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Memorandum From the Executive Secretary of the Department of State (Pickering) to the President's Deputy Assistant for National Security Affairs (Scowcroft)

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Nota de Archivo: *Summary: This memorandum transmitted background and briefing papers on Chile for Secretary of State-designate Henry Kissinger in the event he was questioned on the overthrow of Allende at his Senate confirmation hearings. Source: National Archives, RG 59, Central Files 1970–73, POL 15 CHILE. Confidential; Exdis. Drafted by Kubisch. Seitz signed for Pickering above Pickering's typed signature. Attachments 3 through 7 are attached but not published.*

CHILE: Background and Briefing Papers

Attached are background and briefing papers on Chile assembled in accordance with Dr. Kissinger's instruction to Assistant Secretary Kubisch this morning.

The first paper contains a set of questions on Chile which we think Dr. Kissinger may be asked by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, together with suggested lines of reply. Other selected papers on Chile, some of which have already been transmitted to the White House in connection with WSAG meetings this week, are also attached for his convenience and possible use.

CHILE: Possible Questions and Suggested Replies—

A Paper For Secretary-Designate Kissinger

1. QUESTION: What brought down the Government of President Allende in Chile?

SUGGESTED REPLY: In a word, Allende fell because his Government was a failure. On the economic side, his Administration had brought Chile in less than three years from a relatively prosperous and stable position to a point of utter bankruptcy. During 1971 and 1972 the Allende Government lost more than $600 million. Widespread shortages of foodstuffs and consumer goods had developed.

At the time of the coup last Tuesday, the country was paralyzed economically and near social chaos. Truckers were in the 47th day of their strike and public transportation had been brought to a virtual halt. Distribution facilities were not functioning. The middle classes—shopkeepers, doctors, housewives, etc.—were demonstrating against the Government. Even the workers had suffered heavily, as a result of the inflation, under the Allende regime. Misguided monetary, fiscal and economic policies had carried the annual rate of inflation to almost 300%. There had been prolonged and costly strikes by the copper miners.

The country simply could not go on in this fashion. Allende did not fall just for political reasons or because of his political ideology, he fell because his Government and its policies were an absolute failure.

2. QUESTION: What is the United States Government attitude toward Allende's overthrow?

SUGGESTED REPLY: Frankly, we regret this interruption of Chile's long democratic tradition. We certainly regret very much such a violent end to President Allende's regime and his own death. However, I do not believe that any of us are in a position to make a value judgment about what happened last week in Chile. It is not for us to say whether the people of Chile would have been better served to continue on under the Allende Government or to see his Government overthrown. This had to be—and it was—a Chilean decision by Chileans and, in my view, we must accept it.

My impression is that those who made the decision to overthrow the Allende Government did so reluctantly and could not have found it more painful or difficult. The Chilean armed forces have been among the most competent, respected and democratic-minded of any military services anywhere in the world. In observing what happened in Chile we must keep in mind the terrible ordeal that the Chilean people have suffered in recent months and how hopeless their future looked to them under the Allende Government.

3. QUESTION: Did the United States Government know about the coup in advance?

SUGGESTED REPLY: Much has already been said on this publicly. The truth is that we did not KNOW about the coup in advance. It is important to distinguish between our KNOWING about the coup and our receiving reports about the possibility of a coup.

We had been receiving a steady stream of reports from a wide variety of sources in Chile speculating about a possible coup. Indeed, as we all know, an unsuccessful coup was attempted on June 29 and the reports of possible new attempts increased in frequency in recent weeks. We assessed these reports and concluded that there was indeed such a possibility. However, Chile had moved to the brink of a coup a number of times in the past, and as a result of some last minute decision or compromise by President Allende—or a reshuffling of his Cabinet—had managed to draw back from the brink. Therefore, reports prior to and up to the eve of September 11 were evaluated in that light: there might or might not be a coup at any time. We simply did not know.

I want to make it absolutely clear, however, that there was no official direct contact of any kind with us by the organizers and leaders of the coup, who have subsequently become the Government of Chile. We did not learn of the coup itself until shortly after it began early Tuesday morning, September 11.

4. QUESTION: Did the United States Government adopt a "hands-off policy" with respect to a possible coup in Chile?

SUGGESTED REPLY: Our policy has been that this was entirely an internal Chilean matter. We were not consulted about the coup but if we had been our position would have been that this was none of our affair.

5. QUESTION: Why didn't you notify President Allende that there was going to be a coup?

SUGGESTED REPLY: As I have said, we did not know that there would be a coup. We did know that there was considerable unrest and tension in the country and that the possibility of a coup existed. I am sure that that would have been no news to President Allende who had himself repeatedly spoken out publicly against plotters and called upon the nation to unite behind him and his Government to avoid a coup.

