



Advocates on behalf of Jews in Russia,
Ukraine, the Baltic States & Eurasia

NCSJ WEEKLY NEWS BRIEF
Washington, D.C. Friday, March 17, 2006

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Ukraine holds parliamentary elections on March 26, and Belarus holds its presidential election on March 19. Please see our coverage in the section following the weekly news brief.

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#1

Reform Judaism boosted in FSU
JTA Brief, March 15, 2006

The Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation is joining forces with the World Union for Progressive Judaism and Hebrew Union College to strengthen Reform Judaism in the former Soviet Union.

The foundation is "launching a strategic partnership" with the two Reform bodies, said a senior consultant for the Schusterman Foundation, Yonatan Gordis, who just returned from Moscow with the foundation's executive director, Sandy Cardin.

#2

Radical Anti-Semites Sentenced to Jail in Siberia
MosNews, March 13, 2006

A court in the Siberian city of Tomsk has sentenced several members of a criminal gang to lengthy prison sentences for terrorism, banditry and arousing national hatred. In 2002 the men installed a trip-wired billboard with an anti-Semitic slogan near a busy highway.

Two men were wounded by a hand grenade blast as they attempted to remove the billboard.

The leader of the gang, owner of a local bakery Viktor Lukyanchikov, was sentenced to 23 years in prison, ITAR-TASS news agency reported. His accomplice Igor Kirillov got 20 years sentence and another gang member, Vladimir Istomin, was given a suspended 6.1-year sentence.

The convicts were also found guilty of two murders and a terrorist act — they had deliberately spilled mercury in a local Jewish-owned restaurant . They also planned to bomb a synagogue, the court established.

A prosecutor has told reporters following the trial that Lukyanchikov's father had been convicted in 1944 for high treason after he had assisted Nazi troops that occupied Soviet Ukraine.

In 2002, a wave of similar billboard blasts took place in various places in Russia. On May 27, 2002, Muscovite Tatyana Sapunova attempted to remove a billboard with anti-Semitic slogans and was wounded by a bomb blast. The woman was later treated in an Israeli clinic and Russian president Vladimir Putin has decorated her with an order for courage.

#3

Russian chief rabbi to 'Post': Stronger steps needed to fight anti-Semitism
By Ksenia Svetlova
Jerusalem Post, March 17, 2006

MOSCOW -"The displays of anti-Semitism in Russia are linked to the rise of extremism and xenophobia in the country," he said "The government should do more to crack down. "

"As long as anti-Semitic literature and propaganda can be found in the center of Moscow, and the people who disseminate hideous materials on the Internet continue to get away with it, we cannot be sure that

there will not be another slaughter of Jews somewhere," Lazar said. "There is an upsetting phenomenon of popular nationalistic movements that attract many young people."

"The influence of these groups on Russia's future might be very damaging," Lazar said, referring to Alexander Koptsev's attack on eight members of a Moscow synagogue in January. According to his own testimony, he was influenced by computer games and anti-Semitic literature.

"I was glad to find out the authorities took this incident very seriously, and unlike before, they understand there is a serious problem," Lazar, a Milan native, said.

"In the Soviet era, anti-Semitism was institutionalized," he said. "Today we know for a fact that this is not the government's policy, but still, we'd like to see more action against the extremists. It is very important that Alexander Koptsev be convicted not merely for attacking people, but for inflamed hatred, inter-religious discord and anti-Semitism."

During a hearing on February 28, Koptsev denied his guilt, claiming that "since the criminal code of Russia is written by Jews and the Jewish mafia, I refuse to confess."

Just three weeks ago 12 major Russian parties signed an "anti-fascist pact" against nationalism, xenophobia and inter-religious hatred. The agreement asserts that such activities are banned by law in Russia, but that they should also be condemned morally. Another 25 registered parties refused to sign the pact, however, claiming that "they would not take part in a public stunt of this kind."

Russia has seen an increase in racially motivated crimes in the past several years, including attacks on Jews and dark-skinned foreigners. Twenty-five people have been killed in hate crimes over the past year and more than 200 have been attacked, said Alexander Brod, head of the Moscow Bureau for Human Rights.

#4

House Passes Resolution on Religious Freedom in Russia Commission Leadership Welcomes Vote and Pushes for Change U.S. Helsinki Commission, March 16th, 2006

(Washington, DC) – The House of Representatives has passed H.Con.Res. 190, which expresses the sense of the House that the "Russian Federation should fully protect the freedoms of all religious communities without distinction, whether registered and unregistered, as stipulated by the Russian Constitution and international standards."

"I am very pleased that the House of Representatives has forcibly spoken about the problems and limitations facing religious communities throughout the Russian Federation," said Commission Co-Chairman Rep. Christopher H. Smith (R-NJ) who sponsored the measure. "I want to reiterate the call of the resolution and urge Russian authorities to fully protect the religious liberties of all faith communities, whether registered or unregistered, as well as ensure that law enforcement officials vigorously investigate all acts of violence."

Conditions have deteriorated for minority religions at the regional and local level in some areas of Russia, and the restrictive law on freedom of conscience and religion continues to disadvantage many minority religious groups considered "non-traditional." Reports of violent acts against minority religious communities, sometimes committed by the police and rarely investigated, continue to sporadically but consistently arise. The U.S. Helsinki Commission highlighted these problems at an April 14, 2005 hearing entitled "Unregistered Religious Groups in Russia."

"The Russian Government heard loud and clear from the House of Representatives that more must be done to protect religious freedom and support Helsinki commitments," said Commission Ranking Member Rep.

Benjamin L. Cardin (D-MD). "I hope Russian officials will actively protect the rights of all believers, regardless of faith or creed, especially those communities indigenous to Russia and not well known in America."

The House resolution passed 411-1 on Wednesday afternoon. Helsinki Commission Chairman Senator Sam Brownback (R-KS) has introduced a companion resolution in the Senate, S.Con.Res. 46.

The resolution notes that "over the past 2 years there have been an estimated ten arson attacks on unregistered Protestant churches, with little or no effective response by law enforcement officials to bring the perpetrators to justice." The resolution calls upon the U.S. Government to urge Russia to ensure full protection of freedoms for all religious communities and to "continue to raise [with Russian officials] concerns" over violations of religious freedom, "especially indigenous denominations not well known in the United States."

"Over the past two years we have witnessed an increase in acts of violence against unregistered and minority religious communities, as well as the troubling introduction of draft amendments to the religion law," said Commissioner Rep. Joseph R. Pitts (R-PA). "As this resolution makes clear, Russian authorities at all levels must do more to ensure that everyone can enjoy their religious freedoms without fear of violence or harassment."

