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Interview With Senator Stuart Symington
27 May 1981

Goldberg: This is a continuation of an interview with Senator Stuart Symington at 1700 K Street, Washington, D.C., May 27, 1981, at 2:30 p.m. We have a number of previously submitted questions for Senator Symington. Can we start with Question 4, and talk specifically about UMT, selective service, and the budget supplement? Do you remember President Truman's support of UMT along with General Marshall during this period?

Symington: Yes, very well; a committee chaired by a General named McLain, a highly decorated Reserve Officer.

Goldberg: He was a National Guard Officer.

Symington: That's right. My father-in-law, Senator Wadsworth, was on that committee. He had always been interested in UMT. Today in the United States it would be difficult to get draft legislation passed. The other day I noticed Schmidt, Chancellor of Germany, when comparing his situation to ours, pointed out we have no draft or military requirement for our citizens.

After the war, when President Truman proposed UMT, people advised he couldn't get it through Congress. Truman was wise enough in politics to know that when you lose one it chips a little off your prestige. I'm confident he would have taken a beating on UMT. I believe Universal Military Training is ideal, and believe Mr. Truman thought it

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ideal. Even so, it probably would have been easier to pass the draft.

Goldberg: Why do you think Truman reversed himself on military spending after supporting a supplemental appropriation by putting the tight ceiling on? To what do you attribute this apparent change?

Symington: As you know, Mr. Truman was close to Speaker Rayburn. My guess would be that Rayburn advised him Congress would not approve that large a military appropriation. Perhaps his best friend was John Snyder, Secretary of the Treasury. John was relatively conservative. The Treasury is a good place to have a conservative. My guess would be that Snyder too advised in this case.

Goldberg: Do you look on Truman as having been an economic conservative and having been influenced by his views on inflation?

Symington: To some extent. Some years ago I was talking with the wife of a prominent conservative Republican. She asked, "What are you, a liberal or a conservative?" I answered, "I'd rather be classified as a moderate, but perhaps a liberal about people and a conservative about money." The lady observed, "That won't work." So there you are. The greatest danger to this country today could well be inflation. Truman was a liberal, but a practical liberal, not somebody who went off in the economic clouds like our Democratic candidate in 1972. He had worked and failed in business, at times had been really poor. He was liberal about people, but concerned about maintaining the value of the dollar. Under the urging of Louis Johnson he probably cut the military budget too far. That became all too clear at the start of the Korean War.

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Goldberg: Could we go to question number 7? I think we discussed 5 and 6 pretty much the last time. This has to do with roles and missions and strategic bombing, with which you had some concern during these years. Do you think Johnson was really pro-Air Force or was he just trying to cut the budget?

Symington: Johnson was pro cutting the budget, period; but basically pro-Army. As far as the Air Force was concerned, I believe he was more sympathetic to it than with the Navy. Air had been part of the Army. Some felt Johnson was cutting so heavily because he had political aspirations. His Assistant Secretaries were Lou Renfrow, a dentist and professional Legion man, and Paul Griffith, another professional Legionnaire. Johnson's inner group were political as well as military people. I believe he wanted to show he could handle our security for a lot less money. He was especially tough on the Navy--remember the carrier battles--but also rough on the Air Force.

Goldberg: But in the contest between carriers and strategic bombers, he was going to pick strategic bombers regardless of economy.

Symington: Yes. Also those supercarriers cost a tremendous amount; and in this missile age, picture how they look on a radar screen. A lot of people were and are suspicious about the cost effectiveness of the big carriers, while seeing clearly the reason for small carriers, performing such missions as hunting submarines in the oceans. Our whole carrier setup cost about \$30 billion a year some 10 years ago. Forty percent of that amount went for carriers in the Mediterranean. The Mediterranean, at its narrowest point, is some 500 miles wide. You could hit such a target from the air, from the sea, from under

the sea, and from the land.

Goldberg: Did you change your views on the Navy as time went by?

Symington: Well, although my team was the Air Force, and I worked hard for the team, later one could only become increasingly impressed with the new submarines.

Goldberg: I mean during the Truman period.

