Germany

National Affairs

Since 2005 Germany had been governed by a center-right coalition pairing Chancellor Angela Merkel's Christian Democratic Union (CDU) with Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier's Social Democrats (SPD). Merkel's international standing enjoyed a boost in 2007 due in part to her presidency of the 27-member European Union from January to June and of the G-8 industrialized nations throughout the year. On the domestic front, an improving economy and falling unemployment helped win popular support for the government.

In May, in her role as EU president, Merkel cohosted an interreligious conference in Brussels. Afterwards, she said she no longer planned to include a reference to "Christian values" in a new draft of the proposed European constitution, due to objections from Muslims and Jews.

Germany maintained and extended its presence in northern Afghanistan in 2007, despite popular opposition. About 3,200 German troops and six Tornado reconnaissance jets with up to 500 soldiers were part of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force. In October, the Bundestag approved a one-year extension, with only the Left Party opposed. The next month the Bundestag also approved another year of support for Operation Enduring Freedom, which deployed up to 1,400 German troops in the Horn of Africa and up to 100 special-force personnel in Afghanistan.

A number of tragic incidents fueled public criticism of such commitments. Three German soldiers were killed in May in a suicide bombing. In July, a Taliban group kidnapped two German engineers. One of them was shot and killed, and the other was then shown on Al Jazeera television. Merkel said she would not bow to the kidnappers' demand for the removal of German troops from Afghanistan in return for the engineer's
freedom. The hostage was later released. In August, three German policemen were killed in a bomb attack in Kabul.

Germany remained the second largest contributor to the UN-mandated, 34-nation Kosovo Force, with nearly 2,400 soldiers. In 2007, German diplomat Wolfgang Ischinger led a failed attempt to negotiate a settlement of the status of Kosovo.

With Al Qaeda demanding a withdrawal of German troops from Afghanistan and an end to German support of the U.S.-led "war on terror," the country was considered a potential target for terrorism. In November, a videotaped Islamist diatribe against Germany and Austria called the two countries "friends of Jews and Christians about whom Allah warned us . . . ."

In September, police arrested three men in North Rhine-Westphalia on suspicion of planning terrorist attacks on behalf of an Al Qaeda branch. They were reportedly preparing to make a powerful car bomb, and were suspected of having spent time in terrorist training camps inside Pakistan. Because two of them were German Christian converts to Islam (the third was born in Turkey), the arrests prompted talk of increasing surveillance of German converts.

Late in the year, Jihad Hamada, a Lebanese citizen, was sentenced to 12 years in jail in Lebanon for his part in an attempted attack on Germany. He and Yousef al-Hajdib had planted suitcase bombs on German trains in July 2006, but they failed to explode. Al-Hajdib was to stand trial in Düsseldorf for attempted murder.

Interior Minister Wolfgang Schäuble (CDU) argued for greater powers to conduct Internet surveillance. With support from Merkel, he also pushed for German participation in an EU program to record data about airline passengers, and advocated shooting down commercial jets if it appeared that hijackers would use them as bombs.

There were about three million Muslims living in Germany, most of them of Turkish origin. In December, a report commissioned by the Interior Ministry and carried out by professors from the Institute for Criminology at the University of Hamburg suggested that the Muslim community could become radicalized because Muslims felt excluded from mainstream society. Of the 1,750 Muslims contacted by the researchers, 92 percent rejected violence in the name of Islam, considering it sinful and an insult to Allah. But Schäuble said that the other 6 percent were cause for concern. In addition, another 14 percent tended to hold "anti-democratic" views.

In September, a regional appeals court in Frankfurt am Main found
that the circumcision of an 11-year-old Muslim boy without his approval was an unlawful personal injury, since subjecting one's child to teasing by other children for looking different was a punishable offense. The court opened the way for financial compensation for the boy, now 14, who reportedly planned to sue his father for 10,000 euros (about $14,000). Observers feared the case might have repercussions for the practice of ritual circumcision in Germany by Muslims and Jews.

Germany's Protestant synod, meeting in Dresden in November, turned down a request by Muslim leaders to expand its Christian-Jewish dialogue to include Muslims. Wolfgang Huber, the top Protestant bishop in Berlin, explained that the postwar Jewish-Christian relationship in Germany was unique and therefore not open to new members.

Germany's top foreign-policy concern in 2007 remained the question of whether Iran's nuclear ambitions were related to energy needs or military objectives, and given Germany's twentieth-century experience and its perceived special relationship with the Jewish people, Iranian president Ahmadinejad's threats to destroy Israel made this issue very sensitive for Germans. Iran reportedly relied heavily on German technology, and critics said Germany should use this dependence to influence Iranian policy. The government itself was divided, Merkel leaning in the direction of tougher sanctions and Steinmeier concerned about protecting German industry.

Merkel consistently took a zero-tolerance position on Iran's combination of anti-Israel taunts and vagueness on its nuclear ambitions. She reiterated this in private meetings with Jewish leaders while in New York for the UN General Assembly in September, when Ahmadinejad was also due to visit the UN. Concerns about Iran and also about rising anti-Semitism in Europe topped the agenda for Merkel's discussions on October 1 with leaders of the World Jewish Congress and the European Jewish Congress. This was Ronald S. Lauder's first official meeting with Merkel since being elected WJC president in June. Also at the meeting were Foreign Minister Steinmeier; EJC president Moshe Kantor; Central Council of Jews in Germany (CCJG) president Charlotte Knobloch; and the new WJC secretary general, Michael Schneider.

A month later, however, Steinmeier warned against the use of force to cope with Iran. Speaking in Hamburg at the annual SPD meeting, he said that "military adventures" were no solution, and that Germany would continue seeking a diplomatic resolution in concert with the U.S., Russia, and China. These remarks followed Steinmeier's talks with Iranian nuclear negotiators on October 25, where he reportedly urged the Iranians to cooperate with the EU, the UN, and the International Atomic Energy Agency.
As if to underscore the differences between herself and Steinmeier, Merkel told German Jewish leaders in November that her government was ready to back tougher sanctions. Receiving the Jewish community’s Leo Baeck Prize, Merkel said she saw her three main tasks as combating xenophobia and anti-Semitism; helping support the growth of Jewish life in Germany; and standing up for Israel’s right to exist within secure borders. Regarding Iran, she insisted that “my government is following its words with deeds,” meaning sharper sanctions. On a visit to President Bush in November at his ranch in Texas, Merkel urged all members of the Security Council to remain engaged on the Iranian issue.

