



Gerald Ford and the Challenges of the 1970s

Yanek Mieczkowski

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History has not been kind to Gerald Ford. His name evokes an image of either America's only unelected president, who abruptly pardoned his corrupt predecessor, or an accident-prone man who failed to provide skilled leadership to a country in domestic turmoil. In *Gerald Ford and the Challenges of the 1970s*, historian Yanek Mieczkowski reexamines Ford's two and a half years in office, showing that his presidency successfully confronted the most vexing crises of the postwar era.

Surveying the state of America in the 1970s, Mieczkowski focuses on the economic challenges facing the country. He argues that Ford's understanding of the national economy was better than that of any other modern president, that Ford oversaw a dramatic reduction of inflation, and that his attempts to solve the energy crisis were based in sound economic principles. Throughout his presidency, Ford labored under the legacy of Watergate. Democrats scored landslide victories in the 1974 midterm elections, and the president engaged with a spirited opposition Congress. Within an anemic Republican Party, the right wing challenged Ford's leadership, even as pundits predicted the death of the GOP. Yet Ford reinvigorated the party and fashioned a 1976 campaign strategy against Jimmy Carter that brought him from thirty points behind to a dead heat on election day.

Mieczkowski draws on numerous personal interviews with the former president, cabinet officials, and members of the Ninety-fourth Congress. In his reassessment of this underrated president, Ford emerges as a skilled executive, an effective diplomat, and a leader with a clear vision for America's future. Working to heal a divided nation, Ford unified the GOP and laid the groundwork for the Republican resurgence in subsequent decades. The first major work on the former president to appear in more than ten years, *Gerald Ford and the Challenges of the 1970s* combines the best of biography and economic, social, and presidential history to create an intriguing portrait of a president, his times, and his legacy.

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