



WASHINGTON, D.C. August 8, 2008

TO: NCSJ Leadership and Interested Parties

**FROM: Edward B. Robin, Chairman;
Lesley Israel, NCSJ President;
Mark B. Levin, NCSJ Executive Director**

In Brief: A Tale of Two Countries; Soviet Author, Dissident Alexander Solzhenitsyn

Dear Friend,

For the first time in more than a generation, a totalitarian government is hosting the Olympic Games.

Since the International Olympic Committee first announced China as host, human rights activists have condemned the decision. Questions about access, freedom of information, treatment of journalists and political and religious dissidents in China abound. But China assured the IOC that these concerns would be favorably addressed. As a result, world leaders, including President Bush, agreed to attend the Games.

President Bush's decision to attend has sparked debate about how best to raise U.S. concerns on human rights and religious freedom with his Chinese hosts.

Some in the American political establishment urged caution when discussing these issues, but President Bush said he would continue to speak forthrightly with Chinese leaders. He also said he would publicly speak out, and he did, yesterday in Bangkok.

I am writing about China and the Olympics because some of the very same political and academic figures who urge caution in raising concerns with the Chinese call for a public and confrontational approach with Russia.

Russia's human rights record deserves criticism, but on issues of great importance to the United States, we need to be consistent in our approach and policies toward both countries.

NCSJ has always advocated a balanced approach between "private diplomacy" and "public advocacy," and the history of the Soviet Jewry movement reflects this balance. Twenty-plus years ago, President Reagan and Secretary of State Shultz met with dissidents and refuseniks in Moscow while there to negotiate arms control agreements with the Soviets. Promoting human rights does not have to be sacrificed for other important issues.

The President should use every opportunity to promote democratic values and ideals in countries whose citizens do not enjoy the same rights privileges that we do – whether in Beijing or Moscow.

Earlier this week, Alexander Solzhenitsyn died at the age of 89. One of the great literary forces of the 20th century, his works detailing Soviet oppression and life in the gulag changed the course of history. Interestingly, since he first arrived in the U.S. in the mid-1970s and returned to Moscow in 1994, Solzhenitsyn was a sometimes controversial figure in the American Jewish community. Some believed he was an anti-Semite because of his portrayal of Jews in his writings and because of some of his public statements. Others emphatically defended Solzhenitsyn against this charge.

Unlike another well known Soviet dissident, Andrei Sakharov, Solzhenitsyn did not admire western culture and values. We have included in this week's update a number of stories about his life, including an interview with Natan Sharansky discussing anti-Semitism and a 2004 article on his views toward Jews.

Finally, we have included an **NCSJ alert about today's dramatic escalation in the Russia-Georgia conflict**. We also have included a number of articles on the conflict, and we will continue to keep you informed about any developments affecting the Jewish community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark B. Levin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mark B. Levin
Executive Director



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

NCSJ WEEKLY NEWS BRIEF
Washington, D.C. August 8, 2008

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#1a

Ukrainians honor Jewish singer's memory JTA Brief, August 1, 2008

The late Jewish entertainer Emil Horowitz was honored in the central Ukrainian city of Gaisin.

A plaque commemorating the famous entertainer was dedicated at Gaisin's cultural center in a ceremony last week attended by members of the Jewish community and local authorities. The ceremony was held on the 85th anniversary of Horowitz's birth.

Horowitz, a singer, actor and teacher also known as Gorovets who lived from 1923 to 2001, sang many well-known Jewish and Soviet songs in Yiddish, Ukrainian and Russian. He performed in Ukraine, the Soviet Union, Israel, the United States and other countries.

He started his career in Ukraine and Moscow and during the early years was a soloist of Goset, the state-sponsored Jewish theater in the Soviet Union. In 1973, he moved to Israel and then to the United States, where he died in 2001.

#1b

Airlines Believe in Breslov Flights to Ukraine

By Hana Levi Julian

IsraelINN.com, August 3, 2008

While Ukrainian Jews are struggling with rising anti-Semitism, Ukraine and Israel have signed an agreement to allow more flights to operate between the two countries.

The move comes in anticipation of the annual trek by Breslover Hassidim ahead of the Rosh HaShanah holiday to visit the grave of Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, the founder and late leader of the movement, who is buried in Uman. El Al Airlines and Aerosvit Airlines currently operate the route.

Israel had requested a limited number of flights to carry passengers to Uman, but Ukrainian officials replied that they do not want the city of Uman to be taken over by Breslov followers. Approximately 20,000 - 30,000 pilgrims go to visit Rabbi Nachman's grave every Rosh HaShanah, the Jewish New Year. %ad%

#1c

Peres gets birthday greetings from Ukraine, Belarus

JTA Brief, August 3, 2008

The presidents of Ukraine and Belarus sent 85th birthday greetings to Israeli President Shimon Peres.

In Victor Yuschenko's greetings Saturday to Peres, he expressed his confidence that the high level of bilateral relations and cooperation between Ukraine and the State of Israel will serve well the interests of both states and peoples.

"Once again I want to express my desire to receive you in Ukraine for a visit at any time convenient to you," Yuschenko's letter read.

The Ukraine leader wished "robust health, family happiness, new achievements and success in your state activity" and "peace, prosperity and well-being to the friendly Israeli people."

President Alexander Lukashenko in his statement congratulating Peres said "with conviction" that cooperation between Belarus and Israel "will improve in all spheres."

"Today the ties between Belarus and Israel are not very well developed," the statement said.

Belarus is developing cooperation with Arab countries including Iran. Experts say that it can influence negatively on the relations between Belarus and Israel.

#1d

Floods damage Ukrainian Jewish center

JTA Brief, August 4, 2008

Major floods in Western Ukraine damaged a Jewish community center in the Transcarpathia region.

The Chabad center, the community's kosher dining room and the rabbi's house in the town of Uzhgorod suffered from the flooding that hit the area in late July.

Rabbi Menachem Mendel Taichman, the chief rabbi of Uzhgorod and Transcarpathia, told JTA that rainwater rushed through a building that held his home and offices. He estimated the repairs would cost \$15,000 to \$20,000.

The dining room, which served as a restaurant for 70 diners, and a soup kitchen are now closed.

But houses and property of Jewish residents emerged from the floods unscathed.

"The majority of the local community lives here in town," the rabbi said, "and their homes and property are sealed well."

According to Ukraine's Emergency Ministry, storms and floods in six western regions of Ukraine have killed at least 22 people, including six children.

Hundreds of towns and villages were flooded, damaging more than 40,000 houses and causing the evacuation of thousands of residents, officials said. The Ukrainian government called the flooding the worst the country has seen in years.

President Viktor Yushchenko declared a three-month state of emergency. The parliament has allocated some \$1.2 billion for disaster relief operations.

#2 U.S. Diplomat Disagrees With Speaking Of Possible Curtailment Of Russia- U.S. Relations Interfax, August 1, 2008

MOSCOW - U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Matthew Bryza thinks it wrong for officials to say that relations between Moscow and Washington may dwindle to naught after the presidential elections in the United States.

"I cannot understand how any official could make such a statement. I mean it is a ridiculous statement. The issue at stake here has nothing to do with partisanship or ideology. These are enduring national interests," he said to Interfax commenting on a corresponding statement by a Russian Foreign Ministry source.

A few days ago the ministry source said to the press: "We are ready for any development of the situation. We can afford to have no relations with certain partners, if they want to."

This was the source's comment on recent statements by presidential candidate John McCain, who said that a tougher position should be taken with regard to Russia; in particular it should be expelled from the G8.

"The behavior of our U.S. partners is a test of how strong" Russian-U.S. relations are, the source said.

"Everything is good until one tells us how to act, who to be friends with, who to sleep with and whom to kick out. Finally, they are not godfathers of our children, and there are a lot of (nations) to communicate with, not only they," the source said.

In the interview with Interfax Bryza said that relations with Russia will remain important for any U.S. administration irrespective of the outcome of presidential elections, in particular for the settlement of regional conflicts.

He said he could not undertake any commitment but could make a forecast.

Not party relations but continuing national interests are at stake in this case, Bryza said. U.S. national interests in Abkhazia boil down to the prevention of a war in the region the same as the rest of the Caucasus, he said.

American oligarchs have no intention of buying beaches in Abkhazia, he said. The United States has no intention of transforming Abkhazia into a construction site for the Olympic Games, he said. Its interest is that Georgia would keep its territorial integrity and the Caucasian region as a whole would develop, he said.

Bryza said that the U.S. agenda includes such issues as resistance to terrorism, the settlement of regional conflicts and the nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The U.S. has security interests with regard to oil pipelines and the advancement of democracy in the region and it will be unable to reach any of these objectives without promoting the other, he said.

#3

Azerbaijan president to seek second term Agence France-Presse, August 2, 2008

BAKU — Azerbaijan's ruling party on Saturday nominated President Ilham Aliyev to stand for a second term at October elections in this strategic oil-rich state, the party said.

The elections were immediately denounced as fraudulent by the opposition, which vowed to boycott the vote.

The Yeni Azerbaijan (New Azerbaijan) party unanimously approved the nomination of Aliyev, who exerts a tight grip in this Western-backed, mainly Muslim country.

"In case of my election I will defend Azerbaijan's national interests and work to strengthen the state," Aliyev told the party congress, quoted in a statement by the party.

Aliyev, 46, has ruled this Caspian Sea state since October 2003, when he took the place of his deceased father Heydar in a vote marred by police breaking up mass protests and arresting hundreds.

Azerbaijan is central to Western efforts to develop new sources of oil and gas in the Caspian region independent of its Soviet-era master Moscow. The country hosts strategic East-West oil and gas pipelines.

Two leading opposition parties, Musavat and the Democratic Party, announced Saturday they would boycott the October 15 election, leaving few challengers to Aliyev.

The Azadlig bloc, another opposition group, had already announced its own boycott.

Musavat leader Isa Gambar told a party gathering Saturday that restrictions on freedom of speech and assembly made it impossible for the opposition to contest the vote fairly.

"The majority of the party supports boycotting the elections and I support it as well," Gambar said.

He told AFP earlier he had no doubt the election would be falsified.

"Unfortunately, we have no basis to believe that the upcoming election will be free and fair, according to international standards," he said.

"We have not seen any election since 1993 that was democratic. They have always been falsified. This year I think the situation will be even worse."

Critics have accused Azerbaijani authorities of persecuting the opposition and cracking down on independent media. Media-rights groups have frequently criticised authorities for harassing and jailing journalists critical of the government.