Also in November, the German engineering firm Siemens announced it would withdraw from all new business deals with Iran. Reportedly, less than 1 percent of the firm’s business was in the Islamic Republic, and 80 percent of that was related to non-nuclear-power generation. The Siemens announcement followed decisions in the summer by four major German banks—Deutsche, Commerzbank, Hypovereinsbank, and Dresdner—to cut back on dealings with Iran, after U.S. vice president Dick Cheney warned them that they would have trouble doing business in the U.S. Nevertheless, there were reports indicating that trade continued through other banks. Similarly, some small businesses continued to deal with Iran, often through third parties. It was pointed out, however, that a number of American companies did the same, working through Dubai.

Germany’s economic ties with Iran ran deep. In 1984, West Germany was the first Western country to send a foreign minister to Iran after its 1979 Islamic revolution. Although Germany had reportedly been Iran’s second biggest trading partner in 2006 (the biggest was the United Arab Emirates), trade volume dropped 25 percent through November 2007. In addition, government-backed Hermes export-loan guarantees fell by more than 50 percent from 2006 to 2007, according to figures from the German Ministry of Economics cited by the Financial Times. Deutsche Bahn and E.on-Ruhrgas also canceled major projects with Iran. Some feared that China, Russia, and others would fill the trade gap, and there was in fact a growth in Chinese-Iranian trade. But others argued it would take years for those countries to produce the kinds of products that Germany offered, years that might be critical for halting Iran’s nuclear program.

There was also ongoing cultural exchange between Iran and Germany. The Frankfurt International Book Fair sent a delegation to Tehran’s annual literary event. In the summer, a German orchestra—its female musicians wearing headscarves as required by Iranian law—performed classical works there. Organizers called it the first performance by a Western orchestra in Iran since the Islamic revolution.
December 2007 marked the end of the prison terms of Iranians who had assassinated four Iranian-Kurdish opposition figures in a Berlin restaurant in 1992, an act that had threatened diplomatic relations between the two countries. In October, Israel appealed to Chancellor Merkel not to release the men until Iran gave out information about missing Israeli fighter pilot Ron Arad.

The release of the U.S. National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) report in December, which found that Iran had halted its nuclear-weapons development program in 2003, fueled suspicions in Germany that the U.S. had all along been less interested in stopping nuclear proliferation than in regime change. Critics called on Merkel to divorce her policy from the American line, and some businesses saw the report as a green light to resume trade with Iran. But even the NIE report suggested that Iran could develop a nuclear weapon by 2015. The chairman of the Bundestag Foreign Affairs Committee, Ruprecht Polenz (CDU), said negotiations should be resumed with the aim of getting Iran to stop uranium enrichment. He urged the U.S. to negotiate directly with Tehran.

Popular opinion tended to be critical of Iran. A poll released in May by the Anti-Defamation League showed that Germans and other Europeans saw Iran's going nuclear as a significant threat, and also regarded Hamas as a terrorist organization. Other studies, including a comparative survey of the views of Israelis, Germans, and American Jews by the Bertelsmann Foundation/TNS Emnid, showed much German support for sanctions against Iran.

The spokesman for the Israeli embassy in Berlin told the JTA that “the lesson from history is that we should take people by their word and act accordingly. If Ahmadinejad and others in Iran talk about wiping out Israel from the map while aspiring to acquire nuclear weapons, we should take it seriously.”

Germany and Israel

Germany remained one of Israel's strongest supporters in Europe, and Chancellor Merkel was dedicated to promoting bilateral relations in the year leading up to the 60th anniversary of Israel's founding.

Nevertheless, a conference held in Berlin in September on “Perceptions and Perspectives: The Future of the German-American-Israeli Relationship,” sponsored by AJC's Berlin office and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, found a communication gap between the two countries. As one speaker put it, when Germans said “Never again” they meant no more war, but when Israelis said the same words they meant “we will never be
victims again,” and the difference had serious political implications. “The Holocaust will no longer be sufficient to carry the relationship into the future,” said Israeli ambassador Shimon Stein, and he advocated the cultivation of shared values, economic ties, and cultural dialogue.

The 2007 Pew Global Attitudes Survey indicated that 80 percent of Germans believed that a two-state solution was possible for Israel and the Palestinians. Thirty-four percent sympathized with Israel, 21 percent with the Palestinians, and 34 percent were neutral. Thirty-seven percent of Germans considered Israel responsible for the plight of the Palestinians while 29 percent blamed the Palestinians themselves.

Chancellor Merkel continued to insist that there could be no dialogue with Hamas until it met the three requirements set by the “Quartet” (U.S., EU, UN, and Russia): recognizing Israel’s right to exist, renouncing violence against Israel, and accepting preexisting agreements. She met in February with Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas and asked him to help obtain the release of captured Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit. In March, the European Union Council, under Merkel’s leadership, announced that it would only release funds to the Palestinian Authority that were dedicated to social projects. Any money beyond those sums would be held back until the new unity government agreed to the three requirements. At the same time, the EU demanded that Israel release taxes and customs duties owed to the Palestinians.

Merkel visited Jordan, Israel, and the Palestinian territories in April for talks on the resumption of peace negotiations. She called the Arab League’s initiative to recognize Israel in exchange for the latter’s withdrawal from occupied land a “big opportunity.” And in June, Germany criticized a proposal by the foreign ministers of ten European countries—France, Slovenia, Spain, Portugal, Cyprus, Bulgaria, Romania, Italy, Greece, and Malta—to redefine EU objectives in the Middle East and resume talks with Hamas while pressing Israel to concede to Palestinian demands.

Foreign Minister Steinmeier attended the Annapolis conference on the Middle East peace process in November 2007. He announced that Germany was prepared to advise the Palestinian Authority, particularly on improving its police and security forces.

A tiff erupted in early March, when members of the German Catholic Bishops’ Conference, on their first official trip to the Middle East, compared Israel with the Nazis. Gregor Maria Franz Hanke of Eichstätt, for example, said Ramallah was like the infamous Warsaw Ghetto. Hanke said that while Israel had the right to exist, “this right cannot be realized in such a brutal manner.” He said he would include his impressions in his
Easter sermons. Shimon Stein, the Israeli ambassador, reacted with "horror and disgust," and CCJG president Knobloch condemned the remarks as "appalling and completely unacceptable." But Johannes Gerster, president of the German-Israeli Society, noted "that the Catholic bishops have corrected their comparisons and their positions, which were justifiably attacked." Their second thoughts, he suggested, "should be accepted, and not constantly reheated."

After six years of service, Shimon Stein was succeeded as Israeli ambassador by Yoram Ben-Zeev, 63, who officially took office in December, when ceremonies were held at the embassy in Berlin. Ben-Zeev also placed a wreath at a Holocaust memorial at the Grunewald train station, from which tens of thousands of Berlin Jews were deported to Auschwitz. He had previously been coordinator for the peace process under Yitzhak Rabin, consul general in Los Angeles, and senior director general for North America.

