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Memorandum From Viron P. Vaky of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)

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Chilean Election

Ambassador Korry has recommended increased funding for political action in the pre- and post-election period in Chile:

—$390,000 for anti-Allende propaganda and to subsidize the campaign of Radical congressmen who are anti-Allende; and

—$500,000 for a post-electoral operation to dissuade Radical and Christian Democrats from supporting Allende in any congressional vote.

It seems to me we have to ask the following questions:

1. Is there a real possibility that Allende may be elected?

Everyone agrees that his strength is rising, but there is no clear prospect that he will win and a possibility he will not.

2. How serious to our interests would his election be?

Korry's premise is that Allende is a serious threat to the U.S. and that his victory would result in the establishment of a "Leninist state". It is not clear, however, that Allende can ride quickly and successfully over Chilean forces which would fight the establishment of a "Leninist state", or that the Chileans themselves cannot handle that problem. There is no question that his victory would present problems to us. Whether that means a serious threat to US security and national interest requires a better and more systematic judgment, because how serious we deem the threat to our interest to be will determine the risks we are willing to take to insure his defeat. I do not think we have reached sound conclusions yet, and certainly not a consensus.

3. How effective would Korry's proposals be?

There is no guarantee it would have any real effect, but there is some chance that it may influence a small percentage of voters which could be important in the close race we expect.

4. How serious is the risk of exposure and what is the threat of exposure to our interests?

Korry believes the risk of exposure acceptable, but a significant risk does exist. The Chileans are sensitive to and expect us to be involved and will be alert to it. The Christian Democrats know we were involved last time, since they were the

beneficiaries. Moreover, the channels being employed are well-known Alessandri backers with extensive contacts with US business firms in Chile and New York which are already involved in a pro-Alessandri or anti-Allende activity.

Exposure would seriously damage our capacity to have influence in any post-election situation. Exposure of our involvement would strengthen Allende.

5. Do the risks to our long-term interest of an Allende victory outweigh the risks of exposure?

The key question. I am not sure that they do; the problem of an Allende victory may be easier to handle than the election—i.e., we may find it easier to be "involved" if the problem is a Marxist administration than to be "involved" in an internal electoral process.

If we were to be faithful to the prescriptions of our general policy, we should leave to the Chileans the protection of their own interests threatened by an Allende win. There is no real lack in Chile of money or organizational skill. Why should we do for them what they are unwilling to do for themselves? The premise in Korry's proposal is that we cannot count on the Chileans themselves or private US interests to do an adequate job against Allende, and that we cannot afford to let them fail. This is the basic premise and I am not sure it is proven.

Recommendation: In balance I would go along reluctantly with the pre-electoral phase which is a stepping-up of what we are already doing. But I recommend against the "suborning" operation in the post-electoral phase. That is too dangerous, too antithetical to the concept of our general policy and of dubious effectiveness.

What I would surely recommend is that we analyze more rigorously the consequences of an Allende victory, the probable developments and what could be done about them.