"Throughout the vast Russian Federation there are many faithful public servants who do respect religious freedoms," said Commissioner Rep. Mike McIntyre (D-NC). "I hope this resolution will encourage them to redouble their efforts, but also make clear the importance of religious freedom in Russia to the U.S. House of Representatives."

The Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, also known as the Helsinki Commission, is a U.S. Government agency that monitors progress in the implementation of the provisions of the 1975 Helsinki Accords. The Commission consists of nine members from the United States Senate, nine from the House of Representatives, and one member each from the Departments of State, Defense and Commerce.

#5
U.S. Report Slams Russia and Belarus
By Harry Dunphy
AP, March 10, 2006

WASHINGTON -- The United States is criticizing the human rights records of Russia and Belarus but says in an annual State Department report that there were improvements in Ukraine and the Balkan countries.

The report said the most notable human rights development in Russia during 2005 was the continued centralization of power in the executive branch under President Vladimir Putin, which resulted in an erosion of the accountability of government leaders to the people.

"The government's human rights record in the continuing conflict in and around Chechnya remained poor," said the report, released Wednesday.

On the positive side, the report said the judiciary demonstrated greater independence in a number of cases, producing improvements in the criminal justice system. Russia also made progress, the report said, in combating trafficking in people.

The report said the human rights record of Belarus, where presidential elections are set for March 19, remained very poor and "worsened in some areas, with the government continuing to commit numerous serious abuses."

The report said the government of President Alexander Lukashenko reopened an investigation into the disappearance and presumed killing of television journalist Dmitry Zavadsky but made no serious effort to solve the case.

Credible evidence indicated government agents may have killed Zavadsky for reporting that government officials may have aided Chechen separatists.

U.S. President George W. Bush met last week with Zavadsky's wife, Svetlana, and Inna Krasovskaya, wife of a pro-democracy businessman who disappeared in 1999, to underscore his personal support for their cases.

In August, Lukashenko granted the Order for Service to the Motherland to Colonel Dmitry Pavlichenko, named in a Council of Europe report as having played a key role in Zavadsky's disappearance.

U.S. State Department officials said Pavlichenko played a role in the beating and detention last week of opposition presidential candidate Alexander Kozulin, who tried to enter a meeting chaired by Lukashenko.

The report said the number of reported political prisoners had increased.

It noted that last August, the prison sentence of opposition political figure Mikhail Marinich had been reduced from 5 years to 2 1/2. Marinich, a former government minister, was widely regarded as a likely opponent for Lukashenko in the elections.

The report gave a mixed review to Ukraine, saying its human rights record significantly improved in areas such as freedom of expression and right to assembly but remained poor in areas such as violent hazing of soldiers and anti-Semitic acts.

Among the improvements, the report noted "increased accountability by police officers" and gradual improvements in prison conditions.

The report said mass media made significant gains in independence.

#6

Nudging Russia's President

Editorial

New York Times, March 13, 2006

This summer, President Vladimir Putin of Russia is to play host to heads of the world's most powerful democracies in the glorious city of St. Petersburg. It is a chance for Mr. Putin to seal Russia's membership in the Group of 8. But there are many people -- most recently Senator John McCain -- who are so outraged about the way Mr. Putin has been de-democratizing Russia that they want President Bush to boycott the meeting. A better course would be for the United States and the other members of the group to make it clearer that membership in their club requires a functioning democracy.

In a stinging report last week, a Council on Foreign Relations task force called on the Bush administration to rethink its "partnership" with Russia. The council proposed a relationship that points to some areas for cooperation but also picks out key areas for criticism. Those conclusions quickly drew objections, including some from members of the task force itself who argued that the United States should "cold-bloodedly" cooperate on important matters and consider what goes on inside Russia to be Russia's business.

Nobody wants to sidetrack U.S.-Russian agreements on terrorism or nuclear proliferation or to thwart future cooperation on Iran. And there is no question that the relationship between the West and Russia is far better than it was 15 years ago during the final months of the Soviet Union. Mr. Putin, who is very popular with most Russians, has brought some stability and a degree of economic progress. He has even

encouraged the growth of a fledgling middle class that might eventually demand a freer society and a workable rule of law.

But the council report catalogs an alarming list of ways that Mr. Putin has restricted opposition and accumulated power. His government has taken over the national television networks. He has tightened controls over the legislature and made it difficult for any political opponents to gain traction. He has threatened nongovernmental groups and denied the judicial system real independence.

The Bush administration has emphasized deal-making with Russia while remaining too quiet about Mr. Putin's steady retreat from democracy. It should heed the report's advice about a more balanced approach.

#7

If you want democracy, don't push Putin

By Igor Zevelev and Kirill Glebov

International Herald Tribune, March 12, 2006

WASHINGTON - The Bush administration is about to reshape its strategy towards Russia. A report released March 7 by the Council on Foreign Relations said that 15 years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, U.S.-Russian relations were clearly moving in the wrong direction, with President George W. Bush promoting democracy and President Vladimir Putin suppressing it.

Many analysts expect nothing good from Putin without a tougher American line and call for Washington to make democratization a central component of its policy toward Russia. But it is unrealistic to think that Russian democracy, human rights and civil society will improve if the United States applies pressure.

Everybody seems to understand that only Russians can change Russia's internal political arrangements. There is a false belief, however, that the United States can prompt Russians to do this. In the real world, American efforts to encourage democratic development would be successful only if the United States wielded, in its relations with Russia, enough "soft power" - which Joseph Nye defined as the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States has set the agenda and the rules of the game in many interactions with Russia. But America has had much less leverage in affecting Russia's preferences, desires and thoughts in those areas where the two countries' fundamental beliefs about the world differed.

Unlike Western Europe after World War II, or Central Europe after the Cold War, Russia questions the habitual American assertion that it was the United States who won these wars. American preponderance is seen in Russia as an unpleasant fact, but not as a source of legitimate authority.

The United States has not been able to successfully transform its hard power into soft power in its relations with Russia. In this context, any attempt to encourage faster democratization will be seen as yet another instrument to dominate through helping pro- Western leaders to come to power, or simply as a tool to weaken Russia. This is not only the view of the Russian elite, but also a very popular attitude.

The United States finds many fewer supporters in Russia today than it did 15 years ago. Russian perceptions have changed dramatically; for domestic Russian discourse, political stability and order have greater value than democracy.

Democracy is often associated with the chaos, the collapse of the state and the material gains of the very few that occurred in the '90s.

