

Weekly Top 10

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WASHINGTON, D.C. October 30, 2020

TO: NCSEJ Leadership and Interested Parties

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

Dear Friend,

We apologize for the late delivery, our email distribution system has been experiencing technical difficulties.

Shabbat Shalom!

Sincerely,



Mark B. Levin
NCSEJ Executive Vice-Chairman & CEO

[If you enjoy these Newsletters, please consider making a donation to NCSEJ to help us support the Jewish communities of Eurasia during these uncertain times.](#)

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NCSEJ WEEKLY TOP 10 Washington, D.C. October 30, 2020

When Jewish Refugees Were a Problem No One Wanted to Solve
Andrew Silow-Carroll
The New York Jewish Week | October 28, 2020

For hundreds of thousands of displaced people, World War II did not end in September 1945. The devastation of war created refugees from Eastern Europe and the liberated concentration camps, unwilling or unable to return home and forced into displaced persons camps in conquered Germany under allied protection.

In his new book, historian David Nasaw explains in vivid detail what happened to these beleaguered people, who ranged from shattered Jewish Holocaust survivors to stateless slave laborers to Nazi collaborators who feared going home to their now Soviet-dominated homelands. “The Last Million: Europe’s Displaced Persons from World War II to Cold War” (Penguin Press) tells familiar stories – like the illegal immigration of Jews to British-controlled Palestine – and forgotten stories like America’s shameful refusal to open its gates to Holocaust survivors while welcoming war criminals.

Nasaw is the author of prize-winning biographies of Joseph P. Kennedy, Andrew Carnegie and William Randolph Hearst, and until 2019 was the Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. Professor of History at the CUNY Graduate Center. He spoke with The Jewish Week from his home on the Upper West Side.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Czech Republic Declares Hezbollah a Terrorist Organization

Hana Levi Julian

The Jewish Press | October 28, 2020

The Parliament of the Czech Republic on Wednesday designated Lebanon’s Iranian proxy Hezbollah as a terrorist organization, according to a statement from Israel’s Foreign Ministry.

The resolution passed by an overwhelming majority (63-7) urged the Czech government to declare all of Hezbollah a terrorist organization, local news agencies reported, and sought to push the European Union to end its artificial division of the group into military and political wings.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Red Army Zionist Fighters

Konstantin Fuks

Tablet Mag | October 28, 2020

The Second World War was the first modern war where the Jews did not kill one another. For many diasporic Jews, this was essentially a “Global Jewish world war that blended Allied and Jewish, especially Zionist, interests into a seamless whole.” But this was not the kind of “Jewish War” that might be created in the imagination of an anti-Semite. It was a war for survival, many of whose heroes were erased from history or silenced by the countries whose uniforms they wore.

On July 17, 1944, a combined company of multiethnic soldiers from the 130th Latvian national corps received the order from the Soviet command to liberate the small town of Šķaune located right at the old Soviet-Latvian boundaries. Šķaune was one of the many ordinary Jewish shtetls of the eastern regions of Latvia, whose old communities of the “eccentric” Jewish “dreamers, tailors, and shoemakers” had gone forever during the Nazi occupation of Latvia. The peculiarity of this symbolic commencement of the Soviet liberation of Latvia lay in the fact that the commander of the first company of Latvian soldiers to cross the national border was a highly decorated Jewish officer of the 43rd Guards Latvian Rifle Division—future holder of the order of Alexander Nevsky and a native of Riga—Yazep Pasternak. A couple of months later, the same “tall, handsome” Soviet Jewish officer mounted on a “white horse” entered triumphantly the streets of liberated Riga.

Alongside the fallen Jewish Komsomol activist Benyamin Lurie, Capt. Yazep “Osya” Pasternak was part of the generation of Soviet Jews who optimistically accepted the ideals of social equality, which were put into practice, they believed, during the “Latvian socialist revolution” of 1940. They embraced the arrival of the Soviet Army in 1940 and as volunteers of the Latvian military formations became willful participants in the Soviet-German war. Although not being completely alienated from their Jewish roots, this historical generation of Soviet Jewish idealists fought against the Germans primarily not as the Jews, but as internationalists and unconditional supporters of the Soviet motherland in the fight against Nazi Germany.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Jewish Revival in Russia: 2 New Shuls Open

CoLive | October 28, 2020

Two new shuls opened in Russia with Chief Rabbi Berel Lazar in attendance. In keeping with the guidelines laid out by the Ministry of Health, the events were

modest, yet were celebrated with great joy and emotion.

