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CHILE: The chiefs of the armed services may try to use proffered Soviet military credits to acquire useful but noncombat equipment.

President Allende recently summoned the three service commanders to discuss the acquisition of Soviet equipment, according to a source of the US defense attaché. All gave reasons for not utilizing a reported \$300-million offer of Soviet military credit. The navy chief added, however, that a Soviet hydrographic vessel would be acceptable; the air force and army commanders said that they could use telecommunications equipment and vehicles. The choices were based, the source reports, on the commanders' desire to avoid sending Chileans to the USSR for training or accepting Soviet advisers. They have similar objections, he added, to accepting the Soviet Komar and Osa missile patrol boats that the Cubans and Soviets are urging on the Chileans.



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Although Allende wants to weaken Chilean military ties with the West, he is concerned, as are the military chiefs, over the implications of Chilean acceptance of Soviet military aid. If the commanders themselves can settle on noncombat equipment to utilize some of the Soviet offer, both the President and the military might find this an acceptable way out of this dilemma, at least for the time being.



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USSR-GREECE-CYPRUS: The USSR has resorted to a modest level of political and propaganda pressure against Athens in reaction to Greek demands on Archbishop Makarios but wants to avoid direct involvement.

Since the Greek ultimatum to Makarios on 11 February, Soviet Ambassador Levychkin has made three calls on the Greek Foreign Ministry to stress Moscow's concern. On each occasion, however, Levychkin claimed that he was speaking on his own initiative and not under instructions from Moscow. He avoided even implied threats of Soviet intervention. In his most recent demarche of 6 March, the Soviet ambassador first raised another matter and then turned to a discussion of Cyprus. On his two earlier visits, Levychkin appeared more concerned with the US-Greek home-port arrangements than with Cyprus.

Soviet press statements, however, reflect Moscow's concern over the viability of an independent Cyprus. These statements have connected Athens' pressure on Makarios with the establishment of a "base" in Greece for the US Sixth Fleet. The Soviets waited more than two weeks to comment on the homeporting arrangement and then timed their reaction to coincide with the Greek demarche.

Makarios has not sought either Soviet or local Communist assistance. Nevertheless, the Soviets are uncomfortable about these developments and feel obligated to take up the cudgels for the Archbishop. Moscow continues to favor an independent and non-aligned Cyprus. It wants the removal of British bases on the island and fears the incorporation of Cyprus into NATO by some form of enosis. The Soviets will continue to apply cautious pressure on Greece and, if the situation worsens, will probably encourage Makarios to take the issue to the Security Council where the Soviet UN representative is serving as president for the month of March. [redacted]

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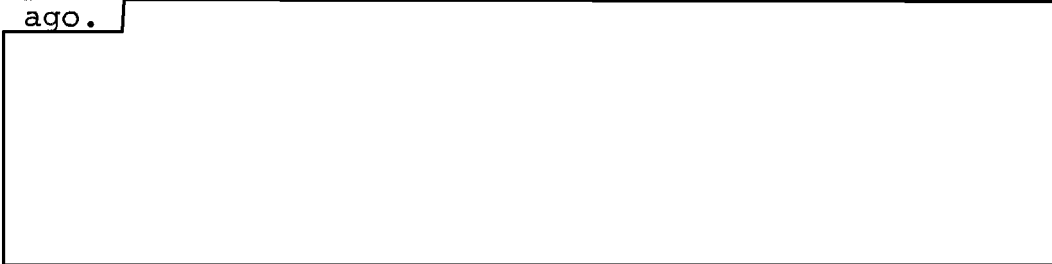
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TUNISIA: A governmental crisis is brewing over the issue of presidential succession.

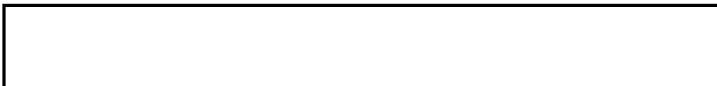
President Bourguiba has changed his mind again and now is disinclined to create the post of vice president, which he first proposed nearly two years ago.



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A joint meeting of the council of ministers and the political bureau of the ruling Destourian Socialist Party, chaired by Bourguiba on 14 March, adjourned without agreeing on a solution to the succession issue, which has dominated Tunisian politics for more than two years. The President's equivocation has generated serious conflicts in the ruling circles of both government and party. Bourguiba and Prime Minister Hedi Nouira are reported to be in profound disagreement, and there are persistent rumors that several ministers, including Nouira himself, have threatened to resign.

Bourguiba probably will be able to secure acceptance of the succession formula he prefers, but this may be achieved at the cost of greater divisions and dissatisfaction with his leadership.



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ZZAIRE: The government continues to press its efforts to gain political control over the Catholic Church.

The political bureau of the official party recently reconfirmed President Mobutu Sese Seko's tough stance against the Church by issuing a strong statement calling for chapters of the party youth wing to be installed in all seminaries by 1 April. Seminaries failing to comply will be closed and their bishops will be subject to "legal action." According to local press reports, chapters have now been installed in various small seminaries around the country. The political bureau also upheld the closure of the Church's major seminary in Kinshasa and the charges against Cardinal Malula, presently "on consultation" at the Vatican following a clash with Mobutu earlier this year.

The statement from the political bureau was a swift response to petitions presented to Mobutu last week by the Council of Bishops. The petitions expressed support for Malula and reaffirmed the Church's refusal to allow party youth chapters in seminaries. The bishops argued that political organizations have no business in centers of theological study.

The party's pronouncement amounts to a final rejection of the bishops' position and makes clear that the issue is not subject to negotiation. The government long has suspected the Church, heretofore an independent institution, of being a source of social agitation and believes that it must be brought under government direction. Although some members of the clergy, particularly the foreign priests, are likely to continue resisting government pressures, any united opposition seems improbable.

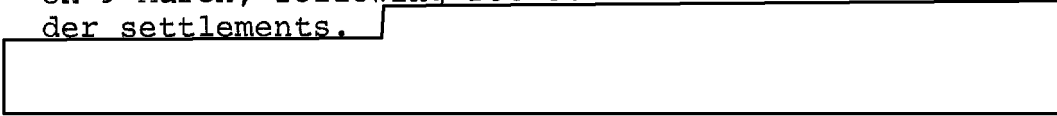


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NOTE

ISRAEL-LEBANON: The landmine explosion in northern Israel on 16 March that killed two Israeli soldiers and wounded five was the second such incident since last month's four-day search-and-destroy attack on fedayeen bases in southern Lebanon. The Israelis are investigating to determine if the mine was planted by infiltrators from Lebanon. If Tel Aviv decides this is the case, retaliation could occur. Fedayeen targets in Lebanon were last hit on 9 March, following rocket attacks on Israeli border settlements.



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