National politics in the latter half of 1996 and 1997 continued along the path set for the Federal Republic by Chancellor Helmut Kohl. Under his leadership, the coalition government made up of the Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU) and the Free Democratic Party (FDP) made the changes in fiscal policy that it deemed necessary to bring the federal deficit below the 3.0 percent level set as a criterion for monetary union in the Maastricht Treaty. The final decision on which countries would participate in the Euro, the new European currency, was slated for March 1998. Unemployment continued to rise, topping 4 million—a new high in the post–World War II era. After having pledged to cut that figure in half by the year 2000, Chancellor Kohl acknowledged toward the end of 1997 that such a goal was not realizable.

Over the 18 months covered by this article, the major political parties began preparations for the 1998 federal elections. As a result, aside from a watered-down version of health-care reform, virtually no progress was made on such pressing issues as tax reform, the restructuring of state-funded pension plans, and educational reform. Coalitions in five of 18 state governments (Hesse, North Rhine-Westphalia, Schleswig-Holstein, Saxony-Anhalt, and Hamburg) of the Social Democrats (SPD) and the Greens, a leftist environmental party, fueled speculation that such a “red-green” coalition could displace the ruling federal government. Indecision within the SPD as to their candidate for chancellor also remained a major source of speculation. Party chief Oskar Lafontaine continued to control the party machinery, but centrist Gerhard Schröder, the minister president of Lower Saxony, enjoyed greater popular support. No decision was expected until after the March 1998 state elections in Lower Saxony.

Both the SPD and the CDU emphasized internal security, their rhetoric playing on public perceptions of insecurity at a time of high crime rates and sustained and increasing unemployment. Schröder demonstrated the willingness of even the traditionally civil liberties–oriented SPD to capitalize on popular anxiety when he announced that foreigners who proved to be a risk to the security of Germans...
would not be tolerated. In an effort to provide law-enforcement officials with increased means to combat organized crime, the federal government proposed a measure that would legalize the tapping of phones belonging to suspected criminals, with court approval. The primacy of civil liberties in postwar and unified Germany made this issue a topic of heated public debate.

Against this national backdrop, the Republikaner, an extreme right-wing political party, attempted to make themselves respectable, echoing those themes of the mass-based parties that meshed with their ideology. Their efforts proved largely unsuccessful, though, as the CDU/CSU and the right wing of the SPD were already satisfying the mainstream public's socially conservative inclinations. The German People's Union and the National Democratic Party of Germany, meanwhile, surpassed the somewhat more moderate Republikaner in importance on the extreme right, aiming their messages at the socially disaffected. Taken together, the membership of these three parties increased 5–6 percent in 1997 from the 1996 figure of 45,300.

The profile of right-wing voters had shifted in recent years from elderly veterans and former members of the Hitler Youth to young men with little education. Experts placed the potential right-wing vote on the national level between 10 and 20 percent.

Israel and the Middle East

Diplomatic relations between Israel and the Federal Republic were strained by developments in the Middle East peace process. Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel's tenure in office had been marked by cordial relations with Israel and, in deference to the historical relationship between the two states, a reluctance to give advice to his Israeli counterparts. Developments in late 1996 and 1997, however, frustrated his efforts both to maintain a common foreign policy with his partners in the European Union (EU) and to achieve a balanced Middle East policy.

The Kohl government defended Israel on the international stage at a time when even the United States had become critical of Israeli policy. Kinkel blocked an attempt within the EU to impose sanctions against Israel in early 1997 in reaction to the settlements policy of Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu. On two separate occasions in the same year, in March and July, Germany voted against a United Nations resolution condemning the Netanyahu policy as contrary to the spirit of the Oslo accords. As these stands in defense of Israeli policy threatened to damage Germany's influence as an impartial supporter of peace in the Middle East, Kinkel traveled to the region in March 1997 and visited four Palestinian cities. When he stopped in Israel to see Foreign Minister David Levy on the same trip, officials described their meeting as "more than icy." After Kinkel warned Levy at a meeting at the UN in September that Germany could no longer protect Israel from the reproaches of the international community, Ger-
many for the first time in its history voted against Israel in the UN General Assembly.

The Israeli Foreign Ministry continued to emphasize the strength of the friendship between Israel and Germany and the importance of the latter's role in the peace process. Indeed, in early December 1997, just weeks after President Bill Clinton would not find time in his schedule to meet with the Israeli head of state in Washington, Prime Minister Netanyahu looked to Chancellor Kohl for diplomatic assistance. Netanyahu traveled to Germany in December, to reaffirm the strong ties between the two countries and to capitalize on the influence Kohl exercised over his Western allies and Palestinian leader Yasir Arafat.

Official differences in policy toward “rogue states” in the Middle East remained an issue in German-Israeli relations. While both Israel and the United States attempted to isolate Iraq and Iran, the Kohl government persisted in its commitment to a “critical dialogue.” Israel nevertheless toned down its criticism of this German policy after German and Iranian intervention led to the release in the summer of 1996 of an Israeli soldier who had fallen prisoner to Lebanese forces.

A new Israeli consul general, Miryam Shomrat, took office in Berlin in February 1997. Shomrat accepted the task of facilitating the transition of the embassy from Bonn to Berlin in anticipation of the official move of the government seat to the new capital of unified Germany. Although the majority of embassies will be located in the vicinity of the government district, the proposed building for the Israeli embassy is located in Wilmersdorf, a residential area of Berlin whose zoning laws would normally bar the opening of an embassy. The area was selected in part because the district is an historical center of Jewish life in Berlin. In recognition of that history and of the special German-Israeli relationship, Berlin officials were considering making an exception to the zoning laws.

A German musician touring Israel with the German Opera of Berlin provoked a public outcry when the media reported that he had signed a credit-card slip “Adolf Hitler.” Apparently, Gerd Reinke used Hitler’s name as a joke after having had a few drinks in a Tel Aviv hotel. The subsequent public reaction brought apologies from the German embassy and the ensemble with which Reinke was touring. Reinke himself was fired immediately and sent back to Germany; his efforts in the German courts to win reinstatement failed. The episode exemplified what Israeli scholar Moshe Zimmerman has referred to as the “schizophrenic” Israeli attitude: open, relatively positive relations with Germany at the governmental level, accompanied by more sensitive, problematic attitudes at the societal level.

Efforts were made to redress this discrepancy by means of academic cooperation, public festivals, and other activities. From April 27 to May 3, 1997, Mishkenot Sha’anananim, the guest house of the city of Jerusalem, was the site of the inaugural conference of an annual series entitled “The Mishkenot Encounters for Religion and Culture.” Participants in the weeklong conference, organized by the Einstein Forum in Potsdam together with the Hebrew University, explored the theme “Visions of Paradise in Religion and Culture.”
The two largest celebrations of Jerusalem Day 1997 in Germany took place in Berlin and Cologne. The street fair arranged by the Berlin Jewish community featured Israeli music, dance, and food and attracted 5,000 visitors. The 30-year anniversary of the reunification of Jerusalem was the theme of the festivities in Cologne. The participation of German officials in both Berlin and Cologne drew protests from Arab diplomats.

**Anti-Semitism and Extremism**

After decreasing in 1994 and 1995, the number of violent and nonviolent crimes committed by right-wing extremists increased in the last two years. Under the general category of punishable offenses, two-thirds of which were related to the display or dissemination of neo-Nazi symbols or propaganda, the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution counted 11,719 in 1997, up from 8,730 in 1996. The figure for violent crimes attributed to anti-Semitic or xenophobic motives rose slightly, from 781 in 1996 to 790 in 1997. Though these numbers fall short of the peak figures reached in 1992, they do indicate a mobilization of right-wing extremist groups. The number of potentially violent right-wing extremists in Germany rose from 5,400 in 1994 to 7,600. This trend is attributable to continued economic difficulties, a general increase in violent crime, and a growing skinhead music scene. Almost half (45 percent) of the violent crimes by right-wing radicals in 1997 occurred in the five states that made up the former German Democratic Republic (GDR), where just 17 percent of the German population lives. These states have a collective unemployment rate of 20 percent.

The rise in visibility of right-wing groups was not, however, limited to the five new states. In the September 1997 Hamburg election, the German People's Union (GPU) fell just 0.03 percent short of winning seats in the government of the northern German city-state. The GPU received as much as 19 percent of the vote in working-class districts hit hard by persistent unemployment. As mentioned above, the two radical right parties competing with the German People's Union, the Republikaner and the National Democratic Party of Germany, increased their membership significantly in 1997, each drawing support primarily from western Germany.

The number of skinhead concerts doubled from 35 in 1996 to 70 in 1997, drawing, on average, 1,500 participants. Young people were attracted to this scene not only because of ideology, but also because its allegedly apolitical musical style appealed to their tastes. The neo-Nazi music scene had developed into a profitable international industry that was difficult for German authorities to control.

In late October 1997 the police confiscated some 265,000 compact discs in raids in Hamburg and Kiel. The open borders within the European Union, however, allowed for a virtually unchecked supply of the music, for which there seemed to be strong demand. In Germany alone, there were at least 55 skinhead bands. The Internet, which was likewise beyond the reach of rigid state control, had also become a favored means of neo-Nazi communication and organization.
Activism on the Internet and the skinhead music scene reflected a broader trend on the far right toward small autonomous groups and Kameradschaften, the name given by the National Socialists to squads of Hitler Youth. After federal and state governments banned some ten neo-Nazi organizations in 1992 and 1993, the skinhead scene and the "youth troops" of the National Democratic Party grew in importance within the right-wing movement. Members of the now illegal neo-Nazi organization thus joined local Kameradschaften that stood beyond the reach of the government ban. At the beginning of December 1997 the Berlin police raided the largest of 11 Kameradschaften in the city. Their collective membership was approximately 120 neo-Nazis. Given the collection of knives, guns, and pipe bombs found during the raid (such weapons are illegal in Germany), experts feared a rash of right-wing violence in the pattern of the terrorist activities of the left-wing Red Army Faction in the 1970s.

Research conducted by the Moses Mendelssohn Center for European Jewish History and Culture at Potsdam University traced anti-Semitic crimes to the same population most prominent in the right-wing movement as a whole. Of the sample of perpetrators and suspects in cases involving anti-Semitic crimes between 1993 and 1995, 95 percent were men, and half were not yet 22 years of age. Of the violent anti-Semitic crimes perpetrated during the same period, 80 percent were committed by men under the age of 25. In contrast, "propaganda crimes" like the distribution of Holocaust-denial literature or threatening letters were committed by men of all ages, including unreformed Nazis in their seventies and men in their fifties who occupied leading positions in neo-Nazi publishing houses and associations.

On April 15, 1997, as part of its fight against right-wing extremism, the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution opened a public exhibition in Berlin. A display of the weapons and propaganda of the neo-Nazi movement documented the crimes committed by Nazis during the Third Reich and those of extremists in the postwar era. The title of the exhibit warned visitors that "Democracy Is Vulnerable."

Extremism in the Bundeswehr

Defense Minister Volker Rühe (CDU) became embroiled in a scandal in the last months of 1997 that centered on right-wing extremism in the Bundeswehr, the German army. By the end of November, the Defense Ministry had already begun investigations into 126 cases of alleged extremist activities involving 161 soldiers. That figure represented a threefold increase from the number of incidents reported in all of 1996. In the face of almost daily revelations, Rühe steadfastly denied that the trend pointed to a failure on the part of the Bundeswehr to insure the commitment of its soldiers and officers to the democratic values of the state they are employed to defend.

The cases reported over the course of 1997 ranged from violent attacks on for-
eigners to the display of Nazi propaganda to a lecture at the Bundeswehr Academy given by a known neo-Nazi activist. In March nine drunken soldiers assaulted three young foreigners in Detmold. Two soldiers were among those arrested in August for setting fire to a shelter housing Italian construction workers in Dresden. In October a television news program aired neo-Nazi scenes from a videotape produced in 1994 by soldiers in Saxony. In November and December stories about Bundeswehr barracks in three different federal states hit the newsstands telling of right-wing publications, celebrations of Hitler's birthday and the anniversary of the beginning of World War II, and calls of "Heil Hitler!" and "Death to the Jews!"

The incident that finally led to a parliamentary investigation of extremism in the Bundeswehr was the revelation of ties with the neo-Nazi Manfred Roeder. The 1993 report of the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution devoted three pages to Roeder and his German-Russian Society, an organization for the promotion of German settlement in Northeast Prussia (a region in present-day Russia claimed by the Germans in both world wars). He was quoted in the report as lamenting the fact that Germans could not celebrate the anniversary of the opening of German-German borders on November 9, 1989, because the date was "reserved as a national day of repentance for a couple of synagogues that were set on fire in 1938." The reports of the same office in the following two years offered updates on Roeder's activities. Nevertheless, in accordance with its mandate to support "humanitarian" associations, the Defense Ministry provided the German-Russian Society access to Bundeswehr vehicles and tools. Furthermore, Roeder was invited in 1995 to give a lecture on the "Settlement of Russians of German Ancestry in the Königsberg Region" at the Leadership Academy of the Bundeswehr in Hamburg.

Defense Minister Ruhe suspended the general responsible for the invitation. In response to calls for his own resignation, Ruhe held his ground and complained of a rumor-mongering press. A parliamentary investigation into the affair was scheduled for January 1998.

GOLLWITZ

In September 1997, a village in the East German state of Brandenburg made headlines across Europe for its refusal to accept a group of between 50 and 60 Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union, as part of a state-mandated program. The mayor of Gollwitz, population 405, denied charges that anti-Semitism and xenophobia had motivated the decision.

Initial support for the villagers by the minister president of Brandenburg, Social Democrat Manfred Stolpe, provoked angry reactions from Ignatz Bubis, head of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, and Andreas Nachama, the president of the Berlin Jewish community. Bubis saw the affair not solely in terms of anti-Semitism but rather as an expression of a general fear of foreigners that
had to be confronted by well-intentioned public officials like Stolpe. Upon further reflection, Stolpe came to the conclusion that the settlement of Jewish immigrants in Gollwitz was indeed an issue of surmounting xenophobia and the acceptance of historical responsibility.

Over the next few months, hundreds of journalists traveled to Gollwitz to question the villagers on their attitudes toward Jews and other foreigners. Efforts by the state and by local social workers to engage the local inhabitants in a discussion with the Jewish community of Potsdam and with residents of a nearby village that had successfully integrated 19 immigrants the previous year had little effect. The villagers and their representatives held fast to their conviction that the introduction of a group of foreigners into the community would bring about undesirable and intolerable changes in the town's way of life. As Gollwitz became a national symbol of xenophobia in Germany, a group of leftist and antifascist activists arranged a protest demonstration in the village on November 9, the anniversary of Kristallnacht (Night of Broken Glass).

Holocaust-Related Matters

Wehrmacht Exhibit

An exhibit documenting the participation of the German army in crimes against humanity during World War II became the focus of national controversy in the winter of 1996–97. More than 130,000 visitors in 16 different cities had viewed “War of Extermination: The Crimes of the Wehrmacht 1941–44” since its Hamburg opening in March 1995. When the exhibit arrived in Munich in February 1997, the ruling Bavarian Christian Social Union (CSU) protested what it perceived to be the “disparagement of German soldiers.” The party newspaper, the Bayernkurier, went so far as to label the photodocumentation of Wehrmacht soldiers massacring unarmed men, women, and children a “moral campaign of extermination against the German Volk.”

At the time of the exhibit’s opening in 1995, Peter Gauweiler, the CSU chief in Munich, labeled Hannes Heer, the curator of the exhibit, incompetent because of Heer’s past association with the German Communist Party. Gauweiler also charged that the exhibit was filled with forgeries. CDU officials in Frankfurt made similar arguments the following month. These claims called into question the long accepted scholarly consensus on the German army’s complicity in the murder of Jews on the Eastern Front. The refusal of the governing political parties to distance themselves from the right-wing extremists who also objected to the exhibit raised the intensity of the controversy. Even the conservative newspaper Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung recognized the campaign against the exhibit as a populist appeal to right-wing voters that threatened to poison German political discourse.

The national media spectacle created by these protests brought the issue to the
floor of the Reichstag in mid-March of 1997. Members of all political parties participated in an emotional debate, many wrestling openly with their personal histories—the service of their fathers, brothers, and uncles in an army committed to defending and supporting a criminal regime. Though no agreement was reached on the wording of a resolution addressing the role of the Wehrmacht in crimes against humanity, many observers commended the seriousness and honesty with which the German parliamentarians confronted the questions raised by the exhibit.

The controversial exhibit attracted 90,000 visitors in Munich before moving on to Frankfurt in April 1997, where, as in other cities, there were protest demonstrations by right-wing groups and counter-demonstrations by the left. To avoid the security problems posed by demonstrations, the municipal government of Dresden chose to forbid them at the local opening of the Wehrmacht exhibit scheduled for January 1998.

Meanwhile, discussion of a permanent exhibit was already under way. Ignatz Bubis suggested the Bendler-Block as a possibility. The former headquarters of the Wehrmacht leadership in Berlin already housed the Museum of the German Resistance and offices of the German Defense Ministry. After Bubis’s suggestion found little support, a representative from the western German town of Waldstadt proposed it as a permanent location. During the Nazi era, Waldstadt was the seat of the high command of the German army. The exhibit was scheduled to remain on tour, however, through the end of 1999, and no decision was expected on a permanent site within the near future.

**RESTITUTION**

After decades of silence about the company’s activities during the Third Reich, the leaders of the Diehl armaments company initiated a dialogue with a group of women in Israel who had been forced laborers for the firm during World War II. Werner Diehl, the son of 90-year-old CEO Karl Diehl, traveled to Tel Aviv in December 1997 to meet with four women who were held as slave laborers in a Polish labor camp. Diehl announced plans to provide “voluntary support” for the women, who told of the participation of Diehl officials in the mistreatment, humiliation, and selection of prisoners. Representatives of Diehl made the important distinction between the voluntary measures to be undertaken by the company and compensatory payments, which would amount to an admission of responsibility for the wrongs inflicted upon the forced laborers.

The discussion came just days before the Nürnberg city council was to discuss a proposal by the Greens to withdraw an honor granted to the senior Diehl in 1996. With the support of the right-wing Republikaner, the council had voted in March 1996 to bestow honorary citizenship on industrialist Karl Diehl. Diehl published an open letter in his own defense before his son left for Tel Aviv. In the letter, Diehl called on historians to investigate his activities during the Third Reich and expressed his regret for the suffering of inmates who worked for his
company. He also insisted that he was compelled by the Nazi state to use forced laborers, and that he gave them the best conditions possible under the circumstances. The timing of these events was significant in light of a November court decision concerning restitution for forced laborers. A district court in Bonn ruled that surviving inmates of concentration camps who had already received compensatory payments from the German government were not entitled to further restitution for lost wages.

The Berlin municipal government announced in November 1997 that it would no longer fund Esra, a social-services center providing psychosocial support for survivors of the Holocaust. Though Esra (Hebrew for “help”) also received funding from the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, the Berlin Jewish community, and the German Red Cross, the withdrawal of state financing would create serious problems for the center, which helped 150 patients yearly. The city justified its decision by arguing that Esra’s patients “had no direct connection to the Holocaust,” but the majority of its clients were in fact child survivors who were born in concentration camps or lived out the war in hiding.

At the end of 1997 talks continued between the Jewish Claims Conference and German officials over compensation for Holocaust survivors in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. In 1995 the American Jewish Committee had compiled a list, country by country, of individual ghetto and concentration camp survivors in these areas. In January 1997 the parliamentary delegation of the Greens proposed applying reparations policies already in place for survivors living in the West to East European survivors as well. The Kohl government, however, showed no interest in addressing the matter. On May 7, 1997, the AJCommittee ran an ad in the New York Times showing a picture of a veteran of the Waffen SS alongside a photo of a concentration camp survivor. The text asked the reader to guess which of the two received a pension, and highlighted the injustice of Nazi veterans receiving pensions, while help was refused to some 18,000 surviving Holocaust victims. The issue was on the agenda when Chancellor Kohl visited President Clinton in Washington in June; soon thereafter Kohl received a letter signed by 82 U.S. senators requesting that pensions be paid to survivors in Eastern Europe. A commission was set up to study the question that fall.

