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News Summary

OFFICE OF THE PRESS SECRETARY

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 1986 -- 6 a.m. EST EDITION

TODAY'S HEADLINES

NEWS CONFERENCE

Reagan: Tax Hike Will Be "Vetoed on Arrival" -- The call for a deficit-cutting tax increase is growing in Congress, but President Reagan warns any tax hike will be "vetoed on arrival" at the White House. (New York Times, Washington Post, Washington Times, UPI)

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Vote-Fraud Reports Viewed Seriously -- President Reagan said yesterday that the Philippine presidential election was "flawed by reports of fraud which we take seriously," and asked former Mideast special envoy Philip Habib to go to the Philippines "to assess the desires and needs" of the people. (Washington Post)

NATIONAL NEWS

Justice Dept. "Blackmailing Me," Burford Says -- Former EPA chief Anne Burford says the Justice Department, in exchange for paying \$198,000 of her lawyers' bills, pressured her into giving up the right to sue the former officials who represented her in a 1983 battle with Congress. (Washington Post)

NETWORK NEWS (Tuesday Evening)

PHILIPPINES -- President Reagan announced he is sending Philip Habib to the Philippines.

SHCHARANSKY -- The prominent Jewish dissident walked to a new life across a bridge.

SHUTTLE -- Witnesses wrangled in public over whether the shuttle's solid rocket boosters had a built-in safety program.

VETO ON ARRIVAL

"Let's be frank: Those who say that our budget is D.O.A. -- Dead On Arrival -- are really saying brace yourself for a tax increase. I think taxpayers want Congress to get its own house in order. I do too. So, rest assured that any tax increase sent to me will be V.O.A. -- Veto On Arrival."

(President Reagan,
News Conference, 2/11)

NEWS CONFERENCE

U.S. TO SENT ENVOY TO PHILIPPINES

President Reagan last night brushed aside questions about fraud in the Philippines' presidential election and said the United States would seek to continue its close relationship with the Philippines regardless of who wins.

Even yesterday, however, Reagan expressed concern about the fraud charges and said he would dispatch Ambassador Philip Habib for talks with Filipino leaders and cited the need for a government there "with an authentic popular mandate." (Boston Globe, A1)

REAGAN SAYS HE'LL VETO ANY NEW TAXES

President Reagan last night pledged to veto any tax increase that Congress might pass to help reduce a more than \$200 billion budget deficit. (Boston Globe, A1)

REAGAN SENDS ENVOY TO MANILA

But He Discounts Fraud Reports in Election; Calls U.S. 'Neutral'

President Ronald Reagan, after announcing he would send a special ambassador to the Philippines to "help nurture the hopes and possibilities of democracy," said last night that the United States remained neutral in last week's election and that allegations of widespread voting fraud had not been proven. (Newsday, A7)

REAGAN FIRES BACK IN BATTLE OVER BUDGET

Insisting Plan Isn't DOA, He Warned Tax Hike Will Get
"Veto on Arrival"

President Reagan went on the offensive Tuesday in his budget battle with Congress, charging that critics of his spending plan were trying to prepare the country for a tax increase.

He said that "those who say our budget is D.O.A. -- dead on arrival -- are really saying, 'Brace yourself for a tax increase.'" (Atlanta Constitution, A1)

REAGAN DECRIES 'QUOTAS,' CALLS AGAIN FOR COLORBLIND SOCIETY

President Reagan contended Tuesday that the government's affirmative action program to increase minority hiring has become a "quota system." He called for a "color-blind society" where "nothing is done to or for anyone because of race."

Despite his criticism of federal affirmative action goals, Reagan did not say what he would do about the executive order that mandates them. His Cabinet has been unable for months to resolve an internal dispute over the order. (Miami Herald, A10)

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U.S. SENDING DIPLOMAT TO PHILIPPINES

President Ronald Reagan said Tuesday that the election in the Philippines had been flawed by reports of fraud and violence. But he said he was encouraged by the demonstration of a two-party system and pluralism in the Asian nation.

(St. Louis Post-Dispatch, A1)

REAGAN WANTS QUOTAS IN HIRING DROPPED

President Ronald Reagan says government bureaucrats are requiring private companies doing business with the U.S. Government to adopt quotas for the hiring and promotion of blacks and he wants the practice stopped.

(St. Louis Post-Dispatch, A19)

PHILIPPINE BASES VITAL, REAGAN STRESSES

President Reagan, stressing the importance of two U.S. military bases in the Philippines, signalled that he is prepared to accept a fraud-tinged presidential election in the Pacific nation.

(Houston Chronicle, A1)

REAGAN TO SEND SPECIAL ENVOY HABIB TO MANILA

President Reagan, presented with evidence of widespread ballot fraud in the Philippines, announced Tuesday that he will send his former Middle East envoy, Philip C. Habib, to Manila to help determine how the United States should respond to what he described as a "flawed" election.

While there has been no evidence of fraudulent acts by Marcos' opponents, the President later ad-libbed during a televised news conference that "it could have been that all of that was occurring on both sides."

(Los Angeles Times, A1)

PRESIDENT HINTS HE'LL DROP MINORITY HIRING ORDER

President Reagan indicated Tuesday he favors a proposal by Attorney General Edwin Meese III to abolish the 20-year-old executive order that empowers the Labor Department to set minority hiring goals and timetables for federal contractors.

