

Belgium

National Affairs

TWO LANDMARK EVENTS took place in Belgium during February. The Belgian Senate held a solemn ceremony on February 7, with the royal family present, to mark 175 years since the adoption of the nation's constitution, and more than 3,000 elementary-school children were brought there to watch a reenactment of the adoption. Later in the month, the Atomium, the world-famous structure built for the 1958 Brussels World's Fair, was reopened to the public. It had taken more than a year to renovate, at the cost of 27 million euros.

Belgium took a major step toward modernization in 2006 by introducing an electronic identity card the size of a bankcard, with a microchip in it. It was expected to cut down sharply on instances of identity theft.

Local elections, the first since 2000, were scheduled for October 8. These would also be the first such elections to be organized and overseen by the individual Regions rather than the federal government. The contested offices were municipal counselors for 589 cities and towns, representatives on ten provincial councils, and other positions. As election day came out on the second day of Sukkot, a good number of Jews could not vote. But voting was compulsory in Belgium, and so the Jewish Central Consistory issued observant Jews the necessary affidavits enabling them to cast ballots by proxy.

The electoral prospects facing the center-left national governing coalition—made up of Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt's Dutch-speaking Liberal Democrats, based in Flanders, and the French-speaking Socialists in Wallonia—were marred by a widespread public perception that crime and corruption were out of control.

First, there was the long-running case of serial killer Michel Fourniret (see AJYB 2005, p. 352), who had evaded justice for years and was finally extradited to France in January 2006 to be tried for murdering six girls. Also, a scheme to fix soccer matches, first revealed in the fall of 2005, was corroborated by the VRT broadcast network in 2006, setting off an investigation. Then, Jacques Van Gompel, the Socialist mayor of Charleroi—a city that had been grappling for years with organized

crime—was indicted for forgery, use of forged documents, and embezzlement, and was jailed pending trial. According to the crown prosecutor, he and his cronies had been taking public funds for some ten years.

A sensational instance of breakdown of law and order occurred on April 14, when seventeen-year-old Joe Van Holsbeeck was fatally stabbed in Brussels's central train station in the heart of the city, in the middle of rush hour, by a person who was after his MP3 player. The assailants got away but were later identified through evidence preserved on surveillance cameras. They were both minors from Poland, and their trial was expected to take place in 2007. On April 23, about 80,000 people held a silent demonstration in the streets of Brussels in memory of the young victim. And on June 9, two little girls, aged ten and seven, disappeared during a block party. Their bodies were found 20 days later: both had been strangled and one raped. The prime suspect, Abdallah Ait Oud, was arrested shortly afterward but denied any guilt despite strong evidence against him. His trial was also set for 2007.

As widely predicted, the government parties suffered significant losses in the elections. In Wallonia, the major beneficiary was the Christian Democratic Party, and in Flanders it was the right-wing anti-immigrant party Vlaams Belang (Flemish Interest), whose strength in the province rose from 14.9 percent in 2000 to 20.6 percent, second only to the Flemish Christian Democrats. In the city of Antwerp itself, however, Vlaams Belang won only about the same percentage it had in the last election, and garnered just 20 votes on the 55-seat council, two less than the Socialist victors. The Antwerp result came as a relief to Belgians who feared the rise of the extreme right, while Vlaams Belang leader Filip Dewinter, who would have become mayor had his party won in the city, ascribed the result to the immigrant vote.

Prime Minister Verhofstadt expressed disappointment with the results of the elections and noted, "We must acknowledge that the government has had a few bad months and we know that whoever leads faces the most fire." With national elections due in 2007, there was speculation that a weakened Verhofstadt might seek to bolster the coalition by bringing the Christian Democrats into it.

Despite its failure to gain ground in Antwerp, the overall success of Vlaams Belang underscored public concern about integrating Muslims into Belgian life. Muslims living in the country, estimated at about 400,000, constituted close to 4 percent of the total population, making Islam the second largest religion in the country, exceeded only by Roman Catholicism.

A number of controversial incidents involving Muslims occurred dur-

ing the year. In May, some Catholic churches providing refuge to illegal immigrants found instances of desecration and the de facto transformation of the churches into mosques. Two Muslim teachers in Brussels public schools were fired in July for refusing to remove their headscarves while teaching, a violation of the law requiring religious neutrality in the classroom. And on the night of September 25, not long before the elections, North Africans living in the Brussels suburb of La Marolles rioted after hearing that a prisoner had died in his cell. The mayhem—setting cars on fire, rock-throwing, and window-smashing—was repeated the next two nights as well.

