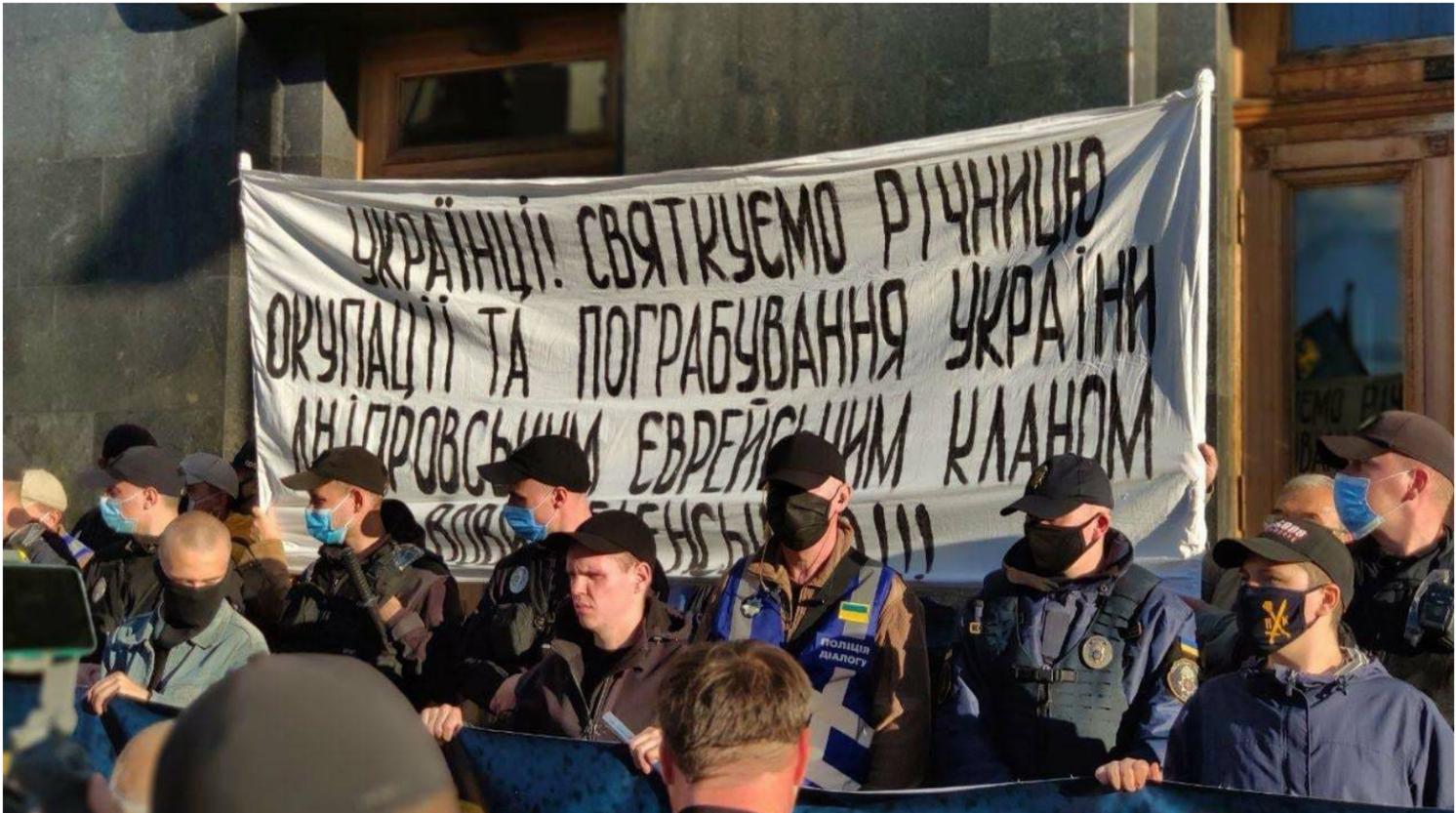


Weekly Top 10

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Billboard-sized banner “Celebrating the anniversary of the occupation and robbery of Ukraine by the Dnipro Jewish clan of Vova Zelensky,” was displayed in front of President Zelenskyy’s office on October 14, Defenders of Ukraine Day.

