

**WASHINGTON, D.C. February 26, 2010**



**TO: NCSJ Leadership and Interested Parties**

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

In Brief: Ukraine Elects Yanukovich

Dear Friend,

We are adding a new feature to the update. In a separate pdf document, we'll have stories devoted to meetings NCSJ has organized and/or participated in during the week. The new section will be available at [www.ncsj.org/NCSJ-WeeklyEvents.pdf](http://www.ncsj.org/NCSJ-WeeklyEvents.pdf). We hope this will give you a better understanding of our work.

One of the great democratic traditions occurred yesterday in Kyiv, Ukraine: the transition of power from one president to another without violence and only some controversy. However, holding elections does not alone make a democratic state.

Newly sworn-in President Viktor Yanukovich was elected in a tight contest that did not give him a clear mandate to radically alter Ukraine's vibrant political scene. In fact, many of the campaign issues remain divisive within the Ukrainian electorate. During his inaugural address, the President alluded to Ukraine becoming a neutral European country. While this was probably applauded in Moscow, it raised concerns with many Ukrainians, and in the EU and the United States.

But the biggest challenge facing Yanukovich now is the composition of the Ukrainian parliament, the Rada. He and his supporters are trying to figure out how to oust his defeated election opponent Yulia Timoshenko from her current position of Prime Minister. There is much maneuvering needed to create a new coalition, and if this doesn't work, then early parliamentary elections are a real possibility.

Ukraine doesn't need more elections. Ukraine needs a political elite willing to address the serious economic and social issues confronting the country, and a government willing to tackle the corruption that pervades almost every facet of Ukrainian life. Given what's at stake, now is the time for the new President and the new political opposition to try working together to move the country forward.

Outside of the Baltics, Ukraine is one of the few countries in the region that has free media access, an active political system and an engaged populace. Unlike many of its neighbors, who use order and stability as an excuse to limit true political discourse, Ukraine's openness and sometimes messy political situation highlights what a real democracy can look like in the former Soviet Union.

As I've mentioned in previous updates, the Ukrainian Jewish community is well-positioned with most of the major parties, and the community's access to the government is not expected to change. Much of this week's update is focused on the election and its aftermath. There are a number of interesting articles and opinion pieces about the future direction of Ukraine.

Earlier this week, I attended a reception where I met with a visiting delegation of Russian parliamentarians. Of course, the Jackson-Vanik amendment was high on their list of topics. I reiterated NCSJ's support for Russia's graduation as well detailing some of the challenges in moving this issue forward in Congress.

It appears that the recent meetings in Moscow between Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and Russian leaders as well as continuing discussions between American and Russian officials may have yielded some positive results on Iran. Support seems to be growing for new sanctions against the regime. With Russia heading in the right direction, greater attention is being focused on gaining Chinese support. For more information, please see the stories in this week's update.

As always, I am interested in hearing your feedback via email ([mlevin@ncsj.org](mailto:mlevin@ncsj.org)) or telephone (202-898-2500).

Sincerely,

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

Mark B. Levin  
Executive Director



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

NCSJ WEEKLY NEWS BRIEF  
Washington, D.C. February 26, 2010

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

1. *Moldovan President Slurs Jewish Lawmaker; Kosher restaurant opens in Moscow; US raises Jackson-Vanik abolishment without trade partner status for Russia*  
Briefs, February 23-25, 2010
2. *Bomb threat and anti-Semitic slur delay Jewish-themed Russian opera premiere*  
AFP, February 20, 2010
3. *Fishing for Jews in Russia's muddy waters*  
By Anna Rudnitskaya  
JTA, February 23, 2010
4. *For children of Russian immigrants, mainstream Jewish community remains elusive*  
By Sue Fishkoff  
JTA, February 22, 2010
5. *With election, change for Ukraine, but likely not for Jews*  
By Anna Rudnitskaya  
JTA, February 22, 2010
6. *Ukraine Leader Drops Vote Challenge*  
By Clifford J. Levy  
New York Times, February 21, 2010
7. *Ukraine's Yanukovich May Form Coalition This Week*  
By Daryna Krasnolutska and Kateryna Choursina  
Bloomberg, February 22, 2010
8. *Straining to Define Itself, Russian Opposition Tests Limits*  
By Ellen Barry  
New York Times, February 23, 2010
9. *Taking a Tougher Line on Iran's Nuclear Ambitions*  
By Jonathan Broder  
CQ Weekly, February 22, 2010
10. *Ukraine's New President to Visit Brussels Before Russia*  
By Clifford J. Levy  
New York Times, February 24, 2010
11. *Washington Sends Delegation to Moscow, via Silicon Valley*  
By Ellen Barry  
New York Times, February 24, 2010

12. *Eastern Europe Looks to Neighbors to Break Russia's Energy Grip*  
By Judy Dempsey  
New York Times, February 24, 2010
13. *Clinton Says Iran Sanctions Bill Should Allow for International Process*  
By Tim Starks  
CQ Today, February 24, 2010
14. *Poland Takes Belarus Offensive To Brussels*  
By Ahto Lobjakas  
RFE/RL, February 24, 2010
15. *Unloved But Unbowed, Ukraine's Viktor Yushchenko Leaves Office*  
By Gregory Feifer  
RFE/RL, February 24, 2010
16. *Yanukovich sworn in as Ukraine president*  
By Roman Olearchyk  
Financial Times, February 25, 2010
17. *Viktor's choices*  
Financial Times, February 24, 2010
18. *Ukraine's Yanukovich pledges to fight country's woes*  
By Natalya Zinets and Richard Balmforth  
Reuters, February 25, 2010
19. *Russia Starts Work On Baltic Nuclear Plant*  
RFE/RL, February 25, 2010
20. *Medvedev Objects To 'Endless' NATO Expansion*  
Reuters, February 25, 2010

---

## #1a

### **Moldovan President Slurs Jewish Lawmaker** **RFE/RL, February 23, 2010**

CHISINAU -- Moldovan acting President Mihai Ghimpu, who is also the parliament speaker, is being criticized for insulting a Jewish opposition deputy, RFE/RL's Moldovan Service reports.

Ghimpu told Communist lawmaker Oleg Reidman during a parliament debate on February 19 that he had met "highly cultured Jews" but that Reidman is "a shame to them." Reidman protested the remark, saying that in parliament he represents his constituency and not a particular culture or religion.

Arcadie Barbarosie, director of the Public Policies Institute, a Moldovan NGO that promotes pluralism and an open society, told RFE/RL that Ghimpu's remarks were regrettable and Reidman's reply was "dignified." He said Reidman's ethnicity plays no role whatsoever in his political activities and bringing it up is "irrelevant."

Barbarosie added that using ethnicity as a weapon in political disputes is "a matter of [poor] education."

Moldovan leaders have been criticized by Jewish groups and a human rights committee in the U.S. Congress for their weak response to an anti-Semitic incident in December when an Orthodox priest, Father Anatolie Cibric, and dozens of his followers tore down a Jewish menorah in central Chisinau.

Cibric was fined 600 lei (\$50) for the incident, which an official at the Wiesenthal Center in Jerusalem called "ridiculous."

**#1b**  
**Kosher restaurant opens in Moscow**  
**JTA, February 24, 2010**

A kosher restaurant featuring Bukharian Jewish food opened in the heart of Moscow.

Seven-Forty is owned by Ben Binyaminov, the president of the Congress of Bukharian Jews of Russia and the CIS, according to the Web site of the Federation of Jewish Communities of the CIS. The teahouse hired eight chefs from Tashkent.

Among those attending the recent opening were LevLeviev, president of the World Congress of Bukharian Jews as well as the Federation of Jewish Communities of the CIS; a chief rabbi of Russia, Berel Lazar; and Alexander Boroda, president of the Federation of Jewish Communities of Russia.

Chabad-Lubavitch emissaries supervised the change-over to a kosher restaurant.

**#1c**  
**US raises Jackson-Vanik abolishment without trade partner status for Russia**  
**Itar-Tass, February 25, 2010**

WASHINGTON-- The U.S. Congress currently raises the abolishment of the long-standing Jackson-Vanik amendment without granting the permanent status of a U.S. normal trade partner for Russia. This status is the major goal for abolishing the above amendment, chairman of the State Duma Foreign Affairs Committee Konstantin Kosachev said in the U.S. capital on Wednesday. He reported to Russian journalists on the results of the 5th joint meeting between the State Duma Committee for Foreign Affairs and the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs, which was held behind closed doors.

According to the Russian lawmaker, his U.S. colleagues are trying "to find a purely legal way to abolish the Jackson-Vanik amendment, but not to grant for Russia the permanent status of a normal trade partner." For their part, Russian lawmakers told the U.S. side that such actions are "senseless," Kosachev noted. "Such interpretation of the question does not suit us at all, Russia is obviously subject to discrimination (with such interpretation – Itar-Tass)," he noted.

**#2**  
**Bomb threat and anti-Semitic slur delay Jewish-themed Russian opera premiere**  
**AFP, February 20, 2010**

SAINT PETERSBURG --The premiere of a Jewish-themed opera in Saint Petersburg was delayed Thursday after an unknown person threatened to blow up the theatre, police said.

The historic Mikhailovsky theatre had been due to present a staging of "The Jewess" by French composer Jacques Fromental Halevy when it received the threat, a police spokesman said.

"An unknown person called the Mikhailovsky theatre to say there would be an explosion before 'The Jewess' began," spokesman Vyacheslav Stepchenko told AFP.

"Bomb specialists and bomb-sniffing dogs went to the scene," he added.

There was no information about whether or not a bomb had been found, but the Mikhailovsky theatre said the premiere would be rescheduled to Friday.

The local news agency Azhur, without giving any sources, reported that the caller had identified himself as a member of a Russian nationalist party and referred to the opera using an anti-Semitic slur.

Thursday's premiere of "The Jewess" was to have been the first performance of Halevy's opera in Russia since it was banned 70 years ago by the regime of then Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin.

The opera tells the story of a romance between a Christian man and a Jewish woman and has been seen as a plea for inter-religious tolerance.

It had been scheduled to reappear at the Mikhailovsky theatre as part of a year-long programme of cultural exchanges between Russia and France.

Nationalist sentiments and racist hate crimes became widespread in Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union. A survey by the Levada polling centre in December found that 54 percent of Russians agree with the nationalist slogan "Russia for Russians."

### **#3**

#### **Fishing for Jews in Russia's muddy waters**

**By Anna Rudnitskaya**

**JTA, February 23, 2010**

MOSCOW -- This spring, Howard Flower and his assistants plan to go to Russia's westernmost region, Kaliningrad, on a fishing expedition: They're fishing for Jews.

Flower, the aliyah director of the Russian office of the International Christian Embassy, a pro-Israel evangelical group, plans to look through telephone directories for Jewish-sounding names and meet with local leaders in an attempt to find far-flung Jews -- some of whom might not even realize they're Jewish -- and talk to them about moving to Israel.

As elsewhere in the world, determining who is Jewish in Russia is more an art than a science.

In the 2002 Russian census, the country's most recent, 233,000 Russians self-identified as Jews. Jewish leaders here and abroad consider the figure an underestimate, but they can't agree on the actual figure or how to determine it.

