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# Memorandum for the Record

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| **Identificador Archival:** | frus:frus1969-76v21/d89 |
| **Agencia Emisora:** | CIA |
| **Fecha del Documento:** | 1970-09-14 |
| **Colección / Serie:** | FRUS 1969–1976, vol. XXI: Chile, 1969–1973 |

***Nota de Archivo:*** *Washington. Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 777, Country Files, Latin America, Chile 1970. Secret; Sensitive; Eyes Only. Drafted by Millian. Although the meeting took place on September 14, the memorandum was drafted and sent to Kissinger on September 18 with a note from Helms that reads: "Here is a write-up of the talk we had with Mr. Edwards from Santiago. Further conversations and a more exhaustive debriefing are going on with Mr. Edwards right now." The only other record of the meeting with Edwards, reporting a series of conversations held on September 15 and dated the following day, provides no substantive information regarding the discussion other than "the meeting went well." (Central Intelligence Agency, Job 80B01086A, DCI Eyes Only File, 1970) The background for these meetings is discussed briefly by Kissinger in The White House Years, p. 673, and by*

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Discussion of Chilean Political Situation

Richard Helms, Director of CIA

Donald Kendall, President of Pepsi Cola

Agustin Edwards, Owner (Publisher) of El Mercurio and a chain of other independent Chilean daily newspapers, as well as banks and important agricultural and business enterprises

[name not declassified]

[Background

The Chilean presidential election was held on 4 September 1970. Socialist Senator Salvador Allende, the candidate of the Popular Unity (UP)—a coalition of the pro-Cuban Socialist Party (PS), the Communist Party (PCCh), the leftist-led Radical Party (PR) and other small leftist groups—won a plurality (36.3%) of the votes cast in a three-way race. Jorge Alessandri, independent candidate of the center right, including the National Party (PN), was generally expected to come in first, but was a close second with 35%. Radomiro Tomic, candidate of the Christian Democratic Party (PDC), came in third with 27.8%.

The Chilean constitution requires that because no candidate received a majority of the votes cast, the Congress will meet on 24 October to elect a president from the two top vote-getters. The Congress has selected the top vote-getter on the three occasions in this century when no candidate received the required majority. Alessandri has said publicly that if Congress elects him president he will resign, thereby forcing a new presidential election in which he would not be a candidate. Tomic, the Christian Democratic candidate, has publicly recognized Allende's victory. Outgoing President Eduardo Frei, a Christian Democrat who was not eligible to run on 4 September, would qualify in a new election if Alessandri were elected by the Congress and then resigned. Frei has said that constitutionally he cannot recognize anyone as president until after the Congress has voted. At present the PDC holds the 75 swing votes in Congress.]

On 14 September Mr. Kendall and Mr. Helms met with Agustin Edwards, owner of the independent newspaper El Mercurio, [less than 1 line not declassified]. Mr. Helms attended the meeting at the request of Dr. Henry Kissinger who, with Mr. John Mitchell, the Attorney General, had met earlier with Mr. Kendall and Mr. Edwards. Mr. Edwards, who had left Chile on 10 September and arrived in the United States on 13 September stopping in Argentina, expressed the following views on the Chilean political situation:

a. Reason for Alessandri's Loss

The abstention figure was 16%, indicating that the Alessandri forces had failed to get out the precinct vote. Women voters probably comprised the bulk of the 5% increase over the 1964 abstention figure. Edwards said that it was "too bad that we could not have been allowed to take votes away from Tomic." This was a reference to the U.S. Government caveat which limited Edwards' efforts on our behalf to an anti-Allende campaign with no direct support to Alessandri.

b. Possibility of Constitutional Solution

On election night, Frei, after allowing Allende to have a victory parade, heard of Alessandri's plan to try to win the presidency on 24 October and then step down in favor of a new election which would probably find Frei opposing Allende. Frei sent Bernardo Leighton, an influential Christian Democrat national deputy as his emissary to Alessandri. Their discussions resulted in Alessandri's statement issued several days later (9 September) that he was not conceding to Allende and that he would resign if elected by the Congress. The chances of Alessandri's being named president are slim. Allende needs at most only 18 additional Congressional votes to secure his victory in the full Congress of 200. Alessandri, on the other hand, needs to attract 58 votes, most of them from the PDC. Frei is "scared blue" of Allende's coming to power, but he can only count on 20 PDC Congressmen to vote for Alessandri. Edwards has heard that some people may be "getting scared." The Communists are circulating blacklists with the names of PDC bureaucrats. These blacklists may boomerang against the Communists to the extent that PDC Congressmen who were neutral or inclined to vote for Allende may decide to vote for Alessandri.

