Australia

National Affairs

Australia in 1991 was deep in the grip of a recession, the severest downturn in the economy since the Great Depression of the 1930s. Layoffs, losses, closures, and bankruptcies became common, especially in hard-hit Victoria, and Jewish businessmen were among the casualties. Perhaps the most spectacular and publicized case was that of textile magnate Abe Goldberg, whose empire crashed, leaving a staggering amount in loans outstanding.

For most of the year, the ruling Australian Labor party (ALP) was headed by Prime Minister Bob Hawke. In December, owing to his inability to improve the economy, he was replaced by former treasurer Paul Keating in a ballot among ALP parliamentarians. Keating remained singularly unpopular with voters, who viewed him as the principal architect of the recession and who perceived him to be arrogant and detached, in contrast to the approachable, emotional Hawke.

The Gulf War

Both the Hawke government and the opposition coalition of Liberal and National parties led by Dr. John Hewson supported military intervention against Iraq's occupation of Kuwait, and Australia contributed to the allied war effort by sending three frigates to the Gulf. But the relatively unpublicized contribution of joint U.S.-Australian communications bases at Nurringar in South Australia and at the North-West Cape was almost certainly far more significant than that of the frigates. Hawke later acknowledged the bases' importance: Nurringar had helped to provide early warnings of Iraq's missile launches, and the North-West Cape base had been a crucial link in satellite communications.

A resolution passed by the Australian Parliament in January, reaffirming support for allied actions against Saddam, added that "this House . . . deplores Iraq's widening of the conflict by its unprovoked attack upon Israel" and "recognizes, as those with whom we are acting now in the Gulf have recognized, the need to intensify efforts to establish peace and stability in the Middle East, including a just resolution of the Palestinian issue and the continuing security of Israel, once the crisis in the Gulf is resolved." Except for hard-line left-wingers, the ruling ALP supported Hawke's refusal to link the Palestinian situation directly to Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait. However, Hawke told a television interviewer, "We have made it quite clear, before this conflict started, that there has to be a resolution of the Palestinian problem and that includes their right to contemplate a state. . . ."
The existence of a secret Australian government ban on the sale to Israel of lethal weaponry as well as nonlethal military equipment, in force for several years, was leaked during the Gulf War. Defense Minister Sen. Robert Ray favored continuing the ban, saying: "We are avoiding selling lethal weapons into areas of instability." Yet he admitted that the government had approved a major sale of trainer-aircraft engine parts to Iraq (a sale blocked owing to the UN embargo following the Kuwait invasion). Official sources later confirmed that during the Gulf War Australia provided Israel with top-secret information obtained from the Nurringar communications base, which was involved in monitoring satellite infrared detection of Iraqi missile launches. Noting the virulent opposition to such bases in Australia by a coalition of left-wing groups headquartered in Queensland, Senator Ray told Parliament: "Essentially the [anti-bases] coalition accuses me of allowing the Australian-American facilities at Nurringar to be used to give early warning time to citizens of Israel that missiles are coming. If I am guilty of that . . . that is my proudest moment in politics."

During the Gulf War, overt public prejudice against Muslims in Australia (the majority of whom are not of Arabic origin) increased, with verbal and physical attacks on persons and property highlighted in the media. Australia expelled a top Iraqi envoy for "security reasons" after he repeated Saddam's call for a resort to terrorism, and a Lebanese-born Sydney Muslim was charged with offering to smuggle a bomb aboard an airplane.

Relations with Israel

Prime Minister Bob Hawke, an ALP right-winger, was regarded essentially as a warm friend of the Jewish community and the Zionist cause, despite a perceptible tilting of his government toward the PLO in recent years. In May Hawke was presented with the Shield of Jerusalem award by Zionist Federation of Australia president Mark Leibler, on behalf of Jerusalem's mayor Teddy Kollek and World Zionist Organization chairman Simcha Dinitz, in the presence of Israeli ambassador Zvi Kedar. The award came in recognition of Hawke's personal support for a united Jerusalem, a stance that contrasted with his government's official insistence that East Jerusalem is part of the occupied territories and should be relinquished. However, Hawke's press office barred television camera crews from the ceremony and discouraged media coverage in general, presumably to play down his well-known ties with Jews and Israel and to placate the powerful left-wing faction of the ALP, which his increasingly shaky leadership position was forced to rely on for support against the known ambitions of arch-rival Paul Keating.

The latter, who became prime minister in December, was largely an enigma as far as Jews and Israel were concerned. There was little in Keating's political career to indicate any special sympathy toward Israel or indeed any particular interest in foreign affairs. He enjoyed limited contact with Australia's Jewish community, and his inner Sydney electorate held a sizable number of Muslim voters. (He admitted
that he had pressed to help controversial Islamic religious leader Sheik Taj El-Din Hamed Al-Hilaly remain in Australia, despite fervent objections from the Jewish community owing to Hilaly's inflammatory anti-Semitic statements.) Nevertheless, Jewish leaders tended to voice optimism about future Australian policy on Israel and the Middle East under Keating. The new prime minister had the reputation of being a good listener and a pragmatist, and his membership in the right-wing ALP faction was expected to ensure his support for Israel.

