Western Europe

Great Britain

National Affairs

PRIME MINISTER Tony Blair resigned on June 27 after ten years in office. The longest-serving prime minister in Labour Party history, he led the party to an unprecedented three consecutive general-election victories.

Over the months preceding his resignation it was clear that the government was in trouble. In January police questioned Blair about allegations that honors were being offered for money (see AJYB 2007, p. 334), and it was not until July that the Crown Prosecution Service ruled that there was "insufficient evidence" to bring charges. In March, 15 Royal Navy sailors serving on the HMS Cornwall were captured by Iran, held for 12 days, and finally released and pardoned by President Ahmadinejad in a televised ceremony. Afterward, Defense Secretary Dan Browne was strongly criticized for allowing the sailors to tell reporters their unimpressive story. By June Labour had slumped 30 percent in the polls.

To be sure, there were accomplishments as well. In May, devolved government was restored in Northern Ireland. The month before, the pound hit $2.0131, a 26-year high against the dollar. Indeed, Blair could take credit not only for a strong currency, but also for significant economic growth during his tenure, 2.8 percent. In addition, inflation was under control and employment at record levels.

The public held high hopes for Blair's successor, Gordon Brown, who had been his chancellor of the exchequer over the entire ten years. Soon after the transfer of power an ICM survey conducted for the Guardian showed a significant jump in Labour's standing with the public.

Brown sought to distance himself from the tired Blair administration. His cabinet included the first-ever female home secretary, Jacqui Smith,
and he put together a government of “all the talents” so as to draw on members of other parties for advice. They included two Liberal Democrat peers who were Jewish, Baroness Rabbi Julia Neuberger and human-rights lawyer Lord Lester of Herne Hill. However Brown was immediately beset with crises. At the end of June, only the vigilance of emergency workers prevented terrorist nail-bombs from exploding at two sites in central London. And when a flaming vehicle was driven at full speed into a Glasgow airport terminal on June 30, the government raised the UK threat level to “critical.”

In July, Labour won a by-election in Ealing Southall, West London, with the Tories coming in third. According to an ICM poll for the Sunday Telegraph, Labour was now backed by 40 percent of the public and the Tories by 33 percent, leading to speculation that Brown might capitalize on his popularity to call a general election and confirm his mandate to govern. The country waited with bated breath. By September Labour’s lead had stretched to double figures, and the prime minister’s rating as a “strong leader” had also jumped. But on October 6, in the wake of a successful Tory conference at which shadow chancellor George Osborne announced a popular plan to raise the threshold for inheritance tax to £1m, Brown announced that there would be no election.

It was a decision he might have come to regret, as misfortunes multiplied. Record summer rains completely flooded large areas of central and northern England. In foreign policy, a diplomatic row blew up between Britain and Russia when Moscow refused to extradite ex-KGB officer Andrei Lugovoi, suspected of murdering Alexander Litvinenko, himself an ex-KGB agent, in Britain. In September came the first hints of a threat to the economy that would only grow worse with the collapse of the U.S. subprime mortgage market. A British bank, Northern Rock, was forced to ask the Bank of England for an emergency loan. In October, for the first time since Brown took office, the Tories outscored Labour in the opinion polls, 40 percent to 34.

In November, Chancellor of the Exchequer Alistair Darling admitted in the House of Commons that confidential personal and financial details about 25 million people had been lost, and that same month Transport Secretary Ruth Kelly revealed that the personal information of three million drivers had been similarly lost. The year ended with a final blow: it emerged that property magnate David Abrahams (who was Jewish) had illegally used third parties to disguise donations of £6m to Labour MPs, and police launched an investigation. A poll taken at the time showed the Tories leading Labour 38 percent to 34.
Israel and the Middle East

The Government

The new prime minister brought little change to Britain’s Middle East policy. The new foreign secretary, David Miliband, pledged in June that British diplomats would be “unstinting” in pursuit of a two-state solution. There would be no contact with Palestinian rejectionists; the UK would support all those on both sides of the divide who were committed to peace; and there would be frank engagement with Israel over the building of Jewish settlements that were “contrary to international law.” BBC world affairs correspondent Paul Reynolds commented that Miliband’s Jewish origins would allow him “freedom to criticize Israel without being accused of anti-Semitism.”

Britain also continued to regard the “road map” as the best hope for a peaceful solution, despite representations from her European partners in July that it had failed and should be replaced by an international force to patrol the Palestinian territories. In August the Commons All-Party Foreign Affairs Committee described the international community’s embargo on contacts with Hamas as counterproductive and urged the government to defy it, suggesting that the UK open relations with “moderates” among the Palestinian rejectionists. Here again, the government held firm, reiterating that any engagement with Hamas depended on it renouncing violence, recognizing Israel, and adhering to previously accepted agreements between Israel and the Palestinians.