Reagan, answering questions at his press conference, said that while he had not yet made a decision on the issue, he is opposed to quotas and "in administering these programs, we've seen that the affirmative action program was becoming a quotas program."

The executive order does not call for quotas.

(Los Angeles Times, A4)

REAGAN SAYS HE'S TRIMMING ONLY "FAT"

President Reagan, who proposed last week to eliminate federal programs ranging from Amtrak passenger rail subsidies to the Small Business Administration, said last night that he is only trimming "fat" and is not cutting "essential parts" of the government. In his nationally televised news conference, Reagan suggested that the domestic spending cuts he proposed are not that severe, reducing spending in this area by only 5 percent. He again promised to veto any tax increase on arrival.

Reagan defended Vice President Bush, who has recently been making the rounds of conservative groups in the intensified jockeying for the 1988 Republican presidential nomination. Asked whether Bush had been "consistent" with his recent comments on conservative issues, Reagan said, "Well, you're asking a fellow who was once a liberal New Deal Democrat before he became a Republican. Sometimes we do change our minds with things that have gone on."

(David Hoffman, Washington Post, A13)

Reagan: Tax Hike Will Be "Vetoed on Arrival"

The call for a deficit-cutting tax increase is growing in Congress, but President Reagan, drawing battle lines with critics who say his budget is "dead on arrival," warns any tax hike will be "vetoed on arrival" at the White House.

At his news conference Tuesday night, Reagan pushed his idea of slashing the deficit through spending reductions, alone, and took clear aim at lawmakers -- including some Republican allies -- who have begun to call for domestic hikes, such as an oil import fee, as a way to avoid painful domestic cuts. "Let's be frank," Reagan said: "Those who say that our budget is DOA -- dead-on-arrival -- are really saying 'brace yourself for a tax increase.' I think taxpayers want Congress to get its own house in order. I do too, so rest assured that any tax increase sent to me will be VOA, vetoed on arrival."

(Joseph Mianowany, UPI)

Tax increase to be "Vetoed on Arrival," Reagan Vows

President Reagan last night defended as fat-free the \$994 billion budget he submitted to Congress last week and vowed to block any tax increase aimed at healing proposed social programs cuts. He said his fiscal 1987 budget plan does not cut the "essential parts" of programs such as student aid and school lunches. Instead, he said, "the small amount of the cuts" is in "the area of fat."

"At every echelon of government where they perform a program for the people, the percentage of the dollar that goes to administer that program is less at the community level, a little higher at the county level, a little higher at the state level," he said. "Now, if we can eliminate some fat, we can handle this."

(Mary Belcher & Jeremiah O'Leary, Washington Times, A1)

President Says Budget Foes Seek Tax Increase and Vows to Veto It

President Reagan tonight accused Congressional opponents of his new budget proposal of maneuvering for a tax increase. He pledged a swift veto if they succeeded. In a strong statement against a tax increase, Mr. Reagan began a nationally televised press conference by saying such a bill would be "vetoed on arrival."

In response to questions about discussions in the Administration over whether to change an executive order that mandates affirmative action plans for companies doing business with the Federal Government, Mr. Reagan stuck to his position that goals and timetables for minority hiring amounted to racial quotas and were a form of illegal discrimination. He said that he would do nothing to restore "discrimination of any kind."

(Gerald Boyd, New York Times, A1)

REAGAN SAYS U.S.-FILIPINO TIES WILL CONTINUE

President Reagan says he will recognize whichever government emerges from the fraud-tainted election in the Philippines because "I don't know anything that's more important" than protecting U.S. bases on the island. In his news conference Tuesday night, Reagan sidestepped accusations of vote fraud and violence by the government of President Marcos, asserting that "it could have been that all of that was occurring on both sides."

But the White House refused to provide any evidence of fraud or violence by supporters of opposition candidate Corazon Aquino. "What we have to say is that the determination of the government in the Philippines is going to be the business of the Philippine people, not the United States," the President said. (Ira Allen, UPI)

Reagan/Philippines

President Reagan expressed concern Tuesday night about violence "and the possibility of fraud" in the Philippines presidential election. He said the United States won't take sides in the contest, noting "one cannot minimize the importance" of American bases on the islands. "We're neutral, and we then hope to have the same relationship with the people of the Philippines that we've had all these years," Reagan told a nationally televised news conference.

At a question and answer session dominated by foreign policy issues, the President welcomed the release earlier in the day of Anatoly Shcharansky, and said he hoped other Soviet dissidents would follow him to freedom. He also said any attempt by Soviet leader Gorbachev to link the timing of this year's scheduled summit to U.S. concessions on arms control "wouldn't work."

(Michael Putzel, AP)

Reagan Pledges To Maintain Ties To Philippines

President Reagan, giving no indication he was ready to distance himself from Philippine President Marcos, said he would work with any government in the Philippines "instituted by the choice of the people." Mr. Reagan, however, said at a nationally televised news conference last night that he was "concerned" about evidence of vote-rigging and election-related violence in the Philippines, and he is sending special envoy Philip Habib to the country to try to clarify the confusing aftermath of last Friday's presidential election.

(Frederick Kempe & Jane Mayer, Wall Street Journal, A2)

REAGAN GIVES BOTTOM LINE ON DEFENSE EXPENSE

President Reagan, displaying some righteous indignation over the infamous \$640 military toilet seat, says the notorious item never existed -- it was a "moulded cover for the entire toilet system." Reagan, when asked about the toilet seat at his nationally televised news conference, said, "we didn't buy any \$600 toilet seat. We bought a molded cover for the entire toilet system."