The implementation of the German–Czech Friendship Treaty, meanwhile, made little progress over the course of 1997. Signed in January of 1997, the treaty provided for the establishment of a German–Czech Future Fund from which victims of Nazi persecution, including Jewish survivors in the Czech Republic, could seek redress. Disagreement about the makeup of the committee to oversee the fund was still unresolved at year’s end.

**HOLOCAUST MEMORIALS**

Cities across Germany continued the work of memorializing the victims of past German crimes. In December 1996 Viennese artist Karl Prantl unveiled 14 five-
foot-long blocks of granite placed alongside a church in the old city of Nürnberg in memory of the victims of National Socialism. Prantl used the same granite that inmates of concentration camps had to break with their own hands during the years of Nazi rule. The city of Brandenburg opened a memorial to the victims of the Nazi euthanasia program at the end of April 1997. In May the German railway company Deutsche Bahn laid the cornerstone at the Grunewald train station for a memorial to the 10,000 Jews deported to the east from that station. A public ceremony was scheduled for January 1998 for its dedication.

A hotly debated plaque in Hamburg was unveiled in June to remind passersby that a supplier of poisonous gas (Zyklon B) had formerly occupied the building now housing the Deutsche Bank. Later in the same month, a “site of memory” was unveiled on the plot of a former synagogue in the Berlin district of Kreuzberg. Empty stone benches stand among trees and bushes in the same layout as that of the pews in the synagogue that was destroyed on Kristallnacht in 1938. The memorial was designed by architect Zvi Hecker and artists Micha Ullmann and Eyal Weizman. In July the Bavarian city of Fürth dedicated a memorial in its New Jewish Cemetery to the Jews from the area who were killed by the Nazis. The Berlin municipal government approved plans for a memorial on Hausvogteiplatz, in the former textiles quarter of Berlin, to the Jews deported to their death in the east.

On November 9, 1997, the state of Brandenburg opened a museum in Barrack 38 of the former Sachsenhausen concentration camp, five years after neo-Nazis attempted to destroy it through arson. The permanent exhibit in the museum documents the experience of “Jewish Inmates in the Concentration Camp Sachsenhausen.” The year ended on a disillusioning note as vandals ravaged the memorial to the murdered Jews of Berlin on the Grosse Hamburger Strasse in Berlin on December 30.

The debate surrounding the construction of a central Holocaust memorial in Berlin entered its ninth year. (See AJYB 1997, pp. 336–37.) The rejection by Chancellor Kohl and other critics in 1995 of the design selected originally for the memorial led to a standstill in the discussion for the better part of 1996. In October of that year, the three sponsors of the project—the federal government, the city of Berlin, and the Society for the Establishment of a Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe—announced that the cornerstone would be laid on January 27, 1999, the German Day of Remembrance for the Victims of National Socialism. Though they did not yet have a clear conception of how they were going to proceed, the sponsors reiterated their commitment to dedicating a memorial to the Jewish victims of the Holocaust and to the site for its construction just south of the Brandenburg Gate, thereby rejecting a call by prominent intellectuals to reconsider their stands on both questions. Three colloquia were held in early 1997 to discuss the why, where, and how of the proposed memorial. These meetings drew headlines in the press, such as “The endless debate continues,” that reflected growing public exasperation with the issue.

In July 1997 the sponsors announced a second competition for the design of
the memorial. Invitations to participate were extended to 25 artists and architects from all over the world. A panel consisting of James Young, an American authority on memorials; Stözl Christoph, the director of the German Historical Museum in Berlin; the Berlin architect Josef Paul Kleihues; and art scholars Werner Hofmann and Dieter Ronte was commissioned to select the winning entry. These judges chose two designs for a final round of the competition, to which the sponsors added another two. The artists responsible for the four designs—the Paris-based Jochen Gerz; the American-trained, Polish-born architect responsible for the new Jewish Museum in Berlin, Daniel Libeskind; Berlin architect Gesine Weinmuller; and the American collaborators Peter Eisenmann and Richard Serra—were to be given the opportunity to introduce their ideas before the public in January 1998, as part of a series of public discussions leading up to a final decision. The decision was expected in March, with construction still scheduled to begin in January 1999.

JEWISH COMMUNITY

Demography

Immigration from the former Soviet Union continued to drive the growth of the Jewish community in Germany in 1996 and 1997. Between January 1, 1996, and January 1, 1998, 16,318 immigrants from the former Soviet Union (8,608 in 1996 and 7,710 in 1997) joined an official Jewish community. The total number of Jews registered with the member communities of the Central Council of Jews in Germany went from 53,797 on January 1, 1996, to 61,203 a year later, to 68,175 on January 1, 1998. Estimates of those Jews who either remained unaffiliated or were affiliated with communities outside the Central Council range from 20,000 to 30,000.

This growth in the national community was spread across Germany according to a formula worked out by the Central Council in negotiation with its member communities and the state governments. Ten new Jewish communities were founded since 1990, bringing the number of cities and towns in Germany with Jewish communities to 78. Only four of these had fewer than 50 members; 18 had more than 600.

The numbers of affiliated Jews in the largest communities were as follows for 1997 (with 1996 figures in parentheses for comparison): Berlin, 10,742 (up from 10,436); Frankfurt, 6,503 (up from 6,289); Munich, 6,194 (up from 5,726); Hamburg, 3,759 (up from 3,273); Cologne, 3,127 (up from 2,763). The growth in membership in state and regional associations of Jewish communities was as follows: Baden, 2,900 (up from 2,757); Bavaria, 4,848 (up from 4,184); Brandenburg, 392 (up from 299); Bremen, 751 (up from 654); Hesse, 3,417 (up from 3,118); Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, 534 (up from 402); Lower Saxony, 5,088 (up from
4,479); North Rhine, 9,554 (up from 8,184); Rhineland-Pfalz, 1,132 (up from 614); Saar, 759 (up from 656); Saxony, 529 (up from 449); Saxony-Anhalt, 593 (up from 503); Thüringia, 300 (up from 190); Westphalia, 5,239 (up from 4,599); Württemberg, 1,814 (up from 1,628).

Communal Affairs

Bavaria became the tenth German state to sign a state treaty with its Jewish community. The Protestant and Catholic churches had long had such agreements with the Bavarian government. The document, officially signed in mid-August 1997, creates the legal foundation for annual financial support from the state. Translated into numbers, the voluntary support given the Jewish community by the Bavarian state in the past amounted to roughly DM 1.2 million ($800,000) annually. The contract signed by Minister President Edmund Stoiber and Simon Snopkowski, the president of the Bavarian Association of Jewish Communities, provides for DM 3.7 million ($2.4 million) in 1998 and DM 4 million ($2.6 million) the following year. The funds will be devoted primarily to securing rabbis, cantors, and religious teachers for a Jewish population that increased by 40 percent in the last decade and now totaled 10,000.

On the local and regional levels, Jewish communities worked to create an institutional infrastructure that could accommodate their growing numbers. In January 1997 a new synagogue was dedicated in the western German town of Recklinghausen to serve the community of Bochum-Herne-Recklinghausen. The membership of this three-city congregation had grown from 85 members in 1989 to 1,139 in 1997. Amid the excitement of inaugurating the new house of worship, representatives of the Association of Jewish Communities in Westphalia acknowledged that conflicts over such issues as the distribution of power and use of scant community resources had resulted from the dramatic growth in membership. The Jewish community of Offenbach dedicated a new synagogue in November. In Duisburg a new community center with a synagogue was being built. In Kassel the synagogue was being enlarged, while the Jewish community of Wuppertal was making plans for a new one.

The combination of communal growing pains and the increased public visibility and assertiveness of Jewish personalities brought national press coverage to several intra-Jewish disputes. A conflict over finances led to the withdrawal of the Munich Jewish community from the Bavarian Association of Jewish Communities. The Baden Association of Jewish Communities, meanwhile, refused to recognize the establishment of several new congregations. In Hannover, the right of Russian-speaking immigrants to vote in communal elections became the subject of controversy. Finally, arguments developed in a number of places over how to define who is a Jew and thus who could be a legitimate member of the community.

At the meeting of the Central Council of Jews in Germany that took place in
Frankfurt am Main on November 11, 1997, the agenda was dominated by issues related to the transformation of the Jewish community through demographic and generational shifts. Social services and activities had demanded increasing attention over the last several years, as communities across Germany attempted to provide language training, job counseling, and general education to the more than 40,000 immigrants from the former Soviet Union. In order to provide a broader forum for the expression of grievances and the exchange of ideas relating to the problems of adjusting to the new conditions of Jewish life in Germany, council president Ignatz Bubis proposed that the Central Council hold a “Community Day” at the end of 1998.

Delegates expressed frustration with difficulties faced by many non-Jewish spouses and children in their search for a rabbi willing to preside over their conversions. Since there is no Beth Din (rabbinical court) in Germany, Orthodox rabbis in the country do not perform conversions, instead referring interested parties to the Beth Din in London. Some Liberal rabbis in Germany do perform conversions, but converts of non-Orthodox rabbis have often had problems having their status as Jews recognized by their local communities. One of the reasons many rabbis in Germany viewed conversion with disfavor had to do with the large number of non-Jews interested in becoming Jews. The motives of these would-be converts in the “land of the murderers” were often called into question. However legitimate this concern, it also exacerbated the frustrations expressed by the delegates at the meeting of the Central Council. Although Bubis showed sympathy for the concerns of the delegates, he insisted that the judgment of individual rabbis had to be respected and that the council was therefore in no position to impose a solution to the dilemma.

On the first day of Hanukkah 1997, the Central Council of Jews in Germany held its main observance in Munich at the site of a former synagogue. In front of an audience of public officials, church representatives, and journalists, President of Germany Roman Herzog lit the Hanukkah lights and affirmed his solidarity with the State of Israel as it embarked on its 50th year of existence. Leaders of the Munich Jewish community, politicians, and the German press all described the interfaith service in the former “capital of the [Nazi] movement” as a symbolic step forward in the process of reconciliation.

Berlin

For the Berlin Jewish community, by far the largest in Germany, 1997 was a critical year. The communal elections held on June 1 brought about an important generational change in leadership. In a shift carrying as much symbolic import as practical substance, survivors of the Holocaust passed the presidency of the community to the first generation of Jews born in postwar Germany. The incumbent going into the elections, Jerzy Kanal, celebrated his 75th birthday in July 1996. Like most Jews living in Berlin after the war, he was born in Eastern Eu-
rope and came to Germany as a survivor of the Holocaust. His successor, historian Andreas Nachama, was born in postwar Germany as a child of survivors. He had been a public figure in Berlin for years, first as a cultural affairs official in the municipal administration and then as the director of the Topography of Terror, an exhibit documenting the bureaucratic infrastructure of the Nazi state. Under his leadership, the community took significant steps to further the integration of Russian-speaking Jews and to foster an official acceptance of religious pluralism previously unknown in the postwar era.

The shift in leadership was likely to speed up the transformation of communal institutions to reflect the demographic changes that had taken place within the Berlin Jewish community since the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989 and the subsequent influx of Jews from the east. Of the nearly 11,000 members of the community, almost two-thirds were Russian-speaking. Under the new leadership, the 1997 Rosh Hashanah annual report was published, for the first time, in German and Russian. The first issue of the community magazine appeared in January 1998 in bilingual form, with a completely new format targeted at the younger generation of Jews in Berlin.

In this new era of religious and ethnic pluralism, Jewish institutions in Berlin were flourishing. In May 1997, in two of the last significant events before the communal elections, the community opened the doors to its new gymnasium, and the Jewish junior high school (Realschule) awarded its first diplomas.

Though Nachama himself preferred to emphasize his work inside the Jewish community, he continued in the tradition of the postwar president of the Berlin community, Heinz Galinski, by maintaining a high profile in the German media, commenting publicly on all issues of importance to the Jewish community. His relations with the city government were not always harmonious. He even complained that non-Jewish German politicians treated him with less respect than his predecessors because he was born after the war. As he once put it, he felt that German policymakers gave him no “Auschwitz bonus.”

**American Jewish Organizations**

Going back to the days of Allied occupation, denazification, and the transformation of the German economic infrastructure, American Jews had played a significant role in postwar Germany. Indeed, for more than 50 years, the American Jewish Committee (AJC) had committed energy and resources to the development and maintenance of a democratic Germany. Not until recently, however, did American Jews have a permanent institutional presence in the Federal Republic. During 1996 and 1997, the American Jewish Committee and the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation opened offices in Berlin, each to pursue goals related to its specific concerns. Together, however, they represent an important development in the relationship between the Jewish communities of Germany and America.

The first weekend of March 1997, in cooperation with the Central Council of
Jews in Germany and several organizations devoted to the trans-Atlantic partnership, the AJCommittee hosted a conference on “The Jewish Dimension in German-American Relations: Perceptions and Realities.” The purpose of this “pre-opening” weekend, which featured the participation in panel discussions of prominent scholars, journalists, and politicians from the United States and Germany, was to investigate the perceptions held among Americans about Germany and those held by Germans about American Jewry. Speakers noted that the establishment of democratic institutions in West Germany and the restitution payments made by the Federal Republic to survivors of the Holocaust and to the State of Israel had facilitated the acceptance by Americans of Germany as a stable and reliable ally. Many American Jews, however, still viewed the successor to the Nazi state with fear and suspicion. On the other side, the German perception of American Jews evoked the image of an “East-coast establishment” that controlled the American press and exerted a disproportionate influence on Congress. Redressing the mutual misperceptions of Germans and American Jews was one of the primary goals of AJCommittee’s Berlin director, Eugene DuBow. He and assistant director Wendy Kloke opened the committee’s Berlin office for business in provisional quarters in July. The official opening of the permanent office was slated for February 1998.

To less fanfare but with no less significance for Jewish life in Germany, the Berlin office of the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation opened in October 1996. Inspired by the survival of Jewish life in Eastern Europe—despite the catastrophic events of World War II and the decades of Communist rule that followed—American businessman and former U.S. ambassador to Austria Ronald S. Lauder founded the organization in 1987 to “support and revitalize Eastern European Jewish communities.” The Berlin office thus focused on helping to create the religious and educational infrastructure in Germany necessary for the integration of recently arrived Russian immigrants into an active Jewish community. Under the direction of Joel Levy, previously a career diplomat and the former head of the American Embassy Office in Berlin, the foundation offered a number of successful programs, such as a model matzah bakery, a Purim program for children, and the sponsorship of 40 children from Germany in the Jewish youth camp run by the Lauder Foundation and the Joint Distribution Committee in Szarvas, Hungary. The foundation also donated entire library collections with works in Russian, Hebrew, German, and English to the Jewish communities of Schwerin, Rostock, Erfurt, Leipzig, and Dresden, all cities in the former GDR. Another staff member worked on youth and outreach programs with the Jewish community in the western German town of Aachen. Still in the planning stage were four one-week day camps in communities in eastern Germany, at which a staff of six to eight instructors would introduce Jews of all ages to Jewish religion, rituals, and history.
**Religion**

Rosh Hashanah 1997 saw the first officially sanctioned egalitarian service in Berlin since the war. More than 200 worshipers attended the mixed-seating service and the *kiddush* reception that followed. With Berlin community president Nachama's approval, the community paid for the *kiddush* as well as for engaging a cantor. Two small egalitarian groups, one each in the eastern and the western parts of the city, had been meeting for years without official support. These groups were part of a larger Progressive Jewish movement in Germany (see below), and Nachama's open-arms policy toward them represented an important aspect of the new vibrancy of Jewish life not just in Berlin but throughout Germany.

The recognition in October 1997 of the traditional Adass Yisroel community by the state authorities in Berlin brought to an end a five-year legal struggle. The official Jewish community of Berlin had traditionally been organized as an Einheitsgemeinde, meaning that Liberal and Orthodox congregations coexisted within one inclusive institutional framework. The decision on the part of Adass Yisroel to remain outside this framework had its historical precedent in 1869, when a community of the same name seceded from the Einheitsgemeinde in order to lead a traditional Jewish life that it viewed as incompatible with membership in a broader community. For reasons relating to the public funding privileges that are granted to officially recognized religious communities, the present Adass Yisrael congregation had to convince the German courts that it deserved recognition as the successor community of the one that was founded in 1869 and dismantled by the Nazis in 1938. With legal disputes behind them, relations between the larger Berlin Jewish community and Adass Yisroel, the membership of which approached 1,000, reached a level of comfortable coexistence. Indeed, in a sign of its increased public acceptance, Adass Yisroel was invited to lead half of the religious ceremony at the unveiling of the Grunewald Holocaust memorial scheduled for January 1998.

The Progressive Jewish movement in Germany made great strides in 1997. During the Cold War, the presence of Jews among the Allied troops in Germany had insured the continued practice of a Judaism in Germany that was more Reform even than that of the minority of officially recognized Liberal congregations. The institutional void left by the withdrawal of foreign troops in the early 1990s was filled by the young Progressive movement in Germany, and indigenous egalitarian Judaism could be seen to be gaining momentum with each passing year.

The Liberal Jewish community of Munich, Beth Shalom, had played an important role in what its own annual report called "the rebirth of Progressive Judaism in Germany" since its founding in 1995. On June 27, 1997, the congregation celebrated the induction of Rabbi Dr. Walter Homolka as spiritual leader. Rabbi Homolka, the recently appointed head of Greenpeace Germany, was also a member of the European Beth Din of the World Union for Progressive Judaism.
The day of Rabbi Homolka's induction also witnessed the founding of the Union of Progressive Jews in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. Under the chairmanship of Prof. Micha Brumlik of Frankfurt, member congregations in Munich, Cologne, Frankfurt, Kassel, Hannover, and elsewhere planned to provide a Liberal alternative to the Orthodox communities represented by the Central Council of Jews in Germany.

Beth Shalom also hosted the annual conference of the World Union for Progressive Judaism's European Region the first weekend in November 1997. The event marked the first time since 1928 that such a meeting had been held in Germany. On the first day of the conference, Rabbi Homolka dedicated a new cemetery for the Munich Liberal community. Though the Orthodox community had not given its official support to the Reform congregation, it welcomed the cemetery as a resolution of the difficult issues raised by the death of partners in mixed marriages and others who could not find their final resting place in the cemetery of the traditional community.

Israeli ambassador to Germany Avi Primor visited Beth Shalom twice in 1997. On his second visit, he addressed delegates of the World Union of Progressive Judaism on the opening evening of their conference. Primor praised the union's work and implicitly criticized the Orthodox domination of religious affairs in Israel. "Diversity is the essence of Jewish life," he declared.

Another noteworthy presence at the World Union conference was Andreas Nachama, whose father still served as cantor of the Pestalozzistrasse Synagogue in Berlin, a longtime member of the World Union. The presence of Nachama at the conference and his election to the board of governors of the Union's European Region caused tension in his relationship with Ignatz Bubis and the Central Council of Jews in Germany. Bubis questioned the propriety of Nachama's simultaneous membership in the Central Council and in the World Union, an organization that, in Bubis's words, "does not stand on the ground of the Halakhah." Nachama, in turn, expressed his frustration with the Central Council's resistance to the participation in community life of non-Orthodox Jewish groups. Approximately 40 congregations in Germany already functioned outside the Central Council's organizational framework.

**Jewish-Christian Relations**

With 77 local chapters and approximately 20,000 members, the Society for Christian-Jewish Cooperation (SCJC) was the central institutional site for interfaith encounters in Germany. The charter of the society called for the inclusion of representatives from the Protestant and Catholic churches as well as from the Jewish community on every chapter's governing council. Efforts in the direction of interfaith understanding, however, were rather one-sided in communities where the SCJC had founded a chapter despite the absence of an institutional Jewish presence.

