



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

NCSJ WEEKLY NEWS BRIEF  
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**#1**

**David Duke Offers 'Antisemitism 101' at a Ukrainian University**

**By Nathaniel Popper**

**Forward, November 3, 2006**

Ex-Ku Klux Klan leader David Duke visited Ukraine's largest university last week to give a stump speech on what he calls "radical Jewish extremists" — his phrase for the Israeli and American government.

Duke has become a regular at the university, the Inter-Regional Academy of Personnel Management, which is known by its Ukrainian acronym, MAUP. Last year, Duke was a featured speaker at the university's conference, "Zionism: Threat to World Peace," and he has received both a doctorate and an honorary doctorate from the Ukrainian school. This time around, Duke's talk in front of university administrators drew particular attention to MAUP's legal battles with its Jewish critics.

"The Jewish extremists — the Zionists — they don't want there to be academic freedom in this country, or political freedom in this country," Duke said in a speech that was also broadcast on his personal Web site. "This university and your students and faculty are resisting this attack."

Duke was referring to what has become an intense legal tug of war between MAUP on one side and Jewish activists and western governments on the other. The United States State Department has labeled MAUP the leading purveyor of antisemitic material in Ukraine. The American and Israeli embassies in Kiev, along with Jewish organizations, have lobbied the Ukrainian government to take a number of steps to force out the school's current leadership.

MAUP's leaders have struck back in force. In the past year alone, the university has launched dozens of lawsuits against Ukrainian journalists, rabbis, politicians and academics — anyone who suggests that the university is antisemitic.

A number of possible reasons have been given for MAUP's anti-Jewish efforts. The State Department alleged in an official report that Middle Eastern governments funded the school. Whatever the explanation, the resulting confrontation has international consequences and is drawing in many of the most significant players in the Ukrainian political community.

Ukrainian President Victor Yushchenko resigned from his place on MAUP's board last December. Members of the United States Congress debated the situation during negotiations over a American-Ukrainian trade bill. And Vadim Rabinovich, a media magnate and a leader of the Jewish community in Ukraine, has been the target of repeated lawsuits.

One of the newest suits arose out of an effort to show just how excessive the legal battles have become. In September, a leading rabbi in Kiev, Yaakov Bleich, went on television. When asked during a television interview what problems Ukraine was facing, Bleich brought up MAUP.

“For instance,” Bleich said he told the interviewer, “right now, I’ll say on television that MAUP is antisemitic and the guy who runs it is antisemitic. I can expect to be sued by them very shortly.”

“Sure enough” Bleich added, “two weeks later, they announced the suit. Now they are just attacking anything that moves. They feel the pressure.”

A spokeswoman for the university declined to comment on the court cases.

Little of the enmity and courtroom machinations is evident on a visit to MAUP’s campus in suburban Kiev.

The school was founded in 1989 as a private alternative to Ukraine’s public university. It now has about 57,000 students. Courses on business and agriculture are taught on a leafy campus that is decked with only a slight overdose of blue and yellow Ukrainian flags.

In general Ukrainian society, criticism of the school tends to focus on its low academic standards — the State Department described MAUP as a “diploma mill,” and the Ukrainian ministry of education revoked thousands of diplomas that were improperly distributed.

But students coming down the main walkway — through a gate that reads “Vivat Academia” — said they had heard little about MAUP’s problems with the Jews. Nastia Gukin, a 17-year-old banking student, said that “the students have their own lives. Whatever goes on in the publishing house is separate from us.”

It is at the upper echelons where the university is becoming consumed by the ever-widening campaign to expose the perceived misdeeds of the Jews. Last year, the president of the university, Geogy Schokin, founded a political party, the Ukrainian Conservative Party, which had an election list stacked with MAUP professors. While the Ukrainian officials rejected a request from the Israeli government to ban Schokin from the elections, the party garnered only .09% of the vote, far from the minimum needed for a seat.

Schokin laid out his philosophy in a lecture titled “Dialogue of Civilizations,” which he presented at a 2002 conference. In bombastic academic language, Schokin explained that Jews around the world are aiming for the “creation, above all, of an extensive and multi-branch network of secret societies coordinated from a single center and based on man-hating principles, ‘consecrated’ by appropriate religious and historical legends and traditions, the core and pivot of which reside in the doctrine of racial ‘selectness,’ and a maniacal dedication to and enthusiasm for the ‘super-idea’ of world supremacy.”

For critics, Schokin’s influence is felt most widely in MAUP’s publishing houses, which publish 400 books, including the works of Schokin and David Duke. Another title is “Sioniski Protocols: Sources and Documents,” which had a print run of 5,000. In the book, “The Protocols of the Elders of Zion,” an antisemitic hoax created by the tsarist secret police, is treated as a genuine document from Jewish hands.

The English summary at the back explains that “Talmud ideology creates some tragic actions in human history, compares Hebrews to the world, and proclaims them as a ‘selected nation.’ This book is intended for researchers of said issue and for global audience.”

The MAUP presses also put out a magazine and a newspaper. One copy of the newspaper, “Personal Plus,” in late September included a piece about a Holocaust memorial service (“Tragedy is good for making money”), a book review (“Greedy American and Jewish corpocrats think that they can steal from other people”) and an article about an award for an Israeli poet at a recent book fair, where MAUP’s display booth was put next to the toilet (“The organizers showed where the place is for the opponents of the Zionists”).

It is these publications that have sparked a number of the lawsuits. A Ukrainian Jewish journalist, Eduard Doks, was sued after making comments at a press conference about the kiosks where MAUP sells its publications. That suit was dropped earlier this week, Doks said, after a judge found that MAUP did not follow "proper legal procedure." MAUP has had more success in its lawsuits against Jewish tycoon and media owner Vadim Rabinovich, who is president of the United Jewish Community of Ukraine. MAUP has launched numerous lawsuits against Rabinovich's Capitol News, and two months ago it celebrated a victory with a special posting on its Web site. The judge had ordered Rabinovich to pay the university \$9,000.

The legal framework of these cases has not always been clear. Doks says that the Jewish critics have lost the court cases "because national legislation does not have a definition of antisemitism."

But Bleich, the chief rabbi, says the reason for the court victories is easier to understand: MAUP has been willing to bribe judges. "They are paying off judges; there is no question about it," Bleich said.

MAUP's spokespeople did not return phone calls for comment. When a Forward reporter visited the administrative offices, a spokeswoman shut the door after saying, "You can see everything on the Web site."

The pressure on MAUP has been increasing during the past year. The school was drawn into negotiations earlier this year in the United States over the Jackson-Vanik Amendment, a piece of legislation that restricted America's trade relations with Ukraine. According to Jewish activists, when Congress was deciding whether to end these restrictions on Ukraine, the decision became linked to the Ukrainian government's promise to rein in MAUP.

"We've been pressing the government on this for a long time," said Mark Levin, executive director of the National Conference on Soviet Jewry.

The Ukrainian government has not ignored these requests. The government's ministry of education has shut down a number of MAUP's regional branches over the past few months. In the Ukrainian parliament, a Jewish member, Alexander Feldman, has pushed the president and prosecutors to do more; however, even if he succeeds with this, Feldman told the Forward he is not sure what silencing effect it will have.

"They enjoy lawsuits," said Feldman, who is initiating his own suit against the university. "The more they get sued, the more P.R. they have. It supports their image of victims."

Nathaniel Popper traveled to Ukraine on a World Affairs Journalism Fellowship administered by the International Center for Journalists. The fellowship is funded by the Ethics and Excellence in Journalism Foundation.

## **#2a**

### **Russian Synagogue Vandalized JTA Brief, October 27, 2006**

VLADIVOSTOK, Russia - A synagogue in eastern Russia was vandalized Thursday.

Swastikas, anti-Semitic slogans and the words "Jews, get away to Israel" were discovered on the walls of the synagogue in Vladivostok, the Federation of Jewish Communities of Russia reported.

