Federal Republic of Germany

National Affairs

For the first time in the history of the Federal Republic of Germany, in September 1998 a sitting government was voted out of office. Chancellor Helmut Kohl had been in power for 16 years. Had he won the election, he would have overtaken Bismarck as the longest-serving chancellor in German history. Instead, the German electorate opted to replace him with Social Democrat Gerhard Schröder. At 54, Schröder became the first German head of state to have no memory of life in the Third Reich. Though observers interpreted this shift in power as the beginning of a new era, Schröder made every effort to assure German voters and European allies that his government would represent “anything but a revolution.”

After the September 27 election, Chancellor Schröder and his Social Democratic Party (SPD) concluded a coalition agreement with the environmentalist Green Party. The tax plan put forward by the Red-Green coalition provoked strong critiques from representatives of industry who had supported Schröder's candidacy. They questioned the degree to which he would be able to influence the policies of his finance minister, Oscar Lafontaine, who had kept his leftist views to himself during the campaign. In another controversial move, the new government proposed reforms that would make Germany the last state in Western Europe to abandon a legal conception of citizenship based on blood.

On the world stage, Germany assured allies that it would maintain the stable partnerships forged during the Kohl era. At the same time, on several policy fronts, the Red-Green government boldly asserted German interests. Within the European Union, Schröder and Lafontaine strained relations with Britain and France by advocating majority voting procedures, the harmonization of tax policies, and reforms to EU finances that would ease the disproportionate share of the budget traditionally shouldered by Germany.

The Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS), controlled by members of the former East German Communist Party, passed the required 5-percent hurdle in the national elections to secure a place in the Bundestag. The party also maintained
its strength in state elections in the new federal states of eastern Germany, even joining together with the SPD in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern to form a governing coalition. It marked the first time since German unification that the former Communists played the role of governing party.

In state elections in Saxony-Anhalt in April, the German People's Union (GPU) won a greater percentage of the vote (12.9) than had any other extreme right-wing party in the postwar period. The momentum did not carry through to the national elections in September, however, as neither the GPU nor any of the other right-wing parties topped the 5-percent hurdle. Nevertheless, echoes of their rhetoric could be heard in the speeches of the mainstream Christian Social Union (CSU) and the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) parties. Politicians aimed their declarations that “Germany is not a country of immigration!” at voters angry about persistent unemployment and eager to hold foreigners responsible for their troubles.

Israel and the Middle East

German policy toward Israel cooled in the year preceding the election in response to the standstill in the Middle East peace process. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visited Chancellor Kohl in Bonn twice in the first three months of 1999, seeking support from a traditional Israeli ally in the face of European Union policies sympathetic to the Palestinians. In early March, during Netanyahu's second visit, Kohl simultaneously reiterated his commitment to Israeli security and confirmed German plans to offer financial support to the Palestinian territories through the European Union. German president Roman Herzog pursued the same policy during his November trip to the Middle East. Herzog visited the Palestinian Autonomous Territory as well as Israel, calling on both sides to implement the recently signed Wye River agreement.

The implications of the change in government for German-Israeli diplomatic relations remained uncertain. Though some questioned Schröder's appreciation of the historic ties that bind the two countries, the coalition agreement signed by the Greens and the Social Democrats did emphasize the importance of maintaining a friendly and productive bilateral relationship with Israel.

The record of the Greens on issues of importance to Israel was mixed. On the one hand, they consistently championed the Palestinian cause. On the other hand, the Greens have always insisted that Germany offer restitution to as yet uncompensated victims of National Socialist persecution. Such willingness to address outstanding claims without being unduly pressurized was in marked contrast to the policy of the previous government (see “Restitution,” below).

Throughout the first half of 1998, the 50th anniversary of Israel was the subject of panel discussions and special reports in the German media. Press coverage of the anniversary painted a portrait of an Israeli society in the midst of an identity crisis. Often featuring the views of Israeli or German-Jewish analysts,
media reports highlighted the contemporary conflicts between religious and secular Israelis, within the fractious Israeli political landscape, and between supporters and opponents of peace with the Palestinians. Israeli and Palestinian scholars and political figures, including several members of the Knesset, addressed these same themes at the mid-June symposium “50 Years of Israel: Jewish State or State of Jews?” Organizers of the event in Munich, including the Goethe Institute and the Department of Jewish History and Culture of the Ludwig Maximilian University, intended this all-day discussion of internal Israeli affairs to counteract the tendency toward generalization, simplification, and stereotype in German public perceptions of Israel.

In addition to critical reflection on the Israeli past and present, an array of celebrations marked the anniversary across Germany. An Israeli bazaar in Mannheim, a play written by members of the Hagen Jewish community, and receptions in the community centers of Trier and Bayreuth typified the commemorations that each community in Germany organized in the spring. On May 20, 1998, Jerusalem Day festivals in the streets of Berlin and Düsseldorf drew large crowds from the Jewish community and the non-Jewish German public as well. Mikhail Gorbachev joined in the anniversary festivities as the guest of honor at the Keren Hayesod benefit gala held at the German Opera of Berlin. The largest and most high-profile affair, however, was the celebration held in early May at the Berliner Schauspielhaus, which drew the likes of Chancellor Kohl, President Herzog, Israeli ambassador to Germany Avi Primor, president of the Bundestag Rita Süßmuth, Defense Minister Volker Rühe, and many other national figures. On August 27, a musical review entitled “Israel Celebrates Its Anniversary,” featuring 40 Israeli singers, dancers, and musicians, opened its tour of Germany at the Staatsoper in Berlin to rave reviews.

In the realm of cultural exchange, Germans and Israelis continued to break new ground in 1998. For the first time, a group of 17 German officer cadets spent three midsummer weeks in Israel touring and training with their counterparts in the Israeli army. The first weekend of November, German and Israeli authors met in Mainz, at the invitation of the North Rhine-Westphalian and German federal bureaus for political education to discuss “Israeli and German Literature: Perspectives and Points of Intersection.” Participants included Israeli Ruth Almog and the German-Jewish author Barbara Honigmann. Also in November, Israeli ambassador Primor announced that new ground in German-Israeli relations would be broken—literally—in January of 1999, when work would begin on the first Israeli embassy ever to be built in Berlin.

**Anti-Semitism and Extremism**

The Federal Agency for the Protection of the Constitution reported for 1998 that, in spite of an 11 percent increase in the number of right-wing extremists, the number of crimes attributed to this group fell below 1997 levels. While crimes
of all kinds decreased almost 6 percent from just under 12,000 in 1997 to 10,341 in 1998, the number of violent acts committed by right-wing extremists dropped from 790 in 1997 to 708 in 1998, a drop of more than 11 percent. Of course, the trends varied from region to region: Rhineland-Pfalz reported a 62-percent increase in radical rightist crime in the first half of 1998, in comparison with the same period in 1997.

Police in Lower Saxony, Schleswig-Holstein, Hamburg, and Bavaria cooperated in early February to close a notorious association of neo-Nazis and its "colony" in Hetendorf (Lower Saxony), which had been used for years as a neo-Nazi gathering place and site for demonstrations. The movement continued to rely more heavily on the Internet as a medium for organization and recruitment. Of greater concern to German law-enforcement officials was the stockpiling of weapons in neo-Nazi cells, which created a potential for right-wing radical terrorism. Furthermore, study after study pointed to a large reservoir for potential neo-Nazi recruits among the young in the eastern German states.

In the first weeks of 1998, officials in Brandenburg, the federal state surrounding Berlin, acknowledged the seriousness of security threats posed by skinhead youths known to law enforcement agencies in more than 80 Brandenburg localities. Media reports on the topic discouraged people living in Berlin from visiting the Brandenburg countryside, traditionally a popular vacation destination.

A special police unit created in February to deter neo-Nazi crime was unable to prevent a series of attacks in late spring and early summer on groups of schoolchildren from Berlin on field trips to the countryside. On at least eight separate occasions, all in different locations, skinheads assaulted classes composed of students from various ethnic backgrounds. These attacks aside, in early July Interior Minister Alwin Ziel (SPD) credited the "Mobile Action Troops" with cutting in half the number of criminal offenses committed by right-wing radicals in the first half of 1998 in comparison with the previous year.

Although partisan politics prevented unified action against the skinhead threat, the independent justice minister of Brandenburg, Otto Bräutigam, announced in April the creation of an antidiscrimination commission to offer support to the victims of antiforeigner violence. A number of grassroots initiatives at the local level also sought to combat the rising tide of neo-Nazism.

A series of reports indicating the spread of neo-Nazism among rank-and-file soldiers and a lecture by the infamous Manfred Roeder at the Bundeswehr academy (see AJYB 1998, pp. 312-13) provided the impetus for a January 1998 parliamentary investigation of extremism in the army. The head of the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, Peter Frisch, testified before the commission that extremist groups used the Bundeswehr as a means of getting their members to learn the spirit of camaraderie and how to handle weapons. After months of refusing to acknowledge the gravity of the situation, Defense Minister Volker Rühe announced that the Bundeswehr would attempt to recruit soldiers from the parties of the left to achieve a greater balance in its ranks. He
also provoked a minor controversy in February when he suggested that the loyalty of career soldiers to the constitution would be subject to investigation. The fact that record numbers of young Germans chose the path of conscientious objection to military service in 1998 further narrowed the population from which the army could draw soldiers of leftist inclinations.

Soccer fans had also become an important source for the recruitment of right-wing radicals. A central police database contained information on some 2,100 "violent hooligans." These soccer fans did not necessarily hold extremist views, but many of them did ultimately join neo-Nazi ranks. A group of German toughs grabbed the international spotlight during the World Cup matches in June when they beat a French police officer into a coma in Lens, France. Football fans in Berlin were responsible for the desecration of a Jewish cemetery in Brandenburg, and in Dresden fans incorporated anti-Semitic symbols into their rhetoric.

Though the vast majority of neo-Nazi crimes targeted foreigners, extremists also desecrated Jewish memorial sites a number of times in 1998. A monument to the 55,000 Berlin Jews deported from the capital city fell victim to vandals four times in the first four months of 1998. In July the Centrum Judaicum in Berlin discovered a neo-Nazi entry in its visitors' book. It was the museum's first such encounter with anti-Semitism. Vandalism planted an explosive in early October at the grave of Heinz Galinski, the longtime chairman of the Berlin Jewish community, causing only minor damage. On the 28th of the same month, unknown perpetrators painted a Star of David and the name of the chairman of the Central Council of Jews in Germany on a pig and chased it through one of the most crowded squares in Berlin. The anniversary of Kristallnacht on November 9 was an occasion for vandalism in Schwerin, Berlin, and Potsdam. On December 19, Galinski's tombstone was again a target; this time it was completely demolished.

RIGHT-WING POLITICAL PARTIES

The electoral success of the German People's Union (GPU) in April 26 state parliamentary elections in Saxony-Anhalt represented but the most troublesome of a series of events and trends that reflected the alienation of many Germans from the democratic institutions of the state. Funded exclusively by Gerhard Frey, the Munich-based owner of various nationalist publishing houses, the GPU joined the campaign just three weeks before the election, boasting no more than 100 party members in the state and no organizational headquarters. With DM 3 million of his own money, more than the SPD and the CDU spent on their entire campaigns combined, Frey proceeded to flood the state with 1.2 million letters and 20,000 posters directed at young male voters and sporting slogans such as "Out with Foreign Bandits" and "Jobs to Germans First." His party's share of the vote translated into 16 seats in the state parliament.

Differing explanations of the GPU success were voiced along the political spectrum. Chancellor Kohl offered the clearest expression of the predominant
CDU and SPD view: “It has to do with protest behavior, not neo-Nazism.” CDU representatives in Saxony-Anhalt claimed that the Social Democratic-led state government had driven voters into the hands of the GPU by accepting the former Communist party as a de facto coalition partner. The SPD, meanwhile, interpreted it as an indicator of the electorate’s dissatisfaction with the Kohl government. In Bavaria, a state dominated by the conservative Christian Social Union (CSU), leading politicians took the appeal of extremist rhetoric to voters more seriously and left little room on the right to the GPU. Even the PDS, the former proponent of Communist internationalism, began to debate the question of how to integrate a German national identity into its platform.

Scholars and public intellectuals, meanwhile, warned against self-serving claims that GPU votes signaled the protest of democratic citizens who could easily be won back to the mainstream parties. The oft-repeated refrain that such protests came mainly from the unemployed, who simply wanted a government that would address their need for work, was belied by the fact that unemployed voters were a minority within the GPU electorate in Saxony-Anhalt. More compelling than employment status as an explanatory factor was the generational experience of the predominantly young voters (including 30 percent of first-time voters) who gave their support to Frey. Socialized in a dictatorship that allowed no forum for political debate, a generation of Germans in the new states have had little or no political education to foster in them the values of civility and liberalism necessary to sustain a commitment to democratic institutions.

Membership in extreme right political parties rose 12 percent in 1998 to 39,000, and experts estimated their voter potential at 13 percent nationwide. Nevertheless, the GPU proved unable to unify the highly fractionalized movement. The Republikaner, the only extreme right party to endure a loss in membership in 1998, appealed primarily to wealthy conservatives with an ideology of chauvinistic affluence who view the losers in the system, primarily foreigners, as potential threats to the system. The other right-wing parties, the GPU and the National Democratic Party (NDP) of Germany, both championed a nationalistic and racist opposition to international finance, globalization, and the presence of foreigners on German soil.

The embrace by the NDP of the neo-Nazi skinhead scene and its desire for mobilization in the streets inhibited cooperation between it and Frey’s strictly political machine. By turning its focus from the older generation of diehard Nazis in western Germany to the younger generation of angry, disenchanted youth in the eastern states, the NDP had grown substantially in the last few years. One-third of its 4,300 members came from the states of the former GDR, and 70 percent of those who joined the party in 1997 were below the age of 30. The party draws its support among the young from its youth organization, the Young National Democrats, which has been able to avoid a government ban because of its affiliation with a legitimate political party.

A tension existed within the NPD between the goals of electoral success and
activism in the streets. This tension came to the fore at the NPD “Day of Struggle” demonstration in Leipzig on May 1. The party’s appeal to young right-wing radicals was enhanced by its determination to take the struggle to the streets, yet the violence that erupted in clashes with leftists attending counterdemonstrations ultimately undercut its potential to win the support of disaffected voters at the ballot box. At the same time, its demonstrations against a museum exhibit documenting the crimes of the German army during World War II won the support of several politicians from the mainstream parties (see AJYB 1998, pp. 314-15).

Particularly in eastern Germany, the National Democrats gained a foothold in communities through their social activism. They maintained a presence on the streets and sometimes even helped locals with their shopping or babysitting. Certain local chapters established such control over their territories that they referred to them as “nationally liberated zones.” In these zones, neo-Nazis determined the norms of dress and behavior, insured that no leftist propaganda was displayed, and allowed no foreigners to show themselves in public at night. Much of what made the NDP scene taboo, if not illegal, in western Germany, was perceived as normal in certain towns in the eastern states: the sale of skinhead CDs in music stores, entire high-school classes sporting shaved heads and combat boots, public officials who closed their eyes to right-wing radical tendencies in a community where foreigners and the disabled were regularly assaulted, and so on.

Holocaust-Related Matters

Restitution

In early January the Kohl government announced an agreement with the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany (also known as the Jewish Claims Conference, or JCC) for the compensation of Jewish survivors of the Holocaust living in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union (FSU). In the aftermath of the cold war, the German state made restitution payments of DM 1.5 billion ($900 million) to the states of Eastern Europe, but the individual survivors never received any of the money. German leaders finally brought months of deadlocked negotiations with the Claims Conference to an end early in the new year in response to a high-profile advocacy campaign sponsored by the American Jewish Committee (see AJYB 1998, p. 316). The agreement stipulated that the Federal Republic would place DM 50 million ($30 million) a year into a fund to be administered by the JCC, beginning in 1999 and ending in 2002. The conference will then divide the money among some 18,000 eligible survivors.

The deal allowed both the German government and the JCC to express satisfaction at having addressed a pressing issue, but survivor groups in Eastern Europe were not united in support of the agreement. Only those Jews who could prove that they had spent at least six months in a concentration camp or 18
months in a ghetto, hidden or living under a false identity, were eligible to receive payments, which amounted to half the monthly pension of Jewish survivors in Western Europe, Israel, and the United States. Non-Jewish victim groups were not included in the negotiations.

Efforts of victim groups to win restitution shifted in focus over the course of 1998 from the German state to private enterprises that profited from the wealth and labor of concentration camp inmates. Scholars estimate that several hundred thousand of the 12 million people forced to work for some 12,000 German firms as slave laborers are still alive. In the decades following the war, banks and corporations argued that, because they had been forced to pay the Nazi state for the slave labor they were allegedly compelled to use, the successor state to the Third Reich, the Federal Republic of Germany, should be held responsible for restitution payments. These arguments, however, lost their validity in the wake of recent controversies surrounding Nazi gold and historical research debunking arguments that Germany industry used forced labor under duress.

On behalf of approximately ten thousand Holocaust survivors and their families, New York attorney Edward Fagan and Munich lawyer Michael Witti filed a class-action suit in June against the Deutsche Bank and the Dresdner Bank. The suit alleged that the banks knowingly profited from the wealth of Jewish victims of National Socialism and sought DM 32 billion ($18 billion) in damages. Later in the summer, on the 50th anniversary of the war crimes judgment at Nuremberg against the heads of the IG Farben chemical combine, several Holocaust survivor groups came together with the "Association of Critical Shareholders" to demand the dissolution of still existent IG Farben financial entities. The protest also called on the chemical companies Bayer, BASF, and Hoechst, the successor firms of IG Farben, to abandon their long-standing tactic of denying legal responsibility for the crimes of their parent firm and to resolve in a timely and equitable manner the claims of former forced laborers.

The changing political and legal climate induced a small minority of companies that had used slave labor during the war, including Volkswagen and Siemens, to set up funds voluntarily for the compensation of victims. Arms manufacturer Karl Diehl decided to institute his own system of compensation in 1997 after controversy surrounded the decision of the Nuremberg city council to make him an honorary citizen (see AJYB 1998, pp. 315-16). The gesture did not bring him the rehabilitation he sought, however, as documents surfaced in 1998 detailing Diehl's involvement in a postwar political movement organized by supporters of the defeated National Socialist regime.

After the Schröder government took power in October, it appeared that the German state would play a pivotal role in resolving pending claims against German industry. Throughout the Kohl era, the government had refused to involve itself in the matter. As late as August 1998, state officials flatly refused to consider the establishment of a joint state-industry fund for the compensation of former slave laborers with valid claims against German companies. As opposition
parties, meanwhile, the Social Democrats and the Greens called on German industry to accept responsibility for its actions under the Nazi regime. After an October 21 meeting with industry leaders, Chancellor Schröder announced his intention to form a working group to set up just such a fund, as a means of “protecting” German industry.

