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Letter From Chilean President Frei to President Nixon

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Nota de Archivo: *Santiago. Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 773, Country Files, Latin America, Chile, Vol. I. Secret. This translation and a copy of the original letter in Spanish were sent to Washington in airgram A–146 from Santiago, May 8, along with data on the copper industry given by Frei to Korry. In the airgram, Korry wrote, "While I cannot vouch for the authenticity of all the figures, I did warn the President that if any errors were to be discovered later, it would not serve the good faith or reputation of his government. He assured me that they had been triple-checked and that the most sensitive ones had been taken from the balance sheets from the companies which must submit their accounts to the Chilean Copper Corporation." (Ibid.)*

I have informed Ambassador Korry of the measures concerning copper that the Government of Chile will adopt.

At this moment I am preparing for presentation to my country a very complete program which will signify sacrifices by all sectors in order to deal efficiently with control of the inflationary process which concerns me gravely and above all with measures designed to resolve the consequences of the drought which affected us all last year and which has constituted a catastrophe for this nation, having affected a zone more than one thousand kilometers long which includes the most productive agricultural provinces of this country, and the reduction of water which has signified a severe rationing of electricity for the industrial sector.

To present this plan and to exclude from these sacrifices the copper producing companies is politically and morally impossible. On the other hand, the conditions of the international market have changed fundamentally and have produced de facto situations which it is absolutely necessary to modify.

In adopting these measures in regard to copper I would like to make clear some facts which to me seem essential:

1. During my entire administration I have desired to maintain the best relations with the people and the Government of the United States. It is my desire and my decision that these good relations should be maintained forever and accentuated because I believe that cooperation between our two countries is fundamental;

2. In adopting these measures I am not motivated by any political interest. I take them because I believe that we have a fundamental moral obligation and because these existing objective conditions more than justify action on the part of my government.

Surely you will think that this is a problem concerning which intervention by the Government of the United States is not appropriate given that it concerns relations between my government and private companies. This is so, but it has appeared convenient to me that you know the reasons why I should proceed and the thinking which moves me and the objectives which I pursue.

I have had given to the Ambassador all the figures and antecedents in order that he can inform his government in a most complete and detailed manner.

May I reiterate to you, Mr. President, my sentiments of friendship and great esteem.

With cordial greetings,