



WORLD BRIEFS

Gorbachev will remain in party chief post

MOSCOW — The Soviet Union's Communist leadership decided Thursday to keep Mikhail Gorbachev as party chief, despite hours of criticism from members prompting him to quit.

The demands for Gorbachev's removal ended in "a crisis of nerves on all sides," said Alexander Pomorov, a regional Communist Party leader from Siberia.

"This is not a demonstration of strength, but a demonstration of (the party's) weakness," he said in an interview Thursday night as the meeting of the party's policy-making Central Committee ended.

Delegates emerged from the yellow Kremlin into a chilly spring evening after more than 10 hours of what party ideology chief Alexander Dzasokhov called "a sharp and critical exchange of opinions." Hard-liners at the closed session spent the morning blaming the Soviet president for the nation's protracted political and economic crisis, delegates said.

Rebels seize town near Ethiopian capital

NAIROBI, Kenya — Tigre rebels seeking to topple the government claimed Thursday to have captured a town 65 miles west of Ethiopia's capital, Addis Ababa.

There was no immediate government comment on the claim, but Western diplomats in Addis Ababa say the insurgents pose the greatest threat ever to the Marxist government of President Mengistu Haile Mariam, who overthrew Emperor Haile Selassie in 1974.

The U.S. State Department said Thursday it was ordering all embassy dependents and non-essential person-

nel out of Ethiopia because of the rebel advances.

All private Americans are being urged to leave the country as soon as possible, department spokesman Richard Boucher told reporters in Washington.

There are about 600 Americans in Ethiopia on private business or working with aid organizations trying to cope with a famine that threatens at least 5 million people.

Bangladeshi premier promises to repeal law

DHAKA, Bangladesh — A 16-year-old law used by successive Bangladeshi governments to make arrests without charges will be repealed, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia said Thursday in Parliament.

The law has been used to arrest thousands of people, including former President Hussain Muhammad Ershad, who is currently facing charges of corruption and abuse of power.

Mrs. Zia's promise to repeal the law, known as the Special Powers Act, came after an independent legislator, Nurul Islam Moni, sought the Parliament speaker's permission to introduce a bill revoking it.

"The 1974 Special Powers Act will be repealed in an appropriate time," the Prime Minister told Parliament members. She did not elaborate or say when the law would be repealed.

Following Mrs. Zia's assurance, Islam withdrew his bill, saying: "I've gained my objective. The government has made a categorical commitment to repeal the bad law. Let's wait and see."

Besides allowing arrests without charges, initially for three months, the law also permits authorities to shut down newspapers that criticize the government. Several anti-government papers have been ordered shut previously.

— The Associated Press

STATE AND NATIONAL

New software enhances film production

By Anna Griffin
Staff Writer

Watch out, Hollywood. While the Southern part of heaven will never be confused with the movie-making capital of the world, two N.C. computer companies are making their name in Tinsel Town with software packages that promise to change the way films are made.

SAS Institute, Inc. and the Virtus Corporation, both based in Cary, now market programs designed to make film production faster, easier and more efficient. Both software packages are designed to make movies more realistic.

The SAS/NVision program can be used to create three-dimensional animated special effects for films and television. The program can be seen in action during the PBS series "The Astronomers" and in national television advertisements for Volkswagen. The PBS series uses the 3-D computer-generated images to depict objects in outer space and to show the movement of the heavenly bodies realistically.

"It might show the black hole or the planets or it might show various graphics," said Lynn Dodges of SAS Institute. "The computer illustrations are used to demonstrate what is being narrated."

"A lot of television movies are using 3-D graphics, and news programs like WRAL are using programs like ours for opening sequences," she added.

While smaller companies like SAS struggle to gain national recognition, the established king of the special effects graphics market is Industrial Light & Magic (ILM), the independent special effects division of George Lucas' Lucasfilm production company.

Computer sequences by ILM were used to create the seawater pseudopod in the 20th Century Fox picture "The Abyss," and allowed Michael J. Fox to float above the ground on his futuristic skateboard in "Back to the Future, Part II," while removing the 2-inch pipe supporting the actor.

ILM also used computers to shoot the horrible death of the villain Donovan in Steven Spielberg's "Indiana Jones

and the Last Crusade." Computer designers were able to show the character rapidly age 400 years in a single, continuous shot. Prior to the development of 3-D graphics programs, scenes like Donovan's death would have required separate shots for each change in the actor's appearance.

The Virtus Corp. is marketing Walkthrough, a program designed to create very exact, 3-D models of sets, which directors can "actually move through," said the program's developer David Smith.

