

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Thursday, October 26, 1967

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The Mexicans came to Washington -- President and Mrs. Diaz Ordaz. It was one of the star State visits of our time here.

I was up early and working with Lynda and Bess on our guest list. I am so looking forward to Lynda Bird's parties -- enjoying all of the fun that other people have worked to produce. I dictated and signed mail.

And then at 12:00, in my bright red Marquise coat and dress, I went to Lyndon's office for the arrival ceremony.

It was a brilliant Indian summer day, and the grounds were reasonably full of people. I had gotten the word to all my house guests.

The big black limousine rolled up for the 37th time this year I believe, and Gustavo Diaz Ordaz emerged with Mrs. Diaz Ordaz. She was beautifully dressed in a pastel suit trimmed in fur and a fur-trimmed hat. And Gustavo Diaz Ordaz I never see without remembering that charming humorous story he told on himself at dinner in Mexico. He said that during his campaign his opponent was accusing him of being two-faced. "Now I ask you", he answered, "If I had two faces, would I wear this one?"

It was a thoroughly disarming story. And certainly Gustavo Diaz Ordaz is by no means handsome.

Several things set this State visit apart from others. One, a

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very real warmth between our country -- between our family -- and Mexico -- the big embrazos in any receiving line, the frequent bursts of Spanish from guests, are a real mark. And then the first family brought all of their children. Their handsome bachelor son, Gustavo, Jr., their pretty daughter and her Lebanese husband, the Salim Nastas, -- they are Lynda's favorites. And young Alfredo who is just 16.

And our Lynda and Chuck -- he a guest for the first time at a State dinner -- were very much a part of the day.

It was a family affair.

After the welcoming speeches and the brief greetings in the Diplomatic Reception Room, we drove with them to Blair House -- a very abbreviated parade, with the flags snapping briskly, large pictures of the two Presidents on lamp posts, a moderate-size crowd of the curious waving and clapping. It simply isn't possible for this town, so satiated with Chiefs of State, somewhat cynical, to turn out in mass for a parade. I remembered our triumphant progress through the hundreds of thousands in Mexico City. We can't match them. So it is wiser not to try. I said to Bess and Liz, "It would take Queen Elizabeth newly married to the Pope to bring out a really big crowd on the streets of Washington."

It was only ten minutes to Blair House, and there President Diaz Ordaz received the key. It is the last time Walter Tobriner will

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officiate at this ceremony I believe. And we said our goodbyes, and I was back at the White House a little past 1:00 and went up into the Solarium to have lunch with Lynda and Chuck and Tony and Matianna. It was my only real visit with Tony and Matianna, and we talked about family and I told them who the other house guests were. In fact the old house is bursting at its seams. Tonight, the Perry Basses and the Don Thomas, Larry Temple will share the third floor with the Tony Taylors. And the Billy Baileys who have been here for several nights.

Sometime during the afternoon we got word that Lyndon had invited "Cantinflas" to be our house guest -- just saying "You've got to make room". So we moved the Warren Woodwards (who are so close we could) down to Luci's room and put "Cantinflas" in the new bedroom.

Alice Brown had the Queens' Room and George the Lincoln Room. And house guests kept on drifting in during the day. I made as many calls as I could during the afternoon to welcome them. And Marilyn has her regular job of telling everybody about how to order breakfast and to get cars, to take a quiet tour of the house if they like, sending them a guest list well ahead of time, or hot tea or some refreshment during the afternoon. Marilyn approaches this duty with a fresh delight that I like. Thirty years younger, it's just the sort of job I too would want.

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I had a brief rest and worked on the list some more. And then a little past 3:00 I had invited the Jacob Hersheys, my friends of the Mississippi River boat to tea, and the Fleetwood Richards who had conducted that one-day tour through the old 10th District to see grassroots urban renewal and Texas restorations. And Dr. and Mrs. E. T. Ximenes of San Antonio. He's a new Regent on the Board of the University -- a schoolmate of John's from Floresville.

The Lincoln Sitting Room which used to be the press room up until Theodore Roosevelt's time is getting to be my favorite place for these small teas -- cozy and intimate. Its warm colors and Victorian furniture have been a happy setting for some good talks.

When there is a State Dinner, I try to get the people whom I really want most to share some time with either as house guests or to come for tea in the afternoon or coffee the next morning. I want the visit to mean something to them and to me.

Fleetwood told me that the Lockhart renovation was going right along.

At 4:00 I called a guide to complete their upstairs tour and went out to Jean Louis for a shampoo and set. It took so long that it was 7:00 and I in a nervous rush by the time I returned to the White House, inspected the gifts and read the information about them, went over the guest list for one last time, and slipped into my long sleeved white

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Mollie Parnis dress, knowing at once that it would be one of the most eminently satisfactory I had ever had.

