

East-Central Europe and the Balkans

COUNTRIES IN THE REGION were considered some of Israel's best friends in Europe, and, during Israel's summer war with Hezbollah in southern Lebanon, both pro-Israel and pro-Hezbollah demonstrations took place in several cities. Governments also issued stern denunciations of Holocaust denial in the wake of the denial conference that Iran hosted in December. Still, anti-Semitism, right-wing extremism, and left-wing anti-Zionism continued to plague the region.

Meanwhile, political developments within individual countries—including elections, cabinet reshuffles, and popular protests—also bore potential implications for Jews. Jewish life in most countries in the region continued to develop. Despite the relatively small number of Jews, new religious, social, and cultural possibilities opened up.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

A new law on property restitution, passed in July, aimed at restoring to their rightful owners land and buildings confiscated during the Balkan wars of 1992–95. The Jewish and Christian communities expressed dissatisfaction, arguing that the law discriminated in favor of Muslims.

Before Passover, copies of a full facsimile edition of the famous fourteenth-century Sarajevo Haggadah went on sale for the equivalent of \$1,350 each. The idea for the project as well as seed money for it came from James Wolfensohn, a former president of the World Bank. Proceeds from sales would, first, reimburse Wolfensohn and repay a bank loan that had been taken to pay for the publication, and the net profits would then be divided between the publisher and La Benevolencija, the Bosnian Jewish cultural, educational, and humanitarian agency.

During the year, Sarajevo's century-old Ashkenazi synagogue, which also housed the offices of the Jewish community, underwent renovation.

In July, 30 American college students, Jewish and Palestinian, visited the country to study the Bosnian peace accord as a possible model for solutions to the conflict in the Middle East. The trip was organized by Abraham's Vision, a group that encourages dialogue between Jews and Palestinians. In October, Sarajevo was the scene of a three-day conference on the status of Holocaust research in southeastern Europe. The event, organized by the Sarajevo Jewish community and Germany's

Goethe Institute, drew more than 100 academics and other experts from the Balkan states and elsewhere.

Bulgaria

Ceremonies were held in March to mark 63 years since the protests that halted the deportation of Jews from Bulgaria to Nazi death camps. The National Assembly, the nation's parliament, observed a moment of silence, and flowers were laid at a memorial plaque near the parliament building in Sofia that honored Dimitar Peshev, the body's wartime vice president, who led the protests by lawmakers, religious leaders, and ordinary citizens that stopped the deportations. The current speaker, Georgi Pirinski, told the legislators that Peshev's actions "will forever be an honor to the Bulgarian National Assembly," but also reminded them that "another truth should not be forgotten—the fact that 11,343 innocent Jews from Macedonia and Aegean Thrace, which were territories then administered by Bulgarian authorities, were exiled and found their death."

In February, the Israeli defense firm Elbit Systems signed a 57.3-million-euro deal to upgrade 18 Bulgarian military helicopters so as to make them compatible with NATO standards. On a two-day official visit to Bulgaria in June, Israeli president Moshe Katzav laid a wreath at the memorial to Peshev. Katzav and Bulgarian president Georgi Parvanov opened a forum of businessmen representing 15 Israeli and 80 Bulgarian firms that was aimed at boosting economic cooperation. "Bulgaria and Israel have good traditions in cooperating in spheres such as agriculture, food industry, tourism . . . but there are many other opportunities," Parvanov said. During Katzav's visit the two countries signed an agreement for visa-free travel. The Israeli president also met with local Jewish community leaders.

At least 5,000 Jews lived in Bulgaria, about half of them in Sofia. As many as 1,500 lived in Plovdiv and 500 in Varna, with smaller communities scattered in other cities. Bulgarian Jewish communities were linked under the umbrella Shalom organization, and Chabad was also active in the country. The only functioning synagogues were in Sofia and Plovdiv. In April, the Sofia Jewish community opened a second Jewish community center across the street from the synagogue.

In July, some 300–400 demonstrators staged an anti-Israel rally in Sofia, protesting Israel's war on Hezbollah in Lebanon. Most of the protesters were believed to be of Lebanese or Palestinian origin.

In October, President Parvanov, a former Socialist running as an in-

dependent, won a second five-year term by a landslide over MP Volen Siderov. Siderov, leader of the right-wing party Attack, was known for xenophobic statements and Holocaust denial. In August, a Sofia court ruled that Siderov's public hate speech against Roma, Jews, Turks, homosexuals, and all non-Bulgarians constituted harassment and incitement to discrimination. It ordered him to refrain from any similar statements in the future.

Croatia

The internal squabbles that split the Zagreb Jewish community during 2005 (see AJYB 2006, pp. 473–75) persisted through 2006. Rabbi Kotel Dadon, whose contract was not renewed in 2005, remained in Zagreb, where he and his followers founded a new congregation, Bet Israel, which was accorded government recognition as a separate Jewish community and founded its own school. Winning the backing of the London-based Conference of European Rabbis, it said it would push to receive a share of the established Jewish community's assets. Historian Ivo Goldstein was president of the new group. Beside his rabbinical duties, Dadon also began teaching Judaism and Holocaust studies at Zagreb University, the first time these subjects were taught there.

Mainstream Jewish community leaders, strenuously protesting the official recognition given to Bet Israel on the grounds that it violated Croatian law, hired another Orthodox rabbi, Zvi Eliezer Aloni. In June, Aloni was attacked on a Zagreb street by skinheads who pushed him to the ground while shouting, "Jews out," in German. Around the same time, the Jewish community reported receiving anonymous threatening letters.

The two Zagreb groups held separate celebrations to mark the 200th anniversary of the Jewish community in the city. The Israeli Philharmonic, directed by Zubin Mehta, performed a concert on May 31 to kick off a series of events marking the anniversary. The Croatian government announced it would fund the construction of a new Jewish center on the site of the city's former main synagogue, destroyed in World War II, but work was held up because of the conflict within Zagreb Jewry.

In September, the International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation (IRWF) presented President Stipe Mesic with its Raoul Wallenberg Award 2006. The presentation took place at Croatia's mission to the UN in New York, when Mesic was there to attend the General Assembly session.