Israel Silberstein, rabbi of the Russian seaport on the Pacific, did not rule out the possibility that the incident was connected to a rally held last week by local radical nationalists and neo-Nazi skinheads. The incident was the third in recent weeks in which vandals targeted Russian synagogues. Previously, synagogues in Astrakhan in southern Russia and in Khabarovsk, also in the Russian Far East, were vandalized.

## **#2b**

### **Jewish graves vandalized in Russia JTA Brief, October 31, 2006**

Eight gravestones in the Jewish section of a cemetery in Russia were desecrated. Antisemitizmu.net reported Oct. 23 that the Egoshikhinsky cemetery in Perm already had been vandalized several times.

Earlier this year, the local Jewish community restored and repaired around 90 percent of the cemetery.

However, the city government did not provide security for the cemetery, so the Jewish community now plans to hire guards.

## **#2c**

### **Moscow nationalist march banned JTA Brief, November 2, 2006**

Jewish leaders in Russia praised authorities for banning a street march that several ultranationalist groups planned for this weekend in Moscow. "Moscow is a multi-ethnic and a multifaith city. If different ethnic and religious communities do not live peacefully together, unrest is guaranteed in the city and in the whole country," Berel Lazar, one of Russia's two chief rabbis, said Wednesday in response to the city's decision to ban the so-called Russian March planned for Saturday.

St. Petersburg also banned a similar event slated for the Nov. 4 Unity Day, a national holiday in Russia.

Moscow came under fierce criticism last year after it allowed thousands of nationalists to march downtown on Unity Day.

Many sported Nazi insignia and yelled "Heil Hitler."

Organizers of this year's march were not discouraged by the ban and said they would go ahead.

The organizers — who include the Movement Against Illegal Immigration and other groups, as well as a number of State Duma deputies — said they expect 10,000 people to participate Saturday, but stressed that participants would not carry posters with swastikas, shout Nazi slogans or make Nazi salutes.

## **#3**

### **Lithuanians Are Given a Taste of How Russia Plays the Oil Game By Andrew E. Kramer New York Times, October 28, 2006**

MOSCOW, Oct. 27 — The Russian government has never been straightforward about its plans to take control of the oil and gas business.

So, Lithuanians were suspicious when Russia said it shut its pipeline — the only one supplying Russian crude oil — in late July because of a leak.

In fact, it was not so much the pipeline the Russians were concerned about, according to Lithuanian officials, analysts and company executives. It was what the pipeline was connected to: Lithuania's sole refinery.

And because Russia often gets what it wants, it may not matter that the Lithuanian government had signed an agreement in June to sell the refinery to a Polish company, PKN Orlen, for much more than Russia had offered.

"The goal was to force Lithuania to reconsider the sale," Tomas Janeliunas, deputy director of the Center for Strategic Studies who has followed the sale closely, said in an interview. "They wanted a Russian company to buy the refinery, but for cheaper than a market price."

Lithuania's brush with Kremlin oil politics, critics of Russian business practices say, is a case study of what Vice President Dick Cheney called Moscow's use of energy exports as "tools of intimidation and blackmail" in relations with its neighbors.

That characterization angered Russian officials, who say they are being discriminated against in the business world as many Russian companies expand their operations into Europe.

"What is all the hysteria about?" President Vladimir V. Putin asked at a meeting with German business executives recently, the Interfax news agency reported. "We cannot understand why the media is nervous about Russia's possible investments in Germany."

Russian companies, their accounts padded by high commodity prices, are on a buying spree overseas. A steel mill in Michigan, a pipeline in Germany and a mine in Australia have recently been sold to the Russian companies Severstal, Gazprom and Rusal, respectively.

In Lithuania, the government and Yukos, a company very much out of favor with the Kremlin, were trying to sell the Mazeikiu Nafta refinery in Lithuania in a sale organized by Lehman Brothers of New York.

Four companies bid: two from Russia, one from Kazakhstan and one from Poland. The Russian companies, Lukoil and TNK-BP, lost after entering bids lower than the others. When asked to match the competing prices, the Russians declined, Nerijus Eidukevicius, chairman of the board of Mazeikiu refinery, said in an interview in Vilnius.

In June, PKN Orlen won the refinery with a bid of \$1.49 billion for Yukos's 53.7 percent stake and \$850 million for the 30.6 percent owned by the Lithuanian government.

"They weren't showing interest," Mr. Eidukevicius said of the Russian companies. "It was strange."

In fact, analysts say, the Russian government was pursuing strategies to win the refinery for a Russian company outside the sale process — and at a knockdown price.

At the time of the sale, Yukos was heading into a politically tinged bankruptcy proceeding in Russia. Rosneft, the state oil company, whose chairman, Igor I. Sechin, is a former KGB agent and Mr. Putin's chief of staff, had already acquired most of Yukos in a forced auction in 2004, and had its sights on the rest.

To get to the front of the line for Yukos assets, Rosneft signed a confidential agreement with Western creditor banks in December 2005 to assume Yukos's debt if the banks forced that company into liquidation, which happened in March. This made Rosneft a creditor in the bankruptcy filing.

The Russian bankruptcy receiver representing Rosneft's claim, Eduard Rebgun, then sued in the federal Bankruptcy Court in New York and in the Netherlands to block the refinery sale, but lost both cases. That ended the legal attempts to win title to the refinery outside the sale run by Lehman Brothers.

In what Yukos executives say was a sign of the deep displeasure of the Russian government at these rulings, Russian prosecutors opened criminal fraud investigations against four Yukos executives. The announcement of these investigations came less than an hour after the decision in Amsterdam on Aug. 17.

The former chief executive of Yukos, Steven M. Theede, an American, called the Russian criminal case against him a “vendetta” that reflected the depth of frustration of Russian authorities at the collapse of their six-month effort to buy the Lithuanian refinery and other smaller Yukos assets in Slovakia and Switzerland.

“When anybody stops them from doing anything it makes them angry,” Mr. Theede said.

Russia, meanwhile, suffered a setback of a different nature inside Lithuania, political analysts in that country say.

In the midst of the sale process, a pro-Russian politician in the Lithuanian government whose ministry was responsible for overseeing the refinery sale was ousted in a campaign finance scandal. The minister, Viktor Uspaskich, fled to Moscow and is now wanted by Interpol.

The Russian government invited his replacement, Kestutis Dauksys, to a Kremlin meeting on May 23 with Dmitri A. Medvedev, a Russian deputy prime minister, according to Mr. Dauksys. The message, he said, was that the Russians truly wanted the refinery.

“He said the Russian government was interested in who buys Mazeikiu Nafta,” Mr. Dauksys recalled in a telephone interview. “He said Russian companies are interested in buying it.”

“They thought they could buy it at low cost, but that is not possible today,” Mr. Dauksys said of the Russians. He returned to Vilnius.

Aleksandr Temerko, a former vice president of Yukos, said the company interpreted Mr. Dauksys’s account of the meeting as a threat to Mazeikiu’s Russian-controlled oil supply through the Druzhba pipeline.

The refinery immediately retooled for tanker oil, a decision that proved prescient; the first shipment arrived a week before the pipeline was shut.

The sales contract with PKN Orlen had an escape clause if the market value of the refinery dropped significantly before the sale closed. Lithuanian analysts and politicians said that forcing PKN Orlen to exercise this escape clause, thus reopening the sale for Russian companies, was one motive for the pipeline shutdown.

Then, on Oct. 12, a fire at the Mazeikiu refinery caused about \$75 million in damage and lost profit for 2006, according to the Lithuanian government and the Fitch credit rating agency. The fire is expected to reduce output by 50 percent until early next year. While arson has not been ruled out, the Lithuanian news media have reported that the likely cause was a petroleum leak. A formal ruling is expected in November.

PKN Orlen, in a statement shortly after the fire, said it would discuss with its lenders whether the sale could go forward.

With his country’s largest asset tied up in business negotiations, Russian style, Lithuania’s president has hinted at possible reciprocation in kind.

President Valdas Adamkus suggested on Aug. 19 that the only Russian railroad supplying the Kaliningrad region, which passes through Lithuania, could be shut for what the Lithuanian news media called “political repairs.”

