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Memorandum of Conversation

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Nota de Archivo: *Summary: In his conversation with Rogers and Meyer, Almeyda stressed the importance of maintaining good relations with the United States. Rogers reiterated the point, noting that the United States did not expect its friends to always agree with it. Source: National Archives, RG 59, Central Files 1970–73, POL CHILE–US. Confidential. Drafted by Barnes; approved in S. This conversation took place in the Secretary's suite at the Gran Hotel Costa Rica in San José where he was attending the OAS General Assembly meeting.*

U.S.–Chile Relations

The Secretary of State

Charles A. Meyer, Assistant Secretary for Inter-American Affairs

Clodomiro Almeyda M., Foreign Minister of Chile

The Secretary opened by saying that in the speech he had delivered on the previous day, he had given an outline of U.S. policy towards Latin America: the U.S. wanted to cooperate and have good relations with any Latin American country which felt the same way. He said that the Foreign Minister represented a new government, which was perhaps still charting its course, but that he would appreciate any indication as to what Chile's policy towards the U.S. was going to be.

The Foreign Minister replied that his government had no intention of doing or saying anything that might lead to a deterioration in the good relations it had with the U.S. There would inevitably come a time when discussions would be necessary on specific issues, such as the copper mines, and his government's intention was to strive to maintain a framework of good relations within which such specific issues might be discussed.

The Secretary said that the U.S. also wanted to maintain good relations with Chile. It indeed maintained very friendly relations with several socialist countries, and in fact, these relations were better than those existing between these countries and the Soviet Union. He expected differences to arise between the U.S. and Chile, but hoped that this would not become an anti-American policy on the part of the Chilean Government. He said that U.S. policy with respect to Chile would depend on whether a) the U.S. concluded that the Chilean Government had embarked on an anti-American course and b) that judgment would be based both on what Chile said but more importantly on its actions.

The Foreign Minister said that Chile disagreed with some U.S. policies, e.g. Vietnam, and others, but this reflected a difference of opinion and no anti-American sentiment. He was sure that the U.S. disagreed with, for example, Chile's decision to recognize the People's Republic of China, but that he did not interpret this as anti-Chilean feeling.

The Secretary asked in the light of the Foreign Ministers OAS speech whether Chile would prefer to have an OAS without the U.S.

The Foreign Minister replied that on the contrary, the OAS could become a very useful forum for constructive dialogue between Latin America on the one hand, and the U.S. on the other. It would make no sense to speak of having an OAS without the U.S. as a member, the Foreign Minister said.

The Secretary stressed that the U.S. did not expect its friends to always agree with it, or to refrain from criticisms, but that the tone and intent of the criticisms were of paramount importance.

The Foreign Minister said that his Government had proved that it had no intention of taking advantage of events to do or say things that would lead to a deterioration in relations. Proof of this attitude was the Chilean Government's calm reaction to the dismantling of the Easter Island installations and to the cancellation of the visit of the U.S.S. Enterprise.

The Secretary said that U.S. experience in dealing with socialist governments had shown that they spoke the same language ideologically. The difference between the various socialist countries lay in their actions. Both Chile and the U.S. would have to judge each other in the light of the actions taken by each, leaving ideological considerations to one side. It was interesting to note that several long-established socialist countries of Eastern Europe had approached the U.S. in the quest of increased contacts and investments, saying that the lack of these contacts and investments was the reason why their systems had not worked better.

The Foreign Minister replied that his Government was not opposed to foreign investments as such. The copper mining industry was in a separate category. He saw no contradiction between Chilean state ownership of the mines and new American investments, provided the latter were mixed in nature, and that the Chilean Government retained control of the "nucleus" of the Chilean economy.

The Secretary pointed out as he had in his OAS speech that the U.S. was not promoting U.S. private investment in countries that did not want it. What was objectionable was for a country to request private investment and then later to criticize the U.S. for doing what it had been requested to do.

In conclusion, the Secretary said that complete frankness was to be essential in communications between the U.S. and Chile, since frankness was the only way in which inevitable differences could be smoothed over. He suggested the advisability of communicating over differences in such a way as to avoid their being aired in the press.

The Foreign Minister expressed his agreement with this approach, and advised the Secretary to read his address to the OAS General Assembly carefully, since it outlined Chile's policies clearly.

The Foreign Minister referred to Ambassador Letelier's invitation to the Secretary to visit Chile and reaffirmed that invitation to visit at an opportune time.