

South Africa

National Affairs

THE YEAR 2003 SAW THE continuing transformation of South Africa and the consolidation of power by the African National Congress (ANC), led by President Thabo Mbeki. Since the ANC came to power in 1994, the government had built 1.6 million houses, supplied water to 9 million people and sanitation to 6.4 million, and created approximately 2 million jobs. Non-whites held 72 percent of public-sector jobs.

Studies showing a decrease in inequality between whites and blacks were somewhat misleading. True enough, at the top of the class structure deracialization was increasingly evident, in part because of the success of Black Economic Empowerment, a policy whereby established companies sold stock to black groups. But this was of no help to blacks without money, who constituted the vast bulk of South Africa's poor. Despite social programs to benefit the impoverished, the average black income decreased in real terms while that of whites increased.

Domestically, the ANC-led government maintained its tight fiscal policies despite a resurgent rand, as measured against major world currencies. In early December, the rand touched a four-year high against the U.S. dollar at R6.10 to the dollar. The economy's growth rate, 1.9 percent, failed to make inroads into an unemployment level that stayed between 30 and 40 percent of the economically active population. The strength of the rand was of great concern to exporters, as the volume of manufacturing production shrank 2.6 percent for the year.

The ANC's coalition partners, the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU)—the country's labor federation—stayed in the government notwithstanding the high unemployment that disproportionately affected their members. In October, legislation allowed, for the first time, “floor crossing,” the right of a member of the National Assembly elected on one party ticket to go over to another party. As a result, the ANC gained seats at the expense of smaller parties. At the same time, the Democratic Al-

liance (DA), the official opposition, broke its ties with the New National Party (NNP), and this enabled the ANC and the NNP to form a government in the Western Cape Province.

Foreign policy received substantial attention, especially the consolidation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and engagement in initiatives to resolve regional conflicts. But the Zimbabwean crisis continued despite President Mbeki's attempts to encourage Zimbabwe's president, Robert Mugabe, to negotiate with his political opponents. South Africa worked hard to keep Africa and, more generally, the southern hemisphere, on the global agenda. Mbeki championed multilateralism in the conduct of international politics and economics, including the reform of such institutions such as the UN and the World Trade Organization.

HIV/AIDS remained a major problem. About 5.3 million people, some 20 percent of the adult population, were HIV-positive, and an estimated half-million had AIDS. A major row took place between the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC)—a nongovernmental AIDS activist group—and the Ministry of Health over the question of antiretroviral drugs. The government, which dragged its heels for some time over introducing an antiretroviral program, finally adopted one in November.

Crime and corruption remained major problems. A national crime prevention strategy adopted by the government began to make an impact, albeit a minor one. Cases of corruption in high places were no longer swept under the rug, but were increasingly discussed in the public domain. In December, a number of white right-wing extremists were arrested and charged with sedition.

The war in Iraq attracted substantial attention. The South African government attempted to prevent hostilities through mediation and discussions with its international contacts. Popular opposition to war revealed widespread anti-Americanism linked to virulent anti-Zionism, especially among Muslims. At the beginning of the year, as war clouds gathered, the Jewish community recognized the potential for anti-Semitism and avoided taking sides. On January 31, the *SA Jewish Report* worried that war in Iraq might endanger Jewish communities not only "in other countries" but also in South Africa:

The political environment in this country is already tipped heavily against Israel, and incitement by Islamists against the Jewish state, and against South African Jews, could potentially find willing ears here. Militant Muslims in the Cape and elsewhere have shown in the recent past how eager they are to encourage such agitation.

In such a context, it is especially incumbent on South African political leaders, in government and elsewhere, to act responsibly and be cautious in their public statements regarding the situation in the Middle East. The last thing we need in this country is for the fires from that dangerous conflict to be imported into our midst.

Two weeks later, on February 14, the *SA Jewish Report* devoted another editorial to the question, this time advising Jewish leaders to exercise considerable caution:

Most people are still unsure that war must be waged. Jews are as divided as others on these issues, except that for them, the place of Israel in such a conflict is an added source of great anxiety.

And for South African Jews, the outbreak of war on Iraq will pose problems in the South African context, since the general sentiment in the country is against America, and Israel is seen to be an ally of America.

In such a context it would seem wise for the leaders of the South African Jewish community to refrain from making strong public statements on this issue, particularly statements which favor war. We have enough problems without adding the extra one of setting Jews against the majority views in the South African population.