"We should guarantee the safety of trains and passengers," Mr. Adamkus said, according to the Baltic News Service. "Should repairs be needed in order to increase the safety of railway services, I see no reason to heat up political tensions."

#### **#4**

#### **Monument installed at communal grave of 84 Jewish children in Belarus Itar-Tass, October 27, 2006**

OSIPOVICH, Belarus, October 27 (Itar-Tass) - Atrocities committed by Nazis during the occupation of Soviet Belarus were remembered once again in this country's eastern Mogilyov region Friday, as a monument was opened at the site of a communal grave of 84 Jewish children slain by the occupants in April 1942.

People have already given it the name of Children's Stone. This gray boulder placed on a granite platform is located in a small clearing in the forest in the Osipovich district.

Inscriptions on the monument are made in Belarussian and Yiddish, as the latter was the mother tongue for the vast majority of Belarussian Jews before World War II.

Installation of Children's Stone was a privately sponsored project. The monument was erected by Vladimir Sverdlov, a former blacksmith who is retired and lives in the capital Minsk.

Sverdlov's initiative to commemorate the Jewish children rallied support from the local authorities and rank-and-file people.

Vladimir himself is the only survivor out of the many Jewish teenagers and pre-school children, whom the Nazi aggression trapped in summer camps and at the Krynka countryside resort.

As the Nazis were transporting a group of kids to the site of execution, Vladimir, 10 at the time, managed to escape.

He said in an interview with Itar-Tass the idea an escape was not his own.

"One of elder boys advised us to organize the escape," Vladimir told Itar-Tass. "He gave up the thought himself, saying he couldn't leave our little comrades just like that, as they would cry bitterly in his absence."

"Then I chose a boy Izya by name as a companion for the escape," he said. "The attempt was successful but Izya decided to go back to when all other kids had already been shot and killed. He thought he would get away with it easily but he was wrong -- the Nazis hanged him."

Vladimir's memory keeps alive the images of all the kids who were together with him then. He loves them as one would love members of his or her own family.

Back in 1942, he spent many long days wandering around the forest and local hamlets. Help came unexpectedly from Alesya Zvonik, a woman who lived in the village Makarychi.

She found the boy who had been enfeebled by hunger and took him to her house. Vladimir stayed with the Zvonik family until the Soviet Army's return and liberation of Belarus in 1944.

Many of Alesya Zvonik's co-villagers knew that she was hiding a Jewish boy and yet no one gave him away to the Nazis.

The Museum of History and Culture of Belarussian Jews made a documentary about Vladimir Sverdlov's life story.

As for Alesya Zvonik, she was posthumously awarded the title of the Righteous Among the Nations two years ago.

Historians say the Nazis killed from 600,000 to 800,000 Jews on the territory of nowadays Belarus during the occupation that lasted from 1941 through to 1944.

Of that number, children made up from 200,000 to 250,000 persons.

## **#5**

### **Russia Uses G8 Presidency to Bolster Position of NGOs Interfax, October 27, 2006**

MOSCOW. Oct 27 (Interfax) - The Civil G8 plans to hold its final conference in November, said Valery Kuzmin, director of the department on links with Russian regions, the parliament and public organizations at the foreign Ministry.

"Non-governmental organizations will publish recommendations for the agenda of the next Group of Eight summit and will pass the baton in the dialogue with the public to a new chairman, Germany" at the forum, he said.

More than 40 Russian NGOs were behind the Civil G8-2006 project, the diplomat said.

The implementation of the project allowed NGOs from almost all continents to get involved in the activity, Kuzmin said.

"In distinction from the so-called traditional democracies, Russian society has not had much time to set up civil institutes," the official said.

"Despite the absence of experience in organizing such major events, Russia tried its best to make use of the opportunity in order to strengthen the position of Russian NGOs both in Russia and in relations with our foreign partners," Kuzmin said.

#6

## It's an Uzbek Jewish thing: Editors chronicle rich past in Central Asia

By Lev Krichevsky

JTA, October 30, 2006

TASHKENT, Uzbekistan, Oct. 29 (JTA) — Vladimir Solomonovich Polykovsky is the editor in chief of the Concise Uzbekistan Jewish Encyclopedia. And don't let the title fool you: When it's finished, the edition is expected to fill eight volumes. "This work is needed so that the huge contribution of the representatives of the Jewish Diaspora is recorded and doesn't fade from memory," says Polykovsky, 75.

Much of what Jews achieved in Uzbekistan occurred during the Communist rule.

"This was Soviet science, culture, technology that was being made by Jews," Polykovsky says.

But he believes the encyclopedia will help the general population of the Central Asian nation as well.

"This has to be done for us, Jews, and also for Uzbekistan," he said.

Today's Jewish population of Uzbekistan, estimated at between 12,000 and 20,000, is a fraction of what it was in the late 1980s before the Soviet Union collapsed.

Since then, the majority of the once 100,000-strong community has left for Israel, the United States or Germany.

A large indigenous Jewish community — known as Bukharan Jews, after the Uzbek city of Bukhara — lived in what is now Uzbekistan for many centuries, involved in crafts and local and international trade.

Beginning in the late 19th century, when the region fell under the Russian influence, Ashkenazi Jews from the European sections of the Russian Empire settled in the region as well. Thousands more found a safe haven in Uzbekistan during World War II, when Jewish refugees and evacuees were fleeing Russia, Ukraine and Poland. Many of them stayed in Uzbekistan after the war.

Engineers, doctors and lawyers, they provided the area's first generation of local intelligentsia — and they will be the encyclopedia's focus.

Polykovsky himself built a successful career in science when Uzbekistan was still part of the Soviet Union: He wears a Communist-era medal of the Winner of Socialist Competition, and his business card meticulously lists his memberships in several academies and the scientific awards he received for his work as a geochemist.

He also has a strong Jewish identity. Like many Jews of his generation in the former Soviet Union, he kept that pride to himself most of his life. But now that official Soviet anti-Semitism has been confined to the dustbin of history, he is quick to talk about his secular religion: the prominence of Jews in various fields.

The encyclopedia's office is housed in a rented three-bedroom apartment inside a rundown building, located on a typical Soviet-era residential block. Numerous files are scattered around the apartment with labels on them reading "Health Care," "Arts" or "Religion."

The encyclopedia's editorial board consists of eight people, with 25 more gathering information on a part-time basis.

Outside of one paid staff member, "all of us are volunteers," Polykovsky says.

The only benefit the editorial board members receive is a monthly transit pass, he says.

“On our board, we have experts on heavy industry, light industry, health care, education, literature and arts,” Polykovsky says.

All of these are areas in which Uzbek Jews made substantial contributions.

The encyclopedia will be divided into separate volumes, organized by career. Thus, doctors will be listed alphabetically in the health care and medicine volume, and actors and musicians will find their place in the arts and literature volume.

No volumes have been printed yet. Polykovsky cites a lack of funds — his project receives only occasional support from local Jewish organizations and from a private individual.

Yet the editor proudly shows a homemade brochure titled “Jewish Doctors of Uzbekistan” that will become the basis for the volume on medicine.

Polykovsky is full of energy and those who know him say he can talk for hours about the undertaking he started three years ago.

Recently, Polykovsky and two of his colleagues eagerly demonstrated their wealth to a visiting journalist.

This includes a dozen posters with photos and text printouts on the walls. The posters — each highlighting the Jewish contribution to an area of knowledge — are occasionally used at conferences organized by the Tashkent Jewish community.

Polykovsky’s own family history will earn several entries in the encyclopedia.

In 1921, his grandfather, Lev Feigin, organized the first orphanage for Bukharan Jewish children located in the town of Kokand. Today, a street in this ancient Uzbek town is named after him.

“Some famous people were educated at this orphanage,” Polykovsky says.

Among them was Suleiman Yudakov, who became the father of modern Uzbek music and the author of the national anthem of the neighboring Republic of Tajikistan.

Other prominent Jews who will get their entries in the encyclopedia include the inventor of the first cotton harvester, introduced in Uzbekistan in 1938, and a geologist who discovered the first deposits of gold in this country. Today, Uzbekistan is the world’s second-largest cotton exporter and a major exporter of gold.

