

Weekly Top 10

4 WASHINGTON, D.C. April 24, 2020

TO: NCSEJ Leadership and Interested Parties

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

Dear Friend,

We have been holding a series of conference calls with leaders from the region. The latest was Webinar with the Chief Rabbi of Moscow and the Executive Director of the Russian Jewish Congress. Next week, we will be holding a webinar with the current U.S. Ambassador to Moldova, [Derek J. Hogan](#).

If you are not receiving notification of these calls and would like to join us, please contact David Pasmanik at dpasmanik@ncsej.org

Shabbat Shalom!

Sincerely,



Mark B. Levin
NCSEJ Executive Vice-Chairman & CEO

NCSEJ WEEKLY TOP 10 **Washington, D.C. April 24, 2020**

The Kremlin's man at 'Vedomosti'?

Meduza | April 23 2020

The sale of Vedomosti, a highly respected business publication in Russia, is apparently in jeopardy. On April 22, one of the newspaper's supposed new buyers, "Arbat Capital" founder Alexey Golubovich, informed Vedomosti's publisher, Gleb Prozorov, that he might withdraw from the deal. The stumbling block appears to be the newspaper's new acting editor-in-chief, Andrey Shmarov, whose abrasive personality and censorship of certain political coverage have surrounded Vedomosti in controversy. At the same time, no one involved in the newspaper's potential sale has taken any responsibility for the new chief editor's questionable leadership. Multiple sources told Meduza that Andrey Shmarov is in fact "the Putin administration's candidate."

[Read the full article here.](#)

Belarus Facing Risks of Unconsolidated Society

Grigory Ioffe

The Jamestown Foundation | April 22, 2020

The Belarusian government's decision to try to fight the COVID-19 pandemic without a nationwide quarantine dominated international coverage of this East European country for several weeks. And yet, that perhaps understandable focus muscled out attention to a number of other key stories related to Belarus. For example, Minsk has now ratified the visa-simplification agreement with the European Union, signed earlier. So once European countries reopen their borders, the EU visa for a Belarusian citizen will be priced at \$35, not \$60 as before; the decision on visa applications will be delivered within 10 days whereas the term of stay of EU citizens in Belarus will be extended from 90 to 180 days (Belta, April 14). Moreover, Belarus solicited a \$1 billion loan from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development

to assist 19 sectors of its economy that have sustained damage due to the coronavirus pandemic (Belta, April 16).

[Read the full article here.](#)

Russia's OPEC Volte-Face
Marcel Salikhov
Carnegie Moscow Center | April 21, 2020

A month after the OPEC+ deal collapsed, the major oil producers realized that they needed to reach an agreement on reducing their output. The main reason for this change of heart is the drastic decline in demand for oil, as businesses close and people go into lockdown across Europe due to the new coronavirus pandemic.

Demand for oil in April and May could be down by as much as 20 or 30 percent, while the overall decline in 2020 will be 5–7 percent, according to various estimates. This means that in six to eight weeks, storage facilities could be full, pushing oil prices even lower than the record lows seen recently, when the price of Urals crude fell to about \$10 a barrel.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Russia's Far East in the shadow of the Asian pivot
Sebastian Hoppe
Riddle | April 21, 2020

The Russian Far East (RFE) is supposed to play a decisive role in what has been labelled the country's Pivot to the East (povorot na Vostok). The pivot gained traction among the policy-making elite in Moscow after the annexation of Crimea in 2014. But there had been earlier moves in a similar direction. The global financial crisis of 2008 spurred various initiatives designed to strengthen both the development of the Far Eastern Federal District or Dal'nevostočnyj federal'nyj okrug (DVO) as well as the geopolitical and economic presence of Russia in the Asia-Pacific region (APR). Key elite actors from Sergey Lavrov to Dmitri Medvedev to Vladimir Putin himself have repeatedly made a case for the interrelationship of RFE's socio-economic development and the firm stance Russia should be adopting in the APR.

Often, that strategic recalibration tends to be discussed in terms of Sino-Russian relations, geopolitical tensions in the APR, or emerging public interest in Arctic issues. What is the place of the RFE in this grand strategic setting? Have there been tangible results for this vast region ranging from Yakutia and Chukotka in the North to Buryatia and Primorye in the South?

