

President's Report to the 2008 Annual General Meeting

1 INTRODUCTION

This report covers the activities of the Anglo-Jewish Association for the year 2007. It is supplementary to the formal Annual Trustees' Report that has been sent to the Charity Commissioners with the 2006 Accounts.

2 THE FUTURE:

This section of the report is used to discuss important issues related to the future of the AJA and it deserves your especial consideration.

2.1 Financial Needs of the AJA

In last year's report, I wrote that one of the areas on which we needed to focus in 2007 was fund-raising. We continued to have moderate success in that we again raised an additional sum of income in excess of £10,000.

Fund raising will remain a key part of future AJA activities. As the cost of education and student needs continue to rise, we will have to increase the amount we raise in order to support them.

I have written previously about my belief that tuition fees will continually rise. Government policy will ensure this is the case. During this past year Universities have made clear they will be asking Government for an increase in tuition fees to £7,000 in 2009-10 (the year the current tuition cap of £3,000 is removed). The Government has signalled its agreement and the Conservative party has made clear that it will no longer oppose it. Current and future policies will ensure an ever increasing demand on our resources, both human and especially financial. We maintain our belief that the Anglo Jewish Community is unprepared for (and in some cases unaware of or unwilling to accept) the impact of these developments.

The funds we raise will be used not only to support our students but also to develop and maintain a communication and information programme to keep our community informed of developments in UK Higher Education.

As you know, we offer much needed support to Jewish undergraduate and post-graduate students studying in the UK. The living conditions of the families of some of our students would be an unpleasant shock to many of you reading this. The report on poverty in our community merely confirms the poor quality of life of some members of the UK Jewish Community in the 21st century.

To increase our financial capacity we need your help. As I mentioned, we have had some success in the past year but we need to accelerate our fund raising activities to build a base from which we can increase our student support and other related activities. Part of our plan has included a change to our investment strategy which is now focused on total return. Our advisors, Rothschild's, are confident (as are we) that this will increase our annual portfolio yield and, as a result, enable us to develop and to support more students in future.

There are other aspects of our plan. I have listed below some areas where some progress has been made.

- 1) Creating a clearing house for Higher Education student grants. Our objective is to work with other educational charities within the community to create a more efficient method of submitting and of vetting allocations and of allocating grants. Collaborative dialogue is ongoing with other organisations.

- 2) Managing other education trusts. Our objective is to manage the allocation programme and related funds of other education trusts. In 2007 we took on another trust (as we did in 2006). We hope for continued progress in 2008.
- 3) Donations. We continued to have moderate success in this area in 2007 and hope to build on this in 2008. We are building a database of people who have supported us in the past and whom we have supported. We will develop a communications programme with this group in order to encourage active participation in the AJA and, perhaps more importantly, ongoing financial and other support. We are working with developers to launch a new website, which we hope to achieve in 2008.
- 4) Legacies. We have been the beneficiary of legacies in the past. If we can successfully develop an ongoing legacy programme, the additional income yield, regardless of size, would enhance our ability to meet future needs. We urge all our members to consider this option in favour of the AJA. If you choose to do so, it would be helpful if you let us know of your decision. We will offer any assistance we can to you in this area.

We would ask you to give serious thought to offering financial support to the AJA either through donations or by establishing a legacy in our favour. Our future is linked to our success in this vital area.

3 AJA ACTIVITIES: INTERNATIONAL and DOMESTIC

3.1 INTERNATIONAL

3.1.1 ISRAEL and EUROPE

3.1.2 ISRAEL

3.1.2.1 The Economy

The economy of Israel continued to grow. Growth in 2007 was 5.3% (compared to 7.3% in 2006). This is the most recent of five consecutive years of rapid growth, four of which exceeded 5%. The growth rate was double that of OECD countries and almost three times that of the USA. Tourism also continued to do well in 2007. However, unemployment was 7.4%.

The population of Israel passed 7.2 million (according to the Central Bureau of Statistics). Seventy five percent (75%) of the population are Jews (5.47 million), twenty percent (20%) are Arabs (1.45 million) and the remaining five percent (5%) are of other religious denominations. The population grew by 1.7% (against 1.8% in 2006). Eighty-eight percent (88%) of this growth was due to natural growth (births and deaths). New immigrant arrivals fell to 18,000 from 19,000 in 2006 and 21,000 in 2005.