Movements to boycott Israeli products, which gained considerable support in other countries, did not get off the ground in Germany. In September, the German Confederation of Trade Unions (DGB) issued a categorical rejection of boycotts "targeted one-sidedly at Israeli citizens, institutions and products." Such boycotts, it said, "weaken the position of the majority on both sides who are ready for peace and will play into the hands of radical and fundamentalist forces." The statement was issued largely as a show of support for the the new Caucus of Jewish Social Democrats (see below, p. 473).

In August, the Kaufhof department-store chain featured Israeli products for a full week. This "Israel Week" sale, the first for a major German chain, was sponsored by the Israeli Institute for Export and Cooperation.

It was announced in October that a soccer player who had refused to take part in a qualifying game in Israel would nevertheless remain on the national team. Ashkan Dejagah, a 21-year-old German athlete of Iranian background, played on the Bundesliga club VfL Wolfsburg. Dejagah, born in Tehran, originally told German Football Association president Theo Zwanziger that he feared for the well-being of his relatives in Iran should he set foot in Israel. He apologized and agreed to play against the Israeli team when it came to Germany in 2008.

Anti-Semitism and Extremism

Anti-Semitic trends in the general public were of concern to Jewish groups, nongovernmental organizations, and the German government.
Left Party legislator Petra Pau, vice president of Parliament and an expert on right-wing extremism and anti-Semitism, submitted a report to Parliament on the matter. It noted another decline in the number of reported anti-Semitic crimes: there were 951 incidents registered in 2007, down from 1,024 in 2006 and 1,193 in 2005. Among these were 23 cases involving injuries and 216 “propaganda” crimes—the use of banned Nazi symbols, texts, or gestures—up from 191 in 2006.

Pau expressed special concern about the desecration of Jewish cemeteries. The Federal Criminal Police Office reported to Pau that there were 30 such vandalisms in 2007, making a total of 267 over the last five years. The perpetrators were apprehended in only four of the 2007 incidents, and Pau wanted the government to explain why so few had been caught. One case she cited exemplified the problem. The historic Ihringen/Kaisersstuhl cemetery had been vandalized twice in recent years and the perpetrators were never apprehended. In August 2007 it happened a third time, and only after a local citizens group pressed the authorities did police arrest four young suspects, all of whom had right-wing extremist connections. The State Criminal Department said it was committed to clearing up the unsolved cases.

In November, Marion Neiss, a historian with the Berlin-based Center for Research on Anti-Semitism, raised the issue again, announcing that the center was preparing to carry out a study about how government authorities handled cemetery desecrations. Only some 10 percent of perpetrators were caught nowadays, she noted, as compared to over 52 percent apprehended during the 1950s.

Several sensational xenophobic attacks during the summer highlighted the threat posed by right-wing extremists. In August, for example, in the state of Saxony, a gang of about 50 beat up several people of Indian background, who were rushed to the hospital with serious injuries. Later that month an Iraqi man was badly beaten by a suspected right-wing extremist in the state of Saxony-Anhalt, and police in the state of Hessen arrested a suspect in an attack on two Africans in the town of Gunterblum.

Demonstrations of civil courage were rare and noteworthy. In late November, four young right-wingers in Mittweida, in Saxony, harassed a six-year-old child, whose foreign family, of German ethnic origin, had recently returned to the country. A 17-year-old girl came to assist the child, and the perpetrators carved a swastika into her hip. Many people reportedly witnessed the incident from their apartments, but none called the police.

The federal government appropriated an additional 5 million euros
(about $7 million) to the fight against right-wing violence in 2007, making the total federal expenditure for this purpose 24 million euros (about $37 million). The state of Saxony more than tripled the amount it spent on such projects, raising the sum to 1.7 million euros (about $2.5 million) for the fiscal year. In August, the state of Thuringia committed $620,000 over three years for a program, “Changing Perspectives: Educational Initiatives against Anti-Semitism and Xenophobia,” developed by the Central Welfare Council of Jews in Germany.

One specific anti-Semitic crime generated widespread interest in tightening up the laws. On February 5, when school was not in session, there was an arson attempt at the Chabad-run kindergarten in Berlin. While the smoke bomb did not detonate, Nazi graffiti were found scrawled on the school and on toys left outside. An outpouring of support for the school came from politicians and other minority-group leaders.

The government responded in March with an announcement of new measures to combat anti-Semitism and xenophobia, including mandatory jail sentences for Holocaust denial and incitement to hate, that resembled the hate-crime laws in the U.S. The Justice Ministry committed funds to programs such as “Youth for Tolerance and Democracy,” and set about building international cooperation in investigating far-right activities across Europe. The ministers of justice in two former East German states, Saxony-Anhalt and Brandenburg, proposed harsh mandatory sentences for all forms of extremist violence. They said these criminals viewed the usual suspended sentences as a kind of victory. In August, the CCJG announced its support.

Other states, however, did not believe that such changes were necessary, arguing that existing laws were sufficient. But another push for the proposed legislation came in September, after another incident, the near-fatal stabbing of Rabbi Zalman Gurevitch in Frankfort, which caused the European Jewish Congress to call for creation of a pan-European bias-crime law. Police ultimately tracked down the perpetrator in that attack thanks to a detailed description of the incident posted on the Internet. The suspect, a 22-year-old German citizen of Afghani background, was charged with attempted murder and causing life-threatening injury. He admitted attacking the rabbi, but denied any intent to kill him.

That same month, a synagogue in Paderborn in North Rhine-Westphalia was vandalized with swastikas and right-wing extremist slogans—daubed in chocolate, presumably to symbolize the brown Nazi uniforms. At this point Petra Pau called on Germany to create a new position in the government that would be in charge of promoting democ-
racy and tolerance. In November, legislators from the center-right Free Democratic Party suggested the creation of a multiparty commission to investigate anti-Semitism in Germany.

Far-right political parties, particularly the National Democratic Party (NPD) and the German People’s Union (DVU), enjoyed minor electoral success in some former East German states, passing the 5-percent threshold necessary to place representatives in local parliaments and to become eligible for federal campaign funding. The NPD—which membership had grown by 200 to 7,200 in the course of a year, according to the Ministry of the Interior—had parliamentary seats in the states of Saxony and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, and in four district parliaments in Berlin. The DVU, whose membership had dropped from 8,500 to 7,000 in the same period, had representation only in the state of Brandenburg.

The NPD in particular aroused concern among mainstream politicians and Jewish leaders. Berlin authorities expressed alarm in July at news—later confirmed by the party—that it was planning to open a training school on a seven-square-mile, abandoned property. At the same time, strangely, the NPD was reportedly facing bankruptcy and selling off properties to meet debts.