German president Roman Herzog and the minister president of North Rhine-
Westphalia, Johannes Rau, spoke in Paderborn on March 2, 1997, at the opening ceremony of the annual SCJC Brotherhood Week. Lectures and panel discussions held throughout the week addressed Christian-Jewish dialogue, the peace process in the Middle East, and conditions in the former Yugoslavia. Hans Koschnik, a former administrator of the EU in Mostar, received the SCJC Buber-Rosenzweig Medal for his contribution to Christian-Muslim-Jewish reconciliation in the Balkans. Throughout the year, the Berlin chapter of the SCJC held lectures, film evenings, and roundtable discussions in cooperation with the Centrum Judaicum, the German-Israeli Society, and the Jewish Volkshochschule (School for Continuing Education). In the academic arena, scholars participating in a November conference in Duisburg, cosponsored by the Jewish Studies Department of the local university and the Evangelical Academy of Mülheim on the Ruhr, inquired into the present-day consequences of anti-Judaism in theology and art.

Education

Jewish educational institutions in Germany were thriving. In 1997 approximately 900 students attended the five Jewish elementary schools in Munich, Frankfurt, Düsseldorf, and Berlin (two). An estimated 240 students were enrolled in the Jewish secondary school in Berlin. The University for Jewish Studies in Heidelberg, which is affiliated with the Central Council of Jews in Germany, counted 160 students in 1997, among them an increasing number of Jews. Since its founding, university officials had bemoaned the fact that this new institutional infrastructure for Jewish education had drawn few Jewish students. Finally, schools for continuing education in Berlin, Munich, and Frankfurt offered adults a means of enriching their knowledge of Jewish history, religion, and languages.

The 1997–98 academic year was significant for the further development of Jewish studies at German universities as well. Prof. Michael Brenner, one of the most prolific historians of German Jewry in the 1990s, became the first scholar to occupy the chair for Jewish History and Culture at the Institute for Modern History of the Ludwig Maximilian University in Munich. On July 19, 1997, he delivered his inaugural lecture on the theme of “Jewish Historical Scholarship in German Universities.” The Gerhard Mercator University in Duisburg inaugurated a Jewish studies program, granting both master’s and doctoral degrees, at the beginning of the 1997–98 academic year. In October the Jewish studies department opened a Web site (http://www.uni-duisburg.de/FB1/JStudien/juedische_studien_in_deutschland.htm) listing more than a dozen Jewish studies departments throughout Germany, including two degree-granting programs in Yiddish, as well as several research institutes specializing in German-Jewish history. One of these research centers, the Institute for the History of German Jews, announced the establishment of the Hamburg Society for Jewish Family Research in October 1996.

At the end of November 1997 the Salomon Ludwig Steinheim Institute for
German-Jewish History held a conference at the Catholic Academy in Mühleim on the Ruhr. Under the rubric of "Young Scholars of Jewish Studies on German-Jewish Culture and History," 20 German doctoral candidates gave papers and exchanged ideas on such topics as talmudic thought, Jewish history in the Middle Ages, and the limits of Jewish assimilation in modern Germany.

Culture

Interest in Jewish life before and after the Holocaust continued to be the focus of a wealth of cultural activities across Germany. Jewish cultural festivals continued to attract large audiences. The festival in Berlin alone, the theme of which was Jewish life in New York, featured 40 concerts, films, and lectures. Symbolically drawing public attention away from the horrors of the past and toward the richness of contemporary Jewish life, the two-week event begins annually on November 10, the day after the anniversary of Kristallnacht.

Several centennial anniversaries occurred in 1997, including the 100th anniversary of the first Zionist Congress. Museum exhibits, newspaper profiles, and a public lecture series in Munich invited the German public to examine the history of Zionism. On the occasion of the 100th birthday of Gershom Scholem, historian of Jewish mysticism, the Einstein Forum and the Institute for Advanced Study in Berlin, of which Scholem became the first fellow in 1982, held a December symposium on "Gershom Scholem as Writer." Additionally, public museums, libraries, and Jewish communal institutions all commemorated in some manner the 200th birthday of the German-Jewish poet Heinrich Heine, in spite of his ambivalent relationship to both Germany and Judaism.

In 1997 the Centrum Judaicum and the National Gallery in Berlin both featured the paintings of impressionist Max Liebermann in recognition of his 150th birthday. Without highlighting explicitly Jewish themes, museums in Berlin also displayed the work of dozens of Jewish artists forced into exile during the 1930s. Exile art was also the theme of "Lisbon 1933–1945: Refugee Station at the Border of Europe," an exhibit on display in fall 1997 in the Börne Gallery of the Frankfurt Judengasse Museum.

The blockbuster hit of the 1997 Christmas movie season, Comedian Harmonists, portrays the careers of one of the most famous German singing groups of the interwar period. Two of the members of the all-male sextet were Jewish, another was a baptized Jew, and a fourth had married a Jewish woman. The movie tells the story of the Comedian Harmonists from the group's beginning in 1927 through its struggle to continue performing in the Third Reich to the emigration of the three non-Aryan members in 1935.

In their 1997 documentary Jeckes: The Distant Relations, German filmmakers Jens Meurer and Carsten Hueck deal more directly with the history of Jews who were driven to flee Nazi Germany than did the Hollywood-esque Comedian Harmonists. The term "Jeckes" (or "yekkes") was a pejorative name given by East
European pioneers in Palestine, in the 1930s, to the urbanized, stiffly proper Jewish immigrants from Germany. The documentary consists of interviews with seven of these “Jeckes” and explores the meanings they attach to their German origins, their Jewish identities, and their lives in Israel. A documentary on the Jewish Roundtable, a group of Jewish intellectuals who fled Nazi Germany for New York, was one of the films featured in the 1997 Jewish Cultural Days in Berlin. The 1997 Berlinale, the world’s third-largest film festival, featured films with Jewish themes from Germany, Norway, Italy, and Israel.

A conference arranged by the Einstein Forum at the end of June examined the place of Hannah Arendt’s Eichmann in Jerusalem in the historiography of the Holocaust. Scholars from all over Europe, Israel, and the United States offered their thoughts on the legacy of Arendt’s controversial work. The conference took on added interest in light of the controversies over the Wehrmacht exhibit and Daniel Goldhagen’s book on the Holocaust (see “Publications,” below).

Another important cultural happening was the opening in late 1996 in Potsdam of an exhibit on “German Jewish Soldiers” at the Office for the Research of Military History. The exhibit, which toured Germany after its initial run in Potsdam, documented the contribution of Jews to the military of the German states from the 18th through the 20th centuries. In the spring of 1997, under the title “And I Can Still See Their Faces,” the Frankfurt Jewish Museum displayed a collection of 300 photos of Jewish life in Poland before the Holocaust.

JEWISH MUSEUM

Between the summer of 1996 and the end of 1997, the controversy over the Jewish Museum in Berlin, which had been going on for several years, gave rise to what some commentators called the worst crisis in relations between the Jewish community and the city government since 1945. Architect Daniel Libeskind had designed a post-modern extension to the baroque Berlin Museum, a section of which was to house the successor to the prewar Jewish Museum that was forced to close in 1938. However, serious differences existed between Reiner Güntzer, the director of the Berlin City Museum Foundation, and Amnon Barzel, the director of the Jewish Museum, over the nature and scope of the new institution. Barzel envisioned a museum that would fill the new wing and be independent financially and institutionally of the City Museum Foundation. Conceptually, he wanted the museum to reflect a Jewish perspective that could not be accommodated by the “integrative” concept advocated by the foundation. Güntzer, meanwhile, insisted that Barzel’s project remain a department of the larger Berlin Museum, subject to the supervision of the Berlin Municipal Museum and occupying a small portion of the space encompassed by the Libeskind extension.

Though the sources of the conflict were many, observers of Jewish life in Germany viewed the debate chiefly in terms of a lack of mutual understanding and trust between the Jewish community and the Berlin government. A visiting del-
egation of the Israeli Knesset expressed dismay at the methods of the city administration, which one Knesset member described as counter to the spirit of democracy. The dispute between Güntzer and Barzel culminated in the latter’s dismissal on the same June day in 1997 on which Andreas Nachama was to have his first meeting as the newly elected president of the Berlin Jewish community with Peter Radunski, the head of cultural affairs in the Berlin municipal government. Nachama compared Güntzer’s unilateral dismissal of Barzel to the museum politics of the German government in the 1930s.

After several more months of acrimonious debate, some positive developments occurred in the last months of the year. At the end of October, the Berlin municipality intimated that the Jewish Museum would enjoy the institutional autonomy it had refused to cede to Barzel, though the substance of that autonomy remained a matter of dispute. Then, in the middle of November, a new museum director was appointed—an American, W. Michael Blumenthal, who served as U.S. secretary of the treasury under President Jimmy Carter. Blumenthal was born in Germany but had spent most of his life in the United States, where he had successful careers as an international economist and corporate CEO. Although virtually unknown to the German public before his appointment, his selection was welcomed by all sides in the debate, as well as the press, all of whom emphasized his energy, self-reliance, and willingness to make difficult decisions. Blumenthal’s own words held out hope that the 18 months of tension might be at an end: “Old discussions do not interest me. I want to open a new chapter, and I believe that I can accomplish a lot for Berlin.”

Publications

Three prominent Jewish public figures in Germany published books in 1996 and 1997. Ignatz Bubis recorded his life story in “Damit bin ich noch längst nicht fertig.” Eine Autobiographie (“I Am Not Even Close to Finished”: An Autobiography). In a second book entitled Juden in Deutschland (Jews in Germany), Bubis elaborated his views on the present state of the Jewish community and issued an admonition against forgetting history. Rafael Seligmann’s Der Musterjude (The Model Jew) is the novelist’s latest effort to provoke the German public—Jewish and non-Jewish alike—to talk, laugh, and joke about issues that have remained taboo since World War II. Micha Brumlik, leader of the Progressive Jewish movement in Germany, published his autobiography under the title Kein Weg als Deutscher und Jude. Eine bundesrepublikanische Erfahrung (No Way as German and Jew: A Federal Republican Experience). The title itself is a commentary, alluding to Jakob Wassermann’s 1921 memoir Mein Weg als Deutscher und Jude (My Way as German and Jew).

Two Israeli public figures with ties to Germany published memoirs in 1997. Leah Rabin, the widow of the late prime minister Yitzhak Rabin, who herself was born in interwar Königsberg, toured Germany in the spring of 1997 in support
of the German translation of her book *Our Life, His Legacy* (*Ich gehe weiter auf seinen Weg: Erinnerungen an Jitzchak Rabin*). As the first Israeli-born ambassador to serve in Bonn, Avi Primor developed a different relationship with Germany than those of his five predecessors. In "... mit Ausnahme Deutschlands." **Als Botschafter Israels in Bonn** ("... with the Exception of Germany": An Israeli Ambassador in Bonn), Primor tells how his preconceived image of Germany was belied by reality.

Several works on the Nazi gold controversy sparked the interest of the German reading public, among them Tom Bower's *Das Gold der Juden. Die Schweiz und die verschwundenen Nazi-Milliarden* (The Jews' Gold: Switzerland and the Lost Nazi Billions) and Michel Fior's *Die Schweiz und das Gold der Reichsbank. Was Wusste die Schweizerische Nationalbank?* (Switzerland and the Gold of the Reichsbank: What Did the Swiss National Bank Know?).

Among the memoirs of Holocaust survivors to stimulate public discussion in 1997 was *Die Mütze oder Der Preis des Lebens* (The Cap or the Price of Life), the German translation of Roman Frister's Hebrew original. In another popular memoir, *Der Ghetto-Schwinger* (The Ghetto Swinger), musician Coco Schumann recounts his experiences playing in a jazz band in Theresienstadt and how his music kept him alive in Auschwitz.

Even before the German translation of his work was released in August 1996, Daniel Goldhagen had sparked a new round of public debate concerning the Holocaust and collective guilt in Germany. In his book *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, Goldhagen, a political scientist at Harvard University, argues that an "exterminationist anti-Semitism" so pervaded German culture in the decades preceding the Nazi rise to power that ordinary Germans from all social and religious backgrounds were eager accomplices in the destruction of European Jewry. Goldhagen toured Germany in the fall of 1996, participating in roundtable discussions with scholars in front of standing-room-only audiences. The German translation became an instant best-seller. The German public, particularly the younger generation, rallied around Goldhagen, while a number of scholars criticized his methodology and conclusions. The books published in the wake of the Goldhagen debate demonstrate its magnitude as a German cultural event. Within days of the release of the German translation, a collection of already published reactions to the controversy appeared under the title *Ein Volk von Mör dern? Die Dokumentation zur Goldhagen-Kontroverse um die Rolle der Deutschen im Holocaust* (A People of Murderers? The Documentation on the Goldhagen Controversy and the Role of the Germans in the Holocaust). In 1997, Wolfgang Wippermann, a German historian who had written extensively on the history of National Socialism, offered his own meditations on the meaning of the affair in the larger context of German confrontations with their past in *Wessen Schuld? Vom Historikerstreit zur Goldhagen-Kontroverse* (Whose Guilt? From the Historians' Debate to the Goldhagen Controversy). Finally, Siedler, the publisher of the German translation of *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, released in 1997 an ad-
dendum to the debate composed by Goldhagen himself. *Briefe an Goldhagen* (Letters to Goldhagen) is a collection of letters the author received from his readers and critics along with his responses.

Although the status of Goldhagen's contribution to the scholarship on the Third Reich remained in dispute, Saul Friedländer's *Nazi Germany and the Jews: The Years of Persecution 1933–1939* (Volume I) (1997) was almost universally well received. Another well-received work was the 1997 German translation of Henry Friedlander's *The Origins of Nazi Genocide: From Euthanasia to the Final Solution*, which appeared under the title *Der Weg zum NS-Genozid. Von der Euthanasie zur Endlösung*.

A number of important publications demonstrated a heightened interest in German-Jewish history before the Holocaust. Following the successful 1995 release of the sociolinguist Victor Klemperer's diaries from the Nazi years (see AJYB 1997, p. 347), the Aufbau publishing house brought out the remaining volumes of Klemperer's diaries. One two-volume set, entitled *Curriculum Vitae*, covers the years 1881–1918; another covers the years 1918–1932 and was published under the title *Leben sammeln, nicht fragen wozu und warum* (Collect Life, Do Not Ask Why and to What End). A single book released separately under the title *Und so ist alles schwankend* (Everything Remains Unsettled) documents the second half of 1945.

Aufbau also published for the first time Arnold Zweig's autobiographical *Freundschaft mit Freud* (Friendship with Freud), one of a planned 19-volume collection of Zweig's works. In *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany*, Michael Brenner highlights the German-Jewish exploration of Judaism after events during and following World War I left so many German Jews disillusioned with the quest for assimilation. Moshe Zimmerman, an Israeli historian, contributed the 43rd volume to the Oldenbourg Publishing series *Enzyklopädie deutscher Geschichte* (Encyclopedia of German History) under the title *Die Deutschen Juden 1914–1945*. Historians Avraham Barkai, Paul Mendes-Flohr, and Steven M. Lowenstein cover the same time period in *Deutsch-jüdische Geschichte in der Neuzeit. Vierter Band: 1918–1945* (German-Jewish History in the Modern Era. 4th Volume: 1918–1945). Lastly, the *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, one of the most important German academic journals, devoted its 1997 volume to the history of "Jews in Politics and Society in the 1920s."

**Personalia**

In September 1996 President Roman Herzog bestowed the Officer's Cross of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany on Eugene DuBow of the American Jewish Committee. Just months before moving to Berlin to open the committee’s new office, DuBow accepted the award, given in recognition of his role in fostering German-Jewish relations, at a ceremony in New York at the office of German Consul General Erhard Holtermann.
A year after receiving the B’naï B’rith Gold Medal for Humanitarian Work, Chancellor Helmut Kohl received the 1997 Leo Baeck Prize of the Central Council of Jews in Germany. In conferring the honor, Central Council president Ignatz Bubis lauded Kohl’s contribution to the reconciliation between Christians and Jews as well as between Germany and Israel. The 1996 Leo Baeck Prize went to the Frankfurt journal *Tribüne* for its 35-year record of fostering understanding of Judaism. B’naï B’rith chose another German citizen, magnate Frank Woessner, chairman of the board of the Bertelsmann Book Corporation, one of the world’s largest publishing houses, as the recipient of its 1997 Gold Medal. As an expression of his commitment to German-Jewish culture, Woessner had overseen the publication of such unprofitable but important books as the collected works of Leo Baeck and the Liberal prayer book in Hebrew and German that was used for 1997 Rosh Hashanah services in the Beth Shalom congregation of Munich. (Siedler, a subsidiary of Bertelsmann, was responsible for the German translation of *Hitler’s Willing Executioners* and the collection *Briefe an Goldhagen* that followed it.)

Goldhagen himself received an award in Germany in 1997. The *Journal for German and International Politics* bestowed its Democracy Prize on the American political scientist. For the occasion, the eminent German philosopher Jürgen Habermas delivered a speech in praise of Goldhagen.

Two important Jewish cultural figures who died in the second half of 1996 were Erika Mileé, the former doyenne of the Hamburg Ballet, aged 88, and Erwin Leiser, documentary filmmaker of almost 50 works on the Nazi regime, aged 73. Among prominent German Jews who died in 1997 were Rudolf Robert, a founding board member of the foundation “Help for the Victims of National Socialist Tyranny,” aged 75; Simon Schlachet, president of the Aachen Jewish community from 1972 until his death, aged 85; East German novelist Jurek Becker, author of *Jakob der Lügner* (Jacob the Liar), a canonical work of Holocaust literature, aged 60; and Stephan Hermlin, another important GDR author, who died in April, just before his 82nd birthday.

**Greg Caplan**
Austria

National Affairs

In January 1997, Chancellor Franz Vranitzky, in a surprise move, resigned the chancellorship of Austria, explaining that "10 years are a sufficient spell" for the job. In stepping down, he handed over the government and leadership of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) to Finance Minister Viktor Klima. The coalition government, which had been formed by Vranitzky in March 1996, made up of the Social Democrats and the People's Party, continued in power through 1997 under Klima, differing little from the preceding government.

Vranitzky had taken office in June 1986, when the country was absorbing the shock of the election of Kurt Waldheim as president of Austria, the man who had fallen into international disgrace after being forced to acknowledge his wartime service in an infamous German army unit. At that time, the Freedom Party (FPO), which was controlled by its liberal faction, had been a junior coalition partner of the Social Democrats. When the far-right nationalist Jorg Haider gained control of the party in September 1986, Vranitzky dissolved the coalition. New elections produced a coalition government between the Social Democrats and the conservative, right-of-center People's Party in which Vranitzky served as chancellor until he stepped down from office.

During his term in office, Chancellor Vranitzky made an important mark on the country's foreign policy. In a bold move, he led his neutral country into membership in the European Union. He offered a helping hand to the neighboring countries in Central and Eastern Europe to adapt to the postcommunist period. In dealing with the Nazi past, he called on Austrians to come to terms with Hitler's legacy in their country.

Another major achievement was the normalization of relations with Israel. He was the first Austrian head of government to make an official visit to Israel and to acknowledge that Austrians, like Germans and others, were involved in crimes against the Jews during the Nazi era.

The coalition under Klima was badly shaken by the results of the vote in elections for the European Parliament in October 1997. The far right-wing Freedom Party (FPO), led by Jorg Haider, won almost 28 percent of the vote, less than 2 percent behind the Social Democrats. By its success at the polls, the Freedom Party consolidated its position as Europe's most successful far-right party. In a separate election, the Socialists also lost their overall majority in the Vienna City Hall, the country's most powerful regional assembly.

In his campaign, Haider struck a sympathetic chord among many Austrians
with his tirades against immigration, which he openly associated with crime, charges of government sleaze, and most of all, his depiction of the European Union as an institution that would cost blue-collar jobs and lead to higher taxes. Like Euro-skeptics in Great Britain and elsewhere on the continent, he called for “a Europe of fatherlands,” darkly warning that a united Europe would destroy national sovereignty. Haider could not be unmindful that the word “fatherland” has other associations in a land that welcomed Hitler’s annexation in 1938. Many of Haider’s supporters were blue-collar workers who in the past had voted for the Social Democratic Party. In attracting these voters, the leader of the FPO succeeded in tapping into growing disillusionment among Austrians over membership in the European Union and an austerity budget that cut welfare benefits and raised taxes and energy costs.

