DECLASSIFIED // SECRET; IMMEDIATE; NODIS

Telegram From the Embassy in Chile to the Department of State

Identificador Archival:	frus:frus1969-76v21/d73
Agencia Emisora:	NSC / Casa Blanca
Fecha del Documento:	1970-09-09
Colección / Serie:	FRUS 1969–1976, vol. XXI: Chile, 1969–1973

Nota de Archivo: *Santiago. Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 774, Country Files, Latin America, Chile, Vol. II. Secret; Immediate; Nodis.*

3548. Subj: One and Only One Hope for Chile. Ref: Santiago 3537.

1. Reftel sent last night is very accurate reflection of opinion of all my senior colleagues in this Mission. It states the rationale for “no hope for Chile.” The only dissenting opinion to my cable is my own. And in writing that strange sentence I recognize the inevitable reaction it will produce. But before St. Elizabeth’s is contacted, hear me out. Like President Frei I have at times to act like the character in a French play who says “even if my hands were full of truths, I wouldn’t open it for others.”

2. I reached the conclusion yesterday that neither the political right nor the military merited our hopes for over-turning the Allende triumph. Each can play a supporting role but they cannot act effectively.

3. I had also concluded that our contacts with these forces were becoming overly risky and that we had to disengage. Such disengagement if properly executed could bolster the prudent but realistic hopes I do retain.

4. I have always believed—and I am alone today in this mission in this faith—that the future of Chile would be decided by only one man: Frei. I believe he is playing his cards with extraordinary astuteness in the circumstances. I believe he knows that he can count on my support when he needs it if as is a doubtful proposition, he will need it. I am persuaded that no one in or out of Chile understands the political situation as he does when he is thinking calmly and purposefully. In a small way I think I have helped him to stop lingering in gloom and to start thinking positively.

5. I became persuaded too that it was necessary to create a mood of US business as usual, partly because of my concern for longer-term US interests whatever the results of the Oct 24th congressional runoff and also because of my wish to contribute to an inflated sense of confidence among the exultant Allende forces. I know that the mood of an Embassy, despite the many precautions that may be taken, is quickly transmitted to many outside; I have had painful experiences these past eight years with leaks of sensitive matters from the Washington end. For the one hope to materialize, I welcome too the growing exodus of US newsmen who think the story has ended, that the US is truly uninvolved and who are planning to return for the congressional runoff.

6. Finally I needed a justification in the form of a cable that will be diffused throughout the Mission insofar as the thrust of it is concerned to rationalize measures we shall be taking to reduce some of our activities. When we send our recommendations they should be read in the light of the foregoing and addressees should not hesitate to question me as to whether they really do mesh with my private optimism and our official necessity to prepare prudently for the worst. I would appreciate that all messages dealing with this subject and with this cable be sent Eyes Only.

7. All politicians know that “we have two kinds of friends: our friends who like us and our friends who loathe us.” We are in that position in Chile; Frei is in that position; his Christian Democrats are in it. The game is how to make these two varieties and some overt enemies as well contribute to our purposes.

8. The Communists are keeping their eye on the military; I have given them enough of a scent to put their nose to right against the men in uniform. They are also worrying a great deal about the political and economic right and are doing their best to reassure all Alessandristas except the very wealthy and the very militant. They cannot afford to be distracted from these representatives of what they consider their inevitable enemies. But they are also lending more attention to what is happening in the PDC, in the largest party of Chile, and the force that will determine the future of the country.

9. There are two political tendencies among the Christian Democrats. One believes society can be structured to create paradise on earth; they are dogmatic and eschatological. The other is more realistic about man, more pragmatic about the possible, more political. The first is typified by Tomic; the other by Frei. The first group was genuinely surprised by the election results and tends to believe that the results prove their view of society; they consider Allende’s triumph proof of their own illusions. The other was shocked not by Tomic’s showing but by Allende’s relative majority and by the significance of it for Chile and for them. In defeat, political parties are assailed by the forces that disunite and by a delayed but no less strong sense of stick-togetherness for survival.

10. As of last night, the PDC in the hands currently of Tomic and the GOC still in the hands of Frei had survived the worst of the first shock without much damage. Tactically their position has improved considerably since Tomic’s typically ill-conceived embrace of Allende, an act that was emulated by his closest circle of advisors. But what could have been fatal did not occur—that the PDC formally recognize Allende as President-elect. The party’s national council in its meeting Monday night avoided that miss-step thanks to the delaying pressures of Freistas and thanks to some, such as my old protagonist Senator Fuentealba whose anti-Americanism is part of his strongly nationalistic views. The fact that we did not intervene with the party in any way may have helped to maintain his independent posture and to postpone a PDC position re Oct. 24th. At the same time Alessandri cooperated by not recognizing Allende and by retreating into silence, thus keeping alive the possibilities for the political transactions that Chileans favor.

11. Frei on Monday also refused Allende’s demand in person to recognize him as the future President. He treated him icily. And yesterday the President met with the leaders of the three armed services, ostensibly for discussions on the economic situation. The President has also acted to keep Chile in as healthy an economic position as possible and to stem the tide of panic that has overtaken many. I understand too that he has moved to maintain the independence of those organs of opinion he controls or can influence; I detect a shift as a result; there is new emphasis from the PDC that the game is still going on, that no final whistle has blown and that Oct. 24th is still 45 days off.

12. The leaders of the armed forces now know as well as I do that they simply have no confidence in their forces or themselves and that they are totally dependent on the President. I think this recognition of reality is a big plus; it places the military command in Frei’s hands and is a very important card to be played at the right time. Similarly I believe the Cardinal, for all the impotence of the Church in Chile, will respond to the PDC and Frei when and if the right moment comes. The only question I have is the right, the political and economic right, who must understand that panic is destructive and that their only hope is Frei even if ultimately a new govt is even more reformist. I shall do what I can and I believe that I have given the US business community the guidelines (septel on that later today with wider distribution) to play a significant role. Incidentally that community is displaying with only one or two exceptions from noisy but minor representatives a very great degree of maturity and common sense; I consider myself fortunate to have their full confidence.

13. The important immediate goal is to foster a sense of equal maturity in the PDC and among the right. The PDC has that most powerful of latent and active impulses—the desire to stay in power. They also have a means—what I called in the reftel a “Rube Goldberg contraption”. This political contrivance is the best, indeed the only way, they can realize an aspiration that satisfies their crude individual interests, the requirements of the party and the sense of doing something for the country. I am troubled only by the equally human dislike of Tomic for Frei, of Tomic’s propensity to do the reverse of Frei, and of the reinforcement of this proclivity provided by his electoral defeat and the inevitable comparisons with Frei. (These matters I will discuss in another way in a septel.)

14. Forgive a somewhat crude analogy as the end of this message. I have tried to place myself in the position of another—of Chile and of Frei. But I am painfully aware that “it is only in the acts of sensual pleasure that one measures the glory that man assumes in putting himself in the other’s place.” Maybe I should stick to such activities but I confess that my hopes, albeit modest, are a mildly exhilarating and satisfying substitute for the moment.