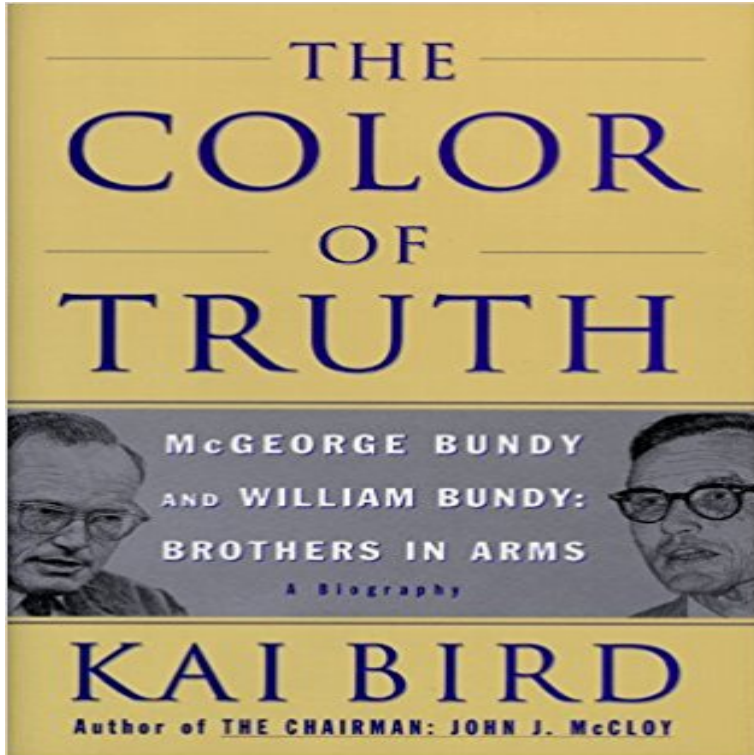


The Color of Truth: McGeorge Bundy and William Bundy: Brothers in Arms



The Color of Truth is the definitive biography of McGeorge Bundy and William Bundy, two of the best and the brightest who advised presidents about peace and war during the most dangerous years of the Cold War. The Bundy brothers embodied all the idealism and hubris that animated American foreign policy in the decades after World War II. They will be remembered forever as anti-communist liberals who, despite their grave doubts about sending Americans to fight in Southeast Asia, became key architects of America's war in Vietnam. Kai Bird, the author of *The Chairman*, the acclaimed biography of John J. McCloy, brilliantly recreates the world of Boston Brahmin privilege in which the Bundy brothers were reared to govern. Educated at Groton, Yale and Harvard, Mac and Bill Bundy were proteges of Henry Stimson, Dean Acheson and Justice Felix Frankfurter, and their friends and admirers included Walter Lippmann, Joseph Alsop and J. Robert Oppenheimer. Bill played a major role in the supersecret Ultra code-breaking project that proved invaluable to the Allies' victory over Nazi Germany. Mac, a key military aide, was present at D-day and later wrote Stimson's influential but misleading essay explaining Truman's decision to use the atomic bomb. In the 1950s, both brothers became ensnared in Senator Joseph McCarthy's witchhunts against suspected communists in government and academia. As dean of Harvard College, Mac fought to protect his tenured faculty while sacrificing junior scholars who refused to name names to the FBI. Bill, a high-ranking CIA official, saw his career nearly destroyed when McCarthy learned he had contributed money to Alger Hiss's defense fund. Bill's refusal to testify before the senators' committee was a turning point in the battle against McCarthyism. The brothers reached the apex of the national security establishment under Presidents Kennedy

and Johnson. Kennedy appointed Mac Bundy to be his national security adviser, and Bill Bundy moved into senior positions at the Pentagon and the State Department. Both were intimately involved in many of the triumphs and deceits of the Kennedy years, including the Bay of Pigs fiasco, plots to assassinate Fidel Castro and the Cuban Missile Crisis. But it was their role in guiding the nation to war in Vietnam that engulfed them in controversy and indelibly marked them as failed figures in American history. At every stage of the war-- from the assassination of South Vietnamese president Diem in 1963 to the Gulf of Tonkin incident in 1964, from the bombing campaign of Operation Rolling Thunder to President Johnson's July 1965 decision to send hundreds of thousands of U.S. combat troops to Vietnam-- the Bundy brothers were present, urging a policy of gradual escalation. Long after Johnson had dismissed their warning that Vietnam could become a white man's war on the Asian mainland, the Bundys remained loyal to their liberal president, who was determined not to allow right-wing critics to accuse him of losing another Asian country. Based on nearly a hundred interviews with the Bundy brothers, their families and colleagues, and on thousands of pages of archival documents-- including some White House memos that remain classified-- Birds account contains dramatic new information that alters the history of the Vietnam War. Like the bestselling *The Wise Men*, this dual biography is both an inside account of the making of U.S. foreign policy in an era of nuclear weapons and a stunning group portrait of the heirs of the Wise Men-- including Robert McNamara, George Ball and Robert Kennedy-- and the presidents they served.

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