But that same issue of the newspaper also carried a statement by Jewish Voices SA, which described itself as a group of progressive South African Jews opposed to a war without the sanction of the UN:

We believe that an unjust war in Iraq will also increase racial, religious and ideological tensions in South Africa, to the detriment of all its people, including the South African Jewish community.

We oppose the war as Jews, precisely because we believe its consequences to be dangerous for world Jewry. In a war that risks being patently unjust (if not illegal) and that is easily interpreted as an attack on Muslims and Arabs, Jews cannot afford to be silent in their opposition to the war.

The South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBOD) issued a statement denying that the Jewish leadership was obligated officially to support or oppose going to war with Iraq. It recognized the strong antiwar stance of the South African government and of President Mbeki in his role as chairman of the Nonaligned Movement. "The recommended course of action is for the Jewish community to allow events to take their course and avoid being drawn into the controversy," asserted the board. By March 21, with the war underway, an editorial in the *SA Jewish Report* went so far as to suggest that "there are occasions in human affairs when war is justified."

Speaking on the occasion of the centenary of the SAJBOD in August,

President Mbeki assured the community that Jews had no reason for unease. Expressing his appreciation for South African Jewry's historic role in helping end apartheid, the president stated that they were regarded as South Africans, and had no reason to fear anti-Semitism. He took note of a survey undertaken by the Isaac and Jessie Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies and Research at the University of Cape Town, which indicated substantial Jewish concern about the future:

I wish to respond to that sense of unease, and pledge that we, as government, are prepared to spend as much time as need be, talking to the Jewish community about that unease and about other concerns they have regarding their future here. We as government have a responsibility to all people who fall victim to marginalization, fear, and disempowerment, and we cannot allow any sector of the community to plunge into a permanent sense of unease and displeasure. We have a common obligation to solve these problems together. One hundred years ago, the Jews were called *uitlanders* [foreigners] but this will never happen again. We should draw strength from our past experience of racism and never allow that to happen again or allow racism in any form to take control of our lives.

Israel-Related Activity

The South African government maintained its involvement in negotiating an end to the Middle East conflict. In February, the government held discussions with nine former high-ranking Israeli defense, security, and intelligence officers at a four-day meeting at the Spier Wine Estate outside Cape Town. No Palestinians took part. These talks were a follow-up to earlier sessions held in January 2002, and South Africa's deputy foreign minister, Aziz Pahad, recently returned from a peace mission to Iraq, explained that they provided the government a better understanding of the Israeli-Palestinian situation.

The Jewish community was divided over the meetings. Mervyn Smith, a former national president of the SAJBOD, welcomed any attempt to achieve peace. But the current national chairman of the SAJBOD, Russell Gaddin, pointed out that the Israelis involved did not represent the government of their country and that the "real players" in the conflict were not being heard. An editorial in the *SA Jewish Report* entitled "SA Should Talk Directly with Sharon" approved South African government involvement, but wondered if it would "not be better to be talking directly to the Israeli government" than with "essentially left-wing politicians who were no longer in positions of power."

In May, Nobel Peace Prize laureate and former president F.W. de Klerk

urged Israel to give up its nuclear capability. Addressing a meeting of the Cape Council of the SAJBOD, he suggested that it was inconsistent to urge other nations not to develop nuclear facilities while at the same time arguing that it was acceptable for Israel to do so.

Speaking at the centenary meeting of the SAJBOD in September, President Mbeki expressed concern at the violence and terror in the Middle East. “We support the ‘road map’ to move forward to permanent peace and stability,” he said, “and this includes the two-state solution—an independent Palestinian state and a state of Israel within safe and secure borders.” But at that same meeting, Mendel Kaplan, chairman of the executive of the World Jewish Congress (WJC), castigated Jewish leaders for excessive timidity:

Instead of remaining unapologetic as proud Jews, during the past three years we have not been proud Jews fighting for Israel. When the government stopped us sending funds to Israel, how many of us complained? No one objected.

It is not about money, but about our right to support Israel. But all businesses are friends of the government and we don't want to promote the cause of Israel to government. As Zionists we are emasculated. What has happened to the South African Jewish community? Israel is under attack, the government is anti-Israel, the view of the ANC is pro-Palestinian. We need to stand up for Israel without fearing that it could compromise our businesses and living conditions. We have the right, as South Africans, to stand up for Israel.