**HOLOCAUST MEMORIALS**

Even as numerous new memorials to the victims of the Holocaust were being unveiled, intellectual debates in the German public sphere suggested that the country had entered a new era in the confrontation with its past. A final decision about a proposed central German memorial to the murdered Jews of Europe seemed imminent as 1998 began, but it was destined to remain a source of controversy for yet another year (see AJYB 1998, pp. 317-18). A series of public discussions in Berlin in January centered on each of the four works selected as finalists by a commission of experts and the three sponsors of the project—the federal government, the city of Berlin, and a private Holocaust memorial advocacy group. Before the participating artists had presented all of their proposals to the public, however, Chancellor Kohl made clear his preference for the design of two American collaborators, artist Richard Serra and architect Peter Eisenman. The design featured tightly packed rows of tall stone columns reminiscent of giant gravestones. In spite of protests against Kohl’s de facto unilateral dismissal of the remaining three designs, politicians from all parties insisted in late January that construction of the memorial would begin in January 1999.

The first obstacle to the realization of this plan came from beneath the future site of the monument, south of the Brandenburg Gate in central Berlin. Excavation of the area, which had lain desolate in the no-man’s-land separating East and West Berlin during the cold war, led to the discovery of the bunker of Nazi propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels. The momentum behind the campaign for the Holocaust memorial quickly overwhelmed voices raised in support of preserving the bunker, in which were found Nazi military gear and skeletons of German soldiers.

In the months that followed, skeptics filled the vacuum created by the silence of the project’s advocates. In the first week of February, a group of 19 prominent intellectuals spoke out against the construction of a central monument. An open letter signed by such public figures as novelists Günter Grass and Peter Schneider and historians Reinhard Kosseleck and Jürgen Kocka urged decision makers to postpone a final resolution of the question. The chief criticisms aired in the letter had been raised repeatedly during the nine-year debate: the numerous objectives envisioned for the memorial could not be achieved by a single artistic representation; the size and scope of the projected monument would not move visitors to a state of critical reflection; authentic Holocaust sites in and around
Berlin had already been preserved and were sufficient to the goals of honoring the dead and learning from the past.

The editor-in-chief of the magazine *du*, Dieter Bachmann, provoked another round of discussion with his suggestion that Potsdamer Platz be renamed Judenplatz (Jews’ Square). Bachmann argued that his proposal, which he published on the front page of the March 5th issue of the national weekly *Die Zeit*, would be more effective in forcing Germans to do the work of remembering than a monument of stone. The idea found little support in the German public and angered several Jewish commentators for its lack of sensitivity to the concerns of the contemporary Jewish community.

Nevertheless, the episode contributed to an atmosphere of opposition to the central Holocaust memorial as conceived by its supporters. In mid-March, Berlin mayor Eberhard Diepgen, one of the few figures with a direct hand in the decision-making process, confirmed to the press his own skepticism about the project.

While the winds of public debate were turning against the memorial, Chancellor Kohl worked in private to convince Serra and Eisenman to adjust their design more to his liking. On May 22, he met with the Americans to discuss his ideas of what alterations were necessary. The following week, Serra withdrew himself from the competition. Though he refused to go into detail in explaining his decision, press reports suggested that Eisenman’s background as an architect left him better prepared than the artist Serra to work with clients to arrive at an acceptable layout for the memorial. Once Kohl viewed and approved Eisenman’s reworked design, the chancellor began to apply pressure on Diepgen, whose opposition to the memorial left him isolated within his own municipal government.

Before the various players in the debate could sort out their differences, the memorial issue became hostage to national politics and the campaign for the chancellery. Publisher Michael Naumann, named by SPD candidate Gerhard Schröder as his future minister of culture, echoed in July oft-expressed criticisms of the memorial, arguing that no work of art could reflect the horror of the Holocaust and that exhibits at authentic sites were the appropriate means of memorializing Nazi crimes. Schröder himself advocated a nonpartisan public discussion of the issue and acknowledged that his views approximated those of Naumann. In the resultant volley of condemnations between political opponents, few observers remarked upon the withdrawal of artist Jochen Gerz, whose design was among the four finalists, from a competition that had clearly been decided long before any of the participants were notified. After weeks of back and forth between the Schröder and Kohl camps, it was agreed in August that the memorial debate should not be held hostage to the campaign for the chancellery. A final decision was therefore postponed once again.

In November the new Red-Green government agreed that the Bundestag should have the final say in the matter of a central Holocaust memorial in Berlin. Still
opposed to providing the city with nothing more than a “place to lay wreaths,” Naumann urged that the Eisenmann design be dropped in favor of a garden and a memorial museum housing temporary exhibits. The project would be coordinated in cooperation with the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, the Leo Baeck Institute in New York, and Yad Vashem in Jerusalem. Naumann planned to place such a proposal before the Bundestag in early 1999.

On January 27, the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, officials from the German rail company Deutsche Bahn AG, the city government, and the Jewish community attended the dedication of a memorial at the Grunewald train station in Berlin, honoring the thousands of German Jews deported from “Track 17.” On the same day, designated the official German Day of Remembrance of the Victims of National Socialism, Israeli historian Yehuda Bauer addressed the German Bundestag.

Months later, Jewish youth organizations in Berlin commemorated Yom Hashoah, Holocaust Memorial Day, by calling on volunteers to recite in turn each of the 55,696 names inscribed in the “Berlin Memorial Book of the Jewish Victims of National Socialism.” The event, devoted to the idea that “every person has a name,” lasted throughout the night of April 22 and into the following afternoon. On June 9, the Jewish community of Munich commemorated the 60th anniversary of the destruction of its main synagogue. In front of the main train station of Bielefeld, local activists and Jewish leaders unveiled a monument on which were engraved the names of the 1,842 Jews deported from that station by the Nazis. Government officials in Lower Saxony announced plans in December for the construction of a “House of Quiet” on the grounds of the former Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. The nondenominational center for private reflection, which will supplement an already existing exhibit on the site, is expected to be completed by the summer of 2000.

People across Germany, particularly the young, volunteered on projects to maintain local Jewish cemeteries or to memorialize the victims of the Holocaust in some way. Of particular significance was the response of German officials and the public at large to the 60th anniversary of Kristallnacht on November 9, which is also the anniversary of the opening of the Berlin Wall in 1989. German president Roman Herzog spoke at a Berlin ceremony organized by the Central Council of Jews in Germany. The SPD called on the German public to view the date as a call to action in the struggle for democracy and respect for minorities. Thousands of people participated in a silent march in Berlin.

This display of humility in the face of German history was all the more urgent in light of the debates of the preceding months. In a discussion largely limited to the academy, historians Ingo Haar and Michael Fahlbusch sparked a controversy with their research into the postwar paragons of their own profession. They alleged that the research institutes at which such prominent postwar scholars as Werner Conze and Theodor Scheider worked during the Third Reich facilitated the “ethnic cleansing” of regions that fell under Nazi occupation. Many of the
most prominent contemporary German historians, themselves trained by and loyal to these men, took issue with the claims of Goetz Aly—a vocal defender of Haar and Fahlbusch—that their mentors had been among the "intellectual forebears of destruction."

A far more public controversy erupted at the Frankfurt Book Fair in October, at which the German author Martin Walser was awarded the Frankfurt Peace Prize. In his acceptance speech, Walser spoke out against the construction of a central Holocaust memorial in Berlin. Declaring that "public acts of conscience run the risk of becoming mere symbols," Walser called for an end to the "incessant presentation of our disgrace." In response to these comments, the president of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, Ignatz Bubis, charged Walser with "intellectual arson" and "latent anti-Semitism." Though he later toned down his criticism, Bubis saw Walser's comments as reflective of an intellectual climate in Germany less devoted to remembering German crimes than to building a German future.

JEWISH COMMUNITY

Demography

The pace of immigration from the former Soviet Union (FSU) remained steady in 1998. With the addition of 8,299 new arrivals, the membership of the communities registered with the Central Council of Jews in Germany increased from around 68,000 at the end of 1997 to 74,289 as of December 31, 1998. Between 20,000 and 30,000 Jews living in Germany either chose to remain unaffiliated or were affiliated with communities outside the Central Council.

The numbers of affiliated Jews in the largest communities were as follows for 1998 (with 1997 figures in parentheses for comparison): Berlin, 11,008 (up from 10,742); Frankfurt, 6,618 (up from 6,503); Munich, 6,595 (up from 6,194); Hamburg, 3,993 (up from 3,759); Cologne, 3,408 (up from 3,127).

Communal Affairs

The 1990s have been both the best of times and the worst of times for the Jewish community in Germany. The immigration of Jews from the states of the former Soviet Union has caused a demographic revolution, tripling the Jewish population of the community and lowering its average age substantially. To accommodate the increasing numbers, new synagogues, schools, and community centers have been built all across Germany. Since 1995, work has begun on the construction or reconstruction of 30 synagogues in Germany, to say nothing of such projects as community centers and ritual baths. As welcome as these developments have been, however, they have also been accompanied by internal com-
municipal bickering over power and resources, bitter criticism of the spiritual state of the community, and scandals involving community leaders. These trends only intensified in 1998.

Immigrants from the FSU continued to contribute to the revitalization of Jewish life in the federal states of eastern Germany. Of the more than 500 Jews in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, primarily in the cities of Schwerin and Rostock, only one was born in Germany. Nevertheless, there are more Jews living in Schwerin today than there were in 1933, the year Hitler took power. Andrew Steimann, an American teacher, traveled from Berlin to Schwerin and Rostock on alternate weekends to lead Sabbath services and teach Sunday school. In October the congregation in Rostock celebrated the receipt of a Torah scroll from the Jewish community of Aachen. The community centers in each city offer German-language courses, youth group activities, programs for the elderly, and other social services.

In Brandenburg, 60 members established a new community in Frankfurt on the Oder in June, and the state association of Jewish communities opened the doors to a new community center just outside of Potsdam. In the Saxon city of Dresden, meanwhile, construction work began on a new synagogue for the first time since World War II. City and state officials joined community leaders for the groundbreaking ceremony on November 9, the 60th anniversary of the night on which the Nazis destroyed the hundred-year-old Semper Synagogue. As was the case in many German cities, the growth of the Dresden Jewish community over the last several years made a new house of worship a necessity. The Jewish population there quadrupled in the last ten years and saw its average age drop from over 60 to 35. Both the city and state governments subsidized the project, but private initiatives will have to cover much of the remaining cost.

State support contributed to a wave of infrastructure development in the Jewish communities of western Germany as well. At the end of January, the state government of Schleswig-Holstein became one of the last federal states to codify its financial and legal relationship with the Jewish community. In addition to state recognition of Jewish holidays and the protection of Jewish cemeteries, the contract stipulated the amount of annual state subsidies to be granted the Jewish community. The following September, the Schleswig-Holstein community of Kiel opened a new community center to serve the 350 Jewish immigrants living in and around the city. In April the Jewish community of Dortmund had inaugurated its own community center to cater to its membership of three thousand. As Johannes Rau, the minister president of North Rhine-Westphalia, remarked, "He who builds wants to stay." After years of difficult relations between the municipal government and communal leaders, a cornerstone for a new house of worship was laid in mid-September in the Hessian city of Kassel, where the Jewish population had grown from 70 to 800 in recent years. The German government welcomed these developments and, along with the leading representatives of Jews in Germany, pointed to the growth in population and institutions as evidence of reinvigorated Jewish life inside the communities.
The rights and responsibilities of Russian-speaking immigrants stirred controversy in Jewish communities divided between the “old” and the “new” throughout Germany. The “old” Jews mixed their insistence on the use of German language as the avenue to integration with complaints about the selfishness and lack of Jewish education of the “new” Jews. Conflicts between the two groups manifested themselves in a variety of ways.

A particularly bitter dispute between the leader of the Hannover Jewish community and the State Association of Jewish Communities in Lower Saxony originated in the summer of 1995 when Leo Kohn, a survivor of Auschwitz and president of the Hannover community for more than 30 years, refused to tally the votes cast in communal elections. He claimed that the state association had wrongly recognized some 350 immigrants from the former Soviet Union as Jews and thereby granted them the right to vote. Though the court of arbitration of the Central Council of Jews in Germany (CCJG) ruled that Kohn’s refusal to recognize the votes cast in the 1995 election was unjustified, Kohn simply disregarded its decision.

In March Kohn convened an assembly of the communal membership for the purpose of organizing new elections. Kohn invited only 840 of the as many as 2,300 Jews estimated to live in Hannover. To be invited, potential members of the community were asked to show the rabbi personal papers proving themselves born of Jewish mothers. This requirement excluded not only the entire immigrant population, who did not have the necessary paperwork even if they did have Jewish mothers, but also the president of the State Association of Jewish Communities, Michael Fürst. The arbitration court of the CCJG then ruled that Kohn and his supporters should be forced to evacuate the administrative offices of the community on May 28. Kohn challenged the legal standing of the CCJG in a German civil court and proceeded to change the locks at the communal offices and to install an alarm system. On August 3, the court ordered that the CCJG’s ruling should be executed; however, an appellate court overturned the decision a week later, asserting that the state had no jurisdiction over the affairs of religious institutions.

In Kiel, though the community center was built for the “new” Jews who make up its entire membership, no immigrants were invited to the opening ceremonies, which were attended by prominent politicians, religious leaders, and officials of the “old” Jewish community of Hamburg. In Rhineland-Pfalz, the communal statute adopted in 1996 granted voting rights to Jews after three years of communal membership but also stipulated circumcision as a prerequisite to membership. On May 23, 1998, the CCJG court found this statute to be inconsistent with the constitutional guarantee of equal treatment and ordered the community to alter its charter and subsequently to hold new elections. Nevertheless, little more than half of the 850 members of the community were invited to cast ballots. Like his counterpart in Hannover, communal president Harry Kindermann refused to recognize the CCJG’s demand that immigrants be treated equally,
protesting that elections were the only aspect of communal life from which the "new" members were excluded.

In response to what they deemed to be the undemocratic methods of the "old" communal authorities, a group calling itself the "Working Group of Jewish Immigrants in Brandenburg" gathered on April 19 to elect an alternative communal council. The communal leadership, headed by Alexander Kogan, then asked the civil courts to forbid the Working Group from claiming the role of communal representatives or council members. After the court granted this request on July 9, Kogan proceeded to rescind the communal membership of those elected to the alternative council. Alexander Nebrat, one of the alternative councilmen expelled from the community, appealed to the CCJG but received no reply and was forcibly prevented, as were his supporters, from attending a June 21 communal assembly. Albert Meyer, a Berlin lawyer and member of that city's Jewish communal parliament, represented the Working Group in Brandenburg as well as the "Association of Immigrants-The Voice," a Berlin-based interest group struggling against alleged abuses in their own community.

**BERLIN**

With the transfer of the German capital from Bonn to Berlin, the largest Jewish community in Germany took on an even more prominent leadership role within the Jewish world and in the broader German public sphere. A newly established communal integration department devoted itself full time to the interests of recently arrived immigrants from the FSU. Its early successes included obtaining permission from the authorities for the long-term residence in Berlin of immigrants' family members visiting on temporary visas. Language programs and an employment network were also developed by communal representatives. Despite these efforts, opposition arose among a group of Russian-speaking immigrants. Lawyer Albert Meyer claimed to represent their interests in the representative assembly, while a Russian-language magazine lambasting the communal administration was distributed to all members of the community, with the consent of Andreas Nachama, the communal president.

Inside the synagogues, women were demanding a greater role in Jewish life. A chapel in the Centrum Judaicum was placed at the disposal of an egalitarian minyan, which took steps toward becoming an official congregation after meeting informally for years. In two of five Berlin synagogues, meanwhile, women were allowed to stand for election as leaders in their congregations, though they were granted no vote in decisions affecting certain rites of worship, such as which men would be called to the Torah.

One of the former hubs of Jewish life in Berlin received a facelift in 1998. Just down the street from the restored 19th-century New Synagogue of Berlin, the nine-year-old Jewish Cultural Association became the first tenant of the Jewish
Communications Center in the Oranienburgerstrasse. An Israeli restaurant and an Anne Frank Center also moved into the building during the year.

Seeing himself duty-bound as the leader of the Berlin Jewish community to play a visible public role, Andreas Nachama participated in a variety of debates during his first year in office. His most controversial public statements came in a June editorial in a Berlin daily attacking Joerg Schönbohm (CDU), the interior minister of Berlin. Upon visiting neighborhoods in Kreuzberg, a district of Berlin populated primarily by Turkish families, Schönbohm had declared, among other things, that the surroundings made him feel as though he were no longer in Germany and that foreigners who had no command of the German language should be invited to leave. Nachama's editorial had references to the Third Reich and condemnations of Schönbohm's "blood and soil" ideology. He also lamented the silence with which the churches had responded to the Berlin politician's remarks. Church officials and Schönbohm himself angrily rejected Nachama's criticism.

AMERICAN JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS

On February 9, 1998, the American Jewish Committee officially opened the doors to its Berlin office. Leaders of the Jewish community in Germany viewed the new American Jewish presence as an example of the self-confidence and strength they sought to foster within their own community and thus a further step in the renaissance of Jewish life in Germany. German foreign minister Klaus Kinkel gave the keynote address at the gala marking the historic event. He welcomed the American Jewish Committee and expressed his confidence that the German-Jewish dialogue would prosper under the watchful eye of the Berlin office. Newspapers across Germany hailed the arrival of the organization as an emblem of the trust enjoyed by the young Berlin republic.

The office was in the news again weeks later when assistant director Wendy Kloke spearheaded a successful campaign to pressure a mobile-phone company into changing the slogan of its billboard advertisements. The slogan of the international ad campaign ("To each his own") had a unique and disturbing connotation in Germany, where those words had been posted atop the gate to the Buchenwald concentration camp during the Nazi era.

As the "ambassador of American Jewry to Germany," Eugene DuBow, the director of the Berlin office, fostered contacts with officials in German government and participated in a variety of public-affairs programs in Berlin. In December he accompanied AJCommittee president Bruce M. Ramer and executive director David A. Harris to Bonn, where they met with leading officials of the new Red-Green coalition government.

Two other American Jewish organizations made their presence felt in the life of the Jews of Germany. The Ronald S. Lauder Foundation announced plans to open the first Jewish seminary (Lehrhaus) in postwar Germany. Rabbi Chaim
Rozwaski was named founding director of the school, which was scheduled to open in 1999. The primary aim of the school is to train religious teachers so that the Jewish community in Germany will have a pool of educators within the country from which to draw. The Chabad Lubavitch movement had also established a presence in Berlin. In the summer of 1998, Rabbi Yehuda Teichtal led the first summer camp for the children of the Berlin Jewish community.