"Anyone who works in Jewish organizations knows that the real number of Jews is higher than records show because many people do not receive any services and thus are not registered anywhere," said Rabbi Yosef Hersonski, head of the Khamovniki community in Moscow. "Probably they are not interested. But if their mother was Jewish, we consider them Jews."

One of Russia's chief rabbis, Berel Lazar, estimates the number of Jews in Russia at 1 million to 2 million; he considers as Jews all those with a Jewish mother. NCSJ, a U.S.-based advocacy group for Russian-speaking Jews, estimates that Russia has 400,000 to 700,000 Jews, and 1 million to 1.5 million in the former Soviet Union as a whole.

A representative for the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, the largest Jewish aid group active in Russia, declined to speculate on a figure.

"We have not yet found reliable data based on sound methodology about the number of Jews in Russia," JDC representative Rina Edelshtein said.

Across Russia, approximately 100,000 Jews are registered with their local Jewish community organizations. To be registered, one has to prove Jewishness.

It's often not a simple thing.

Official records tend to be a mess. In the Soviet era, ethnicity was delineated on adults' internal passports. Those with two Jewish parents were registered as Jewish, but the children of mixed marriages could choose the ethnicity

of either parent. Since Jews suffered discrimination in the Soviet Union, the products of intermarriages usually did not register as Jewish.

The situation was captured best perhaps in a joke popular at the height of the Soviet Jews' struggle for immigration to Israel.

"How many Jews are there in the USSR?" Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev asks the head of the KGB.

"Two-and-a-half million," the KGB head replies. "But if we let them leave, there will be 6 million."

By the time the Iron Curtain fell and Soviet Jews obtained the right to emigrate, there were 1.8 million Jews in the Soviet Union, including 570,000 in Russia, according to 1989 census data. Most have left since then, moving to Israel, the United States and Germany.

The Israeli Embassy in Moscow says it knows only about those who qualify for aliyah, or immigration to Israel, under Israel's Law of Return. Under those criteria, anyone with a Jewish grandparent is eligible.

The Nativ organization, which deals with aliyah in the former Soviet Union, estimated that 530,000 Russians meet the criteria for aliyah, according to embassy spokesman Alex Goldman-Shaiman. How many are legitimately Jewish is unknown, he said.

Mark Tolts, a demographer at Hebrew University in Jerusalem and the author of the "Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe," estimates that only about 255,000 Jews live in Russia. He bases his figures on census data.

"If you speak of a million Jews, show me the method with which you counted them," Tolts said. "Given the proliferation of mixed marriages among the Jews of the former Soviet Union in the last generations, it is very difficult to empirically determine the number of Jews, according to halachah. Demographers base their figures on the statistic data they have. These are mainly census results, vital and migration statistics."

Tolts says that 1.5 million people did not state their nationality during the 2002 census; he guesses that at least 20,000 were Jews.

However, Tolts' figure of 255,000 refers only to the so-called "core Jewish population" -- the aggregate of those who, when asked, identify themselves as Jews or, in the case of children, are identified as such by their parents. It does not include those of Jewish origin who report another ethnicity in the census. Russian passports dropped the ethnicity field in 1994.

To complicate matters, some Russians of Jewish lineage are baptized yet still identify as Jews when asked about ethnicity.

"The main dilemma is who should be called Jews," said Mark Levin, the executive director of NSCJ.

Flowers, of the International Christian Embassy, called counting Russia's Jews "one of the trickiest questions facing man."

His organization recently provided the Jewish Agency for Israel with a list of 1.2 million people in Russia whose names sound Jewish, all of whom were found in online and print telephone directories.

In 2004, a similar list of 30,000 names among St. Petersburg residents was examined. The Jewish Agency chose 10,000 that seemed Jewish and called them. More than 2,000 expressed some interest either in immigrating to Israel or in Jewish community events, according to Flowers.

Along with halachic and ethnic standards, he said the methodology introduced a new way of counting Jews: "phonetically."

#### #4

### For children of Russian immigrants, mainstream Jewish community remains elusive

By Sue Fishkoff

JTA, February 22, 2010

SAN RAFAEL, Calif. -- Alex Varum was 8 years old when he left Russia. Now 35 and a real estate developer in Silicon Valley, Varum grew up in California, speaks English like a native -- much better than Russian -- and feels American in every way.

So why would he spend an entire weekend exploring Jewish identity with a group of other young Jews from the former Soviet Union, many of whose personal ties to the Old Country are as negligible as his own?

"I feel somehow that I don't belong to the American Jewish community," he says. "I don't feel Russian -- I'm American. But I don't identify as an American Jew."

That's the reality of the Russian-speaking Jewish population in the United States.

More than half-a-million strong, scattered in hundreds of cities and towns from New York to Seattle, it spans a range of religious observance, income levels and career choice.

But even those who came as young children and barely speak Russian feel a bond with their landsmen that sets them apart from what they still perceive as a monolithic, powerful and elusive American Jewish community.

"Our concept of Jewish peoplehood is more ethnic than religious," says Mark Khmel'nitsky, 30, a lawyer who has been in this country since he was 16. "With American Jews it's much more about what you do than what you are. I know I'm Jewish -- now what do I do about it?"

That question is what brought Varum, Khmel'nitsky and 80 other young professionals from New York and the San Francisco Bay area to Mitbachon, a weekend leadership and identity-building seminar for Russian-speaking Jews held this month in San Rafael, 30 miles north of San Francisco.

Five years ago the Jewish Agency for Israel began reaching out to this second generation, sending young Russian-speaking emissaries from Israel to New York, Toronto and San Francisco -- cities with large, young, Russian-speaking Jewish populations -- to help them find bridges to the larger community.

It's a tough challenge, acknowledges Anna Vainer, one of three New York emissaries and a co-organizer of the Mitbachon weekend.

"There are very few bridges to reach this population," she says. "Not synagogue, not camps, not Jewish schools."

Even those who grew up in the United States talk about "American Jews" as something apart from themselves.

"The 'booze and schmooze' model that is popular with young American Jews doesn't reach them," Vainer says.

Her colleague Alexandra Belinski, Jewish Agency emissary in San Francisco, agrees: "There is something in the Russian mentality that wants to go deeper. They're 'Russian from the inside,' even those who don't speak Russian well."

All weekend, the conversation veered back and forth between the two languages, with occasional snatches of Hebrew. In one session, participants were asked to describe themselves -- young Russian Jews -- versus American Jews of the same age.

The words on the "Russian Jewish" list showed pride in their cultural heritage -- "intelligentsia," "smarties," "ambition," "loves Pushkin" -- combined with embarrassment at their immigrant status: "fresh off the boat," "xenophobic," "lost," "strong accent."

Their view of their American-born peers was similarly schizophrenic: Envy was reflected in descriptors such as “synagogue,” “went to Hebrew school,” “Hillel,” “making donations” and “part of the community,” mixed with disdain conveyed by terms such as “privileged” and “naive.”

“The Americans have the privilege of going off to do what their hearts desire, but we are immigrants, we don’t have that luxury,” said one young San Francisco woman. “We become engineers, doctors, lawyers.”

Many in this group juggle two, three, even four identities, and just as many passports. Nearly one-third have lived in Israel, and most have family there. Some still have family in the former Soviet Union.

This gives them a deep attachment to Israel, a personal history with anti-Semitism and the shared immigrant experience of living between worlds.

“In a way, we’re homeless,” says Khmelnitsky, who recently moved from New York to San Francisco. “I don’t feel very American. Israel is the place where I could have ended up, and might still end up, so I have a very positive view of it.

“American Jews are already home. They can stand to the side and criticize.”

Few of the second generation group hold leadership positions in Jewish organizations, even though many of those raised in America attended religious school, even Jewish day schools.

“In New York, none of this population has taken a real leadership role yet,” Vainer says.

That’s not because they disdain the organized Jewish community -- quite the opposite. It’s that they can’t find their way in, or don’t feel they need to participate.

One goal of the weekend seminar was to change that perspective.

Lev Weisfeiler, who immigrated to the United States at 22, says he’s never been part of a Jewish community and belongs to no Jewish organizations.

“As a Russian Jew, you didn’t have to show external symbols of your belonging; it was obvious,” he said.

Now that his daughter is 13, however, he wants to develop tools to articulate his Jewish identity so he can pass it on to her.

Finding their way into the community doesn’t mean the Russian immigrants don’t have a deep sense of who they are and where they come from.

The notion of “discovering” their Jewish identity seems foreign to many of them, even laughable. They’re Jewish because they’re Jewish, they say -- what eludes them, for the most part, is Judaism.

“This is something that really interests me, the Jewish part, not the Russian part,” says Luba Prager, who recently made her first visit to Israel as part of a Jewish Agency trip.

Those who do become involved in Jewish organizations often turn to those with which they are familiar, particularly groups that work with their own Russian-speaking community.

At the Feb. 6 Emigre Community Gala in San Francisco for Jewish Family and Children’s Services, which resettled the city’s 45,000 recent immigrants from the former Soviet Union, more than 70 of the bejeweled attendees -- one-fifth of the crowd -- were younger than 35.

Not only were they enjoying the caviar and dancing the hora with their elders, they were helping to raise funds for the organization and making their own donations.

It was the largest youth contingent in the gala's nine years, according to Gayle Zahler, the associate executive director of the Jewish Family and Children's Service. Their presence represents the younger generation's growing confidence in themselves, she says, and their growing willingness to give back.

"My grandmother goes to the L'Chaim Center," says Yelena Frid, 26, co-chair of the event's young adult leadership committee and a native of Odessa, referring to a drop-in center for Russian-speaking seniors. "These people took time from their life to make my life better, and it's our job to give back."

The young people at the Mitbachon weekend, and at the JFCS gala, don't know if their children will speak Russian or their grandchildren will appreciate Pushkin. But just because they feel apart from the mainstream American Jewish community doesn't mean they aren't flexing their muscle and looking to build something of their own.

"There's a whole base of us, a community that speaks the same language and has a specific way of being," says Veronica Price, 32, of New York. "We are a community, and a relatively strong one, and we can teach other communities how to find their identity."

## **#5**

### **With election, change for Ukraine, but likely not for Jews**

**By Anna Rudnitskaya**

**JTA, February 22, 2010**

MOSCOW -- In a country where anxieties about anti-Semitism are never far from the surface, Viktor Yanukovich's victory in Ukraine's presidential election is being welcomed with caution by Ukrainian Jews.

Yanukovich, who has close ties to the Kremlin, replaces Viktor Yushchenko, his West-leaning rival who won five years ago in a second runoff election between the candidates. Widespread protests claiming fraud in favor of Yanukovich in the original runoff spurred the rematch. The pro-democracy protests became known as the Orange Revolution.

Yanukovich's victory, which was finalized last Saturday when his main opponent, Yulia Tymoshenko, dropped her legal challenge to the results, isn't expected to bring significant changes for the Jews of Ukraine, the head of its Jewish community said.

"We don't expect any unpleasant surprises," said Josef Zissels, chairman of the Vaad association of Jewish communities of Ukraine. "We were a bit anxious during the previous elections, as the rise of nationalism is always accompanied with the rise of anti-Semitism. But now we can say those apprehensions proved to be groundless. The level of anti-Semitism in Ukraine is now equal to that in Eastern Europe. The new government is unlikely to worsen this situation."

