

# Moscow's river of blood

*Rachel Douglas reports on the true extent of casualties from the October events, which is much greater than either Yeltsin or Christopher admit.*

A set vocabulary for describing the bloody events of Oct. 3-4 in Moscow is already in use in most American newspapers. The shelling of the Russian Parliament building has become an incident in which, at most, a few hundred people died. Boris Yeltsin's abrogation of the Constitution of the Russian Federation, his abolition of the Supreme Soviet and Congress of People's Deputies on Sept. 21, has become "a rebellion by lawmakers," or "the parliamentary uprising," in the words of the *Washington Post* of Nov. 7.

Maybe this doublespeak made it easier for Secretary of State Warren Christopher to maintain that his meeting with the Russian dictator, Boris Yeltsin, was "an endorsement of democracy and free-market reform in Russia," during Christopher's late October visit to Moscow. Or, maybe he didn't need an excuse. Christopher apparently had no trouble with Yeltsin's extraordinary assertion, that he had secured the path to democracy *by crushing the opposition*.

The secretary of state invoked ignorance of "the circumstances here," as he refused to answer a reporter's question about the lack of access to state-run TV and radio for candidates in the Dec. 12 elections called by Yeltsin, from slates other than those headed by his supporters. Christopher did not want "to deal in the nuances of a particular television policy that I am not fully informed about."

More and more reports are surfacing on the real magnitude of casualties on Monday, Oct. 4, when Russian Army tanks shelled the White House, seat of Russia's Parliament. Seen against the backdrop of those reports, Christopher's mission to support Yeltsin closely resembles that of the State Department's Lawrence Eagleburger and Brent Scowcroft of the National Security Council to Beijing, just a few weeks after the massacre at Tiananmen Square in 1989.

Unlike Eagleburger and Scowcroft, however, Christopher did not feel compelled to make a secret of U.S. support for the brutal acts of a dictatorial regime. He stood with Yeltsin, on Yeltsin's side of the river of blood that flowed through Moscow in early October.

## Thousands dead

Inside Russia and among some human rights activists in the West, it is believed that not hundreds, but thousands of

people died in Moscow from Sept. 21 through Oct. 4.

According to information compiled by elected deputies of the Moscow City Council, before they were arrested by pro-Yeltsin security forces on Oct. 3 and the council abolished, the first death occurred on Sept. 28. A man who was beaten by special security forces, deployed to break up street demonstrations in support of the Parliament, died in a Moscow hospital of his injuries.

On Sunday, Oct. 3, there were two major skirmishes in the city. After police lines ringing the White House fell back, a crowd of demonstrators surged around it. (The Parliament was in session, despite Yeltsin's ban, and despite the ringing of the building by troops and razor wire, and the cutoff of electricity, water, and heat.) Eyewitnesses report that the first shots into the crowd came from the Moscow mayoralty building next door, headquarters for Yeltsin's forces besieging the Parliament. (See article by Konstantin Chermnykh in *EIR*, Oct. 22, 1993 p. 39.) Earlier, shots had been fired into the air. There were a handful of casualties around the White House on Oct. 3.

At Ostankino television center, in northern Moscow, the fighting was heavier that evening. Various estimates put the number of dead there at around 150 people. Many victims were accidental onlookers, as was recounted in a dramatic eyewitness report published in *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* of Oct. 16, where a Moscow mother described how she and her young son barely escaped through a hail of bullets. The writer also strongly made the case that there was no organized "storm" of the TV station, but rather a boisterous crowd of demonstrators, into which bullets were fired first, from inside the Ostankino buildings.

At least six journalists were killed at Ostankino and elsewhere, leading to a widespread belief that pro-Yeltsin forces deliberately targeted them in order to minimize reporting on the events.

The question remains open, of how many people died at the White House on Oct. 4. Yeltsin evidently does not wish the matter to be discussed. When *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* appeared on Oct. 6 with two large blank spots on its front page, in place of articles forbidden by Yeltsin's censors, Moscow sources said that one of the missing articles was about the

number of casualties.

During the shelling of the White House by tank guns and other artillery pieces that Monday. Cable News Network at first broadcast that 400 to 500 people were believed dead inside the building already. Those numbers disappeared from subsequent broadcasts. On Oct. 7, the first official report put the number of corpses found there at only 49. By Oct. 8, Yeltsin staff spokesmen were giving the total number of dead in the clashes as 131. The official toll later rose to the vicinity of 200.