The success of the Freedom Party was a sharp setback to the complacency of the governing coalition, which had long assumed that Austrians would never go so far as to permit the far right to assume power. If the party were to make further gains in the next parliamentary election, it could conceivably be part of a new government or be given a mandate to form one. In a postelection editorial, the liberal daily Der Standard commented: “There has been a significant change in Austria’s psychological and political landscape. This result shows voters are increasingly willing to put Jorg Haider in government.”

Israel and the Middle East

Relations between Austria and Israel remained cordial, and contacts between the two countries at the political, cultural, scientific, and technical levels continued to develop. Underscoring these good ties was the visit paid to Israel by Chancellor Franz Vranitzky in September 1996, the first by a head of government or state to come to Israel since the election that brought the Likud government to power. The chancellor was received by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and President Ezer Weizman and met with other leading members of the new government. In a goodwill gesture, Vranitzky donated the $40,000 he received from a Fulbright prize to the Bruno Kreisky Forum, which sponsored a border-crossing project of youth from Israel, Jordan, and the Palestinian autonomous area. The 70 young people began their walk in Eilat, continued to Akaba, then to Amman, and ended in Bethlehem.

In May 1997 Vice-Chancellor and Foreign Minister Wolfgang Schussel made an official visit to Israel, where he had working sessions with Prime Minister Netanyahu, President Weizman, and Foreign Minister David Levy. In addition, he met with Palestinian Authority chairman Yasir Arafat. At these meetings there was an exchange of views on progress in the peace process and the political situation in the region. The meetings assumed added importance in view of Austria’s scheduled assumption of the rotating presidency of the European Union in July 1998. Dan Tichon, Speaker of the Knesset, paid a four-day visit to Aus-
Israeli prime minister Netanyahu made an official visit to Austria on September 21, 1997. In the course of the two-day visit—the first official visit by an Israeli prime minister to Austria—Netanyahu met with Federal President Thomas Klestil, Chancellor Klima, Foreign Minister Schussel, and National Parliament president Fischer. He also met with members of the Jewish community, including its president, Paul Grosz, and Chief Rabbi Paul Chaim Eisenberg. In an address before a large gathering in Vienna’s Stadttempel, Netanyahu called on Austrian Jews to immigrate to Israel. He also delivered an address to the Second International Theodor Herzl Symposium, which was held at the Vienna City Hall (September 22–24, 1997), and attended the cornerstone-laying ceremony for the new Chabad school. Accompanied by President Klestil, Chancellor Klima, Foreign Minister Schussel, and other Austrian officials, Netanyahu paid a visit to the Mauthausen concentration camp, where many thousands of Jews and peoples of different nationalities were killed.

Talks between the chancellor and the Israeli prime minister centered around expanding trade between the two countries and the peace process, with the two leaders agreeing to establish a “hot line” so as to be able to carry on direct talks. Reflecting the positive nature of the discussions, Prime Minister Netanyahu invited Chancellor Klima to pay an official visit to Israel in 1998. A delegation of ten leading business people who accompanied Prime Minister Netanyahu met with 40 Austrian industrialists to lay out ways of doubling the volume of trade over the coming years. As part of this effort, the two sides agreed to revitalize the Austrian–Israeli Chamber of Commerce.

Bilateral trade between the countries amounted to roughly $250 million. Machinery and manufactured goods figured prominently in Austrian sales, while Israeli exports to Austria were largely manufactured goods, raw materials, and agricultural products. Both sides agreed that Israel needed to canvass the Austrian market more aggressively in order to increase its sales, for example, by being represented at trade fairs in Austria.

Austria named a new ambassador to Israel, Wolfgang Paul, who succeeded Herbert Kroll. A senior official in the foreign ministry, Paul had held ambassadorial posts in New Delhi, Sofia, and Prague.

CULTURAL AND SCIENTIFIC EXCHANGES

Austrian and Israeli officials signed a memorandum of understanding in Vienna in June 1996 to increase cultural contacts between the two countries. In pursuance of this understanding, a number of important cultural events took place during 1997. The Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, under the direction of Zubin Mehta, performed in the Musikverein in Vienna in February; the corps de ballet of the Staatsoper performed in Israel on May 14 and 15.
An exhibition of contemporary Israeli artists opened in Salzburg on June 23. The Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna mounted a special exhibition of artifacts from the Israel Museum, titled *Land der Bibel* (Land of the Bible), which ran from September 1997 to January 1998. On display were some 400 objects dating from the earliest paleolithic period to the scrolls of the Dead Sea, documenting the history of the Holy Land and Jerusalem and of the royal capitals of the ancient Near East. The exhibition was an exchange for the special exhibition at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem in June 1996 of artworks from the Kunsthistorisches Museum; this exhibition was held in honor of the 85th birthday of Austrian-born Teddy Kollek, the former mayor of Jerusalem.

Scientific exchanges between Austria and Israel continued to develop at the government and university levels. The Austrian Federal Ministry of Science and Transport sponsored scientific projects at Kibbutz Sde Boker. The Second International Austrian–Israeli Technion Symposium cum Industrial Forum—"Technology for Peace—Science for Mankind"—was held in Graz, June 4–6, 1997. Forty Austrian and 14 Israeli scientists heard papers on the topics of laser technology and space technology.

**Holocaust-Related Matters**

The special fund established by the Austrian government in June 1995 "for the victims of national socialism" had by June 1997 contacted all the estimated 27,000 people considered eligible to receive payments. The amount paid to each beneficiary was fixed at 70,000 schillings ($5,800), though in cases of special hardship this could be tripled. In 1996 the Ministry of Finance allocated 600 million schillings (approximately $50 million) to the fund and an equal amount for 1997. It was generally understood that the payments were to be seen as a good will gesture by the government and were not to be considered as reparations to the victims.

The legislation creating the fund set forth the conditions for eligibility. These included people who were persecuted because of their political beliefs, religion, nationality, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, or were considered by the Nazis as asocial; people who were forced to flee Austria in order to escape persecution also qualified for payments. Other conditions included certification of Austrian nationality as of March 13, 1938, and proof of residence in the country. The regulations were subsequently eased to permit payment to the estate of an individual who died while his or her claim was being processed. As of June 30, 1997, the fund, which is headed by Hannah Lessing, made payments to 13,800 individuals in the amount of one billion schillings ($80 million). Payments were made to people in 52 countries, the largest number being from the United States (5,600), followed by Austria (2,400), Israel (1,800), United Kingdom (1,700), Australia (700), and Argentina (217). Thirty of the beneficiaries were 100 years old or older.
It had been the understanding that once all people eligible to receive payments were properly compensated, the fund would go out of existence. Meantime, however, consideration was being given to creating a permanent office to provide assistance to victims of National Socialism and their families.

A special exhibition, “Die Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941–1944” (Crimes of the German Army 1941–1944), opened in Graz in November 1997. Through pictures, letters, and official documents, the exhibition documented the complicity of the German army in carrying out the murder of countless Jews and other peoples during the war. The exhibition, which was shown in Vienna in the fall of 1995, had also been shown in a number of German cities.

ESRA, the social-service agency responsible for carrying out the Jewish community’s welfare and social programs, sponsored a two-day symposium in Vienna, November 10–11, on the theme “Überleben der Shoah—Und Danach” (Surviving the Shoah—and What After). The symposium, which was held in Vienna’s City Hall, dealt with a range of issues relating to Holocaust-induced post-traumatic stress disorder. Experts from Austria, Germany, Israel, the Netherlands, and the United States attended the symposium.

**World War II Gold Returned to Austria**

At a conference in Geneva in June 1997, Rabbi Marvin Hier, the executive director of the Los Angeles–based Simon Wiesenthal Center, demanded that investigations into the gold transactions of Switzerland and other neutral countries during World War II be expanded to include Austria. After the war, Austria received 50.5 tons of gold to compensate Vienna for its claim on 100 tons of gold the Nazis transferred to the German Reichsbank after Nazi Germany annexed Austria in 1938. Restitution of wartime losses for Austria was justified on the ground that at the 1943 Moscow Conference, the Allies decided to treat Austria as a victim rather than a perpetrator of Nazi aggression. Rabbi Hier asserted that Austria was not entitled to the gold because its people supported annexation, and more than a million Austrians fought in the German army and the SS. The Allied decision was outrageous, he said, because the gold belonged to victims of the Holocaust.

Related to this was the increasing interest being shown in securing monies owed to Jews by Austrian banks and insurance companies. This matter was first spotlighted with the publication in 1993 of Brigitte Bailer’s book *Wiedergutmachung: Oesterreich und die Opfer des National-Socialismuss* (Reparations: Austria and the Victims of National-Socialism).

**Stolen Artworks: Auerbach Collection Auctioned in Vienna**

In October 1996, in Vienna, a two-day auction of artworks plundered from Jews by the Nazis raised $14.5 million. The 8,000 items for sale—including 19th-century landscapes and portraits, Old Master paintings and drawings, an-
tique coins, sculptures, tapestries, and porcelain—all found buyers. Eighty-eight percent of the auction’s proceeds would go to aiding victims of the Holocaust; the remaining 12 percent would aid non-Jewish survivors. The auction was conducted by Christie’s of London, which agreed to forego its usual fee. A floral still life by 17th-century French painter Abraham Mignon yielded the highest price of the auction—$1.35 million—although it had been expected to bring in no more than $75,000. Paul Grosz awarded the Gold Medal of the Federation of the Jewish Communities of Austria to Chancellor Franz Vranitzky for his efforts in bringing about the benefit auction, as well as to Lord Hindlip, chairman of Christie’s of London.

Most of the artworks had belonged to the 65,000 Jews who did not survive the Holocaust. At the end of the war, American soldiers found a large cache of art in a salt mine near Salzburg. Almost 10,000 of the works of art were returned to their owners or their relatives during the ten-year Allied occupation of Austria. In 1955, the departing U.S. Army instructed the Austrian government to return the rest of the items. Except for several hundred items that were claimed and returned, the roughly 8,000 remaining items were kept by the Austrian government and stored in a 14th-century monastery in Mauerbach, near Vienna. Austria’s reluctance to own up to complicity in the Holocaust was thought to have played a role in the delay, expressed in limited efforts to advertise the works and a requirement that claimants show detailed proof of ownership. In 1995, the government, under strong international pressure, agreed to turn over the collection to Austria’s Jewish community.

The net proceeds of the auction amounted to 130 million Austrian schillings ($10.1 million). This sum, minus the 12 percent set aside for the benefit of non-Jewish victims of the Holocaust, was distributed on a worldwide basis to needy Austrian Jewish victims of the Holocaust. The Federation of Jewish Communities in Austria, which had been assigned responsibility for distributing the funds under the law that authorized the Mauerbach auction, completed this task after intensive negotiations with its international partners—the Central Committee of Jews from Austria in Israel, the Committee for Jewish Claims on Austria, and the World Jewish Restitution Organization.

Stolen Egon Schiele Paintings

A dispute broke out in December 1997 over the ownership of two paintings by the famed Austrian Secessionist painter Egon Schiele. The paintings were part of a special exhibition, “Egon Schiele: The Leopold Collection,” which was on display in the fall of 1997 at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. The family of a Jewish Viennese art dealer, whose prize painting, “Portrait of Wally,” by Schiele, was taken from her by the Nazis before World War II, asked the museum to hold on to it until the provenance could be determined. A second family, whose relative lost a Schiele work, “Dead City,” displayed in the same exhibition, also requested the museum to retain the painting until ownership could
be determined. The heirs of the owner of the work, Fritz Grunbaum, informed the museum that the painting had been taken from his collection without his consent by Nazi agents following the Nazi annexation of Austria in March 1938.

The paintings shown in New York all came from a collection of art owned by the Austrian government–financed Leopold Foundation. Dr. Rudolf Leopold, a 72-year-old Viennese ophthalmologist, began aggressively buying art in 1950. Over the years he amassed some 5,400 works. In 1994 his holdings were purchased by Austria and put in a private foundation, which is building a museum in Vienna. At the end of December, the Museum of Modern Art was deciding whether to honor its legal obligations to the Leopold Foundation to return the works, or to accede to the claimants' requests to retain the paintings.

HOLOCAUST MEMORIALS

The erection of the Vienna Holocaust memorial, which was designed by British sculptress Rachel Whiteread, remained mired in controversy. The project, initially proposed by Simon Wiesenthal to honor the memory of the 65,000 Austrian Jews who perished in the Holocaust, was to be placed in the Judenplatz in Vienna's first district. When it was discovered that the memorial was to be placed over the site of a recently discovered synagogue dating back to the 12th or 13th century, some members of the Jewish community had second thoughts about placing it there. The split in the Jewish community complicated the work of the Vienna City Council, which was expected to make a final decision in early 1998 on whether to site the monument in the Judenplatz. Also taking a stand on whether to have the monument in the Judenplatz was Archbishop of Vienna Christoph Schönborn, who expressed the view that the synagogue itself could best serve as a reminder of the horrible fate suffered over the centuries by many of the country's Jews. In 1420–21 many Jews committed suicide in the synagogue, and some 200 were burned alive at the hands of Christians who threatened to convert them to Christianity under pain of death. The statement provoked a strong reaction from Simon Wiesenthal, who asserted that the archbishop had overstepped his bounds by interfering in internal Jewish matters.

A memorial was dedicated to the victims of Kristallnacht and the Holocaust in Innsbruck, capital of the province of Tyrol. The design for the memorial was chosen from a competition conducted among the province's school youth.

JEWISH COMMUNITY

Demography

The Jewish community of Austria was undergoing changes in size, age, and composition. It was getting somewhat larger and younger and becoming more
varied, though its growth was expected to slow, if not stop, due to recently enacted restrictive immigration and asylum laws. About 7,000 Jews were registered with the Israelitisch Kultusgemeinde (IKG), the official communal body, but knowledgeable observers claimed the actual number of Jews in the country was at least twice that.

Reflecting a long established pattern of Jewish population distribution, the overwhelming majority of Jews were concentrated in Vienna, with only about 300 to 400 making their homes in the large provincial cities of Salzburg, Innsbruck, Graz, and Linz.

With the virtual cessation of immigration from the former republics of the Soviet Union, the small but steady growth was now due to the increased fertility rate, mainly among the Sephardic and Orthodox Jews. It was generally agreed that the Sephardic Jews—most of them from the former Soviet republics of Georgia and Uzbekistan (Bukhara) and a smaller number from Tajikistan—would soon outstrip the Ashkenazic community in size.

A new building complex was dedicated on November 9, 1997, in Vienna’s second district, which was becoming home to a growing number of the city’s Jewish population. The complex has two residences for Jewish senior citizens and a home for students—as well as rental space for shops. The official date of the opening, November 9, was chosen both to commemorate Kristallnacht and to underscore the continuity and growth of Jewish life in the country.

**Communal Affairs**

In June 1996 Ariel Muzikant, a businessman, was elected to succeed Prof. Jacob Allerhand as president of the B’nai Brith chapter of Vienna. The new head of the organization, which numbered 82 members, said that it would develop programs around two policy objectives: combating neo-Nazism and far right-wing groups, and promoting greater understanding among the disparate groups within the Jewish community.

The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) established a new European regional office in Vienna in August 1997, to combat anti-Semitism and racism in Central and Eastern Europe. The office, headed by journalist Marta Halpert, was established through a grant from the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation. According to Abraham Foxman, the director of the ADL, the new office would work with government officials and Jewish community leaders in neighboring Eastern European countries to promote the rights of Jews and minorities in the region. As part of this effort, it would reach out to church groups and interfaith organizations.

ESRA, the agency that administers the community’s wide array of social and welfare programs, continued to serve mainly people with Holocaust-related problems and the large Jewish immigrant population. Most of the aid was directed toward the elderly, youth, and families and included legal advice to recent immigrants; financial aid to people in need; housing and work for young people; and
a psychotherapy clinic. Most of ESRA's budget was covered by grants from the federal government, with the Kultusgemeinde also contributing.

**Christian-Jewish Relations**

In a formal statement issued in November 1997, Archbishop of Vienna Schonborn acknowledged responsibility for the role of the Church in the persecution of Austrian Jews over the centuries and sought forgiveness for its actions. In this historic statement, the archbishop pointed to the great suffering of Vienna's Jewish community at the hands of Christians in 1420–21, which he described as a precursor of the fate that was to overtake Austrian Jewry in the 20th century at the hands of the Nazis. He stated that Christianity now recognized its guilt in the persecution of Jews and was asking for forgiveness. The statement attracted media attention, but no immediate response from the Jewish community.

The 1997 edition of *Das Judische Echo*, edited by Leon Zelman, was dedicated to the theme “Judaism and Christianity” (vol. 46, October 1997). Zelman, a survivor of the Mauthausen concentration camp and a leading figure in Austria's Jewish community, is the director of the Jewish Welcome Service—an Austrian government tourist office. He is a frequent speaker in Austrian public schools and civic organizations on the Nazi period, and an indefatigable worker in behalf of reconciliation between Austrian Jewry and the Catholic Church.

**Culture**

Among the several special exhibitions mounted by the Jewish Museum of Vienna in 1997, three attracted particular attention. One, “Neuland” (New Land), held March 14–May 4, focused on Austrian Jews who had emigrated to Palestine and participated in the cultural development of the State of Israel. The exhibition included writers, painters, photographers, architects, sculptors, fashion designers, actors, directors, and musicians. The second exhibition, “Masken: Versuch Uber die Schoah” (Masks: Approaching the Shoah), shown July 25–October 16, displayed the death masks of 29 murdered Jewish inmates of Nazi concentration camps. These masks were prepared in 1942 in the Anatomical Institute of Poznan by a Nazi official, at the request of the Anthropological Section of the Vienna Natural Historical Museum, which wanted skulls of Jews for its scientific research. The third exhibition, held November 7, 1997, to January 18, 1998, was in honor of the 150th birthday of the German-born impressionist painter Max Liebermann and featured works painted in the years 1900–1918.

Judische Kulturwochen (Jewish Cultural Week) in Vienna in November 1997 featured films, concerts, readings of poetry and literature, plays, and lectures.

The Second International Theodor Herzl Symposium, held at the Vienna City Hall, September 22–24, 1997, celebrated the centennial anniversary of the first Zionist Congress, which was convened on September 3, 1897, in Basel, Switzer-
land. A central theme of the papers read at the symposium was the historical achievements of Zionism and the Zionist movement. The year before, the City of Vienna organized an International Symposium on Theodor Herzl, to commemorate the centennial publication in Vienna of Herzl's *The Jewish State (Der Judenstaat)*. In conjunction with this event, the *Illustrierte Neue Welt* (Illustrated New World), which was founded by Herzl in 1897, celebrated its 100th anniversary. The newspaper, a monthly publication, was under the editorship of Dr. Joanna Nittenberg.

**Personalia**

Viktor E. Frankl, famed Austrian psychiatrist and founder of logotherapy—which became known as the “third school” of Viennese psychotherapy—died on September 2, 1997, at the age of 92. In 1942 Frankl was arrested by the Nazi authorities along with other members of his family and deported. Only he survived the ordeal in which his father, mother, brother, and first wife all died in the camps.

During the three years he spent in four concentration camps, including Auschwitz, he came to the realization that those who gave meaning to their lives—perhaps by helping others through the day—were themselves more likely to survive. After his liberation, he wrote *Man's Search for Meaning*, describing his camp experience and how this led him to develop logotherapy, an approach that enabled many people to alter their lives when they might have given up. The book, which sold some nine million copies and was translated into many languages, had enormous influence. In the postwar period, Frankl practiced and taught psychiatry in Vienna for 25 years and spent 20 years in the United States as a visiting professor at Harvard and other universities. As a testament to his work, Frankl received honorary doctorates from institutions around the world.