Reporters were barred from covering the party congress and Aliyev's acceptance speech.

Western groups, including the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Council of Europe, have called on Azerbaijan to ensure a free and fair vote after giving negative assessments of previous elections.

Azerbaijani political analyst Rasim Musabekov said he expects serious election violations and falsification, even though Aliyev would likely win a fair vote.

"It is impossible to have real competition and real democracy in the country -- the resources are not equal. That doesn't mean the government could not create a situation where the most visible election falsifications and problems are fixed. But will the government do that? I doubt it," he said.

"On election day there will be the usual scenario where the election committees say that nearly 100 percent of voters participated and nearly all of them chose the governmental candidate."

Aliyev has nonetheless fostered close ties with Western countries, meeting with US President George W. Bush on several occasions.

A country of about 8.5 million wedged between Russia and Iran, Azerbaijan gained independence following the Soviet Union's 1991 collapse.

#4

Nezlin Sentenced To Life In Prison

By Alexi Shaw

Moscow Times, August 3, 2008

The Moscow City Court on Friday convicted former Yukos co-owner Leonid Nezlin on several counts of conspiracy to commit murder and sentenced him to life in prison, though the businessman was absent from the trial.

Judge Valery Novikov found Nezlin guilty of organizing five murders, including the 1998 killings of Vladimir Petukhov, the mayor of Nefteyugansk, and of Valentina Korneyeva, the director of trading firm Feniks.

Alexei Pichugin, Yukos' former security chief who was jailed for life last August on charges of involvement in the same murders, was acting on Nezlin's orders when he organized the slayings, Novikov said in his verdict.

Nezlin, who fled to Israel in 2003, has repeatedly dismissed the charges as baseless and politically motivated. His press service issued a statement Friday claiming that the verdict "was dictated in advance by the Kremlin."

"Just as in Stalin's time, the goal of the Kremlin is to destroy its opponents by criminalizing them with false allegations," the statement said.

Eric Wolf, Nezlin's Israeli spokesman, said in a statement that they would appeal the decision. "But we do not expect the Supreme Court to reconsider the verdict," Wolf said, adding that they would take the case all the way to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg.

Nezlin's lawyer, Dmitry Kharitonov, told reporters that the verdict was "all convenient conjecture."

Prosecutor Alexander Koblyakov said he was pleased with the decision. "Nezlin got what we asked for, which was what he deserved," Koblyakov said after the sentencing.

Friday's verdict and sentencing were predictably dry for a trial in absentia. The signature glass courtroom cage for defendants was empty, while Kharitonov was visibly bored, sitting at a barren defense table.

After issuing his verdict, Novikov spent five hours recapping the evidence for each charge. He said it had cost Yukos \$150,000 to have Petukhov, the Nefteyugansk mayor, killed.

Petukhov had accused Yukos of grossly underpaying taxes. In the weeks before he was gunned down on a Nefteyugansk street on his way to work, he had taken his case to then-President Boris Yeltsin. Korneyeva, the slain businesswoman, had refused to sell her downtown Moscow office to Bank Menatep, Yukos' holding company, prosecutors said.

Novikov ordered Nevzlin to pay 5.5 million rubles (\$235,000) in compensation to the victims.

"I'm not interested in money," said Farida Islamova, the only relative of the victims present at the verdict. "I only want justice and for 10 years have known that [former Yukos CEO Mikhail] Khodorkovsky and Nevzlin murdered my husband."

Yukos, formerly the country's biggest oil company, was forced into bankruptcy in 2006 by a slew of what many viewed as politically motivated multibillion-dollar back tax charges. Khodorkovsky and Platon Lebedev, another former Yukos shareholder, are currently serving jail sentences of eight years on tax and fraud charges.

Dozens of the company's managers fled abroad amid the fallout of the affair. Britain has rejected Russian requests to extradite several Yukos executives, including Alexander Temerko, a former senior vice president.

Russia has repeatedly called for Nevzlin's extradition from Israel and has placed him on an Interpol wanted list. Israel has turned down the requests, citing a lack of evidence.

In May, Israel's Supreme Court upheld Nevzlin's citizenship and ruled that the Russian charges are groundless, according to a copy of the ruling obtained by The Moscow Times.

Koblyakov, the prosecutor, said after the sentencing, however, that given negotiations with the Israeli government, there is still a chance that Nevzlin could serve out his life sentence in Israel.

In December, the Prosecutor General's Office said it was also investigating a possible connection of Yukos executives, including Nevzlin, to the murder of Alexander Litvinenko, the former Russian security service agent who was killed by radiation poisoning in London in 2006. Weeks before his death, Litvinenko had met with Nevzlin in Israel.

Britain has accused former KGB officer Andrei Lugovoi of murdering Litvinenko and called for his extradition, a demand that prompted a chill in the countries' diplomatic relations.

#5

Ukraine: Construction Begins On World's Largest Jewish Community Center

By R. C. Berman

lubavitch.com, August 4, 2008

DNEPROPETROVSK, UKRAINE - Straddling two blocks, a \$60 million, 400,000 square foot Jewish Community Center and Holocaust Museum now under construction in Dnepropetrovsk will be a city within a city, a showcase for a Ukrainian industrial backwater waking up to boom times in Jewish and civic contexts.

The seven-tower, twenty-story museum and center multiplex will stretch around the existing Golden Rose synagogue is sweeping in its scope of programs.

"Any Jewish person, any age and every time of the day will have a reason to spend quality time at the center," said Dnepropetrovsk's Chief Rabbi and Chabad-Lubavitch representative, Shmuel Kaminezki. At maximum capacity, the center will hold over 10,000 people, a chunk of Dnepropetrovsk's 50,000 Jews.

Funded by Gennady Bogolubov, president of the Jewish Community of Dnepropetrovsk and partner in the international industrial firm Privat Group, the center will cement the city's Jewish renaissance.

A Jewish mall in the center will offer easy access to kosher food and lifestyle necessities on a level unfathomable in the lean days of the communist and immediate post-glasnost era. Kosher restaurants, coffee shops, fast food joints, an Internet cafe, a bookstore, Judaica store, supermarket and pharmacy will line the first two floors of the center. Currently, ten tons of kosher meat products are produced in Ukraine, including ten different kinds of deli meats, per month. When the center is completed, demand is expected to grow further.

Above the mall, floors of auditoria and suites will become home to programs for children, children with special needs, women's groups, adult education and seniors. A wing is reserved for Jewish courses offered to the community's college students and for its on-site business school. Teachers at the school and community workers will live in the 30 apartments within the complex.

Weddings will be held under the stars near a permanent rooftop tent. Festive receptions and banquet will take place in the plush catering halls a short elevator ride away. A massive commercial kitchen will provide all the kosher catering.

In an adjacent space, the museum, planned with direction of Yad Vashem in Israel, will be more than Ukraine's largest Holocaust memorial. It will also house one of the world's finest collections of contemporary Jewish art and a museum of modern Jewish life. Igor Kolomoysky, Privat Group partner, is funding the museum complex and collecting the art that will form the nucleus of the museum's collection.

"The project will provide resources for the Jewish community, but it plays an important role in the development of the entire city," said Zelig Brez, executive director of the Jewish Community of Dnepropetrovsk. While the center's stores, hotel rooms, restaurants, and clinic will be open to all residents, Brez is especially committed to seeing all Ukrainians visiting the museum. "Today's generation has a very limited understanding of the Holocaust, and we must change that."

Plans for the center received enthusiastic reception from local officials. Mayor Ivan Kulichenko brought the plans along with him when he attended a conference of mayors in Belgium. He shared architectural drawing of the center with Jerusalem Mayor Uri Lupolianski to promote positive ties between the two cities.

For its aesthetic appeal, the center drew approval from the city's architectural planning board. The outermost of seven towers stand five stories high and climb to ten, fifteen and finally twenty stories at the center. Atop each building is a large spotlight fixture that will give the complex the look of a free form menorah. Dnepropetrovsk's municipal chief architect Julia Saenko saluted the building as "good for the image of the city," a step forward for democracy, freedom of religion and revitalization.

City planners were quick to approve plans for the Menorah center. Ukraine won hosting rights, together with Poland, to the 2012 Union of European Football Association (UEFA) championship games. Doubts about Ukraine's readiness to host tens of thousands visitors has placed pressure on municipalities to improve infrastructure and increase hotel room capacity. Menorah center and all of its amenities, on track for completion within two years, is a feather in Ukraine's UEFA readiness cap.

Officials also recognized the job growth potential inherent in a project of this magnitude. Restaurants, stores, food providers, the hotel and catering hall will be managed by independent business owners to provide self-sustaining funds for the center's endowment. Hard numbers are not available yet, but the service and management sector jobs required to run Menorah center and Holocaust museum are expected provide a boost to the city's middle class.

Now experiencing a boom, as evidenced by the number of cranes perched atop the steel skeletons of growing high rises, Dnepropetrovsk is faced with a widening gap between rich and poor. Menorah center stores will offer help to financially struggling families and seniors. A discount card will allow them to purchase groceries and prepared food at near or below wholesale costs. Medical clinic services will be provided on a sliding scale, and prescriptions for low-income residents will be subsidized.

To get a sense of how huge the Menorah Community Center and Museum will be, it helps to hear that its seven lights will be viewable by airplane passengers on their way to the international airport. "The largest

menorah in the world," according to Rabbi Kaminezki. Inside the hulking structure, will be programs that keep the spiritual and physical needs of those in need at the forefront.

#6

Traditional Prejudices: The anti-Semitism of Alexander Solzhenitsyn

By Cathy Young

May 2004, Reason Magazine

Controversy rages as charges of anti-Semitism dog a beloved cultural icon. No, not Mel Gibson: The man at the center of this debate is the Russian writer Alexander Solzhenitsyn.

Solzhenitsyn, author of *The Gulag Archipelago*, was once a revered symbol of moral resistance to the Soviet state. He probably deserves more credit than any other person for stripping away communism's moral prestige among Western intellectuals.

Exiled from the Soviet Union in 1974, Solzhenitsyn alienated some erstwhile admirers with his Russian nationalism and his antipathy toward Western-style democracy; after his return to Russia 20 years later, the public's reverence soon faded to polite indifference. Still, he retains his special status among the older intelligentsia and many Western anti-communists.

Accusations of anti-Semitism are not new for Solzhenitsyn. Critics have long pointed to passages in *The Gulag Archipelago* that selectively list the Jewish last names of labor camp commandants. And Solzhenitsyn's historical novel *August 1914*, published in English in 1972, emphasizes the Jewishness of Dmitry Bogrov, assassin of Russia's reformist prime minister Pyotr Stolypin.

