



Advocates on behalf of Jews in Russia,
Ukraine, the Baltic States & Eurasia

NCSJ WEEKLY NEWS BRIEF
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#1

New Human Rights Chair

By James D. Besser

The New York Jewish Week, January 19, 2007

With Russia continuing its plunge back toward authoritarian rule and far-right forces across Europe showing signs of uniting, the U.S. Helsinki Commission, the congressional group that monitors important human rights accords in Europe, could play an increasingly prominent role.

That panel now has a new chairman with strong connections to Jewish human rights groups: Rep. Alcee Hastings (D-Fla.).

Recently House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) named Hastings, a seven-term House veteran, to lead the congressional group. Hastings is also a member of the Congressional Black Caucus; recently Pelosi thwarted his bid to chair the House Intelligence Committee.

Jewish leaders welcomed the appointment and said it comes at a particularly important juncture for the Helsinki Commission.

"It's very good news," said Mark Levin, executive director of NCSJ, a group that focuses on Jews in the former Soviet Union. "I've worked with Congressman Hastings for many years; his commitment and dedication to human rights is legendary."

Levin said the lawmaker has "gone out of his way to engage in issues of concern to the Jewish community and has been at the forefront of the fight against global anti-Semitism."

And he said the Helsinki process is just as relevant today as it was when it was created 31 years ago by an act of Congress, signed by former President Gerald Ford.

"It has provided the American Jewish and European Jewish communities with a powerful instrument to focus on the rise in anti-Semitism that has taken place over the last eight years," he said. "With the rise in ultra-nationalism and xenophobia across Europe, it's more important than ever."

#2a

Russian center vandalized

JTA Brief, January 16, 2007

A Jewish center in Russia's Volga area was vandalized twice in the last few days of 2006. A Russian news agency reported this week that on Dec. 28, two drunken youths stormed the Ulyanovsk Jewish Center shouting, "Get out of here before it's too late! We will cut your throats!"

They then smashed several windows and a mirror.

Police detained one suspect.

Police are said to be investigating whether the incident is tied to another act of vandalism Dec. 25, when a knife bearing a swastika was found piercing a note that read, "We cut the kikes' throats and will do it again."

Rabbi Yossi Marozov found the note after a bottle filled with gasoline crashed through the synagogue's front window.

Police initially labeled the incident hooliganism, but now are investigating it as a hate crime.

Ulyanovsk's mayor visited the shul Jan. 11 and promised police protection to the community.

#2b

Russian Jewish banker charged in murder JTA Brief, January 17, 2007

A Russian Jewish banker was charged for his alleged role in the murder of the Russian Central Bank's deputy governor. Alexei Frenkel, head of VIP Bank, was detained Jan. 11.

A Moscow court formally approved his arrest Monday and denied bail.

Investigators said Frenkel had a motive to order the death of Andrei Kozlov, who reportedly presided over revoking licenses from several banks in which Frenkel had an interest.

Some observers questioned the arrest, saying Frenkel had no more motive than the heads of many other Russian banks whose licenses had been revoked in recent years.

Kozlov, who led a crusade against money laundering in Russia's secretive banking system, was shot in Moscow in September.

#3

Moscow's Mideast myopia By Yuliya Tymoshenko Haaretz, January 15, 2007

Iran's influence in the Middle East is being strengthened not only because of the opportunities created by the frustration of U.S. power in Iraq, but also because of the diplomatic protection it has been receiving from China and, most importantly, from Russia.

Russia, by wielding the threat of its UN Security Council veto, spent much of the past two years whittling away at the proposed list of sanctions that might be slapped on Iran for its refusal to honor its commitments to the International Atomic Energy Agency over its nuclear program. As a result, the sanctions now imposed by the Security Council are so tepid that they are unlikely to be effective.

Russia sees its relations with Iran as leverage to influence diplomacy in the wider Middle East, where the U.S. has successfully sought to exclude the Kremlin since the end of the Cold War. Russia's other self-interest has been to exempt from sanctions the Bushehr nuclear reactor that it is building for Iran (to be in operation later this year), and to ward off a UN-sponsored financial squeeze on Iran that might put at risk the profits Russia hopes to earn from providing nuclear fuel for the reactor.

Russian President Vladimir Putin argues that Iran, unlike North Korea, has not expelled IAEA nuclear inspectors, quit the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) or conducted a weapons test so it should be dealt with gently. But without making Iran weigh real costs against its nuclear plans, it will have little reason to consider the suspension of uranium enrichment and plutonium dabbling (both are usable for nuclear fuel-

making but abominable for bomb-making), which the Europeans and the United States have made a condition for serious negotiations to take place.

Russia trades heavily with Iran, which is another reason it is wary of sanctions against it. But the U.S. has been leaning on foreign banks to curb their dealings with Iran. Last month, it added five companies (four in China, and another in the U.S. but representing a Chinese outfit) to its list of those fingered for assisting Iran's weapons program and thus banned from doing business with American companies. There is a growing fear in Moscow that the U.S. administration is now looking at Russian companies with similar ties to Iran and its nuclear ambitions.

Russian policy, based on immediate monetary gain and a hope of diplomatic influence, is dangerously short-sighted. (Ukraine, for its part, opted not to participate in building the Bushehr reactor.) If suspicions are correct that Iran has been secretly learning how to build and trigger a nuclear device, and also to shape a missile cone to carry such a warhead (as well as publicly developing nuclear-capable, far-flying missiles), then once it has fully mastered uranium enrichment, it will soon be poised to break out - at short notice, at a moment of its choosing - from the NPT's limits. By enfeebling diplomacy, Russia is taking the world into more dangerous territory.

This is doubly short-sighted as a nuclear-armed Iran on Russia's border is not in the latter's national interest, particularly with Russia's own 20 million Muslim citizens becoming increasingly radicalized. Indeed, Russia's Muslim population is the only sector of the Russian population that is growing, which means Muslims will become a bigger and bigger factor in Russian domestic politics in the decades ahead. That Iran is often seen as a principal backer of the Chechen separatists is also evidence of the truly short-sighted nature of Russian policy.

But in its quest to enhance its great power prestige today, Russia seems willing to sacrifice its long-term security interests in the region for immediate diplomatic gratification. And it is doing so not only in respect to Iran. The big question about Turkmenistan today is whether the vacuum left by the death of Saparmurat Niyazov (Turkmanbashi) will allow Islamic extremism to spill over from neighboring Iran and Afghanistan. Russia is doing its best to see to it that whatever successor regime comes along, it is willing to do the Kremlin's bidding.