*Murray Gordon*
East-Central Europe

Throughout the second half of 1996 and all of 1997, Jewish communities in East-Central Europe continued the path of development and revival that was accelerated by the collapse of Communism in 1989–90. As the revival became more entrenched, emerging new communities took greater part in Europe-wide Jewish discourse and showed increasing self-confidence in demanding to be treated as equal members of the world Jewish community.

Several major issues dominated. One was the linked saga of property restitution and financial compensation to Holocaust survivors, particularly following new revelations about Nazi gold deposits, hidden Swiss bank accounts, insurance claims, and related matters. International aspects of the Nazi gold issue were the focus of a conference in London in December 1997.

Of pressing concern were efforts to obtain direct payments for aging Holocaust survivors in post-Communist states who, unlike survivors in the West, had never been compensated for their wartime losses. Jews in East-Central Europe increasingly demanded that their leaders or representatives participate in discussions on these matters. Some Jewish leaders from the region were outspoken in criticizing the World Jewish Restitution Organization (WJRO) and other international bodies for ignoring them.

Communities, as always, kept a vigilant eye on manifestations of anti-Semitism—and the Anti-Defamation League established an East-Central European office in Vienna in September 1997 to help in this area. However, the most pressing cross-border issues related to ways in which Jewish life could be strengthened—questions of Jewish identity, including how to deal with mixed-married couples and the children of mixed marriages; outreach to the unaffiliated; and the development of new communal leadership. Dealing with these issues influenced the agendas of local Jewish community structures as well as international Jewish organizations working in the region, such as the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation, Chabad, and British-based World Jewish Relief.

The conference on “Furthering Jewish Life in Europe,” held in Strasbourg at the end of June 1997 and sponsored by the European Council of Jewish Communities (ECJC) and the London-based Institute for Jewish Policy Research (JPR), brought Jewish representatives from Eastern and Western Europe and Israel together to discuss the issues on a pan-European level. Other organizations, such as the Europe Israel Forum, also sponsored meetings that brought Jews from Eastern and Western Europe together.

Jewish communities and organizations in East-Central Europe—like Jewish communities throughout the world—took increasing advantage of the Internet
to air their views and maintain contact with each other. The London-based Eu-
ropean Council of Jewish Communities played a special role in trying to facil-
tate communications and interaction among scattered communities, both by host-
ing a Web site with extensive intercommunity links and by organizing a variety of get-togethers, including conferences, study retreats, and singles’ weekends. 
Jewish community centers or offices in most major cities in the region set up com-
puter centers, often with the help of ORT or other organizations, from which com-

**Albania**

Devastating political, social, and economic turmoil swept the impoverished Balkan state in 1997. Albania's tiny Jewish community was caught up in the tur-
moil, and eventually many if not most Jews left the country either permanently or on a temporary basis. Some Jews were victims of the fraudulent pyramid in-

**JEWISH COMMUNITY**

Only about 60 Jews were known to live in Albania before the outbreak of vi-

Just before Rosh Hashanah in 1996, about two-thirds of Albania's Jews gath-
ereed in the capital, Tirana, for a High Holy Day celebration organized by the Joint Distribution Committee. It was the first time the shofar had been blown in Al-
bania in half a century. However, the JDC had to scrap its plans to send a young Italian Jew to Tirana to help celebrate Passover because of the dangerous situa-

In March 1997 two former Albanian cabinet ministers—one Jewish and one married to a Jew—sought asylum in Israel. By the beginning of May, with the help of the JDC, at least half of Albania's Jews had left for Italy, Israel, or else-
where, and fewer than 30 Jews were still in the country. 

In May Israel donated 30 tons of flour to Albania. "This humanitarian aid is an act of solidarity with the Albanian people, and confirms the close relations that exist between the two peoples," the Israeli embassy in Rome said in a statement.

**Bulgaria**

Economic crisis swept Bulgaria in 1996 and 1997, sparking mass street demon-

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*Holocaust-related developments:* In March 1997 Jews, senior government officials, and Orthodox church leaders held a ceremony in the town of Kyustendil to honor Bulgarians who helped prevent the deportation of Jews to Nazi death camps during World War II. Specifically, they honored a delegation of five Bulgarians from Kyustendil, led by Speaker of Parliament Dimitar Peshev, who went to Sofia in March 1943 to appeal against the deportations ordered by Bulgaria's wartime ally, Germany. In conjunction with the commemoration, President Stoyanov ordered that Peshev's delegation be awarded posthumously the Order of Stara Planina, first class.

**Jewish Community**

Estimates of the Jewish population of Bulgaria ranged between 5,000 and 8,000, most of them in the capital, Sofia, and in Plovdiv.

The economic and political crisis hurt the country's Jewish population, especially elderly people living on fixed pensions, and it also induced many young Bulgarian Jews to emigrate to Israel. According to some reports, Bulgaria had the highest rate of Jewish emigration in the world, with some 300 to 400 making *aliyah* each year.

The community operated an elementary school and Sunday school in Sofia and a summer camp. Many activities took place in the Jewish community center, Beit Am, which was enlarged in 1997 to add space for classrooms and youth activities. The Jewish prayer book was translated into Bulgarian for the first time in 1996, and on Passover 1997 about 800 people attended community seders.

The magnificent domed synagogue in Sofia was rededicated in September 1996, after a full-scale restoration that took years. More than 1,000 Jews from around the world attended the ceremony, which was also attended by Bulgarian president Zhelyu Zhelev.

**Czech Republic**

In July 1997 the Czech Republic, along with Poland and Hungary, was invited to join NATO during the Western Alliance's Madrid summit. Vast floods devastated parts of the Czech Republic in the summer of 1997, causing extensive economic losses.

After months of economic and other problems, the government of Prime Minister Vaclav Klaus fell in late 1997. President Vaclav Havel named Josef Tosovsky as new prime minister in December. Havel himself suffered bouts of ill health, including an operation for lung cancer in December 1996.

In September 1997 President Havel made an official trip to the Middle East, visiting Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, and the Palestinian territories. He called for peace and urged Israelis to think twice about building new Jewish settlements.
There was mounting concern among Czechs over manifestations of racism, particularly those directed against Romanies (Gypsies), many of whom attempted to seek asylum in Canada and Britain. There were some anti-Jewish incidents, among them the vandalizing of seven tombstones in Lomnice u Tisnova in November 1996. In September 1997 some 80 tombstones were vandalized at the Jewish cemetery in Frydek Mistek, which had just been restored by a German organization.

Holocaust-related developments: Czech Jews were vocal about pressing Germany to start paying monthly compensation payments to Holocaust survivors in former Communist states. About 2,000 Jewish survivors lived in the Czech Republic.

In October 1996 the Federation of Jewish Communities in the Czech Republic announced that it would apply for the return to Jewish control of about 20 synagogues and Jewish cemeteries. This was based on a government decision in September to restore some buildings confiscated by the Communists to their original church owners. In November 1996 B’nai B’rith in the Czech Republic reacquired its pre-World War II headquarters, 57 years after the building was confiscated by the Germans.

In April 1997 an Interior Ministry spokesperson said that his ministry would help the Czech Jewish community find valuables stolen by the Nazis during the Holocaust. In May the President’s Office established a commission to study the Holocaust era in Czechoslovakia.

In early 1997 it was revealed that Czech-born Madeleine Albright, formerly U.S. ambassador to the United Nations and the newly appointed U.S. Secretary of State, a woman known to be a practicing Christian, had in fact been born a Jew but was baptized and raised as a Catholic. After spending the war years in London during World War II, her family returned to live in Prague until 1948, when they fled Communism and settled in the United States, where Albright later converted to Episcopalianism. On an official visit to her native land in July 1997, now Secretary of State Albright visited Jewish sites in Prague, including the Pinkas Synagogue Holocaust memorial, where she found the names of three of her grandparents on the list of those killed by the Nazis. In September she visited the small town where her family came from and also Terezin (Theresienstadt), site of the ghetto concentration camp where her family members were interned. Albright’s discovery of her Jewish roots as an adult spotlighted a fairly common situation in the Czech Republic and other former Communist states, where many Jews sought to conceal their Jewish roots or hide them from their children as a means of protecting them.

In late summer of 1997 Czech politicians joined Czech Jewish leaders in calling on Germany to prosecute Anton Malloth, 85, who had served as a guard at Terezin ghetto concentration camp. He was sentenced in absentia to death by a Czechoslovak court in 1948 and was discovered living in a Munich nursing home in 1997.

On September 7, 1997, a performance of Verdi’s “Requiem” took place at
Terezin, under the patronage of President Havel and President Roman Herzog of Germany, performed by the German National Youth Orchestra and German and Czech choirs. Presented in memory of the victims, the concert also recalled performances of the mass by doomed Jewish musicians who were interned in the camp in 1943 and 1944.

On December 23, 1997, a German government spokesperson announced that Germany and the Czech Republic would sign an agreement setting up a 165-million mark ($93 million) fund for Czech victims of the Holocaust. The fund, part of a German-Czech reconciliation accord signed early in the year, would begin functioning on January 1, 1998. The money would be used for old people’s homes and sanatoriums for 8,000 Jewish and non-Jewish survivors of Nazi camps and the resistance movement.

Nazi hunter Simon Wiesenthal received an honorary degree from Prague's Charles University in April 1997.

**JEWISH COMMUNITY**

An estimated 3,500 to 6,000 Jews lived in the Czech Republic, and possibly thousands more were of Jewish background. About half of the known Jewish population lived in Prague, with the others scattered in nine other communities, the two largest in Brno and Olomouc.

The revitalization of Czech Jewry, begun with the fall of Communism, continued, with the road to normality marked by expansion as well as internal diversity. In Prague, two non-Orthodox communities continued to function alongside the official Orthodox community. These were Bejt Praha, which called itself the Open Prague Jewish Community, and which was originally founded in the mid-1990s to appeal to foreign Jews living in Prague, and Bejt Simcha, founded by Sylvie Wittmann, who runs a Jewish travel agency in Prague. In addition, Chabad Lubavitch sent a representative to Prague in September 1996.

Bejt Praha, which became a member of the Federation of Czech Jewish Communities, held *kabbalat shabbat* (Friday evening) gatherings in the Jewish Town Hall building. It also sponsored nonreligious events marking Jewish holidays. Bejt Simcha remained outside the official Czech Jewish community organizations but was affiliated with the World Association of Progressive Jewry. (The Olomouc community, with about 180 members, also was Progressive.) Bejt Simcha held weekly *kabbalat shabbat* gatherings. Both groups scheduled lectures and meetings with visiting rabbis and other experts, generally conducted in English. A Jewish elementary school, sponsored by the Lauder Foundation, opened in Prague in 1997. It was the first such to be established in that city since World War II.

The Czech Jewish Museum in Prague celebrated its 90th anniversary in September 1996 with a ceremony attended by President Havel and other officials, during which Havel opened the museum’s new Education and Cultural Center. The museum also started up an Internet Web site.

Numerous concerts, stage presentations, lectures, and other Jewish cultural
events took place in Prague and elsewhere—some sponsored by the Jewish community, Bejt Praha, or Bejt Simcha, others part of the program of the Jewish Museum’s new Education and Cultural Center. Still others were commercially sponsored as part of Prague’s mainstream cultural offerings.

Concerts ranged from Yiddish song to classical performances to liturgical music. Theater included performances by the Jewish community’s 14-member Jewish Children’s Theater as well as professional performances. Among the latter was the September 1996 premiere of Sweet Theresienstadt, a Czech-language play based on a diary found in Terezin concentration camp, directed by American Damien Gray.

Restoration work began on the Spanish synagogue in Prague, and cemeteries and synagogues in various provincial towns were rehabilitated. Several new Jewish museums were opened, continuing a trend begun a year or two earlier. Associated with this, Jewish quarters in several provincial towns were in the process of renewal and restoration, and restaurants or cafes with Jewish-sounding names or Jewish-style decor opened in several of the old ghetto districts. In early 1997 an upscale kosher restaurant, Metzada, was opened by Israelis in Prague’s Old Town. It changed hands later in the year and also changed the spelling of its name to Masaada. Bejt Simcha helped found a Jewish-style (nonkosher) restaurant called Sabra, at Terezin.

Hungary

Hungary continued the process of transition to a market economy, with more than 70 percent of the gross domestic product generated by the private sector. But inflation remained high—at least 24 percent in 1996—and about one-quarter of the population was estimated to live below the poverty line. The hardest hit were elderly pensioners (including thousands of Jewish elderly), Romanies, and dependent women and children.

A top priority of Prime Minister Gyula Horn’s leftist-liberal coalition was readying Hungary for entry into NATO and the European Union. At the NATO summit in July 1997, Hungary, along with Poland and the Czech Republic, was invited to join the defense organization.

Hungary’s relations with Israel continued to expand. Many Israeli tourists visited Hungary, and economic relations broadened. Trade between the two countries was about $100 million in 1996, and Israeli government figures showed that about 100 Israeli businesses had invested some $750 million in Hungary, mainly in the fields of telecommunications, computer software, and pharmaceutical products. In October 1996 a delegation of 160 Israelis attended the opening of Hungary’s largest shopping mall, a huge facility in Budapest funded by Israeli and Hungarian investors. Israelis were investing in at least seven other malls in Hungary, including one in the eastern city of Debrecen, where some Israeli companies reportedly had been targets of anti-Semitic activities.

In January 1997 Hungarian foreign minister Laszlo Kovacs made a three-day
official visit to Israel. While there, he met with senior Israeli officials and Israeli bankers, as well as with Yasir Arafat. Kovacs and Israeli foreign minister David Levy signed a technical cooperation agreement involving agricultural and other joint projects. In July 1997 the Israeli Ministry of Industry and Trade announced that Israel and Hungary had agreed on a trade pact to come into force on January 1, 1998, that would abolish duty on most imports. Duties on some other goods would be progressively abolished by the year 2000.

There were various incidents tinged with anti-Semitism (or perceived anti-Semitism) that involved ultra right-wing forces, either on the fringe of society or in the mainstream. In March 1997, as one instance, Deputy Speaker of Parliament Agnes Nagy Maczo, a prominent right-wing politician, caused a furor by calling attention to the Jewish origins of Matyas Rakosi, Hungary's much hated, hard-line Communist prime minister in the early 1950s.

Skinheads staged rallies on a number of occasions. After a rally by several hundred skinheads in Budapest on October 23, 1996, Budapest police questioned neo-Nazi leader Albert Szabo about his anti-Jewish speech, saying his statements could be interpreted as an incitement against a community. Szabo led a similar rally outside the U.S. embassy on March 15, 1997, Hungary's National Day.

On October 27, 1996, and on March 15, 1997, the extreme right-wing nationalist Hungarian Justice and Life Party, led by writer Isztvan Csurka, staged antigovernment rallies attended by tens of thousands of people.

In the wake of Jewish protests, Hungarian prosecutors in November 1996 banned the sale of a new Hungarian translation of Mein Kampf. The ban, however, touched off a debate on free speech. The new translation was by Aron Monus, a Hungarian émigré who had written anti-Semitic works of his own. Some of these were banned in Hungary in 1991, but the ban was overturned after Monus appealed on the basis of freedom of speech.

There were incidents of cemetery desecration, including the destruction of more than 200 tombs in a Jewish cemetery in Budapest in August 1996, and the destruction of a Holocaust memorial in the Jewish cemetery in Tatabanya, discovered in May 1997. On June 13, a Jewish cemetery in the northern town of Balassagyarmat was desecrated, the day before a scheduled Holocaust commemoration. Vandals damaged or toppled tombstones and also scrawled swastikas and Nazi slogans. In a statement, the Federation of Jewish Communities blamed the incident on the authorities' failure to make full use of the law against "anti-Semites and racists."

Holocaust-related developments: After years of negotiations, in the spring of 1997 the Hungarian government and the Jewish community set up a public foundation to oversee partial compensation of Hungarian Jews for community property seized during World War II. The Hungarian Jewish Heritage Foundation, with a 21-member board whose honorary president is Ronald Lauder, will administer a fund of four billion forints (US$24 million) in compensation coupons given by the government. The government also turned over to the Jewish com-
munity seven state-owned buildings in Budapest (their rental income to be added to the fund) and ten valuable artworks once owned by Jews. Disbursements are to include a supplemental monthly pension of $20 to $30 a month to Holocaust survivors and support for Jewish religious, educational, and cultural activities.

Hungarian Jews, like others in former Communist states, also pressed Germany to compensate survivors. In February 1997 about 100 survivors staged a demonstration outside the Dohany Street Synagogue, which German president Roman Herzog was visiting during a three-day official trip to Hungary. Herzog met with the protesters and assured them that they would receive compensation.

JEWISH COMMUNITY

Hungary had as many as 100,000 Jews, but only a minority were affiliated with any communal or other Jewish institutions. About 6,000 were members of the Jewish religious community and about 20,000 had contact with Jewish organizations or facilities. About 90 percent of Hungary's Jews lived in Budapest, with the others scattered in more than two dozen smaller towns and cities. Regular prayer services were held in fewer than a dozen provincial towns.

The Federation of Jewish Communities in Hungary mainly represented Jews outside Budapest; the Association of Jewish Communities in Budapest represented the bulk of Hungarian Jews. Both organizations operated under a single joint executive director and were supported by the Joint Distribution Committee in carrying out religious, social-welfare, and education activities through the Jewish Social Support Foundation.

A large percentage of Hungarian Jews were elderly, many of them needy. The JDC underwrote cash grants, food-support programs, including meals on wheels, and other social-welfare services. More than 500 elderly Jews attended five adult day-care centers in Budapest and Szeged. Budapest had a Jewish hospital, and there were three Jewish old-age homes (two in Budapest and one in Szeged).

JDC increasingly sponsored activities aimed at making the Jewish community more self-sufficient, such as the Buncher program, which sent potential leaders for training in Israel.

In Budapest, there were about a score of active synagogues, plus kosher shops, two kosher restaurants, Talmud Torahs, Jewish publications, secular organizations, clubs, and other associations and institutions. Just before Rosh Hashanah in September 1996, Budapest's Dohany Street Synagogue, the largest synagogue in Europe, reopened with a gala ceremony after a years-long restoration. The Hungarian government contributed about $8 million of the $10 million cost. Among the 7,000 people attending the ceremony were Hungarian president Arpad Goncz and other government officials, former Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Shamir, and Budapest-born California congressman Tom Lantos, who celebrated his bar mitzvah in the synagogue in 1941.

Budapest had three Jewish schools, with a total enrollment of 1,500 pupils. In
addition, about 200 children attended Jewish kindergartens. In September 1997
the Lauder Foundation opened a new Jewish kindergarten, with space for 62 chil-
dren, as part of its Lauder Yavne Jewish Community School. Budapest was also
the site of a rabbinical seminary (with fewer than a dozen students) and the Ped-
agogium Jewish teacher-training institute.

Budapest's Balint Jewish Community Center, which opened in 1994 as the first
full-service JCC in East-Central Europe since the end of World War II, continued
to offer a full monthly schedule of events ranging from educational activi-
ties to art shows, lectures, singles' parties, concerts, and holiday celebrations. Many of the center's cultural events were open to the public, among them an ex-
hibition of lithographs by Marc Chagall held in October 1996 in cooperation with
Protestant church groups. The three-week exhibit was coordinated with lectures,
performances, and other events based on Chagall's work.

Cultural events on Jewish themes took place in other venues as well. Among
them, a major exhibition, "Diaspora (and) Art," opened at the Jewish Museum
in Budapest in March 1997. The show massed some 500 artworks by Jewish
artists or on Jewish themes in an exploration of the changing position of Jews,
artists, and intellectuals within Hungarian society. A conference relating to themes
in the exhibit was held in May. The show inaugurated expansive new exhibition
space for the museum, which hoped to create a higher profile both for the mu-
seum and Jewish culture among the general public in Hungary. In the fall of 1997
the two curators of the Diaspora exhibit, Levente Thury and Gyorgy Szego, were
among the winners of a competition for East European Jewish artists held in Lon-
don.

