hindsight is better than his foresight, and also better than his memory.

For the President seems to have forgotten his praise of General Eisenhower as a great American and his privately and publicly made promise that there was no office in the land, even the presidency, he would not help the general get.

Mr. Truman, in condemning General Eisenhower's early misjudgment of the Reds, also evidently has forgotten that as late as March 25, 1948, he himself was defending the sale of U. S. war materiel to the Soviets by saying that Russia was a friendly country. At that time General Eisenhower was at work on the memoirs which show plainly that disillusion had replaced his first hopes of cordial relations with the Russians.

And does Mr. Truman remember the date of his now famous remark at Eugene, Ore., about Premier Joe Stalin. If not, we'll remind him. It was on June 11, 1948—more than three years after the end of the fighting in Europe—that he said: "I like Old Joe. He's a decent fellow."

The President says all he wants General Eisenhower to do is "to admit his blunders." We'd like to know when Mr. Truman has admitted any mistake, let alone a blunder. He denounced the charges of Communists in government as a "red herring," only to have the charges proven in many instances and Alger Hiss convicted of perjury. He denounced the charges against the RFC, only to have instances of fixes, 5 per centers and mink coats come to light and be forced to have Stuart Symington, his able troubleshooter at that time, clean it up for him. And how about the disclosures in the Internal Revenue Bureau and the Department of Justice? Will he admit that there has been anything wrong with his administration or that he himself has been wrong in any of his statements? No, he says there's no "mess" in Washington.

Mr. Truman's performance may not be as reckless as it appears. It may be, as one of the wire service reporters aboard the train described it, a coolly calculated attempt to destroy the prestige of General Eisenhower, a man for whom only a short time ago he had only lavish praise, a man he (the President) would back for anything—even the presidency.

We wonder what the President would be saying now had General Eisenhower been a Democrat running on the Democratic ticket.

Politics makes strange bedfellows. It also seems to cause a President to say things one wouldn't expect of a President—even in the heat of a campaign.