In the west of the country, where ultranationalistic and anti-Semitic attitudes are traditionally stronger, some Jews welcomed the Yanukovich victory.

"Unlike Tymoshenko, he is quite predictable," said the rabbi of the Ivano-Frankovsk community, Moshe Kolesnik.

Kolesnik said the community was glad the election was not accompanied by anti-Semitic violence.

"We are grateful this time no one threw stones through our windows. During the previous elections it was much worse," he said. "The local authorities here represent the whole spectrum of ultranationalists. Fortunately they mostly quarrel with each other, leaving us alone."

The election season was not free of anti-Semitic themes, however.

Sergey Ratushnyak, the mayor of one western Ukrainian town who was running for president, engaged in smear tactics against another candidate, Front for Change leader Arseniy Yatsenyuk, over his alleged Jewish roots.

Ratushnyak, the mayor of Uzhgorod, portrayed Yatsenyuk as a “brazen Jew” serving “the interests of thieves who dominate Ukraine” and using money obtained from criminal activities to capture the presidency. Others also attacked Yatsenyuk as a thieving Jew.

Ratushnyak garnered less than 1 percent of the vote, and Yatsenyuk, whose hypothetical Jewishness was never established, won nearly 7 percent.

“All we want is law and order,” said Meyer Brenner, the head of the Jewish community of Uzhgorod, a city of 120,000 located in an area sometimes referred to as Ruthenia. “Ruthenia has always been home to different nationalities that have lived peacefully here. The Orange years have not brought us much good, but there is a chance things will improve now.”

While Yushchenko sought to forge closer ties with the West, especially the United States, his tenure was not without its tensions with Ukraine’s Jews, whose population is estimated at 80,000 to 110,000 in a country of 46 million.

A fierce opponent of Russian influence in Ukraine, Yushchenko gave posthumous awards to several Ukrainian nationalists who fought the Soviets during World War II but also collaborated with the Nazis.

The latest was the awarding of the Hero of Ukraine to Stepan Bandera, the World War II-era head of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists.

Hailed by supporters as a fighter for Ukrainian independence against the Soviets during World War II, Bandera is viewed by detractors as a war criminal responsible for the deaths of thousands of Jews. Bandera fought the Nazis, but he also collaborated with the Nazi regime.

Following the announcement of Bandera’s award, Ukraine’s chief rabbi, Moshe Reuven Asman, declared that in protest he would give up the state Order of Merit Yushchenko had awarded him.

Despite Yushchenko’s predilection for honoring Ukrainian nationalists, he tried to contain the anti-Semitism espoused by many nationalists.

Yushchenko’s government shut down 26 branches of the Interregional Academy of Personnel Management, which in 2008 was named “one of the most persistent anti-Semitic institutions in Eastern Europe” by the U.S. State Department. The academy was responsible for about 80 percent of the anti-Semitic publications in Ukraine, according to the Vaad.

After the presidential election, the representative of Odessa’s Jewish community, Boleslav Kapulkin, said the results leave Jews “neither happy nor upset.”

“Both candidates are the same, as far as their attitude to Jews is concerned,” Kapulkin said. “The community’s life is unlikely to change.”

Ukrainians living in Israel helped propel Yanukovich to the presidency, giving him 72 percent of their vote.

**#6**  
**Ukraine Leader Drops Vote Challenge**  
**By Clifford J. Levy**  
**New York Times, February 21, 2010**

MOSCOW — Prime Minister Yulia V. Tymoshenko of Ukraine effectively conceded the presidential election on Saturday by withdrawing her legal challenge, saying that she did not believe that she would get a fair hearing.

Her decision clears the way for the inauguration on Thursday of the winner, Viktor F. Yanukovich, the opposition leader, capping a comeback for him. Mr. Yanukovich was humiliated in the 2004 Orange Revolution, when he was criticized as a Kremlin pawn who did not want Ukraine to become more democratic and pro-Western.

Mr. Yanukovich has sought to refashion his image in recent years, vowing to improve relations with both the European Union and Russia.

Speaking Saturday at the court in Kiev that was hearing her appeal, Ms. Tymoshenko was defiant, and her party said it would boycott Mr. Yanukovich's inauguration.

"Sooner or later, an honest prosecutor's office and an honest court will assess that Yanukovich was not elected president of Ukraine, and that the will of the people was fabricated," she said.

The end of her challenge is expected to bring about a relatively peaceful transfer of power in Ukraine, a little more than five years after the mass protests known as the Orange Revolution broke out over a disputed presidential election in 2004.

Still, Ms. Tymoshenko, an Orange leader, remains prime minister, and has rejected Mr. Yanukovich's demand that she resign. He intends to put together a coalition in Parliament to dismiss her or, if that fails, to call parliamentary elections, which could create more political instability.

Mr. Yanukovich's aides say he now has to try to unite the country by reaching out to Orange voters, who are concentrated in the Ukrainian-speaking western part of the country and tend to view him as a Soviet-style party boss. Mr. Yanukovich is from the east, where Russian is the primary language.

At the same time, Mr. Yanukovich also wants to mend ties with the Kremlin.

On Saturday, after Ms. Tymoshenko abandoned her challenge, President Dmitri A. Medvedev of Russia called Mr. Yanukovich, and the two men agreed that Mr. Yanukovich would visit Moscow in early March, the Kremlin said.

Under the current Ukrainian president, Viktor A. Yushchenko, an Orange leader who lost his bid for another term, relations with Russia had grown so tense that the Russians would not send an ambassador to Kiev.

Russia was particularly angered by Mr. Yushchenko's plan to seek NATO membership for Ukraine, saying that such a move would infringe upon Russia's zone of influence.

Mr. Yanukovich has opposed NATO membership for Ukraine.

Ms. Tymoshenko had refused to concede the Feb. 7 runoff election, which she lost by 3.5 percentage points, asserting that Mr. Yanukovich had won only through widespread fraud. Mr. Yanukovich's aides called her accusations phony and desperate.

European election monitors called the election honest and fair, and many world leaders, including President Obama, have congratulated Mr. Yanukovich.

In announcing her legal challenge, Ms. Tymoshenko had promised not to organize demonstrations.

As it began evaluating Ms. Tymoshenko's case on Friday, the Higher Administrative Court in Kiev rejected her petition to scrutinize documents from election districts in the Crimean Peninsula, a Yanukovich stronghold, and also to question election and law-enforcement officials.

On Saturday, Ms. Tymoshenko announced that she saw no point in continuing, suggesting that the judges were biased against her.

"It became clear that the court is not out to establish the truth," she said.

She also attacked the court for not permitting the proceedings to be broadcast.

The court did not directly respond to her remarks but agreed to cancel her appeal.

Ms. Tymoshenko earned fame for her charismatic speeches in the Orange Revolution, which occurred after supporters of Mr. Yanukovich were accused of stealing the 2004 presidential elections.

A court threw out the results, and Mr. Yushchenko was victorious in a new election over Mr. Yanukovich.

Ms. Tymoshenko had charged that Mr. Yanukovich had again relied on dirty tricks this year. But analysts said she had little chance in court, given the margin of Mr. Yanukovich's victory and the election monitors' assessment.

## **#7**

### **Ukraine's Yanukovych May Form Coalition This Week**

**By Daryna Krasnolutska and Kateryna Choursina**

**Bloomberg, February 22, 2010**

Ukraine's President elect Viktor Yanukovych said he expects to create a coalition by the end of this week and said failure to secure a majority in parliament by then will trigger early elections.

"We are holding coalition talks with absolutely all parliamentary groups," Yanukovych said yesterday night in an interview with the country's 1+1 television channel.

Prime Minister Yulia Timoshenko on Feb. 19 dropped a court appeal that had sought to contest Yanukovych's victory after the Feb. 7 election. Timoshenko, who said more than 1 million votes had been "falsified," abandoned her appeal after the court rejected her request for a recount and didn't question her witnesses. Yanukovych has urged Timoshenko to give up the premiership, a call that she has so far ignored.

Parliamentary Speaker Volodymyr Lytvyn has given Timoshenko until March 2 to prove she has a majority in the Kiev-based assembly, without which Yanukovych may be able to oust her through a no-confidence vote. Timoshenko's bloc needs to provide signatures to show it has at least 226 lawmakers in the 450-seat legislature.

Yanukovych has identified three candidates for the premiership, should he succeed in ousting Timoshenko. Serhiy Tigipko, who came third in the first round of the presidential vote, former Finance Minister Mykola Azarov and former Parliamentary Speaker Arseniy Yatsenyuk are all potential successors to Timoshenko, Yanukovych told Channel 5 TV yesterday.

#### **No-Confidence Timing**

Timoshenko's pre-election coalition, which includes outgoing President Viktor Yushchenko's Our Ukraine and Lytvyn's party, has 244 lawmakers. Yanukovych, who has 171 seats in parliament, will need to win over 27 lawmakers from the communist party, 20 from Lytvyn's group and at least eight from Yushchenko or Timoshenko's allies to form a majority.

Timoshenko's bloc will hold an extraordinary meeting this week to trigger a no-confidence vote by Feb. 24, her Deputy Oleksandr Turchynov said today on local television. The earlier the vote, the less time Yanukovych has to garner majority support to oust her.

"It is clear now that Yanukovych doesn't have a majority yet and therefore there is a possibility that a no-confidence vote will fail," said Yuriy Yakymenko, an analyst at the Kiev-based Razumkov Center for Political and Economic Studies.

'Money, Job Offers'

Timoshenko last week either met with or contacted by phone key members of Yushchenko's Our Ukraine group to secure their backing, Delo newspaper reported on Feb. 18.

Yanukovych may approach Our Ukraine members "with money or with job offers" in an effort to increase his bloc and to create a bridge to Lytvyn's group, Yushchenko said in televised interview with Ukraine's Inter TV channel yesterday. "Arithmetically this can be considered a coalition," Yushchenko said, though it is a "road to nowhere."

**#8**

## **Straining to Define Itself, Russian Opposition Tests Limits**

**By Ellen Barry**

**New York Times, February 23, 2010**

MOSCOW — For a few days this month, Moscow political circles were transfixed by a rather exotic spectacle: the leader of an opposition party was criticizing Prime Minister Vladimir V. Putin.

This was not just any leader. It was Sergei M. Mironov, whose career in the opposition has been distinguished by passionate loyalty to Mr. Putin. When he ran against Mr. Putin for president in 2004, he said he was running because "when a leader you believe in goes into battle, you can't leave him alone, you must stand with him." Two years later he promised that A Just Russia, his new party, would "follow the course of President Vladimir Putin and will not allow anyone to veer from it after Putin leaves his post."

Many observers long ago wrote off A Just Russia as "pocket opposition," devised to give the appearance of political competition where none existed. So it came as a surprise when Mr. Mironov, who Mr. Putin installed as speaker of the upper house of Parliament, told the television talk show host Vladimir V. Pozner that it was "outdated information to say that we, and personally I, have supported Vladimir Putin in everything," noting that the party members "categorically opposed" Mr. Putin's budget. Mr. Pozner was taken aback — "nobody in that position has said anything negative about Putin," he said later — and watched with real curiosity to see if officials at state-controlled Channel One would edit out the remark before it was broadcast in Moscow. They did not.