Poland

Along with Hungary and the Czech Republic, Poland was invited to join NATO
at the Western Alliance's summit in Madrid in July 1997.

In parliamentary elections held in September 1997, AWS, an alliance of Soli-
darity and various rightist parties, defeated the leftist Democratic Left Alliance
and formed a coalition government with the centrist Freedom Union (FU). Jerzy
Buzek, from AWS, became prime minister, and the FU's Bronislaw Geremek, who
is of Jewish origin, became foreign minister.

Poland's economic performance was one of the strongest of all post-
Communist states. The gross domestic product grew by about 6 percent in 1997,
and by mid-1997 Poland had attracted about $14 billion in foreign direct invest-
ment. Double-digit inflation remained a problem, though it fell to about 13 per-
cent by the end of 1997 from 18.5 percent in 1996. The unemployment rate was
10.9 percent in August 1997. The economy suffered a severe blow from the ex-
tensive damage and losses caused by floods in the summer of 1997.

In January 1997 then Prime Minister Wlodzimierz Cimoszewicz made an offi-
cial trip to Israel, the first ever visit to the Jewish state by a Polish premier. He
visited Yad Vashem and met with top Israeli business and political leaders as well
as with Yasir Arafat. As part of the visit, which was designed to foster economic and other bilateral relations, he took part in a ceremony at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem where he presented the 14th-century Wolf Haggadah to the Jewish National and University Library. The Haggadah, stolen from the Berlin Jewish community in 1938, was discovered by Russian troops in Poland in 1944. It was held in Poland until 1989, when a Montreal man claimed he had bought it and wanted a Swiss auction house to sell it. A court in Geneva seized it in 1990 to prevent the auction. The Polish government and the World Jewish Congress led a court battle to prevent the book from being auctioned, with the agreement that the Haggadah would be presented to Israel if successful. The final court decision preventing the auction came in October 1996.

In October 1997 the Polish government signed an agreement that paved the way to a $600-million antitank missile deal with an Israeli weapons manufacturer.

Political extremism and anti-Semitism remained on the fringes of mainstream discourse in Poland, and anti-Semitism played little role in the September 1997 election campaign. Still, there were manifestations of anti-Jewish attitudes. In November 1996 hundreds of skinheads and right-wing extremists staged Polish Independence Day demonstrations in several major cities. Some 1,200 marched in Warsaw, shouting "Poland for the Poles" and other slogans against Jews and foreigners.

On February 26, 1997, an arson attack on Warsaw's only Jewish house of worship, the Nozyk Synagogue, damaged the former main entrance and vestibule. Polish president Aleksander Kwasniewski condemned the attack as an act of barbarism, and government representatives as well as the U.S. and German ambassadors attended a special service the day after the attack.

There were also cases of Jewish cemeteries being vandalized, among them the cemetery in Oswiecim, the town adjacent to the Auschwitz death camp. Here, in the autumn of 1996, more than 40 tombstones were vandalized; police detained a 17-year-old skinhead who admitted the crime. (The cemetery, which is several kilometers from the Auschwitz camp, had been destroyed by the Nazis, but its stones were reerected in 1980.) In March 1997 a dozen tombstones were damaged in Krakow, and windows were smashed at a Jewish cultural center in Zary.

Rev. Henryk Jankowski, the Gdansk priest who was close to the Solidarity movement and former president Lech Walesa, again caused a furor, this time with anti-Semitic remarks made several weeks after the September 1997 elections, aimed at Foreign Minister-designate Geremek. He said in a sermon that he agreed with the view that "the Jewish minority should not be accepted in our government." Jankowski's superiors sharply rebuked him for these remarks, and he was suspended from priestly duties. In an earlier sermon in January, Jankowski had criticized the Polish government for giving in too much to the demands of Jews and the relatives of Holocaust victims. Less than a week earlier, he was formally charged with slandering Jews in a sermon in 1995, but legal action was later dropped.

In January 1997 Rabbi A. James Rudin, interreligious affairs director of the
American Jewish Committee, received the Figure of Reconciliation Award from the Polish Council of Christians and Jews, for his work in Catholic-Jewish and Polish-American relations.

**Holocaust-related developments:** In the wake of revelations about Swiss abuse of Nazi gold, Poland carried out an official probe into a 1949 arrangement under which Switzerland used Polish funds in unclaimed Swiss bank accounts as part of a compensation deal for assets seized by the Communists. In January 1997 Foreign Minister Dariusz Rosati said the probe showed that Poland’s former Communist rulers had acted wrongly in using money left in Swiss banks by Poles who died in World War II, including Jews killed in the Holocaust, and announced plans to put matters right.

In February 1997 Parliament approved legislation regulating the relations between the Polish state and Jews. The legislation, which went into effect in May, mandated the return to Poland’s Jewish community of some communal Jewish property, including synagogues, schools, and cemeteries. The legislation, which applies to property that belonged to Jewish communities on September 1, 1939—the day Nazi Germany invaded Poland—covers only properties nationalized by the government, not those currently in the hands of individuals. These government-owned properties include about 2,000 buildings and 1,000 cemeteries or sites of cemeteries. Foreign Jewish organizations criticized the bill, saying income derived from the sale or rent of these buildings, once returned, should also go to Polish Jewish Holocaust survivors and other Polish Jews who fled Poland after the war and far outnumber the Jews currently in Poland.

On March 5, 1997, representatives of international Jewish organizations and Polish authorities initialed an agreement for the long-term preservation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp complex. The $100-million plan envisages linking Auschwitz and Birkenau (which are two miles apart) and instituting an exclusion zone around the site, where no commercial buildings may be erected.

In December 1997 eight wooden crosses and 11 wooden Stars of David were removed by Auschwitz Memorial Museum officials from a remote part of the grounds at Birkenau. A year and a half earlier, in July 1996, Elie Wiesel caused a furor in Poland when he called for removal of the crosses during his speech at ceremonies marking the 50th anniversary of the pogrom in Kielce. The crosses and stars had been placed at the camp in the mid-1980s by young Poles doing volunteer clean-up work. Jewish groups had protested the presence of the crosses—some (including Wiesel) protesting only the crosses for what they considered an attempt to Christianize Auschwitz, others protesting the presence of all specific religious symbols, including Stars of David, at the camp.

At the July 1996 Kielce anniversary ceremony, the Polish government apologized for that tragic episode. The apology was first expressed the previous spring in a statement by the foreign minister to a World Jewish Congress meeting and was “sanctified” at the anniversary ceremonies in July.

In October 1997 the final report of a five-year government probe of the pogrom
was issued, confirming that army officers and Communist security men had taken part in the attack, in which 42 Jews were killed by a rampaging mob. The report also concluded that the authorities had not reacted quickly enough but found no evidence that the Communist government instigated the assault. Justice Minister Leszek Kubicki said it was clear that anti-Semitism was at the root of the violence.

Ceremonies were held in several Polish towns to dedicate Holocaust memorials or rededicate restored Jewish cemeteries. These included a monument erected in Wyszkow, near Warsaw, a collaborative effort by Polish officials, the U.S. government, and former Wyszkow Jews. The inaugural ceremony, held in mid-September 1997, was attended by the U.S. and Israeli ambassadors, Polish church and state representatives, dozens of Jewish survivors and other Jews, and local townspeople. In August 1996 a monument was dedicated at the site of the cemetery in Chelm.

In October 1996, 35 Poles were honored as Righteous Gentiles by Yad Vashem; 16 more Poles were awarded the honor in May 1997.

In April 1997 the annual ceremony to commemorate the Warsaw Ghetto uprising was held at the newly renovated Ghetto Heroes monument.

**Jewish Community**

Estimates of the number of Jews in Poland ranged from the 7,000-8,000 officially registered with the community or receiving aid from the Joint Distribution Committee, to 10,000-15,000, including people of Jewish ancestry who have shown interest in rediscovering their heritage, to a total of 30,000 to 40,000, which includes all persons of Jewish ancestry, whether or not they are aware of or open about it.

The Jewish Religious Community of Poland, funded by the JDC, maintained religious services in 15 localities and ran kosher canteens serving free meals to needy Jews in about half of those places.

The reins of leadership of Poland’s Jews passed to the post-Holocaust generation in May 1997 when the newly elected board of the Union of Jewish Congregations in Poland chose 49-year-old Jerzy Kichler, from Wroclaw, as its president. Half the members of the board, elected earlier in May, were also born after the Shoah, as were three of the four other officers elected along with Kichler.

In October 1997 a local Jewish community organization was established in Warsaw. Prior to its creation, no official Jewish community operated in Warsaw; Jewish religious activities there were under the aegis of the Union of Jewish Congregations. Five of the new community’s seven new board members were born after World War II.

In January 1997 more than 150 Jews of all ages and from various Polish cities held an unprecedented conference in Warsaw, sponsored by the JDC, on the future of Polish Jewry in the coming decade. The conference marked the first time
that representatives of all major Polish Jewish organizations, including religious and secular Jews, old and young, gathered for such a purpose.

The Lauder Foundation expanded its operations as the major organizer of Jewish educational initiatives in Poland, including youth clubs, the Jewish school in Warsaw, and summer and winter camp programs. In 1997 the foundation installed a young rabbi as its representative in Krakow. Among other things, he ran a summer religious study program for adults. The Lauder Foundation and the JDC helped organize community celebrations of Passover and Hanukkah in communities around Poland.

The Seventh Festival of Jewish Culture took place in Krakow in June 1997. Also in Krakow, a month-long series of Jewish lectures and cultural events called "Bajit Chadasz" was presented in the fall of 1996 and again in 1997. In the spring of 1997, the Warsaw-based American-Polish-Jewish Shalom Foundation organized an essay competition on Jewish topics for Polish high-school students, for which the three winners would get free history tuition at Warsaw University and a trip to Israel. There were 800 entries.

Midrasz, a glossy Jewish monthly magazine edited by well-known journalist and writer Konstanty Gebert, began publication in Warsaw in April 1997, with Lauder Foundation funding.

Novelist Julian Stryjkowski, whose works portrayed a broad spectrum of Jewish life in Poland, died in August 1996 at the age of 91. Holocaust survivor Czeslaw Jakubowicz, the president of the Jewish Community of Krakow, died in March 1997. Chone Shmeruk, a pioneering Yiddish scholar, died in July 1997 at the age of 76, in Poland. Shmeruk, born in Warsaw in 1921, survived World War II in the Soviet Union and emigrated to Israel in 1949. In his later years he divided his time between Poland and Israel. He was buried in the Jewish cemetery in Warsaw.

**Romania**

Emil Constantinescu, the head of a center-right alliance, was elected president of Romania in November 1996, ousting a leftist government headed by Ion Iliescu. During the electoral campaign, right-wing nationalist extremists accused Iliescu and his allies of favoritism toward Jews and alleged that U.S. ambassador Alfred Moses, who is Jewish, was trying to make secret deals with Iliescu to foster Jewish interests. Anti-Semitic slurs were also aimed at presidential candidate Petre Roman, who is of partial Jewish descent.

The country continued a slow process of transformation to a market economy. The Iliescu regime had not moved fast on implementing economic, political, social, and judicial reforms but it did ratify a landmark friendship treaty with Hungary in September 1996, under which it guaranteed the rights of the large Hungarian minority. The economy grew by 4.5 percent in 1996, but inflation in 1996 was 57 percent. Declining living standards triggered strikes and other protests.
There were continuing efforts to rehabilitate wartime fascist leader Ion Antonescu, troubling people both within the Jewish community and elsewhere. In April 1997 ADL national director Abraham Foxman wrote to Constantinescu to protest the erection of a monument to the interwar fascist Iron Guard movement at the Black Sea resort town of Eforie Sud. The monument was put up following a summer camp organized by followers of the revived movement. Foxman said local authorities in Eforie Sud supported the project as a tourist attraction.

In November 1997 Senator Alfonse D'Amato and Congressman Christopher Smith of the United States protested to Constantinescu over the decision of Romania's prosecutor-general to start procedures for the posthumous judicial rehabilitation of members of Antonescu's wartime cabinet. In the wake of this protest, the Prosecutor-General announced that the process would be ended.

Israel and Romania maintained close relations, with a number of official visits and exchanges. After one of these visits, in June 1997, the PLO's UN observer expressed astonishment that Romania's foreign minister, Adrian Severin, had flown into an airport north of Jerusalem, in an area captured by Israel in the 1967 war, rather than Ben-Gurion Airport, near Tel Aviv. Addressing a meeting of the UN committee on Palestinian rights, he accused the Romanians of violating Security Council resolutions and resolutions of ICAO (the International Civil Aviation Organization) on Jerusalem.

At the beginning of November 1997 Prime Minister Victor Ciorbea made a one-day "unofficial visit" to Israel. In meetings with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and other officials, he discussed bilateral issues including trade relations, Israeli investments in Romania, the problem of Romanian guest workers in Israel, and the restitution of Jewish property.

The issue of Romanian guest workers in Israel was a thorny one. In September 1997 members of the Romanian Parliament's labor commission were told that up to 140,000 Romanians were working in Israel, many of them in construction, lured by Israeli salaries that were many times higher than Romanian wages. Romanian officials expressed concern over the exodus of cheap labor, and local Romanian media featured reports of bad working conditions and health care that had cost the lives of a number of workers. The problem was discussed by representatives of the labor ministries of both countries.

Holocaust-related developments: In a message to Romanian Jews in May 1997, President Constantinescu acknowledged Romanian complicity in the persecution and slaughter of Jews in the Holocaust. Iulian Sorin, secretary of Romania's Federation of Jewish Communities, praised him for being the first Romanian leader to speak so candidly. Constantinescu's message said, "Romanians participated with a criminal blindness in implementing the infamous Nazi project of the 'final solution. . . .' The sacrifice of hundreds of thousands of Jews on Romanian territory is a burden on all of us. . . . The killing of innocent people cannot be forgiven, put right or forgotten."

The president of the Federation of Jewish Communities in Romania, Nicolae
Cajal, at a news conference in June, defended the Romanian government against criticism by the WJRO that it was slow in implementing promises of restitution and compensation. The WJRO had singled out the Hungarian government for praise and said that Romania, Poland, and the Czech Republic were dragging their feet on the issue. In July, however, WJRO vice-chairman Naphtali Lavie praised the government after it ruled that people who had emigrated from Romania under the Communist regime were eligible to receive pensions. The ruling entitled Romanians “who have elected residence abroad to claim full length-of-service pension rights.” About half of Romania’s prewar Jewish population of 800,000 survived the Holocaust, and almost all subsequently emigrated to Israel.

In June Parliament approved a government decision to return to the Jewish community five properties confiscated during and after World War II. A nonprofit organization called Caritatea was set up by the World Jewish Restitution Organization and the local Jewish community to administer the returned assets. The group would also provide assistance to the Jews of Romania and carry out cultural and educational activities.

In December Romania’s central bank confirmed that it had received sizable amounts of gold from Nazi Germany during World War II in payment for grain and oil shipments, but denied that it had any gold from Holocaust victims. A spokesperson said the gold bars received were smelted in the 1930s.

**Jewish Community**

About 14,000 Jews lived in Romania, more than half of them in Bucharest, most of them over the age of 60.

In September 1996 the Joint Distribution Committee—which supports the activities of the Federation of Romanian Jewish Communities—organized a study tour to Hungary by a delegation of Romanian Jewish community leaders, directors of old-age homes, social-service workers, doctors, and social workers. It was the first official Romanian Jewish delegation to visit neighboring Hungary since 1945. The aim was to show the Romanian group how Hungarian Jews, through the JDC and the Hungarian Jewish Social Support Foundation, operated medical and social services. It was also aimed at forging a professional relationship between Jewish leaders and social-service personnel in the two countries.

In the autumn of 1997 Rabbi Menachem Hakohen, 65, arrived from Israel to serve as acting chief rabbi. He replaced Rabbi Yechezkel Mark, who completed a two-year tenure. Hakohen was born into a rabbinical family in Jerusalem; before 1988 he served 14 years as a Labor Party member of the Knesset.

In late 1996, Bucharest’s Jewish State Theater hosted the second Festival of Jewish Theaters, with groups from Ukraine, France, and Israel participating. Various other events—concerts, exhibitions, and performances with Jewish themes—took place during the period covered, and a number of books on Jewish topics were published.
Slovakia

Slovakia made significant progress in the transition toward a market economy, although 65 percent of the population considered living standards to be their greatest problem. Deep political and other divisions between supporters and opponents of nationalist, former Communist prime minister Vladimir Meciar polarized Slovak society. Some observers described it as a split between people who saw their future within a united Europe (the opponents of Meciar) and those who followed Meciar in seeking to isolate Slovakia from Western Europe. There were attempts to clamp down on the independent media, and reports of politically motivated dismissals of officials and intimidation of government opponents.

In the spring of 1997 controversy erupted over a teachers’ manual published by the Slovak Education Ministry and funded by the European Union, which romanticized the Holocaust in Slovakia, making it appear, in the words of a Slovak Jewish leader, that “the Jews actually enjoyed themselves during World War II.” The manual, “History of Slovakia for Slovaks,” by Milan Durica, drew sharp protests from the Slovak Jewish community and others. The director of the Institute of History of the Slovak Academy of Sciences said it was a “dangerous falsification of history.”

In April 1997 vandals destroyed or damaged some 70 tombstones in the Jewish cemetery in Kosice, in eastern Slovakia, and also damaged a Holocaust memorial there. At around the same time, a Jewish cemetery in Nove Zamky was desecrated. In response to these occurrences, the Jewish community issued a sharp statement warning against state-sponsored profascist activities, “laws tinged with racism,” “anti-Jewish vandalism,” and “the unwillingness of the Slovak justice system to implement a law against offenders guilty of anti-Semitic criminal acts.”

The community also remained deeply concerned at continuing efforts by Slovak nationalists to rehabilitate the Nazi World War II puppet regime led by Rev. Josef Tiso. These included rallies honoring Tiso and, in October 1996, the opening of a Tiso “memorial room” in Banska Bystrica. In September 1997 the nationalist Slovak National Party (SNS), a member of the ruling coalition of Prime Minister Meciar, invited French rightist Jean-Marie Le Pen to Slovakia. Several hundred people staged a demonstration in Bratislava to protest the visit.

Also in September, Meciar assured visiting B’nai B’rith president Tommy Baer that anti-Semitism in Slovakia was a marginal phenomenon. Further, he said, Slovakia had been more diligent than some other former Communist states in restituting confiscated Jewish property.

Holocaust-related developments: The Jewish community was vocal in pressing for direct German compensation for Holocaust victims and was supported in this by the Slovak government. On the eve of the December 1997 conference in London on Nazi gold, the Foreign Ministry issued a statement “drawing attention” to the fact that Germany had so far neither compensated Slovak victims of the Holocaust nor paid compensation for “other forms of Nazi persecution.”
Slovak Jews also had to press hard in order to get the Czech government to reverse its long-held position opposing compensation of Slovak Jews for gold seized during World War II, all of which ended up in Prague. After the breakup of Czechoslovakia in 1993, Slovak Jews demanded compensation for these losses. In July 1997 the Czech government announced that it would transfer the majority of the gold in its vaults to a Jewish foundation, the Czecho-Slovak-Israeli Foundation, which would use the funds to care for Jewish sites in Slovakia as well as for the 1,200 Slovak Jews who survived the Holocaust.

In October 1997, 18 Slovaks were honored as Righteous Gentiles by Yad Vashem during a ceremony in Bratislava attended by President Michal Kovac.

JEWISH COMMUNITY

About 3,000 Jews, mostly elderly, lived in Slovakia, about 800 of them in Bratislava, the capital, and about 700 in Kosice in eastern Slovakia. There were rabbis in both cities, and both cities had kosher restaurants, Jewish classes, clubs, and other activities. Smaller communities existed in about a dozen other towns, all functioning under the umbrella of the Union of Jewish Religious Communities in Bratislava. An Institute of Jewish Studies opened in Bratislava in 1996, and restoration work was going on at several Jewish cemeteries and synagogues around the country.