These figures were dubious from the outset. Eyewitness Chermnykh reported:

"There were about 3,000 people inside the White House when the attack started, and only 1,800 came out and surrendered. Therefore, a large number of people just disappeared. At the same time, some volunteers counted the corpses that were brought that day into the Moscow morgue: This number was 720 on the evening of Oct. 4. But the storm of the White House continued until the morning of Oct. 5. . . . Even after most deputies . . . surrendered, others continued to resist. And we don't know anything about what happened to these people."

The fate of a large number of young Internal Affairs soldiers, who put themselves at the disposal of the besieged Parliament, remains a mystery. Taped testimony of a member of Parliament, related by Svetlana Gannushkina in issue No. 40 of the human rights weekly *Ekspress Khronika*, raised this question a few days after the bloodshed:

"The Sofrinskaya brigade of Internal Troops came over to the side of the Parliament. This was around 1,000 men. The soldiers were disarmed and their weapons given to officers and Afghan war veterans [defending the Parliament], while the youngsters were dispatched to the 16th floor [of the White House]. . . . There were around 2,000 of us in the White House, sitting with candles, without food and water. At around 2:00 p.m. [on Oct. 4], tanks began to fire on the building, causing fearsome destruction. . . . There were constant artillery rounds, and everyone was afraid to come out. The 16th floor burned, where the boys from the Sofrinskaya brigade were. I still don't know what happened to them."

### Reckoning demanded

On Oct. 20, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* called for citizens to write to the editors about persons missing since the October events. It requested no anonymous reports. The paper was now officially freed from censorship, but publishing under a death threat; it was warned that Yeltsin's chief censor, Deputy Prime Minister Vladimir Shumeiko, wanted to ban or take over *Nezavisimaya*, on the pretext that it officially was chartered by the now banned Moscow City Council. But Editor-in-Chief Vitali Tretyakov placed a premium on bringing out what really happened Oct. 3 and 4.

*Nezavisimaya* published the first results on Oct. 30, under

the front-page headline, "How Many Corpses Were There in the White House? About 1,500, Says an Internal Affairs Officer."

The correspondent wrote:

"I am an officer of the Interior Troops, and for me it is a question of honor, to tell you what I know. The official authorities and the officious mass media are consciously covering up everything connected with the mass murder of those who were inside the White House. . . . There were around 1,500 corpses found there, women and children among them. They were taken thence in secret, through an underground tunnel . . . to the Krasnopresnenskaya metro station, and then outside the city, where they were burned. There was no question of identifying them. I don't know where they were burned. There were so many dead, because the tanks fired . . . cumulative action charges. The shock wave that formed when they exploded inside the building was so great, that the victims' heads exploded."

A second writer, Nikolai Nikitenko, compared the cover-up and disappearances of corpses in Moscow, to the assassination of President Kennedy in 1963, when "there was a file of coffins carrying the bodies of witnesses, and of those who got too close to the truth. May God save us!"

*Nezavisimaya's* report was covered in the German daily *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. On Nov. 3, the Paris daily *Le Monde* also picked up on the rising doubts in Moscow, about the fate of the dead.

The burning question, wrote Jan Krauze in *Le Monde*, is "the number of victims. The official account (around 140 deaths) is not taken seriously by anybody: The authorities had, originally, made known that this was not taking into account bodies found inside the 'White House,' before suddenly announcing that this figure was definitive. . . . There is much question, in certain editorial boards, about a letter addressed jointly to Boris Yeltsin by the ministers of defense, interior and security, and giving the number of 947 deaths; but no witness has seen this ostensible document with his own eyes. . . . The daily *Novaya Yezhednevnyaya Gazeta* has received the testimony of an employee from one of the cemeteries around Moscow, Khavansk, where 300 bodies were reportedly incinerated. Individuals who were at the White House until the middle of the afternoon of Monday, like [parliamentarian] Iona Andronov or the President of Kalmykia, affirm that at this time, already, there were several hundred dead."

On Nov. 6, *Le Monde* reported that the Movement for the Defense of Democracy and Human Rights in Moscow had demanded an independent investigation into the official count of dead in the October events. The group of Russian university staffers, headed by Aleksandr Burgalin, stated, "According to the official figures, around 200 Russian citizens are dead, but the deaths are much higher, according to non-official sources."

