

Fulbright Regrets His 'Brothel' and 'Arrogance' Remarks

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Sen. J. William Fulbright, D-Ark., said today that he regrets saying in a May 5 speech that "Saigon has become an American brothel."

In fact, the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee told a National Press Club luncheon, he regrets several things he has said in recent weeks "not because of the meaning I attached to them, but because they lent themselves to interpretations I did not intend."

He said the press seems to have "a peculiar instinct" for reporting statements of a politician "in such a way as to make him regret them."

He added that "I am beginning to despair of having my ideas accurately conveyed through the press."

Fulbright attempted to set the record straight on some of his recent statements apparently causing him such embarrassment, including his "arrogance of power" speech, his earlier statement that America is showing some signs of "that overextension of power and mission that brought ruin to ancient Athens, to Napoleonic France and to Nazi Germany," as well as his can brothel."

He recalled that in his May 5 speech "I made the statement based on reports I had read in reputable newspapers and magazines that said both literally and figuratively, Saigon has become an American brothel."

"I regret it," the senator added. "I regret it because liberal references to it in the press have called unwarranted attention to one of several illustrations of my general propositions, which was that rich and powerful nations



SEN. J. WILLIAM FULBRIGHT

have a strong impact on small and weak ones. . . ."

"I am certainly not an authority on the morals and recreational activities of American soldiers, but thanks to the newspapers, I am rapidly becoming one. I have been receiving letters containing all sorts of interesting information about conditions in Saigon.

"Some have come from irate mothers, accusing me of maligning their sons. One came from an army wife who thanked me for confirming what she had always suspected.

"I had not thought I was maligning the brave young Americans in Viet Nam. What I was referring to was the inevitable impact on a fragile Asian society of western soldiers, of different culture, background and race, with plenty of money to spend, behaving in the way that is to be expected of men at war."

Fulbright said he regrets several things about his statement in a New York speech on April 28 that "America is showing some signs of that fatal presumption, that overextension of power and mission, which

brought ruin to ancient Athens, to Napoleonic France, and to Nazi Germany.

He said he regrets that he "neglected to make it clear that I was talking about the extent, not the character of a nation's aspirations; the distinction between Hitler's design for conquest and America's desire to do good in the world seemed to me so obvious as to be unnecessary to mention."

He said he further regrets "the absence from some press accounts of reference to the context of my statement, which was a speech about the effects of the Vietnamese war on American relations with the Soviet Union, eastern and western Europe, and on the Great Society at home."

Without once mentioning President Johnson by name, Fulbright asserted that his "arrogance of power" speech on May 5 "did not charge any American official with arrogance in the exercise of power."

He said his speech "was not about the arrogance of any individuals who hold power, but about the tendency of powerful nations, of which the

United States is the current example, to get puffed up about all the terrific things they think they ought to be doing with their power."

Johnson showed his sensitivity to Fulbright's "arrogance" statement by saying in a May 11 speech at Princeton University: "The exercise of power in this century has meant for the United States not arrogance but agony. We have used our power not willingly and recklessly, but always reluctantly and with restraint."

Fulbright said today that in talking about "the arrogance of power" that he was trying "to develop a concept, not an accusation."

He said he believes that "the press have some responsibility to make clear some distinction between an idea and an accusation and also to make some reference to the theme of a Senator's speech if not actually to summarize its contents."

But, he said he sometimes finds after making a speech that his central idea has been ignored and "I find myself embroiled in a silly controversy over some minor observation that could as well have been left out of the speech."

Fulbright told reporters at the luncheon that the press is "to a greater extent than you may know a conveyor of messages between different branches of the government." He said he thought reporters "had some responsibility for conveying the essence of messages, and not just those parts which lend themselves to controversy."

"The failure to do this at times, he added, "is my only important complaint about the press."