



# NewsWatch

## June 2010

### NCSJ to Congress: Graduate Russia from Jackson-Vanik Amendment

On April 27, NCSJ Executive Director Mark Levin testified before the U.S. House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Subcommittees on Europe and on Trade and Non-Proliferation in support of Congress graduating the Russian Federation from the Jackson-Vanik Amendment.

Other experts testifying were: Edward Lozansky, Founder and President of the World Russia Forum; David Satter, Senior Fellow at the Hudson Institute; Stephen Sestanovich, George F. Kennan Senior Fellow for Russian and Eurasian Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations; Mark Talisman, President of the Project Judaica Foundation; and Edward Verona, President and CEO of the U.S.-Russia Business Council.

As Levin explained to the committee members, NCSJ supports Russia's graduation from Jackson-Vanik based on Russia's documented progress in two critical areas of the law: "freedom of emigration of all Jews...and for those who choose to remain in Russia, freedom to practice the religion of their forebears, to participate in the unique aspects of Jewish culture and language, unfettered by governmental interference." NCSJ has been on record in support of Russia's graduation since 2001.

The Jackson-Vanik Amendment, signed into law as part of the Trade Act of 1974, barred Communist nations that denied

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NCSJ Executive Director Mark Levin (second from left) testifies to the U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee in April. (Photo by NCSJ)

### World Leaders Meet at Nuclear Security Summit in Washington

During the week of April 11, leaders of 47 countries, including the presidents of Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Russia, and Ukraine, gathered in Washington, D.C., for a two-day Nuclear Security Summit, convened by President Barack Obama. Attendees discussed non-proliferation and the global threat posed by nuclear weapons.

On April 8th, in the Czech Republic, the United States and Russia signed a new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START). The New START Treaty, a follow-up to the 1991 START I Treaty that expired in December 2009, reduces each country's deployed nuclear arsenal. At the summit, President of the Russian Federation Dmitry Medvedev also confirmed plans to close a plutonium production reactor.

During the week, NCSJ and the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations met with Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev to discuss his country's strong bilateral relationships with the United States and Israel, his support for the Kazakh Jewish community and interreligious dialogue, and the need to prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons.

Kazakhstan, a strong proponent of nuclear disarmament, was a major participant in the summit. Obama met with Nazarbayev to affirm the goal of strengthening bilateral coop-

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Presidents Obama and Medvedev sign the New START Treaty in Prague, Czech Republic. (White House Photo by Chuck Kennedy)

## NCSJ Honors Departing Ukrainian Ambassador Dr. Oleh Shamshur

On May 27, NCSJ hosted an evening reception at its offices to bid farewell to Dr. Oleh Shamshur, the Ambassador to the United States from Ukraine. Ambassadors Batu Kutelia of Georgia and Yashar Aliyev of Azerbaijan joined NCSJ leadership, American Jewish community representatives, U.S. government officials, and other members of the diplomatic corps in congratulating the Ambassador.

Ambassador Shamshur became a good friend to NCSJ and the American Jewish community during his four and a half years in Washington. NCSJ worked closely with Ambassador Shamshur on graduating Ukraine from the Jackson-Vanik Amendment, curbing the publication of anti-Semitic books and materials by the private Ukrainian university Inter-regional Academy of Personnel Management (more commonly known as MAUP), and on other concerns related to the Ukrainian Jewish community.

At the reception, NCSJ presented the

Ambassador with a gift of framed Jewish art bearing the inscription, in Hebrew and in English, "Justice, only justice shalt thou pursue," and inscribed with a plaque from NCSJ thanking him for his service as Ambassador.

Tributes to Ambassador Shamshur during his last week in residence also included a reception hosted by the U.S. Department of State at Blair House and recognition by several Members of Congress in the Congressional Record.



(l-r) Amb. Batu Kutelia, Georgia; Amb. Oleh Shamshur, Ukraine; NCSJ Executive Director Mark Levin; and Amb. Yashar Aliyev, Azerbaijan. (Photo by Ron Sachs/CNP)

## World Leaders Meet on Nuclear Security, cont'd

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eration on nuclear safety. Michael McFaul, Obama's senior adviser on Russian affairs, told reporters that Obama praised Nazarbayev as "one of the model leaders in the world on non-proliferation and nuclear safety issues."

The Kazakh republic was the Soviet Union's primary nuclear weapon testing ground, and it inherited the world's fourth-largest nuclear arsenal after the breakup of the Soviet Union. It rapidly eliminated its stockpiles and has been nuclear weapon-free since 1995.

NCSJ Executive Director Mark Levin during the summit attended a reception at the U.S.-Ukraine Business Council honoring Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich. At the summit, Yanukovich pledged to eliminate

his country's stockpile of weapons-grade enriched uranium by 2012, and to operate civil nuclear research facilities with low-enriched uranium fuel.

In a joint statement issued with Yanukovich, Obama praised Ukraine's decision as a historic step and a reaffirmation of its leadership in nuclear security and non-proliferation.



Obama and Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev at the summit. (Embassy of Kazakhstan Photo)

## Tolerance Conference to Meet in Kazakhstan

On June 29-30, government officials and other leaders from the 56 member countries of the Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe will meet in Astana, Kazakhstan, for the OSCE High-Level Conference on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination. Kazakhstan is the OSCE 2010 Chair-in-Office, the first ex-Soviet republic and the first country not in Europe to assume the chairmanship.

The conference aims to advance implementation of OSCE commitments and values, focusing on ways to combat anti-Semitism, xenophobia, and other forms of religious and ethnic bigotry and violence.

NCSJ has participated in previous OSCE summits as a public advisor and member of the U.S. delegation, has attended conferences in Austria, Germany, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Spain, and plans to attend the upcoming conference in Astana.