Solzhenitsyn has claimed that he was merely telling it like it was, but *August 1914* embellishes history considerably: While Bogrov was a thoroughly assimilated revolutionary from a family of third-generation converts, Solzhenitsyn saddles him with a Jewish first name, Mordko (a diminutive of Mordecai), and the fictitious motive of trying to undermine the Russian state to help the Jews.

Then came the news that Solzhenitsyn was writing a major history of the Jews in Russia. The first volume of *Dvesti let vmeste* (*Two Hundred Years Together*), covering the period from 1795 to 1916, appeared in 2001; the second volume followed in 2003. According to Solzhenitsyn, the work was intended to give an objective and balanced account of Russian-Jewish relations: "I appeal to both sides -- the Russians and the Jews -- for patient mutual understanding and admission of their own share of sin." This comment seems suspicious in itself, given that, for most of their history in Russia, Jews were victims of systematic oppression and violence. To talk about mutual guilt is a bit like asking blacks to accept their share of blame for Jim Crow.

What does Solzhenitsyn see as the Jews' share of sin? Mainly, their participation in revolutionary activities in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and then in the Soviet government. He rejects claims that communism in Russia was the result of a Jewish plot but asserts that Jews played a "disproportionate role" in the creation of a terrorist state "insensitive to the Russian people and disconnected from Russian history."

Just what does "disproportionate" mean? Jews were overrepresented among the socialist revolutionaries, but as the historian Richard Pipes points out in *The New Republic*, they were also overrepresented among Russian capitalists. What's more, says Pipes, "the ranks of the revolutionaries were certainly dominated by Russians." A three-part series by Mark Deitch in the Russian daily *Moskovskiy komsomolets* last September noted that there were 43 Jews among the 300 major players on the Russian political scene in 1917 -- and only 16 of them were Bolsheviks.

Solzhenitsyn asserts that "the population of Russia, as a whole, regarded the new [revolutionary] terror as a Jewish terror" -- and seeks, if not to validate, then at least to excuse this perception. Deitch subjects Solzhenitsyn's account to a withering analysis. After quoting historian Lev Krichevsky's statement that "in 1918, at the time of the Red Terror, ethnic minorities made up about 50 percent of the central staff of the Cheka [the secret police]," Solzhenitsyn adds that "Jews were quite prominent" among those minorities.

But he omits Krichevsky's actual data, which show that Jews made up less than 4 percent of the Cheka staff and held 8 percent of executive positions. On other occasions, though, Solzhenitsyn is not averse to exact numbers: He points out, for example, that six of the 12 Cheka investigators in the "department for the suppression of counter-revolution" were Jewish.

An even more devastating critique of Solzhenitsyn's oeuvre appeared in the U.S.-based Russian Jewish weekly *Vestnik*. The author, émigré journalist Semyon Reznik, analyzes a curious work self-published in Moscow in 2000 by one Anatoly Sidorchenko, a collection that includes two essays by Sidorchenko himself and one attributed to Solzhenitsyn, "Jews in the USSR and in the Future Russia."

In a June 2000 interview in *Moscow News*, Solzhenitsyn dismissed the publication as "a vile stunt by a mentally ill person." Yet he failed to explicitly disavow his authorship -- and a comparison between the essay (dated 1968) and *Two Hundred Years Together* reveals astonishing similarities, including entire paragraphs that are virtually identical.

The major difference is that the essay abounds in passages that verge on overt Jew bashing. The second volume of *Two Hundred Years Together* mentions a band of "'militant atheists' led by Gubelman-Yaroslavsky" who trashed Russian Orthodox churches. The name Gubelman is the only reference to the man's Jewishness. The corresponding passage in the 1968 essay reads: "The man who trashed Orthodox Christianity was Yemelyan Yaroslavsky -- a Jew, Minei Izrailevich Gubelman." It contains another line about Jews tramping through Christian churches with cigarettes in their teeth.

Almost none of this has received any attention in the Western press. The first volume of *Two Hundred Years Together*, which has yet to be translated into English, has drawn mixed commentary, invariably accompanied by the qualification that Solzhenitsyn is obviously not anti-Semitic. "Solzhenitsyn, in fact, is not anti-Semitic; his books are not anti-Semitic, and he is not, in his personal relations, anti-Jewish," David Remnick wrote in *The New Yorker* in August 2001.

In *The New Republic*, Pipes wrote that while Solzhenitsyn is too eager to exonerate czarist Russia of mistreating its Jewish subjects, and as a consequence is sometimes insensitive to the latter's predicament, "at least he absolves himself of the taint of anti-Semitism."

This sweeping exoneration is puzzling. As an example of Solzhenitsyn's reverence for traditionalist Jews, Pipes quotes his assertion, "The preservation of the Jewish people for more than two thousand years in diaspora arouses amazement and respect." Yet he omits the not-so-flattering next lines: "However, if we take a closer look: in some periods...this unity was achieved by the oppressive methods of the kagals [Jewish self-governing bodies], and one no longer knows if these methods should be respected simply because they stemmed from religious tradition. At least, for us Russians, even a small dose of such isolationism is treated as a repulsive fault."

Even stranger is an essay in the November 2002 *History Today*. There John Klier, a historian at London's University College, describes the charges of anti-Semitism as "misguided." Then he writes that in his account of the pogroms of the early 20th century, Solzhenitsyn is far more concerned with exonerating the good name of the Russian people than he is with the suffering of the Jews, and that on occasion he accepts the czarist government's canards blaming the pogroms on provocations by the Jews themselves.

And that's not anti-Semitic? It's doubtful that an American writer who took a similar attitude toward the lynchings in the South would be absolved of the taint of racism.

How to explain this leniency? Perhaps it is simply too painful to consider that the great moral beacon of the communist days might be tainted with bigotry. But while the writer's role in Soviet-era history undoubtedly deserves respect, that does not require blindness to his flaws.

Solzhenitsyn's anti-communism, it is increasingly clear, was never a defense of individual freedom. It was a defense of a different kind of collectivism: ethnic, religious, and traditionalist. This is far from the only time that

such a mind-set -- anti-secular, anti-modern, anti-individualist -- has been linked to prejudice against those who don't fit into the collective.

#7

Solzhenitsyn A 'Symbol Of Resistance'

RFE/RL, August 4, 2008

Russian human rights activist Lev Ponomaryov discusses the legacy of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, who died at his residence outside Moscow on the night of August 3 at the age of 89. Interview conducted by Yevgenia Nazarets of RFE/RL's Russian Service.

RFE/RL: Tell us what Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn meant for you.

Lev Ponomaryov: For me personally, Solzhenitsyn played a major role. When I was still a schoolboy, I remember thinking of ways to travel to Ryazan, where he worked as a teacher, in order to meet him. Even back then I had heard about him -- I knew that he had returned from the camps. I knew that he had written his first works, and I knew that they were being published. For me then, he was a leader of resistance to the regime -- already in the 10th grade, I was an anticommunist. However, I was never able to make that trip, but his books formed my entire life. Solzhenitsyn is one of those bright examples of a person who stood up to the regime. And he was lucky enough to survive, to show others that it is not only possible to stand up, but to survive as well. For this reason, to me, he was a leader of the resistance.

But he was also a great writer. It is rare for someone to be both the one and the other. That's why we will remember him and mourn him.

And he was also a social figure. And here I must take pause, sigh, and say that I did not always agree with him. I did not always agree with his social positions. But all the same, he was a powerful thinker and a great social figure. He had a different point of view that did not overlap with mine. But he always stirred up the minds both of those who agreed with him and of those who did not. And for that, one must take off one's hat, bow one's head, and say, "Ashes to ashes."

RFE/RL: How important is Solzhenitsyn's experience of resisting the regime for Russia today?

Ponomaryov: Resistance is always useful. A person who has the courage to speak, to write (you will recall that he wrote a letter to a friend in which he criticized the regime), to resist in the camps and survive -- that person is always extremely useful. He is simply a symbol -- that person becomes a symbol for everyone who follows the path of resisting a political regime. When a person does not make compromises, that is always important, that is always.... I am not a young man and I do not want to speak in overblown words like "beacon" or "symbol." Maybe this isn't correct, but it is true. There are names that become exactly that -- symbols. And Solzhenitsyn is a symbol of resistance.

RFE/RL: You became interested in Solzhenitsyn where you were still a young person. What do you think -- when should people become acquainted with this writer, with this public figure, with this leader of the resistance?

Ponomaryov: I suspect that young people today do not know that he is a symbol of resistance. I think that little has been said of this in recent time. And, naturally, he was an old man and he himself moved somewhat into the shadows, occupied himself with his literary works. His relationship with [Vladimir] Putin was impossible to understand, but this is not important. It was all just a crust that will fall away. It might be of interest to us right now, but it will pass into history. He will enter history as a great Russian writer, as a person who stood up to the totalitarian Soviet regime.

RFE/RL: At different times, the circle of people who read Solzhenitsyn has changed. In the dissident years, in Soviet times -- they were certain people. When perestroika began, mass interest in his works was observed. And what role do his literary works play now?

Ponomaryov: I am not a big expert in this area. But all the same, his "The Gulag Archipelago" will be known to all generations. It will be read and quoted. He has various works. There is "One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich," which many people know virtually by heart and which was one of the first literary works -- one might say a small masterpiece -- about the Soviet camps. On the other hand, he has the almost scholarly book "The Gulag Archipelago," which is simultaneously literary, where he spent many years of his life collecting an enormous amount of facts, where he laid bare the gulag, enabled the West to understand what the Soviet regime was, its full criminality. I think that, at the very least, these two masterpieces will remain for the ages. And, of course, many others. Russian human rights activist Lev Ponomaryov discusses the legacy of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, who died at his residence outside Moscow on the night of August 3 at the age of 89. Interview conducted by Yevgenia Nazarets of RFE/RL's Russian Service.

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#8

Alexander Solzhenitsyn: He lived not by lies.

Editorial

Washington Post, August 5, 2008

On Feb. 18, 1974, this newspaper published an essay, "Live Not by Lies," by Alexander Solzhenitsyn, who with his writings and dauntless moral courage had shaken Soviet power as no other individual had done. Written six days earlier, probably hours before the Soviet secret police broke into his Moscow apartment, arrested him and sent him into what would be a 20-year exile in the West, the essay was an ardent call for truth-telling, for spurning the monstrous lies that bore the USSR aloft. "Though lies conceal everything, though lies embrace everything, but not with any help from me," he wrote.

