Eastern Europe

Soviet Union

National Affairs

In 1990 political change continued at an accelerated rate in the once stagnant Soviet system. Mikhail Gorbachev had initiated the policies of glasnost and perestroika, designed to revive the Soviet economy and political system, but the opening up of the society and system threatened to bring more rapid and far-reaching changes than Gorbachev and his supporters had anticipated. In October Gorbachev was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for helping to end the cold war, but at the traditional May Day parade, when, for the first time, independent and unofficial organizations were permitted to march, many of the marchers openly jeered him and other leaders as they reviewed the parade from atop Lenin's mausoleum.

In February there were mass demonstrations in support of greater democracy in at least 32 cities. The following month, in elections for local and legislative offices in the three largest Slavic republics—Russia, Belorussia, and Ukraine—opponents of the Communist party won many posts. Opposition candidates won control of the city councils of the three largest cities in the country, Moscow, Leningrad, and Kiev. A bloc calling itself "Democratic Russia," led by Boris Yeltsin, the former head of the Moscow Communist party who had been ousted by Gorbachev, gained a third of the seats in the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Republic. In May, Yeltsin was elected president of the Russian Republic, giving him a power base independent of the Communist party.

When the third Congress of People's Deputies convened in March, it took the historic step of repealing the constitutional monopoly of the Communist party, thus establishing a legal basis for a multiparty system. At the same time, the congress created the new office of executive president, assigning its holder broad powers in foreign policy and military matters. The congress elected Gorbachev to the presidency by a wide margin. Two other fundamental changes were made in June, when the Supreme Soviet passed a law guaranteeing freedom of the press and approving in principle the transition to a market economy.
Despite having lost its monopoly of power, the Communist party remained the largest, best organized, and most powerful political grouping in the country. At its 28th congress in July, Gorbachev was reelected first secretary. But Boris Yeltsin resigned from the party, as did the mayors of Moscow and Leningrad, who were leaders of the reform movement.

Persistent ethnic problems and a rapidly deteriorating economy led to widespread pessimism and fears about the future of the country. In December, Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze, one of Gorbachev's closest advisers and supporters, shocked the Congress of People's Deputies by resigning his post and warning that a dictatorship was impending, though he did not identify the future dictator.

Aside from the economy, the major internal problem was interethnic relations. The Baltic states were moving to leave the USSR; Armenians and Azerbaijanis continued their war in the Caucasus; and there were ethnic clashes in several parts of Central Asia.

Latvia and Estonia voted to declare independence after an unspecified transition period, but on March 11, Lithuania declared independence of the Soviet Union, a move Gorbachev declared "illegitimate and invalid." The Soviet Army seized Lithuanian Communist party headquarters in Vilnius, the capital, and an economic embargo was imposed on Lithuania by the other republics. By May, Lithuania agreed to suspend its laws relating to independence, though it would not renounce the declaration itself. The Soviet embargo was lifted in July.

Calls for independence were heard in Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldavia as well. Faced with the possibility of a partial breakup of the union, Gorbachev proposed a new treaty regulating the relations among the union's component parts. Military and foreign policy would remain in central hands; "full autonomy" would be given to the republics in matters relating to their natural resources, territories, and economic systems.

Thus, in both the economic and political spheres there was a great deal of turbulence and proposed change. Having dropped its control of the media and its monopoly of political power, the Communist party was no longer able to control the spontaneous forces released by the attempts at reform.

In foreign relations the Soviet Union continued to move away from confrontation with the West and toward cooperation. In May, Gorbachev met for four days in Washington with President George Bush. They signed more than a dozen bilateral accords and agreed on a framework for reducing strategic nuclear weapons, ending production of chemical weapons, and normalizing trade relations between their countries. On December 12, Bush granted a waiver of the trade restrictions imposed by the 1974 Jackson-Vanik Amendment.