Russia has long had the upper hand in Turkmenistan. Most of Turkmenistan's gas is exported through the Russian pipeline system. Gazprom, the Russian state giant, buys gas at relatively low prices, and then distributes it in Russia or sells it at a profit in Europe.

Israel, like Turkey and the U.S., must be hoping that Turkmenistan's new rulers will seek to diversify gas distribution by adopting a project to build a pipeline beneath the Caspian Sea. But diversification is also needed in that country's politics, because the only opposition with any strength in the country is Islamic fundamentalists.

Russia has had centuries of influence in the Middle East and Central Asia in the Russian and Soviet empires. It could serve as a powerful force for good in the region if it stops seeking short-term advantage and begins to act in its own long-term interests, which will best be served by a prosperous, non-nuclear armed Iran, and a far more open Turkmenistan.

The writer is the former prime minister of Ukraine and is currently leader of the opposition there.

#4

Lvov Jews: Give Back Judaica **Vladimir Matveyev** **JTA, January 16, 2007**

Testifying to a rich Jewish past, museums in the western Ukrainian city of Lvov hold hundreds of Jewish artifacts that once belonged to local synagogues and Jewish institutions.

Now the few practicing Jews here say they need the artifacts back to reinvigorate their community. "Our congregation is trying to bring Jewish tradition back, and we need these Torah scrolls and religious objects," said Valentina Zamichkovskaya, 67, a member of the Lvov Reform Jewish congregation.

Ukrainian authorities seem open to the possibility.

"We are ready to transfer some items to the Jewish communities upon their request," Roman Kurash, a representative of the Lvov Regional Administration in charge of religious affairs, told JTA. "Ukrainian authorities are ready to resolve the issue on the condition that these objects are used for religious community purposes," said Alexander Sagan, a senior adviser to President Viktor Yushenko.

Lvov at one time was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and, between the world wars, was part of Poland. The city was incorporated into the Soviet Union in 1939.

When World War II began there were 1.5 million Jews in what is today Ukraine, or about 3 percent of the population. Lvov itself had more than 200,000 Jews, nearly half of them refugees from German-occupied Poland.

The Germans subsequently occupied Lvov after the invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941. More than 6,000 Jews died in pogroms carried out by local residents in the summer of 1941-- even before the Nazis set up a Jewish ghetto in Lvov in November 1941.

In March 1942, the Germans began deporting Jews from the ghetto to the Belzec extermination camp. By August 1942, more than 65,000 Jews had been deported and murdered. Thousands more were sent for forced labor to the nearby Janowska camp.

In early June 1943 the Germans destroyed the ghetto, killing thousands of Jews in the process. Remaining ghetto residents were sent to Janowska or deported to Belzec. Only a few hundred Jews survived the Holocaust in Lvov.

Artifacts such as Torah scrolls and ritual objects were confiscated from the Jewish community during the communist era. Lvov's Museum of the History of Religion and the Museum of Ethnography and Crafts each contain about 1,000 Jewish artifacts.

"We have a good collection of Jewish manuscripts and over 420 Torah scrolls and fragments," said Maxim Martyn, curator of the Museum of History of Religion's Judaica collection. Its holdings date from as far back as the 15th century; more recent objects are from the prewar Jewish community.

Lyudmila Bulgakova, chief curator at the Museum of Ethnography and Crafts, said her institution has an extensive collection of valuable ancient Judaica items, from Torah scrolls and velvet scroll covers to silver pointers and antique Jewish headwear.

Some of the artifacts are included in the museums' permanent exhibitions, while some were shown at exhibitions in Israel and Poland. But many more remain unseen by the public.

Martyn said most of the Torah scrolls were transferred to the religion museum in the 1970s from a Lvov academic library after Soviet authorities shut down one of the city's major synagogues in 1962. Not all of the

museum's Judaica objects arrived there after being confiscated, he said: Some were donated by individuals who could not or were afraid to keep them.

For years the objects were used mainly in exhibitions, but with state-sponsored atheism and religious persecution mostly in the past, the revived Jewish community in Lvov wants the religious objects.

Lvov now is home to some 2,000 Jews. Aside from the Reform congregation, there's a large Orthodox shul run by Rabbi Mordechai Shloime Bold, a Karlin-Stonliner Chasid. The synagogue was confiscated by the Bolsheviks but was returned to the community in 1989, shortly before the fall of communism. Another Orthodox minyan, or prayer group, is run by a longtime Jewish community and human-rights activist, Meilach Sheichet.

Members of these groups acknowledge that many of the scrolls and Judaica objects may never be returned to proper religious use, given the small size of the community. But they insist the city should help the community transfer Judaica from municipal museums to a new Jewish museum that Jewish organizations want to open.

One of Ukraine's chief rabbis was more categorical.

"Museums must return all Torah scrolls to the communities," Rabbi Azriel Chaikin, a chief rabbi of Ukraine and the main Chabad-Lubavitch authority in the country, told JTA. "Religious silver and some other objects we can discuss separately, but Torahs must be returned."

Even before any real negotiations have begun, at least one religious group in Lvov is using a scroll that belongs to a local museum. Sheichet said his Orthodox minyan borrowed a scroll from the Museum of History of Religion on a long-term loan.

Sheichet said many of the objects in the museum's Judaica collection should be moved to a future Lvov Jewish museum, but another Ukrainian chief rabbi disagreed.

"Jewish religious objects were taken from synagogues during Soviet times," Rabbi Yakov Dov Bleich, chief rabbi of Kiev and Ukraine, told JTA. "In independent Ukraine they should be returned to community property."

Some of the Judaica artifacts were damaged or desecrated. Others are so ancient and valuable that synagogues and communal institutions may not want to keep them because of poor security.

One activist in Lvov said it would be wiser to split the Judaica holdings in local museums.

"Some of the objects can help the revival of Jewish communities," journalist Boris Dorfman said, "while others will be better preserved in a future Jewish museum where they can tell incredible stories about the great Jewish past in our region."

#5

Kyrgyz president pens power-boosting law AP, January 15, 2007

BISHKEK, Kyrgyzstan - The president of Kyrgyzstan signed into law Monday constitutional amendments strengthening his powers that he had pushed through after threatening to dissolve parliament, his office said. Lawmakers approved the constitutional changes that give President Kurmanbek Bakiyev the right to appoint the Cabinet on Dec. 30.