The Pew Global Attitudes Survey found that in 1991, by a 51 percent to 39 percent margin, more Russians believed their country should rely on a democratic government than on a strong leader. By 2005, the proportion choosing democratic government had fallen to 28 percent. It is important to understand that

Russians believe that a strong leader will bring about good governance and the rule of law. The secret of Putin's popularity is that he is seen as somebody who brought about at least some elements of the two.

America's support for democracy is addressed as much to itself as to others. Democratic institutions lie at the core of American identity, and U.S. foreign policy reasserts this fact by promoting these values in foreign lands. Such efforts may work if applied in the right place at the right time. Russia is a difficult place to promote democracy, however, because it considers itself an independent center of power and would hate to be treated like a student.

As for the timing for the proposed review of U.S. policy toward Russia, it could not be worse. With Russia striving to restore its status in the world arena, its confidence strengthened and its economy booming, criticism of Russia's democratic record will inevitably be seen as hypocritical rhetoric designed to conceal American concerns about Russia's revival under Putin.

This is likely to trigger an allergic reaction both among the Russian political class and the politically aware Russian population that will further aggravate negative attitudes toward what is seen as American intrusion. As a result, much-needed bilateral cooperation on several major issues might be hampered.

In the final count, the proposed policy changes would not only poison U.S.-Russian relations for the foreseeable future, but would also be detrimental to the very cause that the United States claims to be promoting. Excessive U.S. pressure could cause the Russian public to shift toward seeing the universal values of democracy and human rights as merely instruments of foreign political influence. If that happens, the future of Russian democracy may indeed become bleak.

#8

Russia wants its NGOs to play stronger role in world affairs

By Steve Gutterman

AP, March 13, 2006

Russia wants its non-governmental organizations to play a more powerful role on the world stage, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Monday, stressing the need to bring their influence up to the level of NGOs in Western countries.

Speaking after meeting with leaders of the foreign affairs commission of the Public Chamber, Lavrov said Russian civil society needs to play a larger role in international affairs. The Public Chamber is a newly formed body that the Kremlin says is meant to give society a greater say in governing the country.

"The Foreign Ministry would like the presence of our NGOs in world forums and events ... to become just as impressive as the cooperation of NGOs of Western states," he said. "This would enrich foreign policy and those decisions that are made in the framework of international diplomacy."

The comments by Lavrov and the two leaders of the Public Chamber's Commission on International Cooperation and Public Diplomacy pointed to a new facet of Moscow's push to restore its Cold War clout.

They also reflect concern about the influence of foreign NGOs, which Russian officials have accused of seeking to weaken Russia through espionage and of fomenting political change in ex-Soviet republics such as Ukraine and Georgia.

Vyacheslav Nikonov, the commission's chairman and a Kremlin-connected political analyst, said that one task of the Public Chamber is "to make Russian non-governmental organizations global players with the ability to exert serious influence on the processes that occur in the world."

In the United States, he said, there are more than 30,000 NGOs "involved in foreign policy" and they are "quite powerful, well-funded organizations."

"Russian civil society is far from this, but without a doubt we must strive to use the instrument of public diplomacy just as effectively as many other states do," he said.

Nikonov said there are Russian NGOs that "do not fully agree with the foreign policy of the Russian state _ this is normal, it reflects pluralism."

However, he added, "I believe that when a country is acting in the international arena it should speak with a single voice."

The commission's deputy chairman, Sergei Markov, also stressed the power of NGOs, referring to what Russians call the 'color revolutions' _ street protests that have decreased Russia's influence in its backyard by bringing opposition leaders to power in Ukraine, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan in the past two years.

Russian officials have underscored the role of foreign NGOs that support democracy in bringing about the changes.

"The color revolutions have shown clearly that while the revolutions of the 20th century were party revolutions, the revolutions of the 21st Century are NGO revolutions," said Markov, also a Kremlin-connected political analyst.

"It is in the interest of all of us that Russia have a strong society _ organized, active and energetic both inside the country and beyond its borders," he said.

Critics have dismissed the Public Chamber as a smoke screen for the Kremlin's increasingly authoritarian actions, which include new restrictions on NGOs.

A third of the chamber's 126 members were appointed by President Vladimir Putin, another third were named by presidential appointees, and those two sets of appointees in turn chose the rest.

#9

Russia's NGO Law Cannot be Viewed in a Vacuum

By Christopher Walker

Nezavisimaya Gazeta, March 13, 2006

The introduction and adoption of Russia's new law on non-governmental organizations (NGO) rightly attracted a good deal of attention at home and abroad. The new law, which was signed by President Putin in January, affords the authorities a new set of tools for monitoring and controlling the NGO sector in Russia. The very fact that this legislation generated such a passionate reaction suggests that those with a dedicated interest in Russia's democratic development recognized the serious stakes involved.

At the same time, however, it is important to acknowledge that these NGO restrictions are not an isolated chapter in the story of Russia's recent political development. In fact, the new law represents only the latest in a series of measures, legislative or otherwise, taken over the past five years to limit the ability of independent voices to influence policy in today's Russia. Given the range of actions taken by the Kremlin to rein in political, business and, now, civic actors, the new NGO law cannot be viewed in a vacuum.

The larger issue, of which the new NGO law is an important part, is the ongoing campaign to dismantle any meaningful institutional checks on the Kremlin's power. This trend has serious implications for a range of critical issues, including Russia's ability to diversify its economy from reliance on the energy sector to the country's ability to combat the scourge of corruption, as well as the ongoing terrorist threat.

The new NGO legislation requires detailed reports from nongovernmental organizations on their funding sources from abroad and their activities inside Russia. Nonprofit groups that have emerged since the

collapse of the Soviet Union warn that the restrictions could force them to close down. Under the new law, NGOs and other private organizations will have to register with the government and detail their activities. These organizations will be screened by a new regulatory bureaucracy, which will decide whether NGO activities are permitted under Russian law. The new law also requires detailed reports about the sources of funding and how it will be spent. A complete prohibition on foreign NGOs funding their Russia-based sister organizations, included in the original version of the bill, was set aside before President Putin signed the measure.

In what has been characterized by the authorities as an effort to reform the NGO sector by making activities more transparent is perceived by many in the NGO community and at major international bodies, including the Council of Europe, as an effort to further intimidate NGOs.

A comprehensive review of the legislation undertaken by the respected International Center for Not-for-Profit Law highlights the dangers posed by a number of ambiguous provisions and how these might be applied. The Council of Europe has stated clearly that it shares the concern about the manner in which these new set of tools will be applied.

