



## Weekly Top 10

**WASHINGTON, D.C. August 7, 2020**

**TO: NCSEJ Leadership and Interested Parties**

**FROM: James Schiller, Chairman;  
Mark B. Levin, Executive Vice-Chairman & CEO**

Dear Friend,

NCSEJ is working to prevent the demolition of a historic synagogue in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. Yesterday we were informed by the Embassy of Uzbekistan that the developer, having used questionable legal tactics, withdrew his lawsuit to proceed with the demolition.

The Uzbekistan government's Committee on Religious Affairs [provided support to the Tashkent Jewish community](#) throughout this process. We hope this permanently ends future attempts to evict the congregation.

This week, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee heard testimony from the nominees for U.S Ambassadors to Belarus and Ukraine. Below are their prepared statements.

**[Testimony of Lieutenant General \(Ret.\) Keith Dayton /  
Nominee to be Ambassador to Ukraine](#)**  
**[Testimony of Ms. Julie Fisher / Nominee to be Ambassador to  
Belarus](#)**

On Sunday, Belarusians will go to the polls to elect their next president. While it is expected that the incumbent will win, [President Alexander Lukashenko](#) faces his most difficult test in decades.

The next NCSEJ Webinar is on Tuesday, August 11 and features an interview with State Department Special Envoy for Holocaust Issues [Cherrie Daniels](#). The program will be moderated by NCSEJ Deputy Director, Lesley Weiss. [You can RSVP here](#).

Sincerely,



Mark B. Levin  
NCSEJ Executive Vice-Chairman & CEO

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**NCSEJ WEEKLY TOP 10  
Washington, D.C. August 7, 2020**

**Senate Holds Confirmation Hearing For Trump's New Pick For  
Ambassador To Ukraine  
Michelle Kelemen  
NPR | August 5, 2020**

An update on two important diplomatic vacancies. One is the post of U.S. ambassador to the Ukraine. The last woman who held that Senate-confirmed job was a central figure in President Trump's impeachment. And now the president's pick for the job is facing some lingering question in his own confirmation hearing. NPR's Michele Kelemen reports.

**[Read the full article here.](#)**

**Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine Inaugurate 'Lublin Triangle'  
Jakub Bornio  
The Jamestown Foundation | August 5, 2020**

The ministers of foreign affairs of Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine held a trilateral meeting in the southeastern Polish city of Lublin, on July 28, to discuss regional cooperation (Gov.pl, July 28). To pursue such future development, the officials notably established the "Lublin Triangle," a new political platform invoking the integrationist heritage of the 1569 Union of Lublin.

The recently established format is nothing unusual for Central Eastern Europe; many similar multilateral platforms involving regional states already exist, including the Visegrad Four (V4), Bucharest Nine, Three Seas Initiative (3SI), Nordic-Baltic Eight and the Weimar Triangle. However, since these groupings are rarely institutionalized, their establishment and intensity of meetings telegraph the changing political priorities of the included countries and the general condition of their relations. The Lublin Triangle—as emphasized in the joint declaration—was set up inter alia to strengthen "dialogue between the three countries," to support the "European and Euro-Atlantic aspirations of Ukraine," and, bearing in mind "Russian aggression in Ukraine," to coordinate the three states' activities within international organizations (Mfa.gov.ua, July 28).

**[Read the full article here.](#)**

**Martha Nierenberg, Holocaust survivor who sought to reclaim looted  
family art collection, dies at 96  
Emily Langer  
The Washington Post | August 5, 2020**

They were the "last prisoners of World War II," Martha Nierenberg said, the dazzling works of art that had once adorned the home of her grandfather, Baron Mór Lipót Herzog, a Hungarian banker who had assembled one of the finest art collections of its kind in Europe.

The collection included some 2,500 pieces, including sculptures, coins, furnishings and paintings by El Greco, Velázquez, van Dyck, Goya, Courbet, Renoir and Monet. Located on the main avenue of Budapest, her grandfather's home had the aura of a museum, Mrs. Nierenberg recalled. "I would want to sit down on a chair," she once told the Associated Press, "and I would hear, 'Oh, no, you can't sit down on that chair, that's 12th century.' "

[Read the full article here.](#)

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**Mercenaries' Arrests Deepen Minsk-Moscow Rift**  
**Artyom Shraibman**  
**Carnegie Moscow Center | August 8, 2020**

There are many versions of what really happened to prompt the arrest of thirty-three Russians—allegedly mercenaries—outside the Belarusian capital Minsk. Whatever the truth, the incident is a greater blow to the trust between the two allies than any oil and gas dispute.

