

Embargoed Until Sunday, March 5, 2006 10 pm

AIPAC POLICY CONFERENCE 2006

HOWARD KOHR

Seventy three years ago, on this very day, a man with a radical vision consolidated his power as Chancellor of Germany.

While his goals were anything but hidden, the world refused to recognize the threats that led a world to war,
and a people to disaster.

The parallels of the
geo- political climate of March 5th 1933 and that of March 5th, 2006 are stunning
in their likeness;
eerie in their implication.

Good friends, evil men and their regimes must not be given time to grow and
strengthen.

We must convince our leaders to take all the necessary actions to fundamentally
affect the course of history while there is still time.

Since last year when we gathered together in this city, events have gone from
bad to worse on two fronts in particular that I want to talk about this evening: Iran
and the Palestinians.

First-- Iran.

The shocking threats of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad make his intentions
clear.

"The annihilation of the Zionist regime will come... Israel must be wiped off the
map," he stated.

"God willing, with the force of God behind it, we shall soon experience a world
without the United States and Zionism."

Less than a year since Ahmadinejad was elected Iran's President, his rhetoric
has been coordinated with a series of outrageous actions.

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In defiance of international law, Iran ended cooperation with United Nations inspectors, broke the seals on its nuclear-related equipment, resumed the process of building a nuclear weapon, fed uranium into centrifuges, ended all negotiations with the Europeans and now threatens to withdraw from their existing international agreements.

Ladies and Gentlemen, what makes Iran so dangerous is not simply the words their leaders speak, or the threats the regime makes.

What makes Iran so dangerous is the simple fact that it is closer than ever to having the military capabilities to match its evil intentions.

This is exactly the parallel that world leaders should not miss.

Hitler transformed Germany from a weak power to one with enough military might to carry out his evil plans.

Unlike the ominous days of the 1930s,

This time we must not ignore the approaching thunder.

We must not ignore the evil words and plans of Iran's president.

“Call back yesterday. Bid time return.”

It is Shakespeare's fervent plea. But not ours --- not yet.

Our actions still matter. But, my friends, this moment could pass us by.

Tonight, all of us assembled, take a solemn pledge.

We pledge that we will not be part of a generation that will wish it could call back yesterday.

All of us have asked ourselves the question: Why wasn't more done to stop the Axis powers? Why weren't the warnings heeded?

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Ladies and Gentlemen,
despite the similarities with the 1930s, there are important differences.

First, there is America – the world's lone superpower – no longer isolationist, but able and willing to protect our interests and our allies the world over.

And second, there is Israel—a country ready and able to protect Jews throughout the world;

And there is a third difference – a reality made possible by America and Israel.

There is us – you and me. We are part of the most vibrant, politically involved and influential American Jewish community ever.

AIPAC itself was created so that nobody – none of us --- would miss the opportunity to act.

That is why Tuesday, when we meet with our members of Congress, we will be asking them to put in place the economic, diplomatic and political levers to demonstrate to the leaders of Iran that there are real consequences to their actions.

You came to Washington this week from all over the nation because you understand the urgent need and imperative to convince decision makers to act.

We will ask our legislators on Tuesday to sign onto The Iran Freedom Support Act and to reauthorize and strengthen the Iran Libya Sanctions Act.

What is the meaning of the Iran legislation and why is it a pivotal tool in shaping the future of our world?

First, it is important to understand the nature of Iran.
Iran is not a superpower.

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It is dangerous.

It is a threat.

But Iran is vulnerable.

We need to understand these vulnerabilities in order to prevent Iran from getting the bomb.

Some facts ---

Nearly one million Iranians enter the labor force every year and can't find jobs. A large percentage of the population is either unemployed or underemployed.

And despite its vast oil wealth, Iran has so mismanaged its economy that today it imports 40 percent of its gasoline.

Oil production has shrunk by one-third since the days of the Shah.

Since last August when Ahmadinejad became president of Iran, the Iranian stock market has declined by nearly 40 percent.

While this year their petroleum earnings will amount to about \$50 billion dollars, it has been reported that well over 200 billion dollars in investment capital has left Iran in just the last six months.

The Iranian people are becoming increasingly nervous about the future of their country.

