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Questions

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RESPONSE

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The US Department of State's report on religious freedom for 2006 provides information on the religious demography of Russia, including the information that the Federation of Jewish Communities has estimated that 100,000 Jews live in St Petersburg:

An estimated 600,000 to 1 million Jews (0.5 percent of the population) remained, following large-scale emigration over the last two decades; the Federation of Jewish Communities (FJC) estimated that up to 500,000 Jews lived in Moscow and 100,000 in St. Petersburg. These estimates significantly exceeded the results of the official government census. Between 5,000 and 7,000 Jews lived in the so-called Jewish Autonomous Oblast (region), located in the Far East.

The report observes that “racially motivated violent attacks against Jews were fairly rare in the context of rapidly growing racist violence in the country”. However, the report details many instances of attacks against Jewish persons and against synagogues and Jewish cemeteries. In the following excerpts from the report, references to St Petersburg have been highlighted in bold:

Explicit, racially motivated violent attacks against Jews were fairly rare in the context of rapidly growing racist violence in the country, especially perpetrated by skinheads targeting

identifiable ethnic groups. There were a series of attacks around a Moscow synagogue in Maryina Roscha in the winter of 2004-05. In particular, the attackers beat Rabbi Alexander Lakshin. Following the attack against the rabbi, police promptly found the perpetrators; they were prosecuted and convicted, and attacks against Jews in the neighborhood stopped. There were three known explicit anti-Semitic violent attacks and four incidents of public insults and threats in 2005, which was down from 2004.

A notable exception was on January 11, 2006, in Moscow, when twenty-year-old Alexander Koptsev attacked worshipers in the Chabad synagogue with a knife, wounding eight people - among them citizens of Russia, Israel, Tajikistan, and the United States. On March 27, 2006, the Moscow City Court sentenced Koptsev to thirteen years' imprisonment, ordering him to undergo mandatory psychiatric treatment. The court dropped the charges of provoking interethnic hatred but left the charge of attempted murder of two or more persons for reasons of ethnic enmity. The lawyers of the victims filed an appeal since the prosecutor had dropped the charges of inciting ethnic hate; Koptsev's lawyers also filed an appeal due to his mental illness and the fact that none of the victims were killed or disabled. On June 20, 2006, the Supreme Court overturned the verdict on the grounds that the charges had not referred to the incitement of racial and religious hatred and ordered a new trial in a different court. Both President Putin and Foreign Minister Lavrov publicly condemned this attack.

... According to the NGO Moscow Bureau of Human Rights (MBHR), the ultranationalist and anti-Semitic Russian National Unity (RNE) paramilitary organization continued to propagate hostility toward Jews and non-Orthodox Christians. The RNE appeared to have lost political influence in some regions since its peak in 1998, but the organization maintained high levels of activity in other regions, such as Voronezh. Sova Center noted in its 2005 report that RNE activities had been mostly reduced to picketing and distributing leaflets.

... In October 2005 the MOJ [Ministry of Justice] registered the interregional social movement National Sovereign Way of Russia (NDPR). The organization is the successor of the National Sovereign Party of Russia (which has not been able to register as a political party) and preserved its abbreviation NDPR as well as the party's anti-Semitic, nationalistic ideology. In 2005 officials denied the **St. Petersburg** branch registration, although the organization tried to get registration based on the same documents as the Moscow branch.

Some NDPR branches in regions participated in official events that the local authorities organized. For instance, NDPR participated in a May 1, 2006 communist meeting in Moscow. NDPR also participated in May 1, 2006 events in **St. Petersburg**. In the summer of 2005, in **St. Petersburg**, NDPR participated in the events of the local legislative assembly twice. On July 19, 2005, the Altay NDPR branch participated in a rally of local trade unions and distributed its leaflets, although local authorities in attendance tried to halt it; local TV broadcast the event. At a small February 2005 rally in Moscow, NDPR members distributed anti-Semitic publications and engaged in anti-Semitic hate speech, and in 2004, activists distributed their newspaper and leaflets in downtown Kostroma.

The primary targets of skinheads were foreigners and individuals from the North Caucasus, but they expressed anti-Muslim and anti-Semitic sentiments as well.

