

Fear of Soviet civil war escalates after coup attempt

MOSCOW (AP) — The shattering of Kremlin authority has revived fears of ethnic conflict, border disputes, nuclear arms in the hands of fanatics and the emergence of Boris N. Yeltsin as a bully at the helm of Russia.

"Everything that has been created for centuries by our ancestors, by our hands, is collapsing," reformist lawmaker Oleg Rummyantsev in the Supreme Soviet legislature on Tuesday.

The fear is that the ethnic and border disputes that have flared during six years of change under Mikhail S. Gorbachev will burst into a civil war and, in the worst case, that factions might gain control of nuclear arms.

Many ethnic groups also fear losing

new freedoms to a resurgent Russia under Yeltsin, who has expanded his authority after leading the resistance to last week's botched three-day coup.

Gorbachev, Yeltsin and other leaders are struggling to patch together a new Soviet Union as a confederation of neighbors with strong economic ties and — for those who wish it — a political and defense alliance.

But as Gorbachev said in an impassioned appeal to the legislature, "Maybe the most tragic result of the coup is that those three days have given a boost, and a powerful boost, to centrifugal tendencies. A real threat of a breakup of the union has appeared."

On Tuesday, the republics continued

their stampede out of the Soviet Union, as Moldavia became the seventh republic to declare outright independence.

Speakers from Armenia told parliament they worried about new violence in the disputed border area with Azerbaijan.

With central authority prostrate, and the armed forces reluctant to intervene, fighting could worsen in other hot spots around the country such as Georgia, Moldavia and along the Uzbekistan-Kirgizia border.

One source of tension is the future of ethnic Russians living in the republics that plan to secede.

Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev, any ally of both Gorbachev

and Yeltsin, complained about a statement by Yeltsin's press secretary that Russia reserved the right to review its borders with those republics that decide to leave the Soviet Union.

Nazarbayev, whose republic shares a long border with Russia and has more Russians than Kazakhs among its population, was quoted by the independent Interfax news agency as warning of trouble if Russia "raises the question of revising its borders."

The rapid-fire decrees that Yeltsin issued to assert control after the coup raised concern in the West that "Yeltsin may be overlaying his hand," said Thane Gustafson, a Sovietologist at Georgetown

University in Washington.

"It is the Yeltsin that we always feared was there, the two-fisted sort."

"Because he is ruling by decree, may be seeing the beginning of emergence of a new form of totalitarian rule," Gustafson said in a telephone interview.

Gorbachev rejected suggestions Yeltsin was grabbing for power or that "You must not think, as someone here, that the concept of a Russian Empire is being revived, that Russian leadership has ousted the president of the country that it is not thinking about republics," said Gorbachev, an ethnic Russian who has lived his entire life in the Russian Federation.

Prime minister changes Cabinet in Madagascar

ANTANANARIVO, Madagascar (AP) — The prime minister on Monday urged anti-government forces to accept a new, 24-member Cabinet that includes no opposition figures.

The prime minister of this Indian Ocean island nation of 11 million, Guy Razanamasy, changed the composition of the Cabinet in an effort to end escalating strikes and rallies led by an opposition hoping to end President Didier Ratsiraka's 16-year socialist rule.

"Our objectives are without ambiguity: restore civil peace, heal the bitterness and prepare for elections," Razanamasy said.

Elections have yet to be scheduled.

The Cabinet is made up primarily of civilians. It includes nobody from the six-party opposition coalition among its two dozen members.

The new Cabinet ministers include three officials loyal to Ratsiraka and military officers to head the armed forces and Interior Ministry. Two minor parties outside the opposition coalition were represented with one post each.

The opposition protests followed clashes the past month with security forces that left up to 51 protesters dead. The

demonstrators have ignored curfew and state-of-emergency decrees by Ratsiraka.

The opposition seeks a constitution and general elections as soon as possible for this island off Mozambique.

Talks between opposition representatives on forming a coalition government broke down recently.

Anti-government forces gathered again Monday in a square in the capital, Antananarivo, but the crowd was smaller. Previous demonstrations have attracted tens of thousands of people.

Iran stepping up activity to free hostages, reports say

GENEVA (AP) — U.N. Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar resumed efforts Monday to free 11 Western hostages in Lebanon amid reports that Iran also has stepped up activity to resolve the issue.