Religion

After enjoying a banner year in 1997 (see AJYB, pp. 323-24), the growing Progressive Jewish movement in Germany began 1998 on a divisive note. Prof. Micha Brumlik, cofounder and chairman of the Union of Progressive Jews in Germany, Austria and Switzerland (UPJGAS), resigned his post and publicly attacked the most prominent rabbi in the German Progressive movement. It had come to Brumlik’s attention that Rabbi Walter Homolka, a convert to Judaism, had preached a sermon steeped in Lutheran theology in a Protestant church in Munich as recently as March 1993. In a January 1998 interview with the Allgemeine jüdische Wochenzeitung, the national Jewish newspaper, Brumlik argued that Homolka’s past should disqualify him from leadership in the movement for the reform of Judaism in Germany. In his view, the issue threatened to undermine the tremendous gains made by that movement in recent years. Brumlik went on to criticize the rabbis in England responsible for endorsing Homolka’s written work and ordaining him as a rabbi. Not only these rabbis themselves, but also the majority of the UPJGAS membership and the congregants of the Munich synagogue at which Homolka served, leaped to the rabbi’s defense.

Though the character of Homolka, who also served as the president of Greenpeace Germany, received a great deal of attention in the ensuing controversy, the rabbi served more as a lightning rod for two broader, interrelated conflicts within the Jewish community of Germany. Owing to the historical development of church-state relations in Germany, Jewish communities were always organized as Einheitsgemeinde, in which religious, social, and financial services were administered under a single institutional roof. The Einheitsgemeinde were thus the sole recipients of financial support from the state. As the example of Berlin demonstrated, this arrangement could accommodate a pluralistic religious community. More often, however, the religious life within the Einheitsgemeinde was dominated in the postwar era by Orthodox rabbis. Because those Jews wishing to form a liberal congregation were often refused the financial support of the community, conflicts over the religious identity of the community took on a political dimension. Progressive Jews denounced communal officials for their alleged unwillingness to cede their monopoly of power for the sake of pluralistic harmony within the community. Conservatives, meanwhile, accused the Progressives of seeking to replace the Jewish religion with folklore. Against this background, the decision to defend or attack Rabbi Homolka often had as much to do with one’s stance on the
prospect of institutionalized religious pluralism in Germany as with personal convictions about the rabbi’s conversion. Indeed, on January 17, the conservative Conference of Rabbis in Germany released a statement asserting that Homolka was "neither a rabbi nor a Jew."

Jewish-Christian Relations

Evangelical Christians in several German states recognized in Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union a promising target group for proselytization. By mid-1998, a Jewish-Messianic congregation in Berlin counted 75 baptized members, 80 percent of them Russian-speaking immigrants of Jewish descent. Missionaries leading the group targeted Jewish immigrants, distributing literature in their neighborhoods in Potsdam and Berlin. The CCJG and the governing body of the Lutheran church in Germany issued a joint statement at their annual meeting condemning the exploitation by Christian missionaries of the economic difficulties and cultural dislocation of immigrants. However, the decentralized nature of the Lutheran church in Germany enabled local and regional hierarchies to ignore the national council and fund the proselytization of Jews. Berlin Jewish community president Andreas Nachama did not, however, accept the protestations of the national church that it was incapable of controlling the practices of its local congregations. "If same-sex marriages were being performed here, the church would know very well how to put an end to it," he said.

The Society for Christian-Jewish Cooperation (SCJC) continued its efforts to fortify interfaith understanding, even as some in the Jewish community questioned the value of such activity. Jewish supporters of the SCJC, particularly of its annual Brotherhood Week, argued that a ghetto mentality on the part of Jews in Germany had blinded them to the changes in the views of German churches toward Judaism over the decades since the war. Christians active in the SCJC, their argument continued, shared with Jews a desire to confront the German past, to fight neo-Nazism, and to speak out against Christian missions to the Jews. Jewish critics countered that Brotherhood Week had become an empty ritual attended by those who did so out of habit or who viewed the week as nothing more than a once-a-year exercise in reconciliation.

At the opening ceremony of Brotherhood Week in March 1998, Leah Rabin was awarded the Buber-Rosenzweig Medal. The widow of assassinated Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin declared that she shared the honor with her late husband.

Education

A Chair for Hannah Arendt Research was established at the University of Oldenburg in Lower Saxony. Political scientist Antonia Gruneberg accepted the position and began to recruit specialists in literature, politics, and sociology to
edit the papers of Arendt, the scholar of totalitarianism and author of *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, among other works.

Twenty German doctoral candidates working in the field of German-Jewish history spent a week in Bad Homburg in March discussing their dissertations with one another and with accomplished scholars in the field. The Academic Working Group of the Leo Baeck Institute sponsored the annual event to offer young researchers the opportunity to build relationships with colleagues from across the country with whom they would otherwise never come into contact.

In May the Moses Mendelssohn Center for European Jewish History and Culture at Potsdam University hosted a conference in Berlin on "Jews in United Germany." Scholars from Israel, the United States, Canada, and Germany discussed a variety of topics, including Jewry in the former East German state, the integration of immigrants from the former Soviet Union, and the changing religious landscape of Jews in Germany. Another conference addressed the theme of "Exile and Nation in German Zionism" in Duisburg, in December. Organized by the Salomon Ludwig Steinheim Institute for German-Jewish History at the Gerhard Mercator University, the symposium featured lectures by several prominent scholars, including Frank Stern, Evyatar Friesel, and Michael Berkowitz.

**Culture**

The theater provided a forum in 1998 for a public examination of both the German past and the current state of German-Jewish relations. In Berlin, artists Esther and Jochen Gerz brought a postmodern conception to their production of *The Investigation*, a play dealing with the Auschwitz trials that took place in Frankfurt during the mid-1960s. After the trials ended in August of 1965, playwright Peter Weiss used the transcript of the trials of concentration-camp doctors and guards as the basis of a play that was performed in 15 cities across Germany that October. More than 20 years later, Esther and Jochen Gerz transformed the play into an interactive group therapy session in which members of the audience read lines from the script. In the early months of 1998, three Berlin theaters participated in this experiment in redefining "the space of the perpetrators."

An even more controversial play, long dormant, returned to the headlines in August when Bernd Wilms, the director of the Maxim Gorki Theater in Berlin, announced his intention to produce Rainer Werner Fassbinder's *Garbage, the City and Death*. The play, originally published in 1976, featured a money-obsessed and sexually fabled, yet nameless "Rich Jew" as the lead character. Fassbinder created the character as the embodiment of stereotyped conceptions of the Jew and surrounded him with a supporting cast designed to shock audiences with the openness and vulgarity of their expression. Members of the Jewish community occupied the stage of a Frankfurt theater in October 1985 and succeeded in preventing the premiere of Fassbinder's play. In an effort to avoid a similar showdown with the Berlin Jewish community, in August 1998 Wilms wrote to Andreas
Nachama of his intent to produce the play as a means of provoking discussion of anti-Semitism and xenophobia in Germany, soliciting his support and cooperation in the effort. Nachama rejected the invitation, instead writing to both Wilms and to Berlin cultural minister Peter Radunski that the Jewish community would do everything in its power to prevent the public presentation of "this document worthy of Goebbels." Radunski expressed an interest in finding a mutually satisfying resolution to the matter.

The Munich Volkstheater staged the premiere in September of *Old Woman Summer*, written by and starring television personality Ilja Richter. The son of a Jewish mother and communist father, both concentration camp survivors, Richter dramatizes the familial, religious, and societal dimensions of Jewish life in post-war Germany in the play.

For the first time since World War II, Jewish theaters were being established in Germany. In Cologne, director and musician Alex Shnaider and journalist Andy Cremer announced plans to bring together an ensemble of artists from Israel, Russia, the United States, and Germany dedicated to carrying on the tradition of German-language Jewish theater. In Berlin, Minister of Culture Michael Naumann announced, soon after the Schröder government took power in the fall, that he would establish a Jewish theater in the capital. Though the state would provide the building, the theater would be a commercial venture dependent on success at the box office, Naumann said.

The Berlinale Film Festival, which ran from February 11 to February 22 in Berlin, featured a number of films dealing with Jewish and Israeli themes. In her documentary *Letter Without Words*, first-time filmmaker Lisa Lewenz drew on over 50 hours of footage shot by her Jewish grandmother in Berlin during the interwar period to explore her family history and her own identity. The work of filmmaking brothers Curt and Robert Siodmak was the focus of the annual Berlinale retrospective.

The fourth annual Jewish Film Festival took new Israeli film as its theme for 1998. The Jüdische Volkshochschule (School for Continuing Education) of the Jewish community organized the event together with the Friends of German Cinema. Julie Shles's *Afula Express* and Ron Havilo's six-hour documentary *Fragments Jerusalem* were among the films shown.

The German Museum in Munich opened the year with an exhibition of works by Israeli artist Ilana Lilienthal. Two other Israelis, photographer Micha Bar-Am and graphic artist Yossi Lemel, showed their work at venues in Hamburg in 1998. In May the Academy of Art in Berlin reintroduced the German public to the work of photographer Ellen Auerbach, who had left her native country in 1933.

In fall 1998, the Museum for Art and Cultural History of Dortmund offered its visitors a representation of "Jewish Life in Westphalia" that moved beyond the standard introduction to the rituals of the Jewish religion and into the everyday life of Jews in the region. In a winter exhibit entitled "Regarding: 'Action 3'—Germans Sell Out Their Jewish Neighbors," the City Museum of Düsseldorf
documented the expropriation and auction of Jewish property during the Third Reich. A traveling exhibit called “Sport Under the Star of David” marked the 100th anniversary of the Bar Kochba Jewish athletic association and highlighted the importance of sports in Jewish life in Germany.

JEWISH MUSEUM

The universally acclaimed appointment in December 1997 of Michael Blumenthal, an American businessman and secretary of the treasury in the Carter administration, as director of the Jewish Museum in Berlin opened a new chapter in the decade-long drama of a museum that has yet to open its doors (see AJYB 1998, pp. 327-28). The confidence, decisiveness, and diplomatic grace that Blumenthal brought to the project fostered a public perception in the winter of 1998 that the long-standing dispute over the future relationship between the Jewish Museum and the Berlin Municipal Museum would be resolved swiftly. Despite a few headline-making detours on the road to a codified agreement, the municipal government finally resolved the issue in early November by providing for the creation on January 1, 1999, of the independent public foundation “Jewish Museum Berlin” under Blumenthal’s leadership.

At a conference in April sponsored by the Society for a Jewish Museum and the Friedrich Naumann Foundation, the opinions and proposals offered by scholars, museum curators, and journalists demonstrated the range of expectations being attached to the museum, which is scheduled for an October 2000 opening. Though the original scope of the permanent exhibit was to be limited to Jewish history in Berlin, many participants believed that a Jewish Museum in the new capital of Germany should represent Jewish history in all of Germany, if not Europe as a whole. Some expressed the need to educate visitors in the fundamentals of the Jewish religion, while avoiding a mere duplication of Jewish museums elsewhere; others argued for a much broader conception of Jewish culture that would encompass the variety of contributions to European civilization made by a European Jewish community destroyed during World War II. Still others articulated the desire to turn the museum in Berlin into a hub of contemporary European Jewish life.

The challenge of choosing which of these concerns to address and which to neglect was further complicated by several practical considerations. Berlin already boasted a permanent exhibit devoted exclusively to the history of Jews in Berlin. It remained to be determined how the Jewish museum would avoid duplicating the function of the Centrum Judaicum in the renovated New Synagogue, which enjoyed the patronage of all those interested in being exposed to the history of Jews in Berlin or Judaism in general.

More directly bearing on decisions about the constitution of the new museum is the actual structure that will house it. Designed by architect Daniel Libeskind and evoking the image of a star of David pierced by lightning, the building has
FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY / 355

been called a memorial unto itself, urging its visitors to reflect upon the rich Jewish civilization lost forever in the Holocaust. Some critics have labeled it “ideological architecture,” arguing that it virtually compels the museum to tell a story of persecution rather than one of coexistence marked by triumph and tragedy. Furthermore, the provocative architecture obliged the city government to cede to the Jewish museum the entire building, which had initially been intended to house several departments of the Berlin Municipal Museum. However, the Jewish collection at the disposal of the curators could not fill even one-quarter of the space in the Libeskind structure.

To help him overcome these obstacles and to conceptualize and construct a successful museum, Blumenthal recruited two highly qualified advisors. Jeshajahu Weinberg, the man largely credited with the design of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., arrived in Berlin at the beginning of May to fill the post of curator. His conviction that a museum should tell a story underlay the permanent exhibits not only at the Holocaust Museum, but also at the Diaspora Museum in Tel Aviv and the Museum of the History of Jerusalem. Though initially skeptical that the Libeskind structure could house an effective museum, he enthusiastically accepted the challenge. As assistant director, Blumenthal hired Tom L. Freudenheim, a scholar of Jewish studies who most recently served as director of the YIVO Institute for the study of East European Jewry in New York. Previously, Freudenheim had been an associate secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, the director of art museums in Baltimore and Worcester, and a curator at the Jewish Museum in New York.

Publications

In recognition of the 50th anniversary of the State of Israel, publishers released a number of books dealing with the past and present of the Jewish state. One of the most popular was Ruth Zucker’s *Im Auftrag für Israel* (On Orders from Israel), in which the German-Jewish exile tells of her career as an Israeli spy. Micha Brumlik edited a collection of essays entitled *Mein Israel. 21 erbotene Interventionen* (My Israel: 21 Solicited Interventions), in which various public figures reflect on the prospects of the peace process. Reactions of young Germans visiting the Middle East are recorded in *Impressionen aus Israel* (Impressions from Israel).

German journalists serving as foreign correspondents in Israel also contributed to this publishing wave. In *Schalom Israel: Nachrichten aus einem friedlosen Land* (Shalom Israel: News from a Land Without Peace), Friedrich Schreiber confirms public perceptions of a conflict-ridden society dominated by the military, war, and terrorism. By letting a variety of Israelis and Palestinians tell their own stories, Gisela Dachs conveys in her book *Getrennte Welten: Israeliische Lebensgeschichten* (Divided Worlds: Israeli Life Stories) the diversity of life experiences within the polarized worlds of Jews and Muslims in Israel. Casting aside any claims to jour-
nalistic objectivity, German-Jewish writer Henryk Broder marked Israel's anniversary with a biting satire, *Die Irren von Zion* (The Lunatics of Zion), an ironic reference to the "wise Jews" of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. Broder's critique is aimed at fundamentalist Jews, in his view an irrational minority that exercises a disproportionate and regrettable influence on Israeli society. Also in 1998, the Aufbau publishing house released the German edition of Hadassa Ben-Itto's historical study of this seminal anti-Semitic tract, *Die Protokolle der Weisen von Zion. Anatomie einer Fälschung* (The Anatomy of a Lie).

Publications on German-Jewish history spanned the centuries and took on a variety of forms. Hellmut G. Haasis challenges historical myths surrounding the legendary 18th-century court Jew in his *Joseph Süss Oppenheimer, genannt Jud Süss. Finanzier, Freidenker, Justizopfer* (Joseph Süss Oppenheimer, Called Jew Süss: Financier, Freethinker, Victim of Injustice). In *Hermann Struck (1876-1944). Das Leben und das graphische Werk eines jüdischen Künstler* (The Life and Work of a Jewish Artist), Jane Rusel documents the story of a prolific artist and Zionist activist known to many as Herzl's portraitist. Ernst Loewy's *Jugend in Palästina: Briefe an die Eltern 1935-38* (Youth in Palestine: Letters to Parents 1935-38) relates the experiences of the future author on a kibbutz near Jerusalem as part of a Youth Aliyah group. Continuing a decade-long trend, several works on local Jewish communities, including Cologne, Bochum, and the Berlin district of Wedding, were published in 1998.

The reintroduction of German-Jewish literary figures to the contemporary reading public also proceeded apace. The AVIVA publishing house issued a new edition of Alice Berend's *Die Bräutigame der Babette Bomberlin* (The Bridegroom of Babette Bomberlin) and promised to release in the coming years other works by the popular 1920s novelist who fled Berlin in 1935, never to return. The first volume of the collected works of Max Zweig, the cousin of Stefan Zweig, includes several of his 22 plays. With the publication of *Schalet*, the Reclam publishing house in Leipzig revived the work of Sammy Gronemann, the sharp-witted Zionist and keen observer of German-Jewish culture before and after World War I.

For the first time in years, Hitler was the focus of several new publications. Historian Ian Kershaw's monumental *Hitler: 1889-1936*—the subject of a cover story by Rudolf Augstein in *Der Spiegel*—promised to remain the standard academic biography of the dictator. By far the most controversial work about Hitler, however, was a comic book. In Walter Moers's *Adolf*, the dictator emerges from the gutter after 50 years in hiding, walks the streets of contemporary Germany in search of adventure, smokes crack, teams up with transsexual Hermann Göring, and causes the deaths of Princess Diana and Mother Teresa. In the wake of the controversy it spawned, *Adolf* became an instant best-seller.

The Goldhagen debate, which had dominated the field of Holocaust studies and transfixed the German public in previous years (see AJYB 1998, pp. 329-30), was rekindled for a time with the publication of critiques by Norman Finkelstein and Ruth Bettina Birn under the title *Eine Nation auf dem Prüfstand. Die*
Goldhagen These und die historische Wahrheit (A Nation on Trial: The Goldhagen Thesis and the Historical Truth).

The reflections of the late journalist Eike Geisel on German efforts to live with their history were published under the title Triumph des guten Willens: Die Nationalisierung der Erinnerung (Triumph of Good Will: The Nationalization of Memory). On a lighter note, a German Jew faces an agonizing choice between his German and Israeli girlfriends in Rafael Seligmann's latest novel, Schalom, meine Liebe (Shalom, My Love), based on a screenplay the author wrote for German television.

Jews in the former German Democratic Republic were also the subject of academic research published in 1998. Ulrike Offenber recorded the history of the Jewish community in the Soviet Occupation Zone and the GDR in her Sei vorsichtig gegen die Machthaber (Be Careful with Those in Power). In Jewish Claims Against East Germany: Moral Obligations and Pragmatic Policy, Angelika Timm analyzes the issue of reparations in the post-cold war era.

Personalia

In May the Bavarian town of Fürth conferred honorary citizenship on former U.S. secretary of state Henry Kissinger. Sixty years after he and his family emigrated to the United States from Nazi Germany, Kissinger called the return to his birthplace the "fulfillment of a promise" made on the day of his departure. Former German chancellor Helmut Schmidt attended the May 20 ceremony to pay homage to the statesman with whom he so passionately disagreed during negotiations over nuclear arms in the 1970s.