The first shul is for the Jews of Pushkino, a city not far from Moscow, the capital. Ever since its new and dynamic Shliach Rabbi Reuven Kuravsky moved there together with his family, it has seen a real spiritual revolution. The results of his untiring work could be seen at the opening of the new shul, with many Jews from the city and the surrounding areas coming to thank him emotionally. Their joy at having their own place to gather was palpable.

Pushkino's Mayor, Mr. Pertzov, participated in the festivities and publicly thanked the Kuravsky family in the name of the city's Administration.

The second shul was opened in the city of Obninsk, which is a few hours' drive away from Moscow. For the first time in the city's history, a shul was built for the Jews of Obninsk. It's an impressive building, which hosts a library and classrooms, built by the city's Shliach Rabbi Ahron Golovchiner.

For the past number of years, Rabbi Golovchiner and his family have been the address for Jews from all over the area for support, a listening ear, and much more. Now, with the inauguration of the new building, their activities will be able to grow and develop, to the great joy of the local Jews.

[Read the full article here.](#)

"The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict risks spiraling out of control" - ICRC CommonSpace.eu | October 29, 2020

International organisations have expressed deep concern at the spiral of violence in the South Caucasus as civilians get caught in the fighting between Armenians and Azerbaijanis. Wednesday (28 October) was a particularly sad day with both sides reporting civilian casualties.

Azerbaijan accused Armenia of using cluster bombs against densely populated areas in the Barda district, as a result of which 21 civilians were killed and over 70 civilians were wounded. On the same day Armenia accused Azerbaijan of bombing the maternity hospital and other civilian targets in Stepanakert and Shusha. Both sides insist that they are not targeting civilians.

Among those killed and injured in Barda were Red Cross volunteers. The International Committee of the Red Cross in a statement issued at their headquarters in Geneva warned that "the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict risks spiraling out of control".

[Read the full article here.](#)

Hopes dim for reformed Kyrgyzstan as new president consolidates power

Andrew D'Anieri

The Atlantic Council | October 28, 2020

In early October, popular protests in Kyrgyzstan overturned a fraudulent parliamentary election and later toppled the corruption-riddled government. Demonstrators freed imprisoned politicians, demanded new elections, and Kyrgyzstan seemed to be taking a decisive, if chaotic, step toward a more transparent democracy.

But those hopes have dimmed in recent weeks as recently imprisoned politician Sadyr Japarov has consolidated power, taking over as prime minister before installing himself as the acting president. It's unclear how far Japarov is willing to go to fight corruption and whether new elections in January will result in the free and fair political competition sought by this month's protests.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Moldova's Presidential Election: Geopolitics Take a Back Seat for Now

Vladimir Socor

The Jamestown Foundation | October 28, 2020

Moldova is holding its quadrennial presidential election on November 1, with a likely runoff on November 15 between the two leading contenders: the Socialist incumbent President Igor Dodon and challenger Maia Sandu, the leader of the Action and Solidarity Party in the parliamentary opposition (see EDM, October 19). These same candidates had competed in the 2016 presidential runoff, which Dodon won by 52 percent to 48 percent thanks to support from Vladimir Plahotniuc, the country's de facto ruler at that time. Plahotniuc is now a fugitive

from justice but operates through two Moldovan proxy parties to influence this presidential election (see below).

Given that Dodon is described as a Russophile and Sandu as Western-oriented—accurately so on either side—the expectation of yet another “geopolitical election” fills the air in Moldova and beyond its borders. The assumption that Russia and the West compete over Moldova—and that competition intensifies at election time—is predominant in international media, among European politicians, and in Moldova’s neighbors Ukraine and Romania. The views in the Kremlin, in Brussels (Dodon’s and Sandu’s putative patrons, respectively) and in Chisinau, however, are far more nuanced than that assumption.

