

Weekly Top 10

WASHINGTON, D.C. January 10, 2020

TO: NCSEJ Leadership and Interested Parties

FROM: Daniel Rubin, Chairman;
Aleksander Smukler, President;
Mark B. Levin, Executive Vice-Chairman & CEO

Dear Friend,

I want to thank all of you who generously contributed to the NCSEJ Annual Chanukah Appeal. NCSEJ would not be able to fulfill its important mission without your support. 2020 is going to be another complicated and complex year for the Jewish communities in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Our pledge is to continue to provide the most up-to-date information and best analysis of what is happening in the Eurasian region.

Earlier this week the Ukrainian government made a significant decision to leave the UN Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. This committee is one of the main anti-Israel vehicles at the United Nations. Many of the unjust resolutions directed against Israel originate in this committee. NCSEJ joins our colleagues from other American Jewish organizations in congratulating President Zelensky and his government for taking this courageous step.

International Holocaust Remembrance Day is on January 27th. There will be memorial events around the world, including two large gatherings of world leaders in Israel and Poland. As we prepare to observe the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz it is important to ensure there is an accurate history of the Holocaust. Revisionism is unacceptable. Governments must not allow a historical whitewashing that does not acknowledge that some of their own citizens were as guilty of genocide of their fellow Jewish citizens as were the Nazis. Why now? Simply put, as we get further away from the Holocaust and there are fewer and fewer survivors to share their stories firsthand, future generations will only have what is written about that time. We cannot allow an inaccurate history to take root.

Sincerely,



Mark B. Levin
NCSEJ Executive Vice-Chairman & CEO

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Lithuanian ruling party drafts bill exonerating nation from Holocaust crimes

Cnaan Liphshiz

The Times of Israel | January 4, 2020

Lithuanian parliament committee is drafting legislation declaring that neither the Baltic nation nor its leaders participated in the Holocaust, a lawmaker working on the bill said.

Arūnas Gumuliauskas, chairman of the Freedom Fights and State Historical Memory Commission at the Seimas, made the statement at a conference last month, the news site 15min.lt reported on December 28.

[Read the full article here.](#)

My father, the quiet hero: how Japan's Schindler saved 6,000 Jews

Jennifer Rankin

The Observer | January 4, 2020

As a child in Japan in the 1950s and 60s, Nobuki Sugihara never knew his father had saved thousands of lives. Few did. His father, Chiune Sugihara, was a trader who lived in a small coastal town about 34 miles south of Tokyo. When not on business trips to Moscow, he coached his young son in mathematics and English. He made breakfast, spreading butter on the toast so thinly "nobody could compete".

His son had no idea his father saved 6,000 Jews during the second world war. Over six weeks in the summer of 1940, while serving as a diplomat in Lithuania, Chiune Sugihara defied orders from his bosses in Tokyo, and issued several thousand visas for Jewish refugees to travel to Japan.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Ukraine's underrated economy is poised for a strong 2020

Anders Åslund

Atlantic Council | January 6, 2020

Ukraine's considerable achievements in 2019 are poorly understood, both in Ukraine and abroad. This is perhaps not surprising. Ukrainians usually suspect their government of the worst, while the foreign media rarely reports accurately about Ukrainian reforms. Since September 2019, US media coverage in particular has been distorted by negative impeachment-related headlines. Nevertheless, the progress made by Ukraine over the past twelve months should not be underestimated. This has paved the way for further significant advances in 2020. Key areas to watch will be the cleanup of Ukraine's law enforcement, improvements in state administration, and the opening of all kinds of markets to competition.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Ukrainian Jewish student's dorm vandalized in suspected hate crime

Cnaan Liphshiz

JTA | January 7, 2020

The dorm of a Jewish student in Ukraine was vandalized with anti-Semitic etchings.

The student at Kharkiv's V.N. Karazin Kharkiv National University, who was identified only as Vladislav, discovered the vandalism on Dec. 30, the news site 057.ua reported Monday.

The etchings on the wall included "Ave Satan" and far-right symbols. The intruders also drew swastikas, pentagrams and a Star of David, according to photos of the scene provided on the website jewishnews.com.ua.