At its annual conference in June, the ruling ALP allowed a backroom factional deal to give anti-Israel elements—which included left-wing deputy prime minister Brian Howe—the concessions they sought in a one-sided resolution on the Middle East. The resolution was moved by Foreign Affairs Minister Sen. Gareth Evans (a right-winger) and prominent left-wing parliamentarian Stewart West, long known as an anti-Israel, pro-PLO propagandist. To quote the Sydney-based president of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, Leslie Caplan: "... it is a cause for grave concern that these views were allowed to prevail in an attempt to gain a non-existent consensus on Middle East policy." The resolution highlighted UN Resolutions 242 and 338 as a suitable basis for "the achievement of a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East," but made no reference to the need for bilateral recognition and negotiation between Israel and the Arab nations. It singled out the "continued expansion" of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories as "a major obstacle to a broader peace in the Middle East" and supported the involvement of the PLO in peace talks. The resolution condemned Israel's human-rights record but made no mention of human-rights violations by Arab countries or of their trade boycott. Bob Hawke took no part in the debate on the resolution, which now bound his government, but later defended it: "We think the Israeli government could have conducted itself differently in regard to certain aspects of its policies."

In January the Australian government formally downgraded its relations with the Palestine Liberation Organization, in view of the PLO's continuing support of Saddam Hussein. Australia had not followed the United States in cutting off dialogue earlier, because, in the words of a Department of Foreign Affairs spokesperson, "we thought it was better to leave a line of communication open so we could encourage forces of moderation." The government's reduction of contacts with the PLO came a few months after a request from the PLO for a major upgrading of its presence in Australia, where its sole representative was Ali Kazak, an Australian citizen. Kazak had opened a Palestine Information Office in Melbourne about 1982, moved it to Canberra in 1987, and in 1990 had successfully sought government permission to rename it, first, the PLO Information Office, and shortly afterward, the PLO Office. The PLO asked the government for an in-principle agreement that would allow officials in Tunis or in the organization's affiliates overseas to join the PLO Office in Canberra, but the downgrading of contacts appeared to thwart that request. In September Senator Evans told Parliament that Australia did not see a role for the PLO in the Middle East peace process unless the PLO unequivocally recognized Israel's right to exist, preferably by amending its charter, and that
nothing since the Gulf War had tempted Australian ministers to initiate contact with the PLO.

ARAB BOYCOTT; UN RESOLUTION

The apparent compliance of some Australian companies and even the Victorian and New South Wales chambers of commerce with the Arab trade boycott of Israel led a delegation drawn jointly from the Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ) and the Zionist Federation of Australia (ZFA) to hold separate meetings in August with Foreign Minister Evans, Primary Industries Minister Simon Crean, and the opposition spokesperson on foreign affairs, Sen. Robert Hill. A submission prepared by ZFA president Mark Leibler stated that the central boycott office in Damascus continued to circulate questionnaires freely to Australian firms, and that a number of major companies had conspicuously avoided the Israeli market. The submission called on the Australian government to follow the example of the United States and adopt legislation prohibiting companies and individuals from complying with the boycott. It claimed that almost 100 Australian companies were known to have been blacklisted by the boycott office at some time, and stressed that anti-boycott legislation would not affect the vast bulk of Australian exports to the Middle East—primary produce and raw materials—which were exempt from boycott procedures. (Meanwhile, permission in principle was given to El Al for direct, one-stop flights to Australia.)

The Australian government played a significant role in events leading to the repeal in December of the 1975 UN General Assembly Resolution 3379, which equated Zionism with racism. In October 1986 the Australian Parliament led the world by passing unanimously a motion recommending rescission of the resolution, and in the ensuing years Australia worked assiduously to convince other nations to follow her example. In May 1991, following the UN secretary-general's call for revocation of Resolution 3379, Australia stepped up her lobbying efforts among neighboring countries and fellow members of the British Commonwealth of Nations. Parliament reiterated its support for repeal, and in September Foreign Minister Evans pleaded the case before the UN General Assembly. After the repeal resolution had been drafted in October, Australian diplomats worked closely with senior U.S. and Israeli officials and with the ZFA in the Asia-Pacific region, with a view to ensuring a maximum number of affirmative votes and to securing as many cosponsors as possible. Australia was in fact joined in cosponsoring the resolution by ten Asia-Pacific nations (including Japan, South Korea, Singapore, and New Zealand) and in voting for repeal by a further seven. The ZFA worked closely with the government throughout the repeal campaign, and Jewish communal leader Isi Leibler played a pivotal role in efforts to persuade Asian governments to vote for repeal of the resolution.
Anti-Semitism and Anti-Zionism