WASHINGTON, D.C. October 16, 2020

TO: NCSEJ Leadership and Interested Parties

**FROM: James Schiller, Chairman;
Mark B. Levin, Executive Vice-Chairman & CEO**

Dear Friend,

An anti-Semitic banner directed at President Zelensky was displayed on Wednesday during a nationalist march in Kyiv celebrating Defenders of Ukraine Day. “Celebrating the anniversary of the occupation and robbery of Ukraine by the Dnipro Jewish clan of Vova Zelensky,” read the billboard-sized banner that was displayed in front of Zelensky’s office. Earlier this week, the Ministry of Culture sent a letter to multiple Jewish clergymen asking them to hold prayers for “defenders of Ukraine of all generations.” The day became an official public holiday in reaction to Russian aggression in the region in 2014 to replace the former holiday, Defender of the Fatherland Day which originated in the Soviet Union. Many Ukrainian Jews had objected to the establishment of Oct. 14 as a national holiday because it honored

the Cossacks, a Slavic group that perpetrated pogroms against Jews in the 17th century and Nazi collaborators in the 20th century. NCSEJ was in contact with the Embassy of Ukraine in Washington DC who informed us that the Main Directorate of the National Police are investigating the incident to identify those complicit in the banner and will prosecute them under the criminal code of incitement of national, racial or religious enmity and hatred.

On Sunday, members of the Progressive synagogue in Minsk were arrested while participating in a rally against President Lukashenko. According to NCSEJ Representative Ilya Bezruchko, who is in contact with leadership in Minsk, the arrests included businessmen and sponsors of the Jewish community. They were charged with participating in an illegal gathering and resisting arrest. All of those arrested have been released.

Within hours of a ceasefire signed between Azerbaijan and Armenia about the disputed territory of Nargorno-Karabakh, the armistice was broken amid mutual recriminations over alleged truce violations. Russia has proposed sending military observers to monitor the ceasefire, while Turkey has pledged its support for Azerbaijan. Earlier this month, the U.S. signed on to a joint statement condemning both sides for the "unprecedented and dangerous escalation of violence in and outside of the Nargono-Karabakh zone."

Kyrgyzstan's president is the third head of state in the country since 2005 to be toppled in a popular uprising. The president of the small Central Asian nation, Sooronbai Jeenbekov, resigned on Thursday, leaving power in the hands of a former politician, Sadyr Japarov, whose supporters freed him from jail last week. "I do not want to go down in Kyrgyzstan's history as a president who shed blood and shot at his own citizens." said Jeenbekov in his resignation speech. Sadyr Japarov was serving an eleven-year prison sentence for attempting to kidnap another politician during unrest in 2013. Japarov was elected Prime Minister on Wednesday by the country's parliament.

Lastly, on September 30, the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs published a [National Strategy to Combat Anti-Semitism](#). Please see the [attached press release](#) for more information.

Sincerely,



Mark B. Levin
NCSEJ Executive Vice-Chairman & CEO

[If you enjoy these Newsletters, please consider making a donation to NCSEJ to help us support](#)

[the Jewish communities of Eurasia during these uncertain times.](#)

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NCSEJ WEEKLY TOP 10 Washington, D.C. October 16, 2020

From Hiding, Head of Central Asia's Only Democracy Says He's Quitting Andrew Higgins The New York Times | October 15, 2020

MOSCOW — After more than a week in hiding following a disputed election, the president of Kyrgyzstan — Central Asia's only democracy — on Thursday announced his plans to resign, saying he did not want to go down in history as a leader “who shed blood and shot at his own citizens.”

In a statement issued from an undisclosed location, the president, Sooronbai Jeenbekov, said he had “taken a decision to resign,” though he did not specify whether he had already quit.

Just a few hours earlier, Mr. Jeebenkov had assured a delegation of former senior officials and political veterans that he had no plans to step down and would stand firm against a power grab widely believed to be backed by criminal elements.

Feliks Kulov, a former prime minister who met with the president on Thursday morning, voiced concern over Mr. Jeenbekov's abrupt change of heart, speculating in a post on Facebook that the leader had been “presented with a choice: voluntary resignation or a real war.”

The day's dizzying events, which left a freed prisoner in charge of the government as prime minister, seemed to signal the end of what began as a protest by mainstream opposition forces over a rigged election and degenerated last week into a reign of chaos fueled by thugs and criminals.

[Read the full article here.](#)

E.U. penalizes Belarusian leader Lukashenko for ongoing crackdown Michael Birnbaum The Washington Post | October 12, 2020

European Union foreign ministers agreed Monday to impose sanctions on Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, toughening their response to the longtime leader's months-long crackdown on political opponents.

The foreign ministers also said they would start the process of imposing sanctions on Russian officials in retaliation for a nerve agent attack on Alexei Navalny, the Kremlin's most prominent critic.

Taken together, the actions amount to a sharp response to political violence in Europe's neighborhood, despite mixed E.U. attitudes about how to engage with Russian President Vladimir Putin. Lukashenko has continued to deploy security forces to crack down on protesters, who say an election in early August that returned him to office for a sixth term was illegitimate.

