



UCSJ: Union of Councils for Jews in the Former Soviet Union

"The Voice of Emigration, Jewish Survival, and Human Rights in the Former Soviet Union Since 1970"

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**Highlights: Antisemitism, Human Rights, Religious Discrimination
and Democracy in the Russian Federation, Ukraine, Belarus, 2004-2005**

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[Based primarily on UCSJ monitoring and U.S. State Department reports. See, UCSJ's Web site, [fsumonitor.com](http://www.fsumonitor.com), and its weekly internet newsletter, *Bigotry Monitor*.]

KEY to References Within the Report:

UCSJ's BigotryMonitor = UCSJ's weekly internet newsletter, based on UCSJ monitoring, Charles Fenyvesi, editor.

Russia Chronicle = UCSJ report, *Chronicle of Antisemitism in Russia: 2002-2004, December 2004*, prepared by Nikolai Butkevich, Director of Research and Advocacy, UCSJ (based in part on UCSJ's monitoring network).

Ukraine Chronicle = UCSJ report, *Chronicle of Antisemitism in Ukraine: 2002-2004, December 2004*, prepared by Nikolai Butkevich, Director of Research and Advocacy, UCSJ.

Country Reports = U.S. State Department, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, 2004 report issued February 28, 2005.

Religious Freedom Report = International Religious Freedom Report 2004, released by the U.S. State Department Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor.

THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

General

Although the Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens in some areas, its human rights record was poor in certain areas and worsened in several others. Changes in the parliamentary election laws and a move from election to nomination by the President of regional governors further strengthened the power of the executive branch and, together with media restrictions, a compliant State Duma, shortcomings in recent national elections, law enforcement corruption, and political pressure on the judiciary, raised concerns about the erosion in accountability of government leaders to the people. – *State Department Human Rights Country Report (Russia)*

Russian democracy continues to spiral downward under Putin. Rule of law is dysfunctional and corrupt, which explains why neo-Nazi skinheads, Russian nationalists and Islamo-fascists perpetrate antisemitic and xenophobic violence and propaganda with impunity. In the last parliamentary election, all progressive members were defeated; the Communist and two neo-fascist political parties, all running on explicitly antisemitic platforms, won one-third of the seats in the national Duma – approximately the same strength as that of President Putin’s United Russia party. In the summer of 2005 hundreds of Russian nationalists, including some two dozen members of the Duma, sent a letter to the Attorney General demanding the curtailment of rights to Jewish citizens and organizations.

In November 2005, the Russian Parliament, with support from the president, proposed severe limitations on the functioning of all human rights and charitable NGOs, including those organized or supported from foreign sources. The measure passed the first of three readings; the second reading is scheduled for December 9. This action, taken after publication of the above-referenced Country Report by the Department of State, would put Russia’s entire civil society under Kremlin supervision and regulation. – *Extensive coverage of this development appears in the current issue of UCSJ’s weekly BigotryMonitor (attached).*

Rule of Law

There were credible reports that law enforcement personnel engaged in torture, violence, and other brutal or humiliating treatment, often with impunity. Hazing in the armed forces remained a problem. Prison conditions improved but continued to be extremely harsh and frequently life threatening. Earlier changes in criminal procedures led to further reductions in arbitrary arrest and *lengthy* pretrial detention, and judges routinely enforced pre-trial time limits. Government protection for judges from threats by organized criminal defendants remained inadequate, and a series of cases of alleged espionage caused concerns regarding the lack of due process and the influence of the FSB in judicial proceedings. Amnesty International (AI) has highlighted the case of Igor Sutyagin, whom it has declared to be a political prisoner. – *Country Report*

The Indem Foundation, a research group in Moscow that has conducted the most extensive efforts to measure bribery here, estimated last month that Russians paid more than \$3 billion in

bribes annually and that businesses paid \$316 billion -- nearly 10 times the estimate of its first survey just four years ago. The total is more than two and a half times what the government collects in budget revenues, the survey found. – *NYTimes*, 8/13/05, “*Pervasive Corruption in Russia Is 'Just Called Business,'*” By Steven Lee Myers.