Israel and the Middle East

Belgium, whose capital city of Brussels housed the headquarters of the European Union, maintained the EU position on Middle Eastern affairs, supporting the creation of a Palestinian state that would live in peace with Israel. On January 31, after the EU announced it would not recognize the Hamas government that had won the Palestinian elections until Hamas recognized Israel and renounced violence, Belgium's minister of cooperation and development suspended two development projects in the Palestinian Authority. The Foreign Ministry, however, taken by surprise by the move, withheld comment when questioned by reporters.

In March, a Hamas member of the Palestinian parliament applied for a Belgian visa to attend an EU conference in Brussels. Belgium turned down the request, officially for "technical" reasons, but the president of the European Parliament told reporters that the actual reason was the status of Hamas as a terrorist organization. Afterwards, Foreign Minister Karel De Gucht said that Belgium was anticipating that the EU would develop overall guidelines on Hamas visa applications.

The pro-Israel cause in Belgium was seriously undermined on March 25, when Pierre Galand was elected president of the Secular Action Center (*Centre d'Action Laïque*), a highly regarded human-rights non-governmental organization (NGO). While Galand, then serving as a Socialist senator, was a major humanitarian figure, he was also president of the Belgo-Palestinian Friendship Association and a longtime critic of Israel.

General August Van Daele, Belgium's chief of defense, made an official visit to Israel in late April. He met with the defense minister, the chief of staff, and several other high-ranking military officials, and spent time at Israel Aircraft Industries and at a military base.

With the outbreak of Israel's war with Hezbollah in southern Lebanon,

Arab, Lebanese, and Belgian activists protested daily in front of EU headquarters in Brussels, carrying signs with such slogans as "Stop Israeli terrorism" and "Israel today is committing a deliberate crime against Lebanon." A July 20 press conference in the capital featured Bachir Cham, a Belgian-professor born in Lebanon who now ran a Lebanese hospital, charging that Israel was using chemical weapons.

In late July, in the midst of the war, a Belgian couple of Lebanese origin filed a lawsuit against Israel's prime minister, defense minister, and chief of staff for war crimes. They said they had been on vacation in Lebanon with their three children when Israeli planes destroyed their apartment, forcing them to flee via Syria. Their suit was filed under Belgium's law of universal jurisdiction, which allowed legal action against intentional crimes committed outside the country.

On August 11, relatives of the Israeli soldiers kidnapped and held captive by Hamas and Hezbollah arrived in Brussels for meetings with members of the European Parliament, followed by a press conference. They urged the Europeans to help secure the release of the prisoners, or at least determine their condition. The speaker of the Belgian Chamber of Deputies met separately with the families and promised to contact his counterpart, the speaker of the Lebanese parliament, to obtain information about the men. A pro-Israel rally calling for the release of the prisoners, coordinated with these meetings, took place outside the European Parliament building.

Immediately after the cease-fire came into effect, a Belgian NGO, Medical Aid for the Third World, sent a solidarity mission to southern Lebanon. The group spent a week visiting bombed-out areas, transferred money to local humanitarian agencies, issued statements severely condemning Israel, and urged that Israel be made to pay the costs of rebuilding.

The union representing Belgian military personnel at first expressed some hesitation about contributing troops to the UN international force that would patrol the southern Lebanese border after the war, for fear that the soldiers might be used for the risky job of disarming Hezbollah (ten Belgian peacekeepers had been killed in Rwanda). Upon being reassured that they would not have to do this, the union approved, and a 370-person Belgian contingent went to Lebanon. These included 140 combat soldiers, along with medics, engineers, and experts in bomb disposal.

In late December, two of the Belgian members of a UN force clearing mines in southern Lebanon were wounded when they stepped on a cluster bomb.

Racism and Anti-Semitism

Harassment of Jews in Belgium remained a major problem during 2006. There were taunts, assaults, and other anti-Semitic actions, creating a situation in which the Jewish schools in Antwerp had to be protected by high walls and barbed wire, with armed guards manning the entrances. Just as worrisome was the proliferation of anti-Semitic messages and even calls for violence on the Internet.