The amendments were the second set of changes to the constitution in as many months in this Central Asian nation that has been gripped by political infighting since the March 2005 ouster of longtime ruler Askar Akayev.

In November, protests forced Bakiyev to sign amendments curtailing his powers.

Parliament had been under pressure to return to Bakiyev the authority to form a Cabinet after Prime Minister Felix Kulov resigned in December, claiming that the November changes made it impossible for the government and parliament to work together, and calling for new parliamentary elections.

Lawmakers initially rejected the new constitutional changes, but passed them in a new vote after Bakiyev threatened to dissolve parliament.

The opposition For Reforms alliance has said the new changes were illegal because they weren't approved by the Constitutional Court, which validates all such amendments.

The U.S. maintains a military base in Kyrgyzstan - the only such outpost in former Soviet Central Asia - to back up anti-terror operations in Afghanistan. Russia, which has strong influences on impoverished Kyrgyzstan, also has an air base in the country.

#6

Activist Stabbed 20 Times By Galina Stolyarova St. Petersburg Times January 16, 2007

A twenty-one-year-old antifascist campaigner was stabbed twenty times on Sunday night in south-western St. Petersburg in an apparent attack by extremists.

Ivan Yelin was taken to the intensive care unit of St. Petersburg Hospital No. 26 on Ulitsa Kostyushko, where his condition is described as severe. Yelin underwent an operation for wounds sustained to his liver, kidney, solar plexus and other areas, suffering massive blood loss.

The St. Petersburg Prosecutor's Office has opened a criminal case for attempted murder. No suspects have yet been detained.

Immediately prior to the attack on Sunday, Yelin had been taking part in an international humanitarian initiative titled "Food, Not Bombs," giving food to the local homeless people and street kids just outside Vladimirskaya metro station in central St. Petersburg.

The initiative takes place on a regular basis at several fixed places, including areas close to Vladimirskaya and Vasileostrovskaya metro stations.

The attack took place between 6 p.m. and 7 p.m. near Yelin's home on the corner of Ulitsa Ziny Portnovoi and Leninsky Prospekt in a south-western district of the city.

Antifascist campaigners are convinced that local nationalists and extremists are behind the attack.

"Members of skinhead gangs routinely show up at antifascist and human rights meetings," said Ruslan Linkov, head of the St. Petersburg organization Democratic Russia. "Nationalists take photographs of the participants and also follow human rights activists to their homes."

"On Sunday, Ivan was more noticeable than the others: he was putting food into bowls and giving it to people, and naturally drew more attention," said fellow antifascist campaigner Oleg, who asked that his real name not be used because of fears for his safety. "After they finished, most volunteers went to a rock concert in a nearby club but Ivan went home on his own, making himself an obvious target."

Timur Kacharava, a frequent participant in antifascist meetings who was stabbed to death outside a bookstore on Ligovsky Prospekt in November 2005, was also reportedly followed after taking part in a "Food, Not Bombs" event.

As skinhead violence against foreigners and ethnic minorities rises in Russia, growing numbers of antifascist campaigners are considering giving up street politics, they say.

Not only do they fear physical attack by skinheads, but they say they are treated with suspicion and hostility by the police, while adding that the political elite and general public are indifferent to their goals. Most depressingly, they say, at their own rallies they are usually outnumbered by police and nationalists.

"We have to face it: ordinary citizens prefer to stay away from human rights or antifascist meetings," said Iosif Skakovsky of the human rights group Memorial. "It does not help things that the authorities and law-enforcement organizations both on a local and federal level demonstrate an outrageous lack of leadership and seem to be content with the state of denial they have adopted about hate crimes."

As a result, many antifascist activists are losing faith that they can make a difference.

"More and more of us are strongly considering giving up the fight," Oleg said. "I have personally been attacked by skinheads who kicked me in the head with their heavy boots. But it is not the fear of a physical assault that makes me doubtful about defending the cause. Rather, it is our failure to make a difference in the minds of ordinary Russians that is most frustrating."

Those who want to continue their activism are thinking of changing strategies as street fights between antifascist campaigners and nationalists are becoming increasingly common. The most recent clash between members of the Antifa group and nationalists took place in September. The street fights broke out when activists from Antifa tried to disrupt a meeting of the nationalist Movement Against Illegal Immigration.

"After the murder of Timur Kacharava we figured that the only way to stop the fascists is to counter them physically," said antifascist campaigner Mikhail. "If the authorities do nothing, we have nothing left to do but fight."

Linkov is worried by the tendency of the authorities and the mainstream media to portray antifascist campaigners as yet another breed of extremist.

"They think things would look better if this were seen as the problem of youngsters drinking too much, rather than the problem of nationalist groups getting stronger," Linkov said. "They seem to be trying to spread the responsibility for street violence more evenly among various political forces."

#7

**Russia to be delicate mediator in Middle East
RIA Novosti, January 15, 2007**

MOSCOW. (RIA Novosti political commentators Marianna Belenkaya, Pyotr Goncharov) - In recent years, Moscow has acquired the role of a delicate mediator in the Middle East.

In June 2006, a French diplomat said in an informal conversation with a RIA Novosti commentator at an international conference, "I wish we had the same approach to the Middle East problems as Russia."

These words, voiced by a Western diplomat, and a Frenchman at that, seemed surprising. Although Moscow and Paris were united in their opposition to Washington and London on the war in Iraq, their views differed on the developments around Syria and Lebanon.

Due to historic connections, Paris behaves in these countries much like Washington in Iraq, provoking conflicts inside Lebanon and the region. This way it robs itself of the opportunity to become a real mediator. Russian diplomats, on the other hand, are maintaining contacts with everyone. It was no coincidence that that Lebanese Prime Minister Fuad Siniora came to Russia looking for support in December 2006. His visit took place days before the talks between Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Syrian counterpart Bashar Asad.

No matter whether it is Iraq, Syria or Lebanon that is at issue, Russia's stand is the same: the situation in the region cannot be allowed to explode. Support of balance of forces and regional stability is more important for Russian diplomacy than instant success like the one the United States saw when it seized Baghdad in 2003 (and has not known what to do with Iraq ever since).

Something similar can now happen in Syria and Lebanon, especially if pressure on Damascus increases.

