

Western Europe

Great Britain

National Affairs

IN LOCAL ELECTIONS held in June 2004, Tony Blair's governing Labour Party came in third behind the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats. The result was widely dismissed at the time as the product of a protest vote that would quickly evaporate, and this indeed proved to be the case. Nevertheless, the government, and Prime Minister Blair in particular, had clearly forfeited credibility. The primary reason was the war in Iraq: no weapons of mass destruction had been found, and the government had obviously relied on defective intelligence to justify its involvement. Furthermore, David Blunkett, the popular home secretary, had been forced to resign when his office was found to be involved in fast-tracking a visa for the Filipino nanny of Blunkett's lover. Blunkett brought more discredit on the government when a newly published biography revealed his outspokenly negative views on the competence of his colleagues. Recurring reports of rivalry between Blair and Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown added to public distrust of the government.

But none of this seriously shook its authority, either with the electorate or the government's own backbenchers. Even at the height of the Blunkett affair, polls showed Labour at 40 percent, the Tories at 31 percent, and the Liberal Democrats at 21 percent, not significantly different from the pattern of polls taken throughout the year. The dissatisfaction of backbenchers with the Iraq war, increased university tuition fees, and the ban on fox-hunting was easily absorbed, and Labour was almost universally expected to retain power at the forthcoming general election.

This did not necessarily suggest enthusiasm for Labour, but rather apathy. In the last general election, in 2001, turnout was 59 percent, meaning that more people did not vote than voted for the winning party. The Conservatives failed to benefit from Labour's difficulties. The impetus im-

parted by Michael Howard's accession to the party leadership in November 2003 (see AJYB 2004, p. 279) faded amidst confused Tory policies, repeated reshuffling of personnel, and internal policy divisions, especially over relations with Europe. Moreover, Tory support for the war in Iraq abandoned the antiwar weapon to the Liberal Democrats, who benefited accordingly. In the elections to the European Parliament, also in June, the Tory vote of 27 percent was its worst result in a national election for more than a century.

Israel and the Middle East

Britain's bid for an active role in a resumed Middle East peace process seemed to be succeeding in December 2004, when plans were announced for an international conference in London in early 2005. Participating would be foreign ministers and senior officials from the Quartet (the UN, EU, U.S., and Russia) and other countries ready to donate funds to build a viable Palestinian state with a stable democracy and transparent finances. Israel, by agreement with Prime Minister Blair, would not attend. The conference, Blair explained, would not substitute for the "road map," but be a bridge to return to it.

British enthusiasm for peacemaking had been invigorated by two events in November, the U.S. presidential election and the death of Palestinian leader Yasir Arafat. The need to revitalize the peace process was "the single most pressing challenge in our world today," said Blair, urging President George W. Bush, beginning his second term, to launch a fresh Israeli-Palestinian peace initiative. And in her speech opening Parliament, Queen Elizabeth promised, "My government will continue to support efforts to build peace in the Middle East, to promote democratic reform, and reduce conflict and extremism."

To this end, November saw Foreign Secretary Jack Straw on the West Bank assuring Palestinian leaders that the UK, as a key member of the EU and the UN Security Council, would help the Palestinians conduct their elections. The following month Blair was in Ramallah telling the new Palestinian prime minister, Mahmoud Abbas, that there could not be "successful negotiations or peace without an end to terrorism."

Britain's positive attitude toward Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon's proposed unilateral pullout from Gaza was an integral element of her policy. To be sure, Blair met criticism in March when he joined Bush in welcoming the plan as a "potentially positive development." Some 50 former British diplomats signed an open letter to the prime minister, published

in the newspapers, calling his endorsement “a backward step.” But Blair noted, in June, that the planned disengagement could be the start of a process toward peace, and not just a “de facto final settlement.” A new British initiative building on the withdrawal to jump-start Middle East peace moves, he revealed, had emerged at the G8 summit, where Britain took the lead in urging participants to address the need for peace in the region. The keys, Blair said, were security for Israel and proof, for the Palestinians, that Israeli disengagement could lead to a viable and democratic state. In October, Downing Street welcomed the Knesset’s vote of approval for Sharon’s plan, and Foreign Secretary Straw declared that Britain was ready to work with the Palestinian Authority “to ensure that Israeli disengagement from Gaza is successful for the Palestinians.”

The UK was the Jewish state’s “closest friend in the European Union,” Israeli foreign minister Silvan Shalom told the *Jewish Chronicle* in February. “Britain will be a true and constant friend,” agreed Chancellor Gordon Brown. Notwithstanding such professions of friendship, sections of British public opinion remained opposed to aspects of Israeli policy. In February, July, and again in December, a growing number of MPs (210 by December) signed parliamentary motions calling on Britain to urge Israel to halt construction of the West Bank security barrier. Israel’s security measures were destroying the Palestinian economy and creating widespread poverty, according to the House of Commons Select Committee on International Development, which published a report, *Development Assistance and the Occupied Palestinian Territories*, in February. The proposed fence, the report stated, would destroy “the viability of a future Palestinian state,” and furthermore, “the despair and anger felt by ordinary Palestinians at being denied the semblance of ordinary life were likely to further increase the supply of militants and suicide bombers.”

Great Britain joined with the U.S., Israel, and other states in opposing the hearings before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on the legality of the fence, but it did so on jurisdictional rather than substantive grounds, arguing that submission of the case to the ICJ politicized the international judicial tribunal. In fact, Britain supported a UN General Assembly nonbinding resolution calling on Israel to dismantle the barrier, a move that induced Israel’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs to call in the British ambassador for an explanation, and the Board of Deputies of British Jews to write Foreign Secretary Straw in protest. “We have no objection to the construction of the barrier,” responded Straw, “on condition it is built on internationally acknowledged borders or within Israeli territory.” But to build it on occupied land, he said, was “unlawful.”

In March, Straw, in Brussels for EU talks on tackling terrorism, acknowledged Israel's right to self-defense, but called its assassination of Sheik Ahmed Yassin "unacceptable, unjustified, and very unlikely to achieve its aims." Britain abstained on the UN Security Council vote condemning the assassination (a position denounced at a pro-Palestinian rally in London), but Middle East minister Baroness Symons summoned Israeli ambassador Zvi Shtauber to the Foreign Office, arousing protest from Jewish communal organizations.

In May, more than 70 MPs tabled a Commons motion condemning the destruction of Palestinian homes and the "wide-scale devastation" caused by the Israeli army's incursion into the Rafah refugee camp in Gaza, claiming it breached international law and could not be justified by Israel's claim of "urgent military need." After further Israeli incursions into Gaza in October, Straw voiced deep concern at "the level of violence and the number of deaths, including children While Israel has the right to defend itself against terrorism, it must act within international law." The same month, Straw criticized Israel's "disproportionate" response to the Qassam rocket attacks on Sderot in the Negev.

Individual cases sustained the unease about Israeli policy. In January, Israel arrested one of its soldiers for shooting British photography student and peace activist Tim Hurndall in Gaza in April 2003; a Scotland Yard team had launched an inquiry into the incident after the Westminster coroner requested the Metropolitan police to establish the facts about Hurndall's death in a London hospital. Hurndall's death had other repercussions as well: in June, Israeli officials investigated claims that Israeli troops fired at two British MPs and a peer visiting the site of Hurndall's shooting. In May, the widow of British filmmaker James Miller, killed by Israeli gunfire in May 2003, urged Straw to press Israel to prosecute those responsible (see AJYB 2004, pp. 158, 281).

Nor did Britain's Jewish community unanimously approve Israeli policy. A survey conducted in June by the United Jewish Israel Appeal (UJIA) among moderately identifying Jews revealed that fewer than a quarter of respondents supported Israel's current policies, though 78 percent "cared deeply about Israel." The same month, 340 British Jews signed an open letter calling on the Board of Deputies to represent the views of those critical of Israel's policies toward the Palestinians. "The Board is not and should not be the voice of the Israeli government," they argued. Earlier, in February, Scotland Yard was called in to investigate hate mail received by several Jewish opponents of Israel's treatment of the Palestinians.

In June, millionaire businessman Zvi Hefetz arrived in London as the new Israeli ambassador after intensive scrutiny, both in Great Britain and Israel, of his experience and command of spoken English.

Terrorism and Anti-Zionism

Jewish students faced threats on a regular basis, a Union of Jewish Students (UJS) delegation told a Home Affairs select committee of the House of Commons in December. The committee, gathering evidence on racism and terrorism, heard that university authorities were often slow to respond. The 1982 Education Act protecting freedom of speech could be interpreted to justify tolerating the activities of groups opposed to democratic values, said UJS campaigns organizer Danny Stone, and he called for a review of that legislation.

The situation at London University's School of African and Oriental Studies (SOAS), where a motion equating Zionism with racism had been carried, was of particular concern. SOAS was the venue, in December, of a conference on the Middle East that spawned a new organization, the British Committee for Universities in Palestine, whose manifesto called on British academicians to boycott Israeli educational institutions, but to support Israeli professors working with Palestinian colleagues in their demand for self-determination and academic freedom.

Other campuses could report more positive news. In March, a group at York University called Student Action for Palestine withdrew its earlier invitation to Dr. Azzam Tamimi, head of the Muslim Association of Britain, who was accused of supporting Hamas and calling for the destruction of the State of Israel. And in April, a motion to twin Liverpool University with Bir Zeit University, a Palestinian institution on the West Bank, did not pass.

In January, Liberal Democratic MP Jenny Tonge was sacked from her party's front bench for saying that she might consider becoming a suicide bomber were she forced to live like the Palestinians. The BBC came in for criticism the next month for arranging a visit for Tonge to Israel and the Palestinian territories.

Muslim clerics who preached death to unbelievers remained in the news (see AJYB 2004, p. 283). In February, three appellate judges cut two years off the nine-year jail sentence that had been passed on Jamaica-born Sheikh Abdul El Faisal at the Old Bailey in March 2003. Abu Hamza, a Muslim preacher linked to terrorist groups, had been stripped of his citizenship and ordered deported in 2003. In April 2004 the Special Immi-

gration Appeals Committee postponed the hearing of his appeal against deportation until January 2005, giving him at least nine more months to stay in the country. In May, however, he was arrested in London on an extradition warrant issued by the American government for alleged hostage-taking in Yemen and support for terrorism, and in October was charged with 16 offenses at the Belmarsh maximum-security prison magistrates' court.

In March, Hamas claimed responsibility for the suicide bombing by two Britons of Mike's Place in Tel Aviv in April 2003 (see AJYB 204, p. 282) and showed a video of them wearing military uniforms, reciting Koranic verses, and brandishing assault rifles. The attack, said Hamas, was Islamic retaliation for Israel's killing of a senior Hamas official. The brother and sister of Omar Sharif, one of the two bombers, faced retrial in July after an Old Bailey jury could not reach a verdict on charges that included failure to disclose information that might have prevented an act of terrorism.

Britain remained the country most active in freezing the assets of terrorists. In March, Chancellor Gordon Brown froze funds held in Britain by five senior Hamas figures, including Abdel Aziz Rantisi, the new Hamas leader. According to the Treasury, there were "reasonable grounds" to suspect that these men had facilitated or participated in acts of terrorism.

In May, the Trades Union Congress rejected a call by pro-Palestinian MPs and lobbyists to back a campaign for economic sanctions against Israel. In August, the National Union of Journalists protested when an Israeli judge ordered British reporter Ewa Jasiewicz, said to have links to the pro-Palestinian International Solidarity Movement, to leave Israel. Jasiewicz did not pose a direct threat, the Israeli judge explained, but terrorists might take advantage of her gullibility. Israel deported Jasiewicz in November on the grounds that she had reentered the country in September under a false identity, having been refused entry under her real name. Ironically, Britain's ambassador to Israel, Simon McDonald, had written to the Israeli foreign ministry in September to register concern at the difficulties facing some British journalists entering Israel.

In June, Sir Sigmund Sternberg, who had announced an award of £2,000 to Iqbal Sacranie, secretary general of the Muslim Council of Britain, for her contributions to interfaith understanding, withdrew it after Sacranie accused Israel of "ethnic cleansing." Instead, the money went to a Gaza hospital.

London's left-wing mayor Ken Livingstone, entering his second term

in office, aroused an outcry in the Jewish community in July when he ignored a plea from the Board of Deputies and welcomed a conference in London's City Hall organized by the Muslim Association of Britain. Among the attendees was Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, a reputed defender of suicide bombings who had urged Muslims to kill Jews and gays. A letter to Livingstone signed by all members of the United Synagogue (US) council denounced his "effusive welcome" to al-Qaradawi. But Livingstone replied that he would never share a platform with an anti-Semite, and that al-Qaradawi was actually "a leading voice of moderation" who was "totally opposed to anti-Semitism." In September, 13 national Jewish organizations, including the Board of Deputies, "appalled" by the mayor's invitation to al-Qaradawi to return to London for yet another visit and "horrified" by the lack of consultation with them, requested a meeting with Livingstone. The Board of Deputies again protested to Livingstone in October, this time about a reference he made to "Israel's illegal occupation of the West Bank and Gaza" in an article in his newsletter promoting a Palestinian trade fair.

One pro-Palestinian MP, George Galloway, founded a new party, which he called "Respect." In August it won a seat on the local council of Tower Hamlets' St. Dunstan and Stepney Green ward, East London.

In 2003, the Palestinian charity Interpal had launched a suit for defamation against the Board of Deputies after the latter was unsuccessful in convincing the Charity Commission that Interpal was a terrorist organization linked to Hamas and should have its assets frozen (see AJYB 2004, p. 283). In December 2004, the board successfully fought off an attempt to throw out its defense in the case. Also in December, ten pro-Palestinian demonstrators outside the Marks and Spencer store in Manchester, site of regular anti-Israel demonstrations, were arrested for violating conditions set by the police.

Controversy over the BBC's coverage of the Middle East continued during the year. In April, the new BBC chairman, Michael Grade, pledged that complaints of anti-Israel bias would receive a fair hearing. The very next month a BBC spokesman denied an accusation by Gideon Meir, deputy director general of the Israeli foreign ministry, that the network had paid for and obtained an interview with Mordechai Vanunu, recently released from an Israeli jail after serving 18 years for passing secret information about the country's nuclear capability to the *Sunday Times*, "in a cynical and unethical attempt to bypass Israeli security restrictions." "The BBC," said the spokesman, "was fulfilling its duty to report world events fairly and impartially." Ken Livingstone invited Vanunu to Lon-

don, and 45 MPs signed a Commons motion urging the government to make representations to Israel to permit the visit. Israel opted not to extend the work visa of the deputy head of Jerusalem's BBC bureau, Simon Wilson, who had conducted the Vanunu interview. More complaints of pro-Palestinian bias came in November, when a BBC reporter described her tears when Yasir Arafat, old and ill, left his Ramallah stronghold for a hospital in Paris.

BBC's senior editorial adviser, Malcolm Balen, presented the results of a year-long analysis of the network's treatment of Middle East issues to the BBC's Journalism Board in November. His major conclusion was that reports needed to be placed in broader context. BBC director-general Mark Thompson accepted the suggestion and announced that changes would be made, including "enhanced" Middle East news coverage. But London lawyer Trevor Asserson, in a report he prepared entitled "The Documentary Campaign, 2000-04," asserted that the BBC's flaws ran far deeper. Studying the documentary output since the onset of the current intifada in the fall of 2000, Asserson charged the BBC with persistently breaching its duties of fairness and impartiality. In BBC programs about the Israel-Palestine conflict, the report found an "overwhelming bias," with 15 to 17 of the 19 programs examined portraying a "negative view of Israel."

Anti-Semitism

The Community Security Trust (CST) recorded an unprecedented 532 anti-Semitic incidents in 2004, up 31 percent from the 375 reported in 2003. Over half the incidents in 2004 consisted of "abusive behavior," there were four acts of extreme violence, and 28 involving Jewish schools and/or schoolchildren. Among the 17 synagogue desecrations were arson attacks on North London's South Tottenham Synagogue, and the outreach organization Aish in Hendon, North London, both in June. Five cemeteries suffered damage, Middlesbrough in June, for example, and Birmingham's Witton Cemetery in August.

Although some suggested that the rise in the total number of incidents was at least partially due to more efficient record-keeping, CST spokesman Mike Whine described the figures as "appalling." He pointed especially to the disproportionate rise in attacks on Jews in the street, which reflected "a deteriorating situation" that would have been unthinkable a few years before. The near-record 100 incidents reported just in the month of March, following the assassination in Israel of Hamas

leader Sheikh Yassin, proved, according to Whine, “a direct link between events in the Middle East and an increase in anti-Semitic incidents here.”

Speaking before a meeting of Labour Friends of Israel in June, Prime Minister Blair said his government would not tolerate anti-Semitism or any threat to Britain’s Jewish community. The Jews themselves signaled a more assertive stance toward the problem in August when they formed an Anti-Semitism Coordinating Unit supported by the Board of Deputies, the Union of Jewish Students (UJS), and the Conservative, Labour, and Liberal Democratic Friends of Israel. It was aimed at maintaining liaison with existing communal organizations, coordinating policy, and enhancing collective capacity.

The Crown Prosecution Service promised a “robust response” to crimes motivated by racial and religious hatred, and in some cases fulfilled this pledge. In July, for example, a man who assaulted two bar mitzvah boys outside a synagogue in Clapham, North London, was ordered jailed for two years and nine months by the Southwark crown court, and two teenagers who attacked Jews were given eight-year prison sentences at the Old Bailey. In December, however, United Synagogue burial chief Melvyn Hartog was “disappointed” when youths found guilty of extensive damage to Plashet Grove Cemetery, East Ham (East London), got off with 12 months of community service.

The apparent growth of the far-right British National Party (BNP) gave cause for concern. The party made a concerted effort to win votes in the spring elections for local councils, the European Parliament, and the post of lord mayor of London. Anticipating the BNP push, the Jewish community joined in campaigns that crossed lines of party and religion in seeking to thwart BNP ambitions. Speaking in Burnley in February, Tory leader Michael Howard called the BNP “a stain on British democracy.” In March, Trades Union president Roger Lyons, returning from a visit to Auschwitz, promised a vigorous campaign against BNP influence. The Board of Deputies masterminded a Manchester-based campaign for Jewish representatives to meet their Muslim, Christian, Sikh, and Hindu counterparts to coordinate plans to combat the BNP, whose base of support was in the northwestern part of England. The board also launched a national drive to encourage Jews to overcome possible apathy and vote for other parties in order to defeat the BNP. On election day the Union of Jewish Students rented “battle buses” to transport voters to the polls.

Buoyed by an appearance by French far-right leader Jean-Marie Le Pen as guest of honor at a BNP fund-raising dinner in April, the party fielded 313 candidates for local council seats, 12 for the London Assembly, and

75 for the European Parliament. The BNP polled 800,000 votes in the European Parliament elections; 58,000 in the London mayoral poll; 90,000 for the London Assembly; and thousands more in other local elections. Its number of local councilors increased by five to 21, including one Jewish BNP member, Patricia Richardson, who won her Epping Forest, East London, seat with the claim that she aimed to set Britain “back on track.”

The BNP continued to make small gains later in the year. A Yorkshire Tory councilor defected to its ranks in August, and in September a BNP candidate won a seat by a large majority in an East London by-election. On the other hand, a BBC broadcast in July, “The Secret Agent,” reporting on an undercover investigation of the BNP, convinced Barclay’s Bank to cancel the party’s account there and led to 12 arrests, including that of BNP founder John Tyndall and its current leader, Nick Griffin, in December, on suspicion of incitement to racial hatred.

The Commission for Racial Equality, having already appointed a Muslim, named Julia Chain as its first (part-time) Jewish commissioner in January. Placing representatives of the two minority religions on the commission, said Chain, “reflects the fact that the rise of both anti-Semitism and Islamophobia are of concern to the whole community.”

JEWISH COMMUNITY

Demography

There were 2,665 Jewish births in 2002, a rise from 2,640 in 2001 and 2,647 in 2000, but the Board of Deputies community research unit discerned a continuing long-term downward trend. Despite the slight rises in the most recent years, the number of annual births had been consistently below 3,000 since 1993, whereas it had fluctuated between 3,100 and 3,600 in the period 1986–92. A total of 932 synagogue marriages were recorded in 2003, up from 921 in 2002, while 284 gittin (religious divorces) were completed in 2003, as compared to 250 the previous year. Burials and cremations under Jewish religious auspices fell to 3,592 in 2003 from 3,670 in 2002. The *bet din* (religious court) of the Reform Synagogues of Great Britain accepted 111 proselytes in 2004, 15 more than it had in 2003.

Statistics derived from analyses of the 2001 national census—the first to ask a voluntary question about religious affiliation—were published intermittently throughout the year. The data confirmed “the statistics that

we have been establishing from a whole range of data from synagogues and communities in the last 20 years,” said Marlana Schmool, who retired as director of the Board of Deputies community issues department in 2003. The census, she said, gave “the largest sample of self-identifying Jews ever available. It was invaluable data.”

In February, Barry Kosmin, director of the Institute for Jewish Policy Research (IJPR), said that the census indicated that almost one in 30 British Jews was nonwhite; furthermore, nearly 2,000 Asian Jews lived in Britain, 705 of them defining themselves as black and 105 as Chinese.

In July, more released statistics demonstrated the trend for Jews to quit central London and the inner suburbs and head northward, particularly to South Hertfordshire. Radlett, located in that area, was the English town with the highest percentage of Jews, 24.6 percent of a total population of 8,034. In neighboring Bushey, Jews constituted 19.28 percent of the 17,000 residents, and in Boreham Wood 11.38 percent of 31,172. Also in July, the Ashton Business School released an analysis of social and economic trends in Manchester Jewry, suggesting that the census figure of 21,307 be adjusted upward to between 23,000 and 27,000. The Jews, under this formula, formed just 1 percent of the Manchester population, but comprised 8.2 percent of British Jewry.

In October, the Office of National Statistics issued a publication, *Focus on Religion*, which contained data on the ethnicity, employment, health, and marriage patterns of religious minorities, based on the census. One of its findings was that 22 percent of the 267,000 persons who declared themselves Jewish were over 65 years of age.

Communal Affairs

The role of the Jewish Communal Leadership Council (JCLC), set up in October 2003, had to be clarified in February 2004 after a meeting of all 17 council members with Prime Minister Blair aroused the resentment of the Board of Deputies, which had traditionally spoken on behalf of British Jewry. Henry Grunwald, who was both the JCLC chairman and president of the board, explained that the latter “remained the central representative body for the Jewish community.” The JCLC was not intended to supplant it, but rather to enhance its work and that of other organizations, strengthen British Jewry’s voice in the wider society, and set internal priorities for the community. The JCLC was made up of the lay leaders of major Jewish organizations, plus seven members-at-large chosen on the basis of their individual expertise for a three-year renew-

able period. By November two more organizations had joined, raising the membership to 19.

The steering committee for a new cross-denominational Jewish community center in London, modeled on New York's Manhattan JCC, held its first meeting in February. The center aimed to offer diverse educational, cultural, social, and recreational activities to bring Jews who had dropped out of synagogue life back into the Jewish orbit and provide a forum for Jews of all persuasions. The committee emphasized that the center would not replace synagogues or other existing social venues, but would work in partnership or in a coordinating role to benefit the whole community.

Norwood, the community's leading family and children's welfare organization, received an unprecedented £2m donation from newspaper proprietor Richard Desmond in May toward the costs of relocating its Annie Lawson School from Ravenswood, Berkshire, to Bushey, more easily accessible to the North London community. Later in the year, Norwood lost its bid to continue running the national adoption register, ending what Minister of State Margaret Hodge called "an extremely productive three-year working relationship" with the Department for Education and Skills.

In July, the Otto Schiff Housing Association sold Heinrich Stahl House, North London, a former care home for German Jewish refugees, for £16.25m, two-thirds to go toward a new, state-of-the-art Jewish Care home, and the rest to World Jewish Relief (WJR).

In October, the Agudas Israel Housing Association, which was strictly Orthodox, revealed that it was negotiating with government-backed landowner English Partnerships to build an initial 300 homes in Milton Keynes to help ease the overcrowded in its prolific North London communities. The next month, the manager of the Poundbury, Dorset, community, created by Prince Charles, invited the association to come and "see what we are doing here." In December, Jewish Care launched an integrated long-term partnership with the Stamford Hill community, North London, which was affiliated with the Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations, whose traditional, less Orthodox, client base was "rapidly diminishing."

Religion

The United Synagogue (US), which represented moderate Orthodoxy and constituted Britain's largest synagogue grouping, was entering "a

phase of substantial change,” said US director of development Leonie Lewis in March. Its future guiding principle would be “community first, buildings second.” Since many US buildings were aging and required major work, and pending legislation would require the construction of special facilities for the disabled, it was better to knock them down and start over again, she said. In addition, the single “cathedral” service was outdated, as current thinking favored smaller, more intimate prayer groups.

