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Santiago, July 15, 1986

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DECAPTIONEDMEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

Participants: Senator Jesse Helms of North Carolina
 James Lucier, Legislative Assistant to the Senator
 Deborah DeMoss, Latin American Specialist to Senator
 Clifford Kiracofe, Defense Specialist to Senator

Harry G. Barnes, Ambassador to Chile

Time and Place: July 12, 1986, 12:25-1:05 pm, Crowne Plaza Hotel
 Santiago, Chile

Distribution: ARA/SC, ARA: E. Abrams, PA: B. Kalb, DCM (to circulate copy to J. Keane, P. DeShazo, B. Mickle and W. Belew)

(About two hours before the meeting, Ms. DeMoss had called to ask me to bring copies of the cables the Embassy had sent on the Rojas case, involving a student who had died of burns caused by his apparently being set on fire. I said that it might be difficult to do so because of its being Saturday, but I would try.)

The Senator sat me across the conference table from him and placed two of his aides at either end and one along side of him; two of them took notes, so I decided I would too. He began by asking me whether I had brought the cables. When I replied that much of our communication with Washington on the Rojas case had been by phone, but that I had found a few cables but not all, he said that would make it much more difficult for us to proceed. I said I would send a message to Washington, asking that any pertinent cables be made available to him. He never asked to see the cables I did have with me.

Senator Helms then said there was no point beating around the bush: "You have screwed it up -- you and the people in Washington." By way of particulars, he complained about my presence at the Rojas funeral and the State Department and White House press statements which pressed the Government of Chile to carry out an investigation when the government was already doing so.

Turning back to me, he said he had not wanted to meet me because people in Washington had told him I was advertised as someone sent to Chile to undermine Pinochet. I responded that that was not the mission George Shultz had given me. I was as anti-Communist as he was, because I knew what communism meant from my years in Eastern Europe, and my job was to do what I could to help promote a return to democracy and advance human rights. It was in this context that I had gone to the Rojas service. I then went into some detail about that day under steady questioning by the Senator and his staff. They seemed convinced that everyone at the

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funeral was a communist and obviously so, and were surprised to hear that my wife and I and the other diplomats spent most of our time in a side room apart from the others in attendance. They wanted to know what other democratic opposition leaders were there and what sort of a reputation the Chilean Human Rights Commission had.

2 I was also quizzed on what sort of an investigation the Embassy had made, to which I replied we had made none formally because we had no such authority, but had talked to people who had talked to eye witnesses and would be seeing whether any witnesses could talk to us. Mr. Kiracofe asked if we had called in the Legal Attaché, which I said we had not yet done, but if asked by the prosecuting judge could make such a request. The main interest during this whole part of the interrogation was in trying to prove that the Washington statements were based on inadequate information and that the Department spokesman, Bernie Kalb, whom the senator said he knew well, should have limited himself to praising the Government of Chile for initiating an investigation. (I pointed out that the government took a few days to do that, but that that step had been recognized in the Washington statements, as well as the proffered help of the government's new human rights commission.)

3 The Senator came back again to my going to the Human Rights Commission to attend the service. He wanted to know whether that was my decision or Washington's. I said it was mine based on both the strong interest in the U.S. as indicated by the White House and State Department statements as well as by the horrible nature of the crime itself that appeared to have caused the boy's death -- a repugnance that was shared widely in Chile. Chileans had told me this was simply not the type of action that had been known in Chile. (I told him for that matter, I'd even had a note of apology from the head of the national police over my wife and my having been subjected to tear gas.) The Senator said that however regrettable the death was, he could have understood my attendance if it had been on instructions; but if it was my decision, then "we have a problem." I said in that case we probably did. He asked if I thought my attendance had been a mistake. I said it had become controversial thanks to the government, though the government itself had condemned the whole incident of the burnings. But no, I did not think it was a mistake, in terms of what we stood for. He asked if I had attended the funeral of any slain policemen. I said I had not, this having been only the second funeral I had attended in Chile, the first being that of President Pinochet's mother.

4 The conversation then switched to his asking if I knew about the statements regarding the nature of the burns which seemed to indicate that the young man had been carrying something that had exploded rather than been set afire as had been reported at the time. I said I'd read such a statement by President Pinochet but

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that in talking the night before with Dr. John Constable of Massachusetts General who had been here last weekend and examined Rojas, Dr. Constable had said it seemed an unlikely explanation. We talked for a few minutes further on the medical side of things, with my answering questions with what I knew from Dr. Constable and a report of July 3 by a doctor from the Worker's Hospital.

10 The Senator had earlier said that the boy's mother was a communist and asked if I knew that. I said I'd heard the rumor but no more. He then asked what I knew about the girl who had also been burned and specifically if I was aware that she too was member of a communist group. I said I'd seen the press reports to that effect, but had also seen her father's formal denial. We were trying to see if we could learn anything more. The Senator said that of course was only to be expected; and for his part, he was convinced that she was a communist and was taking back to the States a video which showed her in actions of a terrorist nature.

11 A few other items that were touched on are worth noting: 1) a reference the Senator had made in one of his press statements to there being no drug problem in Chile led me to say we were finding increasing difficulties from one of the investigative organs, the Investigaciones, even to the point where they had tortured one of our informants; the senator was not interested in pursuing the theme; 2) he said he had heard from "30" U.S. citizens resident in Chile, but then spoke only of one man who complained that I saw only "leftists." I said that was untrue and asked them to tell the man to come see me; 3) I told the senator he was the first of that body that had not let me know when visiting the country to which I was accredited. Deborah DeMoss said that was because it might appear that the senator was "getting instructions from the State Department," an apprehension that the senator confirmed. 4) I told the Senator I hope he would let me call on him in Washington so we could talk at greater length. He was non-committal.

12 On two occasions the Senator said that he wasn't a complete apologist for Pinochet; but Pinochet, warts and all, was a lot better than what was likely to come after. Once again the senator focused on the statements issued in Washington, saying that he had been told (apparently referring to the Abrams "Night Line" interview) that the U.S. had issued an ultimatum that it would apply economic sanctions unless the Rojas investigation produced the right results. I said I'd given no ultimatum and know of none in Washington. He then went back to his complaints about Bernie Kalb's statements and why on the basis of so little information he could have said what he did. I said our focus all the way through had been on the importance of a thorough and prompt investigation, and the senator did say he could understand why that much might be said. All I could suggest at this point was that he talk to people in Washington.

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As for me, Mr. Lucier formulated the charges again toward the end by saying that I had seen that Washington put out false statements on the basis of little or no evidence and that I myself had made a "statement" by appearing with leftists and communists. I told him he was completely wrong. We had provided the information we had available to us from people in whom we had confidence; we had reported as well what was in the press and had conveyed clearly the steps the government had taken. The fact that the communists exploited the funeral could not change the abhorrent nature of the boy's death and that was why I was there, aligned not with the leftists but with the great mass of Chileans who were revolted by the event.

END TEXT.

BARNES

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