Symington: I was always relatively closer to the Navy, came from Baltimore originally, close to Annapolis; was in school in Switzerland when World War I started. My uncle Pete was Naval attaché in London and got me home through Gibraltar, 17 days. Then I went into the Army. After World War II, however, my job was working for the Air Force, trying to help build up that service; but I was never anti-Navy.

Goldberg: Were you in agreement with the Air Force generals who wanted to see a single air service?

Symington: Yes; but I also wanted to see a Secretary of Defense who had the authority to be a real Secretary of Defense; an administrator rather than a coordinator. Any objective person with any business experience knows that one should never take responsibility without the authority. Forrestal did not have adequate authority after he accepted the responsibility. In my opinion, that had much to do with his breakdown. The National Security Act has been changed since the beginning. The Secretary of Defense today is ^{far} more powerful, the Secretaries of the Services less powerful; and that's how it should be.

Goldberg: But back in those days Air Force leaders talked about a single air service. That meant taking away from the Navy most of its air power, not all of it.

about the Army? Some 15 to 20 years ago, General Ira Eaker
Symington: There would always be carrier aircraft to search the seas; and how/
had a dinner. Bob Peary, attractive air admiral with a white
beard, was there, plus some Army generals. It came out that the
Army had more pilots than either the Navy or the Air Force. Not
one person in a hundred knew this to be true at the time. Certainly I didn't,
as a former Secretary. Helicopters had a lot to do with this
development. Spaatz always had the concept of unified air. I
heard him emphasize the importance of that unity many times; and I
bought it because to me it made sense. His position, based on battle
experience, was that air power was indivisible. One of the best
illustrations, previously mentioned, was O.P. Weyland rescuing Patton.

That concept proved out also many years later in Viet Nam. In
1965, with Ed Peter, a young Lieutenant Colonel, now a major general,
we went to / ^{several} of the outposts on the Cambodian border. The enemy
knew they could overrun these outposts if they wanted to make the
sacrifice, by North Vietnamese and Viet Cong attacking from Cambodia.
In such outposts there would be a captain, a couple of lieutenants, and
a number of sergeants who were specialists; medicine, communications,
explosives; also quantities of hidden Claymore mines. As soon as an
outpost was hit, regardless of where any air mission had been
scheduled, all planes would be rerouted to the spot attacked, drop
flares, and in turn strafe the attacking enemy, hopefully before that
enemy could get into the inner defenses of said outpost. Not only
fighters switched their mission, but also bombers. If it had been my
choice, after looking at it all, and based on my business experience,

I would have agreed to throw the numbers in a hat and pick one service to be the dominant service. The duplication--triplication-- was beyond belief.

Goldberg: Do you mean for a single air service?

Symington: Not just a single air service, a single everything, three branches duplication, as mentioned, the worst duplication ever to that service--land, sea, and air cost effectiveness. Elimination of/ could have been the "intelligence" set-up in the Mediterranean; and with the new National Security Act you had the regular Air Force, Army Air Force, Marine Air Force, and Navy Air Force. Why do we have to have so many air forces? Not only did and does it result in expensive duplication but it also reduces combat efficiency. Remember Pearl Harbor, where Admiral Kimmel and General Short were hardly on speaking terms, and Army Air Corps General Martin learned first of the Japanese attack from his breakfast room window.

Goldberg: Let's get back to your period as Secretary of the Air Force. You did have a Secretary of Defense and three separate services. The Air Force, before unification and after, had been pushing for a single air service.

Symington: Many far more experienced than I were also pushing for it.

Goldberg: All right, but at that point, you were supporting the Air Force position on it.

Symington: 100%. So was President Truman and so was General Eisenhower.

Goldberg: Forrestal wasn't.

Symington: That's right.

Goldberg: How would Johnson have rated on that?

Symington: I don't know for sure. Louis Johnson was a unique person, bitter about having been cashiered in 1940, along with Secretary of War Woodring at the time FDR brought in Stimson and Knox, two able Republicans.

Goldberg: How would you compare Johnson with Forrestal in his performance as Secretary?

