

April 3, 1984

To: Elliott Abrams

Subject: Our Chile Policy

Yesterday I caught the second half of the Wilson Center seminar on "United State-Chilean Relations in the 1980s". The speakers were Augusto Varas, Carlos Portales and Pilar Arranet, all of Chile (ref. attached). Attendance came close to 50. A copy of the Varas presentation is attached. I recommend you read at least the portion on human rights, beginning on page 8.

The question period started as I arrived. Richard Feinberg, formerly of S/P, asked why it was assumed the USG had so much influence in Chile, despite the fact that the Carter Administration had pushed Pinochet on human rights and there was no progress, and now during the Reagan Administration, which doesn't care about human rights, there is some progress. There was audience amusement at this, and many clearly assumed Feinberg's statement was correct. Varos argued that the USG can prevent democratic progress but it cannot create it. He described the USG as currently supporting the GOC and urged that we stop our "intervention". Someone asked if we should break off relations. Varos recommended that we return to the Carter policy. Portales said he doubted human rights could be much of a factor in our policy because of economic considerations. Varos was asked for specific suggestions. He requested that we stop our political, economic and military support of Pinochet. Someone then referred to an El Mercurio article quoting a U.S. General as stating in Santiago that the U.S. and Chilean Armed Forces share the same objectives. Apparently that statement, which I had not heard previously, was interpreted as meaning we support Pinochet. One man in the audience suggested that the USG favored democracy as long as it was "controlled", the Left doesn't win, there

is no threat to USG security as perceived in Washington, and U.S. economic interests are protected (laughter). Portales said the U.S. was becoming isolated and he lamented that we had no dialogue with the Left.

At the conclusion I introduced myself to all three speakers and gave them copies of the Harkin Congressional Record statement praising our support for democracy in Chile. I informed both Varos and Portales (Armanet apparently had not discussed politics) that they were mistaken about our policy, and that their statements helped Pinochet. I urged them to come in for a discussion. They said they would. I also mentioned that we maintain a good dialogue not only with Eugenio Velasco, local AD representative, but also with Claudio Grossman of the Chilean Socialist Party, certainly an authentic member of the Chilean Left. Claudio was there and joined my conversation with Portales. They are old friends and Grossman said he would come in with Portales to see you. I was pleased to hear Grossman say that the USG has a legitimate concern about what will follow Pinochet and whether there is any opportunity for Moscow to exploit the crisis.

George Lister

cc: Jim Thyden-Bob Snyder