A STRANGE DICHTOMY marked the year. While the country enjoyed continued prosperity and stability, the government—especially Prime Minister Tony Blair—incurred increasing unpopularity, albeit not to a degree that would threaten Labour's continuance in office.

The sustained growth of the economy and low interest rates softened the impact of tax increases on disposable income, although opinion polls did register discontent, particularly over local taxation. Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown's pre-budget report in December indicated that receipts were lower than anticipated while costs associated with the Iraq war had pushed spending above expectations. Nevertheless, Brown adhered to his "golden rule" that over the economic cycle the government should borrow only to invest. Employment reached a record high of 28.1 million, and the number of people applying for unemployment benefits dropped steadily, reaching 917,800 in November, 7,900 lower than a year before. High employment raised the threat of wage inflation. The burden of interest payments on the growing public debt raised similar concerns. In July, interest rates were cut a quarter-percent to 3.50 percent to stimulate the economy, but in December this was reversed for the first time in almost four years; rates went back up to 3.75 percent so as to counteract the danger of rises in house prices and personal debt.

Politically, satisfaction with the government continued to decline from its peak of about 55 percent just after 9/11 to about 25 percent in December 2003. The results of local elections held in May registered the political fallout: Labour lost a combined 800 seats, and the Conservatives, winning the largest share of the vote, gained about 500. Labor's troubles were the result, first, of a perception that public services such as schools and hospitals were not showing improvement. Adding greatly to a lack
of trust in the government was the failure to find evidence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq after the war, casting grave doubt on the case for participating in it. This was reinforced by the apparent suicide of Dr. David Kelly, a government weapons expert, and the evidence of divided views within the government and security services disclosed by the inquiry into his death. The government was also at odds with many of its own supporters in Parliament and the country over school tuition fees. The election of a new Tory leader, Michael Howard, who is in fact Jewish, to replace an ineffectual predecessor gave new vigor and unity to the Tory opposition and provided a credible alternative to Labour.

Israel and the Middle East

“We are absolutely determined to move the peace process forward,” said Prime Minister Blair in March. “This will be a central part of British foreign policy.” But Britain’s relationship with Israel’s government in 2003 started badly when Blair met in London with opposition leader Amram Mitzna, which some in Israel interpreted as an attempt to influence the imminent national election there. Relations deteriorated further when Israel refused Palestinian officials permission to travel to London for a conference convened by Britain on Palestinian political reform.

The Iraq war in March aggravated anti-Israel sentiment. Resigning as leader of the House of Commons, Robin Cook, an opponent of the war, contrasted Britain’s bellicose stance toward Iraq with its tolerance of Israel’s refusal to obey UN Security Council resolutions, and noted “a strong sense of injustice throughout the Muslim world at what it sees as one rule for the United States’ allies and another for the rest.” When Foreign Secretary Jack Straw made a similar comment demanding the same adherence to Security Council resolutions from Israel and from Iraq, the director general of Israel’s Foreign Ministry summoned Sherard Cowper-Coles, the British ambassador, and told him to convey to London the “severity” with which the prime minister and foreign minister viewed Straw’s statement. Later in the year certain left-leaning members of the governing party — MPs Fiona MacTaggart and Tom Dalyell in particular — made allusions to the alleged influence of Israel and Jews on Britain’s decision to join the Iraq war, Dalyell commenting that Blair was swayed by a “cabal of Jewish advisers.” In October, 12 MPs affiliated with Labour Friends of Israel held a private meeting to discuss how to deal with such expressions within Labour ranks.

Blair’s April invitation to Prime Minister Sharon for a full working visit
helped mend fences between the two governments. At a tête-à-tête dinner at Downing Street in July, Blair described Britain as “Israel's best friend in Europe” and Sharon expressed Israel’s readiness to make concessions in exchange for peace. But he failed to persuade Blair to break ties with Arafat. “We will continue to have dealings with Arafat as the democratically elected president of the Palestinian Authority,” said Straw, who, in January, had explained that Britain regarded support for Palestinian reform efforts as an important part of the search for peace. Appointment of a prime minister for the PA was seen as a key element of reform, and in February Blair welcomed Arafat’s declaration that he might be willing to give up some power to a prime minister. In April, Blair reportedly phoned Arafat in an effort to persuade him to cede genuine authority to Abu Mazen, the designated prime minister.

Support for political reform went hand in hand with economic aid. Britain would increase its direct aid to the Palestinians to £32m from a planned £26m, said Foreign Office minister Mike O’Brien in March. In June, following Israeli allegations that some of the cash was going to terror groups, an all-party select committee on international development opened an inquiry into how the PA used British aid (as well as into the effects of Israel’s “wall of separation” on Palestinian farmers and of the Israeli settlements on the Palestinian economy). British aid, according to a Foreign Office spokesman, supported a number of “emergency programs” including trauma counseling, special education, and the work of the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA).

There could be “absolutely no compromise” over Israel’s security, said Blair in May, when he called on Israel and the Palestinians to negotiate steps to halt violence. Such a halt, he hoped, would allow the lifting of Israeli restrictions on the free movement of Palestinians in the territories and progress toward the two-state solution envisaged in the “road map.” In the meantime, Britain condemned Palestinian suicide bombings and urged Arafat to take a strong line against the bombers, but felt the Israeli response fueled the cycle of violence. In March, for example, Straw condemned the bombing of a bus in Haifa, but also suggested that the Israeli army used “indiscriminate” force in battling terrorism. In June, Britain expressed concern at Israel’s abortive attempt to assassinate senior Hamas leader Abdel Aziz Rantisi (see above, pp. 167–68). Whitehall recognized Israel’s right to protect her own security, said O’Brien, but extrajudicial killings or assassinations of Palestinian militants undermined the prospect of a peaceful settlement.

In September, Straw joined the U.S. in pressuring Israel to drop the idea
of removing, let alone assassinating, Arafat, that had been voiced by Israel's deputy prime minister, Ehud Olmert, in a radio broadcast after a double suicide bombing in Jerusalem (see above, p. 181). Britain's new Middle East minister, Baroness Symons, summoned Israeli ambassador Zvi Shtauber to the Foreign Office to tell him that Olmert's comments were "unacceptable, immoral, and not in the interests of peace." In October, Blair angered Israelis by asking his special envoy, Lord Levy, to visit Arafat to apprise him of Britain's views on the "road map" and terrorism. The next month, a Foreign Office spokesman described Israel's response to the suicide attack on a Haifa restaurant (see above, pp. 182–83) as an "unwelcome escalation."

The shootings by Israeli soldiers of two Britons—TV cameraman James Miller in Rafah in May and 21-year-old photography student and peace activist Tom Hurndall in Gaza in April—aroused anger in the country, and, following Foreign Office requests, Israel conducted full investigations into the two deaths (see above, p. 158). Britain also lodged a formal complaint with Israel after an IDF soldier fired warning shots over embassy cars carrying Hurndall's parents through the Gaza checkpoint, and Straw said it was unacceptable for Israel to require all foreigners entering Gaza to sign a waiver absolving Israel from responsibility for their safety. Military forces had obligations under international law in occupied territory, he said. In October, Britain called on Israel to review its army's rules of engagement.

In June, the Israeli government reacted to what it considered biased reporting by the BBC by banning all official contacts with the network. The specific program that triggered Israel's drastic move was a documentary about Israel's nuclear and biological weapons capability. The ban cut most deeply during Sharon's May visit, when BBC journalists were barred from briefings and Israeli leaders refused to appear on BBC programs. A series of meetings in London and Jerusalem involving Israeli officials, British Jews, and BBC representatives led to the appointment of Malcolm Balen to oversee the BBC's Middle East coverage, and Israel ended its boycott in November.

Also in November, Prime Minister Blair welcomed the so-called Geneva Accord, the unofficial combined Arab-Israeli alternative peace plan (see above, pp. 193–94), even while stressing that he still regarded the "road map" as the path to peace. Blair explained that "anything that promotes dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians about how we find a way forward is to be welcomed."

The Iraq war had the effect of boosting membership in British Friends
of Peace Now, but the organization’s participation in demonstrations was hampered by the anti-Israel sentiments of other antiwar groups. In March, Board of Deputies officials told leaders of the Stop the War coalition that they would not tolerate anti-Jewish slogans at their rallies, and again in October protested to the coalition that its demonstrations were being hijacked by the Muslim Association of Britain to attack Israel. Peace Now did not join the 6,000 persons who gathered for a “Free Palestine” rally in London in May, though it did demonstrate side by side with Jews for Justice for Palestinians and the Palestine Solidarity Campaign during Prime Minister Sharon’s visit in July.

In October, European Jews for a Just Peace, a network of 18 Jewish groups in nine countries, placed a notice in the Jewish Chronicle demanding the dismantling of the “wall of separation,” an end to occupation, dismantling the settlements, and acknowledgement of Israel’s share of responsibility for the Palestinian refugee problem. By November, more than 140 MPs had signed a motion calling on the government to exert “all available pressure” on Israel to cease building the wall.

British attempts to rebuild relations with Iran suffered a temporary setback in August when Britain’s chargé d’affaires in Tehran was summoned to the Iranian Foreign Ministry following the arrest in England of a former Iranian ambassador to Argentina, Hade Soleimanpour, for alleged involvement in the bombing of the AMIA (Argentine Israeliite Mutual Aid Association) building in 1994. A month later, a London judge freed Soleimanpour, a research assistant at Durham University, and the Argentine government requested his extradition.

Terrorism and Anti-Zionism

“London has become a haven for radical elements hostile to Jews and Israel,” said an Israeli official in May. “It is a place where they can freely promote their hateful ideology.” His remarks followed the news that two Tel Aviv suicide bombers held British passports. Three family members of one of the bombers were charged at London’s Bow Street magistrates’ court under a section of the Terrorism Act relating to failure to disclose information about acts of terrorism. They were the first people to be charged under the new legislation. Straw conveyed his “extreme regret” to the Israeli government. Urged by Israel to bear down harder on Islamic extremists inciting anti-Jewish violence, the Home Office announced tough new measures, including an amendment to the Criminal Justice Bill imposing stiffer penalties. The main bomber, Asif Hanif, from Hounslow,
West London, died in the blast. The body of his accomplice, Derby-born Omar Sharif, whose bomb failed to detonate, was later found in the sea off Tel Aviv.

In May, the Treasury ordered British financial institutions to freeze the assets of the Al-Aqsa Foundation, which Israel alleged was linked to Hamas and suspected of funding terrorist outrages. The next month, Britain pressed the European Union (EU) to crack down on fund-raising for the military wing of Hamas, banned in Britain under the Terrorism Act. At the EU foreign ministers session in Luxembourg, Straw urged a pan-European ban on Hamas, including its political wing; Whitehall, reports stated, was concerned that Hamas was working to undermine the “road map.”

In September, the Charity Commission unfroze the assets of Interpal, a UK-based Palestinian fund-raising charity, finding no evidence of links with Hamas. The Commission launched its investigation after the Board of Deputies wrote to Straw urging that funds held in Britain for Palestinian terrorist groups be frozen. The next month Interpal initiated a libel suit against the Board of Deputies for calling it a terrorist organization.

In March, the first prosecution of a Muslim cleric in Britain found Jamaica-born Abdul El Faisal guilty of calling for Jews, Americans, Hindus, and other “nonbelievers” to be killed. Convicted at the Old Bailey of soliciting murder and of distributing and possessing material with intent to incite racial hatred, he was sentenced to nine years in jail. A few weeks later, Muslim cleric Abu Hamza—accused in 2002 of links with terrorist groups and banned that December from preaching in his mosque in Finsbury Park, North London—was stripped of his British citizenship under the recent Nationality, Immigration, and Asylum Act for behavior deemed “seriously prejudicial” to British interests.

Academia was the scene of several anti-Israel battles. In January, the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology (UMIST) cleared Professor Mona Baker of wrongdoing for sacking two Israelis from the boards of journals she edited (see AJYB 2003, pp. 364–65). As the journals were independently owned, UMIST had no jurisdiction over them and Baker was therefore entitled to remove board members.

In October, on the other hand, Oxford University’s Visitatorial Board, its disciplinary panel for academic staff, suspended Andrew Wilkie, Nuffield professor of pathology and fellow of Pembroke College, for two months without pay, and required him to participate in an equal-opportunities training program. Wilkie, who resigned his Pembroke fel-
lowship and his place on the college's governing body, had refused to take on an Israeli graduate student because he had previously served in the Israel Defense Force.

The Association of University Teachers (AUT) conference, held in Scarborough, Yorkshire, in May, rejected a motion calling for institutions of higher education to sever academic links with Israel, but agreed that the AUT would affiliate with Trade Union Friends of Palestine. The National Union of Teachers (NUT), which reaffirmed its support for the Palestinian people at its conference in July, planned to send a delegation to report on the situation of Palestinian teachers and students. "We have worked with both Palestinian and Israeli teachers unions," said NUT's deputy general secretary, Steve Sinnet, "and are committed to peace and justice for both peoples."

Pro- and anti-Israel motions were often debated at student unions. In February, Surrey University students voted to ban anti-Zionism from campus. The same month student-union motions to support a boycott of Israeli good were defeated at Liverpool University and passed at London University's School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), which, in November, passed a motion terming Zionism "racial discrimination." Also common were motions to avoid conflict. In February, for example, the student union of Manchester Metropolitan University voted to ban discussion of topics that might set minority groups against each other, and the next month the Birmingham University union defeated a motion to allow the Israel-Palestine conflict to be debated.

Anti-Semitism

"Neither this country nor this government will tolerate anti-Semitism or any threat to the Jewish community," declared Prime Minister Blair in February. Events in the Middle East, he said, were being exploited to fuel anti-Semitism in Britain. Community Security Trust (CST) statistics confirmed this. The number of reported anti-Semitic incidents rose from 350 in 2002 to 375 in 2003. Of the 2003 total, 75 showed specific anti-Zionist motivation. The CST concluded from this a continuing trend away from the racial prejudice commonly associated with the far right and toward anti-Jewish animus rooted in hatred for Israel and Zionism.

The number of incidents in the first quarter of 2003, 89, was especially alarming since it was the highest for any quarter since 1991, and 75 percent higher than the corresponding 2002 period. That 43 incidents occurred in March alone, when the Iraqi war began, confirmed the CST's diagnosis, as some antiwar activists fomented hatred by linking the war
to Israel. Indeed, when the war began the Muslim Council of Britain issued a press release suggested that it was part of a planned redrawing of the Middle East map to accord with “the agenda of Zionists and American neoconservatives.” In response, the Board of Deputies appealed to representatives of the other major religious and ethnic communities to work to prevent the conflict from exacerbating racial tensions.

Attacks peaked again in October when Israel responded to a major suicide attack in Haifa by bombing a terrorist training camp in Syria (see above, pp. 182–83). That month saw the first prosecution in Britain for causing racially aggravated criminal damage: the magistrates' court in Hendon, North London, found a man guilty of sabotaging the eruv (symbolic boundary enabling carrying on Shabbat) on the first day of Rosh Hashanah, which was also Shabbat. The perpetrator was sentenced a fine and 60 hours of community service.

Although no life-threatening attacks were reported in 2003 (there were five in 2002), cases of physical assault rose from 42 in 2002 to 54. Jewish communal buildings were targeted on 63 occasions, including one in December when a memorial to Holocaust victims at Dollis Hill, North London, was vandalized. Attacks on synagogues and cemeteries increased 31 percent to a total of 72 incidents in 2003, including the worst cemetery desecration in UK history: 500 gravestones at Plashet Cemetery, East Ham, East London, were damaged in May. The teenage perpetrators were ordered to perform community service and fined £50 each. Mike Whine, head of the CST, noted that there were no funds for heightened security at cemeteries since the “scarce resources” of the community and the police were needed to protect the living.

The National Union of Teachers (NUT) warned in March that the situation in the Middle East and the Iraq war might require teachers to handle manifestations of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia in the schools. In July, after a 260-percent increase in such incidents at schools was reported, NUT issued new guidelines for dealing with them. In October, the far-right British National Party (BNP) launched a campaign to recruit in the schools.

The BNP increased its political presence in 2003 but sought to change its image; instead of blatantly appealing to racism, it focused on antagonism to asylum-seekers. In January it beat Labour in a by-election for a local council seat in Calderwell, Yorkshire, marking its fifth success in less than a year. Another local council by-election was scheduled for Redbridge, Essex, which had a large Jewish population. The BNP appealed to anti-Muslim sentiment but failed to win, in part because the Board of Deputies urged all synagogues and communal organizations to
cooperate with antifascist and antiracist groups against the BNP. In May, however, the BNP fielded more than 200 candidates at local elections and gained 11 seats, almost all in northern England. CST officials called this "a real warning to the Jewish community." In September, in another move to sanitize its reputation, the party expelled founder-member John Tyndall for "blighting the party with a neo-Nazi image." A spokesman said, "We are not in the business of going on about Jews." By years' end the BNP held 17 local council seats.

In January, Ken Livingstone, the mayor of London—who had already taken legal action against radical Muslims who defied a rally ban the previous summer—disallowed a demonstration in Trafalgar Square planned by the extremist White National Party for April. And in October, Livingstone revoked an invitation to Tony Martin, professor of Africana at Wellesley College in Massachusetts, to address a black heritage conference at Wembley, North London, because of his association with Holocaust denial.

In November, after the Home Office expressed concern at the lack of prosecutions under the laws against racial hate crimes, a working group was formed to examine the question. It consisted of representatives from the London Metropolitan Police, the Crown Prosecution Service, and the Jewish community.

Also in November, the Press Complaints Commission rejected a complaint by the Israeli embassy that a cartoon in the Independent newspaper was anti-Semitic. The cartoon, showing Israeli prime minister Sharon eating a baby, won the award for "political cartoon of the year" given by the Political Cartoonists' Society. Presenting the award at a ceremony sponsored by the Economist magazine, Claire Short, former secretary of state for international development, said that Israel often mistook criticism for anti-Semitism. In another incident that month, the Board of Deputies appealed to the Advertising Standards Authority over its rejection of a complaint against a controversial advertisement by Jews for Jesus that depicted six Orthodox Jews in front of the Western Wall, one wearing a Jews for Jesus T-shirt. The Authority had ruled that it was "neither racist not offensive to the Jewish people."

**Nazi War Criminals**

The government remained committed to bringing war criminals to justice, said Home Office minister Lord Falconer in February. Investigations were proceeding, he noted, into the wartime record of Dr. Swiatomyr Mychailo Fostun, a retired academic. Lord Janner, former secretary of the
House of Common all-party war-crimes group and current chairman of the Holocaust Educational Trust, called for the inquiry in January after the *Sunday Telegraph* reported Fostun’s links with two massacres of Jewish civilians in the Warsaw and Bialystok ghettos. Now aged 78 and living in Wembley, North London, Fostun had belonged to the 14th SS Division, Galicia, and settled in Britain after the war. In June, it was reported that the records of the National Health Service and the National Statistics Office were being searched for the names of any of the 7,000 other members of the 14th Division who might be living in Britain.

**Jewish Community**

*Demography*

With data from the 2001 national census now available, the way was open for a new round of speculation on Jewish demographics. In answer to a voluntary question on religion, some 267,000 residents of Britain indicated that they were “Jewish.” The Institute for Jewish Policy Research (JPR), analyzing the data in *Long-Term Planning for British Jewry: Final Report and Recommendations*, adjusted the number upward to at least 296,000 to account for Jews who did not answer the question on religion, but suggested that the true figure was more likely in the neighborhood of 345,000. Marlena Schmool, director of the Board of Deputies Community Research Unit, opted for a lower total, 300,000. The two groups of Jews most likely not to have responded to the question on religion were the secularists, who did not view their Jewish identity as a religious matter, and the ultra-Orthodox. In Hackney, for example, which had the largest concentration of ultra-Orthodox, fewer than 11,000 people identified themselves as Jews, far below communal estimates.

Meanwhile, the Research Unit’s annual report showed an increase in synagogue marriages from 845 in 2001 to 921 in 2002, a rise shared by all sectors of the community except Reform. Figures for burials and cremations under Jewish auspices were also higher: 3,670 in 2002 against a revised figure of 3,612 the year before, an increase confined almost entirely to the Progressive community. The number of religious divorces completed in 2002 stood at 250, six fewer than in 2001. The number of Jewish births was not yet available for 2001 or 2002; the figure for 2000 was 2,647.

The bet din (religious court) of the Reform Synagogues of Great Britain converted 96 proselytes in 2003 as compared with 87 in 2002.
Religion

In February, the United Synagogue (US), which represented moderate Orthodoxy and was Britain’s largest synagogue grouping, began a determined effort to put its troubles behind it and “create the vibrant and excellent organization needed at the forefront of Anglo-Jewry.” It circulated a 32-page booklet, *Transformation and Action*, which summarized the findings of a strategic review of the US initiated by its chief executive, Rabbi Saul Zneimer. US president Peter Sheldon unveiled a plan for a governance review to be completed by the end of 2004. Four committees would study the organization’s accountability, the effectiveness of its board of trustees, the extent to which members were given a voice, and the enforceability of its policies and practice. A sign that reform would not be easy came in May, when some incoming synagogue financial representatives refused to sign binding regulations before taking office, as required under the new US guidelines.

In July, the US spent £285,000 on the creation of a new division for young people called Tribe, focusing on four subcategories: children, youth, students, and young adults. In an unusual move, the US helped Willesden and Brondesbury Park Synagogue find and hire a young minister, Rabbi Baruch Levin, in November. This was done to revive a flagship synagogue in a demographically growing area.

The British Charity Commission announced in September that it would shortly close its 21-month investigation into the US, opened after a US lawsuit charging three of its cemetery employees of fraud collapsed in December 2001 (see AJYB 2002, p. 314). In November, the case brought by the former employees against the US for wrongful dismissal, racial harassment, and intimidation was thrown out by a special employment tribunal in Stratford, East London.

The Federation of Synagogues, another Orthodox group, also had problems with cemeteries. In September it placed an apology in the *Jewish Chronicle* for the confusion and inefficiency at funerals at its Rainham (Essex) cemetery on August Bank Holiday Monday, and promised to investigate the causes but not to publish the results.

In February, it was announced that the Federation’s Tottenham Hebrew Congregation, where membership had dropped from more than 400 to 80, would close. In December, the Aish Congregation in Hendon, Northwest London, affiliated with the Federation.

In March, the long-awaited Northwest London eruv (symbolic boundary enabling carrying on Shabbat) finally became operative, but was im-
mediately challenged by the head of the Sephardi Bet Din, Rabbi Pinchas Toledano, and haredi Orthodox rabbis, notably the influential Shalom Yosef Eliyashiv of Israel, considered the foremost living interpreter of Jewish law.

