We made a few phone calls to my mother and others. It's relatively lonely at Camp David, just Rosalynn, Amy, and I being here. This is the first time in twenty-six years that we haven't been with our folks at Christmas—since the year my daddy died.... Amy wanted to get up at 5:30, which we did. We had a very fine exchange of gifts.

DIARY, DECEMBER 25, 1979

The Soviets have begun to move their forces in to overthrow the existing government.... 215 flights in the last 24 hours or so. They've moved in a couple of regiments and now have maybe a total of 8,000 or 10,000 people in Afghanistan—both advisers and military. We consider this to be an extremely serious development.

DIARY, DECEMBER 27, 1979

The Soviets still claimed their action was in response to an appeal by the Afghan government leaders to strengthen their security forces, but there were obviously other purposes for such a large-scale operation. In the past, Soviet leaders had not hesitated to use their own troops to maintain domination over the Warsaw Pact countries or surrogate troops from Cuba and Vietnam to accomplish their ends elsewhere. However, this was the first time they had used their troops to expand their sphere of influence since they had overthrown the government of Czechoslovakia in February 1948 and established a Soviet puppet government there.

The invasion of Afghanistan was direct aggression by the Soviet armed forces against a freedom-loving people, whose leaders had been struggling to retain a modicum of independence from their huge neighbor. President Hafizullah Amin of Afghanistan—who, the Soviet leaders claimed, had invited them in—was immediately assassinated, and in his place the invaders installed an Afghan leader of their own persuasion, who had been hiding in the Soviet Union.

The brutality of the act was bad enough, but the threat of this Soviet invasion to the rest of the region was very clear—and had grim consequences. A successful take-over of Afghanistan would give the Soviets a deep penetration between Iran and Pakistan,
The Soviet Union, like Iran, had acted outrageously, and at the same time had made a tragic miscalculation. I was determined to lead the rest of the world in making it as costly as possible. There was a balancing act to perform—America being the leader, but at the same time consulting and working closely with the other nations. To be effective, punitive action had to be broadly supported and clearly defined.

The members of the National Security Council had almost continuous meetings about Afghanistan and Iran, and I worked with congressional leaders and briefed key members of the press to be sure that the American people understood the strategic ramifications of the Soviet invasion. I also consulted closely with our European allies, President Tito of Yugoslavia, President Ceauscescu of Romania, the leaders among the Moslem nations, and particularly President Mohammad Zia of Pakistan, to plan our most effective response to this aggression.

I sent Brezhnev on the hot line the sharpest message of my Presidency, telling him that the invasion of Afghanistan was "a clear threat to the peace" and "could mark a fundamental and long-lasting turning point in our relations." I added, "Unless you draw back from your present course of action, this will inevitably jeopardize the course of United States–Soviet relations throughout the world. I urge you to take prompt constructive action to withdraw your forces and cease interference in Afghanistan's internal affairs."

Brezhnev came back with a devious message, repeating his false claim that the Soviets had gone in at the request of Afghan leaders because of "armed incursions from without into Afghan territory"—which, in fact, were nonexistent. He repeated an earlier promise: "As soon as the reasons which prompted the Afghan request to the Soviet Union disappear, we fully intend to withdraw the Soviet military contingents from Afghan territory."

Despite this promise, the Soviets poured more forces across the border, until there were about eighty thousand Soviet troops in Afghanistan. Armed mostly with small and outmoded weapons, the freedom fighters put up surprisingly fierce and effective resistance. If the Afghans could continue their courageous struggle, the Soviet leaders would have to settle for a long, drawn-out, and costly war. They were condemned overwhelmingly as aggressors by the world community, even by some of their closest allies and friends.

The Soviet Union, like Iran, had acted outrageously, and at the same time had made a tragic miscalculation. I was determined to lead the rest of the world in making it as costly as possible. There was a balancing act to perform—America being the leader, but at the same time consulting and working closely with the other nations. To be effective, punitive action had to be broadly supported and clearly defined.

