

**WASHINGTON, D.C. August 21, 2009**

**TO: NCSJ Leadership and Interested Parties**

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



In Brief: Israeli, Russian Presidents Meet; Ukraine-Russia Tension; Ukraine Mayor's Anti-Semitism

Dear Friend,

Earlier this week, Israeli President Shimon Peres met with Russian President Dmitry Medvedev in Russia. From the various press accounts, it appears that they had a very positive discussion. They covered a range of issues, including Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons, the Middle East peace process and overall Israeli-Russian relations.

Some analysts are speculating about the timing and motives of Russia's move to advance relations with Israel. Is this an attempt to take advantage of the perceived strain in relations between Israel and the United States? Or is it an attempt to pressure other countries in the region? The Kremlin reports that Israel has joined Russia in condemning attempts by several FSU countries to "rewrite" portions of World War II history, a major part of Russia's foreign agenda for much of the year. There are several stories in this week's update on the Peres-Medvedev meeting.

Viktor Yushchenko, Ukraine's embattled president, has responded to last week's scathing open letter by his Russian counterpart. In a letter of his own, he disputed many of the charges leveled against him by President Medvedev. As you may remember from last week's update, the Russian leader accused President Yushchenko of being the cause of all of the problems between the two countries. Interestingly, President Medvedev's letter and video turned out to be a public relations plus for Yushchenko, both domestically and internationally. Reactions, including some in Russia, have been almost entirely one-sided in favor of Yushchenko.

Also in this week's update, we have included articles detailing the Ukrainian government's response to the Uzhgorod Mayor's anti-Semitic tirade earlier this month. After a somewhat slow reaction, the government has charged the Mayor with inciting ethnic hatred. As I wrote last week, NCSJ has been in contact with Ukrainian authorities urging appropriate actions be taken against the Mayor. It is important that Ukraine's presidential candidates and their supporters understand that xenophobia and anti-Semitism are not legitimate tools to use during the campaign, let alone as Ukraine tries to build a civil and open society.

Sincerely,

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

Mark B. Levin  
Executive Director



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

NCSJ WEEKLY NEWS BRIEF  
Washington, D.C. August 21, 2009

1. *Jewish groups train Moldova women; Russia: man arrested in 15 hate killings over 2 years; Forbid entry to Ukrainian mayor, rabbi says; Ukrainian Mayor investigated over anti-Semitic comments; Monument to Nazi victims erected; Russian-language web site for Jewish women launched; Georgia Def Min: US training could target Russia*  
Briefs, August 15-21, 2009
2. *Is the Mayor Fit for Office? No Sure Answer*  
By Clifford J. Levy  
New York Times, August 15, 2009
3. *Russia, Israel to discuss Mideast peace, Iran*  
AP, August 18, 2009
4. *Medvedev, Peres meet on Mideast tensions*  
AFP, August 18, 2009
5. *Russian Jews ponder age-old question: Israel or the U.S.?*  
By Natasha Mozgovaya  
Haaretz, August 19, 2009
6. *Peres: Israel, PA, U.S. ready for 3-way summit*  
Haaretz, August 19, 2009
7. *Peres: Russia to reconsider missile sale to Iran*  
By Mansur Mirovalev  
AP, August 19, 2009
8. *Medvedev Changes His Tactics Over Ukraine*  
By Fyodor Lukyanov  
Moscow Times, August 19, 2009
9. *The Medvedev Show*  
By Nikolai Petrov  
Moscow Times, August 18, 2009
10. *Russia's botched policy in its own backyard*  
By Anders Aslund  
Financial Times, August 18, 2009
11. *Medvedev issues stark warning on Russian Caucasus*  
By Christopher Boian  
AFP, August 19, 2009
12. *Putin backs infrastructure spending after accident*  
By Nataliya Vasilyeva  
AP, August 20, 2009

13. *Western Optimism and Eastern Pessimism*  
By Boris Kagarlitsky  
Moscow Times, August 20, 2009
  14. *Medvedev's Message*  
By Eugene R. Rumer and David J. Kramer  
New York Times, August 21, 2009
  15. *Dear Viktor, you're dead, love Dmitry; Russia's president writes Ukrainian counterpart an insulting letter*  
The Economist, August 20, 2009
  16. *Ukraine Abroad*  
Kyiv Post, August 19, 2009
  17. *Russia's Foreign Direct Investment Falls Record 45%*  
By Alex Nicholson and Paul Abelsky  
Bloomberg, August 21, 2009
  18. *Russia Defends Stalin's Deal with Hitler*  
By Jonas Bernstein  
Voice of America, August 20, 2009
  19. *The Tymoshenko-Putin Axis?*  
By Tammy Lynch  
Jamestown Foundation, August 20, 2009
- 

#### **#1a**

#### **Jewish groups train Moldova women JTA, August 15, 2009**

KIEV, Ukraine –Two Jewish relief groups joined to train Jewish women in Moldova to navigate the workplace.

The program based in Kishniev and sponsored by World Jewish Relief, based in London, and World ORT, the international Jewish education and training group, will train 60 women in communicating effectively with potential employers and colleagues.

Moldova is the poorest country in Europe with the highest percentage of single parent families.

The course aims to assist single-parent or otherwise vulnerable families to support themselves so as to reduce the burden of welfare provision within Moldova's Jewish community, which numbers an estimated 23,000, most depending on external support.

#### **#1b**

#### **Russia: Man Arrested in 15 Hate Killings Over 2 Years By Michael Schwartz New York Times, August 15, 2009**

The police in Moscow have arrested a man suspected of killing 15 people because they did not look Slavic, the Interior Ministry said Friday. The 21-year-old man, who was not identified, committed the murders in 2007 and 2008, the ministry said in a statement. He was arrested in 2008 but escaped, and was captured again on Thursday at a Moscow train station.

Xenophobic attacks are not uncommon in Russia and are typically committed against immigrants from Central Asia or the Caucasus. Almost 40 people have been reported killed and 200 injured in xenophobic attacks in 2009, the Sova Center, an organization that monitors hate crimes, said this month.

#### **#1c**

##### **Forbid entry to Ukrainian mayor, rabbi says JTA August 19, 2009**

KIEV, Ukraine -- A Ukrainian chief rabbi has called on several states and unions to forbid the entry of a controversial mayor to their countries.

Rabbi Avraham Wolf, chief rabbi of Odessa and Southern Ukraine, appealed to the countries to forbid entry to Uzhgorod Mayor Sergey Ratushnyak, who allegedly assaulted a young woman on Aug. 6 as she campaigned for a leading presidential candidate, and then made several xenophobic and anti-Semitic statements.

His open letter was addressed to Javier Solana, secretary general of the European Union; Avigdor Liberman, foreign minister of Israel; Sergey Lavrov, foreign minister of Russia; and Hillary Rodham Clinton, the U.S. secretary of state.

Wolf called on the ministers to demonstrate to those "Ukrainian politicians who are going to play the Jewish card during upcoming presidential and parliamentary elections that such intentions run counter to the interests of our country as well as the whole world community."

At the same time, Wolf welcomed the Ukrainian politicians who condemned Ratushnyak's behavior and statements, as well as the prosecutor's decision to charge him on three separate counts, including inciting ethnic hatred, and appealed to the leaders "to support the processes of extirpating xenophobia and inciting interethnic hatred in Ukraine."

#### **#1d**

##### **Ukrainian Mayor Investigated Over Anti-Semitic Comments RFE/RL, August 20, 2009**

UZHHOROD, Ukraine -- The mayor of the western Ukrainian city of Uzhhorod has been asked not to leave the city while an investigation takes place into alleged criminal actions, RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service reports.

Serhiy Ratushnyak was told by prosecutors in Zakarpattia Oblast, of which Uzhhorod is the capital, to inform them of any possible trips outside the city while an investigation is conducted into charges of abuse of power, hooliganism, and violating ethnic and racial equality laws.

Ratushnyak is accused of using anti-Semitic language against parliament deputy Arseniy Yatsenyuk and his Front For Change movement.

Ratushnyak reportedly repeatedly called Yatsenyuk, who is running for president, "Jew Yatsenyuk," and described him as an "impudent Jew."

He is also alleged to have attacked a young woman working for the Front For Change and destroying a tent belonging to the movement. Ratushnyak says the woman attacked him.

#### **#1e**

##### **Monument to Nazi victims erected JTA, August 21, 2009**

KIEV, Ukraine -- A monument to Nazi victims was erected in Ukraine's Zhytomyr region.

The memorial complex in the town of Andrushivka was dedicated Thursday. The commemoration ceremony was attended by local officials, rabbis, representatives of the Embassy of Israel in Ukraine, Jewish community representatives, WWII veterans and a delegation from Israel, whose members were born in the region.

The complex includes a monument to mother and child, menorah and memorial plaques including victims' names.

The monument was built with the financial support of Ukrainian parliament lawmaker Nikolay Rudchenko and the deputy of the Zhytomyr regional council, Nikolay Oleschenko. Zhytomyr is a region in Ukraine's north. The regional Jewish community funded the menorah and memorial plaques.

More than 252 Jewish women and 25 children were killed by the Nazis in Andrushivka in August 1941 and, according to Aleks Balshin, a citizen of Israel who was born in Andrushivka, more than 1,390 Jews were killed by the Nazis in Andrushivka in 1941-1943.

**#1f**

**Russian-language Web site for Jewish women launched  
JTA, August 21, 2009**

KIEV, Ukraine -- The Lugansk Jewish community launched a Russian-language Web site for Jewish women.

The site, Jewishwoman.ru features news from and for Jewish communities in the former Soviet Union and Baltic states, as well as information on Jewish holidays and traditions, Jewish education, family life and marriage.

The site is an online version of the publication "The World of Jewish Woman," created more than 10 years ago by the Jewish community of the eastern Ukrainian city Lugansk. More than 60 women serving as Chabad emissaries in the former Soviet Union and Israel contribute to it. The Web site offers visitors the interactive opportunity to ask questions to rabbis and their wives, and to communicate electronically with other Jews.

