

Gates says little in Microsoft trial

1 WASHINGTON — Bill Gates was out of his element, to be sure. Given to blunt talk as the combative chairman of Microsoft Corp., Gates had to weigh his words cautiously under the probing of two government adversaries.

For almost three days this summer, in a windowless conference room at Microsoft headquarters near Seattle, Gates resisted them. It was 20 hours of verbal jousting between the world's richest man and the government's top lawyers bent on proving him a predatory monopolist.

Gates, admired and loathed for Microsoft's remarkable influence within the technology industry, won't testify to defend his company during the historic antitrust trial in Washington, now entering its second week.

But he is such a central figure that government lawyers plan to show videotapes Tuesday of hours of his pretrial depositions, then to release the tape to television stations as evidence in the case.

In the tapes, Gates discusses his fears that Internet software by rival Netscape Communications Corp., coupled with a new programming language called Java that doesn't require Windows, threatened his lucrative Windows operating system.

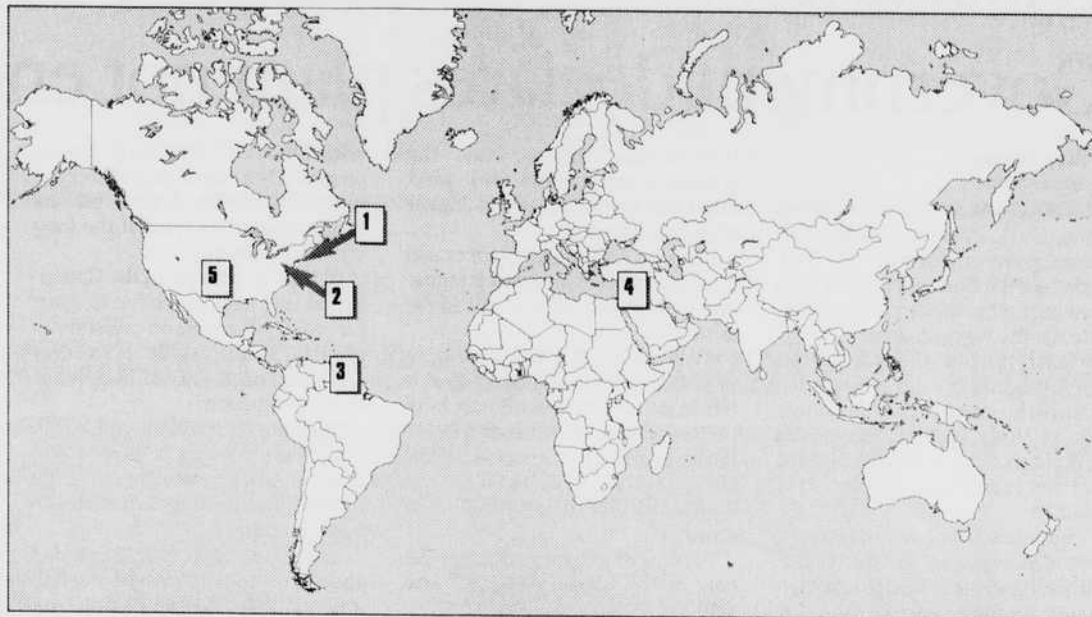
The government contends Microsoft struck back against Netscape, first by offering illegally to divide the Internet software market, and then with a no-holds campaign to "crush" the company wielding its role as the maker of Windows, used by more than 80 percent of the nation's desktop computers.

The spectacle of millions of TV viewers watching Gates on tape bobbing and weaving through tough questions could be a public-relations disaster for Microsoft, even if Gates testifies to nothing incriminating.

Worldwide deflation worries economists

2 NEW YORK — In Brazil, once the problem child of hyperinflation, prices for food and clothing are sliding. Apartment owners who refused to lease units during the days of high inflation are now slashing rents.

In Japan, food, beer and house-



hold goods cost less than a year ago. And prices for commercial land are off a staggering 63 percent from 1992.

In China, the government has ordered companies trying to get rid of excess goods to halt price wars.

From Asia to Latin America, consumers once victimized by surging prices are experiencing a new phenomenon: lower prices on a broad range of items, from crude oil, gasoline and farm commodities to computers and new cars.

"For the first time in decades, there is widespread price deflation going on in much of the world," said Allen Sinai, chief global economist at Primark Decision Economics.

