
Moscow Councilman on U.S. Tour

Americans were lied to about the Moscow massacre

Elected Moscow City Councilman Viktor Kuzin arrived in the United States on Oct. 17 for a nationwide tour sponsored by the Schiller Institute, to explain to U.S. citizens and the press what really happened in Russia during the period from Sept. 21 through Oct. 4, when Boris Yeltsin dissolved the Constitution and elected bodies.

Mr. Kuzin, who is the city council vice chairman of the Committee on Law, Justice, and the Defense of Civil Rights and the chairman of its Subcommittee on the Defense of Civil Rights, helped found the Democratic Union in 1988, the first party in opposition to the Communist Party in the Soviet Union. In 1992, Kuzin, along with eight other city councilmen, released a letter exposing the KGB's hand behind accusations that surfaced during the U.S. presidential campaign that Bill Clinton had had contacts with the KGB during a visit to the Soviet Union 20 years earlier. In July 1993, six of those same city councilmen released a letter to President Clinton requesting his intervention on behalf of U.S. political prisoner Lyndon LaRouche. Kuzin, a signer to the letter, released it to the U.S. press at a July 29 press conference in Washington, during a week-long visit, in which he met with numerous congressmen and government officials to express concern over the LaRouche case (see EIR, Aug. 13 and Aug. 20). Kuzin was most recently a signer to the open letter to President Clinton which appeared as an advertisement in the Washington Post and the New York Times.

As he describes below, he was arrested on Oct. 3, in the course of the "Yeltsin coup." After he was released, he made the decision to return to the United States, in order to give an on-the-ground view of what was going on in Moscow—a view, which is far different from what Americans have been fed by the media.

On Oct. 22, before leaving for a national tour, including St. Paul, Minnesota, Chicago, Baltimore, Los Angeles, and Houston, he gave a press briefing in Washington at the National Press Club. What follows is taken from his remarks, which were translated from the Russian by Rachel Douglas.

I'm particularly happy to speak here today. The very fact that I was able to come to Washington was possible thanks to the active efforts of American human rights defenders, who came out in defense of the rights, this time, not just of private citizens, but of elected officials in Russia. On Oct. 3, at 10

p.m., I and four other deputies of the Mossovet, the Moscow city council, were arrested by KGB special forces in the course of carrying out our duties in defense of the constitutional order in Russia. We were sent to prison and treated rather roughly. It wasn't clear what was going to happen to us. What happened to us, happened on orders of people loyal to Yeltsin. According to the Constitution, which he cancelled, and the activity of the Parliament, which he broke up, he is today a usurper and dictator.

This is an unusual point of view on this matter for the United States today, and therefore, I'd like to go into some more detail on the nature of the Yeltsin regime during the last two years and the circumstances of the events which occurred between Sept. 21 and Oct. 4 in Moscow. And I would like to touch on the deeper social and economic processes which provide the basis for characterizing these events in a very specific way.

Yeltsin and his entourage, the entire vertical apparatus of the Executive branch, which is the only branch of power we have left, have put themselves above the law. The personnel of these structures are former functionaries of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). This is the case for the immediate entourage, the presidential apparatus of Yeltsin, and key members of his government, and this also applies to practically all the administrative leaders—that is, mayors of cities and leaders of regions. And so, it would be no exaggeration to say that the former committees of the CPSU were simply renamed into the Executive branch of government of cities, and the personnel virtually *in toto* shifted into these administrative bodies.

At the end of 1990 and the beginning of 1991, everybody in Russia hoped that Yeltsin, having become President of Russia, would begin genuine reforms in the interests of broad layers of the population, and it was in this spirit that he was making statements in that period. That's why he received the support of the Parliament, which exerted no small efforts to help elect Yeltsin President, and he received from it very broad powers. This is the same Parliament which Yeltsin has now broken up.

