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## MEET THE PRESS

Produced by Lawrence E. Spivak

SUNDAY, JUNE 1, 1969

CUEST:

SENATOR STUART SYMINGTON (. Mo.)

MODERATOR:

Lawrence E. Spivak,

PAMEL:

William Beecher - New York Times

Roscoe Drummond - Ios Angeles Times Syndleate

Lloyd Norman - Newsweek

Douglas Kiker - NBC News

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MR. SPIVAK: Our guest today on MEET THE PRESS is Senator Stuart Symington, Democrat of Missouri, a leader in the fight against deployment of the ABM. A former Secretary of the Air Force, Senator Symington is the only Senator who serves both on the Armed Services and the Foreign Relations Committees.

We will have the first questions now from Douglas Kiker of NBC News.

MR. KIKER: Senator Symington, you are one of the leading critics of the antiballistic missel system that the Nixon Administration wants to build. Word is seeping out now from Capitol Hill that the Pentagon, in an effort to prove its case for a need for an ABM, is deliberately distorting intelligence estimates of Soviet intentions.

Do you believe that this is the case? Is there an intelligence gap in your opinion?

SENATOR SYMINGTON: I don't think anybody is deliberately distorting intelligence, but I do believe there is a difference between the way the intelligence has been interpreted by the Department of Defense in public statements and the way we have been receiving it in classified hearings.

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In addition to that, what worries me is that when they present the testimony, declassify additional testimony to justify the system, they nevertheless keep classified information which we believe would show that, regardless of whether the Soviet threat is as much as they believe it is, the Safeguard system is not the way to handle it.

MR. KIKER: It may be a question of semantics, but isn't deliberate misinterpretation another word for distortion?

SENATOR SYMINGTON: No, I would say they get a different interpretation in the way that they handle it. What would be the best thing to do in my opinion would be to sit around and declassify by agreement some of the data that they have given us. For example, there is a chart that was submitted by the Pentagon, classified, to the Armed Services Committee. If that chart could be declassified, I believe that this argument would be over.

MR. KIKER: For example, the Pentagon is saying that by 1975 if the Soviets continue their current buildup, they will have 500 SS-9 missiles, and they are saying that the Soviets show every intention of continuing that buildup.

Now you get these reports. Is that your understanding? SENATOR SYMINGTON: Well, I don't know that they are going to build 500 and I don't know that they are not, but I do know that regardless of what tehy do or do not build in the way of SS-9's, which really is nothing more or less than an

improved Titan, that we abandoned years ago, that the Safeguard system is a very poor way to commit our limited resources to handle that threat.

MR. KIKER: If the ABM does fail to gain approval, and if the Soviets do continue their buildup of missiles, won't the Mixon Administration have a political weapon to use against you and others who voted against the ABM and won't they use that weapon?

SENATOR SYMINGTON: Well, Mr. Kiker, this subject is above politics. I must say, however, that the briefings that were given us by people like Admiral Rickover, with respect to the submarine menace, and the importance of the ICBM's, which nobody has ever denied, I am very surprised that in the same budget that they ask for this new adaptation of the old Sentinel system, and they ask for a great deal of additional money for that, they are cutting heavly the money they are putting in minutenen, and they are cutting heavily the money that they are putting into submarines.

(Announcements)

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MR. BEECHER: Senator, I'd like to ask you about the metamorphosis of Stuart Symington. Until fairly recent years you were regarded as one of the strongest voices in the Senate in favor of a powerful defense establishment and yet suddenly we see you as leading the fight against the antiballistic missle system, as one of the principal critics of the Vietnam policy, as a man who is questioning that the military might be improperly setting foreign policy for the United States. Clearly you are now listening to a new drummer.

Senator, what turned you around?

SENATOR SYMINGTON: In the 23 years that I have been in government, I have worked for and voted for a lot, for the Department of Defense. To be exact \$953 billion. This is the first weapons system recommended that I have ever opposed. Some have come to me and said, "We thought you were one of us."

