

## WH6401-14-1364\_scroller

**Date:** 1964-01-15

**Participant:** Lyndon B. Johnson

**Participant:** Richard B. Russell Jr.

**Start Time:** 16:30

**Place:** Oval Office

SCROLLER TITLE: "It's Poison"

SCENE SETTER: Anticipating the likelihood that France would soon grant diplomatic recognition to the People's Republic of China, President Johnson and Senate Armed Services Committee chair Richard B. "Dick" Russell Jr. [D-Georgia] considered the implications for U.S. foreign policy. Among them was the belief that the United States would probably need to follow suit, though the time for doing so remained in the distant future.

*A television broadcasts in the background.*

**President Johnson:** Hello.

**Richard B. "Dick" Russell Jr.:** Hello?

**President Johnson:** [*softly*] [Charles] de Gaulle's going to recognize Communist China, and the question comes whether we or whether I ought to protest it rather strongly, or whether we ought to just let the government protest it. You've got two or three questions in there for the record. And our disposition is to just let the government protest it, [*burps*] ahead of time, and ask him to defer it. He'll pay no attention to it.

**Russell:** You mean the government of Taiwan?

**President Johnson:** No, the United States. The United States government would just say to him in a message that "we hope you won't do this," over the Secretary of State's signature, and then when [*unclear*]-

**Russell:** I think that may be all right, but I wouldn't go too strong on it, Mr. President, 'cause he ain't going to pay much attention to it, and—

**President Johnson:** You're not going to pay any—

**Russell:** —it makes you look bad when he goes ahead.

**President Johnson:** Well . . .

**Russell:** We, of course, we really got no control over their foreign policy.

**President Johnson:** That's right. None whatever, and when—

**Russell:** And the time's going to come when we might as well—can't talk about it now—the time's going to come when we're going to have to recognize them.

**President Johnson:** Yeah, I think so. I don't think there's any question on that.

**Russell:** I ain't too sure but what we'd have been better off [if] we'd [*President Johnson attempts to interject*] recognized three or four years ago.

**President Johnson:** I think so. It was the only thing [William O.] Bill Douglas said—

**Russell:** Politically, right now, it's poison, of course.

**President Johnson:** Uh-huh.

*End of excerpt.*

CITATION: "Lyndon Johnson and Richard Russell on 15 January 1964," Tape WH6401-14-1364, *Presidential Recordings Digital Edition [The Kennedy Assassination and the Transfer of Power]*, vol. 3, ed. Kent B. Germany and Robert David Johnson] (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2014–). URL: <http://prde.upress.virginia.edu/conversations/9030145>