And a little bit past 8:00 we were on the North Portico greeting the President and Mrs. Diaz Ordaz who this time wore a beautiful pink chiffon, glittering with beads. I found myself watching for each new outfit she wore -- all of them extremely feminine and pretty. She said they were all made in Mexico. I would not call them high style, but very womanly. If they were not "Women Wear Daily's" cup of tea, they would certainly be "husbands".

We went upstairs with the family -- the Nastas and Gustavo and Alfredo, all smiles. Hubert and Muriel were there and Virginia and Dean -- Virginia looking very pretty. And there was a very big embrazo when Tony Carrillo Flores came in with Fanny -- one of the most popular Ambassadors ever to be in this town I think. The Margains in their very different way. I like a great deal also -- he is quiet and intellectual, does not have Tony's ebullience that embraces the world. But he is very high caliber.

Our Ambassador to Mexico and Mrs. Freeman were telling me about the ruins at Chichen Itza where some very special excavations are going on between now and December 15th. Couldn't I come? How I would love to. I think I startled them by saying perhaps I could after

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the 10th, for I intend to disappear when the wedding is over.

And Lynda and Chuck came in. It was a glow to be introducing them around.

With Mrs. Diaz Ordaz our conversation is mostly family. And there was plenty to talk about -- the weddings and grandchildren. Our gifts included an IBM dictaphone with instructions in Spanish which I managed to turn on for President Diaz Ordaz. And a scrapbook with pictures of the playground equipment we use in our parks and school grounds that Mrs. Diaz Ordaz had sent us last March. And some needlepoint pillows of our Southwestern wild flowers -- so many of them native also to their country. And especial accent on the gifts for the children -- camera, radios, stereo and a big "Smokey the Bear" teddy bear for their grandchild.

They had brought us a picture of a little boy playing with a toy. The artist I didn't know. It had charm and pathos and a quality somewhere between primitive and modern.

And then we were on our way downstairs for the receiving line. This is the first big dinner using both rooms -- 190 guests -- we have had in a long time. And one of the most sought-after guest lists.

The Cabinet was well represented. Besides the Rusks, there were the Gardners and the Weavers. And from the Senate, George

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Smathers without Rosemary. He's a great traveler in Latin America. And Mike Mansfield. Maureen had gotten sick in the afternoon, and that was when I had called Diana to take her place. And the Joe Montoyas from New Mexico.

And the House was especially well represented with Gonzalez and Roybal and Eligio de la Garza and others whose Districts had many ~~Lat~~ Latinos like the Dick Whites ~~and~~ and the Chick Kazens and the John Youngs.

The new Solicitor General, Erwin Griswold, was there for the first time with his wife in a wheelchair.

And it was interesting to see Price Daniel of Texas walking right next to Allan Shivers. I am sure many feuds are temporarily put aside for the evening.

There were old friends -- Tom and Nancy Mann -- big embrazos all around. And Raymond Telles who had welcomed us to El Paso as its Mayor in the '60 campaign. And Tom Corcoran. At the last minute when someone had dropped out, we had asked him to bring Margaret Josephine. And Jim Farley whose interests with Coca-Cola give him a tie with the whole wide world.

And from the staff, the Doug Caters and Walt Rostows. And Betty Furness with her new husband. And I was so glad that we were able to add the Burl Stugards at the last minute. My correspondence office

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is somehow never quite as close to me as Liz's, Besses and Ashton's. And that is a lack in administration on my part.

The arts and entertainment were very well represented with towering Rene d'Harnoncourt of the Museum of Modern Art, and Polly Bergen with her husband. Jose Limon and Mrs. Vicente Minnelli -- whose beautiful jewels attracted the press to no end. The Ricardo Montalban. And actress Ella Raines with her husband Colonel Robin Olds, colorful war hero, minus his western desperado mustache. Writer, Katherine Anne Porter. And star of yesterday, a glamorous hostess of today, Merle Oberon with her husband Bruno Pagliai. Lynda spent much of the evening with them.

Mrs. Merriweather Post's lovely daughter Dina Merrill looking very happy with her new husband, Cliff Robertson.

But the star of the evening was "Cantinflas". And I loved what Lyndon said about him in his toast -- that his popularity was such that if he were to run for public office in either country, he might retire both of us to private life. It is our good fortune that "Cantinflas" prefers to make fun of Presidents rather than run against them. Oddly, I never saw him in the receiving line. Later in the Green Room he came up to us, embraced Lyndon, and we had a happy little talk and I never saw him again -- our phantom house guest in 324.

