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Backchannel Message From the Ambassador to Chile (Korry) to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)

Identificador Archival:	frus:frus1969-76ve16/d37
Agencia Emisora:	NSC / Casa Blanca
Fecha del Documento:	1970-11-08
Colección / Serie:	FRUS 1969–1976, vol. E-16: Documentos sobre Chile, 1969–1973

Nota de Archivo: *Summary: Korry provided a detailed summary of U.S.-Chilean relations from January 1970 to September 1970. Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 778, Country Files, Latin America, Chile, Korry File, 1971. Top Secret; Exclusively Eyes Only. The message was sent with a November 8 backchannel message from Korry to Kissinger that reads as follows: "I have sent summary that you requested. It is of course selective but it does include all messages I received from Washington pertinent to subject. I do not have, of course, any written material on any Senior Group or 40 Committee Washington meetings. Frankly I had hoped that this Presidential requirement would no longer be needed. I respect those who may have disagreed with my style or my opinions but to whom I also am greatly indebted." (Ibid.) The message was elicited by a November 7 backchannel message from Kis*

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631. 1. Jan 19, 1970. First meeting on USG activities in Chilean elections was held in Dept of State.

Participants: Amb Korry, Deputy Asst Sec Crimmins, Coerr, Chapin and Gardner of State, Broe, [3 names not declassified]. (Agency has full minutes.)

Purpose was to discuss Amb/CAS proposal for 303 Committee for funds for anti-Marxist new Radical Party (PDR) and for modest propaganda mechanism. Crimmins made case in his and Meyer's name against US involvement. Korry replied concerns were natural and useful but that question was "are we going to have a popular front or Marxist govt in Latin America?"

Critical exchange came when Coerr asked Korry's view of Allende victory. Amb replied Chilean military would accept victory, that PDC would be weakened. Part of it being attracted to support Allende against Communists and that there would be internal divisions within U.P. "Coerr commented an Allende victory not the same as a Communist victory in that case. Korry agreed but said that operationally one must treat an Allende victory as the same; it would be imprudent to act as if an Allende victory would be anything but another Fidel Castro govt or worse."

Then Crimmins asked "what difference it would make if we did not become involved—seeing how sensitive involvement may be versus what we may gain. Ambassador noted it easy to do nothing but we may have to ask ourselves if Allende wins, especially by few votes, whether we might better have become involved."

Meeting agreed then to accept modest Emb/CAS proposal with proviso it could not be used to support Alessandri.

2. March 27. Korry is informed of 303 Committee approval for a "limited program directed against Allende". Door was left open to reconsider later support for a candidate.

3. March 16. Santiago 971 Limdis election perspectives sent by Korry. First para states: "Our preoccupation is with the concomitant—indeed greater—concern that Chile may emerge from its presidential elections on a course towards

emulation of Fidel Castro's regime. . . . It is essential that attention be focussed on our preeminent worry: —a democratic process putting into power a Marxist regime dedicated to the elimination of US interests and influence in the area. Unfortunately my reiteration for some two years has converted this concern into a humdrum banality elsewhere, thrust aside by more immediate challenges. But the same four stark points must be faced:" (Cable goes on to substantiate this preoccupation.)

4. April 10. Anaconda Board Chairman makes appeal to Asst Secy Meyer in Washington for massive US support with them of Alessandri. Gets no encouragement.

5. April 18. Santiago 2230 Nodis. Korry rebuts very strongly the Anaconda case arguing that the company's judgment and discretion had been consistently disastrous, that Alessandri could find the needed funds, that he was far ahead in [less than 1 line not declassified] polls and that we should stay out of the race as long as we could to keep the PDC neutralized since it still held the govt.

6. June 12. Santiago 2210 Limdis, recalled that Korry's working assumptions for two years had been the base strengths of the candidates were 35–37 per cent for Alessandri, 32–34 per cent for Allende and 23–25 per cent for Tomic. Cable noted that Alessandri's early lead had been significantly trimmed and he was in the 36–37 per cent range, that Allende improved and solidified his base at 32–34 per cent and Tomic after gaining had reached a ceiling of 27–28 per cent. Summary para ended: "The crucial question we originally posed, together with its implications for US interests in South America remains unchanged: the extent of the Allende appeal. One ever more apparent factor is that the common Alessandri–Tomic conviction that the gain of one is at the expense of the other is not valid. Allende benefits at least equally from the Alessandri decline." Cable analyzed foregoing and concluded with pointed remark about importance of women's vote.

