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

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Chilean Municipal Election Results

With about 90% of the vote counted the results of Sunday's municipal elections confirm the trend set by the earlier returns and give an important victory to President Allende and his Popular Unity (UP) Government.

A breakdown of the percentage gained by each party follows. These are official figures with the nulls and voids counted:

The Government, however is playing a numbers game, omitting (contrary to traditional practice) null and void ballots from the total, and thereby giving the UP 50.9% of the vote which permits it to claim an absolute majority. Statistical juggling aside, the major results of the election are as follows:

—The UP coalition received about 50% of the vote, give or take a fraction of a percentage point either way. This is a significant gain over the 36% it won in last September's presidential election and over the 44% which was generally regarded as the traditional base of the UP parties. While the Chilean electorate traditionally is kind to a new President in the first election following his inauguration, the results do give Allende an increased mandate for pursuing his programs.

—The election results will have a major impact on the relative standing of the parties within the UP coalition. The Socialists, who increased their share of the vote to 22.4% from 13% in the 1969 Congressional elections (there was no party breakdown for the UP vote in the Presidential elections), have supplanted the Communist Party as the principal force in the coalition. The Communists increased their vote only slightly to 17% compared to 16% they won in 1969. Thus, the Communist position in the UP has suffered relative to the strong showing of the Socialists. The third major party in the UP coalition, the more moderate Radical Party, suffered a slight absolute loss and thus a relative decline within the UP.

—The opposition made a respectable showing under the circumstances. Taken together the opposition parties got 48% of the vote. The Christian Democrats (PDC) remain the largest single party in the country with some 25.6% of the vote. The Nationalist Party more or less held its own with 18.1%. Their mutual suspicion resulted in limited cooperation between the major opposition parties and probably reduced their effectiveness.

The election results are pretty clearly a personal victory for Allende who has played his cards very deftly since his inauguration. The strong showing of the Socialists can be attributed primarily to the fact that this is Allende's own party. The election results will probably strengthen Allende's authority within the UP coalition, as well as his ability to

manipulate the opposition. He thus should be in a more advantageous position for accelerating the implementation of his programs. The Socialists, interpreting the results of the election as a victory for them, will almost certainly press for a more rapid pace, and the opposition is likely to be more on the defensive than in the past.

Allende has already made efforts to split off the left wing of the PDC and bring it into the UP. If successful, the UP might gain control of the Senate. It is unclear yet whether the results of the election were sufficiently damaging to enhance the chances of a split in the PDC. The chances are that some individuals from the left wing of the PDC may defect, but the party will probably hold together at least until its convention next summer.

Allende had previously indicated that if he obtained a majority at the polls, he would seek a plebiscite on a constitutional amendment to replace the present bicameral legislature with a unicameral one. Since the opposition controls the present legislature, and congressional elections are not scheduled until 1973, approval of such a constitutional amendment would force early elections of a new legislature in a climate more favorable to the UP. However, Allende has made no statement on this subject since the election. In any event, legislation would have to be submitted to the Congress first, and could be put to a plebiscite only if the Congress rejects it.

In the race for the Senatorial seat vacated by Allende when he became President—the only election above the local level—the UP candidate Adonis Sepulveda won with just under 50% of the vote. The PDC candidate, former Finance Minister Andres Zaldivar, received 33%, and a third party candidate supported by the PN received 15%. Despite strong pressures, the PN refused to withdraw the third candidate apparently preferring to preserve its position for the future, rather than allowing the UP or the PDC to achieve a clear majority.

The elections occurred in a climate which was most favorable for the UP, when the benefits of their actions—price reductions, wage increases, increased social welfare benefits—have been felt by the electorate. Allende may find it difficult to sustain the honeymoon climate later, however, when the impact of the Government’s programs on inflation and production become increasingly apparent.