The invasion also affected the way I would proceed with my political campaign. Within the White House, there had been a running argument about whether I would participate in a national television debate in Des Moines, Iowa, with other Democratic candidates. Iowa would soon hold its party caucuses—the first political test in the nation—and the result of these caucus votes would be very significant in my struggle with Kennedy and Brown. Earlier, I had accepted the invitation, but now I felt that with the simultaneous crises in Iran and Afghanistan it would be a mistake for me to begin campaigning actively. As a result of recent events, I had many additional duties. Further, my postponing political activities would let the world know how seriously we
continued to view these disturbing circumstances. Rosalynn agreed, but most of my staff members and campaign leaders were on the other side of the argument. As I told them, “I would go to the Iowa debate as a President and leave there as a political candidate.”

The day after the take-over of Afghanistan, I decided not to go to Iowa and called our supporters there to give them my reasons. A few thought it would hurt us politically, but all agreed I had made the right decision.

My next decision would have an even more significant impact on the people of Iowa—whether or not to impose a grain embargo on the Soviet Union. Other economic steps would have some effect, but an analysis of possible sanctions revealed that this was the only one which would significantly affect the Soviet economy. The Soviets were very short of grain, and supplies were available in only a few other countries, such as Canada, Australia, and Argentina. For an embargo to be effective, we would need cooperation from both American farmers and these foreign grain producers.

Such a step would be drastic, and especially difficult for me. During the early 1970’s, President Nixon had repeatedly imposed grain embargoes in an attempt to stabilize domestic market prices, and in the 1976 campaign I had promised not to do so unless our nation’s security was at stake. I knew that some farmers had interpreted my statements as a pledge not to interfere with the free marketing of grain under any circumstances. Furthermore, as a farmer myself, I understood that the American farm community could be seriously damaged if such enormous sales were canceled without compensatory action by our government. Reserves would pile up, and prices might drop precipitously. If a grain embargo were imposed, we would have to find a way to prevent such consequences.

Grain sales to the Soviet Union was only one of the sensitive questions I had to resolve.

We had a long discussion about the 1980 Olympics. We will make a statement saying that this issue is in doubt, but not make a decision yet about whether to participate. This one would cause me the most trouble, and also would be the most severe blow to the Soviet Union. Only if many nations act in concert would I consider it to be a good idea. DIARY, JANUARY 2, 1980

For the Soviet Union, the Moscow Olympics was much more than a sporting event. They saw it as a triumph for communism and a vivid demonstration to other nations of the world that the Soviets represented the true spirit of the ancient Olympics. For several years, the state propaganda machine had been promulgating this theme, and the government had made an enormous investment in facilities for the quadrennial games. In more than a hundred nations, including our own, thousands of athletes and many businesses and communications firms had already committed themselves to participate. To interrupt all this preparation would be a serious step indeed.

It would be much easier for me to take other steps—to reinforce our military forces in the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf region, cancel planned visits and meetings with the Soviets, bar their fishing fleet from United States waters, deny them international credits, tighten up on any transfer of high-technology equipment, and strengthen our ties with other countries who were naturally fearful of Soviet aggression, including China. We were considering all these moves. We pushed hard for a vote of condemnation in the United Nations, ultimately with success. This was the first time such action had ever been taken against one of the leading nations of the world. In a highly secret move, we also assessed the feasibility of arranging for Soviet-made weapons (which would appear to have come from the Afghan military forces) to be delivered to the freedom fighters in Afghanistan and of giving them what encouragement we could to resist subjugation by the Soviet invaders.

There were some things I did not want to do; one of the most important of these was scuttling the SALT II treaty. It was patently of advantage to the United States and vital to the maintenance of world peace. On January 3, I sent a letter to Senator Robert Byrd, asking him not to bring it to the floor for a vote, but to leave it on the calendar for future action. Because of American disgust with the Soviet invasion, the treaty would have been defeated overwhelmingly, and to withdraw it from the Senate might have made it almost impossible to resubmit in the future or for most of its terms to continue to be observed. This action was the best I could do at the time to keep it alive.

