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Backchannel Message From the Ambassador to Chile (Korry) to the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs (Johnson) and the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)

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1. Santiago Embtel 343 of this date provides all the pertinent background material on the April senatorial race. This message furnishes additional material inappropriate for the other channel.

2. I have been approached during the past fortnight directly or indirectly by most of the key decision makers in the PDC and PN involved in the senate contest. In sum, the Nacional Party wished me to intervene with Frei to force the PDC to support an "independent" or Radical Party dissident (PDR) who would be the anti-Marxist common standard-bearer. Aside from protesting that I could not convince Frei, I pointed out to them the pitfalls of such a strategy (the possible defection of PDC senators to the UP thus providing Allende with a crucial majority in the upper house and the practical problems of eliciting 5000 petitioners in little more than a fortnight at huge expense). Also the premature public declarations made earlier in the month by National Party leader Jarpa and by the PDR calling for a common front with the PDC against the UP had produced the inevitable reaction against the right within the PDC. This maladroitness combined with the last minute loss of euphoria by Jarpa following his return form the US obviated any chance, in my judgment, of the kind of deal they desired.

3. Meanwhile Zaldivar and other Frei cohorts have been reporting on their outlook. After hearing all the pros and cons I responded forthrightly and personally to Zaldivar's appeal for an honest opinion last Wednesday. Since he obviously wished to run, I encouraged him for all the reasons given in the RefTel and because I was and am persuaded that if a single "outside" candidate could not be agreed upon, as was the case, then the greatest combined number of opposition votes was the next best alternative. My feeling after studying the charts was that Zaldivar would make the best run of any PDC candidate in the area. I felt too that there was a reasonable chance that Silvia Alessandri might withdraw in favor of Zaldivar while a weak PDC candidate would have disastrous impact on the mood and direction of the PDC, shoving it towards and reinforcing the UP. I inquired of Zaldivar if he had spoken to Jorge Alessandri since I felt that the latter's views might be critical for Zaldivar's own difficult decision. I was surprised to discover that he had never met the old man but he said he would seek a meeting Monday (of this week) prior to his decision.

4. Today Silvia Alessandri came unannounced to my office (walking up the four flights that separate me from her uncle's office in the same building). She wished to know if she should cede to Zaldivar or not. My questions elicited the essential knowledge that Zaldivar had met with her Monday of this week to appeal for her withdrawal just prior to February 24th.

(With instructions to her followers to vote their consciences.) That she personally did not wish to run, that she would prefer to concentrate her partisan efforts in the municipal elections in her own Santiago where she has a strong following, that Jorge Alessandri was very opposed to her senatorial candidacy and that she was persuaded she would finish third to Sepulveda (first) and Zaldivar if she were to run. Without taking any stand that could once again persuade the Nacionales that we are really all card-carrying PDC'ers at heart (as they became convinced in 1963–67) or that could hurt the amiable relations I have been developing with Jarpa, I asked a series of questions the purposes of which were to reinforce her own hesitations and to plant the notion that if the PDC and PN were to divide their labors, with Zaldivar concentrating on the senate race and the PN on the municipalities, both human and material resources would be at their maximum efficiency. The material resource euphemism was not pursued but I am certain that she had her own clear interpretation. She may well pursue it next week when I see her at her request but I will stay clear of that subject and its ramifications, leaving it to others to handle.

5. [7 lines not declassified]

6. An essential factor in the eventual decision that the PN must make in the next three weeks about Silvia Alessandri is the attitude of the PDR, whose best known current member, Senator Raul Morales (of recent supreme court decision notoriety), has quite an impressive following in his district which Zaldivar is presenting himself. If the PDR [less than 1 line not declassified] were to throw its weight to Zaldivar, the PN, I reckon, would not insist on its own candidate since it recognizes that the PDR would be a very significant defection. Incidentally, Anaconda has had special relations with Senator Morales for many years and the factors involved in the Chilean calculus, including the copper bill before the Congress, could be affected together with the election if the company were to play its hand skillfully.

7. To the extent that we can, I would prefer, and am seeking, to force the difficult decisions back on the Chileans themselves, be it copper or elections. Only if they reach their own decisions in their own interests will they feel responsible for the consequences of their own actions. [1½ lines not declassified]

8. [1½ lines not declassified]