In 1998 the Labor government headed by Tony Blair had to confront the intractable issue of Northern Ireland and to limit the damage arising from dissension within its own ranks, over personalities and policies. On the whole it emerged unscathed, though this good fortune certainly owed much to the weakness of the Tories and their failure to exploit Labor embarrassments.

On the economic front, Chancellor Gordon Brown’s second budget in March introduced a tax credit for working families and extended additional help to the poor. This was in line with the government’s policy of making work pay. Industry, on the other hand, especially exporters, suffered from the strong pound which was strengthened even further in June when the Bank of England raised interest rates to 7.5 percent, aiming to reduce the risk of inflation induced by wage rises. Not until October did the bank cut base rates, by a quarter of a percent, under growing political pressure, which became especially acute when the chancellor abandoned his relatively optimistic growth forecast in the March budget and in the autumn predicted lower growth than in earlier forecasts.

The unpromising Northern Ireland situation improved markedly with the Good Friday agreement signed in April, which created a new Northern Ireland assembly and extended cooperation between the province and the Irish Republic. A May referendum in favor of the agreement gave a boost to the peace process, but the problem of decommissioning arms remained, a situation that was highlighted in August by one of the worst bombings in 30 years of violence, which killed 29 people in Omagh and wounded 250. This was the work of a splinter group, the “Real IRA,” which subsequently announced a ceasefire.

The relative degree of benefit that accrued to the government through its success in the Irish question was offset by the enforced resignation of the Welsh Secretary, Ron Davies, who had to admit to “a very foolish” act on Clapham Common, London. A more serious blow was the enforced resignation in December of Peter Mandelson, minister for Trade and Industry, personal friend of Premier Tony Blair and the man widely credited with organizing Labor’s victory in the
1997 general election. Mandelson resigned when it became known that he had accepted a substantial loan of £373,000 from Paymaster General and millionaire businessman Geoffrey Robinson, whose business affairs were being investigated by civil servants from Mandelson’s own department. Robinson also had to resign.

The Tories were not able to exploit to the full these problems. Not only was their leader, William Hague, unable to reconcile the conflicting pro- and anti-Europe wings within his party but he also became embroiled with the Tory peers, whose leader, Lord Cranbourne, he summarily dismissed in December. This followed the revelation that Cranbourne, unknown to Hague, had entered into a deal with Tony Blair over a proposed change in the structure of the House of Lords. This would have retained 91 hereditary peers in the house, from which Blair was intending to remove the hereditary element entirely.

Israel and the Middle East

“Our policy is neither pro-Israel or pro-Arab, but pro-peace,” said Prime Minister Tony Blair in January. Furtherance of the Middle East peace process was Britain’s key international priority, not only for her presidency of the European Union (EU) from January to June but for her policy throughout the year, with the proviso that the role envisaged lay solely in supporting the American initiative.

Calls by Britain for the redeployment of Israel troops and for a halt to Jewish settlements on the West Bank punctuated the year up to the Wye accord in October, balanced by demands that the Palestinians make a hundred percent effort in matters of security. In March Alistair Crooke, a British diplomat and expert on security techniques, was appointed to help the Palestinians control terrorism.

Britain’s efforts as EU president to unjam the stalled peace process began in January when Foreign Office minister Derek Fatchett visited Israel, where he conveyed British and European concern over the state of the peace negotiations to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and met with Palestinian Authority president Yasir Arafat in Gaza. Arafat subsequently assured Blair explicitly that the Palestinians’ call for Israel’s annihilation was annulled, enabling Blair to state, amidst continued Israeli anxiety, that the issue of the Palestine National Covenant “need no longer hamper the peace talks.”

Condemnation of Israel’s settlement policy caused an upset in March when British foreign secretary Robin Cook, on a six-nation Middle East tour to promote the peace process, visited Israel’s controversial Har Homa housing project on the outskirts of Jerusalem. Describing the expansion of settlements “as one of the main difficulties in the peace process,” Cook further provoked Israeli wrath by shaking hands with Palestinian official Salah Ta’Amri and placing a wreath at the site of Deir Yassin, where Irgun members killed Arab villagers in 1948. Netanyahu, incensed, canceled a scheduled dinner with Cook, and Labor’s opposition leader Ehud Barak said Cook had displayed “great arrogance.”
In London, the Board of Deputies of British Jews withdrew an invitation for Cook to address its annual fund-raising dinner. This evoked sharp comments about the board's representative status in the national press from Jewish Labor MP Gerald Kaufman. Notwithstanding, Cook described his talks with Netanyahu as "amicable and productive." Blair, while supporting his foreign secretary's actions, also considered ties with Israel "very good." He worked to cement them when he went to the Middle East in April, winning Israeli favor by visiting Yad Vashem, introducing United Jewish Israel Appeal (UJIA) Blair Fellowships for exchange trips between British and Israeli youth, and initiating London talks between Netanyahu and the Palestinians.

Blair could claim to be "a profound friend of Israel" when he and Cook attended a reception at London's Israeli embassy in May to celebrate Israel's 50th anniversary, marked in synagogues countrywide and at a daylong extravaganza, attended by thousands, in Wembley Stadium in Middlesex. A coalition of groups including the Palestinian Solidarity Campaign, the Council for the Advancement of Arab-British Understanding, and the London Friends of Palestine planned to mark "50 Years of the Palestinian Tragedy" with a service at Westminster Cathedral.

Britain's September decision to raise diplomatic ties with Iran to ambassadorial level alarmed Israeli officials, who cautioned against overlooking Teheran's extremism, noting that Iran still opposed the peace process. Foreign Secretary Cook's address to the Labor Party conference in Blackpool in October, expressing hope for "a new relationship and for wider dialogue between the West and the Islamic world to promote understanding and combat prejudice," was counterbalanced by a speech by Blair at a meeting organized by Labor Friends of Israel in which he described Anglo-Jewry as a source of strength to Britain. The prime minister was presented with an honorary doctorate from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in recognition of his concern for peace, "illustrated by his pivotal role in Northern Ireland and his furtherance of diplomatic relations between Israel and its neighbors."

Britain welcomed the Wye accord signed by Israel and the Palestinian Authority in October and also Israel's implementation of an initial redeployment from the West Bank under its terms in November. A British-Israeli cooperation pact covering the development of military technology—but not relating to weapons of mass destruction—was signed that month, reflected Whitehall's satisfaction. Both Israeli and British officials described as highly successful a visit by Netanyahu to London in November, when he urged Blair and Cook to express their objection to Arafat's suggestion that he might unilaterally proclaim a Palestinian state in May 1999.

In June a petition was presented at an EU summit meeting in Cardiff, Wales, urging European leaders to help free Israeli servicemen, including airman Ron Arad, missing in action since 1986. The petition was organized by the Campaign for Missing Soldiers and bore 80,000 signatures. In August the government
pledged to continue to play a full role in international efforts to discover the servicemen's fate. In November, on the 12th anniversary of Arad's capture, a vigil was held outside the London offices of the Red Cross.

**Anti-Semitism and Racism**

The number of anti-Semitic incidents increased to 179 in the first nine months of 1998 from 169 in the comparable 1997 period, according to figures issued by the Jewish communal monitoring body, Community Security Trust. The Institute for Jewish Policy Research and the American Jewish Committee, who issued the figures in their annual review of world anti-Semitism, attributed the rise to the tension in the Middle East. The small increase did not, however, interrupt the general downward trend, which was ascribed to more effective policing, more criminal prosecutions, and the Jewish community's more determined attitude. Increased incidents were reported in the same 1998 period of the most common offense, abusive behavior (to 104 from 63) and distribution of offensive literature (to 28 from 23); but damage and desecration of communal property decreased (to 21 from 49), with no recurrence of the large-scale desecration of cemeteries and synagogues that occurred in previous years. In general, the review concludes, Jews in Britain do not experience the same levels of discrimination as other, more visible, ethnic groups. Public expressions of anti-Semitic attitudes come mainly from the political fringe, either far right or Islamist.

European cooperation to combat racism was apparent in February when three suspected neo-Nazis were arrested in Essex on extradition warrants by Scotland Yard, acting on behalf of the French authorities. The same month, the British-based Inter-Parliamentary Council Against Racism made plans for a conference to stem proliferating anti-Semitic propaganda on the Internet, following a report by London law firm Denton Hall that it had found 600 anti-Semitic and other racist Web sites. In April a site used by the Muslim extremist group Al Mujahiroun was shut down by its Internet service provider who claimed its contents were offensive and anti-Semitic.

In January charges of incitement to racial hatred against 84-year-old Dowager Lady Birdwood at the Old Bailey were halted on medical grounds. Birdwood had received a suspended jail sentence for distributing racist literature in 1994 but "no longer had the mental capacity" to stand trial, said Attorney-General John Morris, making it clear that he still considered her material a breach of the Public Order Act. Nicholas Griffin, the editor and publisher of a white separatist magazine, *The Rune*, in 1996, was given a nine-month suspended sentence for incitement to racial hatred, while distributor Paul Ballard received a suspended six-month sentence.

Attempts to improve race relations multiplied. The 3 Faiths Forum of Christians, Jews, and Muslims, founded in 1997 by Sir Sigmund Sternberg, announced plans in January to establish affiliated groups in Dublin, Glasgow, Bournemouth,
Brighton, and Barking. Sir Sigmund had started the group because the Council of Christians and Jews (CCJ) failed to include dialogue with Muslims, and he subsequently resigned as CCJ vice-president. In June Lord Janner set up the Maimonides Foundation to improve Muslim-Jewish understanding, which spawned two programs: Alif-Aleph, a forum for business people of both faiths, and the Calimus-Maimonides student forum. (Some 25 members of Al Muhajiroun, an extremist Muslim group, disrupted the opening session of Calimus-Maimonides at London’s University College in October.)

In June Home Secretary Jack Straw responded to a campaign by MPs, peers, and Jewish leaders and retained a 12-year-old exclusion order against American black separatist Louis Farrakhan. The order did not apply to leading members of Farrakhan’s Nation of Islam, who attended an antiracist meeting in October, organized by the Jewish Council for Racial Equality (JCore) and Westminster’s Race Equality Council at Westminster-Marble Arch Synagogue, London. “Sections of the Islamic community clearly would welcome the opportunity to open a dialogue” with the Jewish community, Rabbi Jonathan Sacks told the Jewish Chronicle, but a Board of Deputies official said that no meeting could even be considered unless British members of the Nation of Islam repudiated the anti-Semitic statements attributed to their leader.

The board found inadequate the Terrorism and Conspiracy Act passed in September to deal with the Northern Ireland situation, but welcomed new proposals to combat international terrorism in a Home Office White Paper issued in December. Israeli and Jewish officials had warned the government that Middle East groups like Hamas and Islamic Jihad were using London as a conduit for funds. The government’s proposals included a crackdown on organizations and individuals suspected of using Britain as a base for funding terror groups abroad, particularly the Middle East, and empowering the police to seize money believed to be earmarked for terrorist purposes.

Holocaust-Related Developments

New efforts were made this year to right the wrongs inflicted on victims of Nazism. In March the government announced that it was making an initial £2 million available for a “practicable scheme” for the return of assets of Holocaust victims deposited in British banks and seized by the Custodian of Enemy Property under the 1939 Trading with the Enemy Act. Trade Secretary Margaret Beckett, launching a Department of Trade report on the treatment of enemy property during and after World War II, expressed the government’s “deep regret” at the “insensitive” attitude displayed by some people dealing with claimants after the war. “The general principle must be that confiscated assets placed by victims of Nazi persecution in the United Kingdom should be returned to them where practicable and where claims can be validated.” To aid the search, 25,000
names relating to such assets were published on the Internet in April. In June Lord Archer of Sandwell, solicitor-general in the 1974–79 Labor government and former Amnesty International chairman, was appointed to advise the government on compensation claims. By November a 40-point consultative document issued by Archer in July—suggesting the most equitable means of compensating claimants—had been revised to take account of criticisms from the Board of Deputies and others and submitted to Secretary of State Peter Mandelson. In December Mandelson announced a claims program “as a matter of urgency,” appointing Archer to head a three-person panel to assess applications. By then 180 persons had submitted claims valued at current rates at £13 million. It was thought that at least £25 million had been allocated to meet anticipated claims.

In July it was announced that British museums and galleries were establishing guidelines for identifying works of art looted from Holocaust victims.

The same month Foreign Secretary Cook released details regarding the £1 million-fund to help victims of Nazi persecution, established by Britain at the Nazi gold conference in December 1997: two-thirds of the sum would go to the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee for medical aid programs in Eastern Europe; the Board of Deputies would distribute the remaining £300,000 among Britain's estimated 500 Holocaust survivors living on welfare. "I am determined," Cook told the Jewish Chronicle, "that those survivors who are left should not have to suffer the double tragedy of surviving the Nazis only to grow old in poverty."

In November, after negotiations in Vienna between the London-based Holocaust Education Trust and the Austrian Post Office Savings Bank, PSK, broke down over repayment of “millions of pounds” in the accounts of Holocaust victims, it was announced that Bank Austria had entered into negotiations with the Trust. Also in November, a first step was taken toward compensating thousands of Holocaust era insurance policy claimants, when six European insurance companies launched a $90 million fund, pledging to complete their work within two years.

Nazi War Criminals

In February 1999 Andrzej (Anthony) Sawoniuk, age 77, a retired British Rail worker, would become the second person to face trial under British war crimes legislation. Sawoniuk, who was arrested after investigation by Scotland Yard's war crimes unit, faced charges of killing two Jewish women and two Jewish men between September and December 1942 in his home town, Domachevo, in Nazi-occupied Belarus. A fifth murder charge was withdrawn at the pretrial hearing at Bow Street magistrates court in April after the prosecution offered no evidence. Sawoniuk, who, according to his lawyer, “strenuously denies the allegations
against him,” was granted bail on condition that he continue to live at his home address and not try to leave the country. Up to 20 witnesses from Belarus and Israel were to be called at his trial, which was expected to last up to eight weeks.