7. June 18. Via CAS channel, Korry made request for [dollar amount not declassified]. Amb noted the foregoing cable and said that unless altered, these trends could well culminate in the election of Allende and as a consequence the inevitable imposition of a Leninist state in South America. An Allende Presidency would result either from his winning the first plurality in the Sept 4 balloting or finishing such a strong second that the Congress might in the runoff prefer his election in preference to that of Alessandri's."

Korry then reviewed Embassy's tactics including the "major effort to convince all here, in Washington and elsewhere of our total non-involvement in the campaign. Unless everyone believed it, no one would." Went on to say this had been successfully accomplished. Emb/CAS had also wooed Frei with the immediate post election period in mind, had concentrated on good contacts with the army by satisfying their urgent needs, had widely propagated view Allende was running very strong and had funded the Radical Party dissidence approved by 303 Committee March 27.

Korry justified his submission of new action program on grounds it was "the Marxists strengths not the weakness of their opponents with which we must deal. I say 'must' because of our unanimous conviction that the consequences of an impressive Allende polling would be very grave for Chile and South America, sufficiently serious to undermine totally the new Latin policy launched by the Oct 31 speech of President Nixon." Amb's and CAS program called for targetting of radicals, of women and of Frei.

Korry reported that a group of US businessmen here had launched a major drive for money to support an anti-Allende propaganda campaign (separate from any Anaconda effort) and had pledged [dollar amount not declassified] with [dollar amount not declassified] matching funds from a Chilean [name not declassified] group whose membership Amb also knew. Korry said a good deal more was needed to make this program successful in the remaining two months and he put the additional sum required as [dollar amount not declassified]. He also asked more for Radical Party dissidence and an allocation of [dollar amount not declassified] for Phase Two.

He concluded: “I do so in calm pursuit of unchanged goals and in cold calculation that less than [dollar amount not declassified] is a very small insurance policy to pay when Chile is so indebted” to various US institutions. He replied to the anticipated argument that we would be supporting Alessandri by stating it was irrelevant since Allende was our target and that there was now a minimal vulnerability to exposure. He appealed for a very quick decision and ended: “I suppose that one should always apologize for doing the right thing since nothing wounds people more, but it is not all the wicked who do the most harm in this world; it is the maladroit, the negligent and the credulous.”

8. June 20. Via CAS channels Korry was questioned in message signed by Crimmins on (A) whether he held to recommendations in view of [less than 1 line not declassified] poll showing Allende with only some 28 per cent nationwide vs Alessandri’s 35 per cent, (B) just who were the US private funding group and whether it was not connected with indiscreet Council for Latin America (C) role of Frei (D) clarification of Radical Party dissidence (E) another assessment of the risk factor for US. “As you know approval of the earlier much smaller program was conditioned on its not becoming a pro-Alessandri operation. Given increased dependence on [name not declassified] to what degree does proposed greatly augmented program increase use of our effort in behalf of Alessandri rather than against Allende with obvious disadvantages. We assume you would agree that as in modest (March 27) program we would suspend expanded program if it were to be used for Alessandri”. He then recalled Santiago 2230 of April 28th (para 5 above) in which Korry had said that any significant sum arriving from the US would be as discreet as a moon launch. “While we recognize that you were talking then of a program of support for Alessandri, we would like your comment on relevance that comment to effects of expanded program.”

