

## David Harris Talks to Russians

On Thursday, May 19Th, [David Harris](#), Executive Director of AJC (American Jewish Committee) met with the Russian Jewish community of Boston. The meeting took place at [Shaloh House](#)/Jewish Russian Community center in Brighton.

The meeting had a friendly, warm, at times nostalgic tone. David Harris reminisced about his stay in Moscow in 1974, as an exchange teacher at the school #45. (His stay did not last long; he was thrown out the country for contacts with Jewish activists). Russian Jews remembered the "blue book" -- a guide for people entering American life that was written by David. David Harris noticed that despite a pronounced conservative bent of the Russian Jews political views AJC welcomes them in the broader community. He stressed the need for influence in both parties. According to AJC's polls 75% of Russian Jews voted for George Bush -- versus the exact opposite of the broader Jewish communities. Thorny issues like separation of church and state and AJC support for Sharon's disengagement were politely left out of the conversation. One cloud went over the otherwise extremely friendly meeting, when somebody from the audience challenged AJC about their position over the issue between Chabad and local Jewish establishment in Vilna, Lithuania. (Chabad's emissary in Vilna comes from Brighton and is well known and liked). All speakers thanked AJC for organizing last year a Russian Leadership program. Everybody agreed that the program had a tangible impact on the level of organization of the Russian Jewish community of Boston.

Russian Jews learned AJC's lessons about organizations, but politely declined left-leaning political advice. AJC seems to be comfortable with this for now.