JEWISH COMMUNITY

Demography

Britain’s Jewish population continued to decline, according to A Profile of British Jewry: Patterns and Trends at the Turn of the Century, by Marlene Schmoo and Frances Cohen, published by the Board of Deputies. Total Jewish population in 1995 fell 7 percent to 285,000, from a downwardly revised 1985 figure of 308,000, according to the 40-page booklet, combining research by the Board’s Community Research Unit and the Jewish Policy Research Unit’s 1995 survey of the community. The numbers of Jews in most major centers had fallen over the decade: in London and the Home Counties from 215,000 to 204,650; in Greater Manchester from 30,000 to 27,800; in Leeds from 12,000 to 10,000; in Glasgow from 7,500 to 5,600; in Brighton from 6,500 to 5,300; in Birmingham from 5,000 to 4,000; in Liverpool from 4,500 to 3,800; and in Southend from 4,500 to 3,400.

Meanwhile, Community Research Unit statistics showed an increase in 1997 in the total number of marriages conducted under synagogue auspices for the second year running, rising 4.1 percent to 986 from 957 in 1996. The number of gittim (religious divorces) completed in 1997 fell to 233 from 272 in 1996, while burials and cremations under Jewish religious auspices fell to 4,070 from 4,167 in 1996. The estimated total of births, based on figures for circumcision, was 2,897 in 1996, as compared with 3,013 in 1995.

Communal Affairs

With the approach of the millennium, new communal surveys were initiated and others, completed, published their findings, all aiming to help the community prepare for the 21st century. In February the Jewish Policy Research Unit (JPR) announced the establishment of an independent commission, “Who Speaks for British Jewry?” to examine the role of the Board of Deputies, the Chief Rabbinate, and other key leadership institutions of Anglo-Jewry to evaluate whether existing organizations effectively served the increasingly “pluralistic” community. The commission, coming in the wake of controversies over the representative role of the Chief Rabbinate and debate about the scope and effectiveness of the Board of Deputies, was expected to cost £50,000. It consisted of ten women and nine men, ranging in age between the 20s and 60s, spanning the religious spectrum. In November the commission’s first head, former Marks and Spencer deputy chairman Clinton Silver and two commission members resigned. In October JPR
launched a four-year survey to investigate the funding, staffing, and leadership structure of Britain's 2000 Jewish voluntary agencies.

According to a new JPR publication, *Patterns of Charitable Giving Among British Jews*, by Barry Kosmin and Jacqueline Goldberg, issued in June, 80 percent of charitable donations came from 9 percent of the community. Based on JPR's 1995 survey of over 2,000 Jews, the report's findings showed a link between philanthropy and religious practice, with the strictly Orthodox giving "significantly larger sums" than other sectors.

A study of services for Jewish students, begun in March, issued its findings in December. Commissioned by four organizations supporting Jewish campus life—United Jewish Israel Appeal (IJIA), Hillel, Union of Jewish Students (UJS), and the Community Security Trust—the study was headed by UJIA board member Victor Blank and implemented by UJIA's strategic planning unit. The commission recommended that the Hillel Foundation become the main agency for coordinating student activity, that the Union of Jewish Students establish an "educational curriculum," and that the position of student chaplains be strengthened.

**Religion**

The major event of the year came in November when leaders of the Orthodox United Synagogue (US), Britain's largest synagogue grouping, and of the Masorti (Conservative), Reform, and Liberal movements signed a declaration pledging themselves "unreservedly to the pursuit of communal peace and cooperation." The declaration, which provides for a permanent "consultative committee" composed of "lay, professional and rabbinic leaders" from each group, followed 18 months of talks aimed at reducing the religious tension sparked by Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks's ambivalent response to the funeral of Reform rabbi Hugo Gryn in August 1996. Opposition from London's Bet Din caused US president Elkan Levy to withdraw a clause in the declaration's appendix that left open the possibility of US rabbis attending non-Orthodox synagogues. A Bet Din statement explicitly forbade such attendance and reiterated its long-standing policy of withholding "support of interdenominational committees" because they "ultimately sowed confusion within Anglo-Jewry." According to Joe Lobenstein, vice-president of the right-wing Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations, the declaration "marks the beginning of the end of the US as guardian of an Orthodox kehillah (community)."

The year was not without problems for the US. In April it opposed Hendon synagogue's choice of Rabbi Zvi Telsner, head of the Lubavitch universal council, for communal rabbi, but denied it was because of his Lubavitch connections. In September Hendon appointed Rabbi Mordechai Ginsbury to fill the post. In May the US dismissed part-time Bet Din *dayan* Casriel Kaplan for removing valuable documents and books from the Bet Din's library. This, coupled with revelations of "financial irregularities" at Waltham Abbey and Eltham cemeteries, led
US president Levy to announce plans in June to appoint outside accountants to conduct a special inquiry into the protection of US assets. In September the US council voted to sell the valuable collection of rare Hebrew books and manuscripts acquired from Chief Rabbi Solomon Hirschell in 1846, as well as the US's surplus silverware valued at around £80,000.

Although US's annual accounts published in June showed a surplus of £230,000, a cut was planned in the budget for the Chief Rabbinate. Consequently, in July supporters of Chief Rabbi Sacks launched a £900,000 appeal to fund a new phase in his "Decade of Renewal," the action plan for British Jewry he initiated on taking office in 1991. It aimed to strengthen mainstream Orthodoxy and offer "strong and purposeful leadership" for the Jewish people as a whole in an age when "modern and moderate Orthodoxy was in eclipse." Proposed projects included outreach to young people and a Web site to communicate Sack's "vision and teaching." Sacks hoped not only to "internationalize the Chief Rabbi's influence" but also to "cluster" around his office key units of the community involved in youth, day schools, personnel recruitment, and community development. Sacks's image was enhanced in September with his appointment to two visiting professorships: at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem for 1999 and at the department of theology and religious studies, King's College, London University, for three years. In November US co-treasurer Jeremy Jacobs announced an increase in the budget for the Chief Rabbi's Office to £255,000 from £220,000, to insure that "the Chief Rabbi is properly remunerated."

In May, after his book *Kosher Sex* was denounced by the US rabbinical council, maverick American rabbi Shmuel Boteach split with the US in order, he said, to spare the chief rabbi problems with the rabbinate and Beth Din. Although no US member synagogue granted him a pulpit, Boteach came second in a nationwide Preacher of the Year contest sponsored by the *Times* and the College of Preachers.

Synagogues closed and/or merged, reflecting population shifts. In January Liverpool's Pride of Israel synagogue with only 30 members announced closure; in September Elm Park (37 members) and Romford (84 members) in Essex agreed to merge as Romford and District Synagogue. On the other hand, a synagogue donated by the Saatchi brothers (including advertising giants Maurice and Charles) in their parents' honor, housed in a Jewish school in Maida Vale, West London, and under the auspices of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews' Congregation, was dedicated in June. In July American Pini Dunner, former Jewish Spectrum Radio presenter, was appointed rabbi of the Saatchi synagogue, which attracted publicity through its appeal to the under-45s and its full-page ad in the *Jewish Chronicle*: a picture of a piece of gefilte fish with the caption "At our new synagogue, this is the only thing that gets rammed down someone's throat." In September disaffected members of Golders Green, North-West London, synagogue started an alternative minyan at local Jewish Vegetarian Society premises.

Controversy struck the West London Synagogue (Reform) over the selection of American rabbi Mark Winer, and not long-serving associate minister Rabbi
Jacqueline Tabick, as senior minister to replace the late Rabbi Hugo Gryn. A mail ballot in April confirmed Winer’s appointment; after a nine-month sabbatical leave, Tabick resigned from the West London in December.

In April, after 18 months of debate, the Assembly of Reform Rabbis voted overwhelmingly for a policy upholding heterosexual marriage as the traditional Jewish ideal, but recognizing “alternative life-styles which are valid and moral.” The assembly, a policy paper stated, neither approved commitment ceremonies nor supported rabbis officiating at them but found involvement in them not incompatible with membership in the assembly. Following the vote, Rabbi Elizabeth Sarah resigned from the organization.

In March Sukkat Shalom Reform synagogue in Wanstead, East London, was awarded a £333,000 grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund and English Heritage for refurbishment; in April a grant of £47,000 was provided by the National Lottery, English Heritage, and Canterbury, Kent, city council to fund the restoration of Canterbury’s Georgian Jewish cemetery.

Approval was given for revised plans for Britain’s first eruv (Sabbath boundary marker) in North-West London by Barnet Council’s development and protection committee in June and its public works committee in October; however, the approval of the national authority, the Highways Agency, was still required before the plans could be implemented.

**Education**

Some 27,850 Jewish children or approximately two-thirds of all Jewish children aged 5 to 17 received some form of Jewish education in 1996–97, compared with 23,800 in 1991, according to the Board of Deputies publication *A Profile of British Jewry*. In addition, approximately 2,700 children attended nurseries or kindergartens for the under-fives, while 14,100 Jewish children received no Jewish education at all in 1996–97 (against 19,100 in 1991). In 1996–97 there were 257 Jewish educational establishments, including preschools and kindergartens, over half of them offering part-time classes. In January 1998 the Secretary of State authorized two new Jewish day schools in Hertfordshire and also conferred state-aided status on Mathilda Marks-Kennedy School, Edgware, Middlesex.

In January the United Jewish Israel Appeal (UJIA), formed by the 1997 merger between Jewish Continuity and the Joint Israel Appeal, the community’s fund-raising programs for education and Israel, respectively, voted to spend £3.8m from its 1998 budget of £14m on Anglo-Jewish education. This included £1.3m on programs for young people, £800,000 on training teachers and educational leaders, and £600,000 on Israel experience schemes. In August UJIA and Limmud, the cross-community educational organization, announced a joint project to provide Jewish literacy for adults in Britain, the Florence Melton Minischool.

Jews’ College, founded in 1855 to train rabbis for mainstream Orthodox communities, in July was renamed the London School of Jewish Studies to reflect its standing as an institute of higher education associated with London University.
The name change was part of an overall plan to revitalize the institution, following a six-month review initiated by the college president, Chief Rabbi Sacks. The first change, in February, was the appointment as director of David-Hillel Ruben, American-born philosophy professor at London University. In August Yeshivat Ohr Torah opened quarters on the college's campus, headed by Rabbi Chaim Brovender, head of Yeshivat Hamivtar in Efrat, Israel. Another change was the appointment of two women council members. In the planning were new courses for London University students and new part-time degrees.

The introduction in September of a joint honors degree in Jewish and Islamic studies at the University of Wales was announced in May. In July Stefan Reif, director of the Taylor-Schechter Genizah research unit at Cambridge University library was appointed professor of medieval studies at Cambridge. In October the University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies introduced an MA degree in Yiddish studies. In May seven leading teachers of university Jewish studies formed the Consortium for Higher Jewish Studies in Britain, calling on community leaders to finance an expansion of students, teachers, and scholars and warning that British Jewry was threatened with decline and the loss of collective identity.

Robin and Nitza Spiro, who had launched the Spiro Institute in 1978 to promote Jewish identity through teaching Jewish history and culture, both resigned during the year. In October the couple started the Spiro Ark at Middlesex University's Hendon campus.

Publications

The 1998 *Jewish Quarterly* award for fiction went to Canadian Anne Michaels for her novel *Fugitive Pieces*; the nonfiction prize was given to Claudia Roden for *The Book of Jewish Food*. Writer and publisher Matthew Reisz was appointed editor of the *Jewish Quarterly*.

Works of Jewish local history published during the year included *JFS: The history of the Jews' Free School, London, since 1732* by Gerry Black; *Touching Lives*, a history of the Clapton Jewish youth club, by Celia Rose; *Eight Hundred Years—The Story of Nottingham's Jews* by Nelson Fisher; and *Voices from the Past* by Zoë Josephs, a history of Birmingham's Singers Hill Synagogue.

New works of poetry included *Arcadia, One Mile* by Dannie Abse; *A Whole Olive Tree* by Nomi Zuckerman; *Sugar-Paper Blue* by Ruth Fainlight; and *Scars and Stripes* by Fran Landesman.

Notable works of fiction were *Donna and the Fatman* by Helen Zahavi; *No More Mister Nice Guy* by Howard Jacobson; *The Pink Danube* by Charles Osborne; *The House Gun* by Nadine Gordimer; *Falling Slowly* by Anita Brookner; *Fair Exchange* by Lynne Reid Banks; and *Day of Atonement* by Jay Rayner.

Literary studies included two works edited by Brian Cheyette: *Modernity, Culture and "the Jew"* (with Laura Marcus) and *Contemporary Jewish Writing in Britain and Ireland; Babel Guide to Jewish Fiction*, edited by Ray Keenoy and
Saskia Brown; and The Experienced Soul: Studies in Amichai, edited by Glenda Abramson.

Among new biographical and autobiographical works and accounts of personal experiences were One Hand Alone Cannot Clap by Greville Janner; Arthur Koestler: The Homeless Mind by David Cesarani; Brief Encounters of a Legal Kind by Aubrey Rose; Amélie: The Story of Lady Jakobovits by Gloria Tessler; Genesis: A Latvian Childhood by Chaim Bermant; Manchester United Ruined My Life by Colin Shindler; Heshel's Kingdom by Dan Jacobson, writing the life of his grandfather; Wanderer from My Birth by C.C. Aronsfeld; A House of Memories by Hana Raviv, the house being the Israeli ambassador's residence in London's St John's Wood; Isaiah Berlin: A Life by Michael Ignatieff; Providential Accidents by Geza Vermes; and Christianity by Lionel Blue.

Holocaust studies included From the Wings by Joseph Harmatz; Surviving the Holocaust with the Russian Partisans by Jack Kagan and Dov Cohen; Holocaust Journey: Travelling in Search of the Past by Martin Gilbert, who also published Israel: A History; The Way It Was by Gary Leon; A Detail of History by Arek Hersh; Have You Seen My Little Sister? by Janina Fischler-Martinho; Values, Belief and Survival: Dr Elkhanan Elkes and the Kovno Ghetto by Joel Elkes; Men of Vision: Anglo-Jewry's Aid to Victims of the Nazi Regime by Amy Gottlieb (the story of the CBF); Edith's Book by Edith Velmans; and Belsen by Jo Reilly.