In October, a new memorial and museum opened at the site of the infamous World War II Jasenovac death camp, where the Croatian fascist

regime killed tens of thousands of Serbs, Jews, and others. President Mesic and Prime Minister Ivo Sanader took part in the ceremony. Even though plans for the new facility had been drawn up with the advice of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum and Yad Vashem, the exhibits drew criticism from the Simon Wiesenthal Center's Efraim Zuroff, who said it did not tell the story of Croatia's wartime Ustasha regime in a clear enough way. Zuroff also pressed for the extradition from Austria of an alleged Croatian war criminal, Milivoj Asner.

Stjepan Steiner, a fighter with the World War II partisans who served as personal physician to the future Yugoslav leader, Marshal Tito, died in January at the age of 90. A cardiologist, he did volunteer work at the Jewish Old Age Home in Zagreb for 25 years. In December, Misha Montiljo, an activist in the Bet Israel Congregation and head of the Croatia-Israel Association, died in Zagreb at the age of 78.

Czech Republic

General elections in June left the Czech Parliament badly split with no clear winner, setting off months of political uncertainty. Mirek Topolanek, finally named prime minister in November at the head of a minority, single-party government, took until the end of December to cobble together a three-party center-right coalition that commanded a majority.

In October, an expert from the Tolerance and Civic Society organization said that neo-Nazism and other extreme right-wing manifestations in the Czech Republic had been relegated to the fringe of public discourse. Nevertheless, activities of neo-Nazi skinhead groups, especially concerts, went on through the year. In August, for example, police detained more than two dozen skinheads who staged a protest outside the Israeli embassy in Prague. There were also episodes of vandalism against Jewish sites. In October, for example, some 49 tombstones in the Jewish cemetery in Zamberk were toppled.

In December, in the wake of the Holocaust-denial conference in Iran, the Czech Senate passed a resolution condemning such denial, which "leads in its consequences to the rule of the lie, to the rejection of people's right to a dignified life, and to the installation of dictatorships and totalitarian regimes."

The Czech Republic enjoyed strong relations with Israel on many levels. In January, the Tivali company, a member of Israel's Osem Group, announced it would set up a \$30-million plant near Teplice for the pro-

duction of vegetarian food products, the company's first in Europe. Also in January, Israel extradited an Israeli citizen, Yakov Moshaylov, to the Czech Republic for trial. He was charged with throwing a grenade at a car owned by an Israeli casino owner in 2004. The attack, outside a casino in downtown Prague, left 18 people injured. In February, the Czech army announced the signing of a \$120-million contract for equipment from the Israeli arms manufacturer Rafael.

In the war between Israel and Hezbollah, Czech public opinion was generally behind Israel, but there were rallies in favor of both sides. In July, for example, about 200 demonstrators called on the Czech government to speak out against "Israeli aggression" and provide aid to Lebanon and the Palestinians. About 100 supporters of Israel staged a counterdemonstration.

The Czech government tried to help civilians, allocating about \$1 million in aid to provide Israel with fire-fighting equipment and the Lebanese government with tents, food, and medicine. "People are suffering on both sides," Foreign Minister Cyril Svoboda told reporters. A number of Czech NGOs raised money to aid Lebanese civilians hit by Israeli strikes.

Czech Jews held a fund-raising campaign for Israeli victims. Some of the money went to help repair Israeli schools and medical facilities struck by Hezbollah rockets and for children's recreational programs, and the rest enabled Israelis with disabilities as well as pregnant women and mothers with small children to spend time in the Czech Republic.

About 3,000 Jews were affiliated with Jewish organizations, communities, or institutions in the Czech Republic, though Jewish leaders believed that there were thousands more who were unaffiliated. Prague had the largest community, about 1,500 members. Orthodox, Reform, and Conservative congregations held services, but only a small minority of Prague Jews attended. The factional conflict that had split the Prague community over the previous two years (see AJYB 2006, p. 480) appeared to have settled down following communal elections at the end of 2005.

Brno had the second largest community, with about 600 members. In the fall, a new mikveh was opened in Brno and ground was broken in Prague for a new facility that would house a nursing home, a Jewish community center, and an assisted-living facility. It was expected to cost nearly \$7 million.

During the High Holy Days, police put Prague's historic Jewish sites under tight security. The government explained that there had been a terrorist threat. According to news reports, it had involved a plot by Islamic extremists to kidnap Jews and blow up one of the city's synagogues.

In February, Prague hosted a forum on Jewish communal development attended by more than 30 leaders of Jewish organizations from 25 cities across Europe. In April, more than 100 Hasidim converged on the town of Mikulov to mark the 238th anniversary of the death of the Hasidic master Shmuel Shmelke Horowitz, who served as rabbi there and was buried in the historic Jewish cemetery.

This year marked the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Prague Jewish Museum. The occasion was marked by an unprecedented "Year of Jewish Culture" program that included more than 70 events throughout the country. Under the auspices of Parliament, the Ministry of Culture, and the mayor of Prague, the museum partnered with more than 80 other institutions to provide exhibitions, concerts, festivals, and lectures. Among the major exhibits were "The Prague Ghetto in Images" at the Prague City Museum; "Mazel Tov—Good Luck" at the Jewish Museum, focusing on the traditional Jewish wedding ceremony; and an exhibition at the Polish Institute in Prague of works by the artist Bruno Schulz. In August, the Jewish Museum hosted an exhibit, "Defying the Beast," on the museum's activities during the 1906–1940 period. A festival of Jewish culture took place in Mikulov in May.

There were also a number of Holocaust commemorative events. In May, American musicians under the leadership of Murry Sidlin, dean of music at the Catholic University of America, performed *Defiant Requiem*, based on Verdi's famous work, at Terezin, the former concentration camp north of Prague that was now a memorial museum. The performance was in honor of the Terezin prisoners who, in 1943, performed the *Requiem* under the direction of a fellow prisoner, Czech conductor Rafael Schaechter.

Terezin was the scene of a Council of Europe seminar on Holocaust education in April, attended by education ministers from some 30 European countries. Also in April, a Yom Hashoah commemoration was held in downtown Prague, where the names of Czech Jews killed in the Holocaust were read aloud. The ceremony was organized by the Terezin Initiative Institute and the Czech Association of Jewish Youth. In August, a Japanese peace group erected a "peace pole" monument at Terezin.