The item is a one piece molded plastic-like cover for a toilet assembly in an aircraft lavatory and cost \$640. Reagan said the item is similar to that used by commercial airlines. "There wasn't any \$600 toilet seat. All those cartoons that run every other week in the paper with Cap Weinberger and a toilet seat around his neck; that's the same price that TWA and Delta and United pay. It is a molded cover (for) the entire system. And yes it does cost about that much."

(UPI)

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INTERNATIONAL NEWS

PRESIDENT SENDING HABIB TO MANILA TO ASSESS SITUATION

Vote-Fraud Reports Viewed Seriously

President Reagan said yesterday that the Philippine presidential election was "flawed by reports of fraud which we take seriously," and asked former Mideast special envoy Philip Habib to go to the Philippines "to assess the desires and needs" of the people. The surprise announcement was a distinct step away from Reagan's statements Monday in which he played down reports of widespread fraud and seemed to be accepting a victory by President Marcos.

Yesterday's statement followed a morning meeting with the leaders of the official U.S. observer delegation to the election, Sen. Lugar and Rep. Murtha. Lugar said they told Reagan that Marcos "still has the power to allow a fair count," and that Reagan should withhold judgment on the validity of the balloting until a citizens' watchdog group completes its tally.

(Joanne Omang, Washington Post, A1)

Aquino Appeals to "Friends Abroad"

Opposition presidential candidate Corazon Aquino, in a message intended for Washington, today warned the Philippines' friends abroad not to "support a failing dictator," as the government media portrayed statements by President Reagan that appeared here Tuesday morning as virtually endorsing the reelection of President Marcos.

Aquino campaign workers said her remarks came in response to the government media's portrayal of statements by Reagan and other U.S. officials as continuing support for him despite widespread charges of electoral fraud.

(William Branigin and John Burgess, Washington Post, A1)

SEN. KERRY CRITICIZES REAGAN ADMINISTRATION ON PHILIPPINE VOTING

A member of the U.S. observer team sent to monitor the Philippine presidential election rebuked the Reagan Administration for not reacting decisively enough to reports of widespread fraud in the voting. "There is hard evidence of fraud in this election, and the only question is whether or not the total resources of the U.S. government will be brought to bear in an attempt to reverse the trend that we and the American people have been witnessing in the election process in the Philippines," Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass) said Tuesday.

Kerry praised the "intensity of the effort" of the 20 U.S. observers, who returned to the United States following Friday's voting. But he accused the Reagan Administration of not taking their findings seriously enough.

(Daniel Beegan, AP)

REAGAN URGED TO PUSH FOR CONTRA AID

Two key House Republicans urged President Reagan yesterday to make "a major personal commitment" to press Congress for "substantial amounts" of military aid to rebels fighting the government of Nicaragua. "The current situation in Nicaragua is of grave concern to us," House Minority Leader Robert Michel (R-Ill) and Rep. Dick Cheney (R-Wyo) told Reagan in a letter.

The appeal to the White House on behalf of the rebels came as Colombian Foreign Minister Ramires said that Reagan's insistence on aiding the rebels is incompatible with peace efforts in Central America. Ramires, in a news conference after talks with Administration officials, said the U.S. position toward Nicaragua is "intransigent and extreme" but held out hope differences between the United States and its major Latin American allies could be reconciled.

(Washington Post, A16)

GIS AID VILLAGERS IN HONDURAS

LA IGUALA, Honduras -- The medical teams fly out once or twice each week from Palmerola air field, the U.S. military command post in this country, for the exercises. The medics stress that their principle objective is to receive field training for themselves, as some U.S. congressional critics have argued that taxpayers' dollars could be better spent delivering medical care to U.S. citizens.

But the medics also noted that their work helps build popular support in Honduras for the U.S. military maneuvers in this country. The exercises are designed mainly to intimidate the leftist Sandinista government in neighboring Nicaragua.

(Robert McCartney, Washington Post, A21)

CIA MANUAL BLAMED FOR ASSASSINATION

LONDON -- Amnesty International today blamed a CIA manual detailing ways to "neutralize" opponents for encouraging U.S.-backed Nicaraguan rebels to commit murder and other human rights abuses. The London-based human rights group produced no evidence directly linking the CIA to atrocities by the Nicaraguan Democratic Force. But it did blame the CIA for providing the Honduran-based contras with the manual, which proposed the "selective assassination of civilian local government officials, police and military personnel."

(David Cowell, UPI)

SCHARANSKY IS RELEASED IN BERLIN

WEST BERLIN -- Soviet dissident Anatoly Scharansky was freed today from nine years in captivity as part of an East-West prisoner swap that culminated months of secret bartering and a global crusade by a wife who had not seen him since the day after their wedding in 1974.

(William Drozdiak, Washington Post, A1)

NATIONAL NEWS

JUSTICE DEPT. "BLACKMAILING ME," BURFORD SAYS

Former EPA chief Anne Burford says the Justice Department, in exchange for paying \$198,000 of her lawyers' bills, pressured her into giving up the right to sue the former officials who represented her in a 1983 battle with Congress.

