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Memorandum for the 40 Committee

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Nota de Archivo: *Summary: This memorandum discussed options available to the U.S. Government to influence the outcome of the September 4 Chilean Presidential election and the subsequent October 24 election should none of the candidates achieve a clear majority. It outlined U.S. requirements, costs, and issues for taking no, limited, and broad covert action in the event that Allende or Alessandri were elected. Source: National Security Council, Nixon Intelligence Files, Subject Files, Chile, 1970. Secret; Eyes Only. A handwritten notation on the bottom of the first page reads, "40 Committee meeting—8 Sept. 1970. Embassy to give assessment; recommendations to be made for 40 Committee consideration at 14 Sept. meeting." For a description of the 40 Committee meeting, see Foreign Relations, 1969–1976, vol. XXI, Chile, 1969–1973, Document 92.*

Options in Chilean Presidential Election During the Congressional Run-Off Phase (5 September–24 October 1970)

1. This memorandum provides the Committee with a series of options which, if implemented, could influence the outcome of the election of a president by the Chilean Congress on 24 October, if no candidate obtains a majority in the general election on 4 September.

2. Background

a. On 25 March 1970 the 40 Committee endorsed a proposal for political action designed to reduce the threat of a presidential victory by Salvador Allende, candidate of the Popular Unity (UP—a coalition of Communists, Socialists and leftists). On 27 June the Committee approved Ambassador Korry's request for an additional [dollar amount not declassified] for anti-Allende activities, but deferred any decision on the Ambassador's proposal for influencing the congressional vote should the election go to Congress. The Committee was briefed orally on 7 August at which time the risks involved in embarking on a course of action to identify "persuadable" individuals in the Chilean Congress were discussed. It was agreed that the Committee would have to consider separately any request for authority to influence the congressional vote.

b. The most recent reliable political surveys continue to indicate that none of the three candidates will receive the required majority of popular votes. Jorge Alessandri, the 74 year-old independent, continues to lead his rivals, Allende and Radomiro Tomic, the Christian Democrat Party (PDC) candidate, but not with sufficient strength to attract the majority support he needs to be elected president on 4 September. This being the case, the constitution requires that Congress select the president from the two candidates who receive the highest number of popular votes. An analysis of the candidates' voting strength in the present 200-man Congress shows that the UP and Allende hold 82 votes, the PDC and Tomic have 75 and the Alessandri supporters hold the remaining 43 seats. To elect a president on the first ballot there must be a majority present (101) and the winning candidate must poll a majority of those present. If no majority is obtained a second vote is called. Should the second vote still not produce a president, a third vote will take place on the following day and the president will be elected by a simple majority of those present and voting. The popular vote is expected to be close and in

all probability all 200 congressmen will be present for the first ballot.

c. The Chilean tradition of endorsing the leading candidate on the basis of popular votes cannot be counted upon in this election in which political dynamics may disrupt party loyalties, especially within the Christian Democratic and the Radical parties. For example, Allende's support in Congress of 82 votes is composed of 28 from the Communist Party, 19 from the Socialist Party, 28 from the Radical Party, and the remaining 7 from the three smaller parties in the coalition. With Allende in second place, President Eduardo Frei has said that he believes about 18 Christian Democrats would support Allende. On the other hand, since Alessandri has considerable influence among the Radicals, we can expect a number of them to vote for Alessandri rather than Allende. How many might do so cannot be safely predicted at this time, but probably there would be no fewer than six. Thus, as second runner, Allende could have a total of 94 votes on the first ballot. However, since firm information on how each individual Radical and Christian Democratic congressman will vote is not available, there is no guarantee that this analysis will prove to be correct.

d. The consequences for the U.S. under an Allende administration were spelled out in NSSM 97 which, in part, said, "The election of Allende would bring to power political forces with the ultimate goal of establishing an authoritarian Marxist state. Long term goals of an Allende administration would thus include suppression of free elections, the state ownership of all or almost all business enterprises, the establishment of state farms, and the imposition of police-backed labor discipline." In foreign affairs, the NIE on Chile dated 30 July 1970 said, "On key international issues, which involve any kind of an East-West confrontation, an Allende administration would be openly hostile to U.S. interests or at best neutral."

3. Possible Electoral Situations and Options

a. The electoral situations which may require some type of action to deny the presidency to Allende in a congressional run-off and possible courses of action follow:

(1) Alessandri in first place over Allende by less than 100,000 votes:

(a) Possible options:

1 Take no action. This posture stresses the USG's respect for the principle of self-determination and implies the conclusion that there is no satisfactory alternative to accepting a Marxist government in this hemisphere if it is constitutionally elected.

2 Take limited action. This alternative would allow for the continuation of the present anti-Allende propaganda campaign or direct political action to influence the outcome of the congressional vote, or a combination of the two. In either case the action could be taken through the cooperation of [26 lines not declassified].

