

Report No.115

PROJECT ON BUSINESS AND POLITICS IN THE MUSLIM WORLD

Central and Eastern Europe including Russia and Baltic States

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Head Lines

Central Europe (Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia & Hungary)

Poland

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Belarus

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Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia & Lithuania)

Estonia

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Overview of the Weekly Report No 115

The Polish tragedy has generated debates (1) about the fate of Kaczynski's Law and Justice Party and (2) regarding the Russo-Polish relations in the context of Russia's efforts to re-establish its sphere of influence in the region.

Fate of Conservatives at home

The staunch support for women empowerment, Tax reforms and efforts to generate strong sense of Nationalism among the Polish Youth have made the Conservative Law and Justice Party a most powerful force in the Polish politics.

Kaczynski brothers, known as suspicious of Germany, hostile to Russia, euro-skeptic, staunchly pro American and obsessed with moral renewal have become the icon of Polish Politics.

On the regional and International arena, the victory for the Centre-Right European People's Party (EPP) in the European Parliamentary elections, the successful persuasion of "the Eastern Partnership Plan", Kaczynski's stance on the Lisbon Treaty, the strategy to install an Anti-Missile Bases in Poland are some outstanding Issues at which these Conservatives stood firm and succeeded in achieving their objectives.

At the Economic Front, during the great financial crisis of the last two years Poland alone, among the 27 states EU, has bypassed the shocks of Economic meltdown, and for the first time in history Poland is where it wants to be.

At ideological front, Poland successfully gathered leaders of Central and Eastern Europe to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Communism and very

successfully generated new debates regarding the legacy of Russian rule in the region.

The Conservatives, very much devoted to cleansing Poland of remaining communist influences, not only banned a broad category of communist symbols such as the hammer, sickle, red star and Che- Guevara t-shirts in Poland, they even asked Russia to admit the wrong doing of Past. Chief among these crimes was the massacre of several thousand Polish army officers and other elites in the KATYN forest in 1940. That is why the Law and Justice party is still confident to win the upcoming Presidential elections.

Russo-Polish relation

Russian gestures to normalize its relations with Poland but at the same time its strategy to dominate the political front of the region has created uncertainties.

Poland is important for Russia because it can exert leadership in Central and Eastern Europe and can mobilize its neighbors to counter Russian consolidation in Belarus and Ukraine through a close alliance with the United States. This is why Russia has launched the “charm offensive” on Poland even before Kaczynski’s death in a plane crash April 10.

Seemingly it is the time for Russia’s resurgence in its periphery. But it is also a harsh reality of History that Poland had to suffer mostly at the hands of Russia at the time when there was a shift in Russia’s approach towards regional and international politics. In this new context Polish leadership should adopt such a rational and realistic approach towards Russia, but not at the cost of losing its Western Allies.

Report Summary

Political and strategic front

Central Europe (Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia & Hungary)

Poland

The analysts are very consciously observing the dimensions of new strategies of Polish right regarding its worldview, its relations with domestic opponents and its stance toward Russia in the post disaster era. The story of Polish Rights has been revolving around twins since very long time and at one point when they held the offices of both president and prime minister identically they become the most influential Political figures of Polish politics. They were passionate ideologues, devoted to cleansing Poland of remaining communist influences as well as to remembrance of crimes against Poland, especially those crimes committed by Russia. Chief

among these crimes is the massacre of several thousand Polish army officers and other elites in the Katyn forest in 1940.

Hundreds of thousands of mourners are expected Saturday at a memorial for victims of Poland's air crash tragedy. While the thickening cloud of volcanic ash over Europe has led US President Barack Obama and other World Leaders to cancel their trip to Poland to attend funeral of President Lech Kaczynski. They regretted that the volcanic ash has disrupting air travel over Europe.

The plane that went down in fog last Saturday was not only carrying the Polish President and high echelon of Polish Military and Civil establishment, but several other peoples were also on board who had personal connections to the massacre of 1940 in Katyn.

Meanwhile Belarusian leader Alexander Lukashenko, who has stormy relations with Warsaw after a crackdown on ethnic Poles in Belarus, has said he believes Polish President Lech Kaczynski gave the final order to land his plane which crashed Saturday in Russia, killing all on board. He ignored the advice and made four attempts to land before hitting tree-tops and crashing. Investigators in Poland also blamed pilot error on Thursday for a crash that killed Poland's president. According to Polish military prosecutor, the crew was aware of the inevitability of the coming catastrophe.

Czech President Vaclav Klaus, who was the last EU leader to sign the reform deal and famous as a fierce critic of the European Union and its reforming Lisbon Treaty, said Thursday that the pact has failed to boost the 27-member bloc's effectiveness. He urges reality check on 'Europe 2020' plan.

Czech President Vaclav Klaus has a chance to reshape monetary policy as the nation moves toward euro adoption after the resignation of central bank Governor Zdenek Tuma. Though the president has the sole mandate to choose board members, the central bank has widely been seen as politically independent.

According to the central bank, stress tests showed the Slovak banking system's strength was sound and majority of banks would weather even a worsening of economic recovery or rising stress on financial markets. The euro zone newest member's banks have been shielded

from the direct impacts of the global financial crisis, mainly thanks to the adoption of the euro in January 2009.

The right-wing Federation of Young Democrats (FIDESZ) with 52.7 percent of the vote and 206 of the parliament's 386 mandates won an absolute majority in parliamentary elections held in Hungary on Sunday. The neo-fascist Party for a Better Hungary (Jobbik), which ran a racist election campaign directed against Roma and foreigners, obtained 17 percent of the vote. The FIDESZ is hoping to gain a two-thirds majority in the second round of voting on April 25, which would allow it to make changes in the constitution. **Fidesz** revolves around a single personality, namely the 46-year-old Victor ORBAN.

Kyrgyzstan's ousted president, Kurmanbek Bakiyev, claims that two countries, Kazakhstan and Belarus have offered him political asylum. Nursultan Nazarbayev personally has invited me to Kazakhstan. Bakiyev told his fellow-villagers and media in the home of his father in the village of Teyitm, near Jelal-Abad.

First Deputy Prime Minister Igor Shuvalov disclosed here on Thursday that Russia may abandon its plans to join the World Trade Organization in a joint bid with Kazakhstan and Belarus. The government had earlier indicated a willingness to apply for accession to the WTO as part of a customs union with Kazakhstan and Belarus, but that model would be changed "due to tactical considerations.

Since Belarus was not invited to participate in the top-level 47-nation nuclear security summit in Washington on April 12-13, during which world leaders agreed to "join Obama's call to secure all vulnerable nuclear material in four years" to "enhance nuclear security, the Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko announced that Belarus has hundreds of kilograms of highly enriched uranium and is not going to get rid of it.

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev plans to visit Ukraine next week to meet with President Viktor Yanukovich. Previously that visit was planned for May. During the visit their discussion will include security, economic relations and humanitarian issues.

Speaking at a joint news conference at the Çankaya presidential palace after his talks with President Abdullah Gül in Ankara, Estonian President Ilves said on Friday that Europe must

think about Turkey's membership in the EU from a global and strategic perspective and accept the country as a member of the bloc.

President Dmitry Medvedev participated in a summit of four i.e. Brazil, Russia, India, and China in Brasilia aimed at strengthening cooperation between the four countries and improving the current global economic situation. After the Summit Medvedev said that Russia will leave the Kyoto Protocol on greenhouse gas emissions if a deal can't be reached on carbon emission reduction. He said developing and developed countries should reach accord on terms of carbon emissions or Russia no longer will participate in the Kyoto agreement. The Kyoto Protocol expires in 2012.

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev has linked the collapse of political regime in Kyrgyzstan with the failure to solve social and economic issues and announced to continue its humanitarian aid to Kyrgyzstan but will conclude major agreement only with a legitimate government that will be able to cope with them.

Economic Front

Czech central bank Vice-Governor Miroslav Singer very strongly condemned IMF assessment about the Czech Republic's economic performance. He criticized IMF for its misleading reports and painting a miserable picture of the country's financial exposure. Singer's criticism followed a sharp attack on the fund by fellow Vice-Governor Mojmir Hampl.

According to a Bloomberg survey, average gross wages in Hungary has probably advanced 3.5 percent in February. The numbers are due for release at 9 a.m. in Budapest. The forint lost 0.2 percent to 262.86 per euro. The yield on Hungary's 8 percent bond due February 2015 fell 2 basis points to 5.789 percent.

The central bank reports money supply as of April 12 is to be released in Moscow. Money supply fell to 4.57 trillion rubles in the week to April 5. The ruble weakened 0.2 percent to 29.0225 per dollar. The yield on the 7.5 percent government bond in dollars due March 2030 fell 1 basis point to 4.791 percent.

According to a Bloomberg survey, the European Union-harmonized consumer prices probably advanced annual 0.3 percent in March. The statistics office in Slovakia reports the figures at 9 a.m. in Bratislava. The yield on the 4.9 percent government bond due February 2014 was little changed at 2.663 percent.

The Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic has awarded US Company Ness Technologies, Inc. a contract to provide the first phase of an electronic healthcare services system valued at €32.4m.

The centre-right FIDESZ party, which ousted the ruling Socialists after eight years in power at elections on Sunday, has repeatedly warned the full-year deficit could be higher than the government's forecast.

According to some major analysts, the change in political direction of Ukraine is a direct result of the economic damage from the global recession. The country of 10 million has fallen on hard times and since 2008 Hungary has to seek the \$25 billion loan from the International Monetary Fund, with stiff conditions attached. Unemployment stands at 11.4 percent and last year the economy contracted by 6.3 percent

According to the Statistical Committee reported, Belarus's gross domestic product (GDP) rose 4.0 percent in the first quarter of 2010 from a year earlier. That was almost quadruple the growth recorded in the same period of last year, which ended with the economy nearly stagnating and GDP grew a mere 0.2 percent for 2009 as a whole.

The new Ukrainian government unveiled an economic reform plan Wednesday in Kiev with goals of increasing productivity to profitable levels. The reform package would be introduced in the RADA (parliament) Thursday for approval.

However the Ukrainian Prime Minister Mykola Azarov said on Wednesday that his country and the International Monetary Fund have agreed to revise two-year bail out program that was approved in 2008 and Ukraine has so far received 11 billion U.S. dollars out of a 16.4-billion-dollar loan from the IMF but IMF has suspended the rest of the money since last November.

Estonia is likely to become the seventeenth member of the euro zone in 2011 as its macro-economic performance remains under control despite the recession. The European Commission is set to give its green light in mid-May. In accordance with the provisions of the Maastricht Treaty, all new members of the European Union are eligible and even compelled to join the bloc's single currency, the euro.

Dmitry Medvedev on Wednesday used the first-ever visit by a Russian president to Argentina to urge the countries to boost economic ties and cooperate more on nuclear energy.

The leaders of the world's four emerging economic powers - Brazil, Russia, India and China (BRIC) - called for a 'new international order' at a summit in Brasilia as they reached consensus to file a draft resolution before the Group of 20 (G20) in Canada in June. They plan to demand more power for emerging and developing countries in global decision-making bodies.

Social Front

The parliament speaker Bronislaw Komowski, who also is acting president, said Wednesday that he would announce the date of the presidential election on April 21, meaning that the election will be held June 20. The Polish constitution stipulates that if a president dies in office, the speaker of parliament assumes his duties and must decide on an election date within 14 days, with the election to follow no less than 60 days after that.

According to the OECD Health Data 2009, Koreans are thought to be the world's heaviest drinkers, but a recent OECD report refutes that notion. Koreans aged 15 or over consumed an average of 8 liters of alcohol per person in 2007, less than the OECD average of 9.5 liters. Korea ranked 11th among the 16 countries surveyed, while Ireland took first place with 13.4 liters followed by Denmark and the Czech Republic with 12.1 liters.

The promises to wear the black uniform of the illegal neo-Nazi Hungarian Guard during the opening ceremony of parliament and to crackdown on "Criminal Gypsy" by the JOBBIK and his party colleagues has upset the political scene of the region. The group has marched through Roma villages bearing flags evocative of the Nazi era. JOBBIK'S success has raised the question that whether the world will have to see other far-right group's victories in future elections around Europe. And whether Jean-Marie Le Pen's National Front in French regional elections, the Anti-

Immigrant Northern League in Italy, or anti-Islamic GEERT WILDERS'S Freedom Party in the Netherlands has the ultimate fate of the regional Politics.

ORBAN and FIDESZ, a populist/nationalist rather than fiscally conservative party, has already made international markets nervous. The party has opposed government plans for fiscal consolidation and suggested that must await growth in the economy. It has already spoken to the IMF about leeway on budget deficits and some commentators question whether it has the stomach for necessary structural reform of the parlous economy.

Belarus has initiated discussions on the formation of active citizenship among the young generation of the CIS countries. The purpose of the activities of the International Forum of voluntary initiatives is the involvement of youth in development and strengthening of human values, education for their civil and patriotic feelings. The Forum is held by Republican Youth NGO "League of voluntary work by young people" with the support of the Interstate Fund for Humanitarian Cooperation of CIS member-states and Belarusian Ministry of Education.

Responding to the Amnesty International's recommendations presented to Kyiv on 14 April on how to protect people in Ukraine from torture and other ill-treatment in police custody and from racial discrimination, the Ukrainian authorities have vowed to ensure accountability for human rights violations. The report also advises on how to protect the rights of refugees and asylum-seekers.

According to Estonian President Toomas Hendrik Ilves, Estonia Government has done a lot of training to judges to get them to understand European Union jurisprudence. And the Judicial Reform strategy is at the tops of its domestic Reform Agenda.

The Ministry of Regional Development and Local Government presented to the Latvian Cabinet an information report on the implementation of the e-Government Development Program 2005-2009. The implementation of the Program brought many considerable achievements, among which are: the introduction of a secure e-Signature infrastructure, the establishment and the expansion of the national e-Procurement system, the set up of new State and municipal information systems and the launch of the e-Government portal www.latvija.lv providing both a public services directory and e-Services. Moreover, the web-based document

flow system (DAUKS) was launched, allowing the standardized and automatic circulation of documents between the State Chancellery and the ministries

The defense minister, Mr AK Antony, today disclosed that an investigation had found that there was a link between Commodore Sukhjinder Singh of the Navy and a Russian woman during his posting in Russia to oversee the re-fit of aircraft carrier Admiral Gorshkov.

Detailed Report

Central Europe (Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia & Hungary)

Poland

The Truth about the Fatal Plane Crash in Smolensk-By James Buchan-Apr 14, 2010

Information is still coming in about the crash of the Polish Tu-154 at Smolensk with President Kaczynski and a good part of the Polish government on board. There seems to be an organized effort to blame the pilot for the crash claiming that President Kaczynski pressured him to land under impossible conditions.

For background see *The Return of the Radical Right in Poland. The Betrayal of Solidarity and the Politics of Discontent*

The first strange piece of information that has come out was that the airport at Smolensk reportedly does not have an Instrument Landing System (ILS). Considering how horrendous the weather can be in Russia during winter and spring and fall, it's stunning to hear that a significant European city of 330,000 people does not have an airport with an ILS. One excuse is that the airport was an ex-military airbase. Which raises the question: "Were the Russians letting their \$30 million dollar Sukhoi Su-27 fighters land there without an Instrument Landing System?"

Assuming the Russians did let a city that large run their airport on "visual flight rules" raises the question: Why would anyone ever want to land there? If I were planning an important event, where people had to fly in, I'd only recommend an airport that had an ILS. In this case, there was an airport at Vitebsk in Belarus with an ILS that was only 66 miles from the Katyn forest.

To safely land an airplane under Visual Flight Rules (VFR), the minimum safe distance for landing varies from 1 to 5 miles depending on the airspace. At an airbase like Smolensk North which may have Soviet fighters using it, a 5 mile visibility is necessary to spot any stray fighters in time to avoid them. Another source notes that –even with an instrument landing system, a half mile visibility is needed before a pilot is allowed to land his plane.

One source reports that the day of the crash the Smolensk North airport had a visibility of 400 meters. Other reports on the evening news and radio have mentioned much less visibility as low as 50 or 80 meters. Any sane pilot would not have attempted a VFR landing with that little visibility. The pilot likely made one orbit of the airfield to appease President Kaczynski and to show that the visibility was not good enough to land. Obviously the pilot would not knowingly fly lower than the height of the surrounding hills plus the added height of trees and power lines.

If the altimeter were sabotaged, this would be where the plane flew too low and everyone got killed.

A number of false or unsubstantiated stories have been circulating around the Internet and it would be good to address them: Diverting the plane would have caused the Polish president to be extremely late for the Katyn ceremony: False. There was an airport with an instrument landing system at Vitebsk, Belarus only 66 miles from the Katyn Forest. The Katyn memorial service was largely ceremonial and only a few hundred people were reportedly at the site. The Polish contingent would have been the most significant group since this included the Polish president, and the press would have waited for them to show up. The Polish president pressured the pilot to land against his will: Disputed. This has been reported as fact even though everyone on the plane is dead and the Smolensk air traffic controller didn't hear anything that would confirm this. Hopefully the black boxes will shed some light on this. An article notes "In August 2008, Mr Kaczynski had pressed a pilot to land in Tbilisi, Georgia, even though conditions were dangerous during Russia's short war with the country. After the pilot refused, Mr Kaczynski went into the cabin and later said: 'If someone decides to become an officer they should not be cowardly.' The pilot, who diverted to nearby Azerbaijan, was later awarded a medal for refusing to yield to the president. Andrzej Seremet, Poland's chief prosecutor, told a news conference on Monday that, at this stage of the investigation, there was nothing to suggest pressure was put on the pilots. However, the Tu-154's black boxes were still being analysed to see 'if suggestions were made to the pilots'." Judging from the earlier incident, the pilot would have stood to get a medal if he ignored pressure from Kaczynski and diverted the plane to another airport. Also President Kaczynski would have embarrassed himself and gotten bad press if he tried to bully another pilot. The pilot made four or five approaches. Disputed. One article notes "The pilot told Mr Plyusnin (the Russian air controller at Smolensk) that he would make one approach to land before switching to an alternate destination if he did not succeed." Another news source has eyewitnesses describing the crash. None of them mention the plane making multiple attempts to land. Another article reports "The air traffic controller at the Air Base said, the airplane attempted only one approach before radio contact was lost."

