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Memorandum From the Executive Secretary of the Department of State (Eliot) to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)

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Chilean Congressional Elections

The Chilean parliamentary election of March 4 resulted in practical political terms in a continued stalemate, with both sides claiming "victory." Nevertheless, the better-than-expected showing of the UP represents a psychological assist to Allende.

In the nation-wide vote to elect 150 Deputies, the opposition obtained 54.7 percent of the popular vote to the Government's 43.3 percent. President Allende had claimed that anything over the 36 percent plurality he received in September 1970 would be a "victory." This assertion ignored for obvious reasons the fact that his Popular Unity (UP) candidates had won 49 percent of the vote in the country-wide April 1971 municipal elections. Opposition spokesmen had portrayed the election as a "plebiscite" asserting that anything over 50 percent for their candidates would signify that a majority of Chileans reject Allende's brand of socialism.

Opposition expectation of a 60 percent majority and its outside hopes for an even larger margin that would have given them two-thirds control of the Congress (needed to override Presidential vetoes), did not materialize. The substantial opposition majority in Congress was slightly reduced from 93 to 87 seats in the Chamber (150 total) and from 32 to 30 in the Senate (50 total). The loss in seats was not en-tirely unexpected nor is it so significant as the lower-than-expected percentage of the total vote because of the opposition's "over-representation" in the Congress dating back to the pre-Allende 1965 and 1969 parliamentary elections, and the fact that UP incumbents occupied only 9 of the 25 Senate seats which were being contested.

While the UP lost electoral support from its April 1971 highpoint, it does appear to have consolidated its strength at the 40 percent level essentially on urban poor and campesino support for the two Marxist parties, Socialist and Communist. The opposition's failure to obtain a wider margin of victory will be disappointing to those who hoped the results would force Allende to modify decisively the pace and direction of his "revolution." The basically inconclusive outcome leaves most participants in the Chilean political scene, including the military, in much the same relative positions as they were in before. Chile's political impasse will continue with the military still serving as the arbiter of power and guarantor against violence by either side, at least for the immediate future. The results will tend to reduce the prospects for violence from what might have been more frustrated UP extremists or more exuberant opposition rightists. The election results will do nothing to resolve or alter the country's deepening economic crisis.