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Nota de Archivo: *Summary: This memorandum, titled "Report on CIA Chilean Task Force Activities, 15 September to 3 November 1970," examined the degree of success achieved by the various covert actions taken to prevent Allende's ascent to the Chilean Presidency between the Presidential election in September and November 3. Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 774, Country Files, Latin America, Chile, Vol. III. Secret; Sensitive; Eyes Only. The memorandum is attached to an undated memorandum from Helms to Kissinger, in which Helms suggested "that it does have some current relevancy in terms of the kind of operational milieu Chile really is. For that reason, you may wish to pass it on to the President." A December 2 covering memorandum from Haig to Kissinger recommended that it be filed.*

Report on CIA Chilean Task Force Activities, 15 September to 3 November 1970

1. General

a. On 15 September 1970, CIA was directed to try to prevent Marxist Salvador Allende's ascent to the Chilean presidency on 3 November. This effort was to be independent of concurrent endeavors being undertaken through, or with the knowledge of, the 40 Committee, Department of State, and Ambassador Korry.

b. Briefly, the situation at that time was the following:

—Allende had attained a plurality of only some 40,000 in the Chilean popular vote for president. Jorge Alessandri, a conservative and the runner-up, would face Allende in a Congressional run-off on 24 October. The run-off winner would be invested as president on 3 November.

—Allende's designation as president by Congress was very probable given all known factors in the Chilean political equation.

—Given the dismal prospects of a political formula being worked out to prevent Allende's designation as president by Congress, remaining alternatives centered around overcoming the apolitical, constitutional-oriented inertia of the Chilean military.

—U.S. Government intentions were highly suspect, particularly in Allende and certain government sectors. Suspicions extended to all Americans in Chile for whatever declared purpose. In addition, the Chilean military were being monitored quite closely by the Allende forces for warning signals of any interventionist proclivities.

2. Special Organization

a. A Chilean Task Force was assembled and functioning three days after CIA was assigned the mission. It was headed by [less than 1 line not declassified] and highly-qualified CIA [less than 1 line not declassified] recalled from their [less than 1 line not declassified] posts specifically for this purpose. A special communications channel was set up simultaneously to

Santiago, Chile, and Buenos Aires, Argentina, to handle sensitive cable traffic for the Task Force.

b. [1 line not declassified] It consisted of four CIA officers with the appearance, language, and experience to sustain the fiction of various foreign nationalities. They were recalled from their overseas posts to Washington, briefed, and inserted individually into Chile [1 line not declassified] nationals. In Santiago, their only U.S. contact was a CIA officer who had resided in Santiago [1½ lines not declassified] established contact with Chilean intermediaries or principals interested in promoting a military coup.

c. By a special (and unique) arrangement requested by CIA, the U.S. Army Attaché in Santiago was placed under operational direction of the CIA Chief of Station there. His assistance and Chilean military contacts were invaluable in this program.

3. The Dual Approach: Constitutional and Coup

a. Prospects for inducing Congress to vote for Alessandri rather than Allende were never bright and, they all focused on inspiring a reluctant, indecisive President Frei to assume an out-of-character role: dynamic leadership within his own party, with the "persuadables" in Congress, and with the military. Frei was under no illusions about Chile's fate under an Allende regime. "Chile has a very short future," he said, "and after 4 November it will only have a past."

b. Initially, Frei was willing to consider and even advocate a constitutional solution: the so-called Frei re-election gambit. The question was whether he would be willing to commit his prestige completely in following through on such a difficult political maneuver with the outcome, at best, unassured. The basic gambit consisted of marshalling enough Congressional votes to elect Alessandri over Allende with the understanding Alessandri would resign immediately after inauguration and pave the way for a special election in which Frei could legally become a candidate. As a preliminary step, Frei coordinated Alessandri's post-election statement that if he were selected for the presidency by Congress, he (Alessandri) would resign. The thrust of CIA's endeavors, then, was to use every plausible pressure combined with inducements to move Frei down this path. To this end, virtually overnight CIA mobilized an interlocking political action and propaganda campaign designed both to goad and entice Frei into following through on the re-election gambit.

