

# A PRESIDENT GROWS UP

Harry Truman insists he's the same man he's always been, but the public disagrees.

Since he cracked down on John L. Lewis and talked back to Joe Stalin, the people have looked more fondly on his chances for 1948

**BY FRANK GERVASI**



**T**HERE is perceptibly more frost in Harry Truman's hair and the crinkles about his hazel eyes have deepened. He is leaner by five or six pounds—he weighs 173—and proportionately tougher. Otherwise two years haven't altered him substantially, physically speaking. He appears to wear well in the Presidency, an office that has cost most of its tenants five years of life for every one of occupancy.

If anything, thanks as much to his Missouri landsman's breeding as to the meticulous attention of his White House doctor, Harry Truman appears younger than he did on the April evening in 1945 when he laid a moist palm on a Bible and became the thirty-second President of the United States.

He was a harassed and sorrowful man as he walked on stage from the wings of Vice-Presidential obscurity to assume the role of star in one of the greatest political dramas in history, the emergence of the United States as a giant among nations. Today he is sure-handed and happy, although he still regards anyone who covets the Presidency simply for the power and glory as a psychiatric case.

A year ago the President was a mass of frustrations, induced largely by a cantankerous Congress whose Democratic majority was as determined as its Republican minority to kill the New Deal. Today, although obliged to work with a Republican Congress and confronted by partisan opposition on most issues, he is as serene as silk.



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I am, he says, the same person I always was. But in the eyes of ordinary people whose mental image of the President is assembled from news stories, editorials and cartoons, he isn't. He has changed.

The headlines and editorials of the past few months have praised a Truman who had the political courage to lambaste John L. Lewis, the sagacity to pick men like George Marshall for top government jobs and the farsightedness to advocate American political and economic intervention wherever dollars and diplomacy can prevent the birth abroad of what the President calls totalitarian "police states."

The man who talked back to Joseph Stalin, plain people reason, isn't the same man who wavered and fumbled before firing Henry Wallace. A year ago cartoonists characterized Truman as a pygmy sitting in a giant's chair. They draw him now as a victorious prize fighter. And up on Capitol Hill those congressmen and senators, old pals or not, who until recently referred to him familiarly and almost impertinently as "Harry," speak of him now as "the President."

### **Gallup Poll Registers Approval**

This new and palpable respect and affection was recently reflected in George Gallup's March poll, which showed that out of every 100 citizens, 60 approved of the way the President has handled the nation's domestic and foreign affairs.

There are outward evidences of the change in the President. There is a new authority in his voice and manner. He smiles as much as ever but no longer grins. He dresses with customary attention to harmony between haberdashery and suitings but escapes being merely dapper. He is cordial, as always, but there is now a final reticence behind which Harry Truman remains, even to some of his most intimate friends, the President of the United States.

The politician has quite obviously given way to—although he has not been entirely replaced by—the statesman. Camaraderie has surrendered to dignity, awkwardness to something approaching urbanity.

"I wasn't briefed for this job," he says, "and I had to learn it from the ground up."

He was obliged to burrow through stacks of papers "that high," he tells you, which contained those secrets of the Presidency which are not confided to mere Vice-Presidents. As a result of much laborious homework, Truman has become what is probably our first two-desk President.

There is one uncluttered desk before him where he sits as the Chief Executive. There is another immediately behind him piled neatly with copies of the Congressional Record—never the favorite literature of Presidents—and with source material on whatever subject happens to be of moment. The man who swings his swivel chair to face the second desk is the former Missouri farmer, the ex-businessman who learned to his financial sorrow that not all haberdasheries can be made to pay, the former county judge, senator and Vice-President trying to learn how to be a better President.

He is no longer Roosevelt's stand-in reading from a New Deal script. He did try playing the part as the maestro might have wanted him to do for a while. But he lacked the maestro's peculiar talents and the act simply didn't come off.

