

**WASHINGTON, D.C. November 6, 2009**



**TO: NCSJ Leadership and Interested Parties**

**FROM: Richard Stone, NCSJ Chairman;  
Alexander Smukler, NCSJ President;  
Mark B. Levin, NCSJ Executive Director**

In Brief

Dear Friend,

NCSJ will host its Annual Board of Governors meeting on Tuesday, December 8, from 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. in our Washington offices. As a reminder, tomorrow is the last day to reserve a hotel room at our discounted group rate. Visit <http://ncsj.org/Board.shtml> for details and to RSVP.

Sincerely,

Mark B. Levin  
Executive Director



NCSJ WEEKLY NEWS BRIEF  
Washington, D.C. November 6, 2009

-----INDEX OF ARTICLES-----

1. *Russian student fined for anti-Semitic leaflets; Prominent Businessman Shot Dead In Moscow; U.S. Official Calls On Kazakhstan To Adhere To OSCE Pledges*  
Briefs, November 1-2, 2009
2. *Holocaust memorials go up in Eastern Europe, with some flaws*  
By Ruth Ellen Gruber  
JTA, October 30, 2009
3. *Medvedev Criticizes Stalin, Terror in Signal to Putin*  
By Lucian Kim  
Bloomberg, October 30, 2009
4. *Russia's rebound will be surprisingly strong*  
By Jason Bush  
Reuters, November 2, 2009
5. *Russia Tries, Once Again, to Kick the Vodka Habit*  
By Clifford J. Levy  
New York Times, November 3, 2009
6. *Now Clear Away the Rubble of the Wall*  
By Mikhail Gorbachev  
New York Times, November 3, 2009
7. *Russia's search for an identity*  
By Masha Lipman  
Washington Post, November 3, 2009
8. *Russia stresses tolerance on national holiday*  
By Lynn Berry  
AP, November 4, 2009
9. *EU Says Russian Economy Slowly Coming Out of Recession*  
Interfax, November 3, 2009
10. *'Againstall' To Run For Ukraine's Presidency*  
By Komila Nabiyeva  
RFE/RL, November 4, 2009
11. *"Where Walls Still Stand" – Commission Marks 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Fall of Berlin Wall*  
U.S. Helsinki Commission/CSCE, November 4, 2009
12. *Russia Is Dying To Learn Its Census Data*  
By Murray Feshbach  
RFE/RL, November 4, 2009

13. *Russian Reports Tie Nationalists to 2 Killings*  
By Ellen Barry  
New York Times, November 5, 2009
  14. *The new partner*  
By Anshel Pfeffer  
Haaretz, November 5, 2009
  15. *Ukraine Says It Paid Russian Gas Bill*  
By James Marson  
Wall Street Journal, November 6, 2009
  16. *Belarusian Parliamentarians To Visit South Ossetia, Abkhazia*  
RFE/RL, November 5, 2009
- 

#### **#1a**

#### **Russian student fined for anti-Semitic leaflets JTA, November 1, 2009**

A Russian court fined a university for posting anti-Semitic and racist leaflets on a St. Petersburg subway.

Sergey Orlov was found guilty Oct. 30 in Vyborg district court of fomenting interethnic hatred, according to a report by the Sova Information-Analytical Center, the UCSJ: Union of Councils for Jews in the Former Soviet Union reported.

Prosecutors plan to appeal the verdict, which they said was too lenient. They are seeking jail time for Orlov. The amount of the fine was undisclosed.

The leaflets urged Russian citizens to "act against Muslims, Jews, Chinese, and people from the Caucasus and Central Asia," Radio Free Europe reported.

Russia's criminal code prohibits incitement of ethnic or religious hatred.

#### **#1b**

#### **Prominent Businessman Shot Dead In Moscow RFE/RL, November 2, 2009**

MOSCOW -- Well-known Russian businessman Shabtai Kalmanovich has been shot dead in Moscow, RFE/RL's Russian Service reports.

His driver was severely wounded and taken to hospital in serious condition.

Kalmanovich was born in Lithuania in 1947 and immigrated in the 1970s to Israel, where he was involved in politics.

He became well-known in the former Soviet Union in the late 1980s after he organized concerts in Russia for Michael Jackson, Liza Minnelli, and other entertainment stars.

Kalmanovich was involved in trade and construction businesses recently and was the owner of the successful women's basketball club Spartak Moscow.

#### **#1c**

#### **U.S. Official Calls On Kazakhstan To Adhere To OSCE Pledges RFE/RL, November 1, 2009**

A U.S. official has called on Kazakhstan to fulfill its obligations before it assumes the chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports.

George Krol, the deputy assistant secretary of state for South and Central Asian affairs, told journalists in Astana on October 30 that Kazakhstan should carry out reforms it agreed to in Madrid last December.

At that time, then-Kazakh Foreign Minister Marat Tazhin told the other OSCE member states' foreign ministers that Astana would make progress on OSCE recommendations to change its laws on the media, namely the mitigation of responsibility for defamation and the liberalization of the registration for media outlets.

Tazhin also said then that Kazakhstan intended to liberalize laws on elections and political parties.

Kazakhstan is due to take over the chair of the OSCE on January 1.

## **#2**

### **Holocaust memorials go up in Eastern Europe, with some flaws**

**By Ruth Ellen Gruber**

**JTA, October 30, 2009**

ROME -- Under communism, Jewish suffering in World War II generally was treated as a footnote to the overall losses in what the Soviets called the "Great Patriotic War."

Public monuments existed at some Holocaust sites in Eastern Europe, such as Auschwitz, the Paneriai forest near Vilnius where at least 70,000 Jews were killed, and Babi Yar, where tens of thousands of Jews were killed in ravines outside Kiev. But these usually commemorated generic "victims of fascism" and did not acknowledge the involvement of local collaborators.

Since the fall of communism 20 years ago, however, a host of new Holocaust memorials have gone up in post-communist states while and Communist-era monuments have been revamped by state authorities, local civic groups and Jewish organizations, giving the Jewish tragedy of World War II more prominence.

The new memorials range from simple plaques to modest monuments to huge memorial complexes, such as the monument at the Belzec death camp. A joint project of the Polish government and the American Jewish Committee, the monument was inaugurated in 2004 by the Polish president.

Some new sites, such as Belzec and the state-run Holocaust memorial center in Budapest, which also opened in 2004, include museums or educational facilities.

In other cases, including at Babi Yar and Paneriai, new inscriptions or components have been added to provide more accurate information and context in order for the memorial site to teach and inform as well as commemorate.

This can become contentious if, for example, the new inscriptions make reference to local collaboration in the killing of Jews.

"After the problem of funding, the hardest part of getting monuments and memorials erected has not been getting some kind of general consent, but it has been working out the specifics of the design and especially the language on the inscription," said the president of the International Survey of Jewish Monuments, Samuel Gruber, who has written about Holocaust memory and consulted on Holocaust monument projects.

"Most older memorials have been very general in their language, so much so that it is often hard to figure out what events are being commemorated, and rarely can one learn about who did what to whom and when," he said.

This remains a concern, even with monuments whose positioning and design make them prominent. Some memorials form a striking symbolic presence, but provide little or no information as to what they commemorate. Visitors are presumed to know already what they represent.

In the heart of the Slovak capital Bratislava, for example, a chiseled image of a destroyed synagogue now serves as a Holocaust memorial. But other than the word "Remember," no information is provided on how the wartime fascist state collaborated with the Nazis in killing most of Slovakia's 135,000-strong prewar Jewish community.