c. At the same time, recognizing the fallibilities of Frei, CIA focused on provoking a military coup. This undertaking was segregated from that of the Frei re-election gambit with the intention that it be pursued independently of Frei if necessary, but with his acquiescence if possible. [3½ lines not declassified]

4. Propaganda Campaign

a. The propaganda campaign was tailored to generating concern about Chile's future in terms which would condition the thinking and actions of the three key elements in the Chilean political equation: Frei himself, the Chilean political elite, and the Chilean military (the latter two of which could well bring collateral influence to bear on Frei). Each of these elements had hastened to rationalize its acceptance of an Allende presidency. Their palliative was the built-in checks and balance of Chile's demonstrated reverence for democracy and constitutionality, sweetened by Allende's promise to honor these traditions.

b. After the 4 September popular vote, the world press had tended to treat the prospect of witnessing the first freely-elected Marxist head of state take office as a curious aberration of democracy rather than a politically significant event. Press interest and coverage was relatively light until the Allende forces fortuitously provided an attractive issue which could be exploited. By 15 September, it became apparent that Allende was conducting a rather blatant campaign to intimidate the Chilean information media through threats of assassination and violence, takeovers by so-called worker organizations, and ultimatums to the management of newspapers and radio stations. Allende's purpose was to smother any opposition to his election by Congress and to take advantage of that peculiarly Latin, and pronounced Chilean, propensity to jump on an

accelerating bandwagon—ideals and the country's welfare to the contrary. A major target of Allende was "El Mercurio", the most prestigious newspaper in Chile and the major opposition voice to Allende up to that time. CIA mounted a propaganda campaign centered around "El Mercurio" and the issue of Allende brazenly taking his first step in "communizing" Chile by attacking freedom of the press and, worse, with the election still unsettled. Covert action resources were used to launch:

—Cables of support/protest from leading newspapers throughout Latin America to "El Mercurio".

—A protest statement from the International Press Association [3 lines not declassified] "Freedom of the press in Chile is being strangled by Communist and Marxist forces and their allies.")

—World press coverage of the International Press Association protest and on the details of the Communist efforts to seize control of the Chilean press.

—A program of journalists—actual agents and otherwise—travelling to Chile for on-the-scene reporting. (By 28 September, CIA had in place in, or enroute to, Chile 15 journalist agents from 10 different countries. This cadre was supplemented by 8 more journalists from 5 countries under the direction of high level agents who were, for the most part, in managerial capacities in the media field.)

As a result of the ensuing furore, Allende—sensitive to world opinion and attempting to project the image of a moderate, non-dogmatic socialist—decided to become more circumspect. By 25 September, heavy-handed intimidation of the press had virtually ceased.

c. Allende's show of strength had made its point however; the Chilean press, including "El Mercurio", never did regain its resiliency and remained thoroughly muted from thereon out. Lacking the usual forums for spontaneous generation and replay of propaganda inside Chile, CIA had to rely increasingly on its own resources:

—an underground press dependent upon direct mail distribution;

—placement of individual news items through agents against the resistance of a cowed management;

—financing of a new, albeit small, newspaper;

—subsidy of an anti-Allende political group and its radio programs, political advertisements, and political rallies; and,

—direct mailing of foreign news articles to President Frei, Mrs. Frei, selected military leaders, and the Chilean domestic press.

This effort did not, and could not, replace a Chilean press, fully operative and free of restraint. Virtually alone, it did keep the voice of public opposition alive inside Chile for coup purposes during the final weeks of this period.

d. The magnitude of the propaganda campaign mounted during this six week period in the Latin American and European media—aside from the U.S., the two "outside" areas with, by far, the greatest influence on Chile—is evident from the fact that only partial returns show 726 articles, broadcasts, editorials, and similar items as a direct result of agent activity. Just how many of these items were replayed is not known [2 lines not declassified]. Nor, has CIA any idea of the scope of the immeasurable multiplier effect—that is, how much its "induced" news focused media interest on the Chilean issues and stimulated additional coverage—except that, even by conservative standards, this contribution must have been both substantial and significant.

e. Special intelligence and "inside" briefings were given to U.S. journalists in deference to the international influence of the U.S. media. Particularly noteworthy in this connection was the Time cover story which owed a great deal to written

materials and briefings provided by CIA. The Time correspondent in Chile who was providing much of the background material for the story apparently accepted Allende's protestations of moderation and constitutionality at face value. CIA briefings in Washington [1 line not declassified] changed the basic thrust of the story in the final stages according to another Time correspondent. It provoked Allende to complain on 13 October, "We are suffering the most brutal and horrible pressure, both domestic and international," singling out Time in particular as having "openly called" for an invasion of Chile.

