

## Visiting Israel's hardest-hit communities

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The Pediatric and Geriatric Departments were moved to an air-raid shelter: "We have only 15 seconds from the alert to reach the shelter, and it is impossible to manage with children and elderly people," said hospital spokeswoman Lea Malul.

Two children from Gaza are hospitalized here; they would be sent home, but the border is closed. The hospital usually cares for ten or fifteen children from Gaza each week, said Dr. Menahem Shlezinger, head of the Pediatric Department.

"We used to have good contacts with Shifa hospital's physicians [a hospital in Gaza.] They are professionals, but now it's too much for them. When all this is finished, we expect that many children from Gaza will be sent to us."

Majidah, a Gaza resident, was in the hospital watching over her grandson, who was in a coma when admitted. Now that he had recovered, she was very grateful to be in the hospital and not at home in Gaza.

When asked, "What do you think will happen with Hamas?" she pointed to the sky and said, "Allah is the one to decide."

"We want peace, we need peace," she said.

She expressed gratitude to the Pediatric Department staff at Barzilai Hospital; she believes the staff saved her grandson's life.

### A Chameleon called 'red alert'

There are no air-raid sirens in Israel's southern cities. The words "Red Alert" are broadcast to alert citizens that they need to find immediate shelter due to incoming rockets.

During the day, most of Ashkelon's children stay inside the shelters, playing games and engaging in group activities. Youth instructors from The Natural Reserves Agency visit the shelters, bringing animals to show the children.

One such instructor, Uri Nave, brought the children a chameleon, a tropical lizard with the ability to change its color. "The children in the shelters decided to name the chameleon 'Red Alert'," Mr. Nave told reporters.

### Sderot, so pretty after the rain

The desert is very green after a rainstorm. Next month it will be covered with a carpet of red flowers, as it is every year.

"It has been eight years that we don't take the children outside to enjoy the nature," said one mother in the shelter. "They are afraid of Qassams."

Qassams are primitive, short-range rockets made by Hamas.

During the first hour that Epoch Times reporters visited Sderot, two alerts were sounded, and four Qassam rockets impacted the city. After a few minutes the remains of the rockets were brought by the police to the station, where they were stored with the wreckage of dozens of other rockets.

At the police station, professionals determine if a specific rocket was made in Gaza or was smuggled from outside. They can tell if it is a Hamas or an Islamic Jihad Qassam. Since 2001 more than 10,000 rockets and mortar shells have been fired from the Gaza Strip at Israeli civilians.

### 'Normal life must continue'

Sderot doesn't look like a bombed city. An Israeli philosophy is that "Normal life must continue."

Rocket damage is repaired immediately and only the damage of the most recent attacks is visible.

The situation is bad for business, as most people won't risk going out to shop. Hundreds of Israelis from across the country plan to travel to Sderot on Friday, Jan. 9, to go shopping as a sign of solidarity with the besieged inhabitants.

### TV stations flock to Sderot

On a hill near Sderot dozens of television teams from around the world have set up a broadcasting site and satellite dishes. They are stationed there to observe Gaza from a safe distance, but still within earshot of explosions.

IDF spokeswoman Irit Azmon, asked the assembled reporters, "Which country in the world, in time of war, sends text messages and fliers to the civilian population, warning them of a possible attack? We do that, even though it puts our own soldiers into a dangerous situation."

# Europe squeezed by Russia-Ukraine gas conflict

By ILYA RZHEVSKIY  
Epoch Times Staff

Europe is starting to feel the consequences of the gas conflict between Russia and Ukraine.

This week, all gas supplies from Russia to Ukraine were halted. Countries such as Bulgaria, Hungary, Austria, Germany, Poland, Romania, Czech Republic and Turkey are seeing shortages in their gas pipeline, as their supplies are mostly filled by Russia's Gazprom.

Russia delivers about one-fourth of Europe's gas supply. About 80 percent of Russian gas pipelines run through Ukraine, with the remaining 20 percent running through Belarus and Turkey.