The Soviet Union gave its blessing to the reunification of Germany on October 3, set 1994 as the date for the final withdrawal of Soviet troops from that country, and agreed that reunited Germany could belong to the NATO alliance.
Relations with Israel

A slow warming trend in Soviet-Israeli relations continued. In January, Israel's Habimah Theater, which had originated in Russia, returned to Moscow for the first time since the 1920s and performed in Hebrew in one of Moscow's most prestigious theaters. Izvestia, the government newspaper, remarked, "The fact that the Habimah has returned and the two cultures have renewed their acquaintance is very gratifying" (January 10). The next month, the first Soviet-Israeli trade agreement in 23 years was signed, calling for each to set up a chamber of commerce in the other's country. Later in the year, Israel and the USSR signed a three-year agreement to exchange scientific and technological information, engage in joint research, share scientific equipment, and exchange scientists.

On September 30, the USSR and Israel announced that full consular relations had been established and that the general agreement signed in 1989 between El Al and Aeroflot would be implemented "soon."

Anti-Semitism

Several anti-Semitic incidents were reported during the year. The most notorious occurred on January 18, when about 80 people, shouting anti-Semitic slogans and threatening Jews with bodily harm, burst into a Moscow meeting of the liberal "April" group of writers and tried to break up the meeting, while police stood by passively. After some scuffles with the audience, the group left. Later, the minister of the interior, in charge of the police, apologized for their inaction and promised an investigation. The incident was widely reported and discussed in the media. While many writers and others condemned the anti-Semitic group, others claimed publicly that this was a "well-planned provocation" designed by "Zionists and organizations financed by Zionists to incite reprisals against Russian society and instigate a pogrom against its best forces" (letter to Literaturnaya Rossiya).

In fact, it was pogroms against Jews that were widely rumored around the country. In February the prosecutor of Moscow stated that there was no credible information about pogroms but that in any case such attempts would be stopped. On February 9, the KGB issued a similar statement and warned the media against blowing rumors out of proportion. One newspaper, Trud, reported a pogrom in Kharkov, but this was never confirmed. Rumors about pogroms spread again in May. The Foreign Ministry spokesperson condemned them as the work of those who wished to promote Jewish emigration.

On March 2, nearly 300 writers published a letter in Literaturnaya Rossiya in which they complained of the denigration of Russia and its culture. The press and Politburo were accused of "whitewashing the ideological essence of Zionism," which had become a "menacing reality" in the country. Earlier, according to Izvestia (February 22), at a meeting in Leningrad, a secretary of the Russian republic writers' union blamed "not only Stalinism but Trotsky, Kamenev, Zinoviev, Uritsky and
Yaroslavsky [all Jews] for undermining the gene pool of the Russian people and their moral and physical strength.” In Leningrad, too, some demanded that Russian schools and cultural institutions be staffed only with ethnic Russians.

A Pravda writer noted (A. Kalinichenko, March 27) that “anti-Semitism has changed its character. Once diffident and two-faced, it has become aggressive, insolent and defiant.” Another example of the emergence of anti-Semitism as a public issue was an article by S. Rogov published in Pravda (July 2), which traced the development of anti-Semitism in the Soviet period and argued that it was one of the main spurrs to emigration and had led to a widespread fear of pogroms.

Perhaps because of the growing openness of anti-Semitism, the first official legal steps against it in anyone’s memory were taken this year. On February 15, the Moscow prosecutor began criminal proceedings against Pamyat, the anti-Semitic organization, because it violated Article 74 of the RSFSR criminal code prohibiting deliberate actions aimed at “stirring up enmity or discord based on nationality or race.” In August, Konstantin Smirnov-Ostavshvili, a well-known Pamyat leader who had participated in the attempted breakup of the writers’ meeting in January, was put on trial for inciting ethnic hatred. In October he was sentenced to two years in jail, the first person to be jailed for anti-Semitic activity. This did not stop his supporters from demonstrating vociferously outside the courtroom. One of Smirnov’s colleagues, Alexander Kulakov, gave an interview to the widely read weekly Argumenty i Fakty (no. 34, 1990), in which he said that “Russia has no friends. The world is already subjugated to international Jewish capital... We think there should be a trial of the nation which brought the communist evil to the world.”

At the same time, citing lack of evidence, the prosecutor in Nikolaev (Ukraine) dropped murder charges against Dmitri Berman, who had been convicted in March 1989. It was widely believed that Berman had been framed, but the Nikolaev authorities pursued the case to conviction, and only considerable international attention brought about a reversal. Berman was given a visa to Israel.

