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 newspaper.

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 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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