Chile Project (#S199900030)
U.S. Department of State
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Declassify: In Part X In Full_____
Exemption(s) B1

EXCISE

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MEMORANDUM

Dept of State, RPS/IPS, Margaret P. Grafeld, Dir.
( ) Classify as (V) Extend as (S) Downgrade to March 23, 1970
Date 1/31/01 Declassify on _____ Reason 25X1

TO : J - Ambassador Johnson

THROUGH: INR/DDC - Mr. Wymberley Coerr

FROM : ARA - John H. Crimmins

SUBJECT: Proposal for Political Action in Chile

Attached is a memorandum that asks for 40 Committee endorsement of certain covert political actions in Chile designed to reduce the possibility of a victory in the September 1970 presidential elections by the Popular Unity (UP), a coalition of left-wing groups headed by the Communist and the Socialist parties.*

ARA recommends that you support the proposal.

There are three principal candidates in the election: former President Jorge Alessandri of the conservative Nationalist Party (PN), Radimiro Tomic of the Christian Democratic Party (PDC) and UP nominee Salvador Allende, leader of the pro-Castro, rigidly doctrinaire Socialist Party (PS). The race promises to be close: Alessandri, whose strength maybe at its peak, now appears to be in the lead with Allende running second and Tomic third. If no candidate wins an absolute majority at the polls -- and this will almost certainly be the case in September -- Congress will select the winner from the top two candidates, who will presumably be Alessandri and Allende. The larger the popular margin for Alessandri, the more likely he is to win in Congress.

ARA believes that election of Allende would be seriously detrimental to our interests and that therefore a limited operation should be undertaken

* Past USG Special Group and 303 Committee interest in Chilean election issues has included approval in 1962 of [redacted] to strengthen the Christian Democratic Party; [redacted] also in 1963 [redacted] to Radical Party, Democratic Front candidate Senator Duran to attract votes from FRAP in the 1964 presidential elections; $3 million to support Frei's candidacy in the 1964 presidential elections; $175,000 to selected candidates in the March 1965 elections to help them against FRAP candidates; [redacted] and in 1968 [redacted] to help selected moderate candidates in the 1969 congressional elections, to conduct a broad-spectrum anti-FRAP propaganda operation, and to help a break-away group of the Socialist Party.

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to try to steer as many as possible of the uncommitted votes away from Allende. Neither this nor any other effort, on the other hand, should be taken to assist directly either Alessandri or Tomic. We do not now contemplate direct assistance to either Alessandri or Tomic, although we understand that there is some feeling in Embassy Santiago that it may later become desirable to help Alessandri. We construe neither the current project nor our endorsement of it as committing ourself in any way to such a proposal if it materializes.

The principal covert actions proposed are:

1) Use of the propaganda mechanism that was established during the March 1969 Congressional elections. Estimated cost, [redacted]

2) Support to anti-UP activity by moderates of the Radical Party (PR) that in mid-1969 split from the PR (which has since joined UP ranks) to form the Democratic Radical Party (PDR). Estimated cost, [redacted]

[redacted] Both phases of the operation will be carefully monitored to assure that our support for either must end should one or the other take on a pro-Alessandri rather than an anti-UP cast.

The security risks appear low from a technical point of view. It is nonetheless important to note that Chile is currently sensitized to charges of CIA intervention. There is and will continue to be a residue of suspicion which will result in special watchfulness by various Chilean elements. The knowledge by some Chileans of our involvement in previous elections will only intensify this problem, especially since the projected program will, for reasons apart from our own purposes, tend to benefit Alessandri.

It seems fair to say that on balance there is a chance that our efforts could influence a small but probably critical margin of votes, and that the operation can be conducted with justified expectations of considerable security. If we do not take what appears to be a relative secure opportunity to forestall a UP triumph, we are vulnerable to a charge, were Allende to win, of having done nothing to prevent his victory. Recognizing that the issue is a close one, ARA endorses the limited proposal on the understanding that our support will be withdrawn from any phase of the program that takes on a pro-Alessandri rather than an anti-UP cast.

RECOMMENDATION

I recommend that you support the proposal for limited political action to weaken UP proppects in the 1970 Chilean Presidential elections.

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