

**WASHINGTON, D.C. January 22, 2010**



**TO: NCSJ Leadership and Interested Parties**

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

In Brief: Moldova PM Visits U.S.; Ukraine Elections

Dear Friends,

This week, a delegation headed by Moldovan Prime Minister Vladimir Filat visited Washington for a series of events, including a meeting with representatives of Jewish organizations, organized and chaired by NCSJ. The meeting was requested by the Prime Minister to discuss the December 13 incident in Chisinau, when an Orthodox Priest tore down a public menorah and replaced it with a cross. The discussion also included other issues of concern to the Jewish community, including Moldova's relationship with Israel. The meeting was held at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum and was preceded by a tour of the Permanent Exhibition led by Paul Shapiro, USHMM Director of the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies. On a personal note, the Prime Minister reacted very emotionally when I pointed out a picture of my mother's arrival at Auschwitz, which is part of the exhibit.

NCSJ also attended a Helsinki Commission hearing, where the Prime Minister discussed political developments in Moldova and where the issue of anti-Semitism was raised by both the Prime Minister and Chairman U.S. Sen. Benjamin Cardin and Co-Chairman U.S. Rep. Alcee Hastings. Reports on both the meeting and the briefing events are included in this week's update.

Today, NCSJ Program Assistant Alla Lipsky and I also attended the signing ceremony for an agreement between the U.S. Millennium Challenge Corporation and the Republic of Moldova at the Department of State, presided over by Secretary Clinton. Under this agreement, Moldova will receive \$262 million grant for agriculture development and road rehabilitation.

Last week, Ukraine held Presidential elections. As expected, no candidate won over 50% of the vote, and on February 7th, there will be a run-off election between Viktor Yanukovich, who won about 35% of the votes, and Yulia Tymoshenko, who won about 25% of the votes. The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe described the election as high quality and showing significant progress over previous elections and the United States has congratulated Ukraine on the quality of the electoral process. There are a number of articles included this week about the election's outcome and the upcoming run-off election.

Sincerely,

Lesley Weiss

Director of Community Services and Cultural Affairs



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

NCSJ WEEKLY NEWS BRIEF  
Washington, D.C. January 22, 2010

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## **#1a**

### **Mikvah to be Built in Kostroma FJC, January 15, 2010**

KOSTROMA, Russia – The Jewish community of Kostroma is preparing to build a mikvah, a specially constructed pool for ritual immersion.

There is an interesting story behind this new mikvah project: During some minor reconstruction work in the Kostrama synagogue, Chief Rabbi of Kostroma Nison Ruppó found a deep hole in the synagogue's kitchen. After examining the pit, which had been filled in with concrete and covered over, it became apparent that the hole had served as the mikvah for the Kostroma community in the years predating the October Revolution. Later on, during the Soviet regime, this mikvah had been filled and then sealed off.

It is worth noting that, during his exile to Kostroma in 1927, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok Schneersohn, the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, immersed in this mikvah. Learning this information made the find even more significant for the Kostrama Jewish community and more determined to "re-open" the mikvah.

Rabbi Ruppó, who is also a Chabad-Lubavitch emissary serving in the region, has begun to raise the necessary funds to build the new mikvah. The mikvah will be beautiful and modern, and will meet the strictest requirements of Jewish law. The synagogue's kitchen will be relocated to a different area of the building in order to enable the mikvah to be built in its original location.

The Jewish community of Kostroma is a member of the Federation of Jewish Communities of Russia.

## **#1b**

### **Moscow Approves Rallies For Murdered Lawyer, Journalist RFE/RL, January 18, 2010**

MOSCOW -- Moscow authorities have ruled that they will allow two demonstrations on January 19 to mark the first anniversary of the murder of lawyer Stanislav Markelov and journalist Anastasia Baburova, RFE/RL's Russian Service reported, quoting radio station Ekho Moskvyy.

The decision reverses an earlier move to reject a request by human rights activists to hold a march in the center of Moscow commemorating the killings.

Rights activists had vowed to stage the rally even without official approval.

Markelov had represented the family of a young Chechen woman killed in 2000 by Russian army officer Yury Budanov, who was released from jail on January 15, 2009, after serving 8 1/2 years of the 10-year sentence he received for that murder.

The two were gunned down in broad daylight on January 19, 2009, after Markelov had given a press conference protesting Budanov's early release. Markelov died on the spot; Baburova died later of her wounds.

The killings of Markelov and Baburova were condemned by international rights groups and have come to represent the climate of fear and lawlessness surrounding rights work in Chechnya.

Baburova's mother, Larisa, told RFE/RL's Russian Service that the two "were very talented people and gave everything they had to the struggle against the shameful phenomenon of fascism. They were thoroughly honest -- both my daughter and Stanislav Yurevich," she said.

## **#1c**

### **20th Anniversary Of 'Black January' Events In Azerbaijan RFE/RL, January 20, 2010**

Azerbaijan is marking the 20th anniversary of the "Black January" violent crackdown by Soviet forces on the Azerbaijani independence movement during the collapse of the Soviet Union.

On January 20, 1990, Soviet troops stormed the Azerbaijani capital, Baku, on the orders of the Kremlin in an ultimately failed attempt to save Communist rule and crush the opposition.

For several days, some 26,000 Soviet troops cracked down on protesters, firing into crowds, and killing more than 130 people and injuring 700.

Moscow also decreed emergency rule, which lasted for more than a year.

In October, 1991, Azerbaijan formally declared its independence from the Soviet Union.

## **#1d**

### **Russia-U.S. Civil Society Working Group to Meet Jan 27 Interfax, January 19, 2010**

MOSCOW - The first session of the Russian-U.S. Civil Society working group, which is headed by Russian deputy presidential chief-of-staff Vladislav Surkov and the White House's chief expert on Russia Michael Mcfaul, will take place in the United States on January 27.

"Ella Pamfilova (head of the Russian presidential council to support the development of civil society institutions and human rights), Pavel Astakhov (Russia's commissioner for children's rights) and I will attend the session of this

working group as specially invited guests," Russia's commissioner for human rights Vladimir Lukin told Interfax on Tuesday.

At its first meeting, the group will address anti-corruption measure and ways to protect children's rights, Lukin said.

"Besides, if we have time, we will discuss stereotypes about Russia in the U.S. and stereotypes about the U.S. in Russia. No reports are expected to be delivered. All discussions will proceed in the form of dialogue, person-to-person communication," the official said.

"Such meetings are very useful because, please excuse me, they take place without the press. If a person with a video camera is present in the room, people try to say what will sound good before the camera, but not what they actually think," he said.

Lukin said he hoped that during the upcoming meeting, "each party will talk about its experience, but will not focus on criticizing each other."

"However, I would not expect the first meeting to produce any specific results," he said.

Civil Society is one of the 13 working groups set up as part of the high-ranking commission, which was formed in line with decisions taken during U.S. President Barack Obama's visit to Moscow last year.

#### **#1e**

#### **Ukrainian PM Offers Job To Rival Candidate For President RFE/RL, January 20, 2010**

Yulia Tymoshenko, Ukraine's prime minister and a candidate in the country's February 7 runoff vote, told reporters in Kyiv today that she has offered a rival candidate the position of prime minister.

"I proposed to Serhiy Tihipko not only that we unite our programs and our visions of Ukraine's development, not only to be his reliable partner in the difficult but rewarding work, but I also offered him the position of prime minister," Tymoshenko said.

Tihipko, a former National Bank chairman, came in third in the initial January 17 presidential vote.

Pro-Moscow candidate Viktor Yanukovych came in first with more than 31 percent of the vote. Tymoshenko followed with more than 27 percent.

For his part, Tihipko said that he doesn't know whom to vote for in the runoff.

"So far all we hear are promises. I want to see what they plan to do, then I'll make up my mind," Tihipko told RFE/RL's R Ukrainian service program.

He said that he had answered a preliminary no to Tymoshenko's offer, and said that Yanukovych had also made him an offer, but did not elaborate.

Tihipko also said that he would not ask his supporters to vote for any one of the candidates. "People who voted for me are intelligent people; they'll make up their own minds," he said.

#### **#1f**

#### **U.S. Congratulates Ukraine On Quality Of Vote RFE/RL, January 20, 2010**

WASHINGTON – The United States has congratulated Ukraine on the quality of the first round of its presidential election.

State Department spokesman Philip Crowley notes that the Organization For Security And Cooperation In Europe (OSCE), one of several groups that monitored the vote, found that the election had been conducted far better than previous Ukrainian elections.

"We congratulate the Ukrainian people on the conduct of their January 17 presidential elections, which the OSCE deemed to have been high-quality, showing significant progress over previous elections," Crowley said.

"This is another significant demonstration of the development of democracy in Ukraine. The U.S. looks forward to free and fair runoff elections on February 7, and working with whomever the Ukrainians choose as their next president."

Opposition leader Viktor Yanukovich won 35 percent of the vote, compared with 25 percent for Yulia Tymoshenko, and 5.5 percent for outgoing President Viktor Yushchenko.

A runoff election will be held on February 7.

## **#1g**

### **Russian Governor Asks For Minimum Wage Salary RFE/RL, January 20, 2010**

KIROV -- Kirov Oblast Governor Nikita Belykh has proposed that his region's legislative assembly reduce his salary to Russia's minimum wage, RFE/RL's Russian Service reports.

