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It's Not as Bad as That, Mr. Fulbright

There is no doubt that the mistakes made in the handling of the U-2 incident and President Eisenhower's rebuff in Japan have hurt the reputation of American policy.

But the picture painted of the United States by Senator Fulbright on Tuesday is grossly exaggerated.

"The prestige and influence of our country on the affairs of nations," Mr. Fulbright told the Senate, "has reached a new low." On what basis does he make this judgment? For, as the black clouds of embarrassment and humiliation clear away, we see that the facts remain largely what they were.

It would have been one thing if Pakistan or Norway, which were involved in the U-2 flight, had broken their alliances with us or publicly accused us of compromising them.

It would have been one thing if the Soviets had immediately signed a peace treaty with East Germany and the screws on the Western garrisons in Berlin had been sharply tightened.

It would have been one thing if our NATO partners, and particularly Britain and France, had indulged in recriminations—which they reasonably could have.

It would have been one thing if the Kishi government in Japan had been overthrown and a new government dedicated to neutralism and co-operation with the communist bloc had seized power.

None of these things has happened. There is therefore little indication that our influence in the affairs

of nations has suffered a dramatic decline. As for our prestige, its level is difficult to determine. It is assumed to be lower, but is the United States held in less esteem than at any other time, as Mr. Fulbright maintains? On what soundings of foreign opinion does he base this claim?

The Senator from Arkansas was at pains to lecture his colleagues on the importance of the forms of international intercourse which have developed over the centuries. The study of history has not, however, given him that sense of perspective which can place blunders and disagreeable signs of unpopularity—and these come to

all powerful countries—in their proper light.

This is not to recommend complacency. We have suffered some unpleasant and humiliating reverses in the last two months, and it has been hard going for our propagandists. We must earnestly hope that our mistakes will not be repeated. But the world is still here, and very much as it was before May 1. This is above all a time when we need to keep our nerve and our balance. It is also, as Mr. Fulbright suggests, a time for self-examination. But neither panic nor guilt has any part to play in the procedure.