**#1g**

**Georgia Def Min: US training could target Russia  
By Lara Jakes  
AP, August 21, 2009**

TBILISI, Georgia Georgia's defense minister said Friday that training the U.S. military is giving to the country's soldiers headed to Afghanistan involve skills that could be used in any new outbreak of fighting between Georgia and Russia.

Vasil Sikharulidze told The Associated Press in an interview that the training by the U.S. Marine Corps will not only give his troops the skills necessary to fight alongside NATO allies in Afghanistan, but also could come into play if another war broke out between Georgia and Russia.

His comments could put the United States in an awkward position with Russia, which has strongly spoken against any U.S. military assistance to Georgia. Sikharulidze was meeting with U.S. Marine commandant Gen. James Conway to discuss the training program that begins Sept. 1.

Conway earlier told The AP that the training focuses on counterinsurgency tactics that would not be very useful against Russia's large conventional army.

Georgia says last year's five-day war started with a Russian invasion of the South Ossetia separatist region and that Russia aimed to regain control of Georgia. Russia says the fighting started with a Georgian assault.

Russia recognizes South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent.

Sikharulidze also said that while Georgia has committed to fighting in Afghanistan for two years, officials would pull back its troops if war broke out again with Russia.

## #2

### **Is the Mayor Fit for Office? No Sure Answer**

**By Clifford J. Levy**

**New York Times, August 15, 2009**

Leonid M. Chernovetsky, this city's unpredictable mayor, likes to answer his critics in his own special way.

When Parliament members said he was acting bizarrely and needed a psychiatric exam, he went to a stadium where he jogged for the cameras before yanking off his shirt and doing pull-ups. He swam laps and flexed his muscles like Charles Atlas. Then he held a news conference — in his tiny bathing suit.

"They are judging me today and want me to spend the rest of my life behind the bars of a psychiatric hospital," Mr. Chernovetsky said. "Look at my body, at how I express my thoughts. I am absolutely healthy. I think logically and philosophically."

True, he was in fine physical shape for a man of 57, though perhaps this was not the wisest strategy for proving one's competence.

But that is Mr. Chernovetsky. Think New York City has had its share of outsize personalities as mayor? They have got nothing on Mr. Chernovetsky, who is also known as Lenny Cosmos because sometimes his head seems to be someplace far, far away.

He makes eccentric suggestions (a statue of Ukraine's most famous poet should be erected in Africa) and staffing decisions (firing a zoo director for not finding a mate for an elephant), and personal gestures (offering to sell his kisses in a lottery).

He interrupts meetings by warbling melancholy Soviet ballads, and even issued a CD on which he covers his favorites. "Who sings better than me?" he asked. "Nobody does, besides God."

And time after time, he does loopy things to prove that he is not loopy.

Politics in Ukraine is already a bit of a sideshow, what with the president and his rivals so estranged that the country still lacks a finance minister, which might be good to have in, say, a financial crisis.

Mr. Chernovetsky's ability to retain his job, though, may be an especially telling sign of the breakdown in the political culture since the Orange Revolution of 2004, which brought to power a pro-Western government that has increasingly exasperated the public.

He is widely regarded as a problem. But the nation's leaders cannot stop squabbling long enough to agree on what to do about him.

In an interview at his office, Mr. Chernovetsky dismissed complaints about his behavior, maintaining that he was misunderstood and had wide popularity.

He spoke of what he said were his accomplishments in Kiev, a city of nearly three million people: nurturing development, combating corruption and helping the poor.

He said he had carried out innovations like setting up an information hot line that has received millions of calls. He is given credit for improving the city's greenery and restoring its historic sites. His backers say that as a result, Kiev, with its lovely cathedrals and old neighborhoods, has remained a charming city that continues to draw businesses and tourists, no matter the tough times.

“Everyone wants me to leave, except the people who elected me,” Mr. Chernovetsky said. “My voters are ordinary people, and I speak to them in one language, the language of ordinary people, even though, of course, I am not an ordinary person.”

Mr. Chernovetsky repeatedly returned to that theme, noting that he used to be an exceptionally talented businessman and lawyer who became a millionaire in banking.

“They have always called me crazy,” he said. “The thing is, crazy are the people who don’t understand that the future belongs to those who are not standard, who are open and vulnerable.”

Still, even in a relatively tame, 45-minute discussion in his office in Kiev, Mr. Chernovetsky seemed a little off. For much of the interview, he would not look at his questioner, speaking in almost a monotone while staring at the floor.

In public appearances, this bearing — combined with occasional bursts of exuberance — has prompted speculation that he abuses alcohol or drugs, or is on heavy medication. At one event promoting religious diversity, he slurred his language, pausing at length as he fumbled for the words for Judaism and Hinduism.

HE has denied the rumors about drugs and alcohol use, though it has not helped that he has taken short, unexplained leaves of absence.

Mr. Chernovetsky, who is married with two children, was elected in 2006 after supporting the Orange Revolution, and became known for courting retired people by strolling neighborhoods and handing out flour and other food.

There are three major political factions in Ukraine, led by President Viktor A. Yushchenko, Prime Minister Yulia V. Tymoshenko and Viktor F. Yanukovich, a former prime minister. Mr. Chernovetsky, an independent, has at times built alliances with each. All three factions covet the mayor’s office but fear that removing Mr. Chernovetsky through something akin to impeachment would allow a rival’s candidate to take over.

In 2008, the Parliament, led by Ms. Tymoshenko, tried to unseat Mr. Chernovetsky by calling a special election. He won, after his opponents could not unify around a candidate and split the vote. He has since suggested that he might run for president.

His rivals have not let up, assailing him for supposedly mistreating city workers, bungling real estate projects and allowing utilities and other services to deteriorate. At one point, the subway system was threatened with closing because it was running out of money.

Above all, they said, his behavior makes Kiev look ridiculous.

At a protest in front of City Hall in the spring, Dr. Larisa Kanarovska, head of a doctors’ union, led hundreds of workers in calling for the mayor’s ouster. She recalled that when she met with him to describe troubles at hospitals and clinics, including the city’s failure to pay salaries, he responded harshly.

“He called us money-grubbing wolves, thieves and bandits,” Dr. Kanarovska said.

SHE said she had an inkling of why he did not like the doctors’ union. “We have diagnosed him as having some sort of mental illness,” she said.

Mr. Chernovetsky acknowledged that such attacks were unpleasant, but he said that he relied on his faith to bolster him, reading the Bible daily. He said he attends a Ukrainian Orthodox Church, though he said he was attracted to Protestantism.

The interview with Mr. Chernovetsky was over, though not before a little small talk. He imparted the secret of his full head of hair, explaining that the key was to rub it aggressively with a towel after a daily shower.

Then he said goodbye with a few parting words.

"I am not going to abandon politics," he said. "I am not crazy. The pressure on me, that is the thing that is crazy."

### **#3**

#### **Russia, Israel to discuss Mideast peace, Iran AP, August 18, 2009**

MOSCOW — Russia's President Dmitry Medvedev hosted Israeli counterpart Shimon Peres for talks Tuesday that were expected to focus on the Middle East and the Iranian nuclear standoff.

Russia aspires to host an international conference to discuss the Middle East peace process, and Medvedev and Peres were expected to discuss the issue during their talks in the Russian Black Sea resort of Sochi.

Medvedev welcomed Peres by calling him "one of the world's most experienced politicians" and said he was ready to discuss both bilateral ties and regional challenges.

"We can touch on both Russian-Israeli ties and difficult issues related to the Middle East settlement and other regional problems," Medvedev said at the start of the talks. "There are more difficulties than we wish, but we still need to discuss them."

Peres told Medvedev that he had "great hopes" for the meeting.

Israel wants Russia, which has close ties with Iran, to increase pressure on Tehran over its nuclear program. Iran, whose president has expressed hatred of Israel, maintains its nuclear program is only designed to provide more electricity.

Israel, the United States and other nations fear that Iran's nuclear program is aimed at acquiring nuclear weapons.

Speaking to reporters after the talks, Peres emphasized the Iranian threat to Israel, pointing at the Iranian references to the destruction of the Jewish state, Russian news reports said.

### **#4**

#### **Medvedev, Peres meet on Mideast tensions AFP, August 18, 2009**

MOSCOW — Russian President Dmitry Medvedev held talks Tuesday with Israeli President Shimon Peres on efforts to check Iran's nuclear program, stalled Mideast peace talks and other issues, the Kremlin said.

The informal meeting got under way at Medvedev's official residence in Sochi on Russia's Black Sea coast and was also to focus on plans long in the works for Moscow to host an international Mideast peace conference.

"The situation in the Middle East, which raises serious concern in Russia, will be at the centre of attention in the meeting," the Kremlin said in a background paper distributed ahead of the Sochi meeting.

Welcoming Peres to his residence, Medvedev said there were "more problems than one would like" in the Middle East at present that required discussion, ITAR-TASS news agency said.

Peres also said he planned to discuss "a range of issues" concerning the Middle East peace process in general and Israeli-Russian relations in particular.

Russia is helping Iran build its first nuclear power station while Israel and the United States fear Tehran secretly intends to build atomic weapons under the guise of a civilian nuclear energy program.

Tehran vehemently denies this suspicion. The Kremlin said "the situation surrounding Iran" would be on the agenda for the talks.

The Medvedev-Peres meeting comes at a moment of unusually high tension between Israel and its chief ally, the United States, over differences on how to deal with Iran and control Jewish settlement activity.

Russia was "working actively" to ease international tensions over Iran's nuclear program, the Kremlin said, and this issue would be examined in detail during Tuesday's talks.

Russia and Israel were also in agreement on the need to fight efforts to "falsify history," specifically denial of the Holocaust and of Russia's decisive role in defeating Nazi Germany in World War II, the Kremlin said.