Historical works included The Illustrated History of the Jewish People, edited by Nicholas De Lange; Mandate Days: British Lives in Palestine 1918–1948 by A. J. Sherman; The Second Republic: Politics in Israel by Asher Arian; A History of Palestine, 634–1099 by Moshe Gil; and two books by Ephraim Karsh: Fabricating Israeli History and From Rabin to Netanyahu.

Israel's 50th anniversary spawned several works, including The Fifty Years War: Israel and the Arabs by Ahron Bregman and Jihan el-Tahri and Israel at Fifty by Moshe Raviv, Israel's former ambassador in London.


Personalia

The Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm was created a Companion of Honor; Lord Rothschild received a Knight Grand Cross of the British Empire for services to the arts and heritage; and a life peerage was bestowed on the publisher Paul Hamlyn. Knighthoods went to biochemist Philip Cohen, Royal Society re-
search professor at Dundee University, Scotland; to Nobel Peace Prize winner Joseph Rotblat for his contribution to international understanding; and to Eli Lauterpacht for services to international law. In October city banker and former senior civil servant Lord Levene was elected the 671st Lord Mayor of London, the eighth Jew to hold the post.

Prominent British Jews who died in 1998 included Leo Sichel, minister, Reading Hebrew Congregation, 1959–88, in January, in London, aged 75; Chaim Bermant, renowned author, journalist, and humorist, in London, in January, aged 68; Ron May, Jewish scholar and Oxford librarian, in February, in Oxford, aged 81; Randolph Jones, writer and historian, in March, in London, aged 84; Rabbi Mordechai Singer, in March, in Gateshead, aged 72; Sir Alexander Stone, merchant banker, solicitor, and philanthropist, in March, in Glasgow, aged 90; Michael Weitzman, Hebraist and Bible scholar, in March, in London, aged 51; Zoë Josephs, historian of Birmingham Jewry, in May, in Birmingham, aged 83; Sam Aaronovitch, economist and activist, in May, in London, aged 78; Carmel Webber, leading British Zionist and communal figure, in May, in London, aged 86; Benny Green, broadcaster, jazzman and raconteur, in June, in London, aged 70; Alfred Rubens, historian of Jewish art, in June, in London, aged 94; Renée Rachel Soskin, leading worker for ORT, in July, in Bedfordshire, aged 81; Frances Rubens, Anglo-Jewish communal figure, in July, in London, aged 88; Cantor Charles Lowy, in London, aged 86; Mark (Monty) Green, instrumental in devising the organization of the Israel Defense Forces, in London, aged 83; Jonathan Fine, Jewish educator, in August, in London, aged 47; Reginald Robinson, Jewish Chronicle parliamentary correspondent for 40 years, in September, in London, aged 75; Eva Reichmann, writer, historian, and Jewish civil servant, in September, in London, aged 101; Rabbi Curtis Cassell, in October, in London, aged 85; Douglas Gluckstein, leading caterer, active in Liberal Judaism, in September, in London, aged 89; Fredman Ashe Lincoln, former Recorder and Crown Court deputy judge, author and naval veteran, president of Masorti Association and vice-president AJEX, in September, in London, aged 90; Joseph Sandler, founder and director of the Hebrew University's Sigmund Freud Center, in September, in London, aged 71; Lionel Bloch, lawyer and Zionist, in November, in London, aged 70; Rabbi Eli Cashdan, in November, in London, aged 93; Rabbi Judah Rockman, in December, in London, aged 81.

Miriam & Lionel Kochan
France

National Affairs

On the political level, 1998 was marked by relatively peaceful co-existence between the president of the Republic, Jacques Chirac, the right-wing leader elected on May 7, 1995, for a seven-year term, and the government headed by the Socialist prime minister, Lionel Jospin, who was supported by the left-wing majority that emerged from the legislative elections of May–June 1997. Real political power was essentially in the hands of Jospin, with Chirac’s prerogatives limited to codirecting foreign policy, about which in any case there was no disagreement. Jospin’s popularity was sustained by the improved social climate. Unemployment declined to 11.4 percent, and the number of salaried workers reached its highest level since 1990.

Against this background of political stability, debate essentially concerned the redefinition of the boundaries between parties. On the left, and to a greater extent on the right, ideological differences, vested electoral interests, and sometimes feuds between political figureheads led to maneuvering by and within party machines that the general public did not always understand.

The Socialist Party, now led by François Hollande, constituted the major component of the left majority. Joining forces with it was Robert Hue’s Communist Party, now espousing democracy; Dominique Voynet’s left-ecologist Green Party, whose rolls were bolstered by the arrival of Daniel Cohn-Bendit, a Jew of German-French extraction who helped instigate the 1968 student revolt but who now championed the market economy and the European Union; and Jean-Pierre Chevènement’s Citizen’s Movement, made up of former Socialists who advocated patriotic values (defined in relation to the specter of European unification) as well as the maintenance of law and order.

The right was divided into three principal components—the Rally for the Republic (RPR), the neo-Gaullist party founded by Jacques Chirac and currently led by Philippe Séguin; the Union for French Democracy (UDF), headed by François Bayrou, a federation of movements of which the principal one, Democratic Force, claimed the heritage of the “Christian-Democratic” movement and affirmed its commitment to European unification; and Liberal Democracy, formerly part of the UDF, whose leader, Alain Madelin, an extreme-right militant in his youth, now supported democratic values and economic liberalism. A hesitant attempt to create an alliance between these parties was met with skepticism both by public opinion and in the political world.

In fact, the right had never recovered from its electoral defeat in 1997.
trouble assuming its role in the opposition, a difficulty heightened by the con-
tinuing popularity of the government and President Chirac’s endorsement of
certain of its initiatives. Internal discord in the opposition was stronger than ever
and primarily concerned two issues. The first was the formation of the European
Union. Philippe Séguin rallied to its cause at a very late date, although the then
head of his party, Jacques Chirac, had always been favorably disposed to the con-
cept. The second issue was the attitude to be adopted to the far right—not so
much the actual National Front of Jean-Marie Le Pen and Bruno Mégreń (all the
leaders of the right agreed to bar any dialogue with this party) but its ideas—
those “national values” whose abandonment, it was said, had been one of the
causes of the decline of the right.

In the elections for regional assemblies of March 15, 1998, the parties of the
“plural left” received 36.58 percent of the votes; the right, 35.98 percent. But
whereas the extreme left of the spectrum—two small Trotskyite parties—brought
in 4.32 percent of the vote, the far right of the right, the National Front, won
15.16 percent of the votes (the remaining votes were divided among various small
groups). The question of the relationship between what is called the “Republi-
can right” (traditional parties subscribing to the values of the Republic) and the
extreme right thus became a central issue of national politics.

The far right was now represented in the assemblies of the 22 “regions” that
make up France, in several of which the National Front held the swing votes that
could determine the choice of a regional assembly president from either the left
or the right. The National Front, prompted by Bruno Mégreń, proposed sup-
porting “Republican right” candidates for the presidency of the regions in ex-
change for a “minimum program.” Paris-based party leaders promptly refused
such negotiation and announced that any regional assembly presidential candi-
dates who accepted votes coming from the National Front would be immediately
expelled. Certain local party officials, however, were tempted to accept such a
deal, which had the appeal of its own logic: why leave a regional presidency to
the left if it was in a minority position? No “program” was officially signed with
the National Front; however, in five regions a president from the right was elected
with ballots of the extreme right.

President Chirac reacted to this situation in a television address on March 23,
denouncing any compromise with “a party that is racist and xenophobic in na-
ture.” Although his intervention was approved, according to public opinion polls,
by the great majority of the population irrespective of political orientation, it did
not have a decisive influence. One of the five presidents subsequently resigned,
and a Socialist was elected to fill the vacated office. The four others remained.
One of these, the president of the Picardy region, Charles Baur, is the nephew of
André Baur, a Jew, who under the German occupation was named by the Vichy
regime to head the General Union of the Jews of France and was subsequently
deported to Auschwitz and killed.
The National Front Challenge

This episode highlighted the problem that the National Front henceforth posed for the opposition on the right and, more generally, for political life in France. It was out of the question to enter into a compromising agreement with a party animated by an extreme right-wing ideology thoroughly permeated with racism. Yet, could one ignore the vote of 15 percent of the electorate, who probably were not all far-right or racist? Among the leaders of the right, it was the president of Liberal Democracy, Alain Madelin, who most openly acknowledged this concern. In an interview published in Le Figaro on September 4, 1998, he defined his approach as follows: "Firmly combat the ideas of the National Front, which we judge to be pernicious, while refusing to ostracize the National Front and its voters." Most of the other leaders on the right adopted much harsher language toward the National Front, but they too wished to leave the door open to those who had voted for it.

In fact, what everyone thought privately but without expressing publicly was that the presence of Jean-Marie Le Pen at the head of the National Front constituted a major obstructive force in political life in France. This fearsome, popular figure had in merely a few years attracted a substantial following to the extreme right, which until then had been practically nonexistent. He accomplished this by playing on the fears of an uncontrolled immigration, escalating unemployment, and feelings of insecurity in the cities. But he also symbolized, in his provocative excesses, all that made the far right intolerable in the eyes of the majority of the French. Thus Le Pen was condemned in April 1998 to a two-year loss of civil rights for acts of violence against a Socialist candidate during the 1997 legislative elections. At the same time, he was prosecuted by the German justice ministry for having declared during a press conference in Munich on December 5, 1997, that the gas chambers were "a detail in the history of the Second World War." (Since Le Pen was at the time a deputy, representing France, in the European Parliament, it was necessary for that body to lift his parliamentary immunity, which was done on October 6, 1998, by a very large majority vote.) All this justified the results of a poll conducted in April 1998 by SOFRES, an opinion research institute, according to which 59 percent of the French considered Le Pen to be "a handicap for the development of the National Front."

Within the National Front, many apparently shared this opinion, but the party sought to maintain at least a façade of internal cohesion. Rumors pertaining to the existence of a conflict between Le Pen, the party's president, and Bruno Mégret, its general delegate, were vigorously denied. Le Pen went so far as to affirm that the relationship between the two was one of "almost perfect agreement."

This façade of unanimity was shattered in December 1998, when formerly faithful friends became unrelenting enemies amid a crossfire of slanderous accusations. Mégret, relying on the majority of party cadres for support, openly de-
fried Le Pen. The crisis resulted in a split in the National Front, with “Mégretists” and “Le Penists” vehemently disputing the use of the organization’s name as well as its offices and financial resources. Le Pen hurled such smears at his adversaries as “putschists,” “felons,” and “racists.” Mégret in turn reproached Le Pen for the lack of democracy within the party and for playing into the hands of those who wished to make the National Front appear “diabolic.”

In contrast to Le Pen, a longtime militant whose political character was tempered in the battles of the extreme right, Mégret enjoyed a “modernist” image. An engineer educated at one of the most prestigious French universities (the École Polytechnique), he had been a member of Jacques Chirac’s RPR who later joined the National Front, where he rapidly rose through the ranks due to his talents as an organizer. Some regarded him as the agent who might integrate the National Front into the “Republican right.” Others, on the contrary, saw in him the ideologist of the most hard-line right (hence Le Pen’s accusation of “racism”), more dangerous than his fraternal adversary because more intelligent.

Israel and the Middle East

French diplomacy, under the direction of Minister of Foreign Affairs Hubert Vedrine, represented the views of both President Chirac and Prime Minister Jospin. This was especially true of Middle East policy where, despite nuances of a personal nature, harmony reigned between the left and the right. As a result, Middle East policy was not the subject of debate and most decisions were made by high-ranking functionaries in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with the backing of the foreign minister.

Official expressions of friendship toward the State of Israel were mixed with an evident hostility regarding the policies of the Netanyahu government. On the amicable side of the ledger were such gestures as the issuing of a postage stamp commemorating the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between France and Israel, as well as the remarks of Prime Minister Jospin at the annual dinner on November 28 of the Representative Council of the Jewish Institutions of France (Conseil Représentatif des Institutions Juives de France, CRIF): “Israel . . . is in the heart of the French people.” However, he also took pains to affirm at the same gathering: “The pursuit of colonization [by Israel on the West Bank] is an error that risks having dire consequences.”

France had not concealed its support in principle for the creation of a Palestinian state. The Wye agreement between Israel and the Palestinians was hailed as a sign of progress in the direction of peace, but a note of skepticism was also evident in the commentaries on this development. While ostensibly supporting American efforts in the region, France sought to play a particular role with regard to Syria and Lebanon where, for historical reasons, it felt its participation justified. Syrian president Hafez al-Assad’s invitation to Paris at the end of July 1998 was a case in point, as was French mediation of the negotiations on an even-
tual Israeli-Lebanese agreement concerning a future Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon—negotiations that were officially denied in Beirut but confirmed by Israeli sources. For the rest, French policy by and large was aligned with European Middle East policy.

On an entirely different level, 1998 was the year of the discovery of Israel by the French general public. During a three-month period, from October through December, France was the scene of the most important series of Israeli cultural events ever to be sent abroad by the Jewish state. There were more than 150 cultural events, including theater, the plastic arts, dance, architecture, literature, and music. These took place in Paris and in a large number of other French cities. The series, called "Israel in the Artists' Mirror," was jointly organized by the respective ministries of culture and foreign affairs of France and Israel and was under the patronage of the presidents of the two countries. A feature of the festival was a 1913 silent film, *The Life of Jews in Palestine*, believed to have been lost for the past 85 years but which was discovered in the Paris Film Archives.

