



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

NCSJ WEEKLY NEWS BRIEF  
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## **#1**

### **Group for FSU Jews honors leaders JTA Brief, June 14, 2006**

A group that works with Jews in the former Soviet Union honored two of its leaders at a Capitol Hill reception.

Shoshana Cardin, the group's one-time national chairwoman, received NCSJ's Torch of Liberty Award, which was presented Tuesday evening by Sen. Barbara Mikulski (D-Md.).

The group — which advocates on behalf of Jews in Russia, Ukraine, the Baltic states and Eurasia — also honored its executive director, Mark Levin, for his 25 years of service.

Cardin, whom Mikulski called a “national treasure,” has chaired many top national organizations, including the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, United Israel Appeal and the Council of Jewish Federations.

She also is past president of JTA's board of directors.

## **#2**

### **Honoring Mark Levin Sen. Gordon Smith (R-OR) U.S. Senate, June 12, 2006**

Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to Mark Levin, who is celebrating his 25th year with the NCSJ.

In his time with NCSJ, Mark Levin has accomplished a great deal. A consummate professional, Mark has spent 25 years moving through the ranks from a professional staffer all the way to executive director.

As the mandated central coordinating agency of the organized Jewish community on behalf of the estimated 1.5 million Jews of the former Soviet Union, the NCSJ comprises nearly 50 national organizations and over 300 local federations, community councils, and committees.

Mark has represented NCSJ at conventions, summits, and also here in the Halls of Congress.

A distinguished scholar and policy expert, Mark is unmatched in his knowledge of the Soviet Jewry, and he was instrumental in restructuring NCSJ's tactics following the breakup of the Soviet Union.

But while Mark's résumé is overflowing with remarkable accomplishments, it is the relationships that he has forged over the years that are his finest achievements.

For 25 years, Mark has been more than an advocate--he has been a friend.

It is those friendships that have made his time with NCSJ special. They are what have taken him from merely influencing policy to significantly impacting people's lives.

And it is those friendships that have brought us all together to honor Mark for 25 outstanding years of service.

With that, I would like to thank NCSJ for an opportunity to speak on behalf of Mark, and I would like to offer my thanks and my congratulations to an outstanding colleague and an even better friend, Mark Levin.

**#3**

### **Mark Levin's Journey**

**From freeing refuseniks to today's dimming democracy, NCSJ head sees renewed need for American Jewish activism.**

**By James D. Besser, Washington Correspondent**

**Baltimore Jewish Times, June 9, 2006**

WASHINGTON - In some ways it seems like a relic of a long-ago Cold War. But NCSJ -- once the National Conference on Soviet Jewry, with a streamlined name now that the Soviet Union no longer exists -- remains an active advocate for the estimated 1.5 million Jews left in the former Soviet republics.

And Mark Levin has been in the thick of the agency's efforts for 25 years. Now, with anti-Semitism in the region on the rise and Russia seemingly headed back to autocratic rule, the Jews he and NCSJ have long fought for once again need outside help.

Mr. Levin, 51, will be honored next week at a Washington reception for his years with NCSJ, including the last 14 as executive director.

"The good news is that state-sponsored anti-Semitism is virtually non-existent," he told the Baltimore Jewish Times this week. "But more and more, we are again dealing with popular anti-Semitism -- especially in Russia and Ukraine."

He was there during the desperate fight to free refuseniks and the opening of emigration floodgates in the 1980's including the huge 1987 mass march on Washington, a major landmark of Jewish activism. Then came the stunning collapse of the Soviet empire, the heady days of democracies being born and now today's frightening retreat from freedom.

These days, he and NCSJ are eyeing life for Jews in the many former soviet republics, which could again get precarious for a community that in total remains the third-largest Jewish population in the world. Mr. Levin's activism on the issue began as a teenager in the Washington area. After a stint at the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, "NCSJ offered me an opportunity to revamp their congressional operation," he said. "I was very young and very sure of myself. I didn't entirely understand the difference between working with a big national organization like AIPAC and working in a tiny office like NCSJ."

At the same time, the small NCSJ offices were next to a ventilator from a fast-food restaurant, he said.

The Soviet Jewry movement had its roots in the mid-1960's and NCSJ was founded in 1971; the rise in U.S. Soviet tensions in the earl 1980's and the plight of countless refuseniks spurred a new wave of activism during Mr. Levin's early years with the group.

The landmark "Freedom Sunday" rally on Washington's mall in December 1987 drew some 250,000 activists, giving the movement added visibility on the national scene. But just as important were the quiet, incessant efforts of NCSJ and other groups to put the issue on the U.S. diplomatic agenda.

In response to the pleas of Jewish leaders, then-President Ronald Reagan and then-Secretary of state George Schultz established human rights as “one of the four cornerstones of U.S. policy toward the Soviet Union,” Mr. Levin said. “They made a promise this would become part of every diplomatic contact with Moscow --- and they kept it.”

That provided a template for U.S. involvement in other human rights crises, he said.

The movement also changed the American Jewish Community, he said, creating “a new generation of Jewish leadership that saw what a galvanized, committed community could do. Many of today’s top Jewish leaders had strong ties to the Soviet Jewry movement in their early days.”

