

Referendum expected to pass

By ANDREW KATELL
Associated Press Writer

MOSCOW — Millions of people voted yesterday in a landmark referendum on whether to preserve the fracturing Soviet Union. Violence prevented some people from casting ballots, while others were lured to the polls with scarce goods.

Hanging in the balance in the first referendum in Soviet or even Russian history was not only the fate of this vast country and its more than 100 ethnic groups, but also the future of Mikhail S. Gorbachev.

The Soviet president lobbied heavily for approval and predicted victory in the referendum, which asks citizens whether they want to stay together in a renewed federation.

Unofficial preliminary results showed more than 94 percent of voters in four regions of the Central Asian republic of Kazakhstan voting "yes." Two-thirds of the voters in the Far East city of Khabarovsk also approved the referendum, election officials said.

Public opinion polls had indicated it would pass, giving Gorbachev the pop-

ular mandate he seeks to crack down on separatists.

He has been pushing for the referendum since December to bypass democratically elected legislatures in the republics that he contends are dominated by nationalist extremists.

Gorbachev wanted to appeal directly to the people to restore national unity shattered by sometimes violent ethnic, legal and political disputes.

The country, however, is already so divided that six of the 15 Soviet republics, or 10 percent of the 200 million eligible voters, refused to vote in the referendum.

Violence in Moldavia on yesterday reflected the fractures.

Hundreds of nationalist Moldavians, aided by police, enforced a local boycott by blocking access to the seven polling stations the Red Army set up in the republic's capital, Kishinev, Associated Press correspondent Dan Petreanu said. The nationalists beat ethnic Russians and Ukrainians who tried to vote. No serious injuries were reported in dozens of fights witnessed by reporters.

Moldavia is among the six republics whose parliament decided not to hold a

referendum. The others are the Baltic republics of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, plus the Caucasus republics of Georgia and Armenia.

A smiling Gorbachev declared himself confident of victory as he voted near his home in southwest Moscow.

He told reporters the issue was larger than his political future.

"It is the fate of the people, of hundreds of peoples, of such a great state, and if you will, the fate of civilization," said the Soviet leader, as his wife, Raisa, stood at his side.

He has repeatedly tried to turn the referendum into an issue of patriotism, of preserving the motherland for which millions lost their lives.

Polls were open from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. Official preliminary results were not to be expected before Monday. Turnout was heavy in most areas with the exception of Leningrad, where only 47 percent had voted by 6 p.m., according to an Associated Press check of several regions of the country.

Soviet consumers got some bad news after the polls closed in most places: Prime Minister Valentin Pavlov said on the evening TV news program "Vre-



Mikhail S. Gorbachev

mya" that long-awaited price increases would begin in the first week of April, although compensation would be given to workers starting Wednesday.

Gorbachev yesterday repeated his warning that if the referendum fails and the union breaks up, a civil war could erupt.

Fighting in Iraq kills thousands

By TERRY LEONARD
Associated Press Writer

NICOSIA, Cyprus — Rebels claimed on yesterday that government forces massacred thousands of people in napalm attacks that left the burned bodies of women and children strewn along a highway in southern Iraq.

State-run newspapers in Baghdad also reported horrific scenes of destruction in two southern cities, saying the bodies of hundreds of people killed by anti-government rioters were on the streets or stacked in hospitals.

None of the claims by the rebels or the newspapers could be verified because few foreign journalists have not been allowed to cover the fighting.

Baghdad Radio said Iraq's National Assembly would meet in a special

session Wednesday. The agenda was not announced for the meeting of the rubber-stamp parliament. The session was called one day after President Saddam Hussein promised major political reforms once the rebellions are crushed.

The radio also said Izzat Ibrahim, deputy chairman of Iraq's ruling Revolutionary Command Council, met with army commanders in northern Tamim province. It referred to him for the first time as the deputy commander of the armed forces but did not indicate if that signaled changes in the command of Iraq's army, which was crushed in the Persian Gulf War.