In October, archaeologists discovered several graves from what appeared to be a long-buried medieval Jewish cemetery outside Pilsen, at a site where an Israeli developer planned to build a shopping mall and parking lot. Lengthy discussions resulted in a compromise whereby the developer agreed to build on stilts so as to protect surviving graves.

There was progress in compensating and restituting Jewish Holocaust

losses. In March, the Czech Foundation Fund for Holocaust Victims announced it had completed the process of compensating individual Holocaust victims, having paid out \$4.23 million over the previous five years to 516 people. The \$8 million remaining in the fund would be used to restore Jewish monuments and support cultural and educational projects. In November, the Czech-German Fund for the Future and the German foundation known as Remembrance, Responsibility and Future launched a project to provide health care and social programs for former prisoners of Nazi concentration camps, ghettos, and other prisons. In November, a new law waived the old deadline of December 31, 2006, for Jews to apply for the return of works of art that had been confiscated from their families during World War II, extending it indefinitely.

In April, Rudolf Slansky, Jr., son of the Jewish Czechoslovak communist leader who was executed after a show trial 1952, died at the age of 71. Slansky served as Czech ambassador to Moscow in the 1990s. In December, the Jewish community held an event in Prague to mark the 80th birthday of the celebrated writer and Auschwitz survivor Arnost Lustig, many of whose books dealt with the Holocaust.

Greece

A delegation from the European Jewish Congress took part in Greece's Holocaust Remembrance Day on January 27. The delegates also met with Prime Minister Kostas Karamanlis and President Karolos Papoulias, the latter telling his visitors that he was determined to combat all forms of historical revisionism and anti-Semitism. In August, Foreign Minister Dora Bakoyannis visited Israel as part of a tour of the Middle East. She met there with her Israeli counterpart, Tzipi Livni, and other senior officials.

In February, Israeli president Moshe Katzav visited Greece. This was the first visit ever by an Israeli head of state; it had taken until 1990 for Greece to grant Israel diplomatic recognition. During his stay, Katzav met with senior Greek officials in Athens and also visited Thessalonika—the historic Salonika, once home to 50,000 Jews and a major center of Jewry in the Balkans. Accompanied by President Papoulias, Katzav laid a wreath at a Holocaust memorial erected in 1997 and visited a museum dedicated to the history of Jews in the city that had opened in 2001. During Katzav's visit, Greek and Israeli representatives signed a cooperation agreement on industrial research and development.

In June, the Greek embassy in Washington organized the presentation,

at the U.S. Capitol, of a book on the Holocaust in Greece. Legislators, diplomats, State Department officials, Jewish leaders, and members of the Greek American community attended the event. The book, *Holocaust of Greek Jewry: Monuments and Memories*, was published by the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece, with the support of the Greek Ministry of Education and the General Secretariat for Youth.

In May, more than 300 Jews in their twenties and thirties from the Balkans and the Black Sea region of the former Soviet Union met at a beach resort in northern Greece for a three-day gathering called Geshet (Bridge). Organized by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), it combined social activities—including match-making—with workshops on religious, educational, and cultural issues.

Hungary

In the April general elections, Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsany, a socialist, became the first postcommunist Hungarian prime minister to win reelection, and he proceeded to introduce tough measures of economic reform. Violent protests broke out against his government in September after a secret tape surfaced, recorded on the day of the election, on which Gyurcsany was heard telling members of his party's inner circle that his government had "screwed up" and had lied to the country "morning, evening, and night" in order to get reelected.

Demonstrators demanding Gyurcsany's resignation attacked the studios of Hungarian Television. Hundreds were injured in clashes with police, and at least 200 rioters were arrested, many of them right-wing militants and soccer hooligans. They were heard to shout anti-Semitic slogans, and some displayed the red and white flag of Hungary's fascist, Nazi-allied, Arrow Cross movement that ruled during World War II. When the clashes were over as many as 40,000 demonstrators staged a peaceful protest outside the National Assembly, Hungary's parliament, demanding Gyurcsany's ouster. Jews in the capital stepped up security measures during the High Holy Days, but no incidents were reported.

The right-wing party Fidesz won sweeping victories in local elections on October 1. Later in the month another series of violent protests, led by right-wing extremists, disrupted ceremonies in Budapest marking the 50th anniversary of the abortive 1956 Hungarian uprising against the communist regime. As in the September protests, some of the demonstrators carried Nazi-era fascist flags.

Hungarian Jews remained vigilant about anti-Semitism. In November, the synagogue and other Jewish institutions in the town of Vac, north of Budapest, were vandalized and sprayed with anti-Semitic and anti-Israel slogans. That same month an Israeli medical student was assaulted verbally, and then physically, by a police inspector in the Budapest metro.

According to Israeli diplomats, the Hungarian media gave generally balanced coverage to the Israel-Hezbollah war, showing the results of rocket attacks on Israel as well as the effects of Israel's attacks. In August, about 120 Israeli children affected by the war, including seven Druze, were brought to Hungary for a holiday. They spent two weeks at the Jewish camp run by the JDC-Lauder Foundation at Szarvas, in southern Hungary. In September, Israeli ambassador Judith Varnai Shorer completed her term and returned to Jerusalem.

At least 100,000 Jews lived in Hungary, the overwhelming majority in Budapest. The main Jewish stream was Neolog, the Hungarian version of Reform, but other congregations, including Orthodox, Conservative, and others, also functioned, and Chabad had a strong presence. Most Hungarian Jews, however, were secular or unaffiliated. Of the smaller Jewish communities in provincial towns, the one in the eastern city of Debrecen was particularly active, hosting an annual conference that drew Hungarian-speaking Jews from neighboring countries, including Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, and Ukraine. These conferences served as a reference point for many Jews in the region.

There were Jewish-themed cultural events and conferences throughout the year. In February, the Jewish monthly *Szombat* organized a two-day conference examining what it called new forms of anti-Semitism, including anti-Zionism and Holocaust denial. The ninth annual Jewish Culture Festival took place in Budapest at the end of August. That same month the fourth annual Conference of European Jewish Women, Activists, Academics, and Rabbis was held at Central European University, whose Jewish studies program also ran a regular lecture series. In November, the Balint Jewish Community Center in Budapest hosted a three-day educational conference called *Keset*.