“Our community is dwindling today, but this titanic contribution our people made is being left unrecorded,” says Zakhar Shtein, 68, another encyclopedia board member who was an engineer for the Soviet munitions industry. “We are documenting another page of Jewish history.”

The encyclopedia will also seek to provide a measure of historical justice.

Although anti-Jewish restrictions in Soviet Uzbekistan were not as harsh as in Russia or other European republics in the USSR, Uzbek Jews knew there were limits to their career growth dictated by the official — although often secret — Soviet anti-Semitic policies.

“Jews were often passed over for a promotion,” Shtein says. “We often come across the biographies of people with 150 to 200 scientific papers to their names. But when you read down to the state awards they received, there is nothing.”

**#7**

**Kiev struggles over nation's western future  
By Roman Olearchyk and Stefan Wagstyl  
Financial Times, October 31, 2006**

After the heady days of the Orange Revolution, Ukraine is confronting reality. When Viktor Yushchenko won the disputed 2004 presidential election, he seemed to have an indisputable mandate for change: in particular, dismantling the corrupt regime of his predecessor, Leonid Kuchma, and a rapid integration with the west. Loudly applauded by the US and the European Union, Ukraine appeared to be on the verge of leaving Russia's orbit for good.

Today, it is clear that Mr Yushchenko's victory was never as complete as it seemed. Viktor Yanukovich, Mr Yushchenko's bitter rival in 2004, has returned to power as prime minister, while Yulia Tymoshenko, Mr Yushchenko's firebrand Orange Revolution ally, has been driven into opposition. Kuchma-era business oligarchs, who laid low when Mr Yushchenko took office, are back on the commercial and political scene.

The US has given up hope of Ukraine securing early accession to Nato while the EU, sceptical about further enlargement, has turned down Ukrainian requests for even a hint of possible future union membership. Only the Kremlin is content, glad that Kiev's break for the west has run into trouble and that high world energy prices have persuaded Ukraine to treat Russia with renewed respect.

But it would be wrong to conclude that little has changed. Ukraine today is a different country from the timid nation that existed before the Orange Revolution. There is a greater sense of freedom and a stronger feeling of national identity. The media reports critically on Mr Yushchenko and Mr Yanukovich alike. The old fears of officialdom have faded, even if they have not disappeared. If corruption remains rife, it is no longer centralised around the presidency.

In foreign policy, Kiev is more confident, even in its dealings with Moscow. While Russia retains considerable influence, it no longer interferes as blatantly as when it unsuccessfully backed Mr Yanukovich in the 2004 election. Petro Poroshenko, an official of Mr Yushchenko's Our Ukraine party, says: "People expected more from the Orange Revolution. But we did what we did. There is no danger of going back to the old ways, even though there is a big chance of failing to make the most of our opportunities."

Unlike Mr Kuchma, Mr Yushchenko cannot bulldoze his way out of political trouble. Under the settlement that ended the Orange Revolution, significant rights passed this year from the president to parliament. But the precise boundaries of power have yet to be defined. Everything is new - and everything is a potential trigger for political conflict. Whatever the personal battles between Mr Yushchenko, Mr Yanukovich and Ms Tymoshenko, this is Ukrainian democracy in the making.

At the same time, rapid economic growth is creating new opportunities, especially for educated young people. Incomes are rising fast, allowing Ukrainians to modernise their homes, buy new cars and take foreign holidays. Foreign investment has poured in, notably Mittal Steel's \$4.8bn acquisition of the Kryvorizhstal mill. Those disillusioned with politics have plenty of profitable outlets for their energies.

Domestic politics is dominated by Mr Yushchenko's efforts to secure support for his reform agenda. This summer, in a bid to end 18 months of conflict, the president brought Mr Yanukovich back to power. For many Orange Revolution supporters it was a betrayal. But Mr Yushchenko believed Mr Yanukovich's triumph in the March 2006 parliamentary elections, when his party won over 30 per cent of the vote, could not be ignored without dividing Ukraine between his own supporters in the west and Mr Yanukovich's in the east.

Mr Yanukovich pledged to implement the president's west-oriented programme, including economic liberalisation and pursuing membership of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the EU and Nato. However, Mr Yanukovich's ties with Ukraine's conservative business oligarchs, who want to avoid offending

Russia for fear of losing cheap energy supplies, have raised questions about his enthusiasm for Mr Yushchenko's aims.

For Mr Yushchenko, integration with the west is a mission. In an interview for this special report, he says: "We see Ukraine's fundamental interests in the Euro-Atlantic integration choice." Mr Yanukovich and his backers are less philosophical. They see long-term advantage in westward integration - notably in access to markets, technology and capital. But with the EU in no rush to accommodate Ukraine, they see no reason for Kiev to hurry to Brussels. Instead, they want to maximise the short-term benefits from links with Russia, notably cheap energy.

Mr Yanukovich will try to match moves towards the west with co-operation with Russia. So far, he has snubbed Mr Yushchenko by declining to apply for a Nato membership action plan - the first step towards future membership. With Ukrainian public opinion strongly against joining Nato, the prime minister has been able to ignore the president on this issue.

The next challenge is the WTO. Mr Yushchenko promised to finish preparations last year, but key legislation is still in parliament. Mr Yanukovich is not opposed but wants to avoid irritating Russia. His ideal option is for Ukraine and Russia to accede together, but with Russian foreign policy increasingly nationalist, it is unclear whether Moscow will now join at all.

If it does join the WTO, Ukraine will be in a position to deepen relations with the EU under the union's neighbourhood policy. Brussels is ready to negotiate agreements on free trade and visa facilitation, but it will not give Ukraine even a glimpse of membership.

If Mr Yushchenko is pro-EU, Mr Yanukovich and Mykola Azarov, the finance minister, are more circumspect. Mr Azarov says that given the EU's energy needs, Brussels will soon establish a "common economic zone" with Moscow. "We are offering both the EU and Russia to establish a common economic market."

Such equivocation causes some disquiet in Brussels. As one EU diplomat in Kiev says: "Ukrainians could one day be in equal relationship with EU members. They should ask themselves whether they could ever be in an equal relationship with Russia." The US has similar concerns. However, faced with divisions in Kiev, political resurgence in Moscow and crises elsewhere in the world, Ukraine today is not a priority.

Meanwhile, Russia is in a stronger position than it expected after 2004. President Vladimir Putin's great fears were that Ukraine would be "lost" and that the Orange Revolution could spark copycat protests in Russia. Today, it is clear that, with Kiev still dependent on gas imports from Russia, the Kremlin retains some influence over Ukraine, while the risk of a Russian popular revolt is remote.

Energy is Ukraine's biggest economic challenge. The price of gas imported from Russia jumped by nearly 50 per cent in January to \$95 a thousand cubic metres and is expected to rise to \$120 next year. So far, the economy has withstood the shock, thanks to strong exports and domestic consumption. But a global economic downturn could leave Ukraine vulnerable.

Mr Yushchenko's answer includes economic liberalisation to encourage greater efficiency in the public sector and more diversification in private business. However, it is unclear how far Mr Yanukovich will back such reforms. Liberal economists fear that progress could be a question of "two steps forward, one step back."

The phrase was often used in the Kuchma era. Although a return to the times of Mr Kuchma is impossible, Ukrainian politics remains a tough world. But it is a world that has changed irrevocably with the Orange Revolution. The winter of 2004 may now be a memory but it has left a lasting legacy.

## #8

### **Georgians Feel Themselves "Last Frontier" of the Russian Empire RFE/RL, November 1, 2006**

(Washington, D.C. –October 31, 2006) Georgia and other post-Soviet states are on the "frontlines of freedom" and therefore, Russia has exerted extreme pressure on them to maintain its "empire," said a group of three Georgian parliamentary deputies. Giorgi Bokeria, David Bakradze and Nikoloz Rurua told a recent audience at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) that Russia views current democratic revolutions in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan as threats to its influence. As a result, Georgia has worked toward achieving a diplomatic solution with Russia, yet will prepare itself for everything necessary to maintain its democratic progress.