We discussed how far we wanted to go with economic measures against the Soviet Union. I want to go the maximum degree—interrupting grain sales, high technology, cancelling fishing rights, reexamining our commerce guidelines, establishing a difference in COCOM [an international committee which set rules for trade with com-
During the afternoon of January 4, I informed my staff and Cabinet, Vice President Mondale, Tom Watson (our ambassador to the Soviet Union, whom I had recalled to Washington), and the congressional leaders of my plans, and that evening I described them to the nation. Fritz objected strenuously to the grain embargo, concerned about possible injury to American farmers. I assured him that we would do whatever was necessary to maintain grain prices and to compensate the farmers for any loss, letting all American taxpayers share the cost equitably. In effect, we could substitute our own government for the Soviets in the purchase of the grain, and protect the farmers, elevator operators, and grain dealers from loss. Then we would sell as much of the grain as possible on other international markets. We would not interfere in the sale of the eight million tons that were committed to the Soviet Union by a long-standing international contract, but another seventeen million tons, which they had recently bought, would not be delivered. The Vice President was not convinced by my explanation, but when I could not be dissuaded, he was loyal in backing my decision. As he traveled through the Midwestern states on the campaign trail, he defended my action to anxious farmers.

It was interesting that on these punitive measures, the State Department advocated stronger action than the National Security Council staff, a reversal of their usual attitudes. Brzezinski was remarkably sober, concerned about future relationships with the Soviet Union. I was sobered, too, by my conversation with Fritz and by our strained relations with the Soviets, but I was determined to make them pay for their unwarranted aggression without yielding to political pressures here at home.

In the midst of all the international crises, the intrusion of the political campaign seemed almost unreal, but there was no way to avoid it. Although I was not actively campaigning, I did agree to an interview with John Chancellor of NBC News, who was asking all the presidential candidates similar questions. The first questions were about Iran and Afghanistan, which seemed perfectly normal to me. Then came the unexpected ones—unexpected by me because I had such life-and-death issues on my mind. "What do you think about school busing?" "What is your position on homosexual rights?" "Do you think that marijuana should be legalized?" I was startled, and fumbled as I tried to focus my attention on those questions I had answered so many times during the campaign four years earlier.

That same weekend, Rosalynn and I watched on television the debate of the Republican candidates in Iowa. As is almost always the case, the news reporters and the public were impressed by the general demeanor of the candidates and their appearance of forcefulness and ease before the camera, and not so much by their stands on the issues, however conflicting.

I thought Baker came out worst, Crane and Anderson came out best, Connally bombed out. Dole looked and acted like a hatchet man. I thought the winner was Ronald Reagan, who didn't show up. DIARY, JANUARY 5, 1980

It was interesting to observe my future potential opponents and to see them wrestle with some of the difficult questions I was having to answer every day. One of these was in the news and had strong political overtones: the Soviet grain embargo. With the exception of John Anderson, they all opposed it.

Although we had to work hard to maintain the embargo among other nations, for the remainder of the year it was very effective. Both Canada and Australia agreed not to replace American grain in sales to the Soviet Union, and at first Argentina did the same. Our relations with the Argentine leaders were very poor because of our protests over their abominable human-rights record, but for a time, world opinion about the Soviet invasion induced them to refrain from doing business with the Soviets. When their new harvest began, however, they soon changed their minds, to take advantage of the high prices offered them—but in any case, they had little extra grain to sell. Some of the European countries had some surplus grain, but they cooperated fully with the embargo. For instance, President Giscard d'Estaing stated, "The Soviets have broken the principles of détente. The actions of the United States as a superpower are justified. France will not substitute embargoed items, and will make no grain sales." On the other
hand, he cautioned against initiating another cold war, noted that the ball was now in the Russian court, and suggested that the withdrawal of Soviet troops would be the test of their intentions.

