

THE PERISCOPE

THE 'VICTORY' WESTMORELAND LOST

A confidential Pentagon paper details the plan the military had three years ago to end the Vietnam war. Gen. William Westmoreland, then top man in Saigon, and Gen. Earle Wheeler, then chairman of the Joint Chiefs, worked it out during the height of Hanoi's Tet offensive in 1968. Westmoreland read Tet as a shift to all-out war by Hanoi and wanted to match it. He also viewed it as a last gasp that would leave North Vietnam's army badly mauled. His plan called for 206,000 more men (a total of 731,000) and moves on all fronts—stopping anticipated assaults from the north, seizing sanctuaries in Laos and Cambodia, blocking the Ho Chi Minh Trail complex in those countries, invading North Vietnam and bombing the port of Haiphong.

On Feb. 12, the proposals were discussed at a White House meeting involving LBJ, Dean Rusk, Robert McNamara, CIA chief Richard Helms, Gen. Maxwell Taylor, Clark Clifford, Walt Rostow and Wheeler. On Feb. 23, Wheeler met Westmoreland in Saigon and after three days brought details of the plan back to Washington. Shortly afterward, the 206,000-man request was revealed in a Pentagon "leak"—a move, Westmoreland says, designed to "prejudice the President's appraisal." On March 24, Wheeler met Westmoreland privately in Manila. The word: no new bombing, no invasions, no 731,000 men. The only thing Wheeler could not tell his field commander was something he did not know himself—that on March 31, LBJ was bowing out of the war and out of the White House.

RUSSIA ORBITS ANOTHER RIDDLE

The Soviet Union seems about to write a new chapter in manned spaceflight—but no one knows what it will reveal. In November and December and again last month, the U.S.S.R. fired off three shots that all looked like tests of a new manned vehicle. The first two satellites evidently carried recorded voices; they executed maneuvers that outdid any by previous manned satellites. U.S. experts say they don't quite fit a program for a manned space station (which the Russians are working on) nor a moon shot. Beyond that, the experts are baffled.

TROUBLE ON THE WELCOME MAT

Chile's new Marxist government faces a delicate problem in its efforts to forge new, friendly links to Red China. After President Salvador Allende granted Peking diplomatic recognition, the Nationalist Chinese envoy left but gave the Chinese Embassy (bought by China before World War II) to Chile's League Against Cancer for use as a hospital. Peking's ambassador wants it back, and Allende's opponents in the Chilean Congress have vowed to block the move.

MOSCOW DROPS A HINT

For the first time in memory, a Soviet radio broadcast this week listed all Russian vessels moving to and from North Vietnam. (Except for a tanker, all carried non-military cargo.) The reason, U.S. analysts think, is that Moscow, fearing that the U.S. may resume full-scale bombing in North Vietnam, is hinting at immunity for its ships from American aircraft.