Another prominent American received one of Germany's highest honors in 1998. In recognition of the contribution made by the 1993 film Schindler's List to the education and historical consciousness of Germans, at a September 10 ceremony, President Roman Herzog awarded director Steven Spielberg the Knight Commander's Cross of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany. Spielberg commented in his acceptance speech that the award was the greatest honor he had ever received and reiterated his commitment to the work of the Shoah Foundation that he had established.

President Herzog was among several German public figures decorated in 1998 by Jewish organizations for their commitment to Christian-Jewish and German-Israeli relations. In awarding Herzog the Leo Baeck Prize of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, Ignatz Bubis praised him for emphasizing the importance of remembering past German crimes and for fostering a culture of tolerance in contemporary Germany. The Jewish National Fund honored Johannes Rau, the governor of North Rhine-Westphalia, for his contribution to the transformation of the Negev from desert to fertile landscape and to German-Israeli understanding in general. On November 10, on behalf of the World Union for Progressive Judaism, Henry Kissinger bestowed the International Humanitarian
Award on Frank Woessner, chairman of the board of the Bertelsmann Book Corporation.

Several prominent Jews died in 1998. Heinrich Joshua Scheindling died on April 21, in Augsburg, at the age of 82. A native of Nuremberg who had settled in Israel, he returned to Germany in 1961 to teach Judaism in Augsburg. Scheindling spent the rest of his life spreading knowledge of Hebrew and Judaism throughout the Jewish communities of Bavaria. Philosopher Hermann Levin Goldschmidt, who had devoted his life to salvaging the intellectual legacy of German Jewry, died in Zurich in March, at the age of 85. The film star, dancer, and singer Lotti Huber, born in Kiel in 1912, died in Berlin on May 31, on the eve of the publication of her latest book. In 1990 she had published a best-selling autobiography entitled There Is a Lot of Juice Left in This Lemon. Pnina Navé Levinson, the 77-year-old theologian and Berlin native, passed away in Jerusalem on August 3. After the war, Levinson played an active role in the reconstituted Jewish community of Heidelberg and engaged regularly in interfaith dialogue. Over the course of her scholarly career, she taught at several universities and published a number of important feminist analyses of Jewish theology.

Greg Caplan
Austria

National Affairs

Austria in 1998 continued to be governed by the long-standing coalition of Social Democrats and the conservative People’s Party; heading the coalition was Chancellor Viktor Klima, with Wolfgang Schussel, leader of the People’s Party, serving as vice-chancellor and foreign minister. Austria was cast into the diplomatic limelight by virtue of its holding the rotating presidency of the European Union during the second half of the year. Meantime, all parties were gearing up for an active political season in 1999, when six elections were scheduled to be held: the national election, four electoral contests at the provincial level, and the election to the European Parliament.

Israel and the Middle East

Relations between Austria and Israel continued to improve, as attested by the official visit of Chancellor Viktor Klima to Israel in March 1998. During his two-day visit, the chancellor met with President Ezer Weizmann, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and other officials. He also met with the president of the Palestinian Authority, Yasir Arafat.

In a speech given at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, Chancellor Klima noted that 1998 marked the 60th year since the annexation of Austria by Germany, and pledged that his government was committed to dealing with the problems of the past. The chancellor, the first Austrian head of government born after World War II, announced the establishment of a chair in history at the Hebrew University, which will focus on the history of the Jews in Austria and their contributions to science, medicine, literature, and the arts.

Klima, who was accompanied by a group of Austrian business executives, emphasized the importance of increasing trade between his country and Israel. At the time of Prime Minister Netanyahu’s visit to Austria the previous year, it was agreed that efforts would be made to promote increased trade, which amounted to $250 million. These efforts appeared to be bearing fruit; in the first six months of 1998, Israeli exports to Austria had increased by 11 percent over the comparable period in 1997. During the chancellor’s visit, a bilateral agreement was signed to promote joint business ventures in Eastern European countries. As a follow-up to the agreement, 14 Israeli business leaders attended a seminar in June at the Austrian Kontrolbank devoted to the promotion of joint ventures.
Holocaust-Related Developments

In important respects, 1998 was a watershed in dealing with Holocaust-related matters. It was a year marked by special ceremonies and efforts to come to terms with the still unresolved issues of compensation for Holocaust survivors and their heirs, and the restitution of artworks to their rightful owners. Growing attention was now being given to the role played by financial, commercial, and industrial firms that had benefited from the Holocaust and the compensation they owed to the survivors and their heirs. Compensation was also being demanded from certain of these firms for the profits they derived from the use of slave labor during the period of Nazi rule.

May 5th was observed, as decided in November 1997, as a memorial day to the victims of National Socialism. In memorializing the Holocaust victims, Grigori Frid’s solo opera *The Diary of Anne Frank* was performed at the National Parliament, with the orchestra conducted by Asher Fisch, the music director of Vienna’s Volksopera and the Tel Aviv Symphony. The Israeli singer Anat Efrati performed the role of Anne Frank.

**WASHINGTON CONFERENCE**

As agreed at the London Tripartite Gold Commission meeting in December 1997, a follow-up conference was convened in 1998 by the U.S. Department of State in Washington, D.C., from November 30 to December 3, to discuss unresolved issues dealing with the property and other assets of Holocaust victims and their heirs. The 52-nation conference, which was jointly sponsored by the State Department and the U. S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, dealt with the issues of gold, looted art, insurance policies, and communal property. The Austrian delegation reported on the status of each of these, though, as will be seen below, some of the information was disputed by Jewish bodies.

**Gold.** There remained no outstanding claims against Austria by Holocaust survivors. At the London meeting of the Tripartite Gold Commission, which dealt with monetary gold looted by the Nazis, Austria had agreed to relinquish its rights to the 860 kilograms of gold owed to it and to hand over the monetary value of this gold—approximately $8.5 million—to the Austrian *Nationalfond* created by Parliament in 1996, for distribution to needy Holocaust survivors and to worthwhile causes.

**Looted Art.** Under a law adopted by the Austrian Parliament on November 5, 1998, artworks of uncertain provenance would be returned to rightful owners or their heirs (see below). Where ownership could not be established, the works of art would be auctioned off, with proceeds of the sales to be given to the *Nationalfond*.

**Insurance.** The Austrian delegation told the Washington conference that the insurance companies active before or during the war were no longer in existence
and, therefore, existing companies could not be held responsible for claims against them. Many insurance claims, the Austrian delegation noted, had been honored in the 1950s and 1960s. Despite this hard-line position of the insurance companies, Austrian foreign minister Wolfgang Schussel requested that they make a good-faith effort to cooperate with international efforts to clear up the matter of unpaid insurance claims. 

Communal Property. The delegation reported that, except for one claim involving compensation for a sports facility that had been the property of the Federation of Jewish Communities of Austria (Bundesverband der Israelitischen Kultusgemeinden Osterreichs) before the war, there were no outstanding claims for the restitution of communally owned property.

Kultusgemeinde Position Differs

Although the fact was not publicly discussed in the media or elsewhere, it was clear that the position staked out by the Austrian delegation at the conference differed from that of the Kultusgemeinde in several important matters. The official Jewish community was at odds with the insurance companies' claim that they had no further obligations on policies dating back to the World War II period. And on the issue of communally owned property, the Kultusgemeinde was withholding comment until the Commission of Historians, or another competent investigative body, came up with more precise information on the status of such property.

Commission of Historians

The Austrian government created the Historiker Kommission in September 1998 to examine the matter of property confiscation during the Nazi period and what had been done in the postwar period to restitute such property to the rightful owners or heirs, or compensate them in the event restitution was not possible. The commission was also charged with the task of investigating the use of slave labor in Austrian factories during the war.

The initiative for the creation of the nine-member body of historians came from the new president of the Israelitische Kultusgemeinde, Ariel Muzicant. Political support for the establishment of such a body had developed because of the changing climate of political opinion in Austria, as well as in other European countries that had shown a greater readiness to deal in a definitive manner with the unresolved issues arising from the Holocaust. Although, in setting up the commission, the government did not impose a time limit for the completion of its investigation and the submission of a final report, it was thought likely that the commission would complete its work in two to three years and that it would, periodically, issue interim reports. Nor was it clear whether the final report would be solely factual or be accompanied by recommendations for action. And, while state
archives would be made accessible to the commission's investigative staff, it was yet to be determined whether the archives of private firms, such as banks, insurance companies, or industrial firms, would be made available.

**The Nationalfond**

The special fund established by the Austrian government in June 1995 "for the victims of national socialism" had by June 1998 contacted all the estimated 29,000 people considered eligible to receive payments. By the end of 1998, payments had been made to 24,000 people in 65 countries, the largest number being in the United States (9,540), followed by Austria (4,226), Israel (3,483), United Kingdom (2,949), and Australia (1,312). Of the recipients, 221 were born between 1891 and 1900. The amount paid to each beneficiary was fixed at 70,000 schillings ($5,800), though in special cases this could be tripled. In 1998 the Ministry of Finance allocated 500 million schillings (approximately $41 million) to the fund. It was generally understood that the payments were a goodwill gesture by the government and were not to be considered reparations to the victims.

The legislation creating the fund set forth the categories 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. This latter condition was considerably eased by allowing people who left after July 12, 1936 (the date of a new German-Austrian treaty), to become eligible for payment. It was estimated that some 400 to 500 people, heretofore ineligible for payments, would now qualify.

In addition to the payments to eligible individuals, the fund was providing money for special projects, such as assistance to the Schiffschule Congregation in Vienna's second district with construction of a synagogue and a yeshiva dormitory. Another project to be financed by the fund is the identification and collection of the names of the 65,000 Austrian Jews who perished in the Holocaust.

**Looted Jewish Artwork**

As of July 1998, 853 of 1,300 applicants had received the sum of $1,000 each from the so-called Mauerbach Fund, established in 1996 from the proceeds of a sale of artworks plundered from Jews by the Nazis. (See 1998 AJYB, pp. 336-37.) The auction of some 8,000 works yielded $14.5 million, of which 12 percent was set aside for needy non-Jewish Holocaust victims and the balance for needy Jewish victims. It was thought that as many as 5,000 Austrians from all over the world would ultimately be eligible to receive grants from the proceeds of the Mauerbach auction.
The dispute that began in December 1997 over the ownership of two paintings by the famed Austrian Secessionist painter Egon Schiele continued into 1998. The paintings were part of a special exhibition, “Egon Schiele: The Leopold Collection,” which was on display at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. (See 1998 AJYB, 337-38.) Relatives of the original owners of the paintings requested the museum to retain them until ownership could be determined. In response to these claims, early in January District Attorney Robert M. Morgenthau of Manhattan secured a grand jury subpoena restraining the museum from returning the paintings until ownership could be established. The museum decided to fight the court order, claiming that the paintings were protected under a state law governing cultural loans. On May 13, a New York State judge ruled in the museum’s favor, but the District Attorney’s office appealed, and the paintings remained in New York pending a final ruling.

The Austrian government, in an effort to resolve once and for all the matter of looted art, proposed a far-reaching plan to restore appropriated artworks to their rightful owners. On November 5, 1998, the Parliament unanimously approved legislation allowing works of art seized by the Nazis and later incorporated into state museums to be returned to their rightful owners. Valuable artworks belonging to many hundreds of Austrian Jews were confiscated during the Nazi rule of Austria between 1938 and 1945, and much of this art continues to hang on the walls of Austrian museums until this day. Following World War II, the government imposed what amounted to an “art tax” on the survivors of Nazism when they tried to take their recovered artworks to their new homelands. Austria demanded a share of this art in the name of preserving the national patrimony, and there was no legal protection against this procedure.

One of the more prominent people who was forced to leave behind valuable art treasures was the widow of Alphonse de Rothschild, younger brother of Louis de Rothschild, head of the Austrian branch of the family. Following the war, Mrs. Rothschild had to leave 170 works of art, 5 percent of the family’s holdings, in Vienna, including three paintings by Frans Hals that she “donated” to the famed Kunsthistorisches Museum. The Österreichische Galerie and the Kunstgewerbe Museum also secured paintings and furniture from the Rothschild holdings. Under the recently enacted legislation, Bettina Jemima, née Rothschild, a daughter of Alphonse, was expected to recover the 170 works of art that her mother was forced to give to Austrian museums. If fully implemented, the legislation would restore hundreds, if not thousands, of works of art currently held by Austrian museums and other institutions to their rightful owners.

A far more complicated issue is works of art seized by the Nazis and taken out of the country. One such case, uncovered by Oliver Rathkolb of the Kreisky Archives and Institute for Contemporary History at the University of Vienna, involved art belonging to the Gutmann family of Vienna that wound up in the Soviet Union. Rathkolb said 41 Rembrandt engravings owned by the Gutmanns were seized by Hitler’s forces, then taken by Soviet troops. It remained to be seen
whether the Russian government would restore the engravings to the Gutmann family. At the Washington conference on Holocaust-era assets, the Russian representative, Valery Kulishov, the director of the restitution department at the Russian Culture Ministry, announced that some World War II booty would be returned to individual claimants.

**Recovery of Jewish Bank Assets**

Negotiations were in progress in London between the American lawyer Edward Fagan and Credit Anstalt, along with its parent company, Bank Austria, and the Landerbank to settle claims of Holocaust victims arising from the activities of these banks during the war. Fagan, who was acting on behalf of numerous victims, was reported to be close to a settlement with the banks. Bank Austria and Landerbank were also prepared to make their archives available to Fagan's investigators. In doing this, the banks would provide documentation of the wartime activities of Deutsche Bank and the Dresden Bank in despoiling Jewish citizens of their money and other assets. Following the annexation of Austria in March 1938 and until the end of the war, these German banks controlled the Austrian banks.

The Austrian Post Office Savings Bank, PSK, refused to enter into negotiations with Jewish organizations to discuss restitution of monies in accounts owned by Austrian Jews before and during the war. After a specially commissioned study of the PSK archives revealed details regarding thousands of Nazi-looted Jewish accounts, the chairman of PSK, Max Rothbauer, stated that he accepted no responsibility for returning accounts, as they had been taken by the Nazis and not returned to the PSK after the war. However, the PSK said that it would repay the remaining balance of dormant accounts, those not seized by the Nazis, amounting to about 120,000 pounds sterling.

**Other Holocaust-Related Matters**

In a series of memorial events, the medical school of Vienna University belatedly acknowledged the persecution of its Jewish faculty members and students during the Nazi era. In September, the school unveiled a plaque dedicated to "teachers and students who were persecuted, exiled or murdered during the Nazi regime for racial or political reasons."

Before World War II, Jews made up over half the faculty of the medical school. Following the *Anschluss* in March 1938, more than 170 professors and consultants lost their jobs. Dismissals had started even before Hitler annexed the country. Like most other academic institutions, the university never owned up to having cooperated with the Nazi regime. In 1995, this attitude was challenged from within the medical world when Dr. Leslie Bernstein, chairman of the ethics committee of the American Gastroenterology Association, raised doubts about hold-
ing the 1998 international gastroenterology conference in Vienna because the university had failed to acknowledge or atone for its past actions. In response, on the eve of the conference, the medical school faculty held a one-day commemorative symposium, and in March it held two public commemorative meetings. The Austrian weekly medical journal *Wiener Klinische Wochenschrift* devoted an entire issue in February to commemorating the “60th anniversary of the dismissal of Jewish faculty members of the Vienna medical school.” The journal observed: “The dismissal caused irreparable damage to the formerly distinguished Vienna School of Medicine.”

On November 9, 1998, 60 years after the destruction of the synagogues in Hitler’s “Grossdeutschland” on Kristallnacht, the foundation for a new synagogue was laid in Graz on the exact site where the old synagogue had stood. The city of Graz (Jewish population 120), which in recent years had become increasingly conscious of its one-time role in promoting anti-Semitism in Austria, regarded the construction of the synagogue as a token of remembrance of Jewish life in prewar Graz. Among the guests present at the groundbreaking ceremony was Dr. Heinz Fischer, president of the Parliament (*Nationalrat*), who announced that the *Nationalfond* would contribute 7.5 million schillings ($630,000) to the construction costs, which were estimated at 55 million schillings ($4.3 million).

In October, Cardinal Koenig placed a plaque in Judenplatz which expresses the deep sorrow of the Catholic Church over its role in inciting citizens of Vienna to burn down the Judenplatz synagogue in 1421, a tragedy in which many Jews perished, and for its failure to hold out a helping hand to Jews in World War II.

**JEWISH COMMUNITY**

**Demography**

The Jewish community of Austria was undergoing changes in size, age, and composition. It was getting somewhat larger and younger, although its growth was expected to slow, if not stop, due to restrictive immigration and asylum laws. Reflecting a trend found in all European Union countries, immigration to Austria had been virtually halted. About 7,000 Jews were registered with the Israelitisch Kultusgemeinde (IKG), the official communal body, but knowledgeable observers claimed that the actual number of Jews in the country was at least twice that.

Continuing 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. There was some evidence that a handful of families from the Sephardic community were making their way back to Eastern European countries for economic reasons; many members of this community derived their livelihood from the garment and shoe trades, which were in a severe recession.

Communal Affairs

In a closely contested ballot held in April 1998, Ariel Muzicant, a businessman with a long-standing involvement in Jewish community affairs, was elected president of the IKG. He was chosen for the post by the 24-member Gemeinde council following elections to that body in the previous month. Following is a breakdown of the newly elected council based on party affiliation: Jewish Unity (5); Atid (5); Sefardim (4); K’hal Israel (2); Jewish Alliance (2); Mizrachi (2); Bund (2); Religious Bloc (1); and Georgian Jews (1). Of the 5,138 community members eligible to vote, 3,066, or 60.3 percent, cast ballots.

Among the issues debated in the elections were reform of the community’s complex institutional structure; restitution of Jewish property taken during the Nazi period; overhaul of the community’s financial structure, which was operating at a deficit; and preparation for the six elections to be held in Austria in 1999.

The Gemeinde was taking an active role in winning the restoration of the Jewish property, bank accounts, and other financial assets to their rightful owners. Along with other organizations and interested people, it brought pressure to bear on the government to have Parliament adopt a law for the restitution of looted Jewish artwork along with such paintings that have remained in the possession of Austrian museums since the end of World War II.

Forty Jewish teenagers and college students from the five republics of the former Yugoslavia met in Vienna in November and spent four days in lectures, discussions, and workshops as part of a program organized by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and Vienna’s Jewish Welcome Service. One purpose of the program, which was funded by the Austrian Federal Chancellor’s Office, the Foreign Ministry, and the Ministry for Environment, Youth and Family Affairs, was to discuss ways of strengthening Jewish community life in these lands wracked by conflict, severe economic decline, and political instability. The students met with Environment Minister Martin Bartenstein and were hosted by Vienna mayor Michael Haupl at City Hall. They also met with their counterparts from Hungary, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic, as well as with some of Austria’s leading journalists.