As long as he had a Democratic Congress theoretically pledged to uphold the party's 1944 platform, Truman felt it his responsibility to cleave to the New Deal. He stuck to the script—pressing for price controls, for housing for veterans, for full employment, fair employment practices and seventeen other objectives considered by party leaders to be the minimum goals for staying in power.

The role Truman was called upon to



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play called for a crusader with considerable endowments of ham. Truman isn't a crusader. He has no noticeable histrionic talent. He sensed the people's boredom with the old Democratic act, but he was powerless to play any other role. He stood helpless while party strategists invoked the New Deal spirit by broadcasting recordings of F.D.R.'s familiar voice during the President's battle with Congress over price controls. The trick backfired.

And in November the voters proved they had "had enough." But while what happened (a sweeping Republican Congressional victory) was a Democratic party "disaster," it was, actually, the event that liberated Truman. He was free to be himself.

"I shall devote all my energy," Truman announced a few days after the November debacle, "to the discharge of my duty with a full realization of the responsibility which results from the present state of affairs."

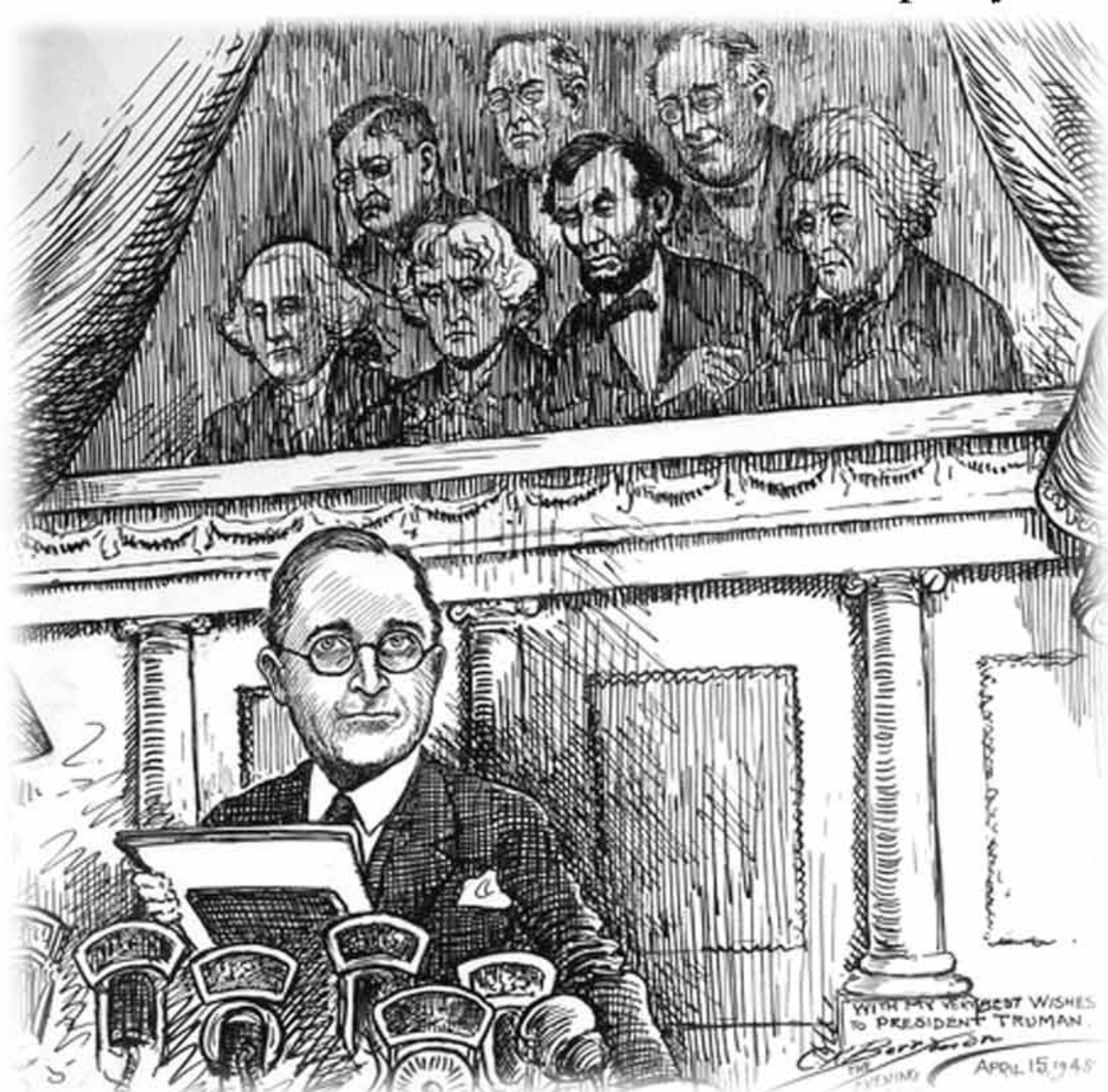
The stand-in almost immediately became the President. The stand-in was responsible to his party and to those within it who sympathized with labor to the extent of appeasing Lewis and with the Soviet Union to the point of appeasing Russian imperialism. But in his new freedom the President felt less responsible to his party and its left-wing strategists than to the people who were manifestly tired of being pushed around by Lewis or by Premier Stalin's idolaters.