Budapest's downtown seventh district, the city's historic Jewish quarter, continued to undergo a steady process of gentrification. Two new kosher eateries opened. Several cafés owned by young Jews functioned in or near the district, and these served as de facto meeting places for young Budapest Jews. The most ambitious of the new cafés, Siraly (meaning "seagull" and, in slang, "fantastic") opened in October, aiming to serve

as both a standard café for the general public and as an informal Jewish cultural center. The only avowedly “Jewish” of the new cafés, run by the Masorti youth group Marom, had a mezuzah on the door and featured Jewish cultural and social events such as an eight-day Hanukkah festival that involved all the streams of Jewish life, from Orthodox to secular. It also hosted concerts, had a theater, and maintained a small Jewish library.

There were a number of Holocaust-related commemorations. Hungary marked its first Holocaust Memorial Day on January 27 with a ceremony in the National Assembly and other events. In February, a permanent exhibition was installed in Budapest’s Holocaust Memorial Museum, which had opened in 2004.

In the spring, the Hungarian government initiated a Holocaust compensation program that provided survivors up to \$1,800 for each immediate family member killed through the involvement of Hungarian collaborators. In September, the Simon Wiesenthal Center identified 92-year-old Sandor Kepiro as a convicted war criminal, found guilty immediately after the war of participating in an action in which thousands of people, including more than 1,200 Jews, were killed in Novi Sad, Serbia. He had fled to Argentina after his trial, however, and then returned to Hungary in 1996.

In September, at a ceremony in Budapest, the Catholic Church beatified Sara Salkahazi, a Hungarian nun killed by Hungarian fascists in 1944 for hiding Jews. In October, Hungarian officials placed a plaque at Pannonhalma Abbey to honor Eduard Benedek Brunschweiler, a Swiss representative of the Red Cross who protected about 3,000 people, including many Jews, at the abbey in 1944–45. On December 3, the Federation of Jewish Communities (MAZSIHISZ) presented its annual “For Jews in Hungary” award to Cardinal Peter Erdo for “strengthening dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Jewish community, and for preserving the memory of the Jews killed during the Holocaust and those who saved them.” It was the first time the award had been presented to a representative of the Catholic Church. An award was also presented to Justice Ministry official Erika Planko for her role in aiding the Holocaust compensation process.

Jewish composer and Holocaust survivor Gyorgy Ligeti, who fled Hungary after the abortive 1956 revolution, died in Vienna in June, aged 83. Gyorgy Faludy, an influential poet and translator who fled the fascists in 1938 and later suffered under communist persecution, died at his home in Budapest in September, at the age of 95. In October, philosopher Gyorgy Bence died in Budapest, aged 65.

Macedonia

Only about 200 Jews lived in Macedonia, almost all of them in the capital, Skopje, where they formed a close-knit community that was known for its Mois Hason Choir, which performed a number of times on Macedonian TV, recorded a DVD in its studio, and also released other DVDs of live recordings from concert performances. The choir got excellent reviews from local critics. One of its performances took place on the European Day of Culture in September, at the National Theater in Skopje. Only a minority of the choir's members, however, were Jewish.

Construction of the new Holocaust museum and memorial proceeded throughout the year. The structure was up in December, but the interior and façade still needed work, and a planned exhibition was still in the design stage.

Poland

As the year began, the conservative Law and Justice party was in power, although it controlled only a minority of the parliamentary seats. Law and Justice was headed by Jaroslaw Kaczynski, whose twin brother, Lech, had been elected president in 2005. In July, after Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz resigned as prime minister, Lech Kaczynski named his brother Jaroslaw prime minister.

Both men, conservative Catholics, denounced anti-Semitism several times during the year in speeches and meetings. In May, President Kaczynski met with Poland's chief rabbi, American-born Michael Schudrich, after the latter was attacked on the street on the eve of Pope Benedict's visit to Poland (see below, p. 495). At that meeting Kaczynski pledged "zero tolerance" for anti-Semitism. Ewa Junczyk-Ziomecka, a former deputy director of the planned new Museum of the History of Polish Jews, served as a government minister—undersecretary in charge of social issues and the president's plenipotentiary for interreligious and intercultural dialogue, with an emphasis on Jewish-Polish relations.

In the spring, when it became clear that the minority government could not maintain itself, Law and Justice entered into a coalition with two extreme-right parties. One was the nationalist Catholic League of Polish Families (LPR), whose leader, Roman Giertych, was named education minister, and the other was Self Defense, whose leader, Andrej Lepper, became deputy prime minister.

Giertych and Lepper denied that they or their parties were anti-Semitic.

Giertych especially denounced anti-Semitism repeatedly and described himself in interviews as a friend of Israel and the Jewish people. However, both these parties and/or their leaders had histories of anti-Semitism. The LPR was the ideological heir to the anti-Semitic pre-World-War-II National Democracy (Endecja) party. Giertych's grandfather was a notorious anti-Semitic politician, and his father, Maciej, represented the LPR in the European Parliament. Roman Giertych was honorary chair of the LPR's far-right youth wing, All Polish Youth, whose members included skinheads, some of whom had been filmed giving the Nazi salute and chanting Nazi slogans.

In November, Maciej Giertych fired an assistant after a video of her giving the Nazi salute at an All Polish Youth gathering surfaced on the Internet and in the Polish media. The video also showed participants shouting "Sieg Heil," and gathering around a huge burning swastika. A few days after the video was made public, a leading newspaper ran photographs of the LPR's deputy chairman at a concert of neo-Nazi skinhead music in 2002. In November, the LPR said it was cutting ties with All Polish Youth over the incident.

Another problem was that the LPR was close to Radio Maryja, the Catholic broadcaster notorious for anti-Semitic content. In fact Radio Maryja was also a strong supporter of the Law and Justice party. Observers believed that the radio station's backing was a factor in the party's victory in the 2005 election. Both Kaczynski brothers appeared frequently on its programs.

Radio Maryja had been censured in the past for anti-Semitism, and its activities during 2006 continued to provoke controversy. In April, under strong pressure from the Catholic hierarchy, its founder and director, Father Tadeusz Rydzyk, publicly apologized for anti-Semitic remarks made by a Radio Maryja commentator in March, accusing Jews of using the Holocaust experience for financial gain. Poland, he said, was "being outmaneuvered by Judeans who are trying to force our government to pay extortion money disguised as compensation." Poland's nongovernmental Media Ethics Council condemned the broadcast.