Likewise, in Sopron, Hungary, a small but powerful sculptural monument depicting empty clothing hung outside the Auschwitz gas chambers stands near an abandoned synagogue. The memorial bears Hebrew lettering and the Sh'ma prayer, but no further information.

"How can one remember what one doesn't know?" Gruber said. "How can one 'not forget' what is never fully discussed or taught?"

On Slovakia's Holocaust Memorial Day, Sept. 9, Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico presided over the dedication of a memorial to Slovaks who helped rescue Jews at the time of the anti-Nazi Slovak National Uprising in 1944.

Funded by the Israeli Chamber of Commerce in Slovakia and several private sources, the memorial was built in the town of Zvolen next to the mass gravesite of Jews who were killed by the Nazis. It also includes a digital information point.

"This represents a different way of presenting Slovak national history that is at the same time a rejection of the [Nazi-allied] Slovak national puppet state of Josef Tiso," said Rabbi Andrew Baker, the American Jewish Committee's director of international Jewish affairs who has advised on Holocaust memorial projects in several countries. "Fico deserves credit for doing this, and he also speaks emotionally about the importance of Holocaust education in his country."

Though flawed at times, the memorials serve an important purpose.

"Memorials have a permanent presence," said Warren Miller, chairman of the U.S. Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad, which has been involved in Holocaust memorial projects in Latvia, Romania, the former East Germany and other countries. "Going to a powerful memorial will help people want to learn more."

### **#3**

#### **Medvedev Criticizes Stalin, Terror in Signal to Putin**

**By Lucian Kim**

**Bloomberg, October 30, 2009**

President Dmitry Medvedev called on Russians to remember the political terror under Soviet leader Josef Stalin, distancing himself from the historical ambivalence of his mentor, Prime Minister Vladimir Putin.

"I'm convinced that the memory of national tragedies is no less sacred than the memory of victories," Medvedev said in a video blog posted on his Web site today. No state goals can justify the "great terror" seven decades ago, he said. More than 12 million Soviet citizens died in Stalin's excesses, according to human rights group Memorial.

Oct. 30 is a day of remembrance of the victims of political repression in Russia. While Putin also observed the day during his two terms as president, Stalin at the same time experienced a revival as a strong leader who defeated Nazi Germany and turned a backward agrarian country into a nuclear superpower.

Understanding one's history in its entirety is a sign of political maturity, Medvedev said. The people, not Stalin, were responsible for the military, economic and scientific achievements of the Soviet Union, he said.

"This is a signal that there's a difference in values between Putin's elite and Medvedev's elite," said Dmitry Oreshkin, a Moscow-based political analyst. "If Medvedev wants modernization, he needs to make clear that it's not going to be by way of a 'great leap.'"

Litmus Test Medvedev, handpicked by Putin as his successor last year, is seeking his own political voice amid Russia's worst economic crisis in a decade. Last month, Medvedev, 44, published an online manifesto exhorting his fellow citizens to join him in modernizing Russia by uprooting corruption, fighting alcoholism and reducing the country's dependence on natural resources.

Medvedev's readiness to pinpoint Russia's weaknesses, invite a debate on the country's future and join the blogosphere contrasts with Putin's so-called power vertical that streamlined authority from the Kremlin down to local government.

A person's opinion of Stalin is a political litmus test in contemporary Russia, Oreshkin said. While few deny the excesses that took place under the Soviet dictator, people who support Putin's top-down management style take a more benign view of him than those who disapprove of it, he said.

"Overcoming indifference and a desire to forget its tragic aspects is no less important than studying the past," Medvedev said. "No one will do this but we ourselves."

Medvedev called for the creation of museums to pass on the memory of the victims of state terror, a demand made in the past by liberal fringe groups like opposition newspaper Novaya Gazeta.

"Compared with Putin, this is a different tone," said Alexander Cherkasov, a board member of Moscow-based Memorial. "The question is what deeds will follow these words."

#### **#4**

#### **Russia's rebound will be surprisingly strong**

**By Jason Bush**

**Reuters, November 2, 2009**

MOSCOW - Most economists dramatically underestimated the impact of the financial crisis on Russia's economy. This year Russia's GDP will slump by some 7.5 percent, compared to an IMF growth forecast of 6.5 percent made just last October.

Curiously, this huge mismatch between forecast and reality has occurred in Russia before. After the last financial crash, in 1998, economists also got their figures spectacularly wrong. And if past experience is any guide, they are as likely to be as wrong about the strength of the upturn as they were about the severity of the downturn.

The fast pace of Russia's recovery so far may already be proving this theory correct. In the third quarter, Russia's GDP grew by an annualized rate of 2.4 percent. Meanwhile, inflation is falling much faster than expected, enabling Russia to slash interest rates. While the Russian government is still cautiously forecasting 2 percent GDP growth in 2010, many independent economists are already predicting growth of as much as 5 percent next year.

There are good reasons to think that Russia's economy will continue to surprise. The simplest explanation is that oil prices have recovered, and are expected to range between \$60 and \$80 next year. These levels correspond with those typically seen during Russia's boom years.

But there are deeper reasons why traditional economic models fail to capture Russia's remarkable volatility. This is partly because Russian companies behave in very idiosyncratic ways.

In a hangover from the days of central planning, the average Russian company holds gigantic stocks of inventories (typically equivalent to several months' production). In the first quarter, destocking alone accounted for 90 percent of the economic contraction.

Another Russian tradition is cost-plus accounting, which means that companies initially resist cutting prices. But Russian managers can easily slash wages when hard times persist as they face minimal resistance from their weakly organized workers.

All this helps to explain why, in the initial stages of a downturn, output in Russia tends to plummet like a stone. But it's entirely logical that the bounce-back is equally dramatic.

True, some economists remain sceptical. While exports are now recovering, consumer demand remains weak. The Russian financial sector is also beset by problems: bad loans are expected to top 20 percent by the year-end. But these aren't convincing reasons to believe that Russia is doomed to stagnation.

Russia's massive fiscal stimulus has only just begun to feed through into consumer pockets. Yet another Russian idiosyncrasy is how long it takes for public spending decisions to be implemented.

Sceptics also argue that, because of the crisis, Russia will no longer benefit from large capital inflows. But far from being permanently scarred, financial investors are already rushing back to take advantage of low asset prices and

Russia's improving prospects. The Russian central bank forecasts a net capital inflow of over \$15 billion in the fourth quarter.

In any case, the role of finance in Russia shouldn't be exaggerated. Before the crisis, bank loans financed just 10 percent of all investment. Russia's debt-to-GDP ratio of 75 percent is just a fifth of U.S. levels, which means that companies, consumers and the government are not constrained by the crippling debt burdens typical in the West.

None of this means, of course, that everything is wonderful. As usual, the crisis has led to a renewed focus on the many structural problems, from corruption to outdated infrastructure, that beset the Russian economy. Russia needs to address these issues to sustain growth in the medium term. But it's a mistake to confuse these underlying weaknesses with the factors that will drive Russia's recovery in the months and quarters ahead.

## **#5**

### **Russia Tries, Once Again, to Kick the Vodka Habit**

**By Clifford J. Levy**

**New York Times, November 3, 2009**

MYTISHCHI, Russia -- It was late on a Monday afternoon at the drunk tank in this Moscow suburb, but it could have been any day, at any hour, at any similar facility across this land. People would come. They always do. Such is Russia's ruinous penchant for the bottle - and the challenge facing a new government policy to curb it.