**Anti-Semitism and Racism**

On January 13, 1998, France commemorated the 100th anniversary of the publication of Emile Zola's famous article, "J'accuse," which marked a decisive turning point in the Dreyfus affair. On this occasion, President Chirac sent a letter to the Zola and Dreyfus families, telling them "how much France is grateful to your ancestors who, with an admirable courage, knew how to give full meaning to the values of liberty, dignity, and justice." In February a memorial plaque was dedicated in the courtyard of the École Militaire in Paris, where Alfred Dreyfus had been publicly degraded in 1895 and later solemnly rehabilitated in 1906. A statue of Captain Dreyfus, conceived by the illustrator Tim and commissioned in 1995 by the then minister of culture, Jack Lang, was, after some delay, finally installed in a small square close to the Paris jail where the wronged Dreyfus had been imprisoned. This official act of contrition on the part of the French state served as an occasion to underscore the connection between the fight against anti-Semitism and the defense of human rights. Happily, during the past year there was no necessity to alert public attention to any anti-Semitic sentiments emanating from political sources. Even Le Pen's egregious remark about the gas chambers was formulated with caution and immediately condemned by public opinion.

In February, 13 persons were simultaneously arrested in several French cities on the charge of belonging to a neo-Nazi organization known as "Charlemagne Hammer Skin." This group was believed to be part of a satanic sect having roughly 1,500 sympathizers in various countries throughout the world.

The summer of 1998 was marked by the desecration of several Jewish cemeteries. In the village of Dieuze in eastern France, four children under the age of 13 who had committed an act of vandalism declared that it was a "game." A few
other local incidents were reported involving anti-Semitic graffiti and the vandalizing of several Jewish community centers. These incidents occurred primarily in the Paris suburban area where tensions sometimes arose between the local Jewish and immigrant Muslim communities. They were considered isolated cases of minor significance.

An embarrassing affair concerned one of the country's most prestigious institutions, the Académie Française, whose 40 members are drawn from France's literary and intellectual elites. In 1998 it awarded an important honor, the medal for services to French language and culture (grande médaille de la francophonie), to an Egyptian journalist, Mohamad Salmawy, in his capacity as editor-in-chief of Al Ahram Hebdo, a French-language newspaper published in Cairo. However, it was discovered shortly thereafter that on February 4, 1998, Salmawy had published an openly anti-Semitic article in his paper, "Seeking Out the Jews." In October the venerable academy was called to task on this matter by the press. While academy members individually declared their profound regret, the institution itself, traditionally slow to act, was not expected to offer an official apology very soon.

Toward the end of 1998, another no less embarrassing affair erupted, this time concerning members of the French judicial system. It began when an examining magistrate (responsible for conducting investigations into felonies and misdemeanors in order to determine whether sufficient evidence exists for arraignment) found himself threatened with prosecution. The magistrate was accused of having transmitted information to the press pertaining to a case he was investigating. Such leaks are a fairly common practice, to which examining magistrates may resort in order to generate public pressure so as to avoid the "squelching" of sensitive cases by their hierarchy, and they are practically never subject to prosecution. However, this incident took place in Toulon, a port city in the south of France run by a National Front mayor, and the magistrate conducting the investigation—considered by a certain number of local politicians as a nuisance because of his persistence in investigating cases of political corruption implicating the mayor's office and other local officials—was named Albert Levy.

The extreme right press had not missed an opportunity to mention the name of Albert Lévy on every occasion that the question of legal proceedings against the National Front in Toulon came up. At a certain point, a magistrates' union became involved. The Professional Association of Magistrates (APM), a small organization of right-leaning magistrates, published in the October 1998 issue of its official bulletin an article by its former president, Albert Terrail, devoted to the "Lévy affair." The piece concluded with the following remark, which, in French, has the ring of a traditional proverb: "Lévy goes to the oven so often that in the end he will burn." The linking of the words "Lévy" and "oven" caused an uproar. The author, who held the important legal office of assistant public prosecutor to the Supreme Court of Appeals, sought to defend himself by observing that he had wished to give his phrase the appearance of a proverb, that the word "oven" in this context had no sinister intent, and that he had "numerous Jewish
friends.” Nevertheless, he had to resign from the governing board of the APM; shortly thereafter, APM’s president, “still in shock,” announced the self-dissolution of the union. Paralleling these developments, legal proceedings were instituted against the bulletin and the article’s author, and Minister of Justice Elisabeth Guigou set in motion disciplinary proceedings against Terrail.

The rapidity of the response to this incident testified to the consensus against racism in official circles and also to the existence of a real problem within French society. Jews were far from being the principal victims of this problem. A poll conducted by the CSA Institute, published in July 1998, indicated that 15 percent of the French felt that there were “too many Jews in the country,” 27 percent thought that there were “too many blacks,” and 56 percent that there were “too many Arabs.” In comment on these results it was observed, however, that there had been a decline in anti-minority attitudes as compared with previous findings. An identical survey completed in 1990 showed rates, respectively, of 24 percent, 46 percent, and 76 percent. Resolute opposition to racism appeared to have become a salient feature of national discourse.

A significant case in point was the World Cup Soccer Championship held in France in the summer of 1998, which was won, against all expectations, by the French team. In their origins, the players on the French team represented the broad range of recent immigration to France—from North Africa, Central Africa, the West Indies, South America, southwestern Asia, and the South Pacific. An American might be hard-pressed to grasp the extent of popular enthusiasm triggered by this victory. The team manager, Aimé Jacquet, told Le Monde shortly after the victory: “France was able to recognize itself in this multiethnic team. What could be more beautiful? . . . It was said that the Blues [the French team] contributed to the fight against Le Pen. I am very pleased about this and very proud.”

For all that, real problems remained. The question of immigration, in particular, divided public opinion. The government’s policy aimed at combating clandestine immigration, while at the same time facilitating the integration of legal immigrants, was the target of attacks both by the right, which found the policy too lax, and a part of the left, which found it too restrictive. A law on citizenship that was revised by the left-wing government to be more liberal was adopted in March. It reaffirmed the French principle of _jus soli_, according to which—in contradistinction to laws prevailing in other European countries—citizenship is granted to every person born in the country.

**Holocaust Denial**

The trial of Roger Garaudy concluded in 1998. The 84-year-old philosopher, who had first been a Communist, then a Christian, before converting to Islam, was tried in Paris for “racial defamation” and for “contesting crimes against humanity.” In 1995 he published a book entitled _The Founding Myths of Israeli Politics_, in which he questioned the extent of the Holocaust as well as the existence
of gas chambers and accused the State of Israel and "the Zionists" of conducting a "Shoah business." On February 27, Garaudy was found guilty of the various offenses with which he had been charged, and was obliged to pay fines totaling 120,000 francs. Although condemned in Paris, Garaudy was soon heralded throughout the Arab-Muslim world as a heroic exponent of freedom of speech unjustly persecuted by the "Zionist lobby." Only a few Arab intellectuals protested the fact that in the name of "anti-Zionism" it was possible to propound notions staunchly advocated by the far right. Garaudy appealed the judgment and, on December 16, was again found guilty, this time receiving fines amounting to 150,000 francs and a suspended sentence of six months in prison. His publisher, Pierre Guillaume—a former ultra-left bookstore owner who had become the ally of the anti-Semitic extreme right—who had been found innocent in the initial proceedings, was given a 30,000-franc fine and a six-month suspended prison sentence.

These guilty verdicts were partially based on legislation passed in 1990, commonly known as the "Gayssot law," which in particular deals with "those who have contested the existence of one or several crimes against humanity as these are defined by article 6 of the statutes of the international military tribunal as appended to the London Agreements of August 8, 1945"—in other words, those who deny the existence of the Holocaust. Such legal provisions are not exceptional, as witnessed by comparable laws in Germany and Switzerland, but they have been misunderstood or opposed, as much in the United States as in certain French intellectual circles. Thus, in an interview published in *Le Monde* (September 1, 1998), the renowned American linguist Noam Chomsky stated, referring expressly to Robert Faurisson, the leading French Holocaust denier: "The state should not be able to determine the truth, even if it happens that it is right. . . . My position on the Holocaust remains in conformity with what I wrote 30 years ago; it is the worst atrocity in human history, and the very fact of debating it is ridiculous. But if people have other positions on this subject, they should be able to have the right to express them." Prof. Chomsky, who as far back as 1979, had taken up the defense of Faurisson in the name of freedom of speech, persisted in presenting him and those close to him as apolitical libertarians, despite the mounting evidence that led to their being considered in France as anti-Semites with close connections to leading circles of the extreme right.

The issue of freedom of speech with respect to Holocaust deniers was the subject of considerable debate in France. At the time of the legislative vote on the Gayssot law, critics on both the right and the left argued that there was a danger of establishing the principle of a "crime of opinion" and creating a precedent that could be extended to other ideas. They also saw the risk of giving Holocaust deniers undue publicity and investing them with an aura of martyrdom.

In actuality, while article 9 of the Gayssot law specifically deals with denial of the Holocaust (it is one of the law's 15 articles that, more generally, are devoted to the repression of "all racist, anti-Semitic, or xenophobic acts"), it has never been invoked against historical researchers, for indeed among all the Holocaust
deniers in France there has not been one professional historian. But the nonhistorian deniers of the gas chambers are a different matter. Originally they consisted of individuals with a nostalgia for Nazism along with a fringe group of the extreme left. Within a few years, however, their discourse underwent a transformation: they began to incorporate vehement attacks against the State of Israel, Zionism, and the “Jewish lobbies” that clearly crossed the line between intellectual argument and racist discourse. It is against such propagandists, for whom the “myth of the Holocaust” is an integral part of a wide-ranging offensive against “Jewish power,” that the Gayssot law has been used. In a country like France, where every racist declaration, be it written or spoken, is severely punished by law, article 9 effectively closes any legal loophole that would allow the expression of anti-Semitism under the guise of “historical debate.” Thus, following Le Pen’s statement that the gas chambers were a “detail,” for which he was prosecuted in Germany, comparable legal proceedings were instituted against him in France, using the Gayssot law. The Gayssot law similarly permitted the condemnation of Robert Faurisson, who on April 28, 1998, was fined 20,000 francs for a letter addressed to the extreme-right weekly Rivarol and published by the latter on July 12, 1996. Faurisson had defended the thesis that “there was no extermination of the Jews by the Germans of the Third Reich.”

The capacity to apply the law, however, had become increasingly hampered by a new technological development, the Internet. For instance, Faurisson was again brought to trial in Paris on November 13, 1998, for an article signed with his name, entitled “The Horned Visions of the Holocaust.” Its opening words were: “The ‘Holocaust’ of the Jews is a fiction.” This article was published on the Holocaust-denying Internet site “Aaargh,” and could still be found in French and English versions in early 1999. The article did not differ, in its essentials, from countless other articles by Faurisson that were reproduced on the same site. Faurisson, however, claimed before the court that he was not the author of the article. As it was materially impossible to prove the contrary, since the “Aaargh” site is located in the United States, Faurisson was acquitted without the court having examined the article’s content.

These legal fine points did not affect the French public’s condemnation of Holocaust denial. A poll carried out by SOFRES, at the request of CRIF, on October 30-31, 1998, indicated that 79 percent of the French approved (and 18 percent opposed) the Gayssot law, “because no one has the right to say whatever he wishes regarding the extermination of the Jews.” In the same poll, 59 percent of the French (versus 37 percent) considered the legal proceedings instituted against Maurice Papon as “necessary,” and 74 percent (versus 24 percent) thought that, “in general,” the law should “prosecute persons implicated in crimes against humanity even if this occurs a very long time after the facts.” This poll also revealed that more than two-thirds of the French approved the “declaration of repentance” made by the bishops of France as well as other professional groups (for instance, the police) for the behavior of their predecessors under the German occupation. The rate of approval rose to 80 percent (versus 16 percent) with respect to Pres-
ident Chirac's 1995 declaration on "France's responsibility in the extermination of the Jews of France during the Second World War." Finally, 90 percent of the French (versus 7 percent) considered "justified" the measures undertaken by Jewish institutions in France "so that property would be restituted that had been stolen from exterminated Jewish families during the Second World War."

Other Holocaust-Related Matters

Papon Trial

The year 1998 began in the shadow of the trial of Maurice Papon. This former high functionary, who from 1942 to 1944 during the German occupation had been secretary-general of the Gironde Prefecture in Bordeaux, was accused of having played a role in the arrest and deportation of more than 1,500 Jews. (See 1998 AJYB, pp. 257-59.) His trial, which began on October 8, 1997, came to end on April 2, 1998. Beyond the trial of one man was the trial of a regime—the Vichy regime—of which Papon had been a faithful civil servant. Did Papon know, or did he not, that the Jews were fated to a certain death? Could he have done anything other than apply the orders of the German occupation authorities and could he, as a functionary, be held personally responsible for his actions? These were the questions before the jury. In the end, Papon was found guilty and sentenced to ten years' imprisonment. He would remain free until the Supreme Court of Appeals pronounced its decision on his appeal, sometime in 1999.

The verdict, overall, was well received. Papon was not given the maximum sentence—life imprisonment—because it was not possible to prove that he had been a knowing accessory to the murder of the Jews he delivered to the Germans. Some deplored the fact that the jury rejected the argument that a high functionary could be guilty of what one of the victims' lawyers, Michel Zaoui, called an "office crime." But the ten-year term, which for an elderly man of 87 had the same significance as a life sentence, demonstrated that, in the words of CRIF president Henri Hajdenberg: "The French people hold the governing officials of Vichy and their functionaries fully responsible for the deportation of France's Jews."

The fact that among the deported were elderly persons, as well as women and children, particularly moved public opinion. A cartoon that appeared on the day following the verdict in La Montagne, a daily published in central France, showed two small children seated on a cloud. One asks the other: "Ten years, what do you think about it?" The other replies: "I can't really say, I never reached ten."

Restitution

Another matter that held the public's attention was the issue of the plundering of Jewish property during the occupation. Hector Feliciano's recent book, Le musée disparu (The Lost Museum), had revealed that some 2,000 works of art re-
covered from the Germans after the war—of which at least a part had been pil-
laged during the occupation from French Jews—were in French museums, still
awaiting claim by their rightful owners. Here was further proof that there were
still unknown or concealed aspects of the wartime spoliation of French Jewry. In
early 1997, then prime minister Alain Juppé had appointed a commission headed
by Jean Mattéoli, president of the Economic and Social Council, to examine the
conditions under which Jewish property had been plundered during the German
occupation and the manner in which restitution had been carried out after lib-
eration, and finally, to formulate proposals concerning the disposition of pos-
sessions that had not yet been returned. The vice-president of the commission
was medical professor Adolphe Steg, president of the Alliance Israélite Uni-
verselle and a former CRIF president. The other members were mostly Jewish and
non-Jewish historians.

