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Hard Push For A Soft Uncle Sam

THE CHAIRMAN of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee has suggested in a major address to his colleagues one of the most sweeping revisions ever in United States foreign policy.

Sen. J. W. Fulbright proposed that we "shed old moralistic myths and dare to think unthinkable things."

Among these things are that we accept Fidel Castro as master of an impregnable Communist Cuba, that we accede to Panama's demands in the Canal Zone and that we recognize that "Khrushchev is not as bad as Stalin."

We should accommodate ourselves, it would seem, to a world in which we are no longer a leader but a reactor.

As the Senate's leading voice on foreign policy and a frequent enunciator of administration thinking in this field, the Arkansas senator's address must be taken seriously. It was weeks in preparation. It could not have been made without consultation at the highest State Department levels.

It is of a piece with other developments. One was the revision of our policy of opposition to Latin American military dictatorships, announced by Thomas C. Mann, undersecretary of state for inter-American affairs at a recent diplomatic briefing. Another was President Johnson's speech to the United Auto Workers this week in which he said we must "substitute understanding for retaliation."

Are we being prepared for a shift to a softer line?

We wonder how the rest of the world would react if this country were to accept Cuban subversion of the hemisphere as normal, after pledging that it would not be tolerated.

We have allowed the argument with Panama to get completely out of perspective because we withhold disturbing facts for fear of ruffling Panamanian feelings.

Are the "moralistic myths" that a Communist Cuba is the enemy of all American democracies, that violent revolution cannot be avoided in Latin America, that we cannot be firm elsewhere for fear of launching a nuclear war?

Or are the myths that Castro is invincible, that we can do business with the Com-

munists, that we can buy respect with unlimited foreign aid?

Senator Fulbright's address is part of a developing national debate of great import. So far the weight of the argument appears to be for a retreat to a weaker position.

If the time has come to change, why not advance to a stronger one?