Symington: Johnson was hardly in Forrestal's league. The latter was brilliant, attractive, a tremendous Undersecretary and Secretary of the Navy. He brought to the Navy all his experience; in every way a fine public servant. Naturally I had to fight for my team, the Air Force, so as the amount of money allowed continued to be reduced we had our differences. But Forrestal aroused affection, from me, also from Ken Royall, who nevertheless disagreed with him completely when he also heavily cut the Army. I remember a day when Royall took off against McNeil and further cuts. I didn't say much, had our own problems. Going back to our offices, Royall said, "Why didn't you back me?" I replied, "You didn't need any back up. You were doing all right." The Navy was against the world at that point, because they also thought they were being unfairly reduced and were completely sincere about it. In any case, the people around Jim Forrestal were devoted to him. People around Louis Johnson, except for a few cronies, were not, and even some of the latter at times privately questioned his judgment. At meetings of the Armed Forces Policy Council, we would be briefed by General Lemnitzer. Johnson presided. One day he announced plans for a further reduction in the Army. Suddenly General (Lightning Joe) Collins announced, "Mr. Secretary, I want you to know this is the last time I'll ever approve

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a reduction in the U.S. Army while I am Chief of Staff." Johnson looked at him, said "Will you repeat that?" Joe said, "I'll be glad to," and did. Collins observed in his later book that he didn't know whether or not he would be fired. In a few weeks, however, we were in the Korean war and Collins was completely vindicated. Forrestal and Johnson were totally different people. In this new biography of General Grant, one reads that Grant trapped himself a couple of times, but luckily got out of the traps. Forrestal trapped himself in the unification fight, later found he couldn't get out of the trap he himself had had much to do with setting.

Goldberg: Now how about Johnson? He must have trapped himself. Do you have any particular knowledge of the circumstances of his firing? What was the story or explanation at the time?

Symington: Louis Johnson always had ^a chip on his shoulder, always was sure he was right, invariably gave the impression he had already made up his mind. He was pretty arrogant with everybody except the President.

Rearden: Do you think that Johnson's quarreling with Acheson was a factor?

Symington: No question. Louis wanted to be involved in diplomacy as well as in the military. But Acheson was close to President Truman, who thought the world of him. Johnson dug his own grave when he started after State Department policies.

Rearden: You say Johnson was interested in diplomacy. I get the impression that he was interested in selective aspects of diplomacy, mainly the Far East.

Symington: I don't remember too much about that, but do remember people felt he was consistently getting into Acheson's bailiwick when it came to diplomatic decisions.

Trask: Do you think that Johnson would have been dismissed when he was if it had not been for the Korean War? Would he have lasted longer?

Symington: With Acheson, Marshall, and Harriman all against many of his statements and actions, I don't think he would have lasted long, Korea or no Korea.

Goldberg: Senator, now that we've mentioned a number of people we'd like to get your ideas and reactions to them in terms of working relationships, people like Steve Early, Pace, Royall, Sullivan, and the military.

Symington: All fine people. We heard Harriman came into the White House to see if Johnson-Acheson differences could be worked out. You might talk to Harriman about that.

Goldberg: We spoke with Harriman, and Lemnitzer has given us some interesting information about Harriman's role with Truman in getting Johnson out.

Symington: Forrestal, Johnson, we've talked about. Steve Early, to him I was devoted. Frank Pace was and is my friend, as is Gordon Gray. Both good public servants. Royall was all right, able, the Under Secretary of War. We had no real problems. John Sullivan was naturally pro-Navy, also able and a friend. Bradley, Collins, mighty fine people. Eisenhower was far more able than some thought. We had some differences after I went to the Senate, but I guess that was inevitable. He had far more ability than some of his detractors, such as/
General
MacArthur, implied.

Goldberg: Do you remember when Forrestal brought him in to work on the budget, when he was at Columbia?

Symington: Perhaps I also had something to do with that.

Goldberg: Would you tell us about that?

Symington: We knew Eisenhower was pro-Air. I have already told about my urging him to ask for more money when he came down from Columbia to testify before the Senate Appropriations Committee; and had spoken to him before about it when visiting at Morningside Heights.

Goldberg: So whose idea was it to bring him down to work on the budget?

Symington: I don't know for sure. I had talked to him about it. No doubt Forrestal did also. We both knew his prestige would make him a valuable advocate.

Goldberg: Did you have any dealings with Forrest Sherman?