It is precisely because other pivotal institutions, which should ensure democratic accountability, have already been neutered by the Kremlin that this is of such concern. Over the course of the last five years, the Russian authorities effectively established control over national broadcast media such that there is little in the way of independent or critical comment on the authorities' decisions or performance. The Kremlin has also reined in the state Duma and regional governors, in the process shrinking institutional capacity to provide a political counterweight to the executive. Finally, the judiciary has been unable to establish itself as an independent force capable of advancing the rule of law.

Given the lack of independence of the media, legislature and the judiciary, the Russian leadership was already well positioned to clamp down on whomever it deemed politically undesirable, even before the passage of the new NGO law. And of course the paucity of democratic accountability contributed to a robust enabling environment for corruption. Mikhail Dmitriyev, head of the government's Center for Strategic Research, had it right when said at the recent conference in Altai that "the best way to combat corruption is through democratic institutions."

The NGO sector has a valuable role to play as a check on executive power, offering valuable feedback to the authorities, and contributing a diversity of ideas to the policy debate. The long list of Russia's deep structural problems enhancing the efficiency of state management, debureaucratization, diversifying the economy, and reforming the military and security services cannot be solved by decree.

This is of particular importance with approaching elections slated to be held in 2007 and 2008. In fact, both of these elections should be the appropriate forum in which to have a vigorous discussion about how Russia can tackle corruption and other challenges facing society. Unfortunately, an intimidated and beleaguered NGO sector will not make the sort of contribution to this debate that would serve the public interest.

This reality brings us back to the implications of the passage of the new NGO law. Unfortunately, the common denominator in the new restriction on NGOs as well as all of the steps taken to curb the independence of the judiciary, parliament, governors and news media - is the reduction of accountability of key institutions to the Russian people.

#10

Ukraine's Jews have enough stuff for a museum, but not enough money

By Yulianna Vilkos

JTA, March 17, 2006

KIEV, Ukraine -- A Jewish activist in Ukraine has collected thousands of artifacts for what he hopes will be his country's first Jewish museum. But, he admits, it's all about the money.

Leonid Finberg, director of the archives at Kiev's Institute of Jewish Studies, put together a small exhibit of Jewish artifacts last summer for the newly renovated Beit Jacob Synagogue in the Ukrainian capital.

The few dozen precious artifacts now carefully displayed under glass in the shul's main hall include a book illustrated by Marc Chagall, which Finberg picked up at a flea market in Lvov.

There's also a letter he found written in Yiddish by a World War II Jewish soldier, a "truly unique document," he says, that somehow escaped Soviet wartime censorship.

Finberg, an inveterate collector, says the exhibit he organized is just a tiny portion of the holdings, which boast thousands of items that could be the basis for a future Jewish museum.

"But a museum with its own building requires millions of dollars, while we operate with budgets of several thousands," Finberg says. "So for the moment, we are doing what we can."

A Jewish museum is still a dream not only for Ukrainian Jews. There is not a real Jewish museum in the entire former Soviet Union.

Some local Jewish leaders say that although the region's Jewish communities have grown tremendously since the break-up of the Soviet Union 15 years ago, the timing and conditions for the creation of Jewish museums are not yet ripe.

Josef Zissels, the head of the Va'ad of Ukraine, says plans for such a museum in Ukraine have been in the works for a long time, but are likely to be postponed yet again.

"To have a collection for a museum is not enough," he says. "You've got to have investors willing to invest in the long-term project and museum specialists with expertise on Judaism studies."

According to Zissels, Ukraine's Jewish communities have more urgent needs, such as caring for the elderly and building Jewish schools.

But in Moscow, plans for Russia's first Jewish museum are moving forward, mainly because there is funding for the project.

The Chabad-affiliated Federation of Jewish Communities is planning a multimillion-dollar museum that will recount the history of Judaism, Russian Jews, the Holocaust and tolerance, says the federation's executive director, Rabbi Avraham Berkowitz. It will fill a 10,000-square-meter building adjacent to the Marina Roscha Chabad Jewish Center, and should be completed within five years.

Grigori Kazovsky, an expert in Russian Jewish art who is helping to develop the museum, says it will be a modern facility with multimedia features that are commonly used in Western museums, but are still a novelty in the former Soviet Union.

Kazovsky is concerned, however, that most of the items for the museum's collection have to be acquired from abroad.

"Unfortunately, little Jewish heritage has been preserved in Russia, so we are finding Jewish art and archives through Judaism dealers, mostly in the United States and Israel," Kazovsky says.

Ukraine is in a more fortunate position than Russia, says Finberg, as more Jewish artifacts are available locally. The Institute of Jewish Studies has been laying the base for a future museum since it was founded in 1990.

"A tradition of preserving family history was almost non-existent during Soviet times," Finberg says.

"People were even afraid to write diaries. But a part of the intelligentsia did preserve some documents despite everything, and it has been our task to collect and study them."

The institute's vast archives on 20th-century Jewish life in Ukraine are largely the result of its project to preserve local Jewish heritage via a program funded by the British-based Hanadiv Charitable Foundation, Finberg says.

The bulk of the institute's records are made up of the private archives of Jewish writers and artists who were killed during Soviet times. The materials were passed on to the institute by the victims' children or grandchildren.

Among the institute's treasures are collections of pre-revolutionary photographs from Jewish family albums, old prayer books, and materials on Jewish theater and film-making activities in Ukraine before World War II.

"Seventy Jewish theaters existed in Ukraine before the Second World War, and dozens of Jewish films were made at that time," Finberg says.

Old posters advertising theatrical performances and several films are featured now in the Institute's archives.

Finberg says the institute is often contacted by Ukrainian and foreign film makers or theatrical directors, who use its photo archives when creating Jewish costumes and characters.

To make its holdings available to a broader audience, the institute has been publishing books, holding joint exhibitions with the National Art Museum of Ukraine and running educational projects with a handful of Jewish schools in Kiev.

Iryna Klimova, head of educational projects at the institute, says she has been lecturing to Jewish youth on topics such as Jewish religious objects and the architecture of historic synagogues still found around Ukraine.

"These young people will most likely never have a chance to go to old Jewish towns or to visit Jewish cemeteries, where many tombstones are masterpieces of art," says Klimova, who has photographed many of the old synagogues and cemeteries during field trips organized by the institute.

But Kazovsky says that Jewish museums are needed in the former Soviet Union not so much for Jews as for the rest of the local population.

"Such museums would help to destroy prejudices against Jews that still exist in the region," he says.

#11

Worrying About A Jewish Future In The FSU

By Avi Rubel

Jewish Week, March 17, 2006

It was a bone-chilling 25 degrees below zero in Moscow as I greeted 250 Jewish university students representing the 27 Hillel Jewish student centers in Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and Georgia at the seventh annual Hillel in the Former Soviet Union Winter Congress. Within minutes the frozen Russian winter was left behind as old friends embraced and new friends met one another.