First to be escorted in by police officers was a construction worker named Damir M. Askerkhanov, who said he had been bingeing on vodka and beer - "This is my very own holiday!" - before he was found stumbling about in the cold. At 23, he admitted that he had already been picked up intoxicated twice recently. "Only even drunker," he said.

Sergey A. Yurovsky, 36, studying to be a government clerk, arrived next, mumbling and getting tangled up in his sweater when he was asked to take it off for a brief medical exam. After he was moved to a room to sober up, and dozed off, officers showed up with Larisa V. Lobachyova, 53, whose hair was matted with dirt from a fall.

"It is this way all the time," said Inspector Igor I. Poludnitsyn, who has supervised the drunk tank for seven years. "It is our national calamity."

Russia's president, Dmitri A. Medvedev, has been voicing that sentiment a lot lately, declaring that the government must do something about the country's status as a world leader in alcohol consumption.

The Kremlin has already vanquished one vice this year, casino gambling, which it all but banned in July. But drinking - vodka in particular - is another thing entirely. It is a mainstay of Russian life, both a beloved social lubricant and a ready means for escaping everyday hardship.

Mr. Medvedev is seeking steeper penalties on the sale of alcohol to minors, as well a crackdown on beer, which has grown more popular among young people. Beer sales at kiosks would be banned, as would large beer containers. The government may seek more control over the market for vodka, still the most common alcoholic beverage.

His plan, though, follows a long line of failed anti-alcohol campaigns here, going back centuries. The most notable was pressed by Mikhail S. Gorbachev, the last Soviet leader, who in the mid-1980's ordered shelves emptied of vodka and historic vineyards razed. Those measures succeeded at first, resulting in a nationwide bout of temperance that even increased life expectancy.

But they also touched off a severe public backlash that damaged the standing of Mr. Gorbachev and the Communist Party, and he eventually relented.

In recent years, as Russia has rebounded and engaged more with the world, alcohol has hindered its development. Foreign companies that operate here are particularly aware of the toll as they grapple with lower productivity.

Russians consume roughly 18 liters of pure alcohol a person annually - 4.75 gallons - more than double the level that the World Health Organization considers a health threat. The figure for the United States is about 2.3 gallons.

The country will have difficulty resolving its demographic crisis - its population is predicted to drop nearly 20 percent by 2050 - if does not confront its alcohol problem. Life expectancy for Russian men is now 60 years old, in part because of alcoholism.

Researchers studying mortality in three industrial cities in Siberia in the 1990's found that in several years, alcohol was the cause of more than half of all deaths of people ages 15 to 54, often from accidents, violence or alcohol poisoning, according to a report this year in the Lancet, the British medical journal. The Public Chamber, a Kremlin advisory panel, has asserted that roughly 500,000 people die annually in Russia from causes directly related to or aggravated by alcohol.

"No matter what people say about it being too deep-rooted in our culture, about it being practically impossible to fight alcoholism in Russia," Mr. Medvedev said in August, "we must recognize that other countries, and you know them yourselves, have been successful in their efforts to address this issue."

Several experts said they doubted that the government would accomplish much unless its plan was drastically strengthened. They said the most important step would be to raise vodka prices significantly through heavier taxation and the closing of unlicensed distilleries. A half liter of vodka now costs as little as \$2.

They pointed out that in other countries, like France, people drink heavily, but mostly wine and beer, which are seen as less harmful. The trouble here is hard liquor.

In Mytishchi, with a population of 170,000 people, Inspector Poludnitsyn said it was clear that more limits were needed. The facility typically receives a dozen or so people a day, and many more on paydays and weekends.

"It is not a fight that can be waged in a single year," he said. "It has to be waged over time, over decades."

Drinking has increased sharply since the Soviet Union's fall in 1991, though heavily intoxicated people have been somewhat less visible on the streets in recent years, in part because the police do a better job of whisking them away.

Dr. Aleksandr V. Nemtsov of the Moscow Psychiatric Research Institute, one of Russia's leading alcohol experts, said that little would change unless the Kremlin gets serious about shutting down unlicensed distillers, which produce half the vodka consumed in the country and usually are protected by corrupt officials.

"The government does not want to deprive poor people of cheap vodka," Dr. Nemtsov said. "Because it is better for them when people are drunk. You probably know that Catherine the Great said it is easier to rule a drunk public. That is the root of the evil."

He said it would be foolish to constrain beer sales. Given that people are unlikely to spurn alcohol altogether, the government should prefer that they drink beer, he said.

Viktor F. Zvagelsky, a member of parliament from the ruling party, disagreed, saying that young people who start with beer would move up to vodka.

Mr. Zvagelsky said the support of Mr. Medvedev and Prime Minister Vladimir V. Putin would help overcome the alcohol industry's opposition to more restrictions.

Brewers, many owned by foreign conglomerates, have for years blocked attempts in Parliament to apply the same rules to beer as vodka, such as limits on advertising or when and where beer can be sold, he said.

"The lobbying by the beer industry has been very strong," he said.

Outmoded ways of addressing the problem were evident at the drunk tank in Mytishchi. After they sobered up, those who had been brought in were written up: they were told that before being released, they would have to pay a fine.

The amount was 100 rubles, \$3.50, just as it has been since Soviet times.

**#6**

**Now Clear Away the Rubble of the Wall**

**By Mikhail Gorbachev**

**New York Times, November 3, 2009**

The year 1989 was a turning point for Europe and for the world, a time when history went into high gear. This acceleration was symbolized by the fall of the Berlin Wall and the velvet revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe. Totalitarian and authoritarian regimes were exiting the stage of history.

Those events, and their peaceful unfolding, were made possible by changes that began in the Soviet Union in the mid-1980s. We initiated them because they were overdue. We were responding to the demands of the people, who resented living without freedom, isolated from the rest of the world.

In just a few years - a very short time in history's span - the main pillars of the totalitarian system in the Soviet Union were dismantled and the ground was readied for a democratic transition and economic reforms. Having done that in our own country, we could not deny the same to our neighbors.

We did not force changes upon them. From the outset of perestroika, I told the leaders of the Warsaw Pact countries that the Soviet Union was embarking upon major reforms but that they had to decide what they would do. You are responsible to your people, I said; we will not interfere.

In effect it was a repudiation of the so-called Brezhnev Doctrine, based on the concept of "limited sovereignty." Initially, my words were met with skepticism, seen as yet another purely formal statement by a new general secretary of the Communist Party. But we never wavered, and that is why the developments in Europe in 1989-1990 were peaceful, without bloodshed.

The biggest challenge was the unification of Germany. As late as the summer of 1989, during my visit to West Germany, journalists asked me and Chancellor Helmut Kohl whether we had discussed the possibility of German unification. I replied that we had inherited that problem from history and that it would be addressed as history evolved. "When?" journalists asked. The chancellor and I both pointed to the 21st century.

Some might say we were poor prophets. Fair enough: German unification occurred much earlier - by the will of the German people, not because Gorbachev or Kohl wanted it. Americans often recall President Ronald Reagan's appeal: "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down that wall!" But could that be done by one man? All the more difficult, too, because others were saying, in effect, "Save the Wall."

When millions of people in the East and West of Germany demanded unification, we had to act responsibly. Leaders in Europe and the United States rose to the challenge, overcoming the doubts and fears that quite naturally existed. Working together, we were able to avoid redrawing borders and preserved mutual trust. The Cold War was finally over.

Developments after German unification and the end of the Cold War did not all go as we would have wished.