Marek Edelman, the last surviving leader of the World War II Warsaw Ghetto uprising, denounced Radio Maryja and called for a government clampdown on it. The 87-year-old Edelman said, in an open letter published in the media, that "some of these broadcasts are no different from those in the Nazi newspaper, *Der Stürmer*." Later in the year, the commentator guilty of the offensive remark was hired by Polish state radio, a move that also drew protests.

Jewish leaders said that the entry of the two extreme-right parties into the government brought a jump in the number of anonymous threatening letters and cell-phone text messages they were receiving. During the summer, the European Parliament passed a resolution warning of a “general rise in racist, xenophobic, anti-Semitic, and homophobic intolerance” in Poland. The resolution sparked an angry reaction in Poland, as did a report issued by the Anti-Defamation League about rising anti-Semitism in the country. In August, during his first visit to EU headquarters in Brussels, the new prime minister, Jaroslaw Kaczynski, said that claims of growing anti-Semitism were a myth created by the media.

Polish police, collaborating with the FBI, announced in July that they had closed down a Polish-language neo-Nazi Web site that was hosted on a U.S.-based server. In October, customs officials seized a box of about 300 neo-Nazi music CDs sent from the U.S. That same month a bookstore located in a Warsaw church that was notorious for selling anti-Semitic publications closed down.

In November, a group of leading non-Jewish intellectuals, working with the Open Republic Association, an NGO, sued the anti-Semitic publisher Leszek Bubel, head of a right-wing fringe party, saying his anti-Semitic activities offended them as Poles. Some 700 other Poles, including many leading cultural and political figures, signed an open letter supporting the suit.

Pope Benedict XVI made a three-day visit in late May to Poland, homeland of his predecessor, John Paul II. During the trip, the German-born Benedict visited Auschwitz. In a speech at the site, he told how difficult it was for him, as a German, to stand there, and also reflected on how incompatible the evil in Auschwitz seemed to be with the existence of a loving God. “In a place like this, words fail; in the end, there can be only a dread silence,” he said, “a silence which itself is a heartfelt cry to God: Why, Lord, did you remain silent?”

During the Auschwitz ceremony, Rabbi Schudrich said kaddish in the pope’s presence, and Cantor Simcha Keller, from Lodz, chanted *El Male Rahamim*, the memorial prayer for the dead. Benedict also met with Auschwitz survivors. Afterward, some commentators faulted him for not specifically condemning the anti-Semitism that led to the Holocaust.

Several incidents just before the pope’s visit to Poland marred the atmosphere somewhat. The day before Benedict visited Auschwitz, Rabbi Schudrich was assaulted as he came out of synagogue by a man who sprayed pepper spray at him, hit him, and shouted, “Poland for the Poles.” Schudrich was unhurt, and the incident was condemned by President

Kaczynski and other officials. A week earlier, youths had shouted anti-Semitic slogans at Schudrich and other Jews. Several months later, a Warsaw court convicted Schudrich's assailant of an act of violence and racially motivated hate speech, but gave him a suspended sentence.

In May, Rev. Michal Czajkowski resigned as cochairman of the Polish Council of Christians and Jews after being accused—and apparently admitting—that he had been a spy for the communist government for more than 20 years. The revelations and resignation came as a heavy blow to Jews and others involved in interfaith dialogue. Czajkowski was one of the most vocal friends of the Jews among the Catholic clergy, and some feared that his downfall and the surrounding scandal could have negative repercussions on Jewish-Catholic relations.

There were a number of Holocaust commemorations during the year, including the annual March of the Living in April, which this year drew about 8,000 participants. In August, a ceremony marked the 62nd anniversary of the liquidation of the Lodz Ghetto. In July, a ceremony in Kielce marked the 60th anniversary of the July 4, 1946 pogrom carried out by a Polish mob on Jewish Holocaust survivors who had returned to the city, leaving 42 Jews dead. A large public monument to the pogrom was dedicated, a sculpture by the American artist Jack Sal. During the year several Poles were awarded the status of Righteous Gentiles by Yad Vashem for saving Jews during the Holocaust.

As usual, Auschwitz was a center of attention. Czech-born Auschwitz survivor Dina Babbitt, now living in California, pressed her claim to be given back seven portraits of Roma (Gypsies) that she had been forced to paint while a prisoner, and which were now part of the Auschwitz Museum. In a similar case, a French man sued to have the suitcase that his father, an Auschwitz victim, had brought with him to the camp. The suitcase had been loaned by the Auschwitz Museum to the Paris-based Foundation for the Remembrance of the Shoah as part of an exhibition, and the man discovered his father's name on it when he went to see the exhibition.

In July, UNESCO's World Heritage Committee agreed with Poland's proposal to change the official name of Auschwitz from "Auschwitz Concentration Camp" to "Former Nazi German Concentration and Death Camp Auschwitz-Birkenau." The formal name change was to be take place in 2007.

The Auschwitz Memorial and Museum got a new director in September, 34-year-old Piotr Cywinski, who announced plans to revamp and modernize the exhibits at the museum part of the former death camp in

a way that would facilitate the education of young people about the Shoah. Some of the exhibits dated back more than half a century to the immediate postwar communist period. The International Auschwitz Council, in December, approved Cywinski's plans and also agreed to carry out preservation work.

Israel regarded Poland as one of its closest friends in Europe, and President Kaczynski said he regarded Poland in that role, too. The appointment of Giertych as education minister, however, caused some strain in relations. Israel's ambassador refused to speak with Giertych, whose ministry oversaw Holocaust education in Poland, and asked the president to shift programs for visiting Israeli students from the education ministry to the presidential office, a request that Kaczynski fulfilled. Israeli business investments in Poland amounted to about \$2 billion, and the two countries had agreements for military and security cooperation.

President Kaczynski not only paid a three-day official visit to Israel (and the Palestinian Authority) in September, but also met with visiting Jewish groups during the year. While he was in Israel, Kaczynski said Poland was ready to help mediate Middle East peace talks. He also proposed that Irena Sendler, now 96, be nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize. Recognized as a Righteous Gentile in 1965, Sendler, during World War II, worked with Żegota, the Polish underground body that saved Jews. As head of its children's department, she helped smuggle 2,500 Jewish youngsters out of the Warsaw Ghetto.