Burford said she reluctantly signed a sweeping waiver last Thursday that precludes her from suing current and former Administration officials who handled the controversy over EPA documents that led to her resignation. She said Justice Department officials refused to pay her three-year-old legal bills unless she bowed to their demands.

"It's blackmail," Burford said in an interview. "They were blackmailing me to protect people.... I think what the Justice Department did in requiring me to sign that was reprehensible."

(Howard Kurtz, Washington Post, A3)

ARAB-AMERICANS ASK RIGHTS INQUIRY

Arab-American leaders told the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights yesterday that they and their communities have been subjected to widespread discrimination, harassment and violence and requested a formal investigation. The group also charged that the FBI has been reluctant to investigate acts of violence against Arab-Americans and has conducted surveillance operations against Arab-American political activists.

(Mary Thornton, Washington Post, A4)

PENTAGON BEGINS TIGHTENING SECURITY-CLEARANCE ROUTINES

Secretary Weinberger yesterday ordered a sweeping overhaul of security procedures, including a reliable program for holders of Top Secret clearances. The reliability program will be applied to those individuals who work "in especially sensitive programs or [who are] assigned to Top Secret positions of high criticality," the Pentagon said in a brief statement.

In essence, the program will require the supervisor of such employees to conduct his own evaluation of individuals moving into such jobs as well as periodic re-evaluations instead of relying on formal background checks. (Norman Black, Washington Times, A3)

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TRIP NEWS

REAGAN/TRIP

President Reagan, trying to bolster the odds of keeping the Senate in Republican hands, is traveling to Missouri to help former Gov. Christopher Bond prepare for a potentially tough race against the state's popular lieutenant governor. The President, heading West on Wednesday for a three-day vacation at his California ranch, planned a stop in St. Louis for a \$500-a plate fund-raiser to help Bond fill his campaign coffers for the November contest.

(Susanne Schafer, AP)

The fund-raiser was being held at the posh Union Station in St. Louis, once the nation's busiest rail terminals, which was rebuilt into a hotel and shopping center with tax credits Reagan now wants to eliminate.

Several groups have scheduled demonstrations during Reagan's visit, protesting Administration farm policies, budget cuts and the nuclear arms race. A spokesman for protesting farmers said he expected demonstrators from Missouri, Illinois, Iowa and Nebraska, carrying handmade white crosses to symbolize the demise of the family farm. A \$1-a-plate protest lunch held at Roman Catholic church on the city's south side was also scheduled to begin at the same time of Bond's fund-raiser.

(Ira Allen, UPI)

'HAIL TO CHIEF' AT STATION AGAIN

ST. LOUIS -- President Reagan will be the first incumbent president to be in St. Louis Union Station since President Truman when Reagan arrives Wednesday to raise money for former Gov. Christopher Bond and the Missouri Republican Party. Truman was in and out of Union Station regularly through 1952 as he went from his home in Independence, Missouri, to Washington.

(Fred Lindecke, St. Louis Post-Dispatch, 2/11)

SENATE COMMITTEE KILLS FARM LOAN PROGRAM

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. -- The Missouri Senate Budget Control Committee, acting only several hours before militant farmers began a rally at the Capitol, unexpectedly killed a bill today setting up a farm loan program.... Some senators said the bill would not help financially-stricken farmers because they already had pledged all available properties as securities for previous loans. They also said the loan program would do nothing to halt declining prices on farm commodities, one of the major reasons for farm failures. (UPI)

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FARMERS AND POOR TO PROTEST REAGAN VISIT

ST. LOUIS -- While President Reagan attends a \$500-a-plate luncheon at posh Union Station Wednesday, farmers and the poor plan to protest outside against administration policies they say have put them deeper in the hole. Members of the American Agriculture Movement, Christians United for Compassionate Government, Pax Christi and the St. Louis April Mobilization Coalition all planned demonstrations outside the newly renovated showplace that contains shops, restaurants and a luxury hotel.... "There's a disparity when the president can attend to \$500-a-plate dinner for Bond and on the other hand look the other way as farmers lose their farms," said Jim Zeeb of the American Agriculture Movement of Illinois. (UPI)

UNION STATION MADE POSSIBLE BY INVESTMENT CREDIT

ST. LOUIS -- The renovated Union Station to be visited by President Reagan would have remained a vacant hulk without the investment tax credit the Administration wants to end. "We do not feel that the project would have gone forward without the investment tax credit," said Donna Laidlaw, an Oppenheimer official in St. Louis. "The investment tax credit allows you to get out and raise private dollars. You can go out and sell pieces of the project to private investors." ... The Reagan Administration has proposed ending the investment tax credit as part of its tax reform package. Congress has yet to act on the proposal and, for now, the credit remains available. (UPI)

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NETWORK NEWS SUMMARY

(Tuesday Evening, February 11, 1986)

PHILIPPINES

CBS's Dan Rather: President Reagan late today announced he is sending veteran diplomat Phillip Habib to the Philippines. The President said he wants Habib "to help nurture the hopes and possibilities of democracy." Earlier, the President received a report from Sen. Lugar. Lugar said President Marcos clearly has the ability to "manage the results."

(Sen. Lugar: "We observed many disturbing aspects of this election. Fraud, abuse, violence. All these things. And we were disturbed by this as you would be.")

As the Philippine National Assembly failed again to count even a single vote from the election, Cory Aquino was mourning today's murder of one of her strongest backers.