For six strange days, Mr. Mironov defended his right to criticize Mr. Putin while officials at the governing party, United Russia, said he should lose his post for his show of ingratitude. The fuss ended with a public reconciliation between the pro-Putin parties, and all the planets seemed to realign. But during an unpredictable political season in Russia, a question was left hanging in the air: Under the right set of circumstances, could a docile, dependent opposition turn into the real thing?

Konstantin V. Remchukov, editor in chief of the newspaper Nezavisimaya Gazeta, which is often critical of the government, has been mulling this question since October. That was when all three minority parties, including Mr. Mironov's, staged a walkout from the State Duma to protest alleged vote tampering by United Russia. Were they pressing the limits of permitted dissent? Yes. Were they motivated by a love of democracy? Hardly.

"They feel a risk of disappearing from the political scene," Mr. Remchukov said. "It is a vigorous fight for their personal physical existence. It has nothing to do with real opposition to the Kremlin."

In an interview, Mr. Mironov was cheerful about the fallout from his remarks about Mr. Putin, saying that the feud with United Russia had brought him more fan mail than at any other point in his career. With several weeks remaining before elections in eight crisis-wracked regions, he clearly is hoping to tap the anti-incumbent feeling that set off last month's protests in Kaliningrad, what he called the "real indignation of the people."

The focus of that anger, he argues, is United Russia. Mr. Mironov said he had watched the governing party take on the monopolistic arrogance of the Soviet Communist Party, which "ended with the crash of a great state." During the feud, he said, "I had the feeling that if they were allowed, they would shoot me. It cannot be faked, they were all shaking, they hated me, they were all calling me names.

"Where is it coming from?" he said. "Hatred toward a person who allowed himself to think and say something that contradicted them. It's the right of every person. We live in a free and democratic country."

But Mr. Mironov is not likely to expand on his criticism of Mr. Putin. To end the feud with United Russia, he signed an agreement promising not to oppose Mr. Putin and President Dmitri A. Medvedev on a list of major policy issues, and in the interview he quoted the prime minister and with unbridled admiration. He called Mr. Putin “a genius — I am not afraid to use this word” for retaining a measure of independence from United Russia.

“A trade union of bureaucrats may serve a function for the prime minister today,” Mr. Mironov said. “But the prime minister may change his views, his needs, or something may happen and the need for this drive belt may disappear.”

The hard reality is that A Just Russia, envisioned by its founders as a left-wing alternative to United Russia, has never gained much traction with voters, and risks dropping below the 7 percent level needed for representation in Parliament. A Just Russia’s best chance is to define itself more sharply as opposition, especially at a moment when Mr. Medvedev is insisting on more political competition in the regions.

Sergei S. Mitrokin, leader of the liberal party Yabloko, scoffed at the idea that Mr. Mironov’s party, which he called “a political structure created by the authorities themselves,” could serve as a counterweight to power. His own party, which has been marginalized to the point of near extinction over the last decade, was disqualified last week from two of the eight regional elections to be held March 14, after local election commissions rejected its signatures.

Mr. Mironov’s party, he said, “can express some degree of the protest spirit in society. But only with the goal of neutralizing it, and strengthening the control of the ruling group.”

Mr. Remchukov, the editor of *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, also watched the drama with a dose of skepticism. In an editorial last week, he urged Mr. Medvedev to grant access to the “real opposition,” parties so shut out from mass media and public life that illegal street rallies are their only outlet.

But, he added, the political self-interest of insiders like Mr. Mironov carries its own subtle threat to the system. Every time a prominent figure breaks ranks, as in the brief show of defiance after the October elections, it carves out a little more freedom.

“People begin to think they can speak out,” he said. “This fear lives and lives in the kitchens, and then someone speaks out,” criticizing United Russia or Moscow’s powerful mayor, “and then people begin to understand, ‘Look, they’re not in jail.’ That’s how all these things begin to soften, these structures, these rigid structures.

“This is good for Russia,” he said. “If we can’t get it from normal sources, let it be from this.”

## **#9**

### **Taking a Tougher Line on Iran’s Nuclear Ambitions**

**By Jonathan Broder**

**CQ Weekly, February 22, 2010**

Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr. will visit Jerusalem in early March as the latest senior U.S. official to ask Israeli leaders for more time when it comes to Iran. President Obama is working to defuse the nuclear standoff with Tehran, but his administration is worried that Israel might mount a pre-emptive strike on Iran’s nuclear facilities.

At the same time, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and her top aides have fanned out across the globe in an effort to win broad international agreement on a new set of sanctions against Iran — the fourth since the United Nations approved its first set of punitive measures in 2006. Adding some muscle to these moves, Obama also has dispatched ships and anti-missile systems to Arab allies in the Persian Gulf to counter any possible Iranian missile attacks.

Obama’s willingness to play Mr. Nice Guy with Iran appears to be over. After more than a year in which Iran repeatedly snubbed the president’s attempts at diplomatic outreach and rejected a nuclear fuel-sharing agreement it had earlier accepted, the administration is now adopting a new, harder line toward Tehran. Ratcheting up U.S.

rhetoric last week, Clinton said Iran, which she branded the “largest supporter of terrorism in the world today,” was drifting toward “military dictatorship.”

That is not to say that the president’s policy goals have changed. He still would like to sit down with Iran to negotiate a halt to its suspected development of nuclear weapons capability. But with Tehran’s refusal to respond to Obama’s carrots, the president is now looking for sticks to prod them to the table.

“What we are going to be working on over the next several weeks is developing a significant regime of sanctions that will indicate to them how isolated they are from the international community as a whole,” Obama said last week.

Obama’s decision to lead the charge for a new round of targeted sanctions against Iran is expected to please most fellow Democrats in the House and Senate, where lawmakers have passed more aggressive measures that would, among other things, cut off Iran’s importation of gasoline and other refined petroleum products. But continued congressional support will depend largely on what Obama can wring from the U.N. Security Council. A sanctions resolution is likely to mollify many of Obama’s congressional critics, especially if the administration and its European allies follow up with an additional round of tougher bilateral sanctions.

But several independent foreign policy experts warn that Obama may have to pay a heavy price for Russia’s sanctions vote at the Security Council, perhaps by agreeing to a moratorium on NATO’s eastward expansion. China looms as an even more serious obstacle. Obama may not be able to secure China’s support, which would kill any sanctions resolution if China were to vote against it or seriously dilute its international mandate should China abstain.

#### A Legacy of Distrust

Even if Obama’s policy shift were to result in a new international sanctions regime, Iran experts such as Gary Sick of Columbia University are doubtful such measures would force Tehran to abandon its nuclear program. He notes that even the harsh international sanctions that were imposed on Iraq after the 1991 Persian Gulf War failed to get Saddam Hussein to change his policies.

“Basically, countries can survive sanctions if they’re determined to go ahead with their policy,” Sick said.

When Obama took office 13 months ago, U.S. relations with Iran were fraught with distrust and tension. President George W. Bush had included Iran, along with Iraq and North Korea, as part of his so-called axis of evil. U.S. warships prowled the seas off the Iranian coast. And U.S. officials openly spoke of “regime change” in Tehran.

Obama offered a different approach, extending his hand to Iran in public statements and private messages to the country’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khomeini. But in each instance, Iran’s distrust of the United States largely prevented it from engaging with the Obama administration.

One meeting did take place last October between Iranian officials and representatives of the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council — the United States, China, Russia, the United Kingdom and France — plus Germany, producing what appeared to be a breakthrough. Iran initially agreed to a U.N. proposal to transfer much of its low-enriched uranium to Russia and France, where it would be further enriched and sent back to Iran for use in medical isotopes. But the agreement ignited a furor in Iran, where conservatives argued the West could not be trusted to return the uranium. After raising objections and backtracking, Iran announced it was rejecting the deal.

Obama had given an end-of-the-year deadline for his attempts at entente to show results. But the House passed its sanctions bill in December, after Iran rejected a U.N. demand to halt work on a once-secret nuclear fuel enrichment plant and then declared it would build 10 more such plants. The Senate passed its version last month, which, like the House measure, would punish countries and companies that export gasoline to Iran.

But White House officials say Obama doesn’t like these proposed sanctions because he fears they will hurt — and ultimately alienate — the millions of Iranians disenfranchised by last June’s questionable elections who now oppose both Khomeini and Iran’s President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Obama prefers sanctions that would target the Islamic

Revolutionary Guard Corps, the regime's praetorian guard, under whose auspices Iran is pursuing its nuclear program.

Earlier this month, Ahmadinejad gave off conflicting signals, saying he might accept the U.N. proposal to let Russia and France enrich its uranium to medical grade after all. But he also ordered his scientists to enrich the uranium themselves in a move that would bring Iran closer to producing weapons-grade fuel.

A week later, the Treasury Department froze the assets of four affiliates of a construction company controlled by the Revolutionary Guards, as well as a Revolutionary Guards commander who directs the company. U.S. officials said the company had excavated a series of tunnels used for Iran's nuclear program.

Last week, the International Atomic Energy Agency, the U.N. office that monitors the use of nuclear energy, issued a report strongly suggesting that Iran has ongoing programs to build nuclear weapons, effectively challenging a 2007 U.S. intelligence report that said Iran had halted such work in 2003. "We've always said that if Iran failed to live up" to its international obligations to halt its suspect nuclear program, "there would be consequences," White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs said.

As the Obama administration presses forward to win international support for another U.N. sanctions resolution, current and former officials say the president is well-positioned to succeed.

R. Nicholas Burns, the State Department's lead Iran negotiator during the Bush administration, says Obama has built up political capital with Russian, Chinese and Arab leaders because of his spurned attempts over the past year to begin a diplomatic dialogue with Iran. "When the Obama administration turns to a sanctions resolution in the U.N. Security Council — and even a second round of sanctions outside the council — I suspect there is going to be more receptivity to that than we've seen in the last several years," he said.

#### Convincing China

White House officials expect Russia will end up voting for a sanctions resolution. But foreign policy experts predict the price for Moscow's vote could be high. Some, like Avner Cohen at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, say Russia may demand U.S. assurances that it will not push for NATO membership for the former Soviet republics of Ukraine and Georgia, which Moscow regards as part of its sphere of influence.

The hardest sell, experts agree, will be China, which buys some 15 percent of its oil from Iran. Beijing has never liked resolutions that meddle in a country's internal affairs, fearing any precedent that also could be used against China itself. As a result, Beijing officially maintains that there is no need for further sanctions against Iran and that a resolution to the nuclear issue can be worked out diplomatically.

Clinton has tried to address Beijing's energy concerns by asking the Saudis to provide China with whatever oil it might lose from Iran under a sanctions regime. But Michael Adler, a Wilson Center scholar who is working on a book about Iran's nuclear diplomacy, says China does not want to be too dependent on U.S. allies for its oil. "They like having a diversity of sources," he said.

China is, however, reluctant to be seen as the odd man out on the Security Council. If the other four permanent members are prepared to vote in favor of sanctions, administration officials say that China is likely to bend.

But to win its vote, China could demand, as it has in the past, that any sanctions resolution be diluted. Though some in Congress might object, this result would be preferable to the White House, which wants to claim broad international backing for the measure.