The MBHR estimated more than 50,000 skinheads and 15,000 members of extremist organizations were acting in the country, who engage in approximately 300 incidents on ethnic hate grounds take place annually. However, in recent years there were at most only five indictments annually. MBHR reported that during the period from January to May 2006, officials registered over 100 skinhead attacks, killing 17 people and injuring approximately 130. No statistics on the number of skinheads in particular towns was available, but according to MBHR, among the cities where skinheads were especially active in 2006, were Moscow, **St. Petersburg**, Kostroma, Volzhsk, Voronezh Oblast, Tula Oblast, Cheboksary, Vladivostok, Yekaterinburg, Krasnoyarsk, Elista, Kaluga, Nizhniy Novgorod, Petrozavodsk, Ryazan, and Surgut. Authorities combined thirteen criminal cases of ethnic-extremist motivation that took place in **St. Petersburg and Leningrad Oblast** [region] from 2003-2006 into one case for

trial. MBHR noted that the skinhead movement continues to expand, spreading from major regional centers to small towns and settlements. In December 2005 skinheads appeared in the small settlement of Chagoda, Vologda region.

In connection with the April 2004 attack in Voronezh on human rights activist and anti-Semitism monitor Aleksey Kozlov, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) reported that authorities arrested two young skinheads shortly thereafter and treated the attack as a misdemeanor unworthy of prosecution and closed the case.

... Vandals desecrated Jewish cemeteries during the reporting period. Officials reported desecration in Omsk (April 15, 2006), the settlement of Khokhryaki near Izhevsk (November 2005), and Kostroma (October 2005). On October 16, 2005, vandals toppled and broke at least fifty tombstones, and on October 6, 2005, vandals desecrated approximately seventy Jewish graves in **St. Petersburg**. Vandals also desecrated graves in Velikiye Luki (September 20, 2005), Tambov (August 29 and August 31, 2005), and Tver (August 6, 2005). Earlier in 2005, vandals desecrated Jewish cemeteries in Kazan, Moscow, Saratov, Petrozavodsk, Makhachkala, Irkutsk, and **St. Petersburg**. In late May 2005, vandals painted swastikas on twenty-six Jewish tombstones in the Jewish section of Kazan's Arskoye Cemetery. The FJC reported that the authorities were investigating the incident as a hate crime and the Kazan City Council issued a statement condemning the attack. In May 2005 vandals desecrated Jewish graves at the Vostryakovskoye Cemetery, near Moscow; the case was being treated as a hate crime rather than simple "hooliganism." The Jewish cemetery in Petrozavodsk was vandalized at least three times in 2004; a criminal investigation failed to identify the perpetrators.

One of the most large-scale desecrations occurred in **St. Petersburg** in December 2004, when vandals damaged approximately one-hundred graves at the St. Petersburg Preobrazhenskoye (Jewish) Cemetery. In the aftermath of the desecration, St. Petersburg Governor Valentina Matviyenko met with the city's Chief Rabbi Menachem-Mendel Pewsner, and promised a serious investigation of the crime. Officials arrested members of a gang but reportedly, since its members were minors, the case was either dropped or the perpetrators received insignificant punishment.

... Vandals desecrated several synagogues and Jewish community centers during the reporting period. In June 2006, officials reported that a man entered a Jewish cultural center in the Urals city of Yekaterinburg, and stabbed the door of the synagogue ten times with a knife. Security guards caught him and had police arrest him. According to a report from the UCSJ, a May 18, 2006, article in the local newspaper "Saratovskaya Oblastnaya Gazeta" reported that the courts sentenced a 20-year-old man with a two-year suspended sentence for painting swastikas and anti-Semitic slogans on the walls of the Saratov Jewish center to which he had confessed when police caught him doing the same thing to a parked car. Unknown assailants have also thrown rocks at the center and its occupants through the windows. Local police allegedly ignored the Jewish community's complaints until the swastika-painting incident.