NPD leaders continued to get into trouble with the law. In August, the party chief in the state of Hessen, Marcel Wöll, was sentenced to four months in jail for Holocaust denial and for beating up antifascist activists outside a meeting of the local council in the district of Wettau. Wöll said he would appeal. The AP reported that Wöll and another party member had said during a council meeting in March that there should be no further subsidies for class trips to Holocaust memorials such as the former death camp at Auschwitz, which he termed “so-called sites of National Socialist terror.” A local politician filed suit against him for these statements. Earlier in the year, Wöll was kicked out of a council meeting after he physically accosted youths who were handing out leaflets calling for banning the NPD. They had received official permission to hand out the leaflets.

The research firm Emnid produced a poll for the broadcasting company N24, released in August, showing that 66 percent of Germans agreed that the NPD should be banned. Politicians and Jewish leaders renewed calls for such a ban. German courts had dropped their last attempt in 2003, after it was revealed that some testimony about the party came from informants who may have instigated illegal activities.

Ban or no, other Germans made their feelings about the NPD clear.
In August, the party was barred from holding a memorial marking the 20th anniversary of the death of Rudolf Hess, Hitler's deputy and a convicted war criminal, in Wunsiedel, where Hess was buried. In October, the party had to cancel its annual conference when its chosen venue, the Weser Ems Hall in Oldenburg, Lower Saxony, refused to host it. NPD leaders sued, but the courts agreed that the site's tenant could legally refuse access. And in a story that delighted opponents of the far right, a Dresden hotelier, Johannes Lohmeyer, devised an ingenious way to keep neo-Nazis off his premises. In an open letter, he informed the party that if it did not accept his cancellation of their online reservation, he would donate all their fees to the Dresden synagogue. The reservation was withdrawn and Lohmeyer received a prize from the German-Israeli Society of Aachen for his "courageous act against right-wing extremism."

Far-left extremism found expression primarily through antiglobalization activism. Criticism of Israel was also common, often comparing Israel to Nazi Germany and disseminating conspiracy theories about supposed Jewish influence on world events. According to the Ministry of the Interior, the number of left-wing extremists in Germany had risen by only about 100 people from the previous year, to 30,800 in 2007. In addition, experts noted a rise in anti-Semitic views among Germans of Arab or Muslim background.

The ADL's 2007 survey of European opinion found that 20 percent of Germans answered "probably true" to three of four anti-Semitic stereotypes. About 51 percent of the German sample thought it "probably true that Jews were more loyal to Israel than to their own countries," and 21 percent thought the same about whether Jews had too much power in business and finance.

Another study, conducted by the Forsa Institute for Stern magazine, showed that 25 percent of Germans thought there was a positive side to National Socialism. Released in October, this survey of more than 1,000 citizens followed soon after the firing of TV talk-show host Eva Hermann for commenting positively on the Nazis' support for traditional families. The answers tended to correlate with age: the older one was, the more likely it was that he or she would see a positive aspect to Nazism.

However another survey that focused on teenagers showed that young people were hardly immune to group prejudice. In talks with youth around Germany, the Berlin-based Amadeu-Antonio Foundation against Racism and Xenophobia found that many believed that Jews must have done something to deserve the persecution they suffered during the Third Reich. The study by sociologist Barbara Schäuble, called "I Have Nothing against Jews, but . . .,” was released in November.
Another particular cause of concern was the anti-Semitism and xenophobia shown by some sports fans, particularly people who followed the fortunes of smaller, regional teams. In November it was reported that the authorities had the names of 9,728 people who had participated in violent sport-related incidents, and about 9.8 percent were known to belong to right-wing extremist groups.

Underscoring the presence of anti-Semitism in the mainstream population, a Holocaust survivor who frequently gave presentations to students at the Berlin Police Academy as part of a class in the National Socialist period reported that, in a discussion about xenophobia and anti-Semitism, the trainees "didn't want to be constantly reminded of the Holocaust," and expressed the view that all Jews were rich. Berlin police president Dieter Glietsch confirmed that such comments had been made.

In August, a 33-year-old member of Berlin's police force was suspended after investigators found right-wing extremist CDs, DVDs, and T-shirts in his apartment. A police spokesperson said the man was suspected of assisting in the production of some of the material.

In May, the right-conservative Christian Social Union (CSU), the Bavarian sister party of the CDU, suspended six officers—including top youth leaders—for suspected extremist activities. A state investigation was launched on charges of incitement to hate, coercion, and the use of symbols of unconstitutional organizations.

A trial began in Magdeburg, in February, of seven men aged 24–29—all members of a far-right group—accused of burning *The Diary of Anne Frank* at a summer solstice party in 2006 in the village of Pretzien. One of them said he committed the act to symbolically free himself from the evil Nazi period, but prosecutors found the statement disingenuous. A conviction would bring a sentence of up to five years in jail.

Hate spread over the Internet remained a major concern in 2007. According to the Ministry of the Interior, there were about 1,000 Internet sites operated by German right-wing extremists. In August, the CCJG lent its support to calls for the Internet video-sharing portal YouTube to be prosecuted for failing to bar neo-Nazi hate material that was illegal in Germany. Although YouTube, owned by Google, was based in California and thus beyond Germany's legal jurisdiction, German officials could come down hard on its branches in Germany. German-based Website companies were required to remove illegal material as soon as they were informed about it. YouTube's German edition went online in November, and observers said the site was rife with neo-Nazi videos. The CCJG urged the firm to use filters.

In August, a traveling exhibit about anti-Semitism in Germany and
elsewhere opened in the atrium of the Foreign Ministry in Berlin. The exhibit, a project by Yad Vashem and the Berlin-based Center for Research on Anti-Semitism, focused on the question of when criticism of Israel crossed the border of legitimacy.

Holocaust-Related Issues

In January, after the UN General Assembly passed a resolution condemning Holocaust denial, German justice minister Brigitte Zypries proposed an EU-wide ban on denial. Prime Chancellor Merkel was EU president at the time. Nine member states had already criminalized Holocaust denial: Austria, Germany, France, Romania, Poland, Slovakia, Belgium, the Czech Republic, and Lithuania. Germany's Supreme Court exempted Holocaust denial from the protections of freedom of expression in 1994.

In March, Holocaust denier Germar Rudolf was sentenced to two-and-a-half years in jail for incitement and Holocaust denial. Rudolf, a chemist, used the Internet and wrote a pseudoscientific book trying to deny and relativize Nazi anti-Jewish policies. At the start of his trial in November 2006 he called the Holocaust a "gigantic con." In September, the Federal High Court upheld a five-year prison term for Holocaust denier Ernst Ziindel, rejecting a 600-page proposal to reduce it.