Capital is not the only thing fleeing Iran.

Visa applications to leave Iran are reportedly at an all time high.

Those skeptical about the utility of sanctions should remember that Iran has repeatedly moderated its posture – albeit temporarily – when confronted with the threat of economic sanction.

Consider the effect if, for instance, the U.N. Security Council put an embargo on Iran's petroleum imports.

Consider what would happen if the European Union, Japan, Australia and

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Canada, which make up half of all Iran's trade, would have the moral courage to boycott them.

The effect would be immediate.

Now that

Ahmadinejad's rantings and Iran's nuclear intentions have finally gotten the world's attention, we must not let the issue slip back off the radar screen.

In just a few hours, the Board of Governors of the IAEA – the International Atomic Energy Agency – will meet in Vienna to consider the report that will finally bring Iran to the United Nations Security Council.

Our Administration is to be commended for galvanizing this effort.

We also applaud the President's commitment of \$75 million in emergency assistance to fund radio, television and educational campaigns inside Iran, intended to encourage pro-democracy dissidents who want to change their country's leadership.

And most significantly, we express our profound appreciation to President Bush for stating clearly and forcefully that the United States will defend Israel if it comes under Iranian attack.

My friends, now we must ensure that the U.N. Security Council takes the next step swiftly.

It must lay out a clear choice for Iran--- either you halt enrichment activity and allow for immediate and full inspections of your nuclear sites or we will impose strong and sweeping economic, political and diplomatic sanctions.

Sanctions could target three groups – the regime, the wealthy, and the unelected mullahs.

The United Nations, as it did in the case of Libya, could ban Iran's airline from flying outside the country's borders, restricting travel of Iranian diplomats and its wealthy citizens.

It could stop scientists from attending international conferences and they could

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freeze the assets of Iranian owned foundations so that the mullahs could not hide their wealth outside the country.

These sanctions would show the Iranian people in stark terms that their leaders are lying to them when they say that they can carry on normal relations with the world, while enriching uranium.

And if the phrase "international community" is to mean anything at all, it must never legitimize those who seek the destruction of a sovereign nation.

Mahmoud

Ahmadinejad must never be allowed to address the United Nations General Assembly as he did just a few months ago.

The civilized world must say to Iran's President --- you and your repugnant ideas are not welcome here.

In addition to crucial steps that must be taken by the UN Security Council to impose these sanctions, we will encourage our elected officials to increase the economic pressure on Iran to an even larger degree by adopting the Iran Freedom Support Act.

This act tightens existing laws by adding teeth to sanctions already on the books. The legislation supports Iranian dissidents.

And for the first time, it urges the divestment of American pension plans and mutual funds in stocks in the foreign companies that are investing in Iran's energy sector.

This is not a symbolic effort.

These actions will help dry up the resources necessary for Iran to invest in weapons of mass destruction.

Taken together, congressional legislation that reinforces U.S. leadership and UN Security Council sanctions that isolate Iran politically and economically, are our best chance to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons.

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Ladies and Gentlemen, Iran is not alone in its desire to wipe Israel off the face of the map.

In the Palestinian territories, the radical terrorist organization Hamas has come to power.

Let us be clear about exactly who Hamas is.

The Hamas charter is laced with the worst kind of anti-Semitism and racism. The core of its doctrine rejects peaceful efforts to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. And calls for the destruction of the State of Israel through jihad or holy war.

Hamas' rise to power signals a change in the nature of the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians.

Their election has the potential to transform what has been up until now, a secular, nationalist struggle to an intractable, fundamentalist, religious one.

Listen to what the charter states: "Our struggle against the Jews is extremely wide-ranging and grave....it will need all the loyal efforts we can wield... until the enemies are defeated and Allah's victory prevails."

Like Iran, what is dangerous about Hamas is not simply its words, but the fact that it matches its words with actions.

Hamas, now in control of the Palestinian Authority, has claimed responsibility for the murder of more than 500 people, including more than two dozen American citizens in some of the most heinous terrorist attacks.

