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CALIFORNIA'S STATEWIDE GAY NEWSWEEKLY

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New Leather
Columnist
Marc Webb
will begin
Next Week in
Section 2

Soviet Gays Fought Commie Crackdown

by Allen White

We are dancing in the streets," said Tom Boellstorff as he stood in the office of the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission in Moscow on Wednesday morning.

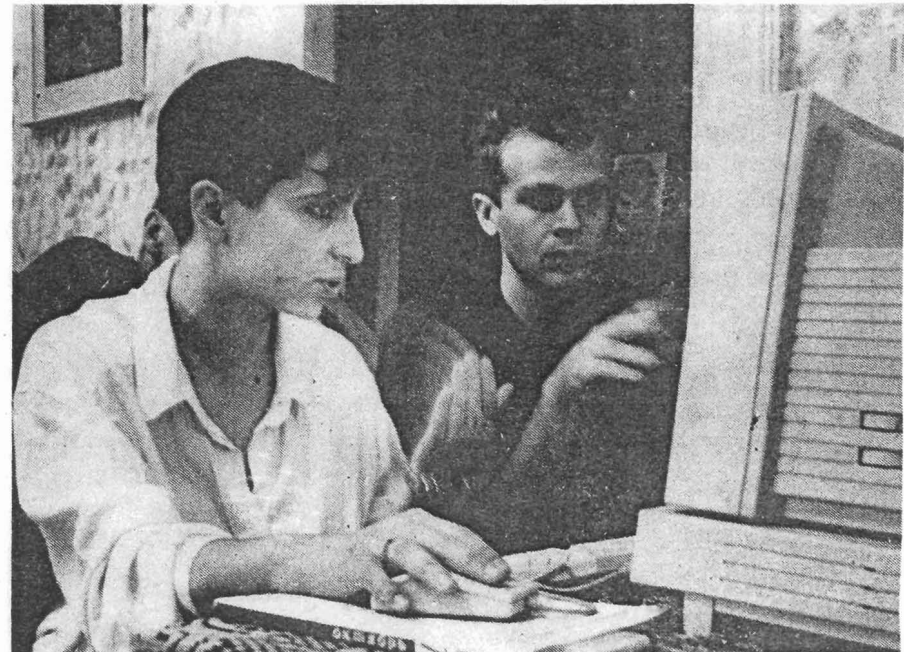
In an exclusive interview with the *Sentinel*, Boellstorff recalled how for almost 60 hours, gay men and women in Moscow had marshaled their forces in an incredible display of courage. Gay activists distributed statements made by Russian President Boris Yeltsin that were printed at Moscow's gay news-

paper.

Fear and panic was everywhere as reports surfaced of the possibility of waves of arrests. A demand was made by the coup leaders for lists of people with AIDS from a Moscow clinic.

Roman Kalinin, the editor of *Tema*, the first lesbian/gay newspaper in Moscow, Boellstorff and three other gay activists used the offices of the IGLHRC as a home, an office and as a stronghold during the attempted coup. Boellstorff is a graduate of Stanford now serving as an intern in Moscow.

Their office had what many believe was the only working Apple computer and laser



Masha Gessen, left, of the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission and Russian Editor, Roman Kalinin in Moscow.

printer. Tuesday they began copying thousands of Yeltsin's anti-coup demands.

"We have been running the copy machine without a break,"

said Kalinin. "We have already run off 4,000 copies of *Tema* and Yeltsin's proclamation and

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Attorney General Investigating...

AB 101

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denounced the vote switch blaming Senate President Pro Tem Dave Roberti, who he said "wanted this bill out at any cost" because of a potentially strong challenge against him in his home district. AB 101 author Assemblyman Terry Friedman (D-Sherman Oaks) was ecstatic and vowed that "the votes are solid and will stick. This is another victory for AB 101 and fairness in California. Much of the opposition does, as Senator Davis says, demonstrate the need for this legislation. There are too many people in this state who hate people who are

ment from the Governor to veto the legislation, Sheldon said "No," but added that they will continue to pressure him. Wilson has repeatedly made his dislike for the fundamentalists known and recently referred to them as "fucking irrelevants." A legislative aide close to the Governor added "Pete Wilson doesn't like to be told what to do and he doesn't particularly like these people to begin with."

