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Intelligence Memorandum

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Nota de Archivo: *Summary: This CIA memorandum contained a post-election forecast of an Allende government which suggested that Allende would move cautiously and gradually toward establishment of a Marxist state and would not threaten U.S. vital interests. The Allende Presidency would, however, create economic and psychological losses for U.S. policy in Latin America. Source: National Security Council, Nixon Intelligence Files, Subject Files, Chile, 1970. Secret; Sensitive. Prepared in the Office of Current Intelligence and coordinated with the Directorate for Plans.*

The Situation Following the Chilean Presidential Election

1. Election Results:

The final results of the election on 4 September, subject to verification before 23 October by the National Electoral Court, are:

Only about 2,960,000 of the 3,500,000 registered voters actually went to the polls. The 16 percent abstention rate is high by Chilean standards.

Allende did not equal the 39 percent of the vote he received in the two-way 1964 presidential election, nor did he come close to the approximately 46 percent he would have gotten if the parties in his coalition had delivered their total voting strength shown in the 1969 congressional elections.

The small number of null or void votes offers little hope that the five-man electoral court, although it is composed entirely of Alessandri backers, can find enough dubious votes to challenge Allende’s lead of nearly 40,000.

2. The Congressional Lineup:

The incumbent Congress, most of which was elected in 1969 and retains office until March 1973, will be charged with choosing between Allende and Alessandri when it meets for the purpose on 24 October. It is likely that Congress will respect Allende’s plurality and select him as Chile’s next President.

Membership of the full Congress of 200 (150 deputies and 50 senators) is divided as follows:

The winner in the congressional runoff could have as few as 51 votes. A quorum of only 101 members of Congress is necessary for the first ballot and, in order to win, a candidate must receive a majority of the votes of those present. If there is a tie, another vote is taken immediately. If this does not produce a majority, another vote is taken the next day and the winner needs only a majority of any number which attends and votes at that time.

Congress has always chosen the top presidential vote-getter on the three other occasions in this century when no candidate received the required majority of the popular vote. This time is not likely to be an exception. In fact, before the election,

Alessandri stated flatly that he would not accept the presidency if he did not win a popular plurality or a majority. His history of stubborn rigidity suggests that he is not likely to change his mind, or to lend himself now to deals by others to head off an Allende presidency. However, some of his backers have urged him not to concede and he has not yet done so.

The time between now and the congressional vote on 24 October is sure to be a period of intense political pressures and complex maneuvering as contending political groups seek to secure their objectives. The most likely end result, however, will be that a decisive number of leftist Christian Democratic members of Congress will swing to Allende. Defeated Christian Democratic presidential candidate Radomiro Tomic, who had hoped to lead a unified leftist coalition including the Communists, is likely to urge this course on his party followers. This move would be rationalized by the hope, almost certainly unfounded, that the Christian Democrats could thus prevent the disciplined Communist Party from dominating the next administration. It could also be justified by the fact that many of Tomic's policies are identical or very similar to those propounded by Allende. The blatantly opportunistic Radicals, already nominally in Allende's camp, will have no reason to desert him at this point.

There is an outside possibility that lame duck President Frei might attempt a political maneuver aimed at denying Allende the presidency. One scheme, which has been rumored and subsequently denied in clandestine reporting, would involve an effort by Frei to swing the Christian Democrats to Alessandri in the congressional vote. Alessandri would, by prior secret agreement, resign the presidency some months after taking office. New presidential elections would constitutionally be required and Frei could himself be a candidate. Frei's continued personal popularity might bring him victory and a new term in the presidency. This complex scheme, or any possible variation of it, would be most likely to collapse before it got far. It is doubtful that Frei could swing such a maneuver or now has the taste to try. He appears totally disheartened and in a near state of shock over the outcome of the election.

If, by any chance, Alessandri should be named president by Congress, the result would most likely be an upsurge of violent reaction by Allende supporters. The armed forces would be hard pressed to contain the violence and might not succeed.