Well, I am one of them. I am an American citizen and above all, above politics or my respect and affection for the military, come my obligations as a United States Senator.

So I am quite suprised that after voting for what will be after this year over a trillion dollars, that I am criticized for believing that this will not work, because I have studied it carefully. I came out of the electronics industry. I opposed it during the Johnson Administration, and I think it is even more absurd, the new application of it in this administration.

So if I didn't say that I was against it, I would not live up to my trust as a Senator. In addition to that, when I started working around already in the government, we had all the gold and we had the bomb. Things have changed quite a lot since then. We have got \$10.8 billion in gold and we owe \$35 billion abroad to foreign people. And besides that, a good many other people have the bomb. I don't think we can fight our way out of this situation like we could 20 years ago. I believe we have to think our way out. That about sums up my change.

MR. BEECHER: If the Senate this summer should defeat the Administration's proposal for an antiballistic missle system would this strengthen or weaken its bargaining position as it enters arms limitation talks with the Soviet Union?

SENATOR SYMINGTON: I personally believe that it would -if the Senate defeats it, right now I think is an ideal time to go ahead with arms control. On the other hand, I think that more and more you are hearing about a possible ceiling given to the Department of Defense, and this is saying, "This is all the money you can spend." That probably would be a mistake. On the other hand, our financial situation -- that is, our monetary and fiscal situation is getting to the point where it may be necessary.

MR. BEECHER: Would you be comfortable, Senator, with an arms control agreement that allowed the Soviet Union to retain

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about because they haven't deployed any system except one they have just about abandoned around Moscow. They abandoned one system around Leningrad. They are now in the process of doing nothing we thought they were going to do with GALOSK system around Moscow and they are testing a new system, which is what we are doing, and I am all for testing this system.

On the other hand, people say they have been at it for 15 years. Well, why shouldn't they be at an ABM system for 15 years when we have been at an ICBM system for 23 years?

My personal opinion — and everybody has a right to their personal opinion — and everybody has a right to the right and ri

My personal opinion -- and everybody has a right to their personal opinion -- is that the reason they are going now so heavily for

ICEMs is that they tried the ABMs and found they wouldn't work.

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MR. BEECHER: You seem to be disagreeing with President Nixon, Senator. He says the Soviet Union has deployed 67 antiballistic missile launchers around Moscow. You say they have none.

SENATOR SYMINGTON: 1 didn't say that. I said they planned to employ a good many more than 67. You mentioned the figure, I didn't. Around Moscow.

We get a great deal of intelligence. As you know, Mr.

better

Beecher, we get / intelligence on a good day today than

we got in a year fifteen years ago and we know what they have

planned against what they are doing. That is one of the

reasons why I think (a) they are working so hard to get ICBMs

and (b) why it is a good time to start talking.

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MR. DRUMMOND: Senator, do you object if we change the subject?

SENATOR SYMINGTON: Not at all.

MR. DRUMMOND: I'd like to ask whether you feel that what is called the industrial-military complex tends to push us into procuring weapons that we don't need?

· SENATOR SYMINGTON: The degree of emphasis against the cancellation of the ABM for the first time worries me quite a lot, because I think that it is becoming more clear that there are many pressures with respect to the pushing of this system that I don't understand, based on the logic of the system.

Now, for example, I opposed it when they said it was necessary for me to vote to protect our cities against the Chinese. It didn't make any sense to me. Nevertheless, we went ahead and we designed, they said, a good golf stick, or a good golf club. Now, that is not what they are talking about today. It is a totally different use, because they have shifted the SS-9 from a second strike weapon to a first strike weapon, and I am getting worried about all the arguments that are being put up as to why this particular system, a relatively unimportant part of our budget, is absolutely essential to the security of the United States.

On a news program not too long ago someone said if we didn't do this, the United States would be naked. Well, if we are spending \$80 billion a year, and we have already spent

\$953 billion since World War II, if we are going to be naked by not putting this up, maybe we better change tailors.