"Attempts to rehabilitate Nazis and their supporters are unacceptable for us," it added, without elaborating.

Tuesday's visit to Russia was the first by Peres since he was elected Israeli president in June 2007.

## **#5**

### **Russian Jews ponder age-old question: Israel or the U.S.?**

**By Natasha Mozgovaya**

**Haaretz, August 19, 2009**

WESTHAMPTON, NEW YORK - They sing the American national anthem first. Then "Hatikvah." They forgo the Russian national song for obvious reasons. The 98-year-old granddaughter of Sholem Aleichem, Bel Kaufman, goes on stage and tells the audience how she held her grandfather's hand and he told her this helped him to write better. Then Knesset members and an adviser to Israeli president Shimon Peres discuss whether there is a Russian elite in Israel, and the imam of the great mosque in New York talks about the relations between the Jewish and Muslim communities.

Several hundred young adults are in the audience, the children of Russian Jews who decided to migrate to the "Goldene Medineh" rather than go to Israel. While the children of Russian immigrants who came to Israel and experienced the difficult years of integrating into the new society debated whether their parents had made the right decision by preferring Israel to "Little Odessa" in Brighton Beach, the youngsters in the Russian-Jewish community in New York posed the opposite question: Is the lucre of America preferable to Jerusalem of Gold? Young Russian-speaking Jews who gathered two weekends ago for a "Limmud FSU" conference at the Hampton Synagogue, in Westhampton, New York, said that the families' decisions tended to be intuitive.

The wave of Jews that began to emigrate from Russia nearly two decades ago tended to split evenly between the U.S. and Israel. More than 350,000 people settled in New York alone. During the last few years they have begun to increase their involvement in the Jewish community, they have set up fund-raising organizations, and after several failed attempts to elect candidates to the local political scene, scored a first success recently, when the Moscow-born Alec Brook-Krasny was elected to the New York State Assembly. The children of an earlier wave of immigrants, from the 1970s, some of whom do not really speak Russian, formed an organization called Generation R, and are diligently looking for roots. Meanwhile those from the more recent wave, who migrated to the United States as children or teenagers, and are now in their 20s and 30s, are looking for alternative ways to express their Russian American Jewish identity.

"I am American Russian Jew, because I am no longer a real Russian Jew and I am definitely not an American Jew," says Yevgeniy Zingman, 27, who came to New York with his family from Russia and today works for a financial company that specializes in real estate.

Zingman is active in the Jewish community during his free time. "Something Russian burns in our souls. I have learned to live and work here, and to find friends, but I find it easiest to communicate with guys like myself. We're left with all sorts of social rituals from there, and concepts of friendship, and it's difficult to find substitutes for that. I came here at age 14, to a very American environment, but culturally, I feel as though I have been put in a can of preserves. I follow the new Russian music to some extent, but mainly listen to the '80s and '90s rock on which we were raised."

Zingman has visited Israel five or six times and says, "it is very important for my identity and my life." He even considers himself a Zionist, although he is not contemplating immigration at this time. "Look, it's not that I haven't thought about it a lot. By and large my parents made the decision for me. Part of our family made aliya to Israel, some migrated to America, and so we mulled it over a lot. But our relatives in Israel wrote us: Think twice. My parents thought it over and we came here."

Zingman speculates that "maybe my soul" is in Israel. But remembering as he does the difficulties he had in adjusting to life as an immigrant to the U.S., he says he doesn't want "to go through all that again, with work, a language, friends."

Zingman does not know what his family will be like in the future. He says: "I am pragmatic, and I understand it is difficult to maintain a three-dimensional identity. What is most important for me is that my future children will be Jewish, but yes, I would like to retain also some of the Russian culture." The best he can do at the present, he suggests, is to invest in "strengthening the ties to Judaism - then we'll see how it will go with the Russian."

Different values, different jokes

Olga Monastyrskaya, a 27-year-old graphic artist, migrated with her family from Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine, when she was 16. Her mother's extended family settled in Karmiel, Israel, and her father's family moved to New York. "So father took the initiative and moved us here," she says, with the hope that his daughter would have a good future. Today Olga works for the publisher Simon & Schuster as a designer, and her life is indeed quite good, she says. She loves it in the United States.

"I finished studying, I work in a serious place, and there are many perspectives," she adds. Yet she and the people who surround her have a common history and identity: They are Russian Jews.

"I don't have a problem with the Americans. I work with them and have friends, but their culture is different and they were raised on different values, different jokes," she explains. "The Americans are more formal. As a rule, you cannot just go over to someone and hang out in his kitchen until 5 in the morning over a glass of tea or vodka and talk as we did in Ukraine. You have to coordinate plans. There may be some exceptions, but you are more likely to find soulmates among migrants like yourself. I had an American boyfriend for two years, and I made friends with Israelis, but something was missing. So I continued looking, and I found Russian Jewish migrants like me, bent on talking philosophy and singing with a guitar. Maybe it's nostalgia, but this culture is part of us. It's not because we have failed, but because this is what satisfies us, spiritually."

Leon (Lunia) Gayer, 33, and English teacher, has been living in Brooklyn for 16 years. "We had an aunt who joined one of the first waves of immigration to Israel. Grandma used to correspond with her in Yiddish. I began studying Hebrew when I was still in Odessa, but we decided to come to New York because they said that in Israel you must serve in the army and the Russian experience with the military has not been too great. One relative told us we were crazy even to consider Israel, where he said they live in mud huts .... Here I remained quite Russian, because in America there is no pressure to give up your previous culture and identity. Because of this approach, the link to tradition comes from a more correct place, without pressure and coercion."

We are not deserters

Despite the arguments of activists who fought for aliya to Israel and were insulted when Russian Jews "deserted," many migrant Jews are drawn to tradition precisely when they are in the Diaspora. M., 28, from Pennsylvania, was raised in a secular Russian Jewish family, but became a Conservative Jew as an adult. Today he wears a skullcap, eats kosher food and observes the Sabbath. He traveled for hours to Limmud FSU, in Westhampton, in the hope of finding a Jewish match.

"The community in our town is small," he said. He did find someone there he wanted to marry, but she was of Sephardi background, and her parents rejected him as a groom. Finding a bride in Israel sounded enticing, but he works for the U.S. Defense Department, and fears such a marriage would harm his security clearance.

Oksana Baiul, the former Olympic ice skating champion for Ukraine, arrives at the conference wearing a coif and immediately becomes an attraction. Everyone wants to be photographed with her. "I discovered my Jewish roots at quite a late stage, at the age of 25, because I am an orphan," she says. "However, the Jewish community received me warmly and now I am helping raise money for an orphanage in Ukraine. Many Russian Jews are looking for a way back to tradition and I think it's really good for the community."

Until recently, the American Jewish community ignored the Russians' uniqueness, hoping that over time they would be absorbed into the community's usual framework. Israeli diplomats and local representatives of organizations such as the Jewish Agency also preferred to ignore reality. However, the Limmud FSU convention demonstrated the extent to which attitudes have changed. Showing up at a one-day meeting with 400 participants were Israel's minister of immigrant absorption, Sofa Landver, the country's consul general in New York, Asaf Shariv, several Knesset members and a Jewish Agency emissary who considers them a potential source for high-quality immigrants.

"Three hundred and fifty thousand Russian Jews in New York mean that every third Jew in New York is a relatively new immigrant from Russia," said Rabbi Marc Schneier, who hosted the conference in his synagogue. "We see the increased number of visits to our synagogues as well as [the interest] of many others who were eager to learn more about their roots and tradition. It is our responsibility to talk to them. They have big gaps to fill with regard to issues that trouble the Jewish community in the United States. We have missed many years by ignoring them. For 15 years the Jewish community did not know how to communicate with them. But it is also clear to us that it is impossible to transform them into 'us.' You can expose them to issues, you cannot force them to adopt a particular way."

Chaim Chesler, the Jewish Agency's former treasurer and founder of Limmud FSU, says that he faced a lot of criticism when he started the project. "Why do 'the Russians' need a unique approach? Let them come to classes with everybody else, like all the Jews," he recalled the comments.

But they did not come. "Because when it comes to sensitive matters such as religion and identity, only Russians can touch other Russians' souls. Finally, 32 organizations contributed to the project, because it works. When a Russian Jewish community assumes responsibility for intensifying and strengthening its identity, it works; not when Israelis or American Jews try to explain it to them."

"Of course I'd like to see all these young people in Israel," said Minister Landver, of Yisrael Beiteinu, "but you've got to be realistic too. You can't always say right up front: 'Come over.' It has to come from them, out of their searching. I know this feeling from the synagogue in Leningrad where we used to meet. It just grabs you, this spirit, the desire to make aliya - not because someone persuaded you. Recently we have seen an increase in the immigration of these young people." Knesset Member Zeev Elkin (Likud), who also came to the conference, thinks that Israel and the Russian Jewish community in the United States have a clear interest in strengthening their ties. "The Russian Jews here are beginning to realize that Israel is a significant arena for the American Jewish organizations. And the Jewish organizations are beginning to understand that this community will not put up with being on the sidelines; that they will break away unless they have equal rights. It's not just the community's considerable size. These are educated people, energetic and quite a number of them are successful too. The process is slow, but we should integrate in time."

## **#6**

### **Peres: Israel, PA, U.S. ready for 3-way summit Haaretz, August 19, 2009**

President Shimon Peres told reporters during an official visit to Russia on Wednesday that he welcomed a future meeting between President Barack Obama, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas.

"The sides are ready for a real dialogue," Peres said, emphasizing the recent intensive talks that have taken place between himself and leaders in the Middle East and Palestinian Authority. "I am very encouraged by what I have heard," Peres said.

At Wednesday's press conference, Peres spoke about Russian opposition to the existence of nuclear weapons in Iran, stating "[The Russian President] has made an unambiguous promise that Russia will not sell weapons that may harm the balance of power in the Middle East."