The US Department of State's report on religious freedom for 2006 also includes information about anti-semitic content in certain news and other publications and the response of the authorities to the publication of such material. According to the report:

... A number of small, radical-nationalist newspapers that print anti-Semitic, anti-Muslim, and xenophobic articles, many of which appear to violate the law against extremism, were readily available throughout the country. Although the production of this illegal material continued, authorities generally did not prosecute the publishers, although there were some noted recent exceptions described below. The estimated number of xenophobic publications exceeded one hundred; local chapters of the NDPR sponsored many of them. The larger anti-Semitic publications, such as Russkaya Pravda, Vityaz, and Peresvet, were easily available in

many Moscow metro stations. Some NGOs claimed that the same local authorities that refused to take action against offenders owned or managed many of these publications. In addition, there were at least eighty websites in the country dedicated to distributing anti-Semitic propaganda.

On April 4, 2006, **St. Petersburg** prosecutor Sergey Zaitsev rescinded the decision of his deputy, Alexandr Korsunov, who refused to prosecute the Rus Pravoslanaya (Orthodox Russia) editor Konstantin Dushenov for the publication of anti-Semitic materials. Although Korsunov found no criminal matter in Dushenov's publications, Zaitsev expressed a different position after the public criticized his deputy's decision.

On April 3, 2006, the Velikiy Novgorod (Central Russia) Prosecutor's Office initiated a criminal case against the Russian Veche editor Paul Ivanov. Ivanov was accused of "public calls to committing violence" and "fueling hatred and discord." Officials initiated the case after the staff of the **St. Petersburg** History Institute of the Academy of Sciences had examined several issues of the newspaper and found that they contained elements that could incite hatred.

... According to local representatives of the ADL, a **St. Petersburg** prosecutor initiated criminal proceedings against the publisher of the Our Fatherland newspaper, accusing it of hate speech in 2005. Officials gave the newspaper a warning, but there was no information on further proceedings.

... An anti-Semitic novel, *The Nameless Beast*, by Yevgeny Chebalin, had been on sale in the State Duma's bookstore since September 2003, despite international publicity. The xenophobic and anti-Semitic text makes offensive comparisons of Jews and non-Russians. According to the ADL, authorities do not typically monitor for content books sold in the Duma. In cases where Jewish or other public organizations have attempted to take legal action against the publishers, the courts have been generally unwilling to recognize the presence of anti-Semitic content.

Anti-Semitic statements have resulted in formal prosecution, but while the Government has publicly denounced nationalist ideology and supports legal action against anti-Semitic acts, the reluctance of some lower-level officials to call such acts anything other than "hooliganism" remained problematic. According to the ADL, in 2006 human rights organizations made numerous attempts to prosecute the authors of the "Letter of 500." However, their attempts were unsuccessful. According to the Obschestvennoye Mnenie (Public Opinion) Foundation, after the January 2006 Moscow synagogue attack, the number of citizens who condemned anti-Semitism increased by almost 10 percent. A poll concerning the attack showed that the proportion of citizens who had a negative attitude towards anti-Semites increased from 34 to 42 percent, while the proportion of those who claimed to be indifferent to them decreased from 47 to 38 percent. Distrust and dislike of Jews was expressed by 7 percent of the respondents, while 5 percent sympathized with those who expressed dislike.

... Members of the State Duma and other prominent figures expressed anti-Semitic sentiments. In January 2005, approximately 500 persons, including nineteen members of the Duma representing the Rodina Party and the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF), wrote to the prosecutor general to investigate Jewish organizations and initiate proceedings to ban them, charging that a Russian translation of ancient Jewish law, the *Kitzur Shulchan Arukh*, incited hatred against non-Jews. The MFA condemned the letter as did President Putin, and the Duma passed a resolution condemning the letter in February 2005. In response, approximately 5,000 persons, reportedly including a number of ROC clerics and some prominent cultural figures, signed a similar anti-Semitic letter to the prosecutor general in March 2005. A Moscow district prosecutor opened an investigation into the Jewish organization that published the translation, as well as into charges brought by Jewish and human rights organizations that the letters violated federal laws against ethnic incitement, but closed both investigations in June 2005 without bringing charges. In January

2006, some of the deputies who had signed the letter said in an interview that the letter had been the “right step.” One deputy even proposed at a Rodina meeting to repeat the letter with even wider distribution. Originally registered with well-known neo-Nazis on its electoral lists, Rodina attempted to improve its image by rejecting openly neo-Nazi candidates; however, it allowed others known for their anti-Semitic views to remain. On November 21, 2005, head of the Rodina party Dmitry Rogozin, in a meeting with Rabbi Lazar, claimed that neither he nor anyone around him from the party were anti-Semites. He claimed that although a number of members of the Rodina Duma faction did sign the “letter of 500,” it included deputies who were not members of the party and therefore did not follow party discipline.

