

Rebel factions fight over Kabul

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — Rival rebels fought over Afghanistan's fallen capital on Sunday, and the followers of a moderate leader gained the upper hand with help from troops of the collapsed communist government. The Red Cross said it had treated 50 wounded rebels since the Muslim guerrillas swarmed into the capital by the thousands on Saturday, and that at least seven had died. With 14 years of civil war apparently coming to an end, Kabul was jubilant and peaceful when the rebels began arriving, and rival groups even cooperated in taking over government buildings. But by Saturday night the fighting among the rebel factions began. Gunfire, rocket and tank

Rival groups trade gunfire as residents mark war's end

shells shook the city of 1.5 million Sunday. The central bazaar, normally bustling, was nearly empty on the sunny day. By nightfall, streams of red tracers stitched the sky, and white and green flares flashed on the horizon. Most of the fighting was at the presidential palace and other strategic spots, and was between radical guerrillas under rebel leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, leader of the fundamentalist Hezb-e-Islami, and those led by moderate commander Ahmed Shah Ma-

sood, of the Jamiat-e-Islami. Masood's men, fighting alongside remnants of the military, drove Hekmatyar's men from the presidential palace and some suburbs of Kabul. But Hekmatyar still held the Interior Ministry building and pockets of the city with anti-aircraft weapons. U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, whose plan to restore peace collapsed with President Najibullah's ouster earlier this month, pleaded for all sides to end the bloodshed. "Now is the time for healing,

tolerance and forgiveness," he told reporters in Islamabad, Pakistan. Hekmatyar has demanded the formation of a strict Islamic state, and opposes Masood's vision of a moderate state in place of the old communist government. Most of the other rebel groups have allied with Masood, and their political leaders say the military commander is in charge in Kabul until a multiparty interim government arrives from Pakistan. Rebel chieftain Sibghatullah Mojadedi, head of a 50-member commission of guerrilla commanders, religious scholars and representatives of the major parties, planned to leave for Kabul later Sunday to start the transition.

Congress considers balanced budget bill

WASHINGTON (AP) — Thanks to a few thousand bad checks at the House bank, a constitutional amendment to balance the federal budget looks like an idea whose time has come. "Because of the check-bouncing scandal, members are trying to explain their position and this is the only ship afloat. They need something to go home with," says Rep. Robert Smith, R-Ore., a leader of the drive for the amendment. After years in which the proposal has been headed off or narrowly defeated by its Democratic opponents, foes and supporters of the measure say Congress seems likely to vote its approval this year. With Congress returning from a two-week Easter vacation Tuesday, support is growing for the measure, aided by lawmakers' desires to demonstrate an ability to act in the wake of the publicity over more than 24,000 bad checks at the House bank. Even House Speaker Thomas Foley, D-Wash., an opponent, conceded last week that "my guess is the votes are there to pass it."

The House Budget Committee begins hearings on the proposal next week, and House and Senate votes could come early as May. An amendment requires ratification by 38 states after Congress gives its approval; the last one gave 18-year-olds the right to vote in 1971. Several versions of the amendment are in circulation. They all would require the president to submit a balanced budget, something President Bush has never done, despite his support for the legislation. If they all would make it difficult for Congress to run a deficit. It would forbid each year's spending from exceeding revenues without a vote of three-fifths majorities to do so. Tax increases could only be approved by majorities of the entire Congress, not just majorities of lawmakers actually voting. The arguments on both sides of the issue have changed since similar amendments in just shy of the required two-thirds majority in the House in 1990 and the Senate in 1986. Democratic opponents argue that a requirement for a balanced budget would lead to draconian slashes in needed government programs. They also say the measure could necessitate steep tax increases. That frightens business groups like the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

Officials endorse outline of aid package

Countries reach tentative agreement on economic assistance to former U.S.S.R.