The question of confiscated or plundered property proved to be most complex.
Approximately 330,000 Jews were living in France between 1940 and 1944, of
whom somewhat more than 75,000 were deported and exterminated at Auschwitz.
The community consisted of a small minority of wealthy Jews, for the most part
long established in the country, and a large majority of poor Jews who had re-
cently immigrated to France. The economic discrimination directed against the
Jewish population, initially instigated by the Germans and then pursued by the
collaborationist Vichy regime, affected the two groups differently and unequally.

The most visible part of the plundering—the “Aryanization” of major busi-
ness enterprises, real-estate holdings, and stock portfolios; the imposition on the
Jewish community of a fine of 1 billion francs, drawn directly from Jewish bank
accounts; the outright theft or forced, disadvantageous sale of artworks—these
only involved a few hundred families. It was also this group that contained the
most survivors and that benefited the most from restitution procedures follow-
ing liberation. The legal battles surrounding certain paintings, which continued
up to the end of 1998, while impinging on public awareness, seemed to be mostly
a matter of curiosity.

In contrast, the majority of French Jews who were victims of plundering dur-
ing the war (numbering in the tens of thousands) were people with little to lose
materially because they possessed almost nothing. In their case, expropriation
meant the loss of relatively small sums—the result of the forced closing of artis-
sans' small workshops and the sale of their contents by “provisional adminis-
trators” named by the Vichy government; the theft by the Germans of the con-
tents of Jewish apartments, a part of which was transferred to Germany; the
confiscation, first by the French and then by the Germans, of money or various
precious objects that Jews had with them when deported to the internment camp
at Drancy, the way station to Auschwitz. The sums involved here were modest,
and if they were not claimed after liberation, it was because there was nothing to
recover nor anyone to do so. Even if these small sums were to be added together,
the resulting amount was insubstantial. But the objective of the inquiry was of
an entirely different nature: it was intended, as was the Papon trial, to reconstruct the mechanisms by which a social system and state administration were put in the service of an enterprise of discrimination culminating in murder.

A paradoxical situation arose from this inquiry: the real interest of the investigation into the plundering of French Jewry was inversely proportionate to the amounts at stake. By placing greater emphasis on the financial consequences of the depredation, the fundamental dimension of human lives broken and sacrificed might receive less consideration, and the unspeakable crimes committed by the Germans and the Vichy regime would appear less in evidence. The choice of the appropriate method to investigate spoliation was as much a question of the basic underlying issues as it was a purely tactical one.

On this point, an obvious tension existed throughout the year between the leaders of France's Jewish community and the World Jewish Congress. The WJC, in the aftermath of the Swiss bank affair, stepped up public pressure on the French state and French financial institutions. Yet such pressure, because it consisted mainly of class-action suits brought before American courts, led to a primary focus on the redress of financial grievances. CRIF president Henri Hajdenberg expressed a viewpoint largely shared in France when he dissociated himself from the WJC's strategy, requesting that it limit its involvement in these matters and leave it to the leaders of the country's Jewish community to settle a "Franco-Jewish dossier."

From the viewpoint of the community, what was at stake was not merely a matter of French Jewish nationalism, or a fear that external intervention would place them in an awkward position with respect to local public opinion. Above all, French Jews were dismayed by what they perceived as a lack of understanding on the part of American Jews. They conceded that pressure from the United States might prod French authorities, and especially banks and insurance companies, to participate more actively in the search for information bearing on this unhappy period of their history, but they feared that such pressures, if excessive, would have the opposite effect of the one intended.

It was underscored in Paris that the money at stake in this instance belonged to French Jews and was not, as in the affair of the Swiss banks, money stolen from Jews throughout Europe. Moreover, in contrast to most other European countries, the majority of France's Jews had managed to survive the war, and this led to the conviction that no other Jewish community was entitled to speak on their behalf. Furthermore, seeking a solution in the form of global financial compensation would deflect attention from a central, crucial issue, namely, that France as a nation should undertake a process of reflection regarding its own past.

It was also felt that French judicial and administrative tradition should be taken into account. Within that framework, the idea that reparation could be made for wrongs committed against individuals by means of collective compensation is not only unheard of but also inadmissible. Even the right of the French Jewish community to represent the interests of individual victims was not self-evident. Sig-
nificantly, the Matteoli Commission, in the introduction to its interim report issued at the end of 1998, took pains to specify that the term "Jew" was used in the report in the sense defined by the discriminatory regulations that were in force between 1940 and 1944. In effect, apart from the historical fact that a certain number of victims did not consider themselves "Jews," the very idea of distinguishing citizens in terms of their origins or religious beliefs was deemed shocking. The Matteoli Commission was obliged to obtain special authorization to constitute lists of the victims of spoliation, as such lists, because they are de facto "lists of Jews," are prohibited by law.

The investigation of the question of plundering was undertaken in this context. To the difficulties indicated above were added further problems of a material nature. The inventoring of confiscated property necessitated examination of an almost infinite quantity of archival documents spread over diverse public agencies and a multitude of private organizations. What is more, a great majority of cases of property appropriation had been resolved and the property restored to owners or heirs shortly after the war. There was no purpose, therefore, in gathering data on the plundering without evaluating the extent of the restitution. However, it turned out to be more difficult to identify and inventory the cases of restitution than the acts of spoliation because the former, in contrast to the latter, were carried out by a postwar regime that prohibited racial discrimination, to the extent of not permitting individuals to be identified by religion or ethnicity in official transactions. As a result, Jews who recovered possessions or property were not identified as such, and there is no record of specifically Jewish restitution cases.

To complicate matters even further, sometimes both public and private archives could not be located. Banks, for example, declared that they no longer retained relevant records dating back so far in the past. Many small banks had long since ceased to exist, others had merged. The current directors of these institutions were little motivated to undertake inquiries into a past that seemed utterly alien to them. Jewish authorities did not hide their impatience and were obliged to acknowledge that under the circumstances a little outside pressure—for example, in the form of legal action before New York courts—would be helpful in convincing banks to participate to a greater extent in the investigation of wartime plunder.

One institution, however, demonstrated an exceptional attitude of cooperation—the Office for Deposits and Consignments (Caisse des Dépôts et Consignations, CDC), a state-run organization whose function is to receive funds for provisional deposit, as required by law, until their subsequent appropriation. Under the Vichy government, the CDC had been given the responsibility of managing a portion of the funds that derived from confiscations. Already in 1992, at the request of Jean Kahn, who was then president of CRIF, the CDC had undertaken to establish a team of investigators who would examine documents in its custody, under the supervisory control of renowned historians. The report resulting from
these investigations, submitted by the CDC at the end of 1998, depicted with unfailing honesty the behavior of its own former directors who executed the policies of the Germans and the Vichy authorities without the slightest apparent compunction. In the final analysis, the sums involved both in the plundering as well as the restitution of property were quite small, even when inflation and interest were taken into account, and very far from the billions of francs that some had imagined. The person who headed this internal investigation, Pierre Saragoussi, adviser to the president of the CDC, had himself lived through this somber period of French Jewish history. A young Jewish child at the time of the German occupation, Saragoussi saw his parents deported; he was taken in and saved by French Christians. Having become a high-ranking functionary, he found himself, at the end of his career, in charge of an inquiry that concerned his own past.

In November 1998, at the CRIF annual dinner, Prime Minister Jospin announced the creation of an “agency responsible for examining individual claims made by victims of anti-Semitic legislation or their rightful claimants.” This measure was taken without awaiting the completion of the Matteoli Commission’s investigation. The prime minister also authorized the increase of operational funds available to the commission so that its final report would be ready at the appointed date, fixed at the end of 1999.

On one significant point, however, the research into spoliation was completed. It dealt with the manner in which the inhabitants of the Marais, a neighborhood located in central Paris, had been expelled by the French authorities between 1940 and 1944. The journalist Brigitte Vital-Durand maintained, in a book published in 1996, that an “administrative pogrom” had taken place. She contended that, under the guise of an urban renewal and public health project, the City of Paris had been able to seize important real-estate holdings by making use of the anti-Semitic legislation then in force. Following these accusations, the Paris mayor’s office had put a halt to the sale of all buildings in its possession. An administrative inquiry was launched under the direction of a high-ranking public official, Noël Chahid-Nourai, in cooperation with experts and representatives from the Jewish community.

The report, made public on November 17, 1998, following a two-year examination of thousands of files, was immediately hailed by CRIF’s president as a “remarkable work.” The report revealed that in the present instance no Jewish property owner had been harmed. Almost all the Jews residing in the Marais neighborhood lived in rented, often run-down, apartments. Among those Jews who owned property, almost all received indemnities equivalent to those allotted non-Jewish real-estate owners. In only five cases were the sums paid sufficiently below the real value of the property as to indicate economic exploitation. In all these cases, the City of Paris paid additional compensation shortly after liberation.

Other cities established analogous investigatory procedures concerning Jewish real-estate holdings. Lyon (where municipal officials representing the National
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Front attempted in vain to oppose the investigation) and Bordeaux (whose mayor, Alain Juppé, had established the Matteoli Commission when he was prime minister), are noteworthy examples.

NAZI WAR CRIMINALS

At the request of CRIF, on the occasion of Syrian president Hafez al Assad's visit to Paris in mid-July, President Chirac asked for the extradition of Nazi criminal Alois Brunner, now 86 years old, who had long been rumored to be living in Syria. An investigation of Brunner had been under way since 1987 as a result of legal proceedings brought before French courts by Jewish lawyer and historian Serge Klarsfeld, and a summons was issued in 1988. Among his other nefarious activities, Brunner was the director of the Drancy camp, where most of the French Jews who were deported to Auschwitz were first interned. Assad once again asserted that Brunner was entirely unknown to Syrian authorities.

JEWISH COMMUNITY

Demography

Reliable statistical information regarding French Jewry is difficult to come by, but on the basis of available information it is estimated that Jews number approximately 1 percent of the total French population, that is, between 500,000 and 700,000 persons. Even in the absence of hard data, two contradictory demographic trends could be discerned: an upsurge of small, ultra-Orthodox religious communities, whose growth is due essentially to their high birthrates; and an increase in mixed marriages, for the third consecutive generation.

Communal Affairs

Israel's 50th anniversary was observed with a number of public celebrations throughout the country. The major celebration took place in Paris, under the auspices of CRIF—the umbrella organization of the organized French Jewish community—the Israeli embassy, and the mayor's office. In a large pavilion erected in the Trocadéro gardens, across from the Eiffel Tower, leaders of the Jewish community mingled with major figures from the world of politics—President Chirac, Prime Minister Jospin, and ministers and deputies representing all political parties (with the exception, of course, of the National Front). Outside the pavilion, some 25,000 people gathered to watch a live broadcast of the ceremony on a giant screen.

On May 17, Henri Hajdenberg was elected to a second term as president of CRIF, which is primarily concerned with Jewish political and social issues, such
as anti-Semitism and the defense of Israel. Hajdenberg, a 51-year-old lawyer, had succeeded Jean Kahn, who subsequently became president of the Central Consistory, the central religious body of French Jewry and one of the founding institutions of CRIF. At the time of his reelection, Hajdenberg had only one opponent, Arié Bensemhoun (age 35), president of CRIF for the Toulouse region, who reproached the incumbent for being insufficiently supportive of Israeli government policies. Hajdenberg was reelected in the first round of voting, receiving 75 votes against 15 for Bensemhoun.

CRIF's aforementioned annual dinner was, as usual, an impressive affair. These dinners are traditionally attended by the current prime minister, and this year's occasion also boasted the presence of 25 ambassadors (including the ambassador of Israel, Eliyahu Ben Elissar, and the general delegate of the Palestine Authority, Leïla Shahid), leading representatives of the Catholic, Protestant, Muslim, and Jewish religious communities, as well as many prominent political figures, with the exception of the extreme right. Prime Minister Jospin's address reaffirmed the French government's sympathy for the State of Israel, its determination to fight racism and anti-Semitism, its support of the new Jewish Museum in Paris and the Holocaust memorial, as well as its intent to strengthen the activity of the Matteoli Commission.

The launching of the annual community welfare campaign, at the end of 1998, by the United Jewish Philanthropic Fund (Fonds Social Juif Unifié, FSJU), served as a reminder that 36,000 Jewish families, according to estimates of social-welfare organizations, lived under the poverty line, the consequence of the prolonged economic crisis.

Religion

The synagogue of Balbronn (a small village in Alsace with 600 inhabitants) had long remained unused. Since many Alsatian Jews, often the most religious, had settled in Israel, a suggestion was made to dismantle the synagogue and transfer it to Jerusalem. However, the plans encountered a last-minute obstacle: the French Ministry of Culture decided that the Balbronn synagogue was a historical monument and as such should be preserved. Now this memorial to a once flourishing Jewish community will be maintained by the state.

On June 2, Israeli chief Sephardic rabbi Mordecai Eliahu came to Dijon to inaugurate a Jewish day school.

Controversy arose over the certification of kosher food products, taxes on which are the major source of revenue for religious organizations. The Paris Consistory, whose Orthodox religious court (bet din) had jurisdiction over the whole country, created a logo to be put on all products it had certified as kosher. However, it met with competition from other Orthodox communities not affiliated with the consistory, such as the Lubavitch movement. The latter had had an ambivalent relationship with the consistory, marked by temporary alliances and fre-
quent denunciations. Tensions reached crisis proportions when an importer close
to Lubavitch had frozen meat shipped to France from Argentina, thereby cir-
cumventing the regulatory controls of the consistory. During this time, Chief
Rabbi Joseph Sitruk, who is affiliated with the Central Consistory of France and
not the Consistory of Paris, made an unsuccessful attempt to unify the certifica-
tion of kosher food under his authority. This would have constituted a redistri-
bution of regulatory authority and consequently a redistribution of revenues
among religious organizations.