Representatives of the American Anti-Defamation League and the Soviet Jewish Va’ad met in September with more than 40 Moscow city council members and the city’s Commission on National Problems. The latter established a joint commission on anti-Semitism with Va’ad. Two council members were to go to New York to study techniques of dealing with bias.

A survey carried out in the Moscow area, funded by the National Science Foundation, the American Jewish Committee, and the University of Houston, involved 508 respondents. Some 15 percent said that “most people” are anti-Semitic, 51 percent said “only some” are anti-Jewish, and 17 percent maintained that “very few” people are anti-Semitic (4 percent said “almost none” are). Respondents were nearly evenly divided on whether anti-Semitism was rising. Equal proportions (19 and 18 percent) said they liked or disliked Jews, and 63 percent were neutral.
JEWISH COMMUNITY

Two strong and contradictory impulses animated the Jewish community during the year. On one hand, there was an unprecedented outburst of communal, cultural, and religious activity. On the other, the emergence of virulent anti-Semitism, publicly expressed by some of the country’s leading cultural figures, was a major impetus to the largest emigration of Jews in the entire Soviet period. By year’s end, 181,759 Jews had emigrated to Israel, and perhaps several thousand others had gone to the United States and other countries.

Demography

According to the 1989 census, the Jewish population had declined by 20 percent since the 1979 census. A major reason for the decline was intermarriage. Demographer Mark Tolts, writing in Sovetskaya Kultura (February 3), pointed out that only Germans in the USSR had a higher rate of intermarriage than Jews. Of all Jewish women marrying in 1988, 47.6 percent married non-Jews, as did 58.3 percent of Jewish men who married that year. A study by Boris Viner, published in Sovetish Haimland (No. 2), showed that, whereas in 1923–28, only 3–5 percent of the Jewish marriages in the Ukrainian town of Vinnitsa were mixed, in 1980–84, 20–26 percent were mixed. In Leningrad, in 1955, there were 1,043 marriages where both partners were Jews, but only 362 such marriages in 1985.

The 1989 census data revealed that while the proportion of European Jews giving a Jewish language as their mother tongue had declined between 1979 and 1989 from 12.5 to 11.1 percent, the number of non-Ashkenazic (Georgian, Central Asian, and Mountain) Jews doing so had risen from 52 to 73 percent. It was estimated that 150,000 Jews gave Yiddish as their mother tongue in 1989, with others giving other Jewish languages (Tat, Judaeo-Persian) as their mother tongues.

The census showed that the number of Karaites, a heretical Jewish sect, had declined from 13,000 at the end of the 19th century to 2,500, with only 800 living in the Crimea, once their center. Still, a conference of Karaites drew participants from 23 cities.

There remained a substantial number of Jews in the Communist party: 215,029 party members in 1989, or 1.1 percent of the membership. The figure was perhaps less impressive than might appear, however. Since urban and educated people were highly overrepresented in the party, and Jews were more urbanized and had higher levels of education than other Soviet nationalities, they might actually have been underrepresented. Moreover, no breakdown by age was given, and it might well be that most Jewish party members were middle-aged and older, having joined 40–50 years ago.
Emigration

The 1990 emigration of Soviet Jews was the largest in 70 years. Over 5,000 Jews came to the United States and 181,759 emigrated to Israel, making for the single largest aliyah since 1951 and enlarging the Israeli population by 5 percent. The numbers of immigrants to Israel kept increasing as the year went on, with over 35,000 arriving in December, by far the largest number of Soviet immigrants ever to come in one month. Large numbers of Jews were coming even from Birobidzhan, the nominal Jewish autonomous region. Whereas in 1989 only 16 people emigrated from there, in May 1990, 52 people went to Israel and 350 applied to do so. More than a thousand Aeroflot tickets had been ordered by Birobidzhan residents seeking to go to Israel.

These developments set off euphoric expectations among the Israeli public and led some Israeli politicians to predict that “millions” of Soviet Jews would come to Israel. When Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir told a Likud party meeting in January that a “big immigration requires Israel to be big [gedolah] as well,” this provoked many Arab and other foreign protests, claiming that the immigration would be used to settle territories occupied by Israel in 1967. At a press conference with President Bush in July, President Gorbachev warned that if Israel did not ensure that Soviet immigrants would not be settled on the West Bank, the USSR would consider “temporarily postponing” the departure of Jews and the issuing of exit permits. Earlier, in reaction to Shamir’s remarks, Soviet authorities said they would not permit direct flights of immigrants to Israel, despite a commercial agreement to begin flights to and from Israel in January.