WASHINGTON (AP) — Finance officials from the world's seven richest industrial countries on Sunday endorsed the broad outlines of an economic assistance package for the former Soviet Union that could, over time, rival the Marshall Plan in its scope. The endorsement by the so-called Group of Seven countries — the United States, Japan, Germany, Britain, France, Italy and Canada — represented a victory for President Bush, who first unveiled the proposed \$24 billion Western aid package for Russia earlier this month. In a joint communique issued late Sunday night, the officials said their countries were ready to provide up to \$18 billion in individual aid to Russia and an additional \$6 billion fund to stabilize the Russian currency, the ruble. Russian Deputy Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar, key architect of the Russian economic reforms, made a personal appeal for assistance

during the afternoon Sunday. The finance officials spent 14 hours over two days discussing the Russian aid package and other issues facing the world economy. The meeting ran four hours longer than scheduled Sunday, but officials later said that it was not the Russian financing package but disagreement over policies needed to spur the sluggish world economy that caused the delay. In a statement on economic policy, the finance officials said they remained concerned that economic activity this year will be below potential and "inadequate to achieve a reduction in unemployment." The communique noted that global interest rates in many cases remained at high levels, a point Treasury Secretary Nicholas Brady has been making for over a year. While stopping short of making specific commitments to cut interest rates, the commu-

nique did pledge efforts to boost growth in their nations and noted specifically that the decline in the Japanese currency, the yen, was not contributing to the process of getting the world growing at a faster rate. Japanese finance officials had complained before the weekend meetings that they were unable to cut their interest rates further because such an action could put more downward pressure on the yen. By specifically noting the yen's level, the finance officials apparently were signalling world currency markets that they would be ready to intervene by buying yen on the open market to support the Japanese currency should the need arise. On the question of aid to Russia, the communique said finance officials from the United States and its allies "welcomed the reforms already undertaken in Russia."

Austrian election ends with run-off

VIENNA, Austria (AP) — A run-off presidential election called Sunday after no candidate received the needed majority to succeed controversial President Kurt Waldheim. According to preliminary results, the Social Democrat Rudolf Streicher led the field of four candidates with 40.7 percent of the vote, and Thomas Klestil, the conservative People's Party had 37.2 percent. The two parties have dominated Austrian politics since World War II. Austrians hope the selection of a new president will end the nation's international isolation because of Waldheim's role with the German army during the war. Streicher and Klestil will be on the ballot May 24. Both hope to win supporters of the right-wing Freedom Party and environmental-oriented Green party. Heide Schmidt, candidate of the Freedom Party, finished with 16.4 percent of the vote, and Robert Jungk of the anti-European Community and pro-neutrality Greens had 5.7 percent.

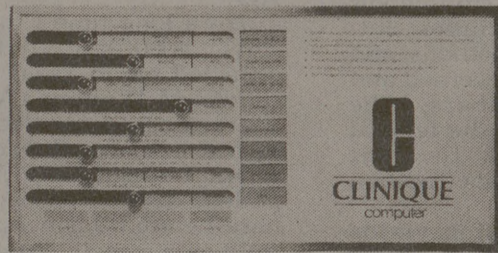
Muscovites celebrate holy day

MOSCOW (AP) — Joyous Muscovites crowded into candlelit churches Sunday to celebrate Russian Orthodox Easter, and for the first time in 74 years Kremlin bells pealed in Red Square in honor of the holy day. Many Albanian Orthodox believers also celebrated Easter freely for the first time, but bloodshed in Bosnia-Herzegovina kept many people home. The patriarch of the Orthodox believers worldwide, Bartholomeos I, led a two-hour service in Istanbul, Turkey, while the church's patriarchate is based in Constantinople. "Hristos Anesti (Happy Easter)," the patriarch, in gold ceremonial robes and a crown, said he blessed the faithful at St. George Church. In Jerusalem, the holiday was marked quietly by Eastern Orthodox Christians at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. The narrow streets of the ancient walled city were crowded with thousands of tourists, many of them Greek Orthodox pilgrims.

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