"It's more important that the resolution be wide, rather than deep," said Shahram Chubin, a nuclear security expert at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Such a resolution, he added, could open the way for tougher U.S. and European sanctions.

## **#10**

### **Ukraine's New President to Visit Brussels Before Russia**

**By Clifford J. Levy**

**New York Times, February 24, 2010**

MOSCOW — President-elect Viktor F. Yanukovich of Ukraine, who tried during the campaign to shed his reputation as an obedient Kremlin ally, intends to make his first foreign trip after taking office to Brussels, not Moscow, officials said on Tuesday.

Mr. Yanukovich, whose inauguration is on Thursday, is scheduled to visit the headquarters of the European Union next Monday for meetings with senior officials. He is to hold talks with the president of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy; the president of the European Commission, Jose Manuel Barroso; and others.

Later in the week, he is likely to go to Moscow to see President Dmitri A. Medvedev and Prime Minister Vladimir V. Putin.

Mr. Yanukovich's decision to travel to Brussels seems intended to send a message to the country that he is serious about bolstering relations with Europe and that he will not be beholden to Russia. It may also help in his effort to appeal to voters who supported his opponent, Prime Minister Yulia V. Tymoshenko.

Ms. Tymoshenko's base is in western Ukraine, where people tend to yearn for closer ties to Europe and reject Russian influence. Mr. Yanukovich won the Feb. 7 election by 3.5 percentage points by rolling up large margins in eastern Ukraine, which is more oriented toward Moscow.

The Kremlin offered no reaction on Tuesday to Mr. Yanukovich's decision to go to Brussels first. Under the departing Ukrainian president, Viktor A. Yushchenko, relations with Russia were very tense, and Russian officials seem pleased about just not having to deal with him.

Ms. Tymoshenko, who dropped her legal challenge over the election on Saturday, is refusing to step down as prime minister, and Mr. Yanukovich is seeking to assemble a coalition in Parliament to dismiss her. His move to woo the West may improve his chances of garnering support from deputies who may otherwise vote for her.

Europe has long been worried about political instability in Ukraine, which has a large manufacturing economy and serves as a conduit for Russian natural gas.

In an opinion article in The Wall Street Journal last week, Mr. Yanukovich wrote that he wanted Ukraine to be a bridge between Russia and the West.

"A Yanukovich presidency is committed to the integration of European values in Ukraine," he said, later adding, "We are a nation with a European identity, but we have historic, cultural and economic ties to Russia as well."

## **#11**

### **Washington Sends Delegation to Moscow, via Silicon Valley**

**By Ellen Barry**

**New York Times, February 24, 2010**

MOSCOW — Call it geek diplomacy.

This week, in lieu of the congressmen and capitalists who typically make up delegations to Russia, Washington sent a detachment of Silicon Valley dreamboats: the 33-year-old creator of Twitter; the "chief lizard wrangler" of Mozilla; the chief executive of eBay; and — for good measure — the actor Ashton Kutcher, who has edged out Britney Spears to become the world's most popular Tweeter.

The approach is an unorthodox one, punctuated by such strange moments as Mr. Kutcher's tweeted discovery of a Siberian man whose arm bore a large tattoo of his face. But it indicates how seriously Washington takes online networking as a social force.

Among the delegation's goals was to persuade Russia's thriving online social networks to take up social causes like fighting corruption or human trafficking, said Jared Cohen, who serves on Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton's policy planning staff.

"These platforms are more than just ways to make money — they're affecting the lives of people for better or for worse," Mr. Cohen said. "As that realization takes hold, it's just a natural human thing. People want to steer it toward the good rather than the negative."

Russia has already developed the world's most active social networking audience, with the average adult spending 6.6 hours a month on networking sites, according to the market research company comScore, which is based in Virginia. The government makes little effort to censor the Internet, which has become a key platform for dissenters like Maj. Alexei A. Dymovsky, who last November posted videos saying that the police were under pressure to fabricate charges.

The projects proposed by the American delegation were neutral by comparison: a cellphone-based program to assist new mothers; a "safe jobs index" to protect women from human trafficking; and jobs tailored to deter young programmers from becoming professional hackers. The delegation also encouraged high-tech entrepreneurs to join with social activists, though in Russia, the two groups inhabit different worlds, said Esther Dyson of EDventure Holdings, a member of the delegation.

To many in business, social activists "have lost touch with what is going on," said Ms. Dyson, who has been investing in Russian companies for 20 years. "Their attitude is kind of like: 'We don't think that stuff was effective. We're entrepreneurs. It's not relevant to us.' They don't identify with these heroes of the past."

In a Wall Street Journal op-ed article last week, Evgeny Morozov chided the State Department for indulging in "techno-utopianism," the notion that social networking has a natural democratizing effect. On the contrary, he argued, crowds mobilized online tend to be chaotic and riven by internal debates, while repressive governments use the same platforms, often anonymously, to distribute propaganda.

He also warned that delegations like the one in Moscow, and a similar group that visited Iraq last year, tie the platforms too closely to Washington.

"The kind of message that it sends to the rest of the world — i.e. that Google, Facebook and Twitter are now just extensions of the U.S. State Department — may simply endanger the lives of those who use such services in authoritarian countries," wrote Mr. Morozov, a Belarussian and the author of an coming book about the Internet and democracy. "It's hardly surprising that the Iranian government has begun to view all Twitter users with the utmost suspicion."

## **#12**

### **Eastern Europe Looks to Neighbors to Break Russia's Energy Grip**

**By Judy Dempsey**

**New York Times, February 24, 2010**

BUDAPEST — With the European Union's Nabucco natural gas pipeline facing new delays and Russia's South Stream project still under negotiation, the countries of Eastern Europe are turning more to one another in search of quicker — and less expensive — ways to secure a reliable supply of gas.

At stake for these countries is energy security and diversification, issues that will dominate a summit meeting Wednesday in Budapest of the Polish, Czech, Slovak and Hungarian leaders, collectively known as the Visegrad Four.

The Soviet Union, in building long natural gas pipelines from east to west in the 1960s, with spurs to their former East European satellites, ensured that none of these countries could easily diversify. All remain heavily dependent on Russia for their oil and natural gas today.

Thus, when Russia turned off the gas last winter during yet another pricing dispute with Ukraine, supplies to several East European countries were severely disrupted. That spurred the Visegrad countries to move ahead now with potential short-term solutions, while the more grandiose pipeline plans creep along.

Some countries, including the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary, have begun establishing energy transport links of their own, known as interconnectors. Hungary also has already built bigger storage facilities for strategic reserves.

Linking gas and oil pipelines and electricity grids will not eliminate dependence on Russia, analysts say. But countries in the region will be able to help each other out in the case of shortages or a disruption in energy supplies. Indeed, that is what Hungary did last year.

“During the beginning of last year when we had the last gas crisis, Hungary was able to supply Serbia and Bosnia so as to help them,” the Prime Minister Gordon Bajnai of Hungary said during an interview last week. “Hungary was the safe haven because of its capacities, which we have been improving.”

It was still not an ideal arrangement: Hungary sent the gas through a complex French and Italian pipeline structure, which exposed the weakness of the entire E.U. interconnectivity network. Even so, the 2008-2009 crisis gave Hungary and other countries in the region a reason to speed up the linking of their pipelines.

“We are establishing interconnectors in every direction, with Slovakia, Romania and Croatia,” Mr. Bajnai said.

Land-locked Hungary is also looking to Croatia, its southern neighbor, as a viable alternative for natural gas supplies. The two countries are involved in building a liquefied natural gas terminal on the island of Krk in Croatia, and are in talks to build a pipeline that could carry the gas to Hungary. Hungary expects the pipeline would cost it €300 million, or \$407 million, Mr. Bajnai said.

The Baltic states are pursuing the same strategy with Poland, and Poland is linking up with Germany.

“The interconnectors are very important,” said Peter Kaderjak, director of the Regional Center for Energy Policy Research in Budapest. He cautioned, however, that they were only part of a much longer-term strategy if the region wanted to truly secure its energy supply.

In addition to developing renewable sources of energy, Hungary will need alternatives to Russian gas suppliers if it is to meet growing demand in the coming years. “I think we have a clear priority,” Mr. Bajnai said. “Our priority is to find an alternative source and routes. A pipeline that combines both is the best for us. Logically, Nabucco is a combination of both. Nabucco is great for us.”

Nabucco is planned to bring natural gas to Europe from Iraq and Azerbaijan, via Turkey. It is being built by a consortium of energy companies that includes MOL of Hungary; RWE of Germany; OMV of Austria; Botas, the Turkish pipeline operator; and energy companies in Romania and Bulgaria. The estimated cost is €8 billion, and completion is planned for 2014. But as of yet, Azerbaijan has not committed to the project.

In the meantime, Mr. Bajnai’s government is keeping its options open by also supporting Moscow’s competing project, South Stream, which would bring gas from Russia via the Black Sea, skirting Ukraine.

Mr. Bajnai conceded that by supporting the South Stream project, Hungary’s dependence on Russian gas would increase, not decrease. He also noted that each project was still in the planning phase.

“All these projects are dependent on the source of gas, the feasibility and the return on investment,” he said. “All these have to be taken into account.”

He would not say which pipeline he thought would be the first to deliver additional gas to Hungary.

Meanwhile, the country is also continuing to expand storage facilities. E.ON, a major German energy group, recently invested in additional storage of 1 billion cubic meters, or 35 billion cubic feet, in Hungary. A new storage site for 1.2 billion cubic meters has been commissioned. And MOL is building a facility for 700 million cubic meters, bringing the total capacity of commercial and strategic storage facilities to 5.5 billion cubic meters.

With such reserves for a country that consumes 13 billion cubic meters of gas each year, Hungary is in a comfortable position. "That mix of storage development, new interconnections and of course energy efficiency and renewables are crucial," said Mr. Kaderjak, the energy analyst.

But he said Hungary's policy of introducing more energy efficiency and increasing the use of renewables had been disappointing. "The government talks about it but implementation has been very, very slow," he said.

### **#13**

#### **Clinton Says Iran Sanctions Bill Should Allow for International Process**

**By Tim Starks**

**CQ Today, February 24, 2010**

In testimony before the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on State and Foreign Operations, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton asked lawmakers Wednesday not to restrict her flexibility to negotiate international sanctions against Iran.

The Senate passed a bill in January (S 2799) that would impose a broad range of strict economic sanctions against Iran. It is a more extensive version of legislation passed by the House in December, adding proposals that would direct the president to freeze assets of Iranian officials and prohibit the U.S. government from providing contracts to companies that supply Iran with communications monitoring technology.

The House measure (HR 2194) focuses on companies that do business with Iran's petroleum sector.

Without specifying objections to any particular provisions of either bill, Clinton asked that any bill that emerges from House and Senate negotiations give her "some flexibility" as she pursues more broad-based international sanctions through the United Nations. The Obama administration has adopted an increasingly harder line toward Iran over its nuclear ambitions, after initially trying to pursue a more diplomatic approach.

"Whatever is done here," Clinton said, she wants lawmakers to make sure sanctions legislation "supplements and supports what we're trying to get done in the [U.N.] Security Council."

Additionally, she said, "We want to make sure we don't send wrong messages before we get everyone signed up on what we can achieve internationally."

