

LAST WEEK, Sen. J. William Fulbright delivered another of his characteristic orations. This one charged the President with unconstitutionally proclaiming an "Asian Doctrine," whatever that may mean.



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The interesting thing about this speech was not what was said, however, but what was not said. When the President first ordered American intervention in the Vietnamese war, a far less strange and esoteric line was taken by Sen. Fulbright, and by his friends in the press and in the intellectual community.

They all asserted, over and over again, that the President's actions would turn every American friend in Asia into a bitter enemy; that every honest Asian heart would be filled with burning indignation; that the Vietnamese war would appear, in Asian eyes, to be a naked revival of the worst in the colonial past, and so on and on.

These predictions were no doubt based on honest conviction, plus the customary lack of first hand knowledge of Asian problems. But surely it is a bit dishonest not to make something approaching an apology for these past predictions, now that events have proved the contrary.

THE MOST interesting and significant indication of the real Asian response to the U.S. effort in Vietnam came, some weeks ago, from the brilliant Prime Minister of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew. Lee is a Socialist, and when he has talked about this country in the past, he has almost always been sharply hostile.

In a public interview addressed to his own people, Prime Minister Lee forthrightly gave thanks for the American effort in South Vietnam, which he described as "buying time" for the Asians who want true self-determination. He was by no means uncritical of the details of the American effort, or over-optimistic about its end result.

But his main theme was

a warning to his fellow-Asians to take the fullest advantage of the time "bought" by this American effort, which might, he remarked, one day be terminated because there "are any number of Robert Kennedys around." While the U.S. effort continues, Prime Minister Lee concluded, "if we just sit down and believe people are going to buy time forever after for us, then we deserve to perish."

Prime Minister Lee was of course simply saying in public what every independent Asia leader has always said in private, from the moment President Johnson decided this country had a duty to help defend South Vietnam's right of self-determination.

If other Asian leaders did not share Prime Minister Lee's sentiments, all sort of things that are now happening would not be happening. The most extreme of all the neutralists, Gen. Ne Win, would not be coming from Burma to visit this country. In Cambodia, the volatile Prince Norodom Sihanouk would not be trying to edge away a bit from his hundred per cent bet on Peking and Hanoi.

Above all, if President Johnson had limply permitted the triumph of Communist aggression in South Vietnam, there would be no chance today for a sane, self-governing Indonesia. The forces of resistance that defeated the Communist coup in Djakarta, would have ceased to resist long before the coup was launched.

THE INDONESIAN case is merely the most dramatic illustration of the service done by the President's policy to the cause that Lee Kuan Yew sensibly defines as Asian self-determination. All over Asia—and not just in Southeast Asia—the people who wanted self-determination were getting ready to throw in the sponge before the American intervention in Vietnam. And now these people, who constitute the vast majority of thinking Asians, are instead working hopefully for a better sort of future, as described by Lee Kuan Yew.

Maybe the President's goal of Asian self-determi-

nation is an erroneous goal for the greatest power in the Pacific. Maybe it was a mistake for the United States to come to the rescue of Greece nearly 20 years ago. Maybe the true wisdom lay with those who wished to consign Greece itself, the first font of Western civilization, to the iron grip of Josef Stalin, because, so they said, Greece lay within Stalin's natural sphere of influence.

These are points that can be rationally debated—providing the true facts are set forth and the real problems are honestly defined. But an effusion like Sen. Fulbright's, containing no hint of any answer to Lee Kuan Yew and no shadow of an apology for previous errors, is not the sort of thing that advances public debate very much.

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Matter of Fact Fulbright's Dishonesty

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