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E/W -- STATUS QUO MAINTAINED, SAY SOVIETS

MOSCOW, SEP 5 (UPI)--THE SOVIETS TODAY SAID THEY HAD MOVED INTO CZECHOSLOVAKIA TO PRESERVE THE STATUS QUO IN CENTRAL EUROPE, NOT TO CHANGE IT AS THE U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT CLAIMED.

THE INTERNATIONALLY-CIRCULATED WEEKLY NEW TIMES REJECTED "WESTERN PROPAGANDA CLAIMS" THAT THE BALANCE OF FORCES IN CENTRAL EUROPE HAD BEEN ALTERED BY THE WARSAW PACT OCCUPATION OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA AND "NATO, THEREFORE, SHOULD STEP UP ITS MILITARY PREPARATIONS."

IT SAID THE WARSAW PACT ARMIES MOVED IN "PRECISELY TO PREVENT IMPERIALISM FROM CREATING A NEW SITUATION IN CENTRAL EUROPE WHICH WOULD HAVE ARISEN IF THE COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY FORCES IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA HAD GAINED THE UPPER HAND."

NEW TIMES, IN AN ARTICLE SIGNED BY "CONTEMPORARY," SAID "THIS DANGEROUS CHANGE DID NOT OCCUR AND WILL NOT OCCUR AS LONG AS THE DEFENSIVE WARSAW TREATY ORGANISATION STANDS GUARD OVER THE PEACE."

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