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Transcript of a Telephone Conversation Between Frank Mankiewicz and the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)

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Nota de Archivo: *Summary: Following up on Church's telephone call that morning, Frank Mankiewicz called Kissinger to discuss in more detail what was happening in Chile—in particular, regarding the emerging human rights crisis—and what the United States might do to improve the situation. Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, Kissinger Telephone Conversation Transcripts, Box 22, Chronological File. No classification marking. All blank underscores are omissions in the original. Mankiewicz had been Latin America Regional Director of the Peace Corps (1964–1966) and, more recently, National Political Director of the McGovern for President Campaign (1972). The Washington Special Actions Group met in the White House Situation Room on September 20, 3:05–3:49 p.m. For the minutes of the meeting see Foreign Relations, 1969–1976, vol. XXI, Chile, 1969–1973, Document 361.*

M: Henry.

K: Frank, how are you?

M: I'm fine. I have to . . . I was talking to Frank Touch [Church] this morning and he told me you might be having some kind of discussions about Chile this afternoon.

K: That's right.

M: And I thought if I could I would take about a minute and a half and give you a couple of notions which may or may not work. I don't know what attitudes are but it seems to me that with foreign correspondents in there now we are going to start to get I think a fair amount of rather unpleasant reporting because all of the reports I get are that these are not very nice people and very insecure. And that there are probably a lot more people dead and there may be you know torture going on and people being held in the stadiums and that all has a bad ring. It's not your kind of classic Latin American coup by any means and from the fact that they're making up all kinds of stories. Maybe they are all true but it's hard to believe that these people were simultaneously stashing Russian arms and planning assassination plots and stealing all the money. I mean that has all the ring of insecurity that those stories are coming out of the junta. I think that regardless of what kind of face the U.S. is going to put toward this at a very minimum we could be talking about human rights you know. About asylum and respecting asylum and after all the courts are working. There is no reason to have military trials of civilians make that kind of representation, because, I'll send you the excerpts from the newspapers that are being printed and statements that were made in the week or so prior to the coup. They talk about an Indonesian solution which is most ominous. And I also got this 2 days ago. Something somebody sent me a full week before the coup, which was an editorial in the Christian Democratic paper. The party paper. A most straight anti-semitic editorial including last names of the suffixes of names of people we must now go after. This editorial says, "the Soviet Union is an anti-Jewish dictatorship and Chile is pro-Jewish Communist dictatorship." I just can't believe that more than 9 Jews in the whole country.

K: I was just going to say.

M: I don't think its Jews they're after but it indicates a state of mind that I think is most un-Latin.

K: Yeah. That is amazing.

M: I assume we have people down there now but as I say I would guess that by tonight, tomorrow morning, the next day, the foreign journalists are going to put quite a different face on it. You're not going to have foreign journalists being arrested.

K: Well, you know, I told Frank that this was something that we were discussing this afternoon but really, only in a sort of a fact finding way. I'm not in a good position until I'm confirmed and sworn in really to take a reading roll but I did tell Frank that I would raise the asylum issue.

M: Yeah, you see there is a U.N., there's a OAS rights commission and unlike anything connected with OAS he has done some good work in the past. Almost in spite of himself and has some respect down there. I think it would be very difficult for these people to refuse to let it in. The civilians even are trying not to let them come in and investigate allegations of torture a couple of years ago and we're not on it which is even better. I think 5 members and kind of a distinguished jurist____ and I would think anything that could promote their coming in or sending a representative in would be very effective.

K: Let me . . . this is a point about which perhaps I can do something this afternoon but don't expect it.

M: I realize you're in a very difficult position.

K: I'm going to look into it.

M: When do you think confirmation is coming?

K: I think they are voting tomorrow morning. I think there is unanimous consent now to vote tomorrow morning.

M: Well that's fine.

K: And then I'll be sworn in Saturday but next week I'll have to spend three days at the U.N.

M: Seeing the new members.

K: Well, I've got to deliver the speech and . . . for the U.S. It gives me a chance perhaps to say something a little more thoughtful than has been said in recent years though I have hardly the time to prepare something.

M: Well, I think it is a good opportunity. Don't let them ask you questions afterward. That's my advice to you but you know major foreign policy speakers do not accept questions. Do you think the White House wants Agnew to resign and then you'll say I have no comment and then that's the story.

K: I'll bet that's right.

M: So just keep your counsel.

K: No, I'll say I couldn't be interested in it since I'm ineligible.

M: That's right, constitutionally ineligible. I think you'll do fine up there. So it's tomorrow. That's good.

K: I hope so.

M: And then you'll be sworn in Saturday.

K: That's what it looks like.

M: OK.

K: Many thanks.

M: I'm just passing this on because you know when ever anything happens . . .

K: That's what I want you to do Frank.

M: 10 or 15 people call me up every hour.

K: I want you to feel that I am a place you will try and call and should call.

M: Normally I'll do it by paper but you know this thing is moving fast and I . . .

K: I enjoyed seeing you on Saturday.

M: Yeah, and we'll set up a couple of dinners up here very soon. Holly thinks that's an excellent idea.

K: Good. McGovern also mentioned it when he called me the other day and told me he was going to vote against me but . . .

M: Yeah, I thought that was a pretty good statement of his, all things considered.

K: It was a good statement. No, he had his constituency to worry about.

M: Sure.

K: I thought it was the minimum criticism he could make.

M: That's right. That's exactly my thought that he could have done a lot more.

K: No I understood it very well and there were no bad feelings, not only no bad feelings, I thought it laid the basis for good . . .

M: I had dinner with him last night and he told me that he had called you and I said I thought, my feeling was that you would respect that considerably. He said he thought you had. So I think that will be good. Well, alright. If I get other things I'll pass them along.

K: Good, wonderful. Bye.