Earlier in his visit, Peres met with President Dmitry Medvedev to discuss Iran's nuclear aspirations. Medvedev promised Peres on Tuesday that Russia will review a decision to sell Iran S-300 anti-aircraft missiles.

President Peres summarized his visit to Russia as a positive one from Israel's point of view. "I welcome President Medvedev's announcement of his intention to upgrade the level of the strategic relationship between Israel and Russia to the same level as the Russian relationship with Germany, France and Italy."

**#7**

**Peres: Russia to reconsider missile sale to Iran**

**By Mansur Mirovalev**

**AP, August 19, 2009**

MOSCOW - Israeli President Shimon Peres said Wednesday the Kremlin has promised to reconsider the planned delivery of air defense missiles to Iran that Israel and the U.S. fear could be used to protect Iran's nuclear facilities.

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev made the pledge during their talks Tuesday in the Black Sea resort of Sochi, Peres said.

"President Medvedev gave a promise he will reconsider the sales of S-300s because it affects the delicate balance which exists in the Middle East," Peres told reporters via video link from Sochi.

A Kremlin spokesman wouldn't immediately comment on Peres' statement.

Russia has signed a contract to supply the powerful S-300 missiles to Iran, but has dragged its feet on delivering them.

Israel and the United States fear that Iran could use the missiles to protect its nuclear facilities - including the uranium enrichment plant at Natanz or the country's first atomic power plant, which is being completed by Russian workers in Bushehr. That would make a military strike on the Iranian facilities much more difficult.

Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak insisted last month that Israel would not rule out any response to the Iranian nuclear program - an implied warning that it would consider a pre-emptive strike to thwart Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons.

Israeli and U.S. officials have strongly urged Moscow not to supply the missiles, and the issue has been the subject of intense diplomatic wrangling for years.

Israel wants Russia, which has close ties with Iran, to increase pressure on Tehran over its nuclear program. Iran, whose president has expressed hatred of Israel, maintains its nuclear program is only designed to provide more electricity. Israel, the U.S. and other nations fear that Iran is secretly developing nuclear weapons.

Moscow has supported limited U.N. sanctions on Iran, but opposed efforts by the U.S. and others to impose tougher measures.

"President Medvedev told me that Russia will not support an Iranian nuclear bomb under all circumstances," Peres said. "But he also mentioned that the Russian appreciation of what's taking place in Iran is different from the American one."

Russian officials confirmed in March that a contract for the S-300 missiles had been signed with Iran two years ago, but a top Russian defense official said in April that no deliveries had been made yet.

Analysts said that Moscow could be using the S-300 contract as a bargaining chip in its relations with the U.S. and Israel.

Peres also said Wednesday that Iran's efforts to develop advanced missiles strained ties between Washington and Moscow. In May, Iran test-fired a new missile with a range of about 1,200 miles (1,900 kilometers) - far enough to strike Israel, southeastern Europe and U.S. bases in the Middle East.

"If it wasn't for Iranian missiles, maybe one of the thorny questions between Russia and the U.S. will disappear - the bases that the United States is building in Poland and the Czech (Republic)," Peres said in a reference to the previous U.S. administration's plans to build missile defense sites in Eastern Europe.

Russia has strongly opposed the U.S. plans as a threat to its security, dismissing Washington's claims that the missile defense system is aimed at countering a threat from Iran.

President Barack Obama has ordered a review of the missile defense plans, but reiterated the U.S. insistence that the missile defense system would pose no threat to Russia.

**#8**  
**Medvedev Changes His Tactics Over Ukraine**  
**By Fyodor Lukyanov**  
**Moscow Times, August 19, 2009**

The economic crisis didn't have the effect on Russia that the West was counting on. Instead of compliance, they've shown more aggression. Rather than being scattered around the world, Russia's now focused on strengthening its position as an independent center of gravity. In other words, it's expanding its markets and political influence into adjacent territories.

The zigzag of replacing World Trade Organization membership with a customs union that surprised so many people, the new push to turn the Collective Security Treaty Organization into a functioning military alliance, and moving closer to Turkey are all elements of one strategy. The new approach toward Ukraine proclaimed by President Dmitry Medvedev last week is in the same vein.

Many people think Russia is getting involved in the Ukrainian election campaign, which will go into full swing right after the vacation season winds down. And likely, that's exactly what's happening. But Russia's hand will be different from the one it played in 2004. Openly betting on a particular candidate ended in such confusion five years ago that the Kremlin would have to be masochistic to try it again. Now Russia's position is formulated on a much broader scale: No matter who wins in January - and the Kremlin doesn't believe in a reincarnation of Viktor Yushchenko - the new president must immediately take into account the long list of framework conditions set forth by Moscow.

It seems that Medvedev's address has brought an end to the previous approach, under which the goal was to treat relations between Russia and Ukraine like those of any two "ordinary" foreign countries. In reality, that was never the case, but no senior political leaders were willing to say publicly that Kiev was for Moscow - or that Moscow was for Kiev - something more than simply an external partner.

To get the gist of this new approach, you need to look at both what was said in Medvedev's public address to Yushchenko and the comments made on his video blog about his recent discussion with Patriarch Kirill, who had just returned from Ukraine. The visit by the head of the Russian Orthodox Church showed that there's a new public figure in Russia whose political weight and diplomatic skills surpass those of the secular authorities. He combines tact and kind civility with a firmness of his ideological positions, and his address to worshippers calling for unity and reconciliation is a demonstration of the "soft," nonstate power that Moscow has long been criticized for lacking.

That impression only became stronger when, a day after Medvedev's address, the patriarch's press service published thank you letters to the people he met with in Ukraine, including Yushchenko. Not only did Kirill thank the

Ukrainian leader for his attention and help in organizing the visit, he also noted that “despite all of the difficulties, Ukraine is successfully consolidating its statehood.” His letter to the president concludes: “May God’s blessing be with the people of beautiful Ukraine, with its leaders and military, and with all of us.”

At first glance, the patriarch’s remarks sharply contrast with those of Medvedev, who said Ukrainian weapons were used to kill Russian peacekeepers in South Ossetia. In reality there’s no contradiction, however, since the authors of the two addresses to the Ukrainian president are speaking from entirely different positions. For Medvedev, Yushchenko is an unpleasant - it’s not being hidden anymore - counterpart; for Kirill, he’s a member of the faith, who needs to be put back on the true path if he strays from it. And the pastor’s approach is ultimately much more likely to have a political effect than the efforts of the presidential administration or the Russian government.

What they have in common is that both Russian leaders - spiritual and secular - are saying they intend to hold a dialog with their neighbor outside the typical political channels. The patriarch addresses his congregation, which by its very definition should not be divided by citizenship or state loyalties. Medvedev appeals directly to the Ukrainian people, letting them know in no uncertain terms that the dialog with their political elite has become unproductive. In fact, the symbolic meaning of not sending a new Russian ambassador to Kiev also ties into this desire to reduce official dialog to a purely technical level.

In their nearly 18 years of independence, Ukraine and Russia still haven’t found a stable form of coexistence. They’ve tried everything from imitating brotherhood and relying on corrupt schemes to petty alienation and indirect military and political confrontation. Yet their overlapping interests - from culture and history to economics and security - are extremely tangled. Passions are tearing through the cloth of all of these types of relations and sparking crises for all of Europe, as happened, for example, in January.

Both countries are in the process of nation building within borders that they never before occupied. That determines an awful lot. And there’s a temptation for Russia to make use of the still unsettled configuration of the post-Soviet space, particularly when it involves land with a disputed history. Additionally, Ukraine is trying to stake out a permanent claim as part of the non-Russian world, even as its internal political environment remains unstable. This psychological interdependence has made pragmatic ties impossible, at the very least for now.

The Russian authorities’ attempts to build ties with Ukraine from below, making use of its resources there, is generally understandable since the country is lacking an accountable and consolidated elite. But this clever plan can only work if the Russian strategists accurately estimate Ukrainian society’s sympathies toward Russia. It’s no secret that the policy, maintained during Yushchenko’s presidency, of a sharp break from Moscow and everything Russian has been unpopular with a portion - and likely not a small one - of the Ukrainian people. It’s not clear, however, that those same people are therefore willing to forgo their national sovereignty, which many of them have gotten used to over the years.

Of course, the Kremlin would most likely be satisfied if the weight of public opinion forced the Ukrainian authorities to move toward a policy of compromise on the most important issues for Moscow, namely security and energy. But by resorting to “Great Game” tactics, Russia should expect a similar response. It’s easy for Kiev to turn the situation into platitudes that “our country’s in danger,” with all of the resulting internal and external consequences. Yushchenko will answer yet. And that’s when we’ll know whether Russia’s evaluation of the situation in Ukrainian society - and its wager on a direct appeal - was correct.

**#9**  
**The Medvedev Show**  
**By Nikolai Petrov**  
**Moscow Times, August 18, 2009**

Following Vladimir Putin’s departure from the presidency, the government has seen more changes to its image than to its essence - and the changes have been very noticeable.

As president, Putin put on a series of staged call-in shows that promised to provide citizens with a direct line to the president. By the end of his presidency, the annual televised shows had broken their own records for the number of

questions sent in (2.5 million, or one for every 50 Russian citizens) and the number of questions answered by the president (dozens).

President Dmitry Medvedev, however, has not been able to manage a similar line of communication with the people, even with the careful selection of participants and the prior agreement of questions. So Medvedev has not followed in the path of his more telegenic and smooth predecessor with the call-in shows.

Another type of show was created for Medvedev - gatherings of citizens for meetings heavily laden with regional officials. This is a tasteless show that could be titled "The Benevolent Tsar and the Unruly Noblemen" and involves the public flogging of poorly performing officials. Designed for cheap popularity, the show repeats a provincial recipe for simple populism that was used by governors like Ulyanovsk's Yury Goryachev during the era of President Boris Yeltsin. Now that's a novel example of the Kremlin borrowing an innovative idea from the regions!

