

Weekly Top 10

WASHINGTON, D.C. August 16, 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 9, 2019**

Zelensky and Netanyahu will hold talks in Kyiv **Kyiv Post | August 14, 2019**

President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will hold talks on August 19, the presidential press service reports.

"On August 19, President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky will hold talks with Prime Minister of Israel Benjamin Netanyahu as part of his visit to Ukraine," the statement said.

Zelensky and Netanyahu will also jointly honor the memory of the victims of the Babyn Yar tragedy.

Earlier, the Israeli newspaper, The Times of Israel, reported on Netanyahu's upcoming visit to Kyiv on August 18-20.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Holocaust haunts Lithuania as names are erased from capital's map **Konstantin Eggert** **DW | August 14, 2019**

Many Lithuanians consider Kazys Skirpa and Jonas Noreika heroes of the nation's independence struggle. Jewish organizations — in Lithuania and around the world — have long campaigned for them to be condemned as Holocaust enablers and denied official commemoration.

It was never going to be an easy decision: The mayor of Vilnius, Remigijus Simasius, knew a storm was coming when he signed a decree on July 24 changing the name of Kazys Skirpa Street and days later another, to remove a memorial plaque dedicated to Jonas Noreika from the library of the country's Academy of Sciences.

A small group of radical nationalists held a rally in central Vilnius to protest the mayor's decrees, railing against "traitors who spit at the memory of the nation's great sons." Vilnius' synagogue was temporarily closed. The president's office tabled a meeting to address, among other issues, renaming streets and memorial plaques, BNS news agency reported.

The most sensitive issue of Lithuania's past - the Holocaust - had ignited passions once again.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Protests Expose Russia's Regime Rivalry

Tatyana Stanovaya

Carnegie | August 13, 2019

"How will the ruling regime deal with the growing street protests in Moscow and other cities?" This is the Number One question in Russian politics today. As far as tactics go, everything is more or less clear: the government's preferred option is to use force.

When it comes to strategy, things get more complicated. The government won't get very far with these new protesters if it refuses to recognize that there is a real opposition and merely calls the protesters a handful of stooges sponsored by the West. The regime is trying to flex its muscles, but its emphasis on force only reveals a growing lack of vision and coordination among its key institutions.

What decisionmaking mechanisms are being used to deal with the protests? Who issues orders to jail opposition activists? Who coordinates the Foreign Ministry statements? Who in the Kremlin discusses the demands of the protest? How often do the meetings on this issue take place, and how involved is the president in all of this? There are no definitive answers to any of these questions today.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Moscow's Mayor Has Kissed Putin's Ring

Alexander Baunov

Foreign Policy | August 7, 2019

Not long ago, the mayor of Moscow, Sergei Sobyenin, seemed to have achieved the impossible. Sobyenin had won widespread praise for transforming Russia's capital into a European-style city with modernized public transport and clean streets. He faced little opposition from the public, and yet kept the approval of President Vladimir Putin. Many hoped, among liberals and the political establishment alike, that he would soon be able to replace the unpopular Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev—and one day perhaps even Putin himself.

After the past few weeks, however, Sobyenin's reputation is in tatters. On two successive weekends, the streets of Moscow have seen the biggest protests in Russia since 2012, broken up in ugly fashion by police beating and detaining thousands of demonstrators. The mayor has seemed impotent, as the crackdown on protest has been directed from the Kremlin. Both Russia's rulers and the opposition see the confrontation as a trial run for a bigger showdown in the parliamentary elections of 2021 and the next presidential election of 2024. It no longer seems Sobyenin will play a starring role in either, because he has lost the confidence of both sides.

[Read the full article here.](#)

What Happened at Russia's Missile Test Site?

The Editorial Board

NY Times | August 12, 2019

Nearly as soon as an explosion ripped through the Nenoksa Missile Test Site in northern Russia on Thursday, briefly raising radiation levels in the region, the Kremlin went into crisis mode. That, to anyone familiar with the immediate aftermath of the Chernobyl accident, means clamping down on information, insisting that nothing really bad happened, that it happens everywhere and that the government is in full control.

This time, thank Heaven, the radiation leak appears not to have threatened residents in the region, and no increases were registered in neighboring Finland or Norway. But the pathetic, inchoate evasiveness of Russian authorities proved once again that the Kremlin is far more concerned with covering its behind than telling its people or the world what happened and how great the risk it carried.

[Read the full article here.](#)

The end of Ukraine's post-Soviet era

Taras Kuzio

New Eastern Europe | August 13, 2019

The election of Volodymyr Zelenskyy and the Servant of the People party by overwhelming landslides in the April and July presidential and pre-term parliamentary elections represent the end of Ukraine's 'post-Soviet transition' nearly three decades after the USSR disintegrated. Zelenskyy and his presidential team and parliamentary faction are not connected to the 1990s and their rise to power

represents a historical juncture between the country's Soviet past and European future. The vote for Zelenskyy was more than a vote against Poroshenko; it was a vote against the entire establishment.