If the assembly adopts the idea, Belykh, whose salary is some 150,000 rubles (\$5,000) per month, will receive 4,330 rubles (\$146) -- about the salary of a kindergarten teacher or a cleaner in Kirov.

Belykh said on his blog that he decided to ask for the minimum wage in order to set a good personal example and to be able look regional and municipal officials in the eye when asking them to make budget cuts.

He added that he is ready to give up some personal benefits for the sake of the region.

Belykh, 34, a former businessman and leader of Russia' opposition Union of Right Forces, said he would live off the savings from some real estate investments and sale of stock shares.

Belykh has also initiated an antialcohol campaign in Kirov Oblast. Since January 1, selling vodka, whiskey, and other strong alcohol is banned between 11 p.m. and 7 a.m.

Belykh said he will not take a single drink of alcohol and that any alcohol he receives as a gift will be sold at an auction.

## **#2**

### **Jewish Community Meeting with Moldovan Prime Minister By Lesley Weiss, Director of Community Services and Cultural Affairs NCSJ, January 20, 2010**

Washington, D.C -- On Wednesday, NCSJ participated in a tour of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum with Moldovan Prime Minister Vladimir Filat and chaired a meeting for Jewish organizational representatives at the Museum, following the tour. The tour was led by Paul Shapiro, USHMM Director of the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies.

Prime Minister Filat's delegation included: **Iurie Leanca**, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration; **Valeriu Lazar**, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Economy; **Valeriu Cosarciuc**, Minister of

Agriculture and Food Industry; **Stela Mocan**, Counselor to the Prime Minister; **Andrei Galbur**, the Moldovan Embassy's Chargé d'Affaires; and Counselor of the Embassy **Tatiana Munteanu**.

The U.S. government delegation at the meeting included U.S. Ambassador to Moldova **Asif Chaudhry**, U.S. Department of State Director for Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus Affairs **Lawrence Silverman** and other diplomats from State and the U.S. Embassy in Chisinau. Moldova's Jewish community was represented by President of the Jewish Congress of Moldova, **Alexander Bilinkis**.

The U.S. Jewish organization representatives were Executive Director **Mark Levin** and **Lesley Weiss**, NCSJ; **Herbert Block**, American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee; **Stacy Burdett**, Anti-Defamation League; **Eric Fusfield**, B'nai B'rith International; **Allen Kronstadt**, NCSJ; **Evan Malnik**, NCSJ; **Peter Rosenblatt**, American Jewish Committee; and **Andrew Srulevitch**, Anti-Defamation League.

Immediately following the tour, Minister Iurie Leanca signed a memorandum of cooperation on behalf of Moldova's State Archives with the USHMM, represented by Paul Shapiro.

Mark Levin, chairing the meeting of Jewish organizations, opened the meeting by expressing the U.S. Jewish community's support of a strong U.S.-Moldova bilateral relationship. He talked about Moldova's significant Jewish population, the Moldovan Jewish community's long history, and the ongoing close working relationship NCSJ has with the community and its leadership.

Levin next discussed the December "menorah incident" in Chisinau, where a Moldovan Orthodox priest tore down a public menorah and replaced it with a cross while a crowd looked on and cheered and police stood by idly. Mark questioned the light sentence imposed (misdemeanor and small fine) and asked whether the Moldovan Ministry of Justice would reexamine the incident and open a criminal investigation, with the goal of imposing a more appropriate punishment. Mark also discussed the government's Justice Ministry's registration of an extremist and xenophobic group, the National Christian Movement, and the state of Moldovan-Israeli relations.

Prime Minister Filat called the meeting very important, and expressed his hope that he could count on the Jewish community's support. He said that Moldova is a country of tolerance and respects the rights of all. He said the Menorah incident was the first time such a thing had occurred and that Moldova's government, the entire political establishment and the Orthodox Church condemned it. A final answer from the investigation is still pending, he said. He said that they have an imperfect legal system and that they are working on a new legal framework to prosecute and sanction these kinds of events.

The National Christian Movement is registered in compliance with national legislation and with the European Convention in Protection of Human Rights. However, they are examining ways to exclude the group from Moldova's civil society list because of its actions. He said he hopes to cooperate with the Jewish community in Moldova and that they plan to establish a Holocaust monument by early May. The Prime Minister said Moldova is working to continuously improve relations with Israel, and hopes to establish a reciprocal visa-free regime. Moldova's dialogue with Israel's Moldovan-born Foreign Minister, he said, is particularly robust.

ADL's Andrew Srulevitch suggested that Moldova's law on extremism provides ample opportunity to bring criminal charges in this case. ADL works with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe on developing guidelines for responding to hate crimes and offered to assist Moldova. The Prime Minister responded that the current law is too wide to be applied to this particular case. He welcomed the offer of assistance and said that the lesson learned is that such incidents must be prevented in the future.

Peter Rosenblatt asked whether the Orthodox Church will take action against the priest. The Prime Minister said he had discussed the incident with the Church but he had no authority to influence Church decisions or actions.

Herbert Block asked about the status of the legal dispute over the ownership of the Kedem Jewish community center in Chisinau. He said that AJJDC is an U.S. NGO that brings in \$4 million to Moldova annually for services for Holocaust survivors and Jewish youth and families. Much of this work is done from the Kedem JCC, which is owned by JDC and was built by its U.S. donors. There have been legal actions in Moldovan courts which would effectively confiscate from JDC a significant portion of that property. In order to preserve

JDC's property and rights, they filed a complaint against Moldova in the European Court of Human Rights. Block asked that the PM use his office to bring about a resolution of this case before further legal action is needed.

Prime Minister Filat said he was aware of and had studied this case. He said it needs to be seen as a legal dispute between two parties. The parties need to continue discussions and the government is willing to mediate to bring about a solution. While the government cannot amend court rulings, Filat said he knows this case has had a negative impact on the image of Moldova.

### #3

#### **U.S. Helsinki Commission Hearing: "Democratic Change and Challenges in Moldova"**

**By Lesley Weiss, Director of Community Services and Cultural Affairs, and Alla Lipsky, Program Assistant NCSJ, January 20, 2010**

Washington, D.C. – On Thursday, Sen. Benjamin Cardin (D-MD), Chairman of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (U.S. Helsinki Commission), and Co-Chairman Rep. Alcee Hastings (D-FL) held a hearing on recent political changes in Moldova. Moldovan Prime Minister Vladimir Filat testified.

In their opening remarks Sen. Cardin and Rep. Hastings both acknowledged the tremendous strides Moldova has made since the early 1990s and Moldova's critical role in the region. The U.S. supports Moldova's constitutional reforms and its efforts to join the European Union, they said.

Prime Minister Filat described his country's recent Parliamentary elections as a time of dramatic developments, when people chose between the past and future. After decades of Communist rule, Moldovans have inherited a distorted economic and political system that needs transformation. They need to settle their constitutional crisis, deal with security issues and build a society based on tolerance.

He referred to the December 13 menorah desecration in Chisinau as the first such incident since independence, but also as one incident too many. He said that the government acted promptly. Although the legal system's imperfections have allowed the perpetrators to effectively go unpunished thus far, he promised that the government would intervene to launch a new investigation. The government believes that this incident may have been a politically motivated provocation, but that they must insure severe punishment of the perpetrators regardless. The Minister of Justice is also examining how to exclude the extremist and xenophobic National Christian Movement from Moldova's list of registered civil society organizations.

Sen. Cardin expressed his appreciation for the government's condemnation of the incident, but noted that after the condemnation, the menorah was placed in a less prominent location than where it was originally erected. The Justice system treated it as a trivial situation, he said; the incident was not handled well and the vandals won. Cardin also raised his concern about the Moldovan government's involvement with a property dispute between the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and the Moldovan Jewish community. The Prime Minister said that at a meeting with Jewish organizations held the previous day, representatives of both organizations were present and they have agreed that upon his return to Moldova, he will mediate the dispute and take the necessary steps to resolve it.

Rep. Hastings discussed the constitutional reform process that will ensure what the Prime Minister refers to as a "state of law" that will offer citizens rights and prosperity. The Prime Minister said that the problem with the constitution is not in intent, but in implementation. Hastings encouraged Moldova and all developing democracies to ask for assistance from other democracies in building an independent judiciary and strengthening other democratic institutions.

Rep. Hastings also asked how the United States might assist in resolving the Transnistria conflict. Sen. Cardin discussed the conflict's significance, and asked how the Moldovan government prioritizes its resolution. Prime Minister Filat assured them that the conflict's resolution is a priority. The citizens who live in Transnistria are citizens of Moldova, he said, and Transnistria is part of Moldova. Filat asked that the United States maintain its support of Moldova, adding that he hoped that human rights infringements in Transnistria will remain on the U.S. agenda.

#### **#4**

##### **Poverty in Russia**

**New York Times, January 18, 2010**

To the Editor:

Re "Bankrupt Factory City Keeps Humming, Courtesy of the Kremlin" (news article, Jan. 5):

Your observations are a stark reminder of the effect that the global financial crisis has had across Russia and other parts of the former Soviet Union.