In November, Michael Bagrain, newly elected national chairman of the SAJBOD, Russell Gaddin, the outgoing chairman, and Yehuda Kay, the board's executive director, met with Deputy Foreign Minister Pahad to discuss the Middle East. Pahad told them that the government considered the conflict to be a dangerous destabilizing force in the region, and that South Africa, with its experience in resolving conflicts, wanted to play a meaningful role.

Throughout the year the media maintained a pro-Palestinian stance, putting South African Jews on the defensive. The South African Zionist Federation (SAZF) and the SAJBOD established a joint team to monitor all media—print and electronic—for anti-Israel or anti-Semitic sentiments and activities, and to respond appropriately. As in many other countries, the only group outside the Jewish community to support Israel wholeheartedly consisted of evangelical Christians. Michael Utterback, international director of the International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem, held a meeting with SAZF leaders in March. He stressed that there was a groundswell of Christian backing for Israel. Beside his organization, Christian Friends of Israeli Communities, Bridges for Peace,

and Christian Action for Israel all worked to generate support for Israel in South Africa.

In January, 360 Jewish college students took part in a two-week educational program run by the Israel Center, Johannesburg, on behalf of the Jewish Agency and Birthright International. Participants were exposed to study opportunities in Israel, visited historical sites, and met with Israelis who had emigrated from South Africa. Michael Mensky, director of the Israel Center, expressed hope that the project “will sow the seed for future aliyah. . . We are looking to create a multifaceted system whereby the youth will have an ongoing exposure to Israel.”

In February, the KwaZulu-Natal Zionist Council established the Durban Israel Victims of Terrorism Enterprise (DIVOTE), on behalf of the Durban Jewish Community. It would raise money for individual Israeli victims, particularly children, who required medical, educational, or other assistance.

In December, Israel’s ambassador to South Africa, Tova Herzl, announced that she would leave her post and return to Israel.

Anti-Semitism

There was a substantial decline in anti-Semitic incidents in 2003. Those that did occur came in the form of hate mail, vandalism—including the desecration of headstones at Jewish cemeteries—verbal abuse, and a pellet-gun shooting from a car occupied by two Muslim men. One extraordinary incident involved a Jewish psychic, Belinda Silbert, who upset some Christians during her show in Cape Town. They accused her of murdering Jesus and called her “the devil incarnate.” The SAJBOD, King David Schools, and two recreation centers received letters with white powder, clearly meant to raise the fear of anthrax. They were sent under the title “Combat 18,” the name of the military wing of a far right-wing British white supremacist movement, Blood & Honour. In addition, there were allegations that right-wing extremists abused Jews, gays, and blacks at the University of Stellenbosch.

In contrast to the decline in incidents directed at Jews, there was an increase in anti-Semitic propaganda, focusing mainly on Israel and often appearing in the media. The Muslim Review Network advocated hostility to Israel, and Channel Islam International denigrated Israel and Jews, most egregiously in a series of interviews conducted by Rafiek Hassen. Challenged by the SAJBOD, Channel Islam denied wrongdoing and expressed its commitment to “the principles of justice, fairness and equality.” During the Iraq war, conspiracy theories identifying Jews as the

power behind the war were common fare on talk shows. The Antiwar Coalition used anti-Israel propaganda in addition to verbal assaults on the U.S. and Great Britain.

Joel Pollack, a freelance columnist and speechwriter for Tony Leon, leader of the Democratic Alliance (DA), raised charges against the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) before the Broadcasting Complaints Commission. A host on an SABC talk show had read an e-mail from a listener implying that Jews had led the U.S. into war. Pollack's 40-page submission argued that the e-mail was factually inaccurate and defamatory, and that the host, having seen it in advance, ought to have edited out the offending section. The complaint was unsuccessful, as the SABC successfully defended itself with the arguments that reading an e-mail does not legitimize it, and that the particular message neither provoked violence nor caused grave offence. SABC invited Pollack to speak on the show, but he declined.

World Relief, a Muslim charitable organization operating in Cape Town, sold the anti-Semitic classic *The International Jew* as part of its fund-raising operation. Islamic Sound and Vision, also in Cape Town, similarly sold the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* until, threatened with legal action, they withdrew the book.