State Duma Deputy Vladimir Zhirinovskiy and the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) are also known for their anti-Semitic rhetoric and statements. In earlier years, LDPR supporters rallied during Moscow’s May Day celebration, carrying anti-Semitic signs and speaking out against what they called “world Zionism,” but there were no reports of this during the period covered by this report. Nikolay Kurianovich, an LDPR Duma deputy, initiated and publicized the creation of a “list of the enemies of the Russian people,” with mostly Jewish names on the list.

Some members of the KPRF also made anti-Semitic statements. For example, former Krasnodar Kray governor and current State Duma deputy Nikolay Kondratenko at a June/July 2004 conference in Beirut, blamed Zionism and Jews in general for many of the country’s problems and blamed Jews for helping to destroy the Soviet Union. His speech was printed in the Communist Party’s main newspaper Sovetskaya Rossiya and several regional papers, including the Krasnodar paper Kuban Segodnya and the Volgograd paper Volgogradskaya Tribuna.

The abovementioned report also notes “Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect of Religious Freedom”, observing that:

Izvestiya reported that on May 17, 2005, the Moscow city government decided to create a two-year, \$12.5 million (350 million ruble) program to promote interethnic tolerance.

Federal and regional officials participated actively in, and in many cases strongly supported, a range of NGO-organized programs to promote tolerance and the more effective handling of hate crimes.

In addition, the newly established Public Chamber, a body that the government set up to represent civil society and whose approach President Putin appeared largely to direct, recognized racism and intolerance as a serious issue and a priority on which to work. The Public Chamber set up a commission on tolerance and freedom of conscience.

In the past five years, the number of organized Jewish communities in the country has increased from 87 to more than 200. In 2005 officials dedicated new synagogues in Birobidzhan (Jewish Autonomous Oblast), Khabarovsk, Vladivostok, and Yekaterinburg; and opened a Jewish school in Kazan.

The reporting period witnessed a few developments in the cultural life of the Jewish community such as opening of a new building to house a Jewish Community Center in **St. Petersburg** in September 2005. The Federation of Jewish Communities, which officially accounts for 184 communities in 176 cities of the country, was restoring a synagogue in Irkutsk. The project was to be completed in the summer of 2006. As of early 2006, the FJC had built eleven multifunctional community centers in the country. A Jewish center and synagogue are being constructed in Lipetsk, and the construction was expected to be completed in the fall of 2006.

The support of federal authorities, and in many cases regional and local authorities, facilitated the establishment of new Jewish institutions. On June 26, 2006, Arkadiy Gaydamak President of the Congress of Jewish Religious Organizations and Associations of Russia, and Chief

Rabbi of Russia Shayevich signed an investment contract regarding the construction of a Moscow Jewish community center. Work began on the construction of a \$100 million dollar (2 billion, 700 million rubles) complex on land donated by the Moscow city government to house Jewish community institutions including a school, a hospital, and a major new museum devoted to the history of the country's Jews, the Holocaust, and tolerance. The construction was scheduled to be completed by the end of 2008.

On September 1, 2005, a center for scribing sacred Jewish scrolls opened in **St. Petersburg** for the first time in eighty years. Located in the Jewish educational center Tomhei Tmimim Lubavich Yeshivah, the center named "Merkaz Stam" will train specialists in scribing and verifying Torah scrolls, Tefillins, and Mezuzahs for use by the Jewish population in the city. A certified specialist from Israel directed the center (US Department of State 2006, *International Religious Freedom Report for 2006 – Russia*, September – Attachment 1).