Some 70 to 100 congregants, mainly of Iraqi origin, broke away from Spanish and Portuguese Lauderdale Road Congregation (Northwest London) in July. Seeking a “more Sephardi-style service,” they formed their own congregation.

Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks came in for criticism in December when Sir Stanley Kalms, previously an influential Sacks supporter, suggested he resign. Writing in the Jewish Chronicle, Kalms described the past two years of Sacks’s rabbinate as “an exercise in unproductivity.” “Can we,” he asked, “in this dangerous time for world Jewry, afford a low-key leadership?” Also in December, the Office of the Chief Rabbi announced that his official residence would move from its historic location in St. John’s Wood to Northwest London, closer to the main synagogues. At the same time the chief rabbi would also serve as part-time rabbi at the Western-Marble Arch Synagogue on alternate Sabbaths.

A bitter row broke out in July when the Bournemouth Hebrew Congregation refused to call up Rabbi Louis Jacobs for an aliya (reading of the Torah) at the aufruf (pre-wedding service) of his granddaughter’s groom. Rabbi Jacobs, a noted scholar, was associated with the Masorti movement, roughly equivalent to American Conservative Judaism. The synagogue, which was independent Orthodox, snubbed him upon the instruction of the London Bet Din, a decision that evoked considerable criticism. One result of the affair was a call by former Masorti chairman Paul Shrank, in the pages of the Jewish Chronicle, for his movement to withdraw from the so-called Stanmore Accords, drawn up in 1998, whereby the US, Reform, Liberals, and Masorti pledged communal peace (see AJYB 1999, p. 283).

In January, the Reform Synagogues of Great Britain (RSGB) reported a £95,000 shortfall in income, and, in March, cut support for the Leo Baeck College-Center for Jewish Education and other projects.

In February, the St. John’s Wood Liberal Jewish Synagogue (LJS) became the first flagship congregation in Britain with a female senior rabbi, Alexandra Wright. In April, the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues (ULPS) rabbincic conference permitted its rabbis to bless the marriages of mixed-faith couples in synagogue, and in June became the first Jewish body in the UK to sanction synagogue blessings for gay and lesbian unions. In July, ULPS appointed an in-house press officer to raise
its profile, publicize its key initiatives, and ensure effective communications within the movement. The initial change to emerge from this public-relations thrust was the decision in September to rebrand ULPS as "Liberal Judaism" and to clarify its identity.

Shechitah (ritual slaughter) was threatened in June when the Farm Animal Welfare Council, a government advisory body, called for new legislation making it compulsory to stun livestock before slaughter, contrary to Jewish and Muslim practice. Then, in September, Vegetarians International launched a campaign against kosher slaughter. Nevertheless, reassurance came from several directions. Government minister Ben Bradshaw in August pledged that kosher meat would be imported into Britain even kosher slaughter were banned. Likewise, Shadow Rural Affairs spokesman David Liddington told a meeting of the Animal Welfare Group at the Conservative Party conference in October that a Tory administration would not allow any change in the law. And in December, London mayor Ken Livingstone assured an audience at the Orthodox Hebrew Congregation in Stamford Hill of his unwavering support for the right of the Jewish people in London to use their traditional means of slaughter. In November, several Jewish organizations formed a new group, Shechitah UK, to explain kosher slaughter to the general public: it sent out more than 5,000 postcards in December, and influenced the presentation of a motion in the House of Commons calling on the government to protect shechitah. Some 6,000 Muslims and Jews signed on to a petition urging no change in the law, and it was presented at Downing Street by Yorkshire councilor Imtiaz Ameen, a Muslim.

In September, "for purely commercial reasons," the Manchester Kashrut Authority ended its joint shechitah arrangement with the London Board for Shechitah.

Education

The long debate over whether a new Jewish secondary school in Hertsmere, Hertfordshire, would be Orthodox or cross-denominational (and therefore accept students with Jewish fathers and non-Jewish mothers) was resolved in favor of the Orthodox, and the projected school was put forward for government funding. The local council's planning subcommittee gave the go-ahead in June and the council approved the plan in October, even though the school was without a location because the county council had sold the projected site to a property developer in March. Meanwhile, London's three existing Jewish secondary schools—the US's newly expanded Jewish Free School in Kenton, Northwest Lon-
don; King Solomon's, East London; and the Orthodox Hasmonean High School—raised objections, fearing that another school would hurt them financially and ultimately lower educational standards. The demographic realities, they argued, showed no need for extra capacity. Confirmation of this came in a JPR report, *The Jewish Day School Marketplace: The Attitude of Jewish Parents in Greater London and the South-east towards Formal Education*. Written by Barry Kosmin and Oliver Valins and published in November, the report warned that London's Jewish schools might have problems filling their classrooms by 2015. “With current Jewish birthrates,” Kosmin contended, “opening another mainstream Orthodox school would leave places empty in others.”

The London School of Jewish Studies (LSJS), formerly Jews’ College, was relaunched in an attenuated form in September. It was without its rabbinic ordination program, and the B.A. in Jewish studies offered in partnership with SOAS had to be dropped after SOAS let go seven LSJS faculty members at the end of August. But with a new leadership team chaired by Howard Stanton (a former deputy chair of United Jewish Israel Appeal, UJIA), the school aimed “to regain community support by offering high quality academic and educational programs . . . to the modern Orthodox community.” First signs of an optimistic future for the cash-strapped institution came in March, with an announcement that financial backing had been secured for at least three years. With Dr. Tamara Wright, a lecturer in Jewish studies, as professional head, the institution would concentrate on adult learning, an evening M.A. course in Jewish studies, and a professional development project for educators. In September, more than £1m was raised to underwrite the relaunch, and in December LSJS netted £120,000 by auctioning off rare books through a New York auction house.

A record nine students began the five-year rabbinic ordination program at the Progressives’ Leo Baeck College-Center for Jewish Education in October. The institution also expanded its library resources by buying a number of the books that the LSJS put up for auction.

In January, UJIA announced plans to launch Britain's first M.B.A. degree in Jewish educational leadership, in conjunction with Hull University. This was designed to give Jewish educators and community professionals the opportunity to develop leadership and management skills.

**Foreign Aid**

The World Jewish Relief Service (WJR) was active at all levels. In June, for example, it worked with Radlett and Bushey Reform Congregation
and Jewish Chernobyl Children to bring youngsters from Radlett's twin "Menorah" community in Grodno, Belarus, to holiday in Hertfordshire. In September, it collaborated with Norwood, the community's main children and family service, to create Novi Dom (New House), a residential recreational and educational unit for disabled children in Minsk. This was Norwood's first overseas project. In December, the Birmingham and West Midlands Committee for WJR raised money to buy equipment for a new children's home in Krivoy Rog, a mining town with 30,000 mostly poor Jews in Ukraine. In the 12 months ending in June 2003, WJR's gift-aid program had delivered £2m worth of goods, double the previous year's figure, £750,000 of it to Belarus.

Royal patronage boosted the image of WJR. After visiting Kraków in 2002, Prince Charles, heir to the throne, became patron of a WJR campaign to build a community day-care center in the city. In February he pledged a £700,000 donation toward the cost. In November, Charles was guest of honor at WJR's 70th anniversary dinner.

In June, WJR announced a merger with UK Jewish Aid and International Development (UKJAID)—which, in February, had launched a program to train medical staff in Belarus. The new, combined body would be known as WJAid.

Publications

Both Jewish Quarterly-Wingate literary awards for 2003 went to non-Jewish authors. The prize for fiction went to Zadie Smith for The Autograph Man, and for nonfiction to the late Sebastian Haffner for Defying Hitler, originally written in German and translated by the author's grandson, Oliver Pretzel.

Books on religious themes published during the year included Hide and Seek: Jewish Women and Hair Covering by Lynne Schreiber; Judaism and Enlightenment by Adam Sutcliffe; Divine Command Ethics: Jewish and Christian Perspectives by Michael J. Harris; The Power of Kabbalah by Yehuda Berg; Abraham: In Search of the Father of Civilisation by Bruce Feiler; The Haphtara Cycle by Stephen Rosenberg; and The Dignity of Difference, second and revised edition of the controversial book by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, who also published The Chief Rabbi's Haggadah. Books about the practical aspects of religious life were Caring for Jewish Patients by Joseph Spitzer; Sign Language in Judaism, illustrating Jewish festivals and customs in sign language and produced by members of the Jewish Deaf Association in cooperation with the Office of the Chief Rabbi; and
Ingredients for a Jewish Life, a guide to food and festivals compiled by Tammy Russell and produced by the United Synagogue (US) community-development division, which ensured that every couple married under US auspices received a copy. Two books published by Progressive rabbis were Talking to the Other: Jewish Interfaith Dialogue with Christians and Muslims by Jonathan Magonet; and Ruach Chadashah — A New Spirit, a new Liberal High Holy Day prayer book coedited by Charles Middleburgh and Andrew Goldstein.

Biographies included Abram Games, Graphic Designer: Maximum Meaning, Minimum Means by Naomi Games, Catherine Moriarty, and June Rose; Relations by Jane Miller; The Double Life of Doctor Lopez by Dominic Green; Elusive Rothschild: The Life of Victor, Third Baron by Kenneth Rose; The Journals of Josef Herman, edited by Nini Herman; and The Woman who Defied Kings by Andrée Aelion Brooks. Autobiographical works published were A Spoilt Boy by Frederic Raphael—who also published a book of essays, The Benefits of Doubt; The Goldberg Variations by Mark Glanville; From the Inside by Ruth Wyner; Interesting Times by Eric Hobsbawm; Somewhere to Hang my Hat: An Irish-Jewish Journey by Stanley Price; and A Life in Music by Daniel Barenboim, who also collaborated with Edward Said in Parallels and Paradoxes: Explorations in Music and Society. Another work on music was David M. Schiller's Bloch, Schoenberg, Bernstein: Assimilating Jewish Music.

Studies of Jewish communities included Esther's Children: A Portrait of Iranian Jews, edited by Houman Sarshar; India's Jewish Heritage by Shalva Weil; The Pity of It All: A Portrait of Jews in Germany, 1743–1933 by Amos Elon; and, on a more local scale, Lincoln's Medieval Jewry and Up-hill Houses by Maureen Birch, and The History of Westminster Synagogue by Philippa Bernard.

Historical studies were The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Studies, edited by Martin Goodman; Haven in Africa by Frank Shapiro; and The Coming of the Third Reich by Richard J. Evans. Transgressions: The Offences of Art by Anthony Julius was concerned with aesthetics.

Holocaust studies included A Sacred Memory, a series of lectures on Holocaust-related topics edited by Aubrey Newman; Representing the Holocaust, edited by Sue Vice; Holocaust Historiography: A Jewish Perspective by Dan Michman; Did You Ever Meet Hitler, Miss? by Trude Levi; A House Next Door to Trauma: Learning from Holocaust Survivors How to Respond to Atrocity by Judith Hassan; In and Out of Harmony by Charles Lowy; Theresienstadt: Survival in Hell by Mélanie Oppenhejm; A Wolf in the Attic by Sophia Richman; and The Holocaust Chronicle,
edited by David Aretha and others. Two books by former Kindertransport children were *Only a Kindertransportee* by Annette Saville; and *A Child of Our Time* by Ruth David.

Studies of anti-Semitism were *A New Anti-Semitism? Debating Judeophobia in 21st-Century Britain*, essays edited by Paul Iganski and published under the aegis of the JPR; *The New Anti-Semitism* by Phyllis Chesler; and *The Holocaust and Antisemitism: A Short History* by Jocelyn Hellig.

Books on Israel included *A Civilian Occupation: The Politics of Israeli Architecture*, edited by Rafi Segal and Eyal Weizman; *Rethinking the Middle East* by Ephraim Karsh; *Six Days: How the 1967 War Shaped the Middle East* by Jeremy Bowen; *Trapped Fools: Thirty Years of Israeli Policy in the Territories* by Shlomo Gazit; *Politicide: Ariel Sharon’s War against the Palestinians* by Baruch Kimmerling; *Yasir Arafat: A Political Biography* by Barry Rubin and Judith Colp Rubin; *The Royal Navy and the Palestine Patrol* by Ninian Stewart; *Death as a Way of Life, Israel and Palestine: Why They Fight and Can They Stop?* by Bernard Wasserstein; and *When the Bulbul Stopped Singing: A Diary of Ramallah under Siege* by Raja Shehadeh. David Grossman published *Dispatches from Jerusalem* and also a novel, *Someone to Run With*.

Other fiction published during the year included *The Good Doctor* by Damon Galgut; *Tales of Grabowski* by John Auerbach; *The Liberated Bride* by A. B. Yehoshua; *The German Money* by Lev Raphael; *Into the Kingdom* by Maggy Whitehouse; *The Sea House* by Esther Freud; *Tamara Walks on Water* by Shifra Horn; *The Sergeants’ Tale* by Bernice Rubens; *The Next Big Thing* by Anita Brookner; *Goldberg: Variations* by Gabriel Josipovici; *Tales of Innocence and Experience* by Eva Figes; and *Madame Proust and the Kosher Kitchen* by Kate Taylor.

Works of literary research were *Grace Aguilar*, the selected writings of the first significant Jewish woman author, edited by Michael Galchinsky; *The Cambridge Companion to Jewish-American Literature*, edited by Michael P. Kramer and Hana Wirth-Nesher; *Jewish Writers of the Twentieth Century*, edited by Sorrel Kerbel; and *Close Encounters with Twenty Israeli Writers* by Eilat Negev. *The Golden Chain: 50 Years of the Jewish Quarterly* by Natasha Lehrer was a celebratory anniversary volume.

Among the poetry published in 2003 were *Hop Pickers’ Holiday* by Gerda Mayer; *Three Voices, Three Visions* by Edward Lowbury, Anne Kind, and Cynthia Walton; *The Fact of a Doorframe: Selected Poems 1950–2001* by Adrienne Rich; *Letters to Ted* by Daniel Weissbort; *Collected Poetry and Translations* by Elaine Feinstein; *Burning Wire* by Ruth
Fainlight; *Grace Notes* by Karen Gershon; and *Looking for You* by Peter Phillips.

**Personalia**

Honors conferred on British Jews in 2003 included a knighthood to Martyn Arbib, founder of Perpetual, an investment company, for charitable work, particularly in the field of education. Ruth Robins, head of the Jewish Free School, was made a Dame of the British Empire for services to education.

Notable British Jews who died in 2003 included Michael Cohen, Jewish educator, in London, in January, aged 91; Yfrah Neaman, violin teacher, in London, in January, aged 79; David Stern, communal activist, in London, in January, aged 82; Cyril Shaps, actor, in London, in January, aged 79; Jonathan Lew, chief executive of the United Synagogue 1986–98, in London, in February, aged 65; Alexander Russell, pediatrician active in Britain and Israel, in London, in March, aged 89; Fritz Spiegler, musical and comic entertainer, in Liverpool, in March, aged 77; Alan Keith, broadcaster, in London, in March, aged 94; Lewis Greifer, BBC producer and scriptwriter, in London, in March, aged 87; Joseph Pilbery, conductor and musicologist, in London, in April, aged 72; Vera Karoly, artist and musician, in Southampton, in April, aged 75; Sir Bernard Katz, Nobel laureate in biophysics, in London, in April, aged 92; Evelyn Rose, *Jewish Chronicle* cooking columnist, in Manchester, in May, aged 77; David Jayson, who helped found the Ravenswood Foundation for children with learning difficulties, in London, in May, aged 93; Bernard Spear, actor, in London, in May, aged 83; Sidney Bloom, of London’s renowned kosher restaurant, in London, in June, aged 82; Gerald Leigh, breeder of thoroughbred horses and philanthropist, in Eydon, Northamptonshire, in June, aged 71; Klaus Meyer, print artist, in Huntingdon, in June, aged 83; Rabbi Bezalel Rakow, the “Gateshead Rav,” Halakhic authority, in Gateshead, in July, aged 76; Alan Kennard, US stalwart and president of London Board for Shechita, in London, in July, aged 76; Linda Bayfield, innovative and influential figure in Jewish education, in Essex, in July, aged 55; Peter Gross, art historian and vice chairman of the Ben Uri Gallery, in London, in August, aged 62; Gershon Ellenbogen, legal and communal personality, in Liverpool, in September, aged 86; Frank Falk, Association of Jewish Refugees campaigner for tax-free reparations, in London, in September, aged 95; Leo Bernard, founder member of the Westminster Synagogue, in London, in Septem-
ber, aged 78; Rafael Scharf, cofounder of Oxford's Institute for Polish-Jewish Studies, in London, in September, aged 89; Ben Segal, professor of Semitic Languages at SOAS, 1961–79, president and former principal, Leo Baeck College, former vice president RSGB, and long-time member of the Jewish Chronicle Trust, in London, in October, aged 91; Pamela Fletcher Jones, active figure in Liberal Judaism, in London, in October, aged 81; Cyril Shine, for 35 years rabbi, London's Central Synagogue, in London, in October, aged 80; Max, Lord Rayne, philanthropist, in London, in October, aged 85; David Band, Anglo-Jewish educator, in Israel, in November, aged 72; Sidney Tobin, founding member and chairman of AJEX Housing Association, in London, in November, aged 89; Michael Kamen, composer and conductor, in London, in November, aged 55; Alec Fishberg, diamond merchant and committed Zionist, in London, in November, aged 94; Harry Franks, for 21 years administrative director of the Jewish Home and Hospital, Tottenham, North London, in London, in November, aged 79; Stanley Black, musician, in London, in November, aged 89; and Sir Stephen Tumim, chief inspector of prisons 1987–95, in London, in December, aged 73.

Miriam & Lionel Kochan
France

National Affairs

The New Government

In contrast to the year 2002, which was dominated by a presidential election, 2003 opened with the unchallenged dominance of President Jacques Chirac—reelected with more than 82 percent of the vote—and of the party constituted around him, the Union for a Popular Movement (UMP, founded in 2002 as the Union for a Presidential Majority), which held almost two-thirds of the seats in the National Assembly. But Chirac’s victory was too overwhelming to be entirely convincing. Everyone remembered that in the first round of the election, on April 21, 2002, Chirac had received less than 20 percent of the vote, and it was only the unforeseen circumstance of far-right candidate Jean-Marie Le Pen beating out Lionel Jospin, the Socialist candidate, for second place, and thereby winning the right to face Chirac in the second round, that brought about his spectacular landslide.

Nor was there a shadow of a doubt that the “party of the president,” the UMP, was an artificial creation. Some of Chirac’s friends dreamt of reorganizing the French political map by transforming the UMP into a “single party of the right,” which would face a “single party of the left,” the Socialist Party. But on both the right and the left, personal and ideological differences were too great to make such a scenario viable in the short term.

Indeed, quite the opposite happened, as a second pole on the right was reconstituted around François Bayrou, president of the Union for French Democracy (UDF), who confirmed his membership in the presidential majority while at the same time maintaining his right to “pluralism,” which was, he said, threatened by the “hegemony” of the UMP. The UMP itself was hardly homogeneous. To be sure, the traditional distinction between “historical Gaullists” (committed to national sovereignty, government intervention in the economy, and political centralization) and the “liberal right” (committed to European federalism, the free market, and regional autonomy) was no longer as significant as it had once been. Nevertheless, there remained important differences among the various elements of the French right.
There were also personal rivalries, the most celebrated being the one between Jacques Chirac and the right’s rising star, Nicholas Sarkozy. Sarkozy was once a close associate of Chirac’s, but the two had a falling out when Sarkozy supported a rival candidate of the right against Chirac in the 1995 presidential election. Within a few years, Sarkozy had rebounded dramatically to the front ranks of French politics, with an image combining dynamism and competence, remarkable skill as a public debater, and a consummate knack for cultivating alliances and retaining the loyalty of supporters. Although relatively young, with these assets he was an essential element in the majority that rallied around the president, to the point that in 2002, after Chirac’s reelection and the victory of his supporters in the legislative election, many expected Sarkozy to be named prime minister. However, Chirac’s suspicion of, or perhaps animosity toward, Sarkozy won out. Jean-Pierre Raffarin was appointed prime minister, and Sarkozy had to be satisfied with the Ministry of the Interior.

In the French system, the interior minister is responsible for public order, a central element in the new government’s policy. The elections of 2002 turned in large measure on the question of security. The French people expected their government to protect them from urban violence, a phenomenon that stood out all the more starkly for having been long unknown in France. In naming Sarkozy interior minister, Chirac gave him an opportunity either to prove himself as a statesman or to ruin his political career. In the event, Sarkozy proved himself in striking fashion. Possessing a great capacity for work and for adroitly using the media, within a few months he established the image of a government that cared about the welfare of its citizens and would not tolerate lawlessness. The Jewish community, which since late 2000 had criticized the government for not doing enough to combat anti-Jewish attacks, showed its satisfaction. The problem of anti-Semitism was clearly not resolved, but Jews at least had the feeling that public authorities took the problem seriously.

But Sarkozy’s achievements as minister of the interior were not enough to satisfy most of the people. Jean-Pierre Raffarin’s government took office with an imperative that came out of Chirac’s presidential campaign: the urgency of “reform,” a deliberately vague term referring to the structural modifications needed to bring French society into the world of the twenty-first century. In particular, France’s aging population and weak economic growth had led to large deficits in government programs inherited from the postwar welfare state—old-age pensions and health insurance. The large bureaucracies responsible for national education and publicly supported research were also in need of change. Previous gov-
ernments had avoided dealing with these issues for fear of upsetting the social and professional groups and trade unions that had a vested interest in these programs.

Prime Minister Raffarin announced his intention to undertake "reform," but said he would do so in a nonauthoritarian manner, through dialogue with what in France are commonly called "social partners," primarily those same professional organizations and trade unions. Raffarin's emphasis on dialogue was an effort to avoid the pitfalls that doomed previous attempt at "reform," undertaken soon after Chirac was first elected president in 1995 under the leadership of his prime minister of the time, Alain Juppé. What many French people perceived as Juppé's excessive rigidity had been met with a series of demonstrations and strikes, leading Chirac to call an early legislative election in the spring of 1997. The election was disastrous for Chirac's side and resulted in a Socialist majority in the National Assembly, forcing Chirac to "cohabit" politically with the opposition until the end of his first term.

Raffarin, therefore, treaded softly, and instructed his ministers to follow suit. Unfortunately, the results did not match the government's hopes, possibly because the ministers were not flexible and convincing enough; possibly because the trade unions in tune with the left-wing opposition did not want to make their job easier; and possibly because the French people were not prepared to give up benefits that had accrued over the years. As a result, 2003 was marked by an almost endless series of social conflicts—over reform of pensions, decentralization of the national education system, cuts in public support for scientific research, and so forth.

