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Telegram From the Embassy in Chile to the Department of State

Identificador Archival:	frus:frus1969-76v21/d4
Agencia Emisora:	Departamento de Estado
Fecha del Documento:	1969-03-25
Colección / Serie:	FRUS 1969–1976, vol. XXI: Chile, 1969–1973

Nota de Archivo: *Santiago. Source: National Archives, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 1 CHILE–US. Confidential; Limdis. This is one of three cables Korry transmitted on March 25 reporting on the subjects of Foreign Policy, Chilean Politics, and Economic Policy. Telegram 1161 is Document 5. Telegram 1168 is published in Foreign Relations, 1969–1976, vol. E–16, Documents on Chile, 1969–1973, Document 2.*

1160. Subj: Conversation with Frei (HQ—Foreign Policy).

1. This cable is one of three (Foreign Policy, Chilean Politics and Economic Policy) based on some three hours of private talk with President Frei March 24.

2. I deliberately provoked Frei into a discussion of foreign policy in order to exercise a restraining influence on Foreign Minister Valdes at the forthcoming CECLA meeting, to rein some of the more free-wheeling spokesmen of the GOC here and abroad and to advise Frei to prepare and control personally the Chilean talking points to Governor Rockefeller.

3. I said there seemed to be a push-pull dichotomy in GOC as well as other Latin governments with regard to US. At very moment when President was expressing over national TV-radio hookups his recognition and gratitude for US assistance, some of his spokesmen took quite an opposite tack. At Geneva, their Ambassador, whom I recognized had supported Socialist Allende for President in last election, attacked US rels with area; parts of his speech had been used a fortnight ago, in far less offensive but not less ill-informed manner, by Foreign Minister Valdes in public speech to UNDP meeting. If anyone could explain to me the incomprehensible performance of his Ambassador to the UN the past GA, I would be an eager auditor. Then last week his Foreign Minister in announcing the forthcoming meeting of CECLA here March 31 had gleefully announced that Latin America had always sought to have an all-Latino meeting “without the presence of the US.”

4. After enumerating examples of push-pull phenomenon, I emphasized that I had no rpt no instructions of any kind to raise this subject with GOC. I was speaking with the same candor he had demonstrated in providing me earlier the most intimate details of Chilean politics and I was doing so because our joint efforts to strengthen democracy in Chile could not help but be damaged by some of the incautious unjustified language. With CECLA about to convene, this was especially important. I did not want to create the impression that I was seeking to strike some kind of bargain of aid in return for what Valdes called “servilismo.” I did want him to know that there seemed to prevail in his Foreign Ministry and elsewhere the Gaullist-type logic that the US was the inevitable protector of the area and had no rpt no option but to support Chilean democracy therefore permitting Chileans a libertinism in action and in speech which the US would simply have to swallow. Such an assumption would be imprudent.

5. The President said that my point was well-taken although he denied that Chile had in any way been connected with the CECLA meeting taking place at this time. He had the same night of our dinner together in Vina (Feb. 26) told the Foreign Ministry to advise Valdes in Ecuador to seek a delay in CECLA since he was convinced that the coincidence of CECLA

and IPC case would be inopportune. Instructions had gone the following day and Valdes had executed them. I noted to Frei that following Valdes' return he had in conversation with me referred to the then apparent delay of CECLA with great regret and that somehow Valdes' sentiment had been echoed by Chilean envoys abroad. Frei said he found that hard to believe but would look into it. He still thought it was wrong to have CECLA now. However, it was his firm understanding that it was Brazil manipulating things very cleverly who had pushed the meeting to its present date.

6. As for Chile exercising prudence at CECLA, he agreed. He did so not rpt not to give pleasure to the US. Nor did he wish his references to US cooperation in his public speeches to be regarded in such light. His was no special virtue. He had done so and would continue to do so when justified because it was right. He knew that his view was not rpt not shared by all Chileans or even by many in his own party and that therefore it did not help him politically. But this was the way he was and he could not do otherwise. However, when I or other Americans noted the loose tonguedness of Chileans, which was probably a special trait of theirs, did we also recognize that he had been the most loyal friend of the US these past four years in South America? Again, this was no special virtue but did we still recognize the fact?

7. Valdes had an uncontrollable desire to show the party and others that he was active and accomplishing things. This characteristic was undoubtedly a weakness but Valdes truly appreciated the US and we should try to keep things in that perspective. He talked too much to newsmen—and so had Minister of Interior Perez Zujovic this past week; such things should not happen (he said it four times as he paced the floor).

8. It may have been true that a kind of Gaullist outlook permeated the Foreign Ministry in the past and perhaps elements of his party as well. But it was quite the contrary now. The widespread impression was that the US no longer considered Christian Democracy all that important as an alternative to Castroism or that even Latin America really mattered.

9. Frei said he understood fully the preoccupations of President Nixon. He could not imagine how a US President dealt with his enormous responsibilities. It was logical as Kissinger had written in Agenda for a Nation that the technological revolution in armaments had altered the nature of big and small power relationships. Kissinger was 100 percent European in his outlook; he was indeed a European intellectual who understood completely how Europeans calculated and perceived; he was correct in postulating that the basis for peace depended primarily on a US understanding with Europe. The US had to concentrate first on that goal; it had to deal urgently with such overriding problems as Viet-Nam, Middle East and so on. A human being, no matter how talented, could hardly handle such an array of external priorities not to mention the domestic problems and have even a moment to think of a place such as Chile. President Nixon had more grasp of the world situation than anyone in his government but facts were facts. The days when Chile counted for something in Washington were gone. He wanted me to understand that he had expressed himself not rpt not in anger nor even sorrow but as a Chief Executive who had to deal with [garble—real needs?] to establish priorities in governments.

10. I stated the case for continuing US interest without denying the priorities. I emphasized that in raising some preoccupations, it was because of my concern that a constructive US interest be maintained. I did not wish him or his government to feel that I was seeking to impose any muzzle since I thought that it was his responsibility to his nation to state Chilean desires and preoccupations; if the US did not believe in this fundamental right, we would not be ideologically different from the Soviets. If the Chileans believed there should be a Latin structure without the US, it was their right and duty to make the case, but the arguments should be logical and the language serious; it could not be cemented by a coarse glue of anti-Americanism, leaving us to see the gaping holes of Latin disunity. Nothing would please the US more than the development of great Latin coherence.

11. Frei said it was his understanding of our fundamental sympathy that prompted him to talk to me freely; he did not go running to De Gaulle or whoever the Soviet Ambassador was ("what is that poor type's name—I have only seen him once") because they would not help Chile. Only the US could.

12. He would write Gov. Rockefeller shortly since he felt this was one very valuable opportunity to get through to President Nixon.