

**Conversation No 320-028**

**Date: February 8, 1972**

**Time: 3:15 - 5:06 p.m.**

**Location: Executive Office Building**

**Participants: Nixon and Connally**

*Nixon adamantly refused to relent on the economic pressure the United States was applying on Chile. As far as Nixon was concerned, “[The Chileans] brought this on themselves; they’re ruining the Chilean economy with their expropriation and everything else.” Nixon was deaf to the entreaties of Chilean Ambassador and Leterier that a hard line on Chile would radicalize the regime.*

*Backing off was not a viable option, Nixon privately informed Connally, because “it means that we are subsidizing, basically, the Communization of Chile.” Connally concurred, adding that he was happy having the Soviet Union to bail out Chile, since “Russia can’t [even] support themselves...” Both Nixon and Connally had few qualms about the Soviet Union playing a similar role in Chile as it did in Cuba since, as Nixon saw things, “Cuba sucks from Russia a million dollars a day, and that’s one of the reasons we are not going to change our attitude toward Cuba. Let ‘em talk; let ‘em pay a million dollars a day. Now the same with Chile...If they want more support from us, they must come a long way.”*

*Both men also drew comfort from the Allende Government’s defeat in two by-elections, which was evidence for Connally that Allende was not “doin’ so well down there with his Communization.” Therefore, it was imperative that the United States press its advantage and “just hold his feet to the fire...” Nixon agreed, which was why he fighting the State Department on the issue of Chilean debt renegotiation at the “Paris Club” meeting. Accepting the State Department position, Nixon concluded, “would pull him [Allende] right out of the trouble, or help to pull him out.”*

[...]

[320-028\\_Clip1](#) (2m; 2:05)

**Nixon:** Now on the Chilean thing, despite the pressure with Allende, I do—I know the argument that Chile—that the Chilean Foreign Minister made: that [unclear] so be it. I think, of course—Oh, I just don’t think [unclear]. I just don’t think you can, you can keep Allende [unclear]. They

brought this on themselves; they're ruining the Chilean economy with their expropriation and everything else. Now, for us to step in and rescue it, means that we are subsidizing, basically, the communization of Chile.

**Connally:** That's right.

**Nixon:** To hell with it.

**Connally:** That's right.

**Nixon:** Do you agree?

**Connally:** Absolutely.

**Nixon:** All right.

**Connally:** Let Russia—Let Russia support 'em, if they think—

[Unclear exchange]

**Nixon:** Sure.

**Connally:** Hell, Russia can't support themselves, Mr. President.

**Nixon:** Yeah.

**Connally:** They're coming to us and saying, "We're not making [unclear]. We want to trade with you. We want—"

**Nixon:** That's right.

**Connally:** "We want your credits to develop our resources [unclear]—"

**Nixon:** See, Cuba sucks from Russia a million dollars a day, and that's one of the reasons we are not going to change our attitude toward Cuba. Let 'em talk; let 'em pay a million dollars a day. Now the same with Chile: If—So, the Russians have to support them, and they will have to be supported by the Russians. The way that Chile—If they want more support from us, they must come a long way. That we won't tell 'em that, but they will know damn well; they'll get the message.

**Connally:** Well, he's [Allende] just lost two elections. I don't know if he's doin' so well down there with his communization.

**Nixon:** You're right.

**Connally:** I think he's in trouble. And I believe, just hold his feet to the fire, and he'll be in trouble.

**Nixon:** And that's—And we would pull him right out of the trouble, or help to pull him out, if we got together with the Paris Group and—

**Connally:** Well, if we do, Mr. President, we're going to do to him, we're going to Chile what we did to Argentina 25 years ago: we let the Peróns run high, wide, and handsome there, and they destroyed Argentina for a quarter of a century.<sup>1</sup>

**Nixon:** Yeah.

**Connally:** Argentina hasn't gotten over it yet.

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<sup>1</sup> Juan Domingo Perón, President of Argentina, 1946-1952, 1952-1955, and 1973-1974. Eva Perón, First Lady of Argentina, Minister of Health, and Minister of Labor and Social Welfare, 1946-1952; Spiritual Leader of the Nation of Argentina, 1952.