Finsbury Park Synagogue, North London, for example, defaced in 2002 and needing repair, was scheduled to close within the year, and a complex of flats and a new synagogue built on its site. The 106-year-old West Ham and Upton Park Synagogue, East London, one of US’s oldest congregations, closed in May because of falling membership. In September it was announced that Clapton Federation Synagogue, South London, where a demographic shift had left a reduced and elderly congregation, was to be sold.

The Charity Commission ended a two-year inquiry into US affairs in April; it had originally been launched after a US lawsuit against cemetery employees collapsed (see AJYB 2002, p. 314). The commission declared itself satisfied with the improvements the US had made in its management practices. The inquiry’s findings, US chief executive Rabbi Saul Zneimer said, drew “a line under the past.”

In June, the US set up a Center for Rabbinic Development at the London School of Jewish Studies, formerly Jews’ College, Hendon, North London, to train and support rabbis, and the next month the US community development group published a handbook for synagogue boards of management entitled *Working Together*. But US’s relations with its clergy soured in October when the rabbi and cantor at the synagogue in Ilford, Essex, were informed of “potential redundancy.” US officials, backed by the synagogue’s honorary officers, felt that Essex’s “dire financial position” (it had run up a deficit of more than £300,000 in five years) and decreasing male membership (down from 1,650 in 1988 to 855 in 2004) indicated it could not afford two full-time ministers. US president Peter Sheldon asserted nonetheless, in November, that that body was not deserting Essex but investing in it. In December, US leaders met with the organization’s rabbis to repair relationships, although the discussion of pensions, housing, and the introduction of new disciplinary procedures to deal with congregants’ complaints against ministers did not dispel the mood of unease. Rumor had it that the US planned to issue guidelines for dealing with “poor performance” by rabbis.

Even so, British Jews thought highly of their rabbis, according to a United Jewish Israel Appeal report published in September, based on a

survey of Jewish identity in Britain. Conducted by an Israeli professor, Steven M. Cohen, and a Briton, Keith Kahn-Harris, the findings were based on interviews and questionnaires concentrating on “moderately engaged” Jews, the predominant group in the community.

The longest slander trial in British history, which generated enormous publicity in the press and considerable embarrassment in Jewish quarters, finally ended in June when a high-court jury cleared Yisrael Lichtenstein, *dayan* (religious judge) of the Federation Bet Din, of slandering Jewish businessman Brian Maccaba. The lawsuit had been initiated three-and-a-half years earlier, and the trial took 41 days.

In April, Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, in conjunction with the Board of Deputies and the US, issued a statement distancing his office from the Kabbalah Center, the international network that sought to popularize Jewish mysticism by its association with celebrities such as Madonna. “The organization does not fall within the remit of the Chief Rabbinate or any other authority in the UK,” the statement said. That same month the chief rabbi appointed an adviser on Jewish-Muslim relations to his cabinet. Rabbi Sacks explained this unprecedented move as an indication of the priority he gave the subject. It was announced in June that the chief rabbi would not move to the London suburbs, as previously announced (see AJYB 2002, p. 289), but would remain in St. John’s Wood.

Safeguarding the Future, a strategic review commissioned by the Spanish and Portuguese Jews’ Congregation, was released in April. Among its proposals was a name-change to Sephardi Jews’ Congregation, as only 12 percent of the 1,000 members had Spanish or Portuguese origins. The review also suggested that Wembley Synagogue, North London, where membership was decreasing, consider relocating to Hampstead Garden Suburb or Elstree; that religious and cultural activity at Bevis Marks Synagogue in the City of London be revived; that Lauderdale Road Synagogue, North London, hold talks aimed at “constructive collaboration” with its breakaway Anshe Shalom congregation; and that the operation of the Sephardi bet din be reviewed to prevent it becoming a financial burden.

In July, the Oxford Center for Hebrew and Jewish Studies paid the Montefiore Endowment £450,000 for books and pamphlets from the college founded by Sir Moses Montefiore. The endowment raised another £4m in November at a bumper New York auction of rare books and manuscripts from the college, assigning the proceeds to a new “community kollel” at Lauderdale Road to train rabbis and educators.

In December, the council of Barnet, North London, approved a planning application for an *eruv* (the symbolic boundary enabling carrying on

the Sabbath) in Edgware, on the model of the Northwest London *eruv* which became operative in March.

The Reform Synagogues of Great Britain (RSGB) issued *Our 2020 Vision*, a plan for the next two decades, in April. The document declared that RSGB would seek to become the “mainstream” of British Jewry by 2020 through a two-pronged strategy of supporting the work of individual synagogues and overseeing external representation and national projects. In a departure from previous policy, it gave formal recognition to the role of rabbis as part of a tripartite leadership, together with lay leaders and professionals.

In September, a new congregation in Manchester, the Metropolitan Liberal Jewish Congregation of Greater Manchester, considered applying for associate membership in Liberal Judaism, while an independent Edinburgh congregation, Sukkat Shalom, became Scotland’s first Liberal congregation when it affiliated as the Edinburgh Liberal Jewish Community.

September also saw the launch of Jewish Heritage UK, an initiative to preserve British Jewry’s synagogue treasures and historic sites.

Education

The projected Hertsmere Jewish High School, an Orthodox institution in Hertfordshire, finally received the go-ahead in December when it obtained a grant of £16m from the Department for Education and Skills after an earlier bid for government funding failed in February. There had previously been some controversy over the need for the school since there were already three Jewish secondary schools in London and little apparent need for another (see AJYB 2004, pp. 290–91). In January one of the existing schools, the Jewish Free School, North London, agreed to help Hertsmere during its initial phase. The new school was expected to open in 2006. The lingering fear that Jewish schools might end up undersubscribed caused the US’s Agency for Jewish Education, in conjunction with the London Bet Din, to issue guidelines in February allowing US schools with openings to admit students who were not Jewish according to Halakhah (that is, did not have a Jewish mother).

Akiva, a primary school in Finchley, North London, that was under the auspices of the Reform movement, won capital funding from the government in February as a first step in its planned change from private to state status. In December it was announced that Menorah Girls’ High School would come under the “voluntary aided” category in 2005.

In January, the Agency for Jewish Education organized Britain’s first

Jewish Early Years Conference. Held in London, it attracted 250 educators and aimed at identifying the crucial components in Jewish primary-school education. The same month, the Board of Deputies inspection service, Pikuach, found that the quality of Jewish studies in Jewish schools had “improved greatly” over the previous four years.

In November it was announced that Pollak’s boarding house for Jewish boys at Clifton College, Bristol—the only Jewish house at a British private school—would close in July 2005, since there were no longer enough boarders to justify the 127-year-old house.

At the beginning of the year, UJIA launched a survey to guide its spending on Jewish education and youth, which, according to its annual review, had increased from £4.2m in 2002 to £4.6m in 2003. Ben Leon, the UJIA chief executive, emphasized the organization’s support for teacher training, but reported in June that “there were now no vacancies in Jewish schools for Jewish studies teachers.” In November, the US launched an unprecedented plan to allow Jewish studies teachers to receive the government-backed postgraduate certificate of education.

In April, for the third consecutive year, UJIA refused funding for Betar, the Zionist youth group affiliated with the Israeli Likud movement. UJIA renewal director Michael Wegier explained, “We don’t fund demonstrations outside Marks and Spencer. We don’t fund political activities.” In August, the government’s Charity Commission struck Betar off its list of registered charities for engaging in “political” activity.

The London School of Jewish Studies, formerly Jews’ College, announced plans in October to launch an M.A. degree program in Jewish ethics in conjunction with King’s College, London, in September 2005.

Foreign Aid

In May, the heirs of menswear magnate Montague Burton rededicated the Galitsky Synagogue in Kiev, Ukraine, built in 1909 and now reopened as a Jewish Agency-run center for Jewish and Zionist learning. Girls’ Action Project, an independent Jewish youth club in Golders Green, North London, collected 80 boxes of good-as-new clothing in July for poverty-stricken Jews in Ukraine. In September, the West London Synagogue announced it would fund the purchase of premises for a new Reform community in St. Petersburg, Russia, thanks to a million-dollar donation from a congregant.

World Jewish Relief (WJR) announced its support, in October, for several schemes: British bar mitzvah boys and bat mitzvah girls would twin with counterparts in four children’s homes in the Ukraine and Moscow,

the money raised going to the child in the FSU; pupils at Jewish Free School, Kenton, North London, would collect clothing, toys, and toiletries for two Jewish schools in Pinsk, Belarus; and US and Reform congregations in Radlett, Hertfordshire, would work together to collect clothing for Jews in Grodno, Belarus.

The Board of Deputies launched a campaign in September for the release of 11 Jews imprisoned in Iran. The next month, Reform young people in Brighton and Hove raised funds for a Jewish hospital in Tehran, in collaboration with WJR.

Publications

Two Israeli writers captured the 2004 Jewish Quarterly-Wingate Literary awards. The prize for fiction went to David Grossman for *Someone to Run With*, while Amos Elon won in the nonfiction category for *The Pity of It All: A Portrait of Jews in Germany, 1743–1933*. The TLS-Porjes Translation Prize for Hebrew into English was shared by Barbara Harshav for *The Labour of Life: Selected Plays by Hanoch Lvin* and Nicholas de Lange for *The Same Sea* by Amos Oz, whose autobiographical *A Tale of Love and Darkness* also appeared, again translated by de Lange.

Books by rabbis on religious subjects included *A Rabbi Reads the Bible* and *A Rabbi Reads the Psalms*, both by Jonathan Magonet; *Jewish Preaching: Homilies and Sermons* and *Their Heads in Heaven—Unfamiliar Aspects of Hasidism*, both by Louis Jacobs; *Reform Judaism and Modernity: A Reader*, an anthology edited by Jonathan Romain; *Judaism and Homosexuality* by Chaim Rapoport; *Moses, Book 1: Moses, Man of God* and *Moses, Book 2: The Law of Moses, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy*, newly translated and edited by Sidney Brichto, who also published *Apocalypse: A Revolutionary Interpretative Translation of the Writings of St. John*; and *The Treasure Within* by Jonathan Shooter. Other religious studies were *Liberal Judaism: The First Hundred Years* by Lawrence Rigal and Rosita Rosenberg; *Meshal Haqadmoni: Fables from the Distant Past by Isaac Ibn Sahula*, edited and translated by Raphael Loewe; *The Limits of Orthodox Theology: Maimonides' Thirteen Principles Reappraised* by Marc B. Shapiro; and *Bound by the Bible: Jews, Christians and the Sacrifice of Isaac* by Edward Kessler.

Historical works ranged from *The Temple of Jerusalem* by classical scholar Simon Goldhill, to *Our Hidden Lives: The Everyday Diaries of a Forgotten Britain*, which Simon Garfield based on diaries kept by ordinary people in the years following World War II. In between came *The*

Making of Western Jewry 1600–1819 by Lionel Kochan; *Pride Versus Prejudice: Jewish Doctors and Lawyers in England, 1890–1990* by John Cooper; *Jewish London: An Illustrated History* by Gerry Black; *The Jewish Victorian: Genealogical Information from the Jewish Newspapers, 1861–1870* by Doreen Berger; *Jewish Memories of the Twentieth Century*, edited by David Stebbing; and *Shalom Ireland: A Social History of the Jews in Modern Ireland* by Ray Rivlin.

Holocaust studies of all types abounded, including *The Origins of the Final Solution* by Christopher Browning; *Kerry's Children* by Ellen Davies; *The Unwritten Order: Hitler's Role in the Final Solution* by Peter Longerich; *Bloody Foreigners: The Story of Immigration to Britain* by Robert Winder; *My Wounded Heart: The Life of Lilli Jahn, 1900–1944* by Martin Doerry; *Nazi Looting* by Gerard Aalder; *Survival*, edited by Wendy Whitworth; *The Children's House of Belsen* by Hetty Verolme; *After Such Knowledge*, a meditation on the aftermath of the Holocaust by Eva Hoffman; *Eichmann: His Life and Crimes* by David Cesarani; and *Holocaust and Rescue: Impotent or Indifferent? Anglo-Jewry 1938–1945* by Pamela Shatzkes. Books concentrating on the survivors were *From the Edge of the World: The Jewish Refugee Experience through Letters and Stories* by Anne Joseph; *After the Holocaust: Jewish Survivors in Germany after 1945* by Eva Kolinsky; and *Generation Exodus: The Fate of Young German Refugees from Nazi Germany* by Walter Laqueur.

Autobiographies included *Winner Takes All*, a collection of anecdotes and musings on the movie business by Michael Winner; *Hitchhiking to Heaven: An Autobiography* by Lionel Blue; *Jew Made in England* by Anthony Blond; *All About Harry, the True Story of a Child Growing Up in London's 1920s East End* by Harry Laughton; and *The River of Angry Dogs* by Mira Hamermesh. Biographies were *Anthony Caro: Quest for the New Sculpture* by Ian Barker; and *Moshe Dayan* by Martin van Creveld. *Gaza Blues* was a composite work of fiction by Etgar Keret, an Israeli, and Samir El-Youssef, a Palestinian.

Works of fiction published in 2004 were *The Apologist* by Jay Rayner; *The Secret Purposes* by David Baddiel; *The Making of Henry* by Howard Jacobson; *Sarah* by Marek Halter; *Facing the Light* by Adèle Geras; *Hunting Midnight* by Richard Zimler; *My Nine Lives*, a fictionalized autobiography by Ruth Praver Jhabvala; *Mordecai's First Brush with Love: New Stories by Jewish Women in Britain*, edited by Laura Phillips and Marion Baraitser; *After These Things* by Jenny Diski; *Young Turk* by Moris Farhi; and *The Killing Joke* by Anthony Horowitz.

The Israel-Arab conflict remained a popular subject. Publications in-

cluded *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited* by Benny Morris; *Crossing the River Jordan: The Journeys of an Israeli Diplomat* by Jacob Rosen; *The Other Side of Despair: Jews and Arabs in the Promised Land* by Daniel Gavron; and *Refusenik! Israel's Soldiers of Conscience* by Peretz Kidron.

Poetry included two collections of Isaac Rosenberg's work: *Isaac Rosenberg: Selected Poems and Letters*, edited by Jean Liddiard, and *The Selected Poems of Isaac Rosenberg*, edited by Jean Moorcroft Wilson. Other works of poetry were *This Is Not My Nose* by Michael Rosen; *Burning Wire* by Ruth Fainlight; *Where Do People Go?* by Bernard Kops; *The Last Hour of Sleep* by Naomi Jaffa; *Flood Warning* by Berta Freistadt; and *Flight into Egypt* by Ian Blake.

Personalia

Honors accorded British Jews during the year included peerages awarded to Sir Stanley Kalms, former Conservative Party treasurer and leading retailer; Leonard Steinberg, founder of Stanley Leisure, the largest casino operator in the country, and president of the Manchester Jewish Federation, for services to charity and education; Iranian-born Sir David Alliance, founder of the textile group Coats Viyella and chair of one of the UK's largest mail-order companies, whose charitable works included the Alliance Foundation for the relief of poverty and the advancement of religion, education, and medical knowledge; historian Dr. Ruth Henig, chair of the Association of Police Authorities and a member of the National Criminal Justice Board; and Rabbi Julia Neuberger, also created a Dame earlier in the year, for services to several public bodies. Other newly created Dames were Gail Ronson, in recognition of her charitable work, and Fanny Waterman for services to music. Knight-hoods went to senior civil servant Peter Gershon, chief executive of the Office of Government Commerce; and Clive Bourne for services to charity and education.

Notable British Jews who died in 2004 included Dayan Michael Fisher, emeritus senior rabbi of the Federation of Synagogues, in London, in January, aged 95; Peter Gellhorn, musician, in London, in February, aged 91; Leslie Levens, industrialist and philanthropist, in London, in February, aged 93; David Carrington, *Jewish Chronicle* journalist, in London, in February, aged 88; Lili Preiskel, patroness of the arts, in London, in February, aged 94; Jack Temple, alternative healer, in Surrey, in February, aged 86; Hymie Binder, weight-lifting champion, in London, in

March, aged 86; Sir Horace Phillips, the nation's first Jewish career diplomat, in London, in March, aged 86; Vilem Tausky, musician and conductor, in London, in March, aged 93; Bernard Mendelovitch, star of the Yiddish theater, in Bournemouth, in March, aged 79; John, Lord Diamond, Labor politician, first secretary to the treasury, 1964–70, in April, in Chalfont St. Giles, Buckinghamshire, aged 96; Paul Hamburger, musician, in Yeovil, Somerset, in April, aged 83; Harry Kleeman, chairman of the Central British Fund for World Jewish Relief, 1991–96, in Barbados, in April, aged 76; Hyam Maccoby, theological historian, in Leeds, in May, aged 80; Alex Rosenzweig, financial adviser active in communal cultural affairs, in London, in May, aged 65; Milton Shulman, drama critic, in London, in May, aged 90; Adèle Leigh, opera singer, in London, in May, aged 75; Sulamith Messerer, ballerina, in London, in June, aged 95; Jack Rosenthal, playwright, in London, in June, aged 73; Mike Woodin, academic and Green Party activist, in Oxford, in July, aged 38; Ellis Birk, influential communal leader, in London, in July, aged 88; Albert Friedlander, leading Reform rabbi and interfaith activist, in London, in July, aged 77; Arnold Ziff, philanthropist, in Leeds, in July, aged 77; Michael Hyam, barrister and judge, in London, in July, aged 66; Maurice Sumray, figurative painter, in St Ives, Cornwall, in July, aged 83; Peter Barnes, playwright, in London, in July, aged 73; Ethel de Keyser, antiapartheid activist, in London, in July, aged 77; Bernard Levin, controversial journalist, in London, in August, aged 75; Albi Rosenthal, antiquarian bookseller, in Oxford, in August, aged 89; Karl Brozik, leading figure in negotiating reparations for Holocaust survivors, in London, in August, aged 83; Jack Rosenberg, choirmaster and composer of Jewish liturgical music, in London, in August, aged 83; Basil, Lord Wigoder, chairman of the Liberal Party, 1963–65, chief whip, 1977–84, in London, in August, aged 83; Samuel Cohen, psychiatrist, in London, in September, aged 78; Harry Seltzer, comedian, in London, in September, aged 95; Bernice Rubens, prize-winning novelist, in London, in October, aged 81; Paul Shrank, chairman of the Masorti Assembly of Synagogues, 1998–2002, in London, in October, aged 57; and Alicia Markova, ballerina, in Bath, in December, aged 94.

MIRIAM & LIONEL KOCHAN

France

National Affairs

IN THE POLITICAL SPHERE, the year 2004 in France began with impressive electoral victories by the left. In regional elections held March 21 and 28, the left, under the leadership of the Socialist Party, received 50 percent of the vote, with 37 percent going to the mainstream right and 12 percent to the far-right National Front. Twenty of the 22 regions making up metropolitan France elected left-leaning administrations. The result was interpreted primarily as a reaction against the domestic policies of the government of Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin, appointed by President Jacques Chirac. Nevertheless, the National Assembly continued to be dominated by Chirac's party, the UMP (initially the Union for a Presidential Majority, later renamed the Union for a Popular Movement with the same acronym). Thus, the punishment administered by the voters in late March was more an alarm bell than the beginning of real political change. To be sure, the powers of the regional presidents, almost all of whom were now Socialists, were far from negligible. But France was a very centralized country, the key authority remaining in Paris, in the hands of the president and his parliamentary majority.

These regional elections were closely followed by elections for the European Parliament on June 13. Once again, the stakes were limited in terms of power, since the real responsibilities in the European Union were essentially divided between the European Council, representing the member states, and the European Commission, a kind of government appointed by those states. Thus the major significance of the parliamentary elections was as a gauge of public opinion. The election was marked by low turnout and political fragmentation, a situation encouraged by the system of voting for party lists. Even so, it was impossible not to notice that the Socialists, with 29 percent of the vote, were the leading political party in France. The right was divided between the UMP with 17 percent and the Union for French Democracy (UDF) with 12 percent, while the National Front remained stagnant at a little under 10 percent.

As already noted, however, political power remained concentrated in the Elysée Palace, the residence of President Chirac, reelected in 2002 for a five-year term, and the Palais Bourbon, seat of the National Assembly,

where the UMP had maintained a solid majority since 2002. With the next national elections scheduled for 2007, attention focused on the internal politics of the UMP, in which Nicolas Sarkozy had become an increasingly powerful figure. After the March elections, Sarkozy, who had gained prominence as minister of the interior, was shifted to economy minister in a government whose leader, Raffarin, had been politically weakened by the right's losses.

It was no secret that Sarkozy wanted to become president in 2007. His plan shocked no one, even in a country that frowns on personal ambition. Sarkozy had succeeded in establishing a public image as an "American-style" politician who engaged in "plain speaking" and placed a higher priority on action than ideology. He emerged personally unscathed from the right's recent election losses, which were attributed to President Chirac and Prime Minister Raffarin. Sarkozy's next step was to take control of the UMP.

This meant a confrontation with Chirac, who had never ruled out the possibility of running for a third term in 2007, and, even if he had no further presidential aspirations, could hardly be thrilled with the idea of his own party being led by a declared presidential candidate. But the dynamic that Sarkozy set in motion carried the day, thanks to the efforts of a large group of party officials who saw in him the promise of political renewal on the right. Chirac had to accept Sarkozy as UMP president, and the only condition he was able to extract was that Sarkozy would resign from the government upon his election to the party position. On November 28, Sarkozy was triumphantly elected president of the UMP with 85 percent of the vote.

Paradoxically, just as the right, after its punishment by the voters, appeared to be pulling itself together for the elections that loomed ahead, the big winner in the recent votes, the Socialist Party, was suffering from division and malaise. The "war of the leaders," which for years had pitted Lionel Jospin against Laurent Fabius, did not end with Jospin's retirement after his defeat in the 2002 presidential election. Instead, it continued as intensely as ever after Jospin was replaced by François Hollande.

The hostility between Fabius and Hollande crystallized around the question of the European constitutional treaty, whose text was to be released to French voters early in 2004. Some commentators suggested that Chirac's decision to submit the treaty to a referendum, when, technically speaking, a parliamentary vote would have been enough (some other European countries took this path), was made with the intent of provoking internal conflict among his Socialist adversaries. If so, the results ex-

ceeded expectations: the Socialists split between supporters of the proposed treaty, led by Hollande, and opponents, led by Fabius. This crisis would have a lasting effect on the party and prevent it from taking advantage of the electoral gains it achieved in 2004.

2004 was also the year in which the wearing of signs or clothing “conspicuously” (*ostensiblement*) indicating a religious affiliation in public primary, middle, and secondary schools was banned, in application of the principle of “*laïcité*” (the French form of secularism). The law giving effect to the ban was promulgated on March 15, after a near-unanimous vote in Parliament. Interpretation of the term *ostensiblement* was to be left to school principals and, if necessary, to the courts. While the law encompassed signs representing all religions, it was generally regarded as being directed at the Islamic veil.

Before it was passed, the law was the target of vigorous protests from extreme Muslim groups. It was also attacked by some far-left activists on grounds that it could potentially isolate Muslim girls from public education, since the only option consistent with their religious convictions would be to quit school. The reality proved far less dramatic. When students returned to school in September and October 2004, the vast majority of girls accepted the new rule, and only a few isolated cases of refusal to comply were reported.

Israel and the Middle East

How did French people regard Israel? A poll conducted among a representative sample of the French population by the French polling firm Sofres (part of the global TNS group) on behalf of the Institut Français in Tel Aviv gave a partial answer. The results were presented in the form of a “sympathy index,” calculated as the percentage of those polled who expressed “sympathy” for a country minus the percentage who did not express sympathy. In the case of Israel, the sympathy index was negative (–10): that is, those who expressed sympathy (38 percent) represented a smaller percentage than those who did not express sympathy (48 percent). By comparison, Russia registered a strongly positive index (+20), “Palestine” a positive index (+7), and the U.S. a negative index (–6).

The same poll indicated that French people considered Israelis aggressive (68 percent agreed and 21 percent disagreed), powerful (68 percent agreed, 22 percent disagreed), courageous (60 percent agreed, 23 percent disagreed), not respectful of human rights (56 percent agreed, 29 percent disagreed), undemocratic (52 percent agreed, 29 percent dis-

agreed), and not sincerely interested in peace (62 percent agreed, 25 percent disagreed). But despite all that, 46 percent of French people expressed the opinion that what united France and Israel was more important than what divided them, while only 30 percent expressed the contrary view. And 54 percent regarded relations between France and Israel as good, only 29 percent regarding them as bad. Finally, when people were asked who was primarily responsible for the current problems between Israel and the Palestinians, 23 percent blamed Israel as compared with 14 percent who blamed the Palestinians, while 40 percent answered "both," and 23 percent had no opinion.

