

ARTICLE BY RABBI ISRAEL
ZOBERMAN

HON. EDWARD L. SCHROCK

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 5, 2004

Mr. SCHROCK. Mr. Speaker, I share the following article on behalf of a constituent, Rabbi Israel Zoberman.

What a golden opportunity Mel Gibson had to introduce a significant note of much-needed harmony into the alarming discord of a polarized and fractured world community, and even here at home, with heightened religious and political strife. I fear that he missed it. It happened—and to Gibson's credit he didn't hide it—because so far he is passionately locked into the anti-Vatican II stance which longs for the "good old days" when the Mass was in Latin and Jews were not collectively free from the outrageous charge of deicide (the killing of God). The world-impacting crucifixion of a fellow Jew historically resulted in the varied crucifixion of millions of his brethren, including gas chambers, thus figuratively crucifying the suffering Jesus time and again.

Indeed Jesus' message and mission of Israel's shalom have been tragically overtaken by history's greatest and longest hatred fueled by The Passion, so ironically toward Jesus' own flesh and blood. Jews are still victims of nails spread in their bodies by suicide bombers. How in the world did Gibson cast that governor Pontius Pilate as a pussycat, manipulated by those scary-looking, menacing rabbis that he after all appointed to high office? He surely knows that all the Jews at that time were under terrorizing Roman rule which gave rise to the fertile messianism so poignantly represented by Jesus.

Gibson allowed his creative imagination to really soar high, but at what price? Millions will consider his take as gospel truth and perpetuate those stereotypical images pursuing us, Jews and Christians, with so much damage to both. Isn't it time to loosen those destructive bonds of oppression?

Gibson succeeded in resurrecting through the power of his artistic talent the ghosts that Catholics and Protestants courageously tried through revised doctrine and practice to bury in humanity's graveyard of monumental sins and errors. But he also presents us with a precious opportunity to redouble our ecumenical dialogue and sectarian educational efforts of all religions to prove that blood should lead to love, violence to vision, and reality to redemption.

Perhaps now that Gibson's risky financial investment—prompted by an evident deep faith which I'm glad he found—has borne substantial fruit, he would contemplate another version of The Passion that is less threatening to our common dream. It is high time to prove that religion can and should be a source of infinite goodness and not only of inexhaustible evil. My own young congregation met for 10 glorious years from 1985 to 1995 at the most gracious Catholic Church of the Ascension in Virginia Beach. That inspiring interfaith model could not have happened without the reforms of Vatican II when Pope John XXIII began and current Pope John Paul II enhanced the promising rapprochement with the Jewish people.

This sea change culminated in the Vatican's official recognition of the Jewish state, the Jews no longer rejected by the church's teaching of contempt condemning us to forever be wanderers with Cain's mark upon us. The Polish pope's visit to Israel's eternal capital Jerusalem witnessed his paying trib-

ute and praying at the Western Wall around the temple where Jesus left his mark, and Yad Vashem's Holocaust Memorial reminding the courageous and visionary pope of his own proud anti-Nazi saga and the Jewish classmates he lost. And could I have honored retiring Bishop Walter F. Sullivan at our holiest service on Yom Kippur Eve? Our dear Catholic bishop, who has become a close friend, held our Holocaust Torah scroll from Czechoslovakia. He was instrumental in establishing the new Holocaust museum in Richmond.

Following Gibson's penetrating film, Jewish children in Virginia Beach and elsewhere have been socially ostracized. Would Gibson like to face the two high schoolers in my congregation who had swastikas left on their desks? And what might yet happen in a Europe that is experiencing the worst resurgence since the Holocaust of the virulent virus of anti-Semitism, as well as the vast Muslim world with its growing radicalism?

On the eve of Passover and Easter's shared rejoicing in the divine gifts of renewal and resurrection, respectively for Jews and Christians, there is much that Gibson can so ably do to help us build together God's kingdom on earth of healing, hope and harmony for all. There is much at stake and we are all in it together.

