

Weekly Top 10

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WASHINGTON, D.C. November 25, 2020

TO: NCSEJ Leadership and Interested Parties

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

Dear Friend,

Have a happy and safe Thanksgiving!

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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'Start-Up Nation' Israel joins forces 'Tech Nation' Ukraine to fly high
Hagay Hacoen
The Jerusalem Post | November 22, 2020

Alexey Chalimov, the founder of Eastern Peak, believes that while Israel is the Start-Up Nation, Ukraine is the Technology Nation.

"We had a problem," he told The Jerusalem Post, based on his career in Silicon Valley. "Top talent over there wants to work with big actors like Facebook, so start-up companies are having a hard time recruiting good people."

"Money isn't hard to get in start-ups: quality talent is," he said.

Born in Donetsk, Chalimov came to Israel in the late 1990's and found his way to the world of hi-tech, eventually working with Get Taxi founder Shahar Waiser in California.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Prominent rabbis pray for Ukrainian President Zelensky, who is recovering from COVID-1
Cnaan Liphshiz
JTA | November 23, 2020

(JTA) — Prominent rabbis from five countries prayed for the health of the president of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelensky, who announced two weeks ago that he had contracted the coronavirus.

The prayers came from Rabbis Israel Miller at the Synagogue of Europe in Brussels; Moshe Sebbag of the Grand Synagogue of Paris; Moshe Reuven Azman, one of Ukraine's two Orthodox chief rabbis; Shmuel Rabinovitch of the Western Wall in Jerusalem; and the chief Sephardic rabbi of Israel, Yitzhak Yosef. The rabbis each recorded video of themselves reciting prayers at their synagogues and sent the footage to Asher Gold, an Israel-based public relations professional who has worked with Zelensky's staff, Gold told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency Wednesday.

"You were here, you prayed here, and we are now praying here for you and your health," Rabinovitch said in footage filmed at the Western Wall.

Also featured in the video greeting sent to Zelensky were Rabbi Levi Duchman of Dubai in the United Arab Emirates and two community leaders, Naum Koen and Solly Wolf.

Zelensky's election last year has been a source of pride for many Jews in Ukraine and beyond. Asked whether this was the reason for the prayers, Gold said it owed primarily not to Zelensky's origins, but to how he has been "an important friend to the Jewish community in Ukraine and of the State of Israel and the fight against anti-Semitism, and someone who cares deeply about the memory of the Holocaust."

[Read the full article here.](#)

Ukraine-Israel free trade agreement to come into force in 2021
Liza Semko
Kyiv Post | November 24, 2020

A free trade agreement between Ukraine and Israel will come into effect on January 1, 2021, President Volodymyr Zelensky announced on Twitter on Nov. 24, after the Knesset, the Israeli parliament, ratified the deal.

The agreement will strengthen economic ties between the two countries, as it abolishes most import duties for them.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Czech Republic launches parliamentary Israel Allies Caucus

Sarah Chemla
The Jerusalem Post | November 25, 2020

A new Israel Allies caucus has been formed in the parliament of the Czech Republic with the objective of strengthening legislative support for Israel on the basis of Judeo-Christian values, making it the 46th Israel Allies caucus in the world.

The Israel Allies Foundation (IAF), which coordinates the activities of the 46 caucuses worldwide, is a network dedicated to promoting communication between parliamentarians and legislators around the world who support Israel, and aims at having 50 by the end of the year, IAF president Josh Reinstein said.

"I am convinced that our relationship towards Israel has deep spiritual roots," said the inaugural chairman of the Czech Parliamentary Israel Allies Caucus, MP Miloslav Janulik. "I am very glad that we maintain the tradition of excellent mutual relationships and that the Czech Parliament is expressing its long-term support to the State of Israel unequivocally" he said, adding that "this is the right path towards peaceful co-existence in the Middle East."

[Read the full article here.](#)

Kremlin says healthcare under heavy strain as COVID-19 deaths hit new high
Reuters | November 24, 2020

MOSCOW (Reuters) - The Kremlin said on Tuesday Russia's healthcare system was under heavy strain as authorities reported a record 491 deaths linked to COVID-19 and infections surged.

Russia has resisted imposing national lockdown restrictions, as it did earlier this year, preferring targeted regional measures, even as thousands of cases are reported each day, with 24,326 new infections on Tuesday.

"The healthcare system is working under heavy strain, but with the exception of a few regions...the situation remains under control," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

"This is an epidemiological challenge that all the world's countries have faced," he said. "We have not faced such challenges in either new or modern history."

[Read the full article here.](#)

Kazakhstan to borrow \$1.8Bln for COVID fight
Almaz Kumenov
Eurasia.org | November 24, 2020

Kazakhstan is borrowing \$1.8 billion from development banks to help cope with the fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The lower house of parliament, the Majilis, on November 24 approved agreements to borrow more than \$1 billion from the Philippines-based Asian Development Bank and another \$800 million from the Beijing-based Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. The Senate will now consider the same agreements.

Explaining the purpose of contracting the debt, Finance Minister Yerulan Zhamaubayev told lawmakers that the funds would be set aside for treating coronavirus patients, covering the cost of supplementary payments to frontline medics and generating employment through support for small and medium enterprise.

