DECLASSIFIED // SECRET; SENSITIVE

Briefing Memorandum From the Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs (Hurwitch) and the Director of the Policy Planning Staff (Hartman) to Secretary of State Rogers

Identificador Archival:	frus:frus1969-76v21/d171
Agencia Emisora:	Departamento de Estado
Fecha del Documento:	1970-11-03
Colección / Serie:	FRUS 1969–1976, vol. XXI: Chile, 1969–1973

Nota de Archivo: *Washington. Source: Department of State, S/S–NSDM Files, Lot 83D305. Secret; Sensitive. Sent through Irwin, Johnson, and S/S. A copy was sent to Irwin, Johnson, and Pedersen.*

NSC Meeting on Chile, Thursday, November 5, 1970, 3:00 p.m.

The assumption of power in Chile by the Allende government is clearly a setback for the U.S. and a gain for our opponents. Nevertheless, the manner in which the U.S. treats Chile under a democratically- elected Marxist President, in a hemisphere where a key current issue is U.S. domination, can incur even more serious losses for us in the hemisphere and elsewhere in the world. With respect to Latin America, our future role in the hemisphere may well be at stake. The policy we adopt toward Chile is, therefore, a watershed decision.

U.S. policy toward Chile will be assessed by many governments and their peoples as a test of the U.S. announced policy of respect for the outcome of democratic elections. Failure on our part to act from the outset in a manner consistent with that policy would reduce our credibility throughout the world. Such failure would probably also: increase nationalism directed against us and divert attention from the real issue of the potential establishment of an authoritarian Marxist state; be used by the Allende government to consolidate its position with the Chilean people and to gain influence in the rest of the hemisphere, where other governments are also facing threats from leftist nationalist forces; and move the Allende government to seek even closer relations with the USSR than it might have initially contemplated.

Respect for the outcome of the elections and awareness of the intensity of Latin American nationalism carry with them the obligation that the U.S. manifest, at the least, a deliberate, restrained attitude and that we refrain from overt actions which could be interpreted by Latin American governments and others as hostile and without evident and warranted basis. This posture would mean that, in the main, we respond to situations rather than take initiatives. Although the Allende government’s ultimate goals appear clear—the establishment of an authoritarian Marxist state—the route he may be forced to take because of the problems he will face, is marked by many, perhaps important, unknowns which may provide us with unforeseen opportunities to exercise our influence.

Another fundamental consideration in dealing with Chile is a realistic assessment of U.S. capability to influence the situation there. We believe that developments in Chile will be primarily controlled by the Allende government and by its reactions to internal pressures. U.S. overt and covert capabilities to force the course of events positively in our favor, short of the use of armed force, are marginal at best, and for the reasons described above as well as the considerable risks of exposure, could be seriously counter-productive.

Our consultations with the other American republics reveal that they share our concern over developments in Chile, but in the main have adopted a “wait and see” attitude and counsel us to do the same.

To date, Chile has not become a major political issue in the U.S.; predominant editorial reaction has been to compliment the administration for its restrained reaction to events in Chile. We expect that as time passes Chile may become more of a political issue accompanied by criticism as to why we haven’t “done something” about Chile. If by our actions and attitudes, however, we have contributed to a worse situation in Chile and elsewhere in the hemisphere, the criticism will be even greater.

The paper describes four policy options. Although for tactical reasons Options A and B appear as distinct options, Option A is in reality an exposition of the philosophy underlying Option B, and we regard them as one option. Taken together, they provide that the U.S. should maintain publicly a restrained, deliberate attitude toward Chile, and should seek to respond to developments as they occur, in a manner under which we would not take the initiative in actions that would isolate us from Chile. The courses of action listed under Option B are equally applicable to Option A. Should circumstances so require, there are several courses of action listed under Options C and D that could also be followed under Option A/B. In sum, Option A/B, together with the stated assumptions and introductory comments for the options, offers a good rationale for our actions and at the same time provides us a wide latitude to meet probable developments in Chile.

Option C proposes that early on we publicly and repetitively express our concern over developments in Chile by making publicly clear our opposition to the emergence of a Communist government in Latin America. This option provides otherwise that the United States would react to developments in Chile rather than take initiatives in advance of them.

Option D proposes that from the outset we adopt the public posture of an adversary toward Chile and place into effect immediately certain economic, political and diplomatic measures. These measures would seek to prevent Allende from consolidating his position, but we believe they would be entirely inadequate for that end and would risk being counter-productive.

ARA–S/PC recommends that at least for the next several months the United States should continue its restrained, deliberate posture, refraining to the extent possible from commenting publicly upon Chilean developments, while retaining our flexibility to meet situations in Chile as they arise. Option A/B is suitable for these purposes; Options C and D are not, in that they would place us in too prominent a public posture and in the case of Option D would have us take actions without evidence convincing to others that such actions were warranted.

There is also attached a “talking points” paper which, based upon inter-agency meetings regarding Chile, lists questions you may be asked and their suggested answers.