3 Broad action. This action would include steps described in 2 above in tandem with other [less than 1 line not declassified] assets in the Democratic Radical Party, the National Party and possibly [less than 1 line not declassified] contacts in the military. This broader approach would provide wider access to the Congress, but without measurably increasing leverage on it. In this case the U.S. would have to fund, direct and coordinate the efforts of the assets involved, thereby increasing the risk of exposure.

(2) Allende in first place over Alessandri. In this situation, the above options may also be considered. This situation offers the least chance of success and Alessandri has said he will not accept the presidency unless he finishes first in the popular vote. In addition, any action by the U.S. Government at the Washington level might also be desirable in order to encourage key world leaders to adopt a position which would influence the congressional vote against Allende.

(3) Allende in first place over Tomic. This situation is unlikely to occur, but if it does the same options as in 2 and 3 above might also be considered. Although the chances of denying Allende the presidency are slim, they would be better than in

situation (2) above because of PDC strength in the Congress and the possibility that Alessandri supporters would vote for Tomic.

b. The following electoral situations might not require any action:

(1) Alessandri in first place over Allende by more than 100,000 votes. Although there is no guarantee that Congress would select Alessandri over Allende no matter what his margin of victory might be, informed estimates place a high probability on Alessandri being elected under these circumstances.

(2) Tomic in first place over Allende by any number of votes. The assumption in this situation is that Tomic would receive all of the congressional votes of the PDC and enough of those of the National Party to give him more than the required majority. Again, there is no absolute guarantee that this would take place.

(3) Alessandri in first place over Tomic and vice-versa. In this situation, Allende would not be a contender in the congressional run-off.

4. Implementation

a. In any of the action situations outlined above, the continuance of the propaganda instrumentalities could be used to:

(1) stimulate public opinion in such a way that it would bring pressure to bear on Congress not to vote for Allende, and,

(2) encourage a political climate in which a majority of Chileans would approve the selection of either Alessandri or Tomic if Allende is in first place.

b. The propaganda effort would include, but not necessarily be limited to extensive use of radio; publication of brochures, pamphlets, magazines, etc., depicting life under a Marxist regime, discussing Communist Party policies, and expanding upon themes put forth in the program of the UP and on statements made by UP leaders; replaying in the Chilean press of pertinent news stories of revelations which might originate outside Chile; publicizing pertinent quotes by prominent Chilean congressmen; sponsoring speeches by exiles from Communist bloc countries; sponsoring public appearances by prominent Chilean congressmen; and, sponsoring women and youth organizations so that they may exert grass-root pressure on Congress.

c. [3 paragraphs (13 lines) not declassified]

(3) [1 paragraph (16 lines) not declassified]

d. [1 paragraph (7 lines) not declassified]

e. The [less than 1 line not declassified] which might be used to try to influence the Chilean Congress include [name not declassified] whose activities in attempting [less than 1 line not declassified] were approved by the 40 Committee; [less than 1 line not declassified] members of the National Party and [less than 1 line not declassified] senior officers in the Chilean military. The use of any of the above [less than 1 line not declassified] is limited to the extent that they can only try to influence those congressmen whom they may know. The military contacts also might issue tailored statements which would intimate that the military might not allow Allende to assume the presidency if chosen by the Congress.

5. Risks

a. The slightest revelation that the U.S. Government is involved in a political action operation against the Chilean Congress could mean almost certain victory for Allende, while at the same time seriously affecting the credibility of the U.S. Government in world affairs.

b. The risks involved in the continuation of the propaganda activity would be minimal, since only [less than 1 line not declassified] mechanisms would be used, and it would be a continuation of the anti-Allende activity.

c. The risks to the U.S. Government would be somewhat higher if [8 lines not declassified].

d. The possibility of security problems would be significantly increased if other covert assets were used; however, these are trusted people and their use, especially with Allende in first place, might justify the risks involved.

e. If Alessandri receives at least 100,000 votes more than Allende, then the chances of success in persuading the Congress to elect Alessandri are good, and there is a good chance that the operation could be carried out without the U.S. hand showing. However, with Allende in first place by whatever margin over either of the other candidates, the chances of denying the presidency to Allende are unfavorable, and the risk factors would necessarily increase as a result of a more hostile operational environment.

6. Costs

a. Propaganda continuation—Based upon the experience gained in the anti-Allende pre-election propaganda campaign, the estimated cost for this option after 5 September through the congressional vote is [dollar amount not declassified].

b. Political Action—The Ambassador and the CIA Station Chief have agreed that political action to influence the congress against Allende would cost approximately [dollar amount not declassified].

c. It is estimated that the use of [less than 1 line not declassified] in attempting to influence congress would amount to [dollar amount not declassified].

d. If all the options are taken, the total cost for the activity would be [dollar amount not declassified].

7. Issues

a. It is requested that the Committee address itself to the following issues:

(1) Should the propaganda activities be continued into the congressional run-off period and, if so, under what precise circumstances?

(2) Is political action to be initiated to try to influence the Chilean Congress during the run-off period and, if so, under what precise situations?

(3) If political action is to be initiated, what should be its extent, i.e., limited or broad?

(4) Is direct contact with Chileans authorized to obtain the political intelligence required to plan and to implement a political action program?