The US State Department's report on human rights practices for 2006, published in March 2007, named St Petersburg as one of the cities in which skinhead groups were "particularly numerous", with deaths and injuries having resulted from "attacks motivated by ethnic hatred". The report states that:

Skinhead activity continued to be a serious problem. Skinheads primarily targeted foreigners and individuals from the Northern Caucasus, although they also expressed anti-Muslim and anti-Semitic sentiments and hostility toward adherents of "foreign" religions... According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, neofascist movements have approximately 15,000 to 20,000 members, of which over 5,000 are estimated to live in Moscow. According to the Moscow Bureau of Human Rights, there were approximately 50,000 skinheads in 85 cities. Skinhead groups were particularly numerous in Moscow, **St. Petersburg**, Nizhniy Novgorod, Yaroslavl, and Voronezh. According to the Moscow Bureau of Human Rights, 170 attacks motivated by ethnic hatred were registered between January and December. As the result of these attacks, 51 persons died and 310 were injured. Numerically, the most xenophobic city is Moscow, with 27 deaths and over 125 injuries registered. There were five deaths and 48 injuries in **St. Petersburg** (US Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2006 – Russia*, March – Attachment 2).

An article dated 4 May 2006 on the Transitions Online website commented that, at times, the "Russian authorities seem helpless to stem the tide of violence", notwithstanding that "there have been some improvements in the way the government deals with hate crimes". The article reports that:

On 20 April, neo-Nazis around the world celebrated the 117th anniversary of Adolf Hitler's birth. Nowhere was the date marked with more violence than in Russia a country that, paradoxically, lost tens of millions of its citizens in the struggle against Nazism six decades ago.

When it comes to racist violence, April 2006 will go on record as the bloodiest month in recent Russian history, with at least seven murders and more than a dozen assaults blamed on neo-Nazi groups.

Since the late 1990s, Russia's homegrown fascists have spent the days surrounding 20 April stepping up their year-round campaign of violence against dark-skinned ethnic minorities, foreign students (predominantly from developing countries), and Jews. This disgusting annual spectacle is presumably deeply embarrassing to President Vladimir Putin, who has publicly condemned racism and anti-Semitism. Yet despite the mobilization of thousands of extra police officers in Moscow and other cities every April, Russian authorities seem helpless to stem the tide of violence.

Nowhere is the situation worse than in Russia's beautiful "northern capital," **St. Petersburg**. On 7 April, skinheads in that city shot dead an African student. Lamzar Samba, a 28-year-old Senegalese national, became the ninth African killed there over the past year, according to a local African student group. Police discovered a swastika engraved on a shotgun near the scene and briefly arrested a suspect before releasing him.

Several racist assaults also occurred in **St. Petersburg** last month – a Chinese student was attacked outside her apartment, a Ghanaian man was savagely beaten in the city's suburbs, a mob of soccer fans assaulted two Mongolian students on a metro train, and an Indian medical student was stabbed.

... While racist violence has become a daily feature of Russian life, it should be noted that there have been some improvements in the way the government deals with hate crimes. Starting in 2002, the number of arrests of skinheads increased. To their credit, police this year prevented similar crimes by quickly rounding up skinheads in Bryansk and Novosibirsk before they could strike. Unfortunately, police chiefs in **St. Petersburg** and Voronezh – the cities with the worst reputation for racist violence in the country – minimized the extent of the problem by blaming a supposed media conspiracy against local officials. The Voronezh chief of police even went so far as to state that the number of murders in his region (four in recent years) was "not that many."

Given the multiethnic nature of the country, xenophobic violence has clear implications for future political and economic stability if it is allowed to spin out of control. In combination with a greater emphasis on promoting tolerance among the nation's youth, federal and regional authorities must systematically crack down on skinhead gangs, and the media need to have regular access to hate-crimes trials in order to discourage judges from giving neo-Nazi thugs lighter sentences than ordinary criminals.

Most importantly, Kremlin political advisers should never again create and support openly racist parties like Motherland, which was put together before the last parliamentary elections in order to drain votes away from the nationalist opposition. Only then will it be possible to imagine a time when 20 April returns to being just another ordinary spring day in Russia ('The cruelest month' 2006, Transitions Online, 4 May – Attachment 3).