Asked by Sen. Barbara A. Mikuski, D-Md., if China and Russia were "slow-walking" sanctions, Clinton expressed optimism.

"I've seen over the last year how progress on Iran has evolved," she said. There are countries, Clinton said, that are "not sure they want to sign on, not sure they want to oppose them. But they see why Iran is a threat."

### **#14**

#### **Poland Takes Belarus Offensive To Brussels**

**By Ahto Lobjakas**

**RFE/RL, February 24, 2010**

The European Parliament today was the epicenter of an ongoing campaign in which Belarusian civil-society activists are seeking greater EU support in their struggle with that country's autocratic authorities.

The EU-Belarusian relationship has soured in recent weeks as a result of intense pressure by Minsk on the independent leaders of the Polish minority.

Poland, an EU member state, is now lobbying other member states in the bloc for a reversal of the policy of engagement which the EU has pursued towards Belarus for the past two years.

Alyaksandr Milinkevich, a Belarusian opposition leader, and Andzelika Borys, chairwoman of the Union of Poles in Belarus (ZPB), held a series of meetings in Brussels this week with representatives of political groups.

The two activists also met the president of the European Parliament, Jerzy Buzek -- a Pole -- who came out strongly in their support.

Buzek warned democratic freedoms were being trampled underfoot in Belarus. "Prisons are filling up again in Belarus -- and not only with members of the Polish minority who were recently temporarily arrested but also by regular opposition activists," he said.

Milinkevich today echoed that assessment.

"In the economy, thanks to dialogue, reforms are happening," Milinkevich said. "There is a certain modernization ongoing and a switch to market mechanisms. But as regards human rights and freedom in Belarus, the situation has not improved. In fact, it has significantly worsened."

At today's press conference, the Belarusian activists were flanked by leading Polish members of the European Parliament. Jacek Saryusz-Wolski, former head of the parliament's foreign affairs committee, and Jacek Protasiewicz, head of the parliament's delegation for Belarus, were both instrumental in securing Borys and Milinkevich a hearing.

Both were expected to meet the new EU enlargement and neighborhood commissioner, Stefan Fule, a few hours later.

At the European Parliament, Saryusz-Wolski told reporters the democratically elected leadership of the ZPB under Borys has been "brutally repressed" by the regime of President Alyaksandr Lukashenka, and the nearly 1 million-strong Polish minority has been denied all rights. Up to 40 activists have received brief jail sentences in recent weeks and a community building in Ivanyets has been seized by the government.

But Borys said it was not just her group that is being pressured.

"The case of the Union of Poles is not a case of problems between Poles and Belarusians, it is a case which entails a violation of human rights and the destruction of an independent organization of the Polish minority which wants to function normally. It is not just our issue," Borys said. "In Belarus, other civic groups are pursued and cannot gain registration in order to operate. The authorities try to present it as an internal conflict in order to distract peoples' attention, so that the issue is not seen in the context of human rights."

Saryusz-Wolski said EU-Belarus ties could now be called into question. A European Parliament fact-finding mission will travel to the country on February 25, and a parliamentary resolution is expected in two weeks' time. EU foreign ministers discussed the issue on February 22 and will revisit it next month.

Steering clear of calls for a complete break-off of relations, Milinkevich today called on the EU to make better use of the instruments at its disposal.

He said funds disbursed under the Eastern Partnership project -- of which Belarus is a member -- are too focused on promoting economic cooperation. The purpose of the money that is available to civil society bodies tends to be defeated because the EU has so far preferred to deal with officially recognized organizations. Anyone heading up an unauthorized group -- like Borys -- Milinkevich said, risks a three-year prison sentence.

Speaking Polish and facing an audience of mostly Polish journalists, all speakers were at pains to stress that this was not a mere Polish-Belarusian spat but an issue for the entire EU. Protasiewicz evoked the 1975 Helsinki accord, which made human rights violations an international concern. He said the Belarusian ambassador to the EU who had attended one of this morning's meetings had said the issue is an "internal matter."

The Belarusian representatives appeared to follow a strict division of labor. Borys repeatedly said she is not a politician, saying the ZPB's activities are limited to cultural and educational matters, leaving political demands to Milinkevich, an ex-presidential candidate.

Under EU rules, the European Parliament has no direct foreign policy-making powers. Its resolutions are not binding on the member states, who retain full sovereignty.

Although Poland's lead role on Belarusian issues is widely recognized within the EU, other member states have so far refrained from open involvement in the issue. Diplomats say Monday's discussion of Belarus among EU foreign ministers was very brief, amounting to little more than a Polish briefing on the situation.

The EU's larger member states tend to view relations with neighbors through the prism of the bloc's partnership with Russia. Older EU members have also learnt to be wary of the newcomers' potential domestic agendas -- in evidence most recently in Romania's very close interest in Moldova's problems.

Interests among the newer member states may also diverge -- the Baltic countries with their large Russian populations are quietly leery of EU involvement in minority issues, fearing damaging precedents.

## **#15**

### **Unloved But Unbowed, Ukraine's Viktor Yushchenko Leaves Office**

**By Gregory Feifer**

**RFE/RL, February 24, 2010**

KYIV -- Five years ago, hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians chanted Viktor Yushchenko's name on Kyiv's Independence Square during mass protests prompted by widespread anger over his defeat in a rigged presidential election. Braving snow and temperatures well below freezing, the demonstrators set up tents, sang, and waved the orange campaign flags that gave their movement its name.

Onstage, rock bands gave concerts and opposition leaders rallied the crowds. Tensions between the opposition and the authorities ran high, overshadowed by the possibility of a violent police crackdown.

Yushchenko promised to ensure the law would prevail and the election results would be overturned. As their struggle played out on television screens around the world, the protesters stayed out day after day, giving the opposition crucial momentum.

It was Yushchenko's biggest triumph. The Supreme Court annulled the victory of Viktor Yanukovich, the pro-Moscow prime minister and chosen successor of hard-line President Leonid Kuchma, under whose regime opposition figures and journalists were assassinated. Yushchenko went on to seal the Orange camp's victory by winning a new election.

But the man who overcame great odds to lead Ukraine during a pivotal time in its history leaves a deeply contradictory legacy. Due to step down on February 25, Yushchenko exits the presidency with Ukraine in economic crisis and paralyzed by a bitter political standoff that has Ukrainians disillusioned and wondering what the Orange Revolution was all about.

#### **Life-And-Death Struggle**

Yushchenko's Orange Revolution victory was a breathtaking achievement in a former Soviet republic whose neighbors had slid back toward authoritarianism. Russia had campaigned hard for Yanukovich, but the odds against pro-Western Yushchenko were far more than merely political.

He was fighting for his life and in terrible physical pain, his handsome face grotesquely disfigured by a massive dose of dioxin poison he accused Moscow-backed government agents of administering. At times, Yushchenko was able to appear in public only because Austrian doctors had threaded a tube under the skin of his back to deliver a constant flow of painkillers.

Viktor Yushchenko before and after the dioxin poisoning

Oleh Rybachuk ran Yushchenko's campaign and later became his presidential chief of staff. He says Yushchenko's pain was "unbearable."

"He was begging doctors just to let him die," Rybachuk says. "The doctors implanted the strongest painkiller in his back, but at some level they were hesitating. They were afraid that his heart would stop. Therefore they were really balancing on the edge of life and death."

With Yushchenko physically unable to travel, it was his main ally, Yulia Tymoshenko, who did most of the campaigning. The fiery orator adopted her now-familiar image, dressing in glamorous white outfits and wearing her newly blonde hair in a fairy-tale braid crown. Her impassioned appearances catapulted her to political stardom, but they also helped ensure Yushchenko victory.

The new president continued to suffer searing pain for years. Rybachuk says in addition to the enormous damage Yushchenko's poisoning caused his nervous system, it had a tremendous psychological effect on a man with Hollywood good looks.

"He said many times in public that when he woke up in the morning, every time, for years after that," he says, "he couldn't put up with the thought that the reflection he was seeing was actually himself. For anyone -- forget about a public figure or candidate for the presidency -- it might totally destroy your identity, your personality. It affected him very seriously."

'First Real President'

But the man whose pockmarked face became the symbol of the fight against authoritarianism wasn't always fated to become an opposition leader. As head of Ukraine's central bank in the 1990s, Yushchenko was known as a centrist -- loyal to then-President Kuchma -- who ushered in a national currency and other reforms that drew praise in the West. After his unexpected appointment as prime minister in 1999, the former collective-farm accountant rebuffed attempts by some of the country's fractured opposition to become their leader.

But Yushchenko changed his mind after he was removed from office amid bitter opposition to his government's reforms from powerful business oligarchs.

After winning the presidency, Yushchenko called himself Ukraine's "first real president."

"We were independent for 14 years, but not free," he said at the time.

The new leader vowed to attack rampant corruption, arrest criminals, and put Ukraine on a path toward Europe. He urged Ukrainians to "roll up our sleeves and work honestly from morning until night for this country."

But Yushchenko himself spent most of his first year in office traveling around European capitals receiving awards. Warmly welcomed in the United States, which had quietly backed him during the Orange Revolution, he was given the rare honor of addressing a joint session of Congress.

Back at home, Yushchenko cultivated the image of a patrician, a man who dressed impeccably -- his tie always matching his pocket square -- but who remained connected to the land. He kept bees at his dacha and was known to leave ministers waiting on important matters of state while he watered the plants in his office.

Rybachuk, who later became Yushchenko's chief of staff, says the president could have used his great popularity to carry out desperately needed reforms.

"He could have done anything," Rybachuk says. "He could have changed the constitution, called for early parliamentary elections if he had used that peak of his popularity for the top priorities for the country. But what actually happened was that the best time of his presidency was almost wasted."

### Tymoshenko Obsession

Almost immediately after his election, Yushchenko became mired in infighting with Tymoshenko, whom he had named prime minister. He fired her in September 2005, after she had set price caps on basic goods and demanded the re-privatization of state assets, which prompted accusations of populism and authoritarianism.

The first public clash between Yushchenko and his most important ally ushered in a bitter five-year standoff. Rybachuk says it also ended Yushchenko's vital political role of a uniter who'd brought Ukraine's fractious opposition together. No longer allied with the woman Ukrainians saw as an integral part of the Orange duo, Yushchenko saw his popularity plummet.

Rybachuk says he soon developed an obsession with undermining Tymoshenko that bordered on the "paranoiac."

"Tymoshenko became his only subject," Rybachuk says.

But Yushchenko's criticism only added to Tymoshenko's popularity. It also helped open the way for Yanukovych, the villain of the Orange Revolution, to emerge from political exile to take up the role of opposition leader.

President Yushchenko (left) after he installed Viktor Yanukovych as prime minister in 2006

After parliamentary elections in 2006 gave Tymoshenko's political bloc far more votes than Yushchenko's party, he restored Yanukovych as prime minister, joining forces with his old foe rather than seeing Tymoshenko return to power. That, too, backfired.

Yushchenko dismissed Yanukovych only months later, accusing him of trying to usurp power.

Tymoshenko made even greater advances in the next round of snap elections, this time leaving Yushchenko with no option but to agree to join her in a new Orange coalition. Still, he objected.