Shoshana Cardin - a former NCSJ president who worked closely with Levin and who will be honored with him next week --- said that the movement “took us out of thinking that it was just American Jewry and Israel and not thinking about Jews in other countries. American Jews, as a community, became globally minded as a result.”

Mr. Levin acknowledged the since the great upsurge in Jewish emigration in the late 1980’s and the end of the Soviet Union itself in 1991, it has sometimes been difficult to explain the need for NCSJ.

“It’s not letter writing, marching, sign waving; it’s a much more subtle but no less significant form of activism,” he said.

Today’s activism, he said, involves working closely with the U.S. State Department, representatives of the former Soviet republics, and international human rights monitoring groups. It also involves myriad relations with the Jewish groups that are re-establishing a vibrant Jewish life in those countries.

The group even works on related issues, such as Russian-Iranian nuclear cooperation, he said.

Above all, NCSJ remains an active promoter of democracy in the former Soviet Union — the best guarantor, he said, of Jewish security in the region.

As democracy in the region teeters and repression looms, “the only entity I know of that will take the time and trouble to help the Jews, and which already has the mechanisms and the political contact, is NCSJ,” added Mrs. Cardin. Maintaining this careful watching mechanism is very important for or community.

#### **#4**

#### **Anti-Semitism Suspected in Murder of Two Jews near Tashkent**

**IsraelINN, June 9, 2006**

Jewish leaders in the former Soviet Union suspect that anti-Semitism was behind the murder of the secretary of a rabbi and her mother in Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan.

The two were found dead in their apartment. The 20-year-old woman, Karina Rivka Loiper, was active in the Tashkent Jewish community and was secretary to regional chief Rabbi Avraham Gurevich.

A Jewish community spokesman said police have revealed no details on the murder. Earlier this year, a leader of the Jewish community was murdered in a Tashkent market, and the Islamic Jihad two years ago attacked Jewish sites, including the Israeli embassy, in Tashkent, killing two workers and a policeman.

#### **#5**

#### **US denies mixing trade with politics in Russia talks**

**AFP, June 9, 2006**

The United States is not throwing up any political hurdles to Russia's bid to join the WTO, new US Trade Representative Susan Schwab said.

Russia has angrily accused the US government of injecting political questions about democracy and human rights into the trade negotiations, but Schwab this was not the case.

"From our perspective that is not a political negotiation. That is a straightforward commercial negotiation," she said.

Asked if the bilateral talks could be wrapped up before Russia hosts a Group of Eight summit next month, Schwab said: "It's not beyond the realms of possibility."

But she added: "We're not there yet on the bilateral."

After Russia successfully concluded talks with Australia this week, the United States is the last big hurdle standing in the way of Moscow's long-running campaign to join the World Trade Organisation.

Would-be WTO members must strike bilateral agreements with concerned trading partners before they can try to get a green light to join the body that sets the rules of global commerce.

## #6

### **For Former Dissident, Two Lives and One Retirement**

**By Nicholas Confessore**

**New York Times June 11, 2006**

TARRYTOWN, N.Y., June 10 - Pavel Litvinov's first life ended one day in August 1968, when K.G.B. agents arrested him in Red Square in Moscow, where he was protesting the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, and exiled him to Siberia. His second life began several years later, when he arrived in this small, leafy town on the Hudson River to teach physics and math at the private Hackley School.

But Mr. Litvinov's two lives - as a resister of totalitarianism, as a teacher of teenagers - are not so dissimilar, really.

"It's different subjects, but they are similar in one sense," Mr. Litvinov said yesterday, as Hackley's seniors assembled for their graduation. "You have to question everything. You cannot believe in absolutes. I teach my students not to believe something because I tell them it is true. I enjoy teaching calculus and science, but really I am teaching them to think."

Mr. Litvinov, 65, retired yesterday, after three decades as one of Hackley's most revered teachers. But his gentle, accented voice has a way of echoing in students' heads long after they leave. "OOOOOOOkaaay, ant dis is how vee are going to soolve it," one former student described it, recalling in a recent tribute how Mr. Litvinov had helped him work through a particularly difficult equation.

After yesterday's ceremony, Mr. Litvinov stood amid the stiff new suits and lacy white dresses, his chromatic green tie and professorial tweed jacket clashing merrily in the sunlight. His former students drew close, one by one, to hug and thank him. "Do you remember me, Mr. Litvinov?" they asked.

He remembers. He was born during World War II, the grandson of Maxim Litvinov, a onetime Soviet foreign minister, and raised among the Russian ruling class, taught to revere Stalin and communism. Later, Mr. Litvinov trained as a physicist, the scientific awakening soon producing a political one.

"When you are trained to think, you cannot take this propaganda seriously," he said. "Sooner or later, you see through all the nonsense and lies."

Mr. Litvinov began campaigning for the right to speak and write freely, as scientists must. "The most important thing about the Soviet regime was that it was a lie," he said, "this whole idea that they were building a paradise when they were actually building labor camps."

He passed information on to Western reporters and petitioned the Politburo on behalf of imprisoned intellectuals. In return, he was stripped of his academic job and, after the Red Square protest, sent to prison and then to Siberia to work in the mines. When he returned to Moscow more than four years later, he resumed his fight against the regime. Leave Russia now, he was told, or you will go to Siberia again and never come back.