Brown’s major Middle East policy statement came in September, with the publication of Economic Aspects of Peace in the Middle East, written by MP Ed Balls, the prime minister’s close associate, and Jon Cunliffe, his adviser on international economic affairs. Originally intended for publication in 2006 but delayed by Hamas’s election victory and the ensuing violence, it stressed that development of the Palestinian economy was essential to hopes for peace. The Israeli government, for its part, had to recognize that the long-term security of both Israel and Palestine depended on Palestinian economic development, and therefore Israel had to remove roadblocks on the West Bank and install border crossings with specific open hours for transport of goods and people to and from Gaza. Israel’s closure regime, the report stated, “exerts a heavy toll,” and regeneration could not occur in such an “insecure environment.” The Palestinian Authority was urged to prevent terrorist attacks.
Miliband visited the region in November, meeting with Israeli foreign minister Tzipi Livni and with the Palestinian president and prime minister, Mahmoud Abbas and Salam Fayyad. Afterward, the foreign secretary announced that the UK was ready to offer almost £250m to bolster the economy in the West Bank and Gaza if there was “tangible progress in security” and “a framework document on a two-state solution.”

Secretary of State for International Development Douglas Alexander arrived in Israel for a fact-finding mission in December. He said that his department had given £15m in the current fiscal year to the Temporary International Mechanism established to deliver aid directly to the Palestinians, bypassing Hamas, plus a further £15m to the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), which cared for Palestinian refugees. Israel and the Palestinians had reached “a moment of possibility for peace,” he said, welcoming Fayyad’s three-year reform plan intended to maximize the efficiency of international aid and promote good governance.

In the second half of the year there were minor signs of friction between Israel and Great Britain. In August Israeli lawyers rejected renewed British demands to reopen the case against an Israeli soldier suspected of killing British peace activist James Miller (see AJYB 2007, p. 338). Israel’s public security minister, Avi Dichter, canceled a trip to Britain in December, fearing arrest for alleged war crimes against Palestinians. The Israel Project, an organization dedicated to boosting Israel’s image in the international media, issued a survey that month showing that 16 percent of the British public supported the Palestinians and 11 percent supported Israel. The overwhelming trend, the survey concluded, was lack of interest in the entire Middle East conflict.

Israel enjoyed a moment of unprecedented popularity with the British public in November, when its soccer team defeated Russia 2-1, thus giving the British team a second chance of qualifying for the 2008 European championship.

**TONY BLAIR, SPECIAL ENVOY**

In July, following his retirement from British politics, Tony Blair was appointed the Quartet’s special envoy to the Middle East. He saw his new role as helping rebuild the legal, governmental, and economic institutions in the region. While his brief did not include participating in peace negotiations, Blair said he would support moderate factions in Palestine, including the Palestinian president, and hoped to play a part in gaining statehood for the Palestinian people.
After a meeting between Blair, Fayyad, and Israeli defense minister Ehud Barak, a series of agreements on economic matters were announced in November. Aimed at providing jobs for Palestinians and improving conditions in the territories, they included construction of an agro-industrial park in Jericho, emergency sewerage work in Gaza, and housing and educational development in the territories. These, said a British official, were “quick impact” projects designed to give impetus to the forthcoming Annapolis summit.

Anti-Israel Activity

In January, a new group calling itself the Enough Coalition was launched by a group of actors, writers, politicians, and intellectuals eager to present the Palestinian viewpoint on the 40th anniversary of the Six-Day War. Although it claimed to support a just peace for both Israelis and Palestinians, the inaugural gathering included only representatives of pro-Palestinian organizations such as the Muslim Public Affairs Committee, War on Want, and Jews for Justice for the Palestinians. Their efforts culminated in a large-scale rally in London’s Trafalgar Square in June, organized by the Palestine Solidarity Campaign and assisted by the Stop the War coalition and War on Want. Trade unions were also involved, despite attempts by Trade Union Friends of Israel (TUFi) to persuade British unions to withhold support. A delegation from the anti-Zionist Orthodox Jewish faction Neturei Karta was present.

Several British charities seemed bent on discrediting Israeli policy. In June Christian Aid urged its supporters to write the foreign secretary to urge the building of “bridges, not walls, in the Middle East.” Israel’s defensive barrier on the West Bank, it argued, symbolized the impasse in the area and also had “a hugely damaging impact” on the livelihood of Palestinians. In August, a booklet published by War on Want—a leading member of the Enough Coalition and the Stop the War organization—advised: “Investment in Israel should be presented in public as investment in a system of occupation, injustice and apartheid.”

Some 400 people attended a pro-Palestinian rally in central London in October to mark Al-Quds Day, an annual event launched about 30 years earlier to assert Muslim claims to Jerusalem. It was organized by the Justice for Palestine Committee and among its supporters were Hezbollah, Respect, and Neturei Karta.

Communities Minister Hazel Blears announced in November a £70m government initiative to confront and isolate Muslim extremists. It was,
she said, imperative to equip people “with the skills and strength to withstand the messages of those preaching division and hatred.” Of the total, her ministry would invest £25m in a scheme to help mainstream Muslim clerics and community leaders counter extremism; the remainder would be available to local authorities and other groups. Jon Benjamin, chief executive of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, said the move “rightly recognizes that the battle against extremism is more than about increased security.” Nonetheless, that same month the Home Office allowed senior Hezbollah official Ibrahim Mousawi to enter Britain, ignoring the protests of MPs and Jewish leaders who sought to get Whitehall to reverse the decision. Mousawi, editor of Al Manar, Hezbollah’s Beirut-based TV station, was in Britain for a Stop the War conference.

In December, the Muslim Council of Britain reversed its boycott of Holocaust Memorial Day and for the first time agreed to send representatives “for the sake of the common good.” Since the launch of the commemoration in 2001 the council had refused to participate, calling for its replacement by a Genocide Memorial Day.