Personally Truman is (or likes to believe that he is, like his predecessor) politically a "little left of center." But his concern for workingmen's welfare wouldn't permit him to countenance disruption of the nation's economy at a labor leader's whim any more than his expressed adherence to Jeffersonian democracy would allow him to yield Europe to totalitarian domination.

In both cases he took what he calls "calculated risks." He took them, according to those who work with him daily and should know what makes the President tick, largely on his own, after, of course, careful study of the facts involved. He substituted his own common sense for the hunches and crystal-ball gazing of others.

The President won over Lewis, although his contest of wills and policies with the UMW boss is not ended by any means. The labor front is far from quiet. Strikes threaten on every hand. These the President seeks to avoid by keeping prices and the cost of living down. In a free-enterprise system he can accomplish this only by calling upon industry to curb its appetite for profits, avoid monopolistic practices and voluntarily keep prices within the reach of consumers' wages. He appeals to industry to co-operate for its own good.

Whether the President will win his contest with Russian imperialism, however, only time will tell. He appeared to have calculated the risks of opposing Lewis with considerable care. In any case, the man who had seemed to many a weak and vacillating President took destiny by the horns in November when his party's





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prestige and his popularity were at their lowest.

He began by manhandling Lewis. Temporarily, at least, he took the bristle out of the labor boss' brows. On May 29, 1946, Lewis had signed a new coal contract at a White House ceremony. He largely got what he had wanted—a pay raise and the welfare fund. But late in October he abruptly announced that unless the government, which had not yet relinquished wartime control of the mines, reopened contract negotiations he would call a strike on November 1st.

The miners walked. The government obtained an order from the federal district court restraining Lewis and the UMW from violating the agreement signed with the government the previous spring. Lewis was required to withdraw the notice to the government that the agreement was ended and to live up to the contract.

### **A Victory Over John L. Lewis**

"No contract, no work," shouted Lewis, and the miners stayed away from the pits. Truman moved fast. The government cited Lewis for contempt of court in failing to fulfill the terms of the court order forbidding the strike. Lewis was found guilty and the UMW was slugged with a \$3,500,000 fine. Lewis himself was fined \$10,000.

From the moment of his victory over Lewis onward, there was little doubt in people's minds of Truman's mastery. He had been carrying the horse, now he rode it. His popularity rapidly climbed from the low of October, 1946, when according to Gallup only 32 per cent saw him in a favorable light.

Meanwhile, the presence on The Hill of almost as many Republicans as you'll find at a nominating convention caused Truman far less concern than it did his party's assorted strategists, tacticians and propagandists. "Don't worry, boys," Truman reassured them, "I'll just co-operate the living hell out of those gentlemen up there."