As one of the largest providers of humanitarian relief in the region, we see among our clients a growing need for food, medicine, employment and other basic needs. Among the 168,000 elderly and 25,000 young children and families we serve, many are facing the diminishing value of their pensions, fluctuating inflation rates and slashed incomes.

Take Faina, for example. She lives alone, in one room, on a monthly pension with a dollar equivalent of \$117. She suffers from heart and gall bladder disease and can't get by on her budget, which is rent, \$12; electricity, \$6; phone, \$1; medicines, \$22; and personal hygiene, \$6.

With the remaining \$70, Faina owes \$10.50 a month for a washing machine (her first washing machine ever), leaving only \$59.50 for food, which is more than \$15 short for a basic nutritional diet.

In the harsh winter, with recovery slow in coming, many are faced with an untenable choice between food and medicine, a choice no one should have to make.

Steven Schwager  
Chief Executive, American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee

#### **#5**

##### **Russia-Belarus Row Affects Oil Flows Again**

**Reuters, January 15, 2010**

MOSCOW - An unresolved row over Russian oil supplies to Belarus escalated again with Moscow reducing flows to Belarussian refineries, traders said on Friday, in a move likely to revive fears of supply disruptions to Europe.

Traders said Russia's pipeline monopoly Transneft

had told oil firms to re-route one third of flows scheduled for Belarussian refineries to the Polish Baltic port of Gdansk, which is on the same pipeline as Belarus but further west.

Some traders said a few firms had already agreed with the order and would ship crude to Gdansk. Certain other firms had agreed to reduce supplies to Belarus but would seek destinations other than Gdansk for their oil.

Russia, the world's largest energy producer and Europe's top energy supplier, had briefly halted deliveries to the two refineries in Belarus, Naftan and Mozyr, after the two sides failed to clinch a deal by the New Year.

The suspension helped push oil prices to a 15-month high above \$83 a barrel during the first days of this month. Flows restarted on January 3.

Europe Union countries, mindful of a dispute in 2007 that cut around a million barrels per day of Russian oil supplies via Belarus, are keen for the two ex-Soviet states to resolve their differences so Poland and Germany can get oil without interruptions.

The latest dispute centres on the tariffs Belarus must pay for Russian oil.

Russia allowed Belarus to import oil last year at only 35.6 percent of the current crude export tariff.

Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin has said Belarus can now buy 6 million tonnes of Russian oil, for domestic needs only, duty-free, while the remaining 14.5 million tonnes a year -- that Belarus refines and re-exports to the West -- should not be exempted from duties.

Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov said talks were continuing and added that Deputy Prime Minister Igor Sechin had sent a letter on Friday to the Belarussian side explaining the Russian position. He declined to disclose the content of the letter.

"As before, the Russian side confirms its readiness to meet the demand from both the Belarussian side as well as European customers," he said, declining to comment on the latest cuts.

Russia has repeatedly clashed with ex-Soviet states over energy pricing in recent years, prompting politicians from the European Union and the United States to accuse the Kremlin of using its energy might to bring its neighbours to heel.

Russia says it wants simply to bring energy prices and transit fees into line with the market after subsidising its neighbours for many years with preferential terms. Much of its oil and gas must cross Ukraine or Belarus to reach Europe.

## **#6**

### **Presidential Election in Ukraine Goes to a Runoff**

**By Clifford J. Levy**

**New York Times, January 18, 2010**

KIEV, Ukraine — Two of the chief combatants in the 2004 Orange Revolution, which brought to power a pro-Western government that has left the public increasingly disillusioned, battled in a presidential election on Sunday, but because neither received enough votes to win outright, they will face each other in a runoff.

That runoff, scheduled for Feb. 7, is seen as a referendum on the Orange Revolution, which has mired Ukraine in political and economic upheaval for much of the past five years.

The results of the voting on Sunday reflected the revived fortunes of the opposition leader, Viktor F. Yanukovich, who was the loser in the Orange Revolution but who has taken advantage of the public's soured mood and the bickering among Orange officials.

Once criticized as a tool of Moscow, Mr. Yanukovich has retained an American political consultant and softened his image. He is to face Prime Minister Yulia V. Tymoshenko, one of the Orange heroes, in the runoff.

The first official returns reported late Sunday, with a fraction of votes counted, showed Mr. Yanukovich with about 38 percent and Ms. Tymoshenko with about 25 percent. The other candidates were far behind.

On Sunday night, both Mr. Yanukovich and Ms. Tymoshenko reached out to losing candidates for endorsements. A looming question is whether those more ideologically aligned with Ms. Tymoshenko will support her.

Ms. Tymoshenko, with her provocative speeches and peasant braid, has long been a polarizing figure. But if she unites the other candidates with her argument that Mr. Yanukovich represents a step backward for Ukraine, then she could make a strong showing in the runoff.

President Viktor A. Yushchenko, another Orange leader, was projected to be in fifth place in Sunday's voting, with less than 7 percent, all but ending his political career. He is unpopular because of the weak economy and the paralysis in the government.

Mr. Yushchenko and Ms. Tymoshenko have feuded for years, and it remained unclear whether he would support her against Mr. Yanukovich.

The Orange Revolution grew out of huge protests in Ukraine over what many voters said was Mr. Yanukovich's fraudulent victory in the 2004 presidential election over Mr. Yushchenko. The results were overturned, and Mr. Yushchenko won a new election.

Mr. Yanukovich said Sunday night that his strong finish this time showed that the public craved new leadership. "I realize very well that I am obliged to do everything that I can to unite the country so that it will be strong and independent," he said.

Ms. Tymoshenko assailed Mr. Yanukovich as a marionette of shady oligarchs, and contended that he would drag Ukraine away from Europe. "To vote for Yanukovich is to go back to the stone age," Ms. Tymoshenko said.

Mr. Yanukovich's aides said he intended to press ahead with his strategy of painting Ms. Tymoshenko as an incumbent responsible for Ukraine's problems.

Ms. Tymoshenko's challenge is to position herself as an outsider who was unable to adopt the changes that the country needed because she was not president.

Interviews with voters at a polling place in Kiev on Sunday hinted at the level of discontent with the country's direction.

Many people said they had once been Orange supporters, and had hoped that the leadership in the past five years would chart a path toward integration with Europe.

Artur Kulish, 27, who works at an Internet cafe, said he pulled the lever for "against all," which is allowed under election law.

"I dislike them all equally," Mr. Kulish said. "None of them is going to change anything. And I very much regret supporting the Orange Revolution."

People complained about the government's inability to address the fallout of the global financial crisis, which has hurt Ukraine more than many of its neighbors.

"What we have now is absolutely not effective," said Lidia Korotchenko, 24, an economist who supported Sergey Tigipko, a businessman who placed third. She said she had also considered Mr. Yanukovich.

"We all favored the Orange Revolution, we all came out and demonstrated, but in these five years, we have been extremely disappointed," she said.

Some, though, still had faith in the Orange leaders.

"This is our only chance for Ukraine," said Valery Alenikov, 65, a biochemist who voted for Ms. Tymoshenko.

Ukraine, which has 46 million people, has been a focal point of the struggle for influence in post-Soviet space. It has long been divided, with Ukrainian speakers in western regions wanting ties to Europe and Russian speakers in the east and south more sympathetic to Moscow.

President Yushchenko is an antagonist of the Kremlin, which was angered by his efforts to join NATO.

Mr. Yanukovich and Ms. Tymoshenko have both indicated that they will try to smooth relations with Russia while continuing to court Europe. Neither has called for Ukraine to join NATO.

Interviews of voters showed the geographic split.

Irina Matseva and her husband, Sergey, who are both 62 and scientists, said they supported Mr. Yanukovich because they were appalled by Mr. Yushchenko's attitude toward Russia. Ms. Matseva said the two countries had profound historical ties.

"I do not want us to lose each other — Ukraine and Russia," Ms. Matseva said. "I think that to spurn Russian culture is a big mistake."

Nearby was Yekaterina Romashchenko, 42, who said she voted for Mr. Yushchenko.

"Yanukovich will sell us to Russia," she said. "We don't want history to repeat itself."

## **#7**

### **Russia Ends Opposition to Rights Court**

**By Ellen Barry**

**New York Times, January 16, 2010**

MOSCOW — The Russian Parliament on Friday reversed its longstanding opposition to reforms in the European Court of Human Rights, as part of a new push to smooth over differences with the country's European partners.

Legislators in the lower house voted 392 to 56 to ratify the reforms, news agencies reported.

The international human rights court, based in Strasbourg, France, has been clogged in recent years with a backlog of complaints, nearly one-third of them filed against Russia. The reform plan, Protocol 14, aims to speed up the court's work, in part by reducing the number of judges necessary to make major decisions.

Since 2006, Russia has been the only one of 47 participating states to refuse to ratify Protocol 14. Moscow's opposition seemed colored by its overall suspicion of the court, which has found Russian officials guilty of corruption, torture and other misconduct.

But Dmitri F. Vyatkin, who serves on Parliament's legislative committee, said European ministers had finally addressed Russian complaints about the proposals, in part by guaranteeing that Russian judges would be involved in reviewing complaints against Russia. He said the decision showed that Russia and the other European states were seeking common ground.