While the overall economy of Israel continues to grow, the levels of poverty are still despairingly high. The National Insurance Institute (NII) stated that one child out of three is poor (i.e. living below the poverty line). Over 400,000 families in Israel (about 28% of the Israeli population) suffer from “nutritional insecurity” (hunger) and 1.6 million (up from 1.5 million) people live in poverty (including 600,000 children). Sixty percent (60%) of these “nutritionally insecure” are Jewish, twenty percent (20%) are Arab and twenty percent (20%) are new immigrants. About 24% of Israelis are forced to choose between food and other expenses (mortgage, rent, medicine, utilities etc.) and half of these choose to subsist on less food than necessary. The poverty line in Israel in 2002 was NIS 4,500 per month (around £600 per month) for a family of four. The NII’s past optimism that the growth in poverty had stabilized (not declined) has proved to be misplaced.

3.1.2.2 The Political Situation

It might be reasonable to describe the political and security situation as stable (stable being a relative term). The Iranian President continues to make threats (and teased the world about its nuclear development); Israeli Air Force jets destroyed a Syrian installation for which there was little condemnation (including from Syria); Hamas and Hezbollah spent most of the year fighting each other, eventually dividing territory between them; and Israel has restricted power supplies to Gaza. All the while, rockets fell regularly on Sderot (which mostly goes unreported) yet life in Israel seems to just move forward.

The soldiers kidnapped (and almost forgotten) in the summer of 2007 remain in captivity with no apparent sign of release. Towards the end of the year, the Annapolis Meeting and Donors' Conference took place in Maryland, USA, on behalf of the Palestinians. Perhaps such developments will yield genuine stability which reasonable people have desired for decades. Still, one would have to be an optimist of significant proportion to think we are approaching a situation in which sustainable peace and security can be achieved.

We hope this year's international efforts to restore stability and to revive the peace process will yield tangible and sustainable benefits to everyone living in the region.

3.1.3 EUROPE

Sadly I report that anti-semitism continues to manifest itself across the continent and in the UK and shows no signs of abating. Anti-semitic behaviour is couched as anti-Israel behaviour. More overt forms appearing in media commentary or in comments of politicians and other public figures are reported but not attacked. Rather than quote statistics and events as I have in the past, I have inserted an article from the Washington (D.C.) Post (USA), written by Dennis MacShane, MP. I think Mr. MacShane paints an honest picture of the environment.

The New Anti-Semitism

By Denis MacShane

Tuesday, September 4, 2007; Page A17

Hatred of Jews has reached new heights in [Europe](#) and many points south and east of the old continent. Last year I chaired a blue-ribbon committee of British parliamentarians, including former ministers and a party leader, that examined the problem of [anti-Semitism in Britain](#). None of us are Jewish or active in the unending debates on the Israeli-Palestinian question.

Our [report](#) showed a pattern of fear among a small number of British citizens -- there are around 300,000 Jews in Britain, of whom about a third are observant -- that is not acceptable in a modern democracy. Synagogues attacked. Jewish schoolboys jostled on public transportation. Rabbis punched and knifed. British Jews feeling compelled to raise millions to provide private security for their weddings and community events. On campuses, militant anti-Jewish students fueled by Islamist or far-left hate seeking to prevent Jewish students from expressing their opinions.

More worrisome was what we described as anti-Jewish discourse, a mood and tone whenever Jews are discussed, whether in the media, at universities, among the liberal media elite or at dinner parties of modish [London](#). To express any support for [Israel](#) or any feeling for the right of a Jewish state to exist produces denunciation, even contempt.

Our report sent a shock wave through the British government. [Tony Blair](#) called us in and told his staff to fan out throughout government departments and produce answers to the problems we outlined. To Britain's credit, the Blair administration produced a formal government response setting out tough new guidelines for the police to investigate anti-Semitic attacks and for universities to stop anti-Jewish ideology from taking root on campuses. Britain's Foreign Office has been told to protest to Arab states that allow anti-Jewish broadcasts.

We made clear that criticism of actions of Israeli politicians was not off-limits. On the contrary, we noted that some of the strongest criticisms of Israeli policy come from Israeli campuses, journalists and political activists, and from the Jewish intellectual elite of many countries. American universities have provided a base for Noam Chomsky and the late Edward Said, among others, to launch campaigns of criticism against Israel, and the bulk of the West's university intelligentsia remains hostile to the Jewish state.