The SAJBOD respond to all anti-Semitic incidents and maintained constructive contacts with other religious groups. Following the desecration of headstones at cemeteries in Cape Town and in the Strand, outside Cape Town, Mohammed Kagee, a member of the Cape Town Interfaith Initiative, condemned the action and all forms of racism including anti-Semitism. "Islam stands for the promotion of religious tolerance, mutual coexistence, and harmony between people of different faiths, and we believe that we should not only practice and promote tolerance but also accept, embrace and honor each other as part of the greater humanity," he said. An Anglican priest, Father John Oliver, also condemned the desecrations, noting the "proud history of interreligious tolerance" in Cape Town. In a lead article, the *Cape Times* (Jan. 3) warned that "South Africa needs to be perpetually on guard against a resurgence of overt racism in all its manifestations, anti-Semitism included. The desecration is a chilling reminder that there are pathological elements in our society and that in South Africa's circumstances particularly vigilance is essential."

Holocaust-Related Matters

In November 2002, Advocate Roland Sutherland, chairman of the Broadcasting Complaints Commission, dismissed a complaint lodged by

the SAJBOD against Radio 786, a Muslim station, alleging Holocaust denial (see AJYB 2003, p. 578.) In 2003, the SAJBOD appealed the decision and the Islamic Unity Convention opposed the appeal. Papers on both sides were filed and the case was scheduled for a hearing in February 2004.

The Cape Town Holocaust Center (CTHC) continued to run its multifaceted programs. Since opening its doors in 1999, the CTHC had welcomed over 100,000 people, including some 63,000 foreign visitors from 73 countries. The CTHC had provided group education programs for approximately 30,000 students from 162 high schools, and 10,000 adults from a diverse spectrum of society. In addition to special programs for magistrates, corporate groups, tourist guides, university students, and religious groups, special full-day seminars were held for a total of 18,000 members of the South African Police Services (SAPS) and the Correctional Services. In 2003 it established a partnership for a pilot project with the Boston-based project Facing History and Ourselves.

In February, the CTHC sponsored a Holocaust commemoration in association with the Italian consulate. It also hosted an exhibition, "Visas for Life: The Righteous and Honorable Diplomats," honoring courageous foreign-service officers of various countries who had helped save Jews during the Holocaust. Mehmet Ülkümen, chief of protocol at the UN in Geneva and son of Selahattin Ülkümen, one of the diplomats honored, opened the exhibition. "Visas for Life" was subsequently shown in Johannesburg, where it was cohosted by the Goethe Institute. (Selahattin Ülkümen died on June 7 at the age of 92.)

Dr. Alexander Brenner, president of the Jewish Community of Berlin, visited South Africa as a guest of the German embassy on the occasion of a special exhibition, "Seeking Refuge: German-Jewish Immigration to the Cape in the 1930s," held under the auspices of the CTHC.

The Foundation for Tolerance Education in Johannesburg, directed by Kim Feinberg, continued to run workshops for teachers and students around the country.

JEWISH COMMUNITY

Demography

According to the 2001 census, the white Jewish population of South Africa stood at 61,675, up from 55,734 in the 1996 census. David Saks, senior research officer at the SAJBOD, adjusted the new figure upward

to approximately 72,000 so as to account for those who did not answer the optional census question about religion; in 1996 the adjusted number was 69,573. In light of the growth of the overall South African population by more than 5 million over these five years, the Jewish proportion of the population was declining dramatically. In addition to the figure for white Jews, the census reported 11,979 black Jews, 1,287 "colored" (mixed-descent) Jews, and 615 Indian Jews. (The "black" Jews were not the Lemba group who lived in the Limpopo Province and claimed to have originated from a Jewish tribe in Sana'a, Yemen.)

The Jewish census figures, not adjusted to include those who may not have completed the question on religion, were distributed around the country's regions as follows: Gauteng, 40,778; Western Cape, 15,690; KwaZulu-Natal, 2,964; Eastern Cape, 1,194; and Free State, 331. About 2,000 Jews resided in small rural towns or hamlets.

Nineteen percent of Jews were 65 years old and over, as contrasted to less than 5 percent of the total population.

Communal Affairs

In August, the SAJBOD celebrated its centenary with a major conference that featured a range of South African and foreign speakers. President Mbeki gave the keynote address. Among the others on the program were Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations; Rabbi Israel Singer, chairman of the World Jewish Congress (WJC); Lord Grenville Janner, president of the Commonwealth Jewish Council; Tony Leon, leader of the Democratic Alliance, the major opposition party; and Valli Moosa, minister of tourism and environmental affairs. Recipients of the board's Human Rights Award were Sir Sydney Kentridge, QC, and the late Israel Aaron Maisels, QC, both legendary figures in South African legal history. In recognition of the importance of the SAJBOD centenary, the WJC held its first ever meeting in South Africa, immediately after the conference. It included an address by Martin Luther King III, president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in the U.S.