As part of this show, Medvedev called on seemingly random citizens at televised gatherings in mid-July in order to solve their problems and reproach negligent governors. In the Far East, he ordered the construction of pedestrian bridges over streets. In a Bryansk town, he ordered the acceleration of the completion of a water supply system. In a Rostov farm, he demanded the installation of a gas system. Here is a typical example of his rhetoric: "Watch how they build it now. If anything goes wrong, tell us and we will send the officials present at this meeting out with shovels and make them build the pedestrian bridges themselves."

With the introduction of this show and other new forms of virtual politics, the Kremlin is suffering a crisis in a more traditional form of virtual reality - its web site. No regular weekly reports about contacts between Medvedev and the public have been posted on the president's official web site since November 2008. The first in six months appeared in late July, when the presidential administration introduced a new head for its department of public communications.

Medvedev's blog recently provided a good example of the effectiveness of his personal dialog with the public. As it happened, a Saratov resident wrote a complaint to Medvedev but, in old bureaucratic tradition, the letter was not passed to the president but to the very regional bureaucrats about whom he was complaining. The bureaucrats reacted by suggesting that the man quit his job on his own volition. The resident resigned but wrote about the situation on Medvedev's blog and gave an interview to Ren-TV television. Immediately, Saratov's governor stepped in and, among other things, restored the man to his job. The story, however, did not end without the firing of at least one person - the governor dismissed the head of his department of public communications.

What is the conclusion from all this? As long as the government attempts to solve the country's problems through virtual politics, there will be no improvement in the real situation, which will in fact only get worse.

*Nikolai Petrov is a scholar in residence at the Carnegie Moscow Center.*

## **#10**

### **Russia's botched policy in its own backyard**

**By Anders Aslund**

**Financial Times, August 18, 2009**

Relations between Russia and Ukraine have always been difficult. Since Ukraine's Orange revolution in late 2004 they have been dismal. Conflicts have involved gas, agricultural trade, the Russian naval base in the Crimea, the war in Georgia and Ukraine's interest in Nato. Even so, politicians from the two countries rarely meet.

Last year Vladimir Putin, then Russia's president, escalated the conflict by publicly questioning Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. He has repeated his claims as prime minister. President Dmitri Medvedev's strident open letter to President Viktor Yushchenko amounted to a further escalation, with its declaration that Russia would not send a new ambassador to Kiev. Mr Medvedev offered no constructive proposals but listed old Russian grudges, claiming that all faults lie with Ukraine.

The language was reminiscent of Leonid Brezhnev in its detachment from reality. Mr Medvedev claimed that no Russian threat against Ukraine exists, as if he were unaware of his prime minister's statements. He went on in Soviet vein: "Russia endeavours to be a predictable, strong and accommodating partner" to its neighbours. Well, hardly, as Mr Yushchenko noted in his response.

Mr Medvedev's obvious aim was to influence the Ukrainian presidential elections scheduled for January, expressing hopes for improved relations with the "new Ukrainian leadership". Mr Yushchenko is no longer a credible candidate, having proven himself an ineffective ruler. The two leading candidates are instead Yulia Tymoshenko, the current prime minister, and Viktor Yanukovich, the former prime minister, with Arseniy Yatseniuk, the former speaker, as the only other plausible contender.

But however much effort Moscow puts into the Ukrainian elections, it is not likely to achieve its aims, as the Orange revolution illustrated. Contrary to common misconceptions, no real separatism exists in Ukraine. The Kremlin has given up on Mr Yanukovich, the leader of largely Russian-speaking eastern Ukraine, realising that no serious Ukrainian politician can be pro-Russian. Recently, the Kremlin has preferred Ms Tymoshenko as somebody they can do business with, but there is no love lost.

The Kremlin's misunderstanding of Ukrainian politics is based on the fact that, unlike Russia, Ukraine is a democracy. The Russian leaders think they can "buy" Ukrainian politicians, but in the end they must listen to their voters, not Moscow, to gain office. This is an alien thought to the authoritarian Muscovites, who believe everything is manipulated from above and by Washington. Persistent anti-Ukrainian propaganda on Russian state television also turns eastern Ukrainians against the current Russian regime.

Mr Medvedev's statements appear to be a reflection of the rivalry between the Putin and Medvedev camps, which confuses all central policymaking in Russia at present. Ominously, Mr Putin has made Ukraine-bashing one of his trademarks and Medvedev needs to keep up. Russian economic policy is suffering as a result of this strife and Ukraine may do so too.

The broader problem for Russian foreign policy is that the country's rulers do not know how to deal with their post-Soviet neighbours. Their policy objectives are mixed. Gazprom wants to monopolise gas supply, transportation and sales. Private businessmen aspire to expand their corporations. Agricultural interests block imports. Russian nationalists persist in neo-imperialism and populist politicians try to win domestic support by attacking their neighbours.

The result is that post-Soviet nations are trying to develop relations with anybody but Russia. Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan are opting for gas exports to China. Most starkly, Georgia and Ukraine are turning to the west, but even Belarus, the ultimate Russian loyalist, is fed up with the Kremlin and seeking other options.

For the west, the conclusion is that it needs to solidify its support for Ukraine regardless of who wins the elections. Fortunately, it is doing so. Joe Biden, the US vice-president, made this point clearly during his recent trip to Kiev, while the European Union is pursuing efforts at integration, notably through a forthcoming European Association Agreement on trade.

*The writer is a senior fellow of the Peterson Institute for International Economics and author of How Ukraine Became a Market Economy and Democracy*

**#11**  
**Medvedev issues stark warning on Russian Caucasus**  
**By Christopher Boian**  
**AFP, August 19, 2009**

MOSCOW - President Dmitry Medvedev warned Wednesday that Russia's Caucasus region was dangerously unstable and said "terrorists" there must be "liquidated without emotion."

"The battle against terrorists must be pursued unceremoniously," Medvedev was quoted as saying at a meeting with members of his national security council in the southern Russian city of Stavropol. "They must be liquidated without emotion or hesitation, or else we will not succeed," he said, according to Russian news agencies.

His comments echoed the strident language used by his predecessor and mentor, Vladimir Putin, who once said rebel fighters in Chechnya should be hunted down and "whacked in the outhouse."

Putin made that particular comment in September 1999 at a time Russian military aircraft had already dropped bombs on the Chechen capital, Grozny, but before the launch of the war in Chechnya that helped catapult him to power.

Medvedev spoke two days after a truck packed with explosives rammed the gates of a police station in Ingushetia, a province neighboring Chechnya, and exploded in a suicide attack that killed 24, wounded 130 and left nine missing.

The Russian president said the situation in the north Caucasus, an area located in the south of the country, was still insecure. The Kremlin in April ended a 10-year "anti-terror" operation in Chechnya.

"Not long ago, the notion took hold that the situation in the Caucasus, in connection with manifestations of terrorism, had distinctly improved," he said.

"Unfortunately, recent events demonstrate that this is not the case."

Medvedev said the fight against terrorism in the volatile region would be expanded and would incorporate "different approaches", but did not elaborate on what measure would be taken.

"If this work is halted, very serious events will begin to occur" in the region, he warned.

He cited "foreign" elements as a factor fomenting instability in the region, but pointedly said the root cause of the problem was within Russia itself, referring specifically to corruption among law enforcement personnel.

"The basic cause is within the country, sad as that is to say," he said.

Deadly attacks by Islamist militants on Russian law enforcement personnel in the north Caucasus have become a daily occurrence, but Monday's bomb attack in Nazran, the main city in the province of Ingushetia, was unusually large.

NATO chief Anders Fogh Rasmussen wrote to Medvedev condemning the "bloody terrorist attack."

In the rare letter to the Russian leader, the NATO secretary general offered his condolences to the Russian people, saying "this tragic loss of life and suffering underscores yet again the grave danger that the terrorist threat poses to all of us," a spokeswoman for the alliance said.

Further unrest flared in the Caucasus Wednesday, with an officer from Russian security service FSB shot dead in Ingushetia, six rebels killed in Dagestan and four more militants killed in Chechnya, news agencies reported. Analysts said Medvedev's blunt talk Wednesday was an indication of how bad the security situation in the Caucasus had become. "The situation is very serious," said Maria Lipman, political analyst with the Moscow Carnegie Centre think tank. "There are objective problems: Poverty, unemployment and Islamic radicalism in a traditionalist society. The fact that Moscow is dependent on local powers only further destabilises the situation," she said.

Medvedev's warning came less than two months after the new Kremlin-backed president of Ingushetia, Yunus-Bek Yevkurov, was seriously injured in a bomb attack on his motorcade.

The wounded Ingush leader, said Lipman, arrived on the scene too late to fix things anyway.

Medvedev earlier in the week gave the Russian interior minister an unusual public dressing down following Monday's bomb attack, which he said "could have been prevented."

## #12

### **Putin backs infrastructure spending after accident**

**By Nataliya Vasilyeva**

**AP, August 20, 2009**

MOSCOW - Prime Minister Vladimir Putin ordered Thursday that key parts of Russia's aging infrastructure be checked and upgraded after a power plant accident in Siberia left scores feared dead and strained the vast region's power supply.

The confirmed death toll in the Russian power plant accident rose to 17 Thursday after three more bodies were found, and harrowing escape stories emerged from the few survivors.

Over 1,000 rescue workers searched the massive Sayano-Shushenskaya hydroelectric plant in southern Siberia for the 57 people who remain missing and are feared dead. On Thursday, workers pumped out the remaining water from the damaged engine room to try to find more bodies.

A powerful explosion Monday blew out walls and caused the power plant's turbine room to flood. Three of the plant's 10 turbines were reportedly destroyed and three others were damaged. The cause of the accident is unclear but officials cited a faulty turbine and a rise of pressure in the pipes as possible triggers.