MR. DRUMMOND: Did you feel these pressures when you were Secretary for Air, and did you tend to feel you needed to yield to them or did you resist them?

SENATOR SYMINGTON: Well, I think that is a bit of an iffy question. Certainly I wouldn't yield to them, and I don't remember any pressures when I was Secretary comparable to these, Mr. Drummond.

MR. DRUMMOND: I would like to raise one more question,
Senator, if I may. It seems to me that nearly everybody agrees
that there is a need for a total review of the interrelationship
between foreign policy, foreign commitments and defense
spending. From what you have said publicly I would be
inclined to suggest you probably agree with that. What I want
to ask you is, do you think that either Congress or the Senate
itself, or the Senate Committees, are organized to undertake
that kind of total review and if not, what do you do about it?

SENATOR SYMINGTON: Well, under the Constitution, and the clause incident to advise and consent, we have the right to look at our commitments abroad prior to the declaration of any war, and we have the right to approve treaties. That is our constitutional situation. I have gone to several countries in recent years where the Ambassadors have said to me that the head military man of the United States is the

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Ambassador in this country; I am not," and that despite the Kennedy letter which came out when President Kennedy wrote it some years ago when that story was getting around.

I don't know whether we are the right ones to do it. I would welcome a better organization, if one could be created, where you would have some kind of a joint commission of people who are outstanding in our communities, but it should be done, because we have 452 bases abroad. We have thousands of places where we have our military people located, and you go into these countries and you see these billions and billions of dollars spent and then you compare that to our growing financial problems and you realize something has to give. And up to this point I haven't mentioned some domestic problems which look like they are pretty serious.

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MR. NORMAN: May I go to one of our urgent problems, not quite domestic -- Vistnam. The war has been dragging on, and the peace negotiations are getting nowhere. You proposed in October of 1967 a cease-fire. Do you still feel that a cease-fire now would solve the problem, a cease-fire in preparation for solid talks?

SENATOR SYMINGTON: Well I don't think anything can, as you say, solve the problem. But we have shackled badly our Navy and we have shackled our Air Force, and actually because all the adjacent countries to South Vietnam are sanctuaries, we in effect have shackled the Army. And therefore I said in

October '67 when I came back from Vietnam -- and I think I have been there more than any other Senator -- I said "Why don't we just have a cease-fire? Why do we stop our qualitative position and keep on with our quantitative position?"

And that was my suggestion, and I would think it would be a good suggestion today. I don't see why we fight their war and stipulate that we cannot utilize where we are the strongest, namely with our Navy and our Air Force.

MR. NORMAN: Would you be in favor of what is reported to be an Administration proposal to requite the Thieu government to accept a provisional coalition government in advance of any elections in South Vietnam?

SENATOR SYMINGTON: I'd put it to you this way, Mr. Norman: I have watched this carefully now for a good many years, and with all our needs at home and in other places of the world, we are spending \$2-1/2 billion a month in Vietnam. I would be in favor of anything that would get us out of this situation with honor.

MR. NORMAN: Do you see any peace proposal that might work out sometime this year for a withdrawal of troops?

SENATOR SYMINGTON: I would hope that troops would be withdrawn. Confession is good for the soul, and the more I have thought about it over the years, the more I think that General Gavin's concept of the enclave might have been the better way to handle this situation. Of course hindsight is

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always better than foresight, but that is what I believe now. MR. NORMAN: You have been there a number of times. How many troops do you think we could safely pull out this year? SENATOR SYMINGTON: That is beyond my ken. I would not want to make a military analysis of that character.

MR. SPIVAK: Senator, we are spending a little over \$80 billion a year now for defense. Would you cut that by a great deal now, and if so, how would you cut it?

SENATOR SYMINGTON: I think that one way to cut it would be not to go ahead with weapons systems which to me do not contribute to our national security. The best way to cut it would be to have all services get together, the three, in order that there was no duplication. I also, as you know, for many years have felt that inasmuch as there is not a single NATO country, not one, that has ever come up with its original commitments with respect to the military position of NATO as constituted in SHAPE, and inasmuch as there has never been a day that the United States hasn't fully met that commitment and inasmuch as those countries abroad, some of them, are the strongest countries financially in the world today, led by Germany, under those circumstances I think they should do more -- come up at least to what they said they would do, and I think we should reduce our troops in other parts of the world, including Europe.