Tony Blair's successor as British prime minister, [Gordon Brown](#), recently said in London that he stood with Israel "in bad times as well as good times," and one of the remarkable turnarounds of the new Labor leadership that governs Britain is a strong support for Israel and its commitment to combating anti-Semitism. The problem is worse in other European countries. The Polish politician, Maciej Marian Giertych, recently published a pamphlet under the auspices of the [European Parliament](#) that attacked Jews. No action has been taken against him. [France](#) and [Germany](#) have seen anti-Jewish attacks. Some references to Jews in the Lithuanian press do not bear translating.

Europe is reawakening its old demons, but today there is a difference. The old anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism have morphed into something more dangerous. Anti-Semitism today is officially sanctioned state ideology and is being turned into a mobilizing and organizing force to recruit thousands in a new crusade -- the word is chosen deliberately -- to eradicate Jewishness from the region whence it came and to weaken and undermine all the humanist values of rule of law, tolerance and respect for core rights such as free expression that Jews have fought for over time.

The president of [Iran](#) is the most odious example of this new state-sanctioned anti-Semitism. But from the Egyptian Writers Union to the notorious anti-Jewish articles in the charters of [Hamas](#) and [Hezbollah](#), hatred of Jews is an integral element of a new ideology rising to prominence in many regions of the world.

Democracies always take their time, often too much time, to recognize and face a totalitarian threat when it is posed in ideological terms. In prewar Europe, conservatives were soft on right-wing ideologies because they were seen as being anti-communist and anti-labor. In postwar Europe, socialists were soft on the [Soviet Union](#) because the communists appeared to challenge capitalism and imperialism. Today there is still denial about the universal ideology of the new anti-Semitism. It has power and reach, and it enters into the soft underbelly of the Western mind-set that does not like Jews or what Israel does to defend its right to exist.

A counterattack is being organized. My own House of Commons has led the way with its report. The 47-nation [Council of Europe](#), on which I sit as a British representative, has launched a lengthy inquiry into combating anti-Semitism in Europe. The [European Union](#) has produced a directive outlawing Internet hate speech originating within its jurisdiction.

We are at the beginning of a long intellectual and ideological struggle. It is not about Jews or Israel. It is about everything democrats have long fought for: the truth without fear, no matter one's religion or political beliefs. The new anti-Semitism threatens all of humanity. The Jew-haters must not pass. (You can download a copy of this article at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wpdyn/content/article/2007/09/03/AR2007090300719.html>)

Holocaust revision (an insidious form of anti-semitism) is a growing world-wide phenomenon. In this regard, I would recommend reading the following report: ***Holocaust Denial: A Global Survey***. www.wymaninstitute.org/articles/HolocaustDenial2007.pdf

This report is issued annually by the David S. Wyman Institute for Holocaust Studies (www.wymaninstitute.org) and is a survey summarising the world-wide Holocaust revision activity. Revisionism is prevalent in the mainstream academic world, especially in the Middle East (where it goes unchallenged). The issue has been recognised by UNESCO such that it passed a resolution urging efforts to promote Holocaust education and combat Holocaust denial. Seventy-two UNESCO members co-sponsored the resolution. Egypt and other Arab states and Iran attempted to change the wording of the resolution but were unsuccessful.

Finally, returning to the UK. Despite the rise in direct and indirect anti-semitic activity in this country (reported by many organisations including the CST and the Government), we tend to have a complacent view of our historic and current relationship with Britain, focusing mainly on our positive achievements and contributions. For an alternative view, I recommend reading the following paper: ***This Green and Pleasant Land: Britain and the Jews*** written by Prof. Shalom Lappin, King's College London. It was, for me, an interesting, informative, provocative and disconcerting paper which posed serious questions which, I think, our community needs to address. If you would like a copy, please send an email to the office (info@anglojewish.com) and we will arrange for one to be sent to you.

We need to be more vigilant and public in our defence of our community and we need to ensure that all colleagues with whom we are involved in multi-faith activities are vigorous in denouncing any and all anti-Jewish behaviour, in whatever form.

3.1.4 THE CLAIMS CONFERENCE

Since our last meetings there have been developments of interest to us, a number of which I report on here.

3.1.4.1 Allocation of Funds

The most recent level of allocations (to survivors and for education/research) totalled \$110,000,000 but the level of allocations for education/research was held at \$18,000,000.

