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Memorandum for the 40 Committee

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Nota de Archivo: *Summary: This memorandum examined the elections held at the University of Chile in April 1972. The contest was "an event of national importance" as the election showdown between the Marxist and non-Marxist forces indicated a political shift away from Allende. Source: National Security Council, Nixon Intelligence Files, Subject Files, Chile, 1971–72. Secret; Sensitive; Eyes Only. A notation on the first page indicates that the memorandum was distributed to the principals of the 40 Committee on May 12. A covering memorandum states, "Paper distributed to all principals. Not forwarded to HAK but read by Bill Jorden. All principals notified that paper being filed 5/22/72. Will not be a minute item."*

Elections at the University of Chile

1. This special report on the favorable outcome of the 27 April 1972 elections at the University of Chile is being submitted because the contest between Marxist and non-Marxist forces in the university was an event of national importance with the non-Marxist candidate for rector gaining an absolute majority over the personal candidate of President Allende. Political trends in Chile have often been forecast by university elections; and, in this year's highly charged political atmosphere, more significance than usual was attached to the outcome of these university elections by political forces in Chile.

2. The University of Chile is the country's largest and most important institution of higher learning with over 60,000 students. The main campus is located in Santiago but the university also has campuses in eight provincial centers throughout Chile. Student politics have always been an integral part of the University of Chile where campus organizations represent national political parties and serve as a training ground for future political leaders. In recent years, administrative control of the university also has become a sought-after prize of the contending political forces. The university is jointly directed by three "estates:" students, faculty, and staff. Voting is weighted, with the faculty having 65% of the voice in the final results; students, 25%; and non-teaching staff, 10%. This voting spread, plus the distribution of campuses throughout the country, lends somewhat of a national character to these university elections.

3. In the last university elections (June 1971), Marxist and non-Marxist forces were almost evenly matched. Dr. Edgardo Boeninger, supported by non-Marxist students and professors, was reelected rector of the university, but the Marxists gained a majority on the 100 member university advisory council. Efforts by the Marxist-controlled council to obtain political control of the university erupted into violence in October and November 1971. The resulting crisis was not finally resolved until January 1972, when both the rector and the council resigned after agreeing to new elections in April 1972. These elections were to choose the two key administrative officers (Rector and Secretary-General) and a new council as well as to hold a university plebiscite on a number of questions relating to university reorganization and internal administration.

4. There were four candidates for the rectorship. Boeninger, running for reelection, was supported by the University Front, a coalition of forces in opposition to Allende. His chief rival was Felipe Herrera, former president of the Inter-American

Development Bank (IADB), who had been in charge of preparations for the United Nations Council on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) which is now meeting in Santiago. Herrera was persuaded by Allende to resign from UNCTAD in order to run for the rectorship. He received strong support from the government and the government's Popular Unity (UP) coalition. Two ultra-leftist candidates were also in the running: Andres Pascal Allende, a nephew of the President, and Luis Vitale. Although these two minor candidates were expected to attract some leftist votes away from Herrera, they also bolstered Herrera's efforts to appear as a candidate of the center and to attract independent and conservative support.

5. [1 paragraph (16½ lines) not declassified]

6. The results of the elections were as follows: Boeninger, 51.86%; Herrera, 43.63%; Pascal, 3.66%; and Vitale, 0.85%. Unofficial returns also indicate that the Boeninger forces have definitely won 53 of the 100 positions on the university council, with the possibility of gaining one or two more. No information on the outcome of the plebiscite has been released, although it has been reported in one newspaper that the viewpoints advocated by the Boeninger forces carried the day.

7. The Attachment hereto shows the voting patterns for the rectorship in both the June 1971 and April 1972 elections. In general, Boeninger obtained a higher percentage of the student vote this time (51.7% as contrasted with 47.7% in June 1971) which more than offset a slight drop in faculty support (to 52.6% from 53.8% in June 1971). There seems to be little doubt that Herrera appealed to some independent and conservative professors. The victory of the democratic University Front in these elections should provide some impetus for the opposition in the upcoming Chilean Student Federation (FECH) elections, which are now scheduled to be held in late May or early June 1972. Boeninger's victory also should assist opposition efforts to oust UP forces from control of the university's TV Channel 9 which is one of the most widely viewed TV stations in Chile.

8. The university elections were widely regarded in Chile as an important weathervane of national political opinion. Had Boeninger been defeated, Allende could have claimed it was the beginning of a new and favorable trend for the government. Allende also would have had a ready-made theme for his May Day speech and for the numerous delegates now attending the UNCTAD conference in Santiago. As things turned out, the university elections represent still another politically embarrassing reverse for Allende while maintaining and increasing the momentum of the political opposition.

Attachment