Bokeria, Deputy Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Legal Issues, told the conference, which was co-sponsored by Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), that the very core of the problem between Russia and Georgia is a "profound unacceptance" by the Kremlin that Georgia is an independent and sovereign country. Russia, according to Bokeria, has used all of its "instruments" to destroy and secure a regime change in Georgia. What Georgians are afraid of, Bokeria said, is that the Kremlin may provoke military confrontation on the territory of Georgia. While Georgia wants productive dialogue and diplomacy with Russia, he added that there cannot be any compromise regarding Georgia's sovereignty, independence and democracy.

Bakradze, Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on European Integration, said that Georgia is approaching a decisive moment in its relations with Russia. He described Moscow's support of ethnic unrest as "alarming" and accused Russia of making military threats. Bakradze said that Georgia is just one case of a "wider problem," that Russia has opposed the recent democratic revolutions in Ukraine, Moldova, Kyrgyzstan and Georgia. Bakradze characterized the future of Georgian-Russian relations as a "test" for the way that the international community responds to Russia's actions against its sovereign neighbors.

Rurua, Deputy Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Legal Issues, said this conflict is less about relations between Georgia and Russia, than between Russia and the world. Rurua said many Russians are unwilling to give up their dream as an empire. Georgia, according to Rurua, is a "catalyst," which has exposed this imperial nostalgia to the world. Rurua agreed with his colleagues that Georgia is perceived by Russia as the "last frontier" and its first opportunity to claim itself as a superpower and kind an empire. Diplomacy from Russia and Georgia, Rurua said, is the key factor in avoiding any military confrontation.

## #9

### **Jews of Krasnodar Hope to Return the Synagogue, Now Communist Party Headquarters FJC, November 2, 2006**

KRASNODAR, Russia - Contrary to the previous reports, the Jewish community of Krasnodar has not given up hope of reclaiming the city's historic synagogue.

The first reference to Jews in Krasnodar is found in 1861. At that time the city included "612 Jewish souls and synagogue." The two-story synagogue building is located in the very center of the city. In 1929 the synagogue was shut down by Soviet authorities. Then, for two years, from 1947 to 1949, the building was briefly occupied by Jewish community, after which it was again taken by the municipality. The security agency and regional committee of the Communist Party is located there now.

Ten years ago Jewish community in Krasnodar began to experience a revival, and, vigorously renewed the attempts to regain the historical building: "several years ago we have initiated proceedings for the return of the old building of synagogue to the community, but we encountered delays from the administration and

bureaucratic difficulties. However, we do not give up hope and we will continue to act in this direction," reported the chairman of the community Yuri Teitelbaum.

According to him, the prayer space and community center is currently being leased in a house in the center of Krasnodar. Recently the Jewish community agreed in general with the city authorities on a new plot of land for a community center with the great help from FJC Russia Chairman of the Governing Council Alexander Boroda. Nevertheless the fight for the old building continues.

## **#10**

### **Kyrgyz opposition rallies, authorities denounce plot AFP, November 3, 2006**

Thousands of opposition supporters have rallied for a second day against Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek Bakiyev in central Bishkek as the authorities denounced alleged plans for a coup.

Kyrgyz Prime Minister Felix Kulov told a session of parliament that opposition leaders were planning to seize government buildings and state television offices, adding: "I will not let them do this."

The political crisis in this Central Asian state of five million people has raised the spectre of a repeat of last year's chaotic "Tulip Revolution," which brought both Bakiyev and Kulov to power.

Audio recordings of conversations purported to be between opposition leaders discussing the seizure of government buildings and KTR state television offices were distributed in parliament.

The recordings "once again demonstrate that the opposition is not interested in constitutional reform. It has set the goal of seizing power by violent means," President Bakiyev said on state radio.

A leading member of the opposition For Reforms movement told AFP, on condition of anonymity, that the movement was planning to occupy local government buildings in regions outside Bishkek.

For Reforms organised a rally on Thursday that gathered some 10,000 people on the scene of the 2005 revolution -- a square in front of the main government building in Bishkek.

Around 2,500 people continued to rally on Friday in protest against Bakiyev for failing to deliver on reform promises. Several hundred demonstrators had spent the night camped out in tents on the square.

"Today, it is time to take concrete actions... you cannot achieve anything with beautiful words," said Azimbek Beknazarov, a former prosecutor general and one of the leaders of the For Reforms movement.

Meilis Eshimkanov, another opposition leader, announced plans for a major rally to be held on Monday and said: "We will continue our actions until Bakiyev resigns."

A third For Reforms leader, Omurbek Tekebayev, demanded a criminal investigation into what he said had been illegal surveillance of the opposition.

"We are going to force the country's leadership to resign not by a violent coup, but by unprecedented pressure on the authorities," Tekebayev told the crowd.

Several opposition leaders on Friday entered the offices of KTR state television to demand live airtime, as some 500 protesters rallied outside the building.

"We asked to go on air so we could ask our questions to the authorities," Temir Sariyev, one of the leaders, said after coming out, adding that KTR management had granted the opposition two live broadcasts later Friday.

Some 500 anti-riot police stood guard on Friday outside government offices on the square and many city centre businesses were closed amid fears of looting.

Demonstrators distributed leaflets to police that said: "Soldiers, don't shoot peaceful picketers! Don't beat your brothers and sisters!"

The protests reflect wider disenchantment with Bakiyev and the government in this poor former Soviet republic located in a mountainous region between China and Kazakhstan.

"No-one respects the president any more. I'm here to demand that he leave," Gulnara Utenbayeva, a 44-year-old teacher, said at Thursday's protest, holding up a placard reading: "I ask my children to forgive me for voting for Bakiyev."

The For Reforms movement, which is made up of political parties and non-governmental organisations, accuses Bakiyev of setting up a regime packed with cronies similar to the one he helped topple last year.

Bakiyev, who promised a new constitution by the end of the year when he came to power in July 2005, dismisses these charges and says the opposition in parliament is deliberately slowing reforms.

Since the 2005 revolution, Kyrgyzstan has been rocked by serious political instability that has included contract killings, rampant organised crime activity and several major anti-Bakiyev rallies.

## **#11**

### **Russian Gas Company Plans Steep Price Increase for Georgia**

**By Steven Lee Myers**

**New York Times, November 3, 2006**

MOSCOW, Nov. 2 — Russia intensified its economic pressure on Georgia on Thursday as the state-controlled gas monopoly, Gazprom, indicated that it would seek to more than double the price it charges for natural gas, beginning in January.

The move to raise the price follows a series of punitive restrictions imposed by Russia on trade with Georgia, as relations between the neighbors deteriorated precipitously in recent months.

The Russian restrictions include bans this year on Georgia's wine, mineral water and fruit and vegetables, and a suspension last month of air, rail and road transport between the countries. The dispute began when Georgia accused Russians of espionage.

Gazprom's proposed price — subject to negotiation but unlikely to change significantly — made it clear that Russia did not intend to relax the pressure on Georgia. The price — \$230 per 1,000 cubic meters of gas, compared with the current \$110 — would be comparable to what Gazprom charges the wealthier nations of Europe. Gazprom has insisted that it will raise prices for former Soviet republics to the same level as Europe, effectively ending subsidized energy to its neighbors. But it has made exceptions.

Gazprom agreed last week to charge Ukraine \$135 after negotiations with the new prime minister, Viktor F. Yanukovich, who is viewed as friendlier to Russia than his recent predecessors. Armenia reached an

agreement earlier this year to pay at a rate of \$110 until 2009, after surrendering control of a pipeline. Among the former Soviet republics, Georgia stands to pay the most for Russian gas.

“There is a big portion of politics inside the price certainly,” Georgia’s foreign minister, Gela Bezhushvili, said in an interview with journalists here in Moscow, where he was in the middle of a three-day visit.

Gazprom would not discuss the negotiations, but a company official, speaking on condition of anonymity because of company policy, confirmed the \$230 price.