Commenting editorially on the occasion of the centenary, the *SA Jewish Report* (Sept. 5) identified three major challenges facing the SAJBOD: the fight against anti-Semitism and anti-Israel hatred; providing a comfortable home for Jews whose views and lifestyles placed them outside the organized community mainstream; and "trying to cross the divides between the various factions within the organized community."

The community continued to grapple with budgetary difficulties. One example was the financial plight of the Selwyn Segal Center, which had trouble keeping up its services for Jews suffering from mental handicaps. As a money-saving alternative, it launched "Operation Ezra," a self-help project that treated clients in their homes. Another area of concern, given the disproportionately high number of the elderly, was the provision of care for senior citizens. To help with general communal planning, the SAJBOD announced it would establish a database of Johannesburg Jewry, in line with what had been done in other communities.

Among the new communal appointments were Michael Bagraim, national chairman of the SAJBOD; Judge Dennis Davis, chairman of the Cape Council of the SAJBOD; Marlene Bethlehem, past president of the SAJBOD, deputy chairperson of the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious, and Linguistic Communities; and Sharon Fox, president of the Union of Jewish Women (UJW).

In an interview, Russell Gaddin, outgoing national president of the SAJBOD, looked back on his term and noted that communal leadership "is complicated by people with huge egos and personal agendas, and satisfying these agendas required a lot of work." The deterioration of the Middle East situation, he went on, put the SAJBOD in the position of having to defend Israel to a South African government that "doesn't understand how strongly South African Jews identify with Israel." While the SAJBOD wanted to engage with the Muslim community, "there is nowhere to go. They will not engage in serious dialogue with the Jewish community, particularly regarding anything to do with Israel. On the other hand, our business relationships continue." Demographic erosion also concerned Gaddin. While affirming the importance of aliyah, he urged anyone not inclined to move to Israel to stay in South Africa.

Yehuda Kay, executive director of the SAJBOD, was somewhat more upbeat. Speaking at a conference in Israel in November, Kay made much of the fact that over 80 percent of Jewish children in South Africa attended Jewish day schools, far more than in other Diaspora communities. He also mentioned that the SAJBOD was putting substantial resources into countering negative perceptions about the country and "marketing" South Africa to the Jewish community.

A number of women's groups celebrated milestones during the year. The Bloemfontein Women's Benevolent Society celebrated its centenary in 2003. In February, the International Women's Forum held its annual meeting in South Africa for the first time. It was hosted by the Union of Jewish Women. Florence Schornstein, past president of the National

Council of Jewish Women, Greater New Orleans Section, was the guest of honor. Lisa Aitken, a clinical psychologist, launched the Women's Bi-Annual United Communal Fund campaign in August.

Community Relations

South African Jewish leaders continued to build bridges with the wider population and to assist the disadvantaged. Michael Bagraim, the incoming SAJBOD chairman, announced an intensified program to strengthen and upgrade relationships with other ethnic and religious groups, government figures, the media, and other sectors. A number of high-level meetings were held with senior members of government.

Tikkun maintained its successful outreach programs, and its work was applauded by Johannesburg's mayor, Amos Masondo. Tikkun augmented its activities in the Western Cape, including a cultural program under the auspices of the South African Jewish Museum (SAJM). A number of local projects were established, such as that of the East London Jewish community under Rabbi Yekutiel Shalpin that involved itself with the plight of residents in Duncan Village outside East London. ORT continued to run vibrant programs to enhance the technical skills of the formerly disadvantaged.

Paddy Meskin, former president of the Durban Progressive Jewish Congregation, played a major part in an interfaith initiative to help AIDS victims. This involved the creation of a kibbutz-style cooperative community center in a rural black area that would train local residents to care for AIDS orphans. The project was dubbed E Khaya, meaning "my home" in Zulu.

The SAJBOD, together with the American Jewish Committee and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF, Doctors Without Frontiers), contributed a total of R390,000 to help 50 AIDS patients receive antiretroviral treatment at the three HIV/AIDS clinics that MSF had set up, together with the administration of the Western Cape Province, in the black township of Khayelitsha, outside Cape Town.