"With the program you can walk through the set and see what it's going to be like when you film it," Smith said.

"It's very interactive. You lay out the world and then you walk from room to room in real time. Essentially it combines a camera simulator and human model-builders," he said.

Smith's program was used to design the underwater sets for "The Abyss" and is now being considered for use by Columbia Pictures, as well as by some smaller production companies. Architects mainly use the program now.

nowIn the future, film production will rely heavily upon computers, according to Michael Baccus, a consultant for several production companies and for Apple Computers.

"I think you're going to see production designers increasingly relying on computers to generate production scenes. I don't think that's 20 years from now, I think it's three years into the future," he said.

Baccus was impressed with the Walkthrough program when he watched it used on the set of "The Abyss."

"It shows a director something more than just blueprints," Baccus said. "It shows exactly how the set is going to look in real time and allows the director and the designer to actually move things around and change details much faster than they could on a model."

"Programs like this are the future of film-making. Buy stock now."

While programs like SAS/NVision and Walkthrough are relatively expensive, their developers believe the time they save during production will result in overall reduced production costs.

Inmates get parole to ease prison crowding

By David Etchison
Staff Writer

North Carolina's overcrowded prisons are being purged of inmates in an attempt to bring their population down to the target level by May 17 and to avoid the possibility of a takeover by the federal courts.

So what else is new?

The prison system is now suffering through the 12th prison cap emergency since the Emergency Prison Population Stabilization Act, also known as the Supercap, was put into effect on March 11, 1987. During such an emergency, the parole board is given special powers

to try to lower the number of inmates.

Thanks to record numbers of inmates coming into the prison system, the parole board has made very little headway.

"Unfortunately, we're seeing admissions come in at a rate that's keeping us at a high prison population despite the best efforts of the parole commission," said Bill Poston, a spokesman for the Department of Correction.

"They are making some gains but are not to the point where they look like they're going to be successful by May 17," he said. "We have never been in a situation before where we violated state law."

That state law is the Supercap that sets a limit of 19,324 on the number of inmates the prison system can legally hold. It also mandates that the normal population should be kept under a "target level" of 18,744.

Poston said an inmate could sue the Department of Correction because of the overcrowded conditions if the May 17 deadline is not met.

"Somebody would have to take legal action," he said. "It would be up to the court's discretion to decide what to do."

The population at 12:01 a.m. Thursday was 19,269. If the prison population stays above a "trigger level" of 98 percent of the Supercap for 15 consecu-

tive days, the parole commission has 90 days to bring it back down to the target level.

The parole commission has been trying to do this since Feb. 15 when the latest prison cap emergency began. The population must be down to acceptable levels by May 17. It is not having much luck.

"Maybe a miracle will happen," said Lou Colombo, chairman of the parole commission. "We'll do the best we can, and hopefully we'll make it. The likelihood is we won't."

Since Feb. 15, the board has been paroling criminals at the record rate of 579 a week, releasing 3,475 persons as of March 28. Unfortunately for the board, people have been entering the system at a record rate of 570 a week, giving it a net decrease of 62 inmates for the first six weeks.

"We're talking a little above 600 a week we have to find and get out of the system to be able to control the population," Colombo said.

His job is made even harder because the parole board has a responsibility to minimize the risk a released inmate could pose to the public, Colombo said.

During a population emergency, the parole board is able to consider only those inmates eligible for parole, but the pool of inmates expands by moving up the parole eligibility for certain inmates. Murderers, drug kingpins and traffickers, sexual offenders, kidnapers and those convicted of driving while impaired are excluded from early release.

Six weeks of accelerated parole has made it harder for Colombo.

"We've dried up most of the sources of what we would consider eligible people of risk factor levels that would not seriously endanger the lives of people," he said. "It's going to be very difficult for us."

What happens if the prison population is not below the target level by the deadline is a mystery. The Supercap Act demands no specific action if the deadline is missed. Last-ditch solutions are also hard to come by.

"This situation has never happened before," Poston said.

The secretary of Department of Correction, Aaron Johnson, has been given the authority to raise the Supercap if it is likely additional bed space will become available. The legislature has the same option.

There is \$75 million invested in ongoing prison construction that will add a little over 2,000 beds to the system. They will not be ready until June.

"Unfortunately, the number of beds that are being built aren't being created quick enough to make any kind of impact," Colombo said.

The entire reason for the Supercap is a federal mandate requiring prisons to provide 50 square feet of space for each inmate by 1994. The cap was put into effect as an agreement with the federal government to keep the overcrowding in N.C. prisons in check while new facilities were built.

If the federal government were to step in, it would not be good for the state, Colombo said.

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