3.1.4.2 The Board Meeting

This year's Board meeting was held in New York. One of the main agenda items was the election of the Chairman and President. I am pleased to inform you that Julius Berman was returned as Chairman. In the light of the resignation of the previous President, the Board then instructed the newly re-elected Chairman to convene a search committee in order to seek out appropriate candidates for the position of President.

The AJA is proud to be a member of the Board of this group which has done and is still doing so much to relieve the suffering of Holocaust survivors and refugees, to recover the property which Jews had been forced to give up and to ensure that the Holocaust is well recorded and continuously researched. Regarding these activities, I am pleased to tell you that I have been appointed to both the Memoirs and Looted Art sub-committees. This is a compliment to our contribution to the work of the Claims Conference. Further information regarding the Claims Conference can be obtained from their website www.claimscon.org.

3.1.5 THE MEMORIAL FOUNDATION

The Memorial Foundation is an organisation with responsibility for the maintenance and development of Jewish culture, education, study and research around the world. It achieves this in a number of ways, most visibly through issuing grants to post graduates taking up courses related to Jews, Jewish history and Jewish culture. In addition to this, the Foundation sponsors an annual leadership programme for which attendees are recommended for acceptance by national organisations. The objective of this programme is to develop a worldwide network of people involved in the Jewish Community to ensure the Foundation can continue to meet its objectives.

The AJA is proud to be a member of the Board of this organisation and we will continue to do all we can to support its work.

3.1.6 THE CONSULTATIVE COUNCIL of JEWISH ORGANISATIONS (“CCJO”)

We are one of the key organisations that make up the membership of the CCJO. This is an organisation that has consultative status at the UN and is focused on Human Rights in general and Jewish Human Rights in particular.

Clemens Nathan, who is a current member of our Executive, as well as a past President, leads the CCJO and its affiliate the Rene Cassin Group (Younger Members Organisation). The following is a brief report on some of last year’s events:

- The CCJO has been extremely busy in the last year with meetings of the Younger Group. A team was sent last year to the Human Rights Council and interventions took place on a wide range of subjects at the UN in Geneva.
- Meetings have been held in London organized by the Research arm of the CCJO on Development Policy & Human Rights. Outstanding speakers included Paul Collier, Professor of Economics at Oxford University. The meetings were packed full with outstanding people of all persuasions and lively discussions took place.

3.2 DOMESTIC

3.2.1 The AJA’s position

The Association maintains a high profile status within Communal Organisations but not within the Community itself. It is represented on the Claims Conference, the Memorial Foundation and the CCJO and is usually invited to the major communal events.

We have been a member of the Umbrella Group (“UG”) for many years. The UG is an association of the various organisations that provide social services to Holocaust Survivors and Refugees living in the UK. Membership comprises Jewish Care, Association of Jewish Refugees, the 45 Aid Society, WJR and Agudas Israel. The UG is the UK’s interface with the Claims Conference for applications and administration of grants received from the Claims Conference. In June 2005, I was asked to Chair the UG and retain this position.

4 THE FINANCIAL AFFAIRS OF THE ASSOCIATION

4.1 The Accounts and Income

I am pleased to inform you that we have filed the accounts for Financial Year 2006, a summary of which is enclosed for your review.

We retained our investment managers N.M. Rothschild. As part of our future development strategy we altered our investment strategy to focus on total return. We believe (as do Rothschild’s, our financial advisors) that this will better serve our needs. Our expectation is that our income will increase without putting our capital base at any greater risk.

5 THE EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Julia Samuel has continued to chair the Education Committee, which is effective.

In the year being reported, we received in the order of four hundred serious enquiries (up from 350 in 2005) generating more than two hundred and eighty completed applications that

required detailed vetting (up from 230 in 2005) before grants or scholarships were awarded. Applications continue to arrive from all over the world including Argentina, Australia, Canada, USA, France, Holland, Hungary, Poland, Russia, FSU countries and Israel. Awards were made to **eighty-four** students of whom approximately two-thirds were UK residents.

The effects of the war in Lebanon in the summer of 2006 are still to be seen. Many Israeli graduate students were released from the army late delaying the start of their graduate education. Many of these young men were badly affected by what they had experienced. This has affected their ability to work part-time to pay for their time in the United Kingdom, increasing the pressure on themselves and the charities who try to help. It should be noted that many British universities offer excellent psychological help in this area gained as a result of the British army's experiences in Northern Ireland, Iraq and Afghanistan.

