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A PROFILE IN COURAGE: J. WILLIAM FULBRIGHT (from cover of magazine)

J. William Fulbright



“Let us ever discriminate between fable and truth, and keep our minds in the same subjection with respect to whatever surprises and astonishes us, as to whatever appears perfectly conformable to their circumscribed and narrow views.” —*Voltaire*

AMERICA HAD ENTERED THE THIRD DECADE of the era of the Cold War. In response to the challenges, real or imagined, of the past 20 years, America had created the most powerful military-industrial system the world had ever known. It flexed its muscles and the rest of the world looked with awe upon the enormous power and versatility of the young colossus. It was not just that the American military had planted its impressive installations in every corner of the world. Americans had also demonstrated their finesse in the arts of international persuasion and influence. Americans spread out all over the world. Whether it was a CIA agent subverting an established government in Latin America or a Peace Corps volunteer showing a peasant in Afghanistan how to purify his drinking water, Americans were leaving their imprint everywhere.

But power does not always have its way. It atrophies from misuse and from insensitivity to the surroundings in which it is applied. It was to have been the "American Century," but something went wrong. Somehow at the beginning of the third decade of Cold War, with American power at its pinnacle, the gears no longer meshed. The machine began to break down.

The crisis for American power stemmed from the desire of other peoples to make their own histories and revolutions. Because America itself had begun to lose hope in new beginnings, it defined the world in such a way as to preclude the possibility of a popular revolution for others. But the crisis was due also to the domestic habits and attitudes developed during 20 years of Cold War. A myth became dogma: that communism, the unchangeable, aggressive enemy, must be fought everywhere if American well-being and security were to be ensured.

War requires a rigid system of political priorities, and the Cold War imposed such a system on America. The name of the system was the bipartisan consensus. The minimum condition for inclusion in the system was the acceptance of America's Cold War mission, a posture that for 20 years had gone virtually unchallenged.

American liberalism might have stimulated debate and consideration of alternative policies, but from the beginning the liberals chose to move with the consensus. The liberals, who might have challenged the consensus who might have refused to serve power, were instead excited by the luxury of being part of the party to big, history-making decisions.

URING THOSE YEARS of Cold War there were sufficient warnings. Even President Eisenhower, sounding like C. Wright Mills, warned Americans of the danger of allowing the Cold War to become institutionalized and the danger of the military-industrial complex that these institutions had spawned. But the drift continued. In 1960 a young man came to the White House with a sense of history and style, and liberals flocked to the seat of power hoping that their pragmatism had paid off. It was a pleasant interlude, with intimations of possible change. But fate soon put a Texan in the White House to resolve all doubts in favor of the Cold War verities. And one day America woke up to find itself bogged down in a senseless and brutal war in a small Asian country.

Many persisted in seeing that war as an unfortunate aberration, as an accident that America had stumbled into and was now perpetuating only because of the special obtuseness of the Texan in the White House. But it was not an aberration. The Texan was the very embodiment of the consensus. His almost religious compulsiveness in pursuing the elusive victory in Asia was, like Captain Ahab's pursuit of the white whale, consistent with the dominant American political character. He and his mates, Rusk and Humphrey, could tell their critics with some justification that they were merely acting on the basis of assumptions that had guided the American ship of state for the past 20 years.

Style, too, had helped to define the consensus. The dominant political style still stressed the importance of working from within, of not rocking the boat, of muted debate that scarcely questioned basic assumptions. Congress, having long ago acquiesced in the new style, had been transformed into a transmission belt instead of a center of debate.

What was desperately needed was someone of importance and influence to break with the system and propose alternatives that challenged the Cold War assumptions.

That was what J. William Fulbright did at a time when events were spiraling almost out of control. At a time when most people were still playing the consensus game according to the rules, Fulbright stepped dramatically forward and went into political opposition to voice unspeakable thoughts about American foreign policy. It was a crucial moment in American history. The country was being stampeded into a war with China. American values were being distorted. Someone had to step forward. This is his story.

