

state/nation/world

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Chernenko introduced to nations' leaders

By ANDREW ROSENTHAL
Associated Press Writer

MOSCOW — New Communist Party chief Konstantin U. Chernenko yesterday denounced what he called "the aggressive intrigues of U.S. imperialism," but also told Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau he was interested in reviving détente.

Chernenko's 35-minute meeting with Trudeau concluded a two-day round of diplomatic talks with some of more than 100 foreign dignitaries who came to Moscow to attend the funeral of the late President Yuri V. Andropov and meet his successor as party general secretary.

Chernenko's position on major disputes between NATO and the Warsaw Pact appeared to reflect previous Kremlin policy, according to the few details of the meetings provided by the Soviet official news agency Tass and other sources.

The accounts also indicated that the subjects and tone of the meetings reflected the state of relations between the Soviet Union and the individual nations.

Among the first to see Chernenko were Fidel Castro of Cuba and Daniel Ortega of Nicaragua, whose governments are the chief Soviet allies in the Western Hemisphere.

Tass said that in talking to Castro, Chernenko repeated the Soviet Union's "invariable solidarity with the Cuban people, who courageously oppose the aggressive intrigues of U.S. imperialism."

U.S. involvement in the volatile politics of Central America also was a main topic between Chernenko and

Ortega, Tass said.

"Both sides strongly denounced Washington's intention to whip up tension, to interfere in the internal affairs of countries in that region and to impose its will on them," Tass said.

But Vice President George Bush, speaking in Rome yesterday, said his talk with Chernenko produced "a certain sense of optimism" on improving East-West relations.

"The talks were serious, non-polemical — no inflated rhetoric," Bush said.

And in Bonn, West Germany, a government spokesman said Chernenko's talks with Chancellor Helmut Kohl also indicated a concern for improved relations with the West.

"The leadership in Moscow desires East-West dialogue and is interested in good relations with the West, including the United States," said spokesman Peter Boenisch.

Trudeau, too, noted that in his talks with Chernenko, "there was no return to the stridency we've heard from both sides in the past. We agreed that there is a new openness in the world and it's up to the politicians to respond to it."

Talking about the breakdown in U.S.-Soviet arms reduction talks, Trudeau called Chernenko a "new man" and added, "therefore he doesn't have to be saddled with a specific position."

"There was a repetition of the use of the word 'détente' and a real continuity with the Brezhnev spirit," he said, referring to Leonid I. Brezhnev, Andropov's predecessor and Chernenko's mentor.



Soviet leader Konstantin Chernenko, second from left, meets with Cuban President Fidel Castro, right, in Moscow yesterday. Others attending the meeting are Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko, who is on Chernenko's right, and Konstantin V. Rosakov, secretary of the Central Committee.

Terrorists murder American diplomat

By JOHN WINN MILLER
Associated Press Writer

ROME — Terrorists killed the American director of the multinational force that patrols the Sinai peninsula, blowing in the rear window of his bulletproof car with machine-gun fire as it pulled up to his home last evening.

At least two people jumped from a trailing car, attacked Leonon R. Hunt's limousine at point-blank range, then fled on foot, police and witnesses said. A group demanding that all "imperialist forces" leave Lebanon claimed responsibility.

Hunt, a 56-year-old career diplomat, was pronounced dead at San Giovanni Hospital at 8:12 p.m. (2:12 EST), a little more than an hour after he was shot.

Hunt is the first American official and the seventh diplomat killed by terrorists in Italy since 1976. The most recent was the Libyan ambassador to Rome, Amr al-Fagazy, who was shot by two gunmen Jan. 21 and died last Friday without regaining consciousness.

The Fighting Communist Party, a group usually identified with the Red Brigades urban terrorists, claimed responsibility for the shooting in an anonymous telephone call to a Milan radio station.

"This is the Fighting Communist Party," a male voice with a Roman accent told Radio Popolare. "We must claim the attempt on Gen. Hunt, the guarantor of the Camp David agreements. The imperialist forces must leave Lebanon. Italy must leave NATO. No

to the installation of missiles in Comiso."

The missiles in Comiso refer to 112 U.S. built cruise nuclear missiles being crated in Sicily as part of NATO's plans to counter Soviet missiles aimed at Western Europe.

Police and Italian news agencies initially incorrectly identified Hunt as an American general.

