

Weekly Top 10



WASHINGTON, D.C. December 27, 2019

TO: NCSEJ Leadership and Interested Parties

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

Dear Friend,

Happy Hannukah sixth night of the festival of lights to you and your loved ones!

Веселой Хануки вашим друзьям и близким!

NCSEJ works to promote and protect the well-being of Jewish communities in the second-largest Jewish diaspora. Please remember to support our work as part of our yearly Chanukah Appeal by clicking [HERE](#).

Sincerely,



Mark B. Levin
NCSEJ Executive Vice-Chairman & CEO

WHAT NCSEJ DOES NEXT YEAR DEPENDS ON YOU.

**Help protect communities and promote Jewish interests in
over twenty countries and across two continents.**



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Russia, Ukraine Reach Agreement on Gas Transit to Europe
NY Times | December 21, 2019

MINSK, Belarus — Russia and Ukraine have agreed to continue sending gas through Ukraine to Europe for five years.

The decision that was announced Saturday removes worries that Europe could be denied a substantial amount of the Russian gas that it relies on for heating and industry.

Russia ships about 40 percent of its European gas deliveries through pipelines that cross Ukraine. The current contract is to expire at the end of the year and delays in concluding a new one caused concern in Europe.

Officials in the Russian and Ukrainian capitals said they plan to have the new contract signed before New Year's Day.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Once heroes of US Jewry, Soviet Refuseniks are largely forgotten. Not for long
Renee Ghert-Zand
Times of Israel | December 22, 2019

On tour with her film “Operation Wedding,” about her parents’ failed attempt in 1970 to hijack an empty plane to escape the Soviet Union for Israel, Israeli filmmaker Anat Zalmanson-Kutznetsov noticed that teenagers regularly came up to her after screenings. They told her they hadn’t known about the struggle for Soviet Jewry, and wanted to know more.

The struggle was a seismic event in 20th century Jewish history, and one of the most remarkable victories for human rights ever. For two decades — from the 1960s through the early 1990s — a generation of mainly American Jews worked tenaciously to free their fellow Jews from the iron grip of the USSR. Yet if you were to ask a young Jew today about this hard-won success in ultimately opening the gates for 2 million Soviet Jews to emigrate for Israel and other countries, they would likely give you a blank stare.

“I realized that after I finished my documentary, my job was not done,” Zalmanson-Kuznetsov told The Times of Israel.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Russia-Ukraine War: Is peace possible in 2020?
Peter Dickinson
Atlantic Council | December 26, 2019

The undeclared war between Russia and Ukraine will enter its seventh year in 2020 with no end in sight to a conflict that has shattered the security assumptions of the post-1991 world. While fighting is now sporadic along the largely static frontlines, Kremlin-commanded forces still occupy much of eastern Ukraine and the death toll continues to mount. Many hoped the spring 2019 election of Volodymyr Zelenskyy as Ukraine’s new president would end the deadlock. However, Zelenskyy’s highly anticipated first face-to-face meeting with Vladimir Putin in December failed to produce any breakthroughs. Instead, it merely served to underline the distance between the rival Russian and Ukrainian visions for a post-conflict settlement. Nevertheless, both sides have committed to continuing negotiations during the coming year. What are the prospects for peace in 2020?

[Read the full article here.](#)

The Polish diplomats who went out of their way to save Jews
Eldad Beck
Israel Hayom | December 27, 2019

The second floor of the Jewish Museum of Switzerland, located in Basel, has six "memory scrolls" with 3,262 names on them. Those scrolls, put on display for the first time in December, were part of an extensive operation to save thousands of Jews from extermination during the Holocaust.

These were Jews from Poland, the Netherlands, and Germany who were issued fake Latin American passports in Switzerland, thus granting them a chance to get out of Nazi-occupied Europe in exchange for Germans in those countries.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Huge turnout at Sofia Synagogue as Bulgaria's Jewish community celebrates Hannukah

Editorial Board

Sofiaglobe | December 23, 2019

The great hall of Sofia Central Synagogue saw a turnout of many hundreds of celebrants as the Bulgarian Jewish community, joined by guests from other faiths, welcomed the first night of Hannukah.

The first candle was lit by Sofia mayor Yordanka Fandukova, who said: "Harmony and understanding, wisdom and tolerance, are the essence of the spiritual light that has illuminated and will illuminate our Sofia".

She thanked the Jewish community, and all "who do good and strengthen the millennial spirit of Sofia, of our shared wisdom of the centuries".

Associate Professor Alexander Oscar, president of the Organization of the Jews in Bulgaria "Shalom", noting the presence of foreign ambassadors and leaders and members of other communities at the ceremony, said: "We are proud of this tradition of welcome, because it represents a light - the light of unity, the light of fellowship among all of us".

[Read the full article here.](#)

Last Jews of Bukhara fear their community will fade away

Andrew Roth

The Guardian | December 24, 2019

On the first night of Hanukah, Benyamin Badalov ascends the platformed bimah in Bukhara's central synagogue to recite the evening prayer.

Among the handful of worshippers to attend, the tall 15-year-old, dressed in Nike trainers, sweats and an off-white yarmulke, is the youngest man in the room by decades.

"This is our future cantor," says Abram Iskhakov, 70, the synagogue's current cantor and the president of the Bukhara Jewish Community. "The youth don't come, they go to Israel and America, but he comes."

Once home to more than 23,000 Jews, the ancient Silk Road city of Bukhara now has around 200. Thousands of Bukharian Jews emigrated because of antisemitic policies under the Soviet Union, and still more due to Uzbekistan's bleak economic prospects after its independence in 1991. The emigre community is far larger than its wellspring, with more than 50,000 Bukharian Jews in New York and more than 100,000 in Israel.

[Read the full article here.](#)

WATCH: Russian Jews 'Party' After Lighting Chanukah Menorah in Moscow's Red Square

Hana Levi Julian

Jewish Press | December 25, 2019

Russian Jews sang and danced on the first night of Chanukah this week after the Chief Rabbi of Russia, Rabbi Berel Lazar kindled the Chanukah lights on the public menorah in Red Square, standing in a forklift over the statue of Karl Marx before the gates of the Kremlin.

A huge crowd responded with a resounding "Amen!" to each blessing chanted by Rabbi Lazar. This is the 30th year that the Chanukah menorah is being lit in Moscow's public square, itself a massive miracle.

The organizer of the event, Moscow Jewish community head Rabbi Mordechai Weisberg arranged for the stage to be built higher than usual this year, and with permission from Moscow's police, the area around the stage also to be enlarged in order to accommodate the huge crowds.

[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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