Plans for boycotting Israel, however, remained alive throughout the year. In anticipation, the Board of Deputies and the Jewish Leadership Council launched a Fair Play Campaign in January to provide a quick and effective communal response. The next month the group’s representatives met with heads of Israeli universities to coordinate a response to any potential academic boycotts.

The annual meeting of the National Union of Journalists (NUJ), whose 40,000 members made it Britain’s largest journalist union, took place in Birmingham in April. It passed a resolution to boycott Israel; called for an end to Israel’s alleged aggression in Gaza and the occupied territories; and instructed its national executive to support such organizations as the Palestine Solidarity Campaign and Jews for Justice in Palestine. Some 300 members of NUJ who worked for the BBC signed a petition condemning these steps as inconsistent with their professional duty to report the news impartially.

In May, despite pleas from its own leadership and a concerted campaign by pro-Israel supporters and academics, members of the University and College Union (UCU) voted to circulate a boycott motion initiated by the universities of East London and Brighton for discussion by the membership. Another resolution agreed to was one proposed by the University of Birmingham, calling for a moratorium on research and cultural collaboration with Israel and for the European Science Foundation to withdraw funding from Israel until that nation abided by UN resolutions.
That same month Unison, the 1.3-million-member union of public-sector workers, held its annual conference in Brighton. It voted approval for a motion suggested by its Wolverhampton branch to support an “economic, cultural, academic and sporting boycott” of the Jewish state. Similarly, the annual conference of the Transport and General Workers’ Union (TGWU), which had 800,000 members, voted to impose a boycott on Israeli goods, deploring the Israeli government’s treatment of the Palestinian people and its failure to recognize their legitimate aspiration for a Palestinian state. The union emphasised that the boycott was not anti-Semitic.

The tide turned somewhat in midsummer, after a “Stop the Boycott” campaign was launched by Bicom (Britain-Israel Communications and Research Center) and the Jewish Leadership Council. Full-page advertisements appeared in the major newspapers signed by 250 eminent academics; notices appeared in the British press inserted by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL); and criticism of the boycott came from Nobel prize-winners, research bodies, British and American Jewish leaders, and Israeli politicians and academics. “The [UCU] resolution does absolutely no good for the peace process,” declared Prime Minister Blair in the House of Commons in June. A poll that month of some 1,000 business, cultural, and political leaders commissioned by Bicom and conducted by Populus found 86 percent opposed to the boycott, although 67 percent did not think it was anti-Semitic.

As for the NUJ resolution, a rank-and-file rebellion spearheaded by BBC staff in July forced the union to abandon its boycott decision. Then in August, Unison secretary Dave Prentis wrote to the head of Histadrut, the Israeli labor federation, that his group’s boycott resolution “did not commit Unison to boycott Israel or Israeli organizations,” but had rather been one way to induce Israel to change its policies. The UCU called off its boycott plan in September after lawyers advised that it would be a form of discrimination “beyond the union’s powers and unlawful.”

In December 2006 the executive committee of the National Union of Students (NUS) had declared that Jewish students themselves had the right to define what constituted campus anti-Semitism, implying that manifestations of anti-Zionism might be included in that category (see AJYB 2007, p. 341). This was followed up by an NUS announcement in January 2007 of plans for a major symposium on the spillover from anti-Israel campus activity to anti-Semitism. The group’s Leeds branch, however, did not endorse the policy until March, when it finally annulled its rule permitting the student union to ignore Jewish Society complaints “as long as Judaism as a faith was not offended,” and passed a motion defin-
ing as “racist” any incident perceived as such by the affected minority group. The NUS annual Blackpool conference that month reiterated the policy and added an amendment calling for a ban on the use of classic anti-Semitic rhetoric and imagery to criticize Israel.

Leeds remained a focus of activity throughout the year. In May an extraordinary general meeting of UCU's Leeds branch castigated the university for canceling a March lecture by Dr. Matthias Künzle of the Hebrew University on “Hitler's Legacy: Islamic Anti-Semitism.” Security concerns had been cited as grounds for the decision, but pressure from Islamic undergraduates was also suspected to have played a role. The UCU branch voted to demand that Künzle be reinvited as a demonstration of the university's commitment to free speech.

With the opening of the fall semester, Union of Jewish Students (UJS) campaign director Ya'ir Zivan warned that Jewish students should beware of intensifying activity on the part of the far-left Hizb ut-Tahrir, which could be operating at as many as 25 universities. Zivan also noted that although UCU had dropped its academic boycott plans, the campaign had strongly affected the atmosphere on campus and anti-Israel elements would surely attempt to ride on its momentum.

Already in August, literature calling Jews “a race of cruel bloodsuckers” for killing children in Gaza was distributed to student unions in Edinburgh and Bangor. In October the Palestinian Solidarity group at Leeds attacked Israel for its environmental record, linked with its treatment of the Palestinians. At Manchester University that same month Jewish students protested a twinning arrangement with the student body at Al-Najah University in Nablus, which had been approved by a vote of the student union in March. In November that student union erected a mock-up of Israel's security barrier as an “apartheid wall” during Solidarity with Palestine Week.