6. QUESTION: Why didn't "responsible officials" see these reports in a timely manner?

SUGGESTED REPLY: Responsible officials did see these reports in a timely way. Responsible officials were following developments in Chile very closely. Some misunderstanding has arisen on this point, I believe, because messages of Monday evening, September 10 from our Embassy were transmitted during the night and read by responsible officials in

Washington the next morning after the coup had begun at 0620 (Washington and Santiago time are the same). In any case, there was no reason to give Monday evening reports any special credence over other reports that had been received over previous weeks that had turned out to be false.

7. QUESTION: Was the United States Government, including CIA, the United States Navy and others, involved in the coup in any way?

SUGGESTED REPLY: No, absolutely no.

8. QUESTION: Were private American companies or private Americans involved in any way?

SUGGESTED REPLY: Obviously, I cannot speak with absolute certainty about all the American companies and the 2,500 or so Americans in Chile. However, I can say categorically that I know of no involvement of any kind by any American in the coup and to the best of my knowledge and belief, there was no such involvement.

9. QUESTION: According to several press reports, the United States Government has kept American companies "apprised" of the coup and developments immediately following it. Is that true?

SUGGESTED REPLY: We have made no special efforts to contact American companies about the coup and we have certainly not endeavored to "apprise" them of developments in Chile last week. If I am not mistaken, the press reports were based upon a luncheon a State Department official (Assistant Secretary Kubisch) had with the Latin American Subcommittee of the International Economic Policy Association in Washington last Wednesday. Some 25 businessmen were present, representing United States companies with business interests all over Latin America including, in a few cases, Chile. The date for this luncheon meeting had been set a month before and it was held in the context of regular meetings by Government officials with private groups of all kinds in the United States to discuss world affairs. The previous day's developments in Chile were naturally discussed during the course of the luncheon, but no classified material was discussed and no special significance should be attached to such a get-together.

10. QUESTION: Will the President make any public statement deploring the abrupt end of constitutional government in Chile?

SUGGESTED REPLY: I do not consider it advisable for the President to make such a statement. Our views on constitutional government are well known and I see no need for the President to make a public statement injecting himself into an internal Chilean matter.

11. QUESTION: Do you intend to cooperate with the new Chilean Government?

SUGGESTED REPLY: That depends to a large extent upon the new Chilean Government and the policies that Government decides to follow. I hope very much that we will be able to cooperate with it because of the very important interests the United States has in Chile and, together with Chile, in many other matters affecting Latin America and the world.

The reality is that there has been a coup in Chile and that there is a new Government. There has also been a long tradition of warm friendship and close ties between Chile and the United States. I hope these will continue.

I would also hope that the new Government's policies will be such that we will be able to cooperate on matters of mutual interest and find ways to deal with a number of common problems. As I indicated earlier, the country is in very bad economic condition. I believe Chile will need substantial assistance from abroad—of many kinds—in order to recuperate and find its way to an economically sound and politically and socially healthy situation. Obviously, it will be well beyond the resources of the United States alone to provide for all of the needs of Chile, but I would hope that it will be possible for

us to help in the country's recovery.

12. QUESTION: What was Ambassador Davis doing in Washington last weekend just before the coup?

SUGGESTED REPLY: As part of my preparation for my new responsibilities, I had asked a number of Ambassadors to come back to the United States during these past few weeks for consultations. Ambassador Davis was one of those asked to come from Latin America. He was permitted to select a time convenient to himself and the date for our meeting was set several weeks ago. He arrived in Washington on Friday morning, September 7 and returned to Chile Saturday afternoon, September 8. Obviously, he would not have wanted to leave his post nor would I have allowed him to come to Washington to see me if we had believed then that a coup was imminent.

13. QUESTION: Has the United States recognized the new Chilean government?

SUGGESTED REPLY: We have not yet responded to a note from the Chilean Foreign Ministry expressing its desire to maintain friendly relations with the United States. We have not had any formal, ambassadorial level contacts with the new Government, although there have been a few limited, informal contacts at the working level. In recent years, the United States has moved away from the concept of recognition, focusing instead on whether diplomatic relations are to continue. This avoids the value judgments often attributed to "recognition" of a Government. As you know, there is a Senate Resolution (205) which disclaims any such implications.

FYI: Brazil, Uruguay and Guatemala have already advised the new Chilean Government of their desire to maintain relations, and informal or technical level contacts are being carried on by Israel, Venezuela, Mexico, Argentina, and Spain. END FYI

14. QUESTION: What is the attitude of the USG toward violations of human and civil rights by the military junta?

SUGGESTED REPLY: The importance the USG attaches to respect for human rights is well known. We will be making our views known in all appropriate ways to the new Chilean Government. The bitter nature of the conflict in Chile may have led to abuses but there is no evidence that the junta has adopted systematic repression as a deliberate, long-term policy.