On January 30, the Israeli government said it had no official policy of settling immigrants in the territories, and there were said to be only about 100 Soviet immigrants in the West Bank. Those who considered parts of East Jerusalem part of the West Bank argued that the Israeli statement was misleading, since many Soviet arrivals were housed in those areas of East Jerusalem. Reacting to the criticism, in March, Israeli authorities ordered news organizations to submit all reports on Soviet Jewish immigration to military censors. This, in turn, aroused further protests and the policy was not implemented. While the Hungarian national airline briefly suspended flights of immigrants from Budapest, following Arab protests, the Polish government announced in March that Warsaw could be used as a transit point. Immediately after, two employees of a Polish trade mission in Beirut were murdered.

The large wave of immigration flooded Israeli facilities. According to Israeli president Chaim Herzog and State Comptroller Miriam Ben-Porat, Israel had neither planned nor prepared sufficiently for the aliyah. Some Israelis protested that Soviet immigrants were displacing them from housing and were driving up real-estate prices. Absorption Minister Yitzhak Peretz said in July that a quarter of the couples arriving from the USSR were intermarried, and another Israeli official said 30 percent of the arrivals were not Jewish. Later, on a visit to the USSR in Novem-
ber, Peretz said that 35–40 percent of the immigrants were not Jews. These figures were disputed, however, by other sources.

The Ministry of Immigrant Absorption estimated in September that 54 percent of the immigrants had higher education. Over 3,000 physicians and 11,000 engineers were among those who had arrived by September. Many were not employed at all or were working outside their professions. Perhaps because of this, the difficulties in finding housing, and other considerations, about 5,000 Soviet Jews immigrated to Germany in 1990, and 10,000 more were said to have applied for permission to enter.

The New York-based National Conference on Soviet Jewry (NCSJ) said that there were still 300 refusenik families in the USSR, including 106 people who had waited many years for permission to leave.

**Culture**

The upsurge in Jewish cultural activity continued. An Academy of Jewish Music, designed to train cantors, was founded in Moscow with the help of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. An All-Union Association of Judaica and Jewish Culture was founded at a meeting in Rostov. Its aims were to create an Institute of Judaica in the Academy of Sciences, open libraries, restore monuments, and help produce textbooks.

Jewish cultural associations were founded in Bobruisk, Berdichev, Kherson, Vitsebsk, Zhitomir, and other cities. Hebrew and Yiddish classes offered by these groups were especially popular. By September there were 23 Israelis teaching Hebrew in 13 cities, many of them sent by the Jewish Agency from Israel. An Israeli pedagogical center, designed to aid the teaching of Hebrew and Israeli culture, was opened in Moscow. It was equipped with books, tapes, and videos. In Chernovtsy and Berdichev Yiddish courses were introduced in some high schools. In Tallin a Jewish middle school opened. An all-day Jewish school, with ten grades, opened in Riga. Over 800 students applied and some 400 were admitted. The school taught Yiddish from the first grade, Hebrew from the fourth. Part-time schools were opened in several cities, including Minsk and Vilnius. A “Jewish University” opened in Leningrad. It had 200 students in a four-year course of Hebrew and Judaica and was designed to prepare teachers of Jewish studies.

This year saw greater public acknowledgment of the Holocaust in the USSR. A large memorial meeting, attended by high officials, was held at the Ninth Fort in Kaunas, Lithuania, where most of that city’s Jews had been murdered. The event was widely covered on radio and in the newspapers. A similar commemoration took place in a Latvian city, Daugavpils. The first public ceremony commemorating the Jewish victims of the Nazis was held in Brest-Litovsk. In Kiev, “Babi Yar Week” was declared in September. Films, concerts, religious ceremonies, and mass meetings marked the observance.

In November the founding congress of the USSR Zionist Federation took place
in Moscow, with 100 organizations from 50 cities represented. The federation's aims were to legalize the Zionist movement, propagate Zionist ideology, and influence the USSR's Middle East policy.

