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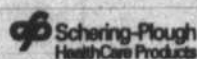


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Russian situation familiar

Power struggle similar to 1917 Bolshevik Revolution

By Neil Feldman
Staff Reporter

Faced with a crisis between two contending wings of power — the presidency and the soviets, or legislative councils — Russia's dual-power dilemma has striking similarities to the October 1917 Bolshevik Revolution.



The presidency and the soviets, both of which have roots entrenched deep in the communist era, are currently jockeying for political power at Red Square.

Such a scenario is quite familiar to the people of the former Soviet Union.

The parallel between the current dual-power conflict and the 1917 bloodshed first entered the picture on March 21, when communist demonstrators tied a flag bearing the sickle and hammer to a monument dedicated to the heroes of the Bolshevik Revolution.

Analysts and historians of the former Soviet Union ranging from former National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski to Princeton University Professor Stephen Cohen have alluded to the striking comparisons between the period from the February Revolution of 1917 to the coup by the Bolsheviks in October and the current power struggle.

Russia's President Boris Yeltsin, analysts say, is currently occupying the Provisional Government role, which was precisely the role of the ruling soviets during the Bolshevik Revolution.

Complicating the current power struggle, the Russian populace is virtually at a dichotomy over who they support.

While Yeltsin has a fair share of supporters, his contenders seem to match the presidency

with subscribers to their traditional communistic ideology.

Yeltsin's task is extremely difficult, as he must gain permission from the parliament he is trying to thwart in order to turn to the people.

Brzezinski, speaking with PBS's Charlie Rhodes, said if the president managed a plebiscite — a direct vote in which the entire electorate can accept his measure — he has managed to hurdle a major barricade.

However, Brzezinski noted that economic inflation, an issue Yeltsin was focusing on prior to the power struggle, might come back to haunt him in such a way that would force him to yield his power.

Moreover, Yeltsin must appeal to the Constitutional Court if he hopes to conduct a "legally binding referendum."

However, analysts, including Brzezinski and Cohen, believe his chances of achieving that are dim, especially because he already accepted the emergency session of Congress.

This type of timid political approach, analysts say, is Yeltsin's best option if he plans to stay in power.

The Clinton administration has backed Yeltsin since the crisis began. The administration has said they firmly believe he is the most committed leader to democracy in Russia.

Secretary of State Warren Christopher seems to be laying the building blocks for an attempt to increase aid to Russia.

Christopher's effort has been kept quiet throughout the crisis, clearly in an effort to make sure Yeltsin



Brian Shellito/DN

remains in power and is not overthrown by the soviets.

Reflecting the cautious foreign policy motives of Theodore Roosevelt during the Progressive 1920s, Clinton has not said very much beyond his rigid statement of support.

NIEN CHENG

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