Grigory A. Satarov, the president of Indem, said in an interview that the new growth of bribery fed off the inefficiencies of Russia's still sclerotic state structures, inherited from the Communist past. But he also blamed Putin policies that have weakened the rule of law. Fighting corruption, he argued, requires three conditions: free news media, a vibrant political opposition and a truly independent judiciary. Under Mr. Putin, he said, the Kremlin has undercut all three. – *Ibid.*

According to a very wealthy and prominent Moscow businessman, who spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of prosecution or political retaliation, as well as others interviewed, bribes have increasingly become a necessity, either to win contracts or to keep inspectors and prosecutors at bay. A recent survey by the World Bank reported that 78 percent of businesses in Russia reported having to pay bribes. Another survey, by the Foreign Investment Advisory Council, created in 1994 by the Russian government and prominent foreign corporations, found that 71 percent considered corruption the biggest barrier to foreign investment. – *Ibid.*

Mr. Putin's critics and even some supporters charge that the government has done little to combat corruption seriously because it extends to the upper tiers of government, something the president himself has acknowledged, sometimes bluntly. "The state as a whole and the law enforcement bodies, unfortunately, are still afflicted with corruption and inefficiency," Mr. Putin said in an interview on state television last year. The corruption, he added, reaches to the "highest level, where we are talking about hundreds, tens of thousands, perhaps millions" of dollars. – *Ibid.*

For Mr. Satarov and others, high-profile cases like the legal assault on the Yukos oil company highlighted less the government's determination to root out corruption than its desire to assert its control over valuable economic assets. – *Ibid.*

Xenophobia/Religious Discrimination

HATE CRIME UP IN RUSSIA; LAW ENFORCEMENT COMPLICIT. Racial hate crimes are on the rise in Russia, and both foreigners and Russian nationals are affected by them, Nikolay Svanidze, presenter of the "Zerkalo" program on Russia TV channel, said at the opening of his broadcast on October 15. Half of all the skinheads in the world live in Russia, Svanidze said. He cited the Interior Ministry that estimates their number as between 20,000 and 30,000. Then he mentioned the Moscow Bureau of Human Rights that has come up with the figure of "up to 50,000 skinheads" in Russia. Among the statistics quoted in the program: In 2004, 44 racial hate murders were committed in Russia, twice as many as in 2003. About 300 incidents of racial hatred are registered in Russia every year. Svanidze noted that in a year no more than 70 criminal cases are opened as a result, only ten ended up in court last year and only in three or four cases out of 300 was a guilty verdict delivered. According to human rights campaigners cited by Svanidze, the worsening racial problem is the result of poor legislation and poor response on the part of the authorities and the law enforcement agencies. – *UCSJ's Bigotry Monitor: Volume 5, Number 41, 10/21/05.*

The Government continued to deny particular foreign missionaries visas to return to the country, reportedly because of their earlier conflicts with authorities. During the year, some religious organizations, particularly Roman Catholics and Protestants, reported experiencing difficulties obtaining long term visas for their employees and missionaries. The Catholic Church reported, for example, that some of its clergy were only granted 3 or 6 month visas, although others were granted 1 year visas. The Mormons, in contrast, noted an improvement in their ability to secure visas for their foreign missionaries and reported that all of them received 1 year, multiple entry visas. The Mormons encountered some difficulties in securing residency permits for missionaries but noted the difficulties varied from region to region and did not constitute a systemic problem. – *Ibid.*

Russia's 1997 law on religion ostensibly targeted so-called "totalitarian sects" or dangerous religious "cults." However, the intent of some of the law's sponsors appears to have been to discriminate against members of foreign and less well-known religions by making it difficult for them to establish religious organizations. For example, many officials in law enforcement and the legislative branches speak of the need to protect the "spiritual security" of the country by discouraging the growth of "sects" and "cults," usually understood to include Protestant and newer religious movements. – *Religious Freedom Report.*

Antisemitism and xenophobic thought has become increasingly popular among certain sectors of the population. Nationalistic parties, such as Rodina and LDPR [and the Communist Party] have gained a wider voter base by addressing issues of nationalism, race, ethnicity, and religion. – *Ibid.* As the *NY Times* article on corruption noted, the police have the reputation of being the most notoriously corrupt.