Sandu has consistently declined to run a “geopolitical” campaign, which would involve denouncing Russia’s past and current predatory designs on Moldova, reducing Dodon to a Russian puppet, rhetorically proclaiming the country’s Westward march, and stressing Moldova’s Romanian-ness. Instead, Sandu’s campaign underscores the need for radical reform in law enforcement and the justice system, cleaning up the government and administration of corruption, instituting meritocracy, and creating the preconditions to attract productive investments to Moldova (Unimedia, Ziarul National, RFE/RL, October 1–27).

[Read the full article here.](#)

The American Jewish Soviet Experience

Izabella Tabarovsky

Tablet Mag | October 29, 2020

natoly Sharansky, now Natan, was born in 1948 in the Ukrainian Soviet city of Stalino (now Donetsk), a time and a place where being a Jew was, in his words, “a disease without cure, a sentence to a life without hope,” and “an invitation to be pitied.” His parents—witnesses to the prewar terror of Stalin’s regime, Hitler’s Holocaust, and Stalin’s postwar anti-cosmopolitan campaigns—guided their son on the path of Soviet Jewish “survivalism,” a term that does not have resonance for postwar American Jews, though it would be easily recognized by their parents, and unfortunately, perhaps, by their grandchildren.

Soviet Jewish survivalism consisted of keeping your head down and your views to yourself, being the best at everything, and choosing a technical or scientific field, where the impact of ideology might be less corrosive than in history, law, or journalism. If all the stars aligned and you followed the program, you just might succeed at overcoming your handicap—your Jewish name and face, and the “nationality” line in your papers. Science might also provide a reprieve from the soul-destroying Soviet life of “doublethink”—the need to hide one’s true thoughts and feelings behind a mask of a loyal Soviet citizen—as well as an illusion of serving a higher purpose rather than serving the regime.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Final news update ahead of the Georgian election

Mackenzie Baldinger

The New Eastern Europe | October 29, 2020

The most recent survey from IPSOS, released on October 28th, shows the ruling Georgian Dream (GD) party is polling at 40 per cent, a 14-point gain from the last survey in mid-October. The largest opposition party, United National Movement (UNM), has also made significant gains in the last two weeks. The party is currently polling at 33 per cent, a 15-point jump from the last survey.

This significant jump in support shows that both parties have been able to capture some of the undecided vote in recent weeks. Per the March 8th agreement between the opposition and the government, Georgian Dream can only claim a majority of seats in parliament if it garners 40 per cent of votes, making this recent increase in support noteworthy. If the party cannot reach the threshold, it will need to form a coalition with other parties to form its next government. According to the poll, there are currently eight other parties that are polling above one per cent, which is the new threshold for entering parliament.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Russia's pre-existing conditions

András Tóth-Czifra

The Institute of Modern Russia | October 23, 2020

October 23 marked a daily record as Russia logged over 17,000 new COVID-19 cases—the uptick, though, is partly due to increased testing. With over 5,400 cases registered in the capital, Moscow authorities already ordered businesses to

send home at least 30 percent of their employees, and closed schools for two weeks. In regions, such as Bashkortostan and Rostov, local outbreaks have caused concern about hospital capacities since early September.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Who's In Charge Following Revolution in Kyrgyzstan?

Temur Umarov

Carnegie Moscow Center | October 26, 2020

When protesters in Kyrgyzstan brought about regime change in just a few days following elections that were clearly rigged, many saw it as a victory for democracy. Yet what happened can hardly be described as a democratic revolution. While uncoordinated activists and opposition figures were trying to reach an agreement, the revolution was hijacked by seasoned politicians from the old elite. The fastest and most determined of them turned out to be Sadyr Japarov. In just ten days he managed to escape from prison, become prime minister, force President Sooronbay Jeenbekov to resign, and take his place.

Despite his current reputation as a protester against the regime he has just toppled, Japarov is no stranger to the Kyrgyz ruling elite. Until 2005, he was the head of the Nurneftegaz oil refinery, which was accused of corporate tax evasion on his watch. He rode into politics atop the wave of the first Kyrgyz revolution in 2005, which brought President Kurmanbek Bakiyev to power.

Today, Japarov talks a lot about patriotism and fighting corruption, but his opponents insist that as an adviser responsible for tackling graft under Bakiyev, he was in fact tasked with concealing corrupt schemes within the president's inner circle. Issyk-Kul Investment Bank, for example, which was used by Bakiyev's son for money laundering, was headed by none other than Japarov's sister, Raikul.

[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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