Then in his State of the Union message to Congress in January there was a significant omission. Lacking were any references to Roosevelt. It was Truman speaking, in simple sentences and in a plain manner—not F.D.R. He won't allow Clark Clifford, his chief counsel, or anyone else to put into his speeches any words that are even remotely out of character. He reads and corrects the final drafts of all speeches, and although Playwright Bob. Sherwood and another Roosevelt speech writer, Judge Sam Rosenman, are often consulted, Truman's speeches are as nearly his own as it is possible for him to make them.

The public-opinion thermometer registered a rising warmth while the President made a succession of appointments to public offices. Last year the people and the Senate quarreled with appointments like those of Ed Pauley to be Undersecretary of the Navy, and of George Allen as director of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation. None could quarrel with the elevation of John Peurifoy as an Assistant Secretary of State, Fred Vinson for Chief Justice and, ultimately, the appointment of George Marshall as Secretary of State. And for the first time in their colonial history the Virgin Islands had a Negro governor, William H. Hastie, former State Department official.

If editorials in virtually every newspaper in the land except the Daily Worker and thousands of laudatory letters and telegrams received at the White House meant anything, Truman hit the popularity jack pot with his March 12th assertion of what has come to be known as the Truman Doctrine. He proposed to give \$250,000,000 to Greece and \$150,000,000 to Turkey to prevent them from being drawn into the Communist sphere of influence.

Announcement of this doctrine brought storms of protest from the left—which found Greece's monarchist government a long way from democratic—



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and from the isolationists on the right—who opposed intervention anywhere. So undoubtedly the approbation came from the middle-of-the-roaders of both parties. Undoubtedly the country was in a conservative postwar mood. It liked the way Truman talked back to Uncle Joe.

Some feared war, but Truman did not. He knew that Russia is in no position to fight a war and won't be until it has satisfied the enormous demand within the country for consumers' goods, rebuilt its industrial plants and owns atomic weapons at least equal to ours. Long before that happens Truman hopes to accomplish internationalization of atomic energy on such a basis as to guarantee our security, and everyone else's, too, through the United Nations.

With Marshall in Moscow to continue negotiations for settlement of the future of Germany, Truman's move was considered by most critics a master stroke of timing. It put Marshall in a superb bargaining position. America, the Truman Doctrine clearly implied, was through with isolationism and did not intend any longer to appease the appetite of those imperialists surrounding Stalin who have been pushing Communism's frontiers farther westward in Europe and eastward in China under the guise of security for the Soviet Union's frontiers.

Personally the President is bitter about Russian disregard for the promises at Potsdam of genuine co-operation in the postwar settlement of Europe's political and economic problems. He went to Potsdam, by the way, under protest. He didn't want to go. He felt that whoever wanted to deal with the United States, principal source of political and economic power in the postwar world, should come here. He has no intention of going to Moscow to see Stalin or anywhere else to see anybody. They will have to come to him.

## **Political Stock Enhanced**

Whatever else the Truman Doctrine is or isn't, has done or may do to future relations with Russia and the rest of the world, it had the effect of boosting Truman's political stock at home. His foreign-policy statement and his almost simultaneous executive order calling for careful screening of all government employees to sift out "subversives, Communist or Fascist," took the wind out of the sails of those Republicans who had been attacking the Administration as a pink hang-over from a New Deal inclined to appease Russia.

Most observers agree that the G.O.P.'s political stock has cheapened considerably since the November elections. Victory for the Republicans in 1948 seemed certain then. Perhaps the odds still favor the Republicans. But they will need to operate more cohesively and more effectively in both the House and the Senate than they have been doing. They've been split wide open on every major issue, from cutting taxes to reducing the budget and providing free lunches for children.

The effect of Truman's behavior since he slapped Lewis around last winter has been to cause those Democrats who had written Harry off as a possible candidate in 1948 to change their minds. They believe now that Mr. Truman has a very good chance indeed of winning.