We had made careful plans for supporting grain prices as we imposed the embargo against the Soviet Union, and had closed the grain markets for two days so that grain could not be traded until we could explain our program. Nevertheless, when the markets reopened, prices dropped the limit for the day. I was already very concerned about many troubling issues, and this news struck me like a hammer blow. But we continued our explanations to the public, and soon had some good tidings on the ticker tape.

The grain prices were very good. This is quite a relief to me. I don’t know why the early news from the grain markets on Wednesday was so depressing, but it was one of the low points of my administration. Corn was up 34¢, wheat up 13¢, soybeans up 8¢. Unbelievable!

DIARY, JANUARY 11, 1980

After a few days of hard campaigning in Iowa, Rosalynn returned home to report that displeasure among the farmers had been substantially alleviated by the improving prices of grain.

In addition to keeping the prices as stable as possible, we wanted to minimize the quantity of grain that would have to be purchased by the federal government. Secretary Bob Bergland and other administration officials marshaled a worldwide effort to sell American corn and wheat, concentrating on such countries as Mexico and China, which imported large quantities but had not been good customers of ours in the past. We were to be very successful, breaking all-time world records in grain sales during 1980, in spite of the restraints on Soviet trade.

On Sunday, January 6, I met with Secretary General Kurt Waldheim, who had just returned from his diplomatic mission to Iran. He had tried to explain to the Iranians the principles that Vance and I had presented to him, but found complete chaos in Tehran. He spent the first hour with me in a very emotional and excited recitation of his horrible experiences there, at times with tears in his eyes. Waldheim believed his life had been in danger on three different occasions and that he was lucky to be alive. He was convinced the Iranians had no government at all; the terrorists were making all the decisions. He did not think sanctions against Iran would ever bring about the release of the hostages.

The Iranians wanted to set up an international tribunal, to try the Shah and the United States, and to get restitution of their funds (with other countries acting as intermediaries) before they would consider letting the Americans go free—all of which I had made clear we would never accept.

After a great deal of lobbying, we got an excellent vote in the United Nations Security Council on sanctions against Iran. The Soviets voted “no,” and I publicly branded them outlaws, who did not favor even the enforcement of international law. It was then I decided to devote my upcoming State of the Union address primarily to United States–Soviet relations and the threat to peace.

I was not always successful in encouraging other nations to condemn Soviet aggression. When Indira Gandhi was reelected as Prime Minister of India, I called to congratulate her and to ask for her cooperation regarding our hostages and the Soviet presence in Afghanistan. She was polite but cool. It was obvious that she did not wish to discuss anything of substance. Within a few days, I learned why. The Indian representative’s speech in the United Nations was as strongly supportive of the Soviet invasion as were those of Czechoslovakia and Vietnam. Even Cuba was more reticent in its praise than India.

In fact, one surprising development was Cuba’s adverse reaction to the Soviet invasion. Fidel Castro had been trying to get his country elected to a seat on the United Nations Security Council, and seemed likely to prevail even against firm United States opposition. After he first refused to criticize the Soviet action, he lost support and had to withdraw from contention. It happened that during this time, Cuba was scheduled to host a meeting of the NAM (Non-Aligned Movement) countries. This organization had first been created by the responsible leaders of India, Yugoslavia, and Egypt, and some of them still remembered the original concept of true nonalignment. Cuba, a Soviet puppet, had not remembered. Most of the others became irate because of Cuba’s reluctance to condemn the Soviet invasion, and Castro was apparently feeling the heat. He sent me word that he wanted to discuss Iran and Afghanistan, and I asked Robert Pastor, Latin American specialist on the National Security Council staff, and Peter Tarnoff, Executive Secretary of the State Department, to go to Cuba for a secret meeting with him.

Our emissaries to Cuba reported a startling frankness in an 11-hour discussion with Castro. He described without any equivocation his problems with the Soviet Union; his
loss of leadership position in NAM because of his subservience to the Soviet Union; his desire to pull out of Ethiopia now, and Angola later; his involvement in the revolutionary movements in Central America but his aversion to sending weapons or military capability to the Caribbean countries; and so forth. He is very deeply hurt by our embargo. Wants to move toward better relationships with us, but can't abandon his friends, the Soviets, who have supported his revolution unequivocally.