BRITISH JEWS AND ISRAEL

The Jewish community campaigned throughout the year for the release of Israeli soldiers captured by Hezbollah and Hamas. Prayers were recited weekly in the synagogues, and the Zionist Federation together with Christian Friends of Israel organized a mass lobby of the House of Commons in January. More than 100 MPs signed an early-day motion demanding the soldiers be freed, and a petition bearing 11,500 signatures calling on Britain to press for their release was presented to Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett. This matter was high on the government’s agenda, said the
The release in July of Alan Johnston, a BBC journalist kidnapped in Gaza and held hostage for four months, gave new impetus to the campaign for the abducted Israelis. Israel's Knesset speaker, Dalia Itzik, appealed to Prince Charles and Tony Blair to use their influence in the Arab world. A campaign under the name “Free the Three” took out full-page advertisements in leading newspapers featuring the slogan, “One Alan Johnston is Free . . . Three Alan Johnstons aren’t.” Seven hundred people demonstrated outside Syria’s London embassy and 250 in Manchester’s town center. In November, Foreign Office minister Kim Howells assured the father of abducted soldier Ehud Goldwasser of the government’s support.

But British Jewry was hardly united in regard to Israeli policies. In February more than 100 Jewish intellectuals and other prominent figures publicly dissociated themselves from mainstream Jewish support for Israel by launching Independent Jewish Voices (IJV) with full-page advertisements in the major British newspapers and the Jewish Chronicle. “Born of our frustration with the widespread misconception that the Jews of this country speak with one voice . . . which supports the Israeli government’s policies,” IJV stood for the rights of Palestinians and Israelis “to peaceful and secure lives.” It condemned anti-Semitism, anti-Arab racism, and Islamophobia. “The battle against anti-Semitism,” it proclaimed, “is undermined whenever opposition to Israeli government policies is automatically branded as anti-Semitic,” and was “contradicted when those who claimed to speak on behalf of Jews in Britain and other countries consistently put support for the policies of an occupying power above the human rights of an occupied people.”

Anti-Semitism

“We will not tolerate racially motivated crime of any kind,” Race and Faith Minister Phil Woolas told the Jewish Chronicle in March. He also revealed that the 2006 All-Party Parliamentary Enquiry into Anti-Semitism (see AJYB 2007, p. 343) had been granted the status of an ongoing select committee, and in that capacity would continue to monitor anti-Semitism. The government, he promised, was taking a zero-tolerance approach.

In July, a working group composed of civil servants and Jewish lead-
ers began discussing implementation of 35 government recommendations to tackle anti-Semitism that had been suggested in response to the Enquiry. By November it could report that the government had set up a task force on anti-Semitism chaired by MP Parmjit Dhanda, parliamentary undersecretary at the Department for Communities and Local Government; pledged that by 2009 all 43 British police forces would be using the same system to report anti-Semitic incidents; appropriated £2m to extend across the nation the Schools Linking Network that combated extremism by making connections between schools of different faiths and backgrounds; and agreed to help meet the spiraling costs of security at Jewish schools that were currently paid by parents. In addition, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) was conducting an internal review of how it dealt with cases of race hatred and incitement. In September the government gave the Parliamentary Group against Anti-Semitism £20,000 to fund efforts to persuade foreign parliaments to set up similar investigations into anti-Semitism.

The Community Security Trust (CST), which monitored anti-Semitic activity for the Jewish community, recorded 547 incidents in 2007, the second highest annual total since these counts began in 1984 but 8 percent below the 2006 total of 594. CST attributed the fall to the absence of "trigger events" such as the 2006 Israeli war in Lebanon rather than to any change in the rising long-term trend. The 2007 figure included 114 violent assaults (as compared to 112 in 2006); 62 incidents of damage and desecration of Jewish property (70 in 2006); and 328 incidents of abusive behaviour (365 in 2006).

The resolution of one particular case of anti-Semitism, a racially aggravated assault on an Orthodox young man in Manchester in 2006, evoked protest from the Jewish community. After the CST complained that the sentences handed down "send out an entirely wrong message to both the perpetrators and the Jewish community," the solicitor general referred the sentences to the Court of Appeal for review in August.

Although the far-right British National Party (BNP) fielded 750 candidates in the May local elections, it gained only two more seats than it had before, increasing its nationwide total to 51. This followed a large-scale "Hope Not Hate" anti-BNP campaign in London, Manchester, and Leeds conducted by the antifascist Searchlight organization in conjunction with local political parties, trade unions, communal groups, and the Daily Mirror, and supported by the Holocaust Educational Trust.

Tempers ran high in Oxford in November when the Oxford Union debating society invited Holocaust denier David Irving and BNP leader
Nick Griffin to lead “A Night of Discussion on The Limits of Free Speech.” Although they could not prevent the event from taking place, students, interfaith groups, trade unions, and political organizations succeeded in considerably limiting its scope by conducting mass demonstrations both outside and inside the union.

The Board of Deputies launched “Racism: It’s Not Kosher” in December. This was a campaign to put the Jewish community in the forefront of the fight against racism, and specifically to prevent BNP from winning a by-election for a seat on the Greater London Assembly for Harrow, North London. The BNP candidate lost badly, polling only 56 votes, and the campaign claimed credit for the result.

In September, the Racial and Religious Hatred Act became law. This was designed to close a loophole in the existing racial hatred law that had protected Jews but not Muslims or Christians.