Russia does not want another conflict zone to emerge in a region adjacent to its borders. It usually tries to find a compromise until the very last moment. It can hardly be accused of appeasing one of the parties. It was to a large extent due to Russia's efforts that Syria began cooperating with the UN commission investigating the assassination of Lebanese former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri. Moscow did not put pressure on Damascus, nor did it hit it with loud accusations. Instead, it engaged in a peaceful dialogue, trying to take into account Syria's interests as well. Russia tried to adopt similar tactics in Palestine, in relation to Hamas, inviting its leaders for talks in Moscow. However, it failed to establish a dialogue between Hamas and the West. Reasons were many, including the parties' unwillingness to compromise. Yet this does not mean that Russia should not have tried.

Moscow will continue its search for international compromises on Middle East problems. The Soviet era, when the country's policies in the region were dictated by ideology, is long gone; so is the beginning of the 1990s when Russia followed in the West's track and lost almost all of its contacts in the Arab world. By now it has established a good dialogue both with its old partners inherited from the Soviet Union and with new ones, such as Saudi Arabia and Israel. It now has large-scale economic projects in the region and security interests as well. It cannot risk these gains because of another Middle East crisis.

Speaking of a crisis we cannot but mention Iran, which is a special case for Russian diplomacy.

Russian-Iranian relations today can be described as a limited strategic partnership. The two countries seem to be doomed to such partnership in some politically and economically important regions, such as Central Asia, the Caspian Sea and the Caucasus. Moscow and Tehran cooperation there is based on the principles of sound pragmatism and neighborly support.

It has always been so. But now, in all of the three regions where Russia and Iran have interests, these interests do not collide, but supplement each other.

A good example is the situation in Central Asia, Russia's traditional area of influence, where Iran has recently mounted its economic expansion. Nevertheless, Moscow has silently approved of it, as it is unable to fill this important region on its own. Voids are filled fast, and Russia's calculations are simple: the more Iran is represented in the region, the less there will be of China, the United States and Turkey.

As to the Caspian Sea, Iran is the only country that fully shares Russia's stand on the issue of determining its international status, which would fully rule out presence of third countries in the area. Moscow and Tehran have similar positions on trans-Caspian oil and gas pipelines as well. Other Caspian-related problems are either secondary or insignificant.

The two countries follow the same principle when designing their Caucasian policies. The Middle East is the only region to stand apart. It is now popular to speak of Iran as of all but the key player there. Most Russian experts believe that it is absolutely natural for a country with Iran's population, resources and history to aspire to a role in the region correspondent to its political weight and potential. Moscow also supports the idea of engaging Iran (and Syria) in solving regional problems.

But that is all. Iran would of course prefer to expand its strategic cooperation with Russia to the entire Middle East, i.e. to turn partnership into alliance, even if nominally. Yet it is hard to imagine circumstances under which Moscow could agree to it.

#8

'Protect Us Against Bullies'

By Elmar Mammadyarov

The Wall Street Journal, January 19, 2007

BAKU, Azerbaijan

Energy is again on the front pages of Europe's newspapers. The Gazprom story from last year, when the Russian energy giant forced Ukraine to accept higher gas prices, was repeated this year in Azerbaijan, Georgia and Belarus.

Almost overnight, the price of gas has more than doubled for us. This is more than just a market message and it is unacceptable for Azerbaijan. In response, we have decided to stop buying Russian gas as well as to stop using the Russian pipeline to export Azerbaijani oil to Europe.

This is a defining moment for Azerbaijan and the South Caucasus as a whole. It is Azerbaijan's sincere wish to have a pragmatic, market-driven relationship with Russia, but as an independent state we are guided by our national interest.

The South Caucasus region is reforming and growing economically. Azerbaijan is committed to a peaceful settlement of the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. In order to move beyond our differences, we need to agree on three redlines: no partition; no occupation; and the return of internally displaced persons to their homes. Armenia must withdraw its armed forces from the occupied Azerbaijani territories, while we must secure and guarantee maximum rights for the minorities. This is the way to a durable solution.

It is in our interest that all frozen conflicts in the region are resolved in adherence to the principle of territorial integrity of all three South Caucasus states: Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia. This was also most recently expressed in the Riga NATO Summit Declaration. A solution to the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict should not be delayed. The conflict is undermining our regional potential and it could cost us a closer partnership with the European Union and NATO.

The South Caucasus-Caspian region offers enormous strategic benefits to Europe. The region is not only energy-rich, but it also links Central Asia with Europe. Baku is the only capital city on the Caspian coast and as such it serves as a logistics center and a hub connecting energy and transportation infrastructure between Asia and Europe. Baku is an ideal location from which to influence economic and political trends in Central Asia.

Azerbaijan is a secular Shia state -- the only such state. We have an open and constructive relationship with Iran. The main trade corridor connecting Iran and Russia passes through eastern Azerbaijan. Discussions are under way to link Azerbaijani and Kazakh oil infrastructures to export Kazakh oil to Europe.

The European Commission last week published a comprehensive strategy paper on energy, suggesting new measures and targets for Europe in energy conservation, renewable energy and infrastructure design. The Commission also made explicit references to market integration, solidarity and diversification of imports. Caspian energy is relevant in this context for at least two reasons.

First, Caspian gas and oil would allow Europe to reduce its dependence on unreliable energy suppliers as well as improve its capacity to meet its energy needs in the medium term. Second, gas is predicted to become the fastest-growing energy source, increasing its share of total EU consumption to 30% in 2030 from 24% now. This is another reason why accessing new markets should be a strategic priority for the EU. At the same time, European know-how and investments will be needed to increase the downstream capacity of the Caspian, which remains an underutilized energy basin.

October's "Memorandum of Understanding on a Strategic Partnership" between the European Union and the Republic of Azerbaijan in the field of energy is a step in the right direction. This is also an opportune moment to start thinking about integrating the EU and South Caucasus energy markets through Romania, Bulgaria, Ukraine, Moldova, Turkey and Greece. Such a move would optimize electricity exchanges between Europe and the South Caucasus by integrating electricity grids and prioritizing new projects. It would also further protect us against market bullies.

In order to capitalize on the closer cooperation with Europe, the Caucasus must grow its market economies and democracies. Reforms are a precondition to the region's long-term economic progress. However, it is the Euro-Atlantic cooperation which makes these reforms all the more meaningful.