During and after the Gulf War, anti-Semitic incidents—frequently associated with anti-Zionism—increased sharply. The early months of the war saw a prolonged epidemic of defacement and damage to Jewish premises in various cities, with synagogues across Australia commonly reporting anti-Semitic graffiti and smashed windows. The National Jewish War Memorial Center in Canberra was internally vandalized. Arsonists lit fires of varying severity at a kindergarten attached to the North Eastern Jewish War Memorial Center in the Melbourne suburb of Doncaster, and in Sydney at the North Shore Temple Emanuel School in Chatswood, the Illawarra Synagogue in Allawah, the Bankstown War Memorial Synagogue, and the Sephardi Synagogue in Woollahra, while a gasoline bomb attack on the North Shore Synagogue in Lindfield was foiled by a guard. Moreover, in a continuation of a rising trend detected in earlier years, individual Jews suffered harassment, even physical assaults, and threatening mail and phone calls were received at Jewish homes and institutions. These actions were attributed by police and communal leaders to neo-Nazis. A hoax bomb call, which almost disrupted a mass Jewish pro-Israel rally in Melbourne, led to the conviction of a confirmed neo-Nazi. Names familiar and not-so-familiar, on both ends of the political spectrum, made predictable anti-Semitic or anti-Zionist charges in newspaper correspondence columns.

Former Australian diplomat and veteran Arabist Malcolm Booker published a series of anti-Bush, anti-Israel articles in early 1991, in the Canberra Times, long regarded as one of the quality national dailies most hostile to Israel. Coincidentally, Booker was the father-in-law of David Hill, managing director of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), whose near-exclusive use of known pro-Arab commentators during the Gulf War caused widespread public indignation (including comments by Prime Minister Hawke and Communications Minister Kim Beazley) as well as protests from Jewish groups. Beazley foreshadowed the implementation of a more effective complaints procedure for the ABC, whose reporting and commentary both on radio and television had often been regarded as slanted by friends of Israel. (By contrast, one of the highlights of the viewing year was ABC-TV’s series of six interviews by producer Dagmar Strauss with prominent Australian Jews.)

In January, one of the ABC’s favorite commentators, Dr. Michael McKinley, caused an uproar by claiming in an article in the Australian Financial Review that in order to boost public support for Australia’s naval presence in the Gulf, Jewish or Zionist groups in Sydney might be tempted to bomb an American airline, an act which would be assumed to be the work of Arabs. New South Wales journalist David Bowman extended his repeatedly paraded anti-Zionism into the letters page of the London Daily Telegraph in a defense of the ABC’s failure to use “commentators who were Zionists” during the Gulf crisis.

During the Gulf War, the Sydney-based Australian Federation of Islamic Councils inserted antiwar advertisements in national newspapers, and the Islamic Egyp-
tian Society in Sydney called for linkage with the Palestinian question. Writers in Arabic-language newspapers, like Ali Kazak and his apologists, continued virulent attacks on Zionism. Sheikh Hilaly, imam of Australia’s largest mosque, who in 1988 made a notorious slur on Jews and Judaism, told the *Sydney Morning Herald* that Australian Jews were “supporting war, not peace,” and claimed that Zionists were creating problems for the whole world. Describing this outburst as “quite inappropriate, provocative and unhelpful,” federal opposition spokesperson Philip Ruddock called on the minister for immigration and ethnic affairs, Gerry Hand, to remonstrate with Hilaly. Bilal Cleland, head of the Islamic Council of Victoria, alleged a clear distinction between Judaism and Zionism. Sydney academic Dr. Ahmad Shboul (one of the ABC’s frequent commentators) told the *Australian* newspaper that people who associated Islam with penal practices considered barbaric and with female circumcision should realize that such practices were attributable to “the Old Testament rules,” some of which Islam had modified. “So . . . we would also have to accuse Judaism. . . .”

During the year, anti-Semitism in Islam-dominated Malaysia spilled over into Australia, with prominent Australian Jews apparently made scapegoats for Malaysia’s fragile relations with Australia. In April an article in Malaysia’s principal English-language newspaper, the *Straits Times*, claimed that the Australian Zionist movement was seeking to oust Prime Minister Mahathir bin Mohamad because it was “unhappy with the firm stand taken by Malaysia toward Zionist brutality in Palestine.” That same month, the Melbourne-based Australian People’s Conference (a shadowy anti-Israel, pro-Iraq group) alleged that Australian Zionists were behind Australia’s criticisms of Malaysia. The group cited attacks on Dr. Mahathir and his government by Michael Danby, editor of the Zionist newsletter *Australia/Israel Review*, by Isi Leibler and the Asia Pacific Jewish Association (of which Leibler was chairman), and by Sydney judge Marcus Einfeld, in 1988, during his presidency of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission in Canberra.