It was announced in January that a European Institute for the Study of Contemporary Anti-Semitism would be established in Great Britain.

**JEWISH COMMUNITY**

**Demography**

In December, the Board of Deputies Community Policy Research Group (formerly called the Community Research Unit, see below, p. 364) issued *Britain’s Jewish Community Statistics 2006*, prepared by David Graham and Daniel Vulkan. It calculated the number of births partly on the basis of circumcision records. The number of circumcisions in 2006 fell to 1,695 from a revised total of 1,709 in 2005, leading to an estimate of 3,314 births that year, down from a revised figure of 3,339 for 2005. The number of marriages performed under Jewish religious auspices also fell, from 1,000 in 2005 to 894 in 2006, and the number of gittin (religious divorces) granted in 2006 amounted to 248 as compared to 251 for 2005. Burials and cremations under Jewish religious auspices also declined, from 3,221 in 2005 to 3,107 in 2006. 2007 statistics on conversions to Judaism were available only for the Reform Synagogues of Great Britain, which accepted the conversions of 101 adults and 30 children, as compared to 113 adults and 51 children in 2006.

The report also introduced new data for *shalom zahor* celebrations held by strictly Orthodox Ashkenazi Jews after the birth of a boy. Based on their number, it calculated a figure of 1,055 strictly Orthodox births,
almost one-third of total UK Jewish births. They were concentrated in
North London’s predominantly haredi Stamford Hill area and in the city
of Manchester.

Other demographic studies of British Jewry also demonstrated the
growth of the ultra-Orthodox community. An in-depth analysis of the
2001 census by the Institute for Jewish Policy Research (JPR), published
in May, noted a “young, rapidly growing cohort of [strictly Orthodox] Jews who are bucking the demographic trend in a remarkable way.” The
116-page report, Jews in Britain: A Snapshot from the 2001 Census, by
David Graham, Marlena Schmool, and Stanley Waterman, predicted
that “the demographic make-up of British Jewry and probably also its re-
ligious structure will be very different in just a generation.” Whereas, in
British Jewry as a whole, intermarriage, cohabitation, and a growing in-
cidence of adult singlehood were eroding the traditional Jewish family,
“the very young population structure of strictly Orthodox groups points
to a demographic future far more secure than the rest of the Jewish pop-
ulation.”

Similarly, Dr. Yaakov Wise, honorary research fellow at Manchester
University’s Center for Jewish Studies, claimed, on the basis of the Man-
chester data, that three out of every four Jewish births in 2007 would be
haredi, a pattern that would lead to that sector forming the majority of
British Jewry within three decades. His calculations assumed the con-
tinuation of the current stark differences between demographic trends in
that community and those among non-haredim. There was no consensus
on the size of the current haredi population in the country. Wise believed
there were 45,500, but David Graham, senior research officer of the
Board, claimed there were only 25,000–35,000. Estimates of the total
Jewish population ranged from 275,000 to 300,000.

Communal Affairs

A highly self-critical internal review of the Union of Jewish Students
(UJS) was released in May entitled “Change in a Changing Environ-
ment.” It found that the organization lacked “a clear and focused sense
of mission, role, and purpose,” and suffered from “serious logistical, ad-
ministrative, and management deficiencies.” The review recommended
the appointment of a “turn-around professional” to fix these problems. UJS,
“the only grass-roots, national representative Jewish student organization
in the UK,” had a membership of 8,000 on 80 campuses, the largest of
them located in Leeds and Birmingham. Aimed primarily at defending
and protecting Jewish student rights on campus, it was largely funded by UJIA, the Hillel Foundation, and CST.

A Jewish Chronicle investigation published in January found serious poverty in the Jewish community that was burdening already heavily challenged charities. Figures based on the 2001 census and surveys provided by the Shoresh Trust showed that up to 40 percent of the total caseload of Norwood, the Jewish family service, comprised people who could not support themselves, with the percentage rising to 78 percent in Hackney, North London, where many Orthodox Jews lived. Some 3,000 Jewish children in the UK lived below the poverty line (defined as 60 percent of the average wage), and 4 percent of children at state-aided Jewish schools qualified for free school meals.

The shortage of suitable housing for Hackney's expanding strictly Orthodox Jewish community caused considerable concern. The JPR report noted above found that Hackney Jews experienced higher levels of social deprivation than Jews elsewhere in the country, 34.5 percent of them living in public housing. In September the Agudas Israel Housing Association opened two £10m “affordable” housing developments and the local planning committee granted permission for two more, but even these were beyond the means of large haredi families with low incomes. In September, Greater London Authority officials met with representatives of communal organizations, including the London Jewish Forum, and agreed to look into possible sites such as Thames Gateway and Olympic boroughs for new haredi homes. “We should be able to address the needs of the Orthodox community,” Mayor Ken Livingstone told the Forum's annual meeting in November. In December, Diane Abbott, MP for Hackney North and Stoke Newington, filed an early-day motion in Parliament calling for more government research into the “hidden deprivation” of Hackney's Jewish community.