In Germany itself, 40 years of division left a legacy of ruptured cultural and social ties that are even more difficult to repair than the economic gap. The former East Germans understood that all was not perfect in the West, particularly in its social welfare system.

Yet despite the problems reintegration brought, Germans have made the united Germany a well-respected, strong and peaceful member of the community of nations.

The leaders who shape global and particularly European relations fared much more poorly in seizing the new opportunities presented to them 20 years ago. As a result, Europe has not solved its fundamental problem - creating a solid security structure.

Immediately after the Cold War ended, we started discussing new security mechanisms for our continent.

Among the ideas was creating a security council for Europe. It was envisioned as a "security directorate" with real, wide-ranging powers. Policy-makers from the Soviet Union, Germany and the United States supported it.

To my regret, the events took a different course. This has stalled the emergence of a new Europe. Instead of the old dividing lines, new ones have appeared. Europe has witnessed wars and bloodshed. Mistrust and outdated stereotypes persist: Russia is suspected of evil intentions and of aggressive, imperial designs.

I was shocked by a letter that politicians from Central and Eastern Europe sent to President Barack Obama in June. It was, in effect, a call to abandon his policy of engagement with Russia. Is it not shameful that European politicians gave no thought to the disastrous consequences of a new confrontation they would provoke?

At the same time, Europe is being drawn into a debate over responsibility for unleashing World War II. Attempts are being made to equate Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. Those attempts are wrong, historically flawed and morally unacceptable.

Those who hope to build a new wall of mutual suspicion and animosity in Europe do a disservice to their own countries and to Europe as a whole.

Europe will only become a strong global player if it truly becomes a common home for Europeans, in the East as well as in the West. Europe must breathe with two lungs, as Pope John Paul II once said.

How do we move toward that goal?

In the early 1990s, the European Union decided to accelerate its enlargement. Much has been accomplished; those achievements are real.

The implications of this process were not carefully thought through, however. The idea that all European problems would be solved by building Europe "from the West" turned out to be less than realistic and probably unworkable.

A more measured pace of enlargement would have given the European Union time to develop a new model of relations with Russia and other countries that have no prospects of E.U. accession in the foreseeable future.

The current model of E.U. relations with other European countries is based on absorbing as many of them as quickly as possible while leaving the relationship with Russia a "pending matter." That is simply unsustainable.

Some in Europe are reluctant to accept this. Is this reluctance a sign of unwillingness to accept, and take part in, Russia's resurgence? What kind of Russia do you want to see: a strong, confident nation in its own right or just a supplier of natural resources that "knows its place?"

Too many European politicians do not want a level playing field with Russia. They want one side to be a teacher or prosecutor and the other, Russia, to be a student or defendant. Russia will not accept this model. It wants to be understood; simply put, it wants to be treated as an equal partner.

Rising to the historic challenges of security, economic recovery, the environment and migration requires a redesign of global and, most importantly, European political and economic relations.

I urge all Europeans to give constructive and unbiased consideration to Russian President Dmitri Medvedev's proposal for a new European security treaty. Once this core issue is resolved, Europe will speak with a full voice.

*Mikhail Gorbachev was the last leader of the Soviet Union.*

**#7**

**Russia's search for an identity**

**By Masha Lipman**

**Washington Post, November 3, 2009**

On Friday, as Russia recognized its annual commemoration of political prisoners, President Dmitry Medvedev published a videoblog in which he condemned Joseph Stalin's crimes and called on the nation not to forget about past political repression or its victims. Medvedev called Stalin's repression "one of the greatest tragedies in Russian history" and expressed concern that "even today it can be heard that these mass victims were justified by certain higher goals of the state." He said that "no development of a country, none of its successes or ambitions can be

reached at the price of human losses and grief." His statement, which led the state-controlled television news, was sharply at odds with official rhetoric of the past decade.

Medvedev's address may have sounded radical, but many here are skeptical that the president's words will actually bring change. The number of alarming signals of Stalin's rehabilitation is growing. And in general over the year and a half of his presidency, Medvedev's often well-intended rhetoric has not been matched with policy.

But it would be wrong to dismiss the speech and conclude instead -- as observers at home and abroad sometimes do -- that Russia has made a definitive turn "back" toward the Soviet Union and an admiration of Stalin. In fact, perceptions of Stalin are conflicted, and this conflict reflects Russia's attempts -- very feeble, so far -- to reinvent itself as a modern nation.

On the one hand, there is evidence of a warming in attitudes toward Stalin. In one recent example a stanza from the old Soviet anthem was returned to the Kurskaya metro station in Moscow. Those lines "Stalin raised us, he inspired us to loyalty to the people, to the labor and heroic deeds" had been removed in the 1950s as part of Nikita Khrushchev's de-Stalinization campaign; they were brought back this fall when the station's original decor was restored. Another instance is the prosecution, on a far-fetched pretext of privacy violation, of a provincial historian conducting archival research of the fates of ethnic Germans deported and killed on Stalin's orders. In December, Stalin came in third in a TV station's poll of greatest Russian historical figures. Contest organizers are rumored to have tinkered with the results after discovering that the man who masterminded the extermination of millions of his compatriots actually finished first.

Yet the peak of Stalin's terror is also recognized for what it was. In 2007, 72 percent of respondents told the Levada polling agency that the repression of 1937-38 were "political crimes that can't be justified." The day of remembrance of political repression, officially introduced in 1991, is not marked by major national events, but on Thursday, just outside the infamous Lubyanka building, the KGB's headquarters and prison, the names of Stalin's victims were read for 12 straight hours by any who wanted to participate. Other commemorations were staged elsewhere in Russia.

Prime Minister Vladimir Putin recently met with the widow of Alexander Solzhenitsyn, and they discussed how best to teach his work "The Gulag Archipelago" in schools. Two years ago, Putin visited a site of mass executions in the 1930s. The Gulag volumes are available in bookstores, as are a broad range of works about the history of Communist terror and books that take a much more positive view of Stalin. Likewise on television, praise of Stalin and his henchmen appears side by side with series and programs based on works by Solzhenitsyn and other chroniclers of Stalin's repression.

The perception of Stalin and his crimes has much more to do with the nature of Russian statehood than with the monstrous actions of the man himself. Russians cling to the image of Stalin as the embodiment of the great state, and he is particularly inseparable from the triumph of the Soviet Union over Nazi Germany. The implication is that individuals may have been cowed, and that the ferocious state treated them mercilessly, but the state was the vehicle that inspired Russia's victory in world War II, its greatest achievement of the 20th century. Ruling elites today are no longer ferocious; rather, they are seen as greedy and self-serving, but the model of the omnipotent state and the impotent people is still generally accepted.

For the government, this acceptance of Stalin and the paternalistic state-society pattern may be handy as a way to consolidate power. But some in the decision-making circles do seem to realize that current social, political and economic models are unable to produce growth and development. From Putin and Medvedev down, modernization has become the mantra. But modernization is incompatible with a statehood based on the specter of Stalin and faith in the magic empowerment of the apathetic people by forces of the state. Unless Russia reinvents itself and takes real steps to encourage people's entrepreneurship and creativity, talk of modernization will remain hollow.

Medvedev's speech points in the right direction, but it must be accompanied by changes in policy to carry weight. Moreover, for change to succeed, the president will need to build a constituency that will trust him, share his objectives and work toward their implementation. As long as there is no such constituency in sight, Stalin's name engraved in marble in the Moscow metro will outweigh Medvedev's humane words.