**RIGHT-WING GROUPS; HOLOCAUST REVISIONISTS**

Conspiracy theories inspired by the right-wing, populist, anti-Semitic Australian League of Rights (the devious machinations of “international finance” is a favorite) were steadily gaining currency in depressed rural areas. Denis Collins, a country grape farmer and Independent member for the outback town of Alice Springs in the Northern Territory (NT) Legislative Assembly, perhaps reflected the league’s influence when he made the absurd claim (under the cover of parliamentary privilege, which shielded him from defamation action) that Melbourne brothers Isi and Mark Leibler were linked to the drug and pornography trades and that ADL in the United States, of which Isi Leibler was “the No. 2 man” (*sic!*) “engages in a wide range of activities that are inherently criminal in nature” and is known as “the American drug lobby.”
Following complaints from the ECAJ, the *Australasian Post*, an adult tabloid magazine, canceled a series of advertisements promoting a package that described the Holocaust as an "Allied Communist fabrication." A Christian fundamentalist group in Victoria distributed a U.S.-made video describing the Holocaust as a hoax and claiming, inter alia, that the Talmud commands Jews to rape preadolescent girls. Holocaust revisionism was also being peddled, as for many years past, in League of Rights publications, by Melbourne lawyer John Bennett and his associates in the minuscule Australian Civil Liberties Union (not to be confused with the reputable Victorian Union for Civil Liberties) and the West Australia-based periodical *Perseverance*, organ of the fascist Hungarista movement. ECAJ secretary Jeremy Jones urged the Australian Law Reform Commission to make denial of the Holocaust a criminal offense.

Other developments included the distribution of material accusing Jews of cannibalism, human sacrifice, and blood rituals by a Queensland-based group known as Christian Identity Ministries; the appearance on a popular daytime television talk show of a self-proclaimed neo-Nazi "fuehrer" wearing Nazi uniform and claiming that "Zionists" controlled the political process in Australia and that Jews might have been responsible for the recent wave of arson attacks on Sydney synagogues in order to "purify" them and collect insurance money; and the appearance in the Victorian country towns of Geelong and Colac of anti-Semitic and white supremacist pamphlets bearing the imprimatur of the newly emerged White Aryan Resistance (WAR).

**OTHER MATTERS**

Several Jews, identified as such, made unwelcome headlines during the year, a trend some observers attributed to anti-Semitism. The case of ruined Melbourne-based building tycoon George Herscu, jailed for five years in December 1990 for bribing a Queensland government minister in return for a lucrative business deal, was featured frequently in the media. The prominent developer of Surfers Paradise, Queensland, Eddie Kornhauser, was tried in June on similar charges of bribery, but was acquitted. In May the Perth-based Western Women Management Proprietary, a fledgling feminist financial counseling, banking, and investment group, collapsed amid recrimination and innuendo focusing on its founder, Robin Zara Greenburg. In July the Melbourne *Age* splashed across its front page a sensationalized scoop report on the bankruptcy, enormous debts, and numerous distressed personal creditors of Chaim Serebryanski, a principal benefactor of Melbourne's Lubavitcher movement, who had suddenly departed overseas. Political commentator and former ALP federal minister Barry Cohen, echoing a widespread sentiment, claimed "an iniquitous and subtle change in the media, whereby articles on prominent Jews never fail to point out if they are Jewish when they have done something wrong."

The Melbourne *Age* carried an attack on circumcision by celebrated feminist Germaine Greer which, while not inherently anti-Semitic, revived media debate on the subject and put Jews on the defensive.
Australian Jewish leaders, convinced of the need for federal antiracism legislation, welcomed a report by federal Race Relations Commissioner Irene Moss and lawyer Ron Castan recommending federal laws to combat racial violence, incitement to racial hatred, and religious discrimination camouflaging racism. Subsequently, the Law Reform Commission announced that it had drafted legislation against racist violence. In December the Legislative Assembly of the Australian Capital Territory (ACT), which incorporates Canberra, passed Australia's toughest antidiscrimination legislation. The racial vilification section was introduced as an amendment by a former ACT attorney-general, who spoke of "a very active far right element developing" in the territory.

Federal ALP parliamentarian Clyde Holding, a non-Jew with a large Melbourne Jewish electorate, and noted for his attachment to Jews and Israel, succeeded Peter Baume as Australia's representative on the London-based Inter-Parliamentary Council Against Anti-Semitism.