Another poll, conducted among a representative sample of Israel's Jewish population on May 5, 2004, by the Israeli firm Market Watch on behalf of the country's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, completed the picture. (Both polls were aimed to coincide with a conference on Franco-Israeli relations in Tel Aviv, part of an initiative undertaken by the two governments to improve relations.) While 91 percent of respondents in the Israeli sample said they felt "great sympathy" or "some sympathy" for the U.S. (the highest score), followed by 79 percent for Britain and 64 percent for the Netherlands, France lagged way behind with 21 percent, just ahead of Germany's 17 percent.

The Israeli respondents considered the French "pro-Arab" (80 percent) and "hypocritical" (64 percent), but also "democratic" (62 percent) and "civilized" (62 percent). Only 14 percent of those surveyed believed that the French government was "energetically" fighting anti-Semitism, while 49 percent believed that it was doing "very little" or even "nothing at all." The response to another question helps cast light on this clearly incorrect perception of the situation in France. When people were asked what proportion of France's Jewish community, in their view, was annihilated in the Holocaust, only a small percentage (23 percent) gave the correct answer: the majority of Jews survived.

Thus, the dominant impression given by the polls was that Franco-Israeli relations were characterized more by mutual ignorance than by real hostility. However, an important gesture on the French side could not help but improve things. On June 7, the Paris City Council unanimously passed a resolution to name a street in the city after Theodor Herzl, the founder of Zionism, who died on that date a century earlier. The city's Socialist mayor, Bertrand Delanoë, supported the resolution, even praising the "excellent initiative" of the two councilors from the right-wing opposition who introduced it.

A little over a month before the June 13 European elections, with most

of the lists of candidates already in place, a new list was announced. It was called Euro-Palestine, and its platform was consistent with the most radical anti-Israel positions. The leader was a surgeon named Christophe Oberlin, who had previously belonged to the Socialist Party and was a longtime pro-Palestinian activist, but the real force behind the initiative was in fourth place on the list. Her name was Olivia Zemor, and early in 2002 she and Nicolas Shahshahani had founded a pro-Palestinian organization called CAPJPO, the Coordination of Efforts for a Just Peace in the Middle East (Coordination des Appels pour une Paix Juste au Proche-Orient). These two founders of CAPJPO, both former Trotskyist activists, were anti-Zionist Jews, as were many of its other members. The Euro-Palestine list represented an attempted "opening" to activists who had no contact with Jewish groups, especially to the Arab-Muslim community, which was regarded as receptive to pro-Palestinian rhetoric.

The list was supported by Islamist groups and some far-left anti-Zionists, but attacked by the Communists and the Greens who worried that it would siphon off some of their votes. On June 8 it was repudiated by the official representative of the Palestine Liberation Organization in France, Leila Shahid, who argued that "a proliferation of lists can only help weaken solidarity with Palestine, not strengthen it." In the end, Euro-Palestine, whose presence was limited to the Paris region, was only a marginal force in the elections, with 1.83 percent of the vote in the region as a whole. There were, however, some neighborhoods with large Muslim populations where it received more than 5 percent and even a few where it exceeded 10 percent. Euro-Palestine continued to exist after the elections, but became increasingly indistinguishable from CAPJPO, serving as its public face.

On October 29, the head of the Palestinian Authority, Yasir Arafat, was transferred to a French military hospital in the Paris suburb of Clamart. A long period of uncertainty began, with contradictory declarations coming from various sources about his state of health. (The French military doctors maintained an almost total silence, broken only by a few press releases.) During this time, pro-Palestinian activists organized a vigil near the hospital, and were joined by some "anti-Zionist Jews" from outside France. The official announcement of Arafat's death came on November 11. Late that afternoon, his body left the Villacoublay military base on an air force airbus bound for Cairo, after an official ceremony on the tarmac attended by Prime Minister Raffarin.

This episode left many French people, especially French Jews, uneasy. Few questioned President Chirac's decision to welcome a gravely ill man

to France, and the discretion of the French military doctors was understood and appreciated. However, questions were raised about the way Arafat's long agony was managed on the political and communications levels. Behind the parade of dignitaries to the Palestinian president's bedside, there appeared to be power struggles and financial intrigues (in February 2004, French judicial authorities had opened an investigation into major transfers of funds that benefited Arafat's wife, Suha, who was separated from her husband and divided her time between Paris and Tunis). Questions were raised about the conditions under which some people and not others were allowed access to Arafat's sickbed, about who determined the legal date of death, and about the source of rumors that Arafat may have been poisoned. Faced with these questions and others along the same lines, the hospital administration invariably replied that Arafat's family had legal privileges that it could not discuss.

Criticism focused particularly on the official acts that followed Arafat's death. First of all, the honors given Arafat at the Villacoublay military base far exceeded the minimum due the head of the PA: the French authorities evidently wished to make a dramatic "gesture." In addition, the official death certificate drawn up at the Clamart town hall gave Arafat's birthplace as "Al Qods/Jerusalem," although almost all biographies of Arafat agreed that he was born in Cairo, and that the Jerusalem birthplace was a fiction maintained for political reasons. The mayor of Clamart insisted that he was not making any judgement in signing this document. He said he was obliged to copy the information recorded in the *livret de famille* of Arafat and his wife, issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (all French married couples and parents have a *livret de famille* or family booklet, which serves as the source for other legal notices concerning them). "It was in this *livret*, an official document," the mayor continued, "that his birthplace was given as 'Al Qods/Jerusalem.'"

A Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson, Hervé Ladsous, was questioned about this matter on November 16. He explained that Yasir Arafat did indeed have a French *livret de famille*, because his wife Suha had acquired French nationality. In this *livret*, drawn up in 1996, the French authorities had carried over the information recorded in the supporting documents supplied by the applicants. Since Yasir Arafat had submitted a document according to which he had been born in Jerusalem, the authorities had no choice but to copy this information as it was. That is how Arafat, through French administrative procedures, gained recognition for the birthplace that he had chosen for himself, and how this choice accompanied him even in death.

Anti-Semitism and Racism

The main source of information on racism and anti-Semitism in France is the voluminous report published annually by the National Consultative Commission of Human Rights (CNCDH), an agency attached to the prime minister's office but comprised of representatives of religious bodies, trade unions, and antiracist groups, as well as independent figures. The statistics contained in this report are provided to the CNCDH by the Ministry of the Interior on the basis of information from the national and local police. The official statistics distinguish between "actions," defined as "acts against individuals and property presenting a certain degree of seriousness," and "threats," which are "threatening words or gestures, graffiti, tracts, hateful demonstrations, and other acts of intimidation." The data also specify the victims of the "actions" and "threats," the most significant distinction being that between anti-Semitism and other forms of racism and xenophobia.

The report for 2004, released on March 21, 2005, showed that Jews were the main victims of racist violence in France. In 2004, in the "Hexagon," or metropolitan France (not including Corsica, where nationalist agitation is tied up with racism and xenophobia), 200 "anti-Semitic actions" and 88 "racist actions" other than anti-Semitic were recorded. The disparity here is flagrant: Jews represent less than 10 percent of the population potentially threatened by racism (people with origins in northern and sub-Saharan Africa constitute the vast majority of this population), but they are by far the leading victims of violence.

This is a recent phenomenon, and its origin can be pinpointed to the beginning of the Palestinian intifada in the fall of 2000. In the five years preceding the intifada, 1995–99, public authorities recorded a total of 16 anti-Semitic "actions" in the Hexagon. In the next five years, 2000–04, their number increased to 672, while in the same period there were 205 racist "actions" directed at people who were not Jews. In 2004 alone, 36 of the 56 people injured in racist attacks were Jews. In the years since the intifada began, the percentage of all racist acts of violence that were directed at Jews ranged, depending on the year, between 65 and 80 percent. Put another way, statistically speaking a Jew is 20 to 30 times more likely to be the victim of a racist attack than an Arab or an African.

To be sure, Jews were hardly the only victims of racism in France. Discrimination in employment and housing, based on physical appearance or surname, was rarely directed against Jews and was much more

likely to affect members of other minority groups. Clearly, two distinct processes were at work. On the one hand, social discrimination based on race, now rarely felt by Jews, had continued and even grown in relation to other minorities. On the other hand, there had emerged a pattern of anti-Jewish violence without parallel since World War II, caused by “fall-out” from the Middle East conflict.

No more than partial information was available about the perpetrators of anti-Semitic actions, as only about one in five had been apprehended by the police (a proportion that also held for those guilty of non-anti-Semitic racist acts). The CNCDH report indicated that of the 970 manifestations of anti-Semitism recorded in 2004 (200 “actions” and 770 “threats”), 27 percent were the work of “Arab-Muslim circles,” 17 percent of “far-right circles,” and 56 percent involved “individuals who were unknown in all respects.” Restricting the analysis to violent “actions” changed the proportions somewhat, with 33 percent attributed to “Arab-Muslim circles,” 7 percent to the far right, and 60 percent to unknowns. Either way, most incidents were not attributed to specific groups, and thus there was no basis for treating the acts, whether violent or not, as necessarily cases of political or ideological anti-Semitism. Rather, there was a cultural climate that allowed isolated individuals to act out anti-Jewish ideas. Beyond the actual violence—which remained limited, even if it had a traumatic effect on a significant part of the Jewish population—there was a kind of symbolic violence embodied both in images coming from the Middle East and commentary in France on these images.

This problem was highlighted by Jean-Christophe Rufin, who was commissioned by Interior Minister Dominique de Villepin to prepare a report on “the struggle against racism and anti-Semitism.” Rufin—a doctor, president of a nongovernmental organization that focused on fighting world hunger, and a successful novelist—submitted the report on October 19, 2004. It distinguished among “three levels of responsibility” for French anti-Semitism: that of the perpetrators of violence; that of the “manipulators,” for whom anti-Semitism was a “strategy”; and “that of the facilitators, who, through their opinions—or their silence—legitimize the *passages à l’acte* while being very careful not to commit such acts themselves.” Rufin termed this third category “anti-Semitism by proxy,” adding, “Of all the subtle forms of anti-Semitism by proxy, one in particular needs to be singled out, because it has emerged as a dominant form of discourse in the last few years: radical anti-Zionism In legitimizing the Palestinians’ armed struggle, whatever form it takes,

even when it is directed against innocent civilians, anti-Zionism proposes a radical reading of reality that serves to legitimize violent actions committed in France itself.”

Around the time that Rufin submitted his report, an illustration of his argument—that criticism of Israel can easily be used to legitimize anti-Semitism—appeared in the form of Alain Ménargues. A journalist who had spent much of this career in the Middle East (he was the Beirut correspondent for Radio France, the public radio station, for many years), Ménargues was named news director of Radio France Internationale (RFI) on July 28, with the title of assistant executive director responsible for broadcasting and information. Radio France Internationale, a distinct entity from Radio France, is “the voice of France around the world,” falling directly under the authority of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In September, Ménargues published a book, *Le Mur de Sharon* (Sharon’s Wall). In the course of promoting the book, Ménargues, speaking on the far-right station Radio Courtoisie on October 12, said: “I was shocked by the wall. I went to see various people about it—rabbis, politicians. If you read Leviticus in the Torah, what is this? It’s the separation of the pure and the impure. To be able to pray, a Jew must be pure; everything that is contrary to this purity must be separated. . . . Read Leviticus. It’s there in plain language. Which was the first ghetto in the world? It was in Venice. Who created it? It was the Jews themselves, to keep themselves separate from everyone else. Later, Europe put them in ghettos.” He further explained that “from the beginning and wherever Jews have lived, they have constructed an ‘*eruv*,’ a symbolic wall to separate them from the others, the non-Jews, the goyim.” According to Ménargues, “Sharon’s wall” was therefore designed to separate the pure Jews from the Palestinian goyim, the “dangerous impure ones.”

A spokesperson for the Foreign Ministry told reporters that he considered the comments of Ménargues “unacceptable.” Jewish commentators (notably in the monthly *L’Arche*, which devoted a special issue to the affair) highlighted the factual inaccuracy of each of his points: the laws outlined in Leviticus regarding pure and impure related to the Temple service, not to relations between Jews and non-Jews; an *eruv* does not separate Jews from non-Jews but marks how far an observant Jew can carry an object on the Sabbath; and, as for the ghetto in Venice, it was built in 1516 on the orders of the Council of Nobles, over protests by the Jews.

It was the mobilization of the RFI journalists that broke the scandal. The fact that Ménargues’s comments about “the separation of the pure and the impure” were made on a far-right station provoked a strong re-

action among the editorial staff. The journalists declared in a press release that their response to “his remarks concerning the Jews and the State of Israel” was “indignation and rejection.” This, added to the disclaimer already issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, made the situation untenable. On October 18, it was announced that Ménargues had resigned from his position as news director of RFI, and that he would take on other responsibilities for the station. But Ménargues then publicly accused the RFI journalists’ unions of being manipulated by “the associations for the protection or the defense of Israel,” and presented himself (according to an October 19 article in the daily *Libération*) as a victim of “manipulation” by a “clique of clannish Jews.” That same day, at a staff meeting, all RFI personnel denounced Ménargues’s “insulting statements” that “apparently have nothing to do with reality,” and rejected “all incitement of racial hatred.” Later in the day, the RFI fired Ménargues.

When this affair began, there was a wave of solidarity for Ménargues in far-left and pro-Palestinian circles; they saw him as a “courageous man” who had done nothing more than “condemn Israeli policies.” But when it became clear that Ménargues was a blatant anti-Semite, only those opponents of Israel who were least sensitive to charges of anti-Semitism—or, put simply, those most prone to anti-Semitism—remained loyal to his cause.

Another public figure who continued to fan the flames of controversy was Dieudonné M’Bala M’Bala, whose stage name was Dieudonné. A comedian born of a Cameroonian father and a white French mother, he had shocked viewers during a live television show broadcast on December 1, 2003, on the public channel France 3. Dressed as an Orthodox Jew, he had called on people to join “the American-Zionist axis,” finishing up with a Nazi salute accompanied by a cry that many viewers heard as “Isra-Heil,” which Dieudonné later claimed was simply the word “Israel.” The reaction was strong: amid protests and some threats, theater owners in Paris and elsewhere canceled Dieudonné’s show, and the probability of his appearing again on television was slim. In response, he declared that he was being persecuted by “the Zionists” (see AJYB 2004, pp. 319–20).

On February 28, 2004, in an interview with an Internet publication, he added another weapon to his arsenal of complaints against Jews, presenting himself as the spokesperson for blacks. He stated that before the incident in late 2003, he had submitted a proposal to the Centre National de la Cinématographie (CNC, the National Film Center), a public agency that granted loans for the production and distribution of French films,

for a project involving a fictional film about the Code Noir that had regulated slavery in the French colonies. The request was turned down. Dieudonné concluded that this was because “the Zionists” controlled French cinema (the executive director of the CNC at the time, David Kessler, was a French civil servant from a Jewish family) and wanted to block the expression of black history. In April, in an interview with another Internet publication, Dieudonné said, “There is a very powerful lobby that thinks it has a monopoly on human suffering and that absolutely refuses to recognize us. . . . I really think that the Jewish lobby hates Blacks! . . . A Jew can just roll up his sleeve and show his number to have an automatic right of recognition. For me, my number is written all over my face! But they don’t want to share that with us.”

These and similar comments evoked protests in the media not only by Jews, but also by many French blacks. A major show was produced in Paris on March 15, “Laugh Against Racism,” sponsored jointly by the Union of French Jewish Students and the SOS-Racisme, an antiracist organization with close ties to the Socialist Party. The show brought together many comedians from a variety of backgrounds, including Jews, Africans, and Arabs, who shared a dislike for Dieudonné’s behavior. In May, Dieudonné, in turn, presented a new show at his own small Paris theater, ironically called “My Apologies.” It consisted not of apologies but of further provocations.

A Paris court, on May 27, ruled in his favor in a case brought against him for the original 2003 television sketch. The judges rejected the accusation of anti-Semitism, holding that “the character personified by the accused did not represent Jews as a whole but rather a certain group of people identified by their political views.” Dieudonné then threw himself into politics, most prominently as a candidate for the European Parliament on the Euro-Palestine list. After the European elections, however, he felt the need to distance himself from the originators of the list so as to avoid the taint of anti-Semitism. If anything, however, he became even more politically active. He and some associates, some of whom had associations with Holocaust denial, set up a Web site containing extensive material about “pro-slavery Jews,” directly translated from the anti-Semitic literature put out by the Nation of Islam, the American movement led by Louis Farrakhan.

On November 11, at his theater, Dieudonné received a delegation of “anti-Zionist rabbis” who had come to France to pay homage to the deceased Yasir Arafat. After one rabbi, Yisroel Dovid Weiss, declared that “Israel will crumble because it is a nation based on lies, usurpation and

blasphemy,” Dieudonné responded, “I am very happy to hear you speak. I didn’t realize that people like you existed. Where have you been all these years? No one ever hears about you! Is this because of a conspiracy?”

Holocaust-Related Matters

On July 11, the Court of Appeals, the highest court in France, rejected the final motion filed by the lawyers for former cabinet minister Maurice Papon. He had been sentenced to ten years in prison in 1998 for “complicity in crimes against humanity,” specifically, arresting Jews in the Bordeaux region and handing them over to the Germans. On October 14, Papon was fined 2,500 euros for “illegally wearing the Legion of Honor,” following the publication of a photo in a daily newspaper showing the medal on his jacket lapel. The medal had been officially withdrawn by a presidential decree in 1999.

JEWISH COMMUNITY

Communal Affairs

France’s first Jewish-Muslim friendship association, *Amitié Judéo-Musulmane de France*, was established on November 21. The initiator was Rabbi Michel Serfaty, an Orthodox rabbi who, in addition to his role as professor of Hebrew at the University of Nancy and rabbi in the town of Ris-Orangis outside Paris, had for years organized trips for young Jews and Muslims from his area to Holocaust-related sites in Poland. Serfaty, who had himself been the object of an anti-Semitic attack by two young Arabs while on his way to the synagogue, wished to strengthen contact between the two communities so that Muslims could rediscover the true face of Judaism, as Christians had a generation earlier.

A Jewish-Christian friendship organization, *Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne de France*, had existed in France for years, as well as a movement bringing together all three religions, *Alliance d’Abraham*. But there had previously been no specific mechanism for Jewish-Muslim dialogue. On the Jewish side, Rabbi Serfaty obtained support from all the major organizations. But on the Muslim side, the only participant was the “moderate” movement whose leading figure was the spiritual leader of the Paris mosque, Dalil Boubakeur. In the end, the success of the group would depend on convincing the Muslim militants to participate.

Publications

A number of original works of Jewish interest were published in France in 2004. In the realm of ideas: Henri Meschonnic's *Les Noms* (The Names), a translation of the Book of Exodus, and *Un coup de Bible dans la philosophie* (Biblical Dimensions in Philosophy); *Chemins de la Cabale* (Paths of the Kabbalah) by Charles Mopsik (who died in 2003); Nathan Weinstock's *Le Yiddish tel qu'on l'oublie* (The Yiddish We Have Forgotten); Benjamin Gross's *L'aventure du langage* (The Adventure of Language); and Catherine Chalièr's *La langue de la vérité* (The Language of Truth), a translation with commentary of texts by the rebbe of Gur.

Current affairs: Jean Mouttapa's *Un Arabe face à Auschwitz* (An Arab Facing Auschwitz); Albert Memmi's *Le portrait du décolonisé* (Portrait of the Decolonized); Pierre-André Taguieff's *Prêcheurs des haine — traversée de la judéophobie planétaire* (Preachers of Hate: The Path of Worldwide Anti-Semitism); and Lisa Anteby-Yemini's *Les Juifs éthiopiens en Israël* (Ethiopian Jews in Israel).

Historical works: Dominique Bourel's *Mendelssohn, la naissance du judaïsme moderne* (Mendelssohn: The Birth of Modern Judaism); Florent Brayard's *La "solution finale de la question juive"* (The "Final Solution to the Jewish Problem"); Pierre Birnbaum's *Géographie de l'espoir — l'exil, les Lumières, la désassimilation* (Geography of Hope: Exile, the Enlightenment, De-assimilation); Jean-Marc Dreyfus and Sarah Gensburger's *Des camps dans Paris, juillet 1943 — août 1944* (The Paris Camps, July 1943–August 1944); Léon Blum's *Lettres de Buchenwald* (Letters from Buchenwald), edited by Ilan Greilsammer; Myriam Anissimov's *Romain Gary*; Olivier Mannoni's *Manès Sperber*; and Michel Winock's *La France et les Juifs* (France and the Jews).

Finally, 2004 saw the publication of an autobiographical account by the great novelist Patrick Modiano, *Un pedigree* (A Pedigree).

Personalia

On May 7, medical professor Alexandre Minkowski died at the age of 88. Born in Paris, he became a specialist in treating newborns. His relationship with Judaism was ambivalent. Describing himself as a "not very Catholic Jew," he was actively involved in a number of "Third-World" causes, among them that of the Palestinians.

On May 23, Maxime Rodinson, a specialist in Oriental studies, died at the age of 89. Born in Paris to a Russian Jewish family, he was a long-

time member of the Communist Party and remained a strong opponent of Zionism all his life. Although his specialty was Ethiopian literary language, he was more widely known for his books on Islam and the Arab world. He eventually accepted the existence of the State of Israel, but his sympathies remained with the Palestinians.

On August 31, André Caquot, an academician, died at the age of 81. This Protestant Christian was an eminent specialist in Semitic languages and biblical research. Professor at the Collège de France (the most prestigious of French universities), he had a vast knowledge of Jewish culture: he regularly attended Yom Kippur services at Paris's main synagogue and knew contemporary Israeli writers personally.

On September 5, historian Paul Sebag died at the age of 85. Born in Tunisia to a Jewish "bourgeois" family, he became an active Communist at a young age. A journalist and teacher, he actively participated in the movement for Tunisian independence. Unlike most Jews, he did not leave Tunisia after it separated from France in 1956. But he came to feel isolated in the new Tunisian society, and, in 1977, left for France where, after teaching for two years at the University of Rouen, he devoted his retirement to writing books on Tunisian history and Tunisian Jews.

On October 9, philosopher Jacques Derrida died at the age of 74. Born in Algeria to a Jewish family, he was barred, at age 12, from attending school by the Vichy collaborationist government; this event seems to have marked him for life. After difficult beginnings, he became one of France's great contemporary thinkers. His theory of "deconstruction" earned him international recognition. Derrida's relationship to Judaism remained complex: he was loath to identify himself with a particular community and maintained a very critical attitude toward Israel, but he asserted that he would never deny his Jewishness.

On October 12, Lazare Pytkowicz died at the age of 76. Born in Paris, he was only 14 when he joined the resistance against the German occupiers who had just deported his parents. Acting as liaison among resistance groups, he was arrested several times but always managed to escape. He was the youngest person in France to receive the title of *Compagnon de la Libération* (Companion of the Liberation), reserved for elite resistance fighters, during his lifetime. Later, he became a businessman, all the while remaining active in the Communist Party.

On November 11, filmmaker Richard Dembo died at the age of 56. Following the release of his first film, *La Diagonale du fou* (Diagonal of the Crazy) in 1984, he made relatively few movies. An observant Jew, he refused to film scenes that went against the rules of modesty specified in

the Torah. He left a posthumous film, *La Maison de Nina* (Nina's House), about the treatment of Jewish children who survived the Holocaust.

On December 9, Marcel Suarès died at the age of 90. Born in Bayonne to a Portuguese Jewish family that had lived in the area since the sixteenth century, he joined the anti-German resistance early on and distinguished himself by carrying out many acts of sabotage in arms factories. His exploits earned him the title of *Compagnon de la Libération*. Suarès served as a bodyguard to General de Gaulle, and then returned to his hometown of Bayonne where he opened an electrical appliance store. For 42 years he served as a city councilor, and was an active member of the Bayonne Jewish community.

MEIR WAINTRATER

Belgium

National Affairs

The Belgian federal government is a loose confederation of three “regions”—the Flemish Region in the north, predominantly Dutch-speaking; the Walloon Region in the south, predominantly French-speaking; and the Brussels-Capital Region, with a mixed population—each enjoying a significant degree of autonomy. Dutch, French, and German (spoken primarily in Eupen and Malmédy) are all official languages. Federal legislative power is in the hands of a bicameral Parliament, and the cabinet, officially answerable to King Albert II, a constitutional monarch, is required by law to contain an equal number of French- and Dutch-speakers. A coalition of neoliberals and socialists controlled the federal government in 2004, each element composed of two parties, one Flemish and the other Walloon. Guy Verhofstadt of the Flemish Liberals and Democrats (VLD) was prime minister.