Reporters for state-run Iraqi newspapers reported yesterday that during a tour of Hilla and the Shiite holy city of Karbala they saw the bodies of hundreds of people killed by rebels.

Kuwaiti government promises parliamentary elections within a year

By JOHN POMFRET
Associated Press Writer

KUWAIT CITY — A high-ranking government official on yesterday promised Kuwait would have democratic parliamentary elections within a year and said drastic reductions were planned in Kuwait's foreign population.

Abdul Rahman al-Awadi, the minister of state for Cabinet affairs, also revealed details on plans to reconstruct the war-torn emirate and said Kuwait would reissue its currency "within a maximum of 10 days."

Al-Awadi promised that anyone who had a bank account in Kuwait on Aug. 1 would be able to withdraw their money once currency was reissued. Iraq invaded on Aug. 2.

Al-Awadi also expressed the government's fears about Kuwait's increasingly chaotic security situation. He estimated that Iraqi troops left "half a million" weapons in Kuwait when they fled last month.

"The security problem is a big problem," he said. "There is a huge amount of weapons and ammunition going around all over the place. It is a huge task."

Since the last Iraqi troops fled Feb. 26, more than 45 bodies of non-Kuwaitis have been delivered to Kuwait's three main hospitals, officials said. In addition, 20 Kuwaiti soldiers and resistance fighters have been killed manning checkpoints around the city, mostly in drive-by shootings, Ministry of Justice officials say.

Al-Awadi said democratic reform "is an obligation and there is no going back."

He said elections would be held as soon as Kuwait's exiled population returned to the country, "in six months, maximum one year."

The ruling al-Sabah family disbanded Parliament in 1986 and placed greater restrictions on the media.

Of Kuwait's estimated 1.8 million

people, about 800,000 were Kuwaitis. Of the Kuwaitis, only 300,000 stayed in Kuwait during Iraq's seven-month occupation.

Many among those who stayed now demand democracy and say the government's previous policy of providing free health care and large salaries to Kuwaitis in exchange for their loyalty is no longer enough. Kuwaitis say Iraq's invasion has taught them to demand a greater say in government policy.

Al-Awadi said that within a year, the government wants to restructure the population of Kuwait so that the number of Kuwaitis equals the number of foreigners.

Such a plan would entail the expulsion or refusal of entry to thousands of foreigners. Many foreigners fled Kuwait during the occupation, but thousands of those have property in the country.

"We are not going to have all the workers we had in the past," al-Awadi said. He said the number of foreign workers in Kuwait would be determined by "supply and demand."