CBS's Bob Faw reports on the murder of Evelio Javier, 43, father of two, a prominent Aquino organizer, who was gunned down in the town of San Jose by six masked men. Evelio Javier, warned repeatedly his life was in danger, knew weeks ago he was living on borrowed time. While the casualty count climbed to over 100, the official count of the vote in Parliament dragged on. "I'm going to win," Marcos said again. "I already have," Aquino said again, warning the U.S. not to be taken in by election results she considers fraudulent.

(Aquino: "Do not make the mistake in the name of short-sighted self-interest of coming to the support of a failing dictator.")

Marcos, conciliatory and confident, invited Aquino to join in talks about his new government. "Get off your political high horse," he suggested.

(Marcos: "Let's forget about all this childish display of petulance.")

"We have great patience," said one Marcos opponent, "but ultimately, we can do nothing against brute force." (CBS-8)

NBC's Tom Brokaw: Senator Richard Lugar, who headed the American delegation to the Philippines election, reported to President Reagan today and then later told reporters that the Manila government of Ferdinand Marcos had manipulated the vote. President Reagan publicly withheld his judgement. But he did say that special ambassador Phillip Habib will go to Manila and will report back on meetings with both sides in this disputed contest. (NBC-5)

ABC's Peter Jennings: This may come as no surprise now -- four days after the Philippine election, there is still no official winner. The government commission counting the votes says President Marcos is ahead with 52%. The National Movement for a Free Election, which supports the opposition, says Corazon Aquino is ahead by the same percentage. In Washington, the members of an observer team which the President sent to monitor the election have now reported back to him. The Administration appears to have made up its mind before it heard the report.

ABC's Sam Donaldson: The observer team leaders were upset by the news that the Administration has already decided on its policy even before hearing their report. The morning papers reflected the White House inclination to swallow hard over a Marcos election-steal, but to swallow it. In the briefing room, Sen. Lugar and Rep. Murtha tried to explain why things have been rushed.

(Sen. Lugar: "We're under the gun and they're trying to respond to each one of you, but I thought it was prudent for them to say that since they sent us out there, they'd wait until we reported." Rep. Murtha: "I think it was premature.")

Actually, it wasn't that people were under the gun. The policy was clear two weeks before the election took place, when the White House chief of staff was asked on "This Week with David Brinkley" what the response would be if Marcos stole the election through fraud.

(Donald Regan: "We'd condemn the fraud. If it's a duly elected government and so certified, you'd have to do business with it.")

Donaldson: "Even if it's elected by fraud?" Regan: "Well, there are a lot of governments that are elected by fraud. How about Angola?") And, in fact, today the White House issued a statement saying it is a disturbing fact that the election has been flawed by reports of fraud which we take seriously. But which also said, at times we need to remind ourselves that this is a Philippine election, not an American election.

(TV Coverage: Still photo of President, with graphics.) Critics said it is the President who needs the reminder.

(Sen. John Kerry: "That we are not going to somehow pull the rug out from underneath people who have put their lives on the line because they believe in us.")

Late today came an indication the President is feeling the heat. He called Ambassador Philip Habib out of retirement to go to the Philippines to assess how the U.S. can help nurture the possibilities of democracy. (ABC-7)

ABC's Mark Litke reports from Manila that Corazon Aquino issued a blunt message today, clearly directed at the government of the United States.

(Aquino: "Do not make the mistake in the name of short-sighted self-interest of coming to the support of a failing dictator.")

But many here already believe that because Washington has not officially denounced this election as a fraud, the U.S. will continue to support the Marcos regime. And that brought anti-American demonstrators to the gates of the U.S. Embassy, while militant students were denouncing U.S. policies in another part of town. Meanwhile, President Marcos called reporters from the three American television networks to his office, apparently to send his own message to Washington.

(Marcos: "To do this, we must retain the friendly relations with the United States.")

And to show that he was conciliatory, he offered Aquino a position in a council of advisers in his new government. Apparently, Marcos has no doubt that he's won this election, even though the official vote count process by the National Assembly started only late tonight.

(ABC-8)

SHUTTLE COMMISSION

Rather: NASA witnesses wrangled in public today over whether the space shuttle's reusable solid rocket boosters had a built-in safety problem. Privately, CBS News has been told of just-raised new safety questions about the shuttle's newest rocket boosters to come off the assembly line and possible safety problems at the shuttle's brand new launch pad in California. Also, CBS has been told NASA may be investigating now the possibility there were booster rocket close calls in midair on previous shuttle missions.

CBS's Bob Schieffer reports on today's meeting of the president's panel. William Rogers seemed bent on playing down leaked NASA documents suggesting that NASA officials had been warned by their own analysts last year that there might be a safety problem with the Challenger's rocket boosters.

(Rogers: "Because it's not unusual in an agency like yours to have employees make critical comments, suggest dangers that might be involved in the program. That's the way the system works, isn't it?")

Today the head of the shuttle program said he had not seen a leaked memo warning of potential trouble with the rubber rings that seal together the booster rockets until this week and is still not convinced that is the problem. Over and over at today's hearing, questions were raised as to whether the analyst who wrote the memo was qualified to make such engineering judgements and NASA officials argued that Challenger was safe to fly. (CBS-Lead)

NBC's Robert Hager: The commission released four internal NASA memos, in which mid-level space agency officials had warned of the potential for problems with the O-ring seals. One memo last spring, from program engineer Irv Davids, warned there have been twelve instances during flight of O-ring erosion. But NASA's Lawrence Malloy, in charge of the solid fuel rockets, said the recent history of O-rings had been that they were safe. The junior budget analyst, Richard Cook, took issue. NASA officials discounted the possible effect of cold weather on the resiliency of the rubber O-ring on launch day, but commission member Richard Feynman, after examining the O-ring, had a surprise.

