

National/World

Five die in day care blast

ATLANTA — A powerful explosion blew out part of a day care center in a predominantly black, low-income housing project in northwest Atlanta Monday, killing at least five, were going to school, police said. Fire officials blamed the explosion on a gas leak from the center's boiler. Police confirmed five killed, but a Grady Memorial Hospital spokesman said five children and two adults were reported killed. Reports of injured ranged from 7 to 12. Rescue workers dug through only made rubble for more victims and some merchandise were treated at the scene. Police emergency vehicles and fire engines rushed to the center shortly after the explosion about 10:30 a.m. Police said there were 83 children,

all young black males, and 12 adults at the center at the time of the explosion. The center had a capacity of 85 children. J. Michael Yelton, public relations director for Grady, said five injured children and two adults had been brought to the hospital, one with second and third-degree burns, three with superficial cuts and bruises and one with a skull fracture. An eye witness to the explosion, Freddie Billinger, 20, said he was standing about 200 feet from the day care center when the blast occurred. "Bricks went up and things flew all around," he said. "White smoke billowed and then it disappeared." Billinger said after the explosion he jumped over a fence separating him from the center and ran to help get the children out. He said children and teachers were running out of the center, many bleeding.

"I saw one little boy with his arm cut off. It was horrible," he said. Little 5-year-old Tommy Malsly, who was in the center, was shaken and subdued but otherwise unharmed. "The whole school blew in," he said. The powerful blast blew out the side of the connecting hallway. Bricks and concrete were hurled 200 to 300 feet by the force of the blast. Some apartments in the housing project had windows blowing out. While police and rescue personnel dug through the rubble, a crowd of about 1,000 people gathered behind police lines. The center is located in a housing project built in 1964 by the Atlanta Housing Authority. The day care center is operated by the Gate City Day Nursery Association.

St. Helens calm again

VANCOUVER, Wash. — Volcanic Mount St. Helens has settled down again from its most recent sputtering that raised concern another eruption may be forthcoming. The volcano vibrated early Sunday with low-level seismic activity, shaking six times during a five-hour period. Scientists said the tremors stopped after 6 a.m. The National Weather Service in Portland, Ore., said radar scanners picked up at least one plume that rose to 10,000 feet from the cloud-shrouded crater. Three bursts of steam that shot as high as 16,000 feet Thursday, Oct. 9, and Friday, Oct. 10, accompanied by an earthquake measuring 2.5 on the Richter scale, ended two months of relative calm at the volcano. Steve Walter, spokesman for the University of Washington's geophysics lab, said the tremors were still much smaller than those that preceded most of the volcano's five major eruptions.

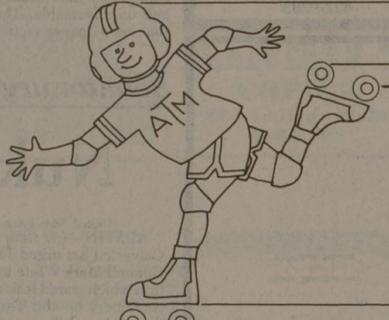
China grain deal near completion

PEKING — America's chief negotiator said Monday he has made considerable progress in concluding one of the largest grain deals in history with China in lengthy and secretive discussions. Grain markets in the United States have expected a major agreement with China for some time but the Carter administration apparently was trying to keep it quiet and make a grand announcement during the presidential campaign to reap political rewards. The agreement, if concluded, would be similar to a five-year accord to expire with the Soviet Union.

The United States would supply China with between 6 and 9 million tons of grain annually. "We have made considerable progress during our talks here," Thomas Saylor, the negotiator, said. "But we still have things to discuss and work out with the Chinese." To avoid the press and even normal diplomacy, Saylor, the associate administrator of the Foreign Agriculture Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and his group holed up in a diplomatic compound. Their whereabouts were unknown for their first week and the American Embassy would not even acknowledge they were in Peking.



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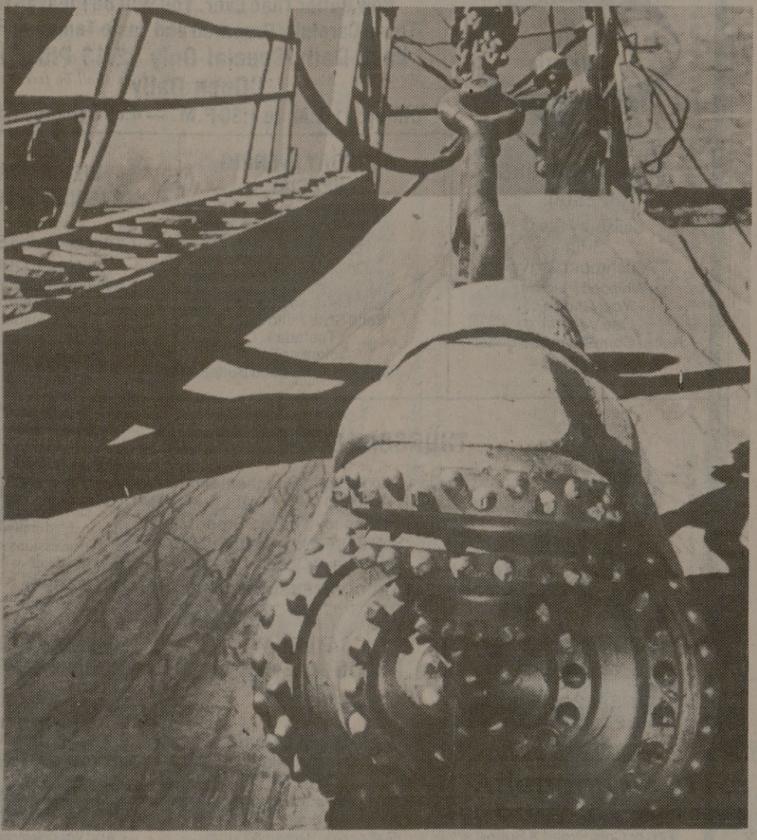
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