[Chapter XII]

FOR eleven extraordinary afternoons this winter, out of the same little box that fouls American living rooms with Peyton Place and old Tom Mix movies, flickered the grim visage of the high priest of intellectuality of the Senate of the United States. Taciturn yet righteous, affable yet obviously frustrated, fidgeting under the kleig lights, J. William Fulbright of Arkansas had taken to television, and daytime television at that, to lecture the President of the United States, the secretary of state, the secretary of defense, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Congress, the Washington press corps, and some 23 million housewives in various stages of undress and comeliness, on the consummate madness of American foreign policy in Asia.

It was a difficult and no doubt disagreeable experience for the senator. A Southerner who maintains his gentle native mountain mannerisms, Fulbright is a conservative, modern-day patrician, who shuns the limelight and would no more grab for newspaper space than a fork at dinner. A serious scholar learned in history and law, he was prepared, by training, to be rather the sage of the Establishment than its gadfly.

But there he was, the afternoon soap operas and middle-brow quiz shows suspended, his shell-rim glasses riding down his nose, peering with a winsome gaze into the cameras hastily installed in the hearing room of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. The red eye on the cameras went on and the Arkansas senator began a historic series of hearings in which he questioned the legitimacy of United States interests in Asia, the logic and indeed the rationality of a fellow Southerner and Rhodes scholar, Secretary of State Dean Rusk, and impugned the honesty and at times seemed quizzical about the sanity of the Asian policies of his old friend and political colleague, Lyndon Baines Johnson.

It was not a mark of his personality, but rather a quirk of American history at mid-century, that cast Senator Fulbright in the role of dissenter. Fulbright, the conservative, the Southern Democrat who knew well the traditions and the prerogatives of consensus politics, had broken with his reserved style of operating and had taken the lead in a bitchy, quixotical and perhaps hopeless fight to limit America's Empire abroad.

In what must have seemed an unsettling historical

irony to the conservative Fulbright, his foils were those populists, Lyndon Johnson and Hubert Humphrey, the men of the people turned Empire builders. They used the satisfying and inspiring prosody of American populism to justify the slaughter, in the name of democracy, of a yellow people removed from America and its democratic traditions, not only by thousands of miles and a great ocean, but by centuries of an alien culture. In the unsettling politics of the Cold War consensus, the liberal democrats of his party and the conservatives of the opposition party had formed an alliance whose unquestioned assumptions seemed to be moving America inexorably and without any significant debate towards the military occupation of Asia and impending war with China.

Not only did Senator Fulbright decide to break with this consensus, but he chose to use his great public presence to legitimize criticism of the war, and in so doing the man from Arkansas found himself, unexpectedly, in the mainstream of native American radicalism.

SENATOR FULBRIGHT'S ACT must be couched within the twin cycles of penance and redemption. For it was Fulbright, more than any other man, who was responsible for the Senate's perfunctory passage of the Tonkin Gulf Resolution — a legislative blank check upon which the President has drawn as if there were a run on the bank.

International incidents, taken as a category of events, often possess a diabolic quality. But the Gulf of Tonkin

incident went beyond the ludicrous to the phantasmagorical. Fulbright's later anguish at having given Johnson sanction to "take all necessary steps" in what proved to be a full-scale, undeclared war is most understandable in view of what now appears to be the unreal nature of the events of Tonkin Gulf in August of 1964.*

In late July of 1964, a brash, moustachioed South Vietnamese Air Force commander, Nguyen Cao Ky, boasted to a New York Times correspondent that the Air Force, led by himself, had dropped "combat teams" inside North Vietnam three years before, well before the heralded "infiltration" of North Vietnamese combat units into South Vietnam. Ky's American advisor, Air Force General Joseph H. Moore, tried to shut him up. Moore, according to the same correspondent, suggested that Commander Ky "did not have a complete command of English and might be misinterpreting questions." But Ky unabashedly admitted that he had flown a combat mission in North Vietnam recently, and that the United States was training South Vietnamese pilots for "large-scale" attacks. This was in absolute contradiction to American policy at the time, and remains an embarrassing disclosure in view of the State Department's insistence that it was the *North* which extended the war.