**Religion**

On September 26, the Supreme Soviet passed a law providing freedom to profess any religion and to practice its rites without hindrance. The law declares religious believers equal to nonbelievers in all respects; allows registered congregations to own property, hire labor, and engage in charitable work; and permits religious schooling. These provisions marked a sharp departure from traditional Soviet practice.

Early in the year, "Hineni," the first Reform congregation in the USSR, opened in Moscow. It held services in a private apartment and was led by an engineer. It was being supported by the Reform movement in the United States and elsewhere. The only synagogue in the Ukrainian city of Kharkov opened in September, after having been closed 38 years before. It had been used most recently as a gymnasium. The Ukrainian press reported the reconstruction of the residence of the rabbi of Sadigora. Hassidim planned to turn it into a museum of Hassidism and a prayer house.

**Personalia**

Iosif Rapaport, a prominent geneticist and chemist, died on December 31, aged 78. Alexander Pechersky, a former Red Army officer who led an uprising in the Sobibor death camp, died in Rostov on January 18, aged 81. Alexander Tverskoi, who wrote in Yiddish and Russian, died on February 10, aged 66. Sociologist Yakov Kopeliush, who studied Soviet Jewry, died on May 3, aged 52.

Zvi Gitelman
Eastern European Countries

In 1990, following the revolutionary political changes of late 1989, elections were held in most East European countries. No party emerged with a clear majority in any country. The transition from socialism to a market economy proved painful and controversial; while Poland adopted a radical policy of rapid transition, in the Balkan states there were only tentative moves toward dismantling the socialist economy. Economic crisis and newfound freedoms of expression exacerbated ethnic hostilities, and grass-roots anti-Semitism became visible in several countries, most notably Poland and Hungary.

Against this background, Jewish communities in Eastern Europe set about reorganizing themselves. Three general trends could be observed throughout the region. There were calls for changes in the leadership that had been appointed by, or had cooperated with, Communist authorities; new Jewish groups and organizations were formed; and discussions began on the return of private and Jewish communal properties to their former owners. Nearly all the East European governments reestablished full diplomatic relations with Israel. Contacts between world Jewry and local Jewish communities intensified.

Poland

As part of a plan to move from socialism to capitalism “cold turkey,” the government introduced a radical reform program on January 1, including price increases, wage freezes, and currency controls.

On the political scene, the Polish United Workers party (the Communist party, PUWP) voted in January to dissolve itself, and reconstituted itself as a social democratic party. In local elections, held in May, Solidarity-endorsed candidates won more than 40 percent of the vote, the Peasant party 7 percent, and no other party, including the former Communists, got more than 2 percent. In the first round of the presidential election, held in November, Lech Walesa, hero of the Solidarity movement, got only 40 percent of the vote and Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki only 18 percent. Voters were clearly unhappy with the dislocations and unemployment caused by the rapid transition from socialism. A political unknown who had lived abroad for many years, Stanislaw Tyminski, received 25 percent of the vote. The results of the second round of elections made it clear that the Tyminski vote was a protest vote: this time, Walesa got 74 percent and Tyminski only 25 percent. President Wojciech Jaruzelski resigned, apologizing for any “harm, pain, and injustice” done by his regime. President Walesa nominated Jan Krzysztof Bielecki to be prime minister.
Despite the fact that there were no more than 10,000 Jews in Poland, by the most generous estimate, manifestations of anti-Semitism were amply in evidence. *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* appeared in two editions, one a reprint from 1937 and the other with a new introduction. Several other anti-Semitic books and pamphlets were available as well. During the campaign for the May 27 elections to local offices, anti-Semitic graffiti were found in several places, including Lodz, Poland’s second-largest city. There the Solidarity list was headed by Dr. Marek Edelman, a leader of the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto uprising. Whereas Solidarity got 80 percent of the vote in most large cities, and over 40 percent nationwide, in Lodz it got only 30 percent. Some speculated that this was due to voters’ reluctance to vote for a Jew.