"It's not such a big step," said Mr. Vyatkin, a member of the governing United Russia party, "but it's a step toward one another, and that's the main thing." He added, "Though we are very singular, we are part of European culture, for the most part."

Strasbourg has provided an international platform for hundreds of cases damaging to the government. One of the most damaging had been expected to grab attention on Thursday, the day of the first hearing in a \$100 billion lawsuit filed by the former managers of Yukos, the oil company once run by the imprisoned oligarch Mikhail B. Khodorkovsky.

The court said Tuesday that the hearing would be delayed for a third time, until March 4, because two Russian representatives would not be available. One became ill, and the other was needed to address the Parliament before the ratification vote, said Karinna Moskalenko, one of Mr. Khodorkovsky's lawyers.

Leaders of the Council of Europe, which established the human rights court, worked hard to convince Prime Minister Vladimir V. Putin and President Dmitri A. Medvedev that the reforms "had become a key link in the relationship," said Thomas Hammarberg, the human rights commissioner at the council. Russia will be held to the same rules that apply to other members, and no changes were made to the protocol during negotiations.

"What they probably feel is that they have been listened to — their concerns have been heard," Mr. Hammarberg said. "I think it has been more of a political process than a juridical process."

But Mr. Vyatkin said the council had provided written commitments on the Russians' main fears. He said he was reassured that Russian judges would be included in reviews of potential cases against Russia, that the court would not begin investigating complaints before cases were formally accepted and that the court would not have new powers to force rulings to be carried out.

He said his European colleagues had ignored Russians' complaints for years. "The main thing is, we explained to our colleagues that ultimatums will not solve anyone's problems," he said. "Let's talk. It is already clear that without Russian participation, the Council of Europe will be of no use to anyone."

Aleksei V. Makarkin, a leading analyst at the Center for Political Technologies, a Moscow policy research group, said such compromises could have been reached at any time in the last four years. What has changed, he said, is the atmosphere in Moscow. "We have begun to change our relationship to the West," Mr. Makarkin said. "We no longer have the feeling that Europe wants to build revolutions here."

In terms of domestic politics, he added, "I would put it in the context of very careful, very gradual steps toward liberalization."

## **#8**

### **Armenian Foreign Minister Warns Turkey, Cools Karabakh Peace Talk**

**By Anna Israelian and Aghasi Yenokian**

**RFE/RL, January 18, 2010**

YEREVAN -- Turkey will risk reversing its unprecedented rapprochement with Armenia if it persists in linking the process with a resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict desired by Azerbaijan, Foreign Minister Eduard Nalbandian has said.

In a videotaped studio interview on January 17 with RFE/RL's Armenian Service (here in Armenian), Nalbandian also sought to cool talk of an imminent settlement of Nagorno-Karabakh, saying that Baku is "not prepared for mutual concessions in 2010."

Commenting on the continuing Turkish linkage of the two issues, Nalbandian reiterated his government's arguments that Ankara and Yerevan set no preconditions when they embarked in 2008 on an intensive dialogue culminating in the signing in October of two agreements to normalize bilateral relations. He also argued that neither "protocol" makes any mention of the Karabakh dispute. The interview with Nalbandian was aired by both the Artsakh public television broadcaster inside Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as by regional Armenian TV.

"Had there been preconditions, we would not have started this process and reached agreements in the first place," said Nalbandian.

"If one of the parties is creating artificial obstacles, dragging out things, that means it is assuming responsibility for the failure of this process," he warned.

President Serzh Sarkisian, who is meeting today in Moscow with Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, explicitly threatened last month to walk away from the agreements if the Turkish side fails to ratify them unconditionally and "within a reasonable time frame." But he did not set any concrete deadlines for Turkish ratification.

Nalbandian also avoided mentioning any dates, stressing instead the fact that Western powers and Russia also stand for an unconditional normalization of Turkish-Armenian relations.

"If Turkey takes a step back, then this will be not only a violation of the agreements with Armenia but will demonstrate that it is not respecting the international community's opinion, with all resulting consequences and the loss of credibility in the first instance," he said.

"Armenia, on the other hand, will -- let's not say win -- not lose anything that we had before this process," he added.

## Denounced Aliyev Statements

The minister went on to dismiss domestic opposition criticism of the protocols and, in particular, a clause envisaging the creation of a Turkish-Armenian “subcommission” of history experts.

“If we were to believe in what opponents of the protocols have said, then Turkey should have rushed to ratify these protocols a long time ago,” he scoffed.

Nalbandian insisted that the Sarkisian administration will not stop campaigning for greater international recognition as genocide of the 1915 mass killings and deportations of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, despite agreeing to what is expected to be a joint Turkish-Armenian study of the issue. The subcommission in question, he said, would be tasked with “restoring mutual understanding and trust between the two peoples,” rather than determining whether the massacres constituted genocide.

Such statements show that Azerbaijan is not prepared for mutual concessions in 2010 as well, and that Azerbaijan remains a threat to the security of the Karabakh people.

Turning to the Karabakh conflict, Nalbandian denounced Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev’s latest threats to win back the disputed territory by force.

“Such statements show that Azerbaijan is not prepared for mutual concessions in 2010 as well, and that Azerbaijan remains a threat to the security of the Karabakh people,” he said, adding that they “cannot make any impact on or intimidate Armenia or Artsakh [Karabakh].”

Aliyev issued the warning in a New Year’s address to his nation. He also claimed to have secured broad international support for Karabakh’s return under Azerbaijani rule.

Nalbandian brushed aside the claim.

“What are the mediating countries saying? They are saying what Armenia says: That the Karabakh problem should be solved in accordance with the principles and norms of international law and, in particular, the principles of nonuse of force, self-determination and territorial integrity,” he said. “This is made clear in the statement which was recently adopted in Athens by the 56 OSCE member states.”

“Azerbaijan’s leadership is trying to predetermine the result of the negotiations,” he continued. “Namely, the question of Karabakh’s status, Karabakh’s self-determination. And yet the question of Karabakh’s status must be decided by the people of Artsakh themselves.”

### 'Basic Principles'

Nalbandian pointed to a joint statement on Karabakh that was issued by the presidents of the United States, Russia, and France – the three countries spearheading the peace process – in July. The statement reaffirmed, in general terms, the essence of the “basic principles” of Karabakh peace proposed by the American, French, and Russian co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group.

“Contrary to Baku’s claims, it is indicated there that the people of Karabakh hold the key to the Karabakh settlement,” said Nalbandian. He also stressed the importance for the Armenian side of the reference to peoples’ self-determination made in a Karabakh-related declaration that was adopted during an OSCE ministerial conference in Athens last November.

“It was the first time that such a statement upheld the right to self-determination,” he added. “A statement that was also signed by Azerbaijan.”

Azerbaijani leaders maintain, however, that under the existing Minsk Group proposals, Karabakh’s predominantly ethnic Armenian population would be able to exercise that right only within the framework of Azerbaijan’s territorial integrity. These diametrically opposite interpretations of the proposed deal raise questions about the mediators’ ability to get the conflicting parties to overcome their remaining disagreements anytime soon.

Nalbandian cautioned against excessive expectations from the negotiating process in the coming months.

"I see no point in artificially accelerating the process, and I think everybody agrees with that," he said.

"Of course, some progress in bringing the parties' positions closer to each other was registered last year," he added. "But that was not enough to achieve a breakthrough. If we are able to maintain the positive dynamic of 2009, then it will be possible to improve prospects for the conflict's resolution."

## **#9**

### **Russia To Send Envoy To Ukraine, Ending Freeze RFE/RL, January 19, 2010**

Russia today finalized the appointment of its ambassador to Ukraine, ending a five-month diplomatic freeze with Kyiv.

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev made the announcement at a partly televised meeting with the envoy, Mikhail Zurabov.

"I think you should begin your duties as our ambassador to Ukraine and try to do your utmost to strengthen the friendly character of our relations," Medvedev said.

Medvedev also named Zurabov as the special presidential envoy for trade and economic ties.

The move follows the defeat of Ukraine's pro-Western President Viktor Yushchenko in the first-round presidential election on January 17, which set up a February 7 runoff between opposition leader Viktor Yanukovich and Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko.

Both are seen as friendlier to Moscow than Yushchenko, who had clashed with the Kremlin on a range of issues in recent months.

In a thinly veiled jab at Yushchenko, Medvedev today voiced hope that Ukraine's future leader will be more "constructive."

"I hope after the final results [of the presidential election] are determined, Ukraine will have a viable and effective leadership that is prepared to establish a constructive, friendly, multifaceted relationship with the Russian Federation," Medvedev said.

Medvedev appointed Zurabov ambassador in August 2009, but a few days later wrote to Yushchenko that Russia would not be sending its envoy to protest Kyiv's "anti-Russian" policies.

#### **Strained Ties**

Ties with Ukraine have sharply deteriorated since the pro-Western 2004 Orange Revolution that brought Yushchenko to power.

Yushchenko's nationalist policies and pursuit of NATO membership have long angered Moscow. His support for Georgia in the August 2008 war between Russia and Georgia and his passionate campaign for a Stalin-era famine that killed millions of Ukrainians to be recognized as genocide have contributed to further tensions.