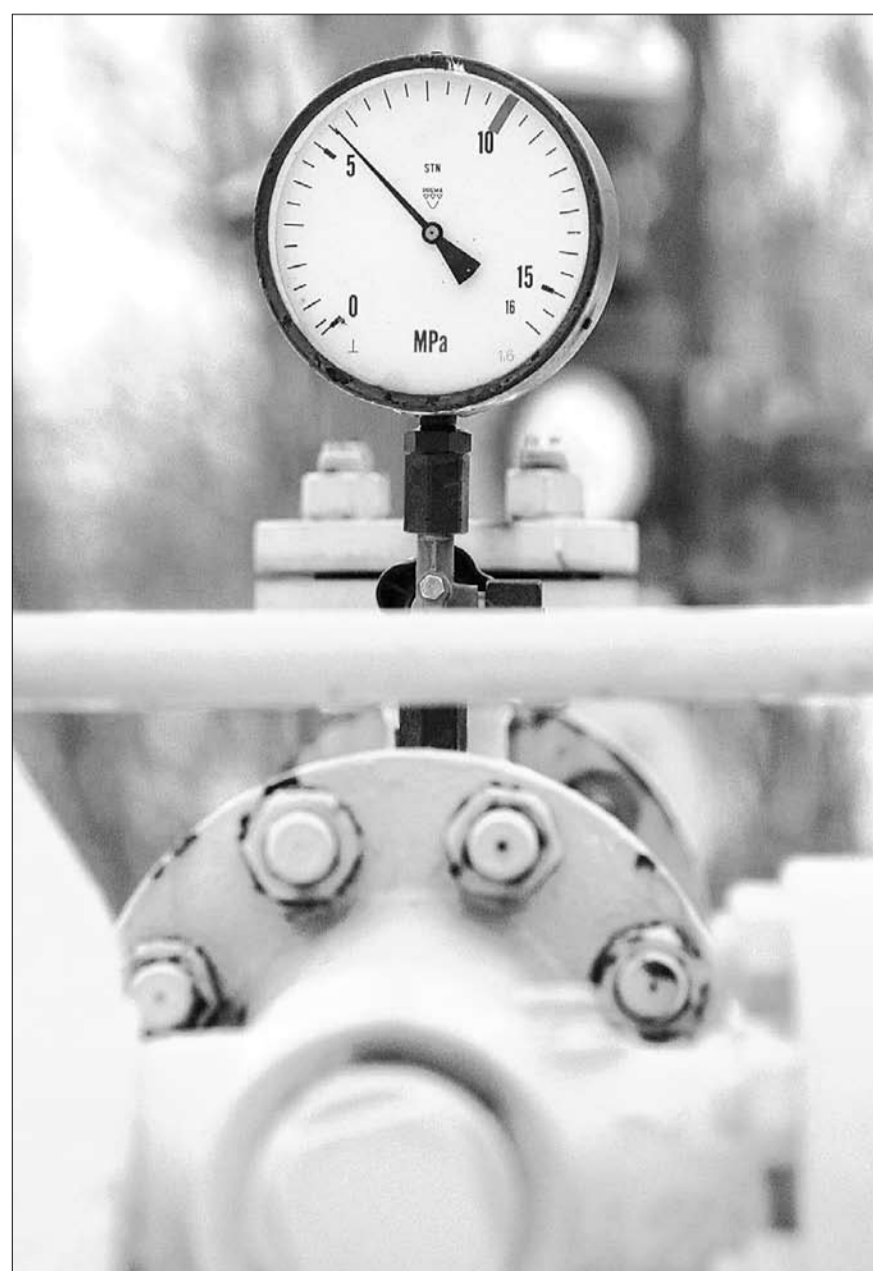
Gazprom is trying to compensate for the gas shortages by overfilling the 20 percent of non-Ukrainian pipelines. This is, however, physically challenging due to capacity restraints in those remaining pipelines for transporting large amounts of gas.