In the presidential election, Solidarity split into supporters of Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki and those favoring Lech Walesa, with several prominent politicians “of Jewish origin” favoring Mazowiecki. The latter, a devout Catholic, was rumored to be a Jew and this was held against him during the presidential election campaign. His rival, Walesa, stated in the course of the campaign, “I can prove my forefathers were all Poles. I am clean. I am a Pole.” When he was criticized abroad for these remarks and for saying that when those who are of Jewish origin “hide their nationality, they provoke anti-Semitism,” Walesa denied any anti-Semitic intent. Indeed, earlier, in June, he had condemned the 1946 Kielce pogrom, called for a struggle against anti-Semitism, and said that Jews were not a problem for Poland nor had they harmed it.

Full diplomatic relations with Israel were restored in March, after having been broken off unilaterally by Poland in 1967. Israeli foreign minister Moshe Arens discussed economic issues with Finance Minister Leszek Balcerowicz and also met with Prime Minister Mazowiecki and President Jaruzelski.

**JEWISH-CATHOLIC RELATIONS**

Jewish-Catholic relations continued to engage both world Jewry and the Polish church. In February the World Jewish Congress announced that the groundbreaking had taken place for an interfaith center outside the Auschwitz death camp. Nuns of the Carmelite order, who had established a convent within the camp, thereby eliciting Jewish protests, would move to the new interfaith center on its completion, though no specific date was announced. Within the Auschwitz and Birkenau camps, inscriptions put there by the Communist government, which had ignored or downplayed the role of Jews as victims, were removed. A commission was established to formulate new inscriptions and explanations. At year’s end, no new signs had been installed.

In November, Rev. Stanislaw Musial, a Polish priest active in improving Polish-Jewish relations, called on Poles to reexamine their behavior during the Holocaust. He contrasted Germans’ “courageous” confrontation with their past with Poles’ silence about their attitudes and actions during the mass murder of Jews. A month
later, the Polish bishops issued a document, later read at masses throughout the country, condemning anti-Semitism and admitting that some Poles had helped the Nazis kill Jews. The statement called on Catholics to treat Jews as “their elder brethren” in faith and asserted that Jews and Poles had had “special ties” throughout Polish history. While the statement urged that anti-Semitism be confronted and condemned, it maintained that it was wrong “to suggest, as many people do, that so-called Polish anti-Semitism is a particularly virulent form of anti-Semitism.” At the same time the statement was being disseminated, the Catholic Theological Seminary in Warsaw published *Jews and Judaism in Church Documents and in the Teachings of John Paul II*, a book designed for Catholic school teachers and seminarians and whose message was similar to that of the bishops’ statement.

**JEWISH COMMUNITY**

The Jewish population of Poland was estimated at less than 10,000.

In April a festival of Jewish culture was celebrated in Krakow. About half the funding for the festival came from the Cultural Affairs Ministry and other state organizations, such as the television network. The Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw attracted several younger historians to its staff, nearly all of them ethnic Poles. In August a summer camp outside Warsaw, funded by the New York-based Lauder Foundation, was attended by about 100 Jewish youth and adults from Poland, the USSR, Czechoslovakia, and the United States.

**Czechoslovakia**

Several steps were taken by the new government to reduce the power of the Communist party, which had ruled since February 1948. Prime Minister Marian Calfa resigned from the Communist party in January. That party surrendered more than 100 seats in the Federal Assembly, reducing its representation from 242 to 139 seats out of 350. The Soviet Union agreed to withdraw its forces from Czechoslovakia, with all troops to be out of the country by July 1991. A parallel agreement was reached with Hungary.

After considerable debate centering around Slovak demands for greater autonomy, in April the country was officially renamed the “Czech and Slovak Federative Republic.” In national elections, held in June, the Czech Civic Forum and its Slovak counterpart, Public Against Violence, won 170 of 300 contested seats in the Parliament. The Communists won 47, and the Christian Democrats, 40. The Slovak National party got less than ten seats. Alexander Dubcek, who had led the reformist Communist government in 1968 until the Soviet-led invasion had put an end to the reforms, returned from political exile to become chairman of the Parliament. Writer Vaclav Havel, often imprisoned under the Communists, was elected to a two-year term as president.
In January, Israeli vice-premier Shimon Peres became the first Israeli minister to visit Czechoslovakia since 1967. He met with President Havel and Prime Minister Calfa and initialed a trade agreement. A month later full diplomatic relations with Israel were restored when Israeli foreign minister Moshe Arens visited Prague.

