As a member of the House of Representatives, Robert H. Michel served with nine presidents, from Dwight D. Eisenhower to Bill Clinton. In what he called his “Presidential Scrapbooks,” Michel kept selected photographs and correspondence with each of the nine.

Michel’s contact with Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, and Lyndon Johnson was limited and perfunctory. In the case of Kennedy, for example, no unique documents appear in the scrapbooks. The selection below reproduces what does exist for Eisenhower.

Michel’s most lengthy and substantive relationship with Richard Nixon is posted at http://www.dirksencenter.org/MichelNixon/index.html.

In the future we will add “Presidential Scrapbooks” selections for Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton, and George Bush.
General Dwight D. Eisenhower  
President, Columbia University  
New York, New York  

Dear General:

I address you as General simply because it is rather difficult to get out of the habit. I served more than two years under your command as an infantryman with the 39th Infantry.

I have always admired you for your guidance of our destinies in Europe and for the manner in which you have spoken out for good sound American principles of government since retiring from the Army.

While reading the morning newspapers, I was a little disturbed to read that you are being groomed more or less as a protege of the East for the 1952 presidential election. That is probably good politics for the time being as long as you do not lose sight of the fact that millions of Mid-Westerners are proud that you originally came from Kansas and are looking to you as our standard bearer.

President Truman's election last year indicates to me that it takes a Mid-Westerner to sell any program to the majority of the whole American population. With the population of the West increasing, a Republican presidential candidate must come from the Mid-West in order to win. Eastern Republicans are too stinted in their political views.

We of the Mid-West look to you, General, as the man best qualified and suited to represent the Republican Party and sell its platform to the majority of the voters. You are our only hope, and I sincerely hope when the time comes that you will again offer your services to preserve America.

Sincerely,

Robert H. Michel  
Suite 1604 First National Bank Building  
Peoria, Illinois
Dear Mr. Michel:

It is always nice to hear from an old soldier, particularly one who served in the Infantry, my old arm. Additionally, of course, I must thank you for the very great compliments paid me in your letter of the 12th.

While it is obviously necessary that, so long as I am connected with Columbia University, I be officially classed as an "Easterner", it is equally true that the roots of my family and my life are buried too deep in the West for me to ever think of myself as anything but a mid-Westerner.

I assure you, though, that these facts have no implications of any kind in the political world — at least so far as any personal politics may be concerned. I have earnestly and honestly tried to make my own position clear about these matters, and I assure you I have not changed my mind in the slightest degree.

With best wishes to a former comrade of ETO.

Sincerely,

Honorable Robert H. Michel
Representative in Congress
Suite 1604, First National Bank Bldg.
Peoria, Illinois
Dear Bob:

Thank you very much for your thoughtful message. Mrs. Eisenhower and I very deeply appreciate your gracious comments. And, of course, you know the tremendous treat it was for us to be with you, your friends and neighbors -- our friends in Illinois. We will not soon forget the warmth of that welcome in Peoria.

As your own campaign moves along, it occurs to me I might well repeat one thought to which you and I attach great importance. That is, the need to hold one political party accountable, during any one Administration, for the management of government. We can fix this responsibility under our system only when the Administration and the Congress are under the same political leadership. Obviously I am convinced, as I know you are, that the needs of all Americans will be best served by the return of the present Republican Administration to office, and by the election, at the same time, of a Republican Senate and a Republican House of Representatives. Your efforts are a vital part of that great undertaking, and my earnest good wishes are with you.

With warm regard,

Sincerely,

Mr. Robert H. Michel
1029 North Glenwood Avenue
Peoria, Illinois
THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

November 10, 1956

Dear Mr. Michel:

I am delighted to join your host of friends in congratulating you on your election to the House of Representatives. During the 85th Congress the problems facing the people of your District and the nation will demand the very best of all of us. I look forward to working in full cooperation with you in advancing the well-being and happiness of all our people. Again, my warmest congratulations.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Mr. Robert H. Michel
Congressman-elect
1029 North Glenwood Avenue
Peoria, Illinois
This photograph was taken at the White House on June 21, 1957, following a breakfast meeting with Republican Congressmen. Bob Michel, smiling, is third from the left in the third row.
HONORABLE EVERETT M DIRKSEN,
UNITED STATES SENATOR

CARE PAUL CATION BANQUET CHAIRMAN= PERE MARQUET
HOTEL CARE ASST HOTEL MGR ON DUTY PEORIA ILL=

PLEASE GIVE MY GREETINGS TO THE CITIZENS OF THE
EIGHTEENTH DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS GATHERED AT THE
TESTIMONIAL BANQUET FOR THEIR REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS,
THE HONORABLE ROBERT H. MICHEL.

