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Memorandum From the Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs (Crimmins) to the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs (Porter)

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Additional Funds for Chilean Opposition for March Elections

In the attached memorandum to the 40 Committee CIA requests an additional [dollar amount not declassified] to support the political opposition in Chile in the campaign leading to the 4 March Congressional elections. Ambassador Davis has endorsed the proposal.

The latest authorization by the 40 Committee for this purpose was in October 1972, when $1,427,666 was approved. The current request is designed to compensate for subsequent adverse developments, principally a sharp rise in prices affecting the cost of such things as campaign material, media advertising, and transportation, coupled with a shortfall in funds that the Christian Democrats had been promised by [less than 1 line not declassified].

Of the sum requested, [dollar amount not declassified] would go to each of the two leading opposition parties, the Christian Democratic Party (PDC) and the National Party (PN), and [dollar amount not declassified] would go into a contingency fund for use with individual candidates of all opposition parties in cases where it appeared that financial help could make a critical difference.

ARA and INR believe the request should be granted. It is of course not possible to state with precision the extent to which our aid to the opposition has contributed to its viability and to its excellent prospects in the present campaign, but we have no doubt that it has been an important element. As far as we can tell, the money has been used wisely, with a minimum of waste and perceived corruption, and with no security compromise.

The March elections will be the first general test in a vote for national offices that the competing political forces in Chile have undergone since Allende’s assumption of office. If the opposition can come within striking distance of the 60% of the vote total that more optimistic predictions accord it, those influences now frustrating the Popular Unity Government’s effort to establish an irreversibly Marxist state will be strengthened and toughened. Even a 55% total would provide a healthy base from which to maintain an effective opposition.

We are under no illusions that a successful opposition effort in the election would have as an inevitable consequence the preservation of Chilean democracy; we do believe that an opposition failure could gravely compromise Chile’s future.

Recommendation

That you support the proposal for providing an additional [dollar amount not declassified] to the Chilean opposition.