(Feynman: "... For a few seconds at least, and more than that, there's no resilience in this particular material when it's at a temperature of 32 degrees. I believe that has some significance for our problem.")

Meanwhile, Rep. Edward Markey (D-Pa.) released a 983 report done for the Air Force predicting odds of one in thirty-five of a booster failure. NASA disagreed with the analysis, and the odds.

(ABC-6, NBC-2)

SHCHARANSKY

Rather: ...Today the prominent Jewish dissident walked to a new life across a bridge between free West Berlin and the communist East. "Look, no wall," he told a U.S. official. Thirty minutes later -- a separation demanded by the U.S. -- there was an exchange of alleged spies: three jailed in the East for five jailed in the West.

CBS's Don McNeil reports from Israel that it was a tumultuous moment in Israel. Thousands crowded into and around Ben Gurion Airport to welcome the man who has become the symbol for oppressed Soviet Jews, for human rights, for defiance of Soviet tyranny. His first public words in English were to President Reagan by telephone:

(Shcharansky: "First of all, I know how great was your role in this greatest event of my and my wife's life. We both are very deeply grateful to you, Mr. President. Second, of course, as you know very well, I was never an American spy -- ")

Behind this emotional scene, there sits the darker side of international politics. Like it or not, Shcharansky is a pawn in the great game between superpowers. American Jewish leaders, instrumental in his release, think they know the Russian reason for it.

(American Jewish leader Edgar Bonfman: "I think that they feel the American Jewish community in particular and the Jewish world has a great deal of influence. And I think they would like to get that influence neutralized...and I think that's what the big chips are in this game.")

CBS's Wyatt Andrews reports from Moscow on the relief with which Shcharansky's mother and brother reacted to the news. They have also applied to leave the Soviet Union, but Soviet authorities have so far said nothing. Despite that, both she and family members said that President Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev deserve credit for Shcharansky's freedom. The goodwill from Geneva, they said, made this day possible.

(Shcharansky's brother, Leonid: "Thank you to everybody who helped to do that, and especially to President Reagan and Gorbachev.")

The thanks and gratitude from the Shcharansky family will only add to the Soviets' public relations victory. For the last nine years of Shcharansky's time in jail and in prison, the Soviets have persistently claimed that he was no dissident, but rather a spy for the CIA. That Shcharansky has now been exchanged for convicted spies will legitimize from the Soviets' point of view what they have been saying about Shcharansky all along. (CBS-3)

NBC's Tom Brokaw: For eight years, in this country and around the world, Anatoly Shcharansky has been a symbol of Soviet human rights oppression, an unseen man whose case was argued by his wife wherever she could be heard. Today, they let him go free, in exchange for Soviet spies.

NBC's Henry Champ reports from West Germany that Shcharansky showed little effect of the eight years spent in Soviet prisons. He was escorted by a West German official, and American ambassador Richard Burt. There was high emotion in the Soviet Union.

(Leonid Shcharansky: "To a lot of friends, and especially to Presidents Reagan and Gorbachev: Thanks, many thanks.")

American officials took great pains to isolate Shcharansky from the eight others who are being exchanged this morning, not wanting the man they see as being a dissident labeled as a spy. The other eight were exchanged after Shcharansky was freed. All had been convicted or accused of espionage. Five people were returned to the Communist Bloc, including two naturalized American citizens, accused of spying in the U.S. for the Czech government.

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NBC's Martin Fletcher reports from Tel Aviv, Israel that Shcharansky's first telephone call was to President Ronald Reagan, to thank him for helping him secure his freedom.

(Shcharansky: "Of course, as you know very well, I was never an American spy, but -- ")

Shcharansky's welcome to Israel was more than a personal tribute; the Israelis turned his arrival into a media spectacular, calling on the Soviet Union to free the thousands of other Jews who have applied to emigrate. (NBC-Lead)

NBC's John Chancellor -- Commentary: When Anatoly Shcharansky came across that bridge in Berlin this morning, it was a moment for free people to rejoice, and to think again about Russians trying to be free who are still held in the Soviet Union. And there's more to it than that. Shcharansky's release came in the aftermath of the Geneva Summit. And it looks as though it is part of a new phase in Soviet-American relations. President Reagan told the Washington Post yesterday that he is optimistic that an agreement on missiles in Europe can be reached this year. It seems clear that there may now be some hope for progress on nuclear weapons; that relations are better, and that Gorbachev is acting with assurance and with some sophistication. It looks as though we can say, of the 12 weeks that have followed the summit: So far, so good. (NBC-6)

ABC's Pierre Salinger reports the freedom of Shcharansky is a big victory for the West, but when he crossed the bridge, he left behind hundreds of other imprisoned dissidents who would also like to make the trip.

ABC's Bob Zelnick reports from Israel on a call of thanks to President Reagan for helping to persuade Secretary Gorbachev to set this prisoner of Zion free.