Mr. Bezhushvili’s meetings were Georgia’s highest-level talks with Russia since tensions boiled over after the arrest of four Russian military intelligence officers in Georgia in late September.

Relations between Russia and its far smaller neighbor have been especially strained since the 2004 election of President Mikheil Saakashvili, an American-educated politician eager to align the country with Europe and NATO. He has also been eager to regain federal control over two separatist regions, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which are supported by the Russians.

The meeting in Moscow on Thursday ended without significant progress at de-escalating a conflict that for a time sounded ominously warlike. Mr. Bezhushvili did say that he and the Russian foreign minister, Sergey V. Lavrov, had agreed to try to lower the tone of the statements emanating from both capitals.

He also said the Russians had agreed not to cut off supplies of gas or electricity to Georgia, as it did to Ukraine briefly during a price dispute at the start of the year. He added, however, that he had no expectation that Russia would remove any of the other economic sanctions soon.

He also said that Georgia would look for alternative sources — in Azerbaijan, Turkey and Iran — to supply the 1.5 billion to 1.8 billion cubic meters of gas that it needs annually, but that wherever it buys, Georgia clearly will have to pay significantly more than before. Gazprom now supplies the majority of Georgia’s natural gas.

Andrew E. Kramer contributed reporting.

## **#12**

### **Georgian president expresses solidarity with Israel**

**By Matt Zalen**

**The Jerusalem Post, November 1, 2006**

“Every time Israel is menaced or threatened, Georgia feels threatened. Every time someone attacks Israel, we send our solidarity and support,” Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili told the Knesset Wednesday, promising to back the Jewish State in the face of growing regional threats.

The president’s comments came during a two-day tour of Israel, during which he received an honorary degree from the University of Haifa and attended an inauguration ceremony at the Knesset for a stamp bearing the image of a prominent figure in Georgian Jewish history.

Although not officially designated a state visit, many observers suggested his presence here was meant to send a political message. It comes at a time when Georgia, facing sanctions from neighboring Russia, is seeking alternative energy sources.

“During the current crisis with Russia, Georgia is hoping to get their natural gas from Iran,” said Reuven Amak, head of the Georgian department at Israel Radio and a leader in the Israeli-Georgian community. “Therefore, it is very important to emphasize [the strong Georgian connection to Israel] once again.

“If the situation continues as is, and Georgian-Iranian ties strengthen, it’s hard to imagine that we will be able to count on their support,” Amak said.

But an Israeli expert on the Caucasus said the strong connection between Georgia and the West will prevent any deterioration in relations.

“I don’t think it will have any affect at all [on Georgia-Israel relations],” said Brenda Shaffer, Faculty Chair for the Center of Advanced Energy Studies at the University of Haifa.

Daniel S. Mariaschin, Executive Vice President of B’nai B’rith International, also praised Saakashvili personally for his strong demonstration of support for Jews and Israel.

“The relationship between Jews and Georgia has been a clear and benevolent one for over two millennium, first between the Jews and the Georgians, and now between Israel and the independent state of Georgia,” said Mariaschin, who accompanied Saakashvili at the Knesset ceremony.

While Saakashvili appeared warm and amiable when discussing Israel and the Jews, his tone turned harsh as he moved to the topic of Russia. Calling some recent Russian acts “ethnic cleansing,” the president compared Russia’s behavior to that of the Russian Empress Ekaterina II who was responsible for the bloody pogroms of the late 18th century.

After providing a number of examples of recent human rights abuses by Russia against Georgian citizens, Saakashvili said simply, “old habits die hard.”

## **#13**

### **From Russia with Jews**

**By Yossi Melman and Amiram Barkat**

**Ha’aretz, November 2, 2006**

Zvi Magen did what few Israelis would dare to do: He rejected a tempting, well-paying job offer from Arcadi Gaydamak, the Israeli-Russian oligarch, whom the State Prosecutor’s office is considering putting on trial for money laundering, and who is wanted in France on suspicion of illegal arms trading with Angola. Gaydamak wanted Magen to head the Congress of Jewish Religious Communities and Organizations in Russia (KEROOR). This is an off-the-shelf organization that came to life about 18 months ago under the aegis of Gaydamak, who contributes money to it and acts as its president.

Magen received the generous offer a few months ago, while he was still head of Nativ, but preferred to join the Interdisciplinary Center, Herzliya as head of a new Euro-Asia institute that will conduct “studies from the Balkans to Mongolia.”

Magen, a lieutenant colonel in the Israel Defense Forces reserves and a former ambassador to Ukraine and Russia, has headed Nativ for almost seven years. He concluded his term of office at the beginning of last month, but his successor has only just been named. Last week, Naomi Ben Ami, Israel’s ambassador to Ukraine, was chosen to head Nativ. This is the first time in the history of the Israeli intelligence community that a woman has been named to head one of its agencies - although Nativ in fact is no longer involved in intelligence.

Magen wanted to leave a year and a half ago, but the prime minister, Ariel Sharon, asked him to stay on for a few months. Then Sharon was hospitalized and replaced by Ehud Olmert, and Magen stayed on because of the elections and the formation of the new government. He became a kind of captive in his own organization, but despite his frustration, a sense of public responsibility prompted him to remain in office.

The government's delay in finding a successor attests to its uncaring attitude toward Nativ, an organization that until about 15 years ago was viewed by the vast Soviet empire as one of its sworn enemies. In fact, apart from Deputy Prime Minister Avigdor Lieberman, who closely monitors the organization and takes a great interest in it - some say he also meddles in its activities - and a few MKs and public activists of Russian origin, it's doubtful that anyone in the Israeli establishment or in the public cares about what is happening in Nativ. Last week, Olmert decided that as part of Lieberman's cabinet functions he will be responsible for Nativ, thus legitimizing his behind-the-scenes activity. In response, Lieberman said he is not involved in the new appointment and that he trusts the judgment of the search committee.

Quite a few people believe that Nativ no longer has a *raison d'être* and should be disbanded. One of them is Yaakov Kedmi, Magen's predecessor as head of the organization. In 1999, about 18 months after taking up his post as ambassador to Russia, Magen accepted the offer made by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to replace Kedmi. Kedmi had run afoul of Netanyahu and exchanged verbal blows with him in public, and then left in order to help his buddy Ehud Barak get elected as prime minister. (In the Yom Kippur War, Kedmi and Barak were in the same tank.)

Kedmi and Magen are total opposites. Kedmi is brash, Magen cautious. Kedmi tried to provide assessments and intelligence estimates to the Mossad espionage agency and dragged Nativ into the risky gray area of semi-intelligence activity in Russia. He rubbed elbows with the chief of the KGB and the heads of its successors, the SVR (Foreign Intelligence Service) and the FSB (Federal Security Service). Magen kept well away from them and is unwilling to criticize his predecessor, but believes that the profile Kedmi adopted was too high.

Kedmi told us that in his view there is no reason for Nativ to exist, at least not in its present format: "That organization concluded its mission the moment the special situation in the former Soviet Union - a situation that justified its existence - ceased to exist. Since the mid-1990s, and particularly since 2000, we have not had immigration to Israel on the same scale, and there is no fear of governmental changes that will bring about the closing of the gates again. The situation of Russia's Jews today is the best it has been in the past thousand years and they are a community like all the other communities. If there is no special governmental body that deals with the Jews of France, why do the Jews of Ukraine, Russia and Azerbaijan need special treatment?" At the same time, Kedmi says that a governmental organization like Nativ is needed in order to replace the Jewish Agency and deal with Jews worldwide. "The Jewish Agency is a clumsy and corrupt organization whose officials decide their own policy," he maintains. "Most of its powers should be transferred to the State of Israel, because as in every normal state, ties with the diasporas need to be consistent with the government's policy and its interests." Magen agrees that Nativ should be Israel's connection with all the diasporas, and not only those in Russia and the republics, but offers his views less bluntly than Kedmi.