Mr. Solzhenitsyn wrote the essay in response to the officially orchestrated campaign of vitriol that greeted the publication of "The Gulag Archipelago," his monumentally damning masterpiece on the vast network of Soviet labor camps and their tens of millions of victims. The book's impact on the moral legitimacy of the Soviet regime was so corrosive, and so irrefutable, that it can be said to have sown the first seeds of the Soviet Union's eventual collapse. Who again could doubt the rot that was at the system's core or the sinister cynicism of its leadership?

In the paralysis of Leonid Brezhnev's Soviet Union in the 1970s, Mr. Solzhenitsyn understood that direct confrontation -- street rallies and strikes -- were impossible. But he knew, too, that the Soviet colossus was profoundly vulnerable and could be subverted by individuals intent on telling the truth about their morally bankrupt system and brutal history. "The simplest and most accessible key to our self-neglected liberation lies right here: Personal non-participation in lies," he wrote in his essay.

In the West, especially in Europe, Mr. Solzhenitsyn stripped away any romantic sheen with which some on the left still regarded the USSR. At home, where "The Gulag" was banned but circulated underground, he was a beacon of integrity for those who cared to subject their country to an honest accounting.

In a tyranny, he wrote famously, a true writer is like a second government. Accordingly, the Politburo regarded him as an affront. Unable to swallow Mr. Solzhenitsyn, the Soviet system spat him out. He spent those exile years mostly in Vermont, isolated, fiercely disciplined, writing day and night. Adamant, uncompromising and severe in his judgments, he condemned what he saw as America's moral laxity, though he engaged little with the country that granted him exile. All the while, he remained confident that the Soviet system was doomed and, with a prophet's certitude, knew that he would return to Russia one day.

When he did, in 1994, he found a new Russia traumatized by a wrenching transition. No longer under tyranny's yoke, his countrymen after a while tired of Mr. Solzhenitsyn's pronouncements, no longer looking to him for guidance or wanting him to unearth the grimmest secrets of the past. His work was done. But through his books and principles, Mr. Solzhenitsyn had waged war on a superpower and subverted it with a writer's only tools: his words.

#9

Reverence for Solzhenitsyn, but No National Mourning

By Clifford J. Levy

New York Times, August 5, 2008

MOSCOW — In a museum here is a box of detergent that stands as a symbol of the reverence that Russians once held for Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, the literary giant who died on Sunday night. Within the box is concealed an illicit copy of Mr. Solzhenitsyn's masterpiece about the Soviet labor camps, "The Gulag Archipelago," which was obsessively circulated in Soviet times despite the penalties for those who read it.

On Monday, national leaders expressed admiration for Mr. Solzhenitsyn, but there did not seem to be the kind of outpouring that arises when a beloved figure dies. The relatively subdued response raised the question of whether Mr. Solzhenitsyn's life and work still resonated in a Russia that is far different from the Soviet Union it replaced.

Russians who grew up in Soviet times continued to speak passionately about the achievements of Mr. Solzhenitsyn, who was 89 and had faded from public view in recent years since returning from exile after the Soviet Union's fall. They compared him to writers like Tolstoy and said he had forced the nation to confront the horrors wrought in the name of Communism.

"Solzhenitsyn was a person whose voice was able to express the pain of tens of millions of people, through 'The Gulag Archipelago,'" said Yuri V. Samodurov, 56, director of the Sakharov Museum in Moscow, which is dedicated to another Soviet-era dissident, the physicist Andrei D. Sakharov. "This book, it seems to me, will last forever."

The museum has a display with a red box of Lotos laundry detergent, inside of which is a dog-eared edition of "The Gulag Archipelago." Such ploys were sometimes used to hide banned literature from the authorities. And before Mr. Solzhenitsyn's death, Mr. Samodurov had been contributing material to a new exhibit that would have celebrated his 90th birthday and publicized his life.

Still, Mr. Samodurov said he feared that these days, most young people could not even recognize the names of Mr. Solzhenitsyn and Mr. Sakharov, perhaps the two most famous Soviet dissidents.

Mr. Samodurov acknowledged that he was among the liberals who harbored misgivings about some of Mr. Solzhenitsyn's political views later in life, including his fierce nationalism. Others, in turn, have criticized Mr. Solzhenitsyn's attacks on Soviet power, at a time when a revisionist movement has emerged that looks upon Soviet accomplishments more kindly.

After his death, though, political and cultural leaders tended to focus on his writing. President Dmitri A. Medvedev and Prime Minister Vladimir V. Putin both offered tributes. The last Soviet president, Mikhail S. Gorbachev, said in an interview with the Interfax news agency that Mr. Solzhenitsyn's books "changed the minds of millions of people, making them rethink their past and present."

Mr. Solzhenitsyn is to be buried at the Donskoi monastery in Moscow on Wednesday after a Russian Orthodox funeral service, officials said.

The service is to receive widespread coverage in the state-controlled media, but in interviews, young people said they would not pay much attention to it. Approached at a park in Moscow, Taisiya Gunicheva, 17, a college student, said she had heard of Mr. Solzhenitsyn, but could not name any of his books.

She said his work was largely absent from her school curriculum. "Can you imagine, there is nothing about it at all," she said. "It is sad, but unfortunately, it's true."

Nearby was Anton Zimin, 26, an advertising copywriter, who said he was quite familiar with Mr. Solzhenitsyn but doubted that others in his generation were. He said people his age had lost touch with the struggles of their parents and grandparents.

“The problem is that now, it’s all about consumption — this spirit that has engulfed everybody,” Mr. Zimin said. “People prefer to consume everything, the simplest things, and the faster, the better. Books are something that force you to think, reading books requires some effort. But they prefer entertainment.”

Andrei V. Vasilevsky is accustomed to such sentiments. Mr. Vasilevsky, 52, is editor in chief of *Novy Mir*, the magazine that published Mr. Solzhenitsyn’s first major work, “One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich,” in 1962.

Mr. Vasilevsky said on Monday that young people considered figures like Mr. Solzhenitsyn to be artifacts, and that Russian society in general was no longer interested in towering cultural or social figures.

“There is no demand for great people,” he said. “I can’t say why, but this fact is simply obvious to me. Famous, notable, popular — yes. But not great, in the fullest sense of the word.”

#10

Sharansky lauds Solzhenitsyn's influence on Soviet Jewry movement

By Ben Harris

JTA, August 6, 2008

NEW YORK - Amid the haystack of laudatory prose evoked this week by the death of one of the titans of Russian literature was this far less flattering needle: Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn was dogged, particularly in his later years, by charges he harbored deep anti-Semitic prejudice.

Natan Sharansky, who along with Solzhenitsyn is among the most famous inmates and chroniclers of the Soviet labor camp system, says those charges should be understood in context.

“I don't think that he has any special prejudice,” Sharansky told JTA. “He had a big interest in defending the Russian nationalism, the Russian pride. Also he wanted to unmask the evils of the empire. While studying it, he discovered -- it was very easy to discover -- that among the architects of this gulag system, meaning this system of imprisonment, were many, many Jews.

"So for him these Jews became the symbol of the worst" types of Jews, those Jews who lost their own identity and tried to take away the identity of others, said Sharansky, whose own struggle became a symbol of the Soviet Jewry movement before he immigrated in 1986 to Israel, where he has served in the national government.

Solzhenitsyn first came to prominence in 1963 with the publication of “A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich,” a short novel describing the harsh conditions of a Soviet labor camp. He went on to publish “The Gulag Archipelago,” his best-selling work, and is credited with some of the worst indictments of Soviet depredation to appear in print. He won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1970.

For nearly two decades, Solzhenitsyn lived in exile in the United States, taking up residence on a secluded farm in Cavendish, Vt. He returned to Russia after the fall of communism, and in his later years embraced President Vladimir Putin, whom he saw as a figure capable of restoring Russian greatness.

Solzhenitsyn died Sunday in Moscow at 89.

Sharansky, then known as Anatoly Sharansky, met Solzhenitsyn briefly in the early 1970s, though he describes himself as more firmly in the camp of another dissident writer, Andrei Sakharov.

Nevertheless, Sharansky recalls traveling hundreds of miles from Moscow to read underground copies of Solzhenitsyn's work. And he credits the writer with helping the Soviet Jewry effort by laying bare the brutality of the Soviet regime.

It became much easier for the Soviet Jewry movement "to mobilize the support of the world for us" because "the world already knew, thanks to Solzhenitsyn, that it was an evil empire, and it was much easier for us to make our case," Sharansky said.

"So whether he agreed or disagreed -- and there were some tactical disagreements between us and him -- his contribution was enormous. In fact he helped us to build our struggle."

In his later years Solzhenitsyn wrote a two-volume history of Russians and Jews titled "Two Hundred Years Together," in which he described the prominence of Jews in the Bolshevik revolution. Others have found traces of his animus toward Jews in the portrayal of Jewish characters in his novels.

But as the Independent in England reported, the issue was more complex given that his second wife was Jewish and their three sons from that marriage were raised as Jews.

For Sharansky, Solzhenitsyn's view on Jews was peripheral to his legacy.

"Definitely he's not objective," Sharansky said. "Definitely he tries to justify things which one shouldn't try to justify. But I have to say, having said all this, with all these prejudices, they played in fact no role in his influence on the world. They were really so marginal.

"Whether he had some prejudices against Jews or not -- and he had some -- it wasn't really the meaning of his influence on the people of the world."

#11

Undermining Medvedev: Western Leaders Still Ponder Who Directs Russia's Foreign Policy

By Vladimir Frolov

Russia Profile, August 5, 2008

On July 24, Prime Minister Vladimir Putin publicly lambasted OAO Mechel and its CEO Igor Zuzin for alleged price fixing, thus halving the company's share price and sending the Russian stock market into a ditch. Putin's comments not only shattered foreign investors' confidence in the Russian market, so meticulously fostered by President Dmitry Medvedev, but also demonstrated that the prime minister still has the upper hand, thus aggravating the relationship between the mentor and the protégée.

There are very few people who know for sure why Prime Minister Vladimir Putin decided to exercise his full verbal powers, and with a few terse sentences about Mechel, a major coal and steel producer in Russia, shaved off \$60 billion worth of the Russian stock market capitalization.

There may have been a whole host of valid reasons to attack Mechel. After all, the company was too greedy and its owner, Igor Zuzin, was brazen enough to stand up to none other than Vladimir Putin. There may well be a case for the Anti-Monopoly Ministry and for the law enforcement agencies to investigate and, if found guilty, to punish Mechel and its CEO.

