

The Reagan Diaries

Chapter One

1981

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The Inaugural (Jan. 20) was an emotional experience but then the very next day it was "down to work." The first few days were long and hard—daily Cabinet meetings interspersed with sessions with Congressional leaders regarding our ec. plan.

Monday, January 26

A meeting on terrorism with heads of F.B.I.—S.S.—C.I.A. Sec's of St., Defense & others. Have ordered they be given back their ability to function. Next a Cabinet meeting on the deal with Iran. We just may not implement some of the Carter executive orders on grounds they violate our own laws. Hostages will arrive in country tomorrow. It seems some of them had some tough questions for Carter in Germany as to why they were there so long and why they were there to begin with. Rest of day meeting committee chairmen & Sens. on raising the debt ceiling.

Tuesday, January 27

Ceremony on S. Lawn to welcome hostages home. Thousands of people in attendance. Met the familys earlier. Now we had in addition the familys of the 8 men who lost their lives in the rescue attempt. One couple lost their only son. His widow was also here. I've had a lump in my throat all day.—Evening 1st white tie reception for the diplomatic corps.

Wednesday, January 28

Visit by P.M. Seaga of Jamaica, his wife & members of his admin. Our 1st state luncheon. He won a terrific election victory over a Cuban backed pro-communist.

I think we can help him & gradually take back the Caribbean which was becoming a "Red" lake.

Thursday, January 29

Nancy had a great triumph with committee which rides herd on White House (to preserve its history). They were enthusiastic about what she has already done to upgrade the 2nd & 3rd floors.

[Received cable from Mike Mansfield, U.S. ambassador to Japan.]

Friday, January 30

More meeting with Cong. leaders on trying to get debt ceiling lifted. If don't we'll be out of money by Feb. 18. Cong. recessing from 5th to 12th. Must get passage of bill by Fri. the 5th.

Short day in office—left for 1st weekend in Camp David. It was great to be in a house with the knowledge you could just open a door and take a walk outdoors if you wanted.

Saturday, January 31

Had a before lunch walk (it was cold). Spent afternoon in front of fire reading intelligence reports & Briefing papers for visit by Pres. Chun (Korea). We have definite evidence Nicaragua transferring hundreds of tons of arms from Cuba to El Salvador. P.M. ran a movie—"Tribute"—Jack Lemmon. He is truly a great performer.

[Sunday, February 1: took walk; returned to W.H.]

Monday, February 2

What's getting to be routine—full day in Oval office.

Tuesday, February 3

The arrival of Pres. Chun, his wife & staff. These meetings through an interpreter which can become a strain. Good meetings though—assured him we would not withdraw our troops from Korea

Wednesday, February 4

Cabinet discussion of grain embargo. I've always felt it hurt our farmers worse than it hurt Soviets. Many of our allies?? filled the gap & supplied Soviet. But now—how do we lift it without sending wrong message to Soviets? We need to take a new look at whole matter of strategy. Trade was supposed to make Soviets moderate, instead it has allowed them to build armaments instead of consumer products. Their socialism is an ec. failure. Wouldn't we be doing more for their people if we let their system fail instead of constantly bailing it out?

[Compliment from Weinberger on cabinet meeting.]

Thursday, February 5

[President's prayer breakfast; meetings with Boy Scouts and high school students.]

Lots of phone calls—Sen. Robt. Byrd (D) is playing games with bill to raise debt ceiling. Has held vote over til tomorrow.

Friday, February 6

My birthday. Nancy, Tip O'Neil, Paul Laxalt, Tom Evans & Cong. Wright from Texas surprised me (all duly recorded by Cap. Press Corps) with a beautiful cake. Tip gave me a tie & the flag which flew over the Cap. on Jan. 20. We wheeled the cake into another room where it was cut up by about 200 of our staff. That afternoon received a great present—our own Sens. who had held out on debt. ceiling turned around and we carried the day.

[Surprise birthday party with California friends.]

P.S. During day discovered my Ambas. appts. were processed by State Dept. They take forever. I want Bill Wilson cleared by them before 26th so he can meet Pope (he's to be Ambas. to Vatican) in Alaska. Told Penn James to tell the guy at State that was advising him to get off his A— & do it.

[Saturday, February 7: photo sessions and dinner party.]

Sunday, February 8

Thank you letters for gifts we found on 2nd floor Fri. night. It took entire Sat. morning to open. Just had a call from Al Haig. I had asked that we quietly have Swiss [. . .] tell Iranians if they did not free Mrs. Dryer (Am. woman they had charged with being a spy & imprisoned) we might find it difficult to implement the terms of the Carter hostage agreement. Mrs. Dryer is coming home. She was turned over to the Swiss. Word [. . .] is that last 2 weeks of hostage negotiations were completely dominated by Iranian fear they'd have to negotiate with our admin. I couldn't be happier.

Monday, February 9

Started the day learning Mrs. Dryer did not leave Iran—some snafu with paper work. Hopefully tomorrow.

[Meetings on timing of tax cuts, and with groups of state legislators; signed citation for Vietnam veterans.]

Tuesday, February 10

This was a day. I was wired for sound. David Brinkley is doing "a day in my life" for TV showing Fri. His cameras catch me in every meeting etc. and I turn on the sound for those things suitable & turn it off for balance of meetings. Began with Brkfst. . . .

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