The Orange and Euromaidan Revolutions were undoubtedly stepping stones towards this historical juncture. In 2004, central Ukraine joined forces with the western region to elect Viktor Yushchenko as president. A decade later, the Euromaidan Revolution was more broadly based throughout the entire country; following the revolution's success and Russia's military aggression, its influences spread to the east and south.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Preschool opens at former concentration camp in Serbia

Sam Sokol

JTA | August 14, 2019

A preschool in Serbia opened at a building that once was part of a Nazi concentration camp.

The building at Staro Sajmiste has housed a number of businesses over the years and government promises to build a Holocaust memorial there have gone unfulfilled for decades, according to The Guardian.

"The kindergarten is inappropriate when you consider what took place there," Federation of Jewish Communities of Serbia President Robert Sabadoš told the British newspaper. "But what's an even bigger scandal is that pubs have been located down there for years, decades even. There even used to be a nightclub. That site was a place of misery and suffering, and that can't be allowed to be forgotten."

[Read the full article here.](#)

WORLD LEADERS TO MARK 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF AUSCHWITZ LIBERATION IN ISRAEL

Ilanit Chernick

JPOST | August 14, 2019

Several world leaders have confirmed their attendance for the fifth World Holocaust Forum set to take place in Jerusalem in January.

This year, the forum will commemorate the 75th Anniversary of the Liberation of Auschwitz as well as International Holocaust Remembrance Day.

Among world leaders that have confirmed their attendance are French President Emmanuel Macron, German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Italian President Sergio Mattarella and Austrian President H.E. Mr. Alexander Van der Bellen.

The forum, titled "Remembering the Holocaust, Fighting Antisemitism," is being organized by the World Holocaust Forum Foundation, headed by European Jewish Congress president Dr. Moshe Kantor, in cooperation with Yad Vashem, and under the auspices of President Reuven Rivlin. Kantor is also president of the foundation.

In a statement about the event, Kantor said that it is "especially important because, as the Holocaust recedes further into the past, some of its memory is being forgotten and its lessons are no longer being learned.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Night of the Murdered Poets

Taras Kuzio

Tabletmag | August 14, 2019

Tradition tells us that the greatest calamities to befall the Jews have happened on (or near) the ninth of Av: the destruction of the two Temples in Jerusalem; the expulsions from England (1290), France (1306), and Spain (1492); even the largest mass murder of Jews in the Americas, the bombing of the AMIA center in Buenos Aires, Argentina (1994). All of these tragedies (and more) have found their way into the ritualized Tisha B'Av mourning.

What you'll never find in any martyrology service is another infamous date of mass murder: August 12, 1952. On that date 13 members of the Soviet Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee were executed for invented crimes against the state. Subsequently, August 12 became a kind of secular Tisha B'Av for a small but vibrant sector of Yiddish-speaking, socialist but anti-Communist, American Jews. Many of

the participants had known the murdered, or been a part of their larger literary circles.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Plaque by plaque, Lithuania confronts its wartime past

Jillian Deutsch

Politico EU | August 15, 2019

VILNIUS — Silvia Foti was brought up to believe her grandfather was a hero.

As a young army officer, Jonas Noreika spent much of World War II fighting against Soviet occupation as a leader of the Lithuanian Activist Front. After a stint in a Nazi concentration camp, he became a leader in the post-war resistance to Moscow. He was executed in 1947 at the age of 36 and elevated into the Lithuanian pantheon of wartime freedom fighters, commemorated with plaques and statues after the fall of the Iron Curtain.

Foti's mother had dreams of writing a book about him and compiled books and newspaper clippings that she stored in her Chicago home. When she died in 2000, she left her daughter with one wish: Finish the book.

Foti didn't know it at the time, but it was a task that would lead her to reexamine her grandfather's place in history — and add fuel to a fiery debate in Lithuania about the country's role in World War II and the Holocaust.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Graves, guilt and genius: Inside Lithuania's struggle with its checkered past

Raphael Ahren

Times of Israel | August 4, 2019

VILNIUS, Lithuania — Last month, during a government-sponsored trip to Lithuania, I visited the old Jewish cemetery in Kaunas, the country's second-largest city. I was excited that we managed to spontaneously add an unscheduled stop to our already-jam packed itinerary, but the burial ground's shameful state left me nearly speechless.

If local anti-Semites wanted to vandalize the cemetery, they couldn't possibly make it any worse than it already is: abandoned and neglected, with countless toppled tombstones, some broken into pieces, many lying on the earth overgrown with grass, about to be swallowed by the ground.

The Lithuanian official who accompanied me during my three days in the country must have regretted taking me here. She helplessly looked on as I passed by thousands of dilapidated graves, shaking my head in utter disbelief that a Jewish cemetery in a country that seeks to promote its rich Jewish heritage could be left in such decrepitude.

[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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