Lech Walesa said the pilot was pressured into landing. False. One source notes “Lech Walesa, the former Polish President, said that Captain Protasiuk would have been expected to consult. However, pilots are trained to resist pressure to take wrong decisions.” The Tu-154 was a flying coffin with a horrible safety record. False. A list of crashes for the Tu-154 since 1994 by FoxNews, show only two previous crashes in Europe. All the other crashes were over Siberia or the the Third World, including two planes shot down and one plane blown up over Europe by Czechen terrorists. Another source notes “On a note about the type of aircraft used, Paul Duffy, an expert on Russian aviation, stated... the hull-loss (crash) rate was normal for the number in service, the number of years it has been operated, and for the technology of the aircraft... 1015 Tu-154s have been built, 214 of which are still in service as of 14 December 2009.” The plane that carried President Kaczynski was only 20 years old and had undergone a major inspection and overhaul in December 2009.

All this raises the question: Who would want to eliminate the Polish government? An article in Jewish Currents entitled “The Return of the Radical Right in Poland” reports “Something has gone very, very wrong in Poland. After elections last September, a group called ‘Law and Justice,’ led by a longtime Solidarity activist and right-wing politician named Jaroslaw Kaczynski, emerged as the largest party in parliament. Victory in the following month’s presidential election went to Kaczynski’s identical twin Lech... The Kaczynskis formed a coalition with an agrarian populist group called “Self-Defense” and a radical-right party with the innocuous name of ‘The League of Polish Families.’ Polite Western journalists have labeled this government ‘center-right’ or ‘conservative,’ but it is hard to find anything centrist about those holding power in Warsaw today. Even Europe’s mainstream conservative parties have publicly disavowed any affiliation with Law and Justice (not to mention the other two coalition members). Put simply, the extreme right now rules Poland, and people widely considered marginal and dangerous even a year ago are now within the corridors of power.”

All it would have taken to cause the accident at Smolensk would have been the sabotage of the plane’s altimeter so that the pilot would have thought he was higher up than he was. Thousands of planes land in bad weather in Europe and the US and only a tiny number crash. The arch-

criminal Franklin Delano Roosevelt once said, “In politics, nothing happens by accident. If it happens, you can bet it was planned that way.”

Article history-Smolensk crash passengers' connections to Katyn victims-The Guardian, Saturday 17 April 2010

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/apr/17/smolensk-crash-katyn-passengers-connections>

When the plane carrying the Polish president, Lech Kaczynski, and 95 other people went down in fog last Saturday, near the site where an estimated 22,000 Poles were massacred 70 years earlier, there were terrible echoes in those who died. In 1940, it was army officers, lawyers, intellectuals, academics, historians, engineers, priests; among those who died last week were General Franciszek Gajgor, the army chief of staff, Aleksander Szczygło, the head of the national security service, and Sławomir Skrzypek, the president of the national bank. The party also included political activists, such as Anna Walentynowicz, and historian Janusz Kurtyka.

But there were others on board who had personal connections to the massacre in Katyn. Wojciech Seweryn, 70, was an artist who lived in Chicago; his father, a Polish infantryman, died at Katyn when Seweryn was just a few months old. He emigrated to the US in 1976, and was a prominent member of his adopted city's Polish community. His sculpture commemorating the Katyn massacre – the Virgin Mary cradling a wounded soldier – stands at St Adalbert cemetery in Niles, Illinois.

Also travelling was Leszek Solski, 75, a retired civil engineer, who lost his father and uncle in 1940, and spent his life trying to uncover documents about the massacre. Ewa Bakowska, 48, the library curator of Kraków's Jagiellonian University, was the granddaughter of Mieczysław Smorawinski, one of only two Polish generals identified among the victims of the massacre. Canon Bronisław Gostomski, 61, travelled from his home in London to represent the families of those murdered. The priest was well-known in the area for his activism and work with young people, many of them Polish migrants, at his church, St Andrew Bobola in west London. Father Bronek, as he was known, was a personal chaplain to his friend Ryszard Kaczorowski, 90, Poland's last president-in-exile and chaplain of the Katyn Family Association, who travelled with

him last Saturday. At his church, there is a wooden engraving of the Virgin Mary, carved in secret by an army officer imprisoned in a Soviet labour camp in Katyn.

Katyn and 'The Good War'-Pat Buchanan Pat Buchanan-Apr 13

<http://www.creators.com/Katyn and-The Good War/YahooNews.mht>

Creators Syndicate – The decapitation of the Polish government last weekend, including President Lech Kaczynski and the military leadership, on that flight to Smolensk to commemorate the Katyn Massacre, brings to mind the terrible and tragic days and deeds of what many yet call the Good War.

From Russian reports, the Polish pilot waved off four commands from air traffic control to divert to Moscow or Minsk. The airfield at Smolensk was fogged in. There is speculation that Kaczynski, fiercely nationalistic and distrustful of Russians, may have defiantly ordered his pilot to land, rather than delay the 70th anniversary of Katyn. The symbolism is inescapable.

For it was Polish defiance of Adolf Hitler's demand to negotiate the return of Danzig, a German town put under Polish control after World War I, that gave birth to the Hitler-Stalin Pact, which led to Katyn.

After the German invasion on Sept. 1, 1939, ignited the war, Joseph Stalin attacked Poland from the east on Sept. 17, capturing much of the Polish officer corps.

In April 1940, on Stalin's order, the Soviet Secret Police, the NKVD, murdered virtually the entire leadership of the nation, including 8,000 officers and near twice that number of intellectuals and civilian leaders. Some 4,000 were shot with their hands tied behind their backs in Katyn Forest.

The Germans unearthed the bodies in 1943 and invited the Red Cross in to examine the site. Through newspapers found on the corpses, the date of the atrocity was fixed as more than a year before the German Army invaded the Soviet Union.

When Polish patriots, whose sons had flown with the Royal Air Force in the Battle of Britain, went to Winston Churchill to demand that he get answers from Stalin about the atrocity, he brushed them off.

"There is no sense prowling around the three-year-old graves of Smolensk," said the Great Man.

At Stalin's request, Churchill bullied the Poles into acceding to Soviet annexation of all the Polish land Stalin had been awarded for signing his pact with Hitler. At the Nuremberg trials, the Russian delegation, led by Andrei Vishinsky, the prosecutor who did Stalin's dirty work in the purge trials, charged the Germans with the massacre. This presented a problem for the Americans and British who knew the truth. They finessed the issue by leaving the charge unresolved. Before, during and after the Nuremberg trials that would convict the Nazis of "crimes against humanity," one of the greatest crimes against humanity in history was being committed. Fifteen million Germans — old men, women, children — were driven like cattle out of ancestral homes in Prussia, Pomerania, Brandenburg, Silesia and the Sudetenland. As human rights champion Alfred de Zayas wrote in his courageous "Nemesis at Potsdam: The Expulsion of the Germans From the East," perhaps 2 million died in the exodus. Few German women in Eastern Europe escaped rape. The Allies turned a blind eye to the monstrous atrocity, as ancient names vanished. Memel became Klaipeda. Prussia disappeared. Koenigsberg, the city of Immanuel Kant, became Kaliningrad. Danzig became Gdansk. Breslau became Wroclaw. "The Germans deserved it, for what they did," comes the retort. Undeniably, the Nazi atrocities were numerous and horrible — against Poles, Ukrainians, Russians, Jews. Yet, it was innocent Germans who paid for the crimes of the guilty Germans.

What happened in Eastern and Central Europe from 1939 to 1948 provided proof, if any more were really needed, of the truth of W.H. Auden's insight in his poem "September 1, 1939": "Those to whom evil is done do evil in return."

At war's end, Churchill and Harry Truman agreed to repatriate 2 million Soviet prisoners of war to Stalin, none of whom wished to go back. For return to Russia meant death at the railhead or a short brutal life at slave labor in the Gulag Archipelago.

Operation Keelhaul was the name given the Allied collusion with the Red Army in transferring these terrified POWs back to their deaths at the hands of the same Soviet butchers who had done the murdering at Katyn.

On Sept. 3, 1939, Britain and France declared war on Germany to restore the integrity and independence of Poland. For this great goal they converted a German-Polish clash that lasted three weeks — into a world war lasting six years.

And was Poland saved? No. Poland was crucified.

As a consequence of the war begun on her behalf, millions of Poles — Jews and Catholics alike — perished, the Katyn massacre was carried out, the Home Army was annihilated, the nation suffered five years of Nazi rule and almost half a century of communist persecution.