Members of the SPD in the state of Lower Saxony suggested in March that Hitler, born in Austria, should be posthumously stripped of the German citizenship he adopted in 1932. However the CDU, Chancellor Merkel's party, opposed the move. Uwe Schüinemann, the state's interior minister, said it was generally illegal to annul the citizenship of a deceased person, and furthermore, such action "could be taken the wrong way by Jewish communities in Germany or abroad," that is, it might be seen as an effort to disassociate Germany from the Hitler era.

When Hans Filbiger, the former governor of Baden-Württemberg, died on April 1 at the age of 93, the current governor, Günther Oettinger (CDU), praised him as an opponent of the Nazis. In fact, as Charlotte Knobloch, head of the CCJG, indignantly noted, Filbinger was forced to resign from his position in 1978 after his World War II actions—including his role as a navy lawyer and judge—were highlighted in a play by Rolf Hochhuth. Oettinger apologized.

An interview with Horst Mahler, one of Germany's most notorious neo-Nazis, in its November 1 issue landed Vanity Fair magazine in deep trouble. Among other things, Mahler said that "Hitler was the liberator
of the German people." Jewish historian and Holocaust survivor Arno Lustiger started proceedings to sue the magazine's German edition. His attorneys charged that Mahler had denied and belittled the Holocaust, which was illegal in Germany. The publisher said he ran the interview to make Germans aware of the poisonous ideas in their midst, but Lustiger's attorneys denied the relevance of its motivation. Michel Friedman, a former vice president of the CCJG, also filed suit as a private individual against Mahler.

When he gave the interview Mahler had just been released from jail after serving nine months for incitement to hate. In November he was jailed again, this time for raising his arm in the "Hitler greeting" to his jailers when he was put in the slammer in the former East German city of Cottbus. He was now sentenced to another six months behind bars.

NPD head Udo Voigt told Iranian journalists in December that "it's not possible" that the Nazis killed six million Jews, and that Germany should get back the lands taken away from it after the war. Also, his representative, Sascha Rossmüller, asked Iran to assist the NPD, expressing the hope that President Ahmadinejad could be a "partner for a new Germany." Sebastian Edathy (SPD), who headed the Bundestag Committee for Domestic Affairs, filed a lawsuit against Voigt for Holocaust denial.

That same month Germany came under EU pressure to explain why it failed to extradite Sören Kam, a former SS member, for trial in Denmark. Kam, about 85 years old, was living in Kempten. Number eight on the Simon Wiesenthal Center's list of ten most wanted Nazi war criminals, Kam was suspected of having used a stolen population register to identify 500 Danish Jews for deportation. He also was involved in the 1943 murder of anti-Nazi Danish newspaper editor Carl Henrik Clemmensen.

The long-awaited opening of the archives of the International Tracing Service (ITS), set up in Bonn in 1955, came a little bit closer in May, with an agreement between most of the International Commission's 11 member countries on rules governing access to the millions of documents at its facility in Bad Arolsen. The countries had different laws about protecting the privacy of individuals, and this had held up release of the documents for some time. The documents, which contained information about people who were persecuted under National Socialism, were useful primarily to help establish eligibility for compensation or reparations. The ITS also announced plans to transfer digital copies of the archives to each member country. At that point, 12 million documents had been digitized, roughly a third of the total.

The issue of how to fund the upkeep of Holocaust-related historical
sites stirred controversy during 2007. At the May 13 ceremonies marking the anniversary of the liberation of Dachau, Pieter J. Ph. Dietz de Loos, head of the International Dachau Committee and a Dutch survivor, angered many of those present by calling for an entrance fee to the site, saying that a contribution from each of the 800,000 annual visitors would help pay for educational programs and additional staff. No sites of this kind in Germany charged an admission fee.

The suggestion was firmly rejected by Dachau Memorial director Barbara Distel. She argued that the country responsible for the crimes of the Holocaust must never charge admission. Another suggestion, proffered in July by Bernd Neumann, Germany’s minister of state for culture, to cut government funding to these sites, was also roundly condemned. Solomon Korn, a vice president of the CCJG, said it was important to increase funding both for symbolic memorials and for authentic historical sites, especially as the number of eyewitnesses declined every year.

In June, a new concentration camp memorial was opened at Flossenbürg. The ceremonies were attended by Holocaust survivors, Foreign Minister Steinmeier, and Ukrainian president Viktor Yushchenko, whose father had been a prisoner there. The event marked 62 years since the liberation of the camp by U.S. troops.

It was revealed in August that Germany’s national Holocaust Memorial, opened in 2005 in Berlin (see AJYB 2006, p. 436), was already in need of repair. About a sixth of the 2,700 cement steles that made up the memorial had deep cracks, which would have to be closed with injections of plastic filler. The memorial had been designed by American architect Peter Eisenman.

Also in August, Germany’s Federal Criminal Police Agency held a series of seminars focusing on the fact that former Nazis continued working for the police force after World War II. Although the agency, created in 1951, had insisted for years that it had no connection to the Nazi period, a 2001 book by former member Dieter Schenk related that the agency was actually created and staffed by ex-Nazis. As late as 1959, they held 45 of the 47 top positions, and 33 of the 45 men had been SS leaders. According to Schenk, the makeup of the agency probably influenced the way the force dealt with right-wing extremists, anti-Semitism, and xenophobia.

*Der Spiegel* magazine reported in August that a box of Hitler’s LP records included music by Jewish composers or played by Jewish musicians. Hidden for 62 years in the attic of a summer resort home near Moscow, the records had been taken from Hitler’s Wilhelmstrasse bunker in Berlin by a Red Army reconnaissance officer.
In October, the Quandt family, which owned nearly 50 percent of BMW, agreed to support research into the family’s use of forced labor during World War II, and opened its archives to an independent historian. What convinced the family to take this step was the public outcry that followed the airing of a TV documentary, “The Silence of the Quandt Family.” It included testimony from former forced laborers, some of whom reported that they had asked for financial support from the Quandts after the war and were turned away.

The Holocaust memorial at the former Bergen-Belsen concentration camp in Germany opened a new documentation center in October, featuring recorded testimony from survivors. The camp’s entire history was covered, starting with its use by the Nazis and ending with its role as the largest postwar displaced-persons camp for Jewish survivors. Liberated on April 15, 1945, Bergen-Belsen was the first such camp that the SS did not manage to dismantle before fleeing.