Nazi War Criminals

In April the federal government announced that its War Crimes Special Investigations Unit (established in 1987 in anticipation of the controversial War Crimes Amendment Act of 1988) was unlikely to be funded beyond June 1992. After that date, a litigation support group was expected to assist prosecutions in progress, but no new investigations would be conducted. News of the probable closure of the unit, which had investigated over 600 suspects and recommended the prosecution of 12, was welcomed by the Ukrainian and Baltic communities and also by certain newspapers and politicians who had deplored the investigations as a waste of taxpayers' money.

In August the High Court of Australia (equivalent to the U.S. Supreme Court) decided by a 4–3 majority that the federal War Crimes Amendment Act was valid. The act had been challenged on several grounds by lawyers appearing for an Adelaide man, Ivan Timofeyevich Polyukovich, the first person indicted under the legislation. Polyukovich faced charges involving the wartime murders in the Ukraine of 24 people and of being implicated in the murders of up to 850 others, mostly Jews. He was charged in January 1990, but the hearing was suspended when his lawyers lodged their challenge in April of that year. (The High Court heard the challenge toward the close of 1990 but announced no decision until 1991.) Reflecting a viewpoint widespread among the public, Polyukovich's lawyers argued that the War Crimes Amendment Act did not fall within the external affairs jurisdiction of Australia; that it was a matter of deeply felt Jewish rather than true international concern; that it operated retroactively to make acts criminal which were not criminal under Australian or international law when they were committed; and that it created new offenses—deportation, internment, and genocide—previously unknown in Australian criminal law. The High Court, in an exhaustive and lengthy judgment handed down in 1991, held that the external affairs power of Australia supported making criminal those acts committed outside Australia, even if at the time the
perpetrator had no connection with the country but only subsequently established one. The High Court also held that a crime against humanity was part of the international body of law, which could and did become Australian domestic law if the government exercised its external affairs power to include it. In addition, the retroactive reach of the act was insufficient to invalidate it, and the act's recitation of criminal offenses did not usurp the High Court's judicial powers.

As a result of this finding, committal proceedings (similar to a U.S. grand jury) against Polyukovich resumed in Adelaide in November, when the courthouse was picketed by members of the anti-Semitic League of Rights and others protesting the trial, some of whom carried placards bearing anti-Israel slogans (the most notable protester was Sir Walter Crocker, a former career diplomat and lieutenant-governor of South Australia, a man of part-Jewish ancestry whose publications betray a near-obsessive anti-Israel bias).

In September two other Adelaide residents, Heinrich Wagner and an unnamed man, were also charged with involvement in anti-Jewish atrocities in the Ukraine in 1942.

JEWISH COMMUNITY

Demography

The Jewish population of Australia was estimated at just below 90,000 by some demographers, while others put it at between 90,000 and 100,000. The latter suggested that many Jews—those who consider themselves Jewish in a cultural or ethnic sense and Holocaust survivors fearful that their Jewish identity could be used against them by a future hostile regime—do not reveal their Jewishness on federal census forms.

Numbers were augmented during the year by newcomers from South Africa and the Soviet Union, though the peak period for such arrivals had passed. Jewish leaders continued to fret over the fact that, according to census figures, the community was an aging one, and the year's statistics for Jewish marriages and for bar/bat mitzvahs were taken by some as cause for concern.

According to an Australian Bureau of Statistics report, "Fertility in Australia," the 1986 census showed that Jewish women have fewer children than women of other religions in Australia. The average number of children for Jewish women aged 15–54 was 1.6 compared with 2.3 for Muslim women, 2 for Christians, and 1.9 for Buddhists. (Women who stated no religion had an average of 1.4 children.) Among women aged 45–54, Jewish women had an average of 2.3 children, compared with Muslims (3.8), Buddhists (3.5), Catholics (3.1), and Anglicans or Episcopalians (2.8).

A federal census, the first since 1986, was conducted in August. Communal leaders called upon Jews, whether religiously observant or not, to answer "Jewish"
to the question about the religion of each household member. The question was vitally important for the community, since census figures influenced government support levels for educational institutions, welfare services, elderly citizens' clubs, and old-age homes, and even ethnic radio. The census results were not expected to become available until 1992–93.

Israel-Related Activity

The Zionist orientation of the community was fully evident, particularly during the Gulf War. A Solidarity with Israel service at Sydney's Great Synagogue at the end of January, after Iraq's Scud attacks began, attracted over 1,600 people. Some 2,600 Jews attended a comparable rally in Melbourne, which heard messages of support from Prime Minister Hawke and Opposition Leader Hewson. In February the New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies organized a protest outside the Iraqi Embassy in Canberra, attended by hundreds of Sydney's Jews supported by the Canberra Jewish community and Christian groups. Several prominent Jewish leaders traveled to Israel during the war to demonstrate their solidarity and, like the Australian Jewish press, were critical of those who failed to follow suit. Many other Israel-related activities took place throughout the year, ranging from fund-raising via the United Israel Appeal, WIZO, the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW), groups of "friends of" Israeli universities, and similar organizations, to lobbying by the ZFA and its constituents, and information activities by Zionist groups and Australia/Israel Publications (publishers of the fortnightly newsletter *Australia/Israel Review*, sent to parliamentarians, journalists, and other policy and opinion-makers nationwide).