Bratislava's chief rabbi, Baruch Myers, was attacked by skinheads on December 6, 1996, the second such incident for the American-born Lubavitcher Hasid, who was roughed up shortly after taking up his post in 1993. This time, a 16-year-old skinhead was detained over the incident, which started with verbal abuse and culminated in a physical attack, which passersby intervened in to stop. The attack took place as Myers was putting the finishing touches on a 12-foot public Hanukkah menorah. At the public candlelighting, Bratislava mayor Peter Kresnek said the authorities were determined to root out all hate crimes. "The perpetrators of these crimes will be forgotten by history, relegated to insignificance, while the Hanukkah lights and their message will burn forever," he said.

FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Conditions in Bosnia-Herzegovina remained difficult as the country tried to forge ahead in the wake of the 1995 Dayton peace accord, which recognized Bosnia-Herzegovina as one state divided into two separate Serbian and Muslim-Croat entities that would eventually be integrated. The plight continued of thousands of people still classified as displaced persons, complicated by polarization between the Serbian Republika Srbska and the Croat-Muslim Federation, as well
as political divisions within each of the two entities. Meanwhile, with the help of foreign donors, efforts went forward to repair the war’s devastation, which, among other things, destroyed or damaged 60 percent of Bosnia’s housing.

JEWISH COMMUNITY

The main Jewish community in Bosnia and Herzegovina was in Sarajevo, several hundred strong, but a community also existed in Mostar, a once beautiful town that was devastated during the war. Some 129 Jews lived in Mostar in 1992, but most moved away during the fighting. By mid-1997, fewer than 40 Jews lived in the town, almost all of them supported by social-welfare disbursements channeled through the Joint Distribution Committee. The 220-year-old Jewish cemetery, which was severely damaged during the fighting, was partially reconstructed after the 1995 Dayton agreement ended hostilities.

A small community with a few dozen members also existed in Tuzla, which after the Dayton agreement became the seat of allied peacekeeping troops. Two American rabbis who served as chaplains for the troops extended their role to help the local Jewish community, supplying it in 1996 with matzah, wine, Haggadahs and other Passover supplies. This created a renewed sense of organized Jewish communal life for a time. A meeting in Tuzla with a delegation from the Jewish Agency was attended by all adult members of the community—the first such in 20 years. Seven of the community’s 13 children attended the JDC/Lauder Foundation summer camp in Szarvas, Hungary in 1996. As peace settled in, however, community involvement dropped, and several members left for Israel.

During a brief visit to Sarajevo in April 1997, Pope John Paul II presented the Pope John XXIII International Peace Prize to the Jewish aid organization La Benevolencija and to Roman Catholic, Muslim, and Serbian Orthodox charities. Each group received $50,000. This was the latest in a list of international honors for La Benevolencija, which worked during the Bosnian war as a key conduit of nonsectarian humanitarian aid. At Rosh Hashanah 1996, La Benevolencija was named “Newsmaker of the Year” by the London Jewish Chronicle.

Croatia

Croatia’s economy was fairly stable and was developing, partly thanks to a dramatic revival of tourism. Inflation was low (around 3.5 percent in 1997). Gross domestic product grew by 4.2 percent in 1996; in 1997 it rose by 3.3 percent in the first quarter and 4 percent in the second. Still, the average wage was under $400 a month, and the unemployment rate was more than 15 percent. Although popular dissatisfaction with living standards was widespread, President Franjo Tudjman, who reportedly was suffering from cancer, was easily reelected to a third five-year presidential term in June 1997.

Tudjman’s foreign policy caused some problems, however. The West accused it
of not doing enough to promote the Dayton peace process. Only in October 1997, after months of pressure, did Croatia hand over 10 alleged war criminals to the Hague War Crimes Tribunal.

Croatia and Israel established diplomatic relations in September 1997, following years of delay. The move had been held up because of President Tudjman's allegedly anti-Semitic statements in an autobiographical book, as well as by the Croatian government's apparent attempts to rehabilitate the World War II Ustasha regime of Croatian fascists, which was a puppet of Nazi Germany. In October 1996, for example, 6,000 people attended a ceremony in which the remains of about 100 soldiers from Croatia's World War II fascist army were reburied alongside anti-Nazi partisan fighters at the seaside town of Omis, supposedly to promote reconciliation among Croats. An association of antifascist war veterans and the Simon Wiesenthal Center strongly protested the reburial.

Israel finally agreed to establish diplomatic relations in August 1997, after the Croatian government formally apologized to the Jewish people in a strongly worded statement that renounced Ustasha crimes. The statement was part of a document released jointly after high-level talks in Budapest between Israeli and Croatian representatives. It said, in part, "The new, free, and democratic Croatia... completely condemns Nazi crimes of Holocaust and genocide over Jewish people in many European states, including Croatia. Therefore, in the name of the Croatian people and the government we express to the Israeli people and the government our apologies and regrets for the crimes committed against Jewish people during the Nazi-time quisling regime [Ustasha]."

The establishment of relations drew criticism in some Jewish and Israeli quarters; Israel's Ha'aretz newspaper, for example, claimed that a military arms deal was involved in the decision. In November 1997 two Israeli opposition politicians attempted to block a planned visit to Israel by Tudjman, and Tudjman ended up postponing his trip. In fact, even before diplomatic relations were established, commercial and other links were well under way. In the summer of 1997, charter flights brought 250 Israeli tourists a week to the Adriatic coast.

Although Tudjman's government aroused criticism for its policies vis à vis the Ustasha, it had also long courted Jewish support. Few foreign Jewish representatives took part in a three-day celebration during Hanukkah 1996, organized by the Zagreb Jewish community to celebrate its 190th anniversary. Tudjman, however, attended the gala anniversary concert, and other senior officials attended the opening of a major museum exhibition on the opulent Zagreb synagogue, which was destroyed by the Nazis in 1941.

Several Jews held senior government posts, including Slobodan Lang, a close adviser to Tudjman, and Nenad Porges, president of the Jewish community from 1990 to 1993, who was named economy and trade minister, replacing another Jew in the post, Davor Stern.

Although anti-Semitism was regarded as less threatening than the rehabilitation of the Ustasha regime, several articles with an anti-Semitic slant appeared
in some newspapers, and in May 1997 the Jewish cemetery in Karlovac was vandalized. A Croatian translation of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, published in the summer of 1996, was on Croatian best-seller lists for months, with one-quarter of the first printing of 2,000 copies reportedly sold in a week. Publication of the Protocols was sharply criticized by non-Jews as well as Jews.

Holocaust-related developments: In April 1997 senior government officials attended an ecumenical service to commemorate victims of the World War II fascist prison camp at Jasenovac, where tens of thousands of Serbs, Jews, Romanies, and antifascist Croats died. Roman Catholic Croat, Serb Orthodox, Jewish, and Slav Muslim clerics took part in the ceremony at the Jasenovac memorial.

In September Croatia announced that it would cede the gold allocated to it by the Tripartite Gold Commission (established by the World War II Allies to distribute Nazi gold) to Holocaust victims. A government statement said that "[a]fter discussing the initiative of the World Jewish Restitution Organization, which urges the final distribution of the gold held by the Commission, the Croatian government has decided to renounce its share in favor of the Nazi Holocaust victims."

Jewish Community

About 2,200 Jews lived in Croatia, some 1,400 of them in the capital, Zagreb. A Jewish community center housed a prayer room, cafe and clubroom, auditorium, exhibition gallery, and computer center. An Israeli teacher, sponsored by the Joint Distribution Committee, taught Hebrew classes and led prayers.

Much smaller communities existed in Osijek, Split, Rijeka, and Dubrovnik. Like most communities in former Communist states, the Croatian Jewish community had undergone a revival in the past few years; however, it remained troubled by a number of problems, including an aging population (about half of its members were over 60, many poor and without family); a low birthrate; and the lack of a resident rabbi.

Identity was another issue: more than 75 percent of the community were either in mixed marriages or children of mixed marriages, and most children in the community were not Jewish according to Halakhah (Jewish law). The community took a definite decision to grant membership to people in this situation. The bloody breakup of Yugoslavia caused other problems, including a "brain drain" of younger Jews and the arrival of hundreds of Jewish refugees from Bosnia.

The celebration of the 190th anniversary of the Zagreb Jewish community in December 1996 was a major event, including a gala concert, symposium, and exhibition. The High Holy Days in both 1996 and 1997 saw the reopening of restored synagogues on the Croatian coast. A week before Rosh Hashanah in 1996, the nearly 500-year-old synagogue in Split was reopened after a restoration financed in part by the Split city council. Split has about 100 Jews.

At Rosh Hashanah 1997, the Baroque synagogue in Dubrovnik, which has a Jewish community of a few dozen, was reopened at a ceremony attended by
Croatian officials, the U.S. ambassador to Croatia, and a JDC delegation. Damaged by Serb shelling in 1992, the synagogue was repaired with funds raised by a non-Jewish couple from Washington, D.C.—Otto Reusch, a Jesuit-educated Swiss Catholic who is now an American citizen, and his wife, Jeanne—who had visited it in June 1996. Croatian Television featured the ceremony on evening news programs and in a documentary on the renovation.

In October 1996 Dubrovnik hosted an international academic conference on the history of Jews in the Adriatic, sponsored mainly by the government.

**Yugoslavia**

Yugoslavia continued to suffer fallout from the turmoil, economic hardship, isolation, and trauma associated with the bloody breakup of the former state. Unemployment was high, wages and industrial production low. At the end of 1996, it was estimated that a family of four would require more than twice the average wage just to purchase sufficient food.

At the end of 1996 and beginning of 1997, hundreds of thousands took to the streets in peaceful mass demonstrations against the regime of President Slobodan Milosevic. Organized by opposition political parties and university students, the demonstrations began after the government refused to accept opposition victories in some local elections, but expanded to become demands for an ouster of the Milosevic regime. Partly because of the lack of unity among the opposition, the protests eventually petered out, with little effect. Many members of the Jewish community took part in the rallies on a personal basis, but the community itself formally steered clear of political involvement.

In July 1997 the Federation of Jewish Communities warned of mounting intolerance fueled by Serbian nationalist politics and lingering political, social, and economic insecurity. A federation statement mentioned “several acts directed against persons and property not belonging to the majority nation or religion” and condemned “all instigation of national, religious and racial hatred and xenophobia in any form.”

The statement received wide coverage in the media and won expressions of support from political and religious figures. While the statement did not use the term anti-Semitism, it was issued a few days after vandals damaged or toppled nine tombstones in the Jewish cemetery of Zemun, a suburb of Belgrade. Various public figures, including Patriarch Pavle of the Serbian Orthodox Church, condemned the vandalism. The statement was also prompted by highly publicized persecution of Croatian Catholics in Zemun, where Vojislav Seselj, one of Yugoslavia’s most extreme Serbian nationalists, was elected mayor in late 1996.

Israel and Yugoslavia established diplomatic relations in late 1996, a year after the Dayton agreement put an end to four years of war in Bosnia and enabled the lifting of UN sanctions against Yugoslavia. The arrival of the new Israeli ambassador was given extensive publicity in the media. Even without formal diplo-
matic relations, Yugoslavia and Israel had maintained commercial links over the years, and the Yugoslav airline JAT had direct flights to Tel Aviv. Since the end of the war in Bosnia, a boom in Israeli tourism to Yugoslavia had developed.

**Jewish Community**

About 3,500 Jews lived in Yugoslavia, most over 60 years old. About 2,000 lived in Belgrade, where a well-equipped community center offered a wide range of educational, cultural, and social activities. There were smaller communities in Novi Sad, Sombor, Subotica, Zemun, and elsewhere, all linked in the Federation of Jewish Communities in Yugoslavia. The leadership of the Belgrade Jewish community was composed largely of "baby boomers" born after World War II, who played an active role in promoting Jewish community activities.

Rabbi Itzhak Asiel, who had been in his post since early 1995, following more than six years of training in Israel, continued to coordinate Jewish life on many levels, both in Belgrade, where he was based, and in smaller communities. Asiel took over most of the duties of Yugoslavia's longtime rabbi, Cadik Danon, who was elderly and in ill health. Asiel was widely credited with sparking a renewal of religious interest among Yugoslav Jews—conducting weekly Sabbath services in Belgrade's synagogue, a Sunday school for small children, clubs for teenagers and university students, regular young people's classes in religious customs and Hebrew, and Sabbath and other programs for all ages. He also oversaw programs to stimulate Jewish revival in small provincial communities.

The Belgrade community also had a choir that gave performances for the general public and a children's theater that put on at least two performances each year. In late 1996 the Belgrade community began work on plans for a new culture center to serve both Jews and the general public and a project to preserve Ladino, the Jewish language spoken by the traditional Serbian Sephardic community. In January 1997 the Belgrade Jewish Historical Museum helped organize a major exhibit on Belgrade's pre-Holocaust Jewish quarter, which drew big crowds and much publicity. The exhibit was mounted in a building used as an alternative culture center, which before the war belonged to the Jewish community.

**Ruth Ellen Gruber**
Russia and some of the other states that emerged from the Soviet Union were plagued by social unrest and economic instability in late 1996 and 1997. The Communist-dominated Parliament voted early in 1997, 229 to 63, to remove President Boris Yeltsin from office, but the vote had no legal standing.

President Yeltsin appointed Anatoly Chubais, architect of the privatization of the early 1990s and the bête noire of Communists and their allies, as first deputy prime minister, in an effort to reenergize economic reform. At the same time, Boris Nemtsov, the 37-year-old governor of Nizhni-Novgorod province, which enjoyed a reputation as economically progressive and prosperous, was appointed the other “first” deputy prime minister. He was given responsibility for overseeing social programs, regulating monopolies, and supervising relations between the federal center and the regions. Another reformer, Yakov Urinson, was appointed economics minister.

In Russia, gross domestic product fell by 6 percent and industrial production by 6 percent in 1996. There were severe energy shortages in many areas, especially the Far East and Siberia. Millions were owed back pay, and in March 1997 about a million workers went on a nationwide strike to protest unpaid wages.

Corruption was said to be so endemic in most of the former Soviet republics that foreign businesses were loath to deal with them. This was especially true of Ukraine and, to a lesser extent, of Russia. It was estimated that about $100 billion was spirited out of Ukraine by local officials and business executives. Ukraine was the third-largest recipient of aid from the United States, following Israel and Egypt.

Sporadic fighting, bombings, and assassinations continued in Chechnya, the breakaway Caucasus region, but President Yeltsin signed a peace treaty in May 1997 with Chechen president Aslan Maskhadov, who had been elected in January on a platform of independence for “Ichkeria” (Chechnya). When the 21 months of fighting—involving 1.2 million soldiers—ended in August 1996, there were 25,000 to 60,000 civilian and 4,500 military dead, as well as half a million refugees and 798 Russians taken prisoner, with between 600 and 1,500 unaccounted for. The Chechen war contributed to the demoralization of the Russian military, which was severely underfunded.

In August 1996 the openly authoritarian president of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenka, presented a draft constitution that would extend his term of office and give him the right to annul decisions of local councils, set election dates, ap-
point judges, and dismiss Parliament. Demonstrations against these proposals were broken up by police. Belarus fined the Soros Foundation $3 million for alleged "currency violations" and expelled its American director. The foundation had contributed $13 million to education, science, and civic groups in Belarus. In February 1996 the International Monetary Fund suspended loans to Belarus due to that republic's lack of progress in implementing economic reforms. Belarus expelled the first secretary of the American embassy, who had observed a clash between police and nationalist demonstrators protesting Lukashenka's rule, and the United States retaliated by expelling a Belarussian diplomat.

In May 1997 NATO leaders and the Russian Federation president signed a "Founding Act" of mutual cooperation and security intended to reassure Russia that it need not fear NATO expansion into countries of the former Warsaw Pact. The act pledged Russia and NATO to consult on security issues and NATO not to deploy nuclear weapons on territories of new members.

In contrast to Soviet times, Jews had become prominent in Russian politics. Boris Berezovsky, who led the Russian negotiating team with Chechnya, was head of the National Security Council until dismissed by President Yeltsin in November. Berezovsky was head of the Logovaz conglomerate, which includes Russia's largest automobile dealership. He held major interests in Aeroflot—Russian International Airlines; Sibneft, one of Russia's largest petroleum companies; United Bank; and ORT, a public television network. Other prominent Jews included Aleksandr Livshits, former minister of economics and more recently the president's deputy chief of staff for economic issues; Yakov Urinson, Livshits's successor as minister of economics; Aleksandr Braverman, first deputy minister of state property; Boris Nemtsov, first deputy prime minister; and bankers Mikhail Frydman and Vladimir Gusinsky, both active in the Russian Jewish Congress.

Yukhym Zvyahilsky, former acting prime minister of Ukraine, who fled to Israel in 1994 after being charged with embezzling $25 million, returned to Ukraine in March 1997, presumably protected by his parliamentary immunity.

**Israel and the Middle East**

In October 1996 the Russian Ministry of Justice authorized the Jewish Agency for Israel to continue its operations as a local agency with 69 branches. This solved the dispute with the Russian government, which claimed that the Jewish Agency was operating illegally and had violated the terms of its charter. In addition to advocating and facilitating immigration to Israel, the Jewish Agency operated 236 Hebrew-language courses (ulpanim) in the former Soviet Union (FSU), with 18,150 students and 550 teachers.

Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu charged in August 1997 that Russia was helping Iran to develop guidance and delivery systems for long-range missiles. Some in the Israeli government advocated freezing economic cooperation
with Russia. The Russian press admitted that Russia had $1 billion worth of military contracts with Iran, but Russian spokesmen, including Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, denied that Russia was helping Iran to build missiles. Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov went to the Middle East in October to lay the groundwork for Russia’s renewed involvement in the region and took the occasion to deny again Russia’s transfer of missile and nuclear technology to Iran. Primakov tried to bring Israel and Syria closer to peace talks and supported the “land-for-peace” formula for settling the dispute between the two countries.

Aleksandr Bovin resigned as Russia’s ambassador to Israel in late 1997. He wrote in Izvestiia that Palestinian terrorism and the PLO’s refusal to eliminate paragraphs from its charter calling for the destruction of Israel “caused shifts in Israeli public opinion that led to the fall of the Rabin-Peres government and enabled Netanyahu to hold up talks with the PLO” (no. 5, 1997). Azerbaijan deferred opening an embassy in Israel after a visit by Prime Minister Netanyahu in August 1997, who explored the possibility of Azerbaijani oil sales to Israel. Uzbekistan, however, opened an embassy that September.

In August 1997 Israel and Russia agreed on joint action to maintain security on flights between the two countries. Israel was the only country whose special services were allowed to enter Russia armed. Russia and Israel agreed to cooperate in combating organized crime and fighting terrorism. Immediately following the agreement, Grigory Lerner (Zvi Ben-Ari), an Israeli immigrant from Russia, was arrested in Israel and charged with 14 counts of extortion, bribery, and forgery in Israel. Russian deputy prime minister and minister of internal affairs Anatoly Kulikov went to Israel in connection with the case. Lerner was also accused of absconding with $85 million from Russia and with complicity in the murder of a Russian bank director.

Nationality Affairs

The Russian Federation (RF), which was still shaping its political structure, provided for national-cultural autonomy for the multiple peoples scattered over its territory. Thus, the second congress of Ukrainians held in Moscow in October 1997 drafted a program enabling Ukrainians in Russia to get an education in Ukrainian, publish a Ukrainian magazine, and have their own television channel—all to be financed from federal and regional budgets. Writing in the official newspaper, Rossiiskiye vesti (October 30, 1997), Emil Pain and Andrei Susarov concluded on the basis of an analysis of the 1994 “microcensus” that “many ethnic communities that had been thought to have been assimilated into kindred peoples are, in fact, retaining their ethnic distinctiveness and separate self-awareness.”

Under a law of November 15, 1997, the nationality of a newborn child could be registered officially if the parents so desired, but there was no obligation to do so. A new provision was included whereby anyone could change his or her name starting at age 14 rather than 16, and authorization to do so would no longer
be required from internal affairs agencies. Presumably, this would make it easier for people to disguise their ethnicity.