Symington: Sure. Superb man. He and Spaatz were close. Sherman got in bad with some of the Navy brass because he was too broad in outlook. I guess it's fair to say he and Radford were in real disagreement.

Goldberg: How about Gruenther?

Symington: Very fine, smart, able, a favorite of Eisenhower.

Goldberg: He played a key role during these years, didn't he?

Symington: I don't exactly know because what he really did was express the thoughts of Eisenhower. But he was a thoughtful and able advocate; and to the best of my memory had the complete respect of Forrestal.

Goldberg: But he spent a lot of time up in OSD, didn't he, dealing with Forrestal and Johnson as Director of the Joint Staff?

Symington: Probably so. Quite a man. Ike thought the world and all of him. Forrestal knew that.

Goldberg: How do you feel about Vandenberg?

Symington: Great; had a well deserved reputation as a combat leader, fearless. Van had been head of tactical air in Europe; he chose good men for the Air Staff. He was popular in Washington; as you will remember was Director of the CIA just before he came back to the Air Force as Chief.

Goldberg: How do you rate Vandenberg as a Chief of Staff?

Symington: When General Spaatz said he wanted to retire (worn out, had lost so many friends, etc.), I asked, "Who will take your place?" He said, "I recommend one of two men, Joe McNarney or Hoyt Vandenberg; one a superb administrator, the other a combat man with a tremendous battle record. What do you think?" I said, "I don't know. Let's go talk to Eisenhower." Ike said, "Take the combat man." That's the way it happened. McNarney later did very well in industry.

Goldberg: Consolidated?

Symington: Yes. Later General Dynamics. I was talking with Floyd Odlum, who controlled Convair at the time. He asked, "Do you know anybody who can run this company? We are in trouble." "I know someone who can run anything. Would you pay him what he wants?" "Whatever is necessary for the right man." So I called McNarney up. "Joe, I think I have something you'd be interested in." He replied, "I'm already signed up." "Well, you'd better look at this opportunity." "I don't think so; I want to live in Southern California." "This is in Southern California." He then agreed to talk to Odlum and eventually he took the job; and pretty well pulled them out of some trouble by the time he left; this as I remember it.

Goldberg: He lasted a long time. Then I think he retired and Pace replaced him, didn't he? Pace took over General Dynamics.

Symington: Convair became General Dynamics. A man named Hopkins made it a military conglomerate. Pace was number two. Hopkins died, and Pace took over. But when McNarney went out to San Diego, as I remember, it was Convair. When Pace decided to run General Dynamics from New York, I heard from several people, without knowing any details, that was a mistake. McNarney stayed right out in California all the time.

Goldberg: I think we mentioned Leva, McNeil and Ohly the last time.

Symington: I didn't know Jack Ohly well but liked and respected him. I had some arguments with McNeil, Forrestal's money man. He was able and thorough, out of the Navy and close to Forrestal. Marx Leva was and is a good man, able lawyer.

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Goldberg: Are there any other people you would like to mention who were important in the national security picture during this period? There were other people who did play important roles?

Symington: Offhand I can't think of anyone. Now here is an angle of the overall problem as it developed later which might be of interest. For years in the Senate we noticed that the Army estimate of Soviet ground forces was always considerably larger than that of the CIA. The same was true as regards our Navy's estimate of Soviet naval strength, also true of Air Force estimates. That was what led us into the phony "bomber gap" of the early fifties. The reverse was true, however, when later on we were told of the "missile gap." That gap was created by the CIA. The record will show that in one 17-month period the CIA, under Allen Dulles, reduced its estimate of Soviet long-range missiles on launching pads by 96%. People others, including blamed Jack Kennedy and me, but the CIA was responsible. Finally I talked to Meg Greenfield of the Washington Post, very intelligent. At that time she was working for the Reporter magazine, published by Max Ascoli. She was given the story and published it in percentages, giving the truth about the missile gap. That ended most if not all of the criticism.

Goldberg: From where was Joe Alsop receiving his information?