The articulate and charismatic Isi Leibler, long one of the world's foremost Soviet Jewry activists, had since turned his considerable zeal and energy to improving the image of Jews and Israel in the Asia-Pacific region. In May he was elected cochairman (with Mendel Kaplan of South Africa) of the governing board of the World Jewish Congress (WJC). In that capacity he undertook missions to Beijing in October and to New Delhi, Singapore, Bangkok, Tokyo, and Seoul in November, meeting foreign ministers and high officials in the presence of Australian envoys. During these missions, which received full encouragement and cooperation from Foreign Minister Evans, he discussed not only repeal of the "Zionism Is Racism" UN resolution but also diplomatic relations with Israel and the Arab boycott.

Australia sent 143 immigrants to Israel in 1991, which gave it one of the, if not the, highest proportional *aliyah* rates of any Western country. A record 186 students from around Australia participated in the Australasian Union of Jewish Students (AUJS) Academy tour of Israel. According to a survey conducted by W.D. Rubinstein for the Australian Institute of Jewish Affairs (AIJA) and AUJS, the overwhelming majority of Australia's Jewish college and university students are strongly pro-Israel (as well as Jewishly-conscious and at least somewhat religious).
Communal Affairs

The vibrancy of Australian Jewry was reflected in its myriad communal organizations and activities. Communal forums addressed by distinguished overseas speakers, most of them brought to Australia by the Australian Institute of Jewish Affairs, drew large audiences. Such speakers included Amos Oz, Chaim Potok, Yehuda Bauer, Rabbi Irving Greenberg and his wife, Blu, Rabbi Shlomo Riskin, Rabbi Sherwin Wine, Brig. Gen. Giora Rom, and U.S. congressman Stephen Solarz. In April Czechoslovak hero Alexander Dubcek received the AIJA Human Rights Award in Melbourne.

Among the year's notable events was the National Outlook Conference on the future needs, prospects, and directions of the community, held in Melbourne in June under the joint auspices of the AIJA and the Executive Council of Australian Jewry. Keynote speaker was Los Angeles Jewish educator Hanan Alexander. The conference emphasized the need for the larger Jewish communities in Australia to give more positive and constructive assistance to their smaller counterparts.

At the ECAJ's annual conference, held in Adelaide in November, Jewish Community Council of Victoria president Joe Gersh forcefully advocated an overhaul of the ECAJ's constitution to ensure the organization's relevance into the next century. Claiming that the ECAJ, whose presidency and secretariat rotate periodically between Sydney and Melbourne, was “irrelevant to Melbourne when it was in Sydney and vice versa,” he echoed a widely shared view when he recommended the establishment of “a permanent secretariat which doesn’t move with the leadership.”

Melbourne's financially straitened Makor Library and Resource Center, a unique and heavily utilized collection of material on Jews and Israel, managed to remain in operation, partly owing to a subsidy from the State Zionist Council of Victoria. Communal leaders formally protested to Special Broadcasting Service heads regarding drastic cuts in Jewish programming on radio stations 2EA in Sydney and 3EA in Melbourne.

In July the Australian Association for Jewish Studies held its annual conference in Melbourne, with papers delivered on various topics by Jewish and non-Jewish academics and nonacademics. A decision was made to change the name of the association's scholarly periodical *Menorah* to the *Journal of the Australian Association for Jewish Studies*.