[Read the full article here.](#)

Coronavirus in the Eastern Partnership states (updates)
The New Eastern Europe | April 24, 2020

New Eastern Europe is providing an update on the situation with COVID-19 (coronavirus) in the Eastern Partnership states. Each have enacted certain policies aimed at minimising the spread of the infection. Below we give the current status of these policies as well as an updated number of reported cases by country.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Kremlin Provides Financial Support to Stranded and Abandoned Central Asian Migrants
Fozil Mashrab
The Jamestown Foundation | April 23, 2020

In response to mounting cases of COVID-19 in Russia, President Vladimir Putin signed a decree, on April 17, providing a financial reprieve for the majority of the seven million–eight million foreign migrant workers currently believed to still reside in in the country, with little or no savings to survive. In particular, this measure affected the two million or so migrants from Uzbekistan and 700,000 from Tajikistan, the two Central Asian countries who send the largest numbers of migrant workers to the Russian Federation. The Kremlin decree allows for a three-month long “financial holiday”—back-dated from March 15 to June 15—during which migrant workers are freed from buying work permits, commonly known as “patents,” to legally stay and work in Russia (Kremlin.ru, April 18). Around 600,000 migrants from Kyrgyzstan were already exempted from buying these patents because of their country's membership in the Eurasian Economic Union, a Russian-led regional economic bloc.

The move was necessitated by the need to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the country and, according to some experts, perhaps also helped prevent a real “humanitarian disaster” among the migrant population. Even though the measure is temporary and does not apply to illegal migrants, who usually outnumber legal ones, it was nonetheless hailed by the millions of migrant workers and their families. Without a doubt, the action further improved President

Putin's traditionally popular standing in the former Soviet countries that usually supply most of Russia's guest laborers (YouTube [1], [2], April 18).

[Read the full article here.](#)

Synagogue torched in northern Russia

Cnaan Lipshiz

The Jerusalem Post | April 14, 2020

A synagogue in northern Russia was severely damaged in a fire that the local Jewish community said was caused by arsonists.

The fire consumed the entrance hall of the Northern Star Jewish community center and synagogue in Arkhangelsk, the Russian Jewish Congress wrote. No one was hurt in the fire. Anatoly Obermeister, who heads the Russian Jewish Congress' Northern Region, said in a statement that the arson Sunday was the third assault on communal property since 2015, though the previous ones resulted in little damage.

At about 3.40 a.m. a perpetrator threw tires over the fence, then climbed over, quickly moved the tires closer to the building, doused them with a flammable liquid and set them on fire. Firefighters arrived 15 minutes later, when the facade was already blazing," said the report, which was based on security camera footage".

The report did not say whether the perpetrator could be identified.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Was Lenin Jewish?

Daniel Staetsky

The Times of Israel | April 23, 2020

Vladimir Ilych Lenin, the leader of the Russian revolution, was born on 22 April 1870. Anyone educated in a Soviet school, will always remember April as 'Lenin's month'. The commemorative activities would typically run for several weeks running up to his birthday and come to a crescendo with a school assembly on his actual birthday. Lenin's biography and the minutiae of his family life were told and re-told in thousands of publications targeted at different age groups. Little Lenin was crestfallen when, aged 4, he broke his aunt's favourite vase. Little Lenin admired his older brother Alexander. Aged 10 or so Little Lenin made a birds' house for his mother's birthday. Some of the accounts were real, others - based on the reality, still others - completely made up. Children's authors contributing to 'Leniniana' (the library of works on Lenin's life) had a developed imagination and could afford to submit to it more easily than their colleagues writing for the adult readership. Neither type, however, was too coherent on Lenin's genealogy.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Jewish center in Ukraine lightly damaged by firebomb

Marcy Oster

The Times of Israel | April 22, 2020

JTA — A firebombing slightly damaged a Jewish community center in southern Ukraine. Kherson police are investigating the early Monday morning attack, in which someone set fire to a bottle of flammable liquid and dropped it on the threshold of the building, the Interfax news agency reported. The liquid did not completely catch fire, however, according to Interfax. The Chabad emissary in Kherson, Rabbi Yossi Wolff, told Anash.org, a news website geared for the worldwide English-speaking emissary community, that the front door of the building caught fire.

[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