Then the strange chronology that was later to hound Fulbright unfolded: On July 31 and August 1, South Vietnamese commandos, under cover of a naval barrage, attacked the North Vietnamese islands of Hon Me and Hon Ngu in the Gulf of Tonkin. The destroyer U.S.S. Maddox was either 30 miles away from North Vietnamese territory at the time (according to the State Department) or ten miles away (according to Admiral Robert B. Moore) or three miles away laying the barrage (other sources). At any rate, the next morning the Maddox, in official Navy language, "became aware" that three PT boats were trailing it. After several hours, according to Time magazine, the Maddox fired "three warning shots across their bows," a difficult feat of gunmanship since the PT boats were due astern. "Warning shots" haven't meant anything but a serious shoot-out since the days of Hornblower, and after a futile exchange of torpedoes and shells, the ships went their own ways.

The next incident, two days later, had Hornblowerian qualities bordering on the epic. The Pentagon account of the "attack" at high sea on August 4 had even William F. Buckley Jr. shaking his head in incredulity: a group of North Vietnamese PT boats

sought out destroyers of the United States Seventh Fleet at the outrageous distance of 65 miles at sea, and, after cruising near the U.S. warships for three hours, launched a three-hour major sea battle in rough seas and bad weather during which no damage or evidence of the attack was recorded by U.S. vessels. Two PT boats were reported sunk. But there were no survivors and no debris collected from the torpedo boats, and sailors aboard the U.S. destroyers, to this day, are under strict orders not to talk about the incident. The North Vietnamese government said the incident simply never occurred, and as Washington pundit James Reston mused why North Vietnam would dispatch hit-and-run torpedo boats to prompt a three-hour sea engagement that could only give an enormous propaganda advantage to the United States, American planes began bombing North Vietnam in a "retaliatory action" that has been continuing, in mounting intensity, to this very day.

The ghostly action at Tonkin Gulf proved of extreme utility. Americans always unite when attacked, even in miniature, and Johnson rushed into Congress a resolution that made a national cause of a distant war of heretofore uncertain motivation.

The bizarre detail and doubtful legitimacy of the alleged events in Tonkin Bay are important. They evoked in Senator Fulbright a skepticism about the accuracy of government pronouncements. He was to conclude, later, that the Administration was lying not only to the public, but also to him, and probably even to itself.

But in August of 1964 the senator from Arkansas had other considerations on his mind. He was consumed with the fear of a strong Goldwater showing in the coming presidential election. Goldwater, to Fulbright, represented the very antithesis of rationality. And reason, to Fulbright, is everything — the golden rule, the means, the end. The Arkansas scholar recoils from missionaries and visionaries — his style is facts first; from the facts he will reason, usually slowly, to a conclusion, even if the conclusion proves opposite to a position he previously held.

When he dwelled, sometime later, on the facts of the Tonkin Gulf incidents, he was mortified. He retracted his earlier stance and made his public *mea culpa* on a national television show: "I have to say to myself," he said in the dull, almost toneless drawl that can empty the Senate galleries, "that I have played a part in that that I am not at all proud of, that at the time of the Bay of Tonkin I should have had greater foresight in the consideration of the resolution. That would have been

*We are indebted to Professor H. Bruce Franklin of Stanford University for his thorough research on the Tonkin Gulf incident.

a good time to have precipitated a debate and a re-examination, a re-evaluation of our involvement . . . I went along with the urging, I must say, of the Administration . . . I made the mistake . . .”