Symington: I do not know. Upon first coming into government, a wise man advised me, "Never leak classified information to anybody because, once you do, the recipient, in effect, will own you." It was basic with me never ^{to} leak any information to anybody. The Alsop

brothers, Stewart as well as Joe, went after Louis Johnson because they became convinced he was jeopardizing our national security with his heavy reductions in military strength. They were both all out for a strong military setup. Joe had been a prisoner of the Japanese, later an adherent of Chennault in China, and Stewart a British commando. One day Stewart came to see me in the Pentagon. My office was directly above that of Secretary Johnson. Both of us used the private elevator coming up from the garage. Alsop had hardly been in the room more than three minutes when, for the first and only time, Louis Johnson appeared in my office, coming from the private elevator. Apparently he had given instructions at the reception desk to let him know if either Alsop visited the Pentagon. I introduced him to the Secretary. The latter expressed his resentment at some of the things said in the column the Alsops wrote jointly, and left. Johnson never brought it up again with me. I think he decided I was not the source of various leaks in the Alsop column, which most certainly I was not. The Alsops were hawkish, almost everybody in that vast building resented the way the Services had been reduced--shortly before Korea--and I am sure some newspapermen had many quiet sources, also very possibly received information from people on the Hill.

Rearden: Well, the Alsops and Acheson were pretty close, weren't they?

Symington: I honestly do not know, very possibly. But this I do know.

People under Acheson in State were close to both of the brothers.

Rearden: It had to be somebody, probably in State, because of that series of columns in early 1950.

Symington: I would not know. But I do know that Leo and I did our best to find out if any Air Force people were contributing to the attacks. We found no grounds for believing so.

As you well know, the Pentagon is one of the largest of all buildings; all those rooms, all those people in on various information. The Alsops were close to Forrestal, but I'm sure Jim gave them no classified information. He was a man of total honor.

Rearden: Forrestal had his critics, namely Drew Pearson and Walter Winchell. They printed anything they could dig up. Do you remember the speech you gave in Los Angeles in July, 1948? There is something in the Forrestal diaries about this, about the press coverage of it. Forrestal got angry about it and the story got in the news.

Symington: I remember that speech episode only too well. Feeling among the services had become pretty bitter, especially about who would have the missions that involved air, in effect, culminating in the "Revolt of the Admirals" in 1949. As an example, in the late forties we were having much trouble with B36 engines. The Navy always opposed that plane because it had that great range. As a matter of routine, we would send reports on the problem to the Office of the Secretary of Defense. Within 48 hours those problems invariably would be reported in a broadcast sponsored by Sun Oil, a broadcaster named Ray Henle; to the point where I would only report the problems--all of which were licked later on--verbally, and only to Forrestal personally.

John McCone, whom I had first met in 1946, came into Washington as a civilian adviser to Forrestal. (In 1950 he became Under Secretary of the Air Force under Tom Finletter.) I saw him fairly often then.

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Los Angeles and California were centers of aviation production. In 1948 I agreed to go out there and make a talk to the aviation people. McCone was going to that meeting, asked me to stay with him in Pasadena, which I did. I had stayed at an Air Force base in Tucson the previous evening. My talk was teletyped out and brought to me at McCone's house.

Rearden: He worked on the Finletter Commission.

Symington: That's right; later Under Secretary of Air under Finletter, then Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission under Eisenhower, then head of the CIA under Kennedy. I read the teletyped talk, which was somewhat garbled, showed it to McCone, and we both agreed the speech should not be given as written because it at least implied criticism of Forrestal's policies. So going to the dinner, about an hour away, I sat on the jump seat, with Mr. and Mrs. McCone in the back, rewrote much of it, page by page, passed the changed pages, one by one, back to McCone, added something complimentary about Jim Forrestal's efforts as the new Secretary of Defense.

In the meantime, however, even though it had not been cleared by Leo, and had not been seen by me, the original speech text was released.

Trask: Who wrote this speech?

Symington: Neither Steve Leo or I ever knew for sure. Possibly by someone in Leo's department who was of the school "air power can do it all." Possibly someone who had it in for the Air Force--figuring what the repercussions would be--approved it regardless in the Defense Department. But the talk I actually gave was the later corrected one.

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Rearden: That was the speech you and McCone had rewritten?

Symington: Right.

Rearden: Well, what was the speech that was recorded in the papers?

Symington: The one not given, not cleared by Leo, or seen by me, but leaked to the press. More specifically, printed in the New York Times.