Mr. Mammadyarov is foreign minister of Azerbaijan

#9

Does Abe Foxman Have an Anti-Anti-Semite Problem?

By James Traub

The New York Times Magazine, January 14, 2007

In certain precincts of the Jewish community, a person who insists that the sky is falling, despite ample evidence to the contrary, is said to gevaltize — a neologism derived from the famous Yiddish cry of shock or alarm. The word is sometimes applied to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, known as Aipac, the hard-line and notoriously successful pro-Israel lobby. But in the world of Jewish leaders, one man stands alone in the annals of gevalthood — Abraham Foxman, director of the Anti-Defamation League and scourge of anti-Semites of high estate and low, in Hollywood and Tehran, on campus and in the tabloids.

In a conversation last month over lunch, as Foxman's bodyguard kept a weather eye open from across the room, I asked the A.D.L. leader about his ever-renewed fount of outrage. "I haven't done gevalt for 30 years," Foxman said, though some might argue otherwise. "But never before has there been such a threat

to Israel and to the Jewish people from a geopolitical conglomerate — the Arab world, with Iran, with Hamas, with Hezbollah, with its position that it will not recognize Israel. The vise is closing.”

The United States, Foxman added, is “the only — the only — country in the world that is consistently willing to stand up to hypocrisy, to double standards, to triple standards, which always has the guts to say no.” And now he sees this great bulwark crumbling. Former President Jimmy Carter accuses Israel in his most recent book of practicing a policy of “apartheid” in the occupied territories. Former Secretary of State Colin Powell, according to Karen DeYoung, a Washington Post associate editor, in her recent biography, “Soldier: The Life of Colin Powell,” links President Bush’s Middle East policy more to Jewish-neoconservative influence than to principle. Judith Regan, the celebrity editor, was reported as saying — she denies it — that the Jews were behind her recent downfall. (Some of Foxman’s examples are more weight-bearing than others.)

But what really makes Abe Foxman shray (cry) gevalt is the claim that an “Israel lobby” or a “Jewish lobby” — Aipac and the A.D.L. and a few others — has effectively gained control over U.S. policy toward the Middle East and suppressed voices calling for alternative policies. Foxman himself became entangled in this debate in October, when he was accused of intimidating the Polish consul general in New York into canceling a talk to be given by Tony Judt, a highly regarded professor of European history at New York University and a supporter of the “Israel lobby” view — which seemed to confirm Judt’s thesis.

Foxman says he is innocent of the charge, and his sense of outraged virtue makes him all the more incandescent. Abe Foxman isn’t doing the stifling — he’s the one being muzzled with the charge of stifling. But the stifling won’t work: Foxman says he will not be intimidated; people all across the Islamic world already believe every kind of pernicious fantasy about the Jews and about Israel. And now here come credentialed American — even Jewish! — scholars saying, as he put it, “The Jews control the media, control the government, control Congress.” The Jewish people, Foxman said gravely, “have paid a very, very significant price for that canard.” And yes, he’s willing to shray gevalt until he’s blue in the face.

So what’s the problem, the thing Abe Foxman is fighting or Foxman himself?

The Anti-Defamation League, which has an annual budget of more than \$50 million, offers “anti-bias education and diversity training” through its World of Difference Institute; plays a major advocacy role in keeping church and state separate; monitors a vast array of extremist activity; publishes curricula on the Holocaust and on tolerance; and so on. But the league is, in the end, mostly Abe. Foxman is a domineering character who over the years, according to critics, has driven out potential rivals and successors. When I asked him whom else in the organization I should talk to, he couldn’t think of anyone, not even Kenneth Jacobson, the A.D.L.’s deputy national director and, others had told me, Foxman’s alter-ego. The A.D.L., for all its myriad activities, is a one-man Sanhedrin doling out opprobrium or absolution for those who speak ill of Israel or the Jews.

Foxman was born in Poland in 1940 as his parents fled before the Nazi advance. The following year, when the Nazis reached Lithuania, Foxman was placed with his Polish Catholic nanny, who pretended to be his mother and raised him — as a Catholic and, Foxman has written, as a Jew-hater. Both his parents, miraculously, survived the war and then reclaimed him, though not without a bitter fight. Foxman escaped the worst of the Holocaust, but it has deeply shaped his sense of the world and is presumably responsible for his feeling that nothing short of supreme and unflinching vigilance will ward off the next cataclysm. Perhaps his childhood also accounts for his air of brazen self-assertion. “Then he had to hide his identity,” as Jonathan Jacoby, the founder of the Israel Policy Forum, a liberal advocacy group, told me. “Now he’s the most out Jew in the world.”

Foxman grew up in Brooklyn and went to work at the A.D.L. immediately upon graduating from New York University Law School in 1965. An incisive and impassioned figure, he rose through the ranks to become associate director, and in 1987, when Nathan Perlmutter, the organization’s director, died, Foxman was the consensus choice to succeed him. These were heady times for the A.D.L. Though founded in 1913 to combat the mistreatment of Jews, the A.D.L. rapidly became one of the nation’s leading civil rights organizations and a cornerstone of the black-Jewish alliance. The rise of the black-power movement largely

put an end to that sort of coalition, and in the 1970s and '80s the A.D.L. turned its attention to extremism. The organization infiltrated its own volunteers into the John Birch Society, neo-Nazi groups and the like at a time when law enforcement paid them little heed. The A.D.L. was a major force behind the passage of hate-crime laws at the state and federal levels.

With anti-Semitism apparently waning, the A.D.L. might well have moved away from its original identity in favor of either promoting tolerance and diversity or leading the nonsectarian fight against extremism. But for Foxman, fighting anti-Semitism was always the core of the mission. The A.D.L.'s world became increasingly binary — “good for the Jews,” “bad for the Jews.” This change had the effect of moving the organization, as it had other mainstream Jewish bodies, to the right. Foxman upset many of his colleagues by extending a welcome to Christian conservatives, whose leaders tended to be strongly pro-Israel even as they spoke in disturbing terms of America's “Christian” identity. Foxman was willing to cut them some slack on issues of social justice, and even of church-state relations, in the name of solidarity toward Israel. At the same time, as black-Jewish tensions increasingly surfaced, the A.D.L.'s old allies became some of its chief targets. Foxman skirmished for years with Jesse Jackson until the early 1990s. When Khalid Abdul Muhammad, an aide to Louis Farrakhan, delivered a venomously anti-Semitic speech late in 1993, Foxman demonstrated that he knew how to hold a punch as well as throw one. In the midst of an urgent meeting called to formulate a response, Foxman declared: “You know what we're going to do? We're going to take out a full-page ad in The Times and just reprint the speech.” Excerpts of the text ran under the headline “Minister Louis Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam Claim They Are Moving Toward Moderation and Increased Tolerance. You Decide.” Peter Wilner, then an associate director of the A.D.L., recalls, “You never felt prouder working for the organization.”