He left, bringing his family with him to America. Mr. Litvinov has since spent nearly half his life here, teaching and working with groups like Amnesty International and Memorial, a Russian human rights organization. He no longer considers himself an exile.

"I'm American as apple pie," he said lightly. The Soviet government long banned him from visiting home, but that ban ended in 1990, shortly before the Soviet government did. He has visited nearly every year since.

Walter Johnson, Hackley's headmaster, said: "For students to have contact with someone who is legitimately a figure of great experience in the 20th century, and who has witnessed his own conviction with courage, is just extraordinary. He is a very gentle man, but he is a man of extraordinary will."

A few years ago, he recalled, Mr. Litvinov was struck by lightning while hiking. (He used to run marathons, but his knees wore out.) His fellow hiker, a doctor, revived him, and he made it down the mountain under his own power. This summer, Mr. Litvinov plans to climb Mount Rainier.

First, though, he will move out of the rambling shingled house on Hackley's campus where he has lived for nearly 30 years. He and his third wife, Julia - they married in 1998 - will live in nearby Irvington, and he has some unfinished business to take care of.

"When I came to this country, I started to write a book," Mr. Litvinov said, a memoir of freedom and oppression. He hopes to finish it soon and return to a different sort of teaching.

"I consider my fight for human rights my lifetime thing," he said. The absolutisms of communism have much in common, he notes, with a more recent threat, radical Islam. But the solutions are less obvious.

"The picture was clearer and easier in my time. You had simply left-wing and right-wing dictatorships," he said. "Islam is a way of life. You start to criticize the fascistic nature of some of these regimes, and you come immediately to the DNA of family's lives."

He blinks his clear blue eyes once, twice, considering.

"That makes it harder," he added. "But we must still do it."

**#7**

**Crowds Pack Moscow Synagogue as Part of Centennial Celebrations**

**Lev Krichevsky**

**JTA, June 11, 2006**

Moscow Jews usually gather in the city's most famous synagogue in large numbers only for High Holidays.

But June 7 was different. The Moscow Choral Synagogue was celebrating the restoration of its main sanctuary as part of yearlong events commemorating its 100th anniversary.

Within a few evening hours, several hundred Jews were treated to a speech by Yuri Luzhkov, the mayor of Moscow, the showing of a movie about the synagogue's history, a children's choir recital and fireworks displayed outside the synagogue located a few minutes walk away from the Kremlin.

Organizers said the crowd could have been bigger. But due to the mayor's presence and because of this year's stabbing incident in another Moscow synagogue, the event was by invitation only. The street was closed to traffic and passers-by.

There were two lines of police and two metal detectors in place.

Despite these precautions, the synagogue was packed.

"Thank God, children's voices are being heard in the synagogue more and more today," Luzhkov, who was sporting a white yarmulke, said about the many children in the audience. "This symbolizes that the faith will live on," he added.

For Jews outside of Russia, the Moscow Choral Synagogue is probably best known as the site where thousands of Soviet Jews gathered in the fall of 1948 to greet Golda Meir, Israel's first ambassador to the Soviet Union, in a rare display of Jewish and Zionist pride for a Soviet Jewry demoralized by Stalin's repression.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the street next to the synagogue became the site of mass gatherings of Jews. Defying the ever-present KGB agents, members of the community celebrated Jewish holidays, sang, danced and exchanged news about the emigration status of their friends.

Technically, the synagogue is more than 100 years old. It was built in the 1890s, but closed by the authorities after it was completed and remained shut for more than a decade. Only in 1906 did the authorities allow worship service here amid a loosening of laws on religious minorities.

This year's celebration will culminate in early September in the presence of many key Jewish and Israeli leaders who are expected in Moscow for the occasion. Invitations have also been sent to Russian President Vladimir Putin and key government officials, although a source with the synagogue said it is unclear whether Putin will attend.

## **#8**

### **Jewish official murdered in Tashkent JTA, June 12, 2006**

The secretary to Central Asia's chief rabbi and her mother were strangled in their apartment.

Karina Rivka Loiper, 20, was secretary to Rabbi Abe David Gurevich. She was found strangled Thursday night with her mother, Svetlana Loiper, in their Tashkent apartment. Police said it was a robbery and had no anti-Semitic overtones.

The Federation of Jewish Communities of the Commonwealth of Independent States called for a thorough investigation.

The killings come three months after Jewish leader Avraam Yagudaev was killed in what authorities said was a traffic accident. Other Jewish leaders said they had concerns about that explanation.

Anti-Semitism Suspected in Murder of Two Jews near Tashkent IsraelINN.com June 9, 2006

Jewish leaders in the former Soviet Union suspect that anti-Semitism was behind the murder of the secretary of a rabbi and her mother in Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan.

The two were found dead in their apartment. The 20-year-old woman, Karina Rivka Loiper, was active in the Tashkent Jewish community and was secretary to regional chief Rabbi Avraham Gurevich.

A Jewish community spokesman said police have revealed no details on the murder. Earlier this year, a leader of the Jewish community was murdered in a Tashkent market, and the Islamic Jihad two years ago attacked Jewish sites, including the Israeli embassy, in Tashkent, killing two workers and a policeman.