Elections were held in June for the regional governments. Once again, the big news was a significant gain for the far-right separatist Vlaams Blok (Flemish Bloc) in the Flemish Region. The party increased its share of the vote from 24.1 to 32 percent and gained ten seats in the regional parliament. Although this made it the second largest party, the other factions continued their policy of refusing to enter into a coalition with it, effectively keeping the Vlaams Blok out of the government. It was already the largest party on the Antwerp City Council and the fifth largest in the Federal Parliament. Although outlawed later in the year, it would reconstitute itself under a different name (see below, p. 355). The far-right party in French-speaking Belgium, the Front National Belge (FNB), won 5.4 percent of the vote in Brussels to secure four seats, a gain of two, and 8.1 percent in the Walloon Region, a gain of three seats for a total of four. The neoliberal parties and the Greens lost ground in all three regions, while the socialists made gains. The elections resulted in a reshuffling of cabinet positions on the federal level, the most important change being the replacement of Foreign Minister Louis Michel by Karel De Gucht.

In the 2004 election, Mrs. Monique Langbord-Faynsztein became the first Jewish alderman in Forest, one of Brussels’s 19 boroughs. This came on the heels of another first, the election of Claude Marinower, an

Antwerp Jew, to the Federal Parliament in 2003, representing the VLD. Two Islamist parties ran in the Brussels regional election. Neither came near to winning parliamentary representation, as the great bulk of Muslim voters cast their ballots for the mainstream French-speaking parties. Of the 72 francophone members of the new Brussels parliament, 15 were of North African origin and two of Turkish descent, while one of the Flemish members was of Arab background.

The European Union, headquartered in Brussels, welcomed ten new members in May—Cyprus, Malta, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Slovenia. The issue of Turkey's accession to the EU remained controversial. Other candidates for membership were Bulgaria, Romania, and Croatia.

The Nihoul-Dutroux affair that transfixed and horrified Belgium for eight years ended after a 17-week trial in Arlon that ran from March 1 to June 22, under a heavy media spotlight. This case involved the kidnapping, drugging, raping, and killing of six young girls in 1995 and 1996 (see AJYB 2004, pp. 327–28). Marc Dutroux was given a life sentence, and his confederates received shorter prison terms: Michelle Martin, 30 years; Michel Lelièvre, 25 years; and Michel Nihoul, 5 years.

Yet another murder of a young Belgian girl was solved during the year when the body of Elisabeth Brichet, missing since 1990, was found on July 3, buried ten feet underground near a building on the grounds of Le Sautou Château, at Donchery, near Sedan, in France. The murderers were Michel Fourniret and his wife, Monique. The pair had convinced the girl to come with them, and then abused and strangled her. Michel Fourniret, under questioning, admitted to committing eight other murders as well, and was suspected of a ninth. Since several of the victims were French nationals, once the Belgian examining magistrate completes his work on the Brichet case, it would be the turn of the the French justice system to investigate this serial killer.

On a far happier note, 2004 began with a blessed event in the royal family, the birth of a baby girl—Princess Louise—to Prince Laurent, the younger son of King Albert II and Queen Paola, and Princess Claire.

Israel and the Middle East

Belgium's official position, like that of the EU, was that there should be a negotiated two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. And like the great majority of the other EU states, Belgium's voting record in the UN was predictably pro-Palestinian.

While Belgium had balanced this stance with good bilateral ties with Israel for some time, the years 2002 and 2003 had been catastrophic for Belgian-Israeli relations. The reason was the ongoing legal struggle to have Ariel Sharon and other Israeli nationals tried for alleged war crimes under Belgium's so-called law of universal jurisdiction that made possible prosecutions in Belgium for acts done anywhere in the world. It was not until August 5, 2003, that the law was changed to require some link of the accused or of the crime to Belgium in order for universal jurisdiction to apply, thus putting an end to the Sharon prosecution (see AJYB 2004, pp. 329–30).

Foreign Minister Michel sought to mend fences with a visit to Israel in February 2004. After holding talks with Israeli leaders, Michel issued a public statement regretting the legal steps against Sharon. He called the universal-jurisdiction law “the cause of misunderstandings that have been most prejudicial to the relations between our countries.” Apologizing, Michel declared that “we have turned the page, and I return to my country firmly convinced that we can now resume a fruitful and constructive dialogue with our Israeli friends.” Israeli foreign minister Silvan Shalom paid a return visit to Belgium in December, and met with Prime Minister Verhofstadt and the new foreign minister, Karel De Gucht. The two ministers agreed on a new bilateral customs agreement.

Trade between Belgium and Israel continued to grow. In 2004, Israeli exports to Belgium were worth almost \$3 billion, and Belgian exports to Israel a little over \$4 billion, both higher than in 2003. By far the largest single item of trade on both sides was diamonds. Israel was the 15th most important supplier of goods and services to Israel, and the 13th biggest customer for Belgian goods and services. The Flemish Region, far more highly industrialized than the Walloon Region, accounted for over 94 per cent of Belgian exports to Israel.

Anti-Semitism and Extremism

Brussels hosted an EU seminar on February 18 about the resurgence of anti-Semitism. Among the speakers were German foreign minister Joschka Fischer, World Jewish Congress president Edgar Bronfman, Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel, and European Commission president Romano Prodi.

The choice of a Belgian site for the meeting was ironically on target: 2004 was studded with a host of anti-Semitic incidents in the country. Most took the form of anti-Semitic graffiti, but several were far more se-

rious. The first to receive national publicity occurred on January 28, at a qualifying match for the European soccer championship between Belgium and Israel that took place indoors in Hasselt. About a dozen people in the bleachers, some painted in Hamas colors and carrying Hamas and other terrorist organizations' banners, hurled insults and abuse at the Israeli players throughout the match, shouting (in Dutch) "Let's slit the Jews throats," "Hamas, Hamas," and "Gas all the Jews." The city brought charges against these individuals, and one Muslim member of the Belgian soccer team was suspended.

On February 15, a Jew from Antwerp was riding on the Antwerp-Charleroi train. When it stopped in Brussels South Station, he took the opportunity to pray. A man who looked about 20 years old came up, placed a knife under his throat, and asked if he was Jewish. Getting no reply, the assailant called him a "dirty Jew" and threatened: "The next time I see you on the train, I'll have your hide and I'll kill you." None of the other passengers interfered, and the assailant got off the train.

On April 1, the prime minister's office and several newspapers received e-mail messages allegedly from Hamas, threatening attacks on Jews, shops, and buses in Antwerp, in retaliation for Israeli actions against Palestinians. One paper reported that a name on the e-mail it got was that of a man suspected of involvement in the Madrid train bombing of March 11. That same month, in a decision that spoke volumes about the toleration for anti-Semitism among political progressives, the Jewish Secular Community Center (CCLJ), a left-wing Jewish group that sought reconciliation between Jews and Muslims, announced that it would not participate in a demonstration organized by a left-wing umbrella organization because the Jews would not be allowed to carry placards denouncing anti-Semitism.

On June 24, around 8:30 p.m., five youths apparently of foreign origin stood in front of a yeshiva in Wilrijk and hurled anti-Semitic insults at the students inside. A dozen of the latter, exasperated by the situation, came out of the yeshiva and headed for the youths, who ran away. About 10:30 p.m. two of the yeshiva students came out on the street and began talking with two other friends. Suddenly, they found themselves face to face with about 15 North African youths who had been hiding up the street. The gang was armed with iron bars, tennis racquets, and blades. They chased the four students, setting upon them out of the blue without any provocation or exchange of words. In the course of the chase the assailants managed to grab one of the boys, 16-year-old Noach Schmahl,

the son of a Dutch rabbi, beat him about the head with the iron bars, and stab him in the back. The victim was hospitalized with a punctured lung; the assailants got away. This incident seems to have set off a series of copycat crimes. Until the end of October, Jewish youths were periodically threatened and assaulted without provocation in downtown Antwerp and Wilrijk.

Alarm bells went off in government circles. On June 26, two days after the Wilrijk stabbing, Belgian officials and representatives of all the political parties attended a meeting denouncing such acts, held at the Jewish Martyrs' Monument in Brussels. Two days later, the mayor of Antwerp attended a rally to combat anti-Semitism in his city and pledged that the police would give the problem top priority. Prime Minister Verhofstadt met with Jewish leaders on June 30, and the next day told Parliament: "Every anti-Semitic aggression is not only directed against the physical persons but also against the fundamental values of our country." In his annual address on National Day, July 21, King Albert II concluded his remarks as follows: "Let us take an uncompromising stance on all acts of racism, anti-Semitism, and xenophobia, wherever they come from. It is in that spirit that the Queen and I hope to continue serving you for many years to come."

That month, the federal government adopted ten measures to counter hate crimes, including provisions for preventive detention, directions to prosecutors to follow through aggressively on all suspected cases, and steps to upgrade security at synagogues and other Jewish institutions. In addition, two federal ministries took action. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs delegated Ambassador Jan Deboutte, one of its senior diplomats, to coordinate measures to fight anti-Semitism, and the Ministry for Social Integration announced the creation of a "watchdog unit" to monitor trends.

The national revulsion against group hatred seemed to carry over to the Belgian judicial system. On April 21, the Court of Appeal in Ghent ruled that the Vlaams Blok—the xenophobic but not overtly anti-Semitic Flemish far-right party—was in violation of the antiracism laws because of its "permanent incitement to segregation and racism." Many observers, and not just on the extreme right, suspected that the government's prosecution of the case at least partly reflected a concerted effort to remove the political threat posed by the antiestablishment party. The Supreme Court upheld the decision on November 9. Five days later the Vlaams Blok officially disbanded and its leaders created a new party, Vlaams Belang (Flemish Interest). At the inaugural event for the new entity, one

leader uttered veiled threats against the prosecutors and judges involved in banning its predecessor party.

Holocaust-Related Issues

In 2003, the government called upon the Center for Historical Research and Documentation on War and Contemporary Society, a major Belgian archive on the World War II era, to establish “the facts and possible responsibilities of the Belgian authorities in the persecution and deportation of the Jews of Belgium” The center organized a research team in 2004, which, in September, began its investigations.

A royal decree on July 31, drafted and approved by the government, extended by one year from September 9, 2004, the life of Belgium’s National Commission for Restitution. Originally set up in December 2001, the commission was charged with arranging reparations for members of Belgium’s Jewish community whose property was stolen or left behind during World War II, and their heirs. Almost 6,000 individual claims, twice the original estimate, had been made by the original filing deadline of September 9, 2003, and in the 12 months since, 1,013 dossiers were settled, 79.3 percent of them in favor of the claimant. The extension would provide more time to wrap up the processing of claims. Priority was to go to the roughly 3,000 claimants over age 70. Once all the valid claims are satisfied, the remaining money allocated for restitution would be transferred to a newly created Belgian Judaism Foundation, administered by representatives of Belgian Jewry, for distribution to Jewish social and cultural programs and to combat racism and bigotry.

The primary Holocaust archive in Belgium was the Jewish Museum of Deportation and Resistance, located in Mechelen/Malines, on the site of what had been Dossin Barracks, where Belgian Jews and Gypsies were taken to await deportation. In March 2004, the museum completed processing the Register of Antwerp’s Jewish Citizens, a mammoth task that involved indexing 10,012 names and 20,024 pictures, and then began work on the 217 binders of the Register of Jewish Residents of Belgium, which contained 40,000 forms. Another project was inventorying and digitizing 4,441 envelopes of personal documents taken from detainees at Dossin Barracks, which had been transferred to the museum by the War Victims Department in 2003. Meanwhile, the Finance Ministry deposited with the museum the unclaimed contents of bank vaults that had belonged to Jewish families, and the Interior Ministry gave the museum permission to digitize the Immigration Police’s files on Jews and Gypsies who were deported from Belgium.

The museum's holdings were further enriched in the course of the year by gifts of many personal documents and mementos from survivors. Some 900 documents from private individuals were catalogued, digitized, and processed for preservation in 2004. Also, the museum was given permission to make digital copies of the large Brachfeld collection, containing copies of files submitted to the State of Israel for awarding the title of "Righteous Gentile." They contained invaluable information about Belgians who helped to hide Jews from the Nazis, including 400 videotapes of interviews with them.

The chairman of the Forum of Jewish Organizations, which represented many Jewish groups in the Flemish Region, accompanied King Albert II and Prime Minister Verhofstadt to Poland on January 27 for the ceremony marking the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi camps and the end of World War II that the Polish government hosted at Auschwitz-Birkenau. For those who were not there, the Forum later organized a short gathering at the Jewish Monument in Antwerp.

On September 5, the Jewish Museum of Deportation and Resistance and the Forum of Jewish Organizations commemorated 60 years since the liberation of Dossin Barracks by gathering as many former inmates as possible, along with their families, for a special ceremony. A large number of Dutch-speaking political authorities attended, as well as an impressive audience. Another 60-year commemoration occurred earlier, on June 1, when Prof. Georges Schneck, a former member of the resistance and honorary president of the Central Consistory of Belgium, participated in the ecumenical ceremony at the Mardasson Memorial in Bastogne, held to recall the famous Battle of the Bulge. Although the battle actually took place in December 1944, the ceremony was held in June so that many American veterans, in Europe to mark 60 years since D-Day, might attend. Yet another 60th was commemorated in September, that of the liberation of Brussels. The first liberators were members of the Piron Brigade, which included a number of Jews.

JEWISH COMMUNITY

Communal Affairs

The Central Consistory of Belgium was the officially recognized body representing Belgian Jewry, acting for the community in contacts with the government, foreign Jewish communities, and other religious and ethnic groups. In 2004 much of its time was devoted to discussions with gov-

ernment officials at various levels on the need to provide security from anti-Semitic violence, and to intergroup dialogue that might calm tensions. The president of the Consistory gave presentations at a number of meetings of international Jewish bodies.

The CCOJB (Coordinating Committee of Jewish Organizations of Belgium) was the umbrella group for 40 Jewish organizations in Belgium, primarily in the francophone parts of the country. It was a member of the World Jewish Congress and the European Jewish Congress. Like the Consistory, it combated anti-Semitism and maintained regular contact with the relevant authorities, organized events commemorating the Holocaust, and maintained relations with other religious bodies in the hope of promoting tolerance and mutual respect.

A roughly equivalent function in the Antwerp area was provided by the Forum of Jewish Organizations (Forum der Joodse Organisaties), whose involvement in various aspects of Holocaust commemoration is detailed above. Since a disproportionate number of anti-Semitic incidents took place in or near Antwerp, the Forum was heavily involved in fighting racism and anti-Semitism throughout the year. Its members participated in TV debates and gave newspaper interviews, took part in public discussions, and participated in interreligious meetings.

Coordinating social welfare services in the Jewish community was the Brussels-based Central Administration of Jewish Welfare Organizations (Centrale des Oeuvres social juives), which provided funds for the various Jewish institutions that dealt with the needy. In the light of the deteriorating economic situation in Belgium and in Europe as a whole, applications for aid were becoming more numerous. The primary recipient of its funding was the Jewish Social Service Office, which marked its 60th anniversary in 2004 (its original beneficiaries had been Holocaust survivors). The office maintained an old-age home, Jewish schools and cultural centers, athletic facilities, a summer camp, and an educational loan fund. Its personnel also paid visits to people living alone and helped the incapacitated with household chores.

Radio Judaica, the only Jewish radio station in Belgium, had been the first to operate in Europe, beginning in 1980. It could be heard in Antwerp, Brussels, and Liège. The station's impact was significant, as it provided a positive image of the Jewish community to the many non-Jewish listeners, served as source of information about developments in Israel, alerted people to anti-Semitic incidents, and functioned as the voice of the Belgian Jewish community. The station was a project of the Ben-Gurion Circle, founded in 1977 to counteract anti-

Israel propaganda. Among its 2004 activities were programs on anti-Semitism, Israeli business opportunities, and Jewish refugees from Arab countries.

There were also other pro-Israel groups in Belgium. The Center for Information and Documentation (CID), for example, sent out about ten e-mail bulletins a week about Israel and the Middle East to more than 1,000 subscribers. It also sponsored lectures and exhibits about Israel, and concerts by visiting Israeli musicians. WIZO (Women's International Zionist Organization) performed the dual roles of uniting Jewish women through the bonds of friendship, and raising money to support its institutions in Israel.

Taking a rather different tack was the Jewish Secular Community Center (CCLJ), which, as part of its humanistic rather than theistic understanding of Jewish culture, promoted the views of the Israeli peace camp and criticized Israeli actions it deemed unjust. The organization ran non-religious celebrations of Jewish holidays and rites of passage, provided Jewish education in secular form, and sought to combat the influence of the extreme right on Belgian life.

Education

There were three Jewish schools in Brussels, all accredited by the state. The largest, Ganenou Athenaeum, with both primary and secondary programs, was modeled on Israeli secular schools, and its degree was recognized by Israel's Education Ministry. Its students were required to master both the official Belgian state curriculum and a program of Jewish studies that, while not Orthodox, stressed the celebration of Jewish holidays, Zionism, and a positive Jewish identity in a spirit of tolerance.

Maimonides Athenaeum, the next largest, was Orthodox and maintained programs from infant daycare through the end of secondary school. It was founded in 1947 to service the educational needs of children of Holocaust survivors. Although most of the students now did not come from Orthodox homes, the curriculum of Jewish studies was highly traditional as well as Zionist. Beth Aviv, the smallest and most ideologically liberal school, had only a kindergarten and primary school.

The three institutions differed in their admission standards. Maimonides would not accept children from mixed-faith marriages where the mother was not Jewish, or those with a mother converted by a non-Orthodox rabbi; Ganenou would accept the latter but not the former. Beth Aviv accepted both categories, but if graduates with a non-Jewish

mother wanted to continue at the Ganenou secondary school, they would first have to convert to Judaism.

Antwerp, with its large Orthodox presence, had a quite different educational profile. Fully 90 percent of Jewish children in the city attended Jewish schools, all of which were Orthodox. The two largest were Tachkemoni, run by the Shomre Hadass community, and Yesode Hatorah, under the auspices of the stricter Machsike Hadass, which maintained separate sections for boys and girls. Tachkemoni was known for its advanced training in Hebrew language that enabled its graduates to proceed directly to higher educational institutions in Israel with no need for special language instruction. A smaller school, Yavne, was Modern Orthodox and Zionist. All three of these schools were accredited by the government. In addition, several Hasidic communities had their own small private schools, none of which was accredited and some of which offered only religious studies.

Adult Jewish education was provided by the Jewish Studies Institute, which operated as part of Brussels Free University. In addition to maintaining a two-year academic program leading to a degree, the institute sponsored popular classes and lectures open to the general public. The 2004 lecture topics included a comparison of the views of Martin Buber and Emmanuel Lévinas about Judaism; love, sexuality and procreation in the Jewish tradition; the “founding myths” of anti-Semitism; the first-century confrontation between the Jewish philosopher Philo and Emperor Caligula; and the contemporary resurgence of Hasidism. The other Belgian universities also offered programs in Jewish studies.

Intergroup Relations

On January 14, the Consistory paid tribute to the late Abbot Jean-Marie Schoefs in a special ceremony. Abbot Schoefs spearheaded the Jewish-Christian dialogue in Belgium following the proclamation of the *Nostra Aetate* encyclical by Pope John XXIII in 1965. Sister Marie-Hélène Fournier, of Notre Dame de Sion, passed away on March 9. Well known for her commitment to Jewish-Christian rapprochement, she, together with Abbot Schoefs, Dean Omer Hamels, and Father Georges Passelecq (all three now deceased), were the Christian founders of the *Organe de Concertation entre Juifs et Chrétiens* (OCJB), which regularly brought together Jewish, Roman Catholic, and Protestant leaders for consultations on common concerns.

Mel Gibson's controversial film, *The Passion of the Christ*, was re-

leased in Belgium on April 7, in the middle of Passover and a few days before Easter Sunday. The movie had already been previewed by journalists and religious leaders. The Jewish community was virtually unanimous in condemning it as violently anti-Semitic. At least one leading Catholic cleric, Msgr. Joseph De Kesel, the auxiliary bishop of Brussels, agreed; he found the violence “absurd.” There were several lively public debates about the film, including one sponsored by the Institute of Jewish Audiovisual Memory on September 21 between Msgr. André Leonard, bishop of Namur, and Prof. Thomas Gergely, director of the Jewish Studies Institute. The controversy was surely one factor in making the movie a great commercial success in Belgium.

An important interfaith conference took place on April 14 at the German embassy in Brussels under the aegis of the embassy, the Consistory’s Commission for Pluralist Relations, the Catholic National Commission for Relations with Judaism, and the Flemish Working Group for Relations with Judaism (VKPB). The featured speaker was Sir Sigmund Sternberg, who discussed how to promote dialogue between religions and combat anti-Semitism in Belgium.

The Sisters of Zion, a tiny Catholic group dedicated to developing good relations with the Jewish people, continued its work, even though membership fell from three to two in 2004. The sisters met with parishes, priests, parents, and catechists eager to understand the Jewish roots of their Christian faith, and wrote articles about Judaism for various magazines. The group maintained membership in several Jewish-sponsored organizations, one sister participated in the Catholic National Commission for Relations with Jewry, and another served on the CID board of directors.

Also involved in intergroup work was the European Jewish Information Center (CEJI), headquartered in Brussels. It sought to adapt the Classroom of Difference program, initiated in the U.S. by the Anti-Defamation League, to the Belgian educational system. The program trained student “leaders” in individual schools to help create an atmosphere of tolerance and mutual understanding between students of different religious and ethnic backgrounds. Work was begun in 2004 on a new manual for coordinators, and inquiries were made to government officials about the possible involvement of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Integration in the program.

Another CEJI initiative was the development of new teaching tools about anti-Semitism. With support from the Belgian Foreign Ministry, a roundtable for educators on the subject took place in December, con-

ducted both in Dutch and French. Another roundtable was scheduled for January 2005, followed by a projected trip to Yad Vashem in April 2005.

Culture

In April, the Jewish Museum of Belgium finally moved into its impressive new home at the heart of the Sablon neighborhood, with its museums, art galleries, and antique shops. The first exhibition there, “Déballage” (Taking off the Wraps), by the Liège artist Jacques Charlier, opened officially on May 4. The museum’s holdings primarily reflected the lives and history of Belgium’s Jews since the eighteenth century. It held works by some 250 Jewish artists, and a photograph and slide library with some 20,000 items that depicted scenes from Jewish life in Belgium and Israel. The museum also organized educational activities including interactive guided tours of its exhibitions, story hours, workshops, talks, and walks around town on specific themes. Four specialized libraries—general and reference, Yiddish, Jewish art, and Judaism in Belgium—with total holdings of close to 25,000 publications, were open to the public. Other libraries were for the time being open only to researchers.

Another important cultural institution, the Contemporary Memory Foundation, was created in 1994 to make the Jews’ contributions to the Belgian nation during the twentieth century better known. It did this through the collection of documents and recorded interviews, sponsorship of research, and dissemination of the research findings to the public through an annual bulletin, *Les Cahiers de la Mémoire contemporaine*. It was also in the process of constructing a Web site.

The foundation set up a traveling exhibition in late 2003 that continued to be presented around the country in 2004, called “Places of Memory.” It depicted the lives of young Belgian Jews in several communities during the twentieth century, covering such topics as school, work, youth movements, summer camps, and hiding out during the Holocaust. The foundation published several books in 2004, including *Les curateurs du ghetto: L’Association des Juifs en Belgique sous l’occupation nazie*, a collection of essays about the Association of Jews in Belgium under the Nazi occupation, and *Orientalisme et études juives à la fin du XIXe siècle: Le manuscrit d’Emile Ouverleaux* by Jean-Philippe Schreiber and Philippe Pierret, on late-nineteenth-century Orientalism and Jewish studies. Among the research projects underway were a study of Jewish children’s schooling during the war, especially the effects of the occupying force’s

order of December 1941 banning Jewish children from public schools, and the clandestine migration of Belgian Jewish Holocaust survivors to Palestine between the end of World War II and the proclamation of the State of Israel in 1948.

The Institute of Jewish Audiovisual Memory (IJAM) began 2004 in major financial difficulty, and two full-time staff members had to be let go on April 30. But the efforts of volunteers and the appointment of a new board of directors enabled the institute to maintain its programs. It held a series of lectures and discussions running from January through March on cultural relations between Belgium and Europe's German-speaking countries, organized in cooperation with the Goethe Institute, the French-speaking Catholic University of Louvain, the Dutch-speaking Catholic University of Leuven, and Debelux (Germany-Belgium-Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce).