Witnesses at the scene told The Associated Press that Hunt was just pulling up to his home on Via Sudafrica, a three-story building with an electronic metal gate, when the shooting occurred.

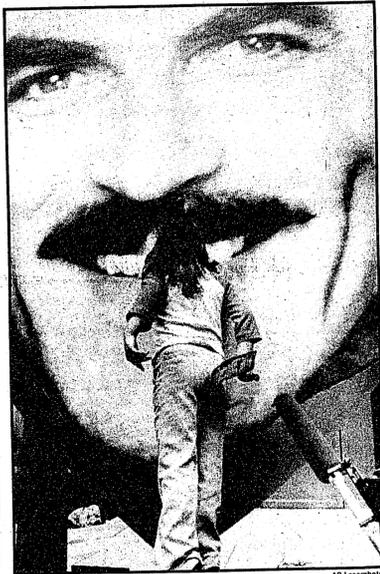
He was being followed by a blue Fiat 128, said the witnesses, who refused to give their names. At least two unidentified men jumped out of the Fiat and opened fire with automatic weapons against the back window of Hunt's bulletproof Alfa Romeo.

Police sources said they believed the first burst of machine-gun fire did not pierce the window, and the gunman then moved closer and opened fire at point-blank range at the window on Hunt's side of the car.

Witnesses said, Hunt's driver backed the car up and then sped off to a hospital behind the winding, quiet streets in a residential neighborhood about six miles from the center of Rome.

The two gunmen fled on foot, leaving their own car behind, witnesses said. They said it was too dark to describe the gunman accurately.

Dozens of police searched the neighborhood, but found no trace of the gunman.



Pucker up
A young admirer plants a kiss on a massive enlargement of Tom Selleck's picture during a nationwide contest launched by Warner Bros. to find the girl with the most kissable lips. The event, held in Hollywood on Tuesday, was a promotion for Selleck's upcoming movie, "Lassie."

Department intends to block steel merger

By MICHAEL J. SNIFFEN
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — The Justice Department said yesterday it would sue if necessary to block the proposed \$770 million merger of LTV Corp. and Republic Steel Corp. into the nation's second-largest foreign competition is not great enough to overcome the risk of domestic collusion to increase steel prices, Assistant Attorney General J. Paul McGrath said in ruling on his first major merger since taking over the department's antitrust division two months ago.

McGrath told a news conference that lawyers for the two companies have agreed to delay the merger while they consider their next move.

The two companies declined immediate comment, and McGrath said he had no indication whether they will drop the deal, try to proceed with it and fight the department in court, or attempt the substantial restructuring of the deal that would be necessary to meet the department's objections.

"The American steel industry is in a state of crisis. It has a very difficult time competing in the world market," McGrath said. "I am totally unconvinced, however, that revitalizing the steel industry requires the proposed merger."

McGrath said he had rejected the companies' contention that increased foreign competition justified the merger. He said that, even counting the foreign imports, the increase in concentration of

ownership was larger than allowed by department guidelines and was considered large enough to raise the threat of collusion on prices in the steel industry.

LTV, a Dallas-based conglomerate, owns Jones & Laughlin Steel Co., the nation's third-largest steelmaker. Republic, based in Cleveland, is the nation's fourth-largest steel producer. The merger would have created the nation's second-largest steel company, behind only U.S. Steel.

McGrath said he decided to reject the merger irrespective of the effect of a proposed \$775 million merger between U.S. Steel and National Steel, the nation's seventh-largest producer. But his decision did not bode well for that deal, which also is under review by McGrath's division.

He said that after reaching his decision he calculated what the effect of the two mergers together would be and was reinforced in his view that LTV-Republic deal should be blocked.

"The proposed merger between U.S. Steel and National Steel only intensifies the concern that already led to that decision," he said. "The firms that would result from the two proposed mergers would together control close to 50 percent of domestic carbon and alloy steel production."

He said he did not mean to imply that the government has decided to oppose the U.S. Steel-National deal but that it would be looking at the same factors in that case and "to the extent that this (decision) might give some learning as to other mergers, so be it."

Broadway star Ethel Merman found dead in N.Y. home

By KILEY ARMSTRONG
Associated Press Writer

NEW YORK — Ethel Merman, who parlayed her brassy, booming voice into half a century of Broadway stardom, belting out such classics as "There's No Business Like Show Business" and "I Got Rhythm," was found dead in her home yesterday. She was 75.

