

Weekly Top 10

WASHINGTON, D.C. March 20, 2020

TO: NCSEJ Leadership and Interested Parties

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

Dear Friend,

Please enjoy the following selection of news stories from the past week.

Sincerely,



Mark B. Levin
NCSEJ Executive Vice-Chairman & CEO

NCSEJ WEEKLY TOP 10 **Washington, D.C. March 20, 2020**

Ukraine's President Zelenskyy Turns Blind Eye to Putin-Medvedchuk Scheming (Part One) **Vladimir Socor**

The Jamestown Foundation | March 19, 2020

On March 10, in Moscow, Ukraine's leading Russophile politician Viktor Medvedchuk conferred with Russian President Vladimir Putin and Duma leaders about adding an "inter-parliamentary dimension" to the Normandy forum (Russia, Germany, France, Ukraine), which is an inter-governmental process. The idea, credited to Medvedchuk, is to enlist inter-parliamentary support for decisions in the Normandy and Minsk processes on special status and elections in Ukraine's Russian-controlled Donbas. Those decisions would then be handed down to the Verkhovna Rada (Ukrainian parliament) for legislative enactments. Putin gave Medvedchuk this opportunity to bypass Ukraine's state leadership and publicly coordinate his initiative with the Kremlin. The reaction from Ukraine's presidential team is equivocal and supine.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Ukraine's President Zelenskyy Turns Blind Eye to Putin-Medvedchuk Scheming (Part Two) **Vladimir Socor**

The Jamestown Foundation | March 19, 2020

Viktor Medvedchuk's party, Opposition Platform-For Life (OP-FL), holds 44 seats in Ukraine's 450-seat parliament. Despite its limited support, it is the single-largest opposition party, and the only outspoken pro-Russia faction in the Ukrainian parliament since the July 2019 elections. In November 2019, OP-FL and a small number of like-minded Ukrainian deputies created a cross-party group, titled "inter-parliamentary dialogue for peace, Ukraine-Russia-Germany-France." They failed to connect with the December 9 Normandy summit in Paris, however, and are now combining with their Russian friends to target the Normandy summit due in April or May in Berlin. Well ahead of that event, Medvedchuk visited the French and German parliaments in January to present this proposal and seek members interested in his inter-parliamentary project. Credible figures will be hard for Medvedchuk to find.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Coronavirus: Jews deliver food to Poles who saved Jews during Holocaust

Cnaan Lipshiz

The Jerusalem Post | March 20, 2020

She does not remember being afraid, even though if they had been discovered her whole family would have almost certainly been shot dead on the spot along with the Jews they hid.

But now, at the age of 88, Kowalska is fearing for her life because of the coronavirus, the fatality rate of which is especially high in individuals older than 70.

“It’s a scary time for me to be outside as I see the impact of this virus on my age group,” said Kowalska, a widow whose son has died and who lives alone in a third-story apartment without an elevator.

Across the world, people from her generation have minimized their interaction with the outside world to avoid contracting COVID-19.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Confronting the Challenges of Coronavirus, Russia Sees Its Worldview Vindicated

Dmitri Trenin

Carnegie Moscow Center | March 20, 2020

With at least 253 confirmed cases of COVID-19, the disease caused by the new coronavirus, Russia is beginning to confront the public health and economic effects of its rapid spread. Despite the emerging challenges, however, the Kremlin believes the shortcomings of the international response have validated key aspects of its worldview.

The virus’s outbreak has become a major test for all governments. Russian authorities must compete in real time with the rest of the world, in a still fairly open information space. They have faced criticism for dragging their feet before evacuating Russian nationals out of Wuhan, China, and for not taking effective measures inside Russia. As the epidemic escalates, comparisons with other countries are inevitable; people are watching and will draw conclusions.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Russia Battles New Economic Crisis on Three Fronts

Anton Tabakh

Carnegie Moscow Center | March 19, 2020

The last week in Russia was abundant in black swan events, both for the financial markets and for ordinary people. On Monday, March 9, and the following day, when oil prices fell further in percentage terms than they had in the last thirty years, both armchair and professional analysts expected the ruble to collapse. Yet that didn’t happen: after falling sharply on Monday, the ruble gradually regained some ground, though it fell again—this time even further—on March 18.

Unlike during the last two crises (in 2008 and 2014), the market is overshadowed by corporate and bank debt right now, and liquid reserves amount to about \$150 billion. That is more than enough to maintain a stable situation on the market and cover a shortfall in budget revenues for a fairly long period of time.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Irina Nevzlin’s roadmap to success

Alan Rosenbaum

The Jerusalem Post | March 20, 2020

The Internet and social media touch every aspect of our lives and are expected to have a growing impact.

“The Internet is ultimately the democratization of knowledge,” said Irina Nevzlin, an Israeli entrepreneur and author of the book *The Impact of Identity – The Power of Knowing Who You Are*. “The Internet has made irrelevant a lot of the systems we are used to. As such, most of us live feeling that the world is not how it was before, but we don’t know what it is going to be.”

Identities have become much more difficult to define, Nevzlin explained. Yet, she said it is defining and understanding one’s ethnic identity that can provide a needed base and stability in a world that is changing quickly.

“This is not a crisis,” Nevzlin said. “We just need to figure it out.”

[Read the full article here.](#)

Belarus Navigates a Time of Uncertainty
Grigory Ioffe
The Jamestown Foundation | March 17, 2020

“Utmost uncertainty” is perhaps the most fitting label summarizing the current situation in Belarus. Against the backdrop of a possible recession, international oil prices plummeted on March 9, in the wake of Russia’s decision to pull out of the so-called OPEC+ agreement with Saudi Arabia, which had previously committed these producers to cutting back on oil exports in the name of retaining reasonably high prices. At the same time, on March 10, the Russian State Duma (lower chamber of parliament) adopted some constitutional amendments that may affect relations with Belarus. Notably, the Duma deputies adopted revised text affirming the primacy of domestic law over international law. This amendment could provide Russia a pretext to withdraw from its earlier commitments within the Eurasian Economic Union (Svaboda.org, March 10), including the pledge to equalize hydrocarbon prices for all members of the Moscow-led bloc by 2025.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Jewish cemetery in southern Hungary vandalized
JTA | March 16, 2020

(JTA) — A Jewish cemetery in southern Hungary was vandalized.

Gravestones in the Jewish cemetery of Kiskunfélegyháza were pushed over and severely damaged, the Mazsihisz Federation of Jewish Communities in Hungary said in a statement on Thursday. The damage was discovered on March 5, according to Mazsihisz, which filed a criminal complaint with the police.

The repairs could cost more than \$8 million, Hungary Today reported.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Institutional experiments in the post-Soviet space
Irina Busygina, Mikhail Filippov
Riddle.io | March 11, 2020

There is one (and it seems that only one) area of activity of the Russian leadership, where, according to its own statements, Russia’s successes are many and undeniable. This is a national foreign policy. Within this sphere, there is an even more successful direction — regional integration around Russia in the post-Soviet space and the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) as the last and most convincing example of institution-building.

It is almost indecent to doubt these obvious successes in Russia. Even so, it is needed: contrary to various statements, evidence of the great progress of integration initiated by Russia is not found. Moreover, it is not clear how rational these efforts are. If we are talking about Russian dominance in the post-Soviet space, then this is easier to achieve (and easier to maintain) through bilateral relations with post-Soviet countries. Russia has many different “bargaining chips” to pressure neighbors. This pressure, though, can be successful only when Moscow builds individual bilateral relations. Multilateral relations (institutions of regional integration), weak though they are, actually limit Russia. So why invest in these?

[Read the full article here.](#)

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