Tumbling prices offer relief to consumers weary of paying more every year for many products. But just like inflation, its flip side, deflation, or falling prices, can pose risks and uncertainties for consumers, companies and the global economy.

With the Asian financial turmoil pushing many economies into recession or at the edge of one, analysts worry about the consequences of a serious bout of deflation, the kind that would pull prices down not only for food and clothing, but also for stocks, houses and other assets.

Cleric supports abortion for some rape victims

3 CAIRO, Egypt — A top Muslim cleric has called on the government to permit abortions for unmarried rape victims, a rul-

ing that is the first of its kind in Egypt.

Sheik Nasr Farid Wasel, Egypt's grand mufti, did not address whether abortions should be permitted for married rape victims. In Egypt, abortion is illegal unless the pregnancy is life threatening.

Adel Ahmed, the deputy health minister, said the government has no immediate plans to change its law on abortion.

Wasel, one of Egypt's top two clerics, also ruled that government clinics should be allowed to perform operations on rape victims to reconstruct their hymens and "restore" their virginity.

It can be difficult for women who are not virgins to find husbands in Egypt's conservative Islamic society.

The ruling, which was issued last week, has no legal weight, but Wasel is deeply respected by conservative Muslims.

"The girl who is raped and loses her virginity sustains great moral and psychological damage," Wasel told the government-owned Rose el-Youssef weekly, which hit newsstands on Sunday.

"The government, which failed to provide her with protection, should do everything possible to help her restore not only her honor but her virtue," Wasel said.

Israelis protest Mideast peace deal

4 OFRA, West Bank — Jewish settlers demonstrated across

the West Bank on Sunday, vowing to scuttle a new Mideast peace deal that gives more land to Palestinians.

The protests came hours before Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu returned to Israel, hoping to convince hard-liners that the deal he made with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat was the best possible. Netanyahu was expected to face a no-confidence motion Monday in parliament.

Arriving back in Israel to a red-carpet welcome, the Israeli leader said security concessions won from the Palestinians during the nine-day summit outside Washington would justify ceding more West Bank land.

"We are returning after a long and difficult effort to bring ... security and peace to Israel," he said. "We achieved such a deal — we achieved the best deal."

Arafat, meanwhile, said in Cairo that he hoped the new accord would be "accurately and faithfully" implemented. Arafat's comment, made at Cairo airport after briefing President Hosni Mubarak on the accord, reflects Arab skepticism that Netanyahu will live up to the agreement to withdraw from another 13 percent of West Bank land.

Arafat also briefed officials in Algeria on the new pact Sunday. He then flew to Morocco and was to travel later to Saudi Arabia.

At least 20 settlers — once Netanyahu's staunchest supporters — were arrested and two police officers were hurt in Sunday's widespread demonstrations, including one outside Israel's inter-

national airport after Netanyahu's arrival.

Memorial begun for Oklahoma City bombing

5 OKLAHOMA CITY — Thousands came to the site of the Oklahoma City bombing Sunday to break ground for a memorial to the 168 people who died, with Vice President Al Gore digging the first scoop of dirt.

"The people who died here were victims of one of the cruelest visitations of evil this nation has ever seen," Gore said. "But we offer them today not pity but honor, for as much as any soldier who ever fought in any war, they paid the price of our freedom."

After speeches by Gore, Attorney General Janet Reno and other officials, Gore took a shiny shovel and dug it into the ground where the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building once stood.

He handed the shovel to young Clint Seidl, who was in the second grade when his mother died in the 1995 bombing. She worked for the Secret Service, and Clint said he wants to do the same. Gore said several agents wanted to talk with Clint after the ceremony.

Gore told those who ever wanted to demean the work of federal workers to "come here and be silent and remember."

One after another, people grasped the shovel Gore passed to them and, dressed in their Sunday best, took a turn tossing a chunk of soil into a pile.

"Being down here always takes us back," said Diane Leonard, whose husband died in the April 19, 1995 bombing that also left 500 injured.

The \$24.1 million memorial will include a reflecting pool, an interactive museum and 168 stone chairs built atop glass bases, one for each of the people killed.

A portion of the chain-link fence that surrounds the bomb site will be kept as part of the memorial. The fence has become a shrine, with visitors leaving mementos.

The fence holds "the real story of our democracy. This is how we feel," Gore said.

While many survivors and relatives had gone into the ceremony with mixed feelings, some said it was time to move ahead.

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