Outside London, the Jewish Chronicle reported, more than one out of every eight Jews in Leeds and one out of every 15 in Manchester relied on charity to get by. To address the problem, Manchester's Jewish Project to Reorganize Communal Organizations set up an operation called Community First in January to promote the social and economic health of the Jews there. The Board of Deputies opened a branch office in Manchester, its first outside London, in July, aimed at improving and expanding relations with local government. In November, the £450,000 Aguda Center for children and families in North Manchester opened in Salford, offering a wide range of social services to 250–300 families per month.
Ironically, the prosperity of some sectors of British Jewry was also blamed for social ills. In February, Norwood's chief executive, Norma Brier, suggested that increased affluence was a possible cause of the growing numbers of family break-ups.

In January, Norwood confirmed that gay Jewish couples could adopt Jewish children. The Board of Deputies established a Jewish volunteer network in June to enable all Jewish charitable organizations to recruit volunteers through a single channel. In August, the Board replaced its Community Research Unit with a Community Policy Research Group, which was expected to function as an academic research body that would help shape British Jewry's long-term planning strategy. "We are trying to use methods similar to those of modern policy-makers," said Alex Goldberg, the Board's community-issues director.

Religion

In March, with its lease on Adler House due to expire, the United Synagogue (US) bought new headquarters in Finchley Road, Northwest London, for £3.6m. Rabbi Saul Zneimer, the first rabbi to serve as chief executive officer of the US, resigned in August after six years. In the Sephardi community, the Board of Elders of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews' Congregation announced in April that Dayan (religious judge) Saadia Amor would replace Dayan Pinchas Toledano as head of the Sephardi Bet Din (religious court).

In July, the Hertsmere Borough Council's planning committee gave permission for the construction of an eruv (symbolic boundary enabling carrying on the Sabbath) in Borehamwood. This would be Great Britain's third eruv and the first outside a London borough. Plans were afoot in August for yet a fourth, in north Manchester.

The Chief Rabbi's Office produced a report in September calling for more young Jews to participate in interfaith activities, a sphere that currently attracted mainly rabbis. Plans included a course at the London School of Jewish Studies on Jewish attitudes toward interreligious dialogue, and programs on interfaith issues in regional communities.

There were a number of developments during the year regarding synagogue buildings. London's New West End Synagogue, built in 1879, was designated a Grade 1 listed building in August; the only other synagogue so listed was the seventeenth-century Bevis Marks in the City of London. In August it was announced that Fieldgate Street Great Synagogue, opened in 1899 in London's East End, was to close. In Liverpool, Green-
bank Drive Hebrew Congregation closed in December after a levy on its 400 members failed to meet the costs of staying open for another year. The closure was part of a plan to consolidate the community's buildings in line with falling Jewish population figures.

In December, Chabad closed its Gaon Club for young Jewish businesspeople in London's West End after admitting a £1.5m deficit. Complaints had been made of "lavish expenditure" on the club, run by Rabbis Yosef and Mendy Vogel. A rift opened between their father, the prominent Chabad figure Rabbi Faivish Vogel, and his fellow trustees after a bet din hearing found the brothers guilty of diverting money that had been designated for other activities.

Rabbi Shoshana Boyd Gelfand was appointed executive director of the Reform movement in April, placing upon her shoulders the responsibility for carrying out the 2020 Vision project to reinvigorate Reform Jewry. Rabbi Tony Bayfield was appointed the movement's first full-time head. The first same-sex wedding in Britain conducted by a rabbi was held in a Reform synagogue in October.

In August, Rabbi Aaron Goldstein, Liberal Judaism's outreach director, quoted unofficial statistics showing that requests for rabbinic officiation at mixed-faith unions had risen from 30-40 in 2006 to around 60 in 2007. In 2003 Liberal Judaism had begun to allow its rabbis to perform such ceremonies even in synagogues so long as the couple made "a commitment to be part of the community and raise Jewish children."

Education

According to The Future of Jewish Schools—A Consultation Document, published by the Jewish Leadership Council in October, the supply of places at mainstream Jewish schools could exceed demand within five years. For one thing, enrollment figures for 2005/6 showed over half the children from mainstream London families attending non-Jewish primary schools. Furthermore, given the demographic trends, the document estimated a fall of up to 20 percent in the primary-school-age population over the next decade, and if the take-up rate for places at Jewish primaries remained at its current 45 percent, nearly one out of three classroom seats would be vacant in London mainstream Jewish primaries by 2016. Jewish primary schools in Northeast London (mainly in Redbridge) already had about 20 percent spare capacity, and in Manchester only 880 out of 1,065 places were filled in 2005/6. The Jewish primary school in Brighton, Sussex, closed in 2007.
In the secondary sector, London mainstream schools (particularly those in Northwest London) were close to capacity in 2005/6 with 4,438 students, an estimated 42 percent of the Jewish pupil population. But the projected number of additional places to be created through the expansion of existing establishments and the planned creation of new ones would, the report said, increase capacity to some 7,000 by 2016. Given the fall in numbers at the primary level, these secondary schools would be nearly 50 percent over capacity by 2016 unless demand for places increased.

Meanwhile, plans for Britain’s first Jewish cross-community secondary school (JCoss) proceeded apace (see AJYB 2007, p. 349). In April it secured a government grant of approximately £40m, and in August planning permission was received from Barnet Council for its 14,000-square-meter site. The project’s president, property magnate Gerald Ronson, announced in December a £10m fund-raising campaign for JCoss. He claimed that the new school would open up the choice of a Jewish education to a whole new group of parents and reengage many “who otherwise will be lost to our community.”