## Kyrgyzstan Government Overthrown; Violence Continues in South

Violence erupted again on June 10 in the Central Asian nation of Kyrgyzstan, in the southern cities of Osh and Jalal-Abad. Riots sparked by a clash between local Kyrgyz and ethnic Uzbek groups have killed scores, wounded hundreds, and caused tens of thousands of ethnic Uzbeks to flee.

NCSJ spoke on June 14 with a local Jewish community leader, who said that Jews in the region, nearly all of Ashkenazic descent, have not been targeted.

On April 7, 2010, widespread anti-government protests turned violent in the capital city of Bishkek, and led to the overthrow of the government. Riot police fired into angry crowds, who were protesting a sharp increase in utility rates. Over 80 died and hundreds were injured.

## NCSJ Testifies on J-V Amendment, cont'd

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their citizens the right to emigrate freely from gaining "most favored nation" trade status with the United States. The law broke ground in American diplomatic history by tying U.S. economic policy to human rights. It had a profound, historic effect on Soviet citizens struggling to assert their Jewish identity.

Armenia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine have all graduated from the Jackson-Vanik amendment. Since 1994, the U.S. government has annually exempted Russia from Jackson-Vanik by a Presidential determination that Russia complies with the Amendment's freedom of emigration requirements.

NCSJ supports Russia's graduation, while also acknowledging that anti-Semitism in Russia has not disappeared and that authorities have not done all they can to eradicate xenophobia and intolerance. NCSJ will continue to monitor these issues and raise them at the highest levels of the Russian government.

Visit <http://foreignaffairs.house.gov/schedule.asp?showdate=4/27/2010> for a webcast of the hearing and to read the full written witness testimonies.

A transitional government took power on April 9, led by Acting Head of Government Roza Otunbayeva, a former Minister of Foreign Affairs.

During the fighting, President Kurmanbek Bakiyev fled the capital, and went into hiding in southern Kyrgyzstan, where he has deep family roots. The United States, Russia, and regional leaders helped broker a deal in which Bakiyev resigned and left for neighboring Kazakhstan. He has since found refuge in Belarus. The interim government has charged the ousted president with abuses of authority and mass murder in the deaths of the anti-government protestors.

On May 13, Bakiyev supporters stormed government buildings in three southern cities, attempting to retake power. One person died and at least 38 were wounded in gunfire. The next day, the interim government regained control in two cities.

The United States and Russia have strategic interests in Kyrgyzstan, which hosts military air bases for each near Bishkek. The planes at the Transit Center at Manas air base resupply U.S. troops in Afghanistan, making it a key staging

ground for the war.

NCSJ has been in contact with the U.S. and Israeli governments, international Jewish organizations and the Kyrgyz Jewish community about the ongoing political turmoil. The Kyrgyz Jewish community is estimated to be less than 1,500 and is primarily located in Bishkek. Jewish programs and institutions that serve the community include a Jewish school and Hesed Center. The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee oversees many of these activities, and World ORT directs the school.

During the April crisis, NCSJ Executive Director Mark Levin spoke with the Reuters news agency, noting that "there have been isolated incidents of violence against Jews in Bishkek, and while there does not appear to be an organized effort to undermine the Jewish community there, the locals will be very concerned until there is a formal government."

A constitutional referendum is planned for late June, with the goal of limiting presidential powers. New parliamentary elections first set for October have been pushed back. Otunbayeva will remain in office as president through 2010.

## NCSJ Briefs Congressional Task Force on Anti-Semitism on Holocaust Distortions in the FSU

On May 24, NCSJ Executive Director Mark Levin briefed over a dozen staff members of the Congressional Task Force on Anti-Semitism. He spoke about at-

tempts by countries in the former Soviet region to revise World War II history to minimize the participation of local ethnic populations in massacres of Jews. Levin also spoke about efforts to restitute Jewish communal property seized by the Nazi and Communist regimes. The Simon

Wiesenthal Center's Mark Weitzman, SWC Director of Government Affairs and of its Task Force on Hate and Terrorism, also briefed the group.



NCSJ Executive Director Levin (center) briefs staffers. (Photo by NCSJ)

## NCSJ Meets with FSU Jewish Community Leaders in Washington

NCSJ works closely with Jewish community leaders from the former Soviet Union as part of its ongoing mission to strengthen Jewish life in the region. In April, NCSJ met with Jewish leaders from seven of the FSU countries in Washington, D.C., to discuss best practices for monitoring anti-Semitism and building successful communities. The leaders were visiting Washington as part of the

overseas delegation to the American Jewish Committee Annual Meeting.

NCSJ Executive Director Mark Levin and Director of Community Services and Cultural Affairs Lesley Weiss met with: Rimma Golovina, Chairman of the Tashkent (Uzbekistan) Jewish Community Center; Viktoria and Emilia Gubatova, Director and President (respectively) of the Riga (Latvia) Jewish Community Center;

Alexey Karpov, Advisor to the President of the Russian Jewish Congress in Moscow; Moris Krikheli, Director of Hillel Tbilisi (Georgia); Leonid Levin, President of the Union of Belarussian Jewish Organizations and Communities; Natasha Schmidt, Deputy Director of the Russian Jewish Congress; Rimma Varzhapetyan, President of the Jewish Community of Armenia, and Josef Zissels, Chairman of the VAAD of Ukraine.



(l-r) Leonid Levin, NCSJ Executive Director Mark Levin, Rimma Golovina, Rimma Varzhapetyan, NCSJ Program Assistant Judy Turkeltaub, and Josef Zissels. (Photo by NCSJ)

Save the Date  
for the Annual  
NCSJ Board of  
Governors  
Meeting

Tuesday,  
December 7, 2010



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