But Yushchenko has become unpopular at home too, where many blame him for failing to bring about promised reforms and pull the country out of a crippling economic crisis. He won only about five percent of the vote in the first-round poll.

With Yushchenko out of the way, the Kremlin now appears eager to restore ties with Ukraine.

"The delay in sending Zurabov as ambassador to Ukraine was linked to Medvedev's personal relations with Yushchenko," says Yevgeny Volk, a Moscow-based political analyst. "By sending Zurabov now that it is clear that Yushchenko has no chance of becoming president, the Kremlin is sending a clear signal to both Yanukovich and Tymoshenko that it is ready to engage in dialogue with them, to cooperate with them, and expects them to recognize Moscow's interests."

But Moscow also had words of warning for Ukraine's future president.

Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov earlier today called on the eventual winner not to make relations with Moscow "hostage to their own, or someone else's, political ambitions."

**#10**  
**In Ukraine, Covering The Election, One Tweet At A Time**  
**By Iryna Tuz**  
**RFE/RL, January 19, 2010**

KYIV -- I just gave a lesson in how to correctly recount the ballots. : ))

That was a tweet posted by Neman44 -- a.k.a. Oleksiy Brituk, a 37-year-old activist and Twitter enthusiast -- early on January 18, following the close of polls and the start of the vote count in Ukraine's presidential election.

Brituk, who lives and works in the eastern city of Lugansk, near the Russian border, is a member of Ukraine's 106th regional election committee, whose function following the January 17 vote was to receive and transmit information from local polls to central election officials.

Brituk this year took a new-media approach to the often low-tech world of ballot counting. Using his mobile phone, he kept the outside world apprised of the 106th committee vote tally by posting regular tweets, such as this:

We've gone through 76 percent [of the ballots]: 66.66% Yanukovich, 16 % Tihpko, 7% Yulia.

Brituk was one of approximately 100 citizen journalists participating in Elect UA, a project in which hundreds of citizen journalists were invited to use the Twitter social networking site to keep Ukrainians up-to-date on the latest developments during the voting and the ballot counts that followed. ("ua" is the Ukrainian web domain suffix.)

Opposition leader Viktor Yanukovich and Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko are set to face off in the election's second round on February 7.

Supporters of the Elect UA project call it a step towards transparency. But skeptics say Ukraine still has a way to go before new technology becomes the norm, rather than the exception

As for Brituk, he sees the social networking tool as a key step forward in Ukraine's democratic evolution.

"During the 2004 [presidential] elections, there were some efforts made to democratize the media, as they were biased. But the efforts were unsuccessful," he says. "As far as I understand the philosophy of Twitter, eyewitnesses are now encouraged to report about what they do or see on the [Twitter] site. This way, everyone can access the news in real time."

Brituk has also turned to new media to support the work of an archaeological NGO he heads in Lugansk, using a blogging campaign to save two World War I-era British-built tanks from demolition.

Pendulum Is Swinging

He says this year's campaign differed from the 2004 race because the candidates were more adept at using new technologies to promote themselves and their positions. (Many of them have Twitter feeds and Facebook fan pages.) But average citizens, he adds, were also ready to use new media for their own benefit.

"The most [technologically] advanced sector of society, and young people overall, received more up-to-date and more interesting, diversified information," Brituk says. "I'm talking about both classical websites and blogs, including Twitter. I think the pendulum has already begun to swing in favor of new media."

Vitaliy Moroz (known as @insider\_ua on Twitter) heads the new media division at the Ukrainian branch of the international media-promotion organization Internews, which spearheaded the Elect UA project, also known as the All-Ukrainian Twitter Broadcasting of Election 2010. (All tweets contained the term #Elect\_UA, which allowed for easy searching.)

Moroz says the project's aim was to help every stage of the election appear as transparent as possible, and to provide additional sources of information for journalists and ballot committees.

The January 17 vote was given a clean bill of health by international monitors as almost violation-free. Moroz, too, says he is pleased with the results.

"The Twitter social network has proved to be one of the most efficient way of conveying information. There are about 100,000 tweets on our specialized website. The #elect\_ua 'tag' is in first place in the top 100 tags."

#### Twitter Firsts

Just how many people were tracking the election tweets is hard to gauge, however. The Ukrainian branch of the Russian search engine Yandex estimates there are about 17,000 Twitter users in Ukraine. But Moroz says the ultimate number of people benefitting from the Elect UA project is far greater, as the Twitter posts quickly trickled down to the wider Internet and even into mainstream media.

Thanks to the Twitter project, Moroz says he was among the first Internet users to see video evidence of attempts to bribe soldiers at polling stations, as well as a post about the birth of triplets at a polling station in Odessa.

Moroz says Twitter has proven its worth as the quickest way to convey news to a wide audience, and points to the critical role the social networking tool played in the massive street protests that followed Iran's elections last year.

"A certain analogy can be drawn with blogging in Iran, but there are some fundamental differences," Moroz says. "In Iran, Twitter was used after the elections to mobilize people. But in Ukraine, it was used for elections coverage, as the most rapid source of information."

#### Meant Little To Many

But Elect UA has its skeptics. Natalia Ligacheva, the editor in chief of "Telekritika" media watchdog magazine, says the election tweets may have been a bonus for plugged-in professionals but meant little to ordinary citizens.

Ligacheva acknowledges projects like Elect UA may help enhance election transparency – to some extent. But at the same time, she thinks that Internet technology still remains secondary to more traditional media.

#### Natalia Ligachova

"Television remains the main medium for political propaganda. And you can see that it's this media that proves decisive in the end," Ligacheva says. "Sergei Tihipko's campaign proves it. It lasted six months, and his main strategy was getting himself [traditional] media coverage. We don't know his team; he doesn't have the usual political forces around him. But he came in third place. I think that's due to his competent use of traditional media and outdoor advertising."

Ligacheva admits that new media has proved a powerful tool in other countries elections -- most notably in the U.S. 2008 presidential race, when then-candidate Barack Obama was credited with running the most Internet-savvy campaign the country had ever seen.

Ukrainian politics may someday reach a similar level of sophistication, she says. For now, however, Ligacheva suggests Ukrainian politics have a long way to go before Internet technology becomes a tool of civil communication rather than a negative attack tool.

"It was via the Internet that the American President Barack Obama communicated with a great number of U.S. citizens to explain his ideas and messages," Ligacheva says. "Unfortunately, in Ukraine, the Internet was used with another aim -- as a tool against political opponents. And despite a declaration about having blogs, not a single politician posted anything themselves."

**#11**  
**Award-Winning Mock Documentary Faces Ban for Extremism**  
**By Alexsky Bratersky**  
**St. Petersburg Times, January 19, 2010**

An award-winning film about skinheads is causing a stir among prosecutors who cannot seem to decide whether it should be banned as extremist.

Samara prosecutors asked a local court last year to ban the film, "Russia-88," because of numerous ethnic slurs made by its characters.

But the Prosecutor General's Office ordered Samara prosecutors on Thursday to withdraw its court request ahead of a review of the case.

If a court were to declare the film as extremist, the Justice Ministry would automatically put it on a list of banned extremist materials. Distribution of extremist materials is punishable by a fine.

In their filing, Samara prosecutors cited an assessment from Samara State University professor Shamil Makhmudov, who said "Russia-88" contains hate speech and propagates race supremacy.

The Prosecutor General's Office said in a statement that it has received two similar assessments from other experts.

But the three assessments are incomplete and therefore require a review before the extremism request is sent to court, prosecutor's office spokeswoman Marina Gridneva said in the statement.

"Since those findings were not presented in full, and parts of the findings do not correspond with one another, a further analysis is needed," she said.

"Russia-88" director Pavel Bardin welcomed the order to pull the court case for a review and said he believed that the film would not be banned now.

He said he had obtained assessments from specialists on extremism who found that the film was not extremist.

"There have been a number of different assessments, and no experts have considered this film extremist," he told The St. Petersburg Times.

The film, released in 2008, is a mock documentary about the daily lives of a skinhead gang. While it did not have a nationwide release, it was shown in a number of movie theaters around the country and won prizes at a Khanty-Mansiisk film festival in March and the Berlin Film Festival in June. The film's main protagonist is a young skinhead leader who hates and attacks dark-skinned people, only to find out that his sister is dating a native of the Caucasus.

While the film is fictional, it is made in a mock documentary style and includes interviews between the actors and real Russians who speak against dark-skinned people in Russia.

"I wanted to make a film that presents conflicting opinions," Bardin said. "That means the movie had to touch on painful subjects."

"Russia-88" is Bardin's first serious movie. The son of prominent animator Garry Bardin, he previously worked on pure entertainment projects including the "Club" series on Russian MTV.

--A State Duma deputy has called on the latest installment in the "Call of Duty" video game series to be included on the Justice Ministry's list of extremist materials, Itar-Tass reported Thursday.

Valery Seleznev, a deputy with the Liberal Democratic Party, said "Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2" contains "multiple and detailed scenes of violence" and allows players to destroy an airport and kill an agent from the Federal Security Service. The first-person shooter game, which has raised concerns in several countries, topped \$1 billion in global sales this week.