The tragedy of today is that it was men of the postwar generation, like Lech Kaczynski, who kept the faith of their fathers and led Poland out of that darkness into the sunlight of freedom, who died seeking to pay homage to their fathers who suffered one of the greatest crimes of that bloodiest of centuries.

Patrick Buchanan is the author of the book "Churchill, Hitler and 'The Unnecessary War.'" To find out more about Patrick Buchanan, and read features by other Creators Syndicate writers and cartoonists, visit the Creators Syndicate web page at www.creators.com.

Polish pilots 'knew the plane was doomed-Friday, April 16, 2010
http://thenews.com.pk/daily_detail.asp?id=234531

WARSAW: Investigators blamed pilot error on Thursday for a crash that killed Poland's president, as harrowing details emerged of how the crew knew they were doomed after hitting trees while trying to land in Russia. As Poland's national unity fractured over plans to bury

president Lech Kaczynski in a castle alongside kings and heroes, officials in Warsaw and Moscow released the first results from analysis of the plane's black box flight recorders. 'The crew was aware of the inevitability of the coming catastrophe, if only due to the plane shaking after the wings hit the trees — which we are certain happened,' Poland's chief prosecutor Andrzej Seremet told commercial radio. Colonel Zbigniew Rzepa, a Polish military prosecutor, said the pilots were aware of the imminent crash as the last seconds of the voice recordings 'were dramatic', but did not elaborate. The Polish presidential Tupolev Tu-154 crashed in thick fog on Saturday near the western Russian city of Smolensk while taking a delegation to a memorial service for a World War II massacre. All 96 people on board were killed

Belarus Leader Blames Lech Kaczynski for Air Crash- Apr 15, 2010-The Post Chronicle.

http://www.postchronicle.com/news/breakingnews/article_212295833.shtml?ref=rss

Belarussian leader Alexander Lukashenko has said he believes Polish President Lech Kaczynski gave the final order to land his plane which crashed Saturday in Russia, killing all on board, Interfax news agency reported. Kaczynski, a combative nationalist known for his distrust of both the European Union and Russia, had been traveling to mark the 70th anniversary of the massacre of more than 20,000 Polish officers by Soviet secret police in the Katyn forest in western Russia when his plane went down Saturday in thick fog. Russian air traffic controllers in Smolensk urged the pilot to divert to another airport because of poor visibility, but say he ignored the advice and made four attempts to land before hitting tree-tops and crashing."It is clear who's responsible for this. Guilty or not guilty, you are the number one person and you are responsible for it," Lukashenko was quoted as saying Wednesday by Interfax.

"If the number one aircraft with the president on board is in flight and there is some kind of irregularity, the captain reports the situation directly to the president," said Lukashenko, who has stormy relations with Warsaw after a crackdown on ethnic Poles in Belarus.

Polish Presidential election likely to be held on June 20 08:55, April 15

<http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90777/90853/6951482.html>

The parliament speaker said Wednesday that he would announce the date of the presidential election on April 21, meaning that the election will be held June 20. Bronislaw Komowski, who also is acting president, met with his deputies and leaders of parliamentary caucuses and said at a news conference later that "we reached full agreement." Earlier Wednesday, the minister of the Sejm Chancellery, Lech Czapla, told reporters that the early presidential election might be held either June 13 or June 20. "But if it was to be held on June 13, the Sejm speaker must call it today," he said. Komorowski, the parliamentary speaker of the ruling Civic Platform party, assumed the duties of President Lech Kaczynski, who died in an April 10 plane crash. The speaker and acting president said April 11 he would defer to the wishes of the two main opposition parties, which lost their presidential candidates and other senior officials in the crash. The presidential couple, together with 94 others, died in an air crash in Smolensk, western Russia, on Saturday morning. The Polish constitution stipulates that if a president dies in office, the speaker of parliament assumes his duties and must decide on an election date within 14 days, with the election to follow no less than 60 days after that. Political parties must submit names of their candidates, with original signatures of 100,000 registered voters attached, no less than 45 days before the election. Elections must take place on a Sunday.

IMF sees Polish growth in 2010 at up to 3 pct-Apr 15, 2010

<http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSWSF00894720100415?rpc=401&type=hotStocksNews&feedType=RSS&feedName=hotStocksNews&rpc=401>

WARSAW, April 15 (Reuters) - Poland's economy could grow by up to 3 percent this year, the International Monetary Fund's head for Europe, Marek Belka, said on Thursday. "Our quite conservative forecast for the Polish economy sees GDP growing by 2.7 percent, but in any case it could reach 3 percent. The following year, we should see a further but gradual rise," Belka told TVN CNBC. **Poland Must Be Ready to Resume Zloty Interventions**

http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601083&sid=aJ_eljierwaA

April 13 (Bloomberg) -- Poland's strong zloty means the next central bank governor must stick to a policy of curbing gains in the European Union's best performing currency this year to make room for interest rate rises, Stone Harbor and TCW Group Inc. said. "We have to see who gets

nominated, but at this period we're neutral, we're not trading at all on our Polish position," said Pablo Cisilino, who manages a \$12.5 billion emerging-markets, fixed-income portfolio for Stone Harbor Investment Partners in New York. "We expect policy continuity."

Volcanic ash: Obama cancels trip to Kaczynski funeral

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/americas/Volcanic-ash-Obama-cancels-trip-to-Kaczynski-funeral/532605/H1-Article1-532756.aspx>

The thickening cloud of volcanic ash over Europe has led US President Barack Obama to cancel his trip to Poland where he was to attend funeral of its President Lech Kaczynski, who died in a plane crash with his wife and dozens of other Polish leaders on April 10. "I spoke with (Polish) acting President Komorowski and told him that I regret that I will not be able to make it to Poland due to the volcanic ash that is disrupting air travel over Europe," Obama said in a statement. Obama was scheduled to leave Washington last night to attend today's funeral. "Michelle and I continue to have the Polish people in our thoughts and prayers, and will support them in any way I can as they recover from this terrible tragedy," he said.

"President Kaczynski was a patriot and a close friend and ally of the US, as were those who died alongside him, and the American people will never forget the lives they led," Obama said. Earlier this week, leaders gathered at the Nuclear Security Summit here began their meeting with a moment of silence in honour of the Polish leader. "I begin, I want to take this moment once again to acknowledge the terrible tragedy that struck the Polish people this weekend," Obama had said in his opening remarks as leaders of 47 countries sat down at the Washington Convention Centre here for the Summit. Poland was represented by its Ambassador to the US Robert Kupiecki.

Huge crowds expected for Poland crash memorial-AFP-16 April

<http://uk.news.yahoo.com/18/20100417/twl-huge-crowds-expected-for-poland-cras-d9fddae.html>

Hundreds of thousands of mourners were expected Saturday at a memorial for victims of Poland's air crash tragedy. The service, in a historic Warsaw square that has previously hosted papal masses, comes a week after a plane carrying president Lech Kaczynski and 95 others crashed in Russia, killing all on board. Sirens wailed and church bells rang across Poland Saturday at 8:56 am (0656 GMT), the exact time a week ago when a plane crash in Russia killed the Polish president and 95 others. Cars on the streets in the centre of the capital Warsaw drew to a halt and pedestrians stood still solemnly, as a day of commemoration began for what has been called the nation's worst peacetime tragedy. Kaczynski and his wife are set to be buried on Sunday in the southern city of Krakow. But the volcanic ash cloud from Iceland that has disrupted air travel could prevent dignitaries including US President Barack Obama from attending

Czech Republic

Klaus: EU not more effective after Lisbon Treaty-Apr 15

http://www.monstersandcritics.com/news/europe/news/article_1548526.php/Klaus-EU-not-more-effective-after-Lisbon-Treaty

Prague - Czech President Vaclav Klaus, a fierce critic of the European Union and its reforming Lisbon Treaty, said Thursday that the pact has failed to boost the 27-member bloc's effectiveness. Klaus, who was the last EU leader to sign the reform deal, said that the EU faces 'great problems' with implementing the new rules. 'The EU certainly did not become more effective thanks to the Lisbon Treaty,' he told reporters after meeting his Portuguese counterpart, Anibal Cavaco Silva, who is visiting Prague. The pact, valid since December 1, overhauled the bloc's institutions in a bid to streamline its decision-making. Prague urges reality check on 'Europe 2020' plan-16 April 2010

Klaus to Shape Czech Policy Path as Euro Entry Nears-April 16,

<http://www.businessweek.com/news/2010-04-16/klaus-to-shape-czech-policy-path-as-euro-entry-nears-update1-.html>

April 16 (Bloomberg) -- Czech President Vaclav Klaus, the country's most high-profile euroskeptic, has a chance to reshape monetary policy as the nation moves toward euro adoption after the resignation of central bank Governor Zdenek Tuma, analysts at Raiffeisenbank AS and Ceska Sporitelna AS said. Klaus, a self-described EU "dissident," will name a new chief for the Ceska Narodni Banka after Tuma said yesterday he will step down at the end of June, almost eight months before his term is to expire. Klaus will also name three new central bank board members when their terms end in February 2011. The central bank has widely been seen by investors as politically independent, though the president has the sole mandate to choose board members. It has urged government spending cuts in the worst recession in 20 years and while the country doesn't have a target to adopt the euro, policy makers have remained mostly neutral on the currency switch.