An agreement was signed between the Kultusgemeinde and the Jewish Liberal Community of Austria giving official recognition to that community. Under the
terms of the agreement, the synagogue of the Liberal Community, Or Hadash, with a membership of 60 to 70 families, was eligible to receive financial assistance from the Gemeinde and was permitted to place announcements and news of its activities in Die Gemeinde, the official organ of the IKG. The IKG also provided limited facilities to Or Hadash in which to conduct prayer services. In return for these benefits, the rabbi of Or Hadash would not perform conversions and weddings; in addition, the Liberal Community pledged that it would not run candidates for seats on the Kultusgemeinde council. Because of financial constraints, Or Hadash did not at present have the services of a full-time rabbi and was limited to holding prayer services on Friday evenings and holidays. It did, however, provide Sunday school instruction to six children and an educational program for adults, as well as activities for its members, including trips to Jewish communities in neighboring countries and discussion groups; it also conducted an interreligious dialogue with leaders of Christian and Muslim organizations and published a bimonthly newsletter called Keshet. The president of Or Hadash was Theodore Much, a physician.

The European regional office of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), which opened in Vienna in August 1997 and is headed by journalist Marta Halpert, continued its work with government officials and Jewish community leaders in neighboring Eastern and Central European countries to promote the rights of Jews and minorities in the region. In February ADL officials met with ministers of the Czech government to protest skinhead violence against Gypsies and to offer assistance in researching the causes of the violence and ways to reduce it. With financial assistance from the Lauder Foundation, ADL adopted an educational program to combat anti-Semitism in Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic. In Austria, it was active in combating hate on the Internet, providing information to schools and public-interest groups on dealing with this growing menace. And for the 60th anniversary of Kristallnacht, ADL sponsored a nationwide art contest for schoolchildren, asking them to depict their own visions of the burning of Austria’s synagogues and the persecution of Jews.

Culture

Among the several exhibitions mounted by the Jewish Museum of Vienna in 1998, two attracted special attention. One, “Der Scheine Jid” (The Fine Jew), shown September 16, 1998–January 24, 1999, focused on positive and negative self-images of Jews from the Middle Ages to the present. The second exhibition, “Brennende Synagogen” (Burning Synagogues), on view November 10-December 18, marked the 60th anniversary of Kristallnacht. The exhibition documented the historical background of the March 1938 pogrom, the gradual marginalization and humiliation of the Jewish population, the destruction of the synagogues and prayer-houses in Vienna and the federal provinces, the dissolution of the community, and the murder of 65,000 Austrian Jews in the concentration camps.
In a change of leadership, Karl Albrecht Weinberger was named director of the Jewish Museum as of January 1998. Weinberger had previously been the curator at the Historical Museum of the City of Vienna.

The Institute for Jewish Studies in St. Polten presented research findings at an academic conference in Vienna, July 5–9, on “The Jewish Family in the Past and the Present” (Die Judische Familie in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart). The conference was sponsored by the Federal Ministry for Youth, Environment and Family. The institute, which was founded in 1988 and is headed by Dr. Klaus Lohrmann, is devoted to the study of Jewish life in the framework of European history.

**Personalia**

The Federation of Jewish Communities of Austria awarded its gold medal to Prof. Kurt Schubert, former chairman of Vienna University's Department of Judaism, for his academic achievements and his role in furthering Christian-Jewish relations.

The Nobel Prize for chemistry was awarded in 1998 to the American scientist Walter Kohn, a native of Austria, whose family was forced to flee the country in 1939 and made its way to the United States. Invited to Vienna by the Austrian government, Dr. Kohn visited the Zvi Peretz Chayes day school that he attended until his family emigrated. He recalled that his interest in chemistry first developed under the encouragement of Emile Nohel, an assistant to Albert Einstein and the school's last director before it was closed in 1939.

Karl Haber, one-time president of *Ha-Koah*, the famous Jewish sports club, died in October at the age of 76. The club, which had achieved great renown for winning the Austrian national soccer championship in the 1920s, was reestablished after the war.

*Murray Gordon*
In 1998, Jewish communal revival continued throughout East-Central Europe. In most of the emerging new communities, lay leadership was increasingly in the hands of members of the postwar generation. Self-confident communal representatives took part in Europe-wide Jewish discourse and grappled with issues and concerns common to communities across the continent. While these leaders recognized that the post-Communist communal revival still had a long way to go, their attitudes reflected a basic change of mind-set, firmly refusing to be labeled the “last Jews” of the region.

Several major issues, as in past years, dominated. One was the continuing linked saga of property restitution and financial compensation to Holocaust survivors and related revelations about Nazi gold, insurance claims, and other such matters. By the end of the year, Germany began paying Holocaust compensation to survivors in East European countries. The issue of Jewish heritage and what to do with remaining or restituted synagogues, cemeteries, and other sites, which often were in bad condition, was also pressing.

Other cross-border issues that continued to engage Jewish communities throughout the region were, as last year, the question of identity and “who is a Jew”; how to deal with mixed marriages and children of mixed marriages; outreach to the unaffiliated; and how to create a new group of community leaders to guide the communities into the future. Dealing with these issues influenced the focus 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 Lauder Foundation, Chabad, and World Jewish Relief (WJR), as well as the European Council of Jewish Communities (ECJC). Several conferences were held on aspects of these problems, including a conference in Vienna in October and one in Lisbon in December.

Relations with Israel, meanwhile, deepened on the government to government level throughout the region, particularly in economic relations and tourism.

Bulgaria

In February, the JDC presented an award to Bulgarian president Peter Stoyanov, recognizing Bulgaria’s success in saving its Jewish population from deportation during World War II. B’nai B’rith presented Stoyanov with its “Award for Courage.” Stoyanov, who was on a visit to the United States, also met with a group of U.S. Jewish businessmen, whom he urged to invest in his country. In August the Anti-Defamation League asked Stoyanov to “publicly renounce” anti-Semitic statements made by Rumen Vodenitcharrov, a prominent member of the Bulgarian...
ian Socialist Party. Vodenitcharov was quoted as accusing the Bulgarian government of "selling the country to Jews and Gypsies" and claiming that Bulgaria "is being ruled by Jews." During an official visit to Israel in June, Bulgarian foreign minister Nadezhda Mihailova met with Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, signed cooperation agreements, and discussed the situation in Kosovo and in the Middle East.

JEWISH COMMUNITY

About 6,000 Jews lived in Bulgaria, with estimates ranging between 5,000 and 8,000. Most Jews lived in the capital, Sofia, and in Plovdiv. At Purim, in March, a gala ceremony inaugurated the newly enlarged and restored Beit Ha'am, the Jewish community building in Sofia. Beit Ha'am houses a kosher restaurant as well as a youth club, an auditorium, a clinic, a library and computer room, a daycare center, and other activities as well as offices. The $500,000 renovation was sponsored by Britain's World Jewish Relief and entailed adding an entire new floor to the building. Also at Purim, the imposing, newly restored ark in Sofia's recently reconstructed Great Synagogue was rededicated at a service that attracted about 300 people. The synagogue complex also houses a Jewish museum. The Purim festivities were rounded off with a lively children's Purim party at Beit Ha'am, featuring music, pop singers, a clown, a light show, and other entertainment. During these festivities, Shirley and Norman Casdan, two guests on a WJR delegation from Britain, met with the family of Rossen Gramenov, a seven-year-old boy who has leukemia and for whom an international B'nai B'rith effort had raised $70,000 to allow him to go to Israel for bone marrow treatment.

In the spring, the B'nai B'rith Youth Organization (BBYO) organized an intensive leadership training program in Bulgaria for teens from Bulgaria, the United States, and Israel. The BBYO, which also organized groups of local Bulgarian teens, and the B'nai B'rith Carmel Lodge, were among many Jewish groups and clubs operating in Bulgaria.

In July, as many as 200 participants from Turkey, Bulgaria, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Yugoslavia took part in Esperansa '98, a four-day festival of Ladino and Sephardic culture held near Sofia. The festival was organized by the Joint Distribution Committee, the European Council of Jewish Communities, and World Jewish Relief, in collaboration with Shalom, the organization of Bulgarian Jews. Its aim was to promote regional cooperation among Jewish communities and to spark renewed expression of a shared Sephardic civilization.

In November a new Jewish school, sponsored by the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation, opened in Sofia. The 12th Lauder-sponsored Jewish school in post-Communist East-Central Europe, it had an enrollment of about 350 students in grades 1 through 8. The curriculum included Jewish history and Hebrew in addition to standard secular subjects. The Lauder Foundation provided $300,000 in funding and also renovated the 86-year-old building where the school is located.
Czech Republic

The Czech Republic, once the pride of post-Communist development, suffered deepening economic, political, and social malaise in 1998. The GDP was at a zero or negative growth rate, wages and foreign investment were down, and unemployment was up. The health of President Vaclav Havel was also a concern. In parliamentary elections in June, the left of center Social Democrats won a relative majority and in July formed a coalition headed by Prime Minister Milos Zeman. The new government included an Auschwitz survivor, Egon Lansky, as deputy prime minister for European integration.

The far-right nationalist Republican Party, known for anti-Semitic and anti-Romany (Gypsy) rhetoric, won only 3.9 percent of the vote (below the 5 percent threshold) and thus failed to get any seats in Parliament. In 1996 elections, the Republicans won more than 8 percent and held 18 seats. In the wake of this electoral defeat, one of the main ideologists of the party, Josef Krejsa, who also edits the extreme nationalist newspaper Republika, issued an apology “to everyone [he] had offended.” Earlier, the Federation of Czech Jewish Communities had brought suit against Republika, accusing it of propagating anti-Semitism.

Nonetheless, rising racism and intolerance were a continuing concern throughout the year. In a February public opinion poll, 25 percent of respondents expressed feelings of racial intolerance. On May 8, five skinheads were arrested and charged with beating two Indian men in a Prague subway. The attack took place shortly before an antifascist march was to begin nearby. On the same day, police had to separate about 15 skinheads from antifascist marchers to avert incidents. Numerous other incidents took place during the year. At a meeting in December with Zeman and other members of the cabinet to discuss racism and xenophobia, Havel said the situation was “serious” and warned of “growing apathy toward racist violence here.” In May, in a speech at a memorial service in Terezin denouncing anti-Romany racism in the Czech Republic, Chief Rabbi Karol Efraim Sidon said, “We Jews feel sooner than others the jeopardy fueled by hatred, now directed against Romanies just as it was once directed against us by the Nazis. Therefore we are convinced that there is a need to mobilize all our strength to ensure that Romanies quickly receive the protection of law that is their inalienable right as citizens of this country and as human beings.” Sidon was speaking not long after plans were revealed to wall off a pair of tenement houses occupied mainly by Romanies in the town of Usti nad Labem, not far from Terezin.

Most racist actions were directed against Romanies, but there were also scattered incidents of apparent anti-Semitism. On November 8, a teenage skinhead stabbed a Jewish soldier. He was charged under the Czech Republic’s hate-crimes law with attempting racially motivated murder and promoting fascism. The Jewish community said this was the first anti-Semitic criminal act since the fall of Communism. On November 11, vandals spray-painted anti-Semitic slogans on tombstones at the Jewish cemetery in Trutnov. They also defaced a plaque mark-
ing the site of the destroyed synagogue and a Holocaust memorial in the town. Four suspects, including three teenaged skinheads, were arrested. A few days later, skinheads in central Prague threatened Rabbi Sidon and his 12-year-old son but did not harm them. The Federation of Czech Jewish Communities appealed to the government to crack down on xenophobic and anti-Semitic acts.

Holocaust-related developments: A joint Czech-German fund for victims of Nazism, set up in January 1997, began issuing payments to 6,200 people, including about 2,000 Jews, in May. Those imprisoned during the war for up to 12 months will receive $900 a year, those imprisoned 12 to 30 months will receive about $1,100, and those imprisoned longer than 30 months will receive $1,400. In November the government established a commission to oversee the restitution of Jewish property confiscated by the Nazis. Chaired by a deputy prime minister and including state officials and Jews, the commission was charged with making an inventory of assets claimed by Czech Jews and then arranging restitution to prior owners or monetary compensation for the property from a yet-to-be-created fund. The work was to be completed by March 1999. Tomas Kraus, secretary of the Federation of Czech Jewish Communities, said the federation would not make claim to properties that are currently being used for the public good, such as synagogues used now as churches or property where schools were built. The Czech Jewish community claims some 200 properties, 17 now owned by the government, 64 owned by municipalities, and the others by individuals. One day before the formation of the commission was announced, the Czech National Gallery said its collection included dozens of artworks believed to have been stolen from Jews during World War II.

Activists tried to enlist international Jewish support to have a pig farm removed from the site of a wartime concentration camp at Lety where Gypsies had been imprisoned during World War II. The Jewish community in Prague was considering opening a museum-memorial to the Roma tragedy in the former synagogue in Pisek, near Lety, which was returned to Jewish ownership.

In March, 88-year-old Nicolas Winton, an Englishman, visited Prague as part of a project by a Czech-British production team to make a documentary about his World War II rescue work. Just before the war began, he organized transports that sent 664 mostly Jewish children to foster parents in England. One of the film's producers is Martina Stolbova, of Prague's Jewish Museum, who said the film would be called Nicholas G. Winton — The British Wallenberg.

JEWISH COMMUNITY

Some 3,500-6,000 Jews were known to live in the Czech Republic, with possibly thousands of others who were unaffiliated but of Jewish background. About half of the Czech Republic's Jews lived in Prague, with the others scattered in nine other communities. In Prague, in addition to the official Jewish community, which is Orthodox, two non-Orthodox communities functioned: Bejt Praha, which called itself the Open Prague Jewish Community, and Bejt Simcha, which main-
tained links with Progressive Judaism. In addition, Chabad Lubavitch had a representative in the city. In November, members of UJA-Federations of North America’s Young Leadership Division delivered a refurbished Torah scroll to Bejt Praha.

In 1998 the Lauder Gur Aryeh Jewish Day School in Prague completed its first year of operation. The Or Chadash Hebrew high school, funded by the Prague Jewish community, opened in September. About a dozen teenagers attended class four afternoons a week, after attending regular public school in the morning.

Restoration work was carried out or completed on several synagogues, including two of the Czech Republic’s most magnificent. On February 11, the Great Synagogue in Pilsen was rededicated after completion of the state-financed $1.7 million first phase of a full-scale renovation. The first phase saw the restoration of the facade and most of the interior. Jewish community leaders said another $1 million was needed to complete the work. Czech chief rabbi Sidon and Israeli ambassador Raphael Gvir took part in the ceremony, along with Pilsen’s mayor and other local officials. The synagogue, built in 1892, is consecrated as a house of worship, but is too big for regular use by the fewer than 100 Pilsen Jews; it will be used for concerts and cultural events.

In Prague, the ornate Spanish Synagogue was inaugurated in November, with a gala ceremony after a full-scale renovation. This structure, which forms part of the Prague Jewish Museum, now houses an exhibition on the history of Prague Jews. This restoration was a major milestone in the ambitious effort of expansion and change at the museum, whose director, Leo Pavlat, aims to make the institution a tool in educating the non-Jewish public about Jews and Judaism. The museum’s Education Center ran public lectures and teacher-training sessions. Pavlat authored a highly critical report on how Jewish themes were presented in Czech public schools. The report, part of the American Jewish Committee’s Curriculum Review project surveying textbooks in several post-Communist countries, showed that little was taught about Jews and Judaism, and that what was taught was sometimes distorted.

Work was under way on construction of a new synagogue in the northern Bohemian town of Liberec, on the spot where the destroyed prewar synagogue stood. The Jewish community regained the site through restitution. The new building will hold a 120-seat synagogue and offices of the Jewish community (there are fewer than 100 Jews in Liberec) plus a research library and lecture hall. Financing for the project came from the Czech and German governments. A number of other synagogues were under restoration in towns scattered around the country. During the summer, an archeological survey of a site in central Prague being developed as a parking lot discovered the remains of Prague’s oldest Jewish cemetery, dating to about 1250. This prompted Jewish leaders to ask that the site be classified as a historic landmark.

As every year, there were numerous cultural events, concerts, exhibitions, publications, and the like on Jewish themes. Some were sponsored by the Jewish community and some by non-Jewish public and private bodies. In April a num-
ber of VIPs attended a special production of the play *Sweet Theresienstadt*, cosponsored by the Jewish Education Center of the Prague Jewish Museum and the Archa Theater. In May, in honor of the 50th anniversary of the Jewish state, Israel was the central theme of an international book fair called Bookworld 98, which featured 680 publishers from 21 countries. As part of events around the book fair, the Jewish Museum organized a symposium on "Czech Jewish Literature, Jewish Themes and Translation." A noteworthy new book, *Clovek není číslo* (A Person Is Not a Number), one among a number of books on Jewish themes published during the year, contains creative writing and art by Czech schoolchildren who visited the Terezin (Theresienstadt) concentration camp and took part in a national competition in 1997. The competition attracted more than 400 entries from pupils in 59 schools in 16 cities.

In July the small Moravian town of Boskovice hosted its annual culture festival aimed at raising consciousness of local Jewish history. On Sept. 19, a concert was held to mark the first phase of the restoration of the house in the southern Bohemian village of Kaliste, where Jewish composer Gustav Mahler was born. The building eventually is to house the Gustav Mahler Center. There are already museums dedicated to Mahler in the nearby towns of Jihlava and Humpolec. In October a Czech production of *Fiddler on the Roof* opened at a newly renovated theater in Prague. It starred Jewish actor Tomas Topfer, the son of concentration camp survivors, in the role of Tevye. The seventh annual Musica Judaica festival took place in Prague in October-November.

**Hungary**

Hungary's economy grew about 5 percent, and the average inflation rate fell to 14.3 percent from 18.3 percent in 1997. In general elections in May, rightists swept to power as the center-right Fidesz Young Democrats-Civic Party won 148 of the 386 parliamentary seats, ousting the Socialists who had governed Hungary since 1994. Fidesz leader Viktor Orban, 35, a former student leader, became prime minister at the head of a coalition with the right-wing Independent Smallholders Party. The far-right Hungarian Truth and Life Party (MIEP), led by Istvan Csurka and known for its anti-Semitic and anti-Romany (Gypsy) rhetoric, won 14 parliamentary seats. MIEP was not part of the government, but this marked the first time an extreme right party — some of whose members are skinheads — had entered Parliament since the end of World War II. This raised alarm among many Hungarians, including, in particular, Jews. "We fear an extremist position may become an acceptable level of political discourse," said Peter Feldmajer, president of the Hungarian Jewish Communities. In September Chief Rabbi Jozsef Schweitzer denounced as anti-Semitic a speech in Parliament by a MIEP MP, the Calvinist priest Lorant Hegedus, who, Schweitzer said, used discriminatory code language to refer to Jews. Critics of MIEP noted that since open anti-Semitic references are not acceptable, coded phrases such as "minority origin" have been employed.
In October Sir Sigmund Sternberg, patron of the International Council of Christians and Jews (ICCJ), met for an hour with Prime Minister Orban during a visit to Budapest and voiced concern about anti-Semitic remarks made by Hungarian MPs. During his visit to Budapest, Sternberg presented the ICCJ’s interfaith medal to Ferenc Glatz, a scholar and Hungary’s former culture minister.