*Masha Lipman, editor of the Carnegie Moscow Center's Pro et Contra journal, writes a monthly column for The Post.*

**#8**

## **Russia stresses tolerance on national holiday**

**By Lynn Berry**

**AP, November 4, 2009**

MOSCOW — Tens of thousands of people took part in Moscow street rallies and concerts Wednesday on a new national holiday that the Kremlin tried to portray as a celebration of Russia's ethnic diversity.

The Moscow rallies were peaceful, police said, but a nationalist march of a few hundred people on the outskirts of St. Petersburg turned violent when six people tried to protest. Nationalists attacked the protesters, kicking some of them as they lay on the ground. Riot police moved in to break up the rally and pull the protesters to safety.

The Kremlin introduced National Unity Day in 2005 to replace the traditional Nov. 7 celebration of the 1917 Revolution that brought the Bolsheviks to power.

But the new holiday was quickly seized upon by extreme nationalists and white supremacists, as well as by Russian Orthodox Christian fundamentalists and monarchists. The first year the Nov. 4 holiday was celebrated, thousands of nationalists marched through central Moscow, some shouting "Heil Hitler!"

Nationalists gathered for a concert Wednesday across the river from the Kremlin and they held their now-annual "Russian March," this year on the outskirts of the capital. But they were far outnumbered by members of pro-Kremlin parties and youth groups who turned out for separate rallies, marches and concerts throughout Moscow.

Members of one youth group wore red ponchos with the words "Everyone Is Ours," in the sense that no one is a foreigner.

The Kremlin push for tolerance and inclusiveness on Wednesday was part of an overall message that Russia is stronger when its people stand united.

In a ceremony just outside Red Square, the Russian Orthodox patriarch was joined by Russia's Jewish, Muslim and Buddhist leaders.

"Our nation is multiethnic," Patriarch Kirill told a crowd of several thousand people, the ITAR-Tass news agency reported. "We, representatives of the religions of Russia, are evidence that neither religious nor ethnic differences can divide our nation."

The Kremlin has tried to give the holiday historical significance by tying it to the 1612 expulsion of Polish and Cossack troops who had briefly seized Moscow at a time of political disarray.

President Dmitry Medvedev, speaking at a Kremlin reception, noted that four centuries ago "people of different classes, nationalities and faiths" followed the call of merchant Kuzma Minin and Prince Dmitry Pozharsky and came together to liberate Moscow.

"The unity of the people saved the country from internal conflict and foreign influence," Medvedev said.

During the reception the president handed out state awards to foreigners who have helped promote Russian culture and Russia's image abroad.

Russian leaders have spoken out against racism and xenophobia in recent years, partly in response to an alarming rise in hate crimes against dark-skinned foreigners and migrants from Central Asia.

Right activists, however, say the extreme nationalist sentiments are a natural outgrowth of the Kremlin's attempts to rebuild a strong Russian state.

About 2,000 people took part in Wednesday's nationalist march in Moscow, which had city approval and took place in the far southeast of the city. The marchers, mainly young men, carried Russian imperial black, yellow and white flags and banners of an anti-immigrant group. Their route was blocked to traffic and riot police maintained order.

Police said 20,000 people took part in a march in central Moscow and thousands gathered at various parks and squares elsewhere in the city.

**#9**

**EU Says Russian Economy Slowly Coming Out of Recession  
Interfax, November 3, 2009**

BRUSSELS - The European Commission argued on Tuesday that the Russian economy is slowly picking up after the deep recession caused by the world financial crisis.

"Signs of recovery in financial variables appeared in March 2009 (when oil prices started to increase again), while indications of improvement in real variables only occurred by the summer of 2009," the Commission said in the Russia section of its autumn global economic forecast for the period from 2009 to 2011.

The year 2009 is expected to see GDP shrinking 7.2% but "a relatively mild recovery is foreseen for 2010 (2.3%), gaining some speed in 2011 (2.7%)," the Commission said in the document, entitled "Autumn Forecast 2009-2011: EU Economy on the Road to a Gradual Recovery."

"The main reason behind this expected recovery is positive net exports, linked to a recovery in commodity prices," it said.

Unemployment is "foreseen to reach around 8%, falling slowly towards 7%, while inflation is expected to slow from 10.5% in 2009 to below 8% by 2011," it said.

"Russian policies used to counteract the downturn are very similar to the ones pursued in more mature economies: measures to support and recapitalize financial markets and institutions, enabling credit markets to continue to work, plus fiscal support packages for the wider economy," the Commission said.

"The growth models that relied more on primary sectors have seemingly shown themselves to be more affected by the downturn. Efforts for a diversification of growth sources towards a less commodities-biased economic structure could be intensified in the future," it said.

The period when GDP is falling should also see "a reduction of the current account and trade surpluses and by a swing from large fiscal surpluses to significant fiscal deficits," the Commission said.

"The EU economy will emerge from recession in the second half of 2009. A relatively strong temporary pick-up is in the cards for the near term, with a more gradual recovery foreseen in 2010-2011," it said.

**#10**

**'Againstall' To Run For Ukraine's Presidency  
By Komila Nabiyeva  
RFE/RL, November 4, 2009**

Not that we needed another reminder of the dismal state of Ukrainian politics, but an individual called Protvyvsih ("Against all" in Ukrainian) has registered as a candidate in the country's upcoming presidential election.

Vasil Protvyvsih, previously known as Vasil Humeniuk, has changed his last name in the hope that he'll get support from the many disillusioned Ukrainian voters out there.

Protvyvsih, 63, who is currently working as a manager at the Ivano-Frankivsk chamber of commerce and industry, said that he borrowed the \$312,000 required to register as a candidate from relatives and friends.

"Againstall" is now the 15th candidate to register for Ukraine's January election.

Even sadder is that the "Againstall" question has come up before.

Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko's party on October 26 proposed to ban the "against all" ballot choice in order "to stimulate the active voting of the electorate," but the proposal was withdrawn two days later.

Recent polls show that some 10 percent of the Ukrainian population might opt to vote against all candidates, so Protvyvsih actually might end up doing reasonably well.

## #11

### **“Where Walls Still Stand” – Commission Marks 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Fall of Berlin Wall Cardin, Hastings Call on Administration to Prioritize Human Rights Issues in Foreign Policy Helsinki Commission News, November 4, 2009**

WASHINGTON—Twenty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, leaders of the U.S. Helsinki Commission said Wednesday the U.S. must lead the fight against modern tools of repression and consistently raise human rights concerns. ([Video](#) and [photos](#) available. [Text of speeches available here.](#))

Standing in front of the largest piece of the Berlin Wall outside Germany, U.S. Senator Benjamin L. Cardin (D-MD), Chairman of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (U.S. Helsinki Commission), Co-Chairman Congressman Alcee L. Hastings (D-FL) and Ranking Minority Member Senator Sam Brownback (R-KS) spoke to a crowd of human rights leaders, foreign diplomats, including the ambassadors of Germany and Romania.

“Walls that divide or imprison are not always made of bricks and mortar. The United States must renew its commitment to human rights – not as a personal belief of any political leader or simply an Administration policy, but as a moral obligation of our country to uphold international law and universal principles of freedom and liberty,” Chairman Cardin said. “We must strengthen international institutions through more active U.S. engagement, but -- whether we are talking about money or militaries, energy or the environment -- the central issue of human rights must never be off the table.”

House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-MD), who chaired the Helsinki Commission in 1989 reflected on its work during the Cold War, when its work helped thousands of people escape Soviet communism and led delegations that were among the first to give human rights advocates a voice in their own countries.