Poland undecided on quick central bank head appointment- Apr 15

<http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSPRG00404420100415?rpc=401&type=hotStocksNews&feedType=RSS&feedName=hotStocksNews&rpc=401>

PRAGUE, April 15 (Reuters) - Czech President Vaclav Klaus said on Thursday he believed the central bank would function normally after Governor Zdenek Tuma announced his resignation for June 30, and that the decision would have no negative economic impact

Czech central banker Singer joins criticism of IMF

<http://www.iii.co.uk/news/?type=afxnews&articleid=7835635&subject=economic&action=article>

Czech central banker Singer joins criticism of IMF

PRAGUE, April 12 (Reuters) - The IMF did a poor job in assessing the Czech Republic early last year, adding to a wave of misleading reports painting a bleak picture of the country's financial exposure, Czech central bank Vice-Governor Miroslav Singer was quoted on Monday as saying. Singer's criticism, in an article published in daily Hospodarske Noviny, followed a sharp attack on the fund by fellow Vice-Governor Mojmir Hampl in an Austrian newspaper earlier this month. Hampl's remark that the fund aimed to create a situation in which it would be

asked to bail out emerging Europe, in order to find new work, sparked a sharp rebuttal from the IMF. Central bank chief Zdenek Tuma distanced himself from Hampl's comments. Unlike Hampl, Singer wrote in an opinion piece that it was lack of competence rather than bad intent on the part of the IMF that did the harm.

Korean Reputation for Heavy Drinking Proved Unfair -14 April

http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2010/04/12/2010041200412.html

Koreans are thought to be the world's heaviest drinkers, but a recent OECD report refutes that notion. According to the OECD Health Data 2009, Koreans aged 15 or over consumed an average of 8 liters of alcohol per person in 2007, less than the OECD average of 9.5 liters. Korea ranked 11th among the 16 countries surveyed, while Ireland took first place with 13.4 liters followed by Denmark and the Czech Republic with 12.1 liters. Korea's alcohol consumption has not decreased, and it has never topped the OECD list since it was first included in 1988. In fact the nation's per capita consumption level has never surpassed 10 liters. It peaked at 9.5 liters in 1988 and 1989 and has hovered around 9 liters since, well below the European average of over 10 liters.

Slovakia

PFI - D1 deal seeks to beat Slovak election-Thu Apr 15

<http://in.reuters.com/article/rbssIndustryMaterialsUtilitiesNews/idINLDE63E22V20100415>

LONDON (Project Finance International) - The Bouygues (BOUY.PA: Quote, Profile, Research) led team financing the 3.3bn euros 75km D1 phase 1 road scheme is pushing to achieve financial close on the deal before the Slovak election on June 12th. The size of the commercial debt financing on the deal has been upped from 1.8bn euros to 2.5bn euros. Originally the European Investment Bank (EIB) was to have provided 700m euros, guaranteed by the Slovak government. But this arrangement requires state aid clearance from the European Union and this is not yet forthcoming. The fifteen commercial banks on the scheme are therefore being asked to up their commitment in the interim. For the Slovak government, this will have a cost as the loan is well priced at around 325bp over libor and there will be extra arranging fees.

The project is one of the largest single transport financings in Europe this year and follows on from Vinci's (SGEF.PA: Quote, Profile, Research) 1.2bn euros R1 deal last autumn. After D1, Hochtief (HOTG.DE: Quote, Profile, Research) is due to start work on financing the 2bn euros D1 phase 3 scheme. Banks and investors have been attracted to the Slovak road programme by the fact the country is rated A+ and the risk on the deals is limited to construction and operations, not traffic.

Slovak stress tests show banks' strength sound-cbank-Apr 12, 2010

<http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSLDE63B21L20100412?rpc=401&feedType=RSS&feedName=rbssFinancialServicesAndRealEstateNews&rpc=401>

BRATISLAVA, April 12 (Reuters) - Stress tests showed the Slovak banking system's strength was sound and majority of banks would weather even a worsening of economic recovery or rising stress on financial markets, the central bank said on Monday. The euro zone newest member's banks have been shielded from the direct impacts of the global financial crisis, mainly thanks to the adoption of the euro in January 2009, very small holdings of toxic assets and small borrowing in foreign currencies."A majority of banks would, even in a case of significantly negative developments in the domestic economy and an increasing number of outstanding loans, meet requested capital levels," the bank wrote in its analysis on country's financial sector in 2009.

Hungary, Slovakia and Russia: East Europe Bond, Currency Preview-April 16

<http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601009&sid=aSfypYN5EzoM>

April 16 (Bloomberg) -- The following events and economic reports may influence trading in eastern European bonds and currencies today. Bond yields and exchange rates are from the previous session.

Hungary: Average gross wages probably advanced 3.5 percent in February, according to a Bloomberg survey. The numbers are due for release at 9 a.m. in Budapest. The forint lost 0.2

percent to 262.86 per euro. The yield on Hungary's 8 percent bond due February 2015 fell 2 basis points to 5.789 percent.

Russia: The central bank reports money supply as of April 12 is to be released in Moscow. Money supply fell to 4.57 trillion rubles in the week to April 5. The ruble weakened 0.2 percent to 29.0225 per dollar. The yield on the 7.5 percent government bond in dollars due March 2030 fell 1 basis point to 4.791 percent.

Slovakia: European Union-harmonized consumer prices probably advanced annual 0.3 percent in March, according to a Bloomberg survey. The statistics office reports the figures at 9 a.m. in Bratislava. The yield on the 4.9 percent government bond due February 2014 was little changed at 2.663 percent.

Slovakia awards €32.4m contract for electronic healthcare system-13 April 2010

<http://www.bjhcim.co.uk/news/2010/n1004014.htm>

The Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic has awarded US company Ness Technologies, Inc. a contract to provide the first phase of an electronic healthcare services system valued at €32.4m. Information technology solutions and services company Ness will provide the system with its partner Lynx, Ltd. Ness has a local subsidiary, Ness Slovakia, which has a significant presence in the local IT market, providing IT solutions and services in key sectors including power and utilities, national and local government, financial services, telecomms, manufacturing and healthcare. Former parliamentary speaker of Slovakia will commemorate Genocide victims in Yerevan

Hungary

Right wing wins large majority in Hungarian election-14 April 2010

<http://www.wsws.org/articles/2010/apr2010/hung-a14.shtml>

The right-wing Federation of Young Democrats (Fidesz) won an absolute majority in parliamentary elections held in Hungary on Sunday. The party is hoping to gain a two-thirds majority in the second round of voting on April 25, which would allow it to make changes in the

constitution. The neo-fascist Party for a Better Hungary (Jobbik), which ran a racist election campaign directed against Roma and foreigners, obtained 17 percent of the vote, finishing just behind the Socialist Party (MSZP), which headed the outgoing government. Fidesz, with 52.7 percent of the vote, commands 206 of the parliament's 386 mandates. The MSZP and its leading candidate, Attila Mesterhazy, received just 19 percent. This compares to 43 percent of the vote for the MSZP in parliamentary elections held four years ago. As a result of Sunday's election, the MSZP has the same number of deputies in the new parliament as Jobbik. The conservative Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF), which formed the first government after the restoration of the capitalist market, and the Federation of Free Democrats (SZDSZ) failed to gain enough votes to re-enter parliament and face the breakup of their organizations. Both parties were represented in the last parliament and held government posts

Hungary Elections Sign Of Central Europe's Slide To The Right-04-16-10

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/04/16/hungary-elections-sign-of_n_540781.html

BUDAPEST, Hungary -- In the quirky political landscapes of central Europe, Hungary isn't the first post-communist country to lurch dramatically to the right. Across the region, from the Baltics to the Balkans, national populists with questionable democratic credentials have proven adept at dominating discourse and even winning elections. But Hungarian voters are in the process of distinguishing their country in more ways than one. Hungary was the one model transitional democracy in the region. Now ongoing nationwide elections have both catapulted right-wing populists to power and handed 17 percent of the vote to an upstart neo-fascist party. If the second round ballot later this month mirrors the polls as closely as Sunday's did, a single party -- Fidesz -- will amass a super majority, giving it the two-thirds majority necessary to pass legislation at will and even alter the constitution. Like other successful populists in central Europe, Fidesz revolves around a single personality, namely the 46-year-old Victor Orban. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Orban and a group of fresh-faced law students banded together to form Fidesz, a stridently anti-communist but thoroughly liberal party intent on modernizing Hungary at record tempo. Over the years Orban shaped Fidesz into his own vehicle, straying from a liberal path as the political winds dictated. Orban reinvented Fidesz as he went along: from free-market liberal to agrarian folk party to national conservative. Although Orban likens

Fidesz to western Europe's Christian Democrats, his disrespect for parliament and his nationalist rhetoric -- above all directed at neighbors Slovakia and Romania -- better place him in the company of Austria's right-wing wunderkind, the late Joerg Haider. But while Haider's party never broached 30 percent of vote at its height, Fidesz is poised to come away with nearly 70 percent of the seats in parliament.