Countries like Bulgaria could be affected most severely because it is almost completely reliant on Moscow's gas supplies. Bulgarian pipeline operator Dimitar Godov said that its gas supplies were enough only for a "few days." It poses a very risky situation for Bulgarians who rely on gas to heat their homes this winter. Meanwhile, temperatures dropped to -15 degrees Celsius (5 degrees Fahrenheit) on Tuesday night in Bulgaria.

Ukrainian Naftogaz spokesman Valentyn Zemlyansky said that shipments to European countries had dropped from 300 million to 81 million cubic meters of gas in the past few days.

"That is all they are sending, in several hours Europe will feel it," Zemlyansky told the Associated Press.

The gas conflict leaves Russia's gas customers vulnerable. As an alternative to Ukraine, Gazprom is building gas pipelines in the Baltic and Black seas. The projects are still underway, but are encountering difficulties and resistance from many environmental organizations worldwide. Should these pipelines



This photo taken on Jan. 6 shows gas valve and gas pipelines at the delivery station in the Slovak village Plavecký Štvrtok. Slovak gas importer SPP declared a state of energy emergency after Russian gas supplies to the country fell by 70 percent overnight. SAMUEL KUBAN/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

already been finished, the gas conflict with Ukraine would be a minor threat to continental Europe.

The Czech Republic, which holds the EU's rotating presidency, has dispatched a delegation to Kiev to meet with Ukrainian officials in

an effort to help resolve the crisis.

"The situation (with gas supplies via Ukraine to central Europe) ... is getting worse by the minute and we would like to talk about this new situation," Czech Industry Minister Martin Riman

told reporters in Kiev.

The conflict started around New Year's, when Gazprom, Russia's gas monopoly, accused Ukrainian Naftogas of stealing 65.3 million cubic meters of gas being transported through Ukraine to Europe. Kiev, in turn, has denied all the allegations of tapping Russian gas. It says that Russia should be blamed for the disruption because it is not willing to supply the gas needed to run its pipelines, including the compressor stations that pump the gas to Western Europe.

Until now, Ukraine was paying Gazprom a below-market price of \$179 per 1,000 cubic meters, while other European customers pay around \$500 per 1000 cubic meters. Russia is currently demanding that Ukraine pay for the stolen 65 million cubic meters of gas in addition to \$614 million that it owes from previously unpaid transactions.

For 2009, Russia proposed an increase in gas price for Ukraine of \$450 per 1000 cubic meters. Ukraine, on the other hand, is unwilling to pay this rate and proposes a rate of \$235 per 1000 cubic meters of gas.

The conflict became a stale mate as both sides are blaming the other and are unwilling to compromise in any way. Both Gazprom and Naftogas have informed that they would file lawsuits with the Stockholm Arbitration Court, which deals with international commercial legal disputes.

Interestingly, the price for a barrel of oil has been slowly increasing. Analysts believe that the rise in oil prices is directly affected from this gas conflict.

Both Russia and Ukraine were hard hit by the global economic crisis, and neither country can afford to keep the gas crisis going for a long time, because it brings them even further financial losses. At the same time, it is critical for Russia to show itself as a reliable gas supplier to the West—it is not in Russia's best interests to have the West switch their gas supplier from Russia to other countries such as Norway or Algeria.

## Britain channels Roosevelt in bid to lift economy

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"When we talk about the roads and the bridges and the railways that were built in previous times—and those were anti-recession measures taken to help people through difficult times—you could [by comparison] talk about the digital infrastructure and that form of communications revolution at a period when we want to stimulate the economy. It's a very important thing."

Brown added that the program will be funded by new money drawn partly from reserves.

In response to the proposals, shadow works and pensions secretary, Chris Grayling said, "I am extremely skeptical about the announcements which were headline grabbing with very little substance."

As a nation we have run out of cash, we've got a debt crisis and the things the government said it would do to try to tackle these difficulties are just not working," he told the BBC.

"The reality is it's only a month since the government delayed its biggest public works project—the project to build new aircraft carriers—because it said it had run out of money," he added.

