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

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Covert Assistance to Chilean Opposition

In the attached memorandum to the 40 Committee, CIA proposes that $1,000,000 be approved for the support through FY ’74 of political parties and private sector organizations opposed to the Popular Unity government of President Allende. Of this sum, [dollar amount not declassified] would be for the Christian Democratic Party; [dollar amount not declassified] for the National Party; [dollar amount not declassified] for two smaller parties; [dollar amount not declassified] for private sector organizations for political activity against the UP; and [dollar amount not declassified] for contingency purposes.

My initial reactions to this proposal were strongly negative. However, I have since had repeated meetings and discussions with knowledgeable members of CIA and the Department, including Ambassador Davis and Deputy Assistant Secretary Shlaudeman—until recently DCM in Santiago. The firm views of those I have consulted are that this financial help is absolutely critical to the survival of an opposition in Chile—which is highly important to the United States—and that although this opposition may not survive in any event, without our help it will surely vanish from the scene.

Arguments against the proposal are nonetheless sufficiently important that you should be aware of them in making your decision. They are:

1) In my view, and in the last analysis, Chile has to save itself. What help can be given from abroad will only be marginal and, in all probability, temporary. It is even conceivable to me that the Chilean opposition may be encouraged by our assistance to depend too much on us, instead of themselves.

2) The proposal and the amount suggested—which I understand is the maximum that can be safely absorbed under current conditions in Chile—seem so small to me that I can hardly see how they will have much effect.

3) Recent disclosures and allegations about U.S. activities in Chile in 1964 and 1970, together with current developments and attitudes in the U.S. towards covert government activities, make the potential damage to the USG from exposure of this program far greater than in the past.

4) The damage could also be telling abroad and especially in Latin America where we are endeavoring to improve our overall relations.

The above considerations have broader implications than just for Chile alone and I would be glad to discuss them with you further.