**#9**

## **Russian Party Asks Young: Who Wants to Be a Deputy?**

**By Peter Finn**

**Washington Post June 13, 2006**

LIPETSK, Russia -- To the list of contest prizes that stoke fantasies worldwide -- riches, fame, a dream date, a new washer-dryer -- add another: a seat in parliament.

Shunning pinstripes for shorts and bathing suits, a group of potential legislators was unveiled at a beach party here last weekend -- the first-round winners in a competition called Political Factory, modeled on the popular Russian television show "Star Factory." Plucked from obscurity, a few of these aspiring lawmakers, or deputies, are due to join the Russian ruling class by October.

"I'm ready to fight and to solve the problems of young people!" proclaimed a beaming Svetlana Kondakova, 21, on hearing she'd made the cut. When a DJ in wraparound shades remarked that what her bikini top concealed would help her advance in politics, the crowd roared its approval.

In April, the Supreme Council of United Russia, the political party that supports President Vladimir Putin and controls legislatures at both the federal and regional levels, decided that 20 percent of all candidates on party lists in future elections must be between 21 and 28 years of age.

The move is part of efforts to broaden the party's membership beyond the stolid bureaucrats and businessmen who currently stuff its ranks -- many of them inspired not by ideological fervor but by the party's almost complete electoral dominance.

Lipetsk's regional governor, Oleg Korolyov, joined United Russia last October, part of a wave of political grandees switching sides. But how to recruit at the entry level? Young Guard, the party's youth wing, hatched the idea of a reality contest and opened it up to all comers. The competition was launched in May in nine regions, including Lipetsk, that are scheduled to hold local parliamentary elections in the fall.

"It's the first time in Russian history that a party has made a decision to share real power . . . on every level from local to federal," said Ivan Demidov, a Young Guard leader and well-known television personality. "It's the first actual step toward renewing the elite."

According to surveys, young people in Russia are largely indifferent to politics, despite Kremlin fears that they could become the vanguard of the kind of popular revolt that toppled governments in neighboring Ukraine and Georgia. Although a host of youth organizations were formed in the last two years to tame or channel youth activism, most of them quickly faded.

So Young Guard used modern marketing to try to attract recruits.

You are young.

You are active.

You are moving forward,

And Political Factory will open the doors for you!

Political Factory gives you a chance to get to power!

So promised a jingle aired over the last two months on local radio stations in Lipetsk, which is about 225 miles south of Moscow.

Critics call this approach a desperate gimmick. "Demidov is a showman," said Vladimir Pribylovsky, head of the Panorama research institute in Moscow. "The president asked him to propagandize among young people and he had to come up with something new to generate some interest. But I don't believe they'll give away parliamentary seats. There are too many of the party's adults who want them."

One young person who embraced the idea was Kondakova. "You look at politicians, and all you see are middle-aged men -- and how are they going to solve the questions of young people?" she said, speaking on the beach of an artificial lake outside Lipetsk. "This competition is a real surprise and a chance for young people to actually do things."

Contestants were invited to come to a Young Guard office in the city. There they had to fill out a long questionnaire on their personal backgrounds and political views.

"The USA is our friend, enemy or economic partner?" one question asked. Respondents were instructed to elaborate on their answers. There are no set correct answers, they were told.

"The U.S. is our strong competitor," wrote Andrei Trofimenkov, 26, who works for a local private group that promotes cooperation between government and business, in a fairly typical response. The Lipetsk branch of Young Guard provided The Washington Post with the completed questionnaires of all 60 people who entered the contest in the city.

"It is not our friend because it is not interested in restoring Russia's greatness," continued Trofimenkov. "Neither is it our enemy because it's not interested in Russia's total elimination."

"It's too tough to say enemy," wrote Dmitry Zakhvatayev, 24, a manager at a small company. "But they don't wish us any good, that's for sure."

Some responses were inflammatory. Asked what the first action of a new youth movement should be, Kondakova wrote that she would like "to disperse a gay parade." An attempt to stage the first gay and lesbian pride parade in Moscow last month ended in violence when it was broken up by police and skinheads.

"I expected worse," Demidov said after reviewing questionnaires from the first nine regions taking part in the contest. "We wanted to find those who have desire, who identify themselves as leaders. There was a lot of confusion about ideology, in their understanding of power, but the main thing is they have the desire to take part. Some people say it's an artificial thing. It's always difficult to find talented people, but it's better to have this 20 percent as a door, rather than the wall we've had until now."

One question asked why Mikhail Khodorkovsky, the Russian oil tycoon who clashed with the Kremlin, was in prison. Almost everyone wrote that he was guilty of financial crimes.

But others showed independence from the government's line.

Pavel Lysenko, a 21-year-old who works for the local Interior Ministry, said Khodorkovsky was in jail only because "he was able to earn money and the Russian mentality can't tolerate that." Yevgeny Zenkov, a 23-year-old chemistry teacher and boy scout leader, said Khodorkovsky was "in jail for his political views."

Both Lysenko and Zenkov are still in the contest.

Entrants also recorded 45-second videos in which they stated why they wanted to be members of parliament. A panel of judges, including Young Guard activists and well-known young people from Lipetsk, conducted follow-up interviews by phone.

"I was looking for some creativity," said Maxim Bereznev, a 23-year-old break dancer who took part in the judging.