5. Political Action

a. The political action program had only one purpose: to induce President Frei to prevent Allende's election by the Congress on 24 October and, failing that, to support—by benevolent neutrality at the least and conspiratorial benediction at the most—a military coup which would prevent Allende from taking office on 3 November. Realistically, the task was one of attempting to recast Frei, as a political personality, in a role demanding decisiveness and "machismo" to a degree that, thus far, had eluded him. Pressures from those whose opinion and/or approval he valued—in combination with adequate propaganda orchestrations—represented the only hope of converting Frei.

b. [1 paragraph (4½ lines) not declassified]

—Allende as president would be an unparalleled disaster for Chile (Frei agreed).

—Frei had both the power and obligation to prevent this.

—[1 paragraph (5 lines) not declassified]

—In the event of a military coup, the successor government would enjoy U.S. support and quiet applause.

—In the event Frei's re-election gambit succeeded, the U.S. Government would be prepared to provide substantial support for Frei's presidential campaign.

[1 paragraph (5½ lines) not declassified]

c. In Europe and Latin America, prominent and influential members of the Christian Democratic movement as well as the Catholic Church were prompted to visit Frei or send personal messages to him urging that he save Chile. Some of these endeavors were the following:

—[1 paragraph (8 lines) not declassified]

—The West German Christian Democratic Party—which enjoyed special equities with Frei by virtue of generous support to the Christian Democrats in Chile over a range of many years—dispatched several top-level emissaries to Chile. They contacted Frei and other Christian Democratic leaders in Chile [less than 1 line not declassified].

—[3 paragraphs (10 lines) not declassified]

—[name not declassified] one of the international figures in Catholicism most respected by Frei, sent a personal message indicating that Frei and his party must oppose Marxism.

—[name not declassified] of the Italian Christian Democratic Party—which had good fraternal relations with Frei and his party—refused to intervene. (He said it was a hopeless situation and he saw no point in risking his reputation in a lost cause.)

Collateral efforts were made to influence Frei or those close to Frei, such as:

—Influential lay Catholics sent messages to or visited the Vatican.

—[2 lines not declassified] was dissuaded from ceding an Allende victory prior to his Congressional election actually taking place.

—Telegrams were sent Mrs. Frei from women's groups in other Latin American countries.

—Foreign press items were mailed directly to Frei, Mrs. Frei, and Christian Democratic Congressmen in Chile.

—Intelligence was surfaced indicating that, once in power, the Communists intended to denigrate Frei as the first step in the dissolution of his party.

d. In spite of everything, Frei never asserted himself. Indeed, he failed to attend or to influence otherwise the 3–4 October Congress of his party at which time it was decided by a substantial margin to make a deal with Allende. With that decision, the Frei re-election gambit died and constitutional alternatives had been exhausted. Subsequently, Frei did manage to confide to several top-ranking military officers that he would not oppose a coup, with a guarded implication he might even welcome one. Yet, when a coup opportunity and situation presented itself upon the assassination of Army Commander in Chief Schneider, Frei moved quickly away from it.

6. Military Coup

a. After early October—absent any evidence that Frei was responding, politically speaking, to artificial respiration—a military coup increasingly suggested itself as the only possible solution to the Allende problem. Anti-Allende currents did exist in the military and the Carabineros, but were immobilized by:

—the tradition of military respect for the Constitution;

—the public and private stance of General Schneider, Commander in Chief of the Army, who advocated strict adherence to the Constitution;

—fear of the reaction of non-commissioned officers who tended to harbor pro-Allende sympathies; and,

—a strong propensity to accept Allende blandishments to the effect that the military had little to fear from him.

