Kissinger DECLASSIFIED

BY LUCY KOMISAR

I recently got hold of a declassified memorandum about Henry Kissinger's only meeting with Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet. The meeting occurred on June 8, 1976, in Santiago, and the internal State Department memorandum shows how hard Kissinger tried to shield the Chilean general from criticism and assure him that his human rights violations were not a serious problem as far as the U.S. government was concerned.

I had been trying since 1989 to get the memorandum, which was excerpted in Seymour Hersh's book *The Price of Power*. My initial request was refused, but belatedly, to my surprise, the State Department "memorandum of conversation" arrived in the mail in October, nearly after President's arrest, with a note explaining that, on reconsideration, it had been released in full.

The memo describes how members of State Kissinger invited and welcomed Pinochet, how—with hundreds of political prisoners still being jailed and tortured—Kissinger told Pinochet that the Ford Administration would not hold them human rights violations against him. At a time when Pinochet was the target of international concern for state-sponsored terror, disappearances, and murders, Kissinger assured him that he was a victim of misleading propaganda and urged him not to pay too much attention to American critics.

The meeting occurred at a gathering of the Organization of American States (OAS). Against the advice of most of the State Department's Latin America staff, Kissinger decided to go to Chile for the opening of the OAS general assembly. He and Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs William Rogers flew into Santiago from Lima and met with Pinochet the next day. The site of the meeting was the presidential palace in Diego Portales, an office building used during regular as La Moneda, the presidential palace Pinochet had bombed on September 11, 1973, when he overthrew Salvador Allende. Chilean Foreign Minister Patricio Carvajal and Ambassador to the United States Manuel Trucco were also there. (For international Rogers, Carvajal, and Trucco, but not Kissinger, who has refused requests.)

Kissinger was eager to thank Pinochet for having promoted the military coup against an elected Allende government, and he sought to maintain a cool public distance from Pinochet. But in the confidential meeting he promised more support.

Kissinger: You assured Pinochet that they had a strong friend in their overthrow of the government. Pinochet said that though the Venezuela had tried to stop communism in the Spanish Civil War, it was overcome by it. Kissinger replied: "We had the Spanish Civil War reversed and it destroyed that very same way here."

Even as Hersh says that the U.S. government was secretly helping Pinochet, "In the United States we publicly set up an apparatus with what you are trying to do here," Kissinger told Pinochet. "I think that the previous government was headed toward communism. We wish your government well."

A little while later he added: "My only interest is that you are a victim of 12 terrorist groups around the world, and that your present enemies are not that you contribute a government which was going Communist."

Kissinger discussed American human rights campaigns against Chile's government as "domestic problems." And he assured Pinochet that he was against measures such as those proposed by Senator Edward Kennedy, Democrat of Massachusetts, which would ban arms sales and cut off aid to governments that were gross human rights violators.

Kissinger joked with Pinochet, saying "I don't know if you listen in on my phone, but if you do, you have just heard me give instructions to Washington to make an all-out effort to oppose the Kennedy Amendment. If we defeat it, we will follow the [CIA's] as we agreed to do." He told Pinochet, "We have no [de facto] policy for a while in order to avoid providing unfriendly ammunition to our enemies."

Both men also indicated they would not be intimidated by Representative Donald Fraser, Democrat of Minnesota, in his committee set to investigate human rights violations. "As you know, Congress is now debating the [Chile] question and we don't like," Kissinger told Pinochet. "We are opposed."

Still, Kissinger was being pressured by the U.S. media to make a statement on human rights. He had just received [illegible] support saying that some people in Chile, and [illegible] were concerned in Chile. "Numerous political prisoners have been killed arbitrarily or have died from natural causes or from lack of medical treatment," the report said. An earlier CIA report had detailed those atrocities in more brutal, gory terms, and [illegible] to protect [illegible] from the [illegible] sources, especially [illegible] to [illegible] gruesome [illegible] with [illegible] by the [illegible].

The speech Kissinger would give that afternoon to the OAS couldn't avoid human rights. It had to be somehow. Kissinger's usual [illegible] to [illegible] [illegible] Pinochet or weaken Pinochet.

Kissinger warned Pinochet [illegible] the speech should not be interpreted as criticism of Chile. He told him, "I will not

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Lucy Komisar is the first journalist [illegible] a book about U.S. foreign policy and human rights in several countries, including Chile, in the 1970s and 1980s. Support for this article was provided by the Fund for Investigative Journalism, Inc.