DIARY, JANUARY 18, 1980

The reasons for this long discourse were unclear to us, but it was at least obvious that Cuba was embarrassed to be aligned with the Soviet Union in the public debates. This attitude was certainly indicative of the great diplomatic losses suffered by the Soviets among the less developed countries of the world. Decades of propaganda effort to project themselves as the peace-loving defender of small countries had gone down the drain. We did not doubt for a moment that their close ties with Cuba would continue—at a cost to them of more than $8 million each day—but we wanted to be certain that other nations did not forget the Soviet crime.

Throughout the crisis over Afghanistan, the meetings between me and my advisers about the hostages had continued without slackening. In spite of many other responsibilities, the hostages were always in my mind.

I got a letter from one of the hostages which remarkably was mailed in Iran and had not been censored. It was written the day after Christmas. He pointed out that they were denied basic human rights; confined in a semi-darkened room without sunshine or fresh air; were given no news of any kind; hands kept tied day and night; bright lights burning in the room all night long; constant noise so they are unable to sleep properly; not permitted to speak to another American, even those in the same room. He slept on a hard floor for 33 out of the 53 nights. Has been given only three brief periods of exercise outdoors in the 53 days. His personal mail is being withheld. He points out that he's not been visited by any representative of the U.S. government, apparently not understanding that we have not been able to visit him. That he's seen no friendly diplomatic representative of any other country.

IRAN AND THE LAST YEAR

That when the clergymen came in on Christmas eve, none of the prisoners was permitted to worship privately. It was obviously a propaganda charade put on by the Iranian kidnappers.

I discussed it with Cy and Jody. The letter is authentic, and Cy will call [the hostage's] family to give them the basic information. We will not disclose the identity of the person, but in a day or two will make public the circumstances under which our prisoners are being held.

DIARY, JANUARY 16, 1980

Later, it was revealed that this letter was from William Ode, a very mature and responsible State Department employee. I was sickened and additionally alarmed to hear about the bestiality of the Iranian captors. How could any decent human beings, and particularly leaders of a nation, treat innocent people like this—week after week?

On January 14, the Iranians had decided that all foreign reporters were to be kicked out of Iran. This was good news. The change would reduce the demonstration of hatred against the United States presented almost every day before the television cameras outside our embassy, and this in itself would have a calming influence on people in both countries. However, I was concerned that the Iranians might be contemplating action which they wanted further to conceal.

Perhaps the most highly publicized issue of all at this time was how to deal with the 1980 Olympic Games in Moscow. Before making a decision, I held many meetings with my advisers and consulted closely with other heads of state and with sports leaders in our country. I did not want to damage the Olympic movement, but at the same time it seemed unconscionable to be guests of the Soviets while they were involved in a bloody suppression of the people of Afghanistan—an act condemned by an overwhelming majority of the nations of the world. It was not an easy decision; we had been hoping our dilemma could be resolved by a firm commitment from the Soviet leaders to withdraw their military forces. However, Ambassador Dobrynin had not brought back any messages from Moscow other than repetitions of the same specious arguments.

I announced our decision about the Moscow Olympics on a “Meet the Press” interview show on January 20. We would send a message to the International Olympic Committee, with copies to other government leaders in the world, stating that unless the
Soviets withdrew their troops from Afghanistan within a month, there should be no participation in the Moscow games. We would help to find another site and participate in the financing and arrangements for the change. In response to a follow-up question, I made it clear that, even if we had to stand alone among nations, American athletes should not go to Moscow while Soviet troops were still trying to crush the Afghan people. I knew the decision was controversial, but I had no idea at the time how difficult it would be for me to implement it or to convince other nations to join us.

