

## FOREIGN POLICY AND NATIONAL STYLE

*In its November issue, The Progressive publishes an article on foreign policy by Senator William Fulbright, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Excerpts from this article follow.*

The United States is losing the Cold War because the American people and their elected leaders are unwilling to perceive and accept the full sweep of their responsibilities. Some say this situation was inevitable; that the national mood is cyclical and that a complacent, even euphoric, people is the unavoidable consequence of a long, arduous period of depression and war. Without commenting on the merit of this argument—I am not a sociologist—I would observe that the United States is quite literally struggling for survival as a free society. By now, this should have become obvious to most of our citizens. It has, according to some writers who explain that behind the cheerful, prosperous facade of the American citizen lurks an anxiety neurosis brought on by the pressures of life in the nuclear age. And it is presumably his insecurity, not complacency, that prevents this American citizen from making his full intellectual commitment to the demands of the time.

Not being a psychologist, I again withhold comment.

I will say, however, that an alarming proportion of our people have simply failed to grasp the nature of the challenge posed by our Communist adversaries. We have been challenged by a monolithic order that is growing in all directions and is dedicated to the accretion of state power. We, on the other hand, have slowed our growth in many directions and dedicated ourselves to the inflation of individual prosperity and well-being. And while circumstances should compel each of the two great systems to move somewhat in the other's direction, I fear that the distinction, with its ominous implications, will hold for quite some time.

The fault, as Cassius observed to Brutus, "is not in our stars, but in ourselves." The United States is currently being failed by its own national style. We have a tendency to accept our own superiority quite uncritically. Our early empirical methods succeeded in producing an immensely rich, self-confident, pragmatic society. We tend to think now that we can dispose of an entirely different set of problems by applying the same undisciplined methods. We dis-

like abstractions and prefer palpable expressions of policy. Thus, we heartily approve of costly military hardware—as, indeed, we must—while subjecting equally vital foreign aid programs to the most critical and often negative scrutiny.

We Americans have traditionally rejoiced in individual initiative, but we react passively to great national needs, such as education. We seek *ad hoc* solutions to external problems that all too often either exacerbate or postpone their resolution. Quite mistakenly, we think that success in the business world qualifies one to lead the Department of Defense into an effective performance of its critical role; that important diplomatic assignments can be entrusted to well meaning but otherwise unremarkable amateurs. Self-righteous and confident of our superior way of life, we tend to place external issues in a moral context, quite forgetting that simple self-interest, not moral principle, is the basis for successful diplomacy.

Foreign policy is ideally the hard work of the intellect, as it responds to the insistence of an informed, vigorous people fully engaged with the national responsibilities. Foreign policy is not to be confused with misleading and oversimplified slogans, such as "massive retaliation" (which happily seems headed for the discard) or "a bigger bang for a buck." Nor is effective foreign policy found in unrealistic groupings, such as the Bagdad Pact—which we have now found necessary to retitle the Central Treaty Organization. Such an alliance comprehends only geography and foolishly, if not dangerously, ignores existing political facts.

The world is changing. It sometimes seems that the events of a mid-twentieth century week offer as much history as was contained in a year, or even five years, of life in the mid-nineteenth century. It is difficult even to guess at what lies ahead. Clearly, though, the future will favor the people who can make the tough, mature decisions. America must be able to respond speedily and decisively to Communist thrusts, which are certain to be a part of our future. We must anticipate these thrusts with a soundly conceived and flexible pattern of response set up in advance. Underlying this comprehensive pattern of contingency planning should be a firm national policy—a base from which we can realistically expect to cope with whatever the future will offer.