Zhamaubayev stressed that the loans were being extended on preferential terms. The debt must be repaid within 10 years at an interest of Euro Interbank Offered Rates, or Euribor, plus 0.5 percent. In effect, this is tantamount to interest-free credit.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Moldova's Election Result Is a Blow to Russia's Regional Dominance
Nicolae Reutoi
Foreign Policy | November 25, 2020

President Vladimir Putin's attempts to keep Russia's immediate neighbors close are unraveling, with the citizens of Moldova joining those of Kyrgyzstan and

Belarus in signaling in recent days and months that they have lost patience with discredited Moscow-backed leaders.

The aftermath of elections in all three countries indicates that Putin's policy of backing allied regimes in Russia's historical sphere of influence is failing. Emerging democratic forces in slow-to-reform former communist states are pushing back against the Russian leader's favored political system of managed democracy—a system comprising democratic elements (parliaments, multiple parties, and elections) that mask de facto autocracy, with the same authoritarian leaders and their parties elected to office time after time, through ballot and media manipulation.

Putin's diminishing ability to influence events on Russia's fringe was further underlined by the recent resumption of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, during which he was reluctant to support close ally Armenia against Azerbaijan—only managing to secure a cease-fire under which the former was forced to make territorial concessions. Putin was wary not only of confronting Azerbaijan's backer Turkey but also of buttressing Armenian Premier Nikol Pashinyan whose grassroots Velvet Revolution saw off the pro-Moscow Republican Party.

[Read the full article here.](#)

No End in Sight for Belarusian Political Crisis **Grigory Ioffe**

The Jamestown Foundation | November 25, 2020

The turbulent stalemate in Minsk continues, despite the fact that street protests have been subsiding and their full-scale resumption is not expected before March, as noted by, among others, Belarusian political commentator Artyom Shraibman (Current Time TV, November 20). By then, not only will the weather warm up but traditional dates marked by the opposition, like Liberty Day (March 25) and the Chernobyl Path (April 26), may themselves produce large protest crowds. Nevertheless, the government has noticeably retaken the initiative in the streets, and its repressive measures have continued to fuel anger and discontent.

One force-majeure event begets a parade of side effects that reinforce other public mood irritants. As if the tragic death of Minsk artist Roman Bondarenko (see EDM, November 18) was not enough of a disturbance, the incident led to the arrest of a Tut.by reporter who publicly disclosed, contradicting President Alyaksandr Lukashenka, that Bondarenko's blood test revealed no traces of alcohol (Tut.by, November 19). The hospital physician who shared this information with the journalist was arrested as well (Media Zona, November 19). Both are now sitting in a KGB detention center.

Meanwhile, an inexplicable audio file is making the rounds in the Belarusian capital, allegedly of two people discussing by phone the circumstances of Bondarenko's death and confirming their physical presence at the scene of his arrest. One of the two recorded voices resembles that of Natalya Eismont, Lukashenka's unusually influential press secretary, and the other is apparently that of Dmitry Baskov, the chairperson of the Belarusian Ice Hockey Federation (Tut.by, November 18). Multiple theories have been circulating as to who might have leaked this recording (Svaboda.org, November 20). Lukashenka himself was asked about it during his meeting with workers of the agricultural machinery plant in Gomel, and he promised an "interesting" disclosure in a week (Tut.by, November 19).

[Read the full article here.](#)

Why did Stalin vote for a Jewish state?

Eli Kavon

The Jerusalem Post | November 22, 2020

Andrei Gromyko, Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin's representative at the United Nations, stunned the world on November 29, 1947, during the debate on the partition of Palestine into an Arab state and a Jewish state.

"The Jewish people had been closely linked with Palestine for a considerable period of history," Gromyko told the UN General Assembly. "As a result of the war, the Jews as a people have suffered more than any other people. The total number of the Jewish population who perished at the hands of the Nazi executioners is estimated at approximately six million. The Jewish people were therefore striving to create a state of their own, and it would be unjust to deny them that right."

The Soviet Union voted in favor of the partition proposal. Stalin allowed the new Communist government in Czechoslovakia to allow arms to be bought from it by

emissaries of the Hagana. This played an important part in Israel's fight against its Arab enemies for independence.

Yet, Joseph Stalin was no friend of Jewish nationalism. The UN vote was a political gambit that seemed to oppose everything the dictator stood for. In 1913, shortly before he became the first commissar of nationalities of the Soviet Union under V.I. Lenin, Stalin penned the essay "The Jews Are Not a Nation."

[Read the full article here.](#)

How One Million Russian Immigrants Revitalized Israel

Yossi Klein Halevi

Mosaic | November 23, 2020

In the summer of 1989, I left my home in Jerusalem for a reporting assignment in Europe, covering the fall of Communism from Warsaw to Berlin to Prague. A year later, I returned to a different Israel. In the supermarket there were strange cheeses and yogurt drinks labeled with Cyrillic writing, and unimagined, new products like frozen blueberries and cherries. On the streets, young musicians played cello and old men with gold teeth played accordion. The country suddenly felt as though it had become both less intimate and more claustrophobic: my daughter's first-grade class was packed with 40 children to accommodate the immigrant influx.

I joined the staff of the recently founded Jerusalem Report magazine and was given the Russian beat. My editor, Ze'ev Chafets, told me that we Israelis are opening our home to hundreds of thousands of strangers, and none of us knows anything about who these people are. And so, I went out to learn. I sought intimate stories: a couple struggling to stay together as the husband became increasingly religious and his half-Jewish wife increasingly bewildered; the editor of a new Russian-language Israeli newspaper who had sat in the Gulag for Zionist activity but who felt himself an outsider to the Jewish story; a celebrated organist in the northern town of Carmiel who divided his time touring Europe and working as an Israeli garbageman.

[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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