We are grateful to the Ian Karten Charitable Trust who has over the last six years given us a substantial sum to award to outstanding postgraduate students working for higher degrees at universities in the United Kingdom who are experiencing financial hardship. The graduates of this scheme are beginning to emerge in top academic institutions throughout the world including Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Emory University Georgia, Oxford University and London School of Economics.

We continue to work closely with a number of other trusts in addition to the Ian Karten Charitable Trust. We wish to express our continuing gratitude to the Ferdinand Beck Charitable Trust, NJL, the Tuckman Trust and other anonymous benefactors. We have also in the last year taken on the administration of the Max and Gladys Rothschild Prize for final year undergraduate engineering students. We also continue to work closely with Hillel Foundation, UJS, the Student Chaplain Service and University Welfare Offices.

The Anglo Jewish Association has been given the great honour of taking on the administration of the scholarship scheme offered by the Stuart Young Foundation. This scheme offers awards of £1,500 for three years to outstanding students demonstrating financial need and academic excellence undertaking undergraduate degree courses. There is an active committee chaired by the Baroness Deech. It has been found that there is much in common between the two programs and it is hoped that we will all benefit from this arrangement.

We are grateful to the members of the Education Committee, who are all volunteers and who take this work exceptionally seriously. The volume of applications continues to rise and is likely to continue to do so. None the less, their commitment has been unaffected and the high standard of work they maintain is recognised not only by the Executive of the AJA but also by external organisations such as the Ian Karten Charitable Trust and the Stuart Young Foundation.

In addition to chairing the Education Committee, Julia continues to visit various organisations and schools talking to Year 13 students about the work of the AJA and various other aspects of Higher Education. She also continues to advise a number of other charitable trusts working in this field including the Finnart House School Trust.

6 THE EVELINA DE ROTHSCHILD SCHOOL

We have been in communication with the school to develop an alternative programme of financial support. We hope to conclude these discussions in 2008.

7 MEMBERSHIP

The current membership of the AJA is aging. It was our intention to develop programmes to recruit a younger, more active membership. We have taken initial steps in this regard with

recruitment to the Executive of younger people and by initiating relationships with a number of student organisations.

8 EVENTS

In October we held the annual Leslie Prince Memorial Lecture. The lecture was given by General Sir Rupert Smith. General Smith is the author of *The Utility of Force* and is one of the leading theorists of modern warfare. He served as Commander of the United Nations forces in Bosnia in 1995 and was General Officer Commanding Northern Ireland from 1996 to 1999. He later served as Deputy Supreme Allied commander in NATO. The event was held at Arundel House in London and was attended by almost 200 people. The lecture was informative and fascinating and the event was a great success.

9 PERSONNEL and DEVELOPMENT of the EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Julia Samuel continues to work on a part-time basis with slightly extended hours. I would like to thank Julia for her continued efforts on behalf of the Association.

I would also like to thank the Executive and Honorary Officers for their continued support during the year.

I am pleased to inform you that Sam Slezinger, Adam Dawson, and Jonathan Walker joined us as members of the Executive. They all have community and professional experience which will prove beneficial to the long term development of the AJA. Jonathan has accepted responsibility for leading the development of our investment strategy, Sam has accepted responsibility for developing commercial agreements with other Trusts and Adam has accepted the responsibility to help us develop a long term strategy as well as develop our relationships with university student organisations. They have already added value to the Executive and to the AJA.

10. HONORARY OFFICERS

Neil Miron has been nominated and has agreed to stand for President. Neil has been Deputy President for the past three years, has worked very hard on behalf of the AJA and has been a key player in enabling the AJA's development. I am confident that Neil will successfully lead the AJA's future development and I strongly recommend you support his candidacy.

David Loewe has been nominated and has agreed to stand as Deputy President. David is a long standing member of the Executive and has held in the past the positions of both Deputy President and President. I strongly recommend you support his candidacy. I have been nominated and have agreed to stand as Honorary Treasurer.

This year ending marks my sixth consecutive and final year as President of the AJA. It has been a privilege to serve the organisation. I have enjoyed the experience and it has enabled me to reach a better understanding of the UK and international community and to be involved in important and interesting work. Whatever success I have had in this role would not have been possible without the support of the members of my Executive, whom I would like to thank very much. Someone said that the true test of successful leadership is that when one steps down the organisation is in better shape than when one started. I hope people think this of my time in post and I hope I have added value to the AJA.

Michael Hilsenrath, President
London – February 2008/Adar I 5768