"The tragic event at the Sayano-Shushenskaya have clearly shown how much we need to do to ensure safety of hydropower facilities," Putin told a Cabinet session in Moscow. "We need to conduct a thorough check of all strategic and vital parts of infrastructure and work out a plan for their regular upgrade."

He also emphasized the need to make sure that workers observe industrial safety standards.

"In our country ... discipline in dealing with technology is very low," he noted, adding that he would visit Sayano-Shushenskaya, Russia's largest power plant, on Friday.

The crippled power station has been shut down since the accident and could be out of service for a significant time as repairs are made.

The accident prompted new warnings about increasing risks posed by Russia's aging infrastructure.

"(This accident) exposed the fairly fragile state of key parts of the infrastructure," said Chris Weafer, chief strategist at the UralSib investment bank. "Time and time again in Russia it does take an accident to spur the government into taking some actions in terms of improving safety or regulations."

Columnist Sergei Leskov wrote in the Izvestia paper that the Russia government has failed to modernize the nation's crumbling Soviet-built infrastructure, threatening the nation's security.

"Equipment and infrastructure are horrendously worn-out and neglected. An urge for modernization and support for high technology are no longer an issue of economic security - they are badly needed for the survival of Russian citizens," he wrote.

The first victims of the accident were buried Wednesday in the nearby town of Cheryomushki, which has been deeply shaken because the whole families worked at the plant.

Nikolai Shchip, covered head-to-toe in oil from a destroyed turbine, was blown away by the bursting water into the Yenisei River, but somehow made it to the shore, according to Moskovsky Komsomolets daily.

Shchip's 28-year-old son Roman, who also was working at the plant Monday morning, never got out of the engine room. Roman's pregnant wife Yelena was rushed to hospital once she heard about the accident and gave birth to a daughter, the newspaper said.

Another worker, Alexander Podkopayev, spent 15 agonizing hours in icy water at a flooded section of the plant, surviving thanks to a 10-centimeter (4-inch) air space under the ceiling, according to the Komsomolskaya Pravda newspaper.

Authorities acknowledged days ago that people who are still missing are most likely dead.

Sayano-Shushenskaya is Russia's largest power plant, providing 10 percent of Siberia's energy needs, and a key energy supplier for Siberian metallurgy.

The accident caused power shortages in several towns and major factories, but by Wednesday the power supply in Siberia had been restored with the help of rerouted supplies from other power plants.

Energy Minister Sergei Shmatko said it would cost 40 billion rubles (\$1.2 billion) to rebuild the power plant's engine room.

Oleg Deripaska, director general of aluminum producer Rusal, toured the damaged plant Wednesday and talked with Russia's energy ministry and plant owner RusHydro about securing energy supplies during the upcoming repairs, which are expected to take up to two years.

More than 70 percent of all the energy from the hydroelectric plant goes to four Rusal smelters, which are believed to be the company's most efficient plants. Rusal is the world's largest aluminum producer.

The accident also produced an oil slick that stretched over 60 miles (100 kilometers) down the Yenisei.

## **#13**

### **Western Optimism and Eastern Pessimism**

**By Boris Kagarlitsky**

**Moscow Times, August 20, 2009**

Germany and France announced their latest victory over the crisis last week. Both countries showed slight economic growth of 0.3 percent over the summer months. Enthusiasm that they had pulled out of recession revived stock markets, fueling their upward climb. In actuality, there is no reason to start talking about the end of the recession. The positive figures only reflected a seasonal spike - one that happens every summer. The vacation season is always accompanied by a jump in consumption. And many stores, which during those months did not place new orders, simply exhausted their inventories. Now they are ordering goods, and when their inventories are full the situation will seem bad again. More important, the market is absorbing large amounts of cash allocated under state anti-crisis programs. The crisis will take over once those resources are spent.

The people who are making loud announcements about the end of the recession know as well as I do how bad the current state of affairs actually is. But they are making optimistic speeches with full knowledge that their words will very soon be contradicted by actual events. What is the reason for this rash and essentially infantile behavior?

It is most likely because no one - neither in Europe, Russia nor the United States - knows what to do about the crisis. People who proclaim the end of the recession are trying to wave a magic wand at the turmoil in an attempt to influence the markets. They are playing up any hint of a positive trend as a dramatic psychological breakthrough. Psychology here is important because the dominant neo-liberal doctrine, which sees no systemic reasons for the crisis, attributes the turmoil to a lack of investor confidence, mistakes by regulators and even coincidental fluctuations in the economic environment. When the consequences of the "mistakes" have been corrected and the negative environment is balanced with an injection of state funds, only one psychological factor remains: upbeat rhetoric to restore confidence. The politicians and businessmen who are declaring the good news don't really

believe what they are saying. Instead, they sincerely hope that their announcements are enabling the economy to recover.

However, the recent announcements of emerging growth in Germany and France came out at the same time as data on the prolongation of the recession in Eastern Europe. EU statistics unequivocally demonstrate a contrast between the West and the East. The Eastern results are pulling down the EU's general indicators, hindering the promised restoration of consumer confidence.

As everyone knows, the overall speed of a fleet is measured by the speed of its slowest ship. In other words, the East's problems are hindering the overall EU economy. Nothing will change until the EU "ship-states" rearrange themselves in a long line. If you don't look at the others, it is possible to improve your efforts to gather speed.

When this summer's economic revival turns into a seasonal decline in the fall, discrepancies between the "old" and "new" Europe will grow further strained. The need by East European countries for help from the West will steadily grow, and the opportunity and desire by the West to present such help will just as steadily decrease. The stabilization in the West and the collapse in the East are tightly interconnected: There are not enough resources for both sides of Europe.

If the statistical data for the first half of 2009 reveal any surprises, they are the growing cracks in a united Europe and a brewing political crisis over how the European Union has expanded over the past 15 years.

*Boris Kagarlitsky is the director of the Institute of Globalization Studies.*

#### **#14**

#### **Medvedev's Message**

**By Eugene R. Rumer and David J. Kramer**

**New York Times, August 21, 2009**

Russia's president, Dmitri Medvedev, has had a busy August.

On Aug. 8, he met with Russian troops, who a year ago had, according to the Kremlin Web site, repelled "Georgian aggression against South Ossetia."

On Aug. 10, he introduced a bill in the Duma to allow him to send Russian troops abroad to defend Russian citizens or prevent aggression against another state.

On Aug. 11, he wrote to the Ukrainian president, Viktor Yushchenko, announcing his decision to delay — indefinitely — the dispatch of the new Russian ambassador to Ukraine. Mr. Medvedev explained his decision by citing Mr. Yushchenko's anti-Russian policies. He also hinted that the decision might be reversed after Ukraine's presidential election in January, when the country will have "new political leadership."

Few things can give Mr. Yushchenko, up for re-election with barely 3 percent support in the polls, a better boost than an attack from the Kremlin. But that was probably not Mr. Medvedev's intent. The letter contains ominous warnings that suggest Russian intentions to escalate already tense relations after the latest gas cutoff last January.

The list of Mr. Medvedev's complaints about Kiev's policies covers virtually every aspect of Russian-Ukrainian relations: Mr. Yushchenko's government supported Georgia in the war with Russia last year and supplied it with weapons. Kiev interfered with Russia's Black Sea fleet based in Sevastopol; it disrupted Russian natural gas deliveries to Europe; it used the specter of a Russian threat to seek NATO membership; it mistreated Russian investors; it engaged in historical revisionism in the glorification of Nazi collaborators; and it even tried to disrupt the visit of the Russian Patriarch to Ukraine.

The alleged offenses are so grave that Medvedev's letter leaves little room for defusing the tensions. If the letter is "merely" an attempt to interfere in Ukraine's domestic politics and warn voters that they should not re-elect the Western-leaning Mr. Yushchenko, it would not be the first time. During the 2004 presidential election, which

preceded Ukraine's "Orange revolution," the Kremlin intervened heavily on behalf of Mr. Yushchenko's opponent, Viktor Yanukovich. But Moscow's intervention backfired, and Mr. Yushchenko emerged as the nation's democratic leader, propelled to victory in part by widespread resentment of Russian actions.

But what if Mr. Medvedev's letter is not simply a replay of 2004? Relations between the two countries have been so bad for so long that everyone has become used to fiery exchanges between the two capitals. In this regard, the situation is reminiscent of Russian-Georgian relations on the eve of the war a year ago. Relations between Moscow and Tbilisi had been so bad for so long, and signs of increasing tension had become part and parcel of Russian-Georgian relations to such a degree, that even many close observers were taken by surprise when the war began.

Who would have predicted that Georgia's tiny military could go to war against the Russian Army? And Russia, conventional wisdom held, would not attack Georgia for fear of damaging its relations with the West.

Is Mr. Medvedev's letter a sign that Russian patience with Ukraine is running out, that Russia is preparing to take drastic action — to reclaim the Crimean peninsula, for example, with its ethnic Russian majority?

Conventional wisdom holds that such a move would cause irreparable harm to Russian relations with Europe and the United States. Conventional wisdom also suggests that the bill Mr. Medvedev introduced on Aug. 10 on the use of Russian troops abroad is probably just a routine piece of legislation intended to fix glitches in existing Russian laws. Russia, after all, moved against Georgia without such legislation.

Conventional wisdom further argues that Russian leaders would not be so careless as to use military force in Crimea, where ethnic Russians reportedly have been obtaining Russian passports and where Russian naval personnel serve at the Sevastopol naval base. And conventional wisdom argues that Ukraine could pose a greater challenge for the Russian military than did Georgia, thus acting as a further deterrent.

Conventional wisdom is reassuring. But relying on conventional wisdom can lead to unimagined results, as last year's Russian-Georgian war demonstrated. Mr. Medvedev's letter to the Ukrainian leader is an occasion to engage in unconventional speculation as to what might be the real reason behind it, and an opportunity to exercise our collective imagination in pursuit of a course of action that would boost our confidence in conventional wisdom.