Orthodox Jews, whose distinctive Jewish appearance made them frequent targets, were sometimes accosted on trains, insulted, and threatened. Outright violence occurred in two cases. Late on the night of October 2, two teenage students of the Wilrijk yeshiva were attacked by a gang of three youths. Although their glasses were broken, neither boy was seriously injured. A complaint was filed at the police station. And on the night of November 30, a group of Hasidic students aged 13–15 arriving for an outing in Beringen were assailed by a group of neighborhood youths of Turkish origin. The latter struck one of the students and then hurled rocks and paving stones that broke the windows of the youth hostel where the students were supposed to stay, all the while shouting anti-Semitic insults. As the police could not guarantee the boys' safety, they returned to Antwerp at 2 a.m. The Beringen police took in ten people for questioning, six of whom were minors. Interior Minister Patrick Dewael sent a letter to the Consistory three weeks later expressing dismay over the incident and assuring the Jewish community that the federal government gave high priority to combating racism.

In early February, Jewish storekeepers on Lambert Crickx Street in "The Triangle," a garment-making and wholesaling Brussels neighborhood, were repeatedly harassed and bullied by a man of North African descent, who complained that Jews made too much money.

The crypt of the Memorial to Belgium's Jewish Martyrs, located in Anderlecht, was vandalized on July 24. An urn containing human ashes from Auschwitz-Birkenau was emptied of its contents, a grating was torn off, windows were smashed, documents destroyed, and the ground covered with condoms and excrement. All the doors were intact; the vandals broke in by scaling a wall behind the crypt. Police said that in the absence of anti-Semitic messages or Nazi symbols there was no reason to believe that the perpetrators had anti-Jewish motivations. Three tags were found on a wall, including one with skull and crossbones.

An investigation was launched on August 1 into e-mails that had been sent for more than a year to lawyers and elected officials whose names

and e-mail addresses were available on the Internet. The person sending the messages called himself Adel Khedira, and he claimed to be a victim of a mainly French “Jewist” plot that had occult powers and caused “murders, rapes, thefts, disease, hunger, isolation, and slander.” In his words, “the Jewists are the basest and most criminal species on Earth.”

On December 13, a customer at the Brussels branch of FNAC—a large chain store—found labels affixed to the back covers of books on Judaism. They bore two messages: “*Américains-Israéliens et leurs amis juifs: dominants morbides! Palestine-Irak libres*” (Americans, Israelis, and their Jewish friends: Morbid dominants! Free Palestine and Iraq), and “*Auschwitz: une histoire d’hier pour massacrer les Palestiniens aujourd’hui*.” (Auschwitz: A story of the past to massacre Palestinians today.) The scandalized manager took the books off the shelves and notified the authorities.

After many years of legal maneuvering and repeated appeals, the Brussels Appeals Court issued a major decision on April 18 dealing with the dissemination of hate on the Internet. Daniel Féret, chairman of the extreme right-wing *Front National* (National Front), and his right-hand man and Webmaster of the Front’s Internet site, Georges-Pierre Tonnelier, were found guilty of inciting racial hatred and discrimination by placing xenophobic tracts and the contents of the party’s platform on the site during 1999–2001, at which time Féret was a member of the Federal Chamber of Representatives. Both men were barred from holding public office, Féret for ten years and Tonnelier for seven. Féret was sentenced to 250 hours of community service—to be spent helping integrate foreigners—and Tonnelier was fined 744 euros. Unlike the 2004 court ruling that the Vlaams Blok party was racist and had to dissolve (see AJYB 2005, p. 355), the National Front, in this case, was acquitted and only its leaders convicted as individuals.

Holocaust-Related Matters

On January 27, Holocaust Memorial Day in Belgium—and the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz—a commemoration ceremony for the victims was held in Egmont Palace.

The ten-year-old Jewish Museum of Deportation and Resistance (JMDR) in Mechelin was an extremely popular site, receiving about 5,000 adult visitors annually and some 30,000 high-school students, who, with the support and encouragement of the Ministry of Education, were brought to experience the 90-minute guided tour that gave a historical pic-

ture of the Holocaust in Belgium and its impact on the Jewish and Gypsy communities. The museum was housed in an actual SS barracks from World War II that had been used to assemble Jews for deportation. Although located in the Flemish part of Belgium, it drew 40 percent of its visitors from the French-speaking area of the country.

