

Weekly Top 10

Show Your Support **Donate To**



WASHINGTON, D.C. December 4, 2020

TO: NCSEJ Leadership and Interested Parties

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

Dear Friend,

The Russian Jewish Congress (RJC) awarded Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu the 'Global Influence Award' dedicated to individuals "whose work has made a significant impact on the world". The RJC awarded the Prime Minister this honor because of his commitment to the safety and security of Israel.

Polish architect Maria Piechotka, a leader in the recovery and preservation of Jewish heritage in Poland, died this past Saturday in Warsaw at the age of 100. Piechotka and her late husband recognized and documented the importance of wooden synagogues from the 17th and 18th centuries in the former Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth. Piechotka's legacy lives on in the stunning hand-built, nearly full-scale re-creation of the Gwozdziec Synagogue's timber roof, which is the centerpiece of the core exhibit at the Polin Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw.

This week, NCSEJ and several other Jewish organizations -- [signed a joint letter](#) to Majority Leader McConnell and Minority Leader Schumer to urge them to pass into law the Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism Act (H.R. 221 /S. 238) before the end of this session of Congress. The bill would elevate the State Department's U.S. Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism to the rank of ambassador reporting directly to the Secretary of State.

Lastly, our next NCSEJ Board of Governors Meeting will be held on **Tuesday, December 8 at 12:00 p.m. EST**. To see guest speaker information and to register, [please click here](#).

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.

Show Your Support **Donate To**



**NCSEJ WEEKLY TOP 10
Washington, D.C. December 4, 2020**

**Netanyahu honored by Russian Jewish Congress for MidEast peace commitment
The Jerusalem Post | November 23, 2020**

The Russian Jewish Congress (RJC) honored Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu with its Global Influence Award, which is awarded to individuals "whose work made a significant impact on the world."

Other recipients included head of the Kommunarka infectious diseases hospital Denis Protsenko and one of the founders of the social art movement Alexander Melamid.

RJC executive committee member Viktor Velkseberg personally awarded Netanyahu the honor and noted his "invaluable contribution to upholding peace and security."

[Read the full article here.](#)

**Ukrainian Jewish professor says he was fired for protesting statue of leader whose troops killed Jew
Cnaan Liphshiz
JTA | December 2, 2020**

(JTA) — A Jewish journalism professor says he was fired from a Ukrainian university for his opposition to a statue honoring a militia leader whose troops killed Jews in pogroms.

The case is a rare example of real-life implications stemming from the heated debate in Ukraine on nationalist memory that has stayed for the most part in the realm of theoretical exchanges.

Zoriy Fine, a photographer from the city of Vinnytsia, says he was fired from the Vinnytsia State Pedagogical University just two weeks after he was appointed to work there as a lecturer on journalism in 2017, according to an 11,000-word account he published last week.

Fine says his former employers told him he was dismissed for speaking out against a statue of Simon Petlyura, a politician and militia leader who fought for Ukrainian independence in the wake of the 1917 Russian Revolution.

Some of Petlyura's loyalists killed 35,000 to 50,000 Jews in a series of pogroms between 1918 and 1921.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Israel, Ukraine free trade agreement to go into effect New Year's Day

Zachary Keyser
The Jerusalem Post | December 2, 2020

A free trade agreement between Israel and Ukraine is set to go into effect when the clocks strike midnight on the New Year's Eve, eliminating import taxes on food products coming in from the Eastern European country.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky highlighted positives of the agreement, a culmination of seven years of negotiations, and congratulated Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on its success on Twitter last week.

"This is a new level of relations between [Israel and Ukraine] and the 'green light' to the growth of exports, closer cooperation in the fields of high-tech, engineering and investment," he wrote.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Ambassador: Belarus, Israel use similar approaches to maintain historical memory
Betla | December 2, 2020

MINSK, 2 December (BelTA) – Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Belarus to Israel Yevgeny Vorobyov took part in the online meeting “Lobby to perpetuate the memory of Jewish heroism during the Great Patriotic War” on 1 December. The meeting was organized by the Knesset of Israel, BelTA learned from the Belarusian embassy in Israel.

Yevgeny Vorobyov spoke about numerous examples of the joint fight of the Belarusian and Jewish peoples against the Nazis in Belarus. He touched upon the existence of Jewish partisan units on the Belarusian territory, including a unit of the Bielski brothers in Nalibokskaya Pushcha.

The ambassador pointed to similarity of approaches that Belarus and Israel use to study the joint past and maintain historical memory. He informed about the events the embassy held as part of the celebration of the 75th anniversary of the end of the Great Patriotic War, including the participation of Belarusian specialists in an educational seminar on the basis of the Yad Vashem Holocaust Remembrance Center, and wreath ceremonies at the monuments erected in memory of Holocaust victims and soldiers-liberators.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Putin orders Russia to begin large-scale COVID-19 vaccinations next week
Reuters | December 2, 2020

MOSCOW (Reuters) - The Kremlin said on Tuesday Russia's healthcare system was under heavy strain as authorities reported a record 491 deaths linked to COVID-19 and infections surged.

Putin gave the order during an online meeting with ministers on Wednesday, a day when Russia, which has the fourth highest number of recorded infections in the world, registered 589 new daily deaths from the coronavirus.