A Lebanese newspaper said Iran sent the commander of its Revolutionary Guards to Beirut to speed up moves to release the Westerners.

One Lebanese faction holding Westerners has demanded that Israel free several hundred Arab prisoners, but the Israelis have demanded concrete information on seven Israeli servicemen missing in Lebanon.

An Israeli official said Sunday that Iran should be able to provide such information.

Perez de Cuellar met Monday with his personal representative on the hostage issue, Giandomenico Picco, for a briefing on the latest developments in

the sensitive negotiations. Picco was in Israel last week.

The U.N. chief told reporters afterwards he continued to hope that "something very important could happen, in the sense of seeing all the detainees free."

He said he would meet Tuesday with an Iranian emissary but had no plans to meet with any Israelis during his three-day stay in Geneva because of Picco's recent talks in Israel.

Pro-Iranian groups in Lebanon are thought to be holding all or most of the 11 Westerners.

Perez de Cuellar said negotiations still focused on an exchange of the Western hostages for Palestinian and Lebanese prisoners held by Israel. The Western hostages include five Americans, three Britons, two Germans and an Italian.

Jury selection begins

Gainesville suspect may be linked to Louisiana slayings, police say

TAMPA, Fla. (AP) — The main suspect in the slaying of five Gainesville college students may be linked to a 1989 triple murder in Louisiana, police said in an affidavit unsealed Monday.

The affidavit in support of a search warrant was released as jury selection began in a robbery trial for Danny Harold Rolling. The trial began a year to the day

after the first two victims were found in Gainesville.

Last week, police in Shreveport, La., Rolling's hometown, obtained blood, saliva, and hair samples from Rolling in an investigation of the Nov. 4, 1989, triple slaying.

The affidavit from Shreveport Detective Don Ashley said Rolling's saliva will be compared

to saliva swabbed from a mark on the breast of victim Grissom, 24.

Ms. Grissom, her 55-year-old father, Tom, and 8-year-old nephew Sean were stabbed to death. Authorities believe Ms. Grissom was the target.

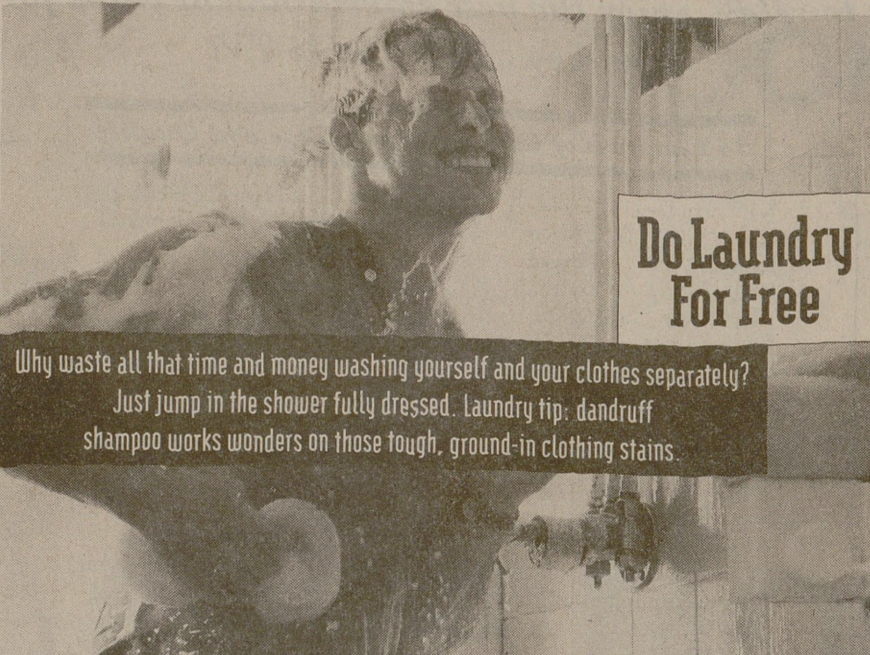
Rolling is charged with holding up a grocery and starting a shootout with deputies.

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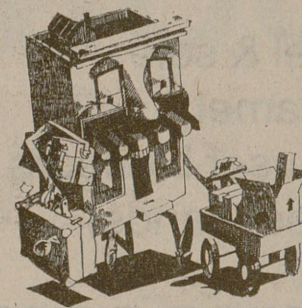
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