Hungary deficit at 82 pct of FY target by end-May

<http://www.iii.co.uk/news/?type=afxnews&articleid=7839835&subject=markets&action=article>

BUDAPEST, April 14 (Reuters) - Hungary's finance ministry expects to achieve its 3.8 percent of GDP deficit target in 2010 despite the shortfall reaching 81.9 percent of the full-year target by the end of May, the ministry said on Wednesday. Hungary targets a deficit of 878.9 billion forints (\$4.51 billion) in cash-flow terms this year and expects the gap to hit 719.4 billion forints in the first five months. The centre-right Fidesz party, which ousted the ruling Socialists after eight years in power at elections on Sunday, has repeatedly warned the full-year deficit could be higher than the government's forecast.

Hungary's turn: A sour economy provokes a move to the right-April 15-Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

<http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/10105/1050558-192.stm>

Hungary's elections on Sunday ended with the defeat of the Socialist Party by the center-right opposition, the Fidesz party of former Prime Minister Viktor Orban, with 52.8 percent of the vote. A second round will take place April 25 to determine the victors in districts where no one received more than 50 percent. The general outcome -- a victory by the right over the left -- is not expected to be altered, however. The change in political direction is a result of the economic damage from the global recession. While the country of 10 million flourished after joining the European Union in 2004, despite its tutelage previously under the former Soviet Union, it has fallen on hard times. Since 2008 Hungary has been living off a \$25 billion loan from the International Monetary Fund, with stiff conditions attached. Unemployment stands at 11.4 percent and last year the economy contracted by 6.3 percent

A worrying trend

<http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/opinion/2010/0416/1224268447268.html>

GABOR VONA promises he and his Jobbik party colleagues will wear the black uniform of the illegal neo-Nazi Hungarian Guard to the opening of parliament. And the leader of Hungary's xenophobic far-right party, triumphant at its 17 per cent vote share in Sunday's general election, has also reprised his election theme, a crackdown on "Gypsy crime", widely understood as a physical threat to the country's Roma. The group has marched through Roma villages bearing flags reminiscent of the Nazi era. Jobbik's worrying success mirrors that of other far-right groups in recent elections and polls around Europe – whether Jean-Marie Le Pen's National Front in French regional elections, the anti-immigrant Northern League in Italy, or anti-Islamic Geert Wilders's Freedom Party in the Netherlands, now polling 25 per cent ahead of June's general election. It is a trend that has set off alarm bells around capitals and in Hungary has stolen the thunder of the real election-winner, Victor Orban. His conservative Fidesz party won 53 per cent of the vote and, in the second round voting next week, may make up the two thirds of seats needed to effect constitutional change. Fidesz capitalised on widespread disillusionment with the Socialists whose eight-year grip on power was tarnished by a succession of corruption scandals, the need for a €20 billion IMF bailout, and a taped admission by Ferenc Gyurcsány, former prime minister, that he had lied about the state of public finances to get elected. Orban's comfortable majority will make single-party government possible for the first time in 12 years and allow him to distance himself from Jobbik despite the two parties' friendly links in the past. But Orban and Fidesz, a populist/nationalist rather than fiscally conservative party, also make international markets nervous. The party has opposed government plans for fiscal consolidation and suggested that must await growth in the economy. It has already spoken to the IMF about leeway on budget deficits and some commentators question whether it has the stomach for necessary structural reform of the parlous economy. A clear two-thirds majority in the second round – or support from Jobbik – would also allow Fidesz to play provocatively to nationalist sentiment by extending Hungarian citizenship to Hungarian minorities abroad – nationalists, for example, refer to Slovakia as "Upper Hungary". That is a dangerous prospect that would play very poorly with the neighbours

Eastern Europe (Belarus & Ukraine)

Belarus

Bakiyev says Kazakhstan, Belarus offer him asylum-15.04.2010

<http://www.itar-tass.com/eng/level2.html?NewsID=15029165&PageNum=0>

BISHKEK, April 15 (Itar-Tass) -- Kyrgyzstan's ousted president, Kurmanbek Bakiyev, claims that two countries – Kazakhstan and Belarus – have offered him political asylum. “The question of my future whereabouts are being discussed by the presidents of some countries. Nursultan Nazarbayev personally has invited me to Kazakhstan,” Bakiyev told his fellow-villagers and media in the home of his father in the village of Teyitm, near Jلال-Abad, the AKI-press-Fergana reports. In the meantime, at a news conference in Kazakhstan's capital Astana earlier on Thursday Kazakh Foreign Ministry spokesman Askar Abdrakhmanov said that the question of letting Bakiyev in was not on the agenda. Bakiyev claimed that he had a phone call from Belarussian President Alexander Lukashenko, who had offered him asylum in Belarus.

Russia to Join WTO Alone-16 April

<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/business/article/russia-to-join-wto-alone/404038.html>

Russia may abandon its plans to join the World Trade Organization in a joint bid with Kazakhstan and Belarus, First Deputy Prime Minister Igor Shuvalov said Thursday, recanting a plan that many experts said was doomed from the start. The government had earlier indicated a willingness to apply for accession to the WTO as part of a customs union with Kazakhstan and Belarus, but Shuvalov said that model would be changed "due to tactical considerations, as long as the decision is approved by the leaders of the three countries of the customs union — Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan." Russia has been in talks to join the WTO since 1993 and is currently the only major economy that is not yet part of the organization. In June, Prime Minister Vladimir Putin said Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan would bid for WTO membership together. Later, both he and President Dmitry Medvedev indicated that Russia would join in whichever way was most expedient. The idea of joining the WTO within the customs union was dubious from the start, said Alexei Portansky, an expert at the Higher School of Economics' Trade Policy Institute

Belarus has "hundreds of kilograms" of weapons-grade uranium — Lukashenko-15.04

<http://en.trend.az/regions/world/europe/1669899.html>

Belarus possesses hundreds of kilograms of highly enriched uranium and is not going to get rid of it, the country's Belta news agency quoted Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko as saying, RIA Novosti reported. The statement came after the 47-nation nuclear security summit, hosted in Washington by U.S. President Barack Obama on April 12-13. Belarus was not invited to participate in the top-level meeting, during which world leaders agreed, according to their communique, to "join Obama's call to secure all vulnerable nuclear material in four years" to "enhance nuclear security."

Belarus economy expands 4 pct yr/yr in Q1

<http://www.iii.co.uk/news/?type=afxnews&articleid=7839931&action=article>

MINSK, April 14 (Reuters) - Belarus's gross domestic product (GDP) rose 4.0 percent in the first quarter of 2010 from a year earlier, the Statistical Committee reported on Wednesday. That was almost quadruple the growth recorded in the same period of last year, which ended with the economy nearly stagnating and GDP grew a mere 0.2 percent for 2009 as a whole. In the first three months of this year the former Soviet republic's industrial output rose 5.9 percent, against a drop of 4.5 percent seen a year earlier. The government has an ambitious forecast for the economy, projecting it will expand by between 11 and 13 percent in 2010.

Belarus discusses formation of active citizenship among young generation-April 15

<http://en.trend.az/news/culture/1670482.html>

Belarus has initiated discussions on the formation of active citizenship among the young generation of the CIS countries, Azerbaijani Ministry of Youth and Sport told Trend. The purpose of the activities of the International Forum of voluntary initiatives is the involvement of youth in development and strengthening of human values, education for their civil and patriotic feelings. The Forum is held by Republican Youth NGO "League of voluntary work by young people" with the support of the Interstate Fund for Humanitarian Cooperation of CIS member-

states and Belarusian Ministry of Education. A delegation of Azerbaijani Ministry of Youth and Sport consisting of seven people attended the event.

Ukraine

Medvedev to visit Ukraine next week to meet with Yanukovich-16.04.2010

<http://www.itar-tass.com/eng/level2.html?NewsID=15030925&PageNum=0>

BRASILIA, April 16 (Itar-Tass) -- Russian President Dmitry Medvedev plans to visit Ukraine next week to meet with President Viktor Yanukovich. "We plan to hold an unscheduled meeting with Viktor Yanukovich in Ukraine's territory next week," the Russian leader told reporters. A visit by the Russian president to Ukraine is planned for May. "We will continue the discussion of all the issues, including security, economic relations and humanitarian issues, and we will do it not only in May during the visit, but also earlier," he added.