Putin said Russia will have produced 2 million vaccine doses within the next few days.

Sputnik V, one of two Russian-made vaccines to have received domestic regulatory approval so far despite clinical trials being incomplete, requires two injections. A third vaccine is also in the works.

Russia said last month that the Sputnik jab was 92% effective at protecting people from COVID-19 according to interim results.

“Let's agree on this - you will not report to me next week, but you will start large-scale vaccination... Let's get to work already,” Putin told Deputy Prime Minister Tatiana Golikova.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Kazakhstan sleepwalks toward choice-free parliamentary election
Almaz Kumenov
Eurasia.org | December 2, 2020

The electorate in Kazakhstan will sleepwalk through next month's parliamentary elections, which will be utterly dominated, as usual, by the Nur Otan ruling party. Turnout will be strong, because if there is one thing the authorities are effective at, it is press-ganging the masses into taking part in pseudo-democratic performances. But there is no papering over the festering disillusionment.

"We have no choice. This will be the same regime and the same pocket political parties we have had for 30 years. For us citizens, voting is senseless," Manshuk Yergaliyeva, the manager of a hardware store in Almaty, the business capital, told Eurasianet.

By rights, things should be electorally bleak for Nur Otan. The economy is experiencing a deep slump, unemployment is becoming a scourge and prices for basic staples are spiraling. While the country's rulers are quick to blame all this on the COVID-19 emergency, the excuse is wearing thin on a population that has long perceived the roots of its woes in corruption, cronyism and mismanagement.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Maria Piechotka, architect who was an influential expert on Poland's synagogues, dies at 100
Penny Schwartz
JTA | November 30, 2020

(JTA) — Polish architects Maria Piechotka and her late husband recognized the significance of the wooden synagogues from the 17th and 18th century as unique to their country — the architecture and the richly colored murals.

"It was as if local Jews found the solution to the prohibition in the second commandment," Piechotka once said, noting the commandment about graven images, in an interview for a documentary.

Piechotka and husband Kazimierz, who were not Jewish, recovered and advanced the knowledge about those centuries-old synagogues. Almost none survived the Holocaust. They also fought in the resistance during World War II.

Piechotka died Saturday in Warsaw. She was 100.

[Read the full article here.](#)

West Calls on Georgian Opposition Not to Boycott New Parliament
Giorgi Menabde
The Jamestown Foundation | December 2, 2020

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe's (PACE) co-rapporteurs in charge of monitoring Georgia, Titus Corlatean (Romania) and Claude Kern (France), called on all Georgian political parties to accept the parliamentary seats they won in the recent elections (first round on October 31, second round on November 21) and to enter the new legislature. "These elections have resulted in a diverse parliament where the ruling majority will face a strong opposition that can ensure proper parliamentary oversight. The only appropriate forum for this, as well as for debating and challenging diverging political views, is the parliament. For the sake of Georgia's democratic consolidation, we therefore call on all parties to accept the mandates they won in these elections and enter into the new parliament," the co-rapporteurs underscored in a statement (Radio Tavisupleba, November 24).

Yet the Georgian opposition has refused to recognize the legitimacy of the 2020 parliamentary elections, claiming that the vote was rigged. Opposition parties now demand repeat elections, the dismissal of the Central Election Administration's (CEA) head, Tamar Zhvania, and the re-composition of the election administration. All opposition deputies elected on October 31 have refused to take up their parliamentary mandates and warned the authorities about the start of mass protests (see EDM, November 5)

[Read the full article here.](#)

Czech Republic says it will open diplomatic office in Jerusalem
Raphael Ahren
The Times of Israel | December 3, 2020

The Czech Republic plans to establish a diplomatic office in Jerusalem, the Central European country's foreign ministry announced Wednesday.

The Czech Republic would be the second European Union member state, after Hungary, to open a diplomatic mission in the city. So far, no European countries have embassies there.

In a statement, the foreign ministry in Prague said it will permanently station a diplomat from the Tel Aviv embassy at its “honorary consulate” in Jerusalem — which likely refers to the “Czech House” culture and trade center that opened in the city two years ago.

[Read the full article here.](#)

A short film offers new perspective on Birthright — through the eyes of Russian Jews

Stephen Silver

JTA | December 3, 2020

(JTA) — Israeli filmmaker Inbar Horesh met Russian actress Nataliya Olshanskaya on the latter’s birthday, so they ordered a bottle of wine.

Olshanskaya proceeded to tell Horesh the story of how she immigrated to Israel after taking a Birthright trip.

Horesh was so inspired that she eventually turned a version of that story into a short film, with Olshanskaya playing a character similar to herself.

“It actually started quite by coincidence,” Horesh told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency in November.

The resulting 25-minute short, titled “Birth Right,” has played at several Jewish film festivals this fall and will stream at the Other Israel fest, which starts Thursday night and is run by the Marlene Myerson Jewish Community Center in New York. Horesh, a 32-year-old Jerusalem native who has directed several short films, says she’s at work on the screenplay for a feature-length version.

1120 20th Street NW, Ste. 300N Washington, DC 20036-3413

Telephone: +1 202 898 2500 | ncsejinfo@ncsej.org

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.

 JOIN OUR EMAIL LIST

 FORWARD THIS EMAIL