Dmitry Vydrin, then a close adviser to Tymoshenko, says Yushchenko disappeared during the negotiations.

"Tymoshenko was calling him every five minutes," Vydrin says. "It turns out he was at his dacha with his mobile phone switched off, turning over mint leaves drying in the sun. That was more important for him than the coalition."

"Mint represents the eternal for Yushchenko, the soul," Vydrin says. "The coalition was just temporary."

### Anger In Moscow

By then, Yushchenko had lost a large amount of power to constitutional reforms he'd accepted during negotiations to settle the political crisis of 2004. But he maintained control over foreign policy, and with it Ukraine's drive to join NATO.

Most Ukrainians opposed the NATO effort, especially in the industrial, Russian-speaking east of the country that had backed Yanukovych and wanted closer ties with Russia.

Moscow also vehemently objected to policies it saw as giving the West influence over former Soviet territory in its own backyard. The Kremlin feared the Orange Revolution would provide a model to those Russians chafing under its own authoritarian rule.

Russia had awarded Ukraine a five-year, highly subsidized natural gas contract in 2004 meant to boost then-Prime Minister Yanukovych's presidential bid. But after the pro-Western opposition came to power, Moscow issued a fourfold price increase. When Kyiv balked and last-minute negotiations broke down, Russia cut off supplies during a

bitterly cold winter. A second shutoff last year lasted three weeks, disrupting supplies to millions in other European countries.

Yushchenko's championing of the Ukrainian language and historical revisionism further taxed Ukraine's deeply strained relations with its centuries-long former imperial master. Chief among controversial topics was a calamitous 1932 famine that Ukrainians call Holodomor -- partly brought on by Soviet dictator Josef Stalin's collectivization of agriculture across the USSR -- that Yushchenko called a genocide against Ukrainians.

Sociologist Iryna Bekeshkina says Yushchenko believes Ukrainians' most important task is to learn values from their own history.

"He believes nation-building is the main thing, the formation of the Ukrainian nation based on the past," Bekeshkina says. "But most people haven't accepted that, they want to live for today and tomorrow."

### Nationalism Controversy

Yushchenko stirred controversy again last month by bestowing the title Hero of Ukraine on an insurgent army leader who fought against the Soviets before his assassination by the KGB in Munich in 1959.

But many in eastern Ukraine denounce Stepan Bandera for collaborating with the Nazis during World War II. The Simon Wiesenthal Center, a U.S. Jewish human rights group, criticized Yushchenko, saying Bandera's followers were linked to the deaths of thousands of Jews.

Yushchenko's move also caused an outcry in Poland, which has done much to repair traditionally antagonistic relations with Kyiv. Polish President Lech Kaczynski, who says Bandera is responsible for the mass killing of Poles, criticized Yushchenko for putting "current political interests" over "historical truth."

Yushchenko dismisses the criticism against him. In a characteristically unbending assessment last month, he defended his presidency in an interview with RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service.

"I'll never bow my head and say I failed in some way during these past five years," he said. "I gave this nation what it needs. If it can understand that, it will be its salvation. If it can't, we'll have to spend another 15 to 20 years under Yanukovyches and Tymoshenkos, under a Kremlin project, just like under Kuchma."

### Orange Revolution Repudiation

It was one of Yushchenko's final decisions in office that his burgeoning number of critics say drove the final nail into the coffin of his moribund reputation as a reformer.

Eliminated from Ukraine's presidential election after winning just 5 percent of the vote in the first round last month, Yushchenko signed a law changing the voting rules three days before a runoff between Tymoshenko and Yanukovych. The new rules, initiated by Yanukovych's Party of Regions, scrapped the requirement for a quorum of observers from all sides to approve counts at each polling station. Tymoshenko called the legislation a "death warrant" for Ukrainian democracy.

It was one of several last-minute moves that were seen to hurt Tymoshenko's chances and that prompted rumors Yushchenko had forged a secret agreement with Yanukovych to undermine Tymoshenko at any cost.

But it was Yushchenko's instruction to his supporters to vote "against all" instead of for Tymoshenko that many believe tipped the election to Yanukovych, who won by less than 4 percent.

However expected, Yanukovych's victory was a jarring repudiation of the pro-Western movement Yushchenko once led, exposing a country fundamentally split between its east and west.

Few in Kyiv can explain the apparently self-defeating actions of a politician who carried off his previous roles as prime minister and opposition leader with aplomb. There are rumors, none proven, of an affair with Tymoshenko

that ended badly. Others say Yushchenko was motivated simply by the envy of a man who couldn't stomach being bested in politics by a strong woman.

Oleh Rybachuk, Yushchenko's former aide, says he and others told Yushchenko that fighting with Tymoshenko would surely end his political career. He also says the president's family members and others in his inner circle contributed to a "vicious circle" of rumors that Tymoshenko was plotting against him.

#### Disillusioned Ukrainians

Yushchenko leaves office with corruption booming, Ukrainians suffering the effects of a devastating economic crisis, and the political leadership still in deadlock. Yanukovich is set to be inaugurated on February 25 with Tymoshenko accusing him of stealing the election and vowing to fight his promise to remove her as prime minister.

As Yushchenko departs, Ukrainians are angry that corruption is rife and the economy is in the tank. The state of affairs has left many Ukrainians disillusioned, saying they have almost no trust in politicians or their government and don't believe the Orange Revolution did much beyond offer broken promises.

Even in the western Ukrainian city of Lviv -- one Yushchenko's biggest support bases -- resident Pavel Tereshchuk echoes common opinion, saying he's been severely disappointed by the man he supported in 2004.

"Yushchenko's ideas and intentions were good, but he wasn't able to accomplish anything," Tereshchuk says. "Most important, he wasn't able to unite the country and create effective authority. Now there's conflict and complete chaos in Ukraine."

#### Uncertain Future

What place will Yushchenko occupy in Ukrainian history? Rybachuk says his legacy was to temporarily unite the opposition and "break down the wall" of the old Kuchma administration.

"He was probably the only chance for us to break down that wall," Rybachuk says, "because if the result [of the Orange Revolution] were to have been the opposite, we would already be cemented in a Belarusian type of country."

But Rybachuk says Yushchenko failed to replace the old administration with a new model.

Yanukovich plans to visit Brussels next month on his first foreign trip as president, a signal he wants to continue improving relations with the European Union. But Rybachuk says Yushchenko's presidency has left Ukraine further from achieving his major promise of European integration than it stood immediately after the Orange Revolution.

For his part, Yushchenko -- who during the election appeared to be doing everything possible to make sure Tymoshenko lost -- bitterly complained after casting his ballot in the runoff that Ukrainians would regret any outcome without him as leader.

"I think Ukrainians will be ashamed of their choice," Yushchenko said, "but that's also democracy."

The president made a quick exit from the ballot station without answering reporters' questions. It was a hasty, dour affair for the man once cheered by hundreds of thousands, and to whom he bequeaths a very uncertain future.

#### #16

**Yanukovich sworn in as Ukraine president**

**By Roman Olearchyk**

**Financial Times, February 25, 2010**

Victor Yanukovich vowed to steer Ukraine on a course between Russia and the west as he was sworn in as Ukraine's president on Thursday.

"Ukraine will choose such a foreign policy that will allow the state to get the maximum results from the development of equal and mutually advantageous relations with Russia, the European Union, the US and other governments," he said at the inauguration ceremony in the country's parliament.

He went on to describe his vision of Ukraine as a "neutral European state".

The inauguration completes Mr Yanukovich's remarkable political comeback more than five years after the Orange Revolution overturned a fraud-marred presidential vote in his favour.

Backed by some of Ukraine's wealthiest business oligarchs, the 59-year-old former mechanic takes over the strategically important country of 46m that borders the EU and where Russia and the west have jostled for influence.

Relations with Moscow soured under his predecessor Viktor Yushchenko, who pushed for Kiev to join Nato. To the satisfaction of Moscow, which strongly opposes Nato's eastward expansion, Mr Yanukovich has pledged to keep Ukraine out of any military bloc.

However, the new president's first foreign trip will be to Brussels on Monday, days ahead of a visit to Moscow.

Mr Yanukovich's immediate task will be to calm Ukraine's political infighting and stabilise the ailing economy, which saw gross domestic product plunge 15 per cent last year.

Despite a controversial background, which includes two stints in jail for petty crimes during his youth, Mr. Yanukovich's victory, in an election dubbed largely democratic, has been well-received by both Russia and the west. His inauguration was attended by senior officials from Brussels, Russia and former Soviet republics.

Mr Yanukovich's political career seemed doomed after he lost the the 2004 presidential contest as the Moscow-backed candidate. Six years on, he capitalised on bitter rivalries between the Orange Revolution leaders and narrowly beat Yulia Tymoshenko, prime minister, in a February 7 run-off vote.

Despite winning the presidency, Mr Yanukovich has yet to consolidate enough political power in Kiev to push through his agenda. In the near term, he will seek to oust Ms Tymoshenko as prime minister, a position that holds more authority over domestic affairs than the presidency.

Backed by a fragile parliamentary majority, she continues to cling to power and accuses Mr Yanukovich of pandering to Moscow's interests by pursuing "anti-Ukrainian and anti-European policies."

Mr Yanukovich threatens to retaliate by calling snap parliamentary elections. Doing so could help him form a loyal governing coalition in the long term, but it could jeopardise short-term efforts to pull Ukraine out of recession.

The most controversial of Mr Yanukovich's alleged plans include prolonging the stay of Russia's Black Sea fleet at a Ukrainian port. Another controversial plan could give Russia, Europe and Ukrainian businessmen loyal to him a management stake in Ukraine's strategic natural gas pipeline via a consortium. Granting Russian official state language status would be welcome in the heartland of his support in eastern Ukraine, but it would alienate western Ukraine, which speaks Ukrainian.

Meanwhile, Brussels has urged Kiev to put an end to political infighting and stabilise its economy by resuming cooperation with the International Monetary Fund. The IMF froze a \$16.4bn bail-out package late last year due to lack of political consensus and reforms. Should Mr Yanukovich get caught up in bitter rivalries with opponents, as Mr Yushchenko did throughout his presidency, his ability to govern will suffer.

**#17**

**Viktor's choices**

**Financial Times, February 24, 2010**

Viktor Yanukovich, who is due to be inaugurated on Thursday as Ukraine's new president, is getting his priorities right by picking Brussels for his first foreign trip.

But next week's brief visit will not make a policy. Mr Yanukovich will have his work cut out convincing the European Union he is really committed to co-operation.

The burly ex-bureaucrat takes power after a bruising election in which he beat the leaders of the Orange Revolution – Viktor Yushchenko, outgoing president, and Yulia Tymoshenko, prime minister. Mr Yanukovich first made international headlines for his unsavoury role in the 2004 election when his campaign was widely condemned as fraudulent. In most European states he would rightly have been wiped from political life. Many Ukrainians see his election now as a national humiliation.

So Mr Yanukovich has much to prove, starting with his democratic credentials. He must also revive a stalled International Monetary Fund rescue vital to bringing Ukraine out of financial crisis.

In foreign policy, he should clarify his intentions. Mr Yushchenko was unusual among Ukrainian leaders in openly backing rapid integration with the west. Mr Yanukovich is returning to the Kiev norm of balancing the west with Russia.