The JMDR was also a documentation center for information on the persecution of Jews and Gypsies during the Nazi era. In 2006 it scanned, inventoried, and conserved in acid-free boxes five major archival collections: the registry of Jews kept by Belgian municipalities (46,000 names); the lists of Jews maintained by the Jewish communities themselves (34,000 names); the card index created by the Nazi SD of those deported from Drancy to Auschwitz (9,000 names); transport lists of deportees from Mechelen to Auschwitz. (25,000 names); and the files of the Aliens Police. Still ongoing was a project of matching 12,000 surviving photographs to the names of deportees from Mechelen.

In 2005, Prime Minister Verhofstadt asked the JMDR to advise in the planned renovation of the Belgian national exhibition in the Auschwitz State Museum, a project facilitated by the Belgian military authorities and paid for, in part, by the National Lottery and the newly formed Jewish Foundation of Belgium (see below). The new Belgian exhibition was opened on May 7, 2006, in the presence of the prime minister, other government officials, and representatives of the Jewish community.

By 2006, the JMDR, a victim of its own success, could not accommodate all who wished to make use of it. After a Flemish government study suggested that the museum could attract as many as 70,000 people a year if its facilities were enlarged, the government entered into negotiations with the museum about tripling the institution's size. Claude Marinon, a well-known lawyer, MP, and city councilor of Antwerp, headed the negotiating team for the museum.

On June 30, 2005, the Belgian government signed the legal document creating the Fondation du Judaïsme de Belgique (Jewish Foundation of Belgium), or FJB, through which compensation would be paid to the Jewish community for property plundered during the Nazi era. This was fulfillment of a provision of the 2001 law on compensation to individuals stating that the balance of the amounts set aside that were not paid to individual claimants must be made available to the Jewish community.

The FJB, headed by its president, Senator Roger Lallemand, and its president, Georges Schnek, was mandated to distribute funds to help pay for the Jewish community's social, cultural, and religious activities and also to combat racism, intolerance, and the violation of human

rights. In 2006, under its Solidarity 3000 project, the foundation announced it would pay any Jew who lived in Belgium during all or part of World War II the sum of 3,000 euros, minus amounts already received under the Belgian and German reparations laws. A total of 5,200 applications were received in the course of the year.

JFB money was also allocated to assist needy Jewish victims of the Nazis, discreetly distributed through Jewish social-service agencies; support the Jewish Museum of Deportation and Resistance's "Let's give them faces" program, dedicated to locating and publishing photographs of all 28,902 Jews from Belgium deported via Mechelen and northern France to their deaths; help renovate and update the Belgian pavilion at the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, as noted above; and provide help for children attending Jewish schools whose parents were in serious financial straits.

JEWISH COMMUNITY

Communal Bodies

The Central Jewish Consistory of Belgium—whose history antedated that of Belgium itself—was the official umbrella organization for the country's Jews, representing the community before the government, other official bodies, religious groups, and foreign Jewish communities. Julien Klener, who served as Consistory president, often spoke at government events and at academic convocations. In 2006 he also addressed an ecumenical conference organized by the World Jewish Congress in Brussels and presented the Consistory perspective at public meetings in Sweden, Greece, and Italy.

Beginning in 2005, the Belgian Senate had conducted hearings on whether to require the stunning of animals prior to slaughter so as to minimize pain, a change that would create significant problems for the practice of kosher slaughter (see AJYB 2006, pp. 366–67). The Consistory, as the country's official representative of Judaism, presented the case for the humane nature of kosher slaughter. The issue was settled, at least for the moment, when the High Court of Appeals ruled in 2006 that the matter was a religious one, and separation of religion and state precluded any government action.

Combating anti-Semitism was a major responsibility of the Coordinating Committee of Jewish Organizations in Belgium (CCOJB) in Brus-

sels and the Forum of Jewish Organizations in Antwerp. Thus, for example, the CCOJB sought ways to dialogue with the Muslim Executive of Belgium so as to encourage moderate Muslims to speak out against extremists who spewed anti-Semitism, and the Forum announced it would sue all those who spoke at the Tehran Holocaust-denial conference in December. As Belgian law made denial of the Holocaust a crime, any conference speaker stepping on Belgian soil, it argued, should be liable to prosecution.

Service Social Juif (Jewish Social Service) was the Brussels Jewish community's primary provider of assistance to all those in need, without regard to national, religious or ideological distinctions. On June 22, Jewish Social Service sponsored a multicultural "world meal" during which four different ethnic and cultural communities that regularly made use of its facilities prepared traditional dishes and put on a show. One of the participating groups consisted of Tutsi survivors of the Rwandan genocide, who had been helped by the service since 2002. On August 19, 2006, Viviane Lipsztadt, the service's social assistance coordinator, and Rabbi David Meyer traveled to Rwanda to meet with survivors, visit places of remembrance, and confer with the authorities in charge of preserving the memory of this genocide.

