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DIRECTORATE OF
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Vietnam.

South Vietnam An increase in ground activity followed the weekend's scattered terrorism.

Four terrorist attacks, presumably marking the anniversary of the Geneva Accords, were conducted against civilian targets on 21 July. These resulted in 12 South Vietnamese killed and 93 injured. The most costly incident occurred in Saigon when an explosive charge detonated near a crowded theater, but grenade and bombing incidents were also reported in the provincial capitals of Phu Cuong and Ben Tre.

As a result of an engagement which began two days ago, South Vietnamese troops reportedly have surrounded an enemy battalion along the coast north of Phan Thiet. Another enemy force estimated of battalion size lost 12 men in a probe on a US Marine night defensive position near Khe Sanh. The probe was repulsed after two hours. Early on 23 July several installations near Da Nang were hit with mortar and rocket fire, killing six Americans. There were also small-scale mortar attacks in II and III corps.

North Vietnam. Hanoi has played down the significance of the Honolulu conference, taking the line that any major decisions must come directly out of Washington. The Communists may thus hope to keep the door open for US concessions in answer to their own reduced military activity and hints of a more flexible position on the role of the Liberation Front.

Hanoi's party newspaper Nhan Dan treated the conference as a "tedious" ritual required by President Johnson to "force his new decisions" on President Thieu. It scored US stubbornness and concluded that US officials had decided, in answer to the "new situation" in South Vietnam, to "follow the beaten track--to step up their war." [redacted] (Map)]

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[USSR-Czechoslovakia: The Soviet decision to talk with Dubcek and the party leadership on Czech soil is a concession, but so far Prague has made no official response.

The TASS announcement yesterday set no date, saying only that the Soviet politburo expected to meet with the Czechoslovak presidium in Czechoslovakia. The Soviets, who have thus given up their earlier insistence that the Czechoslovaks come to them, still insist on a full-scale confrontation. Moscow probably hopes that a show of determination and solidarity on the part of its 11-man politburo may cause some of the Czechoslovaks to waver. The Czechoslovak presidium's 11 members comprise a fair representation of liberals, moderates, and conservatives.

Czechoslovak officials have consistently indicated that Prague would talk with the Soviets, but Prague radio has added that all Soviet troops must be gone first. It is possible that the Czechoslovaks will delay responding to the Soviets' latest proposal until they are satisfied on this score.

The Soviet proposal arrived in Prague even as the Czechoslovak leadership was discussing its terms for a series of bilateral meetings with the Soviets and other Eastern European parties, apparently as precursors to a Soviet - Eastern European summit meeting. Prague's presence at such a top-level gathering was demanded by the leaders of the USSR, East Germany, Poland, Hungary, and Bulgaria in a joint letter sent to Prague on 15 July.

At that time, the Czechoslovaks in effect rejected a summit gathering, saying that they agreed to one in principle, but only after thorough preparation. It is possible that the Czechoslovak leadership is attempting to buy time with such preparation, hoping to convene first its own party congress **]**

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On 9 September. This congress will be dominated by liberals and moderates and can be expected to jettison conservatives and to elect a more homogeneous reform-minded leadership. Such a leadership probably would feel stronger in subsequent dealings with the Soviets and other hostile Eastern European parties.

Despite an apparent willingness to meet the Czechoslovaks half way on talks, Moscow continues to build a case for intervention. A Pravda editorial yesterday lodged familiar charges against Prague. Unlike such editorials in the past, this one failed to express confidence in the ability of "healthy elements" in Czechoslovakia to stem the tide of counterrevolution.

According to sketchy news reports, the Soviets also delivered a protest to the Dubcek regime yesterday over allegedly growing Western influence--especially West German--in Czechoslovakia. Quoting "informed Czechoslovak sources," Reuters reports the Soviets have again demanded that Prague allow the stationing of Soviet troops on the Czechoslovak - West German border.

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Thailand: Deputy Prime Minister Praphat appears to be playing an increasingly active role in preparation for next year's legislative elections.

Praphat apparently is managing an effort by the ruling military regime to emasculate the Democratic Party, the only opposition group currently active with significant support in the country. He is promoting an independent slate of candidates for the Bangkok municipal elections in September to draw conservative but antigovernment votes from the Democrats and clear the way for a government-sponsored ticket. The government hopes that a defeat in Bangkok, where Democratic support is strongest, will virtually destroy the party's electoral chances in next year's countrywide legislative elections.