Mr Yanukovich is more comfortable in Moscow than in Brussels. But he is not naively pro-Russian. Ukraine's business oligarchs, his big backers, would hate to have the Kremlin breathing down their necks, like their Russian counterparts. But they do want favours from Moscow, notably cheap gas.

The EU must give Mr Yanukovich time to explain his plans. For example, he has pledged to join a Russia-led customs union as well as continuing talks with Brussels on a free trade agreement. But it is unclear if these aims are compatible. He wants to bring Russia and the EU into a consortium to help run Ukraine's vital gas pipelines. But on what terms? A genuine partnership that would stabilise the crisis-prone trade is one thing. A sell-out to Gazprom and/or shady businessmen quite another.

Ukraine missed chances after 2004 to accelerate integration with the EU. With Russia now stronger and the EU pre-occupied with other issues, a new rush to the west is not feasible. Balancing Russia and the west is a reasonable choice. But Mr Yanukovich must not forget most Ukrainians see their future in EU integration. Any short-term deal done with Moscow must not harm the long-term prospects. The EU should tell him so.

**#18**

**Ukraine's Yanukovich pledges to fight country's woes**

**By Natalya Zinets and Richard Balmforth**

**Reuters, February 25, 2010**

KIEV - Ukraine's Viktor Yanukovich was sworn in as president on Thursday and immediately pledged to fight corruption and poverty, and restore political stability to win back foreign support for the struggling economy.

Yanukovich took the oath of office in a low-key ceremony which reflected a bitterly-contested election -- still disputed by his rival, Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko -- and which highlighted deep divisions in the country.

All the same, his inauguration marked a comeback from humiliation in 2004 when mass protests, called the Orange Revolution, overturned an election that had been rigged in his favor.

Speaking to a gathering of officials, lawmakers and foreign dignitaries after accepting the traditional trappings of office, the 59-year-old Yanukovich said the country faced "colossal debts", poverty, corruption and economic collapse.

"Ukraine needs a strategy of innovative movement forward and such a strategy has been worked out by our team," he said.

Turning to the paucity of foreign investment in the ex-Soviet republic of 46 million, and its notoriously unpredictable business climate, he said he sought to restore political stability, end corruption and set out rules governing links between the state and business.

These were all "necessary conditions for investors and international financial institutions to establish trust in Ukraine," he said.

Ukraine's economy has been hit hard by the global downturn which hurt its vital exports of steel and chemicals and halved the hryvnia's value to the dollar over the past 18 months.

The country is dependent on a \$16.4 billion International Monetary Fund bail-out program, but lending was suspended late last year and is only likely to resume when stability returns.

The finance ministry said on Thursday that an IMF technical mission would visit on April 7. This usually leads to full-blown visit from IMF officials who may later decide whether to restart the program.

## TIES WITH RUSSIA

A burly former mechanic backed by wealthy industrialists, Yanukovich had a deprived childhood in eastern Ukraine and as a young man was convicted twice for petty crime including assault.

He is expected to improve ties with Russia, Ukraine's former Soviet master, after five years of estrangement under the pro-Western Viktor Yushchenko.

He has hinted at possible concessions to Moscow over the future of Russia's Black Sea fleet forces in Ukraine's Crimean peninsula and has proposed the creation of a consortium including Russia to run the country's gas pipelines.

However, he says he wants to change a 10-year-old agreement on supplies of Russian gas to Ukraine which was negotiated by Tymoshenko and Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin.

He also says he will pursue a balanced foreign policy and has vowed to push for closer ties with the European Union.

In his speech on Thursday, he kept all his options open, saying his foreign policy would be one of "equal and mutually-advantageous ties" with Russia, the EU and the United States which would reap "maximum results" for Ukraine.

His web site later quoted him as confirming he would go to Brussels next week, a visit which EU officials say will take place on Monday. He is also intending to visit Moscow in the first 10 days of March, his Regions Party said.

Yanukovich beat Prime Minister Tymoshenko by 3.5 percentage points but won the support of only a third of the 37 million-strong electorate.

The voting pattern highlighted a sharp split between Russian-speaking voters in the industrial east and south who backed him, and Ukrainian-speakers in the west and center who voted for Tymoshenko.

Tymoshenko dropped her legal challenge to Yanukovich's election only last Saturday. But she maintains he was not legitimately-elected and she and most of her bloc in parliament stayed away on Thursday, giving the ceremony a hollow ring.

Despite Yanukovich's call for the establishment of a "competent executive power", Tymoshenko is still resisting attempts to oust her as prime minister, signaling continued political tension at least in the short-term.

She is trying to persuade her allies to close ranks round her in parliament, while his party and its powerful backers are seeking to draw deputies away from her coalition and forge a new one.

Forging a coalition requires some tricky horse-trading and could be a lengthy process. If Yanukovich fails to secure a new coalition, he will reluctantly have to call new parliamentary elections, further prolonging uncertainty.

## **#19**

### **Russia Starts Work On Baltic Nuclear Plant RFE/RL, February 25, 2010**

Russian officials today laid the foundation stone of a new nuclear power station in Russia's westernmost region, Kaliningrad, which is sandwiched between Poland and Lithuania.

Deputy Prime Minister Sergei Ivanov took part in the ceremony in the Neman district, along with Kaliningrad Governor Georgy Boos, and Sergei Kiriyenko, the chief of the national nuclear-energy corporation, Rosatom.

The site of the planned nuclear plant, located just 20 kilometers from Lithuania's border, has been a cause of concern for local residents and ecologists, for whom memories of the 1986 catastrophe at the Ukrainian nuclear plant of Chornobyl remain fresh.

More than 300,000 people were evacuated in the wake of the disaster from areas in Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia. It also spread a cloud of radiation across much of Europe.

Chornobyl's long-term health effects are still unclear, but the United Nations has predicted it will ultimately cause some 4,000 extra radiation-related deaths in the most affected areas.

Aleksei Yablokov, an environmentalist, academician, and former President Boris Yeltsin's science adviser, tells RFE/RL's Russian Service that despite safety advances since the incident, nuclear power plants remain extremely dangerous.

"It's been said that nuclear power plants are like nuclear bombs that generate electricity. Any of them can explode," Yablokov says. "Not like an atomic bomb, of course, but with huge repercussions like Chornobyl. Even if the damage is 10 times less than Chornobyl, it would be a tragedy for millions of people."

#### **Lack Of Public Participation**

But Rosatom says the project is fully safe and in conformity with European standards. Company spokesman Sergei Novikov says that nuclear safety has advanced dramatically since Chornobyl and the authorities plan to keep the public informed about the new plant.

"This is a completely different type of reactor than the one at Chornobyl," Novikov says. "In order to keep people educated about this we will open a new information center in Kaliningrad even before the first block will be ready for use in 2016."

Apart from raising concerns about safety issues at the proposed plant, environmentalists are troubled by the delivery of nuclear fuel to Kaliningrad and by plans to deal with the resultant spent nuclear fuel.

Rashid Alimov, member of the nongovernmental organization ECOperestroika, tells RFE/RL that the information provided on the project does not properly address the issue.

"There was only one phrase saying that the waste would be sent to reprocessing plants" in Russia proper, Alimov says. "The only way to ship nuclear waste is by train [via] Lithuania. And the only sea route is by the Baltic Sea, which is also very dangerous."

A survey by the "Kaliningrad ekspres" newspaper showed that 43 percent of residents opposed the plant, while 26 percent said they supported it but had safety concerns.

Alimov says the public's opinion is not sufficiently taken into account. "We cannot say that information [about the project] is inaccessible, but there is a lack of public participation, or possibilities to have some influence on decision making," he says.

### Exporting Electricity

Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin signed a resolution on building the two-unit, 2.3 gigawatt Baltic Nuclear Power Plant in September 2009.

The first block is set to become operational in 2016 and the second one in 2018. Each generating unit will have an output capacity of 1,150 megawatts. The estimated cost stands at more than \$6 billion.

It's hoped the new plant, which is expected to supply power to Kaliningrad with excess power being exported into the European market, will reverse the Russian territory's precarious dependence on energy imports.

Kaliningrad faces an energy crisis in the coming years with the shutdown last December of the last reactor in operation at Lithuania's Ignalina nuclear power station, combined with Polish plans to scrap coal-fired power generation.

Kaliningrad is also facing isolation as the three Baltic states are to be integrated in the Nordic countries' electricity market as the Baltic Nuclear Power Plant is to go online.

It is the first such project to be open to foreign capital, but it is not yet clear which companies will participate.

Earlier this month, Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė said her country was not interested in joining the project, saying it also had plans to build its own new nuclear power plant.

## **#20**

### **Medvedev Objects To 'Endless' NATO Expansion Reuters, February 25, 2010**

MOSCOW -- Russia's new military doctrine does not identify NATO as its major threat but Moscow is disturbed by the alliance's "endless enlargement", President Dmitry Medvedev said in an interview published today.

Russia has made future NATO membership for Ukraine and Georgia, two former Soviet republics, a 'red line' in its relations with the West. It said in the new doctrine, published on February 5, that one of the "main external threats of war" came from the alliance's eastward expansion to Russia's borders.

"NATO is not seen as the main military threat [to Russia] in the military doctrine," Medvedev said in an interview with French weekly magazine "Paris Match."

"The issue is that NATO's endless enlargement, by absorbing countries that were once part of the Soviet Union, or who are our immediate neighbors, is of course creating problems because NATO is after all, a military bloc," he said.

Medvedev's comments clarify the stance toward NATO set out in the military doctrine, which reiterated Moscow's long-standing fears of encirclement by the alliance.

Medvedev, who will travel to Paris next month, warned that Russia would not remain indifferent if NATO continued to expand and reconfigure missiles near its borders, according to a transcript (here in English) published in Russian on the Kremlin.ru website.

"This can't but disturb us," Medvedev said, adding that it did not mean Russia was returning to the thinking of the Cold War, when NATO was the Soviet Union's biggest foe.

Eighteen months after Russia's brief war with pro-Western Georgia, Moscow's relations with the alliance remain tense. NATO members have shown little enthusiasm for Medvedev's call to create a new, umbrella European security treaty.

#### French Ship Deal

Medvedev confirmed Moscow's interest in buying advanced warships from NATO members such as France, when asked if he was planning to negotiate the purchase of a Mistral-class helicopter carrier during his visit to Paris.

Paris has said it is ready to sell a Mistral warship to Moscow, despite the concerns of Georgia and the Baltic states, which split from the Soviet Union in 1991 and joined NATO and the European Union in 2004. The potential sale is expected to come up when Medvedev meets French President Nicolas Sarkozy.

French Defense Minister Herve Morin today defended the plan, saying Russia should not be looked at as if it were the Soviet Union. "Russia has changed and we have to change the way we look at Russia," Morin told a news briefing.

Sarkozy sent his European affairs minister, Pierre Lellouche, to Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia this week to calm their nerves over any Mistral deal. Lithuania said on February 24 that Lellouche had given assurances that if it went ahead, the ship would be stripped of military technology.

The Mistral is marketed by French naval firm DCNS and estimated to cost 300-500 million euros (\$404.3 million to \$673.8 million). It is able to carry helicopters, troops, armored vehicles and tanks.