This would not really be a big deal. Microsoft, for example, was investigated on monopoly charges in the 1990s, was found guilty by a federal judge in the United States, as well as by the European Commission, and was forced to pay billions of dollars in fines and compensation measures. Yet it is still one of the greatest companies in the world, with only Google as a peer competitor.

The problem is with the way Putin did it, not to mention that ordinary people, who had nothing to do with Mechel, lost their money as Russian stocks tanked after his comments. The fact that Putin had to lambast Mechel and its owner and CEO Zuzin on public television sends out two extremely negative messages about the way Russia is governed.

The first message is that the system and its institutions do not really work. The Anti-Monopoly Ministry and other law enforcement agencies did nothing about Mechel's dicey business practices until Putin threatened the

company publicly (the Anti-Monopoly Ministry was equally complacent about price-fixing for jet fuel, until Putin publicly threatened to fire the Anti-Monopoly Minister Igor Artemyev). Mechel and Zuzin should have appeared before a judge (as Bill Gates did) and the court should have ruled on the matter. Instead, he had to appear before Putin to face punishment.

If it takes Putin's personal and televised intervention for something as mundane as an anti-trust decision to happen in this country, then the system is really dysfunctional. This is not the way other G8 powers operate.

The second message is even worse than the first one. Putin's intervention, with its devastating effect on the Russian stock market, undermined Dmitry Medvedev's efforts to build up Russia's image as a good place for international investors to do business, and made a mockery of Medvedev's drive to turn Moscow into a major international financial center.

The impression that international investors were bound to get from this episode is that Medvedev's word does not amount to much, and that the president does not generate real policy decisions, just some wishful thinking. The impression is that the president cannot overrule his prime minister who, ostensibly, serves at the pleasure of the president.

This is made to look even more awkward by shy, tongue-in-cheek comments by Medvedev's men, like his assistant Arkady Dvorkovich, his informal advisor Igor Yurgens, and even First Deputy Prime Minister Igor Shuvalov, that no one wants to rock the boat and that no second Yukos case was in the cards.

Dvorkovich and Yurgens' appeal to an unnamed high authority to be careful in handling the Russian stock market where ever more ordinary Russians invest their savings looks particularly lame and frustrating. Even worse is Shuvalov's off-the cuff remark that "no second Yukos is planned, but in real life you never know for sure..." One gets the impression that this is the team that knows what needs to be done, but is not trusted with pulling the levers of power. This is done elsewhere.

It is very bad news for president Medvedev, particularly as it comes on the heels of a badly thought-out foreign policy decision that has heightened confusion in Western capitals as to who really is in charge of Moscow's foreign policy.

The G8 leaders are still scratching their heads in bewilderment, having seen President Dmitry Medvedev agreeing to the G8 statement on Zimbabwe, only to be followed by a Russian veto in the UN Security Council of a resolution to impose sanctions on the Robert Mugabe's regime.

The G8 statement on Zimbabwe was quite explicit about the intention of the G8 to "take further steps, inter alia introducing financial and other measures against those individuals responsible for violence."

The British did not conceal their plans to seek authorization by the UN Security Council to put pressure on Mugabe and his cronies by freezing their bank accounts and imposing travel bans. It is obvious that both Prime Minister Gordon Brown and President George Bush spoke to Medvedev about this in Japan, and were clearly encouraged to think that Russia would go along when Medvedev agreed to the G8 statement.

Yet, just four days later, Russia joined China in vetoing the UNSC resolution with sanctions against Mugabe and his closest associates.

Perhaps, when Medvedev returned to Moscow and got to read the British draft of the UNSC resolution, it might have dawned upon him and others in the Kremlin that Moscow was asked to endorse a precedent of a UN Security Council passing a judgment about an election in a sovereign country, and imposing UN sanctions on perpetrators of electoral fraud. This was something that Russia could have openly opposed at the G8, but did not.

As a result, the veto decision was interpreted in the G8 capitals as a sign that president Medvedev, having agreed to the G8 statement, got back home andwas overruled by a higher authority. This is indeed how it

looked, whether it was the case or not. It sent a signal around the world that Medvedev's word on major international issues was not final. And it made the Russian leader look, well, foolish.

It is hard to say whether this was simply a case of bad political planning and poor execution by the Russian foreign policy bureaucracy that failed to guide the president out of the trap set up for him in Japan, or an orchestrated effort to humiliate Medvedev internationally.

Prime minister Putin could have intervened to prevent a decision that was likely to undercut the international standing of his successor. He did not do so, and a couple of weeks later went on the air and made a laughing stock of one of Medvedev's major policy initiatives - to turn Moscow into an international financial center. Now the question is - why?

#12

Georgia Key to Democracy Building in Caucasus

By Andre de Nesnera

Voice of America, August 5, 2008

Washington - Tensions remain high between Russia and Georgia, especially over the breakaway Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and Georgia's bid to become part of NATO. In this report from Relations between Moscow and Tbilisi have been strained ever since Mikhail Saakashvili was elected president of Georgia more than four years ago following a popular movement known as the "Rose Revolution." And in January of this year, Mr. Saakashvili was re-elected, saying he would pursue many of the policies he began during his first term in office.

Sources of tensions

Analysts say many of the tensions between Russia and Moscow can be attributed to Mr. Saakashvili's pro-western policies, including his goal of membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization - or NATO. During a recent trip to Georgia, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice repeated Washington's support for Georgia's NATO membership bid.

Russia vehemently opposes Georgia's desire to become a NATO member. Jason Lyall with Princeton University (Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs) says Russia's strong opposition is part of President Dmitri Medvedev's robust foreign policy.

"To imagine this from a Russian perspective, you would now have a Georgia inside NATO," he said. "And Georgia borders unto Chechnya. And it is very hard to think of a more sensitive issue for Russians than Chechnya. And now you would have NATO membership right on its doorstep in the north Caucasus."

"So this is caught up with that. It is also caught up now with [President] Medvedev's desire to show a more strident Russian foreign policy, a more prestige-seeking policy. This would be a huge blow to his regime if NATO could move this close into what are considered vital Russian national interests," he continued.

Another major source of friction between Georgia and Russia is the issue of the breakaway, separatist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia - two regions within Georgia, but bordering Russia. They declared their independence from Tbilisi in the early 1990s.

President Saakashvili has vowed to restore Georgia's territorial integrity by bringing them back into the fold. But analysts say little progress has been accomplished in that area, especially since Russia has been increasing economic and political ties with the two regions.

Why is Georgia so important?

Experts say the West is looking with interest and concern at developments in Georgia, especially as President Saakashvili tries to consolidate democratic gains there. Svante Cornell is with Stockholm's Institute for Security and Development Policy.

"After the 'Rose Revolution' four years ago, Georgia has truly been the country in the former Soviet bloc, after the Baltic states in the early 1990s, to thoroughly remake their country, to reform and to install a democratic government that is a functioning independent state - although there is, of course, a long way to go before Georgia consolidates its democracy," he said.

"It has made tremendous progress and has become a model and a symbol of what can actually be achieved - in anti-corruption and democracy building. And Russia doesn't like that. But for the West, of course, if Georgia fails, if Georgia is allowed to fall, this means that any hopes that we may have of democracy building in this part of the world, in this south-eastern corner of Europe, is going to fail," he added.

Many experts, including Ronald Suny from the University of Chicago, say Georgia is important to the West for another reason.

"It's a corridor - a very important corridor - for oil from the Caspian region going to the Black Sea and the Mediterranean through Turkey," he said. "So it's now an area that has become economically important as well."

Role U.S. plays

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States has provided Georgia with considerable aid to support its political and economic reforms. Svante Cornell says Washington has a lot at stake in Georgia.

"Across the region, from Ukraine over the Caucasus to Central Asia, there is no country in which the United States has invested so much of its prestige as in Georgia - which means that if suddenly Georgia is allowed to fail and if the United States does not stand up for Georgia and Georgia's integrity and security, every government from Kiev to Tashkent will draw the conclusion that the United States is not a serious partner. And in that sense, for a very long time, it will undermine U.S. interests in the whole of Eurasia," he said.

Cornell and other analysts say the United States and other western nations could play an important diplomatic role in defusing tensions between Russia and Georgia in order to keep the situation in that volatile region from spiraling out of control.

#13

Europe's Caucasian Moment

By Borut Grgic and Alexandros Petersen

Wall Street Journal Europe, August 5, 2008

The European Union is getting closer to the security concerns of the Eurasian landmass, in particular the "frozen conflicts" in Moldova, Georgia and Azerbaijan. And it's not just due to the EU's expansion to the Black Sea. If Europe wants to reduce its dependency on Russian energy, it will need alternative oil and gas supplies from the Caspian region. But those strategic pipelines are only kilometers away from hotspots like Nagorno-Karabakh, Transnistria, South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

Over the weekend, six people were killed in firefights between separatist South Ossetian militia and Georgian forces. This new outbreak of violence threatens to further complicate peace efforts in nearby Abkhazia. After years of neglect, EU heavyweights are finally taking action there. Last month, German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier developed a three-step strategy to resolve the Abkhazia dispute.

This statelet in northwestern Georgia is run by an ethnically distinct minority that demands formal independence from Georgia. Lacking international recognition, the Abkhaz -- just like the South Ossetians -- won de facto independence with Russian support through a chaotic conflagration amid the breakup of the

Soviet Union. During a 1992-1993 war, the secessionists defeated the Georgian army and forced the majority ethnic Georgian population to leave. The enclave's isolated economy is fueled by Russian business interests, which sit comfortably behind a shield of so-called Russian peacekeepers that divide the territory from the rest of Georgia.

So it is no surprise that the conflict plays out in confrontations between Tbilisi and Moscow. A Russian aircraft was recently filmed shooting down a Georgian surveillance drone. Moscow's "peacekeepers" frequently harass ethnic Georgians in the breakaway region, demanding protection money or, like last year, forcing them to vote in separatist elections. These provocations serve a greater strategic agenda: keeping Georgia out of NATO. The unresolved conflicts of the two breakaway regions are the greatest obstacles to Georgia's ambitions to join the alliance. Moscow holds the trump card.

Mr. Steinmeier's plan was ambitious but realistic. It envisioned a stage of confidence-building measures leading to a gradual return of displaced peoples, followed by economic revitalization with European help. Abkhazia's final status was to be determined in the last stage. In a nod to Moscow, Mr. Steinmeier's plan did not demand the internationalization of the peacekeeping force.