The IJAM screened Jewish-themed films throughout the year. It also chose the Israeli films to be shown the Mediterranean Film Festival held at the Botanique Cultural Center on December 2–11, and decided which one of them would be the topic of a special discussion—*Tehora* (Purity) by Anat Zuria, which dealt with the ritual immersion of women in Jewish tradition. Professor Liliane Vana of the Sorbonne, an expert on women and Jewish law, conducted the session.

GEORGES SCHNEK

The Netherlands

National Affairs

MURDER

For the Netherlands, 2004 was “the year of terror and fear,” according to *NRC Handelsblad*, the country’s least sensationalist daily. On November 2, on a quiet street in Amsterdam, a 26-year-old man identified by the police only as “Mohammed B.” (the surname was later determined to be Bouyeri) fired several shots at moviemaker and publicist Theo van Gogh. He then stabbed the victim and used the knife to pin a letter to the dead body. The letter’s contents tied the murder to van Gogh’s views on Islam, and threatened the lives of several politicians. In addition—though this received scant mention in the media and the political arena—it threatened Jews.

Van Gogh had written a regular column in which he insulted many groups (including Jews), often in coarse language. On August 29, about two months before the murder, Dutch television broadcast van Gogh’s film *Submission-I*, an attack on Islamic repression of women that seemed calculated to offend, featuring nude women with texts from the Koran written on their bodies. Van Gogh produced the film along with a member of parliament from the liberal VVD party, Ayaan Hirsi Ali—a Somali-born woman who was waging her own personal crusade against Islamic fundamentalism. Hirsi Ali was one of those threatened in the murder letter. *

This was the second recent politically motivated murder, coming just two and a half years after right-wing populist politician Pim Fortuyn was assassinated by a left-wing environmental activist (see AJYB 2003, p. 426), the first political assassination in the country since 1672. The Dutch people’s image of their nation as a place of tolerance and freedom of speech, cultivated for centuries and rattled by the Fortuyn murder, was replaced, after van Gogh’s killing, by a state of panic and identity crisis. But the fact that this time the deed was done by a Muslim fundamentalist led many to say, in hindsight, that they had seen it coming.

IMMIGRATION AND DEMOGRAPHY

For centuries, small immigrant groups had been absorbed rather easily by simply ignoring cultural differences in the hope that they would disappear—which, generally, they did. Until well into the twentieth century, Jews constituted the only distinguishable minority group—and a small, highly integrated one, at that. But since the 1970s, the number of non-Western immigrants rose some 1,000 percent to 1.6 million, constituting 10 percent of the total population. Most were men who had been recruited for menial labor, from poor rural areas in Turkey and Morocco. Both Dutch society and the immigrants themselves assumed their stay to be a “work-and-go” arrangement, and neither made any attempt at absorption.

Roughly one million of the immigrants were Muslims; instead of going back home, most imported wives from their home countries. Many perceived Holland’s permissive society as a moral threat to their families. By 2004, the majority lived in poor inner-city neighborhoods, and a relatively high percentage was unemployed. While children were better educated than their parents, they tended to fall behind in the Dutch school system. Those from traditional homes with authoritarian fathers had difficulty adjusting to an environment that did not appear to have any rules—and yet did. The policy of ignoring cultural differences, or dubbing them “an enrichment” regardless of how some of these youngsters behaved, became increasingly difficult to sustain.

When, particularly after 9/11, the realization finally struck that these Muslims were here to stay, tensions rose, and in 2002 Pim Fortuyn seemed poised to achieve a political landslide by, in the words of his followers, “saying what we think.” Fortuyn argued that the country was “full up,” called Islam a “retarded culture,” and sought a complete halt to immigration. Public opinion swung radically to making no allowances at all for immigrants and to demand total assimilation. When Fortuyn was assassinated, the Dutch were greatly relieved that the murderer was a left-wing activist born and bred in the Netherlands, rather than a Muslim. But in 2004, the “pressure cooker” (a term that figured with great regularity in the media) finally burst with the murder of van Gogh.

The rate of Dutch population growth had been declining since 2000, and in 2004 was down to a rise of “only” 34,000, the lowest growth rate since 1920 and half that of 2003. But the Netherlands was still the most densely populated European country, with some 16.3 million inhabitants sharing 13,000 square miles. (As a basis for comparison, Maryland, the

42nd largest American state, is only about 690 square miles smaller, but has a population of only 5.5 million.)

For the first time in 20 years, the number of people leaving the country (a record 112,000) was greater than the number of immigrants (90,000, 14 percent less than the year before). This was due partly to a slowing economy, but also to stricter immigration laws. Roughly 3,900 arrived from Turkey, 2,800 less than in 2003, and Moroccan immigration, estimated at 2,900, was down by about 2,000 from the previous year. Family reunion and the “importation” of spouses remained the main motives for immigration. Despite the immigration decline, a much higher birthrate (eight times the overall rate) ensured the continuing growth of the percentage of non-Western inhabitants.

POLITICS AND SOCIETY

Politically, the atmosphere was grim, the tensions over immigration heightened by political and financial scandal, as well as budget cuts that triggered strikes and social unrest. Two years after the murder of their leader, Pim Fortuyn’s followers were still rudderless, with LPF (List Pim Fortuyn) members of parliament berating each other in their late leader’s hyperbolic language, one discredited parliamentarian sending fake Islamic death threats to himself and another party member. By the end of 2004, the LPF’s following had dwindled to zero, but Fortuyn’s ideas were very much alive.

The up-and-coming man of 2004 was Geert Wilders. A member of parliament for the ruling liberal VVD, Wilders took up the right-wing banner and, in opposition to his party’s declared policy, rabidly opposed Turkey’s entry into the European Union on the grounds that this would “increase integration problems.” Wilders proposed stricter immigration laws and a five-year moratorium on allowing entry for the purpose of family reunification. In September, his party expelled him because of his dissident views. Wilders, keeping his parliamentary seat, founded his own one-man party, Group Wilders. Two weeks later, he proposed a law allowing the government to close down mosques suspected of inciting hatred. By the end of the year, opinion polls showed that if elections were held then, Group Wilders would win 28 seats in the 150-member chamber—more than the number held by the VVD, the government party that expelled him. Even before the murder of van Gogh, Wilders received death threats because of his anti-Islamic statements. And he was not the only one.

The general atmosphere was grim, with widespread public loss of confidence in the local and national authorities. A review of the year's events gives a sense of the situation.

On January 9, the minister of immigration announced that unsuccessful asylum seekers would be "housed in departure centers." On January 13, a 16-year-old Turkish student shot and killed the deputy head of his school in The Hague, prompting Prime Minister Jan Pieter Balkenende to warn of "a spiral of increasing violence." Three days later, (Jewish) Labor alderman Rob Oudkerk resigned from the Amsterdam City Council after the daily *Parool* reported that he admitted to using cocaine, surfing pornographic Web sites, and visiting heroin-addicted prostitutes. That same day, the nation's Temporary Committee on Research for Integration Policy reported its finding that the absorption of many immigrants had "succeeded or partially succeeded"; but this assertion was greeted with wall-to-wall skepticism. On January 23, a confused former student stabbed a teacher at a school for children with hearing, speech, and language difficulties. The teacher barely survived.

Violence and threats continued. In February, Koos Plooy, the public prosecutor of Amsterdam responsible for fighting organized crime, requested a transfer after months of living under constant police protection because of repeated death threats. In March, after terror attacks in Spain and elsewhere, the government announced a national warning system for terror threats and a change in the law to allow the introduction of evidence from the national intelligence service in court cases. In April, a female lawyer spotted VVD leader Jozias Van Aartsen near the government buildings in The Hague and ran him down in her car, as she later said, "on an impulse." Later that month the cabinet announced compulsory exams for immigrants to demonstrate their integration into Dutch society, tough measures against illegal immigrants, and restrictions on renting out apartments in the poor neighborhoods of the four big cities to deprived immigrants. The head of the national intelligence service warned against a "considerable and conceivable" threat of Islamic terrorism in the country.

In July, three rappers were arrested for lyrics threatening Ayaan Hirsi Ali, the Somali-born VVD member of parliament, but the court released them. Later that month, police in Nijmegen arrested two men, one Lebanese and the other Syrian, suspected of planning an attack on the yearly national four-day hike. They were released due to lack of evidence. In August, the controversial film by van Gogh and Hirsi Ali, *Submission-1*, was broadcast.

In September, police raided the home of a Moroccan family in Utrecht, looking for explosives. Two men and a woman were arrested but later released, and the raid was widely criticized. On September 30, a 34-year-old Moroccan translator working for the national intelligence service was arrested for leaking state secrets. Investigators found that he was part of a group possibly linked to the terrorist attacks in Spain. The group included Mohammed B., who would later murder van Gogh, but at the time authorities considered him a minor player and released him.

In October, the Amsterdam prosecutor, Joost Tonino, resigned after a taxi driver picked up a (crashed) computer containing confidential information that Tonino had put out with the garbage, and handed it over to a well-known crime reporter. Later that month, for the first time in Dutch history, a premier league soccer match was aborted after fans chanted hate slogans. Also in October, a couple fled from its home in the Amsterdam Diamant neighborhood after months of abuse from Moroccan-born youngsters. After some procrastination, Mayor Job Cohen imposed an order on the troublemaking boys restricting their movements.

On November 2, Theo van Gogh was murdered and, after a shoot-out in a nearby park, police arrested Mohammed B. Two days later, the letter pinned to the body was made public, and Ayaan Hirsi Ali, threatened in the letter, went into hiding. On November 8, an Islamic primary school in Eindhoven was severely damaged in a bomb attack, and arson was attempted on two mosques in Rotterdam and two churches, one in Utrecht and the other in Amersfoort. Within the next few days an Islamic primary school in the village of Uden was burned down, a church in Boxmeer was torched, and slogans with anti-Muslim content as well as others extolling the murder of van Gogh were found on walls.

National television carried live coverage of what could only be described as war scenes in the streets of The Hague on November 10, as an apartment was taken by storm. Tanks were ordered in after two suspected terrorists threw a hand grenade at the police, wounding three. They were eventually arrested, one in his underwear, on suspicion of plotting to murder members of parliament. A few days later a mosque in Helden was destroyed by fire.

There was considerable fallout from the van Gogh assassination. A parliamentary debate on November 12 was the scene of highly critical remarks about the effectiveness of the national intelligence service. Four days later a committee set up to evaluate the service concluded that it

lacked sufficient funds and manpower to ensure security. The cabinet pledged extra funds (almost \$170 million) to fight terrorism, plus 500 additional employees for the national intelligence service. On November 29, Ayaan Hirsi Ali announced from her hiding place that she was at work on a follow-up to *Submission-I*.

In December, the national police arrested a Dutch businessman, "Frans van A.," for supplying Saddam Hussein with raw materials for chemical weapons and thus being an accomplice in genocide. But the man later turned out to be an informer on the payroll of the national intelligence service.

Despite these stresses, most of the Dutch people, while concerned, did not seem to feel that their daily lives were affected (except possibly when watching the news). One opinion poll found that the Dutch were greatly worried about criminality, health, norms and values, foreigners, security in general, and terrorism in particular. Asked to grade the quality of their society on a scale of one to ten, they collectively rated it a five. (Five years earlier, when the last such poll was taken, it had been graded a seven.) Yet most were satisfied with their lives—50 percent were "satisfied," 28 percent "very satisfied," and 3 percent "exceptionally satisfied."

Other news that kept the country occupied included the deaths of Queen Beatrix's elderly parents—Juliana, born in 1909, in March, and Bernhard, born in 1911, in December. There was the controversial marriage in April of Prince Johan Friso to a woman previously associated with assassinated drug lord Klaas Bruinsma. Since the government refused permission for the marriage, Johan Friso lost all rights to the throne. The royal family remained quite popular in the Netherlands, and equally so within the Jewish community.

The Dutch involvement in Iraq made headlines with the trial, in January, of "Erik O.," a sergeant-major who had shot an Iraqi citizen, and his subsequent acquittal. In May came the first Dutch casualty in Iraq, and the second followed in August. The government decided, in November, to go along with the widespread international opposition to the war and to withdraw the 1,350 Dutch troops stationed in southern Iraq.

Arjan Erkel, a member of Doctors Without Borders, was released by his Chechen kidnappers in April after 20 months of captivity, in return for a ransom of a million euros. Controversy erupted in June when the minister of foreign affairs, who put up the ransom money, claimed it was a loan that had to be paid back, while Doctors Without Borders considered it a gift.

In June, 39.1 percent of the Dutch people voted in elections for the European Parliament, lower than the 44.2 percent overall figure for the 25 EU member states.

IMPLICATIONS FOR JEWS

Ironically, Jews, some of whom had been targets of hooliganism on the part of young Moroccans (see below, p. 373), were affected by the anti-immigrant backlash. This was due partly to oversight and partly to a “political correctness” that did not want to appear to be discriminating against Muslims.

A complicated system requiring people from non-Western countries (the “M” word was not mentioned), even those born in the Netherlands and possessing Dutch nationality, to take obligatory (and expensive) integration tests was applied indiscriminately to include Israelis. Indeed, ordinary Dutch Jews with one foreign parent or grandparent were categorized as “second generation immigrants.” Furthermore, observant Dutch Jews unable to find suitable marriage partners in Holland’s small community were hindered by strict rules against importing foreign spouses. Calls to close down fundamentalist Islamic schools, which were thought to hinder integration, also threatened the two Jewish day schools. Teachers of Jewish studies who failed a Dutch language test were banned from teaching, along with Arab teachers of Islam. Government funding for “education in non-Western living languages” was stopped, including not only Arabic, but also modern Hebrew.

Ayaan Hirsi Ali campaigned against the circumcision of boys, having in mind her own Muslim community, which accounted for the vast majority of the 15,000 boys circumcised yearly in the country. Yet the Jewish practice of circumcision was also threatened. “Hirsi Ali has taken her anti-religious crusade a step too far,” said Ronny Naftaniel, an official of the Netherlands Central Jewish Organization. After considerable negotiation, Hirsi Ali, in an interview with the *Nieuw Israelitische Weekblad*, withdrew her initiative, explaining that she did not want to drive male circumcision underground. Meanwhile, hospital circumcisions had been removed from the nation health insurance package.

In addition, popular antagonism toward groups seen as “different” created a dangerous climate for Jews, and the community, almost exclusively Holocaust survivors and their descendants, felt less secure. In the words of Ruben Vis, secretary of the Central Jewish Organization: “The secret of good democracy is not just that the majority decides; it should

allow minorities to enjoy life as well. One minority that has been living here for four centuries is finding life increasingly less enjoyable here.”

Israel and the Middle East

Dutch relations with Israel continued much as before, apart from the case against the Israeli security fence (or “wall,” depending on who was reporting) before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague. The UN General Assembly had requested the court’s opinion in December 2003; strictly speaking, the decision was advisory and not legally binding. Hearings before the ICJ started on February 23, 2004, and lasted two weeks. The media were out in full force throughout, and public discussion raged. The Dutch generally opposed the fence, and particularly its route, which, in many places, ran outside the 1967 Green Line. The ICJ verdict, reached in July, was that those parts of the fence running outside the Green Line were illegal and should be dismantled.

Jewish organizations in the country largely agreed with the position of the Israeli government that this was not a matter for the ICJ and that the court was being misused for political purposes. Even those who disagreed with the fence or with its route saw politics behind the absence of any discussion of the Palestinian terror campaign that led to the construction of the fence in the first place. Ruben Vis noted: “Like most other lawyers, I think this case should not be heard in The Hague. I also fear the ‘Durban effect’: if you target Israel alone in human rights matters, the effect is anti-Semitic.”

Neither Israel nor the U.S. sent representatives to the proceedings. Richard Heidemann, an American lawyer and honorary president of B’nai B’rith International, held “shadow” hearings elsewhere in the city, attracting many spectators, including two members of the European Parliament, Charles Kinnock of Great Britain and Anne André-Léonard of Belgium. The Heidemann “court” heard testimony from 18 Israelis who had lost family members in terror attacks. Zaka, the Israeli organization of volunteers who recover dead bodies after terror attacks, exhibited the wreckage of a Jerusalem number 19 bus in front of the ICJ courtroom. A suicide bomber had killed 11 Israelis in this bus in January, and it became the focus for pro-Israel and anti-ICJ demonstrators from Poland, Russia, Italy, France, the UK, Germany, and the U.S.—including two congressmen, Robert Wexler (D., Fla.) and Steve Chabot (R., Ohio). The municipality of The Hague took steps to separate demonstrators for and against the ICJ hearings.

Very few Dutch Jews demonstrated. Greatly outnumbering them were about 1,000 members of Christians for Israel, bused in from remote parts of the country and brandishing photos of Israeli terror victims, despite a ban by the mayor of The Hague, who considered it a “provocation.” The Dutch Jews who did demonstrate were members of Jewish youth organizations, Orthodox rabbis and officials, and some Liberal rabbis.

Anti-Semitism and Extremism

Two reports on anti-Semitism in Europe, including the Netherlands, were published during the same week in 2004, both based on data gathered in 2003. Their conclusions were rather different, since one sought to measure manifestations of anti-Semitism, and the other tried to get at anti-Semitic attitudes.

In 2004, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) held its annual International Conference on Anti-Semitism in Berlin. At the conference, in April, the European Monitoring Center on Racism and Xenophobia released its annual report on racism and xenophobia in the European Union, which noted a sharp rise in anti-Semitic incidents in most European countries, listing the Netherlands, France, Germany, the UK, and Belgium as particularly problematic. (Twenty countries sent government ministers to the conference, but not the Netherlands, whose term as chair had just expired.)

Just days earlier, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) reported the results of its survey of anti-Semitic attitudes in the EU, and concluded that they had declined slightly as compared to 2002. Germany had the highest level of anti-Semitism and the Netherlands the lowest—despite being one of only two countries where anti-Semitic feelings had increased, from 7 to 9 percent. The ADL report was received with considerable skepticism, especially since its claim of declining anti-Semitic sentiment in Belgium and France was seemingly belied by the actual experiences of the Jews living there. (To cite but one example, 16-year-old Noach Schmahl, the son of a Dutch rabbi, and three friends were attacked outside their yeshiva in Antwerp, Belgium, by “about 15 boys of North African descent” with knives and iron bars. Noach, stabbed in the back, had to be hospitalized.)

In the Netherlands, where the government did not keep track of anti-Semitic incidents, the only reliable source of information was the yearly report of CIDI, the Center of Information and Documentation on Israel. It noted 334 incidents for 2003, a decline from the 359 reported the year

before, but that 2002 figure had marked a huge 140-percent increase from 2001. The number of incidents reported to CIDI in the first four months of 2004 appeared to confirm the downward tendency, reported the organization's second-in-command, Hadassah Hirschfeld. Serious incidents (physical violence, threats, and desecrations) had declined by 40 percent as compared to the same time period in 2003, and were of a less violent nature. In one example, a recognizably Jewish man in Amsterdam was pelted with stones and insults. "Though this kind of attack is totally unacceptable, it is as nothing compared to the situation in France, the UK, and Belgium, and particularly in Paris and Antwerp, where some incidents were life-threatening," Hirschfeld wrote.

As had been the case for several years, many anti-Semitic incidents appeared connected to violence in the Middle East, as Israeli government actions were used as pretexts to accuse Jews in general of serious crimes. In addition, Arab satellite broadcasts, widely received in immigrant homes, suggested all sorts of conspiracy theories tying American policies in Iraq to American Jews and to Israel. Somewhat artificially, the CIDI report considered purely anti-Israel manifestations as "political opinions" and did not include them, so that the cry "Sharon murderer" would not count as anti-Semitism, but "Adolf Sharon" would, by equating actions of the Israeli prime minister with those of the Nazis against the Jews.

Despite the statistically positive picture, CIDI noted three negative trends. First, there was a rise in the number verbal or written insults aimed at Jews. Second, the perpetrators were increasingly from the Moroccan sector: 43.5 percent of victims who thought they recognized the attackers said they were "of predominantly North Africa descent" (a euphemism for Moroccans), an increase of 2.5 percent since the previous year. Third, anti-Jewish incidents in and near schools continued to rise steadily, and particularly for schools with many Islamic pupils. Since high birthrates were sure to drive up the percentage of school-age children from Islamic homes, this phenomenon was most worrisome.

Anti-Semitic incidents connected to schools received considerable attention in the Dutch media. One daily quoted the Amsterdam alderman in charge of education to the effect that teachers had complained to him that if they mentioned the Holocaust, "the class gets out of hand. Pupils become extremely noisy, chanting all sorts of things, and the classroom atmosphere becomes threatening. Occasionally, the car tires of the 'offending' teacher were punctured. Teachers also reported very real phone threats, such as, "you'd better watch out, we know where your kid goes

to school.” In one incident in March, reported to CIDI, two 18-year-old girls of North African descent told another pupil of a school in Dordrecht, “Jews are dangerous, it says so in the Koran,” and “America is a very dangerous country because many Jews live there and the American government consists solely of Jews.”

Slogans like “*Hamas, Hamas, all the Jews to the gas*” or “*Joduh, Joduh*” (Je-ews, Je-ews), common at soccer matches (see below), had become so common that the word “Jew” took on a new meaning as a general term of abuse among the young. A survey of 11,000 secondary school teachers commissioned by the Ministry of Education and released in May 2004 found that half the teachers had heard insults about Jews over the previous 12 months (it was statistically unlikely that these were all directed at Jewish pupils), and half also reported that they knew pupils who denied the Holocaust. To be sure, group hatred was even more common against Muslim youngsters: 70 percent of the teachers heard insults directed at Islam.

In early May, several projects were launched to sensitize young Muslims to Jewish sensibilities. In a project funded by the Amsterdam municipality, university students of Moroccan descent taught a series of lessons about World War II and the Holocaust in schools with a high percentage of Islamic pupils. Similarly, Moroccan organizations such as Islam and Citizenship developed programs to highlight the fate of Moroccan soldiers who fought for the Allies in World War II. In one Amsterdam neighborhood during the 2004 commemoration of the war’s end, young people read out the names of Moroccans who lost their lives in battle. The year before, Moroccan boys in this neighborhood had disturbed the traditional two minutes of silence for the dead by chanting “*Joden, die moeten we doden*” (we have to kill Jews).

Some of the more popular Dutch soccer teams—notably the Amsterdam team Ajax—had been dubbed “Jewish” by fans and opponents alike (though Ajax had only one Jewish player in 2003, and none at all thereafter). Fans of opposing teams would shout anti-Jewish slogans (“*Hamas, Hamas, all the Jews to the gas*”) or make hissing (gas) noises, just as racist insults would be hurled at black players. This had become such a frequent occurrence that a new term, “speech choir,” was invented for groups of fans shouting discriminatory insults in unison. The Dutch Soccer Union reported two specific “speech choir” incidents to the CIDI in 2004, and these were passed on to the public prosecutor. The Center for Reporting Football Vandalism provided statistics of the number of arrests made during soccer matches and the charges leveled, without specifying the eth-

nic groups that were targeted. In the season that ended in 2003, 25 people were arrested for “deliberate racial insults,” two for “inciting hatred,” one for “participating in discriminating activities,” and ten for “discrimination.”

The police had to be called in to restore order during soccer matches a few times during 2004. In August, fans of FC Utrecht refused to leave the center of Amsterdam and go to the match against Ajax that they had come for. When they start chanting about Hamas and gas, riot police arrested a large number and removed 68 of them from the city. In October, Belgian Club Brugge fans went around Amsterdam shouting that they were going “Jew hunting” with the help of ADO The Hague fans. A battle broke out in the stadium between these fans and Ajax supporters. A total of 100 arrests were made on the Leidsche Plein and in the stadium. Also in October, for the first time in Dutch soccer history, a referee stopped a match. This happened in Enschede, at a contest between FC Twente and Young Ajax, when Twente fans started chanting the same Hamas line. The public prosecutor fined Twente the equivalent of nearly \$4,000, which the team paid.

JEWISH COMMUNITY

Demography

The most recent demographic survey of the Jews in the Netherlands, published in 2001, was the first to be conducted in 35 years. It estimated the Jewish population at 44,000, or 0.275 of the total Dutch population, which was 16 million in 2001. In 2004, the country’s population had grown to 16.3 million, but the Jewish community, if it was growing at all, was doing so at a much lower rate, and thus constituted a steadily declining percentage of the population. There were no evident changes in Jewish demographic behavior. Dutch Jews tended to postpone marriage longer than the general population; young Jews were highly likely to marry non-Jews (in 2001, the figure was 76 percent of men and 68 percent of women); more Jewish women than other Dutch women remained childless; and Jewish families had an average of 1.5 children (in 2001) as compared to the national average of 1.9. The vast majority of Dutch Jews did not associate with any Jewish organization, and many who identified as Jews described themselves as nonreligious.

