

Yeltsin shocks world, fires cabinet ♦ Russian leader dismisses top advisors and prime minister in surprise political maneuver

BY ALLISON STRIZAK
Staff Writer

Boris Yeltsin, Russia's current president, fired his entire cabinet earlier this week.

After recovering from a bout with respiratory infection, the Russian president returned to work only to dismiss the highest ranking members of his staff.

According to the *New York Times*, Yeltsin appointed himself acting prime minister after dismissing his loyal comrade of five years, Viktor Chernomyrdin.

"The lawyers here had to go and tell him that was against the law and the constitution" said a Kremlin official.

In a televised statement, Yeltsin announced his recent actions by saying, "Dear citizens. I have signed a decree on dismissing the government ... It is an effort to make economic reforms more energetic and effective, to give them a political push, a new impulse. The renovation of power is a natural process. You can't have a government without changes."

Much speculation surrounds Yeltsin's purification defense.

Some argue that members of the government, Yeltsin in particular, have been closely linked to billionaire businessmen like Boris Berezovsky, who seemingly maintains the ability to manipulate the system. It has been said that Berezovsky recently clashed with Chernomyrdin, Russia's former prime minister, most notably over the privatization of the state oil company. This venture could have proven quite lucrative for Berezovsky had the deal gone

through.

Ed Sharp, a Guilford professor whose speciality is Russian history, believes it could be more of an internal power struggle. "I think Chernomyrdin was becoming extremely powerful. With Yeltsin sick, he was running the government and becoming the center of power, and Yeltsin decided instead to more or less retire him."

This isn't the first time Yeltsin has fired strategic members of his government, but it does seem to be the most dramatically decisive.

This current move has established the president as the dominant force in Russia.

With statements like, "We must create an environment in which everyone knows and feels that a failure to fulfill orders means death, you will have to immediately submit your resignation," Yeltsin seems to be making up the rules as he goes while maintaining the current power structure.

Although Russia is striving for a more democratic structure, recent events suggest they still have a long way to go.

Kevin Holmes, a Guilford history major, finds communism alive and thriving within the newly formed Russian democratic.

Holmes believes Yeltsin is the secret weapon of the Communist party, which in his opinion will soon make a move for power. "He's starting the revolution, he's a Communist. That stuff that happened back in 1917, that's nothing compared to what will happen. Why else would he fire the whole cabinet? You

just wait."

Others like Karl Mueller, a Guilford

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political science major, believe Yeltsin is off his rocker: "He's a drunk, a smart

drunk, but a drunk nonetheless. As long as it doesn't affect foreign policy or the world order, let him fire whomever he wants."

Whatever the reasoning may be, it should be remembered Yeltsin is a very powerful man in charge of a commanding nation with a large nuclear arsenal at his fingertips.

At first glance he might look irrational but this was a very calculated move on Yeltsin's part. He used the oldest trick in the book; he fired the strong and brought in the weak, consolidating all the power in the top hands.

Civilians killed in Algeria as violence continues

BY GREGORY RINALDI
Staff Writer

Muslim rebels in Algeria massacred 58 civilians in two separate incidents last Thursday night.

By Western estimates, more than 65,000 people have been killed since 1992 in Algeria.

Over the past weekend, Ahmed Ouyahia, the Algerian Prime Minister, stressed that the situation was improving. Algerian newspapers report that government troops killed 70 rebels over the weekend and are currently besieging at least 100 others.

"The security situation is improving steadily throughout the country," said Ouyahia in a state speech. "I call on citizens to keep vigilant in order to safeguard the life of innocent people against terrorists."

Algeria, located in northwest Africa, has been suffering from continual attacks by Islamic fundamentalist rebels since a general election held in 1992.

Islamic fundamentalist groups maintained a commanding lead in those elections until the Algerian government cancelled them.

Bill Richardson, U.S. ambassador to the UN, has urged Algeria to allow human rights investigators to enter the region and probe the massacres.

"The United States condemns these crimes," said Richardson. "There are many allegations inside Algeria

about the killings and the paramount need is for a credible, independent verification of the facts."

But Algerian authorities seem to be against such investigations. They tend to want to settle the issues internally without international aid. As Ahmed Attaf, Algerian foreign minister, put it, there is "no human rights problem in Algeria."

But the massacres continue. An Algerian doctor reported that among the dead last Thursday were "32 babies and a 70-year-old man." The attackers burned down homes and killed livestock belonging to local peasants. The rebels had even placed mines around the village of Bouaicha to delay the arrival of government forces.

The rebel group believed to be responsible for the attacks is the Armed Islamic Group (GIA). The GIA had been reported to be carrying on a forced recruitment campaign among civilians. Also, local shepherds have been targeted as rebels steal flocks of sheep for food and eliminate the witnesses.

Algerian government forces started their huge manhunt on March 26, but no definite signs of the rebel strongholds have been found.

The United Nations has offered no international resolution to the situation in Algeria.

As the situation persists and the Algerian government's refusal to acknowledge outside support continues, no resolution seems likely.



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