Jewish-Christian Relations

The year 1998 marked the 50th anniversary of the Jewish-Christian Friendship
Society (L’Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne), which brings together Jews and Christians
of all denominations in a climate of mutual respect. The anniversary celebration,
held on April 25 at the Rashi Jewish community center in Paris, paid special trib-
ute to two prominent figures who played an important role in the organization’s
recent history—René-Samuel Sirat, former chief rabbi of France, and Father
Bernard Dupuy, former secretary of the episcopal committee on relations with
Judaism.

The dialogue between Jews and Catholics was put to the test following the is-
suance, on March 16, of the Vatican’s statement dealing with the Church’s role
during the Holocaust. Jewish leaders, who had warmly greeted the French bish-
ops’ earlier “declaration of repentance,” concerning Catholic behavior between
1940 and 1944, this time expressed their disappointment with a document that
seemed to minimize the connection between Christian anti-Judaism and the anti-
Semitism of the 20th century and that rejected all questions bearing on the “si-
lence” of Pope Pius XII as the Holocaust unfolded. Many Catholics shared this
critical assessment.

On the occasion of Rosh Hashanah, as had become the tradition in recent
years, posters were affixed to the doors of churches wishing a joyous New Year
to “our Jewish brothers.” New Year’s cards were prepared by Catholic authori-
ties in honor of the year 5759, and Sunday, September 27, which fell between Rosh
Hashanah and Yom Kippur, was declared “a day for greater awareness between
the Christian and Jewish communities.”

Culture

The cultural event of the year was the opening in Paris of the Museum of the
Art and History of Judaism (Musée d’Art et d’Histoire du Judaïsme), in the plan-
ning since the early 1980s. A museum devoted to Jewish art had existed in Paris
since shortly after the war. Located in Montmartre (rue des Saules), it possessed
a fine permanent collection of paintings and mounted regular exhibitions. Due
to limitations of space and budget, however, it was decided to establish an en-
larged museum with a broader financial base, to be located in the Marais neighborhood of Paris and housed in a 17th-century city-owned mansion, distinguished for its architecture, the Hôtel de Saint-Aignan. The project received the joint support of the mayor's office and the Ministry of Culture. The work involved in creating modern exhibition halls while preserving the historic character of the building and its gardens took longer than expected, but the museum was finally inaugurated on November 30 by President Chirac. The new museum, which is subsidized equally by the City of Paris and the Ministry of Culture, houses the collections of its predecessor (closed since February 1998), as well as numerous works from state and private sources. Under the direction of Laurence Sigal and an executive committee representing the major French Jewish institutions, its exhibition philosophy is to present works of art together with historical documents, and its general goal is to carry out a program combining education and research. Already in its first year the new museum demonstrated a policy of openness and dynamism, undertaking numerous initiatives both on the international plane (with a conference on Jewish museums and the preservation of the Jewish heritage) and at the national level (participating in a variety of local projects, Jewish and other).

Attempts to create a Jewish television channel were so far unsuccessful, but Jewish radio stations continued to broadcast in the Paris area and several other French cities. These stations were largely financed by advertising, with some institutional and private grants. They offered to a primarily—but not exclusively—Jewish audience programs featuring current events in Israel and subjects with a Jewish focus. Leading French political figures often went on Jewish radio to express their views on topics of current interest, to such a degree that these broadcasts were regularly cited on national news reports, giving the public the impression of a "Jewish presence" out of all proportion to the actual number of Jews in France. However, for all its apparent success, French Jewish radio recently became embroiled in internal disputes. The principal broadcasting frequency for Jewish radio stations, which is in the Paris area, was shared by four competing groups, each with its own studios and staff. Confronted with the inability of these groups to reach some form of operating agreement, the state regulatory agency in charge of broadcasting was obliged to intervene, designating broadcasting time for each group. Listeners generally did not distinguish among them. However, the lack of coordination had the unfortunate consequence, for example, of providing listeners with the coverage of the same news events from Israel at half-hour intervals.

An adaptation of a classic from the Yiddish theater, S. An-Ski's Dybbuk, staged at the Rashi Community Center in Paris, was the highlight of the Jewish theatrical season. The production was directed by Shakespearean specialist Daniel Mesguich, a Jewish actor and director born in Algeria, who said that he lived his Jewishness in the form of "a brotherhood with Freud."

Two French films with explicitly Jewish themes were shown this year. The first,
L’homme est une femme comme les autres (Man Is a Woman Like All the Others), directed by Jean-Jacques Zilbermann, is a comedy about a Jewish homosexual clarinetist who marries a (female) Yiddish singer. The second, Train de vie (Life Train), by Radu Maihaieanu, recounts the fictional story of the inhabitants of a Jewish village in Eastern Europe who attempt to escape from the Germans by staging their own deportation.

Publications

As in previous years, 1998 saw the appearance of numerous autobiographical accounts dealing with the period of the German occupation. For obvious reasons of chronology, these works are mainly the narratives of persons who were children at the time. Two such efforts were Dès les premiers jours de l’automne (From the First Days of Autumn) by Emile Copferman, and Un hiver à voix basse (A Winter of Whispers) by Dominique Laury. The year also saw the republication of two testimonial accounts of experiences at the Drancy detention camp: Camp de représailles (Camp of Reprisals) by Noël Calef, and Les lettres de Louise Jacobson et de ses proches (The Letters of Louise Jacobson and Those Close to Her). José-Alain Fralon, a Le Monde journalist, published Le juste de Bordeaux (The Righteous One of Bordeaux), a biography of Aristide de Sousa Mendes, the Portuguese consul in wartime Bordeaux who issued visas to a large number of Jews, thus allowing them to escape from the Nazis. Mendes was severely punished by Salazar’s Fascist government and died in poverty.

Israel’s 50th anniversary was the occasion for the publication of several pertinent works, among them: Israël imaginaire (Israel Imagined), a study by Jean-Christophe Attias and Esther Benbassa, addressing Israel’s image in Jewish and Israeli culture; David Gryn by Pierre Haski, a biography of the young David Ben-Gurion; and Géopolitique de Jérusalem by Frédéric Encel.

The year’s notable historical studies accorded pride of place to the Jewish-German experience, with such works as Philologie allemande et tradition juive (German Philology and the Jewish Tradition) by Céline Trautmann-Waller; Portraits de Juifs en temps de crise (Portraits of Jews in a Time of Crisis) by Anne Lagny, an analysis of Jews in German novels during the Weimar Republic; Hannah Arendt, une Juive (Hannah Arendt, a Jewish Woman) by Martine Lebovici; the second volume of Maurice-Ruben Hayoun’s study Les Lumières de Cordoue à Berlin (The Enlightenment from Cordoba to Berlin); and La philosophie allemande dans la pensée juive (German Philosophy in Jewish Thought), under the general editorship of Gérard Bensussan.

Another prominent theme of scholarly publication, generally by Christian authors, was the study of Jewish-Christian relations, which included the following works: Les chrétiens et l’affaire Dreyfus (Christians and the Dreyfus Affair) by Pierre Pierrard; Luther était-il antisémite? (Was Luther an Anti-Semite?) by Lucie Kannel; Le judaïsme by Dominique de la Maisonneuve, a Catholic nun; and Les
**Personalia**

Israeli ambassador Avi Pazner was named a Commander of the Legion of Honor on the eve of his return to Israel, where he assumed the office of president of Keren Hayesod. Rabbi Charles Liché was similarly honored. Claude Hampel, director of *Cahiers Yiddish* (Yiddish Notebooks), was named a Knight of the Order of Arts and Letters, affording an opportunity for the Protestant minister of culture Catherine Trautmann to make a speech in praise of the Yiddish language.

Prominent Jews who died in 1998 included Bernard Picard, an educator who directed the Paris Hebrew schools Lucien de Hirsch and Yavneh, in April, in Jerusalem, aged 73; Jacques Orfus, a Zionist leader, in May, aged 93; and Marc Aron, a physician and community leader, in October, aged 68.

**MEIR WAINTRATER**
The Netherlands

National Affairs

The year 1998 was one of relative political stability and economic prosperity. In elections for the municipal councils (March 4) and for the 150 seats of the Second Chamber of Parliament (May 6), the Centrum Left D'66 (Democrats 1966) Party, which had been a partner in the government coalition, lost almost half its seats, while the two main coalition partners, Labour (PvdA) and the Liberals (VVD), gained. The more left-wing parties— the Green Left and the Socialist Party (SP)— gained substantially, the small Calvinist parties remained stable, and the extreme right was almost entirely wiped out. With a majority of the seats in the Second Chamber, Labor (PvdA) and the Liberal VVD could have formed a cabinet alone, but preferred to draw in D'66 and to exclude again, as they had done in the outgoing coalition, the Christian Democrats (CDA). Still, the three prospective coalition partners differed on a number of issues, and negotiations lasted over three months.

The new government was again headed by Willem Kok (Labor) as premier. There were a number of changes in cabinet posts. Foreign Minister Hans van Mierlo, since 1966 the personification of D'66, had wanted to remain in the government, but when it was decided that the post of foreign minister would go to the VVD, he decided to leave political life altogether. One of the new officials was Prof. Job Cohen, the undersecretary of justice, formerly rector of the University of Maastricht. He assumed the unenviable task of overseeing policy toward asylum seekers.

Among the newcomers to Parliament was 54-year-old Judith C. Belinfante (PvdA), who, after more than 25 years as director of the Jewish Historical Museum in Amsterdam, decided she wanted a change. She was placed high on the PvdA list of candidates — number ten — though she had not previously been active politically.

The Netherlands had several successes in foreign affairs in 1998. It was elected (from January 1, 1999) to be a nonpermanent member of the United Nations Security Council, winning out over Greece. Willem Duisenberg, until recently president of the Netherlands State Bank, was appointed president of the European Central Bank in Frankfurt, against the initial opposition of France. The appointment is in principle for a period of four years.

The Hague is the seat of the International Court trying war criminals from the former Yugoslavia. The government agreed to provide a site for the tribunal scheduled to try the two Libyans believed responsible for the crash of a Pan-
American aircraft over Lockerbie, Scotland, in December 1988. By the end of the year, however, Libya had not yet agreed to extradite the two men.

**Israel and the Middle East**

Yasir Arafat visited Holland on several occasions during the year. Two outgoing cabinet ministers, who were in office until August 3, were particularly sympathetic to the demands of the Palestinian Authority — Minister of Foreign Affairs Hans van Mierlo (D’66) and Minister of Development Aid to Third World Countries Jan Pronk (PvdA).

In a visit to The Hague on February 5, where he was received officially by Premier Kok and Foreign Minister van Mierlo, Arafat held a press conference at which he called attention to delays in the construction of the harbor in Gaza, for which the Netherlands government had promised a contribution of 50 million florins (over $25 million). The Netherlands was in fact one of the largest donors for projects in the areas under Palestinian control. Arafat visited Holland again on March 30-31, to address a symposium at the Erasmus University of Rotterdam on the economic development of the areas under the Palestinian Authority.

In Rotterdam he was received by the mayor; in The Hague he was received by Queen Beatrix and by the Parliamentary Foreign Affairs Commission. The next day he visited Amsterdam where, accompanied by Mayor Schelto Patijn and some Dutch sympathizers, he toured the Amsterdam canals by boat and alighted at the Anne Frank House, where he was received by the director, Hans Westra. The Anne Frank House had been cleared of all other visitors and was heavily guarded, even with a helicopter overhead. Arafat stayed there for about 15 minutes. Asked by a journalist at the door what his impression was he answered “Very moving.” The Jewish community had not been informed in advance of the visit.

On June 30, the Foreign Ministry delayed the departure of a delegation of officials to Israel indefinitely, until more progress could be seen in the peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians.

**The El Al Boeing Crash Again**

Nearly six years after the crash of an El Al Boeing 747 cargo plane in Amsterdam — on October 4, 1992 — in which 43 people were killed, the incident was still the subject of controversy. In September the Dutch newspaper *NRC Handelsblad* reported that the plane had been carrying 49 gallons of dimethyl methylphosphonate, a key component in the nerve gas Sarin, that had come from a Pennsylvania firm and was being sent to the Israel Institute for Biological Research in Nes Ziona, near Tel Aviv. El Al confirmed the report, saying that the chemical was included in the original cargo list and that Dutch authorities had known about it since the crash. The chemical is also used in construction as a flame retardant; the Israelis reportedly told the manufacturer that it would be used to test absorption filters.
The crash had occurred in the Bijlmer district in the southeasternmost tip of Amsterdam, a largely new immigrant neighborhood. The dead included three crew members, the plane's only passenger, a woman, and 39 residents of the new immigrant neighborhood. Boeing assumed full responsibility and paid compensation to the next-of-kin of the victims and others who lived in the area.

In 1998 the issue was not the responsibility for the crash but the nature of the cargo, specifically, whether the newly discovered chemical was related to a variety of health problems that had been reported by some of the residents as well as some firemen and policemen and KLM employees who worked in a hangar where the remnants of the crashed plane were stored. Until this latest revelation, it was claimed that poisonous substances—possibly fumes from burning "depleted uranium" carried in the tail of the plane as ballast—may have caused delayed health problems. At the insistence of members of the Second Chamber of Parliament, 23 reporting centers were set up in the Bijlmer, and a telephone reporting center at the nearby Academic Medical Center (AMC). The latter eventually reported that of some 700 complaints received, only 300 could be connected with the disaster, and that most of these were psychological, such as sleeplessness and nightmares.

Questions and allegations about the episode were widespread. Some of the cargo freight documents were no longer available. Part of the cargo may have been military materiel for Israel. Some eyewitnesses claimed to have seen men in white fireproof suits, speaking a foreign language, at the site of the crash, picking up certain material. It was recalled that the cockpit voice recorder had never been found. And it was charged that El Al at Schiphol Airport constituted "a state within the state," where non-Israelis were denied access, with the consent of Dutch authorities.