It has been estimated that the number of xenophobic publications exceeds 100; many of which are sponsored by local chapters of NDPR....In addition, there are at least 80 Russian Web sites dedicated to distributing antisemitic propaganda. – *Ibid.*

RUSSIAN REGIONAL PRESS LASHES OUT AT JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES. Regional newspapers across Russia attacked Jehovah's Witnesses in a spate of articles last week, raising the possibility that a coordinated campaign has been launched against Jehovah's Witnesses in the wake of a Moscow court's decision to ban them in that city – *UCSJ's BIGOTRY MONITOR, August 2005.*

Tartu, October 25 - The beatings of Muslims in Sergiyev Posad, the seat of the Russian Orthodox Church, suggestions by [ROC] Patriarchate officials that the Muslims should not be there in the first place, and the efforts of the militia and prosecutors to downplay this event [as mere hooliganism] continue to spark discussion in the Moscow media [raising most starkly Russia's commitment to fostering a multi-ethnic society.] – *Paul Goble, Window on Eurasia: The Frightening 'New Russian Order' in Sergiyev Posad.*

Antisemitism

Antisemitic rhetoric has been used by some members of the Rodina bloc, the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR), and the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF) in their public statements. Anti Semitic themes appeared in some local election campaigns. – *Country Report*.

Hundreds of extremist publications, including newspapers, were distributed throughout the country, sometimes containing antisemitic, anti-Muslim and xenophobic articles. Antisemitic themes continued to figure in some local publications around the country, unchallenged by local authorities. In cases where Jewish or other public organizations attempted to take legal action against the publishers, the courts generally were unwilling to recognize the presence of antisemitic content. Some NGOs claimed that many of these publications were owned or managed by the same local authorities who refused to prosecute. – *Country Report*.

The majority of antisemitic hate crimes reported in recent years in Russia remain unsolved, and despite increasingly positive rhetoric, and better police practices in some cities (most notably in Moscow), the authorities have never truly gotten serious about tackling the problems of antisemitism and racism. The geographic scope of the problem is also a cause for concern—antisemitic attacks and incidents of illegal antisemitic hate speech have taken place even in parts of the country where the Jewish community is small. – *UCSJ's Chronicle of Antisemitism in Russia*.

Police officials and prosecutors routinely classify ethnically and religiously motivated violence as ordinary assaults and murders, lending credibility to human rights groups' charges that deliberate obfuscation by law enforcement agencies of the issue of hate crimes against Jews and some other minorities is taking place on a massive scale. Knowing this, and given the police's reputation for brutality, many victims of hate crimes choose not to report them, skewing the statistics even more. – *Ibid*.

Provincial authorities have in the recent past collaborated with violent neo-Nazi groups, and President Putin has at times contradicted his pro-Jewish rhetoric by promoting openly antisemitic parties, most explicitly during the December 2003 parliamentary elections, when government-controlled television swamped the airwaves with positive coverage of Vladimir Zhirinovsky's extremist nationalist party the LDPR and the extremist nationalist Motherland (*Rodina*) bloc. Both of these parties did very well in the December elections, bringing to power the most radically nationalistic State Duma in the country's post-Soviet history. – *Ibid*.

These threats to the Jewish and other minority communities are accentuated by growing authoritarianism. Since President Putin's inauguration, all national television stations have been placed under state control, one of the country's leading private companies (Yukos) is about to be de facto [and now has been] expropriated, gubernatorial elections have been abolished, and former KGB officials have been appointed to influential posts throughout the bureaucracy – *Ibid*.

PUTIN VOWS TO MAKE SKINHEADS DISAPPEAR FROM THE MAP. "We shall do the utmost to make skinheads and fascist elements to disappear from the country's political map," President Vladimir Putin said in a televised phone-in broadcast on Russia TV on September 27.

“I can only bring my apologies for the incidents that have already taken place.” – *UCSJ's BIGOTRY MONITOR, Friday, September 30, 2005.*

CHIEF RABBI BARRED FROM REENTERING RUSSIA -- the 53rd foreign religious worker denied entry to Russia since March 1998. On September 27, Russian border guards denied entry to Pinchas Goldschmidt, chief rabbi of Moscow's Choral Synagogue, the Associated Press reported. Goldschmidt, a Swiss citizen who had been living in Russia for nearly 15 years, was ordered to leave Moscow upon arrival from Israel and to take a return flight. According to the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, he had his multi-entry Russian visa annulled at passport control. Speaking on Ekho Moskvyy radio, Goldschmidt urged the authorities to review his case and allow him to return to Russia. He said he hoped that the incident was a misunderstanding. Raising questions of Kremlin religious freedom policies. UCSJ joined others in immediately condemning the action. – *UCSJ's BIGOTRY MONITOR, September 30, 2005.*

Rabbi Goldschmidt is the 53rd foreign religious worker known to Forum 18 to have been denied entry to Russia since March 1998 (*see F18News 7 September 2005* http://www.forum18.org/Archive.php?article_id=644).