The next day, January 21, the 1980 election process officially began with the Iowa caucuses. The domestic political situation had changed dramatically since November 4, when the American Embassy had been seized in Tehran. At that time Senator Kennedy had been an overwhelming favorite, but he had injured himself that same night in a disastrous CBS interview with Roger Mudd, when he had seemed to be incompetent and confused. Later, his ill-advised comments condemning the Shah, his opposition to punitive actions against the Soviets, and the memories of his Chappaquiddick accident had accelerated the decline in his popularity. American patriotism was high, and the nation had rallied around me as I faced the joint difficulties in Iran and Afghanistan. Fritz and Rosalynn were representing me well on the campaign trail, and other members of my political family were also doing a good job of explaining the complicated issues.

When the results came in, I had won an overwhelming victory over Kennedy—by a margin of 2 to 1—carrying all but one of the 99 counties in the state. Kennedy's extremely liberal stance on economic issues was not popular in Iowa. In addition, a lot of people there thought it improper for him to condemn some of my decisions of recent weeks concerning Iran and the Soviet Union.

The last of the controversial decisions had yet to be taken. Two other actions were needed to demonstrate our resolve, enhance our readiness, and remind the rest of the world how vital our stakes were in the Persian Gulf region.

We did not need to draft young people to serve in the armed forces, but it was necessary to register them, so that we could mobilize more rapidly if the need should arise. The key Cabinet officers and most of my staff members agreed with my plans, but I had a near-rebellion on my hands when it came to Fritz Mondale and Stu Eizenstat. They thought I was overreacting to the Soviet invasion, and that registration would be politically damaging to our campaign for reelection. They had strongly opposed the grain embargo, but this disagreement was much worse. I listened to all the arguments they marshaled against the idea, but decided to proceed.

The other decision was to include in my State of the Union speech on January 23 a warning to the Soviets concerning any further threat by them against the Persian Gulf.

Let our position be absolutely clear: An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force.

This statement was not lightly made, and I was resolved to use the full power of the United States to back it up. I had already discussed my concerns about the Persian Gulf area with the Soviet leaders during the Vienna summit conference in June 1979, but their subsequent invasion of Afghanistan made it necessary to repeat the warning in clearer terms. Some news reporters dubbed my decision the Carter Doctrine and called it an idle threat, because, they said, we could not successfully invade Iran if it were to be attacked by Soviet troops.

The fact was that mine was a carefully considered statement, which would have been backed by concerted action, not necessarily confined to any small invaded area or to tactics or terrain of the Soviets' choosing. We simply could not afford to let them extend their domination to adjacent areas around the Persian Gulf which were so important to us and to other nations of the world.

We had been successful in keeping secret the presence of six American diplomats who had found refuge in the Canadian Embassy at the time our embassy was taken. (Some news organizations knew about these diplomats, but at my request did not reveal the information.) Now, with minimum news coverage and the resulting quiet on the streets of Tehran, it was time for our attempt to bring them back to the United States. This was a real cloak-and-dagger story, with American secret agents being sent into Iran to rehearse with the Canadians and Americans the plans for their safe departure. The agents and those being rescued would have to be furnished with disguises and false documents that appeared authentic, and they needed enough instruction and training to convince the Iranian officials that they were normal
travelers and business visitors from other countries, including Canada. There were several delays and many adventures as our plans were put into effect.

One agent was sent in as a German—with a forged passport, of course. He adopted a false name, with the middle initial "H." When he reached the customs desk, the officials stopped him to comment that it was very strange for a German passport to use an initial rather than the entire name; he had never seen one like this before. He began to interrogate our man more closely, and the quick-witted messenger said, "Well, my parents named me 'Hitler' as a baby. Ever since the War, I've been permitted to conceal my full name." The customs official winked and nodded knowingly, and waved him on through the gates.

On January 25, everything was in place. Three days later I received word that the six Americans were free. (On the same day—January 28—Abolhassan Bani-Sadr was declared the newly elected President of Iran.) Until some of the Canadians and our intelligence agents were also out of Iran, we could not reveal that our first rescue mission had been successful, but when the news was finally released on January 31, Ambassador Kenneth Taylor and the other courageous Canadians became instant heroes. They well deserved the outpouring of gratitude from millions of Americans, who were especially thankful for this rare good news from Iran.

