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Telegram From the Embassy in Chile to the Department of State

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2706. Subj: Chile's Political Crisis.

1. Summary: It is increasingly clear that the Chilean Communist Party has passed to a harder line—closer to the Socialists and less compatible with the President. The recent Air Force sit-down probably weakened that institution and its Commander in Chief—and gave the senior officers of other services pause. The military position regarding the present crisis has not yet emerged, however, and it is likely to be some days before terms for a possible military reentry into the Cabinet are clarified on all sides. End summary.

2. The present moment may not be ideal for forwarding reflections on Chile's political crisis—minutes after President Allende has finished addressing a massive crowd at the Moneda. Nevertheless, I believe a few observations are worth making. First, it is increasingly clear that the Communists have shifted to a harder line. They have moved closer to the Socialists, MIR, Left Christians and Ulta-MAPU, and have moved away from the President. They demonstrated this publicly last Friday when they joined with the Socialists in openly repudiating the President for having received the El Teniente miners, and their faint, subsequent denials have not erased the reality. From clandestine sources our Station is reporting that this Communist shift is deliberate, sharp and real. According to one SRF report, the Communists and Socialists rammed through the decision for today's shutdown and rally over Pres Allende's opposition. It is significant that Investigaciones would enter and smash the University of Chile's new television studio on the morning of the Christian Democrats' rally this Tuesday. If it is confirmed that the armed infiltrators who shot it out with Air Force guards at Los Cerrillos were young Communists, this too might be indicative of the changed line. During Allende's trip to Rancagua yesterday, UP strike-breaking copper workers reportedly warned the President in strongest terms against conceding, and undercutting them. The President, through his Secretary General, "excommunicated" the National Party last night saying no senior government official should henceforth treat with them. Today he said the government would move "through administrative means" against Patria y Libertad. All these actions go in the same direction.

3. Then there is today's shutdown and rally. The object is intimidation—to show the opposition and, even more important, the Armed Forces what the consequences of any golpe might be. It might also have been a practice-exercise for G-Day plus one. The crowds were impressive—swelled in part by the fact that the marchers not only are under pressure to attend, but also have to return to their factories and get their time cards punched if they want their day's pay. Regardless of how the workers got there, nobody is contesting UP control of the streets of central Santiago this 21st of June. Prudence tempered valor when the opposition decided to shut down, just as tight as the leftists, and guard their homes.

4. The recent bread-and-butter, sit-down mutiny of Air Force non-coms frightened, shamed and enraged senior officers. It comes on the heels of a similar troubles within the Carabinero corps. It has probably weakened General Ruiz, who is widely considered the strongest bulwark against Marxist advance among the commanders in chief.

5. It seems early to know how Chilean officers will definitely react to the signs that service discipline is eroding. They may add the workers' menacing show of strength to their calculations, and pull in their horns. On the other hand, they may react with a deeper conviction that something must be done before power, discipline and their troops' economic well-being erode and wash away. Somebody forced the CUT to back off on its announced intention to cut off electricity, gas, telephone, water and other essential services, as part of today's planned intimidation. I have no information, but I would not be surprised if it was the military who put a foot down.

6. The past few days have witnessed further cracking of the veneer of legality on the surface of Chilean political and economic life. The appeals court pronounced the raid on the University of Chile's new television station as illegal. Chilean respect for university autonomy was also affronted, but the court decision has in no way undone the closing. In the truck farming area around Maipu, the MIR has just completed a bold and almost bloodless illegal seizure of a great belt of farms. This event has gone almost unnoticed in the onrush of events. Fresh vegetables are rotting on the ground, and there will be less for eating in the city but the MIR and Socialism have advanced another step.

7. The Cabinet crisis continues, with rumors, reports and formulas of every description—all of them revolving around the terms the military could extract for entering the government. The latest rumors sound closer to the October–March formula, and farther from the real power the military were said to be determined on getting. So far as we know, however, the Council of Generals has yet to hold its crucial meeting. Neither have the Navy or Air Force taken a final position, we believe. My guess is that it will be some days before the question is clarified.