Also in October, Dieter Graumann, a vice president of the CCJG, called on the German Association for Expellees to stop its inappropriate comparisons of German suffering with that of victims of Nazi Germany. As the association marked its 50th anniversary, Graumann said it was time the group healed rifts with Poland and the Czech Republic, wiped its slate clean of nationalistic slogans, and stopped its “unfortunate tradition of drawing parallels between the Holocaust and the expulsion of ethnic Germans . . . .” A similar problem existed with regard to the memorial foundation set up by the former East German state of Saxony: Jewish and survivor groups refused to work with it on the grounds that it drew parallels between Nazi crimes and the injustices of communist totalitarianism.

In November, a new memorial to the victims of Nazi Germany’s so-called euthanasia program was dedicated near the Berlin Philharmonic. Information about “Action T4”—which gassed to death more than 70,000 mentally handicapped people in 1940–41—was displayed near the spot at Berlin’s Tiergarten park where the headquarters of this program were located.

A bold new exhibit opened at the former Neuengamme concentration camp near Hamburg in November, telling the story of women whom the Nazis forced to become sex workers. The exhibit, “Sex-Slave Labor in the Nazi Concentration Camps,” was curated by researchers at the memorial at Ravensbrück, the former concentration camp for women. About 220 women were forced to do this work in ten concentration camps. Many survivors had never spoken of the experience before.

The Berlin Philharmonic opened up its Nazi past to the public in No-
Misha Aster produced a book and documentary film, *The Berlin Philharmonic and the Third Reich*. There also was an exhibit, based on one designed by the Nazis in 1938, about music that the Nazis considered "degenerate," including jazz, works by Jewish composers, and music deemed politically unacceptable.

Also in November, Germany pledged 5 million euros (about $7 million) to the planned Warsaw museum on the history of Jews in Poland. The AP reported that the German ambassador to Poland, Michael Gerds, said Germany wanted "to make another contribution to the reparations for the terrible suffering perpetrated against the Jews and thus against Poland in the name of Germany." The museum, to be built on the former site of the Warsaw Ghetto, was expected to open in 2010.

### Compensation

In March, the Conference for Material Claims against Germany raised pressure on Germany to accept more cases under a law enacted in 1997 to compensate survivors who were not paid for their work during internment in Nazi ghettos. The law was expanded in 2002, but the Claims Conference said Germany had rejected 61,000 out of 70,000 applications either on the grounds that the particular ghetto did not exist at the time claimed, or that certain categories of labor were excluded. In September, Germany announced the creation of a $137-million fund to pay many who had been rejected in the past.

Following its annual negotiations with the conference, Germany agreed in June to raise pension payments for Holocaust survivors to match the higher cost of living in Eastern Europe. Negotiators also secured additional pensions under Article 2 for survivors who still were, or had been, citizens of certain Western European countries. In addition, Germany enacted a new Law for Support of Victims of the Socialist German Dictatorship that granted Article 2 pensions to victims of the German communist regime. This was the third post-reunification law aimed at compensating these victims. Also, the German Ministry of Finance pledged to increase monthly payments to EU residents and to those in non-EU countries such as Ukraine, Moldova, and Belarus. These payments would reach 14,500 Holocaust survivors who met the same eligibility criteria as those for the Article 2 Fund.

Germany also lifted some eligibility requirements, allowing more low-income people to receive Article 2 payments. The agreement added a
quarter of a billion dollars to the pension fund over ten years, and the conference launched an ad campaign to reach people who might qualify. Most of the newly eligible had slightly more than the $16,000 maximum annual income. For some, what made them ineligible was the fact that other reparations payments had been counted toward the income total. That would no longer be the case. The funds would be distributed for ten years starting October 1, the same day that a cost-of-living increase was to take effect.

In November, the Washington Post reported that more than 76,000 claims filed by Nazi-era victims who had owned property in former East Germany remained unresolved. One of the more sensational cases was that of American lawyer Peter Sonnenthal, a former attorney for the Securities and Exchange Commission. He and his sister had been trying since 1991 to reclaim hundreds of properties they said their ancestors had been forced to sell during the Nazi era.

Germany’s Ministry of Finance announced in February that it would return an 1857 painting by Carl Spitzweg to the heirs of Leo Bendel, a German Jewish collector who died in 1940 in Buchenwald. Bendel had been pressured to sell the painting, Fiat Justitia, to a dealer, and used the proceeds to help his family flee to Austria. The painting was purchased a few months later on Hitler’s orders for a museum he planned, according to Der Spiegel magazine.

In March, the heirs of the German Jewish Wertheim family received one of the largest compensation payments ever reported, negotiated during months of secret meetings. The KarstadtQuelle corporation agreed to pay the Claims Conference $117 million for the last remaining major pieces of property that formerly belonged to the family, and would withdraw claims on 50 other Wertheim properties. Some of the funds would go toward Claims Conference programs for Holocaust survivors and the rest to the Wertheim heirs. When they opened their first small shop in 1875, Ida and Abraham Wertheim planted the seed for the foundation of one of Germany’s largest department store chains, but their children lost their property when they fled Nazi persecution in 1939. Much of that property ended up within what became East Germany.

In July, Germany’s Social Security Tribunal in Kassel ruled that two Holocaust survivors were entitled to German state pensions, in decisions that appeared likely to set precedents. At issue was how to interpret the requirement that “persecution” had to last at least six months to merit a pension. One plaintiff was able to prove that his persecution had started at the point he was forced to wear a yellow Star of David when German
troops occupied his town in Poland. The other won recognition for time spent in a ghetto under pro-Nazi Romanian occupation. He had originally been told that Holocaust pensions were only for people living in places under German occupation.

The Dresden State Art Collections announced in June that, in cooperation with Yad Vashem, it would present artwork by Holocaust victims and survivors, alongside relevant pieces from its permanent collection. No museum in the former East Germany had ever done this before. Martin Roth, director of the Dresden Collections, said the exhibit, scheduled for 2009, would show the power of art in times of suffering and barbarism.

The CCJG criticized plans for a Holocaust museum in Leipzig. In August, CCJG vice president Korn said such a museum could distract people from visiting authentic historical locations in former East Germany, including memorials at the former concentration camps of Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen. The current plan was to house the museum in the former Soviet pavilion at the Leipzig fair grounds.

That same month, the city of Lübeck installed its first brass “stumbling block” memorials in the sidewalks in front of several apartment buildings. The blocks, level with the pavement, were engraved with names of people who had lived in the buildings and were deported in 1941. Artist Günter Demnig, who initiated the project as a protest action in 1996 in Berlin and his hometown of Cologne, installed the first 26 of a total of 40 brass blocks in Lübeck. Some 90 Jews still living there in 1941 were deported to Riga, and only three survived.