This was not the only occasion when we used secret agents to help us. Most of our communication with the Iranian leaders was conducted through the Swiss Embassy in Tehran. However, we also opened up an avenue through an Argentine businessman, Hector Villalon, and a French lawyer, Christian Bourguet, who, because of their business and legal dealings with Iranian officials, were frequent visitors to the country. The Panamanians made the first contact with them in December, and it proved to be of great benefit to us.

Both the Iranians and the Panamanians preferred to deal with Hamilton Jordan, because he was close to me, was not in the State Department (which the Iranians claimed was controlled by David Rockefeller), and because Ham had been instrumental in moving the Shah to Panama without his efforts being publicized at the time. Between their frequent trips to Iran, Bourguet and Villalon met with Hamilton and Assistant Secretary of State Saunders several times in Europe and in the United States. The negotiations were so confidential that when Ham called in to make a report to me in the White House, he used a code name. On

one occasion Bourguet came to the White House to give me a personal report. He was a calm, slightly built, heavily bearded man, apparently in his late thirties, who would have looked at home in the audience of a Bob Dylan concert—or in a courtroom working without fee on a civil-rights case. Villalon, whom I did not meet until 1981, was an urbane international businessman, with the reputation of being like a high-class South American riverboat gambler. All I know is that these two men repeatedly risked their lives to help us, and I and the people of our country will always be indebted to them.

In Tehran, the two adventurers were able to meet regularly and without any apparent problem with Foreign Minister Ghotbsadeh, President Bani-Sadr, and other members of the Revolutionary Council. Using simple word codes they had developed, they would call Hamilton directly from Tehran to report progress or ask questions about our policy. I had been highly dubious about their authenticity, until Villalon and Bourguet were given a letter signed by Bani-Sadr and Ghotbsadeh, designating the two men to represent Iran in finding a way to release the hostages. Throughout the early months of 1980, we began to rely more and more on our secret emissaries. Through them we finally seemed to be making some progress.

Cy met with me and David [Aaron, Deputy National Security Adviser] and Hamilton to get an update on the Iranian response. Apparently Bani-Sadr is sending word to us directly that he wants to proceed with a resolution of the hostage question. His inclination is to wait until after the 26th of February, when he can put his government together. (He also said he wanted to get rid of Ghotbsadeh.) He [Bani-Sadr] does not want us to identify him as a friend of the United States or as a moderate. He wants to be known as a revolutionary, protecting the interests of Iran against both superpowers' threats. We decided to maintain our multiple approaches to Iran.

DIARY, FEBRUARY 4, 1980

This was the most encouraging development since our embassy had been seized. Khomeini had forbidden any Iranian official to even talk to an American, yet now the President of Iran was planning with me how to get our hostages home. Although Bani-Sadr was apparently keeping his plans secret from some other members of the Revolutionary Council, Ghotbsadeh was deeply
involved. Although at odds personally, these two men were our best hope, and so we wanted to see them consolidate their political strength. I was pleased at some of the reports we were getting.

Ham got a call from his people in Iran. They've been meeting regularly with Ghotbadsheh since they got over there—I think four times. They met twice with Bani-Sadr, and say that everything seems to be pretty well on track. There are some minor differences, which may become major differences when they are revealed to us. They claim they haven't been to bed in 3 or 4 days, and they're asleep now while the Revolutionary Council meets. At the end of the Revolutionary Council meeting it was announced that Bani-Sadr has become the new chairman of it.

DIARY, FEBRUARY 5, 1980

Bani-Sadr began to make speeches in Iran designed to isolate the militants from the general public and to remove the aura of heroism from the kidnappers. We read his words with great interest, hoping they signified Iranian preparation for release of the hostages. There was no way for the American people to know about our efforts, which had to be kept secret in order to succeed, and they were becoming increasingly frustrated by the long delays and absence of progress. I understood their anger, but at least I had glimpses of progress and moments of hope, although they could be shared with only a very few others.