Speaking alongside German Ambassador Klaus Scharioth, Commission leaders praised how far nations have come since 1989 and identified walls that still stand as barriers to religious, press, and political freedom.

“Historic progress has been made worldwide, but we are not done. For our country to advance freedom around the globe, we know we must advance it here,” Co-Chairman Hastings said. “I’m disappointed that the administration has still not yet nominated an ambassador to one of the preeminent human rights organizations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. For a president who so strongly supports international engagement and reinvigorating multilateral institutions, I expected better. I know it is early and the agenda is long, but I hope we will have an ambassador nominated by year’s end.”

“As we celebrate twenty years since the fall of the Berlin Wall, we must rededicate ourselves to tearing down the walls of the 21st Century,” said Senator Brownback. “One thing is clear: while physical brutality will always be a tool of oppressors, the tyranny of today and tomorrow will be measured by the extent to which tyrants censor and suppress access to electronic information. As the next generation inherits a globally and instantly connected planet, the struggle for liberty will be waged over fiber optics as much or more than through firepower.”

Majority Leader Hoyer added: “Those who were forced to set up this Wall had promised so much—equality, plenty, brotherhood. But they delivered only what Orwell called the prospect of ‘a boot stamping on a human face, forever.’ They called themselves revolutionaries, but they acted out one of the oldest human urges: the urge to dominate our fellow humans. In this Wall, we saw a system that could entrap, but not entice. When it stood, this Wall stood for the division of Europe; but in the battle of ideas, it was also the gray flag of surrender.

## #12

### **Russia Is Dying To Learn Its Census Data By Murray Feshbach RFE/RL, November 4, 2009**

Last week’s announcement that the next Russian census will be held in 2010 as originally scheduled is welcome news indeed. There had been considerable speculation that the census had been delayed largely for political

reasons, and it is encouraging to think that the opinions of experts who say the census information is crucially needed were heeded in this case.

The government originally said it would be forced to delay the census – first until 2012 and then later until 2013 – because of a lack of funds. But this argument never seemed convincing, especially considering that many former Soviet republics have conducted censuses or are proceeding with them despite economic situations far more dire than Russia's.

Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan, and Kazakhstan carried out censuses last year, while Belarus did one this year, and Georgia and Tajikistan will conduct them in 2010.

The lack-of-money plea seemed even more unconvincing considering the record of past Soviet and Russian governments in delaying or even canceling censuses. In 1937, a census was conducted, processed, tabulated, and presented to Josef Stalin. He didn't like what he saw, so he jailed many of those who carried it out and covered up the results. Apparently, the demographic depredations caused by famine, purges, and collectivization were too severe to be made public.

Earlier in the 1930s, the government regularly failed to release data on birthrates and death rates. In later years, state statistical yearbooks periodically failed to report infant-mortality statistics. The omission of grain- or oil-production figures was clearly linked to shortfalls in these sectors of the economy.

Stalin's government did publish a census in 1939, but the figures presented there were clearly too high. When it was originally published, the 1939 Soviet census covered little more than 10 pages. In comparison, the post-Stalin 1959 census ran several thousand pages, although it included much data from 1939 that had not been previously reported. The 2002 Russian census covered some 40,000 pages.

#### Accurate Information Needed

The 2002 census was harshly criticized, particularly for the nationality data it included. The report was questioned by ethnographer Valery Tishkov, demographer Anatoly Vishnevsky, and others for purported inaccuracies relating to the numbers of Chechens, Russians, and other nationalities. The government in Moscow needs accurate information in this area in order to formulate its nationalities policies.

Another issue of potential concern is the number of Muslims in Russia. Recently, the mufti of the Moscow area issued a report claiming that there are some 2 million people of Muslim origin in the capital, about one-fifth of the city's entire population. He used the figure to argue that there is a severe shortage of mosques in the city.

Even Russia's total population is open to doubt. Some observers have disputed the official figure of 142 million, arguing that the real figure is 139.8 million or, in one estimate, 137.8 million. Some analysts suspect the census could reveal dismal birthrate, death-rate, and migration figures.

Vladimir Putin and Dmitry Medvedev have repeatedly backed policies aimed at boosting the birthrate. But the political leadership has rarely acknowledged that Russia faces a sharp decline in the number of women aged 20-29, the cohort responsible for about two-thirds of all births. This imminent decline – from 13 million to 7 million or 8 million – will be the inevitable result of the 50 percent decline in all births between 1987 and 1999 (from 2.5 million per year to 1.25 million).

At the same time, although there have been varying decreases in deaths caused by alcohol poisoning, traffic accidents, heart disease, and cancer, there are still high and potentially embarrassing rates of suicide, narcotics overdoses, and death from alcoholism-related causes and smoking.

Overall death rates in Russia have risen to at least three times the rates in Western Europe and North America. The World Health Organization (WHO) ranks Russia 150th in the world in terms of average male life expectancy at birth. The ranking for women is 100th. Only 50 percent of Russian males currently aged 16 will survive until their 60th birthday. With a life expectancy for men at 60 and for women at 73, Russia has the highest gender gap of all developed countries. Currently, 30-40 percent of all male deaths occur among the working-age population (officially, from 16 to 59 years of age, inclusive).

Premature mortality will be further exacerbated by the increase in AIDS-related deaths. Official data indicates shortages of anti-retroviral-therapy medications. One telling figure is the rate of co-infection between the HIV virus and tuberculosis (TB). Five years ago, about 50 percent of those with AIDS at death were also suffering from TB. Now that figure is about two-thirds.

#### 'First-Time' Cases

It can be difficult to compare Russia's statistics with those of other countries or the WHO because of the way Russia reports morbidity. Russian data on TB and other diseases only reports "first-time" cases. Relapses, reoccurrences, and repeat infections are not included, as they are in data kept by the WHO, the United States, and virtually every other country. This is likely the main explanation why official Russian figures put the number of new TB cases in 2007 at 118,000, while the WHO estimate for Russia is 157,000.

In addition, there have been startling increases in infection rates for other types of TB, including multidrug-resistant TB and extensively drug-resistant TB. Russia is the only country in Europe that is listed by the WHO Stop TB Partnership program as a high-burden TB country. The potential premature mortality from these new illnesses will likely increase mortality and restore the large disparity in ratio of excess mortality to the number of births.

Lastly, there is the issue of migration. The Federal Migration Service simply does not know the "correct" number of migrants in Russia today. Many Central Asian migrants have been returning to their countries because of the economic downturn in Russia, job layoffs, and racially motivated crimes. This out-migration will only worsen the demographic crisis and further reduce the supply of labor. The working-age population of Russia is currently declining by about 1 million per year, and this figure is expected to double over the next 10 years. This means Russia will need some 20 million to 25 million migrants over the next few decades.

Additionally, the military is competing with the civilian labor force: the numerical decline will make it increasingly hard for the military to meet its conscription targets. Already the military is drafting people with compromised health, as well as students and others whose induction was previously deferred. Even people in the penitentiary system are being taken into the military.

All these demographic developments have serious policy implications. How many children will the school system have to prepare for? How will labor shortages affect the government's economic-development targets? And so on and on.

The government needs timely and accurate information -- even if it means facing hard truths at a politically inconvenient moment.

*Murray Feshbach is a senior scholar at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars and an emeritus research professor at Georgetown University.*

#### **#13**

#### **Russian Reports Tie Nationalists to 2 Killings**

**By Ellen Barry**

**New York Times, November 5, 2009**

MOSCOW — Two people have been arrested in the killings of a human rights lawyer and a reporter who were shot in central Moscow in January, the Interfax news agency reported late Wednesday, citing unidentified law enforcement officials.