Religion

Jewish congregations existed in every Australian state (but not the Northern Territory), and most Jews were at least nominally Orthodox. There were thriving communities of Lubavitcher, Adass Israel (mainly Hungarian, strictly Orthodox), and Mizraheists in Melbourne and, to a lesser extent, in Sydney. Progressive (or Liberal, equivalent to American Reform) congregations were to be found in all major centers of Jewish life.
In general, the relations between the Orthodox and Reform rabbinates were either strained or nonexistent. However, tentative steps were taken this year in Melbourne toward dialogue between Progressive and Orthodox Jews. The catalyst was the visit in July of U.S. Orthodox rabbi Irving Greenberg, a pioneer of such dialogue in the United States, who addressed members of Sydney's Temple Emanuel and Melbourne's Temple Beth Israel, both Reform, on the need to persist until dialogue is achieved. At a communal forum devoted to the question of whether there would be “one Jewish people” in the next century, at which Greenberg was the keynote speaker, AJJA chairman Isi Leibler (a Mizrachist) and Rabbi Daniel Schiff of Temple Beth Israel committed themselves to initiate dialogue. Schiff revived the proposals of British Reform rabbi Sydney Brichto, who in 1987 had suggested that Reform rabbis cede authority on conversion and divorce to Orthodox rabbis in return for a guarantee that Halakhah would be administered compassionately and creatively. (The Progressive movement in Australia had offered to adopt the Brichto proposals in 1987, but no Orthodox rabbi accepted.) Schiff believed that the proposals might yet be implemented in Australia, and he urged Orthodox Jews to encourage their rabbis to respond positively. Shortly afterward a group of Orthodox and Progressive lay leaders met in Melbourne with Rabbi Schiff and Temple Beth Israel’s senior minister, Rabbi John Levi, to discuss ways to overcome differences between Orthodoxy and Progressive Judaism over divorce, conversion, and personal status. A dialogue group chaired jointly by Isi Leibler and the president of the Victorian Union for Progressive Judaism (VUPJ), Walter Jona, met periodically thereafter to discuss such issues as remarriage when there has been no get and conversion procedures.

Several congregations celebrated milestones this year: the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation the 150th anniversary of its founding, the St. Kilda Hebrew Congregation, Melbourne, its 120th, and the Bentleigh Progressive Synagogue, Melbourne, its 40th. The Bentleigh Progressive Synagogue was dogged by internal strife, which culminated in the dismissal of its minister, Rabbi Harold Vallins. With a number of seceding members, Vallins founded a new Progressive congregation, Bet Hatikvah, independent of the VUPJ, the umbrella body of Melbourne’s three Progressive congregations. Meanwhile, owing to steadily dwindling membership, the congregation of the long-established Bankstown Synagogue, Sydney, decided to disband.

The year saw a surge in communal activity in the Melbourne district of Waverley, far from the Jewish core area yet home to several hundred Jews. The so-called Waverley Jewish Community, with a nucleus of 25 families, conducted the first ever High Holy Day services in the area and floated a proposal to establish an Orthodox synagogue.

A submission by the ECAJ’s Jewish Women’s Issues Committee to the Australian Law Reform Commission, seeking to make a Jewish divorce decree (get) a condition for civil divorce between Jewish parties, was supported by most sections of the community, including the Association of Orthodox Rabbis of Australia and New Zealand.
Education

Australia's Jewish day schools felt the effects of the economic recession: there were signs that owing to financial pressures some parents were delaying enrolling their children in such schools or withdrawing students already enrolled and sending them to non-fee-paying state alternatives. In an attempt to counter these trends, some Jewish day schools offered subsidies or reduced fees to parents. As more parents could not afford day-school fees, demand increased on the United Jewish Education Board (UJEB) in Victoria—the state most affected by the recession—which provided Jewish students at non-Jewish schools with religious instruction. Ironically, the UJEB was forced to reduce some services owing to a substantial funding shortfall, which left between 40 and 50 Victorian children without any Jewish education. However, the UJEB opened its first Sunday school in the country town of Ballarat to accommodate some 12 children in the district.

Leibler-Yavneh College, Melbourne's Mizrachi day school, appeared to surmount a bitter wrangle over financial management between administrators and major benefactors and embarked on an innovative fund-raising program. Rabbi Bill Altschul succeeded fellow American Steven Lorch as principal of Australia's biggest Jewish day school, Mount Scopus Memorial College, Melbourne.

Jewish-Christian Relations

Six invited Jewish observers (including two Australians, Rabbi Raymond Apple of Sydney's Great Synagogue and Rabbi Brian Fox of Sydney's Temple Emanuel), representing the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, attended the huge World Council of Churches (WCC) Assembly, held in Canberra in February. A statement was adopted criticizing Israel for retaliating against PLO missile attacks from Lebanon, yet a motion to commend Israel for not retaliating against Iraqi Scud attacks failed, even though the General Secretary of the WCC had expressed the hope that any statement on the Middle East would deplore the Scud attacks and commend Israeli restraint. Following objections from Dutch, German, and Swiss delegates, the statement was modified to include an acknowledgment that Jews as well as Muslims have suffered in the Middle East troubles and that the Gulf War had increased anti-Semitism as well as prejudice against Muslims.

In March Bishop Ken Mason of the Sydney-based Anglican Board of Missions called on Anglicans to contribute to an urgent appeal for Palestinians, both Muslim and Christian, living under curfew, even though "the delivery of aid may be hindered by the Israelis." He claimed that the Israeli authorities were denying Palestinians "first-aid and health care." John McKnight, the Sydney Anglican clergyman who converted convicted Israeli traitor Mordechai Vanunu, co-authored (with Tom Gilling) Trial and Error: Mordechai Vanunu and Israel's Nuclear Bomb (Monarch Publications).