3. The Loci of Power in Chile

The traditional sources of power in Chile have been weakened in recent years and most of them are beset with internal differences. All of them are affected by the fact that well before last Friday's election Chile as a nation and a society had already turned clearly toward a statist economic course and a leftist and nationalist political course. This has quickened under Frei, despite his moderate predilections. Perhaps as important has been the fact that traditional power groups have not combined to hold their own, or even sought very hard to do so.

The Military

The Chilean Army's long nonpolitical tradition has made it vulnerable to shabby treatment from successive governments and has not averted a substantial growth of leftist influence at all ranks. It has even been penetrated by revolutionary extremists. The Army has been profoundly affected by the uprising in one of its units in October 1969 and the resentments which led to the revolt have not been really resolved. The effects have been to divide and weaken, rather than to give a common purpose, and the Army's pride, discipline, and proficiency have all continued to erode. Many generals reveal deep uncertainties and mistrust of each other's motives and commitment as well as of more junior officers and noncoms.

The commanders of the Navy and Air Force, and probably most of the officers of these small services, would like to resist an Allende government, but are too weak and dispersed to be effective.

The uniformed national police, the carabineros, are a well-armed and well-disciplined force which is a little larger than the Army and there is strong rivalry between them. The carabineros are committed to their major responsibility of defending the constitutionally elected government. Although their commandant under Frei is strongly conservative, he is already a

lame duck and it is doubtful whether he could lead the force to back a move against Allende as a duly elected president.

The Church

Much of the leadership of the Roman Catholic Church in Chile has long been in the vanguard of the progressive movement within the churches of Latin America. Individual churchmen frequently speak and act in ways which would be considered subversive in such countries as Brazil and Colombia. Many radical Christian Democrats are close to the Church and the numerous influential Catholic universities and secondary schools are strongly influenced and frequently dominated by committed leftists. In this election the Church did not openly support either Tomic or Alessandri, although most of its members were probably divided between the two. Some radical churchmen backed Allende. Additionally, it should be remembered that a smaller proportion of Chileans are even nominal Catholics than is the case of most Latin American countries.

Private Business

The economic power not wielded by the Chilean government through its extensive participation in business and industrial enterprises is concentrated in the hands of a few people. Most of them backed Alessandri, although some of the freewheeling ones tried to keep lines open to Allende. Frei originally had the support of many businessmen, but it diminished during his six years of extensive reforms and Tomic made small effort to regain their confidence. Many economically powerful Chileans have always kept large holdings abroad and seem likely to leave the country rather than risk the chance that Allende will not carry out the extensive expropriations he has promised, many of specific companies. Smaller businessmen and industrialists who have no choice but to stay will probably try to accommodate Allende's policies as long as they manage not to be squeezed out. Few Chilean businessmen, small or large, have had a good word for any government in recent years, even Alessandri's. The large daily El Mercurio speaks for the economically influential and Allende has made its owner, Agustin Edwards, one of his major targets. The many subsidiary newspapers, publishing and other firms, as well as the banks owned by the Edwards family will probably be taken over or forced to the wall by taxation or other means. A major rallying point and voice will thus be eliminated as fast as possible and others with less resources will be treated similarly.

The major economic resource of Chile, its copper mines, are already partly nationalized and Allende will probably move quickly to fulfill his promise to take full control of them. Their recent expansion, largely through US investment and technical expertise, will provide Chile with an assured income, despite recent decline in world copper prices. This, combined with current large credit reserves, will give an Allende government wide latitude of action.

Labor Unions

Chile's largest and most effective labor groups are almost all led by Communists or Socialists. Such unions as the copper workers, a privileged and highly paid elite, did not give Allende all out support in the campaign but can be expected to exert all the influence they can in a Marxist government. Non-Marxist leaders in the large Chilean Labor Confederation (CUT) will find themselves weaker than ever. Christian Democratic organization among peasants has increased in recent years, but the strong Marxist peasant organization will probably overshadow it with government help.