There have been other and even more reliable signs of the rise in Truman's political fortunes. When he visited Key West, Florida, last winter after settling accounts with Lewis, the town's good citizens stayed away from him in droves. But in March, on the day after he challenged Russian imperialism, when the President again flew down to the resort town for a brief rest, the townspeople lined the streets to see and cheer him.

Unless signs are completely misread, if there were an election tomorrow he could probably win comfortably. He might still, in 1948, like Calvin Coolidge, "not choose to run." But it is unlikely. He likes his job now, whereas a year ago he did not—and said so. He considered him-



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self, then, a "prisoner" in a White House "jail." He doesn't talk that way any more. He is still a "prisoner," but of his party.

The Democrats couldn't ditch Truman for another candidate even if they wanted to. By doing so, they would confess failure, disavow the whole Democratic Administration since 1944, admit that everything they've done was wrong. They must run Truman and doubtless will.

Gael Sullivan, new managing director of the Democratic National Committee, who has been running things during Postmaster General Robert Hannegan's long illness and may formally take over as committee chairman this summer, has been busy. His campaign plans center around Truman and no one else. Periodically he shows the President, with charts and boiled-down texts, just what must be done to mend those party fences damaged in the November Republican avalanche.

Behind the scenes, an innovation in Democratic party politics is being tried. Every few weeks the President holds what Gael calls a "Truman clinic." The President sits down with the party leaders of four or five states. Together they discuss the local situations, down to the district and ward level, to determine what can be done to swing doubtful districts into the Democratic column. In time, long before the convention is held, the President will have seen every representative, big and little, of every state in the Union.

### Who for Vice-President?

The problem which seems to confront the Democrats is not whom they will run for President, but who will be the Vice-Presidential candidate. Secretary of the Navy Forrestal, Senator Scott Lucas and one or two others seem to be in the running. The Republicans, on the other hand, are plagued by an overabundance of Presidential timber. The woods, to coin a phrase, is full of it. At least half a dozen senators, two governors and one former governor are openly or secretly aspirants for the job.

Truman's new proficiency is at least partly attributable to what he calls his new "team" in the White House. Here, too, changes are visible to the visitor. As in the President himself, there are changes in attitude rather than changes in substance. There are, however, some new faces. One of them is Clark Clifford, the President's new general counsel, a former St. Louis lawyer who has replaced the bubbly Allen.

Clifford, more than anyone else, is responsible for Truman's abandonment of the role of Roosevelt stand-in for his new one. He falls in perfectly with the President's notion of wanting to be himself. Even if the President wished to use Groton and Harvard periods in his speeches, Clifford wouldn't let him.

But closest to the President in the domestic and foreign fields respectively are Dr. John Steelman and Admiral William Leahy. Steelman, with markedly liberal leanings (he was personally opposed to the crack-down on Lewis), is the President's right bower, dealing with the 100 or more committees, subcommittees and agencies which should report directly to the President almost daily but physically cannot do so without causing the administrative machinery to clog up hopelessly.



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The President still makes the decisions, but he doesn't do all of the paper work and interviewing involved. Steelman does it.

Admiral Leahy is the President's confidant and adviser on all foreign policy matters which involve strategic considerations. Leahy largely fulfills the same functions he did under Roosevelt but is probably on more intimate terms and wields greater influence with Truman.

Administratively the White House has never functioned so well. Steelman calls Truman "the greatest administrator" he has ever known. Every morning at 9—by which time the President has had his 120-step-a-minute walk, his breakfast, has read his favorite newspapers and studied the contents of his leather-leafed folder containing papers to be dealt with that day—he receives Clifford, Steelman, Secretaries Bill Hassett and Matt Connelly, and others of his staff.

"You can set your watch," says Clifford, "by when he opens the door."

