

September 16, 1971
10:43 – 10:57 am

Conversation No. 278-51
Cassette No. 1063
Executive Office Building

[Conversation between the President and Henry Kissinger on giving aid to countries that do not have democratic elections]

Nixon: They raised this question about Guatemala behaving, you know. That line that I thought of is very powerful: “All right, gentlemen, if you go down that road you will have to cut off aid to two-thirds of the 90 countries in the world which get it.” Just let these bastards talk about [inaudible . . .]. Right?

Kissinger: Exactly.

Nixon: You couldn't be more right. That State Department son of a bitch who prepared that! I'll bet you that the number of countries is smaller than that – where there is a president or a prime minister who holds his office as a result last time of a contested election. That's my point!

Kissinger: I'm going to check that –

Nixon: No no no no no – for today it isn't necessary. Two thirds is a big enough number. But I want them to go down country – let me put it this way – country by country, take the third they say are that, and I want to know who did they run against and how much did they win by? Now you know – take those thirty – I want to put this – goddamn State Department! [I'm sore about this!]

Kissinger: It's inconceivable to me that there are 31 countries that we are shipping aid to–

Nixon: –that have elections?

Kissinger: That have elections.

Nixon: That have prime ministers or presidents who are there as a result of a contested election in free democratic – [unintelligible]. As I told Haig yesterday, I said Al, uh, what about – what about Latin America? All right, let's talk. We don't have much aid in Mexico, we have some.

Kissinger: No.

Nixon: That's it. But Mexico doesn't have a President elected by a free democratic election! They don't have opposition parties! He said, “Well, what about Colombia...?” They exchange presidents there every five years! They have no contests. All you've got

is Venezuela, Chile, and everybody else is in there as a result of a coup d'état or something else. Correct?

Kissinger: Yeah.

Nixon: All right. Now why don't we just start with some of that?

Kissinger: And you'll never have a free election again in Chile.

[Conversation turns to Vietnam]