Already on Oct. 10, Zurich-based Russian human rights

activist Dr. Anatoli Koryagin proposed formation of a Committee for the Rights of Prisoners-Defenders of the Russian Parliament, with three goals: 1) establishing the names and number of the dead, wounded, and arrested in Russia in October 1993; 2) compiling a list of missing persons and discovering their fate; 3) ensuring the civil and human rights of persons arrested in connection with the events.

### Deputies threatened

Burgalin's group, according to *Le Monde*, also called upon the government to make public the names of all persons detained since Oct. 3.

Some members of the Russian Parliament are still unaccounted for, among them Col. Vitali Urazhtsev (ret.). The leader of the anti-communist reform group Shield—he was expelled from the Soviet Army in 1989 for founding the organization—Urazhtsev was active in opposing Yeltsin's coup from Sept. 21 through Oct. 4. During its first week, he was arrested and beaten once, but returned to the White House. He was seen to exit after the shelling on Oct. 4, and then disappeared.

In mid-October, relatives of Urazhtsev received a letter from him, saying he had gone underground. Urazhtsev warned that if he were found dead with a weapon in his hands, Defense Minister Pavel Grachev, Yeltsin's ally, would be to blame.

Unconfirmed reports received by acquaintances of Urazhtsev in Moscow, are that security forces had orders to shoot him on sight, if he were discovered.

There is also an abiding threat from national security forces and the Moscow city administration, under Yeltsin loyalist Mayor Yuri Luzhkov, to re-arrest members of the Moscow City Council who opposed the coup. Five deputies were held for two days without being charged, and released Oct. 5.

With special stridence, in interviews with the publications *Argumenty i Fakty*, No. 41, October 1993 and *Tverskaya*, 13, No. 40, Oct. 8-14, 1993, Luzhkov aides have called for the arrest of Moscow City Council Deputy Chairman Yuri P. Sedykh-Bondarenko. A jurist who worked in the Soviet Ministry of Internal Affairs in the late 1980s, Sedykh-Bondarenko was fired after speaking out against its practices. He left the Communist Party and was elected to the Moscow City Council in 1990, where he specialized in questions of legality.

In early October, Sedykh-Bondarenko publicly refuted the insinuations from the Moscow Mayoralty, that he had provoked violence during the crisis. In a precise statement, he accounted for his whereabouts and actions during the days in question and demanded legal action against the Mayoralty for slander. During the first week of November, however, Sedykh-Bondarenko was twice summoned for interrogation at the Russian Federation Ministry of Security, indicating a continuing interest in framing him up.

## Dutch Senate to vote on euthanasia rules

by Linda Everett

Long before U. S. newspapers sported front-page headlines featuring President Clinton's Nov. 7 suggestion that "living wills are a way to cut health care costs," Americans closely watched the euthanasia policies of the liberal government of the Netherlands. In fact, every facet of the "Who lives? Who dies?" debate that First Lady Hillary Clinton hopes to launch soon, will be shaped directly by several upcoming euthanasia decisions in the Dutch Parliament and Supreme Court.

After two decades of promoting the practice of so-called voluntary euthanasia, the Dutch government is now considering demands that handicapped newborns, the mentally ill, patients in coma, and others who cannot express a wish to be killed, should be killed anyway. As a recent American visitor to Amsterdam commented, "It sounded a lot like Nazi Germany in the '30s." What bitter gall for those Dutch who remember that their country's doctors once faced concentration camps and death rather than practice the euthanasia that the invading Nazis demanded. Some feel that nothing less than an international economic boycott of the Netherlands will bring Dutch leaders to their senses.

In a statement on Sept. 30 on the Canadian Supreme Court's ruling against the request of a 42-year-old woman to obtain physician-assisted suicide, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops commented that "to accept killing as a private matter of individual choice is to diminish respect for human life, to dull our consciences and to dehumanize society." Accepting this ever-expanding Dutch policy of euthanasia connotes not so much a "dulling of our consciences," as a deadening of them.

On Nov. 23, the Dutch Senate will vote on new rules for reporting the practice of euthanasia. The rules, which already passed the Second Chamber of the Parliament last February, allow physicians to kill outright just about anyone for any reason—whether the patient asked to die or not. Doctors are guaranteed virtual immunity from prosecution if they follow new governmental guidelines, which are full of loopholes. Any doctor who administers a lethal injection must inform the coroner and report that he or she has paid strict attention to all requirements. Not only is the coroner not allowed to do an autopsy to confirm the cause of death, but the public prosecutor is not allowed to carry out an independent investigation,