In this climate of permanent challenge to the government, even apparently minor issues took on disproportionate significance. An example was a dispute over reforming unemployment insurance for "occasional performing arts workers"—actors, lighting technicians, makeup artists, and others involved in theater, film, and television production. Since their employment was irregular by the very nature of the work, they had especially advantageous unemployment insurance benefits. As a result of this dispute, shows were interrupted and festivals canceled.

The government, with the support of the president and a solid majority in the National Assembly (both constitutionally guaranteed for a five-year period starting in 2002), could theoretically have ignored the protests. But neither Chirac nor even the most ambitious of his cabinet ministers wanted to risk the resulting confrontation. Such a course would have seriously affected their popularity when the 2007 elections came
around. And in the meantime, there would be regional, European-wide, and local elections, and they wanted to give their political allies a reasonable chance of winning seats. Hence the government renounced, as much as possible, the use of force, and sought solutions that its opponents would accept. However, this strategy undermined the credibility of the government’s reform program without actually satisfying its opponents. Raffarin, who in early polls had enjoyed an approval rating equal to Chirac’s, saw his popularity slide as the months passed.

There was one more factor contributing to Raffarin’s unpopularity: the crisis that struck France in the summer of 2003 in the form of an unprecedented early-August heat wave. France, a country accustomed to a temperate climate, was poorly equipped to handle a sudden rise in temperature. Air-conditioning was still a rarity, even in public buildings and hospitals, and the canicule (dog-day heat) had disastrous effects. According to an official report issued a month later, the death rate between August 1 and 20 was 60 percent higher than normal. This translated into almost 15,000 deaths, many of them elderly people living precarious and dependent lives. These revelations were explosive. The government was accused of not perceiving the danger soon enough, not taking the emergency measures that were needed, and not alerting the people. While the affair was not inherently political, it further weakened the image that the Raffarin government had wanted to project, of a team that was both competent and “close to the people.”

**IRAQ AND THE JEWISH CONNECTION**

The government’s foreign policy was far more popular than its economic and social policies. All French political parties agreed with the position that Jacques Chirac staked out when the Iraq crisis began—that everything had to be done to prevent war, and that an offensive against Saddam Hussein’s regime would be illegitimate without UN support. From January on, France and Germany solemnly reaffirmed their opposition to armed intervention in Iraq. When Chirac threatened to use France’s veto in the UN Security Council, there was broad approval within France’s political class. The foreign minister, Dominique de Villepin, attended a Security Council meeting to declare his firm opposition to U.S. policy. At practically the same time, crowds in all of France’s major cities, responding to appeals from left and far-left organizations, demonstrated “against the war.” Newspapers, observing a long tradition
of mixing information with commentary, outdid one another in denouncing the "American war."

Only a few people distanced themselves publicly from this consensus, and they did so for a variety of motivations: full agreement with the U.S. administration; reaction against a perceived resurgence of visceral anti-Americanism in Europe; opposition to international terrorism and Islamism; solidarity with Iraqis who were victims of a barbarous regime; hope for spreading democracy in the Middle East as advocated by neo-conservatives in Washington; and maintaining the balance of power in the Middle East.

These "pro-Americans," all the more visible for being out of tune with the general mood of hostility to American policy, included some Jews—but in more or less the same proportion that Jews could be found espousing all currents of opinion in France outside the far right. The Jews who supported war did not particularly refer to Israeli interests or to any Iraqi threat against Israel in support of their arguments. For that matter, many of them had only a remote association with Judaism and Israel. Nevertheless, both on the far left and the far right, their Jewish origin was sometimes mentioned, and blanket accusations was directed at "Zionists" for making common cause with the "Likudniks" in the Bush administration.

What did the mass of Jews in France think? Given the absence of reliable data and the relative silence of Jewish communal leaders during this period, it is difficult to say. Nevertheless, it is likely that many Jews felt uncomfortable with the kind of vengeful enthusiasm with which the leaders of the country, political activists, and the media condemned the U.S. And their discomfort was surely accentuated by the fact that slogans at "pacifist" marches and commentary by critical journalists often linked condemnation of the U.S. with condemnation of the State of Israel. Banners supporting "the struggle of the Palestinian people" were raised side by side with those attacking "American imperialism"; the "Bush-Sharon" duo became a symbol of evil; and the "American-Zionist axis" was seen as the scourge of modern times. While French Jews did not always identify with American policy, they often felt targeted by the furious denunciations of that policy.

On Saturday, March 22, a large demonstration against the war, supported by all of France's left-wing organizations, took place in Paris. Its route along a boulevard took it near the small street where the office of the left-wing Zionist movement Hashomer Hatzair is located. Four mem-
bers of Hashomer Hatzair went to the boulevard to watch, and one of them had something that could pass for a *kippah* on his head. As a pro-Palestinian organization marched by, some 30 demonstrators attacked the young Jews, two of whom were injured. The four Jews took refuge in the Hashomer Hatzair office, where 150 young people were participating in movement activities. A hundred or so demonstrators besieged the office until the police arrived.

The March 25 issue of the left-wing daily *Libération* carried a story by one of its reporters who had witnessed the events, from the cry of "There are Jews there" that went up among the demonstrators, to the speech by one of the members of the pro-Palestinian group involved in the attack: "We Muslims, we Arabs can walk with our heads held high." The same reporter also described an incident that he witnessed at another point in the demonstration: "Two men were carrying a huge American flag with a swastika in Israel's colors in place of the stars. When a Jewish student protested, some ten *Beurs* [a colloquialism for young French people of North African origin] pushed him and one hit him on the head."

There was a strong emotional reaction to these events. The press criticized the "drift toward anti-Semitism," parties of the left and far-left movements condemned the unacceptable behavior of the demonstrators, and Minister of the Interior Sarkozy went to the Hashomer Hatzair office to promise that the guilty parties would be found and punished. But journalists and political activists soon found other outlets for their indignation, and the culprits were never identified. For many Jews, the feeling remained that pacifist proclamations could go along with anti-Israel excesses, and that it could be only one step from hatred of Israel to hatred of the Jews. There was no shortage of reasons for Jews to stay out of the controversies associated with American intervention in Iraq.

**Muslims in France**

Another major issue that directly involved France's Jews was a domestic one: the "Islamic veil" affair. For some years, France had been divided over how to deal with Muslim girls who sought to wear the veil in public schools. Such girls also frequently did not participate in compulsory sports activities in the school, or in certain academic courses such as the natural sciences. The dominant view in France, backed up by judicial decisions and administrative measures, was that demanding to wear the veil, to the extent that it was "ostentatious," created a climate of proselytism and was thus incompatible with the "laïcité" (the French form of secu-
larism) that is the rule in public schools. A strict interpretation of this position would bar girls who insisted on wearing the veil from school. In practice, however, school principals, with the help of a "mediator" in the Ministry of National Education, worked out arrangements in such cases, and only a limited number of them reached the legal system.

Over time, however, this situation changed. French people became increasingly aware of the significant Muslim community in their midst—the largest in Europe both in absolute terms and as a proportion of the population. And the question of the veil could no longer be viewed purely in terms of individual freedom, since it had implications involving all of French society.

No one knew how many Muslims lived in France, since questions about religious or ethnic affiliation were not allowed in the census, and surveys were not considered very reliable. Estimates generally ran between three and five million. The lowest figure was provided by demographer Michèle Tribalat of the National Institute of Demographic Studies (INED), who suggested that the number of people "likely to be Muslim by birth" was 3.7 million. Tribalat subdivided this population into 1.7 million immigrants, 1.7 million children of immigrants, and 300,000 grandchildren of immigrants. She noted that these figures comprised all the people in France who originated in Islamic countries, and therefore the number of practicing Muslims may be considerably smaller. Another estimate came from a former senior civil servant in the Ministry of the Interior, Alain Boyer, who, in 2000, put forward a figure of a little more than four million Muslims, which he divided according to country of origin: 1,550,000 from Algeria, 1,000,000 from Morocco, and 350,000 from Tunisia (for a total of 2.9 million from North Africa); 315,000 from Turkey; 250,000 from sub-Saharan Africa; 100,000 from the Arab countries of the Middle East; 100,000 from Asia; several hundred thousand of indeterminate status (including asylum seekers and clandestine immigrants); and some 40,000 French converts to Islam.

Whatever their number, Muslims clearly constituted the second largest religion in France after Catholicism, and there were roughly ten times as many Muslims as Jews. Even if some of these Muslims were not French nationals, their children born in France automatically acquired French nationality. It can be supposed that over time the processes that have operated in other immigrant communities such as a weakening of ties to the country of origin, estrangement from religion, and mixed marriages will be seen among French Muslims. Some of these developments were already noticeable in what was called the beurgeoisie (a play on "Beur"
and "bourgeoisie"). Nevertheless, Muslims had certain specific characteristics that distinguished them from previous immigrant groups in France.

The most obvious was their number. Never before had France needed to absorb in such a short period a wave of immigration representing almost 10 percent of the total population. True enough, immigration was a persistent tradition in France: almost a quarter of all people living in France had at least one parent born outside the country, with half of those coming from other countries of the European Union. But cultural differences were clearly greater in the case of people whose origins were in Islamic countries. And most important, the economic and social difficulties were overwhelming. While a minority of Muslims integrated smoothly into their new country, there were still many who remained relegated to neighborhoods on the edge of large cities, where unemployment and its associated social pathologies were the norm. These neighborhoods provided a choice breeding ground for extremism, especially anti-Semitism.

In recent years, the rise of radical Islam added another element to the volatile mix. Despite the widespread French opposition to what they often described as the American "crusade" against Islam, French people were very nervous about the repercussions of September 11. While figures published a few years earlier seemed to indicate a secularizing tendency in the Muslim population, the more recent trend has been in the opposite direction. Young people—including offenders held in French prisons—"converted back" to a fundamentalist form of Islam. Girls whose mothers never veiled themselves started wearing the veil, and no one knew to what extent this was self-motivated or, alternatively, due to pressure exerted by their "big brothers." And thus the veil issue had a wholly different meaning in the summer of 2003 than it had several years earlier.

Meanwhile, Interior Minister Sarkozy had resumed efforts, begun by his predecessors, to establish an institution that could represent Islam in France. The objective was partly to provide public authorities with interlocutors who were in charge of managing the mosques and the numerous Islamic associations in France. Another aim was to encourage the replacement of the current Muslim leaders—almost all of whom had been educated outside France, and were often regarded as agents of foreign powers—with French leaders. After long negotiations between the minister and the various associations, the institution was established under the name of Conseil Français du Culte Musulman (CFCM), and
provided with regional structures and a national leadership. A 41-member board of directors was chosen in elections that took place on April 6 and 13. The board included 16 members from the National Federation of French Muslims (FNMF, representing Muslims of Moroccan origin, who, while a minority of the Muslim population were disproportionately attached to religious practices), 14 from the Union of Islamic Organizations of France (UOIF, with a political-religious orientation close to the Muslim Brotherhood), and six from the Paris Mosque (an institution of Algerian origin regarded as the most moderate both religiously and politically).

The election results were interpreted as reflecting a radicalization of Islam in France. There was some discomfort at the central role that would be played by the UOIF, the most political of the organizations represented in the CFCM. In the weeks that followed the elections, a number of organizations were founded to uphold a *laïque* approach to Muslim identity. But many believed that the government needed to weigh in. On July 3, President Chirac appointed a commission with a mandate to submit a report on "*laïcité* in the Republic." The commission was chaired by Bernard Stasi, who held the post of *Médiateur de la République* (ombudsman), and included members drawn from universities, the political world, and associations. It promptly began to hold hearings, which were broadcast on cable TV and reported in the press.

Despite the deliberately vague official mandate, everyone understood—and the hearings quickly confirmed—that the problem of *laïcité* essentially amounted to the problem of Islam, and since it was impossible to study the place of Islam in the country in general, the commission concentrated on its most visible aspect, the question of the veil in school. Indeed, the status of women in Islamic society was attracting special attention. In 2002, a girl named Sohane was burned alive in a Muslim neighborhood because she had refused a boy's advances, a tragic incident spotlighting the dysfunctional patterns of an immigrant community that was both cut off from its roots and poorly integrated into French society. The traditional values that protected women had been lost, but the fundamental inequality of the sexes and the inevitable submission of women remained.

In February 2003, an organization with the suggestive name Ni Putes Ni Soumises (Not Whores, Not Submissive) organized a "women's march for equality" in the form of a walk around France starting at the place where young Sohane had been burned alive a few months earlier. These women, who included both practicing and nonpracticing Muslims, were
strongly in favour of banning the Islamic veil in schools, explaining that it was the duty of the state to free the daughters of Muslim immigrants from the oppression of which they were victims. As the president of the group, Fadela Amara, said in her testimony before the Stasi Commission, abolition of the veil would both symbolically and concretely help emancipate young Muslim women from the control of their families.

Other testimony emphasized the dangers that Islamic fundamentalism posed for the school community—sexism, anti-Semitism, and more. Witnesses told of how Jewish students were tormented by their Muslim classmates, how teachers could no longer say anything about the Jewish religion or the Holocaust in front of their students, and how pressure was exerted on young Muslims to observe Islamic dietary laws. And these problems were not limited to the schools. Witnesses described the domination some Islamist groups exercised over predominantly Muslim neighborhoods (a commissioner of police, himself of Muslim origin, used the term “Mafia methods” in this context). Other witnesses described cases where a veiled Muslim woman would arrive at a hospital accompanied by her husband who would not allow a male doctor to examine her.

Opposing voices were heard as well. It was noted that anti-Semitic attacks were generally not linked to Islamist networks, but were primarily the work of individual young Muslims with a past history of trouble with the law. Also, it was clear that many girls freely chose to wear the Islamic veil, either as part of a sincere return to religion or as a way of expressing their identity in a society where Islam often had negative connotations. The commission was warned of the risk that some girls would abandon their studies—or be forced to do so by their family and friends—rather than give up wearing the veil, and thus a measure intended to liberate them would result in further confining some of them. Another fear was that banning the veil in public schools would lead to the development of Islamic private schools, and hence hamper the integration of Muslims into French society. Finally, there was the argument of freedom of conscience: even if not all Muslims agreed that Islam required the veil, how could those who saw it as a religious duty be banned from carrying it out?

This controversy occupied public attention through a good part of 2003. Intellectuals, journalists, and politicians were deeply divided on the issue, and partisans of both sides could be found in virtually every political party and trade union, including the teachers’ unions. Even among feminists and Trotskyists, there were passionate advocates of both positions. But the picture was much clearer among the population as a whole.
A survey taken in December 2003 by the French polling firm BVA indicated that 87 percent of French people were opposed to the wearing of the veil in school (including 59 percent who were "completely opposed"), while only 10 percent were in favor (of whom 3 percent were "completely in favor").

This overwhelming opposition to the veil was based partly on hostility to Islam, at least in its external manifestations. At the same time, however, attachment to the central myth that French schools were républicaine and laïque played a large role as well. In the survey, among those who opposed the veil in schools 54 percent based their position on the statement that "French schools are laïque"; 28 percent answered, "The veil is a sign of the oppression of women"; and 13 percent answered, "Wearing the veil in school is offensive." Beyond the specific question of the veil, the message that people sought to send was a political one: Muslims needed to respect the rules by which people lived together in France.

Though not directly involved in the controversy, Jews were inevitably drawn in. One point of entry was the link, admittedly partial and indirect, that was established between the attacks on Jewish students, the Arab-Muslim origins of the attackers, and signs of the presence of Islam in the schools. In addition, the challenge to an Islamic symbol of identity, the veil, soon led to the question of the Jewish kippah. While the problem really was nonexistent, as there were Jewish schools where young Jews could wear the kippah all the time without interference, some Jews felt challenged by the issue, or at least considered it necessary to express an opinion. Thus, in an interview with the daily newspaper Le Monde on May 16, the chief rabbi of France, Joseph Sitruk, came out against "a narrow vision" of laïcité. While suggesting that "the kippah is an infinitely more discreet sign than the veil, so that the two cannot be mixed together," he acknowledged that people did not generally make the distinction. All things considered, he said, he was "not in favor of banning the veil." Other rabbis criticized him for speaking out, arguing that this was a debate about human rights and that a representative of religion should not take a position.

On December 11, the Stasi Commission submitted its report to President Chirac. It proposed a law banning the "conspicuous display" of religious clothing and signs (large crosses, veils, and kippot) in schools. There was much comment on the use of the adjective "ostensible" (conspicuous), connoting the visibility of the sign without presuming the intention of the person wearing it, rather than "ostentatoire" (ostentatious), which had previously been used in this context and implied an
expression of will, and especially an intention to proselytize. In making this choice, the members of the commission were trying to protect themselves, and the law that would be passed, from accusations of partiality and future court challenges that were sure to result from a ban on an act linked to a specific motivation. Other recommendations had to do with laïcité in public services and with various measures to improve the integration of immigrant communities into French society. On December 17, Chirac publicly stated that it was "necessary" to pass two laws banning the wearing of "conspicuous" religious signs, one for schools and one for hospitals. As the year ended no action had yet been taken. Clearly, this was not the end of the matter.

Israel and the Middle East

While France had a reputation among Israelis as one of the most anti-Israel countries in the West, France did not see itself that way, and its representatives continually expressed sympathy for the Jewish state and a sincere desire to ensure a peaceful and secure future for it. On January 25, 2003, at the annual dinner of CRIF, the Representative Council of Jewish Institutions of France (Conseil Représentatif des Institutions Juives de France), Prime Minister Raffarin spoke of the situation in the Middle East, dominated by an increasing number of Palestinian attacks, in these terms: "The tragic suffering that Israel is bearing is a source of anguish for all of us. In this trial, I want to say to you that France remains faithful to the deep friendship it has had for Israel since its founding."

The prime minister went on to refer to the "forms of expression of anti-Semitism" in France and noted "with great concern that some people are calling for a boycott of products of Israeli origin." He commented that French law "severely punishes, with prison sentences, any act of discrimination based on real or supposed belonging to a particular nation or religion." Raffarin then discussed appeals launched in France, following the lead of other countries, for a boycott of Israeli universities and the cancellation of scientific cooperation agreements between the European Union and Israel. "The government forcefully condemns" such appeals, he said, emphasizing that, quite the contrary, France wished to "expand its bilateral relations with Israel." He noted that a few days earlier, on January 14, a new cooperation agreement had been signed between the French Ministry of Research and an Israeli delegation.

Indeed, even as France supported UN resolutions condemning Israel, it maintained good bilateral relations with the Jewish state. A significant
event was the establishment of a “High-Level Franco-Israeli Group” on May 25, during Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin’s visit to Israel. This was a joint initiative undertaken by de Villepin and Israel’s foreign minister at the time, Shimon Peres, and continued by Peres’s successor, Silvan Shalom. Cochaired on the Israeli side by David Lancry, a former ambassador to France, and on the French side by David Khayat, a professor of medicine, its goal was to develop and implement projects that would bring the two countries closer together.

On September 16, the group submitted its report, which was approved by both countries. Among the more notable suggestions were institution of an annual political dialogue between the two foreign ministries; establishment of a Franco-Israeli high council for scientific and technological research and cooperation; various measures for economic and trade cooperation; joint technological programs in third countries; expanded cultural ties, with specific focus on cultural exchange, archaeology, and museums; invitations and exchanges of “young notables of the future”; and annual forums of twinned cities, of intellectuals, and of youth. Implementation began with a Franco-Israeli forum of twinned cities in Paris on June 16, and the first Franco-Israeli youth forum, also in Paris, on December 18.

In practice, relations between the two countries were not always so rosy. If French cabinet ministers knew how to distinguish between political disagreements with the Israeli government and demonization of the Israeli people, the same distinction was not always made in the press or by political activists.

A good example came in February, when a member of the Socialist Party elected to the European Parliament, François Zimeray, came under strong attack in his own party for campaigning to have the EU look into how its financial contributions were being used by the Palestinian Authority. Zimeray, who is Jewish, was especially critical of the textbooks used in Palestinian schools. For this, he was accused of “supporting the Sharon government” and having positions on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that “are not consistent with those of the Socialist Party,” even though Zimeray had come out in favor of a Palestinian state. Zimeray was not included on his party’s list of candidates for the European Parliament in 2004.

Equally significant was the reception given to a report on “Israeli civilians who are victims of attacks by armed Palestinian groups,” presented on July 21 by the French humanitarian organization Médecins du Monde (Doctors of the World). The same organization had earlier issued a re-
report on Palestinian victims of Israeli army operations in Nablus. The report on Israeli victims studied the physiological and psychological consequences of the attacks on the Israeli population; the methods used by those who carried out the attacks; and the responsibility of Palestinian organizations, including the Palestinian Authority. Its analysis, which combined medical and legal elements, concluded that Palestinian attacks on Israeli civilians were "crimes against humanity." The report ignited a lively debate within Médecins du Monde, some members taking it to task for alleged pro-Israeli partisanship. The press said little about the report, no doubt in part because it came out in the middle of France's vacation period.

On December 16, soon after the signing of the document known as the Geneva Accord that suggested the basis for an Israeli-Palestinian deal (see above, pp. 193–94), its two main authors, Yossi Beilin on the Israeli side and Yasir Abd Rabbo on the Palestinian side, participated in a public meeting in a Paris hall. Also present were notable representatives of France's Jewish community, two of whom, philosophers Bernard-Henri Lévy and Alain Finkielkraut, were among the speakers. In addition, all of France's major political parties were represented. Although, as a private initiative, the accord had only symbolic significance, everyone present praised its content—resolution of the conflict through the establishment of a Palestinian state encompassing the full extent of the territories, and Palestinian renunciation of a "right of return" to the territory of the state of Israel—giving the clear impression that such a solution would correspond to the wishes of the French political world.

**Anti-Semitism and Racism**

**Statistics**

Anti-Jewish violence dropped in 2003 as compared to the record year of 2002, but nevertheless continued at a level considerably higher than in previous years. Reliable statistics were provided in the annual report prepared by the National Consultative Commission of Human Rights (CNCDH), an organization attached to the prime minister's office but comprising independent figures and representatives of a variety of religious, humanitarian, and antiracist groups. The statistics it reported were provided by the Ministry of the Interior, based on information from the police. The analysis presented here is based solely on the official data;
however most of the calculations and comparisons do not appear in the report, and have been prepared specially for this article.