Russia gave the plan a green light in private meetings, only to reject it when the German foreign minister made it public. Prime Minister Vladimir Putin and his successor as Russian president, Dmitry Medvedev, see it as in Moscow's interest to preserve the simmering status quo. By publicly ambushing the plan, Moscow hopes to put an end to what it considers as European meddling in its own backyard. Russia wants to sow confusion about its true intentions, thus delaying any resolution of the conflict.

While the first attempt of the German peace plan failed, it nonetheless indicates a growing realization among the EU's power brokers that it is time to get serious about resolving festering conflicts in the union's new neighborhood. Berlin's leadership is particularly notable as Germany is closest to Russia among the EU's major member states. And yet Berlin's peace initiative showed that it considers its diversified investments and diplomatic interests in the Caspian region important enough to strengthen Europe's relations with Georgia.

There is now no time to lose to draft an improved plan that will better provide for Abkhaz demands to shape their own destiny, without jeopardizing Georgia's sovereignty, democratization and Western integration. Any stepped-up effort must include the separatist Abkhaz leadership. Isolated and increasingly overshadowed by Moscow, the leaders in Sukhumi are no more enthusiastic about Russian dominance than the Georgians are. True, the Abkhaz depend on Moscow's support in their fight against Tbilisi. But they are worried that in the process of getting independence from Georgia, they are being integrated into Russia. That's why they have quietly reached out to Western capitals. An EU high representative, with a significant staff and peacekeeping contingent, would likely be welcomed by the Abkhaz.

By seeking a resolution to the conflicts, Europe is facilitating stability and prosperity in its neighborhood. Reducing tensions in the region also benefits Russia. Violence in Abkhazia has been linked to unrest in Russia's North Caucasus republics of Chechnya, Dagestan and Ingushetia. If Russia got bogged down in a confrontation in Abkhazia, violent separatists in the North Caucasus would step up their own rebellions.

Therefore, achieving peace may not be an insurmountable task. The key to a resolution in Abkhazia is to convince Russia that stability on its southern border is more important than a violent veto over Georgia's, and possibly Abkhazia's, Western integration.

Mr. Grgic is director, and Mr. Petersen policy adviser, at the Institute for Strategic Studies in Brussels.

#14

Law And Property, Kremlin-Style

By Victor Yasmann

RFE/RL, August 6, 2008

Experts in Russia and abroad are speculating about whether the conflict around joint British-Russian oil company TNK-BP and Prime Minister Vladimir Putin's sharp public criticism of the Mechel mining and metals

holding marks yet another step toward the establishment of state capitalism. And they are speculating because no one can know for sure whether the rules of the game for investors in Russia are changing and, if they are, then how?

The situation around TNK-BP is becoming relatively clear. The AAR consortium, headed by billionaire oligarchs Mikhail Fridman, Viktor Vekselberg, and Leonid Blavatnik and controlling half of TNK-BP, is trying to take control of the oil giant from its British managers, who represent the firm's foreign shareholders.

Officially, Russian government officials are not getting involved, asserting blankly that this is just a dispute between two groups of shareholders. Unofficially, TNK-BP head Robert Dudley and other British managers and specialists have left the country under strong administrative pressure from law enforcement agencies, behind which -- of course -- stand the so-called siloviki, the people in government with strong ties to the security organs.

The plight of BP in Russia seems to fit in with the overall silovik strategy of restoring state control over the energy sector that was begun in the early days of Putin's presidency. Under that strategy, Gazprom, Rosneft, and other state megacorporations are pushing Western firms out of key projects in the oil-and-gas sector.

The best that Western firms can hope for is a minority stake in strategic projects. Total, ExxonMobil, and Amoco already ran up against this practice at various times during the Putin years. Most recently, Royal Dutch Shell was forced to surrender its controlling stake in the Sakhalin-2 project under strong administrative pressure. In short, TNK-BP clearly seems to be more of the rule than the exception.

But the Mechel affair is less clear. Mechel is one of Russia's leading mining and metallurgy companies and is controlled by Igor Zyuzin. Twice in the space of a single week, Putin loudly and publicly accused the firm of using offshore schemes to avoid taxes. As a result, Mechel's market capitalization collapsed by 60 percent in the space of a few days, and Zuzin's personal net worth fell by billions. The market as a whole was also badly rocked, although it recovered quickly. The business community and foreign investors were so puzzled by Putin's unexpected choice of victims that the government issued a statement indicating that other firms in the sector were also being examined by the Federal Antimonopoly Service in order to minimize the impression that Mechel had been singled out.

But the horse was already out of the barn and many were already comparing the Mechel affair to the early days of the assault on Yukos, speculating that metals and mining would be the next sector to get the Kremlin's oil-and-gas treatment. But the Yukos comparisons don't bear close examination. Yukos was, primarily, a political affair, and former Yukos CEO Mikhail Khodorkovsky was slapped down for supporting Putin's political opponents and financing civil-society institutions that were not under the Kremlin's thumb. Of course, the siloviki and their domestic and foreign partners made out like bandits from the Yukos affair, but that was not the impulse for the attack. After all, the Kremlin did not use such measures to dispossess friendly oligarchs like Roman Abramovich and Oleg Deripaska.

So, what was Mechel and its owner, who was not involved in any political projects, guilty of? Most likely, the firm fell victim to the principle voiced by Spanish dictator Francisco Franco, who said, "For my friends, everything; for my enemies, the law." It would appear that, somehow, the head of Mechel came to be numbered among the enemies and therefore must face the law.

The Law Of The Eurasianists

And what about the law? It must be noted that, despite all the clan differences and economic conflicts of interest, all the siloviki, with their roots in the Soviet security organs, have a common and very specific attitude toward the law and property. The source of this attitude is the ideology of Eurasianism, which was quite popular at the end of the 1980s among the siloviki who now control the commanding heights of the Russian economy.

Eurasianism posits a unique civilizing role for Russia on the world stage and holds as its ideal the creation of a paternalistic, corporatist state, similar to the one Franco built in Spain. But it was the economic program of

Eurasianism that attracted the most attention, as it acknowledged the market and "economic pragmatism" but clearly subordinated these concepts to political ends.

The Eurasianists do not adhere to the idea of the sanctity of private property, arguing that property cannot be "absolute or abstract, but only relative and concrete." In addition, Eurasianists hold that property owners do not enjoy absolute freedom to dispose of their property as they see fit, but are instead responsible before society. And the more "socially significant" their property is, the greater the owner's responsibility and, consequently, the less his or her freedom. In the final analysis, the owner of capital is under the control of society and the state in terms of its ultimate disposition.

Looking back at Russia's development over the last decade, including the redistribution of property and the establishment of numerous state corporations, it is amazing to see how well actual practice in the country corresponds with Eurasianist theory. One only has to recall the strange pronouncements by several oligarchs during the period of the national elections at the end of last year and the beginning of this to the effect that they are ready at any moment to surrender their fortunes if the state demands it.

The leader of the International Eurasianist Movement and the ideologue of neo-Eurasianism, Aleksandr Dugin, was an open supporter first of Vladimir Putin and later of Dmitry Medvedev. Of course, in forcing some oligarchs to emigrate, taking over the assets of Yukos, and gaining control over the huge cash flows of the oil sector, the siloviki had strong, material interests. But the way they acted and the results for Russia and the international community are surprisingly in keeping with the economic teachings of the Eurasianist movement.

#15

Israel Freezes Defense Sales to Georgia

By Steve Weizman

Associated Press, August 6, 2008

JERUSALEM — Israel has decided to halt all sales of military equipment to Georgia because of objections from Russia, which is locked in a feud with its tiny Caucasus neighbor, Israeli defense officials said Tuesday.

The officials said the freeze was partially intended to give Israel leverage with Moscow in its attempts to persuade Russia not to ship arms and equipment to Iran. They spoke on condition of anonymity, as Israel does not officially publish details of its arms sales.

Russia has repeatedly refused to comment on reports that it is selling S-300 air-defense missiles to Iran.

Among items Israel has been selling to Tbilisi are pilotless drone aircraft. Russian fighters shot one down in May, according to UN observers.

Russia sent Israel a letter of protest after the shooting incident, asking it to stop supplying military hardware to Georgia "as Russia from time to time complies with Israel's requests not to supply weapons systems" to states seen as threatening Israel, according to a report Tuesday in the Israeli daily Maariv.

The Israeli Foreign Ministry declined to comment Tuesday on the reported arms trade freeze.

Georgian Reintegration Minister Temur Iakobashvili denied the report.

"There has been no decision by Israel to stop selling weapons. The gossip about that in the Israeli media is linked to the internal political process in Israel," Iakobashvili said.

Israel is one of the world's leading arms exporters but does not detail the contents or value of its trade with individual countries.

In addition to the spy drones, Israel has also been supplying Georgia with infantry weapons and electronics for artillery systems and has helped upgrade Soviet-designed Su-25 ground attack jets assembled in Georgia,

according to Koba Liklikadze, an independent military expert based in Tbilisi. Former Israeli generals also serve as advisers to the Georgian military.

Tensions between Israel and Iran are high, with Israeli officials warning of a possible military strike against what it says is a nuclear weapons program under development by Tehran. The sale by Russia of anti-aircraft weapons could help Iran fend off an attack.

Iran denies that it has nuclear arms ambitions, saying its program is for peaceful purposes. The disagreement between Russia and Georgia centers on the breakaway Georgian provinces of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which have close ties with Russia.

#16

McCain's People and Obama's People Are Heading for Moscow

Background work for the next US president's Russia policy

By Andrei Terekhov

Nezavisimaya Gazeta, August 6, 2008

We have learned of a bipartisan commission being set up in the USA to prepare a report for the next president regarding Washington's policy on Russia. The commission includes politicians, diplomats, and experts - including some with direct influence on the foreign policy views of the presidential candidates. According to our sources, the commission will send a delegation to Moscow in November.

With three months to go before the US presidential election, the Nixon Center and the Belfer Center at Harvard University have initiated the formation of a commission to analyze Washington's policy on Moscow.

The group's task is to convey to the next president the importance of maintaining constructive relations between the USA and Russia. The co-chairs of the new commission are Senator Chuck Hagel (Republican) and former senator Gary Hart (Democrat). Judging by the group's composition, it intends to send a loud political message. Its activities are supposed to result in a substantial report, to be delivered to the president-elect by the end of this year.

The commission is supposed to prepare the report for the next leader, as well as for the new Congress and interested members of the public; it is also supposed to evaluate US national interests and priorities in relations with Russia. It has been set the task of presenting some recommendations to the next president's administration on advancing American interests in the course of interaction with the Russian Federation.