(Shcharansky on phone to the President: "First of all, I know how great was your role in this greatest event of my and my wife's life.") The President said he was delighted at Shcharansky's release. He praised his fortitude and offered the Hebrew salutation for "Good Luck." ... But Shcharansky knows he was set free because he had become an embarrassing symbol to the Soviets at a time when they want better relations with the West. (ABC-Lead)

U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONS

Jennings: On East-West relations, President Reagan has made it clear that he would like to get an arms control agreement with the Soviet Union this year. And in an interview published in today's Washington Post, the President said he thinks the superpowers could reach agreement on limiting intermediate-range nuclear weapons in Europe. We may hear more when President Reagan holds a news conference in the East Room of the White House tonight. (ABC-3)

HAITI

Rather reports there was an offer of permanent asylum today to Jean Claude Duvalier from Liberia. (ABC-9, CBS-9)

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION/HIRING GOALS

Rather: It's no secret that President Reagan long has opposed affirmative action goals as a means of trying to end job discrimination. Today what is called the President's Equal Employment Opportunity Commission confirmed a Washington Post story that it no longer uses hiring goals or timetables to try to settle race and sex discrimination cases. Without a formal vote, without a public announcement, the EEOC says it just stopped using them about a year ago. (CBS-7)

ARROW AIR

Rather reports after being steadfastly defended by the Defense Department and the Army, Miami-based Arrow Air suspended all scheduled passenger service, including military passenger service. It put 80% of its 500 employees on immediate furlough and filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy. Arrow Air said it would continue other charter and cargo flights. (NBC-3, ABC-11, CBS-2)

POLAND/WALESA

Rather: The Polish government sidetracked a potentially explosive political trial by dropping slander charges against Lech Walesa. Walesa called the decision a major step toward compromise. Walesa was accused of slandering election officials by mocking their voter turnout figures for last October's parliamentary elections. (ABC-2, CBS-4)

IRAN-IRAQ

Rather: Iran claims its troops have just captured a bombed-out Iraqi oil terminal at the very edge of the Persian Gulf. Iraq denies the claim, but if Iran is right, this would place Iranian troops within only 25 miles of Kuwait. The State Department said it's concerned the war could spread to Kuwait and beyond. (CBS-10)

LIBYA

Rather: Near the disputed Gulf of Sidra, U.S. warplanes are resuming their exercises. (CBS-11)

BRAZILIAN DEBT

Brokaw: NBC's Garrick Utley reports that Latin America's largest democracy is struggling with Latin America's largest debt -- about \$100 billion. It is a crisis that is being felt not only in Brazil, but also in homes and communities in this country as well.

Utley: Many imports are coming from Brazil. That's where the debt hits home. Companies buy here because workers in Brazil are paid so little. In Brazil, as in North Carolina, you find resentment. Brazilians don't like the high interest rates and the tough economic conditions demanded by its creditors, just as Americans don't like losing jobs to a foreign country. The two countries have become hostages of each other. (NBC-7)

EDITORIALS/COLUMNISTS

PHILIPPINE ELECTION

What Mr. Marcos can't steal -- "No matter how the vote tally turns out in the Philippines, President Ferdinand Marcos lost, and lost big. And the best thing the United States could do now is to participate in his departure from power.... The United States managed recently to fly one island tyrant out of a situation he could no longer control and in the process to win the affection of the people for delivering them of the burden. It is time in the Philippines for the U.S. to move swiftly and boldly to force Mr. Marcos to yield control." (Chicago Tribune, 2/11)

America's Role in Manila -- "We should not overestimate U.S. influence; Washington cannot certify election winners in the Philippines, even if it were absolutely sure who got the most votes. But neither should we underestimate U.S. influence, which has slowly been recovering in the world these past five or six years.... The American stance and American attitudes may not be decisive, but they do matter. What should Americans be saying? ... Amid evidence of fraud and confusing counterclaims, it no doubt will sound naive to hope for the emergence of a two-party democracy in the Philippines. But this is what we want. We should use what influence we have with some patience and tact, but with our goal clear in our minds." (Wall Street Journal, 2/11)

Betrayals -- "What may be motivating this turn is anxiety about the American strategic position in the Philippines, especially on the part of those within the administration who believe that Mr. Marcos, for all his crimes, would still be a safer (perhaps transitional) steward than Mrs. Aquino. It would follow from this thinking that Washington, having made a bold and even interventionist effort to ensure a good election, should do what is necessary now to settle things down.... To its credit the administration had been conducting a wise and forceful policy. To serve major American strategic interests, it was helping the Philippines move toward democracy and engagement with urgent national tasks. To lose heart now is wrong and tempts a policy disaster of Iran-like proportions." (Washington Post, 2/11)

Manila election fraud discredits Marcos rule -- "None of your business, Mr. Marcos has told Washington, adding tacit threats to the future of the two key U.S. bases at Clark Field and Subic Bay. But nothing threatens those bases more than the anarchy that could result if President Marcos steals the election. It's past the time when clinging to an illegitimate Marcos regime offered any assurance of U.S. access to Philippine bases. That's the message that President Reagan must make clear to President Marcos, while there is still a slim chance this election can produce results that have an ounce of credibility." (Philadelphia Inquirer, 2/11)

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(Editorials/Columnists continued)