[Read the full article here.](#)

The first kosher bar in the former Soviet Union serves up cocktails and Torah lessons

Cnaan Liphshiz

JTA | January 6, 2020

As an Orthodox Jew, Aryeh Rov had little interest in this port city's rich and vibrant bar scene.

For one thing, most drinks served in Odessa's bars are not kosher, limiting his choice to a handful of certified brands.

He also usually doesn't feel "at ease" at a bar.

"A person wearing a kippah just stands out in places like that. Certainly an Orthodox Jewish couple," said Rov, who is 40 and married.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Ukraine pulls out of 'anti-Israeli' UN committee on Palestinians

Lahav Harkov

The Jerusalem Post | January 6, 2020

Ukraine has left the UN Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. The decision was approved by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. The 25-country committee is the source of many resolutions criticizing Israel, which are often adopted by the UN General Assembly. It was established in 1975 "to enable Palestinian people to exercise their inalienable rights, including the right to self-determination... the right to national independence and sovereignty, and the right to return to their homes and property from which they have been displaced."

[Read the full article here.](#)

Poland's Israel problem

JPost Editorial

The Jerusalem Post | January 8, 2020

More than 40 world leaders are expected to converge on Jerusalem in two weeks for a momentous occasion. Under the banner "Remembering the Holocaust, Fighting Antisemitism," the dignitaries, accompanied by Israel's prime minister and president, will gather for the Fifth World Holocaust Forum to mark the 75th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp in southern Poland, the largest Nazi death camp in World War II.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Celebrating 90 years of The Jewish Agency at Ben-Gurion Airport

Alan Rosenbaum

The Jerusalem Post | January 9, 2020

"These photos can inspire hundreds of thousands – perhaps millions who pass this way, to help us consider where we came from, and where we are going. I think they are very moving." Thus commented Maj.-Gen (ret.) Aharon Ze'evi Farkash, who served in the IDF as director of Military Intelligence, head of the Technology and Logistics Directorate, and Commander of Unit 8200, on the new "One to Ninety" photo exhibition celebrating 90 years of The Jewish Agency, which opened this week at Ben-Gurion Airport.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Beyond the impeachment drama: Why Ukraine matters to America

Mark Temnycky

Atlantic Council | January 9, 2020

The impeachment of President Donald Trump has thrust relations between the United States and Ukraine into the spotlight. This has amplified the ongoing debate over America's ties to the former Soviet republic, with some questioning the wisdom of the current US commitment to Ukraine in its struggle against Russian aggression.

Fox News has played a prominent role in this discussion. During one November 2019 segment, Fox News presenter Jesse Watters stated that the impeachment investigation was “about a transcript of a phone call with a country no one cared about.” “No one can find Ukraine on a map,” he argued. “If you ask the American people anything about Ukraine, they don’t know a thing about it.” Meanwhile, fellow Fox News anchor Tucker Carlson has openly questioned why he should care about the conflict between Ukraine and Russia. In one widely shared clip, he even claimed that if pushed to choose, he would rather side with Russia.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Putin’s Latest Obsession: A New World War II Narrativ

Leonid Bershidsky

Bloomberg | January 2, 2019

Russia recently announced that it will spend \$500 million to fix and update the commercial port of Tartus in Syria. In 2017 Moscow had renewed its lease over the port, signing an agreement with Damascus in a clear show of support for Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. But Russian (and before 1991, Soviet) naval presence there dates back to the early 1970s. A remnant of a much vaster Soviet string of bases developed from the 1970s on, Tartus is now the only port Russia has outside of those on its own shores. What to make of this renewed Russian effort to have a Mediterranean presence? Given Russia’s economic weakness—and long land borders—why is Moscow so focused on Syria and in particular on having a naval footprint there?

[Read the full article here.](#)

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About NCSEJ

Founded in 1971, the National Coalition Supporting Eurasian Jewry represents the organized American Jewish community in monitoring and advocating on behalf of the estimated 1.5 million Jews in Eastern Europe and Eurasia, including the 15 successor states of the former Soviet Union.