Our allies, too, were impatient. I had a serious problem in keeping them and others with us in sustained opposition to the illegal actions in Iran and Afghanistan. Some—such as Great Britain, Canada, Australia, Egypt, and Panama—were staunch and always helpful; others were a constant source of trouble. Helmut Schmidt was now criticizing the British for supporting our position, and opposed any kind of sanctions against either the Soviet Union or Iran. The French position was a shifting one. We tried unsuccessfully to have a meeting of the foreign ministers who usually attended the economic summit conferences, so that we could discuss common action.

I worked all day Saturday. Up early, discussing the international situation with Vance—the serious problems the French have caused by withdrawing from the conference in Bonn, and the rapidly changing French foreign policy position on the Soviet invasion. They've had at least five different public positions: first saying that this was no threat to Western Europe; then a... public statement by Valéry condemning the Soviets and saying this was a threat to détente; then Giscard's visit to India, where he issued a noncommittal statement with Mrs. Gandhi; then his meeting with Helmut and a very strong [and supportive] communiqué they issued; and then more recently saying that they could not attend any meeting that did not contribute to friendship between us and the Soviet Union. I don’t know what’s going on in France.

DIARY, FEBRUARY 9, 1980

We had to move ahead on our own, beginning to build on the groundwork laid by Bourguet and Villalon. I needed some way to formalize the arrangements we had been working out with President Bani-Sadr, and decided that Vance would go to New York for a meeting with Kurt Waldheim to make plans for another United Nations delegation to visit Iran. The preparations for this visit would be made in Tehran by our two French emissaries. I wanted a precise, written document of understanding between the Iranians and me, so that there would be no last-minute misunderstandings to abort a potentially successful effort.

According to the joint arrangement that was being evolved through the United Nations by the Iranian officials and ourselves, a five-person commission would visit Iran. Both Iranian President Bani-Sadr and I would have to approve some well-known third world leaders, who would comprise the delegation. It was understood that the United Nations representatives would not embarrass any of the hostages or interrogate them about their past actions. The hostages would all be moved permanently to a hospital, so that we could be sure they were receiving good care. A report would be issued by the commission to the United Nations, the hostages would be released, the report would be published, and finally Bani-Sadr and I would make statements, worded as agreed ahead of time.

I was very pleased with how much the Iranians had been willing to change their originally announced positions. They had first called for the Shah's return, the confiscation of his estate, individual trials of our hostages as spies, and condemnation of the United States in an international forum. None of these demands was part of the current terms.

I considered our own change of position insignificant: we were now prepared to let an investigation be conducted before the hostages were released, provided the results were not published until afterward.
This report was hazy on some points, but not particularly discouraging. It was better than most reports I was receiving during this troublesome winter.

I was having a series of campaign victories, but Congress was stalling on our vital energy legislation and would not move on the Alaska lands bill. Some members were creating repeated obstacles to draft registration; many others were trying to circumvent the grain embargo. Almost a hundred thousand Soviet military men were now stationed in Afghanistan, unsuccessfully trying to subdue the fiercely resisting freedom fighters. Their predicament was becoming reminiscent of the American involvement in Vietnam. The public was more supportive of me than it had been a few months ago, but becoming more restive with each passing week because of our seeming impotence in dealing with international crises. World oil prices had doubled since the Iranian revolution began, and inflationary pressures were an ever-present problem. The familiar ups and downs were mostly downs.

And then came the Winter Olympics and the ice-hockey game between the all-powerful Soviet Union team and the unknown and unsung Americans. It was one of the high spots of my year when the young Americans won—a very emotional moment.

I immediately called the coach, Herb Brooks, congratulated them, and invited him and the team to the White House Monday. He responded that he strongly supported our not attending the Moscow Olympics in the summer. Said they had one more game to go against Finland Sunday morning, and they wanted the gold medal now.

DIARY, FEBRUARY 22, 1980

I was hoping this victory and the gold medal were an omen of better days ahead. But that was not to be.