Allegations that foreign fighters are present in the country come up regularly in Belarus's public discourse, ahead of elections or amid protests. It's a simple scheme that both makes protesters think twice about their safety before taking to the streets, and gives the authorities an excuse to use preventative force to protect people from terrorist attacks and provocations.

But this time, the fighters turned out to be somewhat more real than usual. The thirty-three arrested Russians, according to all the available data from Minsk, Moscow, and Kiev, really do have a military background, and work for Russia's infamous Wagner private military company.

[Read the full article here.](#)

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**The incredible story of how the people of the Warsaw Ghetto beat typhus**  
**David Elliot**  
**World Economic Forum | August 6, 2020**

In January 1941, people in the Warsaw Ghetto started getting sick. Nazi troops had forced the Polish city's Jewish population into a 3.4 square kilometre area a few months earlier. As the new year began, fresh arrivals were brought into the sealed-off zone – and with them came typhus.

What is New Zealand's 'elimination strategy' and how has it united the country? The 450,000 residents were suddenly facing an outbreak of an infectious disease that, without treatment, has a case-fatality rate of up to 40%. Conditions were ripe for the lice that spread the bacteria to proliferate. As well as poor hygiene, cold weather and starvation, inmates were dealing with a population density up to 10 times higher than any city today.

The disease tore through the ghetto. It infected as many as 120,000 people, and up to 30,000 died directly from typhus. Many more perished due to starvation, or from a combination of that and the illness.

Chillingly, it's thought the Nazis knew this would happen. But what they hadn't counted on was the inmates pulling together to beat the outbreak.

[Read the full article here.](#)

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**GEC Special Report: Russia's Pillars of Disinformation and Propaganda**  
**U.S. Department of State | August, 2020**

The Department's Global Engagement Center (GEC) is leading and coordinating efforts of the U.S. Federal Government to recognize, understand, expose, and counter foreign propaganda and disinformation.

In line with its congressional mandate, the GEC is releasing a special report that provides an overview of Russia's disinformation and propaganda ecosystem. The report outlines the five pillars of Russia's disinformation and propaganda ecosystem and how these pillars work together to create a media multiplier effect. In particular, it details how the tactics of one pillar, proxy sources, interact with one another to elevate malicious content and create an illusion of credibility. While Russia's disinformation presents a threat, it does not stand unopposed.

The U.S. government, our allies and partner governments, international institutions, civil society, academia, the private sector, and citizens around the world will not stand by idly while Russia misuses the modern forms of communications that we all depend on for the free flow of ideas and information. The GEC will continue to expose disinformation we see coming from Russia and other malign actors so that the international public and the counter-disinformation community have a clear understanding of how disinformation spreads and how we can work collectively to counter it.

[Read the full article here.](#)

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## **Jews in Russia fear low levels of antisemitism are temporary**

**Tara Kavalier**

**The Jerusalem Post | August 6, 2020**

While Jews in Russia are experiencing historically low levels of antisemitism, they consider that this state of affairs is only temporary and look to the future with trepidation, a new study shows.

“Many, if not all, believe that weak or no antisemitism as a Russian state policy in Russia is an exceptional or even ad hoc and temporary phenomenon that has not come to stay,” Alexey Levinson, head of sociocultural research at the independent Levada

Center in Russia, wrote in his study comparing Jewish life in Russia today with that of 30 years ago.

“Jews are not euphoric at all,” he wrote in “Jews in Contemporary Russia: Assimilation and Dissimilation,” which was issued in July and translated recently. The community’s fear is based on Russian history, with Jews in Russia having been subjected to the whim of whoever leads the country.

“Antisemitism goes hand in hand with the history of Jews for ages and ages, and they think these days are just a short interruption of this tradition,” Levinson told The Media Line.