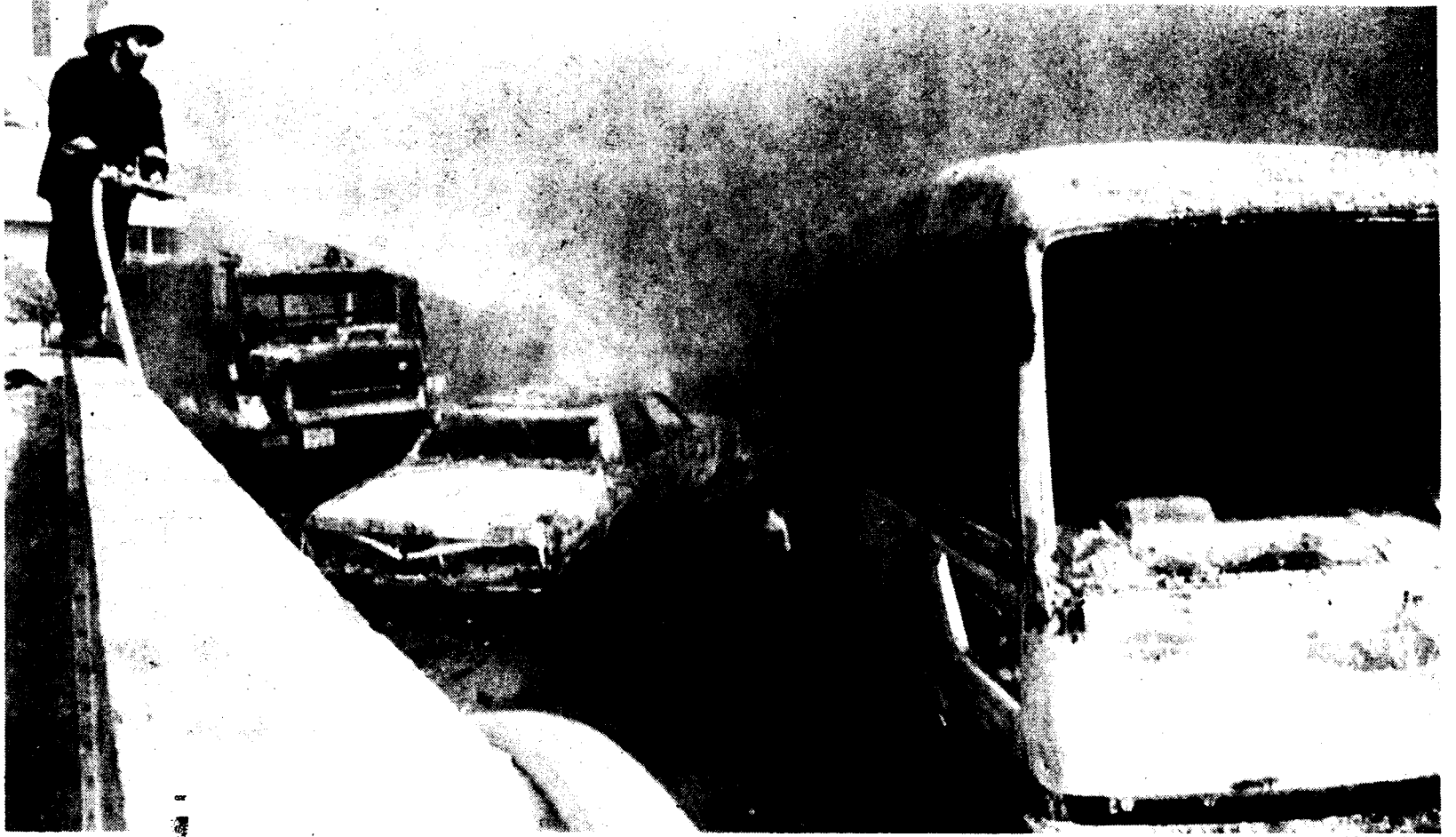
One of the groups expected to bare the brunt of this policy change is the Palestinians, who have been widely blamed by Kuwaitis for collaborating with the Iraqi occupiers.

Al-Awadi attempted to play down these beliefs, saying most Palestinians worked with the Kuwaitis.

"Anybody who has not been doing bad to us, he will be put in our hearts," he said, "but if they have been doing bad to us, he will be put on trial."

Al-Awadi said bank notes, which arrived earlier this week, would be issued within 10 days.

He said the government also planned to restructure the Kuwaiti economy to make the country less dependent on oil income. This is a necessity, he said, because the oil well fires will seriously affect Kuwait's oil industry for at least the next three years.



A Kuwaiti fireman hoses down a wrecked car and truck in the compound of the Salmiah police station in Kuwait City. An explosion caused the fire yesterday.

Kuwaiti storeroom of weapons explodes

By GREG MYRE
Associated Press Writer

KUWAIT CITY — A storeroom packed with captured Iraqi weapons blew up yesterday, touching off a chain of explosions that rained hot metal on a terrified neighborhood for more than an hour.

The blasts apparently were set off by a small cluster bomb that fell off a shelf in a tin shed at the Salmiah police station, according to Kuwaiti soldiers at the building.

The explosion started a raging fire that sent fragments of grenades, mortars and other weapons whistling into the air like fireworks display. Some of the shrapnel landed on the roof of an adjacent apartment building from where an Associated Press reporter and photographer witnessed the blaze.