This Parliament turned the current Constitution of Russia into a quite worthy document, according to modern western standards. It should be particularly underscored that the Constitution which Yeltsin called "Brezhnevite," or "Stalinist,"



Elected Moscow City Councilman Viktor Kuzin, accompanied by translator Rachel Douglas of the Schiller Institute, addresses the National Press Club in Washington on Oct. 22 before starting his national tour of the United States.

or “totalitarian,” was amended to incorporate all the basic principles of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. These norms acquired the status of being valid directly in Russian jurisprudence. To verify that this is the case, you need only open the Constitution and read its Chapter 5. The Constitution was also radically amended in the area concerning the right to local self-governance. These rights were substantially broadened. The Constitution, which Yeltsin has now trampled on, provided for new constitutional rights, which had not existed hitherto in Russia, and new institutions, such as the Constitutional Court—which now also has been abolished by Yeltsin—but which, during its relatively short life, succeeded in adopting numerous decisions that significantly expanded human rights in Russia.

Immediately after Yeltsin’s victory in the presidential elections in June 1991, he forgot all his promises and the obligations he had voluntarily assumed before the people. Rather than, according to the appropriate laws of Russia and its Constitution, launching a reform of the totalitarian economy of Russia along the lines of transferring state property into the hands of a broad layer of entrepreneurs, he, in effect, began to hand over this property to the *nomenklatura*, the former Communist hierarchy, to let them have a monopoly on it.

Today, that property which has been privatized in Russia is by and large controlled by the *nomenklatura* and mafia structures. This is not an accidental coalition, because the *nomenklatura* as a social group is criminal by its inherent nature; and, because, as you know, the *nomenklatura* never paid attention to any laws, but considered itself above the law. It was along these lines that Yeltsin used the broad

powers that he’d obtained from the Parliament. So, we had the conflict which arose almost immediately after Yeltsin became President.

The process of concentration of property in the hands of the narrow *nomenklatura* group headed by Yeltsin, on the one hand, began to move ahead very rapidly. And on the other hand, you had the progressive impoverishment of the vast majority of the Russian population, which, on the eve of the most recent events in Moscow, had reached a catastrophic level. I think perhaps I need not go into this in a lot more detail, because you have the information. But, nevertheless, I would like to state at least one example: The subsistence minimum today in Russia is equal to a monthly wage of 90,000 rubles, while the average monthly wage does not exceed 50,000 rubles. Thus, somewhere between 80 and 90% of the population of Russia is below the poverty line. Now, of course, this characteristic of Russian society at this time shows rather clearly that Yeltsin does not have, and could not have, broad support from society, although there have been illusions on this account, both in Russia and in the West, in connection with the referendum held on April 25 of this year.

Western misperceptions of Yeltsin

In the West, two mistakes were made, in thinking that Yeltsin had received genuine support in the referendum. First of all, there was a very careless attitude in the analysis of the actual numbers, the hard data, from which it follows perfectly clearly that Yeltsin did not receive the support not only of the majority of the population, as he maintains, but not even the support of the majority of the voters. A little bit more

than 30% of them voted for his economic reform course. But the very fact that any people at all had come out and expressed some support for the reform course—about which, by the way, they didn't know anything whatsoever—shows the level of consciousness exhibited by Russian citizens at that point. The other aspect concerning the referendum, is that the West did not take into account the traditional high level of political engagement around such a political vote in Russia; and that, what might seem to be a fine level of support for measures in the West—30% or so—is really very low for Russia, and should rather have put people on guard, rather than reassure them.

Therefore the West continued to support precisely Yeltsin as a person, an individual, and not democratic transformations as such.

At the same time, and also because he was receiving such support, Yeltsin considered himself more and more free from any duty to respect the law. There began to be publicly disseminated by social scientists and others particularly devoted to Yeltsin, the notion that it was necessary to have a certain kind of primitive accumulation of capital in Russia, but in the name of the alleged necessity of having such accumulation, absolutely unacceptable violations of the law. I'm not talking about the violation of some old Stalinist laws. Many of these laws, indeed, were very artificial, and did impede the development of society, especially as concerns property relations. But, what I'm talking about here is that people began to speak out in favor of such things as bribe-taking, as normal phenomena. Gavriil Popov, one of the ideologues on Yeltsin's side, did particularly well in this regard, when he virtually proposed to legalize bribe-taking and to establish a table of fees for bribes.

