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Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon

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Nota de Archivo: *Washington. Source: National Security Council, Nixon Intelligence Files, Subject Files, Chile, 1970. Secret; Sensitive. Sent for action. The memorandum is attached to an October 18 memorandum to Kissinger in which Vaky noted, "Since it had to cover a number of complex tactical issues it is unavoidably long. If you think it too long it could be divided at the end of the fifth paragraph on page 3. The first part could then be a memo on the general nature of the problem leading to a recommendation the President agree to an NSC meeting November 5, and the latter part a memo asking his decision on the tactical questions we have. Korry wants State to seek a presidential decision on phasing out other programs and personnel, and State's memo may contain that. It seems to me, however, that this is part of the longer strategy to be considered later. There is no reason why the President has to make a decision*

Chile—Immediate Operational Issues

It now appears certain that Allende will be elected President of Chile in the October 24 Congressional run-off elections. He will be inaugurated November 3. The Senior Review Group is now working on the formulation of a specific strategy to deal with an Allende government.

We can assume that Allende has a profound anti-American bias which will lead him to work against our influence in the hemisphere and elsewhere. The consolidation of power by an Allende government, therefore, is likely to affect a number of US interests adversely:

a. An Allende government is likely to lead opposition to US influence in the hemisphere, to promote policies counter to ours and to seek the adoption of a neutralist "Third World" stance by Latin America.

b. It is likely to seek linkages to the Soviet Union, Cuba and other socialist countries; Chile could thus constitute another entry point for these countries' influence and activities in the area.

c. Allende will almost surely expropriate US investments sooner or later; whether he will also compensate adequately is not clear.

d. The successful existence of a Marxist government in Chile is likely to encourage elements opposed to us in other Latin American countries, and to provide a psychological boost to those who argue for closer ties with the Soviets or who seek a Marxist pattern for their societies.

The formulation of a strategy to contain or eliminate these threats must also take into account: a) the nature of the present situation in Chile and of Allende's internal position, and b) Allende's own specific "game plan":

a. Allende starts his term with an initially weak position:

—the coalition that supports him is heterogeneous and fractious, with significant friction between the Communists and Socialists;

—the economic situation is deteriorating, placing strong economic restraints upon his capacity to succeed;

—he is a minority president, and there will be strong opposition to any move toward a totalitarian state;

—the political process is cumbersome and it is, therefore, difficult for Allende to consummate a "take over" quickly; there is opportunity for effective political opposition within the system if the opposition acts decisively;

—the military is suspicious of him.

b. To meet these weaknesses, Allende's "game plan" will almost certainly seek legitimacy and respectability; to reassure the apprehensive or concerned and to move carefully to avoid coalescing opposition to him prematurely; to keep his opposition fragmented and then slice their power bit by bit as he is able. Left to his own game plan and pace he probably has the capacity and skill to consolidate his power and neutralize his opposition in a year or two.

It is clear that Allende is not voluntarily going to modify his goals, nor is he likely to have any interest in negotiating such a modification just to get along with us. A US policy of seeking accommodation with him, therefore, is unlikely to deter him from an anti-US course if he wants and is able to take it.

We have been led to conclude, therefore, that only some kind of adversary strategy promises to contain or deter effectively the adverse impact on our interests of an Allende regime. The question is what kind of posture this requires and what degree of hostility.

Our capacity to engineer Allende's overthrow quickly has been demonstrated to be sharply limited. The question, therefore, is whether we can take action—create pressures, exploit weaknesses, magnify obstacles—which at a minimum will either insure his failure or force him to modify his policies, and at a maximum might lead to situations where his collapse or overthrow later may be more feasible.

There are theoretically, two approaches such a strategy might take:

—One would be a frankly overtly hostile policy, utilizing all possible pressures and demonstrating that hostility openly;

—The other would be a publicly "correct" but cold posture, with pressure and hostility supplied non-overtly and behind the scenes, and hostile measures demonstrated publicly only in reaction to provocation.

Both courses would use essentially the same measures—e.g., CIA activity, economic and diplomatic pressures. The difference—and the issue—lies in the question of how overt our hostility should be.

The overt course has the merit of demonstrating our position openly and unambiguously, both domestically and abroad. Its defect is that its very overtness may make it self-defeating. A US position of public confrontation and a visibly punitive policy is almost sure to galvanize the forces of nationalism into Allende's greatest asset both within Chile and in the rest of Latin America. It moreover gives him the opportunity to blame us for his failures or weaknesses and thus escape some of the consequences of his own mistakes.

The merit of the non-overt course is that while it also utilizes the same kinds of pressure and hostility it promises to increase their effectiveness by avoiding the risks inherent in public hostility. It is in a sense the converse of Allende's game plan—just as he would avoid public postures that would alarm and coalesce his opposition, so this strategy would seek to avoid public postures that would give him a way to blunt the effect of our pressure. Its defect is that it requires some fine tuning and may seem less vigorous to our friends.

There are a variety of “game plans” which could be constructed to illustrate and implement each of these two broad approaches. A decision as to basic strategy and an action program for Chile will be of major importance and will have long-range and far-reaching implications in Latin America and elsewhere. For that reason, the Senior Review Group strongly recommends—and I concur—that this question be considered by the NSC and that a meeting be held as soon as your schedule permits.

While you do not have to make a basic decision as to strategy and program now, there are a few tactical issues on which a decision is required in the next few days. These are outlined below, and recommendations regarding them summarized at the end of the memo:

1. Do we make any approach to Allende prior to his inauguration November 3 either a) to obtain commitments from him not to take certain anti-US actions; or b) to be sure he understands what the consequences may be of such actions?

a) Ambassador Korry has requested authority to make an immediate private approach to Allende to negotiate a series of commitments from him ranging from promises not to nationalize US property without compensation, to not recognizing Vietnam or exporting revolution. No one can quarrel with the desirability of having such commitments, but Korry has not demonstrated that it is possible to obtain them nor has he defined what it is he would offer in return.