"I thought it was a military attack,"

said one Kuwaiti soldier who was in the police station at the time.

"We sealed off the doors until we realized the explosions were coming from the station itself," said the soldier, speaking on condition of anonymity.

No one was seriously hurt in the explosion, but several trucks were gutted, the police station suffered fire damage, and hundreds of shell casings and pieces of shrapnel littered the surrounding streets.

The Kuwaiti military was storing captured Iraqi arms and some weapons from the U.S.-led coalition in a tin shed just outside the station door.

The shed — which measured about 15 square feet — was filled waist-high with assault rifles, cases of live rounds, anti-aircraft guns, and crates of hand grenades and rocket-propelled grenades, the soldiers said.

The soldiers returned to the burning

"It was louder than anything we heard during the war."

— Salah al-Karim

building to save some weapons.

Terrified residents fled apartment buildings adjacent to the police station in the working-class neighborhood of Salmiah. Residents of one building 100 feet from the fire were too afraid to exit the front gate — men passed screaming women and children over the top of a six-foot back wall.

"It was louder than anything we heard during the war," said Salah al-Karim. "We were frightened and didn't know what was happening."

Fire trucks arrived at the station but

couldn't fight the blaze because the city still has no pumped water.

Several times the fire began to burn itself out, only to be refueled by a new batch of explosives that sent more shrapnel into the air.

"It was too dangerous to put all the weapons in one room," said Saad al-Saadoun, a medical student who was examining prisoners at the jail when the blasts began. "Thank God no one was hurt."

Al-Saadoun said the jail's three detainees were safely evacuated.

U.S. soldiers arrived at the scene shortly afterward and detonated a rocket-propelled grenade that landed on a street more than 600 feet from the police station.

Unlike the Kuwaitis, the U.S. military has been taking captured ammunition to a field south of the city and exploding the ordnance daily.

Corporate recruiters not seeking as many Class of '91 college graduates

By KAREN BALL
AP Labor Writer

WASHINGTON — Corporate recruiters courted Gavin Sasson with lavish parties and free transportation when he graduated with an economics degree in 1984. Now, about to receive a master's degree, Sasson is being told, "Next time you're in New York, give us a call."

Members of the Class of '91, from engineers to marketing majors to budding young business executives, are finding that a degree doesn't guarantee a job — especially in a recession.

"We get a double whammy in recession time, because fewer companies are coming to campus to recruit, but more students are coming in for our services," said Jack Rayman, director of career development and placement at Penn State University.

Since June, 1.6 million Americans were added to the unemployment rolls as the jobless rate grew from 5.3 percent to 6.5 percent.

"These people who got laid off had college degrees, and now they're competing against the new college grads," said Patrick Scheetz, director of the Collegiate Employment Research Institute at Michigan State University.

Scheetz recently completed a study that found job offerings for college graduates have declined by about 23 percent over the past two years.

"Even in engineering, where opportunities have been quite bountiful, the graduates have faced a difficult time," Scheetz said.

Rayman agreed that the job market is tighter for these "technocrat" students.

"But when you say engineering is soft, I don't think you can catastrophize too much," he said. "Instead of having 12 offers at a lot of exotic locations, they might have one or two offers

in a place where they don't necessarily want to be."

Other students still hotly pursued are those in health care fields, such as nursing, pharmaceutical marketing or hospital management, according to career counselors and employment experts.

Penn State has suffered a drop of about 10 percent in on-campus recruitment this year, especially for liberal arts students who might be trying to break into the business world through management training programs or sales management positions, Rayman said.

"They're having to take the search to the employer . . . rather than having the luxury of sitting here in Happy Valley and having the recruiters come to campus," Rayman said.

Schools nationwide also are reporting similar declines in recruiting.

At Georgetown University's graduate business program, career counselors are advising upcoming graduates to look beyond traditional Fortune 500 companies.