The conference brings together young Jewish leaders from throughout the far-flung Jewish communities of the FSU to participate in Jewish education workshops and seminars, as well as to socialize and network.

Hillel reaches approximately 10,000 students per year; more than a million Jews remain in the former Soviet Union.

That these students are able to both congregate and celebrate their Judaism in Russia today is a marvel. When their parents were students they never could have met openly as Jews, had the opportunity to explore their Judaism or connect to the Jewish people.

As always, history has a short memory. When I asked these mostly 18- to 22-year olds if they feel lucky to have this opportunity to connect to the Jewish community, they did not even understand the question. Like their peers in North America and Israel, these students take their freedom and ability to practice Judaism for granted. To them the end of communism a mere 15 years ago is ancient history.

Aside from support for the creation and sustenance of the State of Israel, the advocacy movement in the U.S. in the 1970s and 1980s to aid and free Soviet Jewry was the most important accomplishment by the American Jewish community in the 20th century. Through lobbying efforts and community organizing, the community was able to influence and pressure those in power in Washington and, more importantly, behind the Iron Curtain. From the marches in Washington to the twinnings at bar and bat mitzvahs, the Soviet Jewry movement was an extraordinary demonstration of the strength of the American Jewish community and the power of civil society to effect change on a global level.

As I talked with the students in Moscow, I wanted to explain to them how lucky they are to have the opportunity to attend this conference. I couldn't help but wonder if Hillel conferences will be possible in the FSU in another 10 or 15 years.

A number of recent developments make me wary: Russia has just passed a series of laws restricting the operation of foreign-operated nonprofit organizations; the "Orange Revolution" in Ukraine is faltering and President Yushchenko will likely be defeated this year; Belarus' dictator Alexander Lukashenko is arranging his own re-election; and Uzbekistan's Islam Karimov continues to repress minorities.

An alarming recent study called "Failing the Stalin Test" published in Foreign Affairs found that "less than half of Russia's young people would categorically reject voting for Stalin today."

Today's former Soviet republics are confusing places for young people to grow up. Their societies suffer from post-Soviet hangovers characterized by a large number of disaffected and alienated elderly, a tiny minority of mega-rich among a large number of very poor people, almost no trust in public institutions, a declining birth rate and embarrassingly low mortality rates. (In Russia, life expectancy for men is approximately 61.) At the same time, their economies are growing and they have access to Western goods and information.

Most of the students I speak with do not plan on emigrating. They see their future in the FSU. But what kind of former Soviet republics will they inherit?

To ensure a future of freedom in the FSU, it is vital that the governments of Russia, Ukraine and the other republics create and be pressured to enact policies that foster open, democratic societies. Concurrently it is crucial that grassroots, civil societies be cultivated and strengthened.

Religious organizations such as Hillel play a vital role in creating Jewish community for thousands of Jews and also in strengthening civil society. Hillel's mission is to build Jewish community by providing the maximum number of Jewish young adults with opportunities to explore Judaism in a pluralistic environment. Hillel is also training a generation of Jewish students who will be empowered to lead their communities in the next few decades.

Over four days in Moscow I watched the Jewish students soak up Jewish knowledge and strengthen their Jewish identities. There were workshops on career development, Jewish perspectives on dating and sex, Jewish holidays, Shabbat and opportunities for experiences in Israel.

Though the future of freedom in the FSU remains uncertain, we must seize the opportunity to help these young Jews connect to the Jewish people and build strong, sustainable communities.

Avi Rubel is director of FSU Development for Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life.

UKRAINE AND BELARUS ELECTION COVERAGE

Washington, D.C. Friday, March 17, 2006

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#1

Ukraine's Parliamentary Election: The Latest Battle in the Orange Revolution Briefing with Oleh Shamshur, Ambassador of Ukraine to the United States RFE/RL, March 16, 2006

Ambassador Oleh Shamshur spoke about Ukraine's progress in the past several years. He mentioned economic growth, increased transparency in elections, and continued improvement in freedom of the press and the fight against corruption. Parliamentary elections will take place March 26, 2006. Shamshur stated that the Ukrainian government welcomes all election observers. They believe that the observers will be particularly effective in areas where certain parties attempt to use threats as campaign tactics.

The Ambassador mentioned a few priorities that the Ukrainian government is focusing on. The first is consolidating democratic change. Shamshur stated that although progress has been made in combating cronyism, work continues to make Ukraine a true democracy. The second priority is to increase economic

growth based on sound economic policy in a number of critical industries, including the space, machine, transportation infrastructure, construction, and energy sectors. Energy is of specific importance. Shamshur stated that diversifying is the key for Ukraine. The third priority is continuing to ensure that elections are fair and transparent.

During the Question and Answer session, the Ambassador answered questions about the energy sector, upcoming elections, the composition of various political parties, as well as culture and society in the Ukraine.

In response to a question from NCSJ pertaining to anti-Semitism propagated by the Inter-regional Academy of Personnel Management (MAUP), Ambassador Shamshur stated that MAUP is a common concern between the U.S. and Ukraine. He went on to say that the Ministries of the Interior and Education are in the process of reviewing MAUP's licenses. Action aimed at the Academy is expected in the not too distant future. However, the government wants to ensure that all actions taken against the University are within the legal framework and have solid foundation. The Ambassador also stated that anti-Semitic and xenophobic incidents that arise will be addressed swiftly and seriously.

Summary by NCSJ Program Assistant Lana Bronipolsky

#2

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Tarasyuk Sees Bush At White House Discusses Elections And Gas Shipments AP, March 10, 2006

WASHINGTON - Ukraine Foreign Minister Borys Tarasyuk said Friday it was important to have positive messages from the United States as Ukraine prepares for parliamentary elections March 26.

He spoke after meeting with national security adviser Stephen Hadley at the White House. President George W. Bush dropped in on the meeting.

Tarasyuk said Bush asked about the elections in which President Victor Yukschenko and populist former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko – the leading figures in the Orange Revolution - are heading rival parties. He said they also discussed Russia's cut-off of gas shipments to Ukraine at the beginning of 2006.

"This was a very positive meeting and the atmosphere was positive as well," Tarasyuk said to reporters. On Thursday he met with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Vice President Dick Cheney.

White House spokesman Scott McClellan said Bush dropped into the meeting "to continue to show our support for the people of Ukraine as they move forward on elections and democratic reforms."

Tarasyuk told the Washington Times Ukraine will remain firmly on a course of closer relations with the United States and Europe whoever wins the elections.