Fulbright's failure to recognize the significance of the Tonkin resolution bothers him all the more because it was not just a case of mistaken fact; it embodied a fundamental error of judgment. The Arkansas senator had set up an arbitrary polarity — Goldwater was the madman, Johnson the man of reason. Anything he might do to split the party, asserting his prerogatives as the Senate watchdog of foreign policy, picking apart the Tonkin resolution, might aid Goldwater. Besides, and this is where Fulbright now realizes he made his greatest miscalculation, the senator from Arkansas put his trust in the former senator from Texas. The two men were long-time friends, their wives even closer. Fulbright had supported Johnson against Kennedy for the Democratic nomination in 1960, and Johnson had let it be known that he felt Fulbright would have been the best choice for Kennedy's secretary of state. Fulbright viewed Johnson as a humane, intelligent and dynamic man and believed the President when he said he had no desire to widen the war and would use his mandate moderately.

WHAT FULBRIGHT DID NOT foresee, indeed, could not foresee, was what the frustrations and the temptations of the Vietnam war would do to Mr. Johnson. Where Johnson's attributes served him admirably in domestic politics — they became monstrous in foreign affairs, outside his native milieu. His humaneness turned easily to self-righteousness, his intelligence to scheming, his dynamism to impulsiveness. Johnson as a congressman and senator was always an active proponent of a massive and growing military establishment, a firm advocate of quick and effective retaliation against any “enemy” who might dare to cross America's path. When the sticky Vietnam situation proved infinitely more complex than getting a housing bill through Congress, Johnson became increasingly frustrated, acting out of instinct to punish those who thwarted him. The punishment went, necessarily, to the Vietnamese people.

Johnson assumed a public posture of moderation and patience, but his quiet, deliberate words clashed with his deeds. His pledge to Fulbright to not act rashly proved empty. And Fulbright could only reluctantly conclude that the frustrations of Vietnam were depriving Lyndon

THE TELEPHONE RANG AT 10:45 A.M. in Senator Fulbright's private office in the sterile new Senate Office Building. He was reading a book taken from the low bookcases that line his walls. He picked up the receiver with a gesture indicating distaste. Telephones are for activists, for operators; Fulbright prefers quiet, leisurely conversations over dinner with intellectual equals. The call was from the White House. The familiar voice with the soft flow of the Pedernales River was coming over the wire: “Ah'm sho glad to have got yo' advaas, Bill.”

The President of the United States talked on at the other end of the wire, but the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee was barely listening. It was a conversation he had heard too often. The senator listened politely until the President was through, then said goodbye and hung up. The call was put through to thank Fulbright for sending over a memorandum prepared by his staff. Fulbright had substituted memos for frequent calls at the White House. The President had dominated their conversations, scarcely allowing Fulbright the chance to say hello, and Fulbright had simply tired of listening to him. Now another long mimeographed memo, Fulbright knew, had already been filed in key wastebaskets at State. He was certain the President had paid no attention to the ideas contained in the memo — fresh, challenging, dissenting ideas. Fulbright had, over the years, carefully built up his staff as a grove of academe in the briar patches of Washington officialdom. But the people at State and the new breed in the White House paid only polite, perfunctory notice to their work. The yahoos were riding high in the saddle: Dean Rusk, who gave Fulbright shivers, had out-hawked Secretary of Defense McNamara and roosted behind the President's ear. Rusk's hard line for Asia was backed by Walt Rostow, then chairman of the Policy Planning Council, recently moved into the White House; and for South America by Thomas Mann, a tough-minded Texan who as Johnson's assistant secretary of state for Latin America had scrapped the official Kennedy policy of support for constitutional democratic regimes and initiated a junta hunt; and by George Ball, the undersecretary of state and guardian of the status quo in European affairs.

As chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, Fulbright did not seek to impose his predilections on the Administration's foreign policy priesthood, but only to see that this priesthood was not unduly burdened with dogma. Unquestioned dogma, Fulbright

dispel dogma met with growing frustration. It was apparent in his remarkable 1964 speech, "Old Myths and New Realities," when he expressed publicly for the first time some of the apprehensions he felt about the conduct of U.S. diplomacy. He said, "There has always — and inevitably — been some divergence between the realities of foreign policy and our ideas about it. This divergence has in certain respects been growing, rather than narrowing; and we are handicapped, accordingly, by policies based on old myths, rather than current realities. This divergence is, in my opinion, dangerous and unnecessary — dangerous, because it can reduce foreign policy to a fraudulent game of imagery and appearances; unnecessary, because it can be overcome by the determination of men in high office to dispel prevailing misconceptions by the candid dissemination of unpleasant, but inescapable facts."