Speaking at a dinner hosted by the Cape Council of the SAJBOD and the WJC in Cape Town, Ebrahim Rasool, minister of finance and economic affairs in the Western Cape government, called on Muslims, Christians, and Jews to "continue to reach out to each other," and said that the Muslim world was "more ready than ever for a two-state solution in Israel." But this view was not necessarily shared by others. The University of the Witwatersrand ANC Youth League severed its relationship with

the South African Union of Jewish Students (SAUJS). According to SAUJS, the break resulted from a directive by the ANC National League and was motivated by differences over the Middle East.

Religion

Even as secular expressions of Judaism became more common and intermarriage rates rose, Orthodox religious institutions continued to mushroom, especially in Johannesburg. Although Orthodox life remained highly diverse, the most publicly evident growth was in the form of *shtieblach*, small prayer houses, which many worshipers preferred to the larger synagogues. Other signs of burgeoning Orthodoxy were the increasing availability of kosher food—albeit at rising prices—and the large number of sukkot put up at shopping centers during the fall holiday. Orthodox leaders were also becoming more outspoken. For example, when Israel's team competed in the World Karate Championship that took place on Rosh Hashanah in Durban, Rabbi Pinchas Zekry publicly denounced the decision to participate, unleashing a communal debate that revealed deep fault lines between observant and nonobservant South African Jews.

The United Sisterhood, the umbrella organization of Reform temple sisterhoods in Gauteng, celebrated its 70th anniversary in February. The mission of the United Sisterhood was participation in welfare, education, and community work in South Africa, by itself and in conjunction with other organizations, for the benefit of all, regardless of race, color or creed. Among its primary projects was the M.C. Weiler School in Alexandra, Johannesburg, founded by Moses C. Weiler, the rabbi who initiated Reform Judaism in South Africa.

In March the SAZF honored Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris in Johannesburg on the occasion of his winning the Jerusalem Prize for Communal Leadership in 2002. In December, the Union of Orthodox Synagogues (UOS) elected Rabbi Warren Goldstein to succeed Chief Rabbi Harris, who was retiring at the end of 2004. Goldstein was 32 years old, born in South Africa, with a doctorate in law from the University of the Witwatersrand.

After years of acrimony between the UOS and the Green and Sea Point Hebrew Congregation about its controversial rabbi, Dr. E.J. Steinhorn (see AJYB 2003, pp. 584–85), a settlement was finally reached. A statement crafted jointly by the UOS and the congregation and read out at the latter's annual meeting in March noted that differences had been

amicably resolved in full accord with the requirements of Jewish law. It also noted that Rabbi Steinhorn would retire at the end of Passover and become rabbi emeritus. The statement affirmed that the congregation retained its Orthodox identification and membership in the UOS, was committed to follow UOS procedures, and “that any statements made to the contrary will cease forthwith.”

The communal rabbinical conference held in Cape Town in September reported that it would respond constructively to President Mbeki’s concerns about many Jews not seeing a future for themselves in South Africa. The rabbis also discussed thorny issues associated with the government’s “outcomes-based” educational policies, which included curricular modules that were seen as conflicting with the religious principles and value systems of Judaism and other major religions.

The Klerksdorp Hebrew Congregation, which now had a membership of 29 families, consecrated its new synagogue in 2003. The Grahamstown Synagogue celebrated its 90th anniversary in June, and the Oxford Synagogue its diamond jubilee, with a gala dinner, in July. Bethlehem Hebrew Congregation in the Free State Province closed down.

Education

Changes in South African society and politics, as well as the shifting demography of South African Jewry, impelled the community to rethink the education offered by its Jewish day schools. The King David system in Johannesburg had a combined total of 3,397 students, and the Herzlia schools in Cape Town 1,906. The largest growth was evident at the strictly Orthodox schools in Johannesburg, such as Yeshivah College, which could boast an all-time high of 850 students, and Torah Academy, which had over 600.

Issues of concern were the relative absence of Jewish contact with other young South Africans, the appropriate place of Israel in the curriculum, and the difficult balance between teaching how to be a committed Jew and a committed South African. There was also some fear that the government might move to withdraw recognition from Hebrew language and Jewish studies as matriculation subjects. Some Jewish schools had outreach programs to black schools and communities.