AS A SOLDIER WHO FOUGHT AND SACRIFICED FOR THE
HIGHEST TRADITIONS OF AMERICAN DEMOCRACY, CONGRESSMAN
MICHEL BRINGS A COURAGEOUS SPIRIT TO THE NATION'S
CAPITOL. HIS LEGISLATIVE EXPERIENCE, HIS LOYALTY TO
CONSTITUENTS AND TO COUNTRY, MAKE HIM A SPLENDID ASSET
TO THE GOVERNMENT.

I AM DELIGHTED TO JOIN IN THIS TRIBUTE TO BOB
MICHEL. MY BEST WISHES TO HIM AND TO HIS FRIENDS=
Dwight D Eisenhower.
This photograph was taken on May 12, 1960, following a breakfast for Republican Congressmen. Michel is at the President’s right shoulder.
PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL

Dear Mr. Congressman:

I am astonished that Dr. and Mrs. Reed M. Smith can be so confident in their conclusions concerning the confused and unsatisfactory situation in Vietnam. Bradley is a splendid University and I am sure every individual deducing his life to the teaching of youth can always be certain of my respect and admiration, but I think that opinions of the kind they express can have validity only as they reflect intimate knowledge of the situation and actual experience in the region.

I quite agree that the present situation cannot be ascribed to either Democrats or Republicans. Indeed the difficulty goes a long ways back in point of time.

Every experienced soldier and every serious student of world affairs cannot fail to understand that in these modern times invading forces can never by force preserve peace and prosperity in any large and rebellious population unless they are ready to use the methods of the Kremlin or of a Hitler. If a people genuinely ask for and are given military help from the outside to preserve their own independent national institutions and culture, that is another matter. This means that the nation and the mass of its population must be working cooperatively with the foreign forces — only in this way can success be achieved.

PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL
The Vietnam War started almost instantly after the close of World War II and was in the first instance nothing more than an effort of the French to maintain the integrity of their "pre-war empire." A great mistake, and one that has never been fully rectified, was the French failure to win an enthusiastic cooperation of the population by pledging to all three countries of the Associated States their complete independence as soon as the military victory was won, and to make sure that this information would promptly reach every last individual in all Indochina.

Today, as I see it, two things are necessary: one, if we are to save the remnant of Southeast Asia, we must provide the kind of strength that will prevent a complete Communist take-over and at the same time must do more to acquaint all citizens of the region with the probity and decency of our intentions and the assurance that we have the capacity, with the populations' cooperation, to win.

To follow "DeGaulle's lead" and to assume that the Free World can have a satisfactory solution through so-called neutralism in the area is just wishful thinking. Anyone who will read the post-war expressions of beneficient Communist intentions regarding the Eastern tier of European States and then look to the fate of those unhappy nations should certainly hesitate before making a "bargain with the devil."

The Korean conditions of 1953 had little relation to the situation now existing in Vietnam. President Truman did not send troops into Korea to reunite the nation in freedom. The move was labelled a "police action" to defend the Republic from Communist aggression from the north. All the world, including the Korean people, knew of this commitment and when in 1953 the Communists recognized the punishment that they would take unless they agreed to an armistice on this basis, there was no longer any hesitation on their part. However, that agreement was not made on sheer faith; Korean forces supported by two divisions of American troops have been on guard to make sure that the truce is kept.
PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL

- 3 -

I am far from being in close touch with the situation as it now stands. But of one thing I feel sure: to believe that the free world is going to protect its rights in the Southeast Pacific based on a so-called neutralized Vietnam is unwise.

With best wishes,

Sincerely,

The Honorable Robert H. Michel
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C.