Praphat's machinations may also be designed to further his own political ambitions. He not only expects to get the credit for defeating the Democrats in September, but he evidently is making plans to pick up the pieces. Praphat recently assumed control of a quasi-government political group. He has flatly told supporters that he intends to use the group as a vehicle for a countrywide political organization, which presumably will be responsive to his direction.

The extent to which Praphat's plans dovetail with the government's is not entirely clear. Although a number of preliminary steps have been taken to organize a party for next year's election, it is clear that the differences within the ruling establishment have not yet been ironed out. Praphat's actions may be in behalf of those hard-line elements in the government who fought against the constitution and are now apparently trying to ensure that their faction will dominate the new government.

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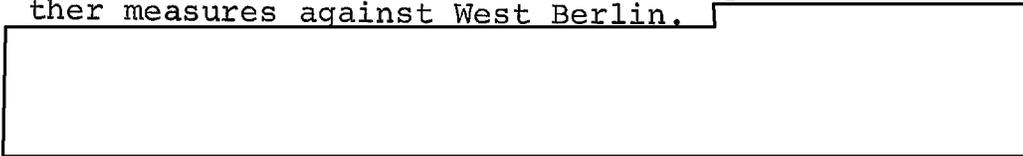
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West Germany: Officials in Bonn continue to fear that East Germany will put additional restrictions on access to Berlin.

A Foreign Ministry representative has expressed particular concern over barge traffic to the city. Bonn recently prevented an East German barge from crossing West Germany en route to the Netherlands on grounds that West German vessels are not permitted to transit East Germany to Czechoslovakia. West German officials fear that the East Germans may now interrupt barge traffic to Berlin in retaliation.

The Bonn official also noted that stories persist about possible East German measures to restrict inter-German mail and parcel post service. Also, according to an editor of Der Spiegel, Soviet Ambassador to East Germany Abrasimov left for Moscow on 17 July carrying a package of proposals for further measures against West Berlin.



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Some Christian Democratic leaders are having second thoughts about the wisdom of proceeding with some of the meetings scheduled to be held in Berlin, including the party convention this fall. Meanwhile, Bonn leaders are continuing their efforts to prevent Latvian refugees from holding what could be a provocative meeting in Berlin between 26 July and 1 August.



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NOTES

USSR-Nigeria: Moscow reaffirmed its support for the Lagos government in a communiqué on 21 July ending a five-day visit of Nigeria's foreign minister. Earlier this month, Lagos and Moscow signed a new arms agreement [redacted] covering [redacted] army field cars and trucks with spare parts, [redacted] [redacted] Moscow had already sold Lagos [redacted] equipment, including jet fighters and patrol boats, and provided training and technicians. [redacted]

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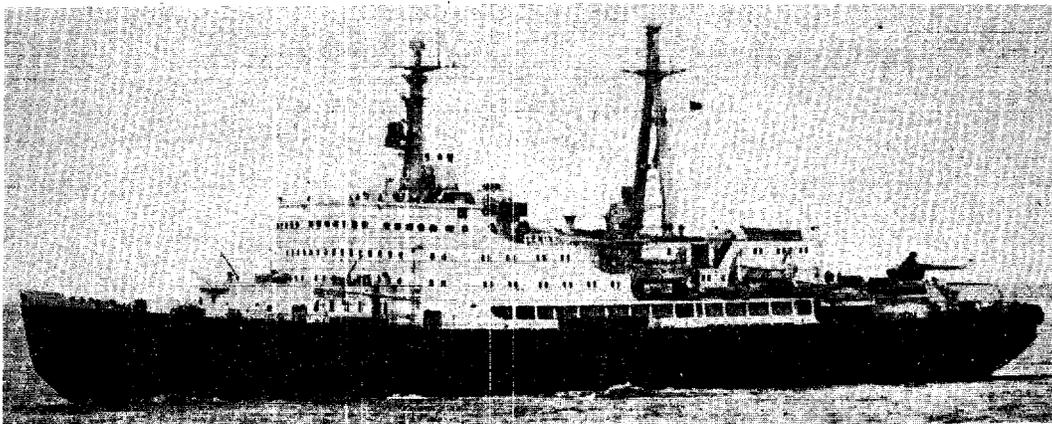
USSR: [redacted]

[redacted] the nuclear-powered icebreaker Lenin will be under repair for another one to three years. The Lenin, the world's first nuclear-powered surface ship, has been out of service since 1965. [redacted]

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[redacted] It has frequently been under repair since it became operational ten years ago. [redacted]
(Photo)

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[redacted] The Lenin [redacted]

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