"We're urging them to take a look at non-profit companies and at companies that are not necessarily the glamour industries, like waste management," said Steve Fleckenstein, who counsels Georgetown's MBA students.

John Onto, an associate dean at Georgetown's graduate business school, said, "The people with powerhouse resumes who have flexibility are still very much in demand."

But he said that as the school year slips away, students are becoming less choosy.

Sasson, who will receive an MBA from Georgetown this spring, recalls what happened when he received an undergraduate degree from Duke University seven years ago.

Now, he wonders if it was a mistake to leave his \$70,000-a-year job to return to school.

"Despite all these interviews, nothing happens. Companies are getting rid of people instead of hiring," Sasson said.

Pittsburgh fire kills 11-year-old boy

PITTSBURGH (AP) — An 11-year-old boy who escaped a fire Saturday in his family's home was killed when he went back inside the burning building, authorities said.

The boy, Damion Binnon, his parents, and two younger brothers escaped the blaze that broke out in the duplex that the family had moved into Tuesday. A short time later, his father noticed he was missing.

"He looked behind and Damion wasn't there any more," said police Officer Paul Wolak.

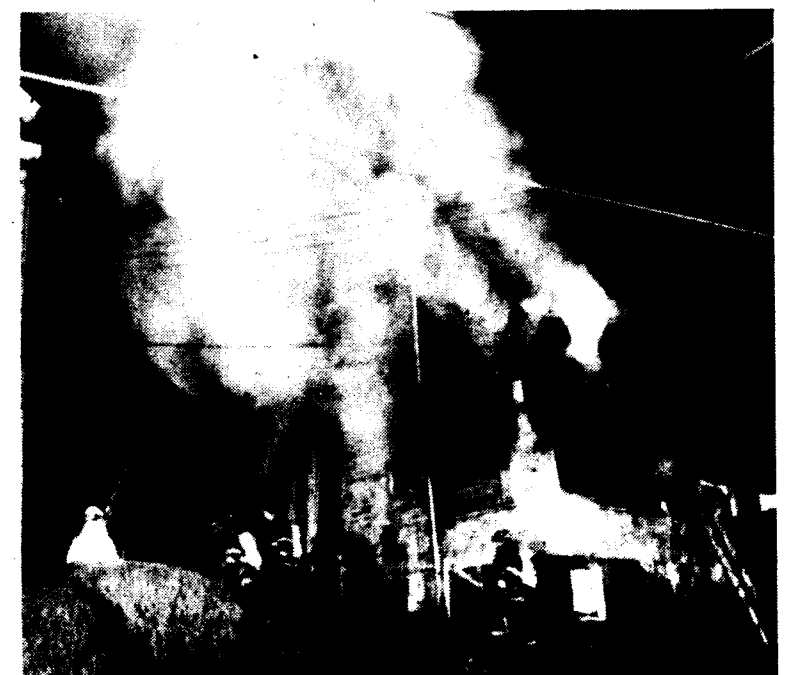
It was not known why the boy went back inside, said Wolak. "There was no pet in there or anything," he said.

The boy's parents, Eloy and Kathy Binnon, who is seven months pregnant, and brother Brandon, 9, suffered smoke inhalation and were in serious condition at Mercy Hospital, nursing supervisor Elizabeth Gribik said. The father also suffered first-degree burns.

Another brother, Eloy, 2½, was hospitalized in good condition.

In a separate house fire, two girls died Friday night in the Pittsburgh suburb of Wilkinsburg, authorities and neighbors said.

The children, Shantel Tarver, 6, and Lenisha Long, 4, died when flames and intense heat kept rescuers



Smoke pours from a burning house in Pittsburgh's Hill District. Firefighters put out the fire Saturday, which killed 11-year-old Damion Binnon.

from entering the home. A third girl, 3-year-old Ukayla Tarver, walked out of the house to safety.

The relationship between the three girls was not immediately known.

Ukayla and her mother, Viola Lockley, were treated at a hospital for burns.

The cause of both fires was under investigation.