JEWISH COMMUNITY

The Jewish population of the country was believed to number about 5,000.

In June, Rabbi Daniel Mayer, the only rabbi in the country, admitted that he had cooperated with the secret police during the Communist era and resigned his post. The lay leaders of the Council of the Jewish Communities of the Czech Lands, Bohumil Heller and Frantisek Kraus, were removed from office on the grounds that they had been tools of the Communist regime. They were replaced by Dr. Desider Galsky, who had headed the Czechoslovak Jewish communities from 1980 to 1985 but who was removed because he was too welcoming of contacts with world Jewry and was "inclined to Zionism." In November Dr. Galsky died in an auto accident. One of the issues his successors would have to deal with was the fate of Jewish properties, including the vast and precious holdings of the State Jewish Museum. Although this had become the property of the state, the new government had pledged to return private property that had been nationalized by the Communists.

In September, representatives of Jewish and Catholic organizations from 16 countries met in Prague and recommended that Catholic-Jewish liaison committees be established in East European countries, as they already had been in Poland and Czechoslovakia. They also suggested that systematic efforts be made to combat anti-Semitism. These would include reviewing textbooks to eliminate anti-Semitic teachings, establishing both seminary courses on Judaism and training programs for priests, and monitoring anti-Semitic outbreaks. These recommendations were later endorsed by Pope John Paul II.

Hungary

Like the other countries, Hungary held elections this year, and these provided some clues to its political character in the post-Communist era. Arpad Goncz, a leader of the Free Democrats, was chosen by the Parliament as acting president. He appointed Jozef Antall of the Democratic Forum, the party that received the most votes in the first post-Communist election, as prime minister. In October, local elections were held; the Democratic Forum captured only 385 electoral districts, whereas the Free Democrats won in 733, and independents, many of them formerly in the Communist party, won in 264. Thus, it was clear that Hungarian politics had not yet settled into stable patterns of partisan affiliation.

There were several anti-Semitic manifestations this year in the political and cultural arenas. Istvan Csurka, a populist writer associated with the Democratic
Forum, the leading party, said in a radio broadcast that Hungarians should wake up to the existence of a "dwarfish minority" that was threatening to take over the country. His talk made it clear that he had the Jews in mind. Writing in a publication appearing in the city of Debrecen, author Imre Kalman charged that Jews were responsible for Hungary's ills. "We cannot afford to be tolerant of Jews who are destroying our country, the country that is giving them their bread." Gustav Zoltai, the new head of the National Representation of Hungarian Israelites, warned that anti-Semitism was on the rise. Indeed, the prewar fascist Arrow Cross organization was revived and issued a manifesto in late 1989 which called for "the immediate deportation of all Jews, Gypsies, and Communists. . . . Public areas that were formerly named for Adolf Hitler, Benito Mussolini, or other National Socialist dignitaries should revert back to their former names."

An Association of Former Slave Laborers was formed to reclaim or be compensated for Jewish property seized in 1944 and then nationalized by the Communists after 1948. It was to have been placed in a trust for the care of Holocaust survivors but Communist governments had not done so. In early 1990 the government conceded that it had misappropriated funds but returned only about $5,000.

**JEWISH COMMUNITY**

Estimates of the Jewish population varied greatly, ranging from 50,000 to more than four times that number.

Whereas public Jewish life in Hungary had been confined to an officially recognized religious community, with the decline of Communist rule, nonreligious Jewish organizations began to form. In 1988 a Jewish cultural organization began to publish *Mult es Jovo* ("Past and Future"), a 132-page journal that was widely respected in Hungarian intelligentsia circles.

In September two new Jewish day schools opened in Budapest. The Yavneh school, funded by the Lauder Foundation, had a secular orientation. The Masoret Avot school, funded in part by the Reichmann family of Canada, was religious and Zionist in philosophy. Each school enrolled about 400 students. Some Hungarian youth went to Israeli kibbutzim in the summer. A site was purchased for a Jewish youth camp, which would accommodate about 300 children. Hebrew courses for adults became quite popular.

