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Telegram From the Embassy in Chile to the Department of State

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2526. For Asst Secy Meyer from Korry.

1. Your 106100 via Roger Channel was received July 4th. This fortuitous coincidence provided time for reflection and a well-considered reply.

2. Because of the wide gap between your views and those expounded by me, I have instructed (without further explanation) the CAS to hold in abeyance the implementation of the 40 Committee decision pending further consultation with you. I have done so because of my conviction that for such a delicate operation to be executed most efficiently there must be a modicum of mutual confidence. In setting forth that general goal, I want you to know that we too agonized over the alternatives, that we too had grave doubts, that we too recognize there are risks and that we do not advance any doctrine of omnipotent infallibility.

3. Incidentally, the proposals I put forward are not strictly mine. They represent the unanimous view of all here who had to be consulted. I accept, of course, full responsibility as the US representative in Chile. It is precisely because I hold that privileged position that I have concluded that I cannot implement a policy that has aroused such strongly expressed opposition after the Committee of 40 has taken its decision. While I am the President's representative, I also depend in the first instance on your support and understanding. Without such confidence, the self-assurance that makes for leadership is undermined to such a degree that an undertaking of the import of the kind we are discussing is indeed jeopardized at the outset.

4. Tactics is not the issue. At no time have I or anyone else here considered a direct or indirect approach to Frei or anyone else about Phase II until approved as specified in our proposal. I thought that our original proposal to the 40 Committee had made that clear.

5. What is extremely unsettling is the wide breach between us over objectives. Our view—and it is the unanimous view of the entire CT—is that the election of Allende would be the triumph by democratic electoral means for the first time in history of a Communist govt. We have consistently set forth this view without challenge from Washington at any time heretofore, and by happenstance, our President on July first in his nationwide TV hour made the point twice unequivocally that no Communists had ever assumed power by democratic means. It would not rpt not be stretching matters, I submit, to say that the President built much of his 50 minute argumentation on the general Asian subject around this fact.

6. If, at any time previously our central thesis that the election of Allende would signify the imposition in Chile of a Communist regime of either the Castro or Ulbricht variety had been challenged, we would have done our best to persuade

you of the contrary but would have ceded to your judgment and to your decision. But because we assumed general agreement on this point and because we anticipated the President's arguments as they applied here, we decided with great reluctance that the Allende chances of victory were so strong that we had to bite the main bullet.

7. Hence we appear to differ over your view that "all three candidates would be negative sooner or later" since we feel that the negative aspects of one transcend the other two and the election of one would have repercussions far beyond Chile, as President Nixon implicitly recognizes.

8. From this central difference flows a subordinate one of equal significance. Whereas you state the "exposure would destroy any prospect of mitigating Tomic or Allende post-election attitudes" we unanimously hold that there is literally nothing the US can do that can mitigate Allende's attitudes. This is not to say that we should deliberately seek to justify those attitudes by imprudences so that his govt would better justify its actions. It is to say that Allende intends, as he said in a speech a few nights ago here, to cooperate fully with Castro to set in motion throughout Latin America a revolutionary tide. There is ample evidence as to the depth and sincerity of Allende's determination to effect this true revolution that would in the first instance be aimed at eliminating meaningful US public and private presence and influence.

9. Concerning exposure which is our very real concern too, I hope that a brief recapitulation of our relationships [less than 1 line not declassified] and with those with whom we must deal sub rosa will serve to clarify some of your merited apprehensions: [name not declassified] was a full party to the Anaconda nationalization negotiation yet the only "leak" that occurred during those delicate weeks and to this date was from a well placed State Department official as I reported near the end of those negotiations. [name not declassified] and [name not declassified] were parties to the frenetic and high risk Arguedas affair here and there has never been a hint of leak from their end. [name not declassified] moreover, is a man who, as I was briefed before coming here, shrinks from decisive tests of strength. Hence when in January 1968 I had to "condition" him to fight for the liberty side of his "revolutionary" party, the White House by letter approved that action with the full knowledge of State. And again under this administration when I conditioned Frei for another such test of strength in his party last year by sending him a copy of Solzhenitsyn's The First Circle, the only reaction I had from State was approval. Thus I am puzzled by the injunction to eschew "conditioning" in this instance, particularly after it has been achieved and after a Committee 40 decision has been taken and after we specified that there would be no direct or indirect approaches to Frei by US personnel re Phase II even if that proposal were approved. Frei has been hammering the "liberty" theme in recent weeks (again during his northern tour which ended today) in an effort to help Tomic rpt Tomic. And the Vice-President of the PDC, Jaime Castillo, the leading ideologue of Christian Democracy, has publicly just characterized what the Communists call the campaign of terror as a "campaign of truth." [6 lines not declassified], as I am sure you will appreciate. The "conditioning" you abjure was done to place the great prestige of Frei and his closest supporters in tandem with our principal goal of stopping Allende and to reduce the exposure factor to the lowest possible level.

10. As for Tomic and his attitude, we have said nothing different to him than to Frei or to anyone else that inquired. We have told them that we believed Allende was a very potent candidate, that the Communists would not rpt not vote for Tomic and that they would not abandon the Socialists to cooperate with a Tomic govt. The only PDC complaint that we have ever had was and is the periodic needle from Gabriel Valdes to me and to the DCM (and spread in PDC circles) that one of the higher ARA officials in Washington was openly Alessandrista. (I mentioned in low key this problem during your visit to Santiago and Valdes has returned to it again and again.) The fact is that the Alessandri and the Tomic camps believe we are neutral with a possible bias towards Tomic. The proof is in the recently propagated Tomic brochure that states categorically as we reported that the US is a friend and an honest one. The point is that anti-Allende propaganda is not rpt not regarded by the PDC as harmful and that it could, as I stated originally, help Tomic as well as Alessandri in the election.

11. My belief today is that Allende is at least a strong second if not first. This view is shared in the PDC by all except Tomic and by everyone in the Alessandri camp. The Communists are now certain, we know, that Allende will run at least a strong second to Alessandri and they believe this will make very likely his Presidency and the destruction of the center of Chile. If they succeed in having an effective general strike on Wednesday this week, the Allende momentum will gain although there will be a backlash effect as well.

12. As for money, I grant you that if the Alessandri campaign had been properly organized and executed, there would be no rpt no need for this discussion. But we must deal with the real world which is quite different. Tomic has all the funds he can possibly use, yet Frei must do for him what we are trying to do for our interests in the same way. To say Tomic, Alessandri and their supporters “should be doing” something will not make it happen. We waited long enough to confirm they will not do it and that the threat we feared had materialized. More importantly, we are in possession of significant information from many quarters starting with the Communists that the anti-Allende “truth campaign” is effective and that it is the only instrumentality that does him harm at the voter level. (We shall be reporting regularly on this aspect.)

13. Having assumed that our President and all his advisors would wish to oppose an electoral triumph of a Communist candidate (which, whatever the label, he is) because it would be harmful to the interests of the US, we had, I sincerely believe, no choice than to “have done something”. Indeed I would be derelict if I did not do something once I assumed that to be the view of my President and my govt.

14. It is because I now discover that the assumption was wrong insofar as it concerned you and that this discovery comes after the 40 Committee has taken its decision that I am so troubled. It is not that unanimity or conformity is an essential prerequisite to action. Indeed unanimity is usually a danger signal and the controlled tensions of dissent are generally constructive. What is at issue now is whether we can effectively carry out the 40 Committee decision in view of your and the Department’s strong opposition to the program. I fear we cannot and would like to have your further comments on the problem before making any new recommendations.