In February the Supreme Court sentenced neo-Nazi leader Albert Szabo to a one-year suspended prison term for incitement against the Jewish community. He was also put on probation for three years. The charge dated back to a speech he made in October 1996. Also in February, some 600 neo-Nazis in black uniforms demonstrated at Buda Castle in Budapest to mark the 53rd anniversary of the surrender of the Nazis to Soviet troops.

Relations with Israel remained close on the governmental, commercial, and personal levels. Many Israeli firms and individuals carried out businesses and joint ventures in Hungary. It was estimated by Jewish sources that some 50,000 Israelis went to Hungary for the High Holy Days. Israelis in Hungary were not always a positive element, however. British-Israeli businessman Joseph Raynor was held in jail on suspicion of smuggling a quantity of chewing gum without paying customs duty. He was arrested in October 1997, but the reason for his arrest was announced only in May 1998. In June an Israeli was arrested along with a German and two Russian citizens on suspicion of involvement in a series of organized crime-related bomb attacks.

Holocaust-related developments: This year was the “year of compensation.” Starting at the end of January, some 7,000 of Hungary’s elderly Holocaust survivors began receiving a lump sum payment of $400 as compensation from the Swiss Holocaust fund for needy survivors. About 18,000 survivors were eligible for such compensation. Most expressed gratitude, but some Jews expressed concern either that the payments represented “blood money” and were distasteful, or that the payments to Jews would trigger a form of jealous anti-Semitism among Hungarian extremists. These 18,000 survivors were also eligible for a grant of 1,000 German marks from the Red Cross. Some 8,000 survivors were eligible for monthly pensions of 250 marks paid by Germany through the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany. In September Minister of Cultural Heritage Jozsef Hamori and chairman of the Federation of Hungarian Jewish Communities Peter Feldmajer signed an agreement mandating collective compensation for 152 schools and other Jewish communal properties confiscated under the Communist regime. The Jewish community will receive $63 million, paid out in annual installments of $2.9 million.

JEWISH COMMUNITY

Estimates of the number of Jews in Hungary ranged from 54,000 to 130,000. Only 6,000 or so were formally registered with the Jewish community, and about 20,000 had some sort of affiliation with Jewish organizations or institutions. Some 90 percent of Hungary’s Jews lived in Budapest.
The vast majority of Hungary's Jews were unaffiliated or secular. The dominant religious affiliation was Neolog, similar to America's Conservative Judaism. There was a small Reform congregation in Budapest, and also a small Orthodox community, made up of both Hassidim and "modern Orthodox." In fact, Orthodox Jews had become an increasingly visible presence. In March Budapest's resident Lubavitch rabbi, Baruch Oberlander, celebrated an Orthodox wedding, complete with huppah, on the street outside the Balint Jewish Community Center. Several Neolog rabbis also took part in the ceremony, which attracted a large crowd. The groom was a student at Budapest's Neolog Rabbinical Seminary and the bride was a student at the seminary's teacher-training school. They said they wanted an Orthodox wedding so that it would be recognized in Israel.

Several new Jewish institutions opened their doors. In May a small prayer house, Holocaust memorial, and Jewish museum complex was opened in Szentendre, a picturesque town on the Danube near Budapest. In July a newly built synagogue and multipurpose education center was dedicated at the Lauder-JDC International Jewish Youth Summer Camp at Szarvas, in southern Hungary. The red-brick, 500-square-meter complex, which houses a library, study rooms, activities rooms, computer center, and synagogue sanctuary, is called Beit David, in honor of the son of JDC honorary executive vice-president Ralph Goldman, who was killed in the bombing of the Israeli embassy in Buenos Aires. Each summer, some 2,000 Jewish young people from all over Eastern and Central Europe attend two-week sessions at Szarvas, where standard summer camp activities are combined with Jewish education.

In Budapest, the start of the school year saw the opening of a state-of-the-art campus for the Jewish community's day school, which also changed its name from the Anna Frank school to the Sandor Scheiber school, in honor of Hungary's respected scholar and chief rabbi who died in the 1980s. The Anna Frank high school had been located in the building of the Budapest Rabbinical Seminary. The new Scheiber school was opened on the grounds of the Jewish hospital. Funds for the new campus came from money paid in compensation in lieu of restitution of a former Jewish school building. It started with a high school curriculum but aimed at expanding into a full kindergarten through high school within eight years. The Scheiber school was one of three Jewish day schools operating in Budapest, with a total enrollment of more than 1,500 pupils. The other two were the secular Ronald S. Lauder Javne School, on its own outlying campus, and the downtown Orthodox school.

Budapest's rabbinical seminary and associated teacher-training institute prepared rabbis and cantors as well as educators for Hungary's schools and institutions, enabling locally trained personnel increasingly to take the place of teachers sent by the Jewish Agency to Hungary from Israel. Plans were announced to merge the seminary and teacher-training institute into an officially accredited Jewish university, to begin operation in September 1999.

In the fall, Budapest's central kosher kitchen, which provided meals on wheels
and kosher meals at senior centers and other Jewish institutions, closed its long-
time premises at the Pava Street senior center and moved into a modern new space
at the Scheiber school complex, where it had the capacity to prepare 3,000 kosher
meals a day for homebound survivors, senior centers, schools, and the hospital.

Numerous cultural events on Jewish themes took place during the year. Dur-
ing Budapest's annual spring culture festival, Budapest's Jewish Museum dis-
played holographic images of Jewish life from the Jewish Museum in Vienna. At
the end of the summer, Budapest hosted its first tourist-oriented Jewish culture
festival. Central Europe University held its second annual Jewish summer study
program in July and scheduled public lectures on Jewish themes throughout the
academic year. In September the first issue of a new Jewish magazine, Remeny
(Hope), was published, financed by the Federation of Hungarian Jewish Com-
munities.

Work progressed on several synagogue restoration projects, and in Budapest's
main Jewish cemetery the beautiful 1904 art nouveau tomb of the Sandor Schmidl
family, designed by leading architects Odon Lechner and Bela Lajta, was unveiled
after two years of restoration work.

In July shooting began in Budapest on A Taste of Sunshine, a movie in which
Ralph Fiennes plays the parts of three Jews in a multigenerational saga center-
ing on a family called Sonnenschein—"sunshine" in German. The film was writ-
ten and directed by Hungarian Jewish director Istvan Szabo.

Poland

Despite being hit by fallout from the financial crisis in Russia, end-of-year re-
ports indicated that 1998 would mark Poland's fifth year of economic growth at
5 percent or higher—a record unmatched in post-Communist Eastern Europe.

In January Poland marked its first ever "Day of Judaism" sponsored by the
Roman Catholic Church. The nationwide initiative, designed to bring Jews and
Catholics closer together, used a slogan taken from a quotation by Polish-borne
Pope John Paul II: "Whoever meets Jesus Christ, meets Judaism." Churches all
over Poland held special masses, and hundreds of Poles visited synagogues around
the country. In Warsaw, hundreds of visitors, including priests and dozens of
nuns, attended a Havdalah service in the city's only synagogue. The ceremony was
given wide media coverage and was followed by speeches by Bishop Stanislaw
Gadecki, head of the Episcopate's Council for Religious Dialogue, and Stanis-
law Krajewski, who spoke in the name of the Union of Jewish Religious Com-
munities in Poland.

This year marked the 30th anniversary of the Communist regime's anti-Semitic
campaign in 1968 that forced some 20,000 Jews out of Poland. Official state cer-
emonies as well as Jewish-organized events were held to commemorate the per-
secutions, and the government took steps to amend the wrongs committed. Jews
who were forced to flee in 1968 were invited to reunions in Poland, Sweden—
where many of the refugees found haven—and Israel. A plaque with an inscription commemorating “those who traveled out of Poland after March 1968 with one-way travel documents” was unveiled at a Warsaw train station from which many refugees departed. And the Polish government announced that it would restore Polish citizenship to individual Jews driven out in 1968 who request it. “We remember and we are ashamed,” President Aleksander Kwasniewski, himself an ex-Communist turned Social Democrat, said at a ceremony in March. “It is not they who abandoned Poland. Poland abandoned them. We must put this right. . . . Today one thing must be said clearly: March 1968 was a shameful page in Polish history.”

A delegation of Polish Jews, led by Jerzy Kichler, the president of the Union of Jewish Religious Communities, met in March with Prime Minister Jerzy Buzek. Buzek was “very sympathetic and seemingly concerned” with the issues raised by the Jewish representatives, including the restitution of Jewish communal property and the need for official reaction against anti-Semitism.

Poland’s government-to-government relations with Israel remained good. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu paid a two-day official visit to Poland in April (see Auschwitz, below). In July Israel honored more than 20 non-Jewish Poles for their work in helping to preserve and protect Jewish cemeteries, synagogues, and other sites of Jewish heritage. Israel’s ambassador to Poland, Yigal Antebi, presented framed certificates to the honorees at a ceremony held in Krakow at the conclusion of that city’s annual festival of Jewish culture. The honored individuals came from Bialystok, Tykocin, Lublin, Pinczow, Bransk, and other towns and cities around the country. They had spent years on a mainly voluntary basis restoring and documenting abandoned Jewish cemeteries, writing books and pamphlets on local Jewish history, seeing that memorial plaques were placed on former synagogues, and working to establish Jewish museums or Jewish departments in other museums. Recognizing them was the idea of Michael Traison, a Jewish lawyer from Detroit who spent time in Poland doing legal work for his firm and had met the honorees personally during trips around the country. The ceremony received ample coverage in the Polish media.

Also in July, a memorial to Jewish Holocaust victims in the southern city of Rzeszow, which had been dedicated the week before, was defaced by anti-Semitic graffiti. City officials in Rzeszow took immediate steps to clean the monument. There were other scattered instances of vandalism against Jewish sites. In May about 35 tombstones were vandalized in two attacks on the Jewish cemetery in Warsaw. In July Prime Minister Buzek condemned an attack on Jewish graves in Palmiry, near Warsaw.

HOLOCAUST-RELATED DEVELOPMENTS

_Auschwitz:_ The former Nazi death camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau, where more than 1.5 million people, 90 percent of them Jews from all over Europe, were
killed, remained the center of emotional and sometimes bitter controversy throughout much of the year. On April 13, Holocaust Memorial Day, Israeli prime minister Netanyahu and Polish prime minister Buzek led the biggest ever “March of the Living.” Accompanying thousands of Jewish teenagers from many countries, they walked the two miles from the Auschwitz I camp to Birkenau and in speeches pledged increasing dialogue and cooperation between Poles and Jews. It was the first time the event included the head of the Polish government and other government ministers.

The controversy over crosses erected at Auschwitz was a continuing source of tension. In February government representatives said that the 25-ft. cross that had stood for the past decade just outside the walls of the Auschwitz I camp museum would be relocated. The cross stood at the site where 152 Catholic Poles were killed by the Nazis, near the building that had housed a controversial Carmelite convent, vacated by the nuns in 1993. In early March, the Carmelites formally gave up ownership of the convent building and turned it over to the state, but this takeover agreement did not include jurisdiction over the cross. In the wake of the statements that the cross would be moved, a local “defense of the cross” movement became more openly active, igniting national debate. Apparently attempting to head off a crisis, Bishop Stanislaw Gadecki, head of the Polish Episcopate’s commission for dialogue with the Jews, in early March proposed to replace the large cross with a monument on that spot to the Polish Christian victims of mass killings, with the understanding that the monument would include a representation of the cross. Under this plan, the large cross—under which Pope John Paul prayed in 1979—would be erected anew at a church in the town of Oswiecim (in German, Auschwitz). Wooden crosses removed at the end of 1997 from Birkenau already had been placed at this church.

Gadecki’s plan fell through. On May 1, about 1,000 Roman Catholics prayed at the cross. Some held banners reading “Let’s defend the cross” and “God, Honor and Homeland.” Other pray-ins, protests, and vigils took place. In late July, radical Catholics began erecting more, smaller, crosses “in defense of” the large cross. In doing so, they defied both the Polish government and Polish church authorities—as well as protests by local Jews, international Jewish organizations, and Israel. The government and church hierarchy wanted the smaller crosses removed but felt that the original, large “papal” cross should stay. At the end of September, the local bishop suspended a priest for his role in erecting a cross. Some of the militants, who also maintained a vigil at the site, issued anti-Semitic statements in the media. By the end of the year, well over 200 crosses formed a forest around the large cross and the situation remained at a tense impasse.

The cross controversy stalled Jewish-Polish dialogue on other issues, including plans for an international restoration and conservation program for Auschwitz, which had been agreed upon in 1997. In the spring, Rev. Waldemar Chrostowski resigned from his position as co-chairman of the Polish Council of Christians and Jews in the wake of controversy over his statements protesting the removal of re-
igious symbols from Auschwitz. The cross conflict also sparked concern over anti-Semitism. In November the one-year suspension from preaching ordered against Gdansk priest Henryk Jankowski was up, and he immediately let loose with an anti-Semitic attack linked to the cross controversy. He had made other anti-Semitic statements outside of the preaching context earlier in the year.

Other Developments: In April Poland presented its highest award to Marek Edelman, the only surviving leader of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising of 1943. President Kwasniewski presented the Order of the White Eagle to the 76-year-old Edelman, who remained in Poland after the war and became a cardiologist and an activist in dissident movements in the 1970s and the Solidarity movement of the 1980s.

Several new monuments to Jewish Holocaust victims were erected or dedicated. In May a monument commemorating 599 Jews murdered by the Nazis was dedicated in the Rakowski forest near the city of Piotrkow Trybunalski in central Poland. More than 100 survivors and descendants of Jews from the town came from Israel, Canada, the United States, and Great Britain for the ceremony. In July Prime Minister Buzek said in Washington that Polish officials, in association with the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, would erect a new monument at the site of the Belzec death camp, in eastern Poland, where a Communist-era monument was neglected and crumbling. Little is known of wartime conditions in Belzec, as only a handful of Jews survived the camp. Archaeologists this year carried out excavations to find out more about the camp before the new monument was built.

A number of events linked to the restoration of synagogues took place in Poland to mark the 60th anniversary of the so-called Kristallnacht pogrom in Germany, November 9-10, 1938, when hundreds of synagogues were destroyed in Germany and German-occupied lands. Prime Minister Buzek and other representatives of the Polish government, the Roman Catholic church and other faiths, as well as Jewish groups unveiled a monument to commemorate the Kristallnacht pogrom in Wroclaw, a city that before World War II was the German city of Breslau, home to Germany's second-largest Jewish community. The monument was unveiled at the site of one of the synagogues burned down during the pogrom. Wroclaw's 19th-century Storch Synagogue, left ruined after the war, was currently undergoing a full restoration. Meanwhile, a synagogue in the town of Oswiecim (Auschwitz) was rededicated as a "center of prayer and contemplation and eternal memorial to Jewish victims of the Holocaust" at a ceremony attended by a 50-member Jewish delegation and representatives of the Polish, U.S., and Israeli governments. The synagogue, long used as a carpet warehouse, was restored to Poland's Jewish community in April—the first Jewish property to be restituted in Poland under the provisions of a 1997 law on restitution of communal property. The new prayer and education center was to be built in the synagogue and in an adjoining house over the next two years by the New York-based Auschwitz Jewish Center Foundation, at a cost up to $10 million. In December the site of a
A synagogue destroyed by the Nazis was returned to the 200-member Jewish community in Gdansk under the 1997 restitution law.

In October leaders of Poland's Jewish community and representatives of the World Jewish Restitution Organization (WJRO) signed an agreement on how to divide the proceeds and ownership of communal properties being restituted under the 1997 law. A joint foundation established by the Polish Jewish community and the WJRO would take ownership of all the inactive Jewish cemeteries and communal Jewish heritage monuments. There are estimated to be as many as 1,400 disused Jewish cemeteries scattered around Poland, most of them in ruined condition. Proceeds from restituted communal property would be divided into thirds: one-third would go to the Jewish communities in Poland, one-third would be administered by the foundation, in theory for preservation and conservation of cemeteries and other properties, and one-third would be administered by the WJRO. No figures were estimated, and, given the complex restitution procedure, much about how the process would be carried out remained uncertain.

In December Israel refused a Polish request to extradite Solomon Morel, a Jew accused of torturing and killing German prisoners during World War II, when he commanded a camp for German prisoners in southern Poland. He is alleged to have been responsible for more than 1,500 deaths. An Israeli Justice Ministry spokeswoman said that the statute of limitations in the case had run out.

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 people of Jewish ancestry who have shown interest in rediscovering their heritage, to as many as 30,000 to 40,000 people of Jewish ancestry. The Lauder Foundation and the JDC were key supporters of a wide range of educational and social programs in Warsaw and other cities. The Lauder Foundation's longtime director in Poland, Rabbi Michael Schudrich, a charismatic figure who was a leading catalyst in the emergence of the reviving Jewish community, ended his tenure. He was replaced by Jonah Bookstein, a young American who had studied in Jerusalem and earlier worked part time for the foundation, and his wife, Rachel. Sixteen Jewish organizations used the premises of the Lauder Community Center for Jewish Education in Warsaw on a weekly basis. The foundation itself sponsored five youth clubs and education centers around Poland. About five hundred people took part in the foundation's summer and winter camps at Rychwald in southern Poland. The foundation supported the glossy Jewish monthly magazine *Midrasz* as well as the student magazine *Jidele* and a new family magazine, *S-terndlech*.

The Jewish Culture Center in Krakow featured cultural events almost daily, and the Shalom Foundation in Warsaw also sponsored many events.

At the beginning of the year, city officials in the town of Plonsk announced a
competition for historical work on modern Polish-Jewish relations. They issued a call for memoirs, diaries, interviews, and other written or audiovisual work related particularly to the relations between Jews and non-Jews in Plonsk and its surrounding district as well as in Poland in general in the 20th century. Prizes were to be awarded in the spring of 1999. Plonsk was the birthplace of David Ben-Gurion, and the $1,000 first prize was to be named in his honor.

In March President Kwasniewski and other dignitaries attended a gala benefit concert at Warsaw Castle, organized by the Jewish Historical Institute to raise funds for a planned Museum of Polish Jewish History to be built in Warsaw near the site of the ghetto memorial. In June Krakow's former Jewish quarter, Kazimierz, was once again the scene of an annual weeklong Jewish culture festival, showcasing concerts, lectures, workshops, performances, and exhibits. Among various conferences on Jewish themes was an international interfaith conference on "Religion and Violence" held at Auschwitz, in May, with the participation of Christians, Muslims, and Jews, including several Orthodox rabbis from the United States and Israel. The conference was organized by Orthodox rabbi Joseph Ehrenkranz, director of the Center for Christian-Jewish Understanding at Sacred Heart University in Connecticut. Other conferences included "Ashkenaz: Theory and Nation," on the East European Jewish experience, cosponsored in May by Ohio State University and Krakow's Jagiellonian University, and "Teaching the Holocaust," held in Krakow in September, organized by the London-based Spiro Institute.