Great concern was caused by the belated discovery that the cargo had contained the DMMP chemical. Although it had been mentioned in the freight documents, nobody had paid attention to it. And even after a Dutch expert stated that DMMP in itself is harmless, the unrest continued, fanned by some of the news media and by Labor parliamentarian Robert van Gijzel, chairman of the Parliamentary Transport Committee. Eventually Parliament decided to hold a high-level official inquiry in which witnesses testify under oath. A commission appointed to organize the inquiry began work in November. Some 50 to 100 witnesses were to be heard, and public hearings were scheduled for early in 1999.

Anti-Semitism and Neo-Nazism

At the end of October some 60 neo-Nazis from Holland, Belgium, Germany, and France held a meeting in a hotel in the countryside, where they had hired a hall under an assumed name. The meeting commemorated the coup by Hitler in 1923.

An article in the anarchist periodical *Ravage*, which is connected with the squatters' movement and has a very limited distribution, charged that B'nai
B'rith, in particular in the United States, had before and during World War II collaborated with the German Nazis and with the Ku Klux Klan. The Dutch B'nai B'rith lodges sued the paper and the author of the article, but the court ruled that their claim was inadmissible, because not they but the American B'nai B'rith was the injured party.

Holocaust-Related Matters

Material claims by Jews or their heirs resulting from the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands continued to be in the news. (See AJYB 1998, pp. 274-77.) Following the decision by the special commission headed by Jos van Kemenade, in consultation with the newly formed Committee of Jewish Organizations on External Matters (CJOEB, usually referred to as CJO), that the sum of Fl. 19 million would be turned over to the Jewish community in the Netherlands (rather than to individuals), the money was transferred by the Ministry of Finance to Joods Maatschappelijk Werk (JMW, the Jewish Social Welfare Board). JMW in turn transferred the funds to the JOKOS Foundation, which had been established in the late 1940s and been inactive since 1971 but had never been formally liquidated. Distribution of the money was overseen by an advisory committee headed by Dick Dolman, a former chairman of the Second Chamber of Parliament and a former chairman of the Netherlands-Israel Society, assisted by four Jewish members.

It was eventually decided that Fl. 1.5 million ($750,000) would be allocated to needy survivors living in the Netherlands. To handle distribution of the funds, a Dutch Commission for Needy Victims (NCNW) was established in June, comprising the CJO and five other organizations: the Society of Caring for the Interests of Victims of Persecution (VBV), the Hidden Child Society (HOK), the Jewish War Children's Society (JOK), the Netherlands Auschwitz Committee (NAC), and the Jewish Postwar Generation Committee (JONAG). It was estimated that a maximum of a thousand Jewish persons or households in Holland fit the definition of "needy"; they would receive an average payment of about Fl. 1,500 or $750.

For individual claims to gold, money, and valuables looted by the Nazis, a Central Reporting Point was opened on March 2, which remained open until October. Some 3,500 claims were submitted. The administrative costs of this office were borne by the Ministry of Finance.

Interest continued in the matter of some 3,000 LiRo (Lippman-Rosenthal) cards discovered in December 1997 in the attic of a building formerly occupied by the Amsterdam branch of the Ministry of Finance. These were records from the former Lippman-Rosenthal bank of assets and valuables that Jews were forced to turn over to the Nazis prior to deportation. Thousands of requests to inspect the cards by survivors or their heirs were received by JMW, but few found the names of their relatives.

In addition to the Van Kemenade Commission, the government established
three other commissions to examine official reparation activities in Holland in 1945 and after:

The Kordes Commission, chaired by Frans Kordes, a former state comptroller, sought to establish the value of Jewish property that had been looted in Holland during the Nazi occupation but had not been compensated for. Excluded were art objects, for which a special commission was appointed. In December, in its preliminary report, the commission concluded that the manner in which claims were dealt with after the war was correct, but too legalistic and cold. It estimated that the State of the Netherlands should pay the Jewish community an amount of Fl. 48.4 million (nearly $25 million) to compensate for mistakes made with regard to Jewish claims in 1945 and after. The Jewish community, according to the Kordes Commission, was also entitled to the Fl. 25 million which at the time it was taxed in order to pay for the maintenance of the Jewish concentration camp of Westerbork and the Jewish part of the Vught camp. The sum of nearly Fl. 50 million does not, however, take account of the inflation of the intervening 50 years. Kordes himself expressed hope for a generous compensation of some Fl. 200 million (nearly $100 million).

The Scholten Commission, headed by W. Scholten, the vice-president of the Netherlands Council of State, also published its preliminary report in December. This commission was established to investigate whether Dutch banks and insurance companies had illegally retained money deposited with them by Jews. The commission concluded that not only had this hardly occurred, but also that it had been impossible, since in 1941, at the order of the Nazis, Jews had to transfer all assets held by banks—including mortgages, patent rights, and so forth—to the Lippman-Rosenthal bank, which had been taken over by the Nazis. After the war several dozen accounts, most smaller than Fl. 100 ($50), for which no heirs were reported, reverted to the banks. Some 90 percent of the bank balances were refunded to the owners, their heirs, or to JMW. Jewish critics thought the inquiry was flawed, since only the 11 largest banks were thoroughly examined.

A third commission, the Ekkart Commission, was to examine the legal ownership of some 3,585 of the 20,000 art objects removed by the Nazis during the years 1940-45 from Holland and reclaimed from Germany after the war. Some were returned to their original owners; the remainder were turned over to the State of the Netherlands, which donated or loaned them to Dutch museums or government institutions. The Ekkart Commission was to establish whether any of these works originally belonged to Jews, a complicated matter that could take several years to resolve.

The case involving the collection of the late art dealer Jacques Goudstikker was still in the courts (see AJYB 1998, pp. 276–77). The Dutch government was being sued by Goudstikker's daughter-in-law and granddaughters (supported by the World Jewish Congress) for a large sum, in compensation for the valuable collection, which was largely housed in Dutch museums. The government rejected the claim on the ground that in 1952, Goudstikker's widow had accepted a settlement of Fl. 2 million and waived all rights to the collection. The daughter-in-
law, Marel von Saher, and her lawyers argued that she had done so only under duress, and that the agreement was therefore invalid.

The mystery of the “Treasure of Almelo” (see AJYB 1998, p. 276) was solved this year. An investigation revealed that the Jewish ritual objects and other valuables contained in a suitcase discovered by a Canadian soldier in April 1945 had in fact been returned to the legitimate heirs, or to the Jewish community of Arnhem, after the war.

The Anne Frank House in Amsterdam, which belongs to the Anne Frank Foundation and is not a Jewish institution, had a record number of visitors this year, over 812,000, 15 percent more than in the previous year. The increase was linked to a general rise in tourism to Amsterdam and to worldwide publicity about the discovery of five previously unknown pages from Anne’s diary. Otto Frank, Anne’s father, had withheld the pages and entrusted them to a Dutch non-Jewish friend, Cor Suyk, who subsequently worked for the Anne Frank Foundation in Amsterdam and for the Anne Frank Center in New York. The new pages, which suggest that the Franks’ marriage was less than ideal, are mentioned in one of the two biographies of Anne Frank that were published in Holland within a week of each other in September. Melissa Muller of Vienna, one of the biographers, had been shown the new pages by Cor Suyk. The other biography is by Carol Ann Lee of London.

A legal dispute broke out between the Anne Frank Fund in Basel, which holds the copyright on the Diary of Anne Frank, and the Dutch daily Het Parool, which published the paraphrased text of the missing pages. The center in Basel charged that this was an infringement of copyright, but a judge ruled that Het Parool had not acted illegally. Another dispute concerned the announcement by Cor Suyk that he was prepared to hand over the five pages in his possession to the RIOD, the Netherlands State Institute for War Documentation in Amsterdam, which has custody of the original manuscript of the diary, in return for a few million guilders for the Anne Frank Center in New York, which was short of money. He later said he would hand over the five pages to the RIOD without any conditions.

In the town of Weesp, some 15 kilometers east of Amsterdam, the small synagogue that had been closed since 1942 and later served as a storeroom was restored to its original condition and will be used for cultural activities connected with Judaism. The initiative for the restoration was taken by a committee headed by Protestant clergyman Dick Pruiksma, who is also the present chairman of OJEC, the Consultative Council of Jews and Christians. Of the 68 Jews who lived in Weesp in 1940, nine survived the war.

**Jewish Community**

**Demography**

No official statistics exist on the number of Jews living in the Netherlands, but it is estimated at about 25,000. Of these only about one-third are affiliated with
any of the three main communities—Ashkenazic, Sephardic, and Liberal. According to the Jewish Social Welfare Foundation (JMW), there were also some 10,000 Israelis now living in Holland, many with non-Jewish partners. The Netherlands Ashkenazi Community (NIK) had 5,313 members at the end of 1996, some 200 less than the previous year. Of these some 3,000 were in Amsterdam and the Amsterdam suburb of Amstelveen, 340 in The Hague area, and 332 in the Rotterdam area. In Almere, a new satellite town of Amsterdam, a group of some 40 Jews was formed.

Communal Affairs

On February 18, the Central Council of the Ashkenazi Community (NIK) adopted a motion, by a large majority, enabling women to become members of this body. In actuality, women's participation had already been made possible by the revision of the council's electoral regulations of 1982, but the rabbis had always opposed its implementation. Shortly after the recent vote, at its meeting of March 3, the Central Council elected Mrs. Marcelle Lange (né Swaab) to one of the vacant seats. Fifteen members of the NIK, together with Amsterdam rabbi Frank Lewis, opposed the decision and asked Chief Rabbi of Israel Yisrael Meir Lau to bring the matter to a rabbinic court.

On May 12, Johan Sanders, age 60, officially retired as secretary of the NIK, a position he had held for the past 25 years. To mark the occasion, he was awarded a knighthood in the Order of Orange-Nassau. He was succeeded by 30-year-old Ruben Vis.

The Central Council of the NIK designated the sum of Fl. 350,000 (some $175,000) to be used to stimulate Jewish activity outside of Amsterdam. As part of this effort it appointed a full-time religious services director. The NIK also contributed Fl. 75,000 (some $37,500) to help support the new Jewish Center for Young People in Amsterdam, in particular its kosher restaurant; it increased its subsidy for Jewish education by 10 percent (to Fl. 700,000 or some $350,000), the increase made possible by the growth in revenue from the export of kosher meat.

For the first time since 1940 a new congregation joined the NIK. It is located in Almere, a satellite town of Amsterdam that began development 25 years ago on a drained section of the Zuider Zee and now numbers 140,000 inhabitants. There are enough Jews to hold regular religious services, for the present in a rented room. The religious functionary is Moshe Stiefel, an American affiliated with Chabad. (Other Dutch religious officials connected with U.S. Chabad are Rabbi Isaac Vorst of Amsterdam and his son Yuda and Rabbi Binyomin Jacobs, the NIK rabbi serving the provinces.)

The Sephardi Community of Amsterdam (PIG), following the retirement of Rabbi Barend Drukarch, engaged Dayan Pinchas Toledano of the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue in London as an advisory rabbi, to come to Amsterdam when necessary and to arbitrate religious issues. On one controversial matter, he ruled that Jews married to non-Jewish partners can remain members of the com-
munity. The PIG now numbered some 400 members, most of them children of mixed Sephardi-Ashkenazi origin. Others had come to Holland from Israel, Morocco, Iraq, and other countries.

When efforts failed to raise sufficient funds privately to restore the Portuguese-Jewish cemetery at Ouderkerk near Amsterdam, where many of the ancient tombstones have sunk into the swampy soil, the Dutch government agreed to provide the sum of Fl. 1.2 million (some $600,000) for the project.

The Liberal Jewish Community (LJG), with six local congregations, opened a new synagogue in Tilburg, to serve the entire province of North Brabant. The congregation is housed in the former Ashkenazi synagogue, which was renovated after years of disuse.

On June 28, Peter Halpern resigned as hazzan of the LJG, which he had served for nearly ten years, to return to the United States, where he was born, to become the full-time cantor at Temple Adath Elohim congregation near Los Angeles. He was succeeded by Ken Gould, an American who had been studying music in Amsterdam since 1995 and was also connected with Beth Chiddush, a progressive group of mainly American Jews living in Holland, which was founded in 1996. Beth Chiddush held a workshop in Amsterdam with the American rabbi Shefa Gold. During the International Gay Games in Amsterdam in the first week of August, the group organized a service for all Jewish participants, conducted by the American rabbi Nancy Wiener. Shalhomo, the Dutch Jewish gay and lesbian organization, also arranged special activities during the games.

A gratifying cooperative effort was the coming together of the Orthodox Jewish women’s group, Deborah, and the Women’s Group of the LJG to form the Dutch National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW). Until now, the Liberal women had been the only Jewish group in Holland represented in the International Council of Jewish Women (ICJW). The newly formed council held occasional meetings and issued a modest quarterly.

The Jewish Social Welfare Board (Joods Maatschappelijk Werk, JMW) issued a report in December in which it stated that 75 percent of the Jews living in Holland today had a non-Jewish partner or were children of a mixed marriage. How this figure was obtained is not clear, since for a number of reasons no Jewish demographic survey had been carried out in Holland for over 30 years. The report also discussed the changing mission of JMW, noting that some of its former tasks had been superseded or were greatly reduced, since the material needs of the Jews in Holland were largely cared for by the government. While JMW had played a role for many years in processing claims for payments under the WUV, the Law on Payments to War Victims, which was passed in 1972, this work had now been largely completed. In addition to its remaining tasks, such as providing domestic help for the elderly, JMW saw a new role for itself in providing expert help to Jewish persons suffering from alcohol and drug addiction — who might feel most comfortable being treated in a Jewish setting.
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ISRAEL'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY

The official celebration of the 50th anniversary of the State of Israel began on December 23, 1997, the first night of Hanukkah, in the courtyard of The Hague town hall, in the presence of Dutch Premier Willem Kok and the mayor of The Hague, Willem Deetman, who was also the new chairman of the Netherlands Israel Society. Israeli ambassador Yossi Gal kindled the first light in a huge menorah, as a symbolic inauguration of the anniversary year.