FEDERAL BUDGET

The budget won't sell without major surgery -- "By and large, the President has done little more than offer essentially the formula for deficit reduction that Congress already has rejected. He wants more cuts in domestic programs, significant increases in defense spending and no tax increase.... The chorus of bipartisan criticism of the presidential budget that already is being heard on Capitol Hill and around the nation gives reason to hope that Congress and the administration will get down to business and put together a fair and reasonable budget compromise before it is too late." (Fort Worth Star-Telegram, 2/8)

Specifics? Line-item veto is place to start on budget -- "Despite the lamentable congressional budgetary gridlock of recent years, the nation has gone ahead to create a record number of new jobs, bring down inflation, push family income to an all-time high and blunt what had been a relentless increase in taxes at all levels. Maybe Congress was having budget headaches in 1985, but Americans were enjoying the third year of an after-tax increase in income netting each household \$2,500.... But the best road to solutions lies in the protection of economic gains of recent years. An expanding, vigorous economy -- not government handouts -- is the best hope for those who for one reason or another have not shared in the nation's current modest prosperity." (Dayton Journal Herald, 2/6)

What Ton of Fat? -- "We were disappointed to hear President Reagan, a former Los Angeles resident who says he wants to come home when he leaves the White House, lambaste the city's proposed Metro Rail subway project in his weekly radio address last weekend.... When he visits now, military helicopters whisk him from place to place, except when motorcycle officers are sweeping clean places for him on the roads. One day he will ride on freeways and surface streets like the rest of us. Los Angeles lives with the traffic every day, which explains why it carries on the uphill fight for funds. Maybe someday he'll thank the city for not giving up, but we'd pass up the gratitude if he would just find something else to call a ton of fat in the meantime." (Los Angeles Times, 2/11)

HAITI

Haiti's Fresh Start -- "For nearly two centuries the United States has been involved in Haitian affairs, to a greater or lesser degree. For too many years the U.S. strongly backed the Duvalier dynasty, despite its lamentable human rights record and the plundering of the country's economy by Jean-Claude and his father. Washington made the correct move last fall, however, when it began to distance itself from Duvalier and, more recently, became involved in easing him out of Haiti."

(Christian Science Monitor, 2/11)

NEWS CONFERENCE

NETWORK REACTION TO PRESIDENT'S NEW CONFERENCE, FEBRUARY 11:

ABC's Peter Jennings: Helen Thomas, of United Press International, as is tradition, bringing the news conference to a close. A news conference which ended on the Philippines and began on the Philippines when it came to questions. A large White House press corps there tonight. A little difficult to get a handle on any particular shape of the news conference because there were questions on such a wide variety of issues, including some questions related to the President's opening remarks, in which he very much tried to put Congress on the defensive. As some of you, particularly in the East and Midwest know, the Democrats have been out around the country this week trying to put the President on the defensive when it comes to the budget proposals he has put forward and the effect on the budget cutting process of the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings budget cutting bill.

So questions on Social Security, whether or not it would be opened up -- and Social Security and Medicare payments -- to enable people to pay for nursing homes around the country. The President has, as he said sometime ago, asked for a study. He also said he would help people who can not afford it.

Most questions in international policy -- on the questions of the Philippines -- where the President's own observer team has been saying both in Manila, the Philippine capital, and here that there has been widespread fraud. But the President, saying tonight at least, that he is not going to commit himself until all the votes are counted. They are presently being counted under the observation of the Philippine parliament, which is pretty much a rubber stamp body for President Marcos. And the President has said earlier that the United States is going to have to work with President Marcos. And other White House people have been suggesting to the opposition that they get on the team. So the United States' image in the Philippines, at this moment, is taking something of a beating -- at least that it has been in the last couple of days.

Other than that, you heard the President as well as we have. Thank you for joining us. That is the President's first news conference in about a month -- more rapidly than usual.

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NETWORK REACTION (continued)

CBS's Dan Rather: Live from the White House, a presidential news conference. President Reagan getting away, fading away on the question of how did he like his son's performance. His son performed very recently.

Recapping briefly in case you came in late or were distracted: President Reagan passed up a chance to call the Soviet release of noted and nine-years-jailed Jewish dissident Anatoly Shcharansky a propaganda move. The President instead called it a hopeful sign for the future and suggested it came out of his Geneva summit talks with Soviet leader Gorbachev.

There will be more details about this news conference on your late local news and on the CBS Evening News tomorrow.

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NBC's Tom Brokaw: President Reagan tonight talked about several subjects, but he opened with a plea for Congress to cut the budget so they can meet the requirements of the Gramm-Rudman law, and he made it very clear once again that as far as he's concerned, there will be no tax increase. He said for those who say that his budget is "D.O.A." on Capitol Hill, that is "Dead On Arrival," he will only say that any tax increase proposal that reaches the White House will be "V.O.A." -- that is, vetoed on arrival.

The President said he believes that the federal government can get more fat out of the administrative cost of the federal budget. The President went on to say, about the Philippines, that he would withhold judgment until the final vote is in, but that he expects that the United States will continue what he described as its historic relationship with that country. He did suggest that there may have been violence or fraud or cheating on both sides. So far as I know, there has been no evidence of that. Today the President did hear from his own delegation, headed by Richard Lugar, that there had been an attempt to manipulate the vote on the part of President Ferdinand Marcos.

The President was also asked about Affirmative Action -- he said he wished that we could have a color-blind society. He worries that Affirmative Action will only lead to quotas and numbers. That's the President's news conference tonight from Washington.

-end-of-News-Summary-