9. June 21. Via CAS Korry replied to Crimmins questions noting his disdain for polls [less than 1 line not declassified] and insisted on Embassy’s own well-tested reporting per previous elections. In re-analyzing the situation, Korry reported Embassy very concerned by recent evidence of shift of women from Alessandri directly to Allende, that it also concerned by the Tomic’s brain-trust’s desire to enter an Allende govt and that of course Korry recognized we would be helping Alessandri with new proposals. [name not declassified] support of Alessandri meant that willy-nilly there would be indirect US support for Alessandri even if we did nothing but anti-Allende work (under the modest March 27 program) since the internal transfer of resources [less than 1 line not declassified] would free funds for Alessandri campaigning and since some of the mechanisms the Agency wishes to use for “women and Protestants are laboring for Alessandri. . . . We have no option but to use mechanisms that are effective at reaching voters. Some of those mechanisms happen to be committed to Alessandri.”

Korry concluded: “In sum your position is very much akin to that Moliere character who counselled: ‘You should always act in conformity with the majority and never make yourself conspicuous.’ To which I respond that I will neither make you conspicuous nor can I guaranty any majority. But I do believe it is prudent to seek some guaranty against a majority that would become very conspicuous indeed in Latin America—that of Allende. If he were to gain power, what would be our response to those who asked what did we do? I am seeking by political action all that I can conceive to get the Chileans to muster their own forces—and I think with some success. But when I examine those three areas that contain almost 55 per cent of the electorate—Santiago, Valparaiso and Concepcion Provinces—I see considerable Allende strength and potential. I conclude that our inputs while imperfect and modest could conceivably provide the margin of safety. I am aware that we have no iron clad assurances of enduring secrecy; I am also troubled by many of the doubts that provoked your cable and questions. But I would be derelict in my convictions if I were not to flag the danger and to offer a proposal to deal with it.”

10. July 3. Via CAS channel Meyer cabled Korry that 40 Committee had approved Phase I of “Korry proposal” and to defer Phase Two. Re Phase Two Korry was strongly cautioned not take any action or any sounding outside Emb despite the severe inhibitions this would signify for forward planning.

11. July 3. Via Roger Channel (State 106100) Meyer cabled Korry that “I want you to know that we in ARA and the Dept as a whole recommended against approval of both Phase I and Phase II of your proposal for political action.” He explained that they had given more weight to exposure potential “and less weight to the protective attractiveness of being able to say ‘we had done something’. We also were influenced by the fact that we will be doing something which Chileans, who have ample resources and a great stake in the outcome, should themselves be doing. We also took account in this complex equation of the uncertain effectiveness of the effort; the probability that, from the standpoint of our interests in Chile all three candidates would be negative sooner or later and the certainty that exposure would destroy any prospect of mitigating Tomic or Allende post-election attitudes. In brief, we believed that the potential gains were outweighed by the potential costs.” Cable concluded by reiterating the prohibition against any attempt to “condition” or to “set up” Frei or anyone else for phase two.

12. July 6. Roger Channel (Santiago 2526) Korry message to Meyer said that “because of the wide gap between your views and those expounded by me, I have instructed CAS to hold in abeyance the implementation of the 40 Committee decision pending further consultation. I have done so because of my conviction that for such a delicate operation to be executed most efficiently there must be a modicum of mutual confidence.” Korry’s proposals were not his exclusively but of all consulted in his Embassy. However he took the responsibility for them. “While I am the President’s representative, I also depend in the first instance on your support and understanding. Without such confidence, the self-assurance that makes for leadership is undermined to such a degree that an undertaking of the import of the kind we are discussing is indeed jeopardized at the outset”.

“What is extremely unsettling is the wide breach between us over objectives. Our view is that the election of Allende would be the triumph by democratic electoral means for the first time in history of a Communist govt. We have consistently set forth this view without challenge from Washington at any time heretofore. And by happenstance, our President on July first in his nationwide TV hour made the point twice unequivocally that no Communists had ever assumed power by democratic means. It would not be stretching matters, I submit, to say the President built much of his 50 minute argumentation on the general Asian subject around this fact. If at any time previously our central thesis that the election of Allende would signify the imposition in Chile of a Communist regime of either the Fidel Castro or Ulbricht variety had been challenged, we would have done our best to persuade you of the contrary but would have ceded to your judgment and to your decision. But because we assumed general agreement on this point and because we anticipated the President’s arguments as they applied here, we decided with great reluctance that the Allende chances of victory were so strong that we had to bite the main bullet. Hence we appear to differ over your view that ‘all three candidates would be negative sooner or later’ since we feel that the negative aspects of one transcend the other two and the election of one would have repercussions far beyond Chile, as President Nixon implicitly recognizes (in his TV hour).