It has specifically targeted innocent children:

College students taking time out from their studies to grab a bite to eat in the cafeteria at Hebrew University;

Teenagers out for a night of dancing at a popular Tel Aviv club;

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Elementary school children riding their bus to school;
And American students on a year abroad.

Lenny and Vicky Eisenfeld's 25-year old son Matthew was studying to be a rabbi at the Jewish Theological Seminary and like most rabbinic students, he was spending the year studying in Jerusalem.

He and his girlfriend

Sara Duker were riding the Number 18 bus in Jerusalem, when a Hamas homicide bomber, funded by Iran, murdered them both, ending two bright futures and shattering the still of the night when a phone call alerted their parents that they would never return home.

Lenny and Vicky Eisenfeld know what Hamas is.
They are terrorists trained to kill.

The Eisenfelds turned their grief into action.

As individuals, they established ground breaking litigation in the United States and Europe to sue state sponsors of terrorism.

They are not victims.

They are community leaders, who have become AIPAC co-chairs of our organizations group in Hartford, Connecticut and have dedicated themselves to increasing the number of people involved in pro-Israel political activism.

Lenny and Vicky are here with us this evening, as they have been so many times before.

They will lobby with us on Tuesday to remind our members of Congress who Hamas is.

Lenny and Vicky, all of us are deeply saddened by the grief you have had to endure.

But you should know that we also derive inspiration from your courage.

Thank you for being here and for all you do to strengthen our work.

In doing so, you keep Matt and Sara's memory alive.

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My friends, Hamas cannot be seen as a legitimate force. It can only be seen for what it is—an organization that has the annihilation of Israel as its end and terror as its means.

We therefore applaud the Administration and the Congress, for having correctly laid out a policy that gives Hamas a clear and distinct choice: Either you recognize Israel, disarm, renounce violence, end terrorism and abide by all your previous peace agreements --- or face international political and economic isolation.

Despite the strong stand by our country's leaders, the world is pushing back. From Riyadh to Pretoria and Caracas, countries are beginning to waver.

And just two days ago, Moscow welcomed Hamas leader Khaled Meshaal, opening the doors to international legitimacy. They are accepting Hamas on its terms – without any preconditions.

Ladies and gentlemen, we must be the counterweight to the pull of the world's dangerous inclinations.

That is why in addition to lobbying for critical Iran legislation on Tuesday, we will work to codify U.S. policy through passage of The Palestinian Anti-Terrorism Act, introduced by members of Congress Ros-Lehtinen, Lantos, Cantor and Ackerman in the House and Senators McConnell and Biden in the Senate.

This legislation will anchor American efforts to isolate Hamas internationally. It will end U.S. assistance to the Palestinian Authority, while still providing for the humanitarian needs of the Palestinian People. The bill will prohibit official U.S. contact with the Palestinian Authority so long as it is controlled by terrorists. Its office in Washington will be shut. Its diplomats in New York confined to the United Nations.

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This legislation provides for real consequences for Hamas' behavior. It will force them to make a choice: Change or continue to rob your own people of the chance for economic development and to live in peace.

In 1943, ten years and two million European Jewish deaths after Hitler rose to power, a group of prominent American Rabbis traveled to this city in an attempt to get a meeting at the White House.

Their goal: to make a direct appeal for the United States to save their Jewish brothers and sisters from the gas chambers.

The meeting never happened.

White House officials sent word that they were too busy to take the meeting.

My friends, decades later, in our nation's capital, at a conference of a size and diversity that our forefathers would have found inconceivable, the Vice President of the United States of America will come to us in what will be the largest American Jewish audience that any Vice President in history has addressed.

His presence reflects his commitment to the US - Israel relationship.

But also,

his presence signifies the strength of our movement.

My friends, think back to that moment during World War II to the meeting that never was.

How much could action at that moment changed history?

How many could have been spared the horror?

These are the questions that haunt a generation.

One of the great sorrows of life is this simple fact.

We cannot change what was.

But my friends, we can change what will yet be.

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This is our time -- our moment.

This time, we must make sure the world listens.

We must use the strength we have built to change the course of events.

Now is the time to stop Iran.

Now is the time to confront Hamas.

Now is the time for leadership.

Now is the time to stand together.

Ladies and gentlemen, now is the time for action.

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