Pro-Israel activities were largely the province of the Belgian Zionist Federation. In 2006, besides speaking out for Israel during the summer war against Hezbollah, the federation took steps to help the Israeli community of Kfar Vradim, with which it had maintained a partnership relationship since 2000. After a meeting between a four-member federation delegation and Kfar Vradim leaders on August 8—held in the center of Israel because the town was too close to the war zone—the Belgian group organized a fund-raising campaign to help the children of Kfar Vradim and offered home hospitality to any of its families who wanted to stay in Antwerp or Brussels until hostilities ended.

Zionist and Israel-oriented cultural activity was carried out by the Ben-Gurion Circle. During 2006 the organization sponsored lectures, film showings, and colloquia on Jewish history, anti-Semitism, Israeli politics, the situation in the Middle East, and the danger of radical Islam. On March 26 it joined with the European Sephardic Institute for a day devoted to the plight of Jewish refugees from Arab countries. The Ben-Gurion Circle also was responsible for the Habonim Dror youth movement, which held educational programs every Saturday afternoon and during school vacations for children age six and up.

The Jewish Secular Community Center (CCLJ) emphasized Jewish

cultural and moral values rather than religious practices or Zionism. In 2006 it produced a pamphlet, *Comprendre la Shoah et les génocides du XX^e siècle* (Understanding the Holocaust and the Genocides of the Twentieth Century) to be used in Belgian schools, which covered not only the Nazi program to annihilate the Jews, but also attempts to wipe out the Armenians and the Tutsi.

On March 16—as part of a week of action against racism organized by the Movement against Racism, Anti-Semitism, and Xenophobia (MRAX)—the CCLJ hosted a showing of the documentary film *Rwanda, les collines parlent* (Rwanda: the hills speak). Some Hutu deniers of the Tutsi tragedy started heckling, and one issued death threats against the Brussels president of Ibuka, the association of Rwandan victims. The CCLJ issued a statement denouncing this attack on the dignity of the survivors and of the dead.

The CCLJ, in cooperation with other likeminded groups, brought 40 young people aged 15–17 from Belgium, France, Israel, and the Palestinian territories together for ten days in July at Limeil-Brévannes, France, to share their views about human rights, racism, and democracy, and to visit important sites. The organizers later noted that the participants corresponded with each other after the program ended, suggesting that more united them than divided them.

An important communal milestone for Belgian Jews in 2006 was the 70th anniversary of Beth Lechem. Founded in 1936 to provide food to poor Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe, several of its members were deported and killed during the Holocaust. After World War II it helped those returning from the concentration camps. There were no government subsidies, salaries or operating expenses, as all those involved were volunteers.

Education

Ganenu Athenaeum in Brussels, a Zionist-oriented day school known for providing quality education in both Jewish and secular subjects, encompassed both a primary school and a high school. Starting in the 2006–07 school year, the first four grades were housed in a new building with 13 classrooms. On October 10, to mark the tenth anniversary of the school's twinning arrangement with Collège Saint-Pierre (Saint Peter's Middle School), Princess Mathilde, the wife of Crown Prince Philippe of Belgium, visited Ganenu. The purpose of the twinning was to demonstrate harmony between religions on the basis of shared ethics.

The Jewish Students Union of Belgium (UEJB) celebrated its 60th birthday on December 18. Begun after World War II by a few Jewish students—many of them orphans—who had returned or come out of hiding after the Nazi years, the first meetings were held in private homes or local pubs, and activities were primarily of a social nature. Six decades later, more than 800 people attended its annual ball, and, as one of more than 40 European Jewish student organizations, the UEJB stood as a symbol of the rebirth of Judaism in the Diaspora. Many of its alumni achieved eminence in Belgium and other countries.

The Brussels-based *Institut d'Etudes du Judaïsme* (Institute of Jewish Studies), directed by Prof. Thomas Gergely, was the only university-level establishment in the country to offer degree programs in Jewish studies exclusively. Classes, given in the evening and on Saturday, covered the Jewish experience from Antiquity to the present, as well as Jewish art and Hebrew language and literature. Close to 200 students were enrolled, many of them students at Brussels Free University, which gave credit for these courses. The institute also ran a public lecture series on Jewish topics and participated in a research project, "Jewish Cultures and Medical Tradition in Humanist Europe," which sought to establish a link between medical practices and Jewish identity. A publication series sponsored by the institute, called "la Collection Mosaïque," had been putting out books since 2002.