An article dated 14 May 2007 on the website of the Federation of Jewish Communities of the CIS reported the murder of a Jewish teacher in St Petersburg and cited comment by Russia's Chief Rabbi that "not enough was being done to deal with neo-Nazi groups". According to the article:

Russia's Chief Rabbi Berel Lazar said Sunday that not enough was being done to deal with neo-Nazi groups in the country, Israel Radio reported.

The rabbi's comments came a day after the murder of a Jewish teacher in St. Petersburg. The stab wounds on Dmitry Nikulinskiy's body, noted Lazar, prove that his killing was an anti-Semitic attack.

St. Petersburg has a long history of terror-related murders, but this is the first time in the last few years that a Jew was murdered for this reason, added the rabbi (Rettig, H. 2007, 'Chief Rabbi: Russia not facing neo-Nazis' 2007, Federation of Jewish Communities of the CIS website, 14 May <http://www.fjc.ru/news/newsArticle.asp?AID=521275&media=80054> – Accessed 21 August 2007 – Attachment 4).

An article dated 29 April 2005 on the same website had reported that anti-semitism "lurks" in Russia, possibly in backlash against the "cultural renaissance" within the Jewish community. The article reported that:

Lured by political changes and a booming economy, thousands of Jews ... – part of a million-strong wave of immigration that fled Soviet repression for Israel in the 1970s, 80s and 90s – are returning to Russia. The growing clout of Russia's Jewish community was underscored on Wednesday when Vladimir Putin arrived in Israel for the first trip by a Russian or Soviet leader ever to the Jewish state.

"I could say it's a miracle," said Avraham Berkowitz of the Federation of Jewish Communities in Russia. "Jewish life here has come back with great force and vigor."

... But even in the new Russia, there are hurdles, too. Though Jewish leaders say it's too early to draw conclusions, the cultural renaissance appears to have sparked an anti-Semitic backlash.

In January, an Orthodox rabbi was attacked near the Jewish Community Center in Moscow. And a group of nationalist deputies in the Duma, Russia's lower house of parliament, published a letter that suggested banning Jewish organizations from Russia.

The letter was roundly criticized in the media, and in the wake of the resulting uproar President Vladimir Putin apologized at a recent ceremony at the Auschwitz Nazi death camp in Poland.

"Russia will always not only condone [sic] any such manifestations but will also fight them with the force of the law," Putin said.

Rabbi Lazar calls the recent events "worrisome, because this could be the beginning of a new trend – people feeling free to speak openly against Jews, against Jewish community, against Israel."

Even so, Lazar says the community is undaunted. "We've opened centers in Yekaterinburg, in Nizhny-Novgorod and in (Russia's) Far East. These are statements that the Jewish community is here, we are back, we're back in the open and we're not going to backtrack, we're not going to go back in hiding..." (Mendenhall, P. 2005, 'Booming Economy Lures Soviet Jews Home', Federation of Jewish Communities of the CIS website, 29 April <http://www.fjc.ru/news/newsArticle.asp?AID=276348> – Accessed 21 August 2007 – Attachment 5).

An article dated 3 May 2005 on the same website reported further on the "Jewish Renaissance in Russia", stating that:

some observers believe that the community's increasing profile has sparked a backlash from nationalist Russians.

In January, 19 nationalist lawmakers sent a letter to Russia's prosecutor-general, asking him to outlaw all Jewish organizations on the grounds that they foster ethnic hatred against Russians.

Two months later, several Russian cultural figures, including former world chess champion Boris Spassky, sent a similar letter backed by a petition signed by 5,000 Russians. Among other accusations, the letter accused Jews of being "anti-Christian and inhumane" and of "committing ritual murders."

Nationalist politicians – a growing force in Russian politics – rant openly about Jewish conspiracies to control the Russian economy, pointing out that many of Russia's billionaire oligarchs are Jewish, including former Yukos oil magnate Mikhail Khodorkovsky, who is in jail awaiting a verdict in his long-running tax-evasion and fraud trial.

Defending the letter in a February appearance on one of Russia's most popular political talk shows, State Duma deputy Albert Makashov spoke for nearly an hour about the allegedly illegal privatizations that left much of the country's wealth in the oligarchs' hands.