“From this central difference flows a subordinate one of equal significance. Whereas you state the exposure would destroy any prospect of mitigating Tomic or Allende post-election attitudes we unanimously hold that there is literally nothing the US can do to mitigate Allende’s attitudes. This is not to say that we should deliberately seek to justify those attitudes by imprudences so that his govt could better justify its actions. It is to say that Allende intends, as he said in a speech a few nights ago here, to cooperate fully with Fidel Castro to set in motion throughout Latin America a revolutionary tide. There is ample evidence as to the depth and sincerity of Allende’s determination to effect this true revolution that would in the first instance be aimed at eliminating meaningful US public and private presence and influence.”

Korry argued that there would be minimal exposure risk and that the “conditioning” of Frei was normal psychological action. His belief was that “Allende is at least a strong second if not first”. As for the money, “we must deal with the real world which was quite different” than the assumption that money meant a properly organized and executed Alessandri campaign. “To say Tomic and Alessandri and their supporters ‘should be doing’ something will not make it happen. We

waited long enough to confirm they will not do it and that the threat we feared had materialized."

"Having assumed that our President and all his advisors would wish to oppose an electoral triumph of a Communist candidate (which, whatever the label, he is) because it would be harmful to the interests of the U.S., we had, I sincerely believe, no choice than to 'have done something'. Indeed I would be derelict if I did not do something once I assume that to be the view of my President and my govt."

12. July 7. Roger Channel State 107632, Meyer reply to Korry expressing thanks for further amplification and suggesting he had erred on side of frankness and incompleteness in explaining Dept's position. "Most important is that ARA and Dept recognize 40 Committee decision as binding". After explaining Phase Two hesitations, Meyer said:

"There is no difference of opinion between us on the adverse consequences of an Allende victory or about the importance of an Allende defeat as an objective. The differences were principally about the degree of risk we should take in an attempt to achieve the objective, considering the adverse consequences to our position in Chile and elsewhere should we be caught out. In any case, do not interpret honest differences in judgment between us in terms of confidence. I know that you do not expect me to accept every recommendation on far-reaching issues that comes forth from any Embassy any more than I expect an Ambassador to suppress differences with Washington guidance that appear to him to be unsound from the standpoint of his concerns in his host country."

13. Aug 4. Roger Channel Santiago 2979 Korry followed up Washington consultation with Crimmins by reiterating difficulties in projecting for NSSM contingency paper based on Allende election and his need to have contact with key Chilean players to make assessment, particularly Frei. He asked for permission to see Frei after stating: "Churchill said that 'true genius resides in the capacity for evaluation of uncertain, hazardous and conflicting information'. I would have to aspire to far more than genius to evaluate and to recommend while isolating myself from the most essential information and to offer appreciations uniquely based on the most hazardous of information.

"It will again be suggested that I am an 'activist' who proposes action for the sake of action. Let me dispose of this kind of type-casting in which the Dept invariably indulges and which is at the root of the troubles flushed out in some of the recent task forces. The report I did on Africa converted US policy from activism to restraint; the low profile arguments I made to the previous administration from here and which I have executed here are the antithesis of activism; the paper I did for UnderSec Richardson on the future relationships of the US with the LDCs was criticized for its retreat from helter-skelter activism; the recommendations I have been discussing for the sharp reduction in official US presence here is being opposed by bureaucrats who want to be active in everything. Neither low profile nor the careful matching of real US interests to US resource availability was intended to be passivism."

14. Aug 12. Roger Channel State 130820 Meyer reply to Santiago 2979. Meyer gives detailed explanation of preoccupations re Phase II. "Of course NSSM 97 can affect judgments about Phase II in the sense that conceivably we may determine that the threat to our interests is so great and our counter-strategy and policy so ineffective that the assumption of the risks and undertainties of Phase II is worth while. That remains to be seen." he noted how delicate and questionable Phase II would be and quoted Bill Broe as stating it would be a "security nightmare". After explaining the concerns for prudence he authorized contacts with Frei as outlined by Korry.