The new sanctions “send a clear message to the Belarusian authorities that business as usual is no longer possible in our relations,” said E.U. foreign policy chief Josep Borrell, speaking to reporters from Luxembourg after the meeting of the foreign ministers. “Yesterday, Sunday, we saw again a strong, tough, disproportionate response to the demonstrators. There has not been any signal from the Belarus authorities to engage in any kind of conversation, in any kind of talks.”

[Read the full article here.](#)

Russia, U.S. remain divided over extending last nuclear arms

pact
Reuters | October 14, 2020

MOSCOW/WASHINGTON (Reuters) - Russia and the United States on Wednesday remained at odds over extending the last major arms control pact between the world's largest nuclear weapons powers, with Moscow denying U.S. assertions of an agreement in principle.

The New START (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty) accord, signed in 2010, limits the numbers of strategic nuclear warheads, missiles and bombers that Russia and the United States can deploy. It expires in February.

A failure to extend the pact would remove all constraints on U.S. and Russian deployments of strategic nuclear weapons and their delivery systems, fueling a post-Cold War arms race and tensions between Moscow and Washington.

U.S. officials have indicated that an agreement to extend it has been reached in principle.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Wednesday that no deal had yet been reached despite what the Kremlin hoped was a joint understanding that the pact did need to be extended.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Belarusian Government Reckons With Two Months of Protests
Grigory Ioffe
The Jamestown Foundation | October 14, 2020

Over nine weeks since the disputed Belarusian presidential election, and three weeks since President Alyaksandr Lukashenka held a secret inauguration ceremony, large street demonstrations in the country continue unabated. In the opinion of Gennady Korshunov, a former director of the Belarusian Institute of Sociology (he revealed that Lukashenka's April 2020 rating in Minsk was 25 percent—see EDM, June 23), the protest movement, imbued as it is with Kantian “good will” (that is, determined by moral demands), has formative significance for Belarusian nation-building (Facebook.com/KorshunauGenadz, October 6).

Yet because the protests have failed to produce regime change, many Belarusians have jumped to compare their effort with their counterparts' in Kyrgyzstan. “Belarusians have been protesting for two months, but the regime has not collapsed. [...] The Kyrgyz, on the other hand, disposed of the powers they were fed up with virtually overnight. On social networks, voices sounded: that is who we need to learn from.” An avalanche of speculation followed as to why Belarusians could not match the Kyrgyzstanis, and if this is good or bad (Naviny, October 8).

Most comparisons pointed to oligarchs and the dominance of rival clans in Kyrgyzstan, both of which are largely nonexistent in Belarus (Telegram.org, October 8). But some also mentioned the incredible number of Western-funded non-governmental organizations (NGO) in Kyrgyzstan and the fact that in Belarus, the power vertical has been more consolidated (YouTube, October 8)

[Read the full article here.](#)

The Secret of the Tajik President's Staying Power
Temur Umarov
Carnegie Moscow Center | October 15, 2020

On October 11, Emomali Rahmon was reelected President of Tajikistan for a fifth term with almost 91 percent of the vote. This outcome could have been described as dull and predictable—if this wasn't 2020, and the post-Soviet space wasn't gripped by wars and revolutions. Rahmon has been in power longer than anyone else in the former Soviet Union, and looked doomed to become yet another victim of this crisis year. But he managed to get reelected for yet another term without any mass protests or other hitches. The regime in Tajikistan has fused so closely with Rahmon's extensive family that neither a new generation nor the coronavirus pandemic can dent his power.

Despite the landslide result, there had for several years been speculation in Tajikistan over who precisely from the Rahmon family would run for the presidency. Back in 2016, the constitution was rewritten to allow the leader of the nation—Rahmon—to run for president an unlimited number of times. The constitutional changes also included a reduction in the minimum age requirement for presidential candidates from thirty-five to thirty. This change was clearly

aimed at Rahmon's son Rustam, who is currently only thirty-three.

Rahmon looks around him and sees that in Uzbekistan, the daughter of late president Islam Karimov is languishing in jail following her father's death. In Kazakhstan, the family of former president Nursultan Nazarbayev, who stepped down from the position last year, is gradually losing influence. In Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko dresses his son Kolya in a bulletproof vest amid mass protests against Lukashenko's contested recent election victory. The regime in Tajikistan is entirely controlled by one family, so problems with relatives of the president are a particular threat to its survival.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Nationalist marchers in Kyiv say Ukraine is under 'occupation' by 'Jewish clan'

Cnann Lipshiz

JTA | October 14, 2020

(JTA) — Participants in a nationalist march in Ukraine raised a banner decrying the country's "occupation and robbery" by a "Jewish clan."