UKRAINE

General

The Government's human rights record remained poor and worsened in a number of areas; however there were also improvements in some areas, particularly toward the end of the year. During most of the year, authorities continued to interfere with news media by intimidating journalists through the use of libel laws, license revocations, and by investigations on tax matters or fire and health code violations; in some cases, these measures had the effect of shutting down independent media sources. – *Country Report.*

Rule of Law

Corruption was rampant in the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of the Government. According to one survey, 80 percent of respondents considered corruption to be one of the country's most serious problems, with 57 percent viewing the police, 34.4 percent the courts, and 30 percent the office of the Prosecutor, as corrupt. – *Country Report.*

Antisemitism

After a period of relative calm from the mid to late 1990's, the situation for Jews has gotten worse in several parts of the country since 2002. The mostly good intentions of the weak and dysfunctional central government don't always filter down to the lower levels of the bureaucracy, especially the police, prosecutors, the courts and the SBU (the former KGB), which are still largely staffed by officials appointed during the years of Soviet state-sponsored antisemitism. It is reasonable to believe that many of these officials retain antisemitic views dating from that time, as has been shown by the numerous antisemitic statements made by various Ukrainian parliamentarians in recent years, and three recent reports of Jews being singled out for torture or harassment by police officials. President Kuchma himself was secretly

recorded using antisemitic language while ordering the murder of an opposition journalist named Grigory Gongadze (these tapes have been authenticated by the US government, though the Ukrainian government continues to contend that they are forgeries). – *UCSJ Chronicles*.

There have been several recent incidents of police singling out Jews for harassment in Ukraine. Even law enforcement officials who do not feel antisemitic bias often do little to prevent antisemitic crimes. Enforcement of laws banning the incitement of ethnic or religious hatred is almost non-existent, leading to widespread antisemitic publishing in the country. A law banning hate crimes, which has been on the books for years, was only successfully applied once in the whole post-Soviet history of Ukraine (against skinheads who attacked a synagogue in Kiev in 2002; see below for details). – *Ibid*.

The Ukrainian press is to a significant extent either controlled by the government or by government connected businesses, or is intimidated by government strong-arm tactics (including murders and assaults), making it very difficult to monitor antisemitic incidents. In some cases, Ukrainian Jewish leaders fear making antisemitic incidents public. Some local officials have hostile attitudes towards the local Jewish community, and the central government appears to be too weak and/or indifferent to check local abuses. – *Ibid*.

Antisemitic incidents have become more frequent and violent since 2002. Local officials, who are inclined to take antisemitic actions, turn a blind eye towards or support antisemitic hate groups and publications, or make antisemitic statements, are as a rule not sanctioned by the central government. Antisemitic attacks often do not result in any arrests, leaving the strong impression that police do not seriously investigate such incidents. -- *Ibid*.

Since the Orange Revolution, Ukraine in many respects seems to have left its giant neighbor to the east behind. But there is at least one thing that the new Ukrainian government can learn from Russia. Along with all of the positive changes there is a strongly negative trend that has gone largely unnoticed. The plague of neo-Nazi violence that has made Russia's streets so unsafe for its ethnic minorities over the past several years is now undeniably present in Ukraine. Even worse, the Ukrainians are repeating the same mistakes that the Russians made when the skinhead menace first raised its ugly head in the late 1990s. – *Ibid*.

In both countries, gangs of youths are busy terrorizing people who don't meet their definition of racial "purity." In both countries, their attacks are getting both more frequent and more violent, provoking strong rhetorical condemnation from political leaders, but that is where the similarities end. While in Russia the most frequent targets of skinhead violence are dark-skinned migrants, in Ukraine it is the Jewish community that is bearing the brunt. And while Russian officials have over the past few years begun to openly talk about the need to combat neo-Nazi extremist gangs, racism, and antisemitism, in Ukraine the standard response is to deny that these problems even exist. – *Ibid*.

UCSJ's monitoring of antisemitic incidents in Ukraine confirms that violent attacks on Jews have become more common over the past year and a half. All of these attacks have taken place in predominantly Russian-speaking regions of the country, raising the possibility that some of these gangs are being inspired by or may be in contact with their comrades in Russia. – *Ibid*.