Despite the split between the two leaders of the Orange Revolution in 2004, Tarasyuk told the paper's reporters and editors, the country's pro-Western reform path and its ambition to join the European Union and NATO remain on track.

Congress voted Thursday to end Cold War trade restrictions on Ukraine, which opens the way for the former Soviet republic to join the World Trade Organization.

The congressional action, and Bush's expected signature, would free Ukraine from a 1974 measure, called the Jackson-Vanik Amendment, that links trade benefits to the emigration and human rights policies of former or current communist states. Ukraine hopes to join the WTO this year, and removal of U.S. trade restrictions is necessary for that to happen.

#3

Jewish voters in Ukraine could back party headed by former Communist

By Vladimir Matveyev

JTA, March 14, 2006

KIEV, Ukraine — Fifteen months after pro-democracy protests in Ukraine reversed a rigged presidential election, the political party that eventually lost that battle appears likely to make a comeback — and Jewish voters may help the party do so. A record 45 political parties and blocs are running in Ukraine's parliamentary election on March 26 amid the country's economic decline and disillusionment in the wake of the "Orange Revolution" that propelled President Viktor Yuschenko to power.

But only six to eight parties are expected to pass the 3 percent threshold required to win representation in the 450-seat unicameral Rada, or Parliament.

The election will have a major impact on Ukraine's future because of constitutional changes that went into effect earlier this year: The new Rada will be the first in post-Communist Ukraine to name the prime minister and appoint key Cabinet members — both previously prerogatives of the president.

In a broader sense, the choice Ukrainians will make this month is between the pro-Western course of Yuschenko, who wants to see his country as part of NATO and the European Union, and the more Russia-oriented course of former Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich, an ex-Communist who lost to Yuschenko in last year's presidential election.

Ukrainian Jews are always sensitive to issues of civil society and democracy that are associated with Yuschenko and his coalition of parties. But Jews — similar to other Ukrainians — are unhappy with the lack of economic improvement and soaring prices during the Yuschenko era.

"Like other citizens, Jews will vote for those who can make their life really better," says Georgy Tseitlin, a Jewish scientist from Kiev.

Jews have an additional reason that may compel them to vote against the Orange parties: the dramatic rise of anti-Semitic attacks and publications that have taken place since Yuschenko came to power.

"The situation with xenophobia and anti-Semitism has become worse, and Jews feel this very strongly," said Mikhail Frenkel, chairman of the Association of Jewish Media in Ukraine.

But no matter which party wins the election, Jewish leaders say the community will feel safe.

"No matter who wins, there will not be big changes" for the Jewish community, said Rabbi Meir Stambler, a leader of the Federation of Jewish Communities of Ukraine, a Chabad-led group.

Jews are among the supporters and activists in all leading blocs, and there are Jewish candidates on virtually every party slate.

And despite specific Jewish concerns, the choices of Jewish voters mostly mirror those of the general population.

Many Jews in western and central Ukraine — Kiev included — are likely to support the pro-Western Orange parties. And similar to what occurred during the presidential vote of 2004, those living in eastern Ukraine are likely to support the opposition and its leader, Yanukovich.

"Jews and non-Jews in the East prefer" Yanukovich's Party of Regions. And in Kiev most of the Jews support Yuschenko, Stambler said.

The Orange forces centered around Yuschenko include the president's own party, Our Ukraine; the party of Yulia Tymoshenko, the president's charismatic former ally and ex-prime minister; Pora-Reforms and Order headed by the former boxing champion Vitali Klitschko; and the Socialists.

According to the recent opinion polls, the Party of Regions is expected to receive about 30 percent of the vote, the Tymoshenko bloc will receive 19 percent, Yuschenko's about 18 percent, the centrists of the current Parliament speaker Vladimir Litvin at 7 percent, and the Socialists with 6 percent.

Since no party is expected to have enough votes to form a majority in Parliament and elect a Cabinet, analysts predict that Ukrainians will witness a major political battle after the election when parties will vie to form coalitions.

Aside from Yuschenko's Orange coalition and Yanukovich's Party of Regions, some of Ukraine's estimated 200,000 to 300,000 Jews will vote for a third force, the centrists.

Josef Zissels, a longtime Jewish leader who supported Yuschenko during the days of the Orange Revolution, says that some Jews may vote for parties like the bloc of Litvin, the parliamentary speaker, or the Socialists.

Many Jews believe Yuschenko has not shown enough willingness or ability to stop anti-Semitic incitement associated with the Interregional Academy of Personnel Management, or MAUP, a Kiev-based university that regularly publishes anti-Jewish articles and organizes anti-Semitic and anti-Zionist activities.

"President Yuschenko has lost his credibility. It is rather difficult to say who really supports him now," said Rabbi Ya'akov Dov Bleich, one of Ukraine's three chief rabbis.

Frenkel of the Association of Jewish Media echoed the widespread Jewish disappointment in Yuschenko.

"The authorities have only been making declarations" but not acted to combat anti-Semitism in the country, he said.

And yet, Zissels said, many Jews will support Our Ukraine, simply because "life in the Diaspora has taught Jews to be loyal to the authorities."

The last option left for voters is none of the above — and a Kiev Jewish pensioner said he is going to check this box on his ballot.

"Like many other people I'm so tired of all this," Gilariy Lyapitsky said of Ukraine's political and economic turmoil of the last year. "I don't believe these leading parties, I will vote against all."

By various estimates, there are between 25-35 Jewish members in the Rada, and observers agree that number will not change dramatically after the elections.

No political party is specifically courting Jewish votes, although Klitschko, the boxer, attended this week a Purim celebration in the Kiev community.

But what worried Jewish observers more is the fact that none of the parties included combating anti-Semitism in their platforms.

"This upsets the Jewish community very much," Stambler said.

Apparently to dispel these feelings and to show a better face of Ukraine in the West, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Boris Tarasyuk said earlier this month in a meeting in the Washington that "any attempts to destroy the harmonious co-existence in Ukraine of numerous minorities and faiths will be strongly prosecuted."

Despite that promise, parties with history of anti-Semitism have been allowed to run in the election.

Two of the parties have officials known as leaders in anti-Semitic propaganda. Yet, neither the Conservative Party of Georgy Schokin, head of the MAUP school, nor the Freedom Party of Oleg Tyagnibok, a former lawmaker expelled from his parliamentary group over anti-Semitic statements he made, are expected to win any seats.