It's tempting to compare Abe Foxman with Al Sharpton, another portly, bellicose, melodramatizing defender of ethnic ramparts. But you never feel that Foxman is admiring his own performance, as you do with Sharpton. Foxman's spleen, in all its infinite variety, is the real deal. “More than anything else,” says J. J. Goldberg, the editor of The Forward, a leading American Jewish weekly, and a frequent foil of Foxman's, “I think his gut is where Jewish emotions are. He opens his mouth and out comes the Jew on the street. He's not complicated.” Over the years, Goldberg has attacked Foxman for offering his kosher seal of approval to such as Silvio Berlusconi, the Christianity-promoting, right-wing former prime minister of Italy, and more recently to John Bolton, the United Nations-hating former ambassador to the U.N. Goldberg says he thinks that Foxman is often wrong — but never cynical.

I first went to see Foxman a few days after the midterm Congressional elections. The flat-screen TV mounted on a wall to one side of his desk was tuned to CNN. Newspapers were stacked up at the entrance to his office — The Times, The Jewish Week, The Forward, the tabloids. Foxman is 66, and his dark hair has thinned and his pale face has grown broad and fleshy. These days he wears his wedding ring on his pinky. He has the look of a kingpin — a Cadillac-driving ward-heeler out of Saul Bellow. He had just returned from a whirlwind trip to Europe conducted more or less at the level of foreign minister. Jacques Chirac, the president of France, pinned on him the rosette of the Legion of Honor, but he is too proud of who he is and where he came from to wear it in his lapel.

I found that I could twist Foxman's dial of outrage without even trying. He said, apropos of the dispute over Tony Judt, that while he would never try to prevent speech, he did believe that it was wrong to give really evil figures, like Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the president of Iran and at present the world's most famously anti-Semitic head of state, the legitimacy of a meeting, as U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan and the Council on Foreign Relations recently had. I asked if Annan also shouldn't have met with Saddam Hussein. “There is a difference between Ahmadinejad and even a Saddam Hussein,” Foxman rejoined. “Here is a man who says time and again, ‘I will wipe this nation’ ” — Israel — “ ‘off the face of the earth,’ and says afterward that the Holocaust never happened. This is not ‘Israel as victim’; this is the destruction of Jewish identity.”

Foxman made a beseeching gesture, his fingertips cupped before his mouth. “Plus, it has happened before,” he went on. “It's not an abstraction. By a man, by a government, who aids, abets, fuels suicide bombers, makes them martyrs, celebrates them, who asks for volunteers from his country, and I don't know

what they have, 40,000 now, who have volunteered in future to go kill Jews!” Foxman was now shouting at me across the table. “And you arm yourself to take out as many Jews as possible!” Foxman’s hands were wheeling in circles before him; this possible Holocaust, so remote to many of us, seemed to rise up before him with a terrible clarity. “Oh, my God!” he cried, as if reeling in horror before the vision he had himself conjured.

Foxman really does dwell imaginatively in the Holocaust. He spends a month or so each winter in Palm Beach, moving in the company of elderly folk, many of them Holocaust survivors, who revere him. He seems to understand the survivor mentality far better than he does the lighthearted and lightheaded culture of disposable, custom-made ethnic identity. All that, so far as Foxman is concerned, is a pleasing delusion, like the *soignй* Berlin of 1925. In his most recent book — “Never Again?” — he makes the stupefyingly counterintuitive claim that high rates of Jewish assimilation are a reaction to discriminatory treatment, rather than a proof of the opposite. “One out of three people in these United States believes that the Jews are more loyal to Israel than to the U.S.,” he growled. “That’s a classic anti-Semitic canard.” And yet a Pew Global Attitudes Poll in 2004 found that anti-Semitism had declined in much of the West and was lowest in the United States. A Pew poll last year found American support for Israel as strong now as at any time in the last 13 years.

Foxman’s genius lies not so much in the realm of oratory as in the realm of dramaturgy; he stages public rituals of accusation and often of reconciliation and redemption. In mid-November he held an event, a cross between a news conference and a roof-raising abolitionist meeting, to honor Ruth Halimi, a Parisian Jew whose son, Ilan, had been kidnapped, tortured and murdered by a gang in February. He had invited prominent members of the French Jewish community, A.D.L. lay leaders, prospective donors and the press. Foxman spoke first, and he addressed Halimi, a small, modest woman, with great gentleness and compassion. Within minutes, though, Foxman had begun to advance up his scale of spleen. He was shouting about Auschwitz and six million and then ticking off the litany of Jews who had been killed in recent years only because they were Jews: congregants in Buenos Aires, the journalist Daniel Pearl, a volunteer at a Jewish charity in Seattle — “and now Ilan,” whose kidnappers assumed that all Jews are rich. “I still hear the good people” — Foxman uses the word good in this context to mean “saps” — “coming to us in the A.D.L., saying: ‘What are you worried about stereotypes? They’re words! Big deal.’ We sat with the minister of education in Spain not long ago, and she said to us, ‘When we say Jews are rich, when we say Jews are successful, it’s a compliment.’” Foxman was now full-out screaming. “And I looked at her and I said: ‘Your Excellency, no thanks. Those are words that helped pave the way to Auschwitz.’”

Foxman was followed by Ruth Halimi, and she in turn by Francois Delattre, the French consul general. Delattre was a man of very different temperament than his host, and he spoke quietly and feelingly of anti-Semitism as “an existential threat to all of us.” Of France, he said, “The Jewish tradition and culture is deeply part of our DNA.” At the same time, because of the collaboration of the wartime French government at Vichy, “we have forever a special responsibility in the fight against anti-Semitism.” At times, Delattre had to struggle to compose himself. It was extraordinarily moving to hear such words, and see such depth of feeling, from a French-government official; perhaps it also proved that Foxman’s hectoring really has raised consciousness about anti-Semitism in places where anti-Jewish feeling represents a real threat. “You have,” one of Foxman’s aides said to me afterward, “experienced an A.D.L. moment.”