On June 4, the original field of 60 was cut to 20, half of whom had no previous affiliation with United Russia or Young Guard, according to their questionnaires.

Contestants heard the news on the beach, where United Russia had set up a stage and DJs from a local radio station played Russian hip-hop and house music. To the side, under a stand of trees, young activists grilled hot dogs and people helped themselves to the mineral water for which Lipetsk has been famous since the days of Czar Peter the Great.

The winners were called up to the stage in groups of four. In responses to a DJ, the fledgling politicians proclaimed their devotion to the party, democracy and the Russian way of life.

"It's not important which party you belong to," said Sergei Pozdnyakov, 26, a former Communist Party loyalist who was among the 20 preliminary winners. "The main thing is to be with people who have some sincere beliefs."

Over the next month, the winners have to gather the signatures of 500 people who pledge to support them in the fall elections. They also have to organize some local events to show their political smarts. The contest will end with a debate among the 20 aspirants before the judging panel makes its final decision.

On June 27, five final winners will be chosen in Lipetsk and added to the party list. Three of those will almost certainly end up in parliament.

"We're looking for energetic, thinking patriots," said Alexei Demikhov, head of Young Guard in Lipetsk. "And our main task is to choose those we won't feel ashamed of when they become deputies."

## **#10**

### **Anti-Semitic Comments at Ukrainian Parley JTA, June 14, 2006**

Participants at a conference in Ukraine made anti-Israel and anti-Semitic statements.

The statements blamed "Rothschild soldiers" for the "genocide" of the Ukrainian people. The statements were made late last month by leaders of the Interregional Academy of Personnel Management, or MAUP, a Kiev-based private university with a history of anti-Semitism.

The event, which the organizers billed as a scholarly conference, brought together MAUP leaders, Ukrainian public figures and representatives of Arab countries, according to a report published last week in the school's magazine, Ukrainian Newspaper Plus.

Last year, school officials created a stir by making a series of anti-Semitic and anti-Zionist statements, including a call to the United Nations to revoke the 1947 vote that created the State of Israel.

## **#11**

### **Belarus Jewish school under political pressure JTA, June 14, 2006**

A Jewish kindergarten in Belarus was forced to remove Jewish symbols from classrooms after a prosecutor accused the teacher of violating the country's religious law.

The prosecutor says Lyudmila Izakson-Bolotovskaya violated the law by holding Jewish religious celebrations inside the school, which is located in a government building in the city of Mogilev.

The prosecutor's action came after recent Purim celebrations in the kindergarten, which featured a children's Jewish musical group, were shown on local television news.

Prosecutors argued that Izakson-Bolotovskaya, who also leads the music group, violated the children's rights, and that television coverage of the event illegally propagated Judaism. The teacher was warned that she might be prosecuted if the actions are repeated.

According to local Jewish leaders, menorahs and Stars of David were removed from the kindergarten.

## **#12**

### **Russia's Lid On the Media**

**By Masha Lipman**

**Washington Post, June 15 2006**

MOSCOW -- Earlier this month Moscow hosted a congress of the World Association of Newspapers. The organization's president, Gavin O'Reilly, deplored the Russian government's encroachments on media freedom. Then President Vladimir Putin took the podium to respond. The media's situation has grown better, not worse, he said: "From year to year increasingly favorable conditions are emerging in Russia for media development . . . Mr. O'Reilly spoke about the increasing state presence in the media. I have different information on this point."

In its hypocrisy, its utter lack of credibility, Putin's statement was reminiscent of the most blatant Soviet propaganda. In fact, it's not just foreign observers but also Russian media professionals who are deeply concerned about state control of the media. In the autumn of 2004 a number of members of the Russian Television Academy signed a letter that stated that "Russian television today is not free." They said they were being forced to broadcast official reports "instead of objective information. Propaganda instead of free discussions. Censorship has been basically established on television." And other restrictions, the letter emphasized, had led to self-censorship.

Putin sees it differently: "Our country continues to value talent, honesty and courage on the part of journalists," he declared at the newspaper association's congress.

Speaking of talent: Russia's best television anchor, Leonid Parfyonov; its best daily newspaper editor, Raf Shakirov; and its best newsmagazine editor, Sergei Parkhomenko (he and I founded and edited a newsweekly that was taken over by the state-controlled gas monopoly Gazprom in 2001), have been forced out of their jobs, as have about a dozen other prominent media professionals. One of the latest to go was Olga Romanova, a fiery and incisive political anchor, forced out of her position on a minor TV channel after a change of ownership orchestrated by the Kremlin. Some of the banished have quit journalism altogether. Others have gone to work for outlets with much smaller audiences.

Another way to view infringement on the media under Putin is to track changes in coverage of the news in recent years. Of the many tragedies that have befallen the Russian people during Putin's presidency, the worst were the sinking of the submarine Kursk in 2000, the Moscow theater siege in 2002 and the terrorist seizure of the school in Beslan in 2004. Back in 2000 coverage of the Kursk catastrophe was a professional and cohesive effort. Both television and print journalists worked hard to provide honest and thorough coverage, bringing to light things that the government tried to hide. Officials -- civilian and military -- were forced to appear on the air to give comments "live." As they sought to avoid responsibility, their lies, cover-ups and conflicting reports were fully exposed to an angry nation.