Officials with the Prosecutor General's Office and the Interior Ministry would not confirm the reports.

The suspects, according to Interfax, are former members of Russian National Unity, a neo-fascist group that came to prominence in the late 1990s and is now banned in several Russian regions. The reports said members of the group attacked the lawyer, Stanislav Markelov, because he represented victims of nationalist violence in court. Anastasia Baburova, a reporter, was killed in the same attack.

A lawyer for Aleksandr Barkshakov, the founder of Russian National Unity, said the organization had nothing to do with the murders.

"He asked me to tell everyone that R.N.U. has never killed anyone, including reporters," the lawyer, Yuri Kachan, told Interfax. "Barkshakov said that he doesn't even know the people who are now being called former members of the organization."

Mr. Markelov, 34, and Ms. Baburova, 25, were shot in broad daylight as they left a Moscow news conference. Mr. Markelov had spent a decade representing victims in a wide range of human rights cases against Russian military officials, Chechen leaders and neo-fascists, among others. The authorities hesitated to put forward specific theories but said they believed that the attackers were motivated by Mr. Markelov's public stances on human rights issues.

## **#14**

### **The new partner**

**By Anshel Pfeffer**

**Haaretz, November 5, 2009**

In October 2007, at the opening ceremony of the first Limmud FSU event of Jewish learning in the former Soviet Union, at a resort near Moscow, a 20-something in jeans went on stage. A representative of the local organizing committee, he greeted the visitors from overseas in heavily accented English, and said: "We have proved here that we can do something like this on our own. We don't need anymore the help of the JDC or the Jewish Agency, we are capable of standing on our two feet."

In the auditorium sat the leaders of most of the major international Jewish organizations, who had flown in especially for the event, most of them American. Some moved uncomfortably in their seats, others smiled indulgently at the young firebrand, but two years later - next week, at the United Jewish Communities (UJC) annual General Assembly in Washington - the international chairman will for the first time be a Russian-born philanthropist, Leonid Nevzlin.

Nevzlin's foundation, the Nadav Fund, is one of the sponsors of the 2009 General Assembly (GA). Nevzlin nowadays likes to be referred to as an "Israeli businessman" and he tries to distance himself from the not very complimentary epithet of "oligarch." Indeed, since making aliyah in 2003, he has been unable to visit his homeland. Due to disputes with Vladimir Putin's Kremlin, he is persona non grata in Russia, but his honorary appointment has still started tongues wagging: The Russians are coming and they are going to shake the cozy arrangement whereby Israel and North America shared the status of the most influential Jewish communities in the world.

"The Jewish American establishment is hugging Nevzlin close," says a former senior Jewish Agency official, with extensive work experience in both America and the former Soviet Union, "because he is the kind of Russian they feel they can do business with. They understand the Jewish world has changed and they have to start treating the Russians as partners and stop acting as patrons. Nevzlin's views are liberal. He believes in democracy, doesn't meddle very much in politics, and he isn't close to the rabbis, like some of the oligarchs. They can get along with him and find some common ground, unlike many of the others."

Since the establishment of Israel, North American Jewish leadership has taken its position as Israel's senior partner in the Diaspora for granted. Its community was the largest in the world, it gave the most money, and it enjoyed a unique position of influence in the corridors of Congress and in the White House. There were occasional challenges to its primacy. When Pierre Besnainou was president of the European Jewish Congress, he tried to chart an independent course from the American-dominated World Jewish Congress and even managed to oppose the opening in France of branches of powerful organizations such as AIPAC and ADL, but French Jewry was never going to have the clout to rival that of the Americans.

On paper, the communities of the former Soviet Union also lack either the numbers or the necessary organization to pose a threat to American dominancy of the Diaspora. But they do have singular advantages. While the number of Jews still living in Russia and its former satellite states is estimated at anywhere between one and two million, many of the two and a half million Jews who emigrated over the last two decades still retain close contacts with their homeland and in many cases identify more with other Russian-speakers than with co-religionists in their new countries. With major presences in Israel, the United States, Canada and Germany, they have become a global community. This has enabled them to a great extent to play the Jewish political game at a different level.

As a senior executive in one of the federations says, "They have different rules." For example, "American Jews tend to be more genteel and polite when it comes to wielding influence in Israeli politics." While some wealthy American Jews have discreetly contributed to Israeli parties and politicians and even visited Arab capitals in the hope of furthering Middle East peace, in general they have dealt with whatever government was elected by Israeli voters and kept their influence behind the scenes. The same is true of American and Canadian immigrants to Israel. They may be very successful in the fields of business and academia, but none of them have risen to prominence in Israeli politics, with the exception of late prime minister Golda Meir. Though she was born in Kiev, Meir grew up in Milwaukee - nevertheless, she was never viewed by Israelis as an "American politician."

### Identity politics

"The Russian-speaking community in Israel has had no problem with identity politics," says one of the few Knesset members with close ties to the American community. "Even though Avigdor Lieberman's Yisrael Beiteinu tries to portray itself as a party for all Israelis, two thirds of its voters were born in the Soviet Union and the party makes no bones about serving its constituency and keeping in contact with Russian-speakers outside of Israel."

The MK asked not to be identified (as did most of those interviewed for this article, saying they were afraid of offending donors), because "the last thing you want nowadays is to be branded as a 'racist Russian-hater,'" especially since, as he pointed out, all the key political roles connecting Israel and the Diaspora are now in the hands of Russian-born politicians. Former cabinet minister and Soviet refusenik Natan Sharansky is now the chairman of the Jewish Agency. His former political rival Avigdor Lieberman is the controversial foreign minister. Additionally, Yuli Edelstein (Likud) is minister for information and Diaspora affairs, Sofa Landver (Yisrael Beiteinu) is minister of immigrant absorption, and even the tourism minister, Stas Misezhnikov, born in Moscow, is a member of Lieberman's party.

"They are all relatively new in their positions," says the MK, "so it's too early to chart how they may change the nature of Israel's relations with the Diaspora, but it is clear that they are out to achieve a fundamental change."

One development that has mainly escaped notice is the transfer from the Prime Minister's Office of Nativ, the shadowy organization responsible for maintaining contact with Soviet Jewry in the days of the Iron Curtain, to Lieberman's control in the Foreign Ministry. The head of Yisrael Beiteinu has taken the failing agency, which was facing closure, and expanded its role as the main Israeli channel of communication to Jews throughout the former Soviet Union. Despite opposition by the local community and the federal government there, it has expanded its operations to Russian-speaking Jews living in Germany and only spirited opposition by the federations has prevented it from spreading its operations to North America as well. In a period when money for Jewish activity is scarce, due to the global recession and the losses many Jewish organizations suffered from the collapse of Bernard Madoff's scheme, Lieberman has tripled Nativ's budget. And while political influence and power is a major factor, money is key, especially when so many Jewish American foundations have been forced to scale back.

The Jewish Agency's fundraising affiliate, Keren Hayesod, established a permanent Moscow office last year and it has traveling representatives in the other former Soviet republics. "The UJC still contributes to the Jewish Agency three times what Keren Hayesod does," says one of the Agency's money-men, "but in the past, the UJC's contribution was much higher, and all it takes is for a few oligarchs - like Victor Pinchuk from Dnipropetrovsk, who donates \$40 million annually - to decide they want to give to Keren Hayesod and they will have taken control of the most important global Jewish organization." The official also notes that although today all the main committees are jointly chaired by Americans and Israelis, "soon that may all start to change."