The A.D.L. moment wasn’t quite over. Foxman called the press — two reporters for Jewish media outlets and me — to a small conference room to meet Halimi. She spoke of her disappointment and anger at the conduct of the French police. Foxman, sitting next to her, fiddled with his coffee mug in increasing agitation. So many people in the neighborhood knew what was going on, he interjected. There should be an investigation, he said, but of course it would look bad if the A.D.L., in New York, called for it: “We need the support of the community.” He asked us to keep this part off the record. We filed out, but a moment later an aide came to fetch us back. Foxman was still sitting at the conference table with Halimi. “There’s a need for an investigation,” he declared. A reporter asked when and where the announcement would be made. He didn’t get it. “I’m announcing it right now,” Foxman said.

One of the really remarkable features of post-9/11 political life was that in the first months and years after the attacks, scarcely anyone called for America to abandon Israel, though it is hardly difficult to argue that our support for the Jewish state has cost us dearly in the Islamic world. (Foxman himself insists that Muslim anger at American support for Israel has nothing to do with Islamic terrorism.) Rabble-rousers haven't gained any traction by scapegoating Israel. Nor have legislators of either the left or the right pushed for a substantial rethinking of our policy.

The publication last March (in *The London Review of Books*) of "The Israel Lobby," an article written by the political scientists John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, marked the end, or at least the beginning of the end, of the post-9/11 taboo. Throwing aside all the circumlocutions with which the subject is usually addressed, as well as most of the ethical and historical premises, Mearsheimer and Walt insisted that Israel had neither a strategic nor a moral claim on American sympathies. Israel was not an asset but a "liability" in the war on terror; indeed, "the U.S. has a terrorism problem in good part because it is so closely allied with Israel." And while "there is a strong moral case for supporting Israel's existence," the country's "past and present conduct" brutal mistreatment of Palestinians, refusing serious peace offers, even spying on the United States "offers no moral basis for privileging it over the Palestinians."

How, then, to explain so one-sided a policy? "The unmatched power," they argue, "of the Israel lobby." Mearsheimer and Walt, distinguished figures who teach at the University of Chicago and at Harvard, respectively, note that the Israel lobby is not a cabal but simply a very effective pressure group whose goal is to influence legislators and "to prevent critical comments from getting a fair hearing in the political arena." Like any other lobby, this one (the authors are speaking specifically here of Aipac) succeeds at the legislative level "due to its ability to reward legislators and Congressional candidates who support its agenda and to punish those who challenge it." The lobby dominates media and has established a "commanding presence" in policy institutes, thus ensuring that, with few exceptions — mostly on campus — only one side of the debate can be heard. And if all else fails, the two maintain, the lobby is always prepared to engage in intellectual blackmail: "Anyone who criticizes Israel's actions or argues that pro-Israel groups have significant influence over U.S. Middle Eastern policy ... stands a good chance of being labeled an anti-Semite." That would be where Abe Foxman comes in.

At times, Mearsheimer and Walt come very close to describing the Israel lobby as something like a fifth column. "The bottom line," they write, "is that Aipac, a de facto agent for a foreign government, has a stranglehold on Congress." And it has a stranglehold, as well, Mearsheimer and Walt argue, on the Bush administration. "Pressure from Israel and the lobby," they write, was "critical" in the decision to go to war in Iraq. That pressure came not only from top officials of the Israeli government and representatives of Jewish groups but also from a subset of neoconservatives, most but not all of them Jewish, both inside and outside the administration. More recently, they suggest, Israel, the Israel lobby and the neoconservatives have shaped the administration's belligerent policy toward Syria and Iran. The ultimate objective is to give Israel "a free hand with the Palestinians," while the U.S. "will do most of the fighting, dying, ... rebuilding and paying."

"The Israel Lobby" slammed into the opinion-making world with a Category 5 force. The article loosed a flood of fevered editorials, labored rebuttals and bare-knuckle debates. Not only the A.D.L. and other watchdog groups, like the Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America, but even academic colleagues of Mearsheimer and Walt pointed out serious errors in the historical portions of the essay. Benny Morris, a revisionist Israeli historian whose work Mearsheimer and Walt have drawn on, described the article as "a travesty of the history which I have studied and written on for the past two decades." The authors were also attacked for cherry-picking quotations. J. J. Goldberg, the *Forward* editor and a critic of Israeli policy, wrote that by conflating moderate supporters of Israel and genuine die-hards, the authors had managed "to create the appearance of a vast, terrifying octopus." The most trenchant criticism was also the most simple: Even if the authors didn't believe that Israel has legitimate moral claims, the American people do, and it was this widespread support, more than any unholy machinations, that explained the continuing support of Israel even in the face of the terrorist threat.

Scholars and journalists familiar with the workings of the Israel lobby came to Mearsheimer and Walt's defense, if somewhat warily, in the pages of *The Nation* and *The New York Review of Books*. But support, or at least confirmation, also came from inside the world of Jewish advocacy. According to M. J. Rosenberg, the Washington director for the Israel Policy Forum and a veteran of Capitol Hill, "The way it works is that most members of Congress feel that saying things on the Middle East that are not strictly the Aipac line will get them in more trouble than it's worth." Rosenberg notes that legislation on the Middle East generally consists of symbolic statements, like the recent Palestinian Anti-Terrorism Act, which are "written by Aipac." No one, Rosenberg says, "advocates anti-Israel policies," and even the modest American Task Force on Palestine is "closer to what the American Jewish community supports" — a two-state solution, the rollback of settlements in the occupied territories — "than any of these right-wing Jewish groups are." Rosenberg describes the attitude of most legislators as a shortsighted "path of least resistance," which, he says he fears, will do real harm to Israel in the long run.

The storm over the Israel lobby picked up new life in September, when Mearsheimer and two supporters squared off against three former policy-makers and authors — two from the Clinton administration and one from Israel — in a debate at the Cooper Union in New York. One member of the Mearsheimer tag team was Tony Judt, who stoutly defended the position that the Israel lobby "acts constantly and very effectively to silence criticism of its cause." The debate was raucous, and widely publicized, and succeeded in deepening, or at least confirming, the hostility surrounding the issue.