Controversy erupted in January over remarks allegedly made by Allan Zulberg, CEO of the South African Board of Jewish Education (SABJE) and head of Johannesburg’s Jewish day schools, concerning Habonim Dror, the secular Zionist youth movement. The row began when Zulberg complained to Habonim that “a major event at the Habonim camp is the

Sayarim streak,” a naked race. He threatened to inform parents about this and deny Habonim access to school campuses under his jurisdiction if the “streak” were not stopped. In an exchange with Jody Hasson, national chairman of Habonim Dor, Zulberg also raised questions about kashrut as well as reports of sexual activities and the availability of condoms at the movement’s activities. Habonim denied the accuracy of his allegations, and others questioned his right to intervene in such matters.

Another row involving Zulberg broke out in August over his plans to implement a middle school for pupils in grades seven through nine at King David Schools. Parents complained that they had not been consulted about the plan—a charge that Zulberg denied—and questions were raised about its financial viability. In September, a committee was established to iron out the problems. Reports circulated that Zulberg had been suspended from his post. SABJE denied this and expressed “appreciation” for Zulberg’s work, but it also noted that he had been appointed to accomplish specific objectives, and once these were attained it might be possible to agree on an early departure.

Yeshivah College, Johannesburg, celebrated its 50th anniversary in April. A banquet celebrating the occasion paid tribute to Avraham and Marcia Tanzer, who arrived in South Africa in 1963, when Rabbi Tanzer took up the position of dean of the school.

Culture

In January, the South Africa Jewish Museum (SAJM) mounted a major international exhibition, “Marc Chagall: Hadassah—From Shtetl to Stained Glass Windows.” Chagall’s granddaughter, Meret Meyer Graber, officially opened the exhibit, which consisted of 62 preparatory sketches for Chagall’s stained-glass windows in the synagogue of the Hadassah Hospital in Jerusalem. A series of photographs of Chagall at work accompanied the exhibition, which also included a recreated model of the windows and replicas of the four stained glass windows created by Chagall.

Another exhibition at the SAJM was a selection of prints and drawings by the internationally renowned artist, William Kentridge.

Beginning in February, the *SA Jewish Report*, the Jewish community newspaper, was distributed free, the community hoping that it would reach every Jewish household. The paper announced, on February 7: “The mission we have set ourselves at the *SA Jewish Report* is ambitious—to provide intelligent and meaningful journalism covering things of relevance to Jews in South Africa and the world.”

A Jewish bookstore in Cape Town, M. Beinkinstadt, celebrated its cen-

tenary. It began as an inner-city shop catering to the needs of early-twentieth-century immigrants.

In August, Alisa Douer, an Israeli photojournalist, displayed her exhibition on Austrian Jewish artists who left the country at the time of the Anschluss. The occasion was Jacob Gitlin Library Jewish Book Week in Cape Town.

The most controversial book published during the year was *Jews in South Africa during the Apartheid Era* by Israeli scholar Gideon Shimoni, which showed that the Jewish community had overwhelmingly acquiesced in the apartheid system. The author's visits to Johannesburg and Cape Town to participate in panel discussions excited considerable comment. The *SA Jewish Report* (Oct. 24) argued that the great stir aroused by the book "shows that many Jews are still disturbed by the implications of Jews' behavior during that troubled period, and are searching for some resolution." These debates, the paper went on, seemed to prove that "Jews do, in reality, hold themselves to a higher standard of moral behavior than many others around them."

Personalia

Dr. Aaron (Ali) Bacher received considerable praise for his performance as director of the International Cricket Council World Cup, held in South Africa in February and March. Jonny Steinberg was awarded the Alan Paton Award for Nonfiction for his book *Midlands*, which explored the murder of white farmers in South Africa. Chief Justice Arthur Chaskalson was honored with a Jewish Achiever Special Award.

Among prominent South African Jews who died in 2003 were Leon Wilder, communal leader and philanthropist; Abe Immerman, the popular blind cantor of Cape Town; Hymie Wolffe, communal leader; Julian Solomon, communal leader and lawyer; Sam Moss, former mayor of Johannesburg; Rabbi Adi Assabi, former spiritual leader of Imanu-Shalom, Johannesburg, who then went on to minister to the non-Orthodox community in Berlin; Rabbi Barney Bender, doyen of the South African rabbinate; Bertha Egnos, musical writer and performer; Saul Zwi, professor of pulmonary medicine at the University of the Witwatersrand; and Jedidiah Blumenthal, Zionist leader and writer.

MILTON SHAIN