Many Ukrainian members of parliament have made public antisemitic statements in recent years, none of which has inspired any sort of condemnation from President Kuchma. Such comments became more frequent as the country's October 31, 2004 presidential elections approached. – *Ibid.*

According to UCSJ's Lviv monitor, on March 27, 2004 opposition parliamentarian Vladimir Nechiporuk gave an interview on Ukraine's 5th Channel during which he asserted that Ukraine is ruled by a "kike-mason mafia," that the Soviet government was "kike-Bolshevik," and that since Jews make up less than 1% of the population, they should not rule the country. – *Ibid.*

The Yushchenko government is making some of the same mistakes that the Yeltsin/Putin governments made when the skinhead movement was just taking off in Russia. While in Russia the prime targets of the skinheads are dark-skinned migrants, in Ukraine it is almost exclusively Jews who are being assaulted. While giving due credit for the arrests they have made in some of these cases, we sharply criticize the head-in-the-sand attitude of Ukrainian officials, who, when they bother to respond publicly to antisemitic violence at all, have invariably denied that antisemitism was a motive, or that skinheads even exist in their country. It's *deja vu* all over again, just like the Yeltsin times. – From *Jerusalem Post* *op ed* by UCSJ Research and Advocacy Director, *Nickolai Butkevich*.

With the exception of a few Ukrainian and Russian Jewish web sites, the Ukrainian media has ignored most of these attacks, though its coverage has improved somewhat since Yushchenko became president. What hasn't changed since the Orange Revolution is the pattern of denial that neo-Nazi violence poses a significant threat to Ukrainian Jews. Arresting suspects is commendable and necessary, but denying the obvious motives behind these attacks insults the victims and emboldens the victimizers. The Ukrainian Criminal Code has a hate crimes statute which could add several years of prison time to the extremists who stabbed Molozhenov, but the fact that this law has only been successfully applied once in the entire post-Soviet history of Ukraine speaks volumes about the lack of seriousness with which this problem is being approached. It took dozens of murders and hundreds of assaults for Russian officials to finally admit that they had a serious problem on their hands. Will the Yushchenko government wait that long? – *Ibid.*

UKRAINIAN DEPUTIES SIGN ANTISEMITIC APPEAL. Two members of the Ukrainian parliament have signed a letter calling for the investigation and prosecution of Ukrainian Jewish groups and activists, according to a September 21 report by the AEN news agency. Among the 1,000 or so signatories of the letter, which was published in the most recent issue of the antisemitic publication "Personnel Plus," were Oleg Tyagnybok (a former member of President Viktor Yushchenko's party expelled for his antisemitic comments) and Ivan Spodarenko (Socialist Party member and editor of the newspaper "Silski Visti" which the previous government unsuccessfully tried to close because of an antisemitic article it published. Earlier this year, editors of "Silski Visti" received medals for their journalistic excellence from President Yushchenko.) – *Country Report*.

BELARUS

General

* * * QUOTE OF THE WEEK, THE POWER OF NUMBERS * * * A dispatch by correspondent Steven Lee Myers published by "The New Times" on October 18 quoted an anti-regime Belarusian activist as saying: "If 100,000 people come out on the streets, I don't think that the government will stand. One general, during an illegal rally in Minsk, said if you come out with 2,000, we will continue to beat you, as we have. But if we see that 100,000 come out in the street, then we will join you." – *UCSJ's Bigotry Monitor: Volume 5, Number 41, 10/21/05.*

Xenophobia/Religious Discrimination

The law restricts the ability of religious organizations to conduct religious education, requires all religious groups to receive governmental approval to distribute literature, and prohibits foreigners from leading religious organizations. Religious groups that could not register frequently were forced to meet illegally or in the homes of individual members. According to the CRNA, 27 religious denominations were officially registered as of January; however, authorities continued to refuse legal registration at the national level to faiths considered to be nontraditional.

According to bishops of the Union of Evangelical Faith Christians in Belarus, authorities have been trying to bar children from attending Protestant churches and Sunday schools. They claim authorities have repeatedly questioned students about their attendance at Sunday schools, the church they belonged to, and the names of their pastors and Sunday school teachers. Teachers reportedly questioned priests of three churches about the curriculum and qualifications of the instructors at Sunday schools. At year's end the impact of this pressure remained unclear. – *Ibid.*

The status of respect for religious freedom continued to be poor during the period covered by this report. The Government formalized restrictions on religious freedom by passing a new law on religion in 2002 and signing a Concordat in 2003 with the Belarusian Orthodox Church (BOC), a branch of the Russian Orthodox Church, that many consider to elevate the BOC's status and provide the Church with privileges not enjoyed by other faiths. Authorities continued to harass other religions and denominations. The Government has repeatedly rejected the registration applications of other religious groups, including many Protestant denominations, the Belarusian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (BAOC), and some Eastern religions. Without registration many of these groups find it difficult, if not impossible, to rent or purchase property to conduct religious services. During the period covered by this report, the government-run media continued to attack non-Orthodox religious groups. Despite continued harassment, some minority faiths have been able to function if they maintain a low profile, while others have openly declared their refusal to seek re-registration under the new religion law. – *Religious Freedom Report.*