The strictly Orthodox community had the opposite problem, the Leadership Council’s document found. It could not expand or build schools fast enough to meet the needs of its children, who now formed half the Jewish school population. This sector had significant funding problems, as many of the schools were private to avoid having to teach the national curriculum, and therefore did not receive government money.

Conflict between mainstream and haredi sectors went public in August, when leaders of the former announced their support for Faith in the System, a government publication aimed at promoting social cohesion and tolerance in faith-based schools. The Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations disassociated itself from the document. Though it approved the broad aims, some of the practical recommendations, such as a program of visits between schools of different religions, were deemed inappropriate for strictly Orthodox schools. Moreover, said the Union, “neither the United Synagogue [which supported the document] nor the Board [of Deputies] has any status to speak on behalf of the entire Jewish community.” The Board agreed it did not speak for the haredi sector, which had withdrawn from that body two years earlier, when the Reform representatives joined. But, said the Board chief executive, Jon Benjamin, “we have to show where faith schools can work in a context that is not insular and that our children understand the wider world in which they live.”
In May, the United Jewish Israel Appeal announced it would fund a three-year fellowship in Israel studies at the Oxford Center for Jewish Studies. And in June, Bolton University and Ma'alot Greater Manchester—a Jewish studies program—announced it would offer a new B.A. combined degree in business and Jewish studies.

**Foreign Aid**

World Jewish Relief (WJR) remained British Jewry’s leading international charity. Chairman Nigel Layton reported in July that the funds raised for its Gifts in Kind program, which sent items of all types to impoverished Jews in Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Serbia, and Hungary, had risen from £1m to £5m annually. He also noted that WJR bought goods valued at £2.5m per year from In Kind Direct, a project started by Prince Charles to buy surplus goods that would otherwise be thrown away and to distribute them to those in need. The Prince was guest speaker at WJR’s annual dinner in December.

Visits between UK congregations, groups or individuals and twinned East European communities continued. In March the rabbi and members of Elstree Liberal Synagogue paid their first visit to their twin community, Lutsk, Ukraine, where they had funded the establishment of classes in Jewish studies, Hebrew, and religion. In June, Hendon Reform Synagogue hosted groups of children from its twin congregation, Bobruisk, Belarus. It was reported in April that the number of participants in WJR’s bar mitzvah twinning scheme had risen from 39 in 2005 to 50 in 2006.

In October, Rabbi Abraham Ginsburg, director of the Stamford Hill-based Committee for the Preservation of Jewish Cemeteries in Europe, led an international campaign to halt the destruction of the ancient Snipiskes Jewish cemetery in Vilnius, Lithuania, the site of major redevelopment.

**Publications**

The 2007 Jewish Quarterly/Wingate prize was won by Howard Jacobson for his novel, *Kalooki Nights*. A new prize for journalism was created honoring the late Chaim Bermant, noted author and long-time *Jewish Chronicle* columnist.

Works of fiction published in 2007 included *Everything Passes*, a poetic novel by Gabriel Josipovici; *Beethoven Was One-Sixteenth Black* by Nadine Gordimer; *Fame and Fortune*, a sequel to Frederic Raphael’s *Glitz-
tering Prizes; The Song Before It Is Sung by Justin Cartwright; Unused Language, a first short-story collection by Jennifer Wingate; Mrs. Zhivago of Queen’s Park by Olivia Lichtenstein; The Brodsky Touch by Lana Citron; The Last Testament by Sam Bourne (the alias of journalist Jonathan Freedland); When We Were Romans by Matthew Kneale; Jonathan Wilson’s historical crime romance A Palestine Affair; and Love Falls by Esther Freud.

Historical studies were Rome and Jerusalem: The Clash of Ancient Civilizations by Martin Goodman; Historians by Daniel Snowman; Barbarism and Civilization: A History of Europe in Our Time by Bernard Wasserstein; Churchill and the Jews by Martin Gilbert; Betrayal: France, the Arabs and the Jews by David Pryce-Jones; Judaism Without Jews by Elaine Glaser; Last Days in Babylon by Marina Benjamin; Nick Lambert’s Jews and Europe in the 21st Century: Thinking Jewish; and On Brick Lane, an oral history of London's East End by Rachel Lichtenstein. Two books on the refugee phenomenon were Remembering Refugees: Then and Now by Tony Kushner and From Outside In: Refugees and British Society by Nushin Arbabzadah.

Works of poetry included Femenismo, Joanne Limburg’s poems about being a Jewish woman in Britain; Out of the Blue by Nadine Brummer; New Departures, a book-length poem by Michael Horovitz; Musica Transalpina by Micheline Wandor; Moon Wheels by Ruth Fainlight; Wide Skies, Salt and Best Bitter by Peter Philips; and Galatea by Melanie Challenger. In the field of literature, Risa Domb, who died in 2007 (see below, p. 369), published Identity and Modern Israeli Literature. The second volume of New Women’s Writing from Israel, which she edited, also appeared.