MR. SPIVAK: Would you be prepared to tell the Defense Department to make a certain cut, to cut X number of dollars?

SENATOR SYMINGTON: Well, when you get into the tactical aspect of it as to what they should cut, if we take it out of their hands, that could run us into deep trouble. But I was in New York as a delegate to the United Nations this year and I went to some meetings that were attended by some of the ablest people in the country, and the arguments there were whether you could cut this budget up to \$20 billion or \$30 billion without affecting our national defense. And so one of the unfortunate aspects of the ABM debate, to me, is that pretty soon you are going to see an arbitrary cut of our military establishment. And if it went too deep it would be harmful instead of helpful.

MR. KIKER: Senator, an awful lot of people are saying now that the military-industrial complex, or, perhaps better stated, the military-industrial-congressional-bureaucratic gotten out of control, complex / has gained too much power.

How do you get a handle on it, how do you bring it under control? Is new legislation needed, for example?

SENATOR SYMINGTON: Well, I think it is fair to say -- I was an industrialist, once, and I believe that the Department of Defense can handle this matter. You say militaryindustrial-congressional-bureaucratic. I think you might add universities to that, based on some of the recent

experiences that I have had, if you are going to add anything at all. But I believe that the American people should be led into realizing (a) that our resources are limited (b) that our problems in Europe and the Middle East are more important than the Far East and (c) that there is nothing more important than our domestic problems here at home. If that is done, I think you will automatically see a reapportionment of the pie chart of our resources.

MR. BEECHER: Do you agree with Senator Kennedy, that the way to get the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong to negotiate seriously in Paris is to reduce the military pressure on them in Viet Nam?

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SENATOR SYMINGTON: Yes, I do. Considering all the other rules and all the other shackling we have done of all the other services. I do not see why, if we want a real peace, that we go out in the country — and I have been up and down those valleys myself by helicopter several times — and kill a lot of these people and let them kill a lot of our youth, when at the same time, then we go back into, you might say, into the enclaves. Because we control this territory by day and the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese control it by night. It is a difficult question to answer Yes or No, but I think that Senator Kennedy had merit in his criticism.

MR.DRUMMOND: Senator, Mr. Kennedy yesterday, Senator Kennedy said that an American government committed to peace can win a settlement in Viet Nam.

I'd like to ask whether you feel that the Nixon administration is committed to bring about what you have described as an honorable peace in Viet Nam.

SENATOR SYMINGTON: Well, let me say this, Mr. Drummond. I believe (a) that our President is an honorable man and (b) that he is desparately anxious to achieve an honorable peace in Viet Nam. I had dinner quite recently with Ambassador Lodge in Paris. On the other hand, he is a good politician and he knows that pretty soon this is not going to be "Johnson's War," it is going to be "Nixon's war," and that unquestionably increases his desire to get out. And I believe that he wants to get out, very, very badly, as soon as he can. Especially when he receives people like his Secretary of State who are going around the world and nothing the problems in other parts of the world, and when he receives reports of what is going on in this country.

MR. NORMAN: Back in the mid-40's when you were at the Pentagon, you used to be known as a big-bomber man and a big air-power man. What do you think now of the prospects and whar are your own opinions about the AMSA or the superbomber that the Air Force wants that some people say will cost \$9 billion and others \$12 billion? What is your view on that? SENATOR SYMINGTON: I can answer you this way on that,

Mr. Norman: I opposed the B70. I think missilry, air to air,

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sea to sea, air to ground, ground to ground, is going to require a great deal of careful thought with respect to new weaponry. Based on my opinion in the Pentagon and based on my seventeen years on the Armed Services Committee, I am sure there is one criticism in which there is some justification of the military; namely, that they prepare for the next war on the basis of the way they fought the past war. And the technological developments are coming so fast that I think we have to look at a great many things besides the big bombers. Today, although my mind is open, I am opposed to any large investment comparable to what the B-70 was, because of the tremendous developments in all forms of missilry.