FYI: The junta has ordered the detention of 117 Chileans identified with the Allende Government and 25 foreigners described as extremists. One Chilean to our knowledge has been summarily executed in accordance with the junta's announced policy for dealing with armed resistance. Foreigners illegally in the country have been ordered expelled. Senator Kennedy has publicly expressed concern about the fate of several thousand Brazilian refugees. The junta has applied rigid curfews and imposed censorship on all media. END FYI

15. QUESTION: What about reports that there may have been some connivance between our Navy and the Chilean Navy in the UNITAS exercise?

SUGGESTED REPLY: There was no connivance of any kind between the two navies. The specific schedule for the 14th annual UNITAS exercise was agreed to by the participating navies about a year ago. Our vessels (3 destroyers, 1 submarine) left their anchorage at a Peruvian port on Tuesday morning, September 11, to proceed with the scheduled next phase of the exercise scheduled with the Chilean Navy. After our vessels sailed, we learned that a coup had been initiated in Chile. Our vessels were then instructed to interrupt their schedule and they subsequently turned north in order to avoid giving any credence to the possible charge of involvement.

FYI: We still don't have confirmed information whether the Chilean Navy actually left Valparaiso the night before the coup and then returned. If true, it's difficult to see what advantage could be gained. END FYI

16. QUESTION: What about the Pentagon statement that our UNITAS vessels were warned before the coup that they might have to alter their schedule?

SUGGESTED REPLY: The situation in Chile was tense and had been tense for many weeks. It was only reasonable to have a contingency plan—and alert the vessels to it—in case it became necessary to modify or change their sailing orders.

17. QUESTION: What role did Cuba play in the Chilean situation and why did the Chileans "violate" the Cuban Embassy and attack Cuban ships?

SUGGESTED REPLY: I will be glad to tell you what I know about this although I hope that we don't become involved in this dispute between the Cubans and the Chileans.

Our information on the events is fragmentary and second-hand. We do not know who started shooting first at the Cuban Chancery on the morning of September 11. We do know the Cubans in Chile were viewed with hostility by the Chilean military. Junta President Pinochet announced the rupture of relations with Cuba on the evening of September 11, and the Chilean armed forces radio announced on September 12 that the authorities had seized "150 armed Cuban extremists."

The Cuban charge involving their Chancery in Santiago, the treatment afforded their nationals and diplomatic personnel, and the apparent firing on a Cuban vessel form the basis for Cuba's formal complaint to the UN Security Council filed late on September 12. The complaint alleges that these actions threaten international peace and security and require UNSC intervention. Despite reservations by the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and to a lesser degree France—all of whom felt the connection between the Cuban situation in Santiago and international peace to be tenuous—a UNSC consensus was reached at mid-day September 14 to schedule a formal Council meeting on September 18.

FYI: The new Chilean Government may send a special representative to the UNSC meeting, or ask that it be postponed. END FYI

THIRD COUNTRY REACTION TO CHILEAN COUP

Latin America:

Argentina: Peron condemns, blames U.S.

Bolivia: Banzer: Coup expressed people's will.

Brazil: Recognized Junta.

Colombia: Foreign Minister says blow to democracy.

Costa Rica: Figueres condemns.

Dominican Republic: National mourning.

Guatemala: Recognized Junta.

Mexico: National mourning; Echeverria deplored events, sent plane to fetch Mrs. Allende.

Panama: Government-controlled congress deplored Allende "murder"; vowed common cause with Chilean patriots.

Peru: Velasco refers to Allende's "tragic death".

Uruguay: Recognized Junta.

Venezuela: Declared national mourning.

Western Europe:

Austria: Kreisky deplored “events and Allende’s death.”

Netherlands: Deplored events.

Sweden: Palme deplored coup; insinuated CIA involvement; suspended aid.

West Germany: Brandt dismayed, but avoided condemnation.

Communist Countries:

CPR: NCNA calls Allende “martyr”; coup was conclusion of incidents engineered by domestic and foreign elements.

Cuba: Seeking UNSC session.

East Germany: Condemns Allende’s “foul assassination”.

Romania: Central Committee demanded end to “acts of terror”, hinted at foreign involvement.

Yugoslavia: Tito “pained and horrified”, charged “international imperialism”.

USSR: Central Committee denounced reactionary forces backed by “foreign imperialism”; expressed full solidarity with Chilean left and confidence in continued struggle. Media quote third parties charging U.S. complicity.