The CNCDH report listed "acts against individuals and property presenting a certain degree of seriousness." There were 125 violent acts against Jews, 70 of them direct physical attacks (of which 32 targeted "minors" and 21 targeted "worshipers in the area around a synagogue or those easily identified as Jews"), leading to a total of 21 wounded, 49 attacks on property ("stone-throwing, shooting, acts of vandalism"), and six acts of arson. The attacks and the fires "targeted 28 synagogues, three businesses and medical offices, six commemorative plaques, five rabbinic seminaries, four private cars, six buildings housing members of the community, and three tombstones."

The total of 125 acts of anti-Semitic violence was down 36 percent from the 195 that had been registered in 2002. But the actions in 2003 were more serious, the number of Jewish wounded rising from 18 in 2002 to 21, the largest number of injuries to Jews since French authorities began to publish these statistics in 1993. Furthermore, it was also the first time that the number of injuries to Jews constituted an absolute majority, indeed two-thirds, of injuries caused by racist violence (21 out of 32). The picture was even more disturbing when the island of Corsica, home to less than 5 percent of the French population, is excluded from the count. Six of the 11 injuries in racist (not anti-Semitic) acts in France during the year occurred on Corsica, mostly related to drug deals. Thus in the "Hexagon," the rest of the country, the 21 Jews wounded were 81 percent of the total.

Comparing the incidence of anti-Semitic violence, whether involving injuries or not, with all other racist violence committed in France during 2003, there were 125 acts motivated by anti-Semitism and 92 by other types of racism. Thus, out of a total of 217 violent acts, 58 stemmed from anti-Semitism. Once again setting aside the Corsican statistics, there were only 36 violent acts that were not anti-Semitic, meaning that the 125 anti-Semitic incidents were 78 percent of the whole.

The CNCDH report also listed — again, based on police statistics — nonviolent manifestations of anti-Semitism and racism. It categorized these as "threats" and defined them as "threatening words or gestures, graffiti, tracts, hateful demonstrations, and other acts of intimidation." The report explained further: "A simultaneous mailing of several tracts or pamphlets in a particular area is counted as one instance of distribution," adding that "only cases involving arrest followed by court appear-
ances are counted among these statistics.” During 2003, the report listed 600 “threats” throughout France, of which 463 involved anti-Semitism (mostly graffiti and minor vandalism, the perpetrators usually remaining anonymous) and 137 other forms of racism. Anti-Semitic threats thus constituted 77 percent of the total. Taking out the Corsican statistics, in this instance, made little difference, raising to 79 percent the anti-Semitic threats (461 out of 587).

Thus whether in regard to threats or to actual violence, the proportion of all racist acts that were motivated by anti-Semitism was roughly 80 percent. Jews, it should be noted, constituted 8.3 percent of the population.

Even though the numbers for 2003 indicated a drop in incidents from 2002—36 percent in violent acts and of 37 percent in threats—this was misleading. Anti-Semitic violence during 2002 was largely concentrated in the months of March and April, a period of considerable Israeli-Palestinian violence. During 2003, there was a similar though less dramatic spike in March and April, apparently because of the war in Iraq. If, for each of the two years, the figures from these two months, when external factors played a major role, are excluded, the number of incidents actually rose from 45 in 2002 to 87 in 2003. Divided relatively evenly over the remaining ten months, they represent, in a sense, the “normal” level of anti-Jewish violence, apart from periods of crisis. Seen in this way, the incidents per month nearly doubled, from four—five to almost nine.

The same pattern was evident in relation to anti-Semitic threats in 2002. The “peak” reached in April was quite extreme: 60 percent of all threats for the year were made that month. The statistics for 2003 did not reveal a similar spike. Comparing the average of the 11 “normal” months of 2002 to the overall average in 2003, the 26 threats per month in 2002 rose 50 percent to 39 per month in 2003. Here again, the optimistic picture seemingly emerging from a straight comparison of numbers disappears upon further analysis.

Anti-Jewish violence in 2003 increasingly turned to educational settings, targeting students in Jewish schools and Jewish students in public schools. Police recorded 22 such cases. In the same period, there were just two incidents of non-anti-Semitic racist violence in schools throughout France. As for anti-Semitic “threats” in school environments, 73 were documented for the year, for a total of 95 manifestations of anti-Semitism (incidents plus threats) in schools. By comparison, only one school manifestation was registered in 1997, three in 1998, and nine in 1999. Since 2000, anti-Semitism in schools, as in society generally, became a real phenomenon, the incidence leaping to 92 in 2000, going down to 30 in 2001,
and climbing again to 77 in 2002 and 95 in 2003. While it was possible that a greater sensitivity to anti-Semitism led to more frequent complaints, it was equally possible that what has being called "a new freedom to make anti-Semitic slurs" was playing a role.

The CNCDH report indicated that over the four-year period from 2000 to 2003, anti-Semitism in schools translated into 39 attacks on property (fires and attempted fires, ransacking, Molotov cocktails, throwing of stones and various other objects) and 34 physical attacks, causing ten injuries. Half of the physical attacks took place in 2003, 17 of them by "projectiles or blows accompanied by anti-Semitic insults," which injured four people. Also registered in 2003 were "five fires or acts of defacement of Jewish schools by pellet guns or stone-throwing."

The report offered some insight into who was behind anti-Semitic and other racist violence. In 50 of the 125 documented anti-Semitic incidents, the perpetrators were identified. Six cases were "attributable to the extreme right" (these were all acts of vandalism, not physical attack) and 44 involved "perpetrators coming from 'at-risk' neighborhoods," mostly petty criminals. Of the 47 people arrested and brought to court for anti-Jewish violence, just one, "arrested for having perpetrated four successive attacks on the same Paris synagogue," was a right-wing activist. Only 50 of the 463 anti-Semitic threats recorded in 2003 appeared attributable to the far right. The police made 46 arrests related to the threats, and among those picked up were "18 North African youths" and "five far-right activists." As for the incidents in schools, the report noted, "Over the course of the four years, 34 perpetrators have been identified, of whom 30 were minors, all of them North African or African." To be sure, while the anti-Jewish acts committed by these "youths" were disturbing in their steady rise, the perpetrators remained a tiny, marginal part of the Arab/Muslim community in France.

In considering racist activity as a whole, the CNCDH report detailed the radical transformation that had taken place over the previous decade in the identity of the racists. In 1993, the far right was responsible for 92 percent of racist incidents in France—100 percent of anti-Jewish incidents and 86 percent of other racist acts. In 2003, the corresponding rates were less than 10 percent of anti-Jewish acts and 39 percent of other racist incidents, making up a total of just 18 percent of all racist activities. As noted above, people of North Africa origin were primarily responsible for the anti-Jewish acts. Somewhat paradoxically, much of the racism not directed at Jews was targeted at that same North African group; the report could not pin down who was primarily responsible for
it. (“Ultra-Zionist” groups were credited with three anti-Muslim actions during 2003, two of which occurred under obscure circumstances and the other seemingly more an act of political hooliganism than racism.)

A document issued by the Ministry of Justice, included in the CNCDH report, noted that of the 43 people tried in 2003 for anti-Semitic crimes, only ten were convicted and one was sentenced to prison. Many of the perpetrators were young people—16 of the 43 came before juvenile court—and the offenses, even those causing injury, were for the most part relatively minor. Nevertheless, some worried that treating such crimes with leniency could lead to more of them, and legislation was introduced to counter this possibility. The so-called Lellouche law, named for the National Assembly member who initiated it, passed unanimously in Parliament and came into effect on February 3. It increased sentences for crimes committed because of the victim’s “real or perceived” membership in a particular ethnic, racial or religious group. Crimes that unintentionally resulted in the victim’s death were now punishable by 20 years in prison if motivated by racism, as compared to 15 years if there was no element of racism. Sentences for lesser violent acts of racism were similarly ratcheted up: what had previously merited five years in prison would now get the perpetrator ten; three-year terms went up to five; and what used to be punished with a fine would now bring three years in prison.

PUBLIC OPINION AND THE INTELLECTUALS

The year 2003 represented a turning point in that the French public finally came to the realization that Jews were the primary victims of racially motivated violence. Politicians who previously tended to minimize the reality of anti-Semitism in France changed their tune. Receiving a delegation from the American Jewish Committee led by its executive director, David Harris, President Chirac denounced “the cancer of anti-Semitism.” On May 23, speaking to the Jewish community at the 60th anniversary of CRIF, Chirac declared: “Today, you are no longer alone. France stands with you in combating anti-Semitism. France herself is attacked when a Jew is attacked on her soil. France herself is insulted when a synagogue is burned on her soil. It is France who is humiliated when, on her soil, a Jewish child must change schools to escape harassment, intimidation and insult. When Jews lose confidence in their own country because they do not feel sufficiently understood, supported, and protected, our country’s very national unity is threatened.”

This implicit mea culpa was expressed even more strongly by the op-
position leader, François Hollande, first secretary of the Socialist Party, at a conference on November 23 organized by the Léon Blum Circle, a club associated with the party that was concerned with defending Jewish causes. Hollande, whose party had been in power during the 2000–02 period, when anti-Jewish violence increased, underlined the "incontestable fact" of "the rise, these last few years, of anti-Semitism in France." And he went further, saying: "The left and the Socialist Party were incapable of grasping the full measure of this phenomenon. Identifying anti-Semitism as a problem emanating solely from the far right, the left was loath to name acts perpetrated by those who come from the poorest parts of our cities and towns as anti-Semitic." Recalling that, as a result, "the left underestimated the number of incidents and the relevant facts," Hollande affirmed: "The left has finished with this period of caution and reluctance to speak."

The message of the country's leadership came through for the broader population as well, but more slowly. A BVA survey taken between November 24 and December 5, 2003, and published as part of the CNCDH annual report, asked respondents, "In France, who are the primary victims of racism/discrimination?" Roughly 46 percent named some element of the group comprising Arabs, North Africans, and Muslims; 18 percent said Africans or blacks; and 15 percent named the Jews (when the question asked simply about "discrimination," 17 percent said Jews; when it mentioned only "racism," 13 percent did).

This perception of Jewish victimhood stood in marked contrast to the results of a similar poll conducted by the same company just one year earlier. In November/December 2002, only 5 percent of the French designated Jews as targets of racism or discrimination (the percentage was the same for both formulations, "discrimination" and "racism"). Thus there was a rise of over 200 percent in public recognition that Jews were being targeted. The numbers in relation to the other minorities rose as well, but far less drastically. From one year to the next, the percentage of those who saw Arabs, North Africans, and Muslims as the primary victims rose by 31 percent, while for Africans and blacks it increased by 29 percent.

In the same survey, the statement "Jewish French people are French people like anybody else" was accepted by 89 percent (63 percent were "completely in agreement" and 26 percent "mostly in agreement"), while only 9 percent expressed opposition (6 percent "mostly in disagreement" and 3 percent "not at all in agreement"). These figures were nearly identical to those of 2002. By comparison, the statement that "Muslim French
people are French people like anybody else" was accepted by 75 percent of those questioned, while 23 percent rejected it, and in this case the acceptance rate rose slightly over the year before.

In general, the French viewed themselves as well-intentioned toward potential victims of racism. In another survey, taken in April 2003 by the CSA Institute for the daily Le Figaro, 87 percent said they felt "sympathy" for black Africans; 85 percent for Jews; and 76 percent for North Africans.

These good intentions, at least with respect to Jews, were put to the test in 2003, as the Paris Court of Appeal was to deliver its judgement in the case of Raymonda Tawill, a Palestinian journalist and mother-in-law of Yasir Arafat. The case began on January 12, 2001, when Tawill spoke—in perfect French—to an interviewer on the public radio station France Culture. She accused "French Jews" of waging a "media war [against Muslims] designed to create fear among the French." Denouncing "the racism of French Jews," she stated that "Judaism has become racist here." She developed her argument as follows: "I come from America ... I see what the Jewish lobby does in America ... the influence on Congress ... the influence on the White House ... the influence on everything. [Clinton's] papers are prepared by the Jewish lobby, everyone knows it, that's how it works there. And here, there is influence by the Jewish lobby. ... I say 'Jewish lobby' so that the Jews know: it's enough to do their lobbying in the West."

The repeated reference to a "Jewish lobby" was particularly shocking to the French ear, since the very idea of any specific ethnic or religious group looking out for its own narrow interest runs contrary to the French idea of the social order. Talk of a "Jewish lobby" immediately brought to mind anti-Semitic propaganda denouncing the presence of Jews in business, government, and the press. Two antiracist associations—one of them the International League Against Racism and Anti-Semitism (LICRA)—charged her with racism, but the focus was less on Raymonda Tawill as a person than on the legitimacy of speaking this way on French public radio.

The trial court, however, decided in December 2001 to absolve Tawill on the grounds that despite their "great violence," the terms she used fell within the context of a "political battle" and spoke to her "concerns." The plaintiff's appealed. On March 6, 2003, the Court of Appeal confirmed the judgement, ruling that the "violence" of Ms. Tawill's words stemmed from a "strong emotion" and should not diminish her right to freedom of expression. The court effectively sent the message that as long as the
necessary precautions were taken, anyone could speak about Jews in the way Tawill had.

Another salvo was fired in October 2003, this time from a Muslim intellectual of Swiss nationality, Tariq Ramadan, who was known for his attention-getting mix of modern arguments with fundamentalist principles. Ramadan was the grandson, on his mother's side, of Hassan al-Banna, founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, and his father was a devoted follower of the movement. Despite his protestations to the contrary, Tariq was also close to the Muslim Brotherhood. In any event, his personal charm and rhetorical ability helped him carve out a prominent place both among young French Muslims and within the left-wing antiglobalization movement. In an article published in the daily Le Monde in December 2001, Ramadan warned against Muslim anti-Semitism, and his about-face in the fall of 2003 came as a surprise.

In an article entitled “Critique of the (New) Inward-Looking Intellectuals,” Tariq Ramadan attacked “French Jewish intellectuals who until recently had been viewed as universalist thinkers” but who had begun to develop “analyses that are more and more oriented toward the particular concerns of their own community.” He went on to name names: sociologist Pierre-André Taguieff, who “has transformed himself into a defender of a community in danger”; philosopher Alexandre Adler, “whose reading of the world . . . is understood only in relation to his attachment to Israel”; and “intellectuals as diverse as Bernard Kouchner, André Glucksmann or Bernard-Henri Lévy” who “have taken courageous positions on Bosnia, Rwanda or Chechnya” but “have inexplicably supported the American-British intervention in Iraq,” which can only be understood if one knows that “the architect of this operation from the heart of the Bush administration is the notorious Zionist Paul Wolfowitz.” Regarding Bernard-Henri Lévy, Ramadan noted that he had published a book on the assassination of American journalist Daniel Pearl in which he criticized the Pakistani secret service—and this at the moment that Israel was embarking on a reconciliation with India, Pakistan's traditional enemy.

Ramadan's article, rejected by the dailies Le Monde and Libération, appeared on October 3 on a Muslim Internet site, oumma.com. From there it was picked up on Internet chat lines dedicated to preparation for the European Social Forum, an international gathering of the antiglobalization movement scheduled to take place near Paris in November. Within a few days, the entire French press had mobilized against the article. The left-wing weekly Le Nouvel Observateur spoke of “a strange text, full of
anti-Jewish prejudices and conspiracy theories,” and cited the reaction of Pierre-André Taguieff, a scholarly specialist on racism, who was impugned by Ramadan even though he is not Jewish: “For Ramadan, anyone who fights anti-Semitism is a Jew.”

In the same magazine, philosopher André Glucksmann—a Jew who had never identified himself as such, had never written about Jewish issues or about Israel, and who had been engaged in a very public battle to defend Chechen Muslims—commented: “Mr. Ramadan is saying in essence, ‘Glucksmann doesn’t think with his head, he thinks with his race.’” Glucksmann noted that since Ramadan had issued his criticism, he, Glucksmann, had received “letters that reeked of an animal anti-Semitism, little seen since 1945.” Bernard Kouchner, another of Ramadan’s targets, who was Jewish only on his father’s side and had never identified as a Jew, told a radio interviewer that Ramadan “does not stigmatize me, he honors me. That man is a shady intellectual.” In the weekly Le Point, where he had a regular column, Bernard-Henri Lévy (who, contrary to Ramadan’s claim, did not support the war in Iraq) wrote on October 10 of Ramadan’s “sickening text” reminiscent of “the good old theory of a Jewish conspiracy” and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, and invited his friends on the left to distance themselves from the author. In the daily Le Figaro on October 16, Alexandre Adler underlined the “violent archaic nature of such thinking” and dubbed Ramadan “emir of the fanatics.”

But these attacks, and others, seemed to have no effect on Tariq Ramadan or on the antiglobalization activists who, while conceding that his article was “in poor taste,” denied the accusation of anti-Semitism and refused to rescind his invitation to the European Social Forum. On November 20, Tariq Ramadan debated Minister of the Interior Sarkozy on the public television channel France 2. Sarkozy strongly criticized Ramadan’s sortie against Jewish intellectuals: “Your article was not a blunder,” he said, “it was a misdeed. Because the Jews are not like the people of the Auvergne or the Parisians. There was the Holocaust. When one speaks of the Jew Lévy or the Jew Glucksmann, one ignores the Holocaust and the six million killed.” But Ramadan, agreeing that “anti-Semitism is unacceptable, and it must be fought,” justified the content of his article, saying: “I wrote ‘Jewish intellectuals.’ I don’t see the malice.” He added, “In France, one should be able to criticize a country. When I criticize the policies of the Israeli government, I am not an anti-Semite, just as when I criticize Saudi Arabia, I am not an Islamophobe.” People close to Ramadan noted that Jewish antiglobalization activists agreed completely with their Muslim colleague. Shortly after these events, the
University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana, offered Tariq Ramadan a full-time, tenured position in Islamic philosophy and ethics.

Another notable anti-Semitic episode took place on December 1. A comedian, Dieudonné M'Bala M'Bala, known by the stage name Dieudonné, who was the son of a Cameroonian father and a Breton mother, was invited to perform a three-minute live sketch on the public television channel France 3. He appeared dressed as an ultra-Orthodox Jew—with a black hat, imitation side locks, a hood, and a fringed vest—and delivered a monologue in which he announced that he had converted, "for purely professional reasons," to "Zionist fundamentalism." He called on "inner-city youth" (that is, young people from immigrant families living in the poorest neighborhoods) to do the same and join the "American-Zionist axis." At the end of the presentation, he gave a Nazi salute while crying, "IsraHeil."

Six million people watched the program, and protests poured in. The show's producer and host, Marc-Olivier Fogiel (who is Jewish), admitted the next day that he had made a mistake in not reacting immediately to Dieudonné's comments. He had been "concerned and shocked," he said, but reluctant to create a scene on live television, especially since some of those onstage, unlike the viewers, did not fully grasp what Dieudonné was saying. The programming directors of France 3, for their part, published a letter in which they recognized that "Dieudonné crossed the line into anti-Semitism." They also apologized to the public and to the High Council for Broadcasting (CSA)—the authority responsible for monitoring adherence to media ethics. The CSA, in turn, issued a stern warning to the organization supervising all public television outlets, Television France, and reprimanded its president. Dominique Baudis, a former journalist who headed the CSA, declared: "The language . . . and the final gesture, equating the state of Israel with Nazism, are unacceptable and cannot be tolerated, even in a comedy program." Prime Minister Raffarin, referring to the presentation, emphasized that "having the status of artist does not excuse one from respecting human rights." The press, almost without exception, agreed.

For his part, Dieudonné stated that his sketch was not anti-Semitic and that he was being subjected to a "media lynching." But five days later, on December 6, Dieudonné got into trouble once again. On Mediterranean Radio (a station owned by Franco-Tunisian businessman Tawfik Mathlouthi, also owner of the soda Mecca Cola, which Mathlouthi described as "a militant product of the boycott of American and Zionist imperialism"), Dieudonné described his indignation upon reading in his son's
school text that the Holocaust was "the greatest tragedy in the history of humanity." There was, he reported, no mention of "the black slave trade," which had "enriched many, notably the Jews." Dieudonné went on to explain that he was reading "a lot of [Norman] Finkelstein at the time," who "explains [in his book, The Holocaust Industry, translated into French] that there is in effect a Holocaust industry." In France, he added, "There is a group of hysterics who hang on to Judaism to justify interests that are more economic, that are much more sinister. I think that Judaism is there to offer a moral shield for a bunch of bastards."

At the time, Dieudonné was starting a tour of regional cities. Several of his shows were canceled, either upon the initiative of the organizers or as a result of local protests. But the national Jewish organizations deplored these cancellations, since they appeared to be an organized boycott and thus might allow Dieudonné to play the martyr. And so he did, presenting himself as the champion of blacks who were victimized by the Jews. As for Israel, it was "a terrorist state in relation to the people of South Africa. Diamonds extracted for next to nothing," he charged, "were resold in Tel Aviv and then later in Antwerp. Dieudonné continued this incendiary rhetoric into early 2004, and then put his name forward as a candidate for election to the European Parliament, listing himself as a "Euro-Palestinian."

Holocaust-Related Matters

On March 24, a delegation comprising 167 French people, 26 Turks, and 15 Americans met in Poland to inaugurate a Ladino (Judeo-Spanish) memorial stone recently placed at the Auschwitz-Birkenau memorial. Back in 2000, Professor Haïm-Vidal Sephiha, who was the first to hold a university chair in France dedicated to Ladino, noted during a visit to Auschwitz (where he himself had been deported) that although there were memorial stones containing the same commemorative text in many different languages, there was none in Ladino, the mother tongue of 160,000 Jewish victims of the Nazis. Following an initial refusal by the Polish authorities to change the number of stones, Sephiha created an organization, Ladino at Auschwitz (JEAA), launched a worldwide campaign on the issue, and finally won. Simone Veil—president of the Foundation for the Memory of the Holocaust, former cabinet minister, former president of the European Parliament, and former Auschwitz deportee—was present for the inauguration.
The other major event during the year in commemoration of the Holocaust was not a French initiative. Rather, it began with a trip to Auschwitz-Birkenau in May, organized by an Arab priest, Father Émile Shoufani, the director of a school in Nazareth, who was convinced that Jewish-Arab dialogue could not move forward so long as Arabs did not appreciate the depth of historical unease in the Jewish psyche. Three hundred people took part, equally divided between Jews and Arabs, all Israeli citizens. They were neither political activists nor religious pilgrims, but individuals coming from a wide variety of backgrounds (most of the Arabs were Muslims, reflecting Israeli Arab population generally). It was agreed that the Arabs would not demand anything of the Jews in return for visiting the site, not even a symbolic gesture.

Jean Mouttapa, also a Christian and a Parisian publisher who had published two of Émile Shoufani's books in France, decided to mount a French version—actually, a Franco-Belgian version—of the trip. An association was established called Memory for Peace, presided over by Father Shoufani, and a group of 200 people was assembled, Christians, Jews, and many Muslims (including women wearing the Islamic veil). They were of all ages, but included, most poignantly, young scouts—both Jewish and Muslim. Before leaving, all the participants took a seminar on Jewish history and the Holocaust.

