



“My Congratulations and My Sympathy”

Date: 1968-08-08

Conversation: WH6808-01-13304

Participant: Lyndon B. Johnson

Participant: Richard M. Nixon

Start Time: 16:09

Duration: 03:44

Place: Lewis Ranch

SCENE SETTER: On the day that Richard M. “Dick” Nixon accepted the 1968 Republican presidential nomination, President Johnson called to congratulate him and to invite him to a classified briefing on negotiations for peace talks to end the Vietnam War.

Richard M. “Dick” Nixon: Hello?

President Johnson: Dick?

Nixon: Hello, Mr. President.

President Johnson: How are you?

Nixon: [*Slight chuckle.*] Well, I’m just fine. I haven’t had any sleep, but you know how that is.

President Johnson: I sure do, and I give you my congratulations and my sympathy.

Nixon: [*Laughs.*] Boy, I’ll tell you, isn’t that the truth.

President Johnson: Dick, I want to keep in close touch with you along the line we did—

Nixon: Wonderful.

President Johnson: —in our last talk, and I want to try to play this thing as much in the national interest as is humanly possible, and as fair as possible. And I have just one purpose, and that is the best interests of the country, and I believe that your conduct has been very responsible.

Nixon: Well—

President Johnson: There are some developments that have not changed the picture, but that I think you would do well to know about. I don’t want to influence any of your decisions. I wouldn’t change anything that I have seen that you’ve done. If I were in the same position, I would have pretty

much [*Nixon acknowledges*] followed the course of action, which I understand. I haven't read everything, but I'm away from the picture, but—

Nixon: You meant my statement on Vietnam?

President Johnson: Yes.

Nixon: I—we—it was pretty responsible, I thought.

President Johnson: So I—

Nixon: We're holding the line [*unclear*].

President Johnson: I had this thought: [Cyrus R. "Cy"] Vance is here. He is going to be going back to Paris [France]. I don't know what your plans or [Spiro T. "Ted"] Agnew's are. [Hubert H.] Humphrey [Jr.] is coming here tomorrow. He's campaigning in Texas. [Eugene J. "Gene"] McCarthy's [DFL-Minnesota] in Houston [*Nixon acknowledges*], and Humphrey is in Corpus Christi. He's coming by on his way to Corpus, and I'm going to bring him up to date with what has happened, and there have been some things happened, additional outlets, since we talked.

Nixon: Mm-hmm.

President Johnson: I thought I ought to say to you at the same time that if either or both of you were interested, that I would consider—I had not planned to do this with him—but I would consider bringing Vance down here if you went from Miami [Florida] to California anytime in the next two or three days before he has to go back.

Nixon: Mm-hmm.

President Johnson: And I would bring Vance and [Dean] Rusk here, and I would meet with you or whoever you wanted us to and bring you up to date on what's happened.

Nixon: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. Well, that—

President Johnson: It is not the thing that you are—that you raised the question about.

Nixon: The pause.

President Johnson: It goes in the opposite direction.

Nixon: I see.

President Johnson: But it's something that I think that would be well for you to know, and I would [*Nixon acknowledges*] say that there's great pressures that you ought to know about, which, in the light of my own views, I'm not going to succumb to.

Nixon: Yeah, right.

President Johnson: But I think that in an hour or an hour and a half [*Nixon acknowledges throughout*], that it would be good . . . If I were in your place, I would want [Dwight D.] Eisenhower, or you, or somebody in a similar place to discuss it with me. And my position's going to be—try to—

I'm going to exercise responsibility up until somebody says, "So help me God." But until that moment happens, I'm going to try to keep in touch with both leaders [Humphrey and Nixon] and see that they have it 50/50.

End of excerpt.

CITATION: "Lyndon B. Johnson and Richard M. Nixon on 8 August 1968," Conversation WH6808-01-13304, *Presidential Recordings Digital Edition* [Johnson Telephone Tapes: 1968, ed. Kent B. Germany, Nicole Hemmer, and Ken Hughes] (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2014–). URL: <http://prde.upress.virginia.edu/conversations/4006028>

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