#4

Belarus: Little Hope For A Fair Contest As Early Voting Begins

By Daisy Sindelar

RFE/RL, March 13, 2006

Early voting for Belarus's presidential election is due to begin on March 14. The vote pits incumbent Alyaksandr Lukashenka against three candidates who have little, if any, chance of upsetting his bid for a third five-year term. In the end, the importance of the Belarusian vote may not be its outcome, but the public response it provokes. Will Belarusians take to the streets to protest an unfair election -- and how will the state respond?

PRAGUE -- Not everyone is laboring under the pretense that Belarus's upcoming presidential vote will represent a legitimate political contest.

Some Belarusians interviewed by RFE/RL's Belarus Service on Monday said they thought all candidates in the March 19 were being given equal opportunity to get their message across. Others weren't so sure:

Woman: "It seems to me they get almost the same chance. They've all had equal time on the radio and everything else. We're already bored with all their talk."

Man: "Lukashenka, as president, has better access to the press. But I think the others get a sufficient opportunity to express their thoughts."

Woman: "No, no. It's not equal."

Man: "It's not equal."

Man: "Well, first of all, I think that the incumbent should temporarily resign his duties in order to run for president. Otherwise, all these rallies and the state press have no choice but to promote the president."

Man: "At present, we can't say they're equal. We see that TV and radio are constantly promoting only one candidate -- the incumbent. The others don't have even 5 percent of the opportunities and possibilities that he does."

Even so, the ruling regime of President Alyaksandr Lukashenka appears to be taking no chances when it comes to ensuring election success.

Arresting Opposition Supporters

Riot police on March 12 arrested around a dozen Ukrainian and Belarusian activists attending a Milinkevich rally in the capital Minsk.

Hanna Horozhenko, a television reporter with Ukraine's Channel 5, was reporting live from the rally to news presenter Natalia Moseychuk when she and her cameraman were also apprehended by police. Horozhenko, who began with a straightforward report about the groups attending the rally, broke into

horrified screams as she was accosted by police and forced into a law-enforcement van before her mobile phone was cut off.

Horozhenko and her cameraman were released after several hours, following an intervention by the Ukrainian Embassy in Minsk.

But at least two of the Ukrainian activists have been given 10-day jail sentences, and Belarusian authorities have said they will deport any foreigners planning to take part in public rallies aimed at "destabilizing" Belarus ahead of the election.

They have also accused the European Union and the United States of funding the opposition with the aim of fomenting public unrest.

Brussels and Washington deny the claim. But they have already condemned the vote as unlikely to be free or fair, and are watching carefully the run-up to the election.

'Abysmal' Pre-election Climate

In a hearing on March 9, the U.S. Helsinki Commission, a government agency, criticized as "abysmal" Belarus's pre-election climate, and warned Lukashenka to refrain from postelection violence against peaceful demonstrations.

Among the hearing's speakers was Belarusian student activist Iryna Vidanova, who said the country's youth would play a "key role" in the elections.

"In Belarus, young people are the most open-minded, tolerant, and pro-European segment of the population. It should come as no surprise that a December survey found that more than one-third of those supporting the democratic candidate Alyaksandr Milinkevich were under 30. Belarus has a very young society, and many of these young people will vote for the first time. But 77 percent of young people doubt that the elections will be fair," Vidanova said.

Arrests like those on March 12 underscore the lack of public trust in the upcoming vote. They were just the latest actions by Lukashenka's camp to silence opposition voices ahead of the ballot, which formally begins on March 14 with early voting.

In recent weeks, scores of opposition supporters have been arrested, fined, or otherwise harassed. Authorities have cracked down on nonstate newspapers and censored television appearances by Lukashenka's political rivals.

Belarusian special forces went so far as to physically assault the second opposition candidate in the race, Alyaksandr Kazulin, after he tried to enter a building where Lukashenka was holding a political assembly in early March.

'Colored Revolutions'

Following the sweep of "colored revolutions" that brought political transformation to Ukraine, Georgia, and Kyrgyzstan, many had hoped Belarus would follow suit with a youth-driven "denim revolution" of its own.

But many in Belarus concede the country -- which under Lukashenka has enjoyed economic and social stability -- is not yet ready for such an uprising.

Svyatlana Aleksiyeovich, a Belarusian writer and passionate commentator on Belarusian society, told RFE/RL's Belarus Service she has little hope this week's election will bring change to the country: "I'm afraid that it seems to me that we don't have the kind of internal strength to beat this situation. That is primarily because the state is strong -- and also brazen, let's put it like that. I've already said that [former

Ukrainian President Leonid] Kuchma didn't shoot on his own people. [Uzbek President Islam] Karimov -- he did. So let's think, what kind of government do we have? For example, as far as I understood, at a recent large gathering, they said troops would have automatic rifles with which to defend this government. In fact, they're talking about defending a single person."

Milinkevich has asked supporters to join him in central Minsk after polls close on March 19 -- not for a revolution, but simply to "defend their choice."

But the country's top police official, Vladimir Naumov, has said all rallies will be banned on election day. He has vowed to use "all means within the law" to disperse protesters.

#5

Jewish leaders in Belarus quiet as Lukashenko set to win again

By Lev Krichevsky

JTA, March 14, 2006

MOSCOW — Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, a former Soviet collective farm manager, has been tightening the screws on dissent before a presidential vote in his country next week. Lukashenko's regime, routinely referred to in the West as Europe's last dictatorship, is facing two opposition candidates as he campaigns for his third term in office.

Support for the opposition among Belarusian Jews is especially strong among younger and more educated voters, as well as in the capital of Minsk, home to many of the country's estimated 20,000 to 30,000 Jews.

Jewish leaders in the past have shown a certain degree of independence from the authorities and have at times criticized the official line on issues of concern for the community.

But the leaders of the community are refraining from making any predictions regarding Sunday's vote — apparently fearing a possible backlash.

The authorities are afraid of a repeat of what happened in Ukraine and Georgia, where regime changes occurred as a result of pro-democracy protests that took place after rigged elections.

As a result, opposition activists are being detained in Belarus and even one of the two opposition candidates was briefly arrested for holding a rally that had not been sanctioned.

New amendments introduced to the criminal code will allow the regime to further clamp down on political dissent, civil rights groups fear.

The opposition candidates have been all but barred from media and their rallies have been broken up by force. More recently, opposition activists in many areas of Belarus had to resort to home visits as the only way to distribute campaign materials and talk to voters.

The main opposition candidate, Alexander Milinkevich, a 58-year-old professor of physics, believes that he and Lukashenko both share one-quarter of popular support each, with about one-half of the electorate still undecided or afraid of showing their support to the opposition.

But most observers believe Lukashenko will not allow himself to lose the vote.