Rearden: OK, the unedited one got on the wire.

Symington: Right. When you all previously asked me about this, I got in touch with Leo, now retired and living in Maine; and asked him to write me up his recollections of this happening, some 33 years ago. There follows his recollection.

(Stephen F. Leo)

"For what it may be worth, this is my recollection of the Los Angeles capers surrounding the July, 1948 appearance you made before the Institute of Aeronautical Science.

"Your speech was prepared at the last minute before your departure, with clearance incomplete before you left. Copies were run before clearance, and went to a variety of places, including Mr. Forrestal's office. Similarly, other copies were run off at the Air Materiel Procurement office on the West Coast (Los Angeles). Col. Tommy Chapman, commander of that setup, told me that the copies were handed out before final clearance, and that the tentative nature of the text was told to the reporters.

"When the speech was withdrawn, the reporters were told that they would have to cover the dinner, because there was no time to re-run the speech, since the new text was hopelessly garbled in transmission. Gladwyn Hill showed up at the source office in

(Stephen F. Leo - cont.)

Los Angeles that day, accompanied by the Navy PIO and his (the PIO) sister, the latter being a reporter for the Los Angeles Times, and, according to Chapman, a source of information for Hill.

"Hill vigorously sought a copy of the original text, even though told that it was not final. It would appear that he filed his story based on that text. Chapman told me that he thought, even a week after the event, that you would recall Hill as being the No. 1 question boy when you held your news conference there.

"Also, a week or so after the occasion, Joe Carroll told me that a microphone had been put in place by a Navy PIO (possibly a reservist) and mis-wired in such fashion that had you touched it, you possibly would have been electrocuted. I was later told that one of the Navy PIO types around the gathering was the son of A.M. Rochlen, Douglas vice president for Public Relations. In his earlier years Rocky worked for LA papers as a reporter, and may well have had children fitting the story (a daughter with the LA Times friendly with Hill and a son PIO Lt. in the Navy Reserve).

"That's all I know, or can recall, about the West Coast aspect of the episode. There was almost as interesting an aspect to the Washington end of the incident.

"When your draft talk hit Mr. Forrestal's shop, it was handed around like confetti in a stiff breeze. The content of the talk was clearly something to infuriate the Navy and the DoD, assuming there was a difference at that time. After I had talked with you and we had agreed that the talk needed tempering, I set about recovering copies which had been going through the clearance in Forrestal's

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ship, and had the greatest trouble with Van Bush. All the others were glad to return work they didn't have to do, since the speech had been scrubbed and another substituted, but Bush was evasive to the point of being absurd. He didn't want to give up the evidence, I guess, and I was cynical enough to believe he wanted more time to copy the text. Anyhow, I went to his office, passed his secretary, saw the speech on his desk and took it, telling him that the whole thing was a comedy of errors and there was no point in his wasting his valuable time reviewing something that wasn't going to happen. Since I already had the text in my hand, he seemed to concur, and I left. But all previous efforts to retrieve the speech had failed, and I have to believe Bush had plans to analyze that text to death.

"I have always been uncomfortable that the text in this case got as far as it did without my review. That was unusual and I suppose it happened because of time limitations and your unavailability because of travel. On top of all the rest, the weather conspired so that the electric storms made it impossible for anything but a garbled text to get through.

"The above is my best recollection. I hope it is helpful in sorting out the facts."

* * *

Symington: In other words, the speech not given came out in the New York Times. Apparently their West Coast representative, Gladwin Hill, either wrote it without going to the meeting or was guilty of deliberate deception. In any case, after I returned to Washington, there came a message to come to Mr. Forrestal's house for dinner

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Sunday evening. This I did, arriving a little early before the other guests, Secretary Royall of the Army and Secretary Sullivan of the Navy. Forrestal/asked, "What do you mean, saying what you did in your Los Angeles talk Friday?" I replied, "The talk was incorrectly reported in the Times. I received a garbled teletyped copy, did not agree with it, changed it in the presence of your friend John McCone, with whom I was staying; and who, with his wife, went to the dinner in question with me." Shortly thereafter both Royall and Sullivan arrived.

