

## Weekly Top 10

**WASHINGTON, D.C. August 30, 2019**

**TO: NCSEJ Leadership and Interested Parties**

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

Dear Friend,

Please see below for the links to this week's news updates. We wish you a safe and happy Labor Day weekend.

Sincerely,



Mark B. Levin  
NCSEJ Executive Vice-Chairman & CEO

### **NCSEJ WEEKLY TOP 10** **Washington, D.C. August 30, 2019**

#### **Dozens of synagogues to open to public on 20th European Days of Jewish Culture**

**By Cnaan Lipshitz**

**The Times of Israel, 24 August 2019**

Some of Europe's most exquisite synagogues will open to the public on the 20th edition of the annual European Days of Jewish Culture.

Among the synagogues that on September 1 will be greeting visitors is the Portuguese Synagogue of The Hague. Less known than its larger and older counterpart in Amsterdam, the 18th-century Hague synagogue is more complex architecturally, featuring a glass dome that spans its two buildings.

On September 1, the Beth Jehoeda Liberal Jewish Community, which uses the synagogue, will host a concert under the glass canopy, Jewish Heritage The Hague wrote in a statement.

[Read the full article here.](#)

#### **Russian city returns synagogue closed by communists to local Jewish community**

**By Cnaan Lipshitz**

**JTA, 27 August 2019**

Municipal authorities in the Russian city of Syzran returned a synagogue to the local Jewish community that was shut down by the communists nearly 90 years ago.

The synagogue, which was built in 1910 and shuttered 20 years later, was returned last week, the SyzranSmall website reported. Syzran, which is located in the Volga region, at the foot of the Ural Mountains, has a small Jewish community.

Mayor Nikolay Lyadin's decision means that within the next two years, the building of about 1,500 square feet, which is recognized as a monument for preservation, will be rededicated and receive a Torah scroll.

[Read the full article here.](#)

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### **Moldova's dwindling Jewish community reopens synagogue seized by Soviets**

**By Cnaan Lipshitz**

**The Times of Israel, 26 August 2019**

Jews in Moldova on Sunday reopened a synagogue in its former home, a building seized by Soviet authorities nearly 80 years ago.

The Wooden Synagogue, or the Lemnaria Synagogue, was reopened in the cellar of the Kedem Jewish Community Center. About 300 people attended the ceremony under the auspices of the Limmud FSU biannual conference of Jewish learning in the center of Chisinau, also known as Kishinev.

The original synagogue was established in 1835 and nationalized in 1940. In 2005, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee opened the JCC in the building that once housed the synagogue. But the building did not have a synagogue until Alexandar Bilinkis, president of Jewish Community of the Republic of Moldova, donated the funds along with Alexander Weinstein and Grinshpun Emmanuil.

[Read the full article here.](#)

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### **Among Holocaust ghosts, the return of Jewish life in Poland has been slow**

**By Marc Santora**

**Independent, 28 August 2019**

There were lectures on the journey of Jews from shtetls in Poland to new homes in what would become Israel; workshops on chanting the Torah and cooking for Shabbat; exhibitions documenting the devastation brought by the Second World War; and debates about Jewish life in Poland today.

Everywhere, there was music. Gentle lullabies and Yiddish folk songs, thumping Israeli hip-hop, and rousing celebratory tunes played by scores of Klezmer bands filled the ancient alleyways of Krakow, a Polish city that was once at the centre of Jewish life in Europe.

[Read the full article here.](#)

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### **The Nazi Occupation Of Prague: Then And Now**

**By Amos Chapple**

**Radio Free Europe, 28 August 2019**

Rare photographs from the World War II-era shed light on a dark period in Prague's history.

[Read the full article here.](#)

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### **16th-century Jewish tombstones unearthed in Ukraine**

**By Moshe Weistoch**

**Israel Hayom, 28 August 2019**

Members of the group Jewish Galicia & Bukovina were recently sent to document 16th-century Jewish graves that were unearthed in the town of Busk in western Ukraine.

Dr. Ilia Lurie, a researcher with the organization, told Israel Hayom, "We knew that there was an old grave dating back to 1520 in the Ukrainian town of Busk. The cemetery was apparently built at the end of the 15th century."

The representatives of Jewish Galicia & Bukovina (JCB) were joined by local activists and students from the Herzog College in Jerusalem who have completed a course on European Jewry. Alongside the grave whose existence they were aware of, they were surprised to discover 10 more graves and headstones, which Lurie describes as a "rare find."

[Read the full article here.](#)

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### **Decoding the enigma**

**By Mattia Nelles**

**New Eastern Europe, 29 August 2019**

Volodymyr Zelenskyy's successful campaign elevated the widely popular showman in less than four months from a political nobody to the presidential office. Throughout the innovative campaign, Zelenskyy - aided by massive support by one of the country's main TV channels - successfully managed to tap into the public discontent and high distrust of the electorate fed up with stagnating living standards and rampant corruption. His election for some already symbolises a break with the post-Soviet past and most of the political elite which was socialised in the 1990s. With 100 days into his presidency, what do we know about the president's plans besides a change of style and ability to connect with the electorate through effective and creative usage of (social) media?

[Read the full article here.](#)

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### **Putin's power depends on his popularity. That makes him vulnerable.**

**By Samuel A. Greene and Graeme B. Robertson**

**The Washington Post, 27 August 2019**

Russian President Vladimir Putin often seems like a tyrannical Svengali. "Putin's power as Russia's leader is based in fear, mystery, and propaganda," wrote the organizers of PutinCon, a conference for opponents of the president held in New York in 2018, adding, "Putin has wielded violence as the key tool in shaping a system that gives him unrivaled power and wealth, both within Russia and worldwide." He draws on a centuries-old secret-police culture to "keep citizens in check and destabilize foreign adversaries," warns ex-CIA operative John Sipher. He's a "modern day Pablo Escobar," claims the investor Bill Browder, comparing Putin to the murderous Colombian drug lord.

[Read the full article here.](#)

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### **Lost Shtetls of Ukraine**

**The Ukrainian Jewish Encounter , 26 August 2019**

The Jewish population of Ukraine before the Second World War was over 2.5 million. Now the current population is only around 100,000.

A whole world with its very own culture, rules, and customs was decimated in the Holocaust.

Decades later, descendants of survivors, along with friends and supporters, are working hard to piece together remnants of this once vibrant world.

In western Ukraine and other parts of the former Austro-Hungarian empire, many restoration and educational projects are underway. But in eastern Ukraine, not so much.

[Read the full article here.](#)

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### **Rabbi helps dedicate a memorial to Ukrainian group that collaborated with the Nazis**

**By Sam Sokol**

**JTA, 26 August 2019**

One side called it a fitting compromise. The other said it was a whitewash of Ukraine's role in the Holocaust.

The chief rabbi of Ukraine and other religious leaders helped inaugurate a monument to members of an ultranationalist movement whose followers collaborated with the Nazis.

Rabbi Yaakov Dov Bleich took part in the Aug. 21 ceremony commemorating members of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, or OUN, and its militant offshoot, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, or UPA, on the edge of a Jewish cemetery in the town of Sambir. According to Holocaust historians, the two groups were responsible collectively for the deaths of thousands of Jews and up to

100,000 Poles during World War II.

[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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