Although individual officers among the top leadership of the military and Carabineros were pre-disposed to take action, they felt the Army was central to a successful coup, and, as long as General Schneider remained the head of the Army, the Army could not be counted upon. General Schneider's attitude could only be changed through the personal intervention and forceful advocacy of a coup by President Frei; something, it became obvious, the latter was most unlikely to bring himself to do.

b. [less than 1 line not declassified] had a wide range of excellent contacts among the military with whom he enjoyed unusually close, frank, and confidential relationships. [5 lines not declassified] As a general rule, members of the "illegal" team initiated and picked up those contacts with the highest risk potential, that is, those individuals whose credentials, reliability, and security quotient were unproven and unknown.

c. Between 5 October and 20 October, the CIA Station [1 line not declassified]—made [number not declassified] contacts with key military and Carabinero officials. These contacts required a high degree of overt plausibility or clandestinity since, by that time, Allende was acutely aware that only the military remained between himself and the presidency, and, accordingly, monitored the activities of key military figures quite closely. Through direct contact, the [less than 1 line not declassified], the [less than 1 line not declassified], the [less than 1 line not declassified], the [less than 1 line not declassified], and the [1 line not declassified] advised of the U.S. Government desire to deny Allende the presidency and

its willingness to support a coup attempt. The [less than 1 line not declassified] and the [less than 1 line not declassified] were made privy to the U.S. position through trusted high-level military intermediaries.

d. During this same period in October, the "illegals" established direct contact and conducted negotiations with the leadership of the two incipient coup "movements" involving the greatest risk:

—[name not declassified] claimed to have 4,000 men organized in the greater Santiago area. He requested arms and ammunition from his "illegal" contact. When it developed that [name not declassified] was somewhat eccentric and had little, if any, organization of the scope claimed, contact was dropped. [2 lines not declassified]

—All activities of retired Army General Viaux were being carefully scrutinized by both Allende and General Schneider during this period because—having led the unsuccessful Tacna regiment revolt in October 1969—he was a known dissident with some residue of influence in the Army. Viaux was contacted by several "illegals" at different points of negotiation with him. He requested a sizeable airdrop of arms and ammunition in the countryside (which was denied as unrealistic under the circumstances), substantial financial support [1½ lines not declassified] life insurance policies for his principals (up to $250,000 in coverage was agreed upon), and paralyzing gas grenades (which were not immediately available). Finally, it became evident that Viaux did not have the organization or support to carry out a successful coup, but might trigger prematurely an action that would spoil the better chances of doing so from within the active duty military itself. Direct contact was suspended and an alternate channel of emergency communication was established.

e. Eventually, the best prospects for a successful coup were developed among the high-level military contacts. On 18 October, General Valenzuela, who was in command of the Santiago Garrison, advised that he, [3 lines not declassified] were prepared to sponsor a coup. The plan was to:

—kidnap General Schneider;

—have the command of the Army pass to the next in line, General Prats who at least was not dogmatically opposed to a coup [less than 1 line not declassified];

—most of Frei's cabinet would resign and be replaced by military and Carabinero members;

—Frei would renounce the presidency and leave the country; and,

—a military junta would be installed.

Indications were that Frei was aware of the main elements of this plan as were a few cabinet members. The only assistance requested by Valenzuela to set the plan in motion through Schneider's abduction was several sub-machineguns, ammunition, a few tear gas grenades, and gas masks (all of which were provided) plus $50,000 for expenses (which was ready to be passed upon demand).

f. On 22 October, General Schneider was mortally wounded on his way to work. General Prats was appointed to command the Army in place of Schneider. Frei made a strong statement denouncing the assassination and declared a state of emergency; as a result thereof, General Valenzuela assumed control of the Santiago area. In effect, the military were in control of Chile and in an excellent position to follow through with a successful coup irrespective of Frei's actions or inactions. They did not—probably because of the strong reaction of Frei and the public to the Schneider affair and lack of any positive encouragement from Frei. Their rationale is not certain at this stage, nor, for that matter, is it certain who or what group was ultimately responsible for Schneider's assassination. The Valenzuela group claimed that it was not and that all matériel passed to it is still in its possession unused. In any event, the opportunity for a coup soon passed; and, Allende was easily elected by Congress on 24 October and quietly inaugurated on 3 November.