Then Forrestal excused himself, and went indoors; came back in a few minutes to say, "McCone has completely confirmed your story." I replied, "So you had to check the accuracy of my statement?" Then Sullivan, the last to come, began to lay it into me. He'd gotten the story already spread around that Forrestal asked Truman to fire me, felt he was on sound ground. I set him straight.

Turning to another episode that involved Sullivan and the Navy, one of the most fascinating of all experiences occurred at another meeting in Mr. Forrestal's house, also at dinner. The latter had called me to say, "I understand any real bomber effectiveness without fighter support is negligible." Now I had been fairly deep in this in England in early 1941 during the Battle of Britain, working over there on power gun turrets for bombers, so replied, "That's not true." "Well", said Forrestal, "I am told on good authority that it is true." I denied it emphatically. He then said, "Come over to my house tomorrow night for dinner and bring someone who can prove the assertion wrong." So I promptly called Spaatz, told him the story and asked

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who would be the best person to talk about the fact bombers could work effectively even without fighter escort. Spaatz promptly said LeMay. "OK, can you have him down here by tomorrow afternoon?" LeMay came, and he and I went over to the Forrestal house for dinner. At dinner the other guests were Secretary of the Navy John Sullivan and an Admiral named Parsons. LeMay never said a word at dinner. Towards dessert Forrestal observed to me, "I understand bombers cannot function effectively without fighters." I replied, "That's not true." Forrestal said, "How do you know?" I turned to LeMay, who then told about either the Schweinfurt or Regensburg (over the years I have forgotten exactly which one) raid, when the bombers went out without any fighter escort because of a mixup in weather reports. By the time said bombers were over Holland it was sunny, and they ran into the whole German fighter force, had a rough time. Forrestal observed, "You lost a lot of planes, didn't you?" LeMay replied, "Yes, sir, but we wiped the target off the face of the earth." (In Albert Speer's autobiography, he notes "One more raid like that and the Reich would have been through.") Forrestal asked, "Are you sure of your facts?" LeMay replied, "I led the first group, sir."

Goldberg: He wasn't quite correct. They had the bombed facility back into operation before too long. They hit it again in October and they got it back in operation again after that.

Symington: Well, look up what Speer said in his book. In any case, Forrestal observed, "That's good enough for me"; and that's the last we heard about that particular attack on the effectiveness of formation strategic bombing.

Goldberg: Of course, fighters didn't play much of a role in that anyhow. The fighter escorts really didn't come into the picture in escorting missions all the way into Germany until the very end of 1943. We couldn't possibly have had fighter escort all the way anyhow. The bombers would have had to fight alone. After the second Schweinfurt mission they didn't go deep into Germany for almost 3 months.

Symington: We took quite a beating, but apparently hurt the Nazi cause badly. Speer's autobiography verifies that as fact. Around this time the report of the Strategic Bombing Survey also hurt the Air Force badly, actually questioned the effectiveness of the bomber strikes. In 1945, shortly after VE Day, John Snyder and I went over to Germany. Truman had just become President. Eisenhower, who ran Berlin at the time, laid out the red carpet for us. We flew over a lot of the bombed area, landed at Hamburg where they had that fire storm after the bombings; then flew down the Rhine to note the devastation everywhere; and then on to Wiesbaden. The damage to German industry was almost unbelievable.

Goldberg: Could we move on to the Korean war period, to the mobilization policy adopted under NSC-68 after the Korean war got under way? I am interested in your role in connection with mobilization in 1950 and 1951. Once the Korean War got really big, the Chinese came in, and discussions took place on how far to go with the mobilization. What are your recollections of your position and that of the other people involved in making the decisions? You were with NSRB at the time.

Symington: Yes. We did our best in the allocation of scarce materials; had a good Board consisting of representatives from labor, business,

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agriculture and the public. Phil Murray and Bill Green were on it from labor; also a fine fellow, George Mead of Mead Paper representing the public, met about every two weeks. Dave Stowe of the White House staff provided liaison. We worked on such items as rubber, aluminum, steel, materials like that; and I talked about the problems almost daily with President Truman.

Goldberg: What was Truman's position on the timing and scope of the mobilization?

Symington: He wanted the job done, but was leery about some specifics.