In May Mark Leibler, president of the Zionist Federation of Australia, wrote to
the headmaster of the private secondary Brighton Grammar School, Melbourne, expressing concern about a classroom lesson that emphasized Jewish complicity in the death of Jesus and claimed that Christianity had superseded Judaism. Dissatisfied with the headmaster's response, Leibler took the matter to Anglican archbishop Dr. Keith Rayner. Following a strongly worded exchange of correspondence between the two, a special interfaith committee of Christians and Jews was set up in Melbourne in September to review Anglican teachings that may provoke "feelings of hostility toward Jews." This was the first time Jews and Anglicans in Australia had agreed to work together on a major review of church teachings concerning Jews and Judaism.

The Uniting Church of Australia (a Presbyterian-Methodist-Congregationalist amalgam and third largest Christian denomination in the country) held its sixth assembly in Brisbane in July. For the first time the church invited representatives from the Jewish and Muslim communities, and Rabbi John Levi presented a strong paper on the theology of supersession (the doctrine that Christianity has rendered Judaism obsolete). But in October a serious rift opened between the Jewish community and the Uniting Church, when the latter released to its synods throughout Australia a highly tendentious pamphlet that was heavily weighted toward the Palestinians. The pamphlet unleashed a storm of protest from Jewish leaders throughout Australia and was the subject of a meeting in Canberra between ECAJ president Leslie Caplan and Uniting Church president Rev. Dr. D'Arcy Wood. Dr. Wood said he was "most anxious" to improve dialogue with the Jewish community; however, a subsequent written evaluation by the author of the original pamphlet only served to exacerbate the controversy.

**Jewish-Muslim Relations**

A few hopeful signs were discernible amidst the considerable hostility that existed between the two communities. Sylvia Gelman, Victorian president of the National Council of Women and a past president of the National Council of Jewish Women, wrote a letter to the Melbourne *Age* condemning racist attacks on Muslim women. Sheik Abdullah Nu'man, prevented by illness from participating in an ecumenical service in Melbourne's St. Paul's Cathedral to pray for peace in the Persian Gulf, was visited in the hospital by Rabbi John Levi. Zia Ahmad, managing director of the newly launched, Sydney-based, multilingual *Australian Muslim Times*, told a Jewish reporter that, the Israel-Arab dispute aside, there were many things Jews and Muslims could learn from each other; nevertheless, an anti-Semitic diatribe full of League of Rights themes and by an apparent non-Muslim soon found its way into Ahmad's paper.
Publications

Several noteworthy Jewish books were released during 1991. The two-volume *The Jews of Australia: A Thematic History* by Hilary and W.D. Rubinstein, commissioned by the AIJA (published by William Heinemann Australia), was launched in March by Liberal party leader Dr. John Hewson, at one of his earliest appearances before a Jewish audience. *Hebrew, Israelite, Jew: The History of the Jews of Western Australia* by David Mossenson (published in 1990 by the University of Western Australia Press) became generally available early in the year. *What God Wants*, a collection of short stories by Lily Brett, was published by the University of Queensland Press. Another creative work, *Jewels and Ashes* by Arnold Zable (Scribe Publications), set in Jewish Bialystok, won the 1991 New South Wales Ethnic Affairs Commission Award and the 1991 National Book Council Lysbeth Cohen Memorial Prize.

Personalia

Peter Baume retired from the federal Senate in January, leaving no Jews in that legislature (his cousin, Sen. Michael Baume, is not Jewish). He became head of community medicine at the University of New South Wales. Melbourne lawyer Ron Castan was appointed a part-time commissioner of the federal Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission for a three-year term. Michael Gawenda became editor of *Time* Australia. Aviva Kipen, from Melbourne, became the first Australian woman admitted to the rabbinate when she was ordained at Leo Baeck College, London. Daniel Nevo was named Israel’s new consul in Australia.

Australian Jews who died during 1991 included Martha Jacobson of Melbourne, a former state and federal president of WIZO who was prominent also in many other communal organizations, in January, aged 66; Rabbi Dr. Israel Porush, chief minister of Sydney’s Great Synagogue (1940–72), a scholar and author who retired to Melbourne and remained until the end of his life a towering figure in the Jewish community, in May, aged 83; University of Melbourne postgraduate student Yankel Rosenbaum, aged 29, in August, in Brooklyn, New York, from fatal stab wounds inflicted by young blacks during an anti-Jewish rampage; and Abram (Abrasha) Zbar, a textile wholesaler and Yiddishist who in 1946 cofounded the Bialystocker Center (a principal Melbourne landsmanshaft) and who sponsored the migration of numerous Holocaust survivors to Australia, in December, aged 95. (For the record, influential political scientist Henry Mayer of Sydney, who died in May, was, contrary to the general assumption, not Jewish.)

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