

Weekly Top 10

WASHINGTON, D.C. August 23, 2019

TO: NCSEJ Leadership and Interested Parties

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

Dear Friend,

Sincerely,



Mark B. Levin
NCSEJ Executive Vice-Chairman & CEO

NCSEJ WEEKLY TOP 10 **Washington, D.C. August 23, 2019**

Putin Not Putting 'Russia First
Dmitriy Frolovskiy
Haaretz | August 21, 2019

Russia's political reality in the years following the 2014 annexation of the Crimean Peninsula echoes in many ways the atmosphere that prevailed during the Cold War era, with tensions boiling to a point of no return behind closed doors.

Dissent is gradually building in Moscow, even though it might appear to be a political monolith, unabashedly supporting Russian President Vladimir Putin's notions of realpolitik and the end of liberalism.

Five years before U.S. Special Counsel Robert Mueller revealed Russian operatives' coordinated attack on the American political system, the Kremlin's vision of relations with the West was different. Although Russia did not miss a chance to challenge the post-Cold War order and unleash diatribes, few there truly wanted to break up with the West.

[Read the full article here.](#)

MANY SOVIETS LOST THEIR CONNECTION TO JUDAISM, BUT THAT'S BEEN CHANGING
Ruty Korotaev
Canadian Jewish News | August 14, 2019

For many Jewish people, living in the U.S.S.R. meant that their Judaism had to take a back seat. As a result, many Russian-speaking Jews lost their connection to their heritage. Things changed when the Soviet Union collapsed and Jews were finally allowed to leave.

As they emigrated to Israel, the United States, Canada and Europe, many Russian-speaking Jews began to reconnect to their roots and learn more about the religion that had been robbed from them. Some younger Russian-speaking Jews, the millennials and gen-Zs, who were raised outside of the Soviet Union, are now becoming more religious.

[Read the full article here.](#)

All Quiet in Russian-Belarusian Relations

Arkady Moshes
Ponars | August 2019

For approximately a year, from summer 2018 onwards, observers were paying close attention to tensions in relations between Russia and Belarus. A particular concern was caused by the assumption that Moscow might be planning to impose upon Minsk the reunification of two states, which could hypothetically allow President Vladimir Putin to circumvent the constitutional two-consecutive-terms limit on Russia's presidency and stay in power beyond 2024 as the leader of a new political entity. Each of many bilateral presidential and prime-ministerial meetings provoked interest, and often anxiety, as it could potentially bring news about Minsk agreeing to Belarus's absorption by Russia. However, as of today, all these have proven to be false alarms. Furthermore, in July this year, Russian and Belarusian leaders agreed to postpone the decision about the future of the two countries' integration until December 2019, when the treaty on the Russian-Belarusian Union State will mark its 20th anniversary. Quite plausibly, if the reunification scenario has ever existed, it has now been shelved or abandoned altogether.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Update: derelict synagogue in Săveni, Romania sold and converted into restaurant
Jewish Heritage Europe | August 20, 2019

Back in 2013 we wrote about plans by the Romanian Jewish Federation (FEDROM) to sell the derelict synagogue in Săveni, in northeastern Romania — but bids were low and it was taken off the market.

A long essay this month in the Ziaristii news site laments that the abandoned synagogue was indeed sold and has been turned into a modern restaurant specializing in Romanian cuisine — erasing the physical testimony of Jewish history in the town.

[Read the full article here.](#)

NETANYAHU PROMISES 'THERE WILL NEVER BE ANOTHER BABI YAR
Herb Keinon
Jerusalem Post | August 20, 2019

Standing at Babi Yar, but with Iran obviously on his mind, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu declared it is Israel's "constant duty to stand against murderous ideologies in order to ensure that there will never be another Babi Yar."

Netanyahu's comments came at a memorial ceremony on Monday at the site, where some 34,000 Jews were murdered by the Nazis and Ukrainian collaborators in September 1941.

"For humanity, Babi Yar is a warning sign," he said. "For Jews, it is an eternal imperative - we will always defend ourselves, by ourselves, against any enemy."

Netanyahu, who arrived in Ukraine on Sunday for a two-day visit - the first by an Israeli prime minister in 20 years - said that it was hard to believe that "this beautiful forest saw the horror that happened here. The forest was silent, but so too was the world."