BELARUS SLAPS HUGE FINE ON CHURCH ORGANIZER. On September 23, two months after police raided a Sunday morning service of the New Life charismatic church in Minsk, a court fined church administrator Vasily Yurevich the equivalent of 160 times the minimum monthly wage for organizing an "illegal" service, Forum 18 News Service reported on September 28. Yurevich told the news service that Judge Natalya Kuznetsova ignored the testimony of church members that he had not organized the service, while the court decision

maintained that the judge “believes offender Yurevich is trying to evade responsibility for what has been committed.” This is Yurevich's second massive fine and he fears further fines in the wake of a police raid on the church's September 4 service. – *UCSJ's BIGOTRY MONITOR*, September 30, 2005.

In separate cases, one Baptist punished for organizing “illegal” worship was able to overturn his fine in August, but two other Baptists have been fined.

Antisemitism

On August 18, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs notified the local chapter of the Union of Councils for Jews in the Former Soviet Union (UCSJ), one of the country's primary Jewish human rights organizations, that it would not be reregistered because the chapter [i.e., UCSJ's human rights Bureau in Minsk] submitted some documents late. – *Ibid.*

There were isolated instances of antisemitic vandalism during the year. On November 5, vandals defaced (for the fifth time) a Holocaust Memorial in Brest. While the Government investigated such incidents and often assisted in restoring such memorials, no individuals have been arrested for vandalism of these sites. – *Country Report*.

Distribution of the antisemitic and xenophobic newspaper *Ruski Vestnik* newspaper resumed in February through the state distribution agency *Belsoyuzpechat*, despite a May 2003 order by the Prosecutor General and the Ministry of Information that it be terminated. Sales of such literature continued throughout the year in government owned buildings, in stores, and at events affiliated with the BOC. [Belarus Orthodox Church] antisemitic and Russian ultra nationalistic literature continued to be sold at *Pravoslavnaya Kniga* (Orthodox Bookstore), a store operated by Orthodox Initiative that sells Orthodox literature and religious paraphernalia. Antisemitic literature also continued to be sold at kiosks selling Orthodox literature, including one located in the National Academy of Sciences. The CRNA claimed it was difficult to prevent the distribution of Russian-produced antisemitic literature. – *Ibid.*

In January, the organization Russian National Unity [RNE] distributed antisemitic leaflets in Gomel, which stated: "The Jews are trying to destroy Christianity," "Now hostile activities against the Jews will begin," "The Jews are the forces of evil," and "The fighters against God must be exterminated." In addition, the letters RNE were sprayed on the walls of the Jewish Community building in Gomel. No suspects were arrested at year's end. – *Ibid.*

NB: The following represent extracts from a report by UCSJ's principal monitor in Minsk:

Provocative publications are considered as scientific ones, and therefore they are not subjected to court disputes. One example is the trial against publishers of the book *The War On the Laws of Meanness*, a compilation of antisemitic tracts including the Protocols of the Elders of Zion. The same happened during a trial against the newspaper *NARODNAYA VOLIA*, which had published in April 2000 an article by a journalist Nina Yakubovich containing slander about Pentecostal Christians. The cases went nowhere.

Mass destruction of gravestones (obelisks, crosses, etc) has become an ordinary phenomenon; in many cases authorities refuse not only to restore the gravestones (as required by law), but even to react to these incidents. Most of the cases of vandalism considered anti-state, however, are rubbed clean immediately.

There are forces in the republic, which try to restore the Nazi ideology. The printing house The Greek Orthodox Initiative has been doing that for years. In 2005 the newspaper *Communists of Byelorussia* published materials which essentially repackage Hitler propaganda.

All these manifestations became possible due to the return of active propaganda in aid of great power chauvinism in the Republic. Eduard Skobelev, editor-in-chief of the presidential bulletin, has clearly expressed the State position. i.e., "It's time for every nation to come back to its own territory or to lose the right of national identification voluntarily."

All these facts are symptoms of a sickness of the Belarussian society. When authorities, despite the facts, stubbornly refuse to accept the existence of such sickness, this will lead to a further increase of neo-Nazi tendencies. – *UCSJ's chief monitor in Minsk.*