Putin did not restrain himself in expressing his anger at the coverage. He publicly blamed media tycoons for the destruction of the army and the navy. But at that time, there was little he could do about it: The media, in the wake of Boris Yeltsin's presidency, were still largely unrestrained.

But by the time terrorists seized a Moscow theater and took some 900 hostages, the state had gone a long way toward regaining control of television. At least one channel, NTV, still had its professional standards and drive, though. It set about investigating the botched rescue operation, which caused the deaths of 129 people in the middle of Moscow. NTV couldn't do much, but at least people in Russia could see that the government wasn't letting the journalists do their jobs. Putin's response? He accused reporters of having base motives. They were mere publicity-seekers, he said, capitalizing on human blood. A few months later the manager of NTV was forced to resign.

State control was fully in place by 2004. The television coverage of Beslan stopped after the operation ended on day three of the monstrous terrorist attack, which left 331 people dead, more than half of them children. No high-ranking official -- security, law enforcement or otherwise -- has appeared on the air to account for what happened. To this day it has not been disclosed who was in charge of the operation. A Duma investigative commission has simply ignored much of the bloodcurdling testimony of witnesses, including that which surfaced during the trial of the only surviving terrorist. The trial itself was barely covered.

Four years into Putin's presidency, television has been tamed and taken securely under government control. Nothing is left to chance: Even seemingly live political talk shows get some editing so that nothing unexpected or unwelcome will appear on the screen. Whatever high-level criticism of Russia might be voiced at the G-8 summit in St. Petersburg next month, Russia's mass TV audience is unlikely to learn about it.

Since the Beslan tragedy, the Kremlin has moved to expand control over minor media, such as small-audience television outlets and, increasingly, print media. The once-respected daily Izvestia was acquired by Gazprom.

Lately there are persistent rumors that the next target may be the publishing house Kommersant and its crown jewel, the newspaper of the same name. This is Russia's most professional and high-quality mainstream daily. If the rumors are true, Kommersant will likely be handled as other media have been: The state will "appoint" a loyal buyer whose editorial line will no longer be a source of concern to the Kremlin.

There are still other, smaller outlets besides Kommersant that have preserved independent editorial stances. But these can barely break the basic media monopoly of Putin's Kremlin. The state television news channels reach 100 percent of the Russian audience, while alternative sources of information have limited circulation. Moreover, the Kremlin has ensured that national television is separated from independent-minded media: Television does not pick up their stories or invite their reporters to appear on the air.

Today's Kremlin is wholly unconstrained. There is nothing, inside or outside the country, to stop Putin and his regime from doing anything they wish on the domestic scene -- political, media or otherwise.

### **#13**

#### **Crackdown in Russia A New Cycle of Bribes and Purges**

**By Steven Lee Myers**

**New York Times, June 11, 2006**

THE secret agents moved in on the senator from the Russian republic of Kalmykia and two associates when they emerged from the office of an airline in Moscow on June 2 with a black briefcase said to contain \$300,000 in marked bills.

The authorities accused the senator, Levon Chakhmakhchyan, of shaking down the airline to clear up some inconvenient auditing discoveries. The \$300,000 was an advance on a \$1.5 million bribe, officials alleged. The senator protested his innocence even as he declared his parliamentary immunity. By Friday, though, the authorities had ousted him from his seat in the upper house, or Federation Council, leaving him to the mercy of Russian justice.

It was a nifty sting, as if made for TV. And it might have been, since Russia is a place that perfected the show trial for those who fall out of political favor. But this case, when considered in combination with several others in recent weeks, raises a question that could profoundly affect the country's direction in the next few years: Is Russia, at last, getting serious about fighting corruption?

President Vladimir V. Putin would like Russia - and, in advance of the Group of Eight meeting in St. Petersburg next month, the world - to think so. But he faces enormous hurdles, most of his own making.

A pliant judiciary, selective prosecution, the erosion of political competition and the stifling of opposition voices - not to mention a murky official explanation of the senator's alleged crimes - all play into a public cynicism so deep that even highly publicized arrests are brushed aside as Potemkin justice.

"Society has grown disillusioned about justice," the newsweekly *Argumenty i Fakty* wrote recently. "A person who steals a chicken might go to jail, of course, but a person who steals millions is welcome to become a member of the Federation Council or the Duma!"

Bribery is so pervasive in Russian society - from paying off the police and judges to dodging the draft to doing almost any business with a bureaucracy now larger than the Soviet one - that a handful of new cases inevitably raises suspicions of selective prosecution.

The most striking thing about reaction to the charges against Mr. Chakhmakhchyan was not the shock that a senator might be carrying a briefcase full of dollars. (Seats in the Parliament, as well as the government, are widely believed to be available for a price, supposedly in the millions.) It was the flood of speculation over whom he had crossed, or double-crossed, to get himself in trouble.

Just how cynical are today's Russians? One theory was that Mr. Chakhmakhchyan was ousted, as were four other senators last month, so that the seats could be resold.

"They only talk about corruption," said Vladimir A. Ryzhkov, one of the few independent critics of the Kremlin remaining in the lower house of Parliament, or Duma. "They don't fight it. They fight only political opponents."