[Read the full article here.](#)

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## **A new united opposition up against a tired president: counting down to the elections in Belarus**

**Maxim Rust**

**The New Eastern Europe | August 5, 2020**

Last week, the presidential campaign in Belarus gained new dynamics. We wrote about the results of registering of candidates here. Alyaksandr Lukashenka’s major rivals who had the highest popularity and were called “the candidates of hope” were not registered. Viktor Babaryka, the former chairman of the board of Belgazprombank, is currently in custody on charges of economic crimes and recognised as a political prisoner. He collected a record number of signatures for his nomination among all the alternative candidates. From the 367,000 signatures submitted, the Election Commission recognised only 165,000. The official reason he was denied registration was the inconsistency in his income declaration and assistance of a foreign state in financing his campaign. Valery Tsapkala, the second “candidate of hope”, submitted almost 160,000 signatures, while the Election Commission recognised less than 80,000, which automatically excluded him from the presidential race. Fearing arrest, Tsapkala left with his children first to Russia and then to Ukraine.

Following the announcement of these results, mass protests broke out across the country, which were brutally suppressed by OMON (special police forces) and the militia. The expectations of the authorities that the lack of registration of the above-named candidates would undermine the mobilisation potential of the Belarusian society were completely disproven and miscalculated. As a result of Tsapkala and Babaryka unable to register in the election, the forces supporting the “candidates of hope” united around Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya.

Tsikhanouskaya’s campaign was supported by Tsapkala’s wife, Veranika, and Babaryka’s campaign coordinator Maria Kalesnikava. This led to talk in Belarus that the Belarusian revolution would have a female face, and a joint photo of these three amazing women circulated in media around the world.

[Read the full article here.](#)

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## **Holocaust Memory in the U.S.S.R.’s Shadow**

**Natan Sharansky**

**The Wall Street Journal | August 5, 2020**

The Babyn Yar tragedy symbolizes the fate of around 1.5 million Jews shot across Eastern Europe during the Holocaust. This story evaded the historical record for decades, as Soviet authorities tried to erase Jewish suffering. The Babyn Yar Holocaust Memorial Center will preserve the memory of tens of thousands of Jews, Ukrainians and others shot dead in the Babyn Yar ravine near Kiev.

I was pained to read Vladislav Davidzon’s attempt in “Ukraine’s ‘Holocaust

Disneyland,' " (Houses of Worship, July 10) to besmirch the center's development. I have headed the center's supervisory board since 2016, joined by leaders including former Sen. Joe Lieberman and Leonid Kravchuk, Ukraine's first president since independence. Ukraine's current president, Volodymyr Zelensky, recently stated support for the project.

The center is already restoring historical memory, with 15 research projects under way. Previously unknown victims have been uncovered. New oral histories and archival footage illuminate lives that were lost. Speculation over plans for the memorial's design and content is just that: speculation. The planning process is transparent and available online.

The establishment of the center represents the closing of a personal circle, as someone born and bred in Ukraine and as a proud Jew whose identity the Soviets sought to crush. It also represents the closing of a collective circle for the tens of thousands killed by the Nazis, only for the Soviets to wipe away their memory. The center will restore history to a place where history was erased.

[Read the full article here.](#)

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## **Kazakhstan: Authorities see COVID-19 improvement, but tighten restrictions**

**Almaz Kumenov**

**Eurasia.net | August 4, 2020**

Kazakhstan's Health Ministry has said it is managing to get on top of the coronavirus outbreak, but authorities have nonetheless extended the existing lockdown regime and brought in stricter rules on where and when masks must be worn.

Health Minister Alexei Tsoi said at a briefing on August 3 that with the peak of infections now passed, other challenges lie ahead.

"Our job is to maintain positions that have been won through very hard trials endured by the entire population and the healthcare system," he said.

Tsoi cited indicators such as the halving of the number of daily new infections detected in the past three weeks as proof of his upbeat assessment. Hospitals are seeing a much lower workload and more beds are freeing up, he said. "Just remember how critical the situation had become in some hospitals in June. Now, hospitals are only 34 percent occupied," Tsoi said. "This has been achieved in part by increasing bed capacity."

June was an especially bad month for Kazakhstan. With hospitals often full to capacity, it had become commonplace for even critically ill patients to be turned away. Ambulance drivers complained of people dying while in search of a hospital that could treat them. Waves of rushes on pharmacies caused anti-viral and fever-calming medicines to run short in many places. It was against that backdrop that the government reintroduced lockdown measures on July 5.

[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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