During the debate Sen. Alquist blasted Queer Nation for strong armed tactics used against him for not coming out in favor of AB 101, said Alquist, "They made it almost impossible for me to vote for this bill." Alquist, who

SOVIET

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distributed it in the streets and even to soldiers in the tanks."

Julie Dorf, Executive Director of IGLHRC, said, "We have good reason to believe gays would have been a target of the initial wave of arrests."



Tom Boellsdorf in Moscow.

The new government issued a statement saying they would consider 'criminals and immoral elements a threat to stability.' Gays in Moscow believed 'immoral elements' was an official reference to gays and lesbians."

There was also intense fear for people with AIDS. "We got reports August 20 that authorities went to the AIDS clinic and demanded lists of all the people with AIDS from the head doctors," she said. "They were afraid of quarantine."

"Two weeks ago, we were part of an event which brought together more people and exposed them to more visibility than they had ever experienced in their lives," Dorf said, speaking of the International Lesbian/Gay Conference which just ended in Leningrad and Moscow. "Clearly we feel responsibility for protecting them now that the political situation has dramatically changed."

Kalinin, one of the Soviet Union's most well known gay

activists, knew he could be arrested at any time. Working 20 hours each day he printed fliers and published a special edition of *Tema*. No printing presses were available and a primary problem was finding ink cartridges for the copy machine.

Once the copies were printed, they were distributed at the protest area in front of the Parliament building. Risking their lives, they went right up to the soldiers driving the tanks. "Roman was so courageous in printing all this stuff during this time," said Russ Gage, one of the young activists in San Francisco. "They did some incredible work and they were very courageous knowing that if the coup had succeeded he could have been arrested along with many of his friends."

The S.F. activists saw their friends protesting in front of the Parliament Building as it was broadcast on CNN. "We knew they were OK," said Dorf, "because we saw them on television."

"Roman definitely feared arrest," Dorf said. "He assumed there might be some warning." His father, described as a "very serious communist," has dealt with the KGB numerous times because of Kalinin's gay activism.

Thoughts of getting Kalinin out of the country were dismissed. "It is his country. It is where he lives," Dorf said. "It is not so simple that you just abandon the country you are trying to change. Ramon is the type of person who would rather die in a labor camp fighting in the Soviet Union than to live in exile."

The coup ended about 5:30 a.m. Pacific Daylight Time. "We had the heaviest rain I can remember," Boellsdorf said, "the sun came out just as we heard the coup was ending."

AB 101 Watch

This is how members of the Senate Appropriations Committee voted on the Gay Rights Bill on Monday.

YES

Alfred Alquist (D-San Jose) 916-445-9740
Henry Mello (D-Santa Cruz) 916-445-5843
Leroy Greene (D-Sacramento) 916-445-7807
Ralph Dills (D-Gardena) 916-445-5953
Lucy Killea (I-San Diego) 916-445-3952
Bill Lockyer (D-Hayward) 916-445-6671
Art Torres (D-Los Angeles) 916-445 3456

NO

Robert Presley (D-Riverside) 916-445-9781
Biol Leonard (R-Upland) 916-445-3688
Morian Bergeson (R-Newport Beach) 916-445-4961
Ed Davis (R-Northridge) 916-445-8873

ABSTAIN

Bob Beverly (R-Redondo Beach) 916-445-6447

different from them."

Friedman was referring to a comment by Senator Ed Davis (R-Northridge) who called the opponents of AB 101 "unrelenting and in many cases obnoxious and commanding. They've been a hateful lobby. If you have any question that there is discrimination all you need to do is listen to them." Despite that strong statement, Davis said he would not support the bill because proponents of AB 101 had worked hard to defeat two major pieces of legislations that he had carried."

Sheldon also felt that Governor Wilson was no longer strongly committed to

originally had abstained, was the key seventh vote that passed the bill. His vote change came, after a brief talk with Sen. Roberti on the phone. Lou Sheldon suggested that Roberti may have threatened Alquist chairmanship of the powerful Budget Committee. Both Roberti and Alquist's offices denied that accusation. Chris Lindstrom, Alquist's Chief of Staff cited Alquist's "close friendship with Roberti" and added that "though the senator was appalled by the way he was threatened, he put his personal feelings aside and just looked at the merits of the bill. He thinks he did the right thing."



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