Lukashenko is backed by the Kremlin in Moscow, but even Russian experts helping Lukashenko in his campaign usually refrain from calling the election process in Belarus democratic.

Lukashenko, still popular with many Belarusians, has maintained a strict, state-controlled economy, and has capitalized on low unemployment and stable, if meager, living standards.

But at least a few Belarusians apparently have other ideas. Last week, the chief of Belarus's KGB security service accused an allegedly foreign-funded opposition group of planning to stage an election-day coup after publishing false voting results.

Opposition leaders deny the allegations, and Milinkevich has called for peaceful protests if vote-rigging occurs.

#6

Ukraine Votes May Unite Foes

Weakened Yushchenko Weighs Coalition With Pro-Russian Faction

By Alan Cullison

Wall Street Journal, March 13, 2006

Ukraine's parliamentary elections this month could mark an unexpected turn for the country's fledgling democracy, which the West had hoped would inspire democratic movements in other former Soviet states -- and in Russia itself.

With his own supporters weak and divided before the crucial vote, Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko is considering what was unthinkable a year ago: a coalition government with the pro-Russian factions that opposed him during the 2004 presidential elections.

Mr. Yushchenko is faced with the choice after a severe come-down in his popularity since the protests that overturned the flawed election and put him in power. His problems stem partly from the country's sagging economy and bitter disputes with onetime allies.

The March 26 vote is the first electoral test of the political promises Mr. Yushchenko made during the "Orange Revolution." In a bitter turnaround, the top vote-getter is expected to be the party of Viktor Yanukovych, the Moscow-backed presidential candidate who almost became president by alleged ballot stuffing in 2004.

RANKLING RUSSIA

Ukraine's rapid integration with the West has rankled Russia, which accuses the U.S. and Europe of bankrolling the Orange Revolution to tug Ukraine out of its orbit. Observers say Russian President Vladimir Putin has used the events in Ukraine -- as well as upheavals that toppled governments in the former Soviet states of Georgia and Kyrgyzstan -- to crack down on dissent at home.

Whether Mr. Yushchenko makes peace with his embittered former allies could determine how rapidly Ukraine can end its culture of corruption and turn around its economy, which has lately stagnated.

Recent constitutional changes in Ukraine mean its Parliament will have new powers to fire and hire the president's cabinet and prime minister. A deadlocked Parliament could stall the economic overhauls needed to move Ukraine toward a Western-style economy and could derail more-divisive political matters, such as whether to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

No single party is likely to dominate the new 450-seat Parliament, however, and Mr. Yushchenko may yet rally enough onetime allies from the Orange Revolution to form a government. That may help galvanize the estimated 20% of Ukraine's undecided voters, many of whom are disillusioned with the infighting of Orange Revolutionaries and plan to stay home on election day.

"We need to agree on some kind of coalition before these elections," said Dmitry Sennychenko, head of the executive office of the PORA political party, which supported Mr. Yushchenko in 2004. "If we succeed, then a lot of our parties will do better on election day."

Hopes, however, are fading. Talks last month between Orange Revolution allies collapsed amid demands by some parties over specific cabinet posts. Mr. Sennychenko said they are unlikely to resume before the vote.

EFFECTIVE TEAM

Many of Mr. Yushchenko's political problems arise from a bitter falling-out with his former prime minister, Yulia Tymoshenko, who in 2004 helped lead demonstrations that reversed the tainted presidential vote. During that tumultuous time, their radically divergent styles made them an effective team: Ms. Tymoshenko was emotional, telegenic and articulate, and Mr. Yushchenko was authoritative and measured.

The two quickly tangled in government, however. Last fall, Mr. Yushchenko fired Ms. Tymoshenko from her prime minister's post and blamed her for contributing to the slowdown in economic growth that has undermined his popularity. He replaced her with Yuri Yekhanurov, a technocrat and former university professor.

Ms. Tymoshenko has turned into a spirited opponent and even teamed up with the pro-Moscow forces in Parliament to pass a vote of no-confidence in Mr. Yushchenko's new prime minister and cabinet.

Hryhoriy Nemyri, a top adviser to Ms. Tymoshenko, says she and Mr. Yushchenko have some deep differences over how far to prosecute the crimes of the old regime after Mr. Yushchenko was swept to power.

Ms. Tymoshenko's group "says that in order to move ahead we need to clean the stables," Mr. Nemyri said. "And there is the other side that wants to make a broad-based deal with the former regime without cleaning the stables."

Ms. Tymoshenko is making no secret of her ambitions: She wants her party to win more seats in Parliament than Mr. Yushchenko's party, making her the chief representative of the supporters of the Orange Revolution and forcing Mr. Yushchenko to form a coalition with her and name her prime minister again.

The latest polls show she isn't too far behind: One taken this month showed Mr. Yanukovich's party collecting 28% of the vote, with Mr. Yushchenko trailing with 16% and Ms. Tymoshenko with 12%. Following her are a clutch of parties, including communists, socialists and Orange Revolutionaries that have been both supportive and hostile to Mr. Yushchenko.

For now, Mr. Yushchenko is betting that Ukrainians are more interested in jobs than the revolutionary rhetoric that they associate with Ms. Tymoshenko. Last week his government got a boost from the U.S., when Congress voted to establish permanent normal trade relations with Ukraine by revoking a Cold War provision tying Kiev's trade status to the rights of Jews to emigrate.

Earlier in the week the U.S. also signed with Ukraine a bilateral-trade protocol that is a major step toward Kiev's joining the World Trade Organization.

MAKING A COALITION POSSIBLE

Mr. Yushchenko's practical interest in economic growth may indeed make it possible for him to form a coalition with Mr. Yanukovich's party, which is dominated by oligarchs and economic-clan leaders from Ukraine's Russia-dominated east.

Besides Mr. Yanukovich, a major leader in the party is Rinat Akhmetov, Ukraine's richest man, who resided outside Ukraine for most of last year when rumors were rife that police were planning to arrest him. He returned to Ukraine after Mr. Yushchenko fired Ms. Tymoshenko as prime minister.

Katya Malofeeva, an analyst at Renaissance Capital brokerage firm in Moscow, said the Kremlin as well as the pro-Russian politicians in eastern Ukraine may be learning there is no point in strident opposition to Mr. Yushchenko. While many dislike Mr. Yushchenko, Ms. Tymoshenko is feared for her revolutionary rhetoric.

"People understand that Yushchenko is easier to deal with," said Ms. Malofeeva. For that reason, she expects Mr. Yushchenko to form a coalition with his old foes in eastern Ukraine, and leave Ms. Tymoshenko as an oppositionist.