The Congressional route to prevent Allende from coming to power, while remote, should not be ignored, but it entails the following risks:

1) It might not work, and then what? (The new president takes office on 4 November.)

2) Some Congressmen might move too soon or announce their intention prematurely, thereby triggering the Communists to "move into the streets."

3) Retired General Roberto Viaux, leader of the military dissension of October 1969, [1½ lines not declassified] or "some other nut" might try to stage a coup, thereby precluding any serious effort. (Comment: Viaux, in October 1969, led a 24-hour rebellion of the Tacna Artillery Regiment in Santiago to express military dissatisfaction with its poor pay and equipment. The rebellion ended without bloodshed when the government promised to meet some of Viaux's demands. Viaux had widespread moral support because of overall dissatisfaction in the military. He was convicted of "military rebellion" and eventually placed on parole. At present he does not appear to have substantial support among active duty military personnel.)

c. Timing for Possible Military Action

By mid-October after the PDC Congress, it should be clear what will happen on 24 October in the Congress. Edwards asked: "Can we run the risk that the Alessandri/Frei plan will work?"

d. Carabineros (National Police)

[name not declassified] believes that the Carabineros, particularly their commandant, General Vicente Huerta, want to do something to prevent an Allende presidency, but they cannot do it alone. [3 lines not declassified] The Carabineros, a well formed and disciplined force of 24,000, [2 lines not declassified].

e. Navy

14,000 (145 in the Naval Air Force and 2,200 in the Marines) largely based at the port of Valparaiso, an elite service. Edwards described Rear Admiral Fernando Porta, Commander-in-Chief of the Navy, who opposes Allende, as indecisive and overly cautious. [1 line not declassified] Porta, who took a stance similar to that of General Rene Schneider, Army Commander-in Chief, to the effect that the military would support the constitution. At that time it was expected that Alessandri would win a plurality but not a majority and the Congress would elect Allende. Of 11 Navy admirals, eight are anti-Allende and three are pro-Tomic, including Rear Admiral Luis Urzua Merino, Commander of the Marine Corps. [3 lines not declassified] the Navy enlisted men would be much more reliable than those in the other services. Allende's political forces, however, had been able to shift the votes of some of the wives of the Navy enlisted men by promising them that if Allende became president, enlisted men could move up to become officers.

Captain Carlos Le May Delano, Deputy Chief of the Navy General Staff and the most intelligent man in the Navy, [less than 1 line not declassified], has considerable influence on Porta but is a staff man, not a troop commander. Le May felt that manipulation of the Navy fuel supply for its small fleet might have some effect in pressuring the Navy to act, but alone it would be ineffective. (Le May studied electronics at Monterrey and was once an alcoholic.)

f. Air Force

9,720,490 of them pilots, with 227 aircraft, 60 of them jet-powered.

General Carlos Guerraty, Commander of the Air Force, wants to act against Allende, but Guerraty is not very intelligent and his immediate deputy, General Cesar Ruiz, Chief of Staff, is "doubtful." [name not declassified] did not see any significant role for the Air Force and noted that it was incompetent and poorly equipped.

g. Army

23,000 in six understrength, inadequately equipped divisions.

The Army is quite divided, partly because of the Viaux episode. Before the election [name not declassified] went to see Alessandri to alert him that there was too much talk of a coup in the event Allende won the election. He said the organization should be tightened up and either Viaux or the military chiefs should decide which group should lead the coup.