The group coming from Israel and the group coming from France met up in Poland at the end of May to "keep the memory of the Holocaust alive." Together forming a group of 500 people, they walked along the railway lines of Birkenau, a route designed to focus attention not on the concentration camp at Auschwitz, but on the Birkenau extermination camp, where the gas chambers operated. Among them were Jewish survivors of the camp, who served as both guides and witnesses. The participants read off, one at a time, the names of 500 deportees. The final declaration, read at Birkenau on May 28, said, in part: "We, Jews and non-Jews present here, in going beyond our diverse backgrounds, beyond beliefs, nonbeliefs or philosophical choices of one kind or another, affirm that the memory of this crime must become part of thought and culture so that together we will be able to create, and reject the specter of inhumanity."

Even as the group stood there, it learned that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) had awarded Father Shoufani its Education for Peace Prize. (Later, the Hebrew University in Jerusalem bestowed an honorary doctorate on him.)
Education

In 1945, after World War II, only four Jewish schools remained in France. By the late 1970s, some 40 new ones were established, and over the next two decades the Jewish school system underwent dramatic growth. In 2003, there were roughly 100 Jewish schools, incorporating 256 établissements (that is, units defined by age group, according to the divisions used in the French education system).

In 2003, about 30,000 Jewish students were being educated in Jewish schools, representing 30 percent of school-age Jews. In all, it was estimated that about half of all young Jews had received at least some of their education in Jewish schools, some starting out in Jewish schools and later transferring to public education, and a smaller number making the reverse switch. In general, the students in Jewish schools scored above average in national examinations.

The vast majority of Jewish schools had ties to the government through association contracts, on the basis of principles laid out in a law passed in 1959. Such contracts required the school to follow rigorously the programs and schedules determined by the Ministry of National Education for public schools. Specific additional subjects (in Jewish schools these would be Jewish religion, Hebrew, and Jewish history) were taught on a supplementary basis. In exchange for the school's commitment to the national program, the government paid the salaries of teachers of the required subjects and made a lump-sum payment toward the cost of running the school. The school, then, had to come up with the money to pay the salaries of teachers of the Jewish subjects, and possibly a portion of the administrative costs. In 2003, of the 30,000 students being educated in Jewish schools, 26,000 were in établissements that were under contract or in the process of negotiating contracts.

Publications

A number of original works of Jewish interest were published in France during 2003. In the realm of ideas: Pierre Bouretz's Témoins du futur (Witnesses to the Future), a study of European Jewish philosophers over the past century; Gilles Bernheim's Le souci des autres au fondement de la loi juive (Concern for Others at the Foundation of Jewish Law); Catherine Chalier's Traité des larmes (Treatise on Tears), analyzing biblical de-
scriptions of tears; Mireille Hadas-Lebel's *Philon d'Alexandrie, un penseur en dialogue* (Philo of Alexandria, a Thinker in Dialogue); Benny Lévy's *Être juif* (Being Jewish), on the compatibility, or incompatibility, of Jewish and philosophical thought; Stéphane Mosès's *Système et révélation—La philosophie de Franz Rosenzweig* (System and Revelation: The Philosophy of Franz Rosenzweig).

Current affairs: Emmanuel Brenner's *Les territoires perdus de la République* (The Lost Territories of the Republic), on anti-Semitism in French schools; Éric Marty's *Bref séjour à Jérusalem* (Brief Stay in Jerusalem), a collection of articles by a non-Jewish academic dealing with the place of Israel and Judaism in the contemporary world; Alain Finkielkraut's *Au nom de l’Autre—Réflexions sur l’antisémitisme qui vient* (In the Name of the Other: Reflections on the Coming Anti-Semitism); Régine Waintrater's *Sortir du génocide—Témoigner pour réapprendre à vivre* (Coming Out of Genocide: Bearing Witness to Learn Again How to Live), on the way that victims of the Holocaust and other collective traumas bear witness.

Historical works: Dominique Vidal's *Les historiens allemands relisent la Shoah* (German Historians Reread the Holocaust); Laurent Douzou's *Voler les Juifs* (Stealing from the Jews), on the plundering of Jewish property in Lyons during World War II; Odette Carasso's *Arthur Meyer*, about a Jew who converted to Catholicism and became a French press baron in the late nineteenth century; Pierre Hebey's *Les Juifs de Damas* (The Jews of Damascus), on a famous ritual murder accusation in Damascus in 1840; Gérard Nahon's *Juifs et judaïsme à Bordeaux* (Jews and Judaism in Bordeaux); Jean-Claude Schmitt's *La conversion d’Hermann le Juif* (The Conversion of Hermann the Jew), on a medieval German text whose authenticity remains doubtful; Moïse Rahmani's *Shalom Bwana*, on Jews in the Congo; Jean-Marc Dreyfus's *Pillages sur ordonnances* (Looting by Administrative Order), on the plundering of Jewish banks in France during World War II; *Dictionnaire des Justes de France* (Dictionary of Righteous Gentiles in France), edited by Lucien Lazare and published under the aegis of Yad Vashem; Claude Singer's *Le Juif Süss et la propagande nazi* (The Jew Süss and Nazi Propaganda); Arrick Delouya's *Les Juifs du Maroc—bibliographie générale* (The Jews of Morocco: General Bibliography); Jean Baumgarten's *Le yiddish.*

Novels: Clémence Boulouque's *Mort d’un silence* (Death of a Silence); Gilles Rozier's *Un amour sans résistance* (Love without Resistance); Henri Raczymow's *Le plus tard possible* (As Late as Possible); Serge Moati's *Villa Jasmin*; Françoise Giroud's *Les taches du léopard* (The Leopard's
Spots; Cyrille Fleischman’s *Une rencontre près de l’Hôtel de Ville* (A Meeting Near City Hall), a collection of short stories. A new dictionary was Niborski and Vaisbrot’s *Dictionnaire yiddish-francais*.

**Personalia**

On January 19, journalist and writer Françoise Giroud died at Neuilly-sur-Seine near Paris at the age of 86. Born France Gourdjii, she concealed her Jewish origins almost all her life. In 1953, along with Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber, Giroud founded the weekly magazine *L’Express*, of which she was the editor. In addition to being a leading figure in French journalism and a successful writer, she was an activist against colonialism and for women’s rights. She also had a brief political career, serving as secretary of state for the status of women, and then secretary of state for culture. Her last book was a novel, *Les taches du léopard* (an allusion to the biblical image of the leopard’s spots that never disappear), published soon after her death. In it she referred for the first time to the Jewish dimension of her life. Her grandson, Nicolas Eliach-eff, adopted strict Orthodox Judaism, becoming assistant to the chief rabbi of Strasbourg.

On February 20, writer and critic Maurice Blanchot died in Paris at the age of 95. In his youth he belonged to the French far right, and his published writings before World War II included anti-Semitic attacks. However, he maintained a friendship with the Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Lévinas, dating back to when they were both students at the University of Strasbourg. Shocked by the development of Nazism, he changed his position on the Jews shortly before the war. Between 1940 and 1945, he looked out for Lévinas’s family while his friend was held in a camp for French prisoners of war in Germany. Subsequently, the revelations about the Holocaust inspired him to produce a body of work focusing on the concepts of evil and destruction. He also studied the works of Jewish thinkers, especially Martin Buber and André Neher. His best known books were *The Writing of the Disaster*, *The Space of Literature*, and *The Instant of My Death*.

Jewish communal leader Charles Haddad died in Marseilles on April 17 at the age of 92. Born in Tunis, he was a lawyer by profession and the last president of the Tunisian Jewish community, until his departure in 1958. After that he played an active role in Marseilles, maintaining close relations with mayors and other local political leaders. He also wrote books on Tunisian Jewry.
On October 15, philosopher Benny Lévy died in Jerusalem at the age of 58. Lévy was born in Cairo in 1945, and when his family was forced to flee Egypt in 1956, he took refuge in Belgium and then in France. His brilliance as a student earned him a place in the most prestigious of French schools, the École Normale Supérieure. There, under the pseudonym of Pierre Victor, he became the leading figure in the Proletarian Left, a Maoist group that played a significant role in the revolutionary agitation of the late 1960s and early 1970s. For a generation of far-left activists, "Comrade Victor" was a charismatic leader who exercised both political and intellectual influence. It was largely because of him that the French far left, unlike its counterparts elsewhere, rejected terrorism.

Lévy became Jean-Paul Sartre's main collaborator. He slowly moved away from left-wing activism and the ideology that inspired it, and while pursuing his own philosophical research on the Greek foundations of the Western conception of politics, he also gradually moved closer to Judaism, taking his inspiration especially from the thought of Emmanuel Lévinas. Having readopted his original name Benny Lévy, he studied in a yeshivah and later taught philosophy at the university level, while living the life of a strictly religious Jew. He finally settled in Jerusalem, where, with the help of his friends Bernard-Henri Lévy and Alain Finkielkraut, he founded the Institut d'Études Lévinassiennes (Institute of Lévinas Studies) in 2000. Apart from his dialogues with Sartre, his major books were: *Le Logos et la lettre*—*Philon d'Alexandrie en regard des Pharisiens* (The Logos and the Letter: Philo of Alexandria in Relation to the Pharisees, 1988), *Visage continu*—*La pensée du Retour chez Emmanuel Lévinas* (Continuous Face: The Concept of Return in the Thought of Emmanuel Lévinas, 1998), *Le meurtre du Pasteur*—*Critique de la vision politique du monde* (Murder of the Shepherd: A Critique of the Political Vision of the World, 2002), and the posthumous *Être juif*—*Étude lévinassienne* (Being Jewish: A Lévinasian Study, 2003). His death evoked a series of tributes in the French press by his former far-left disciples who had since risen high in the French intellectual world.
Elections for the Chamber of Deputies, the lower house of Belgium's Parliament, took place on May 18. The greatest gains were made by the Socialist Party—its French-speaking faction (PS) won 25 seats and its Flemish faction (SPA Spirit) 23—and the French-speaking neoliberal Reformist Movement (MR), which won 24. These, together with the Flemish Liberals and Democrats (VLD), which won 25 seats, formed the new governing coalition. It was nicknamed the “purple government,” a combination of blue, the color of the liberals, and red, that of the socialists. Guy Verhofstadt (VLD) continued as prime minister and Louis Michel (MR) as deputy prime minister and foreign minister.

The big losers in the election was the Social Christian Party (French-speaking Christian Democrats), who now found themselves outside the government for the first time since 1958, and the two Green parties, Ecolo and Agalev, which, after having done well enough in the 1999 elections to merit inclusion in the government for the first time, were reduced to insignificance in 2003.

There was a worrisome rise in the strength of the xenophobic far right. While the FN (French-speaking National Front) secured just one seat, the Flemish Vlaams Blok raised its representation from 15 to 18 seats. So popular had the Vlaams Blok become in the Flemish capital that no majority coalition could be formed on Antwerp’s city council without its participation. There were reports that the Vlaams Blok sought votes among the Hassidim of Antwerp by appealing to their fear of Muslim immigrants, but there was little evidence that the strategy had worked.

Claude Marinower, a respected member of Antwerp's Jewish community, was elected to Parliament representing the VLD, a notable first for the community. He is the son of the late Marcel Marinower, who served as secretary general of Belgium’s Jewish Central Consistory.

The ink on the parliamentary election ballots had barely dried before the country was caught up in the preliminary campaigns for two more elections, both scheduled for June 2004. One was for the European Parliament. The other, far more contentious, was for the regional governing bodies within Belgium. The two linguistic subdivisions of the country, the
Walloon Region (French-speaking) in the south and the Flemish Region (Dutch-speaking) in the north, coexisted in a state of tension with each other. Both now set their sights on the Brussels Region, where the majority of inhabitants spoke French. Flemings concentrated in certain municipalities ringing the capital were demanding control over these areas, including the right to reject the bilingualism that characterized the region's 19 boroughs. Intense conflict was expected in 2004 between the Flemish parties, which had banded together on the language issue, and the French-speaking parties.

The major economic theme in the country was the move to privatize government-owned enterprises. Although this was part of a broader trend within the European Union, in Belgium it was related to the ongoing impact of the 2001 bankruptcy of Sabena, Belgium's national airline since 1925, which had a mixed government-private ownership. Already in severe financial trouble, Sabena finally succumbed to the fear of flying that followed immediately upon the events of 9/11. Not only was this the largest bankruptcy in Belgium's history, but it affected the many Belgians who worked for the company and its numerous subsidiaries. Given Belgium's characteristic politico-linguistic divide, casting blame for the catastrophe and finding investors to take the company over took on a French-speaking vs. Flemish cast. Similar ethnic divisions were evident in regard to plans for privatizing the national railways company, SNCB/NMBS.

The social security system was also a subject of great controversy. Many Belgians living in the Flemish Region resented the flow of government money into the poorer French-speaking Walloon Region, and sought to transfer a large part of the responsibility for such payments from the central government to the regions. Others advocated privatizing some parts of social security.

The legalization of same-sex marriage, which occurred in 2003, indicated once again that the Christian Democrats and the Catholic Church no longer had the power to influence Belgian social policy, a trend evident earlier in the 1990 law granting abortion rights and the 2002 enactment of legalized euthanasia.

Belgians remained transfixed by the long-running case of Marc Dutroux, which had dragged on for almost a decade. On June 24, 1995, Dutroux kidnapped two eight-year-old girls. He held them captive in a specially built hideaway in the basement of his home in Marcinelle, where they were repeatedly raped. Their dead bodies were discovered on August 17, 1996, on the grounds of another house belonging to Dutroux, in Sars-la-
Buissière. They had died of hunger and thirst. Dutroux and an accomplice, Michel Lelièvre, kidnapped two other girls at a seaside location on the night of August 22, 1995. These were also taken to Marcinelle, where they were held and raped. Their bodies were found later at Jumet, where they had been drugged and buried alive. So was the body of another of Dutroux’s accomplices, Bernard Weinstein. A fifth girl, Sabine, was kidnapped near Tournai on May 28, 1996, on her way to school, and a sixth, Laetitia, near the municipal swimming pool in Bertrix, on August 9. Both were subjected to the same terrible treatment, but were freed together on August 15 of that year.

It would take six-and-a-half years for the lengthy investigative process to culminate in an indictment, a delay that scandalized public opinion and led to charges that people in high places might be protecting the perpetrators. On January 17, 2003, Marc Dutroux; his wife, Michelle Martin; and his accomplice, Michel Lelièvre were arrested. In addition, Jean-Michel Nihoul, who had dealings with Dutroux and his “partners,” was indicted by the grand jury in Liège on March 5 on charges of criminal association. (The day after Laetitia’s kidnapping, Nihoul had delivered 1,500 ecstasy pills to Michel Lelièvre.) The trial of the four defendants in Assizes Court was set to begin March 1, 2004.

Israel and the Middle East

Belgium has long belonged to the circle of member states of the European Union that are linked by the most advanced types of cooperation, such as the single European currency (the euro) and the Schengen Agreement on police cooperation and common border controls. As a member of NATO, Belgium, which ended compulsory military service in 1992, participated in operations during the Gulf war and the events that came in the wake of Yugoslavia’s break-up, contributing personnel in proportion to its size.

But the prospect of war in Iraq in 2003 saw Belgium lining up with France and Germany—part of what U.S. defense secretary Donald Rumsfeld called the “old Europe” — skeptical of the U.S.-British position favoring armed intervention, and since Brussels was the site of NATO headquarters as well as the “capital” of the EU, the country’s antiwar stance was very visible. Many of the same American supporters of the war who spoke of boycotting French wine and “French” fries said the same about Belgian waffles. The government’s position, in fact, accurately reflected Belgian opinion. Several public demonstrations against war
took place in the country, the largest coming on February 15, when some 100,000 people turned out in Brussels to protest, part of a coordinated international day of demonstrations in world capitals.

The Belgian antiwar movement put considerable pressure on the government not to allow the U.S.-led coalition to use Antwerp harbor for the shipment of military supplies, as had been done in the Gulf war of 1991, and a number of activists were arrested for demonstrating at the harbor on February 17. When hostilities began, Defense Minister André Flahaut indeed stated that Belgium would not allow the transportation of military equipment through Belgium or via its ports.

Belgium's opposition to the war did not spare it from the wrath of Islamist terrorism. On May 16, five explosions went off in Casablanca, Morocco, killing 20 and injuring many others. They all seemed targeted at "Western" sites. One bomb went off at a Jewish nightclub, another at a Spanish social club and restaurant, and three booby-trapped cars exploded in front of the Belgian consulate. Since Belgium, unlike Spain, was not part of the U.S.-led coalition in Iraq, a government spokesman raised the possibility that the terrorists actually intended to destroy a popular restaurant next door.

"Universal Jurisdiction" and the Sharon Case

In 1993, Belgium adopted the principle of "universal jurisdiction" for war crimes and for crimes against humanity, meaning that anyone of any nationality suspected of such activities anywhere in the world might be tried in Belgium. The first successful prosecution under this law came in 2001, when four Rwandans were convicted of engaging in genocide during the civil war in that country in 1994.

In June 2001, survivors of the September 1982 massacres in the Sabra and Shatilla refugee camps for Palestinians near Beirut filed suit in Belgium against Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon and others, charging them with war crimes for their alleged role in the massacres. The lawsuit strained diplomatic relations with Israel and deeply embarrassing the Belgian government. On June 26, 2002, a Belgian appeals court voided the suit, citing an 1878 precedent limiting Belgian jurisdiction to crimes committed on Belgian soil or by someone located in Belgian territory at the time of prosecution. The case was appealed to the Court of Cassation, Belgium's supreme court for criminal matters (see AJYB 2003, pp. 408–10).

On February 12, 2003, the Court of Cassation reversed the lower court
decision and reinstated the suit. This ignited a storm of protest from Israel, which withdrew its ambassador from Brussels. Foreign Minister Louis Michel issued a remarkable public letter in response, dated February 25. Acknowledging that the court's move had brought Belgian-Israeli relations to a "low ebb," Michel recalled that his country was one of the first to criminalize Holocaust denial and enact special punishment for crimes motivated by anti-Semitism and racism. He explained that Belgium did not want to be the world’s "Grand Inquisitor," but that the law under which Sharon was accused "is in full conformity with the present evolution of international criminal law." Michel flatly denied that the statute was targeted at Israel or that the Sharon prosecution was motivated by anti-Semitism.

The government's hands-off policy did not last long; it was one thing to brush off Israeli objections, but quite another to take on the world's sole superpower. On March 18, suits were filed under the "universal jurisdiction" law against two prominent Americans, former president George H.W. Bush and the current secretary of state, Colin Powell, for the bombing of Baghdad during the Gulf war of 1991, when Powell had commanded the American forces. Powell commented that he could not visit Brussels, headquarters of NATO and the EU, for fear of being detained. Washington threatened to suspend funding for a planned new NATO headquarters building in Brussels, and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld went so far as to suggest moving those headquarters elsewhere. The absurdity of the situation triggered immediate action from the Belgian Parliament, which amended the law so that it would not apply to leaders of democratic countries that provided fair trials.

But this did not stop four doctors who worked in Iraq for the Belgian organization Medicine for the Third World from filing suit in Belgium on April 18 against Gen. Tommy Franks, the U.S. commander, for war crimes allegedly perpetrated in the recently completed action in Iraq. On July 29, soon after the new government coalition was in place, the Chamber of Deputies adopted the first draft of a revised law on violations of international human rights, and it was adopted on August 5. Under its provisions, violations could be prosecuted in the country only if the case had a "link" with Belgium: both the accuser and the accused perpetrator had to be Belgian, or to have resided in Belgium for at least three years. Acting under the new rule, an appeals court threw out the case against Franks on September 23, and the next day the Court of Cassation did the same to the Sharon prosecution, finally putting an end to the matter.
Anti-Semitism

The Belgian government distanced itself from anti-Semitism in no uncertain terms. Condemning the assertion in October by Malaysian prime minister Mahathir Mohamad that Jews "rule the world by proxy," Belgian foreign minister Louis Michel stated that his government "does not accept anti-Semitism in any form." Nevertheless, as noted in the EU report on anti-Semitism that was, for a time, suppressed but then released, "since the beginning of the 'al-Aqsa intifada' the number of violent actions against Jews and Jewish institutions has increased" in Belgium, "with the suspected perpetrators mainly from Muslim and Arab communities," but also from right-wing extremist groups.

In 2003, Jews were the targets of anti-Semitic insults and attacks in Belgium. For example, a Molotov cocktail was thrown at the main entrance to the Rue de la Clinique synagogue on March 18. An attempted car bombing, in which a booby-trapped vehicle was parked in front of Charleroi's synagogue on June 13, luckily did not come off, as the car failed to explode. Police arrested a 32-year-old man of Moroccan descent shortly afterward near the scene. Prime Minister Verhofstadt condemned the act but said there was no need to tighten security around Jewish buildings, even though that same synagogue had been hit by gunfire from unknown assailants a year before.

A particularly regrettable anti-Semitic incident, verbal rather than physical, occurred in Brussels on June 11, during the funeral of the mother of one of the community's best-known figures, Thomas Gergely, a professor at Brussels Free University (ULB). Professor Gergely wrote the following reaction on June 16, and it was published in the "carte blanche" column of the Belgian daily *Le Soir* (June 25):

I am writing these lines as reparation for an insult that I did not make but could not prevent. I ask for pardon, for who shall apologize, if I do not? Doubtless no one.

I teach at Brussels Free University. I am Belgian. I am Jewish. I took my mother to her final resting place last Wednesday. She was 95. She came into the world in 1908, under Franz-Josef's reign, in that Hungary of her origins, which was already anti-Semitic, to cries of "Death to the Jews!" She just left us to cries of "Dirty Jews!" in our Belgium, a country that she cherished so much for the respect for others that she had found here. The shameful loop of history has come full circle, implacable and unpardonable in its reiterations.

The facts? They are simple. In one of Brussels's boroughs a funeral parlor and primary school stand across the street from each other.
As the funeral procession for the lady who was my mother got under way, some North African children, having noticed the Star of David on her hearse from the schoolyard where they were at recess, covered her remains with insults. I could only follow her body without reacting, powerless to protect her from this last indignity.

Here, people will explain learnedly that our young 6-to-12-year-old North African compatriots are “filled with hate” because of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and, at their age, mix up everything, as do some of their elders, moreover. Well discerned, and yet, in explaining the incident in this way we have got it all wrong. Indeed, the fault is to found less in these kids than in today’s educational system and its omissions when it comes to educating its charges, in the admittedly somewhat old-fashioned meaning of the term.