Then came a new tempest, if in a much smaller teapot: the Polish Consulate affair. After Judt's talk there was canceled at the last minute, he says he heard from the event's organizer that "serial phone calls" from Abe Foxman had frightened the consulate into canceling the event. Here was the proof, in case more proof were needed, that the Israel lobby was squelching debate — precisely the point Judt had planned to make. He now threw a match into New York's ever-combustible intellectual world by circulating an e-mail message detailing his victimization to a long list of pundits and scholars. A number of the recipients of Judt's e-mail were less outraged by his treatment than by his views. Nevertheless, the issue of the suppression of debate had now been joined, and more than 100 people signed an open letter, which appeared in the Nov. 16 issue of *The New York Review of Books*, accusing Foxman and the A.D.L. of fostering "a climate of intimidation" and lamenting that the organization had apparently lost sight of its hundred-year commitment to civil rights and public education.

The problem was that Foxman had not made those serial phone calls. According to a story that he tells and others confirm, a subordinate had called on his behalf to see if the consulate was sponsoring the event. Satisfied that it was not, the group dropped the issue. Of course, even those calls might have prompted some rethinking by a diplomat from a country that has worked hard to restore its ties to Israel. A separate call from David Harris, the head of the American Jewish Committee — who later explained that he had called as "a friend of Poland," because "that evening was going to be entirely contrary to the entire spirit of Polish foreign policy" — probably proved more influential. But when a consulate official telephoned the organizer, Patricia Huntington, to call off the event, she says he told her that the consul general couldn't come to the phone as he was speaking to Foxman. This was what Huntington later told Judt.

Here was one of those stories that seemed so self-evidently true that its falsity couldn't be accepted. Abe Foxman was, after all, the hanging judge of anti-Semitism. Isn't it just the kind of thing he would do? And the A.D.L. so neatly symbolized the divide between mainstream Jewish groups and the intellectuals who had once been so closely associated with them. On this subject, Tony Judt went to town in a way that he may live to regret. In one widely circulated e-mail message, he described Foxman and David Harris as "illiberal lying bigots — Fascists, as we used to say." He dismissed Foxman himself with an almost Leninist turn of phrase: "Pollution like him swirls around in the gutters of every democracy." Apparently it's not only the hanging judge who suffers from a sense of grandiosity. Judt now says, "I don't feel in the least personally suppressed," but rather he worries about the effect of this attempt at suppression on other, less doughty souls.

That, Abe Foxman would say, is "abject nonsense." The A.D.L., he says, doesn't operate that way; it seeks balance, not suppression. Foxman told me that he believes he's challenging his adversaries to a debate,

not shouting them down. But, I asked, isn't slinging the dread charge of anti-Semitism at people like Jimmy Carter and Tony Judt and Mearsheimer and Walt really a way of choking off debate? No, it isn't, Foxman said. This was at our lunch; Foxman got so exercised that he began to choke on his gratin. I asked if it was really right to call Carter, the president who negotiated the Camp David accords, an anti-Semite.

"I didn't call him an anti-Semite."

"But you said he was bigoted. Isn't that the same thing?"

"No. 'Bigoted' is you have preconceived notions about things."

The argument that the Israel lobby constricted debate was itself bigoted, he said.

"But several Jewish officials I've talked to say just that."

"They're wrong."

"Are they bigoted?"

Foxman didn't want to go there. He said that he had never heard any serious person make that claim.

Perhaps the question comes down to this: Are we courting more danger by suppressing speech or by speech itself? Several of the signatories of the open letter with whom I spoke cited John Stuart Mill's dictum that in a democratic society the free market of ideas ultimately sifts through falsehood to produce truth. Abe Foxman says this is naive. The A.D.L. used to argue with Norman Lear, the producer of "All in the Family," that listeners weren't laughing at Archie Bunker but with him. Foxman says the same thing now about Borat. Experience — primal experience — has taught him that the truth does not win on its own merits; the market for falsehood is just too powerful. "Where is it being debated?" he asked. "In the universities, on the airwaves. Advanced by whom? Harvard, the University of Chicago. With Pat Buchanan, it wasn't legitimate. Who cares about David Duke? It is now a legitimate debate." And Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, and the murderers of Danny Pearl and Ilan Halimi, and millions of impressionable Muslims are listening and taking notes. That's the audience that Abe Foxman worries about.

What is the difference between this claim and the accusation, a favorite of Vice President Dick Cheney and former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, that critics of the war in Iraq, or of the war on terror, or of homeland-security preparations, are emboldening the enemy? And isn't that claim, too, designed to suppress debate, or at the very least to make the critic think long and hard before opening his mouth? Is that a price worth paying? Put otherwise: Should we make the existential choice to err on the side of fear, or of hope — a prudent, watchful hope, that is?

Foxman invited me to hear him speak in December at Temple Sholom in Greenwich, Conn. The temple has 700 members, mostly younger families, but the crowd at the event, and especially at the \$250-a-person reception beforehand, was an Abe Foxman crowd — older, richer, more conservative. Foxman gamely grinned and hugged and mugged for the camera; the bodyguard straightened his collar. One by one, the congregants approached to consult him on matters Jewish and Middle Eastern; Foxman fielded the questions with due solemnity. A woman who introduced herself as the daughter of Holocaust survivors said that Jimmy Carter was just as bad as Ahmadinejad — another Israel-denier. Foxman demurred on the comparison but said he planned to write to Tim Russert, the NBC interviewer, asking why he had treated Carter with "kid gloves." A short, bearded man who said that he was a member of Aipac asked, "What do you think of John Bolton?" The American ambassador to the United Nations had just tendered his resignation. Both agreed that it was a shame. The A.D.L. had taken out a full-page ad applauding Bolton as a staunch defender of Israel. More hugs, more pictures.

Foxman is an anachronism. The demographic of which he is a member — Holocaust survivor — is rapidly disappearing. Younger people don't know quite what to make of him. In a recent column in *The Jewish*

Journal, David A. Lehrer, formerly the head of the A.D.L.'s Los Angeles office, observed that Jews are now the most widely admired religious group in America, as well as the most successful, and lamented that Jewish leaders — Foxman specifically — continue to harp on Jewish “insecurity” and the threat of anti-Semitism. Lehrer says that when he raised his view that the A.D.L. had to learn to speak to this new, confident but less affiliated generation of Jews, Foxman dismissed it out of hand. The generational question does not interest him. “It’s not my job to judge whether they should feel beleaguered or not,” Foxman snapped when I raised the subject. “I do feel. And I’ve got news for you: Every one of them, in their maturing process, will experience this.”

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