"I HAVE A FEW DOUBTS, GENTLEMEN." Seth Tillman, Fulbright's speech writer and intellectual confidant, looked up. When the senator said he had a "few doubts" it could mean a major policy decision was forthcoming. Fulbright had asked Tillman and other members of the inner circle of his Foreign Relations Committee staff to gather in a Washington restaurant for a late lunch. It was a Saturday afternoon in August of 1965. The men did not realize it at the time, but they were to participate in a fundamental decision that would, in the field of foreign policy, make their staff the closest thing to a shadow cabinet the United States has known.

The issue was the Dominican Republic. The Foreign Relations Committee had been holding hearings behind closed doors for weeks, and the testimony was both disturbing and dismaying — so dismaying that the senators on the committee had become divided over what should be said to the public, and it was apparent that no report would be issued. So Fulbright had to decide if he should speak out; this was a most serious and anguished decision, for in order to speak at all candidly about the Administration's action in the Dominican Republic it was necessary to infer that the President of the United States was lying.

It was the lying, the reckless fabrications uncovered in the Dominican hearings that so stunned and horrified Fulbright. When pro-Bosch Army officers began the revolt, the Administration said it was sympathetic to the democratic aims of the revolution, but in reality acted from the outset to prevent a rebel victory. When the Marines

they were there to protect endangered American citizens, yet the Marines' real mission was to aid the right-wing anti-rebel forces. When this became apparent, the Administration justified its action by releasing fantastic stories about rebel atrocities — Johnson stated there were "1000 to 1500 bodies that are dead in the streets," a body count that later shrunk to six. Then it was announced that the rebel forces were dominated by communists — and listed, in an accounting reminiscent of the late junior senator from Wisconsin, exactly 53 communists. And when even this number was discredited, Secretary of State Rusk solemnly reminded the nation that there was a time when only "seven people" sat in a beer hall with Hitler, and Secretary Mann volunteered, "Look at Cuba. There were only 12 people in the beginning, and yet they took it over."

Fulbright, though outraged by the deceptions he uncovered, did not act impetuously. This Saturday afternoon meeting had been preceded by many other lengthy consultations with his staff — all directed at one question: should Fulbright publicly expose the hypocrisy of the Administration? To do so would not only embarrass his party and his old friend the President, but would effectively cut the senator off from the White House. That meant a break with the Senate traditions that Fulbright so cherished. It meant taking the case for rationality to the people in a struggle that was certain to be argumentative, confusing and costly to the careers of those involved.

Seth Tillman looked across the table at Fulbright and realized that the senator had made up his mind. He had stretched out in his chair; the annoying pot belly that had lately provoked the former University of Arkansas star halfback into regular sessions at the Senate gym bulged slightly under his well-cut vest. Tillman, formerly a brilliant political scientist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, shared the senator's fervid regard for the intellectual process. He knew where the balance scales would tip: to speak out now was to advocate rationality, to dispel misinformation, to bolster truth. There was, really, little choice.

A few hours before he stood on the Senate floor to blast Johnson's Dominican adventure, a text of the speech and a letter of explanation were delivered by messenger to the White House. The letter has never been answered. And Fulbright has never received another phone call from the President. He became *persona non grata* at the White House. And he was now free to broaden his criticism of Johnson's foreign policy: there

LIKE MR. PICKWICK'S short black gaiters, J. William Fulbright's glasses are an indistinguishable part of his personality. He uses them to see through, but that is a preliminary function that has become almost atavistic. The tilt of Senator Fulbright's glasses can express interest, boredom, chagrin or disillusion. When held at arm's length off his face, they may be the first thrust of a Fulbrightian inquisition. And on the days that Secretary of State Dean Rusk testified in the crowded, overheated Senate hearing room, the spectacles were continually poised for combat. In the televised drama of the first open debate on United States Asian policy the American public was his audience. But Dean Rusk was his foil.