MR. SPIVAK: Gentlemen, we have less than four minutes.

Senator Symington, the American people are confused

by the expert testimony they have heard on both sides of the

ABM issue. Why should they listen to you and others who

oppose the ABM rather than the President and his experts?

SENATOR SYMINGTON: Well, Mr. Spivak, I suggested earlier in this program that a chart which was presented by the Pentagon representatives, specifically Deputy Secretary of Defense Packard and Director of Research Foster, that was submitted to the Senate Armed Services Committee in classified hearings, be declassified. I have studied the chart and to the best of my knowledge if the chart is

declassified, then this question of whether we should deploy the ABM now or whether we should have further research and engineering prior to deployment, would be clarified and decided once and for all.

MR. KIKER: Senator, you say that pretty soon it is going to be known as Nixon's war. How much time do you think that the President has left before critics, such as yourself, will declare the honeymoon finally over?

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SENATOR SYMINGTON: Well first, I have never criticized President Nixon about this war.

MR. KIKER: That is my point.

SENATOR SYMINGTON: He did not get us into it and

I believe sincerely that he is mighty anxious to get us out

of it. How long it can go, however, with these heavy casualty

lists before the American people will transfer the responsibility

from this Administration to the other Administration is

just as much your guess as mine.

MR. BEECHER: Senator, you said earlier that you would be in favor of reducing our troops in Europe. Would you agree with the view of former President Eisenhower that one American combat division in Germany would be sufficient to show that we would fight if Russia attacked, rather than the present five?

SENATOR SYMINGTON: I am very glad you brought that up, because the late great President Eisenhower was the first one to suggest, to the best of my knowledge, the reduction of our troop forces in Europe. I believe if we have troops there and we have the flag there, inasmuch as I have never been one that felt that those troops were a shield -- rather they were only a tripwire; the two words that have been used for so many years -- that it would be well to take them out.

So whether it should be one division or two divisions

instead of the five divisions that the American taxpayers have paid for that have been there for over a quarter of a century now, that I would leave up to the military.

MR. DRUMMOND: Senator Symington, I have a domestic question I would like to ask you. Do you favor the direct popular election of President and Vice President?

SENATOR SYMINGTON: Yes, I do.

MR. NORMAN: The Japanese Foreign Minister will be here next week and he will be asking for the return of Okinawa. How do you feel about the return of Okinawa to the Japanese?

SENATOR SYMINGTON: I wouldn't oppose it, but on the other hand I think if they want it back, and want to specify what we should or should not have on that island, as apparently they are doing, that they better start spending some of their own money for the national defense of their country instead of letting us underwrite that, and at the same time flooding this country with so much merchandise because of their lower standard of living.

MR. NORMAN: You feel they are getting a free ride then, in the defense of their own country and their own area?

SENATOR SYMINGTON: Well, please don't ask me to go any further than I just did.

MR. SPIVAK: Senator, you have access to all of our military intelligence. What is the truth about Soviet military strength today, against our military strength?

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SENATOR SYMINGTON: I still believe this country is stronger. I think there are three fields, however, that we have to concentrate on and I have so said publicly. The first is, we are very short of attack submarines. The second is, since 1954, the Russians have built and I have photographs of 13 modern fighter planes, and the Preparedness Subcommittee And the third is, staff tell me there are five more./ and therefore we are way behind in modern fighter aircraft, and finally, I think we have to be sure that our missiles in a second strike can get into the Soviet Union. On that score, I think we are in very good shape.

MR. SPIVAK: I am sorry to interrupt, but our time is up. Thank you, Senator Symington, for being with us today on MEET THE PRESS.

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(Next week: Postmaster General of the United States,
Winton M. Blount.)

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