Insofar as these types of processes were promoted in the economy and in society during this year and a half, you have had a very rapid growth of the clout of criminal structures in society. It has now become common practice for mafia representatives to collect protection money from companies and firms in the city; and those who don't pay up have been annihilated physically. During the last year alone, about 10 commercial bank directors have been killed in Moscow. As a result, by August, the scope of criminal activity had become so broad that the authorities had to admit that the situation was not under their control and that they had been forced, in order to maintain some modicum of order in society, to enter into negotiations with the mafia structures.

I have brought two articles from the press that confirm this: One is the interview in *Izvestia* of Aug. 6, 1993 with a law enforcement official of the Moscow mayoralty, Sergei Dontsov; and then a second interview given by the same individual to the newspaper *Glasnost*.

These phenomena could hardly be seen as desirable by normal people. And so, from the beginning, both the Russian Federation Parliament and the Mossovet, the Moscow City Council, demanded strict observance of the law and respect

for the rights of citizens. But they got the following objections in reply—and accusations, as well: It was asserted that both the Russian Parliament and Mossovet were actually hindering reforms and wanted to return to the old Communist times.

This is pure demagogy.

The nomenklatura/mafia versus the democrats

As a result, as you know, the conflict between the Parliament and the Executive branch in Russia essentially was a conflict between the democratic line and the *nomenklatura/mafia* line, going so far that it acquired the nature of open warfare. Now the two sides in this war used different means: The Parliament appealed to the law, but the Yeltsin group resorted to their habitual means—disinformation, slander, and provocation.

At the end of the spring and the beginning of the summer, the Parliament had been forced to launch a number of investigations of people in the immediate entourage of Yeltsin. I think that the results of these investigations are known to you, and you are informed that serious charges were raised in the course of them, against such high-ranking people as Shumeiko and Poltoranin. Serious charges would have come up against other officials as well, all of which damaged the image of Yeltsin and his entourage as reformers, as honest people, and moral people. Therefore, an increasing readiness, matured on his part, to resort to more decisive measures to remove the lawful Parliament, as an obstacle to the final seizure of power by the group acting in the interests of the former *nomenklatura* and the mafia clans.

Yeltsin, several times, beginning in December 1992, tried to do this, but neither on Dec. 10 of last year nor on March 20 of this year did he succeed, because his plans became known to the Parliament, and he had not yet succeeded in installing his people in the leadership of the key ministries, such as the Ministries of Security and of Internal Affairs. You know that between May and September of this year, Yeltsin resolved that problem, and he used various pretexts to remove Interior Minister Dunayev and Security Minister Barannikov. This prepared the way for the final blow against the constitutional order in Russia.

Of course, Yeltsin understood perfectly well that the population would not welcome such a step, and therefore, immediately after he announced the dissolution of Parliament, on Sept. 21, troops were brought into the city. By Oct. 3 and 4, there were as many as 40-50,000 troops in the city. Initially, these were Internal troops, the special forces of the Dzerzhinsky Division, and then regular Army units from the Taman Division and others. It is also the case, that neither among the Internal troops, nor among the Army, did Yeltsin have partisans on whom he could totally rely. He relied, rather, on individual units headed by people personally loyal to him.

On the whole, the Moscow police force did not support what he was doing, and therefore, for the purpose of scatter-

ing the supporters of the Constitution and the Parliament, from Sept. 21 through Oct. 3, he brought in armed units from various cities throughout Russia to break up the people who were peacefully demonstrating in support of the Parliament during that week. They were the so-called OMON units, special forces, brought in from Yekaterinburg, Nizhny Novgorod, Pskov, Tomsk, and some other cities. They violently broke up demonstrations and beat the participants. This was evidently a deliberate tactic of provoking civilians.

I find it very indicative for the evaluation of these events, that, starting on Sept. 21, Yeltsin, according to Article 121.6 of the Constitution, actually lost his authority as President of the country, and this devolved upon Vice President Rutskoy. And therefore, attempts on Yeltsin's part to appeal to law enforcement bodies juridically can be termed an attempt to carry out an armed coup d'état, while the actions of citizens and of the parliamentary deputies to defend the Constitution have to be seen as fully legal.