In 2004, sociologist Marlene de Vries followed up on the 2001 survey

by investigating nonreligious Jews in greater depth. Her book, *Een blijvende band? Niet-religieuze joden en hun binding aan het jodendom* (A Lasting Bond? Nonreligious Jews and Their Ties to Judaism), was based on interviews with 30 such Jews, all born after World War II. They related memories of a warm yet restrictive Jewish atmosphere when they were growing up; the role of the Holocaust and the State of Israel in their Jewish identification; and their wish simultaneously to participate in the non-Jewish world, to hold on to as much as possible of Jewish tradition, and prepare their children to do the same. They were strongly critical of Orthodox Judaism, and noted how a growing concern with anti-Semitism affected their sense of Jewishness.

Jewish organizations reacted with dismay. Doubting that such loosely affiliated Jews could possibly maintain the Jewish continuity of their families, community leaders made the involvement of nonreligious Jews a priority, and allocated for this purpose a large part of the Holocaust restitution money that was set aside for communal projects.

Communal Affairs

Fearing for the future of the community, Jewish bodies launched outreach programs to attract new members. The Orthodox umbrella organization, NIK, claimed success in expanding its membership to 4,875, a net growth of 31 over the previous year. The largest community within NIK, that of Amsterdam, gained 112 new members, many of them young, which, computed together with deaths and resignations, amounted to a net gain of five persons. The year 2003 had ended with a net loss of 72.

The “Portuguese” Sephardic Congregation, reduced to about 400 members in the whole of the Netherlands, still struggled under the enormous cost of maintaining its historical heritage—most notably the monumental seventeenth-century Esnoga structure in Amsterdam and the Ets Haim Library. The library, housing 30,000 printed works and 500 manuscripts—many of them unique—was placed on UNESCO’s “Memory of the World” list of protected libraries.

As for the non-Orthodox groups, the Liberal Jewish Community of Amsterdam remained stable with 1,633 members. A new player on the religious scene was the Masorti (Conservative) community, launched in the town of Almere in October 2004, with plans to branch out into other Dutch cities. Masorti Netherlands, which joined the World Council of Conservative/Masorti Synagogues and received help from Masorti London, was yet too small to employ its own rabbi.

The survival of the Jewish Organization for Social Work (JMW), which provided help for the poor and disadvantaged, was threatened during 2004. In July, the city of Amsterdam announced, as part of budget cuts for 2005, an end to all funding for JMW since, it claimed, nonsectarian institutions could take over the work. (This was part of the broader effort to stop financial support for “ethnic” services—including Islamic ones—in the city.) Roughly half of all Dutch Jews lived in greater Amsterdam, and about 15 percent of these appealed for help to JMW in the course of a year. The disproportionately aged nature of the Jewish population—some 80 percent of JMW clients were Holocaust survivors—meant that Jews needed such aid at about five times the rate of the general population. In August, the city council relented; it would not cut JMW’s funds for 2005, but would review the budget for 2006.

Then, toward the end of the year, two separate lawsuits were initiated against JMW over its planned merger with a number of foundations for the care of Jewish orphans that had ceased functioning years before but still existed legally. Since 1986, JMW had taken over most of their responsibilities, and managed their capital and interest. In 2004 it sought a formal merger, but the two suits, launched by other Jewish organizations and individuals, meant that no steps could be taken until the courts rendered verdicts, which would not take place before 2005.

The youth movement Ijar organized an international “Meet Market” weekend in Amsterdam; it attracted 200 young Jews from the Netherlands, France, Switzerland, Ireland, Italy, the UK, Canada, and the U.S. On a sadder note, the Jewish Youth Center in Amsterdam closed its doors. The center, with its many facilities, had been conceived as a lively meeting place and a focus of activities for young Jews. But the youth organizations involved were unable to organize enough events and attract enough visitors, and the center had been operating at a huge loss for some years.

In other communal news, the Jewish community of Rotterdam celebrated the 50th anniversary of the local Orthodox synagogue, built to replace two synagogues that were destroyed in the bombing of Rotterdam in May 1940. The Jewish cemetery in Geervliet, south of Rotterdam, was restored. Earlier, a complete inventory (entitled *Matsewa*) was published listing and showing every gravestone, and providing information about the person buried there. In the city of Venlo, a medieval *mikveh* (ritual bath) was discovered during road construction. Dating from before 1350, it is the oldest known *mikveh* in the Netherlands.

Many old synagogue buildings were restored in 2004. One was the

beautiful synagogue of Enschede, dating from 1928, now restored to its former glory and rededicated. Enschede welcomed its own rabbi again, opened an institute for Jewish learning, and scheduled regular concerts in the building. For months after the rededication, visitors flocked to the synagogue in such numbers that there were not enough volunteers to provide guided tours.

On the initiative of B'nai Brith, the Netherlands participated in the European Jewish Heritage Day for the first time in 2004, joining 25 other European countries that had been involved since 1999. Ten synagogues opened their doors to the public, together drawing about 1,300 visitors. In Groningen, a temporary exhibition on twentieth-century Jewish life in the Folkingsstraat opened in the synagogue on that street.

2004 was the year of Jewish reunions. These included a reunion of the youth movement Habonim, for which some 300 former members came from within the Netherlands but also from Israel, the U.S., Germany, Belgium, Spain, and the UK. The oldest participant, 90-year-old Seraphina Boas, told of her years in the prewar precursor of Habonim, Joodsche Jeugd Federatie, founded in 1919. Another reunion was of 254 former pupils of Jewish children's homes (for children who lost one or both parents, or whose families had been disrupted by the Holocaust), which met in April. Some participants flew in from as far away as Canada.

Jom Havoetbal, the annual Jewish soccer tournament, celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2004. It was one of very few events that appealed to the entire community, from the secular to the Orthodox. So popular had the tournament become that a limit had to be placed on teams from other European countries, as well as on new Dutch teams. Some 2,300 spectators watched 55 teams (and the other spectators, of course). Mover and shaker Philippe Rubens was awarded royal honors for his part in coordinating this event.

Intergroup Relations

Dialogues and joint cultural programs with the Muslim community were stepped up in an attempt to improve relations. Several synagogues, including the Amsterdam Liberal Synagogue, exchanged visits with local mosques, and Jewish youth movements with Muslim counterparts. An unusual example of intergroup activity was the Moroccan-Jewish soccer tournament organized in De Baarsjes, an Amsterdam neighborhood where tensions ran high and anti-Semitic incidents were frequent.

Individual Jews and Moroccans organized the competition. Players—including the chairman of the NIK national Orthodox umbrella organization, a goalkeeper—and fans alike considered it a huge success, and the day passed without incident. The only criticism came from other ethnic groups, as local boys originating from Turkey and Suriname complained about being excluded, and said they wanted to participate with teams of their own next year.

Despite such activities, tensions were still very real. Apart from actual anti-Semitic incidents (see above), there were other problems. For example, the chairman of the youth movement run by Milli Gorus, the organization of Turks in the Netherlands, told an interviewer that he “did not believe in the European murder of six million Jews.” But it was Milli Gorus that insisted that he resign, indicating that Holocaust denial was not part of its official ideology.

Holocaust Restitution

In 2000, the Dutch government, banks, insurance companies, and the stock exchange had contributed to a restitution fund. Most of the money had been divided among the survivors and their heirs. Twenty percent of the total, the so-called “Maror” money, had been earmarked for communal purposes, and this continued to be allocated in subsequent years. In 2004, scores of new projects were funded in two rounds. Some \$4.4 million was divided among 27 projects for Dutch Jews living in Israel, many of them involving old age homes. Despite the allocations, there were complaints that payments were too slow.

Several claims for the restitution of artworks were resolved and the works were turned over to the original owners or their heirs.

Publications

More than 200 years after the death of Sha’oel Halevi Hager (1712–85), chief rabbi of The Hague, his manuscripts were published as a book, *Binyan Sha’oel*, by one of his successors, Rabbi P.A. Meijers, now living in Antwerp. The book, in Hebrew, included Torah commentaries, answers to questions of Jewish law, and letters, as well as supplementary material on the history of Ashkenazi communities in the Netherlands—particularly Amsterdam and The Hague—from the beginning of the eighteenth century until the Holocaust.

A new Dutch translation of Theodor Herzl's *De Jodenstaat* (The Jewish State, originally written in German in 1896) was published by the Federation of Dutch Zionists on the centennial of Herzl's death.

The existence of *NIW* (*Nieuw Israelitische Weekblad*), the Dutch Jewish weekly, was threatened by financial difficulties. It raised subscription fees (which had been kept artificially low for a long time) and many subscribers rallied with additional voluntary contributions. "The paper you are holding now is the only binding factor that keeps Dutch Jewry together. There is nothing else," wrote popular novelist Leon de Winter. "The *NIW* is vital for the continuity of Dutch Jewry." The paper, founded in 1865 and now the oldest opinion weekly in the country, had come out regularly for 138 years, ceasing publication only during World War II; two weeks after the liberation of the Netherlands, it rolled off the press again. In September, *Orange Juice*, a new magazine for Jews aged between 18 and 35, was launched, funded with Holocaust restitution money.

A dissertation analyzing by region the survival rate of Dutch Jews during the Holocaust was published, *Een onderzoek naar de overlevingskansen van joden in de Nederlandse gemeenten, 1940–1945*, by Marnix Croes and Peter Tammes. It showed that Jews in the southern provinces of the country had a better chance of survival than those in the north, and estimated the national rate of Jewish survival at 29.6 percent. While previous scholars suggested that some 8,000 Jews who went into hiding were caught, Croes and Tammes set the figure higher, at 12,000.

In *Niet voor de school, niet voor het leven* (Not for the School, Not for Life), Peter Hermans chronicled the lives (and, in half the cases, deaths) of 65 Jewish pupils of the Barlaeus Gymnasium in Amsterdam after the Nazis forced them to move to segregated Jewish schools in May 1940.

Eene zeer twistzieke natie. Aspecten van de geschiedenis van de joodse gemeenschap in Winschoten 1686–1943 (A Very Quarrelsome Nation. Aspects of the History of the Jewish Community in Winschoten 1686–1943), by P. Brood and E. Schut, was a fascinating and beautifully illustrated account of conflicts in the Jewish community of Winschoten and the role played by a band of Jewish robbers who operated in the area.

Personalia

Several Dutch Jews received awards and honors during the year. Rabbi Jacob David Schmahl was awarded the Torah and Halakhah Prize of Jerusalem for his book, *Kisa'ot lebeth David*, on financial and business disputes in Jewish law. Poet Nachoem M. Wijnberg received the Paul

Snoek Poetry Award from the Belgian town Sint-Niklaas for his 2001 book *Vogels* (Birds). Author Helga Ruebsamen was awarded the prestigious Anna Bijns Award for her complete works. Her stories center on the polarities of fantasy/reality, intoxication/clarity, and world citizenship/Jewish identity.

Veteran Israeli diplomat Shabtai Rosenne was awarded The Hague Prize for International Law. This was a new award, which the city intended to make the “Nobel Prize for international law.” Jews who received royal honors were Deborah Maarsen, the driving force of the Zichron Menachem organization that sponsored annual trips to the Netherlands for Israeli children suffering from cancer; and Gerard Klein and Fiep Maas, chairman and secretary, respectively, of the Jewish community of Hilversum, which they helped rebuild after the Holocaust. Yad Vashem, Israel’s Holocaust memorial, honored the popular Majoor Bosschardt of the Dutch Salvation Army for saving 70 orphans, including many Jews, during World War II.

Prominent Jews who died in 2004 included I.B. van Creveld, historian of the Jewish community in The Hague, aged 83; film director and television presenter Ralph Inbar, aged 65; Sal Zanten, active in the Jewish community of Den Bosch and the NIK national Orthodox umbrella organization, aged 83; Jacques Furth, oldest member and one of the founding fathers of the Nederlands Auschwitz Comité, aged 93; Louisa (Wiesje) Aldewereld, managing director of the Joodse Invalide (old age and rehabilitation home) in Amsterdam for 20 years, aged 97; Saul Smit, who helped rebuild the Jewish community in Zaandam and held many Jewish communal offices there, aged 92; and Aron Spijer, businessman, and member of the board and the burial society of the Jewish community in The Hague, aged 79.

ELISE FRIEDMANN

Italy and the Vatican

National Affairs

THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT of Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi remained one of President George W. Bush's staunchest allies in Europe even though most Italians opposed U.S. policy in Iraq. Italy also maintained exceptionally good relations with Israel. In a meeting in July with a delegation from the Anti-Defamation League, Berlusconi said: "Italy is the closest friend of the United States and Israel. We shall continue along the road we started out on together."

U.S. vice president Dick Cheney visited Italy in January and thanked the government for its help in Iraq. Bush visited in June to mark the 60th anniversary of the liberation from the Nazis. On his itinerary was a visit to the Ardeatine Caves, site of Italy's worst Nazi atrocity, the March 1944 murder of 335 Roman men and boys; some 75 of the victims were Jews. Berlusconi, in turn, visited Washington in December, and one of the topics discussed during a White House meeting with the president was the Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations.

In November, Gianfranco Fini became the country's new foreign minister, replacing Franco Frattini, who became justice commissioner of the European Union (Fini also retained his previous post as deputy prime minister). The move capped Fini's political and personal journey from neofascist to leader of the mainstream conservative right. Fini, 52, began a decade earlier to win respectability for his National Alliance party. In the process, he mended fences with Jews, paid homage at Auschwitz and other Holocaust sites, and visited Israel. Fini received a warm welcome on another official visit to Israel a few days before being named foreign minister (see below, p. 384).

In October, after tough negotiations, European leaders signed the new European Constitution at a ceremony in a palace on Rome's Capitoline Hill. Over the objections of the Vatican and several other countries, the document did not include any reference to the role of Christianity (or Judaism) in shaping European history and civilization.

Despite widespread popular opposition, Italy maintained 3,000 troops in Iraq, the third largest national contingent. A number of protests

against the war took place during the year, including a demonstration by as many as a million people in Rome in March. In September, Italians were shocked by the murder in Iraq of an Italian journalist, Enzo Baldoni, who had been held hostage by terrorists, but the government insisted it would not withdraw its forces. Two Italian women aid workers who were held by terrorists were released.

In February, a report by Italy's secret services said that the country had become a "base of departure for aspiring members of Islamic Jihad and suicide bombers." According to the report, cells of Islamic militants in Milan, Cremona, Parma, and Reggio Emilia recruited suicide bombers to carry out attacks in Iraq. In May, antiterrorist police arrested five people belonging to one of these groups.

Israel and the Middle East

ITALY

Rome's Jewish monthly, *Shalom*, described the warm ties between Italy and Israel as "a model of international relations." Participating in an international tourism convention in Milan in February, Israeli officials noted that about 26,000 Italians visited Israel in 2003, an increase of 53 percent over 2002. (In October, Jessica and Sabrina Rinaudo, two vacationing Italian sisters, were killed in the terrorist bombing of the Hilton Hotel in Taba. It was announced that a forest of 500 trees would be planted in Israel in their honor.) In April, numerous politicians and other dignitaries attended a reception in Rome for Israel Independence Day, hosted by Israeli ambassador Ehud Gol. Separately, Oded Ben Hur, Israel's ambassador to the Vatican, hosted a reception for senior Vatican officials. Another reception marking the day drew more than 1,000 people in Milan.

The large number of visits back and forth between Italian and Israeli officials also demonstrated the friendly bilateral relations. Foreign Minister Frattini came to Israel and met with senior government officials early in the year. In August, Israeli foreign minister Silvan Shalom attended the annual convention of the Italian Catholic group Communion and Liberation, where he had a heated face-to-face public debate with his Palestinian counterpart, Nabil Shaath. Both men expressed the desire for renewed peace negotiations, but clashed so sharply on almost every other issue that one reporter termed it a "dialogue of the deaf." Reuven Rivlin, speaker of the Israeli Knesset, visited Italy in November.

When Deputy Prime Minister Gianfranco Fini arrived in Israel in November just before being named foreign minister, he was greeted with enthusiasm. Fini attended a conference on international cooperation in Tel Aviv and met with senior Israeli officials, including Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, President Moshe Katzav, and Foreign Minister Shalom. He also had a session with "Italkim," Israelis of Italian origin. While in the country Fini said, "We must act in a way that Israel and Italy create an economic relationship that is increasingly intense and innovative, that will be an example for the whole region, and that will help create the conditions for a stable and lasting peace."

Italy also maintained good relations with Arab states, and there were many exchanges with Arab leaders. In February, Palestinian Authority prime minister Ahmed Qurei met Berlusconi and other Italian officials during a two-day visit to Rome that was part of a tour of European Union countries, and he also received an award from Rome's mayor. In April, the Italian Foreign Ministry hosted a conference on the country's aid programs to the Palestinians, both those carried out by the ministry and others run by Italian regional and local institutions.

In the eyes of many Italian Jews, some leftist politicians, journalists, nongovernmental groups, students, and street protesters crossed — by a wide margin — the line between legitimate criticism of Israeli actions and anti-Semitism. Italy's left-wing opposition and the leftist media generally supported the Palestinian cause and sharply criticized Israeli policy in a manner that those sympathetic to Israel considered heavily one-sided. For example, in a move that triggered considerable controversy, Oliviero Diliberto, secretary of the Italian Communist Party, met in Beirut with Hezbollah leader Sheik Nasrallah.

Already Libya's biggest trading partner, Italy boosted its ties with the North African state. Berlusconi visited Libya and met several times with Col. Muammar Qaddafi. In February, in fact, Berlusconi became the first Western leader to visit Libya since it declared, in December 2003, that it would end development of weapons of mass destruction. During another visit by Berlusconi, in October, Qaddafi said that the 20,000 Italians expelled from Libya in 1970 were now free to visit. That same month, a group of exiled Libyan Jews living in Italy made a four-day visit to Tripoli (see below, p. 393).

The Federation of Italy-Israel Associations held its congress toward the end of October. Founded in 1988, the federation had more than 50 branches around the country, and the members were mainly non-Jews. About 400 people attended the congress, which opened in Rome, and 60

of them then flew on to Jerusalem to conclude the proceedings there, becoming part of the largest-ever Italian solidarity mission to Israel. Some 230 people took part in the mission, sponsored by the federation, WIZO, Keren Hayesod, and Keren Kayemet.

Throughout the year there were conferences, roundtables, seminars, and debates (some broadcast on radio or television) on the subject of the Middle East. Discussion was often heated, with American and Israeli policy frequently coming under sharp criticism. In November, the city of Milan hosted a conference about Jewish refugees who fled Arab countries beginning in 1945. Many new books were published on the Middle East, Iraq, Islam, and the threat of global Islamist terrorism. In April, journalist Oriana Fallaci published a new book, *La Forza della Ragione* (The Force of Reason). In her trademark polemical style, she accused Europe of having given in to what she described as an “Islamic invasion,” and condemned the Roman Catholic Church for showing weakness in the face of militant Islam.

Jews expressed concern over a song, “Marika,” by pop star Roberto Vecchioni, which appeared to show sympathy for a young terrorist. In response, Vecchioni said that he would no longer perform the song at his concerts.

Jews critical of Israeli policy toward the Palestinians also made their voices heard. In January, a group of young Jews who regarded themselves as Zionists but opposed the Israeli occupation of the territories and supported the Israeli peace movement screened the documentary *Don't Say You Didn't Know—Israeli Voices Against the Occupation*, by Italian-American director Joseph Rochlitz, at Rome's Jewish Community Center. In the summer, an Italian Jewish group calling itself Martin Buber-Jews for Peace spearheaded a statement signed by nearly 600 Diaspora Jews criticizing the policies of the Sharon government. Published as a full-page ad in the Israeli dailies *Ma'ariv* and *Ha'aretz*, the statement said that the policies pursued by the Israeli leadership had not provided Israel with security. The ad backed alternative initiatives such as the so-called “Geneva Accord.”

THE VATICAN

Negotiations between the Vatican and Israel aimed at finding solutions to several unresolved bilateral issues, suspended in 2003, resumed during the summer of 2004. The key matters under discussion were the safeguarding of church property and holy sites in Israel, the tax status of

Catholic religious institutions, visa regulations for priests and members of Catholic religious orders in Israel, and the participation of Israel in certain church-run educational initiatives.

Earlier, in April, church officials said that the visa applications of 138 Catholic clergy, many of them Arabs, had been held up by Israel's Interior Ministry, a 60-percent increase over the previous year. Further talks on the visas were held in September, and in December the Israeli ambassador to the Holy See announced that a solution was near.

The pope, who had strongly opposed the U.S.-led war in Iraq, told visiting President Bush in June that he hoped for a speedy return of Iraq's sovereignty, and also expressed to Bush his concern about "grave unrest" in the Middle East. Addressing the UN General Assembly in September, the Vatican foreign minister, Archbishop Giovanni Lajolo, asserted that "everyone can see" that the Iraq war "did not lead to a safer world, either inside or outside Iraq." He went on: "The Holy See believes it is now imperative to support the present government in its efforts to bring the country to normality and to a political system that is substantially democratic and in harmony with the values of its historic traditions."

As he had done often in recent years, the pope issued repeated calls for a halt to Israeli-Palestinian violence, which he termed "an endless conflict that is fed by reciprocal hate and desire for vengeance." On several occasions he urged the international community to help bring the sides back to the negotiating table.

In February, the pope met with Palestinian prime minister Ahmed Qurei and repeated criticism he had first made in 2003 of the security barrier Israel was building in the West Bank. After the death of Yasir Arafat in November, the Vatican issued a statement of sympathy that called him "a leader of great charisma who loved his people and tried to guide them towards national independence." The pope, who had met with Arafat several times, sent a message to the Palestinian people saying that he prayed that the "star of harmony" would soon bring peace to the Holy Land and that both Israelis and Palestinians could live "reconciled among themselves as two independent and sovereign states."

Anti-Semitism and Racism

Visiting Italy in January, Natan Sharansky, the Israeli minister for Diaspora affairs, gave a formal address to the Italian Senate in which he warned about the rise of a "vicious" new form of anti-Semitism in Europe. What was new, he explained, was the transfer of "classical" Jew-

hatred to an equally irrational hatred of the Jewish state. Sharansky reiterated his thesis in a talk at the Rome Jewish Community Center.

That same month, Prime Minister Berlusconi announced the formation of a committee composed of representatives of several government ministries to investigate and fight anti-Semitism and racism. Citing “profound concern about the rise of episodes of intolerance and anti-Semitism in Europe,” he said the committee would track such episodes, seek ways to educate people against the attitudes that lead to them, and punish acts of bias. In February, the Chamber of Deputies passed three motions charging the government to combat anti-Semitism by systematically monitoring the situation and taking concrete measures—including educational programs in the schools—to “accentuate the struggle against this execrable phenomenon.”

Italy, in fact, experienced little of the anti-Semitic violence witnessed in several other European countries. Even so, public-opinion polls indicated lingering anti-Semitic stereotypes as well as sharp opposition to Israeli policy toward the Palestinians that at times crossed the line into anti-Semitic expressions.

A poll conducted in 2003 that received considerable publicity in early 2004 was carried out in Italy and eight other West European countries on behalf of Milan’s *Corriere della Sera* newspaper. It identified 15 percent of respondents as “strongly” anti-Semitic and found that some 40 percent believed that Jews “have a special relationship with money.” Over one-third felt that Jews “should stop playing the victims because of the Holocaust and the persecutions of 50 years ago.” Fewer than 60 percent found Israel “sympathetic.” Sociologist Renato Mannheimer, who directed the survey, wrote that “it is sure that, in all nine countries, anti-Semitic attitudes are closely correlated with anti-Israel attitudes.”

Another poll focusing specifically on Italy was released in January, “Italian Public Opinion on the Israel-Palestinian Conflict and the Middle East Question.” Based on interviews with 1,500 people and conducted by the Eurispes Research Institute, it found that even though most were not anti-Semitic, more than one-third of the sample believed that Jews “secretly control economic and financial power and the media.” More than 90 percent supported Israel’s right to exist, but over half were critical of current Israeli policy toward the Palestinians and nearly 36 percent agreed with the statement that the Sharon government was carrying out “a real, true genocide, and behaves toward the Palestinians the way the Nazis behaved toward the Jews.”