Mr. Putin's motives remain, as ever, enigmatic. But he has, at least, been talking about corruption more. He inveighed against it in a national address last month, calling its manifestations "the most serious obstacles on the path of our development."

He went so far as to quote from a fireside chat by Franklin Roosevelt in 1934. "In the working out of a great national program which seeks the primary good of the greater number, it is true that the toes of some people are being stepped on and are going to be stepped on," Mr. Putin recited. "But these toes belong to the comparative few who seek to retain or to gain position or riches or both by some short cut which is harmful to the greater good."

Roosevelt was referring to unfair business practices and social irresponsibility, not corruption exactly, but that's quibbling. "I believe social responsibility should be the foundation of the work of both officials and business people," Mr. Putin said, "and they should bear in mind that the source of the prosperity and well-being of Russia is its people."

*Argumenty i Fakty's* headline played on the allusion: "Whose Corns Did Mr. Putin Step On?" Which is an excellent question, and one, so far, impossible to answer.

Two days after his speech, Mr. Putin fired the head of the notoriously corrupt customs service and a dozen or so midlevel officials who were accused of smuggling cars, wine and even yachts into Russia, while skimming billions of dollars from duties on imported goods. The Federal Security Service, the domestic successor of the K.G.B., announced criminal cases against several officials.

On May 26, the authorities arrested Aleksei Barinov, governor of the Nenets Autonomous District, an energy-rich Arctic region, on charges dating to 2000 that had been investigated and dropped before. He was the first sitting governor in Russia to be arrested since the Soviet Union broke up.

A senator from the same region was forced out of the Federation Council, as were three from other regions. Then the mayor of Volgograd, Yevgeny Ishchenko, was charged with abuse of office. On June 2, Mr. Putin dismissed Russia's top prosecutor, Vladimir V. Ustinov, who himself had vowed that more corruption cases were in the works. Aides to Mr. Putin hinted that more dismissals would come.

It looks like an anti-corruption purge - one that the newspaper *Noviye Izvestiya*, chillingly compared to the purges of the 1930's. The Great Terror it is not, though.

Corruption cases can certainly send a message to officials susceptible to bribery, and Mr. Putin's supporters say he and his inner circle understand that corruption threatens Russia's development as a respected world power.

But Kirill V. Kabanov, director of the National Anti-Corruption Committee, an advocacy group, is skeptical. He welcomed Mr. Ustinov's dismissal, but said that a true measure of a war on corruption would be a case against someone close to Mr. Putin himself. "In Russia it is always the case some people are found at the lower or middle level, while no one at the top is," he said. "That is why I think this is just a P.R. campaign and nothing more."

#### **#14**

#### **Ukraine 'orange' coalition talks at dead end: Yushchenko bloc AFP, June 12, 2006**

KIEV, June 12 2006-The party of Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko said Monday that talks to unite the "orange revolution" partners to form a new governing coalition had no prospect of succeeding.

The Our Ukraine party believes that "continuation of negotiations on the creation of a coalition has no prospect" of success, Yushchenko's party said, referring to talks with other West-leaning parties in the ex-Soviet republic.

The statement singled out "ultimatums" from the Socialist Party, which has demanding that its leader, Olexander Moroz, be given the post of speaker of parliament as part of any coalition deal among the erstwhile "orange" allies.

"Our Ukraine regrets that the personal ambitions of the socialist leader have destroyed the negotiations on the creation of a coalition," the statement said.

Yushchenko's party, along with the socialists and the party led by Yulia Tymoshenko, have been wrestling since parliamentary elections on March 26 to revamp the orange coalition that ousted an entrenched pro-Russian regime 18 months ago.

Their efforts have been overshadowed by the fact that Ukraine's main pro-Russian party, the Regions Party led by Yushchenko's chief rival in the disputed "orange revolution" presidential election of 2004, came in first place in the March 26 vote.

Of the three "orange" parties -- whose alliance collapsed in September 2005 amid recriminations and accusations of corruption -- Tymoshenko's bloc now controls 129 of the 450 seats in parliament, followed by 86 seats for Our Ukraine and 33 seats for the Socialist Party.

The Regions Party took 186 seats.

The negotiations among the "orange" partners have so far been deadlocked over failure to agree on who will control key government and legislative posts in a future coalition.

Tymoshenko has made clear that she expects to regain the post of prime minister, a job from which she was sacked by Yushchenko last September.

Under constitutional changes that took effect early this year, the post of prime minister will carry substantially more weight than before. Yushchenko's supporters appear to have accepted that Tymoshenko would reclaim that post in a new "orange" coalition.

The new parliament met for the first time late last month, but the "orange" parties declared two consecutive suspensions of the assembly's work due to their incapacity to agree on a coalition plan.

The government, led by acting prime minister Yuri Yekhanurov of Our Ukraine, formally resigned at the opening session of the new parliament but continues to function in a caretaker capacity.

## **#15**

### **Russia Bargains For Bigger Stake In West's Energy**

**By Steven R. Weisman**

**New York Times June 12, 2006**

WASHINGTON, June 11 - Russian, American, European and Japanese officials are negotiating over whether Russia should be allowed greater latitude to invest in utilities, pipelines, natural gas facilities and other infrastructure in the United States and Europe.