## **#12**

### **Ukraine Poll Leaders Set Sights on Swing Voters**

**By James Marson**

**Wall Street Journal, January 19, 2010**

KIEV - Opposition leader Viktor Yanukovich and Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko, bitter foes since Ukraine's 2004 Orange Revolution, began a three-week scramble for new support Monday after first-round voting in the country's presidential election thrust them into a runoff.

Near-complete returns from the Central Election Commission gave 35.3% of Sunday's vote to Mr. Yanukovich, the dour but resilient politician whose tainted victory in the 2004 race was overturned after massive street protests against alleged fraud.

His margin over Ms. Tymoshenko, who polled 25%, wasn't wide enough to make him the runoff's clear favorite, political analysts said. Ms. Tymoshenko, a former natural-gas tycoon known for her sharp tongue and crown of braided hair, is considered the more charismatic and aggressive campaigner.

But she shares the burden of the political and economic turmoil that has stymied the country under the pro-Western Orange Revolution and its principal leader, President Viktor Yushchenko, who finished fifth among 18 contenders with 5.5% of Sunday's vote.

With 40% of the first-round vote up for grabs, the question is whether Ms. Tymoshenko can persuade swing voters who are ideologically closer to her to overlook her part in the leadership's failures and support her in the Feb. 7 runoff.

Staking out her battle line, she assailed her opponent, a former prime minister, as a tool of corrupt oligarchs. She called on "democratic forces" to help her keep Ukraine on a path toward integration with Europe.

"To vote for Yanukovich is to choose the Stone Age," she said in televised remarks late Sunday.

Mr. Yanukovich declared Monday that Ukrainians had turned against their leaders. His rival, he said, "has not learned to accept her mistakes and correct them. People sense that, and don't trust her."

Ms. Tymoshenko got most of her support in the nationally minded, pro-European west and center of Ukraine. Mr. Yanukovich polled heavily in the eastern and southern regions culturally close to Russia.

The geopolitical tone of the 2004 race, in which Russia backed Mr. Yanukovych and was humiliated by the outcome, is largely absent this time. Both major candidates have vowed to repair ties with Russia while pursuing European Union membership. The economy and corruption mattered more to voters.

Nor did allegations of fraud and voter intimidation weigh on Sunday's results as they did in 2004. Western election observers reported that the voting generally met international standards, despite some confusion over who was eligible to vote from home.

Supporters of banking millionaire Serhiy Tihipko and former parliament speaker Arseniy Yatsenyuk could hold the key to the runoff outcome. They finished third and fourth, respectively, polling about 20% between them on similar reform messages branding Ukraine's traditional politicians as ineffective and corrupt. Messrs. Tihipko and Yatsenyuk said they will support neither candidate in the runoff.

"Tymoshenko needs to convince voters for Tihipko and Yatsenyuk to come out, and she needs to persuade them ...that the alternative represented by Yanukovych is much worse," said David J. Kramer, a Senior Transatlantic Fellow at the German Marshall Fund in Washington, who observed the election. "That's going to be hard...A lot of Ukrainians voted for those candidates because they are not Tymoshenko."

Mr. Yanukovych hopes to pick up votes from Mr. Tihipko, who scored well in the front-runner's strongholds. But some who voted for Mr. Tihipko said they couldn't abide Mr. Yanukovych, a former factory manager who served jail time for assault and robbery in his youth and gained attention for declaring himself a "proffesor"-misspelling the word in Ukrainian-in his 2004 presidential declaration.

"I will never vote for an illiterate leader. I would be embarrassed to have him as president," said Olha Kovalchuk of Kiev, who voted for Mr. Tihipko in the first round and now supports Ms. Tymoshenko.

Both candidates sprang into action Monday after an explosion caused by oxygen tanks killed at least seven people at a hospital in the eastern town of Luhansk. Ms. Tymoshenko rushed there in her capacity as prime minister. Mr. Yanukovych promised his Party of Regions party would give \$3,000 to the families of each victim.

Whoever wins the runoff will inherit an economy that shrank 15% last year, according to the World Bank. The new president will have to persuade the International Monetary Fund to resume a \$16.4 billion bailout program, suspended after Mr. Yushchenko signed wage and pension increases into law in October.

Getting parliament to pass the required austerity measures will be difficult. Mr. Yanukovych has said that if he wins he might call parliamentary elections this year to secure a legislative majority.

**#13**

**Seeing Orange**

**Why a Ukraine without Viktor Yushchenko might be in a better position to cooperate with the West.**

**By Samuel Charap**

**ForeignPolicy.com, January 18, 2010**

Ukrainians went to the polls on Sunday to elect a president for the first time since the dramatic events of 2004-2005 that came to be known as the Orange Revolution. Early results indicate that Viktor Yanukovych, the leader of the parliamentary opposition, and Yulia Tymoshenko, the current prime minister, lead the pack of 18 candidates, with Yanukovych in position to garner between 31 and 38 percent to Tymoshenko's 25 to 27 percent. The Central Election Commission is unlikely to issue the final tally for at least a week, but it is clear that neither candidate will end up with over 50 percent of the vote, triggering a runoff on Feb. 7. While this result might seem like a blow to Western interests, a closer look at both the last five years of Ukrainian politics under Yushchenko and the likely policies of his probable successors shows that the situation is far less dire than it has been portrayed.

Coverage of the elections in the Western press has been marked by hand-wringing about the implications of a win for either of the two frontrunners, especially the allegedly "pro-Russian" Yanukovych. One headline read, "Orange

sunset as Ukraine poll heralds turn to Russia." After all, Yanukovich was the "villain" in the Orange Revolution drama – the Kremlin-endorsed candidate who was vanquished by the purportedly "democratic," pro-Western opposition leader Viktor Yushchenko in a repeat vote after the second round of the presidential elections in 2005 that was marred by fraud. Although Tymoshenko – the Orange Revolution's other international icon – was Yushchenko's close ally during the uprising, and became his prime minister after he took office, she is now portrayed as nearly as hostile to NATO and the European Union as Yanukovich. Since the main goal of Yushchenko's presidency was, according to the prevailing conventional wisdom, anchoring Ukraine in the West, the election, no matter which of the two emerges victorious on Feb. 7, represents the Ukrainian people's repudiation of this goal – all the more so because Yushchenko appears to have garnered only 6 percent of the vote in his reelection bid.

Fortunately, these assertions are largely bogus. They rely on a superficial account of Yushchenko's presidency, mischaracterizations of the two presidential frontrunners, and a misunderstanding of the role of the president in Ukraine's political system. In fact, a Tymoshenko or a Yanukovich victory is unlikely to significantly impact the country's relations with NATO, the European Union, or the United States, and its ramifications for Russia are mixed. However, a Tymoshenko victory might present the opportunity for an end to the political instability that has paralyzed Ukrainian policy-making for the past several years, and make it more likely that much-needed reforms will be implemented.

Yushchenko does appear to be genuinely committed to integrating his country into the Euro-Atlantic community. During his tenure several important steps were taken toward that end: Ukraine became a member of the World Trade Organization; it received a promise that it would eventually become a NATO member-state; it joined the EU Eastern Partnership - a forum for the alliance's former Soviet neighbors; and negotiations began on a free trade agreement with Brussels.

But these achievements were relatively modest, and were outweighed by the damage to the country's international reputation caused by the unfulfilled promises and political infighting that characterized his tenure. With commitments consistently broken (such the conditions attached to a \$16.4 billion International Monetary Fund loan, largely due to Yushchenko's failure to veto a massive budget-busting hike in social benefits) and a president who proved incapable of demonstrating competent leadership, Ukraine came to be seen as a basket case, and genuine progress toward integration with the West ground to a halt.

Yushchenko also discredited the Westernization project within Ukraine. He pushed too hard on divisive issues like NATO membership and exacerbated Ukraine's regional fissures by forcing the country's largely Russian-speaking southern and eastern regions to use the Ukrainian language and taking controversial stances on historical issues (earlier this month, for example, he issued a decree creating a holiday and ordering cultural events in honor of Ukrainian soldiers who fought with Austro-Hungarian forces against Russia in World War I). By the end of his tenure, more Ukrainians supported a union with Belarus and Russia than joining the EU, and less than 20 percent favored NATO accession.

So despite his positive rhetoric, Yushchenko leaves office with relations with the West in a sad state. And because of both the Kremlin's visceral distaste for him and his own gratuitously provocative moves (such as not accepting the newly appointed Russian ambassador's credentials last year), he will leave his successor a relationship with Russia at its lowest point in the post-Soviet period. As counterintuitive as it may seem, a fractious relationship between Kyiv and Moscow makes Ukraine's Westward progression more difficult.

While neither Yanukovich nor Tymoshenko are likely to use the same pro-Western rhetoric as Yushchenko, their positions more accurately reflect Ukrainian public opinion. When asked what issues a new president should focus on after taking office, only 3 percent of the population put relations with the EU at the top of the list, and just 1 percent prioritized relations with NATO. Compare that to the 71 percent who thought the new president should focus on creating jobs.

But beyond the public speeches, the banal but crucial ongoing behind-the-scenes cooperation with the West is unlikely to change much. Negotiations on the trade agreement with the European Union will continue and Ukraine will not suddenly pull out of the Eastern Partnership. Neither candidate will cut off cooperation with NATO, which encompasses a wide range of joint activities with the Alliance, especially in the area of defense modernization.