Rabbi Israel Zoberman, spiritual leader of Congregation Beth Chaverim in Virginia Beach, is son of Polish Holocaust survivors. He is immediate past president of the Hampton Roads Board of Rabbis.

HONORING VALERY (LAWRENCE)
WEINBERG PRESIDENT, PUBLISHER, AND EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
OF NOVOYE RUSSKOYE SLOVO

HON. JERROLD NADLER

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 5, 2004

Mr. NADLER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Valery (Lawrence) Weinberg, President, Publisher and Editor-in-Chief of Novoye Russkoye Slovo. On May 8th Mr. Weinberg will be celebrating 40 years of service at Novoye Russkoye Slovo (New Russian Word). Novoye Russkoye Slovo is the oldest and most widely read Russian-language daily newspaper in the United States.

Born in the Ukraine in 1945, Mr. Weinberg emigrated first to Poland, and then to the United States in 1964—the same year he began his career at Novoye Russkoye Slovo. From 1964–1982 he held numerous positions at the paper. He was named Executive Vice President in 1982 and President in 1986. In 1995, Mr. Weinberg founded and became President of People's Wave Radio (WYDM 1380-AM), the only 24-hour, seven-day-a-week Russian-Language radio station in the world.

Under Mr. Weinberg's leadership, Novoye Russkoye Slovo played an important role in bringing democracy to the Soviet Union by supporting Russian dissidents and publishing their work. Former presidents from both political parties, including President Bill Clinton and Ronald Reagan, have acknowledged Novoye Russkoye Slovo anniversaries and noted the newspaper's part in helping new immigrants adapt to life in the United States and understand U.S. policy and democracy.

After the collapse of communism, the Russian government honored Mr. Weinberg for his

and the paper's support of freedom and democracy. In 2000, he received an award from former President Boris Yeltsin celebrating the paper's 90th anniversary. In 2003 he was honored at an event in Moscow for his efforts to preserve Russian culture in the United States.

Mr. Weinberg is also a well-known philanthropist in the Russian-American community. He is the founder and President of the UJA-Federation Russian Division, which raises funds for economically disadvantaged Russian Jews worldwide. With his wife Lilly, Mr. Weinberg helped raise funds to build several projects in Israel, including a school for disabled children. In addition to his work the UJA, Mr. Weinberg is President of the Fund for the Neediest Russian Immigrants. The fund was instrumental in building an emergency room and hospital in Israel, and was active in providing assistance to Russian-American victims of September 11th. Finally, Mr. Weinberg also serves as President of Litfundt, which provides assistance for Russian-American artists and writers.

I am pleased to stand here today to congratulate Mr. Weinberg for his 40 years of service to the Russian-American community and thank him for his commitment to freedom and democracy. He is a man of integrity and drive, and I wish him all the best now and in the future.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO DAYNA
LEONARD

HON. SCOTT McINNIS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 5, 2004

Mr. McINNIS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Dayna Leonard of Montrose, Colorado on being named Youth of the Year by the Black Canyon Boys' and Girls' Club. The award, in its fifty-seventh year, recognizes contributions to family, community, school, and the club. Dayna will serve as a representative for the club for the remainder of the year, and it is my pleasure to recognize her achievement today.

A fifth grade student at Pomona Elementary School in Montrose, Colorado, Dayna was named Youth of the Month by the Boys' and Girls' Club in February 2003. This honor allowed her to compete for the honor of Youth of the Year. Dayna was selected Youth of the Year from fourteen other winners because of her moral character, life goals and public speaking ability, after a competition which included an essay, an interview, and a speech. In addition to her participation in the Boys' and Girls' Club, Dayna is active in Black Canyon Gymnastics, the Torch Club leadership program, as well as several community service projects.

Mr. Speaker, I am honored to pay tribute to the service and achievements of Dayna Leonard before this body of Congress and this nation; and to congratulate her on having the distinction of being named Youth of the Year. Her dedication to improving herself and her community are truly remarkable and I wish her all the best in her future endeavors.