[name not declassified] said that the key to a coup would be to get General Carlos Prats, Chief of the National Defense Staff, to move, which would involve neutralizing Schneider, the Commander-in-Chief of the Army. [name not declassified] has considerable respect for Prats [less than 1 line not declassified] Prats was Army Attaché to Buenos Aires three years ago.

[name not declassified] has been able to contact General Camilo Valenzuela, Commander of the Santiago Garrison who, during elections or under a state of siege, takes command of all troops in the Santiago area, including the Carabineros, but usually, as now, has no troops under his direct command. Valenzuela has agreed to cooperate with the military chiefs. [name not declassified] described Valenzuela as tough, well-mannered, and honest. Valenzuela said that, if necessary, he would "go it alone" and would support General Prats for Commander-in-Chief if Schneider could be given an honorable way out.

After the election, the only significant military contact [name not declassified] had was with Valenzuela. [name not declassified] lost some of his respect for Valenzuela's capability—however, when he asked [name not declassified] to check on the reliability of General Orlando Urbina, Commander of the Second Army and Valenzuela's direct subordinate. It seems that Urbina has a relative who is an advisor to Allende.

[name not declassified] said the Army is concerned about the reliability of non-commissioned officers (NCO), particularly those in the NCO School. He added, however, that he believed Viaux could neutralize them. A danger, [name not declassified] believes, is that "some junior officer will crop up (probably in the Navy) and prematurely start something on his own against Allende.

([less than 1 line not declassified] Chile produces limited quantities of small arms and ammunition. It is dependent on the U.S. and Western Europe for all categories of equipment including additional quantities of types produced locally.)

[name not declassified] added that in discussing the post-election situation with Valenzuela and some of the key Naval officers they were concerned with two basic points:

1) If the Chilean Government were overturned in a military action, would the new government then installed receive diplomatic recognition from the U.S.?

2) Would the Chilean Armed Forces receive logistical support for an action against the government? ([name not declassified] quoted Captain Le May as having said that saber rattling activities by Peru or Argentina against Allende could trigger a military move as would a decision by the U.S. Government to withhold aid.)

[less than 1 line not declassified]

[5 lines not declassified] The main worry of all those who might be involved in a military action is the protection of their families and of their followers should they decide to act against Allende.

Frei

[name not declassified] said that he was fond of the President as a person but asked "how many presidents would enjoy spending the evening reading about Catholic influence on modern literature?" He described Frei as one who traditionally collapses under pressure. He said [1 line not declassified] to his knowledge, "Frei has never in his political history crossed a major rubicon." He cited as an example the election of 1958 in which Frei ran third only because he failed to write a letter asking for the proffered support of the Conservative Party. Edwards said Frei is indecisive, always balancing, always waiting for the "other guy to move."

United States/Chile

A key question in the average Chilean's mind, according to [name not declassified], is: Does the U.S. care? The eight-hour TV interview given by Fidel Castro, which was played extensively in Chile prior to the election, told the Chilean people not to worry about U.S. intervention if Allende won since the present "non-interventionist attitude" in the U.S. combined with pressure in the Near and Far East—plus domestic unrest in the U.S.—would keep the U.S. neutralized.

In answer to the question on how an encouraging word could be passed to the military, [name not declassified] said it would be disastrous if it were delivered openly. If word of the U.S. attitude were delivered discreetly, it might help.

In reviewing the present arrangement of forces on "our side," [name not declassified] noted that, as far as he knew, our State Department was pressing the constitutional line while Ambassador Korry "was running around like a lunatic" and would probably ignore the State Department if he saw a way out. In any event, Frei would probably "chicken out" at the

last minute—probably deciding not to act on little more than a phone call from a worrier.

Replying to a question as to whom [name not declassified] knew who still had good contacts with the military, [name not declassified] said that both Sergio Onofre Jarpa, President of the National Party (PN), and PN Senator Francis Bulnes of the National Party could be helpful, but he added that others in the Alessandri campaign were not really tuned in properly. The best man, [9 lines not declassified].

[name not declassified] was somewhat emotional at times and frequently rambled. He appeared to be seeking possible solutions but his conversation did not indicate that he had yet found one that he considered feasible or effective.