"I don't want to quarrel with Kedmi in the newspaper," he notes in his farewell interview. "But in my opinion Nativ never died. That is a tendentious presentation of the events. Nativ is not a superfluous organization. In my view it is an essential and important body." Lieberman added that far from shutting down Nativ, its activity should be expanded and intensified.

His pal Putin

Zvi Magen was born in the Soviet Union in 1945 to parents of Polish extraction. He immigrated to Israel in 1960, living in Kibbutz Gan Shmuel as an "external child." He did his army service in the Armored Corps and then joined a settlement group in Kibbutz Eyal. In 1970, he returned to the IDF, serving in the Intelligence Corps, initially in the central collection unit, 8200, then in the research section, where he was

occupied with several sectors, including the eastern and the northern. He left the IDF in 1978 with the rank of lieutenant colonel.

Magen's knowledge of Russian and his experience as an intelligence officer caught the eye of David Bar-Tov, then head of Nativ. Magen joined the organization, holding posts in the research and intelligence section and then the staff branch, eventually reaching the position of deputy chief of Nativ.

He was part of the second Nativ team that was sent to the Soviet Union, in 1988. Until the opening of the Israeli embassy, the Nativ personnel and the Foreign Ministry operated from the Netherlands embassy, which represented Israel's interests. In 1993, Magen moved to the Foreign Ministry and was appointed ambassador to Ukraine and, in 1998, to Moscow. He held the latter post for about a year and a half until the prime minister asked him to return to Nativ, this time as its chief.

Magen's worldview is in some degree conspiratorial. He believes, for example, that the Islamic resurgence in the West and in Russia is the result of incitement, which has its source in a guiding hand. He also suspects that there are those who are inflating and disseminating reports of the kind that were published a few years back - and which the Israeli press played up - to the effect that tens of thousands of immigrants from the former Soviet Union were leaving Israel and returning to their native lands after despairing of being integrated into Israeli society.

Magen believes that Nativ played a critical role in the fall of the Soviet Union, due to its influence on the Jews there. Nativ's specialization in "influence building," a codeword for subversion, made the organization dangerous for the Soviet Union, he believes, far more than classic intelligence-gathering bodies. He thinks that "when someone agitates a large population in a particular country, it is far more dangerous for that country's national security than someone who has come to collect intelligence."

Overall, he is a great believer in conspiracies and is convinced that many events in the world were the result of organized plots. In his view, every ethnic group is a potential fifth column, a tool in the hands of organized and trained bodies. Without reference to their terrorism and violence, the world's greatest experts in this regard are, according to Magen, organized Muslim groups such as Al-Qaida, Islamic cultural and religious organizations, and of course Muslim states, which are working systematically to stir up immigrant communities everywhere. The riots in the suburbs of Paris a year ago were only a small example of what they are capable of.

He would like to see Israel take a leaf out of the Muslims' book and strive to establish a worldwide Nativ. On this subject, he agreed with Kedmi. Magen believes that Nativ is capable of repeating its success in bringing the Jews of the former Soviet Union to Israel - in all parts of the world, even the United States. The Jewish Agency, he maintains, is incapable of fomenting mass immigration; only the subversive methods of Nativ can do that.

In 2000, Magen made a daring but failed attempt to put this policy into practice. He suggested that Nativ's activity be extended to Argentina and says he persuaded Prime Minister Sharon. The chairman of the Jewish Agency at the time, Sallai Meridor, said that he had discovered the plan by chance, after getting a report from his staff about the appearance of Nativ personnel in Argentina. Meridor issued an ultimatum to Sharon, threatening that he would remove the Jewish Agency from every country in which Nativ was operating. Sharon, fearing a rift with the Jewish Agency bigwigs abroad, dropped the idea, or, according to Magen, "turned tail." Since then, relations between Nativ and the Jewish Agency have only worsened, taking the form of mutual boycotts and incessant mutual badmouthing. Nativ's relations with the Foreign Ministry were also tense, particularly during Kedmi's tenure.

Magen's identity was shaped above all by his time in Military Intelligence. In his own eyes, he is primarily an intelligence officer, and the people he feels most comfortable with are other intelligence officers. As ambassador in Moscow, he preferred the company of foreign military attaches to events in the Jewish community or cocktail parties thrown by his diplomatic counterparts. Of his former colleagues in intelligence, Magen especially enjoys talking about one of them - Vladimir Putin.

Magen's attitude toward Putin borders on admiration: "In the KGB Putin was the director of a cultural center in Dresden, in East Germany. Effectively, he was Nativ. He is very professional and I have only positive things to say about him. We met a few times when I was ambassador and he was in the presidential apparatus, and afterward head of the FSB. In all the meetings with me he displayed extraordinary friendship for Israel. My impression was that he has esteem for Israel and for your faithful servant. In 1999, when I concluded my term as ambassador to Moscow, he came to my farewell reception, which took place the day before he was appointed prime minister. It was very unusual for a person like him to come to the farewell reception for an ambassador."

The relationship between Putin and Israel is currently being put to the test. About a month ago, Israel sent a delegation to Moscow headed by the director of the Euro-Asia Department, Mark Sofer. The delegation showed the Russians evidence of how Russian weapons found their way to Hezbollah - photographs of 39 antitank weapons and of packages that were seized by Israeli soldiers, original shipping documents and more. The arms sales will not stop, but the Russians are promising that they will take more care to ensure that they get only to the "end C user" for whom they are intended.

According to Magen, the Israeli revelations "quite embarrassed the Russians." However, he believes that Israel has very limited ability to change the Russians' arms sales policy in the Middle East.

In contrast, he is cautiously optimistic concerning Iran's nuclear plans. "There is no doubt that if Iran acquires nuclear weapons it will be partly thanks to Russia," he emphasizes. "Russia may not have intended Iran to acquire the ability to develop nuclear arms, but it has a part in the creation of Iran's nuclear ability and potential. At the same time, in the wake of the second Lebanon war the Russian leadership is having second thoughts about the essence of Iran's intentions."

In Magen's view, the Russians are beginning to understand that the Iranians' policy is a direct threat to Russia. "The threat is not of nonconventional weapons, but it involves the Iranians' strategic national interests, which are often furthered at Russia's expense. I am talking about the attempts to expand the Islamic empire northward under a nuclear umbrella. Russia faces a dilemma regarding the Islamic world. They are seeing that a large-scale Islamic network is being created adjacent to them and is developing not only in the neighboring states but in Russia itself as well. There are today areas of dense Muslim population in Russia, such as in the Urals and the Volga Basin, and all the major Islamic elements in the world operate within Russian territory."

### The Torah scrolls underground

At its peak, Nativ was part of the Israeli intelligence community, alongside the Mossad, Military Intelligence and the Shin Bet internal security service. Until the early 1990s, military censorship prohibited the publication of the organization's name or of its head. Only a slip of the tongue by the finance minister, Yitzhak Modai, during a television interview, caused the ban to be lifted.

Today Nativ is a small unit attached to the Prime Minister's Office. In its heyday, it employed hundreds of people and spent hundreds of millions of shekels. Currently it has some 60 employees and a shrunken budget of about NIS 50 million, part of which comes from the rival Jewish Agency. In the past, Nativ had dozens of intelligence and research officers and diplomats on four continents, whereas today it has a small presence in Russia and in some of the republics.

Nativ was established during 1951-53 in order to replace the Mossad l'Aliya Bet, a secret underground organization that operated before Israel's creation, organizing the illegal immigration of Jews to Palestine, and after 1948 dealing with the immigration from Eastern Europe and the Middle East. Officially, Nativ was created to channel (the Hebrew word nativ means channel or route) the immigration of Jews from countries where they found themselves in distress. However, its powers were soon curtailed.

Ties with Jews in the Arab countries and the mission of bringing them to Israel was entrusted to a department - later a branch and finally a small unit - called Bitzur in the Mossad. Nativ, which was also known as the Liaison Bureau, was assigned the task of making contact with the Jewish communities in the Soviet Union and the countries of Eastern Europe, encouraging them to engage in Jewish cultural activity and later to attract them to Zionism and Israel. This was done largely by means of clandestine activity. Nativ emissaries operated under the guise of diplomats from Israeli embassies. At the same time, sailors from the Israeli Merchant Marine, tourists and young Jews from around the world were sent to Eastern bloc countries. They were given Torah scrolls, prayer books, dictionaries and books in Hebrew and asked to take them into the target countries.