In July, about 220 people staged a pro-Israel rally organized by the Baptist Church with the backing of several Jewish organizations. In August, the city of Lodz, at the initiative of its mayor, Jerzy Kropiwnicki, paid for 15 Israeli teenagers from the northern Israeli town of Nahariya, which had been hit hard by Hezbollah rockets, to have a two-and-a-half-week vacation in Poland. October saw the launch of a Poland-Israel Youth Exchange Program organized by the Museum of Jewish History in Warsaw, which itself was only in the planning stage. In the first phase of the program, eight Polish students received scholarships to study for a semester at the Lowy School for Overseas Students at Tel Aviv University. It was anticipated that in the next phase Israeli students would be brought to Poland to study.

JEWISH COMMUNITY

Although only a few thousand people were formally affiliated with Jewish institutions or organizations, Rabbi Schudrich estimated that at

least 20,000 Jews lived in Poland. There were two major Jewish organizations in the country. One was the Union of Jewish Religious Communities in Poland, an umbrella group for eight communities; Warsaw, with 500 members, was the largest. The other was the Cultural and Social Association of Jews in Poland, a secular body that also had a number of local branches. At the beginning of the year, Piotr Kadlcik was reelected president of both the Warsaw Jewish Community and the five-member executive of the Union of Jewish Religious Communities.

The year saw several important milestones in the postcommunist Jewish revival. Several new rabbis took up positions at the High Holy Days. Among them was Mati Pawlak, 29, who was believed to be the first local Jew to become a rabbi and serve in Poland in 40 years. Pawlak also became principal of Warsaw's Lauder-Morasha Jewish school, replacing longtime principal Helise Lieberman. An Israeli, Boaz Pash, became rabbi in Kraków, and Yitzhak Rapoport, a Swede, took up a rabbinical post in Wrocław, Poland's second largest Jewish community. All three were Orthodox.

On Rosh Hashanah, Warsaw's Progressive (Reform) Jewish congregation, Beit Warszawa, got its first full-time rabbi, 58-year-old New Yorker Burt Schuman, who had previously served a congregation in Altoona, Pennsylvania. Beit Warszawa, which had about 200 members, made other strides during the year, instituting a Sunday school, lectures, Jewish-themed movie nights, informal social gatherings, and an eight-month conversion course. Beit Warszawa was now a reference point for Jews elsewhere in Poland who were seeking a non-Orthodox alternative, or hoping to form a Reform congregation in their city.

A number of new communal institutions were initiated in 2006. A small synagogue opened in Lublin, home to several dozen Jews, early in the year, in the huge building that once housed the prewar Yeshiva Hakhmei Lublin, which was returned to the Jewish community in 2004. In November, ground was broken in Kraków for what would be Poland's first modern Jewish community center, a \$1.2-million facility next to the Tempel Synagogue. Funded by the JDC and World Jewish Relief of Great Britain, the center resulted from a visit in 2002 by Britain's Prince Charles. It was expected to provide welfare and medical services as well as cultural, religious, and educational programs.

On several occasions during the year Jewish worship came to long disused synagogues in towns where no Jews now lived. In June, a traditional Shabbat was held in the synagogue in Pinczów, now a Jewish museum. Services were followed by a kosher meal. In October, Shabbat prayers

were held in a synagogue in the southeast city of Przemyśl that the Nazis had used as a stable. These services opened a weekend dedicated to Polish-Jewish dialogue, and a conference called "Lost Nation: The Jews of Przemyśl and the Polish Landscape." For Sukkot, a sukkah was built in Czestochowa, believed to be the first there since the Holocaust. It was put up and decorated by students from an art school, aided by Jewish students from other countries. About 300 people—including visiting Jews who traced their ancestry to Czestochowa—filled the sukkah for lunch.

On Hanukkah, the Warsaw Jewish community, for the first time, lit a public menorah in the square next to the synagogue. The Israeli ambassador and Warsaw's mayor took part in the ceremony, which was organized by five local Jewish organizations. Chabad, which had sponsored public menorah lightings in prior years, held its own lighting ceremony in front of the nearby Palace of Culture. President Kaczynski hosted yet a third candle-lighting ceremony at the presidential palace—another first. Among those present were Rabbi Schudrich and other Jewish leaders, Israeli ambassador David Peleg, and visiting officials from the European Jewish Congress.

There were numerous cultural, educational, and commemorative events throughout the year. The two largest were the annual Festival of Jewish Culture in Kraków and another dedicated to the Yiddish world of Isaac Bashevis Singer that was held in Warsaw in the fall. There were also two Jewish film festivals in Warsaw, as well as a conference on Yiddish language and culture held at Warsaw's Jewish Historical Institute.

Work continued on the planned Museum of the History of Polish Jews, due to open in Warsaw in 2008 or 2009. In September, a tent was erected on the proposed site for a preview of exhibitions and staged educational events. During the year, the Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland oversaw the restoration and fencing off of a number of Jewish cemeteries around Poland. Holocaust memorials were erected in some of them.

In March, two teachers—Norman Conard of Fort Scott, Kansas, and Robert Szuchta of Warsaw—received the first annual Irena Sendler Awards, to be given annually to an American and Polish educator who exemplified the teaching of respect for all people, in the spirit of Irena Sendler (see above, p. 000). At the end of December, Brandeis professor Antony Polonsky was awarded the Kraków-based Judaica Foundation's annual Felek Award.

A number of important Polish figures passed away during 2006. Historian Jozef A. Gierowski died in Kraków in February at the age of 83.

He was the founding director of the Research Center on Jewish History and Culture in Poland at Kraków's Jagiellonian University, which, established in 1986, was the first such university Jewish studies institute in postwar Poland. Science-fiction writer Stanislaw Lem, author of *Solaris* and many other works, died in Kraków in March at the age of 84. Born in 1921 in L'viv, which was then part of Poland, Lem survived the Holocaust thanks to forged documents. The Polish poet and essayist Jerzy Ficowski died in Warsaw in May at the age of 82. Not himself Jewish, he composed powerful poems about the Holocaust and its impact on Poland, wrote extensively about Roma (Gypsies), and was a leading expert on the life and work of the Polish Jewish writer and artist Bruno Schulz, who was killed in the Holocaust.

Romania

In April, President Traian Basescu signed into law an emergency ordinance banning organizations and symbols with a fascist, racist, or xenophobic character.