Yanukovych and Tymoshenko will prioritize repairing Ukraine's relationship with Moscow, but largely because its current state of disrepair is untenable, not in order to cede sovereignty to the Kremlin. Yanukovych is no pro-Russian stooge, and during his brief tenure as prime minister in 2006 and 2007 he did little to act on Moscow's policy wish list. Indeed, the economic interest groups that back him would never allow him to sour relations with the West, where they send the majority of their exports, or open Ukraine's markets to Russian oligarchs.

So despite what's been claimed, this election will not mark a major geopolitical departure for Ukraine. There may no longer be an idealistic pro-Western dreamer at the helm in Kyiv, but a foreign policy pragmatist who moderates divisive rhetoric while continuing practical cooperation might well prove preferable.

That does not, however, make the election insignificant. The outcome will determine the balance of power in Ukraine's complicated domestic politics, where, because of constitutional reforms implemented as part of the compromise that brought Yushchenko to power, Ukraine has a (highly convoluted) parliamentary-presidential political system, which severely limits the powers of the presidency and effectively means that a president who does not control parliament cannot govern.

If Tymoshenko wins, the parliamentary opposition is likely to splinter, with a number of MPs coming over to her side of the aisle, providing her with a solid majority. She could then install one of her loyalists as prime minister, which would give her control over all three centers of power in Ukraine and put an end to the endless confrontation among these institutions that has crippled governance. For the first time since the Orange Revolution, a Ukrainian president would be able to deliver on promises and perhaps even push ahead with unpopular, but desperately needed, reforms.

For the West, this might be a major boon, since one of the top priorities in both the Europe and the United States' relations with Ukraine is energy reform. The country's highly corrupt, backwards energy sector represents a major threat to Europe's energy security, as the 2009 gas shut-off that left Eastern Europe shivering demonstrated. When Western leaders go to Kyiv, they inevitably demand action on this front, but their Ukrainian counterparts invariably fail to deliver. If elected, Tymoshenko could use her political authority to implement painful reforms such as cutting the massive gas subsidies for domestic consumers and tackling the problems in the opaque, graft-ridden energy monopoly, Naftohaz.

That said, an empowered Tymoshenko is not good news for her political enemies. She has never been known for a democratic governing style, and there is no guarantee that she will not abuse her authority to, for example, lock up some of her opponents.

A Yanukovych win would be quite different. He is unlikely to cobble together a solid majority in parliament, and might face the prospect of Tymoshenko remaining prime minister. Even if he dismisses parliament and calls early elections he is unlikely to gain control of the legislature. In short, the fractiousness that has been the hallmark of Ukrainian politics for the past five years would continue unabated.

Perhaps the best the West can hope for from these elections is a president who can govern. What is at stake is not geopolitics, in the sense of a tug of war with Russia over Ukraine, but something much more banal – a functioning state.

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**#14**

**Shuvalov Seeks Common Vision on Future of CIS**  
**Interfax, January 20, 2010**

BISHKEK - As chair of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in 2010, Russia plans to ask CIS member countries to formulate a common vision regarding the organization's future development, Russian First Deputy Prime Minister Igor Shuvalov said during a working visit to Bishkek on Wednesday.

"Russia, as the CIS chair country, believes that it is necessary to take measures together with all CIS member states, primarily in Central Asia, to determine a format of the CIS's future development in areas included in our joint agenda, which is based on our common interests," Shuvalov said at a meeting with Kyrgyz Prime Minister Daniyar Usenov.

The high-ranking Russian official, who is visiting Kyrgyzstan as part of his Central Asia tour, said that prior to celebrations to mark the 65th anniversary of the defeat of Nazi Germany in World War II in May 2010, Russian officials would visit all CIS member states.

But the Central Asian region was chosen as the first stop, he said.

"We believe that this is absolutely right, given the present-day conditions, because a large amount of interests is concentrated in this region," Shuvalov said.

"In recent years, we (Russia and Central Asian states) have made considerable progress in our bilateral agenda, but our work within the CIS has been controversial," he said. Kyrgyzstan has been playing a proactive role within the CIS, the Russian official said.

However, some CIS member states, including in Central Asia, "do not have a common approach to the future of the CIS," Shuvalov said.

CIS member states need to "agree upon a format they will recognize as their common choice," he said.

"Kyrgyzstan has always been a reliable and consistent partner for Russia both within Central Asia and as part of regional organizations such as the CIS, the CSTO (Collective Security Treaty Organization), the EurAsEC (Eurasian Economic Community) and the SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organization)," Kyrgyz Prime Minister Usenov said.

Usenov applauded the level of Kyrgyz-Russian relations, which he described as "special."

"As far as the bilateral format is concerned, Russia remains our strategic partner," he said.

Addressing cooperation within the CIS, the Kyrgyz official said that his country "places high hopes on Russia's chairmanship of the CIS in 2010," which "will help create effective mechanisms for cooperation within the commonwealth."

"I totally agree with the opinion that the time when the CIS can be regarded as a "mechanism for a civilized divorce" has passed. The time has come for the CIS to become a mechanism for mutually beneficial cooperation," Usenov said.

## **#15**

### **Russia Seeks to Cleanse Its Palate of U.S. Chicken**

**By Michael Schwartz**

**New York Times, January 20, 2010**

MOSCOW — At the mere mention of American chicken at a central Moscow market, the poultry vendors pounce.

"We don't eat American chicken," snarled one.

"Americans raise their chickens on chemicals," another called from across stacks of Russian birds. "They're all fat. There's no taste."

Of all the disputes great and petty that have marred relations between Russia and the United States over the years, chicken has provoked more than its share of angst and animosity. The United States under the first Bush

administration flooded Russia with American chicken as food aid in the early 1990s, products that Russians came to call “Bush legs.”

These stocks — mostly thighs and other parts, not many drumsticks — helped feed hungry Russians reeling from an economic collapse. They also came to symbolize the humiliation of a once-great nation reduced to dependence on food handouts.

The Russian government has spent over a decade seeking to do away with this lingering vestige of post-Soviet misery. In the latest attempt, the government imposed an open-ended ban on American chicken imports that started Tuesday, ostensibly because United States companies had failed to adhere to new food safety regulations.

Representatives from both countries began talks on Tuesday in Moscow in an attempt to resolve the dispute, though neither side seemed prepared to make concessions.

The move might cause poultry prices here to spike, but there was nevertheless a tinge of national pride last week when Prime Minister Vladimir V. Putin told Russian poultry producers that Russia was no longer dependent on Bush legs.

“Unfortunately, among many of our partners — and above all I mean companies from the United States — we still do not see a readiness to observe our standards,” he said. “If some of our foreign suppliers do not want or are not in a position to fulfill our safety requirements, then we will use other sources.”

This has no doubt unnerved American producers, who gained a foothold in the Russian market in the early 1990s, in part, their Russian critics say, by swamping Russian producers with cheap chicken. Since then, Russian officials have angered American producers and officials with a raft of restrictions and quotas meant to help domestic producers.

The Kremlin has also used chicken as a diplomatic weapon with the United States, which, aside from poultry, has relatively little trade with Russia. Moscow imposed a similar ban in 2002, after the United States raised steel tariffs, and it banned several American chicken companies shortly after Russia’s war with Georgia in 2008, after accusing the United States of helping to instigate the violence.

The continuing chicken dispute has hindered Russia’s entry into the World Trade Organization.

But domestically, the restrictions, coupled with heavy government support of the poultry industry, appear to have worked.

“There has been a rapid rise in production consisting of 15 to 16 percent per year,” said Andrei N. Teriokhin, head of the Association of Russian Poultry Market Operators. Domestic production now accounts for 75 percent of demand.

“In the next four to five years,” Mr. Teriokhin said, “Russia will be able to support itself.”

At Dorogomilovsky Market in Moscow, the chickens arranged lovingly at the poultry counter all come from farms just outside the capital, the vendors said.

“This bird was running around yesterday,” said a burly vendor named Mikhail, pointing out a chicken that was clearly freshly plucked. “They showed us on television where those Bush legs come from,” he said. “They are all American military surplus.”

Propaganda campaigns aside, United States companies were still able to sell about 600,000 tons of chicken last year worth roughly \$800 million, according to American and Russian officials, by far the largest share of Russian poultry imports.

But the new regulations, which came into effect on Jan. 1, could endanger this lucrative trade.

At issue is the chlorine bath that American companies use to disinfect chickens after slaughter. Russian health officials declared that method unsafe, and they outlawed the procedure in 2008. The European Union has long enforced a similar ban on the procedure.

The Russian government gave companies, both Russian and foreign, until this year to adopt new procedures. About 90 percent of Russian companies complied, officials said.

The Americans, however, protested. The requirements would force American poultry producers to completely overhaul their sanitation systems, officials and producers have said.

Moreover, American producers have said that the Russian government has provided no scientific evidence that chlorine disinfection is unsafe. The USA Poultry and Egg Export Council wrote a letter to the Russian government last November, citing several scientific studies that found the opposite to be true.