Works by rabbis included Rabbis in Danger, Jonathan Romain’s account of rabbinical occupational hazards; a new translation of and commentary on The Authorised Daily Prayer Book by Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks, who also published The Home We Build Together, which cast a critical eye at multiculturalism and assimilation; and Liberal Judaism: A Judaism for the Twenty-First Century by Rabbi Pete Tobias. Closely related were British Chief Rabbis 1664–2006 by Derek Taylor, and Law, Medicine and Ethics, published by the Cancerkin breast cancer charity in honor of the late chief rabbi, Lord Immanuel Jakobovits. Other publications on religious themes included Orthodox Judaism in Britain since 1913: An Ideology Forsaken by Miri Freud-Kandel; Undercurrents of Jewish Prayer by Jeremy Schonfield; What Do Jews Believe? by Edward Kessler; and Jewish Thought: An Introduction by Oliver Leaman.
Holocaust literature included *Roman’s Journey* by Roman Halter; *The Crime of My Very Existence: Nazism and the Myth of Jewish Criminality* by Michael Berkowitz; *The Mascot* by Mark Kurzem; *The Single Light* by Ernest Levy; and *A Garden of Eden in Hell* by Melissa Müller and Reinhard Piechocki, about the life of pianist and Holocaust survivor Alice Herz-Sommer.

Biographies and autobiographies included *Some Sort of a Life* by actress Miriam Karlin; *Before I Forget: A Family Memoir* by Brian Tesler; *Take Off Your Party Dress*, in which Dina Rabinovitch recorded her fight against cancer (see below, p. 370); *Making Trouble: Life and Politics* by Lynne Segal; and *West End Chronicles* by Ed Glinert. Poet Dannie Abse mourned the death of his wife in poetry in *Running Late*, and in prose in *The Presence*.

Books about Israel were *The Jewish Divide Over Israel: Accusers and Defenders*, edited by Edward Alexander and Paul Bogdanor; *The Politics of Acopalyse: The History and Influence of Christian Zionism* by Dan Cohn-Sherbok; and *What Zionists Really Think* by Colin Schindler.

Borat Sagdiyev (comedian Sacha Baron-Cohen) published *Touristic Guidings to Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan*.

**Personalia**

Honors conferred on British Jews in 2007 included knighthoods to treasury adviser James Sassoon for services to the financial industry and public service; solicitor Geoffrey Bindman for services to human rights; Norman Rosenthal for his 30 years as exhibitions secretary at the Royal Academy of Arts; and Leigh Lewis for his work as permanent secretary in the Department for Work and Pensions.

Notable British Jews who died in 2007 included Harry Crivan, Zionist personality and metallurgist, in Glasgow, in January, aged 99; Clive Bourne, philanthropist, in Nevis, West Indies, in January, aged 64; Nathan Vogel, founder of the Chabad senior boys' school, in London, in January, aged 82; Paul Oppenheimer, pioneer of Holocaust education, in Birmingham, in January, aged 78; Sam Cohen, communal worker, local Labour government politician, and Zionist, in London, in January, aged 103; Alexander Brown, Blackpool religious official and ritual slaughterer, in Manchester, in January, aged 95; Risa Domb, founder-director, Cambridge University Center for Modern Hebrew Studies, in Cambridge, in January, aged 69; George Garai, Zionist journalist, in London, in February, aged 80; Philip Kleinman, journalist, in London, in February,
aged 74; Jack Goldwhite, founder of the Wingate football club, in London, in February, aged 89; Jakov Lind, Holocaust diarist, in London, in February, aged 80; Teddy Isaacs, Sheffield communal personality, in London, in February, aged 96; Leslie Gatoff, Jewish educator, in London, in February, aged 86; Helena Wolman, social worker, in Manchester, in April, aged 82; Josef Dunner, senior leader of Britain's strictly Orthodox community, in London, in April, aged 94; Susi Bradfield, prominent WIZO figure and philanthropist, in London, in May, aged 77; Michael Hamburger, poet and translator, in Suffolk, in June, aged 83; Maurice Wohl, philanthropist, in London, in June, aged 84; Natalia Karp, pianist, in London, in July, aged 96; Sannie Somers, Whitechapel Road Pavilion Yiddish Theater Company star, in London, in July, aged 99; Abraham Wulwik, for 31 years headmaster of Northwest London Jewish Day School, in London, in July, aged 90; Monty Richardson, active in all aspects of Jewish communal life, in London, in July, aged 89; Frank Cass, publisher of Jewish books, in London, in August, aged 77; Kalman Fausner, for 54 years Hove synagogue cantor, in Hove, in September, aged 98; John Bull, Westminster city councillor for 31 years and prominent Jewish personality, in London, in September, aged 79; Judy Goldkorn, Federation of Women Zionists stalwart, in London, in September, aged 91; Alan Coren, humorist and first Jewish editor of Punch magazine, in London, in October, aged 69; Dina Rabinovitch, journalist, in London, in October, aged 44; Michael Harris, US council member for 22 years, on the Board of Deputies for 48, in London, in October, aged 78; Peter Lipton, philosopher of science and Cambridge Jewish personality, in Cambridge, in November, aged 53; Leonard Tann, long-serving Birmingham rabbi and educator, in Birmingham, in November, aged 62; Norman Pearlman, amateur entertainer and a founder of the Jewish Theater Group, in Manchester, in November, aged 80; Hayim Pinner, Labor Zionist, Board of Deputies secretary general, 1977–91, in London, in November, aged 82; Ruth Winston-Fox, social worker and communal personality, in London, in November, aged 95.

Miriam Kochan