The Liberal Democrat's treasury spokesman Vincent Cable commented that although Brown's plans were similar to their own, he was not convinced they would be implemented properly.

"The plan to create 100,000 jobs was coming as perhaps a million were going to be lost. The key point

**"The reality is it's only a month since the government delayed its biggest public works project"**

is to make sure the banks are lending again. The problems are in part because of a paralysis with decision making because they are being set contradictory objectives," he added.

In order to save jobs, the prime minister announced that he intends to kick start the banks to resume lending. He promised new measures to help firms with good long-term prospects to obtain credit: "Clearly we have banks that were willing to take large numbers of risks a year or two ago and people are now averse to risk—so we have got to create the conditions in which it's possible for banks to resume lending."

The prime minister plans to attend a jobs summit involving government, business and unions after touring the country this week.



The crowd at last year's MacWorld in 2008. Apple announced that this year's MacWorld will be the company's last. TONY AVELAR/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

## Apple's Last Macworld Arrives in San Francisco

### Company's withdraw is business decision

By Antonio Perez  
Epoch Times Staff

Apple Inc.'s iconic CEO surprised the world last month that today's Macworld Expo in San Francisco will be the company's last, and that he wouldn't attend. Apple's presentation on Tuesday will instead be handled by Apple Senior VP Phil Schiller.

The company initially provided no details for Jobs' absence, but on Monday, Apple finally offered more clues—his absence is indeed related to health. Jobs needed time to recuperate from "hormonal imbalance," according to a letter to company employees this week.

Nonetheless, this would be the first Macworld without Jobs since 1997. Software maker Adobe and accessories manufacturer Belkin also dropped out of the expo.

According to some analysts, Apple's decision to forego its annual tradition is a business one, as trade shows with the size and scope of Macworld typically cost companies millions of dollars. That amount of money can pay for a lot of Apple employees or renovate dozens of Apple Stores.

With Jobs out of the picture, few analysts and Apple bloggers are now expecting groundbreaking announcements from the company that brought us the ubiquitous iPhone and iPod.

Is Jobs slowly moving away from product development like Bill Gates at Microsoft Corp.? Hardly—the company confirmed on Monday that he would remain as CEO. His blue Levi's and black turtleneck is every bit as important to Apple's image as the iconic "i" in front of its product names.

By all estimates, Apple had a relatively successful holiday season. The company's iPhone and iPod products continue to sell well, and despite the economic downturn, Apple is one of a handful of companies expected to hold their ground in sales figures.

Here is a list of possible announcements bloggers and tech analysts expect—or hope—Apple to make at Macworld 2009, sans Jobs.

1. Launch date for Mac OS X 10.6 ("Snow Leopard"). Probably the most certain announcement Apple will make is the launch date for the next version of the operating system, dubbed "Snow Leopard." Selling software is a cash cow for tech companies, and given the popularity of its current iteration of Mac OS X ("Leopard"), its next release should also be a hit.

Another reason for Apple to unveil its new operating system is its rival Microsoft. At the Consumer Electronics show this week, many analysts expect Microsoft to release the first beta of its upcoming oper-

ating system, Windows 7. Like it or not, Apple still has Steve Ballmer to contend with in Redmond.

2. New MacBook Pro. Last fall, Apple announced new designs for its MacBook Pro laptop line, with one egregious omission—the 17 inch MacBook Pro. At the time, Apple purportedly ran into display and other technical issues with the larger version of the unibody laptop. We fully expect a 17-inch MacBook Pro to arrive on the shelves this month.

3. Bigger and cheaper iPhone. Bloggers have mentioned that Apple will definitely increase the memory on the iPhone—the question was when. Macworld is a great time to do it. Also, many experts expect a price drop on the older versions.

4. New Mac Mini. The Mac Mini hasn't had a design upgrade since its introduction, which has led some analysts to question its future. Some Web sites have leaked possible new specs for the diminutive computer—with a new Nvidia graphics chip.

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