During the year, the American Jewish Committee and the Warsaw-based Jewish Historical Institute released studies decrying the lack of material on Jewish themes taught to Polish students in public schools. The American Jewish Committee report, issued in May in Polish and English, was the first of a series of such education surveys to be carried out in several former Communist countries.

Poland's first postwar Jewish book fair took place in Warsaw in November, sponsored by the Lauder Foundation and the Polish Jewish magazine Midrasz and held at the Lauder Community Center. More than 300 books—about 200 in Polish and 100 in English—were displayed at the fair by more than half a dozen Polish publishers and distributors, and the event received extensive publicity in the media. The book fair also included well-attended related events, including lectures, readings, and a concert.

The Tempel Synagogue in Krakow, the only 19th-century synagogue still standing intact in Poland, was opened to the public for tours of the full-scale restoration taking place, a project of the New York-based World Monuments Fund. Scaffolding was removed from the synagogue's interior, revealing the newly cleaned, ornate ceiling decoration.

Romania

Romania continued to struggle with deep economic and political problems. Tensions between the two main coalition partners, the Democratic Convention
of Romania and the Democratic Party, triggered the collapse of Prime Minister Victor Ciorbea's government in early 1998, and a new government, led by Prime Minister Radu Vasile, took office in April. Personal and political conflicts among the four-party coalition partners persisted throughout the year, stalling reforms and contributing to a sense of political instability. Meanwhile, the economy continued to perform poorly, although inflation was lower and wages were somewhat higher than in 1997. In the first six months of 1998, however, the GDP dropped by 5.2 percent compared to the same period in 1997, marking the second consecutive year of sharp decline. (End-of-year forecasts for the total 1998 drop in GDP ranged from 3 to 6 percent.) Unemployment was estimated at about 9 percent.

In November a poll by the Open Society Foundation showed that 51 percent of respondents thought life was better before the 1989 collapse of Communism, and nearly 75 percent of them said Romania needed a “single, committed person at the head of the country.” Some 16 percent of respondents expressed support for the anti-Semitic Greater Romania Party—four times as many as voted for the party in the 1996 general election.

Prime Minister Vasile made a four-day official visit to Israel in early August. He and Israeli prime minister Netanyahu—who described his meeting with Vasile as “excellent”—signed agreements on agricultural cooperation and the mutual protection of investments and pledged to step up efforts to conclude a free trade agreement. He also visited the Israel Aircraft Industries plant and confirmed that Bucharest was examining the possibility of modernizing Cobra helicopters in Israel. During his visit, he met with Palestinian leader Yasir Arafat and offered Romania’s “good services” as a mediator in the dispute with Israel over the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the West Bank. Vasile also met with some of the estimated 30,000 Romanians working in Israel, mostly in construction, who complained to him about working and living conditions, including unpaid wages.

Following a visit to Yad Vashem, Vasile said he would push for restitution legislation that would be “a global solution for Romania to return property to all former owners, not only Jews.” According to Vasile, five buildings had been returned to their Jewish owners in 1998 as of August, and three or four more were to be returned soon.

There were some incidents of anti-Semitism. In May a Jewish cemetery in Targu Mures was vandalized. In June vandals ransacked a synagogue in Oradea, stealing ritual objects and candelabra and daubing anti-Semitic slogans on the walls. Two teenagers were arrested. In September the government called for legal action against the publishers of an anti-Semitic weekly, Atac la persoana.

In October the Romanian Supreme Court rehabilitated Toma Petre Ghitulescu, who had served for seven weeks as deputy state secretary in the government headed by wartime fascist ruler Marshal Ion Antonescu. The court said the crimes of the Antonescu government had been committed after Ghitulescu quit office.
JEWISH COMMUNITY

There were about 12,000-14,000 mostly elderly Jews in Romania, about half of them in the capital, Bucharest. The rest were grouped in more than 45 communities around the country, some with only a handful of members. Of the 94 synagogues owned by the Jewish community, some 58 still functioned on a regular or semi-regular basis. Of more than 750 cemeteries, some 103 still functioned. Two rabbis served the country: a chief rabbi in Bucharest, who spent part of his time in Israel, and an elderly rabbi in Timisoara. The support of the JDC in partnership with the Federation of Romanian Jewish Communities (FEDROM) remained essential for educational and welfare programs. Among other activities, the Jewish community ran a number of clinics and health services around the country, three old-age homes, 12 Talmud Torah classes with a total enrollment of about 200 children, and 11 choirs. In January a new adult day-care center for needy Jews was opened in Bucharest. More and more emphasis was placed on upgrading facilities and infrastructure (some remodeling was carried out with funds from the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany) and in sponsoring programs aimed at educating young people, including establishing resource centers at six computer clubs around the country. In 1998 the Lauder Re'ut Kindergarten and Lower School, housed in the renovated Jewish Theater building in Bucharest, completed its first year of operation.

Slovakia

Slovakia underwent major political upheavals this year. After Michal Kovac's term ended in March, the country remained without a president, since Parliament, which elects the president, was unable to agree on a successor. In September opposition forces won a general election, ousting nationalist-populist prime minister Vladimir Meciar — politically, Kovac's arch rival — and opening the door to liberalization and European integration after six years of Meciar's pro-Russia, authoritarian rule. Mikulas Dzurinda, a 43-year-old Christian Democrat and former transportation minister, was sworn in as prime minister on October 30. His program aimed at political and economic reform, including closer ties to the West and increased privatization and other drastic economic restructuring that could result in painful belt-tightening. Slovakia's unemployment rate was about 14 percent. A public opinion survey in November revealed growing support for Dzurinda's coalition, which had 65 percent approval, compared with the 58 percent of the vote it won in the elections. In December Meciar announced that he would quit public life entirely.

JEWISH COMMUNITY

Fewer than 4,000 Jews lived in Slovakia. The two largest communities were in the capital, Bratislava, with about 800 Jews, and in the eastern city of Kosice, with
about 700. There was a rabbi in each of those cities, as well as a kosher restaurant serving locally produced kosher meat, plus Jewish classes, clubs, and other activities. There were smaller Jewish communities in about a dozen other towns. All came under the umbrella of the Union of Jewish Religious Communities in Bratislava. There were Jewish museums in Bratislava and Presov, and an Institute of Jewish Studies in Bratislava. Restoration work was under way at several Jewish cemeteries and synagogues around the country.

In Bratislava, American-born Chabad rabbi Baruch Myers published a newsletter, Keser, in Slovak and English, ran adult classes ranging from basic prayers to the Kabbalah, a match-making service, weekend seminars, and community holiday celebrations. At Passover, about 70 people attended a community first-night seder in Bratislava’s Danube Hotel, and about 40 people attended the second seder at Myers’ home.

Young Slovak Jews aged 15-35, in both the Czech and Slovak republics, were members of the Czecho-Slovak Union of Jewish Youth (CSUJY). In the summer they organized camps dedicated to restoring Jewish heritage sites, and throughout the year had a program of joint activities including discussions, debates, dancing, and sports, including winter ski camps, and well as the celebration of Jewish festivals such as Purim and Hanukkah. The CSUJY also organized events for non-Jewish young people, in order to educate them about Jews and fight prejudice. Every summer (since 1992) the CSUJY has cosponsored the Bridges-Gesharim project, in which Jewish and non-Jewish young people work together to restore Jewish and Christian monuments.

**FORMER YUGOSLAVIA**

**Bosnia-Herzegovina**

Peace reigned in Bosnia-Herzegovina, under the watchful control of international bodies and peace-keeping troops, and what one observer described as “the buzz of life” returned to Sarajevo. The country remained divided into two ethnic sectors, the Republika Srpska of Bosnian Serbs, and the Bosniak (Muslim)-Croatian Federation. But the country as a whole had an “ethnically neutral” currency, license plates, and passport.

In Bosnia, Jews—as during the war years of the 1990s—continued to enjoy a political importance that far outweighed their numbers. The government named a Jew to the important post of ambassador to Washington. According to correspondents, this was a compromise solution, so that no Serb, Muslim, or Croat would represent Bosnia-Herzegovina in such a high-profile job.

There were a number of instances of Jewish leaders working with leaders of other faiths in fostering reconstruction and reconciliation. In February leaders of the Islamic, Jewish, Serbian Orthodox, and Roman Catholic communities in Bosnia asked the European Union for funding to reconstruct war-damaged or de-
stroyed mosques, synagogues, and churches and pledged to promote religious
tolerance and the return of refugees. Also in February, religious leaders of the
various faiths issued a joint message pledging tolerance and inter-ethnic under-
standing. Before issuing the statement, Jakob Finci, head of Sarajevo's Jewish
community, Roman Catholic cardinal Vinko Puljic, Metropolitan Nikolaj, of the
Serbian Orthodox Church, and Mustafa Ceric, the head of Bosnia's Muslim
community, held a roundtable discussion on religious issues and the import-
ance of implementing the Dayton agreement.

Jewish Community

Jewish students from Bosnia-Herzegovina were part of a gathering of Jewish
students from the various countries of the former Yugoslavia that took place in
November in Vienna. The students took part in workshops on youth activities,
visited the Vienna Jewish Museum, and attended lectures as well as social get-
togethers with Jewish young people from Vienna. The meeting was organized by
the JDC with the support of Vienna-based Jewish organizations. It was funded
by the Austrian Chancellor's Office, the Austrian Foreign Ministry, and the Min-
istry for Environment, Youth and Family Affairs.

Norwegian Peoples Aid, the humanitarian assistance arm of the Norwegian
government, carried out the job of removing the hundreds of land mines that
studded the ancient Jewish cemetery overlooking Sarajevo. The cemetery had been
on the frontlines of fighting during the Bosnian war. In September the de-mined
cemetery was returned to the possession of the Jewish community in a gala cer-
emony. In addition, the Central Sarajevo Municipality—the downtown part of
the city—allocated some 100,000 German marks (about $65,000) to repair the
wall around the cemetery and the entrance gate. In Mostar, work was under way
to create a Holocaust memorial in the Jewish cemetery.

Croatia

The growth of Croatia's GDP slowed in 1998 to about 3.4 percent, compared
with 6.5 percent in 1997. Wages were higher, but the unemployment rate remained
at about 16 percent.

Foreign Minister Mate Granic made an official visit to Israel in May, becom-
ing the first Croatian government leader to visit Israel since the two countries es-
tablished diplomatic relations in September 1997. On a tour of Yad Vashem, he
condemned on behalf of his government the persecution of Jews in wartime
Croatia and "the crime of genocide of 6 million Jews."

Two developments, meanwhile, forced Croatians to face the legacy of their
World War II fascist government. One was the arrest in Argentina of World War
II fascists Dinko Sakic and his wife, Nada, and their extradition to Zagreb to face
war crimes charges. Sakic, 76, was arrested in April after he reminisced on Ar-
gentine television about his years as commander of Croatia's notorious wartime concentration camp at Jasenovac, south of Zagreb, where tens of thousands of people were tortured and killed. The great majority were Serbs, but victims also included Jews, Romas, and antifascist Croats. Jasenovac was not run by German Nazis but by homegrown Croatian fascists, called Ustashe, who ruled Croatia as a nominally independent Nazi puppet state from 1941 to 1945. Sakic, who with his wife had lived in Argentina for 50 years, was extradited to Zagreb in June. He was formally indicted in December and charged with responsibility for the deaths of at least 2,000 people while he commanded Jasenovac between April and November 1944. Nada Sakic, 72, alleged to have been a guard at another concentration camp, was extradited to Zagreb in November to face charges in a separate trial. The Sakic case had important repercussions in Croatia, where President Franjo Tudjman has used a calculated ambivalence toward the wartime independent Croatia to foster Croatian nationalism. It opened the door to a reexamination of Croatia's past, both its World War II history and the nationalist passions fanned over the past decade with the bloody breakup of Yugoslavia. Before Sakic's extradition, the Jewish community publicly demanded that he be brought back for a fair trial. Jewish leaders were inundated by phone calls either accusing Jews of engineering Sakic's arrest or expressing support for the process.

The other related development was the beatification in October by Pope John Paul II of Zagreb's World War II-era archbishop Alojzije Stepinac, a Croatian nationalist hailed as a martyr to Communism by many Croatian Catholics but reviled by critics as a fascist collaborator. The Simon Wiesenthal Center called on the Vatican to postpone the beatification pending further study into his actions during the war. Stepinac at first supported Ustashe leader Ante Pavelic, but by 1942, he had denounced the Ustashe regime's genocidal policies. A staunch anticommunist, he was tried by Yugoslavia's Communist government after the war and sentenced to jail for having collaborated with the Pavelic regime. He died in 1962, while under house arrest.

JEWISH COMMUNITY

Croatia was home to about 2,000 Jews, most of them in Zagreb. Most community members were secular and well assimilated into the mainstream community, and most children were from mixed marriages.

Rabbi Kotel Dadon, an Israeli who had been teaching at the Rabbinical Seminary in Budapest, Hungary, was formally inaugurated as chief (and so far only) rabbi in Croatia in November. He became the first permanent rabbi based in Zagreb for more than half a century. Dadon had already officiated at High Holy Day services before he was officially installed. He said his goal was to reintroduce Jewish ritual encompassing the entire life cycle and calendar.

In July B'nai B'rith opened a lodge in Zagreb. Jewish students from Croatia took part in the gathering of 40 Jewish students from the various countries of
the former Yugoslavia that took place in November in Vienna (see Bosnia-Herzegovina).

**Slovenia**

Slovenia maintained good relations with Israel, thanks to various military transactions and tourist trade.

Only about 120 Jews lived in Slovenia, most of them in the capital, Ljubljana, but they were recognized as a national minority by the Slovenian constitution. There was a concerted effort to revive communal activities, sponsored by the Joint Distribution Committee, after a change of leadership that took place in late 1997-early 1998. In this change, Andrej Kozar-Beck became president of the community. The community had no rabbi but began negotiations with the Jewish community in Trieste, Italy, to arrange for a rabbi from there to visit on a regular basis.

**Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro)**

Political, economic, and social conditions in Yugoslavia remained dire and depressing, as violence flared in Serbia's Kosovo province between Serbian police and ethnic Albanian guerrillas demanding independence, and the authorities in Montenegro inched toward possible secession. Yugoslavia remained a pariah state, headed by president Slobodan Milosevic.

Several anti-Semitic acts were reported, including an assault by skinheads who scrawled swastikas and anti-Semitic slogans on an interior corridor of the Belgrade synagogue. A television program during the summer, focusing on the policies of Madeleine Albright and Richard Holbrooke, declared "The Jews are ruling the world. They are responsible for what is happening in (and to) Serbia." On July 5, in response to these and other incidents, Aca Singer, the president of the Federation of Jewish Communities, complained to Serbia's president that nothing was being done to combat anti-Semitism and no arrests had been made.

**Jewish Community**

Most of the 2,000-3,000 Jews in Yugoslavia lived in Belgrade, with much smaller communities in several other towns. The communities were linked through the federation. In Subotica, near the Hungarian border, a social service organization was set up in cooperation with the Sarajevo Jewish community's La Benevolencia organization to help provide nonsectarian aid to people in the Subotica region. Jewish young people from Belgrade and other towns took part in the meeting in November in Vienna of some 40 young Jews from the various countries of the former Yugoslavia. (See Bosnia-Herzegovina.)

In Belgrade, the Jewish community underwent a leadership change early in the
year that replaced most of the communal leaders who had led the community since the early 1990s. This moved some formerly active members to disassociate themselves from most community activities. Friction also developed between the new leadership and the young, Belgrade-based rabbi. Meanwhile, Jacques Beraha, the former vice-president of the Belgrade community, was held under arrest on charges related to the 1997 collapse of an illegal private bank he had operated. Losses amounted to about $1.2 million, wiping out the savings of many of Belgrade's cultural and intellectual elite, including members of the Jewish community.

About 50 to 60 Jews lived in Kosovo. About 40 of them lived in the capital, Pristina—some 30 of them members of one family—and they were safe from the violence that swept parts of the countryside. Three Jews were known to live in Prizen and four in Djakovica, both towns near the Albanian border. Most Jewish women and children left Kosovo during the summer months to stay with friends and relatives elsewhere. Jews in Kosovo (as most Jews elsewhere in Yugoslavia) attempted to keep a low political profile. They faced no special problems as Jews, but shared in the fears and uncertainties of the population in general. In Kosovo, the Jews resisted attempts by the local authorities to have them express public support for official Serbian policy but suffered no consequences from this. Kosovo's Jews remained in close contact with the Jewish Federation in Belgrade and received some financial assistance from the JDC.

Macedonia

About 100-150 Jews lived in Macedonia, most of them in the capital, Skopje, and enjoyed excellent relations with the government. Local authorities supported Holocaust commemorations in several cities, and the 500-year-old Jewish cemetery in Bitola—home now to just one Jew—was being repaired and restored with public funds, at the initiative of Bitola University.
Signs of an upturn in the economy of the Russian Federation had been clearly discernible in 1997, but by the end of 1998 the economy and polity were in disarray. Nevertheless, in July the International Monetary Fund approved and disbursed the first installment of a $22 million aid and bailout package, contingent on President Boris Yeltsin's promise to implement further fiscal reforms. However, Yeltsin had reduced the political and economic responsibilities of two prominent economic reformers, Anatoly Chubais and Boris Nemtsov, early in 1998, though Nemtsov continued as first deputy prime minister. Both were said to be of at least partly Jewish origin.

In March President Yeltsin suddenly dismissed Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin—a potential successor—and his entire cabinet. The prime minister was replaced by 35-year-old Sergei Kirienko, formerly minister of fuel and energy, who was approved as prime minister by the Communist-dominated Duma only after several weeks of wrangling and three votes in the Parliament. When Duma Speaker Gennadi Seleznev, a Communist, demanded that Kirienko be investigated for holding Israeli citizenship, Kirienko gave a television interview in which he explained that his father was Jewish, his mother Russian, his surname Ukrainian, that he was born in Abkhazia (an area in Georgia), and considered himself Russian culturally.