By 9:30, or at the latest 10 A.M., pending business has been disposed of and every man has his day's work assigned to him. At 10 the President begins receiving callers at 15-minute intervals. He's in bed and asleep, more often than not, by 9:30 or 10 P.M. To relax he reads mystery stories.

The President chooses policies rather than makes them. His technique is the old "fact-finding" one he sought to introduce in the settlement of labor-management difficulties. Every man on his staff has the job of digging up the facts pertinent to any problem and of presenting them, in concise, understandable form to the President. Then, when he has heard all the pros and cons, studied the briefs presented to him and done what outside reading might be necessary, he decides what must be done. On the Greek-Turkish policy he consulted for days with Marshall, Leahy, Senate and House leaders, Undersecretary of State Dean Acheson and a host of minor officials before choosing his course.

The policy was not, as appeared at first and as some critics insist on believing still, a hastily conceived leap into the dark. The State Department had worried over the Greek internal crisis ever since the first British efforts to unify the country with restoration of the monarchy had failed more than a year before. In the eight months preceding the President's action, the Department, aware of Britain's dwindling financial power, had begun studying possible alternatives to British withdrawal from Greece.

Russian influence in Greece, however small and indirect it might have been during Greece's occupation by the Germans and up to the time of the country's liberation, had, according to evidence reaching the Department from Ambassador Lincoln MacVeagh and other observers, increased dangerously. The Partisans fighting in the mountains were no longer patriots resisting their own Fascists as they had fought the Nazis during the war, according to this evidence, but had become the tools of Russian imperialism, receiving arms and instruction directly and indirectly from the Russians or their satellites, the Bulgars and the Yugoslavs.

The withdrawal of the British by March 31st, suddenly announced in a note in February, would leave a vacuum in Greece which, the Department reasoned, the Russians would fill. Turkey, with the Russians already on its long northern frontier and with the Russian-dominated Bulgars on the west, would be faced with another Soviet satellite on its flank. Turkey would be unable to resist Soviet pressure for bases in the Dardanelles, eastern gateway of the Mediterranean. It, too, might lose its independence.

### **Knowledge of History Is Asset**

The problem which confronted Truman and his military advisers was one in simple strategy. Truman had read deeply in history and particularly in military



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history. He was well acquainted with Russia's historic efforts to reach warm-water ports via the Dardanelles, as he was aware of the military problem which the presence of Russian bases in Greece and Turkey would present in the event of another war.

Because the problem was as much a military one as it was political it goes without saying that Truman was largely influenced by his military consultants, Admiral Leahy and General Marshall. But it was he, and he alone, who calculated the risks, and his, ultimately, will be the responsibility for the success or failure of the Truman Doctrine.

The line between diplomacy and strategy, politics and war, is always a thin one. Of this, Truman was keenly conscious when on March 12th, he decided that America's political destiny as the fountainhead of democracy demanded that the nation be willing to undertake whatever military risks might be involved.

"I don't care," President Truman has told friends on several occasions, "what kind of governments nations achieve. They can all go Communist, if they wish, provided that they do so with due respect to law and in free and unfettered elections. But we can't stand for police states imposed on people by armed minorities."

While the President makes—and assumes full responsibility for—his own decisions, he has abandoned personal government for what he calls "Cabinet government." His Cabinet members are drawn into every specific issue at hand. He lunches with them regularly and not only solicits their advice but very often takes it. On business matters, for instance, he wouldn't make a decision without consulting Averell Harriman, the conservative and successful businessman who replaced Henry Wallace as Secretary of Commerce.

Being a simple man himself, with a plain man's aversion to prima donnas, it was a forgone conclusion that individualists and headline makers like Wallace, Francis Biddle, Henry Morgenthau, Jr., and others in the Cabinet and the Administration would go. The surprising thing was that some, like James Francis Byrnes, lasted as long as they did. Controversialists and extroverts have either been fired, squeezed out or asked to resign. And where his predecessor often enjoyed a squabble between two or more of his minions, Truman prefers peace and teamwork.

"I've got a good team now," he boasts.

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