Ukraine eyes tax-cutting economic reform-April 14,

http://www.upi.com/Business_News/2010/04/14/Ukraine-eyes-tax-cutting-economic-reform/UPI-60151271259551/

KIEV, Ukraine, April 14 (UPI) -- The Ukrainian government unveiled an economic reform plan Wednesday in Kiev with goals of increasing productivity to profitable levels, a minister said. Deputy Prime Minister Andriy Kliuyev told a news conference the reform package would be introduced in the Rada (parliament) Thursday and he was confident it could be passed, Interfax-Ukraine reported. The package sets a number of reforms goals with a target of achieving growth of 3.7 percent in gross domestic product with emphasis on stepping up industrial production by 5.3 percent and agriculture by 2.4 percent, Kliuyev said

Ukraine, IMF to hammer new credit deal in two weeks-April 15, 2010

<http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90777/90853/6951868.html>

Ukrainian Prime Minister Mykola Azarov said on Wednesday that his country and the International Monetary Fund have agreed to hammer out a new credit program in the next two weeks. Azarov said this was decided after "successful" talks between President Viktor

Yanukovich and IMF chief Dominique Strauss-Kahn in Washington. "After successful negotiations ... a two week time-scale was set out for preparing a memorandum on a new program with the IMF," Azarov told a cabinet meeting. The IMF in 2008 approved a two-year bailout program for Ukraine. So far, the Eastern European country has received 11 billion U.S. dollars out of a 16.4-billion-dollar loan from the IMF. The IMF has suspended the rest of the money since last November because of breached promises of fiscal restraint by the previous leadership of Viktor Yushchenko.

Ukrainian authorities respond to Amnesty International's human rights challenge-

<http://www.amnestyusa.org/document.php?id=ENGNAU2010041516266&lang=e>

The Ukrainian authorities have vowed to ensure accountability for human rights violations in response to Amnesty International's recommendations to newly-elected President Viktor Yanukovich and his government. Following the publication of Amnesty International's briefing, Put deeds before words: Deliver human rights for Ukraine, the deputy head of Ukraine's presidential administration, Anna German, said that "the promotion and unconditional protection of human rights were under the direct control of President Viktor Yanukovich." The statement by the presidential administration gives a positive message for the promotion of human rights in Ukraine. This must translate into a climate of greater accountability of government structures and productive dialogue with civil society," said Nicola Duckworth, Senior Director at Amnesty International. The Amnesty International briefing contains recommendations on how to protect people in Ukraine from torture and other ill-treatment in police custody and from racial discrimination. It also advises on how to protect the rights of refugees and asylum-seekers. It was presented at a press conference in Kyiv on 14 April.

Reporters Without Borders: Ukraine's media freedom deteriorating

KIEV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukraine's press freedom has declined since the election of the new Russia-friendly president earlier this year, a global media rights watchdog said. Paris-based Reporters Without Borders said in a statement issued Thursday that the ex-Soviet nation has seen a return of intimidation and physical attacks on journalists and abuse of authority toward the media over the past three months. The group expressed concern about Ukrainian

President Viktor Yanukovich's decision earlier this month to disband the national commission on freedom of speech. It urged Yanukovich to explain his move and spell out his media policy. The UNIAN news agency quoted Yanukovich's deputy chief of staff, Anna German, as saying Friday that the commission's functions were given to a newly created body that she heads.

Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia & Lithuania)

Estonia

Political Front

EU should accept Turkey as member, says Estonian president

Speaking at a joint news conference after his talks with President Abdullah Gül in Ankara, Estonian President Ilves, during a ceremony at the Çankaya presidential palace, said on Friday that Europe must think about Turkey's membership in the EU from a global and strategic perspective and accept the country as a member of the bloc.

Economic Front

Commission says ready to back Estonia's eurozone bid-16 April 2010

Estonia is likely to become the seventeenth member of the euro zone in 2011 as its macro-economic performance remains under control despite the recession. The European Commission is set to give its green light in mid-May. In accordance with the provisions of the Maastricht Treaty, all new members of the European Union are eligible and even compelled to join the bloc's single currency, the euro. Of the ten member states that joined the Union in 2004, Slovenia, Cyprus, Malta and Slovakia have fulfilled the convergence criteria and are now part of the euro area. In January 2009, Slovakia became the sixteenth country to adopt the EU's single currency as the euro celebrated its tenth anniversary. On 12 May, the European Commission is also scheduled to publish its convergence report for 2009. "It will be the day of deepening and also possibly gradually widening the euro area

Minister: Estonian economy to grow ahead of euro switch-Apr 13, 2010

http://www.monstersandcritics.com/news/business/news/article_1547764.php/Minister-Estonian-economy-to-grow-ahead-of-euro-switch

Tallinn - Estonia, which saw its economy shrink by 14 per cent in 2009, will make a rapid return to growth in 2010, finance minister Jurgen Ligi said in Tallinn Tuesday. Unveiling his ministry's revised spring economic outlook, Ligi said a quicker than expected recovery would see the economy grow by 1 per cent over the course of the year.

Estonia sees 2010 GDP growth of 1.0 pct

<http://www.iii.co.uk/news/?type=afxnews&articleid=7837429&subject=markets&action=article>

TALLINN, April 13 (Reuters) - Estonia will return to a low level of growth of 1.0 percent this year after a double digit economic drop in 2009, but inflation will stay tame, the Finance Ministry of the euro hopeful nation said on Tuesday. In a statement, the ministry, which had previously forecast a 2010 gross domestic product (GDP) drop of 0.1 percent, said it saw consumer prices rising 1.1 percent this year, rather than the 0.4 percent gain previously forecast. Estonia hopes that it will get European Commission approval to enter the euro zone at the start of 2011 after meeting the Maastricht criteria

Social Front

Estonian president recalls judicial reform was not easy

According to Estonian President Toomas Hendrik Ilves, “We have done a lot of training with our judges to get them to understand European Union jurisprudence.” Estonian President Toomas Hendrik Ilves said as he was about to embark on a visit to an EU-hopeful country in which judicial reform tops the domestic agenda.

E-elections for disabled and expat Turks

TALLINN -- While listening to what Mr. Priit Vinkel, an advisor from the department of elections of the Estonian parliament, the Riigikogu, was telling me about the success of elections in Estonia, I thought this could be the perfect solution for our millions of

disenfranchised voters at home and abroad. Wish full thinking? Not really. It is impressive that 15 percent of voters turned to the Internet to cast their ballots in a country of 1.4 million people. The results in the last four elections were pretty conclusive: The Internet was able to pull voters who would most likely shy away from exercising their democratic rights anyway. So in fact voting over the Internet further solidified democracy in Estonia by engaging more voters in the election process.

Latvia

Political Front

Riksbank Governor Ingves Says Greek Bailout May Track Latvia's

http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601068&sid=aTx6vVfpvm_8

April 15 (Bloomberg) -- Swedish central bank Governor Stefan Ingves said the potential bailout of Greece hanging over European Union finance ministers as they meet in Madrid tomorrow may follow the path set out by the 2008 rescue of Latvia. The Greek government is set to meet officials from the International Monetary Fund and the European Commission on April 19 to discuss the mechanism by which a 45 billion-euro (\$61 billion) loan package can be triggered. Latvia cut public spending by 10 percent of gross domestic product last year after receiving a 7.5 billion-euro loan in 2008.

Economic Front

Latvia PM sure about ability to reach budget deficit target

<http://www.iii.co.uk/news/?type=afxnews&articleid=7839294&action=article>

RIGA, April 14 (Reuters) - Latvian Prime Minister Valdis Dombrovskis said on Wednesday the government would be able to keep to its budget deficit target of 8.5 percent of gross domestic product (GDP), thus meeting country's bailout programme terms. Under a 2008 deal with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the European Union for a 7.5 billion euro (\$10.20 billion) bailout, Latvia has to keep its public sector budget deficit at 8.5 percent of GDP this year.

Social Front

E-Government Development - Major Achievements Of The 2005-2009 Period In Latvia

E-Practice EU-13 April, 2010

<http://www.egovmonitor.com/node/35474>

On 23 March 2010, the Ministry of Regional Development and Local Government presented to the Latvian Cabinet an information report on the implementation of the e-Government Development Program 2005-2009. The implementation of the Program brought many considerable achievements, among which are: the introduction of a secure e-Signature infrastructure, the establishment and the expansion of the national e-Procurement system, the set up of new State and municipal information systems and the launch of the e-Government portal www.latvija.lv providing both a public services directory and e-Services. Moreover, the web-based document flow system (DAUKS) was launched, allowing the standardized and automatic circulation of documents between the State Chancellery and the ministries

Lithuania

Political Front

Senior Chinese political advisor meets former Lithuanian president 21:16, April 13, 2010

<http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90776/90883/6949622.html>

Zhang Meiyong, vice chairwoman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, met with former Lithuanian President Rolandas Paksas here Tuesday. They exchanged views on deepening China-Lithuania relations and furthering friendly cooperation. Paksas paid the visit to China as guest of Chinese People's Institute of Foreign Affairs.

Economic front

Lithuania current account gap narrows in Feb

VILNIUS, April 13 (Reuters) - Lithuania's current account deficit narrowed to 36 million litas (\$14.17 million) in February from 133.2 million litas the month before, the central bank said on Tuesday. The fall was mostly due to a drop in the trade deficit, the bank added in a statement. Lithuania's current account deficit, once a sign of economic overheating, has quickly narrowed as demand for imported goods fell during the economic crisis. The Baltic state's economy fell 15 percent last year, but is expected to grow 1.6 percent in 2010.