“All I am saying is that most oligarchs come from one diaspora: Jewish,” he said. “They stole everything God gave us.”

Asked to call in their support for either Makashov or his opponent in the debate, more than 53,000 of about 100,000 callers chose Makashov.

Attacks on Jews also remain a problem. The Moscow Bureau of Human Rights reported this month that 27 anti-Semitic attacks occurred in Moscow in 2004 and the first three months of 2005.

In January, six thugs shouting anti-Semitic slurs attacked a group of Orthodox Jews in a Moscow underpass. Two young boys and one man escaped, but Rabbi Alexander Lakshin was left beaten and bloodied.

When he tried to ask employees at a local shop to use their phone to call the police, they refused and told him to leave.

Yet even Lakshin is encouraged by recent developments in Russia. In the weeks since the attack, police arrested three suspects, two of whom are now facing charges that could land them in jail for years.

“No country in the world can boast of having no anti-Semites,” he says. “It’s how a society reacts to these kinds of attacks that’s important.

“Yes, it was a sad thing that happened. But when I think about how much tremendous change there has been in Russia since I was a boy, when I see groups of young people walking about unafraid, it makes me so happy.”

At the seven-storey, \$25 million Moscow Jewish Community Centre built five years ago, there’s a growing sense that the Jewish renaissance is irreversible.

Stretching over two city blocks, the centre includes a synagogue, library, fitness centre and kosher restaurant, all built with donations from abroad and the local community. Record numbers of Jewish families are signing up for its free services and this year’s Passover celebrations have been the biggest in memory.

Down the street, a \$125 million complex – which will include Russia’s first Jewish museum, a medical centre and a school – is being built on land donated by the city of Moscow. Smaller centres, most featuring the first local Jewish schools in decades, are being built across the country.

In the past five years, the number of distinct Jewish communities in Russia has swelled from 87 to more than 200. Fifteen years ago, there was not a single Jewish school in all of Russia. Today, more than 15,000 students attend such schools (Mainville, M. 2005, ‘A Jewish Renaissance in Russia’, Federation of Jewish Communities of the CIS website, 3 May <http://www.fjc.ru/news/newsArticle.asp?AID=276745> – Accessed 21 August 2007 – Attachment 6).

A list of Jewish community organizations in St Petersburg is provided on the Jewish Community of Saint Petersburg website (‘Jewish Organizations listed by Their Activities’ (undated), Jewish Community of Saint Petersburg website <http://eng.jewishpetersburg.ru/modules.php?name=Content&pa=showpage&pid=303> – Accessed 22 August 2007 – Attachment 7).

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US Department of State website <http://www.state.gov>

Non-Government Organisations

Amnesty International website <http://www.amnesty.org>

Human Rights Watch website <http://www.hrw.org>

International News & Politics

BBC News website <http://news.bbc.co.uk>

Times Online website <http://www.timesonline.co.uk>

Transitions Online website <http://www.tol.cz>

Topic Specific Links

Federation of Jewish Communities of the CIS website <http://www.fjc.ru>

Jewish Community of Saint Petersburg website <http://eng.jewishpetersburg.ru>

Search Engines

Copernic search engine

Databases:

BACIS (DIMA Country Information database)

FACTIVA (news database)

ISYS (RRT Country Research database)

REFINFO (IRBDC (Canada) Country Information database)

List of Attachments

1. US Department of State 2006, *International Religious Freedom Report for 2006 – Russia*, September.
2. US Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2006 – Russia*, March.
3. ‘The cruelest month’ 2006, Transitions Online, 4 May. (CISNET Russia CX152670)
4. Rettig, H. 2007, ‘Chief Rabbi: Russia not facing neo-Nazis’, Federation of Jewish Communities of the CIS website, 14 May
<http://www.fjc.ru/news/newsArticle.asp?AID=521275&media=80054> – Accessed 21 August 2007.
5. Mendenhall, P. 2005, ‘Booming Economy Lures Soviet Jews Home’, Federation of Jewish Communities of the CIS website, 29 April
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7. ‘Jewish Organizations listed by Their Activities’ (undated), Jewish Community of Saint Petersburg website
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