Eugene B. Rumer is a senior fellow at the Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, Washington. David J. Kramer is senior fellow at the German Marshall Fund of the United States in Washington and served as a deputy assistant secretary of state responsible for Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova in the George W. Bush administration.

## **#15**

**Dear Viktor, you're dead, love Dmitry**

**Russia's president writes his Ukrainian counterpart an insulting letter**

**The Economist, August 20, 2009**

RUSSIA marked the first anniversary of its war with Georgia with a verbal salvo against Ukraine. Russia's president, Dmitry Medvedev, wrote Viktor Yushchenko, his Ukrainian counterpart, an open letter with a familiar litany of complaints: Ukraine was supplying arms to Georgia, complicating the life of Russia's Black Sea fleet (which is based in Sebastopol, a Ukrainian port), signing treacherous pipeline deals with the European Union, kicking out Russian diplomats and falsifying joint Soviet history.

Less familiarly, Mr Medvedev posted a special video blog to publicise his letter. Dressed in ominous black, and overlooking the Black Sea with two military boats on the horizon, Mr Medvedev said the Kremlin would not be sending its new ambassador to Kiev.

It took Viktor Yushchenko several days to reply. His response was measured: Ukraine had done nothing illegal towards Georgia; had the right to choose its friends; was entitled to its own view of history and its language; and had repeatedly asked the Kremlin to remove some of its diplomats involved in non-diplomatic work.

But Mr Medvedev was not interested in what Mr Yushchenko had to say. He wanted to register Russia's hand in Ukraine's presidential election due on January 17th. That election is of almost as much importance to Russia as it is to Ukraine itself. In the previous presidential election, Russia backed Viktor Yanukovich, the Russian-friendly prime minister at the time. He lost badly and so did Vladimir Putin, then Russia's president and now prime minister, who had rushed to congratulate him.

The Kremlin fears making the same mistake twice. But this time, in insulting Mr Yushchenko, it is kicking someone who it thinks is certain to lose anyway. It is also laying down rules which it implies the next president must respect if he or she is to be accepted in Moscow. The ability to influence Ukraine's policy is seen by Russia as a test of its resurgence.

To show the range of options for reintegrating Ukraine into its "sphere of privileged interest", Russia recently dispatched Patriarch Kirill, the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, on a tour of Ukraine. "When I walked through huge crowds of people, chanting 'Kirill is our patriarch', I understood that our great spiritual unity ...has become a basic value which cannot be shaken by politics," he told a doubtless grateful Mr Medvedev on his return.

As the war in Georgia showed, the Kremlin has other means of persuasion at its disposal. On August 10th, a day before the video blog, Mr Medvedev announced new, simplified rules for using Russian military force outside the country to protect Russian citizens and defend units stationed abroad.

A full-blown military conflict with Ukraine seems unlikely but is no longer unthinkable. (Two years ago a war between Russia and Georgia seemed equally unlikely.) Andrei Illarionov, once an adviser to Mr Putin and now a fierce critic, says the key factor is not whether Russia has the military capacity for a confrontation with Ukraine, but that aggression towards the neighbours has become a way of life for the Kremlin. In the past decade, Russia has managed to alienate almost all the former Soviet republics, even undemocratic Belarus. Trade wars and energy cut-offs have become standard policy responses.

Of all the neighbouring republics, Ukraine remains the largest and most important. As Zbigniew Brzezinski, a Polish-born American national security adviser, once wrote: "Without Ukraine, Russia ceases to be an empire, but with Ukraine, suborned and then subordinated, Russia automatically becomes an empire." It is far from clear, even now, that Russia has fully accepted Ukraine's sovereignty. At a NATO summit in Bucharest last year Mr Putin reportedly told President George Bush, "You understand, George, that Ukraine is not even a state!"

Unlike Georgia or the Baltic states, which had longer traditions of running their own affairs, Ukraine has had little experience of statehood. "In the last 80 years of the 20th century we declared our independence six times. Five times we lost it," Mr Yushchenko pointed out in a recent interview.

Ukraine's politicians and voters seem to be leaving the country vulnerable again. According to a recent poll, more Ukrainians think their own government is the biggest security threat to their country than believe Russia is. Corruption and squabbling inside the ruling Orange coalition have paralysed governance. The majority of presidential decrees do not get implemented. Since June Ukraine has not had a defence minister. Its economy contracted by 18% in the second quarter of the year.

"People have lost any respect for their own state," says Yulia Mostovaya, an influential journalist in Kiev. National ideals have been discredited by cynicism and the corruption of ruling politicians tainted by shady gas deals with Russia. Meanwhile the version of order projected by Russia's television channels looks increasingly popular (more than 90% of Ukrainians say they feel positive about Russia, whereas 42% of Russians see Ukraine as an enemy).

Few leading Ukrainian politicians publicly rebutted Mr Medvedev's insult to Mr Yushchenko. Most used it as yet another opportunity to kick him. "We have reached a critical point, a point of bifurcation," says Anatoly Gritsenko, Ms Mostovaya's husband, a former defence minister and one of the presidential candidates. "Either Ukraine is going down, towards disintegration, or it will start recovering. But the current unstable situation cannot last."

Russia's own situation may not be entirely stable and its current rulers may be tempted to provoke a conflict with Ukraine to consolidate their position. One thing looks increasingly certain: the relationship between Russia and Ukraine will be a worry for European security.

**#16**  
**Ukraine Abroad**  
**Kyiv Post, August 19, 2009**

Foreign media are full of stories about Ukrainian-Russian relations after Russian President Dmitry Medvedev's open letter to his Ukrainian counterpart turned out to be a public relations windfall for Ukraine; Gas war fears ease as international organizations come to the rescue.

Siding with Ukraine

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev's open letter and Aug. 11 video blog attacking Ukrainian President Victor Yushchenko turned out to be a PR windfall for Ukraine, judging from international reaction.

Medvedev blamed Yushchenko for numerous problems in the bilateral relationship. Medvedev accused his Ukrainian counterpart of taking an "anti-Russian" stand in the 2008 Russia-Georgia war, obstructing the Russian Black Sea Fleet's operations in Sevastopol, ousting the Russian language from Ukrainian life, distorting history and bypassing Russia in gas deals with the European Union. He closed the video blog presumptuously with hope that "the new leadership of Ukraine" after the Jan. 17 presidential election – in which Yushchenko is a candidate for re-election – will be ready to improve ties.

Many outside of Russia – and some within -- sided with Ukraine and Yushchenko. "The language [of Medvedev] was reminiscent of [former Soviet leader] Leonid Brezhnev in its detachment from reality," wrote Anders Aslund, author of "How Ukraine Became A Market Economy and Democracy," in an Aug. 17 opinion piece published by the Financial Times. "The Kremlin's misunderstanding of Ukrainian politics is based on the fact that, unlike Russia, Ukraine is a democracy ... The broader problem for Russian foreign policy is that the country's rulers do not know how to deal with their post-Soviet neighbors. Their policy objectives are mixed. Gazprom wants to monopolize gas supply, transportation and sales. Private businessmen aspire to expand their corporations. Agricultural interests block imports. Russian nationalists persist in neo-imperialism and populist politicians try to win domestic support by attacking their neighbors."

Political analyst Yevgeny Kiselyov wrote in the Aug. 14 Moscow Times: "All of the problems the president mentioned do exist, but they first appeared long ago and most had arisen even before Yushchenko took office." Kiselyov speculated that the Kremlin wants to see Yushchenko re-elected because they see him as weak. "...if Medvedev's strategy is successful, we might see an amazing, come-from-behind victory for Yushchenko in January's presidential vote," he wrote.

John O'Sullivan wrote in the Sept. 7 National Review: "Medvedev's bullying tone, list of grievances and veiled threats were all too redolent of the world of the 1930s." O'Sullivan doubted whether realism would work with the Kremlin since "Russia is a gangster state. And such a state is unpredictable."

Boris Nemtsov, co-chairman of the Solidarity movement in Russia and a former aide to Yushchenko, told Ekho Moskvyy radio station on Aug. 18 that Medvedev's message did the Ukrainian president "a great service. Ukrainians suddenly realized that they were being attacked and offended, albeit verbally, and they were forced to team up behind Yushchenko, whom they don't like, seeing him in this particular case not as an unpopular politician but as a symbol of Ukraine as a sovereign country."

And Russian defense analyst Pavel Felgenhauer, reacting to the widespread speculation that Russian leaders might militarily attack Ukraine, wrote in the Jamestown Foundation on Aug 13: "Russia needs at least three more years of radical military modernization and some rearmament before it may contemplate a Crimea and Ukraine mission. Now a new bitter gas war with Kyiv is on the horizon, which might once more cut supplies to Europe. While further Russian attempts to influence domestic politics in Ukraine continue, the military threat will linger in the background."

Gas war fears eased

International loans to Ukraine “have diminished considerably” the chances of another gas war like the one that shut off natural gas supplies from Russia to Europe through Ukraine for two weeks in January. This is according to Business Monitor International’s Emerging Europe Oil and Gas Insights report dated Sept. 1.

The report cites the International Monetary Fund’s \$3.3 billion loan and another \$1.7 billion offered by the World Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the European Investment Bank. The loans are contingent on enhancing the transparency of the notoriously opaque state-owned Naftogaz and raising domestic prices by 20 percent each quarter on gas prices to consumers.

“Although this is likely to cause short-term pain to consumers, particularly in light of the current economic downturn, in the longer term the benefits of industry reform far outweigh the short-term problems,” BMI wrote. “Furthermore, if Tymoshenko is perceived by the public to have averted a recurrence of the so-called ‘gas war’ with Russia, this could earn her valuable political capital in the 2010 elections.”