Concurrently, Nativ personnel, working from Israeli embassies in Western countries, organized Jewish organizations, trade union leaders, intellectuals and politicians in a propaganda campaign against the Soviet Union under the slogan "Let my people go." In several instances, Nativ personnel bribed officials and leaders in Eastern European countries to allow the departure of Jews. For years the leading bribe-takers were the family of the Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceausescu.

The KGB and the secret services in the Communist countries viewed the Nativ personnel as spies in every respect. They considered Nativ to be a subversive organization that was trying to destabilize the Soviet regime - and they were right. In most countries of the Soviet bloc, Zionist activity was prohibited and considered a violation of the law. Some Nativ personnel were declared persona non grata and expelled from the Soviet Union and from Eastern bloc countries. The fear of the KGB and of the Soviet leadership was that if the Jews were allowed to leave, other minority ethnic, religious and national groups would demand the same right, and the Soviet Union, a multinational empire, would fall apart because of the "national problem." Which is exactly what happened.

Cultural center to promote interests

Nativ now issues visas to people entitled to immigrate to Israel under the Law of Return and also runs a number of cultural centers in Russia. Could these tasks not be transferred to the Foreign Ministry, the Jewish Agency, the Absorption Ministry? "A great many changes can be made in the Israeli administrative system, which is conducted exotically," Magen says. "I will not be giving away any secrets if I say that foreign policy is not always conducted by the Foreign Ministry. We could take the matter to absurd lengths and argue that even the Israel Police could be disbanded and their powers transferred to the Gadna [Youth Battalions]. But no one recommends doing that, and the same goes for Nativ. It is an organization that possesses knowledge, ability and experience in dealing with the Diaspora. There must be one state body to deal with the Diaspora communities in a country that was created out of such communities and maintains important interaction with them."

But Nativ is not responsible for the whole Diaspora. Sharon, under pressure of the Jewish Agency, would not let you operate to bring Jews from Argentina and France, or to operate amid Jews from the former Soviet Union who immigrated to Germany and the United States.

"I am talking about the principle, the concept. A country that considers it crucial to maintain ties with the Diaspora has to preserve its capabilities. The subject is most needed. And the fact is that none of the committees that examined the functioning of Nativ recommended shutting it down."

But a committee headed by former Mossad chief Yitzhak Hofi, which was appointed by Prime Minister Rabin in the 1990s, concluded that Nativ should be preserved only as a marginal organization "for a rainy day." Isn't that tantamount to saying that it's not needed?

"I prefer to avoid using that expression. I believe that the organization is vital for a country which has interests in preserving ties with the Diaspora."

Do you believe that a situation could arise in which Russia or some of the former republics of the Soviet Union would bar Jews from leaving and immigrating to Israel?

"I don't think that will happen, though it could happen. A regime can change. But it's more likely that a situation of persecution and attacks on Jews could develop. There is a rise in anti-Semitism in the world, as we see in France."

We still don't see why Nativ is needed.

"Because in principle Israel has one and only one body for Diaspora affairs, and that is Nativ. A state must have capabilities in this sphere. Many countries have bodies that deal with the ties with their diasporas. In the Israeli case the ties with the Diaspora are intended for a central goal of immigration. That is why Nativ was focused and aimed at immigration. And from this point of view Nativ proved itself. It generated the immigration waves of the 1940s, the 1950s and the 1980s and brought about the immigration of millions of people."

By the nature of its definition, Nativ is a very problematic organization, because it intervenes in the internal affairs of other countries and asks their citizens to move to a different country. Is Nativ effectively operating in a minefield?

"Yes. There is a range of methods of operation within the framework of what is called acceptable practice or within the framework of the tolerable. That is how most countries operate."

Does such activity also take place in Israel?

"It is no secret that Russia is currently working in Israel to promote those interests." Magen is referring to the fact that Russia has in recent years set up a number of organizations aimed at tightening the ties between the homeland and its Diaspora communities. In the near future, as Putin and Prime Minister Ehud Olmert announced at their meeting in Moscow last month, a Russian cultural center will be opened in Tel Aviv. It will operate in the same format as the German Goethe Institute, the British Council, the American Cultural Center and the Spanish Cervantes Institute. But in Magen's view, these are not only innocent centers to promote the culture of the mother countries, but also front organizations which advance broader national interests.

Did the Russians infiltrate spies into Israel through the Nativ filter?

"Nativ was not responsible for thwarting espionage or for security filtering. It's certain that all kinds of Klingbergs" [referring to Marcus Klingberg, the convicted Soviet spy] "have infiltrated from then until now. I hope they did not get far."

Nativ also operated clandestinely, did it not?

"Yes. Until the 1980s Israel operated secretly with regard to this subject and from a certain stage moved to an open pattern. That, in my opinion, was a mistake. It would have been better not to operate publicly or openly, because that method creates a problem and a challenge for both sides - for the host side, too."

How did the secret activity work?

"I don't know."

You don't know? You were deputy chief of Nativ from 1987 on Soviet soil under a diplomatic cover. So that for two years at least you were a witness and a partner to the secret activity.

"Throughout all the years of Nativ's existence there were all kinds of operations that were called flight operations, through special operations and particularly by means of political operations."

Are you referring to political arrangements that made Jewish emigration possible?

"Yes. Just so there will be no mistakes - I am not talking about intelligence operations. Nativ was not a body that collected intelligence. It did not have agents. It is not a body that carried out intelligence-gathering activity in the territory of foreign countries, as is often alleged against it. It dealt with the promotion of subjects that were of concern to the diasporas, ties with them and concern for immigration, and in most cases it was successful. I myself came to Israel thanks to this body."

Oligarchs, capital and government

Our conversation took place in Magen's new office on the third floor of the Faculty of Law at the Interdisciplinary Center. We note that he turned down Gaydamak's offer to work for him, but Nativ, more than any other body in Israel, is associated with overly close ties with oligarchs, some of whom are wanted by the world's police forces on suspicion of offenses and illegal acts.

"I know Gaydamak and he did in fact offer me a job with him. He is the president of KEROOR and as head of Nativ I had to maintain professional ties with him. These were formal ties, as with the president of any organization. Nativ as an organization had to maintain ties with all of them. The more so as these are people who established large and important organizations."

Are you referring to Vladimir Gusinsky, Leonid Nevzlin, Lev Leviev and Vyacheslav Kantor?

"Yes, to them too. There are many players on the Jewish-Russian field: Jewish organizations of the world, governments, and of course Israel has to be there also, otherwise we will be out of the game. We must also not forget that Nativ is a body that does not grant citizenship. It is appointed by the government to decide who is entitled to immigrate to Israel on the basis of the Law of Return and grant him an immigration visa."

But the moment that visa is granted the individual automatically becomes a citizen of Israel. Hasn't Israel become a haven for oligarchs and a place to launder their fortunes?

"There were a few cases like that; there is no need to get carried away. If a person wants to be a citizen, that is one thing and the state cannot prevent that. If people want to smuggle money through the banks, that can definitely be described as a laundry. But you have to understand: more than half of the immigrants from the Soviet Union at the end of the 1980s immigrated to Israel with aliya visas and then moved to the West. So to say that this is a tendency that characterizes the rich would not be correct. Israel could not have discriminated against a particular group of people only because they had money, and prevented them from receiving immigration visas."

Do you think there is any way to isolate the criminal phenomena from the need - which no one disputes - to cultivate and preserve the ties with the Jewish communities?

"I understand that there are extradition requests, but the subject, to the best of my knowledge, is being handled well by the law agencies: the police and the State Prosecutor's Office. The Israel Police is doing holy work. The central problem is now the oligarchs' fortune; it is those in the Israeli establishment who might be negatively influenced by them. That is the connection between capital and government. The problem is not the capital but the government." W