But the science of the matter, it seems, is not the most important point. Rather, as Gennady Onishchenko, Russia's chief sanitary officer, noted in an interview in the official newspaper Rossiiskaya Gazeta last month, the issue is one of principle.

"A problem has arisen with one country: the United States, which is again continuing to insist that we show them that it is harmful," Mr. Onishchenko said. "We tell them, 'Excuse me, we pay the money, so we set the conditions for what kind of meat we want and what kind we don't.' "

## **#16**

### **Russia to remember Holocaust victims in WWII ghetto near Moscow**

**RIA Novosti, January 20, 2010**

An event to commemorate Holocaust victims will take place in a war-time Jewish ghetto southwest of Moscow on January 27, an international remembrance day, a Jewish charity in Russia said on Wednesday.

The ghetto in Kaluga, 190 km (120 miles) from Moscow, was the first Holocaust site in Europe liberated by Soviet troops. It was freed in December 1941 about two months after it was created by the Nazi occupiers.

For the Russian Jewish Congress, which is organizing the event, International Holocaust Remembrance Day and Victory Day "remind of the tragedy and heroism, of the importance of historical memory, the danger of nationalistic ideology and the need to counter attempts to distort history," Congress spokesman Mikhail Savin said.

He said the event will attract federal and regional officials, foreign diplomats, religious and public figures, and members of the cultural community.

"Soviet troops also liberated those who survived the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp on January 27, 1945," Savin said, echoing Russian leaders' concerns about recent attempts, especially by some former Soviet states, to "rewrite history," diminishing the Soviet Union's role in World War II.

It will be the first Russian Holocaust remembrance event to take place outside the capital.

"We believe such events will promote true, not showy, patriotism," Savin said.

The United Nations declared January 27, when the Red Army liberated the largest Nazi death camp Auschwitz, an international day to remember victims of Nazism.

A UN resolution urges member states to honor the memory of Holocaust victims and develop education programs as part of efforts to prevent more acts of genocide. Another UN resolution rejects the denial of the Holocaust, in which 6 million European Jews were killed by the Nazi German regime.

The Kaluga ghetto comprised 150 inmates, 11 of who died as Germans set the compound on fire when fleeing the city. Another 14 Jews in the city were earlier shot by Nazis as Soviet officials. The Jews, who had been forced out of their apartments, had to clear the city of corpses and garbage every day.

Jewish schoolchildren's essays on life in the ghetto were later included in a book, "War through the eyes of children" published by the local authorities.

## #17

### **The Man of the Moment in Ukraine**

**By Gregory Feifer**

**RFE/RL, January 21, 2010**

Orange Revolution heroine Yulia Tymoshenko and her rival, pro-Moscow Viktor Yanukovich, may have won the top two spots in Ukraine's presidential election on January 17, but as they face off ahead of the final round next month, someone else is at the center of attention.

Third-place finisher Serhiy Tigipko says he won't endorse either candidate, but there's intense competition to get him to change his mind.

Tigipko headed Viktor Yanukovich's campaign during the infamous presidential election in 2004, when their victory -- in voting widely believed to have been rigged -- prompted thousands onto the streets.

The Orange Revolution removed Yanukovich and the rest of the old administration from power. But that hasn't stopped Prime Minister Tymoshenko, the Orange Revolution's heroine, from hoping Tigipko will join her side this time.

The mathematics are simple: Tymoshenko won 25 percent of the vote in the first round of the presidential election on January 17. That's 10 percent behind her rival Yanukovich, a gap she needs to make up to have any chance of winning the presidency in the second round.

Backing from Tigipko -- who came from nowhere to place third with 13 percent -- is Tymoshenko's surest bet to convince undecided Ukrainians to vote for her.

Tigipko is a former central banker and amateur bodybuilder who recently appeared bare-chested on the cover of a glossy magazine. He's insisted he won't back any candidate to win, but there's intense competition to get him to change his mind.

Tymoshenko first began wooing him at her campaign headquarters in Kyiv's Hyatt Hotel on election night. But in an interview with RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service on January 21, Tigipko said he hadn't accepted her offer of the prime minister's seat, along with half the cabinet's other posts. But he said talks were continuing, and left the window open for changing his mind.

"I don't know yet. I'm going to listen and I'm going to think about it," Tigipko said.

Many believe accepting the post would be suicidal. Ukraine is mired in a crippling economic crisis that would ensure that any new prime minister responsible for improving people's lives would quickly become unpopular.

Tigipko is said to be creating a new political party. Like the other 15 losing candidates in the first round, his campaign during the past year is seen as focused not on the presidential vote, but on snap parliamentary elections most believe will be called in May.

Tigipko founded a bank in the early 1990s that he later sold to the Swedbank group for almost \$1 billion. Although he was close to Yanukovich, he hasn't been tainted by the corruption allegations that have hurt many other Yanukovich allies. Many of those who voted for Tigipko said they wanted a fresh new leader to replace the same old faces they see as being tied to big business and equally corrupt.

## Cliffhanger

So far, no one in Ukraine is predicting who will win the razor's-edge presidential competition most believe will be decided only on election night.

Much of Yanukovich's lead can be explained by a split among Orange supporters who divided their votes between three candidates: Tymoshenko; the fourth-place finisher, former central banker Arseniy Yatsenyuk, who won almost 7 percent and also says he won't endorse anyone; and President Viktor Yushchenko, who won more than 5 percent.

### **#18 Moldovan delegation meets USA-based Jewish organizations Moldpres, January 21, 2010**

A Moldovan government delegation, headed by Prime Minister Vlad Filat, has had a meeting with Jewish organizations from the USA and visited the US Holocaust memorial museum. The meeting took place within the delegation's visit to the USA, the government's press service has said.

Filat thanked those present for their willingness to participate in the meeting, pointing out that to Moldova it is important to step up relations with USA-based Jewish organizations.

"We rely on the support of Jewish communities and we assure you that Moldova respects the human rights," he said.

In the context, Filat recalled the Moldovan government's position on the incident that took place in Chisinau on 13 December 2009, during which the Jewish Menorah was thrown down, and specified that a criminal case had been opened on the issue.

Filat said that the goal of the government is to promote a coherent, pragmatic policy based on the principles of tolerance and indiscriminate in Moldova and on the removal of all forms of anti-Semitism.

Asked about the Moldovan-Israeli relations, Filat said that recently the Moldovan government has launched the procedure of lifting the visa regime for Israel and relies on the fact that Israel will do the same for Moldova.

The Moldovan delegation also visited the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, where Vlad Filat lit a candle in the memory of the Holocaust victims.

### **#19 U.S. Rights Body Challenges Moldovan PM On Confronting Anti-Semitism By Andrew F. Tully RFE/RL, January 22, 2010**

WASHINGTON – Moldovan Prime Minister Vlad Filat has appeared before the Helsinki Commission, a U.S. agency that monitors human rights worldwide, during his first visit to Washington as premier.

In his speech on January 21, Filat discussed the challenge of establishing what he called "a state of law" in his country after a decade of Communist Party rule.

Comments from the chairman of the commission, Senator Benjamin Cardin (Democrat-Maryland) and its co-chairman, Representative Alcee Hastings (Democrat-Florida), made it clear that they believe Filat and his government have a long way to go to establish a strong legal system.

In his opening statement, Filat referred to an incident on December 13 in which scores of Orthodox Christians in Chisinau, chanted anti-Semitic slogans and tore down a large menorah -- an important Jewish symbol -- that had been set up in the capital's Europe Square.

Cardin praised Filat's government for condemning the incident at the time. But he noted that the menorah wasn't restored to its rightful place in Europe Square, but in a much less prominent spot. Further, he said, Moldova's justice system seemed to have trivialized the incident.

"I just want to express my concern that I believe it was not handled well with the menorah being placed back up," Cardin said. "It was almost like the vandals won. They didn't want it in a prominent location, and it was no longer in a prominent location."

Filat replied that his government did as much as it could, given the state of the country's judicial system that he inherited from the Communists.

"We want to build a society which is based on tolerance," Filat said. "I have to mention that the incident that took place on the 13th of December in Moldova is the first of its kind that happened in Moldova since independence."

"But even so, it is one too many," he continued. "The government has acted promptly in this regard, and I want to assure you that even though we do have a number of imperfections in our legal system, we will intervene in order to launch a new investigation."

The Moldovan leader promised the commission that he would share the findings of the new investigation as soon as they are available. Filat also noted that earlier that day he had met with U.S.-based Jewish organizations to discuss the vandalism of the menorah and had visited the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington.

Hastings noted that like Cardin and himself, Filat is also a trained lawyer and therefore understands the value of law above all in a democracy. He pointed to the two successful parliamentary elections held in Moldova in 2009, but stressed that democracy demands more than just well-organized votes.

"Standing alone, an election does not make democracy," Hastings said. "The rule of law is fundamental, and I hear you loud and clear, and applaud your efforts. And one of the things that I believe that you would benefit from is the experience of the more developed democracies in developing an independent judiciary."

Hastings said he didn't mean to lecture Filat, and went out of his way to say that democracy in the United States is still incomplete.

But Hastings, a former judge, emphasized that the Moldovan leader probably would learn more about the rule of law from those who recently have had to establish it, such as other states that once operated in the Soviet sphere, than he could from Americans, who have inherited a strong legal system.