The contrast between Rusk and Fulbright is symbolic, almost archetypal. Rusk is a missionary with a previously misplaced sense of the inevitable, purveying the American gospel with a global hard-sell. Fulbright is the cool man of reason, making decisions on the basis of practicality, more concerned with what America can do than what perhaps it should do. Their differing positions reflect what American foreign policy is, and what Fulbright wants it to be.

The conflict between these two men is all the more bitter because of the similarity of their backgrounds. Both are Southerners. Rusk was originally a poor white and Fulbright a patrician, but both were raised in the back country of the old Confederacy when memories of the Battle of Shiloh and the craft of carpetbagging were still raw. Both became Rhodes scholars: both began their career as college teachers. Both have extremely reserved, rather dull personalities, and prefer a seminar room to a public platform.

But there the resemblance ends. Dean Rusk is an unfrocked John Foster Dulles, Fulbright an Ozark-breed Voltaire. Rusk shares Dulles' evangelistic sense of America's responsibility for the destiny of nations. He is convinced that there is good and evil in the world, and that America is good. Communism is evil. Like any apostle worth his salt, he sees no gray area in between. Nor is he particularly troubled by any end-means dilemma. The very apex of morality to Rusk is the effort to advance a nation's capacity to repulse evil and render its people freedom, democracy, Coca Cola and all the other benefits that America can provide.

It was Dean Rusk the apostle who responded to the senator's questions on daytime television. Rusk began and ended the hearings with the rote view that the sole cause of the Vietnamese war was the aggression of Hanoi and Peking and stubbornly restated the thesis

that America, by bombing the hell out of an Asian country, is effectively resisting the evil of communism.

There were times during Secretary Rusk's recitation when Senator Fulbright didn't seem to be listening. The glasses slid even further than usual down his nose and his eyes drifted up above the gray horizon created by cigarette smoke swirling in the artificial light of the television lamps. This history cannot record what the senator thought during those moments of introspection, but it is likely that once, at least once, he ruminated on the irony of the selection of Dean Rusk as secretary of state, which was one of the great accidents (Fulbright would call it a catastrophe) of our times.

Exhaustive investigation by future historians may prove otherwise, but there is now no evidence to prove that John F. Kennedy chose Dean Rusk as his secretary of state on other than a transitory, eleventh hour whim. Despite the pain he had taken to assure a spectacular beginning to his administration, he came virtually to the eve of taking the Presidential oath without a secretary of state. He had almost tired of the search when the name of Rusk, a former assistant secretary of state for the far east, appeared at the top of the list. Kennedy recalled reading an essay by Rusk in Foreign Affairs in which he celebrated U.S. power to get things done in the world. That fit in with Kennedy's concern at the time for an aggressive diplomacy. Rusk had both Establishment ties and was noncontroversial; nobody could find anything bad, or even interesting, about him, so Kennedy apparently said why not?

IT IS ONE OF THE MYSTERIES of Washington, where even the cleaning ladies have evil memories, why no one remembered how Dean Rusk had resigned from the State Department in 1951: He walked out in a snit because we weren't going to bomb China. As head of Asian affairs, Rusk was the most outspoken advocate of the MacArthur position on the Korean War which, in the nice phraseology of today, would be called pro-escalation. Then it was just called bombing. Rusk, obviously influenced by his eight years in the military, agreed with MacArthur that there was "no substitute for victory." Those who know the secretary insist that he is bitter to this day over the treatment of MacArthur, that he believes it was American diplomatic mistakes, if not duplicity, that "lost" China, and actually feels a personal sense of guilt about it.