Relations with Israel were strong. Numerous Israeli companies did business in Romania. In March, the two countries signed a military cooperation agreement and pledged to work together to fight terrorism. With Romania slated to join the European Union in January 2007, hundreds of Israelis of Romanian origin applied for citizenship. An estimated 400,000 Romanian Jews came to Israel after World War II.

Between 6,000 and 10,000 Jews lived in Romania, about half them in the capital, Bucharest. Romanian Jewish leaders took part in a variety of international meetings. In May, the executive of the European Jewish Congress met in Bucharest, where the EJC leaders met with Romanian government officials and told them they backed Romania's entry into the European Union. They also urged the government to help make sure that Romania's estimated 800 Jewish cemeteries received proper care.

Also in May, B'nai Brith Romania, in cooperation with B'nai Brith Europe, hosted an international seminar in the Romanian capital. Representatives from 12 countries attended the meeting, whose main theme was how to fight anti-Semitism. That same month, more than 80 young Jews from Romania took part in the Balkan Black Sea Geshet meeting in Greece; several Romanians were on the organizing committee.

At the end of May, Romanian representatives took part in the Eighth International Conference of Regional Jewish Communities, held in Debrecen, Hungary. During the meeting, Aurel Vajner, the president of FE-

DROM, the umbrella organization of the Romanian Jewish communities, worked out a cooperation agreement with the Union of Jewish Communities in Hungary. In August, a 14-member Romanian delegation took part in a solidarity mission to Israel organized by the World Zionist Organization. The group included actress Maya Morgenstern as well as members of the media.

OTER, the Romanian Jewish Youth organization, which maintained a number of chapters around the country, held seminars, conferences, and training sessions for young people throughout the year. In July, more than 40 young people came together in Arad, where they learned about volunteerism and helped clean up a Jewish cemetery.

There were numerous Jewish cultural events. The Jewish State Theater in Bucharest staged a range of performances, including a musical version of the story of Esther. An Israeli film festival took place in Bucharest, March 29–April 2. The Minister of Culture and Religions hosted an all-day conference in April to discuss plans for an “itinerary of Hasidic culture” in Romania. Among the seminars and conferences that took place was “Elie Wiesel’s World — Yesterday and Today,” which took place during the spring in several Transylvanian cities. In January, after a break of several years, FEDROM reinstated the awarding of annual prizes to leading Jewish cultural figures. This year it distributed 11 awards.

Many books on Jewish themes and by Jewish authors were published, including some by the Jewish publishing house HaSefer, most notably a Romanian translation of the book *Judaism* by German theologian Hans Küng, which was launched with a lecture delivered by Küng in April. Among other new books was a volume on synagogue history and architecture by Mircea Moldovan. Several Jewish communities held events on the European Day of Jewish Culture, September 3.

There were events commemorating the Holocaust in Romania. In January, a ceremony at Bucharest’s main Choral Synagogue marked the 65th anniversary of the violent January 1941 pogrom, carried out by members of the fascist Iron Guard, which left dozens dead and portended the broader Romanian tragedy that was to come. Further ceremonies at the end of June, including an international conference, commemorated the 65th anniversary of the 1941 pogrom in Iasi that left at least 10,000 dead.

Romania marked its third annual Holocaust Memorial Day on October 9 with events around the country. In Bucharest, President Basescu laid the cornerstone for a national Holocaust memorial. In his speech, Basescu expressed concern at the lack of awareness about the Holocaust

in Romania despite recent attempts at education. "Finding out the reality did not solve the problem of national conscience regarding the crimes committed by state authorities," he said. "It is a difficult process which requires a change of mentality and the ability to accept reality."

Holocaust education indeed received high priority. Romania, during 2006, was a member of the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research. In the spring, Peninah Zilberman, a former director of the Holocaust Education and Memorial Center of Toronto, held seminars on the subject for teachers in two major cities: in Bucharest she held a session for 58 teachers at the Goren-Goldstein Hebrew Studies Center, and in the Transylvanian city of Cluj she lectured to 30 teachers at Babes-Bolyai University. In December, the Foreign Ministry expressed "deep concern" at the Holocaust-denial conference held in Tehran, and said that attempts to question the Holocaust were "unacceptable."

In July, Alexandre Safran, who became the youngest-ever chief rabbi of Romania in 1940 and served until ousted and expelled by the communist regime in 1947, died in Geneva at the age of 96. He had served as Geneva's chief rabbi from 1948. The author of numerous books on Jewish philosophy and mysticism, Safran also published his memoirs, which described what happened to the Jewish community of Romania during the Holocaust, his rescue efforts during World War II, and his attempts to rebuild the community after the war.

In September, Silviu Brucan, who went from being a communist loyalist to one of the most outspoken critics of dictator Nicolae Ceausescu, died in Bucharest at the age of 90. Brucan's birth name was Saul Bruckner, and he suffered discrimination as a Jew in prewar Romania. In September, Zvi Feine, the JDC country director for Romania for more than a decade, completed his tenure, and was replaced by Jorge Diener, who also headed JDC operations in Hungary and Bulgaria. In November, the Romanian-born Jewish author Norman Manea won France's Medici's Prize for the best non-French book of the year, for his memoir *Hooligan's Run*, which described Manea's return to Romania after the fall of communism.

Serbia

In March, former Serbian and Yugoslav president Slobodan Milosevic died in his cell in The Hague, where he had spent more than four years on trial for war crimes during the Balkan wars of the 1990s. He was 64.

Serbian foreign minister Vuk Draskovic made a three-day official visit to Israel in November. According to knowledgeable observers, one goal of his trip was to win Israeli support for Serbia's drive to maintain control over the strife-torn Kosovo province. In an interview with the *Jerusalem Post*, Draskovic compared Serbia and Israel. "Many newspapers are writing that Israel is terrorist No. 1 in the Middle East [and] that Serbia is terrorist No. 1 in the Balkans. We're not. This is the wrong perception of us—both of us," he said, "We have to support each other." He told the *Post* that the main obstacle to peace in the Middle East was the "stubborn refusal" of certain Arab countries and organizations to recognize Israel's right to exist. Draskovic met with top Israeli officials, and the two countries signed accords easing certain visa restrictions and pledging bilateral cooperation.