Let me explain. Fifty years ago I was enrolled in Ixelles Primary School, just opposite the ponds. Every day, funeral processions heading for Holy Cross Church, on the square currently named Flagey, went past us children during our hour of recess. Every day, at the sight of those processions, the entire yard froze at attention and, whether Christian, Jewish, or of other faiths, we raised our caps in a tribute to the unknown person being carried past and out of respect for the bereaved who followed.

The old master that I have become and who has to date already tried to train some 25,000 young people, says without mincing words that spending two less hours on courses on tadpoles or computers and two more hours on basic ethics (for example, “One does not insult the dead!”) and the obligatory social skills that derive therefrom would contribute more to changing the sad face of certain things than the preordained “politically correct” round tables and other “adult” consensus-minded blathering with which we are stuffed to the gills.

If we had paid this ridiculously small price, I dare to believe that we would have spared an almost-100-year-old woman who had lived through all the horrors of the beautiful twentieth century without ever losing her faith in man or preferring one child over another, the inexcusable disgrace of departing under the invectives of schoolchildren blinded by the holes in their education. Some of the shame is theirs; much of the shame is borne by their teachers and parents.

Publication of this open letter triggered a host of responses, as readers voiced their indignation at what happened. Some Muslim women apologized for the behavior their coreligionists exhibited at the funeral. The government minister in charge of primary schools, Jean-Marc Nollet, organized a discussion on the topic that was broadcast on the French-speaking radio station RTBF, and which included Prof. Gergely.
Holocaust-Related Matters

In 2002, the National Commission for Restitution recommended the creation of a national foundation that would coordinate compensation to Jewish deportees, “hidden children,” and their families. Negotiations about implementation proceeded smoothly in 2003 between the Jewish organizations and the government.

The year 2003 marked the 60th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. To mark the milestone, the Jewish organizations held a commemoration in the presence of His Excellency Prince Philippe and the country's major civil, political, and religious authorities in the Brussels Fine Arts Center on April 29. Guest speakers included Simone Veil, president of the French Holocaust Foundation, Elie Wiesel, and Avraham Burg, former speaker of the Israeli Knesset. On May 8, Belgium’s Holocaust Memorial Day, the Forum of Jewish Organizations held its annual ceremony of remembrance in front of the monument to Antwerp’s deportees, and it was attended once again by Prime Minister Verhofstadt.

The Jewish Museum of Resistance and Deportation, located in Malines/Mechelen, preserved documents and artifacts relating to the Belgian experience in World War II. It was a popular destination for school outings, with hundreds of young people from both the Dutch- and French-speaking school systems visiting each day. The museum accessed a considerable amount of new material in 2003, including rushes of the well-known Flemish broadcast *The Last Witnesses*, with 150 hours of interviews of survivors; 3,000 envelopes with the personal papers of the people who were deported from Malines/Mechelen on the famous “twentieth train,” which will be preserved in digital form; and the “registry of Jews” that was kept during World War II on the orders of the Nazi occupiers, tangible proof of the Nazis' pathological zeal for writing down and keeping tallies on everything. The museum library also continued the process of transferring its 2,953 published works to CD-ROM. On September 11, the museum, in cooperation with the Toy Museum, presented an unprecedented and moving joint exhibition, “Geen Kinderspel” (No Child’s Play). On display were the toys of Jewish children from the camps, lent by Yad Vashem for the occasion.
Communal Defense

The Central Consistory of Belgium, the community's representative body, gave top priority to addressing the new expressions of anti-Semitism. It did this primarily through participation in meetings and conferences with local and pan-European agencies. Thus its president, Prof. Julien Klener, participated in seminars with the European Commission on religious tolerance, and was part of a fact-finding mission on relations between the different religious communities in Marseilles, France, that was organized by Belgian authorities in September. Klener also spoke at different venues in the Flemish and French-speaking parts of Belgium, explaining Jewish culture and history, and the problems confronting contemporary Jewry. Eager to coordinate its efforts with those of the rest of the Jews of Europe, the Consistory took part in a board meeting of the European Council of Jewish Communities held in Istanbul, in early November.

Along with the Consistory, the Coordinating Committee of Belgian Jewish Organizations (CCOBJ) in the French-speaking part of the country and the Forum der Joodse Organisaties (Forum of Jewish Organizations) in the Dutch-speaking area represented Jewish interests of a political nature with Belgian and foreign official bodies. All three groups participated in meetings with the prime minister and other high-level government officials on the subject of Belgium's policies in the Middle East and the Jewish community's feeling of insecurity in the wake of anti-Semitic attacks.

The Forum in particular provided interviews to the print and electronic media about the rise of anti-Semitism in the Flemish Region. It also filed a number of complaints on the subject, including one against the De Krijger publishing house for spreading Nazi propaganda, another against some Flemish newspapers for publishing anti-Semitic and anti-Israeli caricatures, and also one against the Taalknikker texts used in the public schools for their sometimes tendentious language. The Forum also called attention to anti-Semitic slurs in Palestinian textbooks (partially paid for by Belgian taxpayers) and to the phenomenon of anti-Semitic tags placed on the baggage of passengers arriving from Israel.

As elsewhere in Europe, there were elements of the Belgian Jewish community that disagreed with the mainstream organizations' support for Israel's policies. The Union des Progressistes Juifs de Belgique (Union of
Jewish Progressives of Belgium; UPJB) joined with 15 likeminded Jewish bodies from eight European countries to form a new group, European Jews for a Just Peace. The UJPB hosted the inaugural meeting in Brussels on March 15, where overall aims and strategy were discussed. This was followed by a conference in Amsterdam, September 19–20, which had the suggestive theme, "Don't say 'I didn't know.' " In December, the UPJB presented a photo exhibition, "Palestine beyond the Checkpoints."

Commemorations

For the Jewish community of Brussels, 2003 marked the 125th birthday of the Great Synagogue, located in Regency Street, and three separate events were held in commemoration. A special ceremonial service took place on June 23 in the presence of many of the country's civil and religious dignitaries—government figures, top leaders of the Roman Catholic Church in Belgium, and the president of the country's Protestants. In his address, Consistory president Klener stressed that the evolution of the synagogue, which began in a simple house and developed into a prestigious temple, accurately reflected the historic Jewish presence in Belgium. On September 10, the Jewish community hosted a reception in the Gothic Hall of the Brussels Town Hall to honor the mayor and municipal authorities of the city. And to cap this exceptional year, a large audience gathered in the Great Synagogue on December 14 to hear a concert of religious music of great quality featuring the famous Antwerp cantor Benjamin Muller, his son, Israel, and Michel Heymann, cantor of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg.

Although it occurred just before the year began, in December 2002, the 50th anniversary of the Centrale des Ouvres sociales juives (Central Administration of Jewish Welfare Organizations) also deserves mention. This was a fund-raising body along the lines of the federation system in the U.S. that collected money and allocated it to the community's social-service agencies and schools. The anniversary ceremony in the Brussels Town Hall was attended by Belgian dignitaries and Jewish leaders.

Interreligious Relations

The major interreligious event of the year took place on March 23, a day devoted to the theme "Jews, Christians, Muslims, and Agnostics: Let's build bridges together." Emphasizing the future rather than the
past, more than 100 people, young and old, were given the chance to put questions to "light transmitters," the featured speakers who represented the different groups.

As in the past, the Sisters of Zion, a Catholic group dedicated to developing good relations with the Jewish community, continued its cultural activities. One of the sisters served as editor-in-chief of the international journal *SIDIC* (*Service International de Documentation Judéo-Chrétienne*; International Jewish-Christian Documentation Service), published in both French and English. The Sisters of Zion also carried out "interfaith itineraries" in which participants coming from many different religious traditions are received in the various houses of worship in a given neighborhood. The 2003 session was attended by more than 250 people, including Jews, Christians, Moslems, Buddhists, and Bahais. The Sisters of Zion also took part in all public events involving the Jewish community.

The Forum of Jewish Organizations continued to conduct meetings with the Muslim leaders of Antwerp, and together the two communities drafted a charter of cooperation and mutual understanding that was circulated throughout the city. The Union of Jewish Progressives stepped up contacts with the North African immigrant community, particularly in Saint-Gilles, a Brussels borough with a large Muslim immigrant population, and organized visits of teams of Jews and Muslims to Belgian schools in order to combat racism and anti-Semitism.

**Culture**

The Consistory organized a colloquium on demography and the future of the Jewish people on May 25 at the Institute of Sociology (ULB), in cooperation with the Institute of Jewish Studies. Also, together with the Jewish Museum of Belgium, it organized the very successful Belgian celebration of the European Day of Jewish Culture, September 7.

The Jewish Museum of Belgium, now located in the headquarters of the Jewish community of Brussels on Stalingrad Avenue, planned its move to a spacious old mansion in the Sablon antiques district, made available to it by the government. The new location at 21 rue des Minimes would house the existing collection of artifacts and documents, a library, a depository for archives, and a teaching area for children. The more than 3,000 square meters of floor space would make it one of the most significant Jewish museums on the continent, worthy of the city that
served as the capital of Europe. The premises were expected to be ready sometime in 2004.

The organizers frankly acknowledged that the purpose of the expanded museum went far beyond an antiquarian interest in the history of Belgium's Jewish community. Rather, in a time of renewed anti-Semitism and Holocaust revisionism, the new, more prominent location was expected to counteract anti-Semitic stereotypes and stimulate serious consideration of the critical role of Jews in Western culture and the challenges of sustaining a pluralistic society.

In preparation for the move, the museum launched an appeal to people of Belgian descent living anywhere in the world who might have materials that could enrich the museum's collections, such as works of art, religious objects, photographs, books, plays, or other artifacts. Potential donors were assured that a six-person scientific team would ensure the proper conservation of all collections.

The Goethe Institute, which promotes German culture in Belgium, organized conferences, exhibitions, and lectures on Jewish themes and the Holocaust. There was an exhibition on the largely forgotten Flossenburg concentration camp, including documents and reports, as well as drawings, paintings, prints, and other pieces of artwork done by former inmates and deportees. One public lecture was devoted to Robert Schindel, a lyric poet, author, and stage director, whose works often touch upon the Holocaust's effects on the psyche of the postwar generation. Another lecture explored Germany's reparations for the Holocaust and whether Jews and non-Jews had finally achieved "normal" relations in reunified Germany. Another highlight of the Institute was a program on Jewish museums that was chaired by Prof. Georges Schnek, with the participation of the Jewish museums of Frankfurt and Munich.

The Jewish Studies Institute (Martin Buber Institute) presented important lectures and colloquia throughout the year. Some of the topics were the life and works of Baron de Hirsch, the Jews in Italy from 1848 to 1938, and Hannah Arendt's Jewish identity. On May 22, archeologist Neil Asher Silberman ended the 2002-03 academic year with an address on "The Bible Unearthed." The next academic year was launched on October 28 with a lecture on Palestinian Christians of Jewish origin in late antiquity, by Simon Claude Mimouni. "Jewish Identity: Between Tradition and Secularity" was the theme of a major colloquium sponsored by the Jewish Studies Institute on October 13-15. Thirty researchers from Belgium and abroad (Israel, France, Russia, Hungary, Germany, the U.S.,
and Great Britain) gathered in Brussels for this event. The keynote session, open to the public, attracted about 180 people, and the next two days were devoted to eight workshops focusing on specific subjects, and a closing session. The proceedings were to be published.

The Cercle Ben Gourion (Ben-Gurion Circle) held a Grand International Festival of Yiddish Culture in May, including songs, skits, and music by internationally renowned performing artists. It also organized a trip to Barcelona, June 12–15, with particular attention to Jewish historical sites and contemporary Jewish life. The circle's year of activity closed with a passionate debate on whether Belgium was doing enough to counter the danger of terrorism ("Fait-on tout en Belgique face au danger terroriste?") with the participation of Minister of State François-Xavier de Donnéa, along with several journalists.

The Institut de la Mémoire Audiovisuelle Juive (IMAJ; Institute of Jewish Audiovisual Memory) sponsored several memorable cultural events, the most significant of which was the Polish Jewish Culture Festival that took place October 14–20. Including an exhibition, concerts, movies, and lectures, it was organized in cooperation with the Polish Cultural Center, with the help of the Jewish Secular Community Center, the Maison du Livre literary center, and Friends of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and with the support of the Polish embassy and general consulate. The festival gave the Belgian public a sense of what Jewish life was like in Poland before the Holocaust as well as an idea of the contemporary revival of Jewish culture there.

Georges Schnek
Italy and the Vatican

National Affairs

Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi emerged as one of President George W. Bush's staunchest allies in the U.S.-led war on Iraq. Italy allowed U.S. warplanes to fly through Italian airspace and U.S. transport planes bound for the Gulf to use bases in Italy for stopovers. Italy eventually sent 3,000 peacekeeping troops to Iraq. Italian public opinion, however, largely opposed the war. There were numerous antiwar marches, strikes, and other protests, and the rainbow peace banner hanging from windows was a common sight. The center-left opposition took a strongly antiwar stand, and there were heated debates in Parliament. In November, a suicide bomber in the Iraqi city of Nassyria killed 19 Italians, shocking the country.

Iraqi deputy prime minister Tariq Aziz visited Italy in February, before the war, where he met with Italian leaders and Pope John Paul II (see below, p. 344). Rome's mayor, Walter Veltroni, turned down a meeting with Aziz after the Iraqi refused to answer a question posed by an Israeli journalist at a news conference.

During the year, several highly critical articles about Berlusconi appeared in the international media. Among other things, they focused on unresolved problems of conflict of interest regarding his media and business holdings. He was accused of getting legislation passed that was specifically formulated to help him out of his legal difficulties. For example, Italy was due to take over the rotating six-month presidency of the European Union on July 1. The day before, an Italian court suspended a bribery trial against Berlusconi after Parliament passed a law granting him and other senior leaders legal immunity. In Berlusconi's debut speech to the European Parliament in Strasbourg, he compared a German member of the 626-member assembly to a kapo in a Nazi concentration camp. The remark—the latest in a series of verbal gaffes by Berlusconi—sparked a diplomatic spat with Germany.

In December, the Italian economy was rocked by the collapse of the giant Parmalat food company in a financial fraud scandal resembling the Enron accounting case in the U.S.
Israel and the Middle East

Not only was Prime Minister Berlusconi an American ally in the Iraq war, but he also emerged as one of Europe’s most pro-Israel leaders. As early as December 2002, in fact, Israeli president Moshe Katzav, on a visit to Rome, had hailed him as a “great friend of Israel.”

At the same time, Italy was at the center of several investigations targeting alleged Islamic extremists among the immigrant Muslim population, including imams at mosques in several cities. There were a number of arrests, and security was heightened throughout the country for fear of terrorist attacks. In June, Abdel-Samie Mahmoud Ibrahim Moussa was suspended from his position as imam of the Grand Mosque of Rome for preaching a sermon that exalted suicide bombers and called for the annihilation of “the enemies of Islam” and for “the victory everywhere of the Nation of Islam.” Moussa’s sermon had triggered an appeal by the Simon Wiesenthal Center for Italy to deport him.

In New York in January, Foreign Minister Franco Frattini said that his government would use its moral and political leadership to oppose anti-Semitism and the vilification of Israel in the international community. He called for “concrete actions, not just words” to stop terrorism in the Middle East, referring in particular to Hamas and Islamic Jihad. Italy’s approach to the Middle East conflict, he said, was a two-state solution based on mutual security, along the lines articulated by President Bush in June 2002. He urged the Palestinian Authority to move toward democracy and governmental reform, and suggested that Italy’s initiative for widespread aid and investment—a “Marshall Plan for the Middle East”—could be an essential component of long-term peace. Frattini spoke at a meeting organized by the Anti-Defamation League and hosted by Italy’s permanent representative to the United Nations.

In May, Berlusconi reiterated to visiting leaders of the World Jewish Congress that, as EU president during Italy’s six-month tenure, he would fight anti-Semitism, promote sympathy for Israel in Europe, and work to broker peace in the Middle East. Berlusconi went to Israel in June to promote the “road map” peace plan. He told Prime Minister Sharon: “I feel the attacks against Israelis as if they were attacks against my own people” and reiterated his “Marshall plan” of economic aid. On the trip, he also visited Jordan and Egypt, but, in a move criticized by other EU countries, he adopted the Israeli-U.S. position of boycotting Palestinian Authority chairman Yasir Arafat. Italy’s foreign minister held a series of high-level meetings in North Africa and the Middle East the same week.
Berlusconi’s support for Israel prompted the Anti-Defamation League to present him with its Distinguished Statesman Award at a “Salute to Italy” dinner in New York in September. (At the ceremony, Berlusconi advocated Israel’s membership in the EU.) “Italy stands as a staunch and valued ally of the United States in the war against terrorism and has taken a leadership role in an effort to stamp out anti-Semitism and racism in Europe,” the ADL said. It presented the award despite the fact that, in an interview published earlier that month, Berlusconi had angered Italian Jews by seeming to minimize the brutality of the wartime fascist regime of Benito Mussolini. “Mussolini never killed anyone,” Berlusconi was quoted as saying. “Mussolini sent people on holiday in internal exile.” To smooth relations with the Jewish community, Berlusconi expressed remorse for his remarks during a 90-minute meeting with Italian Jewish leaders at Rome’s main synagogue, and also reiterated his strong support for Israel. Jewish leaders accepted his apology—though they called on him to apologize to all of Italy, not just Jews. Nevertheless, many Jews remained upset.

In the U.S., meanwhile, the New York Times published a letter from three Jewish Nobel laureates that strongly protested the ADL award as “shocking to anyone who knows Mr. Berlusconi’s controversial history.” One of the signers was the Italian-born Harvard economist Franco Modigliani, who died two days after the letter appeared (see below, pp. 357, 623). ADL national director Abraham Foxman defended the award to Berlusconi. “A friend is a friend even though he is flawed,” he argued. “Has Berlusconi said things that I am critical of? Yes. But he’s America’s friend, Israel’s friend, our friend.”

Prime Minister Sharon paid a three-day official visit to Italy in November, during which he reiterated that Italy was Israel’s “greatest friend” in the EU. A key issue during his visit was anti-Semitism. He arrived just days after the suicide-bomb attacks against two synagogues in Turkey (see above, pp. 224–25), and in the wake of two disturbing surveys: first, an EU poll showed that 59 percent of Europeans saw Israel as a threat to world peace, and second, a survey in Italy indicated that 22 percent of the population did not see their fellow Jewish citizens as “real Italians,” and that 52 percent had little sympathy for Israel (see below, p. 347).

There were many other official visits back and forth between Italy and Israel during the year. Notable among them was one to Israel by the president of the Italian Senate, Marcello Pera, in May, and another by the Israeli minister of industry to Italy in the fall, which was followed by a large Italian trade delegation to Israel.
The most significant Italian visit to Israel was that of Deputy Prime Minister Gianfranco Fini in November, shortly after Sharon went to Rome. Fini led the National Alliance party, which had roots in neofascism, and the trip culminated nearly a decade of efforts by Fini to shed his party’s jackboot image and emerge as a mainstream rightist leader. In Israel, Fini met with Sharon and other leaders, and, wearing a kippah, laid a wreath at Yad Vashem. He denounced Italy’s fascist past and involvement in the Shoah, and pledged to fight anti-Semitism. “We have to condemn the shameful chapters in the history of our people and to try to understand why complacency, collaboration and fear caused no reaction from many Italians in 1938 to the disgraceful, fascist race laws,” he said. “We have to do this not only to settle accounts with the past, but to prepare for the future. We have to do this so it is clear to all today, in 2003, with the racism and anti-Semitism, so no one can say ‘I am not connected, it has nothing to do with me, it is not my place to respond.’”

Union of Italian Jewish Communities (UCEI) president Amos Luzzatto, who had long expressed skepticism at Fini’s attempts to win favor with the Jewish world, accompanied Fini to Israel. The visit drew a mixed response from some Israelis of Italian origin and from left-of-center Israeli commentators and politicians. Fini’s denunciation of Italy’s fascist past also shook up the National Alliance at home. Alessandra Mussolini, granddaughter of the wartime duce, quit the party and founded her own political movement. Other right-wing elements in the National Alliance also criticized Fini.

Shortly before his trip to Israel, Fini demanded the expulsion from the party of a National Alliance member of Parliament for sending other MPs a video praising Erich Priebke, the former SS captain sentenced to life in prison for his part in the murder of 335 civilians in Rome in 1944 (see AJYB 2003, p. 446). Priebke, now 90 years old, appealed for a pardon in October.

Numerous official visits also took place between Italy and Arab states, including the one by Iraqi deputy prime minister Tariq Aziz to Rome in March mentioned above, and another in September by Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak.

In December, Rome was the scene of a two-day annual conference of international donors to the Palestinian Authority. During this meeting, the Israeli and Palestinian foreign ministers, Silvan Shalom and Nabil Shaath, held bilateral talks and announced plans to ensure more effective distribution of international aid in Gaza and the West Bank. They
also said they were attempting to arrange a meeting between their prime ministers.

A number of local initiatives were aimed at promoting contact between Israelis and Palestinians. At the beginning of the year, a group of Palestinian and Israeli educators, religious representatives, and social activists visited Italian organizations with the aim of promoting grassroots dialogue in the Middle East. The meetings were cosponsored by Confronti, an Italian magazine devoted to social and religious issues, and Rome's Office of Multiethnicity. This was the fifth year of such meetings, which included a roundtable discussion at Rome’s city hall on the impact on children of the violence between Israel and the Palestinians. In April, several music schools in Rome hosted a group of young Israeli and Palestinian musicians in a program called “Notes for Peace.” The musicians, students at the Jerusalem Academy of Dance and Music and the Magnificat Institute in Jerusalem, attended classes, met with young Roman musicians, and performed together with them.

In February, a group of Italian academics who belonged to the Italian Association of Friends of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem issued an appeal for solidarity with Israeli scholars and institutions threatened by boycotts in leftist academic circles. In March, the rectors of the University of Milan and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem signed an agreement to develop cooperation and exchange programs. In May, a group of leftist intellectual and political figures launched an initiative to combat left-wing anti-Zionist, anti-Israel, and, at times, anti-Semitic attitudes. Called “Left Wing for Israel,” the group said it would publicize the efforts made by Israeli leftists to foster “a reciprocal and peaceful recognition of the rights of the two peoples, Israeli and Palestinian.”

In November, hundreds of priests, nuns, politicians, and ordinary Italians joined Italian Jews at Shabbat services in synagogues around the country as a show of solidarity following the suicide-bomb attacks against two synagogues in Istanbul. More than 1,000 locals came to the congregation in Milan alone. The initiative, called “Open Synagogues,” was launched by Gad Lerner, a very prominent journalist and television personality.