Target: to destroy the Parliament

Probably, the main course of events from these days is more or less known to you, but let me focus in on just a number of details, which, in my view, will help your evaluation. Yeltsin evidently set himself the task beforehand of a physical crackdown on the Parliament; and, from the very beginning, it appears, intended to use big force, the military. But this would have to be justified somehow before the eyes both of the Russian public and of the world. Therefore, demagoguery was launched, to the effect that it was just communist extremists and revanchists and fascist grouplets that were supporting the Parliament; that the population didn't care what happened to the Parliament or was on the President's side.

Indeed, there were a lot of red flags at the Parliament building. But it is also the case that at the demonstrations in Moscow during those days, including at the White House, there were large numbers of people who are indifferent to communism or very hostile to it, and who were supporting the Parliament and the Constitution as a counterweight to possible dictatorship. These people could not come out under the tricolor, which is usually associated with democracy, because this has become the symbol of the Executive branch, and is associated with Yeltsin, whom they didn't accept. So, therefore, people would assemble under these red flags, not in order to support communist groups, but as a form of expressing protest against Yeltsin and his partisans.

I would like to say something also about the role of the chauvinist-nationalist groupings. You get a very interesting picture here: Take the National Patriotic Front, Pamyat, headed by Dmitri Vasilyev, which has been written about a lot in the United States. The fascist organization was supported by Yeltsin. If you look at the early phases of this organization's activity, you find that it was supported by the Moscow mayoralty, and I, as someone whose business it was to be on

top of these questions, can't think of a single instance where the Moscow mayoralty denied Pamyat a permit to carry out demonstrations. Just about a year ago, the Pamyat front received permission to hold its demonstrations on the steps of the White House, the parliament building, and this also, evidently, was not without its purpose. This made it possible to associate in people's eyes, this grouplet with the Parliament.

You get a similar picture with the so-called Barkashov group, which is a militant paramilitary chauvinist group, although it's numerically very small, and does not have any broad support in the population. This group also was able to function legally with help from the Moscow mayoralty, where it got its official registration. And with the permission of the Moscow mayoralty, the Barkashov people were able to do their paramilitary training, to practice hand-to-hand combat and shooting, on the training grounds of the Moscow police. This group, from the beginning, when the White House was blockaded by troops, showed up there, and actually set up their operations also inside the White House.

As you can imagine, the blockaded Russian Parliament could not make decisions on who was going to show up outside the building: There were very diverse people there, whose political views were quite contradictory and who were united by just one thing—loyalty to the Constitution and belief in preserving the Parliament.

These factors indicate that Yeltsin had formed a plan of provocations to discredit the parliamentary structures and smear their supporters as extremist bandits, and thus, to use this to justify the subsequent use of violence.

In those critical days, Yeltsin did not appeal to the population for support, but he appealed to the West for support. There were not substantial demonstrations in support of Yeltsin during these days, while there were constant peaceful demonstrations in support of the Parliament that were being broken up violently.

The denouement is known to you: I would just add that the immediate pretext for the use of violent force against the Parliament was, again, two provocations by his forces—or maybe more than two. The first was near the White House the evening of Oct. 3, when the large demonstration, before which the police lines had broken, was shot at from the Moscow mayoralty building by forces loyal to Yeltsin. Something very similar occurred at the Ostankino building, when, again, the first to open fire were military units inside the television center. Extremely reliable information has come in on one provocation, which is the shooting of the Itar-Tass building on the evening of Oct. 3 by snipers of the Taman Division. The regular police guard of the Tass building returned fire: Several snipers were killed; one was arrested. And that sniper confessed that he had been ordered to shoot at the Itar-Tass building by the command of the division, in order to destabilize the situation in the city.

Today's *Washington Post* has a fresh, further story on

the role that the Taman Division played during the events, in support of Yeltsin.

After the Parliament building was shelled, there began arrests and detentions, and shootings of the people who had defended it. The people who were killed were armed defenders of the Parliament. Deputies were detained and were beaten. The leader of the Parliament, Speaker Khasbulatov, and Acting President Rutskoy were taken to Lefortovo Prison.