The commission includes few academics specializing in Russia, but plenty of people directly involved in American policy-making, with practical experience in the Nixon, Reagan, Clinton, and Bush administrations. It includes Pete Peterson, former commerce secretary and board member at the Council on Foreign Relations; Robert Blackwell, former aide to the National Security Advisor; General Charles Boyd, former deputy commander of US forces in Europe; Richard Bat, former deputy secretary of state in the Reagan administration; James Collins, director of Russian and Eurasian programs with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and former ambassador to Russia; Susan Eisenhower, president of The Eisenhower Group; and Robert Ellsworth, former deputy defense secretary and envoy to NATO.

The commission also includes some specialists who have made recent direct contributions to shaping American policy on Russia: Thomas Graham, special presidential aide and senior director for Russia in the National Security Council during the Bush administration, and Graham's predecessor in that role, Mark Medish.

Carla Hills, former US representative at trade negotiations, will help shape the next US president's views on Russian-American economic cooperation and its prospects. Developing cooperation in nuclear weapons non-proliferation should be handled by former senator Sam Nunn, who worked with Richard Lugar to lay the foundations for a program aimed at ensuring security for nuclear materials in Russia. The commission's list of heavyweight experts also includes two former national security advisors: Lieutenant General Brent Scowcroft and Robert Macfarlane.

We have obtained a copy of a statement from the commission, stressing that each of its members is acting in an individual capacity. But it's hard to ignore the fact that it includes advisors to Barack Obama and John McCain. For example, Chuck Hagel recently accompanied Obama on a tour abroad. Sam Nunn and Lee Hamilton are among the leading foreign policy advisor to the Democratic candidate. Macfarlane and Bart are acting as advisors to McCain.

The bipartisan nature of the commission makes it likely that its recommendations will be heeded by either Obama or McCain, whichever of them wins the election.

One way or another, observers agree that both Obama and McCain could become entirely different people - and perhaps more pragmatic leaders - after moving into the White House. Rather than the dramatic slogans they use today, they will need quality analysis, in areas including Russian-American relations. This should be provided by the new commission, which will send a delegation to Moscow in November, after the election. According to our sources, the visitors may be received at the highest level.

Translated by InterContact

#17

**Russia Asks That Iran Be Given More Time
No Deadline on Incentives, Envoy Says
By Colum Lynch
Washington Post, August 7, 2008**

UNITED NATIONS - Russia said Wednesday that Iran should be granted more time to respond to a package of incentives that the United States and five other powerful nations have offered Tehran to freeze its uranium enrichment efforts, a stance that may slow U.S. and European efforts to impose U.N. sanctions on Tehran.

Russia's U.N. ambassador, Vitaly I. Churkin, said the six nations should continue negotiating with Iran over its nuclear program. He dismissed assertions by the United States, Britain and France that Tehran had missed a deadline this week to respond to the offer, which would make a push for U.N. sanctions inevitable.

"We haven't set any deadlines for their response," he said. "We have some negotiating opportunities, and rather than focus almost entirely on sanctions we should focus on what those opportunities should be."

Churkin's remarks raised the prospect of renewed strains between Washington and Moscow over Iran policy during the final months of President Bush's tenure. Administration officials say Iran is buying time to advance its capacity to enrich uranium, an effort they suspect is intended to fuel a nuclear weapon. They have made it clear they hope to secure a fourth round of U.N. sanctions against Tehran before Bush leaves office in January, according to U.N. diplomats.

Iran denies that it is seeking nuclear weapons, and says that the council has no right to prevent it from developing a civilian energy program.

The United States, France and Britain pressed ahead with efforts to punish Tehran after a conference call Wednesday between representative of the six nations. Britain's top Middle East expert, Kim Howells, indicated that the allies secured agreement with Russia and China to pursue a "dual track strategy" on Iran -- including discussion of possible U.N. sanctions and further contacts between Iran's nuclear negotiator, Saeed Jalili, and Javier Solana, the European Union's foreign policy chief.

The latest standoff comes nearly two months after the five permanent members of the Security Council -- Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States -- as well as Germany offered to sweeten a package of economic, political and security incentives to Iran. Solana, the group's representative, gave Iran until last Saturday to accept the package or face further U.N. sanctions.

Iran said in a letter to Solana Tuesday that it is ready to respond to the offer as long as the six big powers "simultaneously" provide Tehran with a more detailed explanation of the incentives.

The United States, France and Britain accused Iran of stonewalling, and said they would begin talks on a new U.N. sanctions resolution. Churkin, the Russian representative, conceded that "we would have preferred a more straightforward and positive answer from our Iranian colleagues."

"The letter that we received yesterday appears to be a stalling tactic," State Department spokesman Gonzalo Gallegos said. He said the big powers are "beginning to consider the possible outlines of another resolution."

Council diplomats and analysts said Russia's initiative would lend support to what they think is an Iranian effort to buy time. "The Iranians seems determine to run out the clock," said Justin Logan of the Cato Institute. "The Iran problem appears likely to be handed to the next president."

#18

Nazi hunter: Lithuania hunts ex-partisans, lets war criminals roam free

By Yossi Melman

Haaretz, August 7, 2008

A few months ago, Lithuanian policemen and agents from the security service knocked on Rachel Margolis' door in Vilna. Fortunately she was not home, and was thus saved the humiliation of an interrogation. Margolis, almost 90, was a Jewish partisan during World War II, and is finding it difficult to recover from the trauma even now, when she is living in her daughter's home in Rehovot.

"My sin in the eyes of the nationalists and the anti-Semites in the Lithuanian government," she says, "was that I was a partisan and fought against the Nazis and their collaborators."

The Lithuanian policemen and agents wanted to interrogate her about her memoir, in which she told about her partisan colleagues who in January 1944 attacked the village of Koniuchy (or in Lithuanian, Kaniukai).

The Lithuanian partisans, who operated under the aegis of the Central Partisan Command of the Soviet Union, had information that there was a German garrison in the village. After the fact, it turned out that the Germans had abandoned the place. In the battle that ensued, 38 villagers were killed, including women and children. In independent Lithuania, with a tendency to rewrite history after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, they describe this attack as a "massacre," and a special prosecutor opened an investigation.

Margolis says she was not even in Lithuania at the time of the attack, and was active in another partisan unit in White Russia.

"I wrote a book about the war, and in it I mentioned in a few lines that I had heard from partisan friends about the attack," she says.

In the book she mentions another partisan friend who was among the attackers, Fania Brantsovsky, and another partisan, Sara Ginaite, both of whom are also suspects and wanted for interrogation.

"That's Lithuanian chutzpah," says Dr. Efraim Zuroff, director of the Israeli branch of the Simon Wiesenthal Center. "To date, Lithuanian governments have not punished a single Lithuanian war criminal. In spite of our considerable efforts and the large amount of information we have given them, they handled three cases with astonishing slowness. Not one of the three served a single day in prison. On the other hand, they're not ashamed to persecute and harass Lithuanian partisans who fought the Nazis. What is common to all these cases is that they're all Jews. Instead of punishing Lithuanian criminals who collaborated with the Nazis and murdered Jews, they're harassing the partisans, Jewish heroes."

Perhaps the height of chutzpah was the attempt by Lithuania to investigate Dr. Yitzhak Arad, a Holocaust historian and one-time partisan, a former brigadier general and a chief education officer in the Israel Defense Forces, and the chairman of the board of Yad Vashem.

The Lithuanian claim against Arad was that he served in a Soviet security services, the NKVD, which engaged in murder and looting, and that he was involved in the murder of innocent Lithuanians. In the Lithuanian newspaper, *Republika*, they even published an article two years ago entitled "The expert with blood on his hands."

Arad explained that the Lithuanian claims against him were false. The Foreign Ministry and Yad Vashem sharply protested the Lithuanian demand, and refused to cooperate with the request.

However, there are some in Israel who believe that neither the Foreign Ministry nor Yad Vashem are acting with the determination expected of them, and are demonstrating weakness. There are voices who believe that Israel should lower its diplomatic contacts with Lithuania if it continues harassing Jewish and Israeli partisans. One of the critics is Zuroff.

"In the State of Israel, they prefer to let Jewish organizations do the dirty work and fight against the rewriting of history in Lithuania," Zuroff said. "The State of Israel and those involved in the issue should have made it unequivocally clear to the Lithuanian government that it is crossing all the red lines."

Another harsh critic of Israeli policy is historian Prof. Dov Levin, an expert on Lithuanian Jewry. Levin chronicles in his books how more than 200,00 Jews were murdered in the Holocaust, mainly by the Lithuanian collaborators who were eager to engage in murder without the German Nazis having to convince them.

Levin, himself a partisan in Lithuania and a member of the Yad Vashem council, was opposed to the decision about 10 years ago by the Foreign Ministry and Yad Vashem to cooperate with Lithuania in the study of the history of World War II. His view was not accepted, and a joint international committee of Israeli, Lithuanian and other historians was established.

The committee, actually two subcommittees, is studying the murder of the Jews in the Holocaust in Lithuania as well as the murder of Lithuanians, during the period of the Soviet occupation of the country from 1940-1941 - as part of the infamous 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact - as well as the Soviet period from 1945 until independence in 1991.

By doing so, the committee is unfortunately helping the Lithuanians equate the two historical developments. Levin believes that Yad Vashem should have severed any connection with the Lithuanian government and ended its activity.

"I told Yad Vashem, 'stop kissing up to the Lithuanians, it's kissing up to evildoers,' " he emphasizes. Levin says that in a protest move, he recently decided to return the decoration of honor he received in 1993 from the Lithuanian president. He also decided not to visit Lithuania again. "In the past I went there but now it disgusts me."

The Lithuanian ambassador to Israel did not respond to Haaretz.

'Good diplomatic ties'

The deputy general director of the Foreign Ministry, Pinhas Avivi, said that "the ministry takes the persecution of the Jewish partisans very seriously, and we have made that clear to them by every means and at every opportunity. But we do not believe that there is a reason to destroy our relations with Lithuania and to harm the good diplomatic ties between the two countries."

Yad Vashem responded: "To say that we are 'soft toward the Lithuanians' in the affair of Dr. Yitzhak Arad is groundless slander by someone who perhaps is not familiar with the entire picture. Regarding our participation in the committee, it is important to emphasize that in light of the historical revisionism that is evident in the

investigation against Arad, we consider it very important that teachers from Lithuania come to Israel, to Yad Vashem, to study the subject of the Holocaust and how to teach it in their classrooms."