The bitterest irony of Kennedy's choice of Rusk as secretary of state dedicated to "our capacity to act" was that the young President found himself, in the last

months of his life, coming to recognize and accept the basic limitations of American power. But if Rusk was uncomfortable in the atmosphere of détente in the last period of the Kennedy Administration, he positively luxuriated in the tougher temper of the Johnson Administration. The secretary of state is now head hawk in a large and growing aviary at the White House. Johnson is a man of action and Rusk counsels action. In the face of failure, Rusk counsels more action, more bombs. It was what he counseled in 1951, but nobody listened to him, then.

They were listening to him now, with a terrifying unanimity, at State, at Defense, at the White House. Fulbright can only probe and challenge both the assumptions and logic of Rusk's brand of fast freight diplomacy. He hoped, through the unlikely medium of daytime television, to show that reasonable men could fashion another definition of our national interest than committing a quarter of a million men to the suppression of a small Asian country. He had brought his case to the people.

"I'M NO SAINT," FULBRIGHT OFTEN SAYS, usually with a slight note of exasperation. He says it to liberals who cluck cluck in formalized horror over how Fulbright can be *so* right about foreign policy and *so* wrong about things like civil rights. This is a dichotomy that doesn't bother Fulbright as it apparently did not disturb the great Southerners who at the same time held slaves and were the dominant voices of reason and democratic theory in the 19th century U.S. Senate. Fulbright, as a Southern man, has great sympathy for the situation of Negroes — but also retains great indignation over what to him were the atrocities of Reconstruction. He makes no attempt to compromise these conflicting tendencies, and feels no need to do so. His voting record is illiberal on both civil rights and Israel, but Fulbright doesn't care. This often totally exasperates liberals — but if Fulbright were less of a gentleman he could point out that the civil rights leaders cater to the Administration by not speaking out against an immoral and racist foreign policy and are vulnerable to the same holier-than-thou criticism they extend to him. But it is not the style of J. William Fulbright to whine.

Fulbright is no pacifist. He predicted disaster for the Bay of Pigs operation, but supported a possible American invasion of Cuba during the missile crisis of 1962. In spite of qualms about the Vietnam involvement, as late as in late

porting Administration strategy.

Fulbright has been disturbed not by questions of morality about the Vietnam war, but by the spiritualistic sense of the inevitable — the gradual occupation of Asia, the drifting towards nuclear war with China — that made the Administration seem to him a band of one-eyed colossi, gazing into a crystal ball tuned to only one channel.

When he couldn't educate the President, he sought to educate the public. And it may be the final irony of the act of J. William Fulbright that Johnson's impetuous reaction to the televised questioning of his policy — in rushing to Honolulu to a hasty summit meeting with puppet premier Ky against the wishes of his more sensitive advisors — has led to a chain of events that may bring about a new South Vietnamese government inclined to ask the United States out of their country. In such an eventuality, it may be difficult for even Rusk, even Johnson, to say no.

Fulbright has changed since he assumed the leadership of the disloyal opposition. His recent speeches present more than a conservative sense of the necessity of limiting the use of U.S. power. He presents an understanding of the inevitability of popular revolutions in Asia, South America and Africa, and the impracticality of the U.S. in attempting to control them.

In a recent speech, the senator formally assumed the patronage of the traditional brand of American radicalism that has lost acceptability in recent years: "In a democracy dissent is an act of faith. Like medicine, the test of its value is not its taste but its effects, not how it makes people feel at the moment, but how it inspires them to act thereafter. Criticism may embarrass the country's leaders in the short run but strengthen their hand in the long run; it may destroy a consensus on policy while expressing a consensus of values. Woodrow Wilson once said that there was 'such a thing as being too proud to fight'; there is also, or ought to be, such a thing as being too confident to conform, too strong to be silent in the face of apparent error. Criticism, in short, is more than a right; it is an act of patriotism, a higher form of patriotism, I believe, than the familiar rituals of national adulation."

The end product of these thoughts is destructive of the Cold War consensus that has sapped America of much of its vitality and reduced the rhetoric of democracy to a series of clichés. Perhaps this is what Senator Fulbright, the historian, has decided he must be about.

by Warren Hinckle, in conjunction with Milton Viorst