In August, the Rome city government assured Israeli ambassador Ehud

Gol of its commitment to fighting anti-Semitism, asserting in a letter to the ambassador that Mayor Walter Veltroni's "attention and resolve" in confronting any expression of anti-Semitism, racism or xenophobia "goes without saying." This was in response to a personal letter that Gol had written to Veltroni expressing dismay at anti-Semitic and anti-Israel slogans found scrawled in a Rome park, which, Gol feared, could signal an emerging new manifestation of anti-Semitism. The graffiti, removed by city workers the day they were discovered, included swastikas and slogans such as "*Juden Raus*" and "Death to Zion." Several similar incidents occurred elsewhere in Italy. In Genoa, the street sign marking a square named after the city's wartime rabbi, Riccardo Pacifici, who was killed in Auschwitz, was plastered over with a sign "renaming" the square "Piazza Yassin" after Palestinian Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, who was killed by Israeli forces. It said that Sheikh Yassin had "fallen in the name of freedom." In April, a Milan court convicted Pietro Aligi Schiavi for sending anti-Semitic hate mail to Milan Jewish community president Roberto Jarach and fined him 5,000 euros.

In October, Israeli diplomat Shai Cohen was heckled by a group of 20 students at the University of Pisa who prevented him from giving a scheduled talk on "Israel, the Only Democracy in the Middle East." The hecklers, some wearing the Palestinian kaffiyeh around their necks, shouted such slogans as "Sharon assassin," "Israel is a death dealer," and "Zionism is a crime against humanity." There were students present who sought to calm the situation and defended Cohen's right to speak, but to no avail. Italian Jews were angered by the incident, but even more by the general lack of condemnation of it by leftist politicians and media.

There were several conferences, symposia and other meetings on anti-Semitism and how to combat it. Psychologist David Meghnaghi, a professor at Rome's University Tre, organized a committee of professors from around the country to fight anti-Semitism, particularly in the academic setting. Rome was the site of a conference in February on the image of Jews in the Arab media. In November, Prof. Meghnaghi, in collaboration with the Union of Italian Jewish Communities (UCEI) and University Tre, organized a session titled "Between Old and New Anti-Semitism." In December, the Italian government, in association with the ADL and the Italian newspaper *Il Foglio*, conducted a two-day conference on the topic "Anti-Semitism—A Threat to Democracy" that included as speakers high-ranking political figures and leading journalists from Italy, the U.S., and Israel.

The Rome municipality carried out a number of projects aimed at promoting religious and ethnic tolerance and combating racism and anti-Semitism. These were coordinated by Franca Eckert Coen, a former director of Rome's Jewish Community Center who now worked as counselor for multiethnic policy for the city.

Holocaust-Related Developments

Italy marked Holocaust Remembrance Day, January 27, with dozens of high-profile events ranging from solemn commemorations attended by top government officials to exhibitions, lectures, films, broadcasts, concerts and performances, and the so-called Match of Memory, a celebrity soccer game held to raise funds for a planned Holocaust museum in Rome. Organizers sold 20,000 tickets for the match, but only 3,000 people braved the cold rainy weather to attend. Among them were Mayor Veltroni and other dignitaries, including guest of honor Elie Wiesel, who was also honored in a ceremony at Rome's Campidoglio city hall. Schools held classes about the Holocaust, radio and television broadcast special programs, and magazines and newspapers published a wide range of articles on the subject. Nevertheless, public-opinion polls released on the eve of the observances showing that many Italians and other Europeans still maintained anti-Semitic stereotypes (see above, p. 387) indicated that much educational work remained to be done.

Beginning in February, Italy assumed the year-long presidency of the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research. The 16-member task force had been set up by the Swedish, British, and U.S. governments in 1998 to raise global consciousness about the Shoah.

The city of Rome hosted a series of events throughout the year to promote memory, awareness, and understanding of World War II, the Holocaust, and Jewish history aimed specifically at high school students. Called "Rome 1944–2004: Memory, Resistance, and Liberation," it included exhibits, conferences, commemorations, and projects. Special commemorations marked the 60th anniversary of the Nazi slaughter of 335 Romans at the Ardeatine Caves in March 1944, as well as the liberation of Rome by American troops in June 1944. And in October, for the second consecutive year, more than two dozen Rome high schools took their students on an educational trip to Auschwitz as part of a project called "We Remember." Also in October, on the 61st anniversary of the depor-

tation of Jews from Rome, an exhibition on the persecution of Italian Jews opened in the Vittoriano, a gallery in Rome's "Altar of the Homeland" monument.

In April, Mayor Veltroni announced that Villa Torlonia, the former residence of fascist dictator Benito Mussolini, would open in 2006 as a Holocaust museum. (A series of Jewish catacombs dating to ancient times lies beneath the villa and its extensive grounds.) In April, Catania, in Sicily, hosted a conference on Italy's fascist-era anti-Semitic laws. A book on the effects those laws had on the economic activity of Rome's Jews was published in the fall.

There were a number of seminars and conferences on Holocaust themes, and several books were published as well. An international conference on Primo Levi took place in Rome. In April, a new International Museum of Memory was inaugurated at the site of the World War II concentration camp of Ferramonti in Calabria. In October, the Hungarian Academy in Rome sponsored a conference and exhibition marking 60 years since the deportation of the Hungarian Jews. The Jewish community, Rome authorities, a university, and several organizations jointly produced a documentary film, *Born Twice, the Story of Settima, a Roman Jew*, for use in schools. It was based on interviews with Settima Spizzichino, the only Roman woman to survive Auschwitz out of the 600 who were deported in October 1943.

In February, an olive tree from Jerusalem was planted in the courtyard of Italy's oldest police training facility in honor of Giovanni Palatucci, an Italian police chief who saved thousands of Jews from deportation during the Holocaust and later died at Dachau. A scholarship was also announced in Palatucci's memory, to be awarded for the best university thesis by an Italian police officer dealing with the Shoah, racism or multiethnic society. Palatucci served as the commissioner of Rijeka, today in Croatia but during World War II under Italian jurisdiction and known as Fiume. Between 1937 and 1944 he saved more than 5,000 Jews by providing them with false documents and safe-conduct permits. In May, a new school in Rome was named in Palatucci's honor. At the same time, another new school was named in honor of the Di Consiglio family of Rome that was wiped out in the Holocaust: 22 members were deported and murdered at Auschwitz, and seven were killed in the Ardeatine Caves massacre. In June, a commemorative mass was held in Rome to honor Portuguese diplomat Aristides Sousa Mendes, who helped save thousands during World War II by granting false documents.

In January, an Italian court charged seven former SS members with the

August 1944 killing of 560 people in the Tuscan village of Sant'Anna di Stazzema. German interior minister Otto Schily visited Sant'Anna in August on the 60th anniversary of the massacre and said it marked "a day of shame" in German history. In March, Rome officials banned rival demonstrations for and against a pardon for convicted Nazi war criminal Erich Priebke that had been planned for the same time on the same day in the same part of the city. Prefect Achille Serra cited the "climate of tension" in banning the rallies. Priebke, 90, was serving a life sentence for his role in the Ardeatine Caves massacre. Karl Hass, a former SS major serving a life sentence under house arrest in Switzerland for his role in the Ardeatine Caves massacre, died in April at the age of 92. In December, a military court in La Spezia acquitted former SS officer Hermann Langer, 85, of having commanded the September 1944 massacre of about 60 people at a monastery in Farneta, Tuscany, that sheltered Jews during World War II.

JEWISH COMMUNITY

Communal Affairs

About 35,000 Jews were believed to live in Italy, although only some two-thirds were formally affiliated with Jewish communities. Rome, with about 15,000 Jews (12,000 formally affiliated), and Milan, with about 10,000, were the largest communities. The rest of the country's Jews were scattered in a score of other towns and cities, mostly in northern and central Italy, in communities ranging from a handful of people to a thousand or so. All were linked under an umbrella organization, the Union of Italian Jewish Communities (UCEI), whose leadership, under president Amos Luzzatto, served as the political representative of Italian Jewry.

A small Jewish community was reorganized this year in Trani, in southern Italy's Puglia region, through the joint efforts of the culture and education department of the UCEI and Chabad. For the first time in 500 years, Yom Kippur services were held in the town, one of Rome's seven congregations "lending" a rabbi and a cantor for the occasion. About 30 people participated. Trani's mayor made the former Colona Monastery available as a house of worship until the medieval Scolanova Synagogue, long used as a church, is restored. Trani had a thriving Jewish community in medieval times, until Jews were expelled in the sixteenth century.

Orthodoxy was still the only officially recognized form of Judaism in Italy, a point reiterated during the year by Chief Rabbi Riccardo Di Segni of Rome, who stated that his community "is and must remain Orthodox." Italian Orthodoxy encompassed 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 a strong presence in Rome, Milan, Venice, Florence, Bologna, and elsewhere. Rome was home to the Italian Rabbinical College. Under the direction of Rabbi Di Segni, it trained rabbis as well as teachers for Jewish schools, coordinated a university degree course in Jewish studies open to any member of a Jewish community, and offered various other courses in Jewish culture. In Milan, a new yeshiva program directed by the chief rabbi, Giuseppe Laras, was conducted at the main synagogue.

In December, however, Laras shocked the community by announcing plans to step down as chief rabbi after 25 years in the post. Noting divisions in the community, he asserted that these were less serious than in the past, but acknowledged that there had been a drop in the number of people formally affiliated. However, he added, the community now was "richer in activities, initiatives and interests, both religious and cultural, even if there still remains a wide sector of 'invisible' people who, because they are 'invisible,' we are not able to reach or involve."

Not only were Reform and Conservative streams not recognized by the UCEI, but there were also complaints in some communities by less observant Jews that local rabbis had become more rigid in their practice. Several small Reform congregations operated independently, including Lev Chadash and Beth Shalom in Milan, which employed rabbis from abroad to conduct services and hold classes for members and potential converts. Both of these Milan congregations were affiliated with the World Union for Progressive Judaism (WUPJ). Similar small groups existed in Rome and Florence, and as the Italian Reform communities expanded they began to form an embryonic alternative to the Orthodox establishment. Lev Chadash was especially active, hosting young liberal Jews from elsewhere in Europe for a Purim celebration. For the High Holy Days in the fall, an American, Barbara Aiello, took up her post at Lev Chadash as Italy's first woman rabbi.

The Rome Jewish community held elections for its board in April and the results bore witness to the political and ideological splits within the membership. A group considered conservative that ran under the slogan "For Israel" won 15 seats on the board, edging out a left-leaning group

called "For the Young People, Together," which won 13 seats. In June, the board unanimously reelected 65-year-old Leone Paserman, from the "For Israel" faction, president of the community.

Results of a survey of elderly Jews in Milan were released in the spring, based on telephone interviews with a representative sample of 200 of the 1,243 Jews over age 70 registered as members of the local Jewish community. Only 40 percent had been born in Italy; of the rest most came from Egypt and Turkey, and others from Greece, Romania, Iran, Syria, Lebanon, and Libya. Even though more than 60 percent had children living in Milan, 40 percent lived alone, 63 percent speaking on the phone with their children or grandchildren at least once a day. These older Jews were much better educated than their non-Jewish Italian counterparts, 22 percent having completed university studies. Almost all those questioned were in regular contact with the Jewish community in one way or another: some 77 percent said they read the community monthly, *Il Bollettino*, and another 19 percent said they just leafed through it.

Rome's Jewish community had a different ethnic makeup: 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. In October 2004, after Libyan leader Col. Muammar Qaddafi told President Berlusconi that the 20,000 Italians expelled from Libya in 1970 were now free to visit (see above, p. 384), a group of Italian Jews of Libyan origin made a four-day visit to Tripoli. Warmly welcomed, they met with senior officials who raised the possibility that they might regain Libyan passports and have dual Italian-Libyan citizenship. During their talks, the Jews raised the issue of compensation for property left behind, and the Libyans advised them to draw up and submit lists of such property. The group had expected to meet with Qaddafi but did not, in the end, do so. In December, Libyan Jews now living in Italy, Britain, the U.S., France, and Israel formed an international committee to seek compensation.

The major Jewish communities in Italy offered a full infrastructure serving varied needs: religious institutions, Jewish schools and other educational facilities, health and welfare services, and Jewish cultural and community centers. The women's organization ADEI-WIZO was especially active, as were various support and solidarity groups for Israel. There were kosher facilities, including public restaurants, in some cities. In May, some 1,000 people filled Milan's main synagogue for the annual joint bat mitzvah ceremony at which, this year, 16 girls took part.

The Rome Jewish community inaugurated new premises for its old age home and was in the process of restoring buildings for a modern new

school complex in the heart of the old ghetto. In the fall, a new step was taken with an agreement between the Rome municipality and the Jewish community to construct an *eruv* (symbolic enclosure enabling observant Jews to carry on Shabbat) in the city, to be in place by June 2005. In the spring, hundreds of people attended the UCEI's annual cultural and educational weekend in a resort hotel on the Adriatic Sea. This year's theme was Torah, symbols, and idolatry.

A range of Jewish youth groups were active, sponsoring educational, social, and recreational activities. In June, for example, more than 450 young people, including many from other countries, took part in the so-called "Zooish" Shabbaton (youth weekend) in Milan. At the end of October, the annual fall Moked youth meeting was held at Montecatini spa in Tuscany, its theme being a century of the Jewish youth movement in Italy. That same weekend Rome hosted "Ring," an educational and social gathering of Jewish students from all over Europe. And during the summer, Jewish institutions and organizations hosted a group of 50 Israeli children, victims of terrorism, for a vacation in Tuscany.

Jewish-Catholic Relations

January 17 marked the Catholic Church's annual "Day of Judaism." In Milan, a public meeting between Jews and Catholics, Protestants, Orthodox, and other Christians took place in the main synagogue. The event came soon after the Council of Christian Churches in Milan issued an expression of solidarity with the Jewish community in the face of anti-Semitism. In Rome, a gala Vatican concert aimed at promoting reconciliation among Catholics, Jews, and Muslims took place. Pope John Paul II presided, flanked by a rabbi and an imam. The concert was held before 7,000 people, including dignitaries of the three religions from around the world, among them Israel's two chief rabbis. The venue was the Pope Paul VI Auditorium, and the music was performed by the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra conducted by Gilbert Levine, an American Jew, son-in-law of a Holocaust survivor, and a Papal knight. The Israeli chief rabbis, Yonah Metzger and Shlomo Amar, also had a private audience with the pope, the first such Vatican audience for Israeli chief rabbis. (The pope had met Israel's previous chief rabbis when he visited Israel in 2000.) Metzger and Amar urged the pope to continue speaking out against anti-Semitism, and the pope assured them that he remained committed to improving Catholic-Jewish relations.

Mel Gibson's controversial movie *The Passion of the Christ* opened on

nearly 700 screens across Italy just two days before Good Friday. Tickets sold out at many cinemas, and the film posted a record opening-day take of more than 1.2 million euros (\$1.5 million), more than 60 percent of the total money earned by all movies shown around the country that day. Response to the film was mixed. Furio Colombo, editor of the leftist daily *L'Unità*, called it a sadistic, pornographic, and blasphemous horror show, "the most anti-Semitic film in the history of the cinema." Many Catholic clergy, though, including some senior Vatican officials, responded with enthusiasm and encouraged the faithful to see it. They praised *The Passion* for its unflinching depiction of Jesus's torment and argued that the violence could be redemptive. In February, before the movie's release, Jewish leaders, including Israeli chief rabbi Metzger and Rome chief rabbi Di Segni, had called on the Vatican to condemn the film as anti-Semitic, but got no response. The actor who played Jesus, Jim Caviezel, a devout Catholic, had an audience in March with Pope John Paul II, who had seen the film the previous December.

The pope met several times during the year with Jewish leaders. At an audience in February with a delegation from the American Jewish Committee, he told the group, "There is regrettably a great need to repeat our utter condemnation of racism and anti-Semitism" and reiterated that "violence in the name of religion is always a desecration to religion." He also lamented that the Holy Land "continues to be afflicted by violence and suffering" and said he prayed that "a just solution will be found which respects the rights and security of both Israelis and Palestinians." In March, the pope expressed similar sentiments in a meeting with a delegation from the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC). In November, Muslim, Orthodox Christian, and Jewish religious leaders from Azerbaijan had an audience with the pope. The Anti-Defamation League met with him in December. An earlier ADL delegation had met in July with other Vatican officials to discuss the opening of the Vatican's World War II-era archives, anti-Semitism, and the broadening of Catholic-Jewish relations.

The pope sent two senior cardinals to represent him at celebrations marking the 100th anniversary of Rome's Great Synagogue in May (see below, p. 398). The pontiff also issued a message on the occasion reiterating his condemnation of anti-Semitism and calling for further cooperation. "The dutiful deploring and condemnation of hostilities against the Jewish people, which often characterized history, is not enough," he wrote. "We need to also develop friendship, esteem and brotherly relations" with Jews.

There were a number of interreligious meetings and conferences throughout the year in Italy and elsewhere. A dozen cardinals, six chief rabbis, and other representatives from Europe, North America, and Israel participated in what was called a World Symposium of Catholic Cardinals and Jewish Leaders, in New York in January. In July, the 18th meeting of the International Liaison Committee of Jewish and Catholic leaders took place in Buenos Aires. It released a statement expressing "total rejection of anti-Semitism in all its forms, including anti-Zionism as a more recent manifestation of anti-Semitism." In September, Chief Rabbi Metzger of Israel attended a weeklong interreligious conference organized by the Milan archdiocese and the St. Egidio community, a Catholic social action group, where he called for a Jerusalem-based "religious United Nations" to promote dialogue.

In October, delegations from Israel's Chief Rabbinate and the Vatican's Commission for Religious Relations with Jews met for three days near Rome. They issued an appeal to respect the "sacred character" of Jerusalem and condemned all "actions of disrespect" toward religious sites, symbols, and people. The participants declared that they "were not enemies, but unequivocal partners in articulating the essential moral values for the survival and welfare of human society."

During the encounter, the rabbis and priests also attended lectures by Cardinal Walter Kasper and Rome chief rabbi Di Segni marking the opening of a new program at Gregorian University on the Catholic Church's teachings about Judaism and the Jewish people. Di Segni acknowledged progress in Catholic-Jewish relations but complained that the Church "engaged in the dialogue using its own language, its own mentality, its own culture, its own vision of the world, its own needs," leading to an "asymmetry" in the discussion. He singled out several recent Vatican actions of concern to Jews: the canonization of Edith Stein, a Jewish convert to Catholicism killed in Auschwitz; preliminary steps to the beatification of Eugenio Zolli, the World War II chief rabbi of Rome who converted to Catholicism under the influence of Pope Pius XII; and the enthusiasm among Vatican officials for *The Passion of the Christ*. Kasper gave a much more optimistic account of the state of Catholic-Jewish relations, saying that they had progressed "remarkably."

Another development that dismayed some Jews was the beatification in October of Anna Katharina Emmerich, a nineteenth-century German nun whose graphic visions, published after her death, inspired Mel Gibson's grisly depiction of the crucifixion in his film. The Vatican said that

Emmerich was honored for her virtuous life, not her visions. In December, the Vatican set Cardinal Clemens August von Galen, an anti-Nazi German bishop who denounced Hitler and died in 1946, on the path to beatification.

There were a number of historical revelations during the year based on material found in the Vatican's secret archives recently opened to scholars. In March, for example, documents surfaced indicating that soon after Adolf Hitler came to power in 1933, Italy's fascist dictator, Benito Mussolini, may have secretly attempted to persuade him not to persecute the Jews. Other newly released documents fed both sides of the controversy over the role of Pope Pius XII during the Holocaust, critics feeling that Pius failed to do enough to save Jews, defenders arguing that he did all he could. In the summer, the Vatican said it planned to release more than two million files about prisoners of war and other missing persons from the World War II period. According to the Vatican, the documentation was "testimony to the ample charitable and social work inspired by principles of universality and impartiality" during the pontificate of Pius XII.

At the end of December, the *Corrière della Sera* newspaper published a letter dated October 20, 1946, suggesting that the Vatican, with the approval of Pius XII, had ordered church authorities in France not to return Jewish children who had been baptized to save them during the Holocaust. The letter, sent by the Holy Office, the Vatican department responsible for church discipline, to the future Pope John XXIII, Angelo Roncalli, then the Holy See's envoy in Paris, stated: "Children who have been baptized may not be entrusted to institutions that are not in a position to guarantee them a Christian upbringing." The letter, unearthed by a historian editing Roncalli's diaries, ended with the words, "Please note that this decision has been approved by the Holy Father."

During the year, the pope and other Vatican officials expressed continuing concern at what they saw as a secularist, "anti-Christian" movement in the European Union. Some even attempted to have "Christophobia" recognized as a form of prejudice equal to anti-Semitism or hatred of Muslims. The Vatican—and the pope personally—had pressed hard but unsuccessfully for an explicit reference to Europe's "Christian roots" in the new European Constitution that was signed in Rome in October (see above, p. 382). Furthermore, the Vatican expressed outrage when the European Parliament Committee on Civil Liberties rejected the candidacy of a devout Catholic, Rocco Buttiglione, the Italian

nominee for the post of EU commissioner of justice. Buttiglione had expressed traditional conservative Catholic views on the subjects of homosexuality and women.

Culture

There were numerous Jewish and Jewish-themed cultural events organized by Jewish communities and institutions, private organizations and promoters, civic and state bodies, or a combination of these.

In April, a new Jewish museum opened on the top floor of the synagogue in Genoa with an exhibition of works by Marc Chagall that depicted biblical scenes. A series of events marked the 100th anniversary of the Tempio Maggiore, or Great Synagogue, in Rome. The first, in May, was an exhibition tracing the history of the synagogue that was displayed in the expanded new premises for Rome's Jewish Museum on the lower floor of the synagogue complex. Senior government and other officials attended the main centennial ceremony, held in the ornate sanctuary on May 23. The Jewish community had invited Pope John Paul II to the event but he declined, saying he did not want to detract from the impact of his first historic visit to the synagogue in 1986. Instead, Cardinal Camillo Ruini, president of the Italian Bishops Conference, and Cardinal Walter Kasper, head of the Vatican's office for relations with Jews, represented him. Celebrations, which ran into October, included cultural events and an international academic conference on Roman Jewish history. Both Italy and Israel issued commemorative postage stamps.

There were efforts to conserve, preserve and protect other sites of Jewish heritage in Italy. During the year a member of the Italian Senate, Loredanna De Petris, spearheaded legislation to fund the restoration of the Jewish catacombs under Villa Torlonia in order to open them to the public. Parliament also examined other proposed legislation that would provide funds to finance the maintenance and restoration of Italian synagogues over the next few years. A conference in May was devoted to a 40-million-euro project to develop the area where the ancient Jewish cemetery of Ancona is located, possibly add a small museum there, and make it into a park. In August, regional authorities in Calabria announced plans to conserve the ruins of the ancient synagogue at Bova Marina, near Reggio Calabria, discovered in 1983, so that they might be visited by the public. The Veneto Region allocated 700,000 euros for the restoration and care of seven Jewish cemeteries in the region.

Italy was an enthusiastic participant in the fifth annual European Day of Jewish Culture, held on September 5 in 25 countries; the theme for 2004 was Judaism and education. After the keynote opening ceremony in Pisa, some 37,000 people visited numerous Jewish sites in 45 localities around the country.

The Israeli embassy sponsored a number of performances, exhibits, and appearances by Israeli cultural figures. In Milan, the Mario Negri Medical Research Institute and Israel's Weizmann Institute collaborated on a series of symphonic concerts to raise funds for their work, under the title "Music and Research Together for Health."

Rome's Jewish community center hosted the city's second Jewish film festival in February, including screenings of Jewish and Israeli films as well as roundtable discussions and lectures. French director Claude Lanzmann, who produced the Holocaust documentary *Shoah*, was one of the speakers. The seventh annual Pitifest Festival of Jewish Cinema and Culture, held December 5–8 in the Tuscan hill town of Pitigliano, featured several films and exhibitions about Anne Frank, and also hosted the premiere of *Binario 21* (Track 21), a video about the deportation of Italian Jews to Auschwitz, and a series of Israeli films. The Venice Film Festival in September screened two Israeli films, *Hotel Promised Land*, Israeli filmmaker Amos Gitai's docudrama about sex slavery in Israel, and *Take a Wife* by Ronit and Shlomi Elkabetz, about Israelis of Moroccan origin in Haifa in 1979. Director Michael Radford's film version of *The Merchant of Venice*, starring Al Pacino as Shylock, had its world premiere at the festival.