In a draft declaration for endorsement at a Group of 8 summit meeting next month in St. Petersburg, Russia, broadened Russian access is paired with something the West wants: endorsement of market principles and greater access for foreign investment in the energy industry of Russia, one of the biggest oil and natural gas producers in the world.

Russian investment in Western energy facilities has been relatively modest, like Lukoil's investment in a chain of 2,000 filling stations in the United States. But earlier this year, when Gazprom, the giant Russian natural gas monopoly, expressed an interest in buying Britain's largest distributor of natural gas, it raised a furor in Britain similar to reactions in the United States to a Chinese bid for Unocal and a Dubai company's arrangement to control operations at several American ports.

The political maneuvering keeps a channel for progress open at a time of fierce tensions between Russia and the West over access to energy supplies. In January, Russia cut off natural gas shipments to Ukraine during a price dispute, which shut down deliveries in Europe. The move prompted denunciations from the United States and Europe, and was seen as an effort to punish Ukraine, long dominated by Russia, for its political independence.

More recently, Vice President Dick Cheney and other American officials have rebuked Russia for its increased state control of the energy sector, its crackdown on dissent and what they say is an effort to muscle out Western investments in oil and gas pipelines in the Caspian Sea, where the United States has been trying to secure energy supplies in ways that would bypass Russia.

The goal of the energy negotiations, which are being held at the highest levels, is to smooth over the most pointed differences between Russia and the West with some mutually acceptable language. "The U.S., Russia and Europe are trying to find their way to common ground on the road to the summit," said Daniel Yergin, president of Cambridge Energy Research Associates, who talked with Russian and European officials in Europe last week.

The negotiator for the United States is Faryar Shirzad, a deputy national security adviser for economic affairs. For France, it is President Jacques Chirac's diplomatic adviser, Maurice Gourdault-Montagne. For Russia, it is Igor Shuvalov, President Vladimir V. Putin's chief aide in planning the meeting.

Mr. Shuvalov said Russia was determined to get the Group of 8 summit meeting to endorse the principle that for Russia, "energy security" meant greater access to investment in the West and to the means of delivery of oil and natural gas. Mr. Putin has said that energy security will be a main theme of the meeting.

Mr. Shuvalov said Russia was prepared to use its leverage to get that access, and had held up a decision on foreign bids for exploring a potentially huge natural gas reserve off the Russian coast in the Barents Sea until it was clear that the West would be receptive to offering similar bids by Russia for ownership in American and European energy facilities.

Russian investment has in fact already begun, and it has begun to stoke controversy. Rebuffing pressure from many in Britain, Prime Minister Tony Blair said he would not try to stop the Russian effort.

Gazprom and Lukoil are not the only Russian entities looking abroad. Now the Russians appear interested in investing in pipelines and liquefied natural gas conversion facilities on the East Coast, which some experts fear could reignite the passions that swirled around Unocal and the Dubai port deals, both of which fell through. Critics of those deals successfully argued that they would have surrendered vital strategic economic assets to foreign control.

"Gazprom has not been specific on what it wants in North America," said Thane Gustafson, professor of politics at Georgetown University. "But what they want to do is replicate what they've done in Germany and in varying degrees throughout Eastern Europe," he said, referring to investments by Russian companies in European energy production and transmission.

Mr. Putin aims to use the St. Petersburg summit meeting to demand respect for Russia as a major energy producer. Russia wants to rebut the argument, heard after the Ukraine natural gas cutoff, that it is not a reliable producer, and to bury suggestions from some critics in the United States that it should be expelled from the Group of 8 nations.

"The summit should recognize that Russia plays a key role in providing energy security, and that Russia is ready to open its energy reserves to foreign investment," said Mr. Shuvalov in a telephone interview. "We think that after this summit, no one will again question the membership of Russia in the G-8."

The United States is looking to the meeting to endorse Mr. Bush's vision of "energy security," particularly reduced dependence on Middle East oil, greater variety of oil resources and more nuclear power. One other important part of the American vision is that, especially after the Ukraine cutoff, there should be more efforts to bypass Russia for natural gas exports, especially to Europe.

Not surprisingly, the Russians have a different definition for "energy security," interpreting the term to mean greater guarantees of access of Russian energy to Europe, not less. Ownership of European and American pipelines would support that goal, Russians say.

One area of Russian-American competition that could come up at the summit meeting is the activity in the Caspian Sea, where at least since the 1990's, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States has sought to encourage oil and gas pipelines that would not go through Russia. Earlier this year, for example, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice urged Turkey and Greece not to engage Gazprom as a partner in bringing natural gas to southern Europe. Gazprom is viewed in the West as a shadowy creature of the Russian state that has enriched the people around Mr. Putin.

Comments like those of Ms. Rice and Mr. Cheney challenging Russian energy dominance in the region have hurt the atmosphere for the summit meeting, Mr. Shuvalov said. But American officials say it is in Russia's interest to encourage diversity of supply.

"Despite what they think, it's not that we want to shut Russia out," said another senior administration official involved in planning the summit meeting, who requested anonymity because he did not want to speak publicly about issues still under negotiation. "That's ridiculous. Russia will always be a major energy exporter and transit route. What we're trying to do is make sure there is no monopoly on energy, to avoid someone manipulating the markets."