The banner, aimed at Ukraine's Jewish president, Volodymyr Zelensky, appeared Wednesday at the annual OUN-UPA March, which is named for Ukrainian nationalist movements that for a time sided with Adolf Hitler against the Soviet Union.

"Celebrating the anniversary of the occupation and robbery of Ukraine by the Dnipro Jewish clan of Vova Zelensky," the read the billboard-sized banner that was displayed in front of Zelensky's office.

Zelensky, who was elected last year, has implicitly criticized the glorification of wartime collaborators, telling the Times of Israel earlier this year that it would be better to name monuments and streets in the country after people "whose names do not provoke conflict." Dnipro is a city in eastern Ukraine with a large Jewish community.

Mikhail Tkach, executive director of the United Jewish Community of Ukraine, said the banner was an act of incitement and called on authorities to punish those responsible for it.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Secret Soviet Interrogation

Rabbi Shmuel Butman

The Jewish Press | October 15, 2020

Chabad-Lubavitch, as a spiritual religious movement, remains above partisan politics. The Lubavitcher Rebbe, although encouraging us to vote, never endorsed a particular candidate. We cannot fail, however, to notice how one side in the coming crucial election includes a vocal element that embraces Marxism which aims to steer its party's policies in that direction.

Lubavitcher chassidim grew up under the shadow of Stalin's purges and rabid Soviet persecution of chassidim. Our mentors, especially senior chassidic role models, are living testimony to decades of suffering and mesiras nefesh under the harshest conditions, which resulted directly from Marxist policies inspiring the Soviet regime. Thousands of chassidim were tortured in Soviet prisons, many executed by firing squads or expiring from hard labor and frozen conditions in Siberian concentration camps.

As examples of the excesses of Stalin's Marxist regime, we share information here from recently obtained excerpts of a transcript of NKVD interrogations of four Jews arrested in Chernigov, in northern Ukraine, on March 8, 1939.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Georgian election nears

Mackenzie Baldinger

The New Eastern Europe | October 12, 2020

A recent poll, conducted by the Georgian Institute of Politics, found that the majority of international and local election observers surveyed believe that the ruling Georgian Dream Party is leading significantly against the opposition. Experts expect the Georgian Dream to obtain somewhere between 39 and 53 per cent of the proportional votes, followed by the main opposition, United National

Movement (UNM), which is predicted to get between 16 and 25 per cent of the vote share. Almost 60 organisations have registered as observers for the upcoming elections, with OSCE/ODIHR slated to provide the largest international observation.

This poll, which also predicts that the new election threshold of one per cent should result in a more multiparty parliament, supports the findings of the recent public poll commissioned by the TV station Rustavi2. It shows 55.7 per cent support for the Georgian Dream party and 16.2 per cent for the United National Movement. This poll, however, is highly disputed by the united opposition, which claims the numbers have been manipulated by the pro-governmental leadership of the TV station.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Nagorno-Karabakh ceasefire hopes sink as warring sides bicker and fight

Reuters | October 14, 2020

BAKU/YEREVAN (Reuters) - Hopes of a humanitarian ceasefire ending fighting over Nagorno-Karabakh sank on Thursday as the death toll mounted and Armenia and Azerbaijan accused each other of launching new attacks.

Azerbaijan's president said his country's armed forces would take control of all regions surrounding the breakaway mountain territory if Armenia continued to "act negatively".

Armenia accused Azerbaijan's ally, Turkey, of not allowing aircraft carrying emergency aid to enter its airspace despite fears of a humanitarian disaster. The ceasefire brokered by Russia last Saturday was intended to let the sides swap detainees and bodies of those killed. But it has had little impact on the fighting in and around Nagorno-Karabakh, which is internationally recognised as part of Azerbaijan but is populated and governed by ethnic Armenians.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Overlooked by Nazis, an untouched Jewish village in Poland remeets 'real' world

Renee Ghert-Zand

The Times of Israel | October 14, 2020

The Holocaust always fascinated author Max Gross. But while reading incessantly about the Nazis' notoriously efficient genocide of the Jews, one thought kept niggling at him: He wondered whether they could have just possibly missed a Jewish village somewhere in Eastern Europe. And if so, what would have happened?

Gross, 41, imagines a possible answer to this question in his terrific debut novel, "The Lost Shtetl," published October 13.

Growing up in New York, he would ride the subways reading books on World War II, including biographies of Adolf Hitler. "When I got a Kindle, people on the subway finally stopped thinking I was a Nazi," he joked to The Times of Israel in a recent interview.

[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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