Another law proved highly controversial. As of October 1, 1997, nationality was no longer to be registered in one's internal passport (the "fifth paragraph"). This could prevent officials from taking account of nationality in admission to higher education, employment, and other decisions. While some welcomed this, particularly Jews and others who wished to keep their nationality private, the governments of Tatarstan and of several regions in the North Caucasus, as well as Communist deputies in the Duma, demanded that nationality be registered at least on a voluntary basis. Otherwise, they argued, the numbers of some nationalities would be artificially reduced in official calculations and reports.

Interestingly, a vice-president of the St. Petersburg Jewish Association, Aleksandr Frenkel, argued in a major newspaper that the nationality designation should not be dropped, since it "prevented the disappearance... of ethnic groups that were subjected to persecution and discrimination, and fostered conditions for their revival today" (Nezavisimaya gazeta, November 10, 1997). He suggested that nationality designation had also facilitated Jewish emigration and urged that it be kept because it "makes nationality a parameter of the relationship between the individual and the state" and enables peoples to demand state support of their cultures. Finally, designating one's nationality would prevent "unchecked pursuit of a policy of Russification." At year's end the matter was still being negotiated.

**Anti-Semitism**

Two contradictory trends marked the post-Soviet period. On one hand, in contrast to the Soviet regime, none of the post-Soviet governments in any of the successor states pursued explicitly anti-Semitic policies. On the other hand, spontaneous, grassroots anti-Semitism flourished, unchecked by governmental or social action. The main sources of anti-Semitism seemed to be, first, on the collective level, the sense of humiliation over the Soviet Union's loss of superpower status, and, on the individual level, the loss of jobs, income, and status. A second factor was the understandable inability of many to comprehend why their economic situation had declined so precipitously and why society seemed to be unraveling—with soaring crime rates, widespread pornography, and immoral and unethical behavior leading them to search for an explanation. As journalist Alessandra Stanley put it: "Frustrated with the wrenching economic and social upheaval that followed the collapse of Communism, and the Soviet Union, in 1991, and spurred on by politicians willing to tap their resentments, many people are returning to a traditional scapegoat, the Jews" ("Success May Be Bad for Jews as Old Russian Bias Surfaces," New York Times, April 15, 1997).

A third source of anti-Semitism was simply the anti-Jewish stereotypes and attitudes that had been transmitted from one generation to the next and continued to be so. Typical was the response by Vladimir Gudylev, a 41-year-old auto me-
chanic, to a question asked by a journalist on the streets of Moscow: “Today, what would you call the holiday Russia observes on November 7 [the anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution, redubbed the ‘day of peace and reconciliation’]?” “It’s a Jewish-Kike holiday. The Jews and the Masons are still in power” (Moskovskii komsomolets, November 6, 1997).

Institutionally, the sources of anti-Semitism seemed to be the Russian Orthodox Church, the Communist parties, and the extreme Russian, Ukrainian, Baltic, and other nationalists. The chief expressions of anti-Semitism, aside from insults and other face-to-face utterances, were destruction of Jewish property or monuments commemorating Jews and Jewish history; press and other media attacks on Jews, who were blamed for every evil imaginable; and physical attacks.

Recent examples of the first include swastikas and anti-Semitic slogans painted on the entrance to the only synagogue in Riga, Latvia, in December 1997 (while pamphlets were circulating calling Jews and Russians the main enemies of the Latvian people), and two desecrations in the summer of 1997, in Vilnius, Lithuania, at the site of the oldest Jewish cemetery. Tombstone desecrations were reported in Jewish cemeteries in Mogilev (Belarus), Smolensk (Russia), and Tallinn (Estonia). In July 1997 a memorial stone marking the site of the Vilnius ghetto during World War II was removed by vandals, an act condemned by Lithuanian president Algirdas Brazauskas. A less direct measure, perhaps not intended to be anti-Jewish, was the change made to a monument in L’viv, West Ukraine, in December 1997. Erected originally in tribute to Soviet troops in World War II, it was renamed to honor “fighters for freedom of Ukraine.” These included the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), an explicitly anti-Semitic group in interwar Poland; the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), which for a time collaborated with the Nazis; and other “anti-Soviet” groups. Since the OUN and UPA were directly responsible for murdering Jews, the alteration of the monument was viewed by Jews as an ominous sign.

When Martin Scorsese’s film The Last Temptation of Christ was shown on NTV (independent) in Moscow in November 1997, the Russian Orthodox Church condemned it as sacrilegious. Some called the television network “Tel Avivision” and a “nest of Zionism.” Pickets of NTV held up signs saying “Zionism will destroy Russia.”

During the controversy over what to do with the physical remains of Tsar Nikolai II and his family, which had been going on for several years, Metropolitan Yuvenaly told a meeting of the Holy Synod: “Contemporary expert theological analysis of the notion of ‘ritual murder’ confirms the negative findings of the group of Russian Orthodox theologians who... testified at the Beilis trial in 1913. And analysis of the circumstances of the murder of the imperial family rules out any conclusion that it was ritual in nature” (Sergei Bychkov in Moskovskii komsomolets, November 12, 1997). Nearly 90 years after the world watched in amazement as a Russian court seriously considered a charge that a Jew had murdered a Christian child to use its blood for ritual purposes, not only were such
beliefs still held, but a high-ranking church official was prepared to investigate the possibility that the act had occurred more than once.

Since the church's influence had grown tremendously—it now provided chaplains for the armed forces, spent huge sums on welfare activities, and constructed and reconstructed many churches, often with government funds—church attitudes toward the Jews were highly influential. This was a church that, unlike the Catholic Church, had not reconsidered its traditional teachings about Jews and whose attitudes toward Jews and Judaism were a throwback to centuries gone by. Curiously, even among the fast-growing neo-pagan churches in Ukraine, one writer found, the anti-Semitic motif was powerful. In a booklet issued by RUNvia, one such new religion, containing answers to 200 questions about its doctrines, Izvestiia reporter Yanina Sokolovskaya counted “up to 15 sections... dealing with the nature of the ‘Yids’ ” (October 31, 1997).

A typical example of the way Jews were portrayed in some media is an article by one Anton Surikov in the newspaper Zavtra, in August 1997 (no. 33, p. 4). Entitled “The Collapse of Russia and the Jews,” the article asserted that Boris Yeltsin's wife and daughter were Jewish (they are actually Russians). More importantly, Surikov stated baldly that “members of the Jewish community are in total control of the financial sphere and news media. That is, to all intents and purposes, the Jewish community governs Russia.” In a bizarre twist, Surikov claimed that he learned this while on a trip to Israel, where officials expected massive pogroms to break out in Russia because Jewish control had aroused the righteous indignation of the populace. Israel was therefore preparing plans for the massive evacuation of the Jews. The United States, Surikov claimed, backed Deputy Prime Minister Chubais, a Jew (he is actually Russian), because “it is obvious that the Americans’ ultimate goal is to de-industrialize Russia, reduce its population by 25 to 30 percent, and turn the country into a raw-materials colony of the United States, governed in U.S. interests by people like Chubais.”

However absurd such statements may seem to outsiders, there was a considerable public in the former Soviet Union inclined to believe them. Certainly, most Jews continued to perceive the society in which they lived as riddled with anti-Semitism. It is striking that in a late 1997 survey of a quota sample of 500 Jews in Moscow and 300 in Ekaterinburg, Valeriy Chervyakov and Vladimir Shapiro of the Institute of Sociology, Russian Academy of Sciences, found that anti-Semitism was the single most important element in the formation of Jewish consciousness. In answer to the question “What was the greatest influence on the formation of your ethnic consciousness?” 56 percent of Muscovite Jews and 48 percent of those in Ekaterinburg said “anti-Semitism.” Books, literature, and music were mentioned frequently as well, but anti-Semitism was reported more frequently than any other factor.

Significantly, when asked how they would like to have their “nationality” indicated in their passports, nearly half the respondents in both cities wanted either nothing registered or “citizen of Russia.” They would not try to “pass” as
Russians" (Russkii)—only 1–2 percent would choose that—but only slightly less than half would choose to be registered as Jews, though at the time over 80 percent were so registered. Only about 60 percent would choose to be born Jewish if they could be born again. Clearly, to be known officially and publicly as Jews was still something many wanted to avoid, however positively they may have felt inwardly about their Jewishness. Nearly four out of five in both cities asserted that anti-Semitism was “very important” as a motivation for emigration.

According to Mark Krasnoselsky, director of the anti-defamation committee of the Russian Jewish Congress, there were about 50 “extremist organizations” and about 300–400 periodicals with circulations in the millions that carried anti-Semitic materials. While only 5 to 7 percent of respondents in opinion polls expressed explicitly anti-Semitic views, the “overwhelming majority” responded “don’t know” to the question “What is your attitude toward Jews?” Indeed, the All-Russian Center for the Study of Public Opinion reported that the proportion of respondents claiming “no feeling one way or the other toward Jews” had gone from 26 percent in 1995 to 83 percent a year later (Moskovskie novosti, April 20–27, 1997, p. 25). Krasnoselsky complained that legal measures against anti-Semitism were ineffective (Nezavisimaya gazeta, August 29, 1997). Indeed, in October 1997 the Duma rejected an amendment to the criminal code that would have banned public justification, approval, or praise of crimes committed by fascist regimes. Ironically, Nikolai Ryzhkov, a former Soviet premier, complained that such an amendment would allow suppression of dissidence. Russian Prosecutor General Yurii Skuratov said that his office, the Justice Ministry, and the Federal Security Service would set up an interdepartmental group to combat hate crimes. He told the Russian Jewish Congress that 49 criminal cases had been opened in the last two years on charges of inciting ethnic, racial, or religious hatred.

**Nazi War Criminals**

Past anti-Semitism continued to cast its shadow. In July 1997 the case against Aleksandras Lileikis, deported from the United States a year earlier for having covered up his role in massacres of Jews in wartime Lithuania, was suspended indefinitely because of his poor health. The Wiesenthal Center in Israel urged the Lithuanian government to arrest 89-year-old Kazys Gimzauskas, Lileikis’s assistant, for war crimes. Charges against this former deputy director of the Vilnius region security police, 1941–44, were filed in November, and the law was amended to allow the trial of people who were in poor health. The posthumous rehabilitation of war criminal Petras Kriksciunas was revoked, the first instance of an abrogated rehabilitation. Sixteen similar cases were said to be pending.

In September 1997 Latvia declined to request the extradition of Konrad Kalejs, an Australian accused of war crimes who had been deported from the United States and Canada, because of “insufficient evidence.”
Religion

The passage by the Duma in June 1997, in a 300–8 vote, of a law on religion was a dramatic development. The Federation Council approved the bill in September, and President Yeltsin signed it after having vetoed an earlier version in July. The law was strongly supported by the Russian Orthodox Church, because it would permit only those religions that had been active in Russia for over 50 years and that had branches in at least half of the federation's 89 regions to receive "all-Russian" (national) status. Religious groups operating even locally for fewer than 15 years could not be registered and were not legal entities. This deprived them of the right to own property or a bank account. The law was aimed at Catholics and Evangelical Christians, as well as groups such as Hare Krishna and Aum Shinrikyo, the Japanese cult responsible for the gassing of the Tokyo subway.

Polls showed that the Orthodox Church was the single most trusted institution in Russia—54 percent named it as such, with the army being named by 42 percent and mayors by 35 percent. Nevertheless, the church had been trying to prevent other Christian and non-Christian groups from proselytizing in the Russian Federation. Yeltsin vetoed the original bill after Western protests; after it was slightly amended, he signed it. Protests by Western Christian groups continued.

JEWISH COMMUNITY

Demography

Emigration continued to erode FSU Jewry, whose low birthrates, aged population, and high mortality rates could not compensate for the outflow. The pace of emigration slowed somewhat in 1997, especially to the United States. In calendar year 1996 there were 19,497 immigrants to the United States from the FSU; between September 1996 and October 1997, there were 15,837. In the latter period, 41.5 percent of the immigrants came from Ukraine and 30 percent from the Russian Federation. Forty-seven percent had been in the labor force, and 69 percent of those were professionals. This was a lower proportion by far in the labor force than in any year since 1991. Following the pattern of previous years, 46 percent of the immigrants settled in New York City.

In 1997, 54,233 immigrants arrived in Israel from the FSU. According to the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, 68 percent of immigrants arriving in 1996 registered themselves as Jews, the same proportion as had done so in 1994 and 1995.

Communal Affairs

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, over 80 buildings that had once been Jewish communal property were returned to Jewish communities, and 67 others
were in the process of being reclaimed. The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) ran seminars to train local Jews how to reclaim communal properties. There were 37 functioning Jewish community centers in 34 cities and towns, located in five republics, and most were housed in reclaimed properties.

The JDC supplied 145 Judaica libraries to Jewish schools, universities, cultural and religious societies, and synagogues in more than 75 cities. Five new libraries were opened in 1996.

According to estimates by the “Joint,” a third of the Jewish population in the former Soviet Union were elderly, and between 200,000 and 300,000 were needy. About 70,000 of them received some sort of assistance. There were nearly 40 larger and a hundred smaller welfare (“Hasadim”) societies in 127 localities, spread among five states that had emerged from the Soviet Union. About half were opened in 1996, eight of them in areas with a high proportion of Holocaust survivors. The latter were funded largely by the Conference on Material Claims Against Germany. About 1,700 volunteers in the former Soviet Union delivered food parcels, “meals on wheels,” and medical equipment to those in need. The largest Jewish welfare organization in the FSU was “Hesed Avot” in Kiev, which provided hot meals to about 6,500 of the estimated 14,000 elderly Jews in the Ukrainian capital. The Joint sponsored an Institute for Communal and Welfare Workers in St. Petersburg, to create a cadre of social-work professionals for Jewish communal service.

The communal structures emerging in the FSU are typified by those of Odessa in Ukraine, Kishinev in Moldova, and Bishkek in Kyrgyzstan. Odessa, whose mayor was Jewish, had a Jewish Cultural Society, two Jewish schools, two kindergartens with 87 children, two synagogues, and a “children’s home.” About 600 people were studying Hebrew. It is estimated that of the nearly 90,000 Jews in and around Odessa, about a thousand emigrated each year. There were about 23,000 elderly, ill, and needy people, about 450 of whom received hot home meals. Kishinev had about 300 students in Hebrew courses, 13 small Jewish schools with about 1,180 students, about 30 Jewish organizations, and 133 elderly receiving home care. In Bishkek, the smallest of the three communities, the Jewish population had declined from about 9,000 in 1989 to 2,000, largely due to emigration. The communal organization called itself Menorah. There was a Sunday school with over 60 children, a day school with 20, a Jewish youth club with 60 members, a choir, and two dance groups. The local Jewish library held about a thousand volumes. The synagogue was attended mostly by “Bukharan” (Central Asian) Jews, whereas the Ashkenazim (European Jews) affiliated mostly with Menorah.

The Russian Jewish Congress signed an agreement with the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations and with the National Conference on Soviet Jewry to establish an “ongoing structured relationship.” The Russian Jewish Congress signed a similar agreement with the World Jewish Congress, adding cooperation in restitution of Jewish property and in interfaith relations to their agreement.
In August 1996 a cornerstone was laid for a new synagogue in Almaty, capital of Kazakhstan. In January 1997, in Kazan, capital of Tatarstan in the Russian Federation, a century-old synagogue building was returned to the 10,000-strong Jewish community. A four-story building for the Jewish community of Tallinn, Estonia, was to be built in the center of the city. It was designed to include a synagogue, community center, and facility for the elderly. The World Union of Progressive Judaism claimed 30 affiliated congregations officially registered in the republics and three regional associations.

Culture and Education

In May 1997 a conference in Moscow on “The Lessons of the Holocaust and Contemporary Russia” featured over 60 speakers who presented scholarly analyses, personal recollections, and discussions of contemporary anti-Semitism and Holocaust education. Dr. Ilya Altman, director of a Holocaust center in Moscow, chaired the conference.

In September an international conference in Vilnius, Lithuania, discussed the legacy of the Vilna Gaon (the “Vilna Genius”) on the 200th anniversary of the death of this outstanding rabbinic authority and leader of the Mitnagdic (anti-Hassidic) camp. The Association of Lithuanian Jews in Israel and the Simon Wiesenthal Center there called for a boycott of the conference, saying that Lithuania had done nothing to prosecute Lithuanians who had collaborated with the Nazis. The weeklong event was held nevertheless and included a ceremonial session of Parliament, a reception by President Algirdas Brazauskas, and the return of four Torah scrolls from Lithuanian archives to the one functioning synagogue in Vilnius.

Several groups representing American Jewish organizations visited Vilnius in 1997 in order to investigate the status of Jewish books and other artifacts stored in the Lithuanian capital. A delegation from the American Jewish Committee, YIVO Institute, and B’nai B’rith was followed by a group from Chicago, including Sen. Richard Durbin of Illinois. The Council of Archives and Research Libraries in Jewish Studies, supported by the National Foundation for Jewish Culture, also visited Vilnius in March to survey Judaica holdings. It recommended establishing an international commission to discuss preservation, restoration, archiving, and access. The groups found close to 125,000 volumes in the Judaica collection of the Bibliography and Book Center, of which fewer than a third had been catalogued and shelved. About 10,800 books were classified as “first editions” of Hebrew or Yiddish books published in Lithuania. Nearly 74,000 periodical volumes had been catalogued and were being microfilmed. The National Library’s Judaica collection had some 370 Torah scrolls. The Beth Medrash Govoha of Lakewood, N.J., undertook an independent initiative and buried unusable Torah scrolls in Lithuania, claiming that it was a legitimate heir of Lithuanian Jewry (actually, this yeshivah originated in Belarus). The Telz Yeshivah, now in Cleveland but originally from the Lithuanian town of Telsiai, laid claim to many
of the books and scrolls. The YIVO Institute, after years of negotiation, was receiving from Vilnius books and other materials that clearly had belonged to YIVO in Vilnius (then Wilno in Poland) and had survived the war. YIVO was to copy its own former holdings and return the originals to Lithuania.

Jewish education continued to expand in the former Soviet Union. The Conservative movement sponsored two day schools, in Odessa and Chernivtsi in Ukraine, the Orthodox movement many more. The JDC supplied educational materials to 45 day schools, 35 preschools, and over 200 Sunday schools. It claimed to supply a total of 296 schools that had 21,000 students enrolled. Educational publications included *Avot u'banim* (Parents and Children), a monthly journal in Russian for teachers, parents, and children, and *Evreiskaya shkola*, a professional educators’ journal published by the Petersburg Jewish University. Twenty educators from the FSU attended the Melton Program for Senior Jewish Educators in Jerusalem, spending six months in intensive study.

A Hillel foundation, serving postsecondary students and young adults, opened in Minsk, the fourth such unit in the FSU. Hillel in Moscow, opened in 1994, counted 50 “activists,” 300 “regulars,” and up to a thousand occasional participants in its activities. For the first time, its members organized their own High Holy Day services, which were held in Moscow’s Choral Synagogue.

In higher education, five Jewish institutions (the Jewish Universities in Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Minsk; Solomon University in Kiev; and Maimonides College in Moscow) claimed 850 students. Another 2,000 students were said to be taking courses in the roughly 50 Jewish studies programs at state and private universities. There were seven “people’s universities,” or institutes of adult Jewish education, involving some 1,600 people. For example, the Jewish Open University in Odessa claimed 80 students who met twice monthly in six-hour sessions. A similar pattern on a smaller scale was followed by the parallel institution in Vitebsk, Belarus.

Project Judaica—a joint program of the Russian State University for the Humanities, the Jewish Theological Seminary, and YIVO Institute—graduated 17 Judaic studies majors in 1996; in 1997, the Maimonides College in Moscow graduated ten students. It was projected that in 1998 Project Judaica would produce 15 graduates, the Jewish University of Moscow, 37, and Maimonides, 16. Sefer, the organization of academics involved in Judaica throughout the FSU, held its annual academic conference in February 1997, bringing together about 300 Jewish and non-Jewish academics.

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