15. Aug 13. Roger Channel Santiago 3141 Korry to Meyer expressing thanks for clarification. Korry stresses election results will determine what if anything US would do.

16. Aug 23. CAS channel from Dept to Korry informing him that Senior Review Group had decided to withhold final decision on options paper until after elections. Requests detailed scenario on post-election phase II.

17. Late August (exact date unavailable) via CAS channel Amb replies to foregoing and comments on CAS program for Phase Two (sent simultaneously).

18. Sept 9. Santiago 3548 Nodis refers to his widely distributed Santiago 3537 Sept 8 cable entitled “No Hope for Chile” to which Korry sets forth his own dissent and calls for action in support of “Rube Goldberg” contraption. He justifies this apparent two-facedness on grounds that he had to make large number of consumers believe (via Santiago 3537) US was doing normal business as usual. He reiterates his conviction that “the future of Chile would be decided by only one man: Frei” and that it is worth a US effort to have Frei fulfill a constructive role in stopping Allende.

19. Sept 11. State 149384 Nodis from Secretary Rogers to Korry replies to above and other reporting. Secretary reiterates “that there has been no decision authorizing a program of political action to prevent Allende from being elected by Congress.” Secretary adds: “It is of the greatest importance that the process of collecting information not become or be interpreted as USG encouragement of, support for or commitment to courses of action we have not adopted. We cannot find ourselves involved in a very risky situation through inadvertence imprudence or emotion. If we come to accept all the risks and get involved, it must be only on the basis of a deliberate cold-blooded decision made in Washington and approved by higher authority.”

Secretary says confusion caused by Ambassador’s “two-levels technique” and shifting emphasis in analysis, and he asks that a lengthy number of points be clarified. He requests urgently a specific account of how Ambassador and his colleagues collecting information and notes his concern from Amb’s reporting, citing details “of his direct participation in urging Chileans to act without even the safeguards such as they are of intermediate elements.”

Secretary instructs Amb: “Until you are otherwise instructed, I want you to limit your activities and those of the Embassy strictly to collecting information and preparing the assessments you have been asked to submit. Above all I do not want you or the Embassy to be stimulating Chileans to action until you are notified that a decision to support such action has been taken here.”

20. Sept 11. Santiago 3642 Nodis Korry reply to Secretary providing specific answers. Ambassador comments:

“I wish to make it most clear that if the Frei forces are left totally to their own devices and resources, intellectual first and material second, or if they meet with the posture laid out in para 6 reftel it is my very considered opinion that (A) Allende will be elected (B) that the USG will be blamed by many and publicly by the most influential after his election for having taken that decision. I want to be equally straightforward in saying that if such are the desires of the USG I shall carry them out but with those clear assumptions in my own mind.

“I appreciate your sympathy. I would only note that the same hesitations and same concerns were expressed in the pre-electoral period. Nothing warranted them and our actions were carried out without a hitch of any kind that exposed the US except for one known to the Dept done without my knowledge. We are in a very fluid situation in which events overtake planning as the message to CAS Headquarters clearly states. An act of commission is no less an act. What one does not do is as much an action as one does do. The question of whether Chile will be a Communist state or not is being decided now. I would hope and I would expect that a decision as to which the US would prefer and what it permits to be done about it will not await committee meetings whose decisions will once again be overtaken by events. In the interim I shall bear uppermost in mind your views.”

21. Sept 12. White House channel (WH 01777) Dr. Kissinger informing Korry that President had “been impressed by your perceptive reporting during difficult days. He is most appreciative of your efforts.”

22. Sept 12. White House channel (WH 01783 from Kissinger to Korry stating President had read Santiago 3642 (para 20 above) and requests feasible courses of action. “You are of course free to contact any persons you feel are necessary in

order to collect required information."

23. (Sept 13 to present does not include any other pertinent material relevant to this subject.)