Says one Keren Hayesod official: "Generally, the Jewish oligarchs are suspicious of giving to the large established organizations. They prefer to do things their own way, to set up their own organizations, but if that begins to change, and with Sharansky at the Agency's helm, that certainly can happen, the American federations and leaders should start worrying."

While the American Jewish establishment has generally tended to be liberal-leaning, with strong participation from the Reform and Conservative streams, and constitutes the principal source of donations to secular movements trying to further democratic ideals in Israeli society, most of the so-called oligarchs are closely aligned with right-wing politicians in Israel and are of course close to their own governments, which are far from democratic. While most of them do not lead a religious life, they tend to support Orthodox rabbis and organizations. Due to them, the Lubavitch movement is particularly strong in Russia.

## Leviev's influence

One of the more prominent FSU-born Israeli tycoons, billionaire Lev Leviev, who left Bukhara at age of 15, but makes most of his money from real estate, diamonds and minerals in the former Soviet Union, maintains Or Avner, the largest Jewish educational network there, with hundreds of day schools and kindergartens. Or Avner's staff works closely with Chabad rabbis, many of whom are sponsored by Leviev and his business partner, Roman Abramovich.

Although the Or Avner network is based in Moscow and operates mainly in the FSU, Leviev has also opened a school in New York, catering mainly to Russian-speakers. And he has tried to get secular schools in Israel to adopt a special Orthodox-oriented curriculum of Jewish studies. Oligarchs are also challenging American leaders in the field of Jewish international diplomacy. The boisterous president of the European Jewish Congress, Moshe Kantor, demands to meet heads of states separately from his counterparts on the World Jewish Congress, refusing to keep to a joint agenda in his bombastic statements.

"For many of us, there is a feeling that we are finally emerging from beneath American patronage," says an official in one of the Russian Jewish communities. "I remember as a teenager when there were food shortages as the Soviet Union came apart and the JDC [Joint Distribution Committee] came in with supplies. We were happy for the food but we felt they were treating all of us like children."

Indeed the JDC, for years the most active Jewish organization in the former Soviet Union, feeding and clothing tens of thousands of needy Jews, is now scaling back its operations, not only because of a lack of funds, but also due to the emergence of local community welfare organizations. In some cases, there has been tension between the two sides, as in one city where the local community even demanded the JDC hand over control of buildings bought with Claims Conference funds.

Still, the emergence of Russian communities and philanthropists doesn't always lead to tension. In many cases, it has also brought about cooperation. The Genesis Philanthropy Group, founded by a group of businesspeople lead by Mikhail Fridman, has become one of the major donors to Jewish education projects around the world, and has entered a number of partnerships with federations, aimed specifically at Russian-speakers in America [see box]. Former Israel Defense Forces major general Elazar Stern, who chairs the organization's advisory board, says: "The Genesis agenda of fostering Jewish identity of Russian-speakers around the world should not be threatening to anyone. These are people who have made money and are now saying that Jews in Russia have nothing to be ashamed of about their past and present. It's a good thing that Russian money has entered the system."

While there are grumblings in some federations about the growing Russian influence, many other leaders welcome the new donors helping them to overcome the shortfall in donations. Ted Sokolsky, president of the UJA Federation of Greater Toronto, a city to which more than 30 thousand Russian-speakers have arrived in recent years, terms the dialogue with their representatives as "a positive challenge." He admits his community hasn't done "a stellar job in integrating the Russian-speakers," and says that "they seem to have different priorities and different methodologies. They have very specific goals and objectives and benchmarks for achievements and they find the old methods paternalistic, especially when it comes to engaging with Russian-speakers." Overall, says Sokolsky, "it's nice to see these guys walking up to the plate and getting involved in the Jewish identity issue. I don't think anyone should see this as a threat."

In fact, the entrance of the Russians may be less a threat, and more just another symptom of the prolonged decline of the current UJC federation system. "It's not only the oligarchs who are going their own way and advancing their private agendas," says a former head of the Israel office of one of the large federations. "When some of the biggest donors in America, like Michael Steinhardt and Sheldon Adelson are doing their own thing, and opting out of the UJC system has become the fashion, it's every billionaire for himself. The UJC is already losing its influence on the Jewish Agency board, where people like Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein, who brings in \$9 million from the Christian evangelicals, have a say, and soon it will be the oligarchs who set the tune."

## **#15**

### **Ukraine Says It Paid Russian Gas Bill**

**By James Marson**

**Wall Street Journal, November 6, 2009**

Ukraine said it has paid its monthly gas bill to Russia, allaying fears of a new gas crisis in Europe.

Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin had said last Friday that Ukraine was struggling to make the payment, sparking concerns of another gas crisis after a dispute in January saw flows to the European Union cut.

But Ukrainian Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko said Friday that state gas company Naftogaz had paid its Russian counterpart Gazprom \$500 million for gas used in October. A Gazprom spokeswoman declined to comment on the October bill.

Ukraine has settled all of its monthly bills to Russia on time this year, despite its economy contracting 18 percent in the first half of 2009 and constant warnings from the Kremlin about its ability to pay.

Naftogaz's finances are struggling as it sells increasingly expensive Russian gas to consumers at below market prices. The company announced Thursday that it had successfully restructured \$1.6 billion in external debt -- including a \$500 million Eurobond and loans from foreign banks -- to avoid default.

Ms. Tymoshenko said it had been "extremely difficult" to find the money to pay Gazprom as regional energy companies had only paid for "50 to 60%" of the gas used. She also accused the President Viktor Yushchenko and the Central Bank of blocking attempts to pay.

Attempts to combat the economic crisis in Ukraine have been hampered by political infighting ahead of presidential elections scheduled for January.

Mr. Yushchenko last week signed a into law a rise in social spending opposed by Ms. Tymoshenko, his former ally and now bitter rival. The decision to hike wages and pensions by 20% is jeopardizing further lending from the International Monetary Fund, which has provided \$10.6 billion since last fall to stabilize the Ukrainian economy.

Ukraine's constitutional court on Friday said it had received a request by 50 parliamentary deputies to check that the decision to raise social expenditures was constitutional.

The government would struggle to cover a rising budget deficit without the next \$3.8 billion tranche, as financing from the European Union is conditional on the IMF program and talks on bilateral loans have proved unsuccessful.

## **#16**

### **Belarusian Parliamentarians To Visit South Ossetia, Abkhazia**

**RFE/RL, November 5, 2009**

MINSK -- A group of Belarusian lawmakers will travel to Georgia and its breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia to decide if they should have parliamentary discussions about the recognizing the regions as independent states, RFE/RL's Belarus Service reports.

Syarhey Matskevich, the chairman of the parliamentary International Affairs Commission, told journalists on November 5 that the group will meet with Georgian officials in Tbilisi and visit its breakaway regions from November 17-20. He said the parliamentary group will also hold talks on the issue with members of the Russian State Duma in Moscow.

Matskevich said that after the visit the commission will decide if it is necessary to hold a debate in parliament over the possible recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states. Russia recognized the two Georgian regions after a five-day war with Georgian forces in August 2008.

Nicaragua and Venezuela have in recent months also recognized Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Moscow has pressured Minsk to also recognize the regions as independent, though the European Union has sought to keep Belarus from taking such a move.

The EU is scheduled to discuss lifting sanctions against Belarus on November 16, one day before the Belarusian delegation travels to Abkhazia and South Ossetia.