Serbian Jewish leaders expressed concern about anti-Semitic and neo-Nazi activities during the year, including the public availability of anti-Jewish publications. In January, 18 alleged neo-Nazis were arrested in Novi Sad and charged with having, in November 2005, disrupted a commemoration of the 1938 Kristallnacht pogroms, and 15 of them were later sentenced to up to a year in prison. The next month anti-Semitic slogans were found scrawled on the fence of a memorial in Nis, near the spot where more than 1,000 were killed during World War II. Skinheads, chanting "Auschwitz, Auschwitz," beat up two Israelis at a rock concert in Belgrade in August; two suspects were arrested.

The Serbian Jewish community issued a statement afterward warning of an increase in such incidents. Serbian president Boris Tadic denounced the attack and called for "the identification of all ultra-right and ultranationalist organizations in Serbia." Zarko Korac, a former deputy prime minister, told B92 Radio: "For a long time we lied to ourselves that there is no anti-Semitism in Serbia. Our society will have to sober up and realize that the fact the vast majority of people are not anti-Semitic does not mean there aren't these very aggressive anti-Semitic groups in the society itself."

The state television network broadcast an hour-long program in April called "Serbs and Jews, a Synagogue in the Backyard," which explored the history of Jews in Serbia and relations between Jews and mainstream Serbian society.

Holocaust Memorial Day, January 27, was marked by a number of ceremonies. In Belgrade, Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica spoke at the dedication of a commemorative plaque and memorial park at Topovske supe, the site of a World War II concentration camp for Jews and Roma. In Sep-

tember, Jelenka and Ljubica Stamenkovic, from a village southeast of Belgrade, were posthumously named Righteous Gentiles; the award was presented to their daughter. This brought the number of Serbian designees to 128.

The Serbian Jewish community, strapped for cash, attempted to cut expenditures and cultivate new sources of income. One potential new source emerged with new government legislation that authorized restitution for property seized from churches and religious communities. But Jewish leaders failed in their efforts to have the law cover property seized as of April 6, 1941, the day the Nazis attacked Yugoslavia (researchers had drawn up a list of some 600 properties owned by Jewish communities and associations at that time), and so only communist-seized property was covered.

In its original form the statute stipulated that restitution claims could be made over the course of two years beginning October 1, 2006, but the starting date was delayed. In June, the JDC organized a seminar on property restitution, attended by representatives of Jewish communities from throughout the former Yugoslavia. It included sessions on how to apply for restitution as well as how to manage properties.

There were squabbles and infighting in some local communities. Early in the year a "Federation of Pancevo Jews" was established in the town of Pancevo, near Belgrade, apparently as a rival to the recognized Pancevo Jewish community, with the aim of obtaining restituted property. In Zemun, a Belgrade suburb with a Jewish community, an investigation was launched into how part of the Jewish cemetery became the private property of a community member, who built a new building on the land and sold it for commercial purposes.

There were numerous cultural, educational, and commemorative events throughout the year. Israel Independence Day was celebrated in Belgrade with a concert featuring the Israeli pop star Rita, accompanied by the Belgrade Philharmonic Orchestra. In May, the Jewish community and city officials in Novi Sad celebrated the 100th anniversary of the groundbreaking for the city's Great Synagogue, which was designed by the prolific Budapest architect Lipot Baumhorn. Numerous dignitaries took part, Cantor Laszlo Fekete from Budapest sang, and there were performances by a choir and an Israeli dance troupe. The 80th anniversary of the synagogue in Belgrade was also marked during 2006.

In June, Jewish young people from all over the former Yugoslavia took part in a program in Nis called Menuha. They worked to clear and make

accessible part of the historic Jewish cemetery there and to create a database of information about the graves. All ten Jewish communities in Serbia held events for the European Day of Jewish Culture in September. The community in Zemun, for example, held an exhibition about its revitalization over the past six years.

David Albahari's book *Mamac* won the Most Berlin Award, given in Germany every other year to a "significant contemporary work of literature from Central and Eastern Europe and its translation." Albahari and another Jew, theater director Egon Savin, were among those presented with the City of Belgrade 2005 Award.

Slovakia

The extreme right-wing Slovak National Party (SNS) made big gains in the general elections held in June, winning 11.7 percent of the vote and becoming the third largest party in the country. Led by Jan Slota, the SNS was known for xenophobic and ultra-nationalist stands. The SNS was invited into the ruling coalition by the left-wing SMER party, led by Robert Fico, which won the elections. Also invited was the small right-wing party LS-HZDS, led by former prime minister Vladimir Meciar. In March, before the elections, the Supreme Court banned the neofascist Slovak Community-National Party, which had first registered to participate in elections in 2005.

About 3,000 Jews lived in Slovakia. The two biggest communities were in Bratislava, the capital, and Košice. Jewish communities around the country were linked under the umbrella Central Union of Jewish Religious Communities, based in Bratislava. Events for the European Day of Jewish Culture, held in Bratislava, Košice, and Komarno, attracted several hundred people. In the spring, B'nai Brith Europe launched a two-year program in Bratislava to foster Jewish adult education, particularly for currently unaffiliated Jews. Called Makor, it was sponsored by the German government's Holocaust fund.

More than 170 Slovak Jews competed in the winter Maccabee games that marked the 70th anniversary of the last European winter Maccabee games. This year's competitive events took place in Slovakia, on the very same ski slopes as those of 1936.

In January, the Israeli embassy in Bratislava recognized seven Slovaks as Righteous Gentiles. The only one of the seven who was still alive could not attend due to health reasons.

Slovenia

Israel and Slovenia had extensive and fast-growing economic relations. In February, following a hi-tech forum of Slovenian and Israeli companies held in the Slovene capital, Ljubljana, it was announced that Israel would open a full-scale embassy in the city. Since 1992, when diplomatic relations had been established, they had been handled from the Israeli embassy in Vienna. In March, President Janez Drnovsek made his first visit to Israel, where he met with President Moshe Katzav and other officials. He told Katzav that Slovenians “feel deeply for the people of Israel, whose achievements we have followed with admiration.”

Between 200 and 600 Jews were believed to live in Slovenia, of whom 150 were affiliated with the Jewish community. In the fall, Andrej Kozar Beck was reelected to a third term as head of the community.

RUTH ELLEN GRUBER