#19

'We'll neutralize S-300 if sold to Iran'

By Yaakov Katz

Jerusalem Post, August 8, 2008

If Russia goes through with the sale of its most advanced anti-aircraft missile system to Iran, Israel will use an electronic warfare device now under development to neutralize it and as a result present Russia as vulnerable to air infiltrations, a top defense official has told The Jerusalem Post.

The Russian system, called the S-300, is one of the most advanced multi-target anti-aircraft-missile systems in the world today and has a reported ability to track up to 100 targets simultaneously while engaging up to 12 at the same time. It has a range of about 200 kilometers and can hit targets at altitudes of 27,000 meters.

While Russia has denied that it sold the system to Iran, Teheran claimed last year that Moscow was preparing to equip the Islamic Republic with S-300 systems. Iran already has TOR-M1 surface-to-air missiles from Russia.

Mixed media reports have emerged recently regarding the possible delivery of the system to Iran. Two weeks ago Reuters quoted a senior Israeli official who said the system would be delivered to Iran by the end of the year. In response, the Pentagon released a statement rejecting the assessment and saying that the US did not believe Iran would get it in 2008.

According to the Israeli defense official who spoke to the Post, "no one really knows yet if and when Iran will get the system."

A top IAF officer also said this week that Israel needed to do "everything possible" to prevent the S-300 from reaching the region.

"Russia will have to think real hard before delivering this system to Iran, which is possibly on the brink of conflict with either Israel or the US, since if the system is delivered, an EW [electronic warfare] system will likely be developed to neutralize it, and if that happens it would be catastrophic not only for Iran but also for Russia," the defense official said.

Neutralization of one of the main components of Russian air defense would be a blow to Russian national security as well as to defense exports. "No country will want to buy the system if it is proven to be ineffective," the official said. "For these reasons, Russia may not deliver it in the end to Iran."

Also on Thursday, Defense Minister Ehud Barak told an Italian paper that a nuclear Iran would be "dangerous to world order."

Barak emphasized that all options for dealing with threat of a nuclear Teheran were "open and ready," and stressed the importance of "strengthening and accelerating economic sanctions against Iran."

"Either way, we need to keep every option open. If they provoke us, or they attack us, our army is prepared to attack and to succeed uncompromisingly," he asserted in an interview with the daily Corriere della Sera . "It's up to us to find the best way to get the best result with minimum damage," Barak added.

"Iran confirmed its message when it stood against the whole world: to deceive and to reject. Their aim is to obtain an atomic bomb," he continued.

The defense minister also spoke of the results of the Second Lebanon War, telling the Italian paper, "Two years ago, we saw the price that's paid for a lack of an experienced leadership. Nevertheless, today we're equipped with a good understanding to prevent this from happening again."

He added that UN Security Council Resolution 1701 that brought an end to the war was inefficient since Hizbullah, Syria and Iran were doing what they wanted in Lebanon.

Jerusalem Post staff contributed to this report.

#20

Military Conflict between Georgia and Russia; Jews leave area for Tbilisi NCSJ, August 8, 2008

A military conflict has broken out between Georgia and Russia over the breakaway region of South Ossetia. Russia has sent heavy armaments to the region and Russian aircraft have bombed Georgian territory.

The Russian government said they were protecting Russian peacekeepers and civilians after Georgian troops moved into South Ossetia. Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili accused Russia of invading his country, resulting in many wounded and dead civilians.

Tensions have been escalating between the two countries for months over the disputed territory.

NCSJ has been in touch with our Jewish community contacts in Tbilisi. We learned that most of the Gori Jewish community, which is located near the conflict, has left for Tbilisi.

We will continue to monitor the situation, and keep you informed of any new developments affecting the Jewish community.

#21

Russia Threatens Retaliation After Georgia Says It Fired on Planes By Anne Barnard and Andrew Kramer New York Times, August 8, 2008

MOSCOW — The sharpest fighting since the early 1990s in the disputed Caucasian enclave of South Ossetia threatened to draw Russia and the American-backed former Soviet republic of Georgia into direct military conflict on Friday.

Georgian officials said their military had fired on Russian planes and that their aircraft had bombed a convoy of Russian tanks that moved into South Ossetia, the pro-Russian enclave that has enjoyed de facto autonomy from Georgia since 2004. A local Russian official said the convoy was humanitarian.

As Georgian forces besieged Tskhinvali, the capital of the enclave, President Dmitri A. Medvedev of Russia promised to "punish" those responsible for what he called "a deep violation of international law" by Georgia that he said had led to the deaths of Russian citizens and Russian peacekeepers stationed in Tskhinvali.

"I am obligated to defend the lives and dignity of Russian citizens, wherever they are located," he said in an address carried on Russian state television. "We will not allow the unpunished killing of our fellow citizens. Those who are guilty will suffer the punishment they deserve."

Speaking in Beijing, where he traveled to attend the opening of the Olympic Games, Prime Minister Vladimir V. Putin of Russia said Georgia's actions "will certainly lead to retaliatory actions."

The fighting presented the most dangerous crisis in years in the Caucasus region, a key conduit for the flow of oil from the Caspian sea to world markets and an area where violent conflict has flared along the Russia's outskirts for centuries, most recently in Chechnya.

The developments raised the question of how the United States might react to a Russian attack on Georgia, an American ally whose pursuit of NATO membership has angered the Russians.

By midday Friday, Georgian army units were trying to seize Tskhinvali using heavy machine guns and mortars in firefights with separatist paramilitary fighters, Shota Utiashvili, an official at the Interior Ministry of Georgia, said in an interview.

"Now, the army will have to take the capital," he said, citing "massive fire" aimed at Georgian troops by fighters inside the city.

The head of a Russian peacekeeping force in the city, Marat M. Kulakhmetov, said in a telephone interview that the city had come under "massive attack" by the Georgians and that civilians had been wounded. As he spoke, shooting could be heard in the background.

Mr. Utiashvili, the Georgian official, said Georgians had seen Russian forces, including "hundreds of soldiers and dozens of armored vehicles, including tanks," move up the military highway into the Caucasus Mountains that ties the separatist enclave to Russia.

By morning, they had passed through a mountain tunnel into the northern portion of the enclave, he said. "They are on Georgian territory now."

"We don't know whether they are militias or regular Russian forces," he said. "As they carry heavy equipment, we think they must be regulars. We don't know. We just know they are coming to attack us."

He said Georgian Su-25 ground attack airplanes had struck the convoy and that the Georgians believed they had caused casualties and destroyed Russian armored vehicles.

But a spokesman for Teimuraz Mamsurov, the president of the semiautonomous Russian republic of North Ossetia, which borders the disputed territory, said the Georgian planes had struck an automobile convoy shipping humanitarian aid from Vladikavkaz to South Ossetia.

He said he had no information about the sighting of Russian tanks.

The Georgian military fired on Russian fighter jets that bombed Georgian territory and strafed Georgian positions at about 11 a.m. Moscow time, Mr. Utiashvili said.

Georgia's president, Mikhail Saakashvili, ordered the "total mobilization" of military reserves, said Kaha Lomaia, Georgia's national security adviser. He said about 70,000 troops would be mobilized, though not all would be immediately called up.

"They will be on high alert," he said.

Russian leaders at first sent mixed signals about their response. While Mr. Putin said immediately that Russia would retaliate, a spokesman for Mr. Medvedev said the president's security council would hold an emergency meeting first to decide how to respond to the Georgian incursion.

The spokesman, Alexei Pavlov, declined in an interview to say whether Russia would respond with military force.

"There is a lot of information and it is very contradictory," he said. "Any word said in the wrong context could be ruinous for the peaceful and human resolution of this conflict." But the president appeared to have stiffened his response in his later televised address, promising punishment of Georgia.

The reported Georgian attacks were likely to be seen as a sharp provocation by Russia. But it also may have reason to tamp down the fighting to avoid chaos in a region not far from its Black Sea resort town of Sochi, where Russia will host the Winter Olympics in 2014.

Analysts said that Georgia could be trying to seize an opportune moment — with world leaders focused on the start of the 2008 Olympics in Beijing this week — to reclaim the territory.

Russia also may be seeking to draw attention away from another breakaway Georgian region, Abkhazia, where it has been under pressure to allow a settlement between pro-Russian and pro-Georgian factions, analysts said.

Meanwhile, Russian citizens in South Ossetia called on Russia to intervene, "We are being killed by Georgian aggressors," they said in a letter posted on an official Web site maintained jointly by South Ossetia and North Ossetia, an adjacent territory on Russian territory that wants to unite with the southern region.

"We, hiding in the basement of a house, showered by bombs, are not feeling now that we are citizens of a great country. We hear Russia has a great air force and excellent planes. Protect your citizens. You are our last hope."

The Russian Defense Ministry said Friday afternoon that it would protect Russian citizens in the territory and Russian peacekeepers who came under fire in Tskhinvali.

"The Georgian leadership has unleashed a dirty adventure," the ministry said in a statement, posted on its Web site. "The blood shed in South Ossetia will remain on the conscience of these people and their entourage. We will not allow anyone to do harm to our peacekeepers and citizens of the Russian Federation."

Mr. Utiashvili, the Georgian Interior Ministry official, said that about 10 Russian jets dropped seven or eight bombs on Georgian territory outside South Ossetia. The jets struck a police station in Kareli and a radar station in Gori -- hitting two cities near the Georgian capital of Tblisi -- and wounded several people, he said.

It was unclear whether any Russian jets had been hit by Georgian forces.

Georgian casualties from Thursday totaled 10 dead and 50 wounded, he said. More were killed and wounded Friday morning but the military had not yet provided a tally. At least 25 people have been killed since fighting started Thursday, according to officials from both sides.

"We consider that to be an act of military aggression and we call on the Russian Federation to immediately stop military aggression against Georgia," said Mr. Lomaia, the national security adviser.

Heikki Talvitie, special envoy for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe chairman-in-office, said Russian attempts to arrange a meeting between Georgian and South Ossetian authorities had failed on Thursday, but would continue today. The Georgian minister was unable to reach Tskhinvali yesterday, he said.

"We are very worried that this will escalate even further," he said. "It will escalate very easily to a kind of a warfare and who controls this."

He said it is essential that a meeting take place as soon as possible. "Now, as far as the situation is now, we still think it can be controlled by the parties. But if it escalates, who knows."

Ambassador Talvitie said Tskhinvali has been partly evacuated, but the O.S.C.E. mission of five or six people remains active.

Nikolai Khalip and Ellen Barry contributed reporting.