

Germany, Japan warn of trouble in Russia

by Konstantin George and Kathy Wolfe

In language remarkably similar to the warnings issued by *EIR* during August, Konrad Porzner, the head of the German Intelligence Service, BND, warned in an interview on Sept. 9 with the daily *Kölner Express*, that a coup is coming in Russia to install an "authoritarian regime." Porzner cited the "catastrophic situation in the economy," which is threatening to unleash massive "social conflicts," stating that this collapse of the economy can weaken President Boris Yeltsin. He stressed: "We must therefore realize that forces are at work who want to establish an authoritarian regime."

This would be in reaction to the Russian crisis and its being heightened by "the inter-ethnic conflicts . . . along the borders of the former Soviet Union," in reference to Moldova, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. This vast conflict belt threatens to become far worse than the Balkans: As in the Community of Independent States (CIS), "there are available more weapons and heavier types of weapons than exist in the Balkans, one needs little imagination to recognize this highly explosive situation."

The BND warning came on the day of the Sept. 9 announcement in Moscow that Yeltsin had abruptly canceled his trip to Japan, which had been scheduled to begin Sept. 14. The cancellation was forced on him by the Russian state's highest organ of power, the Russian Security Council, a six-man body, four of whom represent the military and the military-industrial complex, identified by *EIR* as the organ to watch in the process of transition toward an authoritarian regime. These twin institutions of military and military-industrial power had always been in the forefront of the opposition against Yeltsin going to Japan and making any concessions concerning the four disputed Kurile Islands.

Yeltsin's position has been weakened by the radical economic reforms of acting Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar's government and the need to fend off attacks from nationalists, said Semyon Verbitsky, senior researcher at Russia's Oriental Studies Institute, Sept. 10. "Things are very dangerous for him—things are too tense for the visit," he told wire services.

Foreign policy coup

The first sign of what soon became a foreign policy coup by institutions pushing for an authoritarian regime emerged on the morning of Sept. 9, when Yeltsin suddenly canceled

a pre-trip press conference that day, citing "extremely complicated work" at the Russian Security Council. After that "extremely complicated" session, came the announcement that the Japan trip had been canceled. The question now being asked not only in Moscow, but in many western capitals, is, was this foreign policy coup a prelude to *the* coup?

Domestic crisis in Russia was the reason for the sensational move, all Japanese sources agreed. Japanese Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa's spokesman Koichi Kato confirmed Sept. 10 in Tokyo that Yeltsin had told Miyazawa by telephone the evening before that "domestic problems" had forced him to "postpone" the visit. Kato said the Russian leadership had thought that it would "not be good for the President to be away from Russia for a long time while the country faced severe economic difficulties."

Yutaka Akino, a Tsukuba University expert on Russia, said that ethnic conflicts and a worsening economic situation forced Yeltsin's hand. "This kind of cancellation is very rare in the history of Russian diplomacy," Akino told *Kyodo News*. "I think it indicates the degree to which things have deteriorated in Russia . . . and it is of utmost importance for Yeltsin now to establish a stable system at home."

"Yeltsin already risks losing power because of the Russian domestic situation, rampant inflation and discontent with economic reforms," said Takehiko Kamo of Tokyo University. "He would have been even more vulnerable to attack from conservative opponents after an unsuccessful trip to Japan and decided he couldn't take the risk." Japanese officials working on the visit said that Yeltsin probably decided to call it off after realizing he could offer little. "I think he couldn't get a consensus on the plan he proposed for resolving the territorial problem," said one.

Great Russians attack Japan

Valentyn Fyodorov, Russian governor of the Sakhalin regional government that rules the Kurile Islands, lost no time in making public propaganda for the authoritarian faction, by loudly blaming the Japanese for Yeltsin's decision. "Japan's hard-line stance on the islands is one of the factors," he told Japan's NHK-TV.

One communist organization planned "a day of defense for the four Kurile Islands," Tass/Itar news agency reported on Sept. 10, in cities across the country, had Yeltsin gone to Tokyo. It said the All-Russian Committee for the Defense of the Kuriles would picket the Japanese embassy in Moscow and hand an appeal to the Russian Foreign Ministry. Interfax news agency put out an opinion poll Sept. 8 saying 60% of Russians oppose returning the islands to Japan.

Yeltsin had scheduled a meeting with business leaders in Tokyo in hopes of encouraging Japanese investment. *Kyodo* news agency quoted Susumu Yoshida, managing director of Nissho Corp., a major Japanese trading house, as saying that the postponement could delay Japanese-Russian joint projects already under way in Russia's Far East.