

Oct 15 2008

Lessons in Diplomacy à la Kissinger (1): Don't be afraid to bend the truth....

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US-Chilean relations during the Allende presidency

Memorandum of Conversation, Henry Kissinger, Chilean Foreign Minister, Cloromiro Almeyda, and the Chilean Ambassador in Washington, Orlando Letelier, c.7 October 1971, Fondo Orlando Letelier, National Archive, Santiago, Chile.

“Mr Kissinger indicated that he agreed totally with [Chilean Foreign] Minister Almeyda that it was important to isolate the issue of copper and avoid this transcending into other areas of the two countries’ [US and Chile] relations. He said that, even if press speculation was impossible to control, the attitude of his government would be to make every effort to avoid any factor that could harm ties and calm dialogue between both countries. Referring to the Chilean revolutionary process, Kissinger indicated to Minister Almyeda that, as he had already had the opportunity to state to Ambassador Letelier, he profoundly admired the way in which President Allende was leading the Chilean political phenomenon. He signaled...his interest in Chile and in maintaining the most constructive relations possible with his government, which was reflected in the fact that Orlando Letelier was the Latin American Ambassador he had the most open relationship and most permanent contact with. He also indicated that if at any moment the Chilean government wanted to present his government with a proposal of a confidential character with respect to the relationship between both countries or pending problems, this could be managed through him at a presidential level with the safety that there existed an attitude of understanding and orientation towards facilitating constructive links between both countries [in the Nixon administration]. He also commented that as far as his country was concerned, Chile had a great importance within Latin America and he indicated that it would be very incongruent if, while the United States was able to seek a form of understanding with the PRC from which it had been separated for so many years, it could not find positive solutions to problems with Chile with which it had a long tradition of friendship. In this respect, he alluded to the tendency towards ideological pluralism in international relations.”

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