Lerner launched the plan with a letter to the editor of the Catholic daily Avvenire. He wrote: “Many Italian Jews are afraid. They are afraid to pray in the synagogue on Saturday morning. Last Saturday, they massacred people who had gone to pray where they have always gone; and now some of our fellow countrymen, who are neither conspiracy theorists nor
visionaries, know well that there is an intention to renew this massacre—
because all Jews are considered guilty of the existence of Israel—and thus
they fear that this could happen among us. Dear [editor], the syna-
gogues are places of prayer, but also of community dialogue and witness.
I extend to you an invitation—come with me and my children to the
Milan synagogue on Via Guastalla next Saturday. This would be a sim-
ple gesture of solidarity to show that those who threaten the prayers of
some strike the civilization of all.” In a letter printed in *Avvenire* along
with Lerner’s, the editor responded: “I’ll be there; you can count on it.
We won’t leave you alone.” And he broadened the proposal to all, “from
city to city, wherever there are synagogues and Christians.” Because “it
is not just or moral to leave you alone. If someone is thinking of strik-
ing you because you are Jews, he should know that we are there with you.”

*The Vatican and the Middle East*

The Vatican was an unwavering critic of the U.S.-led war against Iraq.
Pope John Paul II spoke out against war on a number of occasions, as
did other Vatican officials and commentators. The pope’s stance made
him a rallying point for a diverse mix of antiwar political forces. In Feb-
ruary, the pope appealed for world prayer to avert war, and sent Cardi-
nal Roger Etchegaray on a peace mission to Baghdad to try to convince
Iraq to cooperate with the international community. In Baghdad, the
envoy delivered a personal message from the pope to President Saddam
Hussein. (After his return, Etchegaray received some criticism for main-
taining silence on Saddam’s brutality to his own people.) The same week,
Iraq’s deputy prime minister, Tariq Aziz, a Chaldean Catholic, met with
the pope at the Vatican and prayed at the tomb of St. Francis in the Um-
brian hill town of Assisi. Aziz told John Paul that Iraq would cooperate
with the UN. Aziz was accompanied by Archbishop Hilarion Capucci.
Now 81, Capucci had led a small Greek Melkite community in Jerusalem
in the 1960s and 1970s, and in 1974 was arrested by Israeli security forces
when his car was found filled with explosives and guns destined for the
PLO. Sentenced to 12 years in prison, he was freed in 1977 and had since
lived in Rome.

Ahead of the war, the pope also met with UN secretary general Kofi
Annan, British prime minister Tony Blair, German foreign minister
Joschka Fischer, and other leaders, and in early March he sent an envoy
with a peace message to President Bush in Washington. On March 16,
just days ahead of the U.S.-led attack, he called on Saddam Hussein to
cooperate with the UN, saying that Iraqi leaders had an "urgent duty to collaborate fully with the international community, to eliminate any motive for an armed attack." After the war began, the Vatican urged a quick end to the conflict, expressed concern for the victims, and offered to help coordinate humanitarian aid through its Iraqi dioceses. At Easter, the pope offered a special prayer for "victims of hate, war, and terrorism."

December 30, 2003 marked the tenth anniversary of the accord that led to full diplomatic relations between Israel and the Holy See. In the spring, Oded Ben-Hur took up the post of Israeli ambassador to the Vatican, replacing Neville Yosef Lamdan. In an interview published in Italy before he returned to Israel, Lamdan said that Israel appreciated the Vatican's efforts to take a balanced position in the Middle East conflict and described the Vatican position as "consistent and reasonable." But, he said, "in practice we sometimes feel there is a limited recognition of the political, military, and moral dilemmas that Israel has to face. And on the contrary, a certain tolerance and permissiveness with the Palestinians, when from the Vatican we expect instead a stronger moral influence on them." He also said Israel had been "disappointed" over the past two-and-a half years at "the refusal of the Vatican to raise its voice against anti-Semitism, despite the fact that we have asked at the highest levels."

There was evidence during the year of what Italian journalist Sandro Magister referred to as "the general deep distaste for Israel that animates an important segment of Catholic intellectuals." He noted a commentary published in the fall in the Palermo Catholic monthly Segno, which justified suicide bombers and described Israel as "a foreign body" nourished since its beginning by "fundamentalist ideals" and moved by an "irrepressible impulse" toward occupation and colonization. On the other hand, in an interview published in an Italian newspaper in December, Cardinal Etchegaray warned that anti-Semitism was on the rise in Europe and urged constant vigilance to avoid setting out on "the path to Auschwitz."

When Ambassador Ben-Hur presented his credentials to the pope on June 2, John Paul reiterated the Vatican view that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would be resolved only "when there are two independent and sovereign states." Just minutes after this audience, the pope met with U.S. secretary of state Colin Powell, where the pope urged international cooperation in the rebuilding of Iraq and the two men discussed the U.S. "road map" peace plan for the Middle East. Powell went on from the Vatican to the Middle East.

During the year, the pope repeatedly deplored violence and called for
a negotiated peace in the Middle East. In June he urged the international community "not to tire of helping Israelis and Palestinians to find a sense of brotherhood to weave together their future." In November the pope condemned terrorism in the Holy Land, but also criticized the security fence Israel was building to separate itself from the Palestinians. He said: "The construction of a wall between the Israeli and Palestinian peoples is seen by many as a new obstacle on the road toward peaceful cohabitation. In reality, the Holy Land doesn't need walls, but bridges."

**Anti-Semitism and Racism**

Like their counterparts in other European countries, Italian Jews worried about the perceived rise of a "new" anti-Semitism linked to the situation in the Middle East. Italian public opinion was highly critical of Israel's tough military policy against the Palestinians, and Italian Jews expressed alarm and concern at what they warned was a sharp anti-Israel and anti-Jewish bias in some of the print and broadcast media. Jewish monitors, making use of Web sites set up for the purpose, analyzed the media's performance and denounced instances of inaccuracy, misinformation, and prejudice. There were several seminars and conferences during the year that discussed how the Middle East conflict was covered in the media. One that drew considerable attention was the two-day "Media and Truth" conference at Rome's city hall in February. Sponsored by a group called Religions for Peace, it featured journalists, diplomats, and media experts from Europe, the U.S., Israel, and Arab countries.

A number of anti-Semitic incidents were reported, most involving vandalism, threats, or anti-Semitic graffiti rather than the violent attacks that had been seen in some other countries. Jewish leaders described a spreading "climate" of increased anti-Semitism emanating from three sectors: the extreme right wing and conservative Catholicism, the pro-Palestinian mainstream left, and the antiglobalization and pro-Palestinian militants.

Victims of anti-Semitic graffiti during the year, among others, were physicist Decio Levi, a professor at the Roma Tre University, and two well-known journalists—Clemente Mimun, director of the state broadcaster RAI's main television news program, and Paoli Mieli, former editor of *Corriere della Sera* newspaper, whose father was Jewish. The incidents prompted loud condemnation from across the political spectrum. In March, when the U.S. attacks on Iraq began, vandals smashed a marble plaque that marks a park in Rome named after Yitzhak Rabin. Also in March, militant antiwar demonstrators trashed the entrance to
the building housing the offices of Israel's trade and tourism bureaus in Milan. These people were a small group that broke away from a mass antiwar demonstration involving thousands of people in downtown Milan. In the summer, a crude nail bomb was discovered in the Jewish cemetery in Florence (it was deactivated and caused no harm). In December, a car parked near the synagogue in Modena exploded before dawn when an Arab man set himself on fire inside to commit suicide. There were no other injuries.

Several surveys taken during the year produced troubling data. In the spring, a study published by the European Observer on Racism indicated that Italy hosted the greatest number of racist and xenophobic Web sites operated by soccer fans. The study, which monitored 450 sites in Europe, found that nearly a third of the 53 Italian sites included racist, anti-Semitic or xenophobic material.

A survey of Italian youth conducted in 2002 and released in June 2003 indicated that racist attitudes were becoming increasingly embedded in mainstream Italian society. More than a third of Italian teenagers seemed to harbor such views toward Jews, Muslims, immigrants, and other cultural minorities. The survey was sponsored by the Union of Italian Jewish Communities under the auspices of Italy’s president. It showed that new forms of racism had become socially accepted, and that racist rhetoric was becoming part of the daily language of a large part of society. Interviews with more than 2,000 young Italians between the ages of 14 and 18 in 110 towns, cities, and villages revealed that nearly 8 percent harbored a “very high” level of racism; nearly 11 percent a “high” level; and nearly 21 percent a “medium high” level. More than 9 percent showed a “very low” level of racism; 15.5 percent a “low” level; and nearly 18 percent a “medium low” level. The highest levels of racism were seen in northern Italy and among those teenagers who were deeply religious or politically right wing.

In November, a survey carried out for the Corriere della Sera newspaper indicated that the vast majority of Italians believed that Israel had a right to exist, but more than half felt little “sympathy” for the Jewish state, and 70 percent judged the policies of the current Israeli government to be mistaken. The poll also indicated that one-third or less of the population had an accurate historical understanding of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and that some 20 percent of Italians harbored anti-Semitic feelings. “Disinformation about the reality of events and the consequent greater readiness to accept the most simplistic interpretation also appear to depend on anti-Jewish sentiment and, in turn, contribute to shape it
and reinforce it,” wrote sociologist Renato Mannheimer in an analysis of the survey.

**Holocaust-Related Developments**

State, local, private, and Jewish bodies sponsored numerous events to mark January 27, Holocaust Remembrance Day. More than 20,000 people took part in a commemorative march in Milan, where Italy’s president awarded the national Order of Merit to seven people who had either survived the Holocaust or helped save Jews. A “Garden of the Righteous” honoring people who performed acts of courage or compassion under extreme circumstances was inaugurated in Milan, sponsored by the city council. It was modeled on the Forest of the Righteous among Nations at Yad Vashem. (In the spring, authorities in Florence approved a similar initiative there.) From Tuscany, 500 people went on a study trip to Auschwitz.

There were more than 40 events in Rome alone, ranging from a special conference for several thousand high-school students to a concert by Israeli musicians at a train station from which Roman Jews were deported to Auschwitz. Radio and television broadcast hours of Holocaust-related programs, and newspapers and magazines published special sections. The scope of these events made some Jews uneasy, since the facts and implications of the Shoah could easily be lost amid the hype. (A week later, vandals destroyed a memorial in Cernobbio to the Italian fascist Giorgio Perlasca, who saved thousands of Jews in Budapest during World War II. Italian TV had shown a film about Perlasca on Holocaust Remembrance Day.)

Differing historic memories of World War II and Italy’s fascist past continued to spark debate. How to mark Liberation Day on April 25, the anniversary of the 1945 partisan insurrection against the Nazis and fascists in northern Italy, provided the focus for this. Over the course of the previous decade, the view that fascist fighters and antifascist partisans were equally patriotic had been gaining ground. Indeed, some on the right began branding the partisans as “communists.” April 25 ceremonies in the northeast city of Trieste exemplified the issue. Two separate Liberation Day ceremonies were held. One commemorated the victims of the fascists and Nazis who were killed in the San Sabba death camp there. The other honored some 6,000 anticommunists who were believed to have been killed and thrown into ditches between 1943 and 1945.

In Rome, Liberation Day events including the planting of an olive tree
from Jerusalem to commemorate the “Jewish brigade” from Palestine that helped fight the World War II fascist regime. But earlier in the day some Jews pulled out of a Liberation Day parade in the capital after a group of far-left, pro-Palestinian participants unfurled banners with anti-Israel slogans.

In May, the long-exiled heir to Italy’s abolished monarchy paid homage at the Ardeatine Caves, the country’s foremost World War II monument. The caves, where 335 Romans, including 75 Jews, were massacred by the SS in 1944 in reprisal for a partisan attack that killed 33 German soldiers, are a national shrine and memorial to Nazi victims. Victor Emmanuel, son of Italy’s last king, laid a wreath that, he said, was intended as “a gesture of peace toward the Jewish community.” He was on his third visit to Italy after Parliament in 2002 lifted the postwar ban on Italy’s royal heir setting foot on Italian soil. His gesture did little to assuage Jewish uneasiness over Victor Emmanuel’s failure to apologize for the monarchy’s support of the fascist-era persecution of Italy’s Jews. Victor Emmanuel, in fact, had never even made official contact with Italy’s Jewish community after his exile was lifted.

In May, the Chamber of Deputies, the lower house of Parliament, approved an investigation of the failure of postwar Italian authorities to prosecute hundreds of cases of war crimes. In 1994, 695 cases of files on the 1943–45 massacres of 15,000 people were found hidden in a building housing the military court appeals offices.

In October, Rome mayor Walter Veltroni accompanied 200 students from the city’s public high schools on a Holocaust education trip to Auschwitz. The group was guided by a leading Italian Holocaust scholar and accompanied by several Italian survivors and Rome’s chief rabbi. On October 16, Italian officials joined the Rome Jewish community in events marking the 60th anniversary of the Nazi deportation of more than 2,000 Roman Jews to Auschwitz. These included a memorial ceremony attended by Italy’s president and Mayor Veltroni, a film on the deportation screened for 1,200 students from 33 Rome high schools, a conference on art and memory, and a concert at the train station from which Roman Jews were shipped to their death. There was also an exhibit on the impact of the anti-Semitic laws imposed by Italy’s fascist regime in 1938.

During the year, Yad Vashem recognized several Italians as Righteous among the Nations. In May, Italy was chosen to head the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research in 2004.

In February, the Vatican unsealed 650 files of diplomatic documents
about its relations with prewar Nazi Germany, opening the way for scholars to examine the once-secret documents. These included thousands of pages from the diplomatic collections of the Papal Nunciatura in Munich and Berlin, and the Second Section of the Vatican State Secretariat. They all dated from the pontificate of Pope Pius XI, who reigned from 1922 until his death in February 1939. During that period Eugenio Pacelli, who became Pope Pius XII on March 2, 1939, served as Vatican ambassador in Berlin and Vatican secretary of state. In these positions, he both wrote and received regular reports on the situation in Germany.

The documents were unsealed six years ahead of schedule in response to the debate over Vatican activities during in the Holocaust—in particular the role of Pius XII, whom critics had long accused of culpability through silence. The first few files to surface from the trove included an impassioned appeal for papal action against Nazi persecution of the Jews written in April 1933 by Edith Stein, a German Jewish convert to Catholicism who eventually was murdered in Auschwitz and in 1998 was declared a saint.

Another set of documents released at the same time included prewar archives opened by the Vatican’s Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which in that period compiled numerous confidential studies on Nazism, fascism, and communism.

JEWISH COMMUNITY

Demography

About 28,000 Jews were officially registered as members of Italian Jewish communities, but the actual number of Jews in the country was believed to be between 30,000 and 40,000. Three-quarters of Italy’s Jews lived in two cities that provided a full infrastructure for Jewish life: Rome, with about 15,000 Jews (13,600 officially registered), and Milan, with about 10,000. The rest of the country’s Jews were scattered in 19 other towns and cities, mostly in northern and central Italy, in communities ranging from a handful of Jews to a thousand or so.

According to figures cited in February by Rome’s chief rabbi, Dr. Riccardo Di Segni, only about 3,000 of Rome’s Jews took an active part in communal religious life, 1,000 attending Shabbat services each week, and about another 2,000 who were predominantly parents and children associated with the Jewish school. Di Segni outlined strict conversion pro-
cedures for children of families where the wife was not Jewish but wanted to raise the children as Jews. The parents would have to attend Jewish study sessions, maintain an observant home, and send the children to the Jewish school until the age of bar/bat mitzvah. At that point, the child would choose whether to remain Jewish or follow the mother’s faith. Those choosing the former would have to continue studying Judaism until their formal entry into the Jewish community at age 18.

About half of Italy’s Jews were native born, the other half immigrants who had come over the past several decades. Between one-third and one-half of Rome’s Jews were members of families that had been forced to leave Libya following the Six-Day War of 1967. The last Jew in Tripoli, an 81-year-old woman, arrived in Rome in October. (Several events, meetings, exhibits, and publications during the year centered on the Libyan Jewish diaspora in Rome.) The Milan Jewish community included recent arrivals from more than two dozen countries, including Iran and other Muslim states.

Communal Affairs

Orthodoxy was still the only officially recognized form of Judaism in Italy, encompassing three ritual traditions: Sephardi, Ashkenazi, and Italian, the latter a local rite that evolved from the Jewish community that lived in the country during the Roman Empire. Chabad-Lubavitch maintained its strong presence, particularly in Rome, Milan, and Venice. In the spring, the Milan rabbinate launched an initiative to open an Italian yeshivah to be associated with the city’s main synagogue.

Reform and Conservative streams were not recognized by the Union of Italian Jewish Communities (UCEI). Nonetheless, several small Reform congregations operated independently. These included Lev Chadash and Beth Shalom in Milan, which were served by rabbis from abroad who made regular visits to conduct services and hold classes for community members and potential converts. Both of the Milan congregations were affiliated with the European Region of the World Union for Progressive Judaism (WUPJ). Similar small groups also existed in Rome and Florence. In May, at the Lev Chadash congregation, a couple celebrated what was called the first Reform wedding ever held in Italy. In June, the congregation formally installed a Torah scroll in the converted apartment it used as a synagogue, and celebrated what were believed to be Italy’s first Reform bar and bat mitzvah. A visiting rabbi, Kathleen Middleton, led the service. Beth Shalom in Milan dedicated a Torah in November at a
service conducted by Rabbi Avraham Soetendorp of The Hague. The scroll was a gift from New York’s Temple Emanu-El.

In May, Milan’s Orthodox chief rabbi ruled out any acceptance of the two nascent Reform congregations. “The Milan community is an Orthodox community, in the sense that, historically, from the institutional point of view, it was founded, inspired, and acts on the basis of the principles of Halakhah,” Rabbi Giuseppe Laras told the Milan Jewish monthly Il Bollettino. Allowing groups that operate “not on the basis of the principles of Halakhah but on that of Reform Judaism” would create problems between communal institutions as well as individuals, he said. Since Reform groups acted autonomously in how they defined the Jewish identity of their members, Laras noted, “it is easy to foresee how the entrance into the Jewish community of such groups would be likely to create serious problems of coexistence.” Laras made his comments following a meeting of the Milan Jewish community board that focused on policy toward the Reform movement.

Italian Jews had a well-organized infrastructure of schools, clubs, associations, youth organizations, and other services, including a rabbinical college. In November, Milan hosted delegates from 27 countries attending the third congress of B’nai B’rith Europe. A growing number of young Italian Jews, particularly in Milan, made contact with each other through a hip-looking Web site, www.ghetton.it. In May, about 1,000 Italian Jews took part in the annual Moked cultural and educational gathering at a resort on the Adriatic Sea. The women’s organization ADEI-WIZO was active nationwide, and Jewish community and cultural centers in Milan and Rome had a full schedule of cultural, social, and educational activities. The communities in Rome and Milan each published monthly magazines, and the Milan magazine, Il Bollettino, began a regular e-mail newsletter. Less elaborate bulletins were published in Turin, Trieste, and Florence.

The Jewish community of Trieste carried on increasing contacts and exchanges with Jews in Slovenia and Croatia, thanks to the fact that Rabbi Ariel Haddad, director of the Jewish Museum in Trieste, was also chief rabbi of neighboring Slovenia (see below, pp. 446–47). In May, the presidents of the Jewish communities in Trieste and Slovenia signed a joint statement formally declaring the intention of their communities to collaborate, and the next month, Jewish children from Slovenia, Croatia, and Albania, as well as from around Italy, took part in an educational get-together in a newly renovated Jewish activity center near Trieste.

In May, the Jewish community of Rome signed a property-exchange
agreement with the city enabling all local Jewish educational and recreational activities to move into one building in the old ghetto, a former school, thus making possible the establishment of a modern Jewish community and cultural center. In the spring a new kosher restaurant opened in Rome specializing in Italian, Libyan, and Israeli food, and in the summer a new synagogue was founded in a residential district of the capital.

Jews were involved in broader community work. Over the winter, the Rome Jewish community ran a program providing clothing, blankets, and hot meals to the city’s homeless. Italian Jews also carried out an aid program for young children and teenagers affected by an earthquake in southern Italy in 2002 that had leveled an elementary school and wiped out almost an entire class. UCEI sent in a team of ten educators specializing in helping youngsters recover from trauma to work with local children, using play therapy to help them overcome fears brought on by the quake.

Italian Jews, many of whom had close family ties with Israel, followed the continuing conflict between Israel and the Palestinians with great concern. This was demonstrated vividly when, in a solidarity move, the national board of the UCEI flew to Jerusalem in September for its regular board meeting. They were joined on the trip by the presidents of Jewish communities from around Italy. There were also several solidarity missions to Israel organized by Jewish groups.

Jews followed the outbreak of the war in Iraq with trepidation. Attitudes toward the war were mixed, reflecting the varied political orientations of community members. Beside fears for Israel, Jews were concerned that, in a country where public opinion was against the war and where the U.S., Israel’s main ally, was seen as the villain, there was a risk of a backlash against Jews.

Jewish-Catholic Relations

Pope John Paul II, increasingly frail, marked a milestone on October 16—the 25th anniversary of his papacy. As part of the anniversary celebrations, he beatified Mother Teresa and elevated 30 new cardinals. On the occasion of the anniversary, Jewish leaders praised the pope for his commitment throughout his reign to bettering Catholic-Jewish relations. Throughout the year, the pope and other Vatican sources called for a reference to God and Europe’s “Christian roots” as part of the European Union’s first constitution.

Jewish leaders met with Pope John Paul II and other Vatican officials
a number of times. These included a private audience between Rome chief rabbi Di Segni and the pope in February, ahead of the outbreak of the Iraq war, at which the pope said that Jews and Christians alike felt an urgent need both to pray for peace and to help construct peace. The visit was Di Segni’s first private audience with the pope since he formally took up his post a year earlier. Also in February, a delegation on interreligious dialogue of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel—the first such body officially organized by the rabbinate—held unprecedented talks with senior Vatican officials. In a joint statement, the delegates and the Vatican stated that terrorism in the name of God was a “profanation of religion.” They also decried the way young people were exposed to violence and pornography.

In May, the pope held a brief private encounter with leaders of the World Jewish Congress ahead of a half-hour meeting with a dozen international Jewish leaders. In November, a delegation from the Simon Wiesenthal Center met with the pope and presented him with the organization’s Humanitarian Award for 2003. They also called on the pope to join its campaign to have the international community treat suicide bombing as a crime against humanity.

