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Backchannel Message From the Ambassador to Chile (Korry) to the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs (Johnson)

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Korry Four Page Message dated 24 September 1970

1. Source cited Paragraph 8 (yesterday's) reftel saw Frei at noon today to inquire about Frei–Allende meeting Wednesday night in Valdes home. Frei vehemently denied it adding Allende had gone to Valdes home. Frei would give no details on Allende–Valdes meeting. (U.S. business community reps report Valdes spreading word that Allende should not be regarded as Marxist but more as a radical with whom business can be transacted.)

2. Frei admitted to source that it did not look as if he could win party junta or enough votes on October 24 (as source had insisted) but that he had not totally given up.

3. Source suggested that bringing military into cabinet was only way to block Allende. Frei agreed but said that once military was in government how could he be sure at this time they would do anything more than assure Allende's victory.

4. Same source called on Perez Zujovic last night who insisted he still working on winning control of party junta for Frei and that at minimum he wanted to roll up big opposition vote against acceptance of Allende. Added that his strategy was to convince junta that PDC should be given key ministerial posts in Allende government as only sure guaranty. Perez said Senator Carmona had taken his place as main Frei massager with PDC senators and deputies.

5. Another excellent source quoted Esteban Tomic, son of candidate who has recently returned to Foreign Ministry from campaign train, as stating yesterday that it would not be bad if PDC split, that the party would be purified. I believe that Tomic senior favors this solution and also one of loudest exponents of the Italian model theory whereby Chile proves you can have "Christians of the left," Communists and Socialists in one happy bridge-building brigade. He seems to ignore totally that PDC would disappear as political force. In fact Tomic is now a total MAPU man—that is, proselytizing for Chonchol, Gumucio and Silva Solar. (MAPU pulled a maximum of one per cent in the presidential elections for Allende but they have lots of attraction for youth.)

6. I continue to believe Frei is keeping all options open, that he is injecting yeast into different mixes and seeing which ones rise—military, economic or party. For the moment that is the best he can do since I think the essential conditions do not yet exist to have the army move and that a popular justification is necessary. A close vote in the PDC junta in favor of Allende would not be as helpful as a vote against Allende but Frei is working for at least the minimum since a worsening economic situation after the junta (scheduled October 3–4) could still affect the October 24 ballot. A minimal vote for Allende October 24 in a secret ballot even if more than his 80 sure votes could still spark a military reaction after October

24th if the economic conditions were right—and a worsening economy could in turn provoke at any time the kind of leftist violence that would prompt greater army intervention and concerns.