

WH6501-04-6740

Date: 1965-01-19

Participant: Lyndon B. Johnson

Participant: Gerald R. Ford

Start Time: 14:29

Place: Oval Office, White House

SCROLLER TITLE: Forging Bipartisanship

SCENE SETTER: Speaking with newly elected House minority leader Gerald R. Ford [R-Michigan], President Johnson pledged to consult with Republicans on U.S. foreign policy and to engage them "with dignity and decency." Ford assured Johnson that any disagreements between his party and the administration would remain strictly on the issues.

President Johnson: I want you to know as much as the President knows, and I want you to have that assurance and that confidence, and I want you to have that participation. Because when I get run out of Vietnam, or when I get in a war with China, or if I got another stalemate for a year, there're going to be Republican boys shot just like Democrats, and they don't know the difference. And they're all patriots, and so I want everybody's decision [I] can get, and I'm perfectly willing and anxious to admit, just like I know you would be if you wound up here in the morning by fate like I did, to know that I don't know all the answers.

Gerald R. Ford: Well, Mr. President, let me say this without any hesitation or qualification, and I only pick this out as a point: your statement in the State of the Union message on your—our commitment to South Vietnam, I wholeheartedly and unequivocally stand by. And you can have my assurance in this regard, now and in the future. And I . . . but I do think that it's important that I and others on our side be as—be kept up to date as well as we can. Now, that doesn't mean [Robert S.] Bob McNamara has to be over here once a week telling us what's going on.

End of excerpt 1.

President Johnson: But I'm like [Arthur H.] Vandenberg [Sr.]: I want in on the takeoffs as well as the landings. Now, [Dwight D.] Eisenhower did that with me, and I've followed exactly the policy that you've announced you're going to follow. I said to him, "Mr. President, when I can't agree with you, I'll come tell you. I'll disagree with you with dignity and decency, and I won't talk about your dog or your boy. But I'll try to offer an alternative, and then I'll try to bloody your nose."

Ford: [*with President Johnson laughing and attempting to interject*] Well, this is the way we hope to proceed, and I would hope that we can, from now in the future, have as good a relationship as we've had in the past.

President Johnson: Well, we can, we can. And we're going to—I'm going to insist on it, as far as I'm concerned. And I never had a [*unclear*—I never had a quarrelsome word with Eisenhower for six years. Now, a good many times we differed.

Ford: Sure.

End of excerpt 2.

Ford: Well, you can assure—you can be assured, Mr. President, that what I've said about supporting you to the hilt when we, in our judgment, think you're right, and I think there will be many occasions where that will be true, and when we oppose, it'll be on the issue and not [*President Johnson acknowledges*] on any personalities or anything else.

End of excerpt 3.

CITATION: "Lyndon B. Johnson and Gerald R. Ford on 19 January 1965," Conversation WH6501-04-6740, *Presidential Recordings Digital Edition* [Election of 1964, vol. 2, ed. Kent B. Germany, Ken Hughes, Guian A. McKee, and Marc J. Selverstone] (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2014-). URL: <http://prde.upress.virginia.edu/conversations/4000979>