There were also interfaith meetings throughout the year, both in Italy and at the Vatican, and in other countries. These included a conference of prominent Catholics and Jews in March at UNESCO headquarters in Paris, organized by the European Jewish Congress, with the participation of the North American Boards of Rabbis and the Catholic Episcopal Committee for Relations with Judaism. An interfaith meeting in Rome in December was sponsored by the “Religions for Peace” organization. In October, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) organized a two-day conference in Rome on religious freedom, attended by legislators from 49 countries.

**Culture**

As every year, there were numerous Jewish cultural events organized by Jewish communities, private organizations, civic and state bodies, or a combination of sources. The Israeli embassy sponsored performances, exhibits, and appearances by Israeli cultural figures. The following is a small but representative sample of Jewish cultural events.

Italy was an enthusiastic participant in the annual European Day of Jewish Culture, held this year on September 7. Events in four dozen towns and cities drew 26,000 visitors. The theme for 2003 was “Judaism
and Art.” Jewish film festivals took place in Rome in February and December, and Israeli film festivals in March and June. The annual Pitifest Jewish film festival took place in Tuscany in August. In November, a number of Israeli films were featured at the annual Med Film Festival in Rome. Several mainstream films in Italian cinemas dealt with Jewish themes, including *The Window Opposite*, directed by Ferzen Ozpetek, which dealt with the memory of the deportation of Rome’s Jews in 1943. It won five “David” awards—Italy’s “Oscar”—including best film.

There were many concerts of Jewish music by local and foreign Jewish musicians, including many from Israel. In September, one night of a ten-day Venice international festival of contemporary music was devoted to Jewish music. Numerous Jewish-themed exhibits and performances were staged. Actor Olek Mincer toured with *A Shed: The Demon of Tishevitz*, a play based on an Isaac Bashevis Singer story (for which Mincer won a grant from the European Association for Jewish Culture), and Moni Ovadia, Italy’s leading Jewish performer, toured with his new production of *Fiddler on the Roof*. In April, a musical version of *The Ten Commandments* opened in Rome. A new Italian documentary film on how the Jewish community in Sarajevo came to the aid of the city during the Bosnian war in the 1990s premiered in Milan in May.

In March, an exhibition in Rome examined how Roman Jews lived from the time that Pope Paul IV forced them into a ghetto in 1555 until the ghetto was finally abolished in 1870. The exhibit was organized by the Province of Rome in collaboration with the Rome Jewish community. Major exhibits of works by Modigliani and Chagall opened in Milan in the spring, and one of works by Lele Luzzatti, one of Italy’s major contemporary Jewish artists, took place in Verona during the summer. There were many exhibits by Israeli artists, including a big show of contemporary Israeli photography that opened in Milan in May. Israel fielded an unprecedented number of participants at this year’s Venice Biennale, with ten Israeli artists working in a variety of media. Nine Israeli artists were exhibited at the Florence Biennale.

Numerous books on Jewish topics or by Jewish authors were published, and there were book launches, readings, roundtables, and other literary happenings almost every week throughout the year. In June, Rome’s city hall hosted a major event to launch *Constructors of Peace, the Story of a Jewish Refugee from Libya*, by David Gerbi. This featured a panel discussion that included the mayor of Rome, the Libyan ambassador, and leading Jewish personalities, as well as a concert and readings from the book. In the fall, a book of memoirs by another prominent
Libyan Jew now living in Rome, Victor Magiar, was published. Award-winning journalist Fiamma Nirenstein published a book-length interview with scholar Bernard Lewis called *Islam: la Guerra e la Speranza* (*Islam: War and Hope*). Other notable new books included *The Place of the Jews*, an analysis of contemporary Jewish identity by Amos Luzzatto, president of the UCEI; *Ebraismo e antisemitismo in Italia, dal 1848 alla guerra dei sei giorni* (*Judaism and Anti-Semitism in Italy from 1848 until the Six-Day War*) by Mario Toscano; and a travel guide to Jewish Italy by Annie Sacerdoti, editor of the Milan Jewish monthly. In September, Israeli author Amos Oz was in Italy to launch the Italian translation of his book, *A Story of Love and Shadows*.

Many conferences, lectures, and seminars took place. In March, Bernard Lewis held a public lecture on the Middle East organized by the president of the Italian Senate. In April, there was an international conference on synagogue restoration in Ferrara and an exhibition of photographs of synagogues in Emilia Romagna at the Jewish Museum in Bologna. In September, scholars from Italy, Israel, and the U.S. met at the seaside town of Gabicce Mare for the 17th annual meeting of the Italian Association for the Study of Judaism. In October, the Rome Jewish community held a daylong seminar on the links between past and present political violence and terrorism. Also in October, European scholars and translators met in Turin for three days to discuss the work of Primo Levi, the Italian Holocaust survivor who is the most translated Italian author in Europe. In November, Rome’s Sapienza University hosted a series of lectures on Jewish and Israeli art.

**Personalia**

During the year, President Carlo Azeglio Ciampi awarded Auschwitz survivors Piero Terracina and Goti Bauer the high state honor, Knight of the Great Cross of the Order of Merit. He named Luisella Mortara Ottolenghi, president of the Center for Contemporary Jewish Documentation—Italy’s leading research center on the Holocaust and anti-Semitism—a Great Official of the Order of Merit. The book *Sefarad* by Antonio Muñoz Molina was awarded the third annual ADEI-WIZO literary prize. U.S. ambassador Mel Sembler and his wife were inducted as honorary members of the Rome Jewish community at an informal ceremony at Rome’s great synagogue. In February, a street in Rome was named after the architect Bruno Zevi, a prominent member of the Jewish community who died in 2000. In May, regional authorities in Tuscany
presented the region's highest honor, the Silver Banner, to the memory of Giorgio Nissim, who saved 800 Jews from deportation by the Nazis.

In April, the Italian singer Liliana Treves Alcalay won first prize at the first festival of new compositions in Judeo-Spanish (Ladino), held in Jerusalem. In September, the German actress Katja Riemann won the Venice Film Festival's award for best actress for her role as the Aryan wife of a Jew in Nazi Germany in the film *Rosenstrasse*. In October, Cobi Be- natoff, a past president of the Jewish community in Milan, was elected president of the European Jewish Congress. Benatoff was also the president of the European Council of Jewish Communities. In December, the Polish Council of Christians and Jews presented its annual "Figure of Reconciliation" award to Jerzy Kluger, a Polish Jew living in Rome who was a lifelong friend of Pope John Paul II.

Fiat chairman Gianni Agnelli died in January, aged 81. His grandson, John Elkann (son of the Jewish author Alain Elkann) was his heir apparent. The actor Fiorenzo Fiorentini died in Rome in March, two weeks before his 83rd birthday. Also in March, Marcello Cantoni, a prominent pediatrician and former president of the Milan Jewish community, died. The composer Luciano Berio died in May, aged 77. Berio, though not Jewish, had a long relationship with Israel and used Jewish themes in his music. He became conductor and artistic director of the Israel Chamber Orchestra in the 1970s, and was survived by his third wife, the Israeli musicologist Talia Pecker Berio. Yehuda Milo, Israeli ambassador to Italy from 1995 to 2001, died in Israel in June. Franco Modigliani, who fled fascist Italy and went on to win the Nobel Prize in economics, died in September, aged 85, at his home in Cambridge, Massachusetts (see below, p. 623). Two days before his death, the *New York Times* printed a letter he and two other Nobel laureates wrote to protest the Anti-Defamation League honoring Prime Minister Berlusconi with its "Statesman of the Year" award.

Ruth Ellen Gruber
Switzerland

National Affairs

The right-wing, nativist Swiss People's Party (SVP/UDC) continued its remarkable rise in popularity, finishing first in the national elections that were held on October 19, with 26.6 percent of the vote. As a result of the new constellation of forces, the SVP would have two representatives in the seven-member executive instead of one for the first time since 1959. The Federal Assembly, the nation's parliament, replaced incumbent minister of justice Ruth Metzler, a Christian Democrat, with Christoph Blocher, head of the Zurich chapter of the SVP. This change cut the representation of women in the executive from two to one. The new Swiss government leaned much more to the right than its predecessor, reflecting a country worried about its future and its cultural identity. Commentators predicted a deepening of the gap between left and right and the end of the traditional system whereby the parties represented in the government reached decisions by consensus, since the SVP favored increasing the use of popular referenda.

At the top of the Swiss People's Party's agenda was a more restrictive asylum policy and making the naturalization process much more onerous. The party launched a referendum that called for the submission of all naturalization petitions to popular vote, but the Supreme Court ruled such a procedure unconstitutional. This set up a confrontation between the court and the parliament, the former championing nondiscrimination in naturalization and the latter the ostensibly democratic right of the citizens to decide whom to naturalize. In the meantime, dozens of longtime resident aliens had been denied Swiss citizenship by popular vote in the canton of Schwyz, especially applicants from the former Yugoslavia and Turkey, while Italian and Spanish families were more easily granted Swiss citizenship.

Internationally, Switzerland sought to develop an image as an active but neutral intermediary for settling disputes. The outstanding example was its hosting and promoting of the so-called Geneva initiative for peace between Israel and the Palestinians (see below).
Israel and the Middle East

Despite its traditional position of neutrality, Switzerland took a firm stand against the war in Iraq. Criticism of the U.S.-led military intervention was, to some extent, another way of expressing the country's strong anti-Americanism. This widespread feeling had never diminished since the crisis over Holocaust victims' dormant accounts in Swiss banks that began in 1995, when the U.S. brought pressure on the banks to make their records public (see AJYB 1998, pp. 296–98).

An investigation was opened against Yeslam Binladin, half-brother of Osama bin Laden, for suspicions of money laundering through the Geneva-based company SICO, which he controlled. His house in Geneva and his villa in Cannes, France, were both searched, though the results were never made public. Binladin became a Swiss citizen in the summer of 2001.

The anti-Israel media coverage and the general anti-Zionist climate of opinion continued in 2003. There were numerous pro-Palestinian rallies, cultural programs, and political statements, along with renewed calls for boycotting Israeli goods and libelous graffiti attacking Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon.

While criticism of Israeli policies came from all directions, it was particularly strong in far-left antiglobalization circles. During the G-8 meeting in Evian, France, antiglobalization groups carried out many parallel protest activities in Geneva and Lausanne, including workshops dedicated to fighting imperialism and capitalism, with the U.S. and Israel cited as the prime examples of such villainy. Rare voices were heard within the leftist groups saying that they could not support Palestinian demonstrations without at the same time condemning suicide attacks against Israeli civilians and manifestations of anti-Semitism in Europe. But such expressions were far outnumbered by calls for a binational state in all of Israel/Palestine and the end of Israel as a Jewish state.

The U.S. Treasury Department issued a list of allegedly charitable organizations suspected of financing terrorist groups such as Hamas, froze their assets in the U.S., and prohibited their transactions with American nationals. The list included a Swiss entity, Association de Secours Palestinien-Suisse, founded in 1994, which participated in the international "101 Days" campaign that provided a monthly income to families of suicide bombers and offered temporary shelter to those families of Palestinian terrorists whose houses were demolished by Israeli soldiers.
Two meetings of this organization took place at the Geneva mosque. Also, the attorney general of Switzerland opened an investigation into Patrick Illi, founder of Pro-OLP Suisse (pro-PLO Switzerland), who was suspected of criminal acts involving explosives on behalf of the Palestine Liberation Organization. He had previously been turned away by Israeli authorities while trying to get into Gaza.

A Zurich lawyer, Marcel Bosonet, filed suit with the Swiss military court against four prominent Israelis for war crimes. He sent a 1,000-page report that included the testimony of numerous Palestinians to make his case against Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz, former defense minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer, Gen. Doron Almog, commander of the southern region, and Shin Bet director Avi Dichter. As the year ended, the court had not yet ruled on its own competence to hear a case having no relationship to Switzerland that involved citizens of a foreign country.

The "Geneva initiative" for an Israeli-Palestinian settlement began in the summer of 2001, after the failure of the Camp David negotiations and the sessions that followed in Taba, Egypt. It was the brainchild of university professor Alexis Keller, who asked former Israeli minister Yossi Beilin, "What if we finished the Taba negotiations?" Beilin expressed interest. Keller then organized secret meetings in Switzerland between Beilin and former Palestinian cabinet member Yasir Abd Rabbo, financed by Swiss donors and banks. Two Swiss ambassadors, Urs Ziswiler and Paul Fivat, were also involved, as well as Nicolas Lang, a former Swiss representative to the Palestinian Authority, and Roland Steininger, who was part of the International Force stationed in Hebron. No current Israeli or Palestinian official was ever part of the discussion among the self-appointed negotiators.

An unofficial agreement was reached on October 12 in Jordan, and signed in Geneva on December 1. It proposed a final-status settlement of all existing issues between Israel and the Palestinians, and a two-state solution based on the 1967 borders. A Palestinian state would be created in exchange for full recognition of Israel's right to exist. Jerusalem would be the capital of both countries, the Old City under the control of the Palestinians except for the Jewish Quarter and the Western Wall, which would remain under Israeli sovereignty. Regarding Palestinian refugees, while the Palestinians would not give up the "right of return" in principle, they would have to do so de facto, since Israel would control the admission of refugees to its territory. The primary way of handling the refugee issue would be through financial compensation and absorption by third countries.
Micheline Calmy-Rey, the Swiss minister of foreign affairs (Socialist Party) was instrumental in the negotiations and was a prominent presence at the symbolic signing of the agreement. She then sought to expand the number of supporters, both internationally and within Israel and the Palestinian Authority. However, Switzerland’s facilitation and sponsorship of the discussions and the involvement of its high-ranked Foreign Ministry officials caused tensions between Bern and Jerusalem. The Israeli government requested Switzerland to explain its role in engineering secret negotiations involving Israeli citizens who did not represent the Israeli government or its Knesset.

Another source of tension between the two countries erupted in May, after Israeli bullets were shot at the car of the Swiss representative to the Palestinian Authority, Jean-Jacques Joris (the bulletproof windows of his vehicle prevented injury). Swiss authorities claimed that Israeli soldiers targeted the car, while an Israeli investigation showed that the shots were accidental. Although the Israeli minister of foreign affairs expressed regrets, Switzerland remained dissatisfied with the investigation.

The book *Dreaming Palestine* by Randa Ghazy, an Arab teenager living in Italy, was criticized for glorifying suicide bombers and Islamic terrorism, and for promoting anti-Semitic stereotypes. Originally published in Italian and translated into many languages (see AJYB 2003, pp. 395, 442), distribution of its French version in Switzerland was stopped after complaints by Jewish organizations.

**Anti-Semitism and Extremism**

At the Geneva-based UN Commission of Human Rights, Switzerland cosponsored a resolution for the eradication of racism, but, bowing to pressure from Arab and African countries, agreed to take out the last paragraph that specifically mentioned anti-Semitism.

The Geneva-based Islamic intellectual Tariq Ramadan, grandson and spiritual heir of Hasan el-Banna, founder of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, circulated a pamphlet on a Muslim Web site that denounced Jewish (and some non-Jewish) intellectuals, by name, for defending Israel. He asked “which principles and interests they defend in the first place,” accused them of “parochialism,” and asked them to “condemn clearly the repressive policy of Israel, its alliances and other doubtful methods, as well as the discrimination against their Muslim fellow citizens.” The individuals he challenged reacted strongly, and a lively debate followed in the mainstream press. This affair showed a new face
of the Swiss-born 41-year-old Islamic intellectual, who taught in a Geneva public high school. To some, he was a respectable scholar with a moderate Islamic worldview. To others, he was a passionate activist in the rough suburbs, where he encouraged Muslim youths to become model citizens while at the same time throwing themselves and their beliefs into Western society “like a bomb,” as he said in a taped lecture. To yet others, he was a polished but dangerous speaker with a deceptively radical message, and the ability to adapt his rhetoric to suit many different audiences.

Anti-Semitism on the far right remained a problem, as its veteran spokespersons found fertile ground in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to fuel their hate speech in such publications as L’Atout, Recht+Freiheit, Le Courrier du Continent, and others. This year, the far-right Geneva lawyer Pascal Junod created a new group embodying his nativist and anti-Semitic views, Avant-Garde Suisse. A number of Web sites with anti-Semitic and Holocaust-denying content flourished in Switzerland, demonstrating close ties to similar far-right operations elsewhere in the world. Verbal aspersions on high-profile Jews became more common. For example, Pierre Schifferli, a lawyer and Geneva city councilman (Swiss People’s Party), attacked Philippe Grumbach, a lawyer representing Stuart Eizenstat, the American Jew perhaps most identified with the Swiss bank issue (see below), in Place Publique, the party bulletin. Among Grumbach’s many alleged offenses was that he was an “extremist Zionist activist.”

In this context, anti-Semitic graffiti were painted on the Lausanne synagogue. Local authorities and the Jewish community allowed the offensive scrawl to remain there a few days so that the public could see for itself such an open expression of anti-Semitism.

René-Louis Berclaz and another member of his now dissolved far-right organization Vérité & Justice were convicted by the State Court of Fribourg to jail terms of six and three months, respectively, for racial discrimination. Their crime was printing, publishing, and distributing two pamphlets denying the Holocaust, The Counter-Bergier Report and The Amaudruz Trial. Berclaz appealed to the Swiss Supreme Court to nullify the verdict on the grounds that the original judge was Jewish, and so could not render impartial justice in such a case. The appeal was rejected.

In Bien, Jürg Scherrer, a member of the city council from the Freedom Party, was found guilty of racism and fined SF2000 ($1,600) for saying that asylum petitioners from Kosovo were all criminals. Although Scherrer had made racist and anti-Semitic statements in public before (see, for example, AJYB 2003, p. 462), this was his first conviction.
For the first time, an openly racist party, Partei National Orientierter Schweiz (PNOS), presented a candidate in the parliamentary elections. Founded in 2000, it called itself the party of modern nationalism, but its goal was the political mobilization of skinheads and far-right activists. The party sought the expulsion from Switzerland of the 1.4 million residents (one-fifth of the population) who did not have Swiss citizenship. Campaign posters announced, “we are cleaning up,” and showed a broom sweeping leftists and Jews out of the country. (A similar poster had been used by the fascist National Front in 1933 in Zurich.) The PNOS was forced to withdraw its posters, and its candidate was not elected.

A newly created party, Parti National Suisse, distributed its platform in mailboxes in French-speaking part of Switzerland. It advocated an end to democracy, abolition of the law against racism, and withdrawal of Switzerland from the UN, and blamed the current allegedly decadent state of affairs on Jewish organizations—such as “the infamous and feared secret Jewish society of B’nai B’rith, eye and ear of Israel and New York”—globalization and multiculturalism, foreign immigration, and capitalism. It advocated stripping Swiss citizens naturalized after 1974 of their citizenship if they were not of European origin. The party did not present candidates for the parliamentary elections, but a criminal suit was nevertheless filed against it in Lausanne and Geneva for violation of the antiracism law.

An antiracism campaign aroused national controversy when it used racist stereotypes to make its case. The Foundation Against Racism and Anti-Semitism wanted to make the population sensitive to these themes and make them think carefully about their own attitudes. Thus their ads asked, “Where do people from Kosovo get their car radios?” and answered, “They buy them, like everybody else.” “How do Jews earn money?—They work, like everybody else.” The very invocation of the stereotypes, however, albeit for the purpose of refuting them, drew criticism for spreading and perhaps legitimizing them in the public mind.

In addition, there was a growing debate within the antiracism organizations over the appropriate degree of prominence that ought to be given to fighting anti-Semitism. What made some activists seek to soft-pedal anti-Semitism was that these very same antiracist organizations, with their human-rights priorities, tended to sympathize with the political left, and were among the strongest supporters of the Palestinian cause and opponents of Israeli policies. For them, it was sometimes difficult to separate out attacks on Jews, which were unacceptable, from criticism of the Jewish state, which was politically correct.
Swiss Protection of Animals, a very powerful organization with a large membership, called for a referendum amending the law protecting animals. It was aimed at observant Jews and Muslims. The ritual slaughter of animals had been banned in Switzerland in 1893 to discourage Jewish immigrants from settling there. In 2001, the Swiss government sought to lift the ban, but this step backfired, triggering passionate, often anti-Semitic, reactions, including the suggested referendum. The proposal would carry the ban one step further, making even the import of kosher and halal (slaughtered according to Muslim law) meat. It was scheduled for submission to popular vote in 2004 or 2005.

Holocaust-Related Matters

A report by Judah Gribetz, the “special master” appointed to oversee the distribution of money from the 1998 global settlement between Swiss banks and Holocaust victims, complained that only $485 million out of the agreed-upon $1.25 billion had been paid out to 250,000 people in five years. He ascribed the slow pace to the inevitable loss, over the years, of data about the accounts, but also to restrictions some banks were placing on the access of lawyers to banking records. The larger banks, he said, were cooperating, but some of the smaller private and state banks were not. Another obstacle, charged Gribetz, was Switzerland’s Federal Banking Committee, which refused, in March 2000, to include 4.1 million Holocaust-era accounts in a centralized archive database. So far, information had been released on only 36,000 such accounts. At first the Swiss banks and the committee rejected the criticism, but they finally agreed to make these accounts available so as to help conclude the distribution of money to survivors and their heirs. A new report from Gribetz was due in March 2004.

A new book, *Evita's Secret*, by Frank Garbely, described Switzerland’s go-between role in financial transactions between Nazi Germany and the Perón regime in Argentina, as well as the underground Swiss networks that helped former Nazis escape to Argentina.

Jewish Community

The 2000 national population survey shows a slight growth of the Jewish community of Switzerland to 17,914 (0.2 percent of the population),
a majority of whom were Swiss citizens. The largest communities remained Zurich, Geneva, Lausanne, Basel, and Bern.

By a very slim margin, a meeting of the Federation of Swiss Jewish Communities, consisting of delegates from 22 congregations, voted in May to reject the applications of the two Reform Jewish communities in Switzerland, located in Zurich and Geneva. Two ultra-Orthodox communities had threatened to withdraw from the umbrella organization should they be admitted. Thus the federation remained a national umbrella body for traditionalist communities only. After the vote, the Reform congregations announced the inauguration of a new multidenominational national federation and claimed to have the support of other congregations.

Leaders of the Jewish community, especially in the French-speaking part of the country, were increasingly reluctant to speak out against anti-Semitism or publicly defend Israel. Rather than activism, the tendency was to remain quiet and keep one's Jewish identity a private matter.

A new database opened by the Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich, using material from the archives of the Swiss Union of Jewish Aid Committees, traced the fate of 20,000 Jewish refugees in Switzerland from 1938 until today. It facilitated research about their background, history, and the nature and amount of aid they received. The project was financed by the Zurich Protestant Church and private donations.

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