

Part 5/18/66
Letter
Chasm Jumping

The path of your reasoning in the May 1 editorial, "Mr. Fulbright's Troubles," jumps some awfully big chasms. You point to the questioning of our own motives as a restraint on "overextension of mission that brought Athens, Napoleon and the Nazis to ruin." Despite the questioning we have escalated the war by doubling the number of troops in Vietnam in the last 12 months, tripling our military budget for the adventure and bombing ever closer to China. Some might get the impression the military establishment is hurrying to escalate beyond the point of no return before Congress puts its foot down.

You seem to say at one point that the United States is not to blame for failure to extend the hand of friendship to Russia, vis-a-vis the consular treaty, because J. Edgar Hoover, not Congress, is running our Government. Your flimsy bridge over the final chasm collapsed before I even set foot on it. Mr. Fulbright, you said, "offers no practical advice except, by implication, withdrawal from what has been regarded as a fundamental American interest."

Who regards it as "a fundamental American interest"? This is the crux of the whole question, yet you hold it up as though it was agreed upon by all. This is the question that a growing number of the Senate's most sincere and informed members are raising.

Isn't it true that our foreign policy has been frozen for at least 15 years—frozen in a mold fashioned by Sen. Joseph McCarthy, William Knowland, and John Foster Dulles? Who wants to accept that trio's definition of where America's "fundamental interest" lies?

In essence the McCarthy-Knowland-Dulles definition of America's fundamental interest was that we should destroy communism wherever it was found. This makes about as much sense as the onetime belief that Christendom's fundamental interest was to banish Mohammedanism from Jerusalem. Millions of lives were sacrificed to this fetish before Europeans decided there were more important things to be done.

Wouldn't it make more sense to define America's fundamental foreign interest as outdoing communism in bringing about real reforms in underdeveloped countries, particularly those on our own doorstep? And wouldn't a first step in that direction be to withdraw from Vietnam and use the billions we seem determined to waste there in helping to improve the lot of the masses in Latin America?

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