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There were old friends -- C. R. Smith and Marlin Sanlin. And of course the closest of all, those who are our house guests.

When we had greeted the 190 guests I took the President of Mexico into the Blue Room where Ava Gardner who speaks Spanish sat on his right. And next one of the most attractive stage figures ever to entertain us here in the White House -- Jose Limon -- who danced the Moors Pivon for the King of Morocco. He is at least my age, and that must be something of a phenomenon to dance with the power and skill and beauty that he does in the middle 50's. Next was Katherine Anne Porter who looked really very frail -- white hair, very white skin, very pastel evening gown -- quite unlike you would expect as the author of "Ship of Fools" which was to me an often cruel, cynical, hopeless sort of book. She seemed to be very interested in everything, but a very limited vitality. And right after dinner she came up to me, apologized and left. Next to her was C. R. Smith for whom I have the greatest fondness. And between him and Mrs. Sheldon sat Honey Berlin who looks no older than when I first met her. It must have been more than 20 years ago -- one of the most warm, feminine, glowing people I know.

Tony Carrillo Flores sat on my left which made my evening. I believe some day he will be President of Mexico. And then Mrs. Montoya--

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not that we need a Spanish-speaking person next to him. He can communicate in English quite as well as in Spanish. And he's the sort of person who doesn't really need a language to communicate.

It was a good table, a lively evening -- a brilliant guest list,, glamorous women, and later loud and lively and successful entertainment.

Lyndon's toast was humorous and full of warmth. And he spoke of something that is one of the real pluses of this decade to me -- of the development in Mexico in Chapinga partly financed by the Rockefeller Foundation of a remarkable new strain of wheat which can produce more than twice the crop from the same amount of land and which best of all the Mexicans are exporting to underdeveloped countries -- Pakistan and India -- and now being tested for Turkey and Iran and Afghanistan. They've concluded some of the largest international sales of seed wheat ever in any country. And so plagued as this era is with wars and frustrations we do make some steps forward.

Alas, President Diaz Ordaz' speech was much too long -- 25 minutes.

The "Strolling Strings" added their own special lift and spirit to the evening. They played among other things, ^{Celeste Linde} "Silly Talinga" and the "Mexican Hat Dance".

We had coffee and liqueurs in the Red Room, and I introduced as many of the after-dinner guests -- especially the press ladies -- to the President or Mrs. Diaz Ordaz as I could. I always try especially to

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introduce the members of our own staff when we were within hailing distance of them.

And then we went in to hear Herb Alpert and the Tiajuana Brass. With his big smile I could tell it was an especial favorite with our fellow. I think it's one of the most popular entertainments we have ever had. And there was much foot-tapping and that electric ripple of response to the audience. Lynda had introduced them with a delightful girlish little speech.

To me one of the most interesting moments of the evening was when President Diaz Ordaz spoke of his predecessor, Lopez Mateos, who now lies in a comma hopelessly ill. He has never mentioned him before in our presence on any of our other visits. There is something between them -- I do not know what it is. But now at death's door, it no longer matters.

He has been talking of the writer Beatraven whose identity is a mystery. And yes, he, Diaz Ordaz, did know the story -- that this mysterious writer might indeed have been Lopez Mateos himself or perhaps his sister, who actually was listed as his agent. She died, and with it the works of Beatraven ceased to reach the market.

One of the high moments of the evening to me was when Herb Alpert broke into the wild, tumultuous "Zorba the Greek."

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When the entertainment was over the President and Mrs. Diaz Ordaz made their way rather quickly to their limousine. We accompanied them to the door.

And then back inside I spent a few minutes seeking out friends and chatting with them. And by 12:30 was upstairs myself, having sent word to all our house guests -- the Perry Basses and the Billy Baileys and the Don Thomas and the Tony Taylors and George and Alice and Woody and Mary Ellen -- to meet us on the second floor for a night-cap. And here alas is where I get D- as a hostess -- I forgot "Cantinflas". I really think he would be grateful for my forgetting, so maybe it was partly Freudian. But at any rate I shouldn't have done it.

We talked of the dinner of Texas, of things serious and light. I remember at one point Lyndon was explaining something about the bombing in North Viet-Nam, and he said, "We keep 600,000 men busily repairing what our 400 bombers have taken out. That is a good trade."

He has a talent for putting complicated things into a simple sentence. I only wish he reached the 200 million of them with those simple vivid pictures. We do so many things well in this Administration, but as propagandists I can't give us the highest rating.

We said goodnight to our house guests at a quarter of two. It was a quarter of three before Lyndon laid down the last of his night reading and turned off the light.