



Cold War Strategist: Stuart Symington and the Search for National Security

Linda McFarland

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This study of Cold War politics explores the attitudes of William Stuart Symington, a consummate Cold Warrior and Democratic senator from Missouri. The book focuses on his transition from being an avid supporter of the military and the CIA to his dovish position on the Vietnam War, as he questioned all foreign commitments, as well as military and CIA budgets. His ideas influenced presidential administrations ranging from Truman's to Nixon's. He exposed covert activity associated with the Vietnam War and worked to restore the constitutional balance between the executive and legislative branches of the government.

Symington held several appointive positions within the Truman administration where he was instrumental in the unification of the armed services: he served as the first Secretary of the Air Force, a post responsible for the conduct of the Berlin Blockade. As a senator, he was a strong voice for the military, and he openly criticized President Eisenhower for his defense policies and meager budgets. A vociferous advocate of the big bomber and ICBMs, he helped establish the missile gap myth, providing the Democratic Party with a key issue in the 1960 presidential race. This well-documented study highlights the importance of and the interplay among significant personalities, circumstances, and public policy at a key point in our nation's history.

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