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Memorandum From the Director of Operations Policy, Bureau of Intelligence and Research (Gardner) to the Deputy Director for Coordination, Bureau of Intelligence and Research (McAfee)

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ARA/CIA Meeting, 11 June 1973

ARA—Messrs. Kubisch, Hurwitch and Shlaudeman;

CIA—[name not declassified]; INR/DDC—James R. Gardner

[Omitted here is discussion unrelated to Chile.]

Chile

After [name not declassified] reviewed the financial details of the new proposal for extending the financial assistance to the Chilean opposition, Mr. Kubisch recalled the reservations that he had expressed on 30 May and remarked on the dimensions of the risks in today’s atmosphere that we ran were our assistance to become known.

Mr. Shlaudeman said that the risk of our assistance becoming known centered here rather than in Chile. Neither side in Chile really wanted to raise the matter. The subject of covert foreign assistance had been deprived of much of its credibility because of overplay by Marxist elements in Chile. The secrecy of the operations in Chile have actually been very good, as good as any he had ever seen. The real danger of compromise lay here rather than in Chile; exposure here would receive a far bigger play and far more credence in Chile than anything that could be said there.

Mr. Kubisch remarked that we had been involved in the Chile electoral process for so long that it would take a long clean period before there would be general belief that we were not involved.

Mr. Shlaudeman said we had made considerable progress in the past few years in convincing the Chileans that we were not trying to rig their elections. He noted that it was widely believed that we did not give financial support to Chilean parties during the last congressional elections. To him, the important step was to keep clear of any role in which we were attempting ourselves to engage in operational activities. We could not tell Chileans how to run a campaign. To do so would get us into trouble comparable to that arising out of the 1964 elections.

Mr. Kubisch noted that the CIA paper had pointed up three possible positions. One of these, a golpe, was not held to be a serious possibility. Why? [name not declassified], replying for the Agency, said in effect that the Chilean populace was not geared to thinking in terms of overthrowing their Government. Compromise was to Chileans an essential element of the

political process. Furthermore the Chilean military since 1932 had had "constitutionality" drilled into them; it would take a great deal to get it to move. [name not declassified] went on that there were a number of preconditions to be met before golpe could be seriously considered in Chile. One was mass support, of which there was clearly no evidence. The military would have to be united in their opposition to the present regime; it was not. There would have to be political support from the parties, especially from the PDC; there was no such support. There would also have to be a good constitutional reason for an attempted coup. At the moment there was none. There would have to be a military consensus that a coup was required. There was no prospect that such a consensus could soon emerge.

Mr. Kubisch said that it therefore was clear that a military coup seemed to be a non-starter.

[name not declassified] said that the most likely way an overthrow might occur would be through a "constitutional coup," with the military being brought into all key positions in the government, and insisting on a number of requirements or conditions which would give everybody a measure of what he wanted.

Mr. Kubisch wondered if by granting limited assistance to the opposition we were but giving them the means to keep barely alive, encouraging them in an ineffective opposition; it might be better to cut off assistance and let the situation develop to a point that a reaction would be triggered that would produce a "constitutional coup" or some other response more effective than that we were now seeing.

Mr. Shlaudeman said that it was more likely that a cut off of our assistance would work the other way. Opposition in Chile to Allende was a result of party activity. Parties were central in Chile. If the parties faded, opposition influence among the military would tail off. Despite evidence in early 1971 that the heart had gone out of the opposition, it had lately come to show considerable energy. Without our help it could do much less, it would lose heart. The visibility of political activities and media independence was what kept the opposition going.

Mr. Kubisch asked if, in the last analysis, a country didn't have to save itself.

Mr. Shlaudeman observed that the Chileans were fighting Allende on their own initiative, the decisions were theirs. The little edge that we were giving them with our financial assistance was critical, but we were not and must not get in the position of saving them.

Mr. Kubisch said that he was not persuaded that a vital US interest of the sort that would justify our covert assistance really was involved. Messrs. Shlaudeman and Hurwitch agreed that there was no vital interest, but nonetheless an important one.

Mr. Kubisch agreed with Mr. Hurwitch's formulation that new sensitivities in the US and in Chile to US covert activities should not necessarily drive us to abandon all these, but that they would make it necessary to analyze in a much more critical way than hitherto the importance of the objectives that we were trying to achieve through them.

Mr. Kubisch said that in this particular instance he did not believe that the benefits outweighed the potential cost.

Mr. Hurwitch said that it would be of inestimable importance to our policy in Chile, in Latin America and in the rest of the world were a free Chilean election to be held in 1976 that would result in a democratic repudiation of a Marxist regime. Such a development would be far better for us than any military coup in Chile could be. He himself believed that a free election in Chile would actually result in the rejection of Allende's regime. The current covert program kept the hope alive that this result could be won. He therefore thought that the potential benefit outweighed the risk. He would hesitate to narrow the possibility of reaching such an outcome.

Mr. Kubisch said Mr. Hurwitch's position was persuasive. He then sought to advise on how best to bring the considerations that had been surfaced to the attention of the 40 Committee. Positions held two years ago by the Committee

members and by the White House were not necessarily ones that would be held today were the Committee brought to focus on the new elements in the situation. He reacted positively to the suggestion that an effective way to insure the necessary reexamination was by persuading Ambassador Porter, our 40 Committee representative, that the situation should be examined de novo. It was decided that the text of the CIA-proposed memorandum would state merely that Mr. Kubisch had been consulted on the program, not that he had concurred. He would see to it that the various pro and con arguments were brought to Mr. Porter’s attention.