Interfaith Relations

An exhibition at the ninth-century Saints Michael and Gudule Cathedral in Brussels, held from November 16, 2006, through January 8, 2007, was a unique event in the history of Judeo-Christian relations: the exhibition of the work of a Jewish artist in a church. The artist was Jean-Paul Leon, and the theme of the paintings was the menorah—a key symbol of Judaism—depicted in various ways. Enhancing the impact of the exhibition was the anti-Semitic story told by the church's stained-glass windows. In 1370 the Jewish community of Brussels was accused of stabbing holy wafers, whereupon blood flowed from these "wounds." Several Jews were burnt at the stake for the "crime" and their property confiscated. The fifteenth- and sixteenth-century windows of the cathedral illustrated these scenes, and many of the faithful continued to believe the story into modern times. In 1968, in line with the spirit of Vatican II, the diocesan authorities publicly acknowledged the tendentiousness of the accusations, and some years later a plaque was put up at the site emphasizing

the falsity of the legend. The Leon exhibition, encouraged by the local Roman Catholic religious authorities, testified to the excellent relations between Jewish and Christian communities in Brussels.

Although their numbers had diminished to three, the Sisters of Zion community in Brussels kept up interfaith activities with Jews. Besides conducted Hebrew classes—steeped in rabbinical sources—for people of all ages and religions, maintaining a library and documentation center, and attending public events of Jewish significance, it participated during 2006 in a conference entitled “Jews, Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, Agnostics, Let’s Build Bridges Together—Using My Conviction to Open Up to Others”; played a major role in an interreligious tour of houses of worship in the city, including a synagogue, a Vietnamese pagoda, a Pakistani mosque, and the Orthodox cathedral; and organized two open-house events where it explained to visitors from Belgium and abroad the work it did to narrow the gap between Jews and Christians.

In Flanders, the Forum of Jewish Organizations participated in several meetings called by Minister for Home Affairs Marino Keulen to promote interfaith dialogue. The official policy that Keulen announced as a result of the meetings was to allow construction of new mosques with government support provided that the imams used the Dutch language rather than Arabic.

Culture

The Jewish Museum of Belgium’s exhibition on “175 years of Jewish Life in Belgium,” which began in 2005, ended on September 3, 2006, European Jewish Culture Day. It was followed, from September 10 through October 20, by an exhibition devoted to the work of photographer Dan Zollman that featured images of Antwerp’s Hasidic community. October 18 marked the opening of *Trajectoires et espaces juifs. La schoule de Molenbeek. Facettes d’un judaïsme contemporain*, explaining facets of contemporary Belgian Judaism through an exact replica of a small synagogue in the heart of Brussels. There was also a series of lunchtime lectures offered twice a month on Jewish art and culture. And in partnership with ASF—a group of young volunteers—the museum sponsored some 20 worksites in Europe, with projects ranging from the renovation of apartments for elderly people to support for centers for the handicapped, the building of playgrounds, and, above all, cleaning and refurbishing places of remembrance. Mindful of bolstering its national identity, the museum conducted a number of events and activities in Dutch.

The *Fondation de la Mémoire Contemporaine* (Contemporary Memory Foundation) was created in 1994 to collect information, primarily through interviews, on the recent history of Jews and Judaism in Belgium and their contributions to the nation. The foundation also undertook scientific research into previously obscure aspects of Belgian Jewish history, publishing books on such topics as aid for Jewish war victims after World War II, Jewish education under the German occupation, and illegal immigration to Palestine before the creation of the State of Israel. Its *Cahiers* series published a third set of journals in 2006 focusing mainly on the experiences of German or German-speaking Jews in Belgium.

The Institute of Jewish Audiovisual Memory (IMAJ) screened a number of films of Jewish interest during the year. Often, the showings were followed by talks by the author or producer and discussions with the audience, and on one occasion, after a film on what happened to the Armenians during World War I was shown, a debate was held. Some of the screenings were cosponsored by other Belgian Jewish organizations. IMAJ was responsible for choosing the Israeli films for the Mediterranean Film Festival that was held November 26–December 3.