Yeltsin is stuck, as to what to do with these people, because there's no legal basis for their conviction for anything. But, at the same time, it would be very undesirable for Yeltsin to let these people go free.

Under these circumstances, Yeltsin has proposed to conduct free elections on Dec. 12, but de facto a state of emergency is still in effect in Russia, especially Moscow. As you know, several opposition publications were shut down; these were mainly the communist opposition. But, the activity of the democratic opposition to Yeltsin is seriously impeded and virtually impossible as well. Political censorship continues. The opposition does not have access to the electronic media. The time allowed for drawing up slates and collecting the requisite signatures is extremely short, and for all intents and purposes, will exclude the opposition from taking part in the elections.

The partisans of Yeltsin, on the other side, have very favorable circumstances to campaign. As a rule, many of those who are on the slates of the bloc Democratic Choice are Yeltsin government officials, so they can use their office for access to TV, for financing, and so forth.

So, it cannot be said that free elections could take place under these circumstances—that out of these elections, democracy would emerge. Yeltsin will obtain a loyal Parliament, which in any case is slated to have very limited authority; essentially it is not even going to be a Parliament, but more of an advisory body for the President, which, *in extremis*, he can also dissolve by dictate.

I would like to draw special attention to the threat hanging over deputies, as well as ordinary citizens, who defended the Constitution. There were some military units, which, on Oct. 3 and 4, were moving toward Moscow to help the Parliament; they were intercepted and physically annihilated. Essentially, civil war has begun in Russia, and the situation now, after the bloody victory achieved by Yeltsin, is, if anything, even more difficult than it was before this coup. Yeltsin also has the major problem of his relations with the population, the majority of which does not understand what he's doing and doesn't accept it, and is suffering very badly from the policy Yeltsin is carrying out.

I think I would end there and invite your questions.

Who is Aleksandr Rutskoy?

First of all, about Rutskoy: I heard reports that he harbored ideas to reestablish the Soviet Union, and that a lot of the ex-Soviet states are very worried that if he were to get

into power, he was going to reestablish the Soviet Union. Doesn't this indicate to you that Russia is not really ripe for democracy?

This would be a complex question, but so would the answer be; but let me try. And I think some of the written material you have demonstrates that what I am going to say is right. I am referring, in particular, to Rutskoy's speech before the 10th Congress of People's Deputies, which was taking place in the blockaded White House. Rutskoy, taking into account all the specifics of him as an individual, nevertheless, has been an advocate of a constitutional and lawful resolution of the problems of the state.

And thus, despite what personal views Rutskoy might have had with respect to relations both with eastern European countries that were not part of the former Soviet Union and with the Near Abroad (that is, countries that were), some of what Rutskoy was saying, I believe, was provoked by very real problems which were not his doing: for example, the state of our military, and particularly, the condition that those military people are living in, who were previously stationed in eastern Europe, and have been withdrawn under agreements. Now these people have virtually no means physically to exist. Actually the *Washington Post* discusses this in some detail.

The other such problem is the huge number of people who have suddenly found themselves living in foreign countries, whose roots are in Russia. This is tens of millions of people, the Russian-ethnic population. These people cannot always and don't always want to enter the life of, now, a foreign country. But they're left with no choice, because there is nobody ready to greet them with open arms in Russia, and there exist no state programs to help them establish themselves, if they decided that they should come and live in Russia. Yeltsin says, well, there's no money. But at the same time we know that the national wealth of Russia is being looted to the tune of tens of millions of dollars, which is going into the pockets of the mafia and the representatives of the old Communist *nomenklatura*. This is the only layer that hasn't lost anything in this situation. I don't think I've encountered a single unemployed former secretary of a CPSU party committee.

I still wanted to address the issue of Mr. Rutskoy, then: Do you still believe he advocates taking over these areas where there are ex-Russians, or—?

No, absolutely not. By the way, you must understand that Rutskoy did not voluntarily get into politics. He's a soldier and follows orders, so, a lot depends on the level of intellectual and moral development of the people running the country, and also the Army.

Will you go back to Russia?

Of course, I'm returning! What are you talking about? I am not a political emigré and I have no intention of becoming one.