She died of natural causes in her home at 20 East 76th St., according to Dr. Elliot Gross, the city's medical examiner.

Harvey Sabinson, a spokesman for the League of New York Theaters, said the marquee of all 38 Broadway theaters would be darkened for one minute at 8 last night — show time — in honor of the star.

Gross said Merman's body would be cremated by the Frank Campbell Funeral Home. A spokeswoman for Campbell said no information would be released about the singer's death or possible memorial services because her son, Robert Levitt Jr., "wants it strictly private."

Merman had undergone brain surgery April 15 at Roosevelt Hospital, an institution she had regularly visited once a week to cheer up the bedridden.

"Broadway has been very good to me," she said a year ago. "But I've been very good to Broadway, too."

Reaction came quickly following news of her death.

"It's like the Statue of Liberty has fallen," said Carol Channing, "Ethel Merman personified the best of Broadway musicals. She was an inspiration to us all."

"She was absolutely the greatest," said composer Irving Berlin, who wrote Miss Merman's biggest Broadway success, "Annie Get Your Gun." "You could feel safe with a song you gave Merman. As I once said, 'You'd better give her a good song, because the audience was

going to hear it."

Bob Hope said through spokesman Kon Kanter, "Ethel Merman was a dear friend, one with whom I started on Broadway nearly 50 years ago in 'Red, Hot and Blue.' Show business has lost one of its greats."

"She was one of our greatest talents and, like Judy Garland, will live on forever," Mickey Rooney said through spokesman Red Duff.

Merman first took command of the musical stage in 1930. As a 21-year-old neophyte in the Gerashwin brothers' "Girl Crazy," whose star was Ginger Rogers, Merman had one song and made the most of it — the show-stopping "I Got Rhythm."

"As I went into the second chorus," she recalled later, "I held a high C note for 16 bars. The audience applauded through the whole chorus and I did several encores."

Her success continued in such classics as "Anything Goes" in 1934, "Panama Hattie" in 1936, "Annie Get Your Gun" in 1946 and "Call Me Madam" in 1950. Her last role was as the wind-up star of "Hello, Dolly!" in 1970.

She had 14 movie credits between 1934 and 1976 and appeared on a number of television specials. Her movies included the film versions of "Anything Goes," and "Call Me Madam" and also "Alexander's Ragtime Band." "No Business Like Show Business" and a non-singing

part in "It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World."

Whatever the song, Miss Merman delivered every note bell clear to every corner of any theater, unamplified and with apparent effortless.

"I never took a singing, dancing or acting lesson in my life," she once said. "George Gershwin told me, 'Don't ever take a music lesson, Ethel.' All I have done since is belt out the songs."

Her favorite role was Mama Rose in "Gypsy," a character as unsympathetic as musical comedy allows a star to play.

The Julie Styne-Stephen Sondheim score of "Gypsy" climaxes with "Mama's Turn," a complex soliloquy that Merman thought was her most demanding moment in the theater and some critics considered her finest.

"She was the only superstar on Broadway," Styne said upon learning of her death. "It was one of the greatest thrills of my life to have her sing my songs."

After "Gypsy" Merman continued working in movies and television and also sang in concerts and night clubs, but she never again originated a Broadway role.

One of her later returns to the New York stage was for the 1966 revival of "Annie Get Your Gun." She was received with cheers for the role in 1953 and shed in 1961.



Ethel Merman, shown here in 1946 as Annie Oakley in "Annie Get Your Gun," has died of natural causes at age 75.

state news briefs

Steady downfall swells state rivers
Scores of people were forced to evacuate their homes yesterday, as warm weather and persistent rains caused rivers and streams throughout Pennsylvania to swell over their banks.

No injuries or deaths were reported.

The worst flooding occurred in the central part of the state, where the Susquehanna River was past flood stage and still rising. Nancy Sherer of the National Weather Service's River Forecast Center in Harrisburg said many streams and tributaries feeding into the Susquehanna had already crested by noon yesterday. The river itself was expected to crest at 1 this afternoon at 21 to 22 feet. Flood stage is 17 feet.

