

WH6512-05-9338_scroller

Date: 1965-12-27

Participant: Lyndon B. Johnson

Participant: McGeorge Bundy

Start Time: 09:35

Place: LBJ Ranch

SCROLLER TITLE: "He's a Fool"

SCENE SETTER: National Security Adviser McGeorge "Mac" Bundy discussed with President Johnson the possibility of having Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey Jr. ask the President of the Philippines, Diosdado P. Macapagal Sr., to send troops to Vietnam. President Johnson objected strongly to this suggestion, arguing that "I don't think it's wise to have [Humphrey] go out [and] make any proposition to anybody about anything."

President Johnson: Have you gone over my message to the head of the Philippines?

McGeorge "Mac" Bundy: Yeah, I'm not satisfied with it. And I'm—they're having a meeting, [Hubert H.] Humphrey [Jr.] and [Dean] Rusk, right now, to review the question of what might be asked out there. The question really is whether Humphrey ought to put the—how hard he ought to put it to him orally. Your message doesn't say anything but "Vietnam's very important, and Humphrey will talk to you about it." And the—we had a contingent agreement from [Diosdado P.] Macapagal [Sr.], about 2,200 men in a construction battalion. They have a legislative problem, the exact shape of which isn't as clear to me as it ought to be. And the question really is whether Humphrey might not simply say to him privately, "Look, we're going to need fighting men from the Philippines, but I'm not here to break up your inauguration by giving you an ultimatum. But this is the thing that matters most to us." The Philippines is—he's got a mess. He's got empty coffers and sugar problems [*unclear*]

President Johnson: I think if you discuss Vietnam with Humphrey in any way, that he'll be in every column in America in the morning.

Bundy: Yeah.

President Johnson: I've cautioned the boy seven times. And this morning, every paper down here is full of all the trades he's going to propose [*Bundy acknowledges throughout*] and what all he's going to do, and I think it would be a mistake to try to tell this man that, just as he's—I'd treat him just like I treated [J. Harold] Wilson when he came in, that I don't—I wouldn't be coming out there to tell him that he's got to win our war for us. I'd get him out there, and I'd brag on him and say he's the greatest guy in the world, and we've all got interests out there. And then when I got him away, I'd have somebody's—tell him, let [William M.] Bill Blair take a letter in, say, "Now, you told us—the Filipinos told us—that you'd come to our rescue after the elections and—"

Bundy: I agree with you.

President Johnson: "—here it is." I would love for Humphrey to do this when he learns, but he just cannot learn. He just does not know. I saw—Richard [L. "Dick"] Wilson's had a lengthy interview with him today [*Bundy acknowledges*] and two or three more. And he is giving out interviews now that he is really on top of the world situation, because he saw some Japanese newspaperman, and that his image against [Robert F.] Bobby Kennedy's [D—New York] not as bad as it—they say. And he's very defensive, and he's a fool! I told him if he'd quit worrying about his own goddamned image,

and go to worrying about the world a little bit, and get these hirelings away from him, why, we'll take care of his image.

Bundy: All he has to do is cut a little mustard in the department.

President Johnson: That's right. [*Bundy acknowledges.*] But—so I don't think it's wise to have him go out and—

Bundy: I agree with that.

President Johnson: —and make any proposition to anybody about anything. And I think Rusk ought to say to him that we haven't reached any conclusions on what they ought to do. That the best thing he ought to do is just say that Vietnam is important to this area of the world, and if we get licked there, we don't know what—how they'll stand up.

Bundy: Yeah. But not actually a proposition.

President Johnson: Not a damn thing.

Bundy: I agree with that.

President Johnson: When he asks him how many troops we want, say, "That's a matter you better talk to our ambassador about."

Bundy: Right.

End of excerpt.

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