These memorials were financed by private donations. There were now some 9,000 “stumbling blocks” in Germany. Some cities, including Munich — home of CCJG president Knobloch — refused to allow them. Knobloch herself, who survived the war by hiding with a Christian family, opposed the stumbling blocks as disrespectful, since one could walk on them.

JEWISH COMMUNITY

Demography

About 120,000 people were registered members of German Jewish communities, but estimates of the country’s Jewish population, including the unaffiliated, were as high as 200,000. The registered Jewish population had more than quadrupled since 1990 due to the influx of former
Soviet Jews, but this immigration slowed after Germany introduced a tough new immigration law in 2005. According to statistics cited by the U.S. State Department, the number of Jewish immigrants decreased from 3,124 in 2005 to 1,971 in 2006.

The Central Council of Jews in Germany (CCJG) included 23 regional associations and 104 communities. There were more than 80 synagogues but only about 30 rabbis. Berlin remained the largest community, with about 12,000 members. Charlotte Knobloch was president of the CCJG. Dieter Graumann and Salomon Korn were vice presidents, and Stephan Kramer was general secretary.

In July, figures were released showing a sharp rise in the number of Israelis seeking to live in Germany. Of the 124,830 people who became citizens of Germany in 2006, 4,313 of them were former Israelis, a figure that marked a 50-percent increase over 2005.

Communal Affairs

A major political development occurred in April, when Jewish members of Germany's SPD announced the formation of a Caucus of Jewish Social Democrats. It was led by Peter Feldmann, a Frankfurt city counselor, and Sergey Lagodinsky, a Berlin lawyer. "The SPD greeted us with open arms," Feldmann said in a press release. Lagodinsky said the new group would stand up for "integration of immigrants of Jewish and non-Jewish background, support activities to combat right-wing extremism," and fight for the rights of Holocaust survivors. The caucus saw itself as ideologically close to the Israeli Labor Party and Meretz, and favored a "realistic" evaluation of Israeli policies.

In June, Gesa Ederberg became the first female rabbi appointed to a pulpit in Berlin. In ceremonies at the Centrum Judaicum, Ederberg —ordained by the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York — was formally installed as rabbi of the Beit Ohr congregation, better known as the Oranienburgerstrasse synagogue, in former East Berlin. Her initial contract was for two years. Berlin's senior Orthodox rabbi, Yitzchak Ehrenberg, objected to the installation and said he would not attend any communal events to which Ederberg was invited. (The first woman ever ordained as a rabbi was Regina Jonas of Berlin, who never held a pulpit. She was murdered in 1943 in Auschwitz.)

In August, the CCJG and the Central Welfare Union of Jews in Germany expressed concern about plans by Nativ, an Israeli government agency, to set up operations in Germany, with a new mandate and money
from Israel’s minister of strategic affairs, Avigdor Lieberman. Nativ had been created in the 1950s to help Soviet Jews come to Israel, and with the fall of communism Nativ’s purpose was called into question. Some saw the decision to send emissaries to Germany as an attempt to breathe new life into Nativ by having it encourage German Jews to come to Israel, and feared this could deepen splits in the German Jewish community. In December, an agreement was reached whereby new Israeli cultural centers would open in 2008 to be run jointly by Nativ and the Jewish Agency, but the arrangement was put on hold with the threatened resignation of Lieberman from the Israeli government.

Jewish communal elections were held in Berlin in November. They brought to power a “unity” party that included members of the old, established community and FSU immigrants. Lala Süsskind, 61, became the first female head of Berlin’s Jewish community. Born in Poland, she was a past chair of the WIZO women’s Zionist organization in Germany. Although Stephan Kramer, the CCJG general secretary, had announced his intention of running for a seat on the board, CCJG officials said it was inappropriate for a top appointed official to do so, and he withdrew. In the past Kramer had expressed interest in ultimately becoming president of the Berlin community.

In August, the magnificent Rykestrasse Synagogue—Berlin’s only major synagogue to survive the Holocaust—was rededicated following a two-year renovation. The building, in former East Berlin, had room for up to 2,000 worshipers. Among the guests was Rita Rubinstein, 85, whose parents were married there in 1905, one year after the synagogue opened. Under communism the sanctuary was used by the vestigial Jewish community, but services were seldom held in the years since German reunification.

Chabad opened its Szloma Albam House—Rohr Chabad Center in September. The official ceremony dedicating the sanctuary and study rooms concluded a multiyear building project that cost about $7 million, virtually all of it raised through private donations. A street fair followed, featuring a performance by Avraham Fried, a noted Chabad singer from Brooklyn.

The city of Bochum dedicated a new synagogue in December, nearly 70 years after Nazis destroyed the town’s original synagogue. The Jewish community had 1,200 members in 2007, as many as it had before the Nazi period. The new, cube-shaped synagogue cost about $10 million and was financed by the Jewish community, the state of North-Rhine Westphalia, and the federal government. New synagogues were also planned for Schwerin and Potsdam.
In May, two leaders of the U.S.-based Jewish Renewal movement, Rabbi Marcia Prager and Cantor Jack Kessler, held an event called “Ohel Hachidush,” a weekend teach-in and Shabbaton, in Berlin. It was the brainchild of Cantor Yalda Rebling.

Construction workers digging in Mainz in September found 20 Jewish gravestones, probably dating to the twelfth century. These were among the oldest Jewish tombstones ever found in the Rheinland-Pfalz region, experts said. Some of the stones included names of famous rabbis.

In November, a Torah scroll that a priest, Gustav Meinertz, had rescued from Cologne’s burning synagogue 69 years before was rededicated. The Cologne Jewish Congregation commemorated the anniversary of Kristallnacht with the placement of the repaired scroll in the ark. The synagogue that was the scroll’s original home had not been rebuilt. Meinertz returned the Torah to the Jewish community shortly after the end of the war in 1945. The cost of repair was covered by the archbishop of Cologne, Joachim Cardinal Meisner.

Germany announced in November that it would use $1.6 million in Marshall Fund moneys to strengthen relations between German and American Jewish groups through weeklong guided visits by the Americans to Germany. The one-year trial program was called “Germany Close Up: Young Jewish Americans Meet Modern Germany.” The funds would be administered by the New Synagogue Berlin-Centrum Judaicum Foundation.

In December, Berlin’s Jewish community marked 60 years since the reopening of city’s liberal synagogue. Three Berlin cantors took part in the ceremony, led by Rabbi Chaim Rozwaski in the Pestalozzistrasse Synagogue in former West Berlin. When it reopened in 1947, its cantor was Estrongo Nachama, a Greek Jewish survivor of Auschwitz, who learned the German liturgical melodies of Louis Lewandowski and served the Berlin congregation until his death in 2000.

