

Report from Bonn by Rainer Apel

Russia is seeking support

The Boris Yeltsin visit to Germany established a new phase of Russo-German relations, especially in the economic area.

When Russian Federation President Boris Yeltsin visited Germany Nov. 21-23 on his first official trip to a western state, he was cheered by smaller crowds than Mikhail Gorbachov two years ago, at the height of "Gorbymania." But the result of Yeltsin's trip to Germany was more likely to last.

The most vital aspect of his trip, Yeltsin explained in an interview Nov. 17 with Germany's national DLF radio station, was to set up direct, bilateral, Russo-German ties. This would pay tribute to the changed situation in the former U.S.S.R., he said, adding that the second most important goal was to define "areas of mutual interests for Russians and Germans" in economic cooperation. He cited three main areas: farming and food processing, road-building, and joint transportation ventures.

On the diplomatic side, the reception Yeltsin got in Bonn was the same as for any other state visitor, although the German government has not yet decided for full diplomatic relations with the Russian Federation. Bonn's approach is a compromise which would not risk an abrupt break with Gorbachov, but wait until his political demise. It may not be that far away.

Russian Justice Minister Nikolai Fyodorov, in Germany the week before Yeltsin, minced no words in an interview with the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* issue of Nov. 19. He warned that Gorbachov may face trial for involvement in the Aug. 19 coup attempt, along with the other ex-members of the Communist Party Politburo and

their private secretaries.

Fyodorov added, "Gorbachov is no longer deciding which policy is made by Russia or the U.S.S.R. We are willing to listen to him, but if he continues to take a position of interference with the realization of certain programs, he will not be President much longer." There is no longer any Soviet government, declared Fyodorov: "The Soviet Union is nothing but a phantom now."

This view—which many Germans hold as well—was supported in a DLF radio interview Nov. 27 by Vyacheslav Dashchichev, a longtime foreign policy adviser to the Kremlin, who has been working as a visiting professor at the Free University of Berlin for two years. He said that the "new union" project, a Gorbachov brainchild, was doomed to fail, for the simple reason that the man pursuing it was the President of a state—the U.S.S.R.—that had ceased to exist. The new reality of the former U.S.S.R. is the republics, Dashchichev stated. He called on Germany to stop dealing with Gorbachov and forge diplomatic ties with Russia and the other republics.

The most remarkable economic passage in the joint Russo-German declaration signed in Bonn is:

"Both sides agree that in order to create the unified and common Europe, progress in the creation of an all-European infrastructure (roads, communication, energy) is required. In cooperation with European institutions and the neighboring countries, they will examine options of intensi-

fying their infrastructural relations.

"Consequently, special emphasis shall be given to traditionally close relations in the area of transportation (by road, rail, air, sea, waterway)."

Yeltsin and a delegation of 50 Russian industrial managers were hosted Nov. 22 at a meeting of the Ostausschuss, the Eastern Trades Division of the Congress of German Industry and Trade (DIHT). Both sides agreed that food, transportation, and energy were areas most attractive for German investment.

Modernizing the farm sector and improving the storage and processing of food, transport, and logistics in general, and making oil and gas pipelines "leak-proof," are priority projects, the DIHT experts said. If the average loss of 30% of the oil and gas carried by leaking pipelines could be halted, Russia's economy would earn \$8 billion more annually without having to produce more oil and gas.

Investments in converting high-tech firms in the Soviet military sector (75% of which are located on Russian territory) into civilian production, and training the work force in this sector, are seen as "promising" by the DIHT experts over the medium term.

The talks Yeltsin and his team had in Stuttgart Nov. 23, with executives of Daimler-Benz, Germany's largest industrial group in aerospace and transportation, led to a letter of intent signed by Yeltsin and Daimler-Benz chairman Edzard Reuter on future joint production of cars, railway equipment, and aerospace technologies.

This will begin with the licensed production, by late 1992, of 10,000 Mercedes-Benz Unimog multi-use trucks for Russia's industrial and construction firms, farms, and municipal services. The joint production of ambulances and of aircraft engines is envisaged in the Nov. 23 document, as well.