

Let's talk sense about Cuba

STATINTL

By Sen. J. William Fulbright

One of the most distinguished members of the Upper House, Senator Fulbright shook Washington recently with a speech attacking the "myths" that underlie U.S. foreign policy. Here he defends himself against his critics and tells in fuller detail what he thinks should be done about Castro's Cuba.

For a long time it has seemed to me that American attitudes toward the world tend to be rigid and slow to adjust to new situations. Thus, for example, we tend to resist change in policies which were developed to deal with a monolithic Sino-Soviet bloc despite the facts that the Chinese and Soviets are now deeply, perhaps irrevocably, split, and that there is a growing trend to diversity in Eastern Europe. There are people who cry for a blockade or other stern measures against Cuba, making no distinction between the problems posed by a Cuba with Soviet medium-range missiles and by a Cuba with Communist workers riding to the cane fields in new British buses.

It was in an effort to point out some of the areas in which change has outrun policy that I spoke in the Senate on March 25. "We are confronted with a complex and fluid world situation," I said, "and we are not adapting ourselves to it. We are clinging to old myths in the face of new realities." I stated, for instance, that Castro "is not likely to be overthrown by any policies which we are now pursuing or can reasonably undertake." I suggested that our efforts to persuade free-world countries to maintain a boycott on trade with Cuba have been largely unsuccessful and that for this reason the boycott policy has been a failure.

My purpose was, and remains, to stimulate a general discussion, a rethinking, and a reevaluation of our foreign policies in the light of changing circumstances. Such criticisms as were contained in my speech were directed at inflexibility in public and congressional thinking about foreign policy, and not at specific policies of the present and preceding Administrations, except as these policies have been thwarted or unduly influenced by popular prejudices.

There is nothing more difficult, and nothing more important, than the adjustment of our thoughts and of our policies to changing realities. As Eric Hoffer has written: "It is my impression

that no one really likes the new. We are afraid of it. . . . Even in slight things the experience of the new is rarely without some stirring or foreboding."

If there was something "new" about my speech of March 25, it was not what was said but the fact that it was said, and said publicly. In any case, reactions of fear and foreboding were largely confined to the Congress. The reaction of the press and of over 10,000 private citizens who wrote letters to me in the first three weeks after the speech was very substantially favorable to the views which I expressed. What is more important, the reaction showed a very substantial interest in a public exploration of the issues which I raised. The voluminous public response indicates to me that the American people are eager for a public discussion and may be receptive to changes in policies.

I welcome the opportunity to examine some of the questions raised in the various comments and criticisms of my speech. I have no objection to being held responsible for anything I said. I do object, however, to being held responsible for things I did not say. I did not say, for example, that American policy is guided solely by myths, or that our policies were inappropriate at the time they were framed. I did not say that we should ourselves enter into friendly relations with the Castro regime in Cuba or terminate our own economic boycott. I said only that our effort to organize a concerted international boycott which eventually will bring down the Communist regime is a failure, which it demonstrably is.

I did say that we should face the probability that the Castro regime will continue to exist. We are, of course, already doing so, and this particular suggestion, therefore, is not the adoption of a new policy so much as the acknowledgment, to ourselves, of an existing fact.

There has been considerable inaccuracy on another point. I did not say that the Castro regime is not a "grave threat" to the hemisphere. I said that it is not a

"grave threat" directly to the United States. I did say that it is a "grave threat" to the Latin-American countries, but one which should and can be dealt with through the procedures of the Organization of American States.

One criticism which has been directed at the speech is that I neglected to state more explicitly what I believe our policy toward Cuba should be. On reflection, I think this criticism may be well taken, because Cuba now appears to have greater importance in the public mind than I had thought.

I believe that the United States under present conditions should maintain its own political and economic boycott of the Castro regime. It would be desirable if all the other countries of the free world would join in such a boycott, but experience has amply proved that major industrialized countries of Europe, and Japan as well, are unwilling to do so and that we are incapable of either forcing or persuading them to do so. We look silly when we cut off a pittance of military aid to Great Britain and France because they trade with Cuba, when at the same time we find an excuse to continue substantial aid to Spain despite its trade with Cuba. What makes the case even sillier is that the "aid" we were giving to Britain and France was not aid at all. It was called aid because it came from military-assistance appropriations, but in fact it paid for a sales-promotion campaign to persuade high-ranking British and French officers to buy American military equipment.

There is an important distinction to be made between Cuba and Western Europe on the one hand and Cuba and Latin America on the other. Cuba is not a grave threat to Western Europe, any more than it is a serious threat directly to the United States. But Cuba is a grave threat to Latin America. It is logical, therefore, to expect the Latin-American reaction to Cuba to be different from the European reaction, and this has indeed been the case. The Organization of American