One day I went to him and said, "Mr. President^d, we ought to establish another OPA." He replied, "Never; I'll never put back price and wage controls." "Then we've got to put a new war economy on top of our resurgent peace economy." "OK, do whatever's necessary." I remember then saying, "That means we'll have to make plans to go from 90 million tons of steel a year to 130 million tons." "OK," he replied; "go ahead and do it." That resulted in new plans and many new plants, and so forth. It went pretty well.

Goldberg: What happened to the price administration?

Symington: He wouldn't touch it. We had had so much trouble with OPA during WWII.

Goldberg: Wasn't there limited price control during the Korean War period?

Symington: There might have been on certain particular items, but it wasn't on any broad general scale.

Goldberg: Were there differences between you and Truman on the size and the scope and the timing of the mobilization?

Symington: None that I remember. One of the formidable problems characteristic of any war economy is the temporary agency. I came into government originally as Chairman of the Surplus Property Board, created to sell

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the some 100 billion dollars of unwanted machinery and material and equipment not wanted after the war had been won. This meant, obviously, presiding over an agency whose life was limited. Any temporary agency in this town starts to die the day it begins operating; and it is always difficult for that agency to win out in differences with a permanent department such as State or Treasury. We had a big battle with State, which we lost. They were artificially holding up the price of tin as a means for increasing foreign aid to Great Britain. The inability to win such differences increased my desire to go back to my business, but the President asked that I go over to the RFC--where some monkey business apparently was going on--as did my friend John Snyder; so over I went, for an agreed upon one year, leaving the Executive Branch permanently after things got straightened out there. In the straightening out I always had the President's full support.

Back to another subject, I'm glad you are interested in getting the truth about that Los Angeles speech.

Rearden: The question occurred when my manuscript was sent out and people commented on it. I had a paragraph about the speech. Several people raised questions about it, including Bob Donovan, the biographer of Truman, and Forrest Pogue, the biographer of Marshall. Pogue suggested I talk with you to clear this up, because the entries in Forrestal's diary are very vague. Forrestal suggests that he went to the White House and talked with Truman about it. It's not clear what kind of response he got from Truman.

Symington: Steve Leo, who would know as much as anyone in the Air Force, has given his recollections. No one in their right mind would have given that talk the way it was originally teletyped to me in Los Angeles.

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Whether it was honestly mishandled, or a real frame will probably never be known; but our experience with people like Cedric Worth, who confessed to writing that scandalous attack while working in the office of the Under Secretary of the Navy, was typical of the climate in the Pentagon at the time.

Goldberg: Did you ever find out who wrote it? Who the actual writer was?

Symington: We never did, but Leo brought up something interesting that occurred at the time of that Los Angeles talk. Douglas Aircraft had always had the prestige of supplying the plane for the President's personal use. There was a mysterious crash of a new DC6 in Chicago in which a friend lost his life. This worried me, so I asked Eddie Richenbacker what he thought. Eddie suggested the Air Force get a new Lockheed Constellation, which we did. When the controversy about that Los Angeles speech came up, we heard the Navy had a tape of the talk actually made. I asked that officer I always relied on in such cases, Joe Carroll, to go to Los Angeles and find out what he could. In a couple of days Carroll returned and reported that a young naval lieutenant, who happened to be the son of a Douglas Aircraft vice president, had been behind a screen taping the speech from a separate microphone; and if I had touched both microphones at the same time, might have been electrocuted. The taped speech we understood was sent to the Secretary of the Navy.

Goldberg: Was this the speech you gave in Los Angeles?

Symington: Yes. The actual one. I called up Sullivan, who confirmed he had this actual talk and sent it down. Sometime afterwards, as I remember it, when we went to look for it in the files, it had disappeared. Those were strange days.

Goldberg: Did you send a copy to Forrestal?

Symington: Probably, I don't remember; but by that time, after very possibly checking further, Forrestal had become completely convinced what I had reported was correct.

Rearden: I haven't found any copy in the OSD files.

Symington: Nor could we later in Air Force files. Joe Carroll is still alive. He might remember something.

Goldberg: We want to thank you very much for this interview. We'll send you a copy when it is transcribed.

Symington: Glad to have this opportunity to make the record.