The commitments relate to things Allende may not do anyway during his consolidating period under his game plan; moreover to be meaningful they require some precise negotiating which is a long process if achievable at all (e.g. what constitutes adequate compensation, or exporting of revolution). If, to secure these commitments, we offer to aid Allende, we insure his consolidation; if we offer non-hostility we give up our main pressure against him; if we threaten him we give him the opportunity to appeal to nationalism to excuse his activities by charging we tried to intimidate him. If he chooses to violate any commitments later when he is stronger we cannot prevent it, and if he wants to neutralize us he could string us out in “talks”.

If Korry made the pitch and Allende said no, we would then lose our flexibility and be forced immediately to a confrontation position or appear to be a paper tiger. In short, I cannot see that we gain by this gambit while tactically we risk a great deal.

I recommend that we take no initiative to negotiate a deal with Allende prior to the inauguration.

b) State has suggested that, as distinct from a negotiation, an approach to Allende may be useful to make sure he understands our likely reaction if he takes anti-US actions. While I think we need be under no illusion that he fails to understand what we could do, he may conceivably believe that we would ignore his actions. A “warning” that we would not could be accomplished either privately, through Korry or the Chilean Ambassador here, or through a general public statement of our concerns.

A private approach has the merit of getting the message directly to Allende, but it has the same defect as the negotiation gambit—it gives him the initiative to claim either that we threatened or that we “negotiated,” and it may lead him to miscalculate ever more seriously.

A public statement of comment could accomplish the objective of “sending a message,” and have the additional merit of making a public record of our concerns for domestic and foreign consumption. It has the defect of giving him the opportunity to charge public intimidation, although this could be countered if the comment is skillfully phrased. Public statement could be made by you or by a USG spokesman at some suitable level. Your comment would clearly carry the most weight, but I do not see that your personal involvement at this early stage is necessary to achieve our objective; it may be better to preserve your prestige for some later use when it may be more necessary. Sufficiently official and desirably

natural character could be given a statement by Ziegler in response to a planted question on the occasion of the October 24 election.

I recommend that we use the press spokesman gambit to observe that we have noted Chile's electoral process is completed, that it is now up to Chile and that we would of course be gravely concerned with any policy measure which damaged US interests or sought to disrupt the cohesion and harmony of the hemisphere, such as etc., etc.

2. Should you send the customary congratulatory message to Allende upon his election October 24?

While customary, it is not required that you send a personal message. Not to do so will be taken as coldness, but it is not the kind of action Allende can very well react against or use specifically. To send a message, even if perfunctory, would be perceived as your personal recognition of Allende's accession to power and as our "accepting" Allende. That risk seems to outweigh the risk of being charged with appearing cold or hostile. Therefore, in balance I recommend that you send no message.

3. Should we say anything to other Latin American countries now?

Just as Allende should be under no doubt as to our concerns, neither should our friends. To say nothing may lead them to think we are unconcerned. Moreover, since we will need their cooperation in containing any anti-US moves that Allende may make in the hemisphere context, we should be coordinating our position to be ready. Therefore, I recommend that prompt private consultations be undertaken with key countries to outline our views and concerns in some detail, including those things for which we will be watching and against which we would react—e.g. confiscation of property, Soviet military presence, export of revolution.

4. What kind of delegation should we send to the November 3 inauguration?

We have been invited to send a special, high-powered delegation, but this we would not want to do. Our practical choices are to send Assistant Secretary Meyer—which has been our customary pattern,—or to designate Ambassador Korry to represent us at the inauguration.

The custom in this case is more rigorous than in the case of congratulatory messages. To designate Korry would be seen as a calculated rebuff, and Allende could credibly claim he was the aggrieved party without justification. Meyer's level is still less than they have asked and is, therefore, suitably "cool," but has the virtue of being our pattern and custom. Hence Allende has no propaganda opening, but can see the "message."

I recommend that Meyer be designated to head a small, low-key delegation, and that he be instructed to be cool and formal in his protocolary contacts with the new government.

5. We suspended pipeline shipments of military equipment previously contracted in an effort to provoke the military to action. Since they did not act, should we resume such aid and if so when?

If we continue to suspend military aid it will appear we are punishing the military, which is the last group in Chile we ought to punish. Moreover, if we maintain the suspension, we will have no "screws" to tighten in this sector later if we wish to increase pressure on Allende. The best posture would be to show to the Chilean military that it is Allende's hostility which produced the cut-off. If we renew we should do so before October 24; to wait until after the runoff election may be seen as a step taken in recognition of that election.

I recommend we resume the pipeline shipments in small amounts immediately, keeping in mind that they will be cut off as soon as Allende takes hostile action.

6. [1 paragraph (14 lines) not declassified]

[1 paragraph (2 lines) not declassified]

Summary of Recommendations

1. That you disapprove any private contact or negotiating with Allende prior to inauguration.

2. That you not send a personal congratulatory message to Allende on his election.

3. That you approve an expression of concern by press spokesmen in response to queries about the October 24 election, as the means of conveying our “message” to Allende for the moment.

4. That you authorize prompt private consultations and coordination with other key Latin American countries.

5. That you approve the resumption of deliveries on previously contracted and purchased military equipment.

6. That you authorize the phase out of the US Air Force atmosphere testing unit currently stationed in Chile.