The Middle Class

This is a large but amorphous group with little sense of common interest. Many are by any standard actually poor, a situation sharpened by Chile's rampant inflation. Like most Chileans, the middle class is divided into many identity groups which they emphasize by preference. These divisions are heightened by an obsession with independence and the plethora of highly opinionated media, which are very influential among a people 90 percent literate.

Students

University students and, increasingly, secondary students, play a disproportionately large role in Chilean politics. This role is usually disruptive and is encouraged by many professors and administrators. The radicalization of the students is likely to increase under Allende. However, he and his Communist allies believe their hold on power could be threatened by extremist actions and he may take moves to control them.

4. Developments after a Congressional Decision Favoring Allende:

If Congress declares Allende the victor on 24 October, the odds would strongly favor his inauguration on schedule on 4 November. The possibility of a military power play exists, but it is too early to assess the chances of success, particularly in view of the reasons discussed above. The Army commander's pre-election statement that he would respect the decision of Congress even if it selected the man with the second largest number of votes was not universally supported by top military leaders. However, in the present context armed forces leaders could see it as a way to avert an Allende government. Even if a military take-over were to be attempted, with or without the connivance of President Frei, the probable reaction would be serious and sustained violence by Allende's partisans that might ultimately prove beyond the power of the armed forces to suppress.

The chances of a military coup would, of course, increase in the period before the inauguration if there were to be a major outbreak of violence. Political forces to the right of the Allende camp do not appear to have the ability or the inclination to resort to sustained violence, and they would have little popular support if they tried. Allende and his chief backers, particularly the Communists, can be expected to do everything in their power to prevent and to avoid the provocation of pre-inauguration violence. The extremists on the far left, who have denounced Allende and his supporters for pursuing the peaceful road to power, have lain low in recent weeks. They were encouraged to do so by Fidel Castro, who warned them that they might endanger an Allende victory. These revolutionaries, however, have become increasingly capable and self-confident, and may wish to prove to Allende that he cannot discount them and their more radical ideas.

The intelligence community's judgment of the likely policies and goals of an Allende administration were discussed at length in the response to NSSM #97, dated 18 August 1970. Nothing has happened to change these judgments. The summary portion of the response to NSSM #97 is quoted below.

In sum, we would expect an Allende government to move gradually and cautiously toward the establishment of an authoritarian Marxist state. To this end, it would seek to destroy, neutralize, or obtain the support of the various groups and institutions which might block its progress. Some groups, most notably the security forces, would be watching Allende closely, and could move to overthrow him if he were seen flagrantly flouting the constitution or threatening the military's institutional interests. Divisions and uncertainties within and among these groups, however, mean that a sufficiently gradualist and skillful approach by Allende could avoid provoking the military almost indefinitely. On this basis, time would enable Allende to entrench himself ever more firmly in power.

Internationally, we see as one of Allende's goals the extirpation of U.S. influence from Chile. While we expect him to try to avoid a serious provocation of the U.S., his promised actions, including the expropriation of the U.S. copper companies, raise to a high level the probability of some kind of confrontation with us. We take at face value Allende's platform promises to "denounce" the OAS, to intensify relations with socialist countries and to establish close ties with Cuba. Expansion of the Soviet presence in Chile could occur in many different ways, but we believe the establishment of a major permanent Soviet military presence to be unlikely but not impossible. We also believe Allende would probably—and almost certainly in the period in which he was trying to consolidate himself—avoid the risks of discernible Chilean subversion in other countries.

Regarding threats to U.S. interests, we conclude that:

1. The U.S. has no vital national interests within Chile. There would, however, be tangible economic losses.

2. The world military balance of power would not be significantly altered by an Allende government.

3. An Allende victory would, however, create considerable political and psychological costs:

a. Hemispheric cohesion would be threatened by the challenge that an Allende government would pose to the OAS, and by the reactions that it would create in other countries. We do not see, however, any likely threat to the peace of the region.

b. An Allende victory would represent a definite psychological set-back to the U.S. and a definite psychological advance for the Marxist idea.