**Romania**

The governing National Salvation Front scheduled elections for April and said it would itself present candidates. However, the government was challenged by a series of protests and riots throughout the year. In June there were clashes in Bucharest between student anti-Communist demonstrators and coal miners brought in by the government to counter the students. Some 10,000 miners beat civilians,
ransacked the headquarters of the National Liberal and National Peasant parties, and were then commended for their actions by President Ion Iliescu. The United States and the European Community suspended aid to Romania in protest against the heavy-handed tactics of the government. In December there were further antigovernment riots in Timisoara, where the original public protests against the Ceausescu regime had been launched in the fall of 1989.

In the May elections, the National Salvation Front got two-thirds of the votes, and President Iliescu won 85 percent of the presidential vote. There were charges of electoral fraud, but foreign observers, while agreeing that there had been violations, could not document that the elections had been fundamentally flawed.

Several anti-Semitic incidents were reported, including the desecration of Jewish graves in Tirgu Mures and Galati.

**JEWISH COMMUNITY**

The Federation of Jewish Communities reported that of 20,100 Jews in the country, two-thirds were over 50 and only 6 percent under 15 years of age. There were 52 Jewish communities. The Jewish population of Bucharest was 9,114, with 10,986 Jews living in 157 other localities. In 1988, more than 6 percent of the Jewish population (about 1,200 people) emigrated; 4 percent (about 800 people) died; and births amounted to only one-half of 1 percent of the population.

Chief Rabbi Moses Rosen came under fire for his close association with former dictator Nicolae Ceausescu. Rosen replied that he had done what was necessary to protect Jews and improve their lot, including making possible their emigration to Israel.

**Bulgaria**

Economic, ethnic, and political issues agitated Bulgaria during the year. In a compromise over the status of the Turkish minority, Bulgarian was made the official language, but Turks were given the right to choose Turkish or Bulgarian names. Parliament revoked the constitutional provision guaranteeing the Communist party a dominant role in society and politics, and the Communist party changed its name to the Bulgarian Socialist party. Prime Minister Andrei Lukanov was forced to resign in July, when he admitted that he had called for tanks to crush a pro-democracy protest in December 1989. Lukanov was replaced by opposition leader Zhelyu Zhelev. In the run-off elections for Parliament, the Bulgarian Socialist party won 211 of 400 seats; the United Democratic Front, which encompassed 16 parties, 144 seats; and a Turkish party, 23 seats.

In May, Bulgaria and Israel restored diplomatic relations.
JEWISH COMMUNITY

Within the Jewish community, numbering some 5,000, a new editor of Evreyski Vesti (Jewish News) was appointed. In his first editorial, 49-year-old Eliezer Alfantdry, who had never joined the Communist party, pledged to put an end to “the old editorial practice of fear and servility, total distortion of news about Israel and all things Jewish, complete lies about life in our Jewish community and communities elsewhere, the falsification of our past, and the complete ignoring of our contribution to society.”

Yugoslavia

In republicwide elections in April, an anti-Communist Slovene party won 55 percent of the legislative seats, while the former Communists got only 17 percent. But the candidate of the Democratic Renewal (former Communist) party, Milan Kucan, won the presidency of Slovenia. In the other Catholic republic, Croatia, Franjo Tudjman, representing the Croatian Democratic Union, which was opposed to the Communist party, was elected president of the republic. In Serbian elections, held in December, the socialists (formerly Communists) won 194 seats to the opposition’s 48 and independents’ 8 seats. Thus, political trends in Serbia were diametrically opposed to those in Croatia and Slovenia. In the latter republic, 95 percent voted for independence in a December plebiscite.

Unlike the other East European countries, Yugoslavia did not restore diplomatic relations with Israel. However, Serbian prime minister Stanko Radmilovic and a group of 300 Serbian citizens came to Israel in June to open the first “Serbian Week” in that country, featuring a commercial and cultural exhibition.

JEWISH COMMUNITY

Yugoslavia’s Jewish population was estimated at around 6,000.

The Croatian government agreed to open archives relating to the persecution of Jews in Croatia during World War II to researchers from Yad Vashem. President Franjo Tudjman pledged to allow a Jewish community center and synagogue to be built on the site of the former central synagogue of Zagreb, the republic’s capital. The synagogue was constructed in 1867 and destroyed by the Nazis in 1941. The Jewish community had been seeking permission to rebuild it since 1986.

ZVI GITELMAN