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Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon

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Nota de Archivo: *Summary: Kissinger summarized the differences between the Department of State and CIA approaches to the situation in Chile prior to the election. Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 774, Country Files, Latin America, Chile, Vol. II. Secret; Sensitive; Eyes Only. Sent for information. On a blank sheet separating the memorandum from Tab A, Nixon wrote: "K (1) A very sad record—(2) State obviously blocked any meaningful positive move—(3) But the 40 Committee should have overruled State or have brought it to my attention (4) Let's watch the next one more closely!" Tab B is published as Document 38.*

Helms' Postmortem on the Chilean Presidential Election

Attached at Tab B for your information is a memorandum which Dick Helms sent to me, unsolicited, on the background of why more energetic measures were not taken by the U.S. Government to prevent Allende's election in Chile. The report was drawn from all levels of CIA and is extremely interesting. A summary of the report is at Tab A, but I think you will find it worth reading in full.

Although Helms' report is somewhat selective—CIA had reservations itself about the feasibility and risks involved in expanding covert operations in Chile—its implications are significant. The report indicates that:

—As the election drew nearer, Ambassador Korry was prepared to support some expansion of the anti-Allende covert action program, but not in any way which would jeopardize our ties with the Christian Democratic Party which he saw as the only viable non-Communist political force in Chile.

—Throughout the pre-election period, the State Department had reservations about any expansion of the covert action program, and was completely opposed to considering any support for the conservative candidate, Alessandri.

—As a result, the State Department established a restrictive criterion that any covert anti-Allende operations must not involve support for Alessandri.

The net effect of the State Department's position was that nothing could be done to stop Allende if it meant strengthening Alessandri. In view of the fact that the election came down to a very close race between Allende and Alessandri, with the Christian Democrat Tomic trailing far behind, the State position against strengthening Alessandri neutralized us. While it is not certain that a less circumscribed covert action program would have given the marginal victory to Alessandri, Helms feels the odds for success of an expanded program would have been reasonably favorable. An Alessandri victory might have presented some problems for us, but it clearly would not have been as threatening to our interests as Allende's victory; at a minimum, the serious problems we now face in dealing with a Marxist Government in Chile could have been postponed for perhaps six years.

Tab A

SUMMARY OF HELMS' MEMORANDUM OF 12 NOVEMBER 1970

The possibility of an Allende victory was apparent as far back as 1968. A limited covert action program was initiated in 1968, even before Allende had put together his coalition. That program was designed to influence the composition of the Chilean Congress in the March Congressional elections, since it was apparent even then that the Chilean Congress probably would decide the Presidential election. The covert action mechanism used at that time was sustained until the 1970 Presidential election was concluded.

In April 1969 the 40 Committee considered the question of a U.S. Government role in the still-distant Presidential election, and decided to defer further consideration until candidates were selected. That did not occur until December 1969, when Allende was nominated as the candidate of a new leftist coalition. During the period prior to Allende's selection, CIA preserved its covert action mechanism with a "spoiling" operation aimed at weakening Allende's coalition and encouraging prospective candidates within the coalition other than Allende.

In mid-January 1970, representatives of State and CIA met with Ambassador Korry and the CIA Station Chief to prepare a status report on the covert operations for the 40 Committee and to consider a proposal from the Station Chief to underwrite several more anti-Allende activities which, if approved, could have resulted in side political benefits accruing to Alessandri. In this meeting State expressed its concern that any intervention would redound to the benefit of Alessandri, and questioned the need for any involvement in the election at all. The result was a proposal for minimal action; intensification of the existent "spoiling" operation, with a firm caveat from State that support would be withdrawn from any covert mechanism which developed strong pro-Alessandri overtones. State

reaffirmed this position in the 40 Committee meeting in March 1970 at which the proposal was approved.

In late April 1970, in commenting on a U.S. businessman's proposal for U.S. Government support for Alessandri, Ambassador Korry took the position that:

—We should remain uninvolved in the campaign of any candidate.

—He did not see why the USG should meet Alessandri's financial needs when many of his supporters were in a position to make contributions.

—Support for Alessandri would endanger our influence with the Christian Democratic Party, the largest single political party in Chile.

—He could not see any advantage in helping Alessandri fight Tomic with the indirect benefits going to Allende, particularly when such a commitment could not be discreet.

In mid-June Korry supported an expansion of the anti-Allende covert action program, though still maintaining his position that support of any candidate would be counterproductive. State again reiterated its reservations, citing particularly the difficulty of proving to the Christian Democrats, in the event they won the election, that we had not supported Alessandri. In late June the 40 Committee approved the expanded program. At that time, the State representative stated that he "harbored philosophic reservations about funding election interventions and that Assistant Secretary of State Meyer and his principal deputy opposed authorizing the current request." Meyer sent a message to Korry after the meeting informing him that the Department had recommended against approval of the proposal, citing among other reasons "the problem 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 Allende post-election attitudes."

In the final two weeks before the election, the CIA authorized a substantial infusion of funds for covert activities, and arranged for funds from U.S. business interests to be passed to the Alessandri camp. This action was taken without reference to the State Department.