Transportation official backs axle tax
HARRISBURG (AP) — Pennsylvania's bridge repair program would be seriously harmed if court challenges to the state's controversial axle tax succeed, a top state official told a Senate panel yesterday.

Transportation Secretary Thomas D. Larson said \$69 million from the tax is expected this fiscal year to help rebuild "hundreds of bridges on schedule."

"Without that money, however, the state's bridge program could 'collapse,' Larson said.

Although the state would still get federal money, the \$1.4 billion, eight-year program would face "serious problems" without the levy, a department spokesman said.

Still, Larson noted that the tax has no problems because it is being challenged in federal court by the American Trucking Association and has led to retaliatory measures against Pennsylvania truckers from eight states.

The \$36-per-axle tax, which took effect April 1 and is thought to be the first of its kind in the country, must be paid by all trucks of 26,000 pounds or more.

nation news briefs

Industrial production posts gain
WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. industrial production rose a healthy 1.1 percent in January in what most economists saw as yet another sign that the pace of the nation's economic growth is not slowing as much as had been feared.

The increase was almost double the 0.6 percent rise in December and was the biggest jump since a 1.3 percent surge in September.

In further good news, the government also reported Wednesday that sales outpaced the rebuilding of inventories in December, signaling further economic growth as industry works to keep up with increased demand.

The two reports were further signs that the pace of the nation's recovery from the 1981-82 recession has not decreased as much as some analysts had believed based on weaker December economic activity. Recent reports have shown retail sales and employment also were up in January.

Group calls for Social Security cuts

WASHINGTON (AP) — A business leaders' group urged Congress to take another crack at cutting Social Security benefits, saying reforms adopted last year are "too little, too late" and that the system could run short of cash again before 1990.

A 15-member subcommittee of the Committee for Economic Development called for raising the retirement age to 68 by the year 2000 and trimming the annual cost-of-living increases or reducing future retirees' initial benefits.

Its report, "Social Security: From Crisis to Crisis?" concludes that even with the 1983 bipartisan package of tax hikes and benefit cuts that Congress approved last year, there is "very little margin of safety" for the rest of this decade.

The Social Security rescue bill does gradually raise the normal retirement age from 65 to 67 in the next century, but the move would not start until 2000 and would not be complete until 2027. The business group said that "is too little, too late," and would put most of the burden on workers now under age 24.

world news briefs

FBI studies Salvadoran death squads
SAN SALVADOR, El Salvador (AP) — FBI officials met with high-ranking Salvadoran military officers to discuss formation of a unit to investigate rightist death squads, a high military officer said yesterday.

They also were to talk about how to give the Salvadoran government technical assistance in tracking, capturing and prosecuting the vigilante killers, the military officer said. He spoke on condition that he not be identified for security reasons.

The officials, whose names and ranks were unavailable, arrived Tuesday, the officer said. He did not say if they were still in the country yesterday.

A U.S. Embassy spokesman said he had no information on the visit.

The Salvadoran military high command is forming a 12-member team headed by a lieutenant colonel to investigate the death squads. The Salvadoran government had announced it would create the unit after a Dec. 9 visit by Vice President George Bush, who warned of a cutoff of U.S. military aid unless the squads were reined in.

Leaders discuss cease-fire in Africa

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa (AP) — The United States, Angola and South Africa met in Zambia today to discuss a lasting cease-fire in the region's 17-year-bush war.

Announcement of the one-day meeting came amid reports of plans to have military personnel, including some from the United States, monitor the present, de facto truce in Angola.

The war is over South-West Africa, a territory controlled by South Africa despite U.N. calls that the white-minority government relinquish its rule. The territory is also known as Namibia.

In their fight to free the territory, guerrillas of the South-West Africa People's Organization have used bases in southern Angola, a Marxist nation which borders Namibia on the north.

South Africa has announced it was withdrawing its soldiers from Angola, where they were fighting SWAPO guerrillas. South African Prime Minister P.W. Botha said the pullout was a first step toward a lasting cease-fire.

stock report

AT&T stocks heavily traded
NEW YORK (AP) — The stock market finished mixed yesterday, yielding to some late selling amid forecasts of higher interest rates.

Telephone stocks were actively traded as another milestone was reached in the breakup of American Telephone & Telegraph.

As part of the Jan. 1 divestiture, the "old" AT&T stock gives place today to the new AT&T and shares of the seven regional companies taking over local telephone service.

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