There were many Jewish-themed concerts, plays, and theatrical performances during 2004. Among them, Jewish actress and playwright Laura Forti staged *Dimmi* (Tell Me), a play based on her family's history, and Hasidic pop star Avraham Fried sang in Rome's prestigious new Auditorium concert hall in a performance organized by Chabad. Rome's Ha Kol Jewish choir performed at the Summer Festival of Two Worlds in Spoleto. In September, Israeli dancer and choreographer Yasmeen Godder performed at the Enzimi dance festival in Rome. A new adaptation for the stage of *If This Is a Man*, by Primo Levi, opened in Rome in October. The writings of Etty Hillesum, the Dutch intellectual and diarist killed at Auschwitz, formed the basis of a play staged at Rome's Theater Sala Uno in the fall. Moni Ovadia, Italy's foremost Jewish stage performer, continued touring with his production of *Fiddler on the Roof*, bringing it for the first time to Rome. Israel's Habima acting troupe performed in Milan at the end of the year.

Pianist and musicologist Francesco Lortoro continued work on a series of recordings he called *Musica Judaica*, a collection of all music composed by Jews in concentration camps between 1933 and 1945.

Among the many Jewish-themed exhibitions was "The People of the Dream," 50 graphics by Vittorio Pavoncello inspired by the Torah, which opened at Rome's Vittoriano museum in October. A month-long one-man show by Israeli designer Ron Arad, who had collaborated with many Italian design companies, opened in Vicenza in September.

Numerous books by Jewish authors and other books of Jewish interest were published, and so there were plenty of book launches, readings, roundtables, and other literary happenings. Rome's Jewish monthly, *Shalom*, routinely reviewed more than a dozen books per issue. Italy's main Jewish publishing house, the Florence-based Giuntina, initiated a new series of translations of works by contemporary Israeli authors. The first books to appear were *The Rosendorf Quartet* by Nathan Shaham and *The Salted Biscuits of Grandma Sultana* by Dan Benaya-Seri.

One of the most important Italian books of Jewish interest was *Mitzva*, a personal evocation of his Jewish identity by Alain Elkann, a leading writer, socialite, and adviser to the Italian government whose son was vice chairman of the Fiat motor industry and heir to the Agnelli dynasty. Another notable book was *Roma delle religioni* (Rome of the Religions), a book of text and photographs about the various faiths held by Rome's inhabitants. *My Father, Il Duce*, a memoir of Italy's fascist dictator Benito Mussolini by his son, Roman Mussolini, sold well and made headlines by presenting a positive view of Mussolini's private life. *Ritrovare se stessi: Gli ebrei nell'Italia postfascista* (Finding Themselves Again: The Jews of Postfascist Italy) by Guri Schwarz told the story of Italian Jewry's postwar development. Other books included *Attese* (Waits), a novel by Elena Loewenthal, and *Gli Antisemiti Progressisti* (Liberal Anti-Semites) by Fiamma Nirenstein, about left-wing anti-Semitism.

In February, a conference of Jewish archivists took place in Florence. Two significant conferences took place in Milan in March, one on the subject of Jews and politics, the other on the contribution of religions to the construction of a united Europe. In December, Italy's first national conference of Yiddish studies was held in Rome, marking the 100th anniversary of the birth of Isaac Bashevis Singer.

At the end of the year, Israeli writer Amos Elon left Israel and moved permanently to Tuscany, where he had had a home for years.

Personalia

In January, the Italian government awarded Leone Paserman, president of the Rome Jewish community, the Gold Medal for Civic Values. In April, it gave the Grand Cross of the Republic to director Steven Spielberg, who also received a David of Donatello Award—Italy’s equivalent of the Oscar—for his lifetime achievement in cinema. In October, the Federation of Italy-Israel Associations awarded the 2004 Correct Information Award to journalist Fiamma Nirenstein and to the newspaper *Il Foglio*. At a ceremony in Rome, the Swedish prime minister presented a new award, the Per Anger Prize, to 97-year-old Monsignor Gennaro Verolino, who, during World War II, saved thousands of Jews in the Budapest ghetto by granting them false papers.

In May, Polish-born filmmaker Roman Polanski, the Academy Award-winning director of *The Pianist*, was awarded an honorary doctorate by the Department of Literature and Philosophy of Rome’s Sapienza University in recognition of “the fundamental relationship of a Polish Jewish intellectual and artist to the entirety of European culture.” (Polanski survived the Kraków ghetto during the Shoah.) Angelica Edna Livi Calo, a Roman Jew living in Israel, and a Palestinian Christian, Samar Shahar, were awarded the first Women’s Peace Prize by Catholic officials in Assisi during ceremonies marking the 750th anniversary of the Basilica of Saint Francis. The Italo-Israeli writer Manuela Dviri and the Palestinian writer Suad Amiry received the international Viareggio-Versilia Prize, recognizing them as “two people who have spent their lives for culture, understanding among peoples, social progress, and peace.”

In June, the Rome Jewish community presented a commemorative scroll to Brown University professor David Kertzer in honor of Kertzer’s late father, Rabbi Morris Kertzer, who, as a U.S. Army chaplain in 1944, led the first Shabbat service in Rome’s Great Synagogue after liberation. The next month the Rome chapter of B’nai Brith awarded its first Golden Menorah Award—honoring persons who demonstrate support of or solidarity with Israel—to writer Massimo Teodori, who organized a pro-Israel march in Rome in 2002. In December, Italy named ADL national director Abraham Foxman a Commendatore of the Italian Republic, one of the country’s highest civilian honors.

In February, Andrea Jarach was elected president of the Federation of Italy-Israel Associations. Rome Jewish community member Angelo Pavoncello was elected the new president of the council of Rome’s 15th municipal district. In July, Giorgio Sacerdoti was elected president of the

Contemporary Jewish Documentation Center (CDEC), Italy's leading institute for research on anti-Semitism and the Holocaust. Leone Kalon took up the post of chief rabbi of Livorno in September. In May, Cobi Benatoff, an Italian Jew who was president of the European Jewish Congress, ended his tenure as president of the European Council of Jewish Communities, and in the summer assumed the presidency of the Milan Jewish community's school foundation. In December, the Anti-Defamation League named Rome lawyer Alessandro Ruben as its chairman in Italy.

Writer Alberto Lecco died in May at the age of 83. In October, Oscar Mires, a past president of B'nai Brith in Milan, died. Stefano Madia, an actor and journalist who was also a leading member of the Rome Jewish community, died in December, aged 49. Other deaths included author Elisa Springer, a survivor of Auschwitz, Bergen Belsen, and Terezin, and artist Aldo Di Castro.

RUTH ELLEN GRUBER

Switzerland

National Affairs

THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS of October 19, 2003, marked a sharp shift to the right in the country's politics as the Swiss People's Party (SPP) finished first with 26.6 percent of the vote, and party leader Christoph Blocher was named justice minister. In a departure from the Swiss tradition of devising government policy by consensus of the multiparty seven-member executive, Blocher and his party fought aggressively for toughening Switzerland's laws regarding foreigners, whether asylum seekers or children of immigrants.

The SPP opposed passage of two referenda aimed at easing the naturalization process for Switzerland-born children and grandchildren of immigrants. In 2004, as voters debated the proposals, the party ran a campaign with blatantly racist messages—advertisements depicting black and brown hands greedy for Swiss passports; misleading statistics on the Muslim population; and pejorative slogans against immigrants from the former Yugoslavia and other countries. In the end, the strategy worked, as both referenda went down to defeat, a great political coup for Blocher. The party also succeeded in making it more difficult for asylum-seekers to enter Switzerland. Its next announced goal was forcing 500,000 Swiss citizens with dual nationality to choose between their Swiss and their foreign citizenships.

Blocher and his followers also had an impact on the country's justice system. A popular referendum requiring life sentences for certain designated "dangerous" crimes passed overwhelmingly even though it was opposed by all parties except the SPP, which wholeheartedly endorsed it. In fact, the only referendum during 2004 that could not be described as an SPP victory was that held on stem-cell research, which, surprisingly, was approved by a large margin.

Switzerland continued to watch the expansion and development of the European Union from the sidelines. As more Eastern European countries joined, Switzerland, at the center of Europe, stood out as one of the very few nonmembers on the continent, leading to speculation that it might ultimately become the only outsider.

This political climate of extreme conservatism, isolationism, and xeno-

phobia alienated people with other perspectives. One was Swiss artist Thomas Hirschhorn, who announced that he would not exhibit his works in Switzerland so long as Blocher was in the government. From his home in Paris, Hirschhorn infuriated many politicians by ridiculing Swiss democracy, and launched an artistic attack on Blocher with an installation at the Swiss Cultural Center in Paris titled “Swiss-Swiss Democracy.” The center was funded by the taxpayers of Switzerland, and the nation’s parliament, the Federal Assembly, retaliated by slashing over a million dollars from the annual budget of the national cultural foundation that administered it.

Israel and the Middle East

On December 1, 2003, the “Geneva initiative” was signed in Switzerland. It called for a comprehensive resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through a two-state solution based on the negotiations brokered by the U.S. at Camp David and Taba in 2000–01. An unofficial proposal drawn up by a number of prominent Israeli and Palestinian individuals, it was sponsored by the Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs under the leadership of Foreign Minister Micheline Calmy-Rey (see AJYB 2004, pp. 360–61). Although the Swiss government responded favorably to Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon’s unilateral Gaza disengagement plan as a sign of progress, it remained committed to the Geneva initiative because of its multilateral approach. Throughout 2004, Switzerland continued to speak out on behalf of the initiative and sought to expand its network of supporters. But since the plan lay dormant, superseded by Sharon’s unexpected proposal, Switzerland was in no position to take a leadership role in the resolution of the conflict.

There was growing sentiment in Switzerland—though not in official circles—for a binational Israeli-Palestinian state. This proposal meant the end of Israel as an independent entity, its Jewish population eventually turning into a minority governed by an Arab majority. Some of its anti-Zionist supporters dubbed it the Lausanne initiative, after the Swiss city on Lake Geneva where they held a conference to promote binationalism. This created some confusion with the government-supported Geneva initiative, named for the city only 40 miles away on the same lake.

During 2004, Switzerland ratcheted up its pro-Palestinian activities. Positioning itself at the forefront of respect for international law, the government repeatedly criticized Israeli policies, and received a mandate from the UN General Assembly to report on legal and humanitarian con-

sequences of the security fence that Israel was building in the West Bank. In September, Calmy-Rey led a Swiss delegation that paid a visit to PLO chairman Yasir Arafat, toured a number of Palestinian cities, and reported that an international conference was necessary under the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention to discuss Israel's treatment of civilians in the territories.

Jean Ziegler, a former Socialist member of the Swiss parliament and now UN special rapporteur on the right to food, urged the European Union to suspend ties with Israel, which he accused of creating a "humanitarian food crisis." Ziegler also suggested a boycott of the Caterpillar company for selling armored bulldozers to Israel, which, he said, were then used to destroy Palestinian houses, in Ziegler's view a violation of human rights. Israel rejected his report on the grounds that the recommendations were politically motivated, and called on the UN to replace Ziegler as rapporteur for abusing his mandate. Ziegler had a long record of involvement with the Swiss anti-Israel group *Collectif Urgence Palestine* and other similar organizations.

Pro-Palestinian activists continued to attract media attention and address public forums; pro-Israel voices, in contrast, were rarely heard. It was quite common to see advertisements for film documentaries, lectures, and radio or TV shows reflecting the hard-line Palestinian point of view, sometimes with an anti-Semitism tinge. Editorials and letters to the editor were virtually unanimous in condemning U.S. and Israeli actions in the Middle East throughout the year. Some pieces in the mainstream papers even went so far as to express admiration for suicide bombers, and came up with arguments to blame Israel for the deaths of Israelis in the terrorist attacks against hotels in Taba, Egypt (see above, p. 245).

Switzerland's reputation was tarnished during the year when allegations surfaced that Saddam Hussein's regime had deposited billions of dollars of illegal payments from the UN's "oil for food" program in Swiss bank accounts between 1990 and 2003. The scandal also implicated a Swiss company that had been supposed to monitor the program, but instead allegedly helped Iraq evade the international embargo by arranging to sell Iraqi oil to private companies (at a profit), and then paid off the Iraqi regime with generous bribes sent to those Swiss bank accounts.

Anti-Semitism and Extremism

The federal police issued a report indicating that no extremist group—whether of the right or the left—seriously threatened national security.

Nevertheless, it showed a dramatic increase in violent incidents perpetrated by far-left groups, which now had a combined membership estimated at 2,000. They were bolstered by support from antiglobalization activists, who organized demonstrations against meetings of the WTO (World Trade Organization), WEF (World Economic Forum), and G8 that took place in Switzerland.

The far right, for its part, consisted of skinheads, fascists, nationalists, neo-Nazis, and simple hooligans. They had no recognized leader, but operated through independent cells that law enforcement found difficult to infiltrate. Imitating American racist fringe groups, they called for “white power,” criticized democracy as a threat to civilization, and maintained ties with Holocaust deniers, who acted as their “intellectual” arm by organizing lectures, publishing newsletters, and building international networks. A number of the most notorious deniers had been tried and convicted under the antiracism laws in recent years, two of them fleeing the country to avoid prison—Jürgen Graf to Iran and René-Louis Berclaz to Serbia. Negotiations with the Serbian ambassador about extraditing Berclaz were fruitful, and the convicted man turned himself in at the end of December 2004, a year after his escape.

For some time, the far right had sought heightened visibility through media stunts such as parades and public displays of Nazi symbols in the streets, at stadiums, and in schools. Over the course of several years, skinheads had sought to disrupt the Swiss president’s annual address to the nation, delivered on the Grütli hill to mark the national holiday. This year, authorities limited access to the Grütli hill to ticket holders in order to prevent the skinheads from displaying armbands, flags, and other Nazi paraphernalia as they had in the past. Two weeks after this event, the Federal Court interpreted the Swiss law against racism so as to place severe limits on extremist activities. Previously, only “public” racist meetings were illegal, whereas “private” events, that is, those by invitation only, were not covered by the law—a loophole that skinheads and others used to rally hundreds of sympathizers in secret locations, by invitation only. The new court ruling, however, defined any gathering of 40 or more people who did not know each other before as a “public” meeting whether or not it was publicly advertised, and therefore made it subject to the antiracism law.

Some extremists were willing to use violence even to the point of murdering one of their own whom they suspected of disclosing inside information. In 2004, four skinheads belonging to the Chevaliers of the Aryan Order were tried for killing a 19-year-old member of the group. The

leader was sentenced to life imprisonment, two accomplices received 16-year prison terms, and the fourth person involved was sent to an institution for delinquent minors.

While the Swiss People's Party, now the most important political faction in Switzerland, had clearly shifted in a sharply rightward direction, there were groups even further to the right. Some tried, with minimal success, to enter mainstream politics. *Partei National Orientierter Schweizer* (PNOS), founded by skinheads, and the National Swiss Party both brought forward candidates for local elections, but they went down to defeat. The far-right Freedom Party had representatives on the city council in Biel, one of whom, Jürg Scherrer, was reelected in spite of his repeated racist and anti-Semitic statements that bordered on illegal incitement to group hatred, but the party remained of marginal significance.

More than a century ago, in 1893, Switzerland had outlawed the ritual slaughter of animals in the hope of discouraging Jews from settling in the country. An attempt to lift the ban in 2001 triggered a backlash led by the powerful Swiss Society for the Protection of Animals, which urged an amendment to the 1893 law ending even the importation of kosher and halal slaughtered meat from abroad. That this would make it impossible for observant Jews and Muslims to eat meat in Switzerland was acknowledged by the initiative's backers, some of whom had no hesitation in urging those affected to "become vegetarian or leave the country." The Society for the Protection of Animals launched an advertising campaign in Zurich early in 2004 that juxtaposed images of badly treated animals with pictures of inmates of Nazi concentration camps. The language of the initiative, however, seemed likely to alienate others outside the Jewish and Muslim communities since it would also ban the consumption of frog legs, battery farming, and other common techniques or practices.

Anti-Semitism continued to be expressed publicly in newspaper op-eds, letters to the editor, public lectures, and cultural events. Verbal abuse, insults, and graffiti were frequent. Fewer physical attacks were reported, but, for the first time in Switzerland, a Jewish day school and a Jewish sports club in Geneva were broken into, computers stolen, and anti-Semitic slogans scribbled.

Dieudonné, a French-Cameroonian stand-up comic, was scheduled to perform in Geneva, having already made a name for himself in France for racist and anti-Semitic statements, glorification of Osama bin Laden, accusations that Israel financed apartheid and genocide, and impersonations of a Nazi "rabbi" representing the "American-Zionist axis" (see AJYB 2004, pp. 319–20). The Geneva Department of Cultural Affairs

banned his show, but this only triggered a vast campaign in defense of the humorist, who was portrayed as a victim of political correctness, censorship, and the “very powerful Jewish lobby.” Dieudonné did issue a public apology to people of “Jewish religion that he may have hurt,” but his letter continued, “Ariel Sharon’s policies are those of a criminal and have to be denounced without being accused of anti-Semitism.” His show, rescheduled, sold out quickly, and six months later he returned to perform again. In an interview with a major daily, Dieudonné declared that he knew “who the real fascists are, now that I need bodyguards because of the Zionist campaign against me I wish that the Arabs get the atom bomb as soon as possible, it is the only way to install a real democracy.”

Islamic fundamentalism was fast becoming a major force in Switzerland as the country became a center for laundering money, training radical imams, and building fundamentalist networks. In 2004, Swiss police arrested Mohamed Achraf, a Moroccan terrorist who operated between Zurich and Madrid and was involved in the planning of major burglaries in Switzerland to finance the terror attack that took place in Spain.

Two of the most important Islamic figures in Europe were the Geneva-based brothers Hani and Tariq Ramadan. Both were frequently in the public eye. In 2003, Hani wrote an op-ed in the French daily *Le Monde* defending the stoning of adulterous women and describing AIDS as a deserved “punishment” for homosexuals. He was immediately fired from his teaching position in a Geneva public school, but a few months later, in 2004, an administrative court ruled that he had to be reinstated. Local authorities in Geneva refused and appealed the decision. As if to demonstrate that his views had not changed, Hani Ramadan subsequently published a book on Islamic law in which he described stoning as a compassionate punishment.

Even more controversial was Tariq Ramadan, who taught philosophy in a Geneva public high school and Islamic thought at the University of Fribourg. While cultivating the image of a moderate Muslim intellectual, some of his published work clearly indicated an affinity with the teachings of his grandfather, Hassan el-Banna, founder of the radical Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt (see AJYB 2004, pp. 317–19). Early in 2004, he announced he was leaving Switzerland to accept a tenured position in Islamic studies at the University of Notre Dame in the U.S. Some European commentators discretely expressed relief to see this controversial figure depart the continent. But weeks before he was due to leave Switzerland, Ramadan’s American visa was revoked without explanation, and

the academic year began at South Bend without him. Toward the end of 2004, still not having received any explanation from the U.S. State Department for the visa denial, Ramadan resigned his position at Notre Dame.

Mel Gibson's film *The Passion of the Christ* was a commercial success in Switzerland, thanks especially to massive attendance by Christian groups. Only one area of the country, the Neuchâtel region, did not get to see it, and this was because the major manager of movie theaters there, a Jew, refused to distribute what he called an "anti-Semitic film."

Holocaust-Related Matters

La Suisse et les Nazis: le Rapport Bergier pour tous (Switzerland and the Nazis: The Bergier Report for Everyone), which appeared in 2004, was a summary version of the massive 25-volume report of the special Swiss historical commission that was published in 2002 detailing Switzerland's role during the Holocaust, focusing on such issues as refugee policy and financial dealings with Nazi Germany. The shorter publication, designed for the general public, was prepared by journalist Pietro Boschetti. This French edition was privately sponsored, and there was as yet no funding for the issuance of a German edition.

Legislation was passed during the year granting pardons to those who had been punished for breaking the law to help save refugees in Switzerland during World War II. The first pardon went to Aimée Stitelmann, a Jewish citizen of Switzerland who was arrested and briefly jailed for feeding and hiding Jewish children. Her name was cleared by an ad hoc commission 60 years after the event. Twenty-six more cases, some of them posthumous, were submitted for review but had not been acted on at year's end.

Despite the new law, the Swiss ambassador to Israel, Ernst Iten, refused to attend the unveiling of a street sign renamed after Paul Grüninger, a Swiss police officer who was dismissed from his job and disgraced for forging documents to save 3,600 Jewish refugees. The ambassador explained that the new street was located in the Pisgat Ze'ev neighborhood of Jerusalem, located beyond the Green Line and thus outside the internationally recognized border. The Israeli press commented sarcastically about Switzerland's adjustable neutrality and its perhaps deliberate confusion between Holocaust memory and Israeli politics.

In the six years that had elapsed since the 1998 "global settlement" between Swiss banks and lawyers representing Holocaust survivors or their

heirs, only a fraction of the \$1.25 billion settlement had been distributed to those entitled to compensation. Judah Gribetz, the “special master” in the case, proposed that 75 percent of the unclaimed funds (amounting to many millions of dollars) should go to needy Holocaust survivors in the former Soviet Union, an idea that many survivors in the U.S. and Israel believed shortchanged them. U.S. District Court Judge Edward Korman had not yet made a final decision at the end of 2004.

A Swiss appeals court granted a group of Roma (Gypsies) the right to sue IBM over its alleged role in the Holocaust, the first such case against the U.S. computer maker. The court ruled that IBM, by providing the use of its technology, may have helped the Nazi regime pursue its policy of mass murder more quickly and efficiently than would otherwise have been possible.

JEWISH COMMUNITY

Switzerland’s 2000 national census showed the Jewish population stable at around 17,800, some 0.25 percent of the country’s total of seven million people. The number of Muslims was close to 300,000, or 4.26 percent, a significant jump from 0.26 percent in 1970. The number of Jewish communities declined by one, with the merger of the small congregation in Vevey-Montreux into the larger Lausanne congregation, after the Jewish old-age home in Montreux, where the synagogue was located, was sold to the city.

Although Jews were completely integrated into Swiss life, two religious issues remained problematic: the ban on ritual slaughter (see above) and the shortage of space in Jewish cemeteries that could provide perpetual plots. In some Swiss cities, such as Geneva, old Jewish cemeteries were almost full, and the creation of new private cemeteries was forbidden. Rather than having to conduct burials in secular cemeteries without perpetual plots, Jewish communities sought to negotiate arrangements with local authorities whereby both Jewish and municipal burial laws would be respected.

The umbrella organization for Swiss Jewry, the Swiss Federation of Jewish Communities, celebrated its centennial anniversary in a solemn commemoration attended by political and religious officials. A bilingual book (in French and German) was published for the occasion, *Vie et culture juives en Suisse—Jüdische Lebenswelt Schweiz*. Founded in 1904 to protect the rights of Swiss Jews in the wake of the national ban on ritual

slaughter, the federation expanded its role by establishing ties with leaders of other religious groups, politicians, intellectuals, social workers, and others. It developed a welfare network for Jewish refugees in Switzerland during World War II, voiced its concerns to the government regarding restitution of Holocaust victims' assets, and, while maintaining an attitude of Swiss patriotism and political neutrality, opposed anti-Semitism. To be sure, the organization had been subject to criticism from those who considered it too timid and conciliatory on issues of anti-Semitism, or inconsistent in regard to Israeli policies. Even so, its prominent role in the debate over Switzerland's role during World War II raised the federation's profile in the community. Run by volunteers and a tiny professional staff, it maintained relations with other Jewish communities in Europe and beyond.

Alfred Donath, president of the federation, took sides in a controversy involving the World Jewish Congress (WJC). During the year, the WJC abruptly closed a Swiss bank account containing \$1.2 million, transferring the sum to an undisclosed beneficiary. A few months later, the WJC made an apparently unrelated decision to shut down its Geneva office, angering the employees and the local Jewish community. When the bank withdrawal was disclosed, Donath insisted on a "prompt accounting of this matter" and on an independent audit of the WJC, for which he was suspended from the European Jewish Congress, the WJC's regional affiliate. Another critic, WJC vice president Isi Leibler, an Australian Jew now living in Israel, was stripped of his membership on the group's steering committee. The Swiss media had a field day with the story since the WJC had been at the forefront of the battle with Swiss banks over the Holocaust-era bank accounts, and now the Jewish organization had to explain about its own Swiss bank account. After weeks of heated exchanges gleefully reported in the media, the WJC apparently agreed to an independent audit, but Donath had not yet been rehabilitated within the European Jewish Congress.

Sigi Feigel, a prominent lawyer who presided over the largest Jewish community of Switzerland, the Israelitische Cultusgemeinde Zurich, died at the age of 83, having devoted his life to fighting racism, bigotry, and anti-Semitism. In his last years, Feigel was often in disagreement with the leadership of the Federation of Jewish Communities and with the Israeli government.

BRIGITTE SION
(WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF JOSEPH ALPERN)