On August 17, Prime Minister Kirienko and Central Bank chairman Sergei Dubinin announced that Russia would default on government debt and devalue the ruble. The Russian ruble immediately lost half its value against the dollar, and Russia's ability to borrow was put in serious doubt. The economic collapse was explained by several factors. One was the $5 billion cost of the war against Chechnya (which also cost 50,000 lives) and the government's mortgaging of many of its most lucrative assets in 1995 to a few well-connected businessmen who agreed to bail out the government in return for shares in major government-owned enterprises. Another, the collapse of oil prices. Russia was no longer able to pay its debt, let alone pay pensions and wages, and default was declared. Several banks became insolvent. President Yeltsin dismissed Kirienko and other economic reformers. Evgeny Primakov, former head of the security services, a career diplomat and most recently foreign minister, replaced Kirienko. Primakov, who was orphaned at an early age, was also rumored to be of Jewish origin. Not surprisingly, opinion polls taken in the fall showed declining trust in politicians, disillusion with democracy, which was associated with corruption and ineptitude, pes-
simism regarding the future, and low belief in political efficacy (the ability to affect politics). Real per capita income declined 16 percent from 1997 and nearly a quarter of the population had incomes below subsistence levels.

Despair about politics deepened with the murder of Duma deputy Galina Starovoitova on November 20 in St. Petersburg. She was the seventh Duma deputy to be murdered since 1993. Starovoitova, an ethnographer, Yeltsin's adviser on nationality issues, and a well-known democrat and liberal, had declared her intention of running for governor of the Leningrad region in order to block the nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovsky. She was rumored to be investigating corruption in the Communist Party and had criticized Communist Duma deputy general Albert Makashov for anti-Semitic remarks he had made several times in public. While Starovoitova's killers remained at large, her funeral turned into a major rally for democrats, though rival factions and leaders among them failed to unite. At year's end, Prime Minister Primakov had not taken any significant steps in economic policy, Yeltsin's health was more precarious and his public appearances fewer, and the central government seemed to be losing both authority and power vis-à-vis the regions and the citizenry.

Prime Minister Chernomyrdin issued directives in February regarding the registration of foreign religious associations with the Justice Ministry and its regional branches. This followed from the law on religion passed in September 1997, which prohibited unregistered foreign religious associations from operating in the Russian Federation. Since Judaism was considered a religion with historic roots in Russia, Jewish religious organizations were not generally affected, though some local authorities tried to prevent Jewish religious activity on the grounds that there had been none in the region for several decades. In Uzbekistan, as part of President Islam Karimov's drive against Islamic fundamentalism, foreign clergy were limited to 30-day visas.

In Ukraine, inflation doubled from its 1997 rate to 20 percent. Ukraine's foreign debt, $11.5 billion, was 40 percent of the Gross Domestic Product and 70 percent of annual exports. The Communist Party won a quarter of the seats in the election to the national Rada (parliament) in April. No other party got even half as many seats, though the number of independent deputies was greater than that of any party but the Communists. Between 10 and 20 Jews were elected to the Rada, and two Jews, Dmitry Dvorkis in Vinnitsa, and Eduard Gurvits in Odessa, won mayoral elections.

Israel and the Middle East

Israel and the United States on several occasions protested Russia's assistance to Iran's nuclear industry and its development of missile technology. Primakov and other Russian officials made public assurances that Russia's assistance would not enhance Iranian military capacity. In turn, Russia criticized joint naval exercises between the United States, Israel, and Turkey that were held in June, since
Turkey has long been Russia's rival in the Black Sea and Caucasus Mountain regions.

Minister of Trade and Industry Natan Sharansky of Israel, formerly a Soviet prisoner and prominent "refusenik," visited Russia in March in an attempt to increase trade between the countries, which amounted to $400 million a year. Sharansky also visited Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. Israel exported significant amounts of agricultural products to Kazakhstan, and Gilat, an Israeli communications firm, planned to provide satellite communications for 250 locations in that very large state. Israel was committed to assisting these Central Asian states with irrigation techniques, greenhouse farming, and the development of solar and wind-powered energy systems. In May, Israeli prime minister Netanyahu stopped in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, on the way home from China and invited Uzbek president Islam Karimov to visit Israel. This he did in September, when he signed several agreements with Israel and also met with Palestinian Authority president Yasir Arafat.

Israel and Russia also cooperated in criminal matters, such as the case of Soviet immigrant Grigori Lerner (Zvi Ben-Ari), who was sentenced to six years in jail in Israel. He was convicted for, among other things, fraudulent acquisition of $14 million from Russian and Israeli banks. Russian Federal Security Service head Nikolai Kovalev was in Israel in July to enhance cooperation between Israel and Russia in the struggle against terrorism. Noting that Israeli officials "constantly returned to" the topic of technology transfer to Iran, Kovalev asserted that the transfers were by commercial firms, not the Russian government. A Moscow military court sentenced to a three-year term and fined Lt. Vladimir Tkachenko of the intelligence service for supplying Israel with high resolution satellite photos. The Federal Security Service announced in August that it had uncovered a network of informants who were passing military secrets to Israel and were operating out of the emigration department of the Israeli embassy.

**Anti-Semitism**

There were several anti-Semitic acts of vandalism this year in widely scattered parts of the FSU, and, for the first time since the breakup of the USSR, political anti-Semitism emerged prominently in Russia. In May vandals damaged 149 tombstones in a Jewish cemetery in Irkutsk (Siberia), the third such incident since the previous December. The Jewish section of Moscow's Vostryakovo cemetery was vandalized in July, and fire extensively damaged Kharkov's (Ukraine) only synagogue in August. In December some 50 gravestones in Tbilisi's (Georgia) Jewish cemetery were destroyed, causing President Eduard Shevardnadze to declare the action "barbaric and inexplicable." In May a bomb went off soon after people left Moscow's Marina Roshcha Synagogue, a building that had been constructed after the previous synagogue building was burned down in 1993.

The governor of Krasnodar region (krai), Nikolai Kondratenko, made di-
paraging remarks about Jews on several occasions. He assailed "Zionists" at a meeting of regional officials, and the deputy minister of the region, Nikolai Denisov, called for defending the public against the "cosmopolitans [a Stalinist code word for Jews] around the Kremlin who provide intellectual services to the policy of genocide against [ethnic] Russians and other peoples of Russia." In December leaflets appeared in Krasnodar calling for the elimination of all Jews in the area and urging Governor Kondratenko to run for president in 2000.

In October parliamentary deputy and Communist Party member Gen. Albert Makashov made some clearly anti-Semitic remarks in public. He recommended establishing quotas for the numbers of Jews allowed in governmental positions and criticized the media for being under Jewish/Israeli influence. Makashov called Jews "bloodsuckers" in a television interview. On November 4, the Duma defeated a resolution explicitly condemning both anti-Semitism and General Makashov by 120-107, with 7 abstentions and 220 not voting. Nine days later a milder resolution was passed, with no mention made of Makashov or anti-Semitism. The document stated that "some deputies, officials and mass media outlets do not advance friendly and respectful relationships between persons of different nationalities with their statements." A poll of Muscovites by the All-Russian Center for the Study of Public Opinion found that 51 percent condemned and 15 percent approved General Makashov's portrayal of Jews. However, a third approved the idea of limiting the number of Jews holding senior offices (43 percent were opposed), and nearly two-thirds said they would not want a Jew as president. Yet, over three-quarters said that Jews should have equal access to higher education.

In December, State Duma Security Committee chairman and Communist Party member Viktor Ilyukhin said that the "large-scale genocide" of the Russians would have been less massive if "the president's entourage and the government included representatives of other ethnic groups and did not consist exclusively of Jews, though they are a talented group." The next day the Duma rejected a proposal to condemn Ilyukhin, with only 82 deputies voting for the proposal. Other politicians strongly condemned Ilyukhin, but their motivations are telling. Chief of the Presidential Administration Nikolai Bordyuzha said that Ilyukhin's remarks "undermine not only the reputation of the Duma but Russia's international reputation." Not surprisingly, President Aleksandr Lukashenka of Belarus, suggested that "the problem of anti-Semitism has been created by the Jews themselves, the ones who work for the mass media." Communist Party leader Gennadi Zyuganov joined the chorus of anti-Semitic remarks by politicians when he was quoted in December as saying that "Gorbachev, Yeltsin, and Chernomyrdin are all Russians but the harm they have inflicted on Russia is more than that of the Jews Chubais, Gaidar and Kozyrev" (Komersant, December 19). Reacting to criticism of his remarks, Zyuganov issued a four-page statement in December explaining that ethnic Russians are disadvantaged in Russia and are "facing genocide." He claimed that the Communist Party had no quarrel with the Jews but was against the "Zionists" who were "blood relatives to Fascism. The only dif-
ference between them is that, where Hitlerite Nazism appeared under the mask of German nationalism attempting to subjugate the world openly, Zionists, appearing under the mask of Jewish nationalism, act in secret and employ the hand of others." Jews should either emigrate from Russia, assimilate, or live in a Jewish community in Russia, which they should regard as their "only motherland."

Boris Yeltsin, who had defeated Zyuganov for the presidency of Russia, appeared on television in late December and announced that he would launch a "powerful offensive" against anti-Semitism and extreme Russian nationalism. Representatives of the main military inspectorate and the Security Council were sent to several Russian regions to check with compliance with Yeltsin's instructions on combating political extremism.

Holocaust-Related Developments

Attitudes toward Nazi collaborators and legal proceedings against them remained an issue in some former Soviet states, especially Latvia and Lithuania, where many consider the Soviet "liberation" from the Nazis in 1944 as an "occupation." In February Lithuanian investigators announced formal charges against 90-year-old Aleksandras Lileikis, head of the Vilnius "security police" in World War II, who had been deported from the United States. Lileikis protested that he was the victim of "international political pressure" and asked for postponement of his trial, which was granted several times, so that by the end of the year he had not yet been brought to court. In March Lithuania indicted another war criminal, Kazys Gimzauskas, deputy chief of the security police in Vilnius in 1941–44. Gimzauskas denied the charges and claimed he was a member of the anti-Nazi underground. In September Lithuanian president Valdas Adamkus established a commission to investigate Soviet and Nazi war crimes in Lithuania, chaired by Emanuelis Zingeris, a parliamentary deputy and Jewish community leader. Earlier, in May, Estonian president Lennart Meri had announced the establishment of a similar commission. Twenty-two Lithuanian citizens who had been convicted of war crimes by Soviet tribunals were stripped of the pardons given them when Lithuania became independent. Israel had submitted a list of over a hundred names of war criminals who, it felt, had been wrongly pardoned. It was not known how many of the 22 were alive.

On the eve of his visit to Israel in February 1998, Latvian president Guntis Ulmanis wrote to the parliamentary commission on foreign affairs, urging lawmakers to admit that Latvians had participated in the murder of Jews in World War II. He said that "The historical truth is that there were Latvians who participated in the Holocaust and there were Latvians who helped Jews and hid them in their houses." In Israel Ulmanis " unofficially" apologized for Latvians' role in the Holocaust. Israeli officials asked that the whereabouts of war criminals living in Latvia be investigated; while Ulmanis was in Israel, however, the Latvian Prosecutor-General's Office said it had no information on people living in Latvia.
who could be prosecuted for the murder of Jews. In March, some five hundred veterans of a Latvian SS division that had fought with the Nazis gathered in Riga to commemorate the 55th anniversary of the establishment of the unit. They marched through the old part of town, where elderly Russians mounted a counterdemonstration. The SS veterans claimed they had not volunteered but had been drafted; the counterdemonstrators were driven off roughly by police. Russian presidential spokesman Sergei Yastrzhembski said that the Russian government was considering an official protest.

President Ulmanis observed that during the war the situation in Latvia had been "complicated," and that the international community could not be expected to understand it fully. He criticized army commander Juris Dalbins and parliamentary speaker Alfreds Cepanis for attending the rally, and Dalbins resigned. The Russian newspaper *Nezavisimaya gazeta* (March 17) charged that the commander of the Latvian navy, the deputy speaker of Parliament, and other politicians had also participated in the SS march.

On April 2, a bomb went off near the Riga synagogue, which had previously been bombed in May 1995. Some Russian journalists (*Nezavisimaya gazeta*, April 4) asked why there was no American protest over the rough treatment of the elderly Russian protesters against the SS veterans' march, and noted that the FBI had offered its services in investigating the bombing of the synagogue. The Latvian government strongly condemned the bombing of the synagogue and dismissed police chief Aldis Lieljuksis and the state secretary of the Ministry of the Interior for failing to protect the building after a swastika had been painted on it. Lieljuksis was later cleared by a court of charges of neglect of duty and was offered reinstatement, which he refused. In July, in Tallinn, there was a rally of 1,500 veterans of an Estonian SS battalion, but no top political or military officials attended.

**Jewish Community**

**Demography**

Israeli demographer Mark Tolts estimated that at the beginning of 1998 there were 325,000 Jews in Russia, where they made up 0.2 percent of the population. This represented a 43-percent decline since 1989, when the last census was taken. Moscow's Jewish population was estimated at 135,000 and St. Petersburg's at 61,000. The rate of emigration from the latter was higher than that from the capital. On the other hand, while in 1989 Russian Jews constituted 39 percent of the total Soviet Jewish population, in 1998 they made up 60 percent, since they had a lower proportion of emigrants and also because some Jews had immigrated to Russia from other former Soviet republics. According to the Institute of Contemporary Jewry of the Hebrew University, Ukraine had 155,000 Jews, the next
largest concentration. Belarus was estimated to have 23,000 Jews; Uzbekistan 14,000; Latvia, 12,800; and no other former Soviet republic more than 11,000. Estimates of the Jewish population by Israeli and other Jewish organizations were considerably higher; however, these relied on reports by local Jews and included those eligible for immigration to Israel, i.e., those who might have one Jewish grandparent but were not registered as Jews or were not Jewish according to Halakhah (Jewish law).

By 1997, 70 percent of all children born to Jewish mothers in Russia had non-Jewish fathers. About one-third of Ashkenazi Jews in Russia were over 65, and the median age of Jews was 56. In 1997, 9,546 Jews died, and 663 were born to Jewish mothers in Russia. This highly unfavorable demographic balance reflected a long-term trend and portended a further rapid diminution of the Jewish population.

**Emigration**

In 1997, 51,745 FSU Jews immigrated to Israel and only 14,143 to the United States. The small number of immigrants to the United States, about half the number who immigrated annually in the early 1990s, was explained by several factors: the drying up of the reservoir of first-degree relatives of those who had already come to the United States; the expense of traveling to Moscow, where American authorities insisted all interviews of potential emigrants be held; and the skeptical attitudes of U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service officials toward claims of persecution by potential refugees. Concomitantly, there was a rise in the number of Jews immigrating to Germany, though no precise figures were available. Of those going to Israel, 38 percent were under 25 years old, and 11 percent were over 65. The Israeli Interior Ministry announced in late December that "since 1989" (no terminal date was given), 166,029 non-Jews had come to Israel from the FSU, most of them not declaring any religion. Rabbi Yisrael Rosen, head of the conversion unit of the Chief Rabbinate, estimated that only about 5,000 had converted to Judaism.

The Israeli "Liaison Office" (*Lishkat Hakesher*) estimated that between 1989 and 1998, Israel had resettled from the FSU 13,800 scientists; 82,700 engineers; 53,200 technicians; 17,400 physicians; 19,200 other medical professionals; 39,200 teachers and artists, and 81,500 skilled workers. During the decade, some 768,000 immigrants had come from the FSU, 70 percent of them from Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus, and 20 percent from the Central Asian republics. Two-thirds were under 44 years of age and 13 percent (97,600) were over 65.

**Communal Affairs**

In September a four-day celebration was held in Tbilisi, capital of Georgia, marking 2,600 years of Jewish presence in that republic. According to local tra-
dation, Jews came to Georgia after the Babylonians conquered Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E. Though the Jewish population had shrunk from between 60,000 and 100,000 in the 1960s to about 14,000 at present, largely through emigration to Is- rael, an estimated 50,000 people attended the events, sponsored mainly by the gov- ernment. Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu could not attend due to ill- ness, but both Israeli chief rabbis and Israeli cabinet minister Moshe Katsav were present. Georgian president Eduard Shevardnadze, the former foreign minister of the USSR, spoke in a Tbilisi synagogue, calling the settlement of Jews in Georgia "a landmark in our history." Shevardnadze had visited Israel in January when he signed a "treaty of friendship."

At the same time, a largely symbolic synagogue was dedicated on Moscow's Poklonnaya Gora war memorial complex. Funded by the Russian Jewish Con- gress, the synagogue joined a church and a mosque that were to be built as sym- bols of the major faiths with which those who had fought in World War II were associated. President Yeltsin, Moscow mayor Yuri Luzhkov—widely regarded as a potential successor to Yeltsin—Israeli minister of trade and industry Natan Sharansky, and other local and foreign dignitaries spoke at the event. Luzhkov presented Adolf Shaevich, chief rabbi of Russia, with an 18th-century Torah scroll. The synagogue will be used only on major holidays, but it houses Russia's first major Holocaust exhibit and museum.

Another ceremonial event was the January commemoration of the 1948 mur- der, arranged by Joseph Stalin, of Yiddish actor and theater director Shlomo Mikhoels. That tragedy was the beginning of the official shutdown of Yiddish culture in the Soviet Union, including the arrest, and later murder, of many of its activists. The commemoration included 17 events, but no Yiddish theater pro- ductions, as few people in Moscow could follow a Yiddish play.

It was estimated that 20,000 children in Russia were receiving some form of Jewish education, mostly in Russian with some Hebrew instruction. This was said to be a small fraction of the age-eligible population; however, considering that a decade earlier not a single Jewish school operated in the country, this was a sig- nal achievement. An ORT school opened in Odessa (Ukraine) in May. ORT spon- sored five model schools in Russia and Ukraine, along with 22 technology cen- ters. These schools provided chiefly vocational and technological education but offered Hebrew and Jewish history classes in addition. Israel's education ministry was connected to 34 schools in the FSU and placed 75 teachers there. In 1997 the American Hillel organization, serving college-age Jews, had sent 240 students to conduct communal Passover seders, which, it claimed, included 10,000 Jews. In 1998, 600 young people conducted 350 seders for 18,000 Jews in various parts of the FSU. Five cities had regularly functioning Hillel Foundations and 14 more were planned.

The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) continued to play the major foreign role in communal reconstruction and service. The "Joint" op- erated 15 offices and had 24 "expatriate representatives," nearly 400 local em-
ployees, and about 5,000 volunteers. It supported Jewish studies at 54 general universities and five specifically Jewish universities, partly through its support of the Sefer organization, which brings together and assists people studying and teaching Judaica in the FSU at the higher education level. JDC set up 145 Jewish libraries in 75 cities and supplied materials to nearly 300 Jewish schools; trained Jewish communal workers at a center in St. Petersburg; and helped communities reclaim nationalized properties. By 1998, 81 buildings had been returned to Jewish communities and 67 other claims were in process. JDC estimated that it served over 100,000 elderly Jews with food packages, hot meals, care visits, and winter relief assistance.

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