[Read the full article here.](#)

Zelensky, Netanyahu meet in Kyiv, talk up economic and cultural ties; Russia barely mentioned
Natalia Datskevych
Kyiv Post | August 19, 2019

A historical meeting between two international Jewish leaders — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu — took place in Kyiv's Mariyinsky Palace on Aug.19.

The two leaders talked about security, high-tech cooperation, the coming ratification and expansion of a free trade agreement and the problems that Ukrainians have in being allowed to visit Israel.

Netanyahu, who served as Israel's prime minister in total for 13 years, last visited Ukraine in 1999. He said Ukraine has changed a lot and he expects better times ahead.

[Read the full article here.](#)

77th memorial to second largest mass murder of Jews from the FSU
FJS-FSU | August 19, 2019

On Sunday, August 11, was the 77th anniversary of the second largest mass execution of Jews in the FSU by the Nazi invaders. The largest mass murder took place in Baby Yar. On August 11-13, 1942, the Nazi's murdered more than 27,000 men, women, and children from Rostov-on-Don. The Nazi's marched the Soviet and Jewish citizens out of Rostov-on-Don to Zmievskaya Balka where they were penned up like animals and murdered viciously through various means including being shot, poisoned and gassed.

This year, the memorial of this horrific tragedy coincided with the memorial of the destruction of Jerusalem of old along with the holy temple. This mournful day, which is marked by fasting and lamentations every year, was significantly more poignant this year.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Seeking democracy on the streets of Russia

Will Englund

The Washington Post | August 17, 2019

MOSCOW — It was cold, but not too cold. The streets were cleared of snow. By the thousands, Russians gathered at the big statue of Lenin in October Square until finally they set off along the Garden Ring road to what was then called Prospekt Kalinina. A river of people filled streets made broad to give tanks room to maneuver.

We called them Soviets back then — it was February 1990, my first time in Moscow, the first time I would write a news story about Russians seeking democracy and a chance to live in what they always called “a normal country.”

Nearly 30 years later, Russians are still at it.

[Read the full article here.](#)

The grandson of Ukrainian strongman Stepan Bandera reckons with his family legacy of Nazi collaboration

Sam Sokol

JTA | August 21, 2019

(JTA) — The rabbi appears serious, with just the barest hint of a smile behind his long white beard. Standing beside him, a stocky, unremarkable man with a thick black mustache grips a smartphone, his arms held straight at his sides. He also has a subtle smile.

The scene is both pedestrian — and remarkable. Tweeted from the sidelines of the Ukrainian Jewish Forum, a gathering of representatives of the post-Soviet state's Jewish organizations, the photo shows Yaakov Dov Bleich, chief rabbi of Kiev and Ukraine, with Stepan “Steve” Bandera, the eponymous grandson of one of Ukraine's most notorious Nazi collaborators.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Explaining Trump's belated Russia sanctions

Maximilian Hess

Riddle.io | August 16, 2019

Last August, US President Donald Trump found Russia had used nerve agents in the March 2018 attack on ex-double agent Sergei Skripal in Salisbury, England. Trump's response was to label Russia a violator of the Chemical and Biological Weapons Control and Warfare Elimination Act of 1991 (CBW ACT), thereby formally barring the US from directly loaning to Russia or selling it arms and national-security sensitive goods and technology. The CBW Act also calls for the president to impose a series of additional sanctions within three months unless the president certifies to Congress the designated state has changed its behaviour.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Netanyahu's praise of Kyiv's Holocaust remembrance only tells part of the story

Sam Sokol

Times of Israel | August 21, 2019

On Monday evening, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stood at Kyiv's Babi Yar ravine with Volodymyr Zelensky, Ukraine's recently elected Jewish president, and praised the former Soviet republic for what he said was its commitment to memory.

More than 30,000 Jews were murdered by the Nazis at the site over a period of two days in 1941.

“I thank you President Zelensky, and I also thank the Ukrainian government, for your efforts to preserve the memory of the Holocaust,” Netanyahu said. “You are continuing your efforts in the war against anti-Semitism.”

While Ukraine has indeed made efforts to commemorate the Holocaust in recent years, especially at Babi Yar, its record on memory is far more complicated than Netanyahu’s statement indicated.

[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.

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