## **#17**

### **Russia’s Foreign Direct Investment Falls Record 45%**

**By Alex Nicholson and Paul Abelsky**

**Bloomberg, August 21, 2009**

Russia’s foreign direct investment plummeted an annual 45 percent, the most on record, to \$6.1 billion in the first six months of the year as the economy of the world’s biggest energy producer contracted at a record pace.

Overall foreign investment, including credits and flows into securities, fell 30.9 percent from a year earlier to \$32.2 billion, the Moscow-based Federal Statistics Service said today. The office began collecting the data in 1999.

“Given the pressures on the credit market and uncertainties in the financial sector both in Russia and globally, it would have been surprising to see a pickup in FDI volumes in this period,” said Vladimir Tikhomirov, chief economist at UralSib Financial Corp. “I wouldn’t be surprised to see it lower in the third quarter too.”

Gross domestic product shrank a record 10.9 percent in the second quarter following a slump in the price of oil, its key export earner. This year’s decline ended a decade of expansion averaging almost 7 percent. President Dmitry Medvedev has made developing an “innovative economy” a priority in an attempt to wean Russia off dependence on oil, gas and metals exports.

## Stocks, Bonds

Foreign investment in stocks and bonds dropped 25 percent to \$862 million compared with the same period last year, the statement said. Portfolio investments jumped more than sevenfold on a quarterly basis, as recovering oil prices helped Russia’s benchmark Micex Index rally about 23 percent in the period.

Other foreign investments, including loans from foreign banks and Russian companies’ foreign divisions, were down 26.5 percent in the first half at \$25.2 billion, the data showed. Still, the second quarter saw almost double the \$8.7 billion of the first three months, Tikhomirov said.

“The market started to unfreeze somewhat for Russian companies,” as they sought to restructure their loans with foreign banks, Tikhomirov said. “It shows it was easier for some to attract loans in the second quarter than in the first.”

Investment in the retail industry, which received the most funds in the first six months of 2008, dropped almost 41 percent to \$8 billion. Ikea, the world’s biggest home-furnishings retailer, had the opening of its outlet in Samara delayed almost two years after a disagreement with local officials. The retailer has faced at least four disputes with authorities since entering the Russian market in March 2000.

## Lost Competitiveness

The country risks losing competitiveness as foreign investment dries up and the global economic crisis prompts the government to raise its stakes in corporate stocks. State ownership of corporate stocks reached 45 percent at the end of 2008, the Moscow-based Institute of Contemporary Development said in a February report.

More than half of the stock market is controlled by the state, a setup that investors should approach with caution, according to Troika Dialog, Russia's oldest investment bank.

The decline in Russian FDI compares with a 35.7 percent slump in China's inflows in July, the Commerce Ministry said on Aug. 17, as companies stalled expansion plans.

Russia's manufacturing industry received the largest amount of investment in the first six months, according to the Statistics Service. Foreign investors brought \$9.2 billion into the industry, including stock and bond purchases.

### Lending Failure

The Netherlands was the largest foreign investor in Russia in the first six months, followed by Cyprus and Luxembourg. The U.S. was the eighth biggest.

PepsiCo Inc., the world's second-largest soft-drink maker, and Pepsi Bottling Group Inc. said on July 6 that they plan to invest \$1 billion in Russia over three years in anticipation of a resurgence of consumer demand.

So far the central bank's five interest-rate cuts since April 24 have failed to spur lending as banks hold back on concern borrowers can't repay loans. Retail sales declined 8.2 percent in July, the most in almost 10 years, as households cut back spending after incomes dropped and consumer borrowing declined.

"Though assets are cheaper, the fact that FDI is falling sharply means that companies aren't rushing to use this drop in price," Natalia Orlova, chief economist at Alfa Bank in Moscow, said by phone.

### #18

#### **Russia Defends Stalin's Deal with Hitler**

**By Jonas Bernstein**

**Voice of America, August 20, 2009**

Moscow -- Sunday, August 23, marks the 70th anniversary of the so-called Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact - the non-aggression treaty signed in 1939 by Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov and German Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop. The pact included a secret protocol dividing Eastern and Central Europe into Nazi and Soviet spheres of influence. Days after it was signed, first German and then Soviet forces invaded Poland.

The anniversary's approach has sparked a debate in Europe. Western governments condemn Adolf Hitler and Josef Stalin as two equally murderous variants of totalitarianism. The Russian government calls that comparison a "distortion" of history.

On August 17, the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service issued a statement saying it had declassified documents showing that the 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact was the Soviet Union's "only available means of self-defense."

The spy agency's demarche was just the latest in a series of Russian government statements that critics say appear to defend Soviet dictator Josef Stalin and justify actions he took shortly before and during World War II.

In early May, Russian Emergency Situations Minister Sergei Shoigu introduced legislation in parliament that would make it a crime to deny the Soviet victory in World War II.

Later in May, President Dmitri Medvedev issued a decree setting up a presidential commission to counter what he called attempts to "falsify history."

At a meeting in early July, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe passed a resolution designating August 23 - the anniversary of the signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact - as a day of remembrance for the victims of both Stalinism and Nazism.

Russian delegates to the European security body walked out of the meeting, in protest. Russia's Foreign Ministry denounced the OSCE resolution as "an attempt to distort history with political goals," while Russia's parliament called it a "direct insult to the memory of millions" of Soviet soldiers who, in the words of the parliament, "gave their lives for the freedom of Europe from the fascist yoke."

Former independent Russian parliament Deputy Vladimir Ryzhkov says what he calls the "official" Russian position on the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact is "extremely strange."

Ryzhkov asks why today's Russia, which has a democratic constitution and new democratic legitimacy, should justify the division of Europe between Hitler and Stalin.

He says that this view is now included in Russian history text books and has caused "enormous moral damage" to Russia's reputation, particularly in the countries of Eastern Europe that were the main victims of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. Ryzhkov says the only explanation for the Russian leadership's position on the issue is what he calls "sympathy for Stalin."

Public opinion surveys suggest many ordinary Russians share at least some of their government's views.

A poll conducted by the state-run VTsIOM agency, following the OSCE resolution condemning Stalinism and Nazism, found that 53 percent of the respondents across Russia viewed it negatively, while 11 percent viewed it positively and 21 percent viewed it neutrally. In addition, 59 percent of those polled said the resolution was aimed at undermining Russia's authority in the world and diminishing its contribution to the defeat of Nazi Germany.

Dmitry Furman of the Russian Academy of Science's Institute of Europe calls the presidential commission to counter what it deems historical falsification an "idiotic undertaking" and a "very bad idea." He also says Stalin's government killed as many, or even more people than Hitler's.

But, given the suffering Russians endured after Hitler turned on Stalin and invaded the Soviet Union, Furman says it is natural that many resist equating Stalinism and Nazism.

Furman says it is "very difficult psychologically" for Russians to put what they see as their "victors" in the Great Patriotic War, as they call World War II, on the same level with the vanquished Nazis.

## **#19**

### **The Tymoshenko-Putin Axis?**

**By Tammy Lynch**

**Jamestown Foundation, August 20, 2009**

Ukraine announced yesterday that Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko will meet her Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin next month in Warsaw, Poland. The announcement came on the same day that Russian President Dmitry Medvedev brusquely denounced Ukraine's "leadership" during a press event with German Chancellor Angela Merkel in Sochi. Medvedev also claimed that "normal relations" would not be possible until "new leadership" takes over in Ukraine.

Days earlier, Medvedev had released a harsh video blog criticizing everything from Ukraine's treatment of Russian speakers to its "resistance" toward Russian business to its gas deals with the EU.

Medvedev's remarks have created numerous questions. The Putin-Tymoshenko meeting could begin to provide some answers.

The video blog appears to be an attempt to undermine Ukraine's President Viktor Yushchenko in advance of the upcoming presidential election, while increasing support for "pro-Russian" candidate Viktor Yanukovich (and possibly others considered "pro-Kremlin"). However, Medvedev included harsh words for "Ukraine's political leaders" who "do deals with the European Union on supplying gas." The Russian president's use of the plural in his video blog, as well as an ambiguous reference to Ukraine's "leadership" during his recent press event, should not be overlooked.

In fact, it was Prime Minister Tymoshenko – not Yushchenko – who negotiated and signed the Joint EU-Ukraine Declaration on the Modernization of Ukraine's Gas Transit System. The Declaration provided for a framework to modernize Ukraine's transit pipelines in order to increase transit capacity for Russian gas to Europe. This has the potential to undermine competing transit pipelines planned by Russia that would bypass Ukraine and led to a loud, threatening – and effective – response from Moscow.

So, is Medvedev's wording a sign that Moscow does not understand the diarchy of power in Ukraine? Or simply doesn't care? The Russian President clearly is proceeding as if there is one unified power center in Ukraine – and suggesting that Russia will oppose anyone associated with that center.

Or, is Medvedev perhaps signaling that concessions will be necessary from Tymoshenko if Russia is to either back the Prime Minister in the election (assuming she wants this backing) or stay out of the election?

This last question in particular will undoubtedly come up at the Putin – Tymoshenko meeting on September 1st – a meeting which was initiated by Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk.

Tymoshenko and Putin have maintained a cordial, if sometimes strained, working relationship. In fact, Tymoshenko first began working with Putin while he was president; at that time, he clearly showed an understanding of the significant power held by the prime minister's position in Ukraine.

The implication by Tusk that a meeting between Putin and Tymoshenko may ease tensions is a significant repudiation of Medvedev's claim that "normal relations" with Ukraine are not possible. And the fact that both prime ministers have agreed to take part is more interesting.

Given Tymoshenko's strained relationship with Yushchenko, she is happy to appear statesmanlike and effective at his expense. But are Medvedev and Putin working together? Will Tymoshenko meet the good cop in Warsaw? Or, is Medvedev attempting to use Ukraine as a demonstration of his own power? If so, will he be allowed to succeed?