The Potsdam-based Abraham Geiger College, which housed Germany’s Reform rabbinical seminary, announced in May that its rabbinical students would spend their first year of study in Israel, in accordance with a new agreement with Hebrew Union College in Jerusalem. The college later advertised plans to open a Jewish Institute of Cantorial Arts, sponsored by the Leo Baeck Foundation Potsdam, the Breslauer-Soref Foundation of California, and the Soref-Breslauer Texas Foundation.

Also in May, Brandenburg governor Matthias Platzeck signed an agreement linking the Potsdam-based Einstein Forum with the Hebrew University in Jerusalem for the development of an educational forum at the former summer home of Albert Einstein in Caputh, in Brandenburg.
Hebrew University had inherited the home from Einstein, who was on the university's first board of governors.

Culture

The Jewish Museum Munich, financed by the city, opened to the public in March. It was part of a larger complex at St. Jakobs-Platz that also encompassed a Jewish community center, a synagogue, a café, and schoolrooms. The new museum sought to educate visitors about local Jewish life, culture, history, and religion.

In July, a former Hamburg hostel for Jews opened as a museum. The Ballin Stadt Museum, located on the city's waterfront, featured a database with the names of five million emigrants who left Europe via Hamburg between 1850 and 1934. The hostel—which offered kosher food—had been built by Jewish businessman Albert Ballin, chief executive of the Hamburg-America Line, for the many Eastern European Jews who passed through the city on their way to the U.S.

Barbra Streisand performed in Germany for the first time in her career in July. Although the 65-year-old singer had reportedly never wanted to set foot in the country, she stood onstage at the Nazi-era open-air Waldbühne Theater and told some 18,000 fans that she was "very happy to be here in Berlin." Before leaving the city, Streisand and her husband, James Brolin, paid a private visit to the city's Jewish Museum.

In June, Five Days, a film about the 2005 evacuation of Jewish settlers from Gaza, won the prize for best Israeli film of 2007 at Berlin's annual Jewish Film Festival. The overall favorite film, as voted by the viewers, was The Galilee Eskimos, about a kibbutz on the brink of bankruptcy. Sponsors of the festival included the City of Berlin, the Jewish School of Continuing Education in Berlin, Friends of the German Cinema, and private donors.

In December, the World Congress of Russian-Speaking Jews and the CCJG cosponsored the fifth annual Golden Chanukea, a competition for Jewish performers and musicians.

Circumcision was the theme of the fourth issue of the European-Jewish literary magazine GOLEM, published in May, which contained essays, fiction, poetry, and artwork. That same theme was addressed again in September in the first issue of Familienmensish, Germany's first Jewish magazine about parenting. It was financed by private donations and a grant from the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.
Personalia

In January, American Jewish businessman Arthur Obermayer presented the seventh Obermayer German Jewish History Awards in Berlin. Each year these awards, which included a small stipend, honored non-Jewish Germans who contributed toward recording or preserving the Jewish history of their communities. Cosponsoring the project were the German Jewish Community History Council, the Office of the President of the Berlin Parliament, and the German Jewish Special Interest Group of JewishGen (an international Internet Jewish genealogy organization).

The 2007 winners were Lars Menk, a letter carrier who compiled an 800-page published volume on the etymology and geographical origin of 13,000 German Jewish names; Ernst Schaeffl, who, over the course of 20 years, restored tombstones in the Jewish cemetery of Laupheim, in Baden-Württemberg, together with other volunteers; Johannes Bruno of Speyer, a former teacher in Rheinland-Pfalz, who devoted his retirement to researching the Jewish history of that town, writing three books and numerous articles; historian Wilfried Weinke of Hamburg, who created exhibits on Jewish history that were on display at the Jewish Museum of Frankfurt and other venues; and Inga Franken of Berlin, cofounder of the One-by-One contact group for children of survivors and perpetrators.

In October, Holocaust historian Saul Friedländer received the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade, in an emotional ceremony at the Paulskirche in Frankfurt. The Israeli historian, 75, was honored for giving voices and names to Holocaust victims. The international prize, presented annually at the Frankfurt Book Fair, carried an award of 25,000 euros. In his acceptance speech, Friedländer read aloud from unpublished letters his family members wrote in 1942, before they were deported to Auschwitz.

The CCJG presented its annual Leo Baeck Prize to Chancellor Merkel for her commitment to good relations between Jews and non-Jews in Germany, her support for Israel, and her engagement on behalf of Germany's Jewish community.

The Jewish Museum in Berlin presented its annual prize for understanding and tolerance to former chancellor Helmut Kohl and German-born historian Fritz Stern, whose family fled the Nazis and came to the U.S. in 1938.

The annual Buber-Rosenzweig medal was presented in November to journalists Esther Schapira and Georg M. Hafner in recognition of their
reports on the Middle East conflict. The prize had been given annually since 1968.

Heinz Berggruen, the eminent Berlin-born art collector, died in Paris in February at the age of 93. News of his death prompted the German media to reflect on the generosity he showed in donating his huge collection, “Picasso and His Era,” to the country from which he had fled to the U.S. in 1936. Berggruen had been a friend of Picasso and a specialist on Van Gogh, Cézanne, Matisse, and Paul Klee. The art he brought to Berlin after the war helped fill a gap created when the Nazis confiscated what they considered “degenerate” art.

Author and theater director George Tabori died in July at age 93 in Berlin. Tabori was known as an incisive critic of German society who challenged anti-Semitism and underscored what he considered the absurdity of Hitler and Nazism. His father was murdered in Auschwitz but his mother escaped deportation, and her story became the subject of Tabori’s 1979 book *My Mother’s Courage*, later made into a film. Tabori lived in 17 countries in all, and in Berlin since 1999.

In September, Julius Kurt Goldstein, who fled Nazi Germany in 1933, fought in the International Brigades in Spain against Franco, and survived 30 months in Nazi concentration camps, died at age 93 in Berlin. After his liberation from Buchenwald in 1945 he settled in communist East Germany, where he worked as a journalist and radio director until 1976. Goldstein, honorary president of the Berlin-based International Auschwitz Committee since 2003, long advocated a united front against neo-Nazism. He received Germany’s highest honor, the Federal Cross of Merit, in 2005.

Ernst Ehrlich, a Jewish historian, theologian and author, died in October at age 86. Born in Berlin, Ehrlich studied with the famous liberal rabbi Leo Baeck. He survived the war by hiding with a German family, and then fled to Switzerland, where he remained as a permanent resident. After the war he devoted himself to reconciliation between Jews and Roman Catholics. He was active in B’nai Brith, serving as European director from 1966 to 1991 and then becoming honorary vice president.

Toby Axelrod