Social Front

Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues-14 April

On April 10, 2010, Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues Melanne Verbeke began a two-week trip to Lithuania, Russia, and Egypt. The Ambassador will meet with senior government officials and non-government leaders to discuss progress towards achieving women's empowerment in the political, social, and economic arenas, combating gender-based violence, and improving maternal health. While in Lithuania, the Ambassador will launch the Community of Democracies Working Group on Gender Equality, which the U.S. is co-sponsoring with Lithuania, as well as participate in a panel at Vilnius University to discuss ways to increase women's political participation. In St. Petersburg, Russia, she will meet with the governor and NGO leaders, and, in Moscow, she will meet with members of the Duma and with the NGO community. She will also travel to Barnaul, in southern Siberia, with U.S. Ambassador to Russia John Beyrle, where she will observe NGO efforts to enhance women's economic opportunities.

Russia

Political Front

Medvedev threatens to leave Kyoto pact

BRASILIA, Brazil, April 16 (UPI) -- Russia will leave the Kyoto Protocol on greenhouse gas emissions if a deal can't be reached on carbon emission reduction, President Dmitry Medvedev said. Medvedev said developing and developed countries should reach accord on terms of carbon emissions or Russia no longer will participate in the Kyoto agreement, Russian news agency RIA Novosti reported. "(You) can't have it both ways," Medvedev said after a summit in Brasilia, Brazil, of Brazil, Russia, India, and China aimed at strengthening cooperation between the four countries and improving the current global economic situation. The Kyoto Protocol expires in 2012 and a new global climate deal is needed to continue efforts beyond then.

After plane crash, Poland is at a political crossroads-By Marjorie Castle-April 17, 2010

http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/04/16/AR2010041603846.html?nav=rss_opinion/columns

Rarely is personal tragedy so intertwined with the political. For Poland, the crash in Smolensk, Russia, last weekend of the Tu-154 airliner carrying the country's president, first lady and dozens of other officials is a history-changing event. It is also a personal tragedy of extraordinary proportions for former Prime Minister Jaroslaw Kaczynski, who lost his twin brother -- his constant collaborator and political partner -- President Lech Kaczynski. This disaster's long-term impact on the Polish right -- on its worldview, its relations with domestic opponents and its stance toward Russia -- can be shaped by the bereaved twin, if he so chooses. The story reads like a novel, albeit a highly unrealistic one, because the plot twists are wildly improbable and the coincidences strikingly neat. Identical twin boys are born to Polish patriots, veterans of the 1944 Warsaw Uprising. After a brief stint as child actors, the brothers study law and commit themselves to the overthrow of communism, working in the underground opposition. With communism defeated, they adapt with lightning quickness to the new democratic game. Within a couple of decades they become the most successful of former oppositionists -- at one point holding the offices of both president and prime minister. They are passionate ideologues, devoted to cleansing Poland of remaining communist influences as well as to remembrance of crimes against Poland, especially those crimes committed by Russia. Chief among these crimes is the massacre of several thousand Polish army officers and other elites in the Katyn forest in 1940. In a development that any self-respecting author would reject as too obviously ironic, the

presidential twin dies in a plane crash on his way to a 70th-anniversary commemoration of the massacre. This brings us to the surviving twin, a bachelor now mourning not only his brother but also his sister-in-law and dozens of longtime political colleagues and friends. All the Polish political elite are in mourning. One politician described himself as not knowing for which of his many friends he was shedding tears. Each of the largest political parties lost at least three important members. But Jaroslaw Kaczynski has lost something much more than that. Many years ago I interviewed the Kaczynskis separately about Solidarity's negotiations with the communists. One twin had participated in the official talks, the other in the private meetings. Truthfully, I could have saved myself time and interviewed only one. They knew exactly the same facts and told identical stories. Jaroslaw, for example, was eager to explain to me not just the contribution his brother had made to the secret negotiations but even Lech's reasoning. Lech made sure I realized what Jaroslaw had added to the opposition's preliminary strategy sessions. In democratic Poland, the twins continued to operate in close political partnership, with never a visible disagreement between them on their fundamental goals. Even in 2006-07 as heads of such inherently competitive institutions as the presidential chancellery and the prime minister's government, they worked together without a hitch. President Kaczynski's last phone call, from his ill-fated plane, was reportedly to his brother to tell him that the trip to Katyn was going according to plan. As unquestioned leader of Law and Justice, the only right-wing party that can collect enough signatures to nominate a candidate for the early presidential election in June, Kaczynski has the power to determine the future of the Polish right. As his brother's survivor he has an exceptional moral authority to do so. The remaining Kaczynski's interpretation of this tragedy, whatever it may be, is likely to be shared by a significant proportion of Poles. Was it an incomprehensible act of God or the latest martyrdom of the "true Poland"? Should he accept the conciliatory gestures of his political opponents or dismiss them as hypocritical and opportunistic? Should he take Russian declarations of sympathy and solidarity at face value? But these possibilities are merely political. In the grip of such a personal tragedy, Kaczynski might withdraw from politics entirely. In a novel, this would be the cliffhanger, as the bereaved twin readies himself for Sunday's state funeral, in between hospital visits with his critically ill mother, whose doctors recommended against telling her the news. Unfortunately for Jaroslaw Kaczynski and the Poles joining him in mourning, this is reality. Marjorie Castle, an associate instructor of

political science at the University of Utah, is the author of "Triggering Communism's Collapse: Perceptions and Power in Poland's Political Transition" and co-author of "Democracy in Poland."

Gazprom-SOCAR gas deal: Should Azerbaijan commit to a long-term contract?

<http://www.todayszaman.com/tz-web/news-207061-109-gazprom-socar-gas-deal-should-azerbaijan-commit-to-a-long-term-contract.html>

WASHINGTON -- In the last quarter of 2009, State Oil Company of Azerbaijan Republic (SOCAR) and Russian gas giant Gazprom signed a medium-term deal -- in the presence of both Azerbaijani President İlham Aliyev and Russian President Dimitry Medvedev -- to supply Azerbaijani gas to Russia. The contract initially envisioned export of about 500 million cubic meters of gas per year. Gazprom's Web site said the two companies would conduct joint technical inspections of the 200-kilometer Baku-Novo Filya pipeline, which runs along Azerbaijan's Caspian coast to the Russian border, and ultimately modernize the pipeline. "Azerbaijani gas will be supplied to Russia along this route," the company's Web site reported.

Russia to cooperate only with legitimate Kyrgyz govt – pres-16.04.2010

BRASILIA, April 16 (Itar-Tass) -- Russia is ready to provide humanitarian aid to Kyrgyzstan, but to carry out major projects only with a legitimate government that will be able to cope with them, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev noted. "We are ready to provide humanitarian aid, but we will implement major interstate projects only if we realize that the new legitimate government is ready to cope with them," the president said. The collapse of the political regime in Kyrgyzstan is linked with the failure to solve social and economic issues and with the fact that the system of government was formed like the previous one based on clanism, nepotism and business sharing, the system not engaged very much in settlement of other problems, Medvedev believes. It is desirable that Kyrgyzstan's new power when it is legitimately formed will be free from the negative trends, he noted.

Economic Front

Russian president on trade mission to Argentina

<http://www.businessweek.com/ap/financialnews/D9F3HT1O1.htm>

Dmitry Medvedev on Wednesday used the first-ever visit by a Russian president to Argentina to urge the countries to boost economic ties and cooperate more on nuclear energy.

ANALYSIS: Emerging economic powers call for "new international order"-Apr 16, 2010

Brasilia - The leaders of the world's four emerging economic powers - Brazil, Russia, India and China (BRIC) - called for a 'new international order' at a summit in Brasilia. Presidents Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva of Brazil, Hu Jintao of China and Dmitry Medvedev of Russia, and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh reached consensus Thursday night on demands that they plan to field before the Group of 20 (G20) in Canada in June. They plan to demand more power for emerging and developing countries in global decision-making bodies. Lula was very satisfied with the summit, which took place one day earlier than originally planned because Hu needed to return to China because of the devastating earthquake. 'Brazil, Russia, India and China have a fundamental role to play in building that new international order that is fairer, more representative and safer,' Lula said. Singh called for a democratic and multipolar world order in which the United Nations play a central role, while Medvedev highlighted the need for increased fairness at the international level in the wake of the global financial crisis.

Social Front

'Probe proves naval officer's links with Russian woman'-16 April-Statesman News Service

http://www.thestatesman.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=325455&catid=36

NEW DELHI, 16 APRIL: The defence minister, Mr AK Antony, today disclosed that an investigation had found that there was a link between Commodore Sukhjinder Singh of the Navy and a Russian woman during his posting in Russia to oversee the re-fit of aircraft carrier Admiral Gorshkov.

“The Navy has completed one part of its investigation and they have just started the second part. The particular man had some relations with the other side... a lady. That part has been established. Nothing beyond that is proven so far. Let the Navy complete the investigation,” he

told reporters on the sidelines of the two-day Unified Commanders conference which he inaugurated.