The central celebration took place on April 29, 1998, in Amsterdam in the large RAI Center. A special committee representing most Jewish organizations in Holland organized the program, which was varied and took account of all ages. The hall, which could seat 2,000 persons, was sold out well in advance, and many requests for tickets had to be rejected for lack of space.

On April 26, a joint worship service for members of the Sephardi and Ashkenazi communities filled the Sephardi Esnoga in Amsterdam. The service was conducted by chief hazzan Naphtali Herstik of Jerusalem; Israeli chief rabbi Lau delivered the sermon. In the main Ashkenazi synagogue of Amsterdam a special service was held on April 30, conducted by Amsterdam chief cantor Hans Bloemendal. The same night Israeli ambassador Gal sponsored a special Yom Ha'atzmaut concert in The Hague for both non-Jewish and Jewish invited guests.

Many television and radio programs devoted attention to the jubilee, some positive and some negative. The VPRO broadcasting organization presented a series of five radio programs on Dutch Jewish immigrants in Israel in various periods. One TV program had an interview with the former Dutch ambassador to Moscow, Pieter Buwalda. During his tenure there, the Netherlands represented Israel's interests, and he issued thousands of exit visas to Russian Jews on Israel's behalf. Now he visited families in Israel with whom he and his wife had become friendly. On a different program, the former Dutch undersecretary for defense, Bernard Stemerdink, told how he and the then minister of defense secretly supplied spare parts for Israeli tanks during the Yom Kippur war, without the knowledge of the other members of the cabinet.

Some of the TV and radio programs were critical, or at least probing, dealing with such subjects as the loss of the idealism of the pioneers and kibbutz founders, or with the position of the Palestinians, in particular in the refugee camps. The controversial Israeli TV documentary Tkumah (see "Israeli Culture" elsewhere in this volume) was also shown on Dutch television. A documentary on Yitzhak Rabin, produced by Willy Lindwer of Amsterdam for Joop van den Ende Productions, had its gala premiere in Amsterdam, in the presence of Leah Rabin.

The anniversary celebration ended on December 13 with a concert of liturgical music in Amsterdam, featuring the Jerusalem Great Synagogue choir and the Amsterdam Synagogue choir, the latter conducted by Barry Mehler.
Culture

A symposium on the history of Dutch Jewry was held in Jerusalem from November 22 to 25, part of an ongoing program of symposia held every two or three years, alternating between Amsterdam and Jerusalem. In Amsterdam the meetings are organized by the Commission for the History of Dutch Jewry of the Royal Academy of Sciences, in Jerusalem by the Institute for the History of Dutch Jewry at the Hebrew University. Of the 36 lectures this year, 23 were given by scholars who had come to Jerusalem from Holland specifically for this conference. Most of the audience were immigrants from Holland living in Israel.

There were signs of growing interest in Yiddish, which was nearly absent in Holland before 1940. The newly established Jiddisjer Krajz, together with the Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana, organized a study day on the Yiddish poet Itzik Manger (1901-1961), on November 29 in Amsterdam. The Second International Yiddish Festival was held in Amsterdam in September. On December 3, the Menasse ben Israel Institute, established in 1997, organized a study day in Amsterdam on Yiddish in Western Europe with the participation of scholars from Holland and abroad. The institute coordinates Jewish studies at the University of Amsterdam and at the Free University.

The most important Jewish exhibition of the year was at the Jewish Historical Museum in Amsterdam: “Vienna and the Jews Around the Year 1900,” organized with the participation of the Jewish Museum in Vienna, the Netherlands-Austria Society, the Goethe Institute in Amsterdam, and the Netherlands-Germany Society. The exhibition was scheduled to travel to the Israel Museum in Jerusalem and the Jewish Museum in Vienna. In Amsterdam, where it was on view from October 14 to January 17, 1999, it was accompanied by lectures and other events related to the history of the Jews in Vienna.

The bronze gates created by Albert Drielsma for the ancient Sephardi burial ground in Middelburg were officially unveiled on May 27. In 1994 Drielsma had restored the small synagogue of Middelburg (the capital of the province of Zealand), where all 95 of the tombstones in the town’s Jewish cemetery, unused for centuries, were restored at local initiative.

Publications

As in previous years, a large number of books on Jewish subjects were published, fiction and nonfiction, in the original Dutch or in translation, and appealing to non-Jewish as well as Jewish buyers.

On a Sunday afternoon during the annual Book Week in March, the book department of De Bijenkorf, the large Amsterdam department store, presented some 25 Jewish authors—Dutch, Israeli, and American—who signed their books for purchasers, many of them waiting in long queues. That evening, several of
these authors, among them Amos Oz, Meir Shalev, and A.B. Yehoshua, participated in a panel discussion and workshop, also before an avid audience.

Among new books in Dutch may be mentioned three personal accounts of wartime experiences. Auschwitz survivor Joseph Hillel Borensjtajn’s *Diary 1940-45* was written in Yiddish and later sent by the author to YIVO in New York where it was found by his son, who translated it into Dutch. Yaakov Ben Dror (Van Gelder)’s *Naar de hel en terug* (To Hell and Back) and Hans Kahn’s *Mazzel en lef, Tegen de stroom in* (Against the Stream) are the other two personal accounts.

Translations into Dutch included novels by Pearl Abraham, Giorgio Bassani, Yoram Kaniuk, Amos Oz, A.B. Yehoshua, Bernard Malamud, and Meir Shalev, and nonfiction works by Stephen Beller (*Vienna and the Jews*), Deborah Dworak (*Children with a Yellow Star*), and Arthur Hertzberg (*Jews, Identity and Character*), the latter arousing considerable discussion. The biographies of Anne Frank by Carol Ann Lee and Melissa Muller appeared in Dutch translation before their publication in the original English and German, respectively. The same applied to the history of the Nazi persecution of the Jews in the Netherlands 1940-1945 by Bob Moore, *Slachtoffers en Overlevenden* (Victims and Survivors).

**Personalia**

Judith C. Belinfante retired as director of the Jewish Historical Museum in Amsterdam, with which she had been connected for over 25 years, in order to become a member of the Second Chamber of Parliament for Labor. She was succeeded by Rivkah Blok Weiss from the Israel Museum in Jerusalem, the daughter of Dutch-Jewish parents who had settled in Israel, where she was educated.

Among leading Jews who died in 1998 were Barend Drukarch, 81, a religious functionary, former Haham of the Portuguese congregation of Amsterdam; Prof. Frits Schwarz, 69, former member of the executive of the NIK and chairman of the Jewish community of Utrecht, a survivor of concentration camps who studied medicine in Utrecht, where eventually he became a professor of endocrinology and dean of the Medical Faculty; Prof. David Simon, 94, an emeritus professor of law in Rotterdam, honorary officer of the Dutch Zionist Organization, and one of the three members of the commission that revised the Dutch constitution after World War II; and Mira Rafalowicz, 59, a champion of Yiddish in Holland, daughter of Polish Jewish immigrants who in the 1920s were the founders of ANSKI, the Yiddish Culture Group in Amsterdam. A former student at the YIVO Institute in New York, where she also studied dramaturgy, she was the main organizer of the 1st and 2nd International Yiddish Festivals in Amsterdam.

*Henriette Boas*
Italy

National Affairs

Prime Minister Romano Prodi resigned in October 1998. His center-left government lost a parliamentary confidence vote by just one vote after the Marxist Communist Refoundation Party rejected the 1999 draft budget and withdrew its support from Prodi's coalition. Italy's 56th postwar government was sworn in later in the month, with Massimo D'Alema, a former Communist, as prime minister. His cabinet included the first Marxists—two ministers—to serve in an Italian government since 1947, as well as three ministers from the centrist UDR Party, whose leader, former president Francesco Cossiga, and D'Alema were once bitter political enemies. Italy's economy meanwhile slowed, with the 1998 GDP growth rate projected as less than 2 percent.

A constant concern throughout the year was how to deal with the waves of illegal immigrants, mainly from the developing world, that arrived on Italian shores on overcrowded boats and rafts. Many clandestine immigrants were Kurds or refugees from Albania and from Yugoslavia's strife-torn Kosovo province. With the abolition of border controls between Italy and its European Union (EU) neighbors, Italy's long coastline was seen by many as an easy gateway into the larger European Union.

Italian right-wing leader Gianfranco Fini continued his efforts to distance his National Alliance Party (AN) from its neofascist roots. At a convention in Verona at the end of February and beginning of March, which was attended by a delegation from Israel's Likud Party, he made overtures of rapprochement to Israel and the Jewish world. Fini—who had long wanted to visit Israel in order to demonstrate his rejection of the Fascist past—gave a lengthy interview to Israeli television in which he called the anti-Semitic laws enacted by Italy's Fascists in 1938 "a horror" and said Mussolini was "by now a figure who is part of history." In his closing speech in Verona, Fini said that people should not forget "the many Italians who were deported [during World War II] only because they were Jews." Before the conference, AN member Franco Perlasca publicly called on Fini to make an even stronger condemnation of the past. (Perlasca is the son of the late Giorgio Perlasca, an Italian businessman who saved as many as 5,000 Jews in the Budapest ghetto by pretending to be a Spanish diplomat and issuing false Spanish passports.)

March 1998 marked the 150th anniversary of the statute issued in 1848 by King Carlo Alberto of Savoy, emancipating Italian Jews under his rule. The Italian government issued a postage stamp to mark the occasion, a commemorative cer-
mony was held in Parliament, and numerous exhibitions and other events took place around the country, sponsored by both civic authorities and the Jewish community.

**Israel and the Middle East**

Italy continued its policy of maintaining good relations with both Israel and the Arab world. Italian leaders supported the peace process and did not hide their disapproval of Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu's hard-line policies.

Yitzhak Rabin remained an emblematic figure. In December Italy's Highway (Autostrada) Administration, whose president was a firm supporter of Israel, organized a Christmas concert in a church to promote peace and to honor Rabin's memory. Leah Rabin was a guest of honor, and the orchestra was conducted by Israeli maestro Daniel Oren. Early in the year, the same agency had published a coffee-table book on Jerusalem.

Numerous events were held in Italy to mark the 50th anniversary of Israel, including concerts, exhibitions, broadcasts, and conferences. In March the Israeli embassy and the Rome municipality sponsored a 12-day festival of films, music, lectures, and other events, including a gala fashion show by Israeli designers, called "Journey Through Israel" and held at the Exposition Palace, a major exhibition hall in downtown Rome.

Italy meanwhile took steps to improve relations with Islamic countries. In June Prime Minister Prodi paid an official visit to Tehran, becoming the most important European leader to visit the Iranian capital since the 1979 revolution. Senior Italian leaders visited other Islamic countries. In July Italy signed an agreement with Libya aimed at helping to ease that country's isolation. In December Italian leaders were openly critical of the U.S. and British bombing of Iraq.

During a visit to Italy in mid-June, during which he also met with Pope John Paul II, Palestinian leader Yasir Arafat held talks with Italian leaders and called on Europe to use economic pressure to force Israel to accelerate the peace process. In Florence, Arafat received the Golden Pegasus Peace Prize granted by the region of Tuscany.

**Vatican-Mideast Relations**

The Vatican maintained an "evenhanded" approach to political events in the Middle East, repeatedly stressing support for the peace process and decrying moves it considered detrimental to negotiations. Pope John Paul II and other Vatican officials were critical of Israeli policy, particularly regarding Jerusalem. In his Easter message in April, for example, John Paul criticized Jewish building activity in Arab east Jerusalem, asserting that peace in Jerusalem was being put at risk by "dangerous political decisions." In October he praised the Wye memo-
During a visit to Jerusalem at the end of October, the Vatican’s foreign minister, Archbishop Jean-Louis Tauran, said that east Jerusalem was “illegally occupied” by the Israelis and called for international guarantees for sites considered holy by Christians, Jews, and Muslims. Following a suicide bombing in a Jerusalem market in November, carried out by Arab terrorists, the pope condemned the action, saying it raised fears for the success of the peace process.

At the end of April, a PLO delegation met with Vatican officials and agreed to set up a bilateral working commission with the Holy See to further mutual cooperation. The Vatican had established official diplomatic relations with the PLO in 1994, just four months after establishing full diplomatic relations with Israel. In June Palestinian leader Yasir Arafat had a 13-minute private audience with the pope at the Vatican. It was the sixth time the two men had met. According to a Vatican statement, Arafat told the pontiff about “the tragic situation of the Palestinian people, while the peace process is threatened by all sides.” The pope confirmed the Vatican’s support for the peace process, “which must continue with goodwill from all sides [and] with respect for the commitments already made and international law.”

Efforts continued to induce the pope to visit the Holy Land. In January Israeli deputy prime minister and tourism minister Moshe Katzav met with John Paul and reiterated Israel’s long-standing invitation for him to come to Israel. During his June stay in Rome, Yasir Arafat invited the pope to visit Bethlehem, sacred to Christians as the birthplace of Jesus, to mark the millennium, and said the pope had given him a “positive reaction.” Also in June, Vatican envoy Roger Cardinal Etchegaray toured the Iraqi town of Ur, revered as the birthplace of Abraham, and reiterated the pope’s desire to visit biblical sites throughout the Middle East, including Ur. Earlier, in April, Chief Rabbi Elio Toaff of Rome told an interviewer that he was ready to travel with the pope to Israel. Vatican officials said that, while preparations were being made for a papal visit to the Holy Land, such a trip would depend both on the pope’s health and on the status of the peace process.

In August Israel and the Vatican clashed over Israel’s attempts to block the nomination of a Palestinian refugee living in Brazil, Bishop Boutros Mouallem—a man Israel considered a supporter of the PLO—as the new archbishop of Galilee. Prime Minister Netanyahu accused the Vatican of having acceded to political pressure from the PLO in appointing Mouallem Galilee bishop of the Greek Catholic Church, an Eastern-rite branch of Catholicism that is loyal to Rome. At the same time, the Holy See’s observer mission to the United Nations in New York released a document criticizing Israel’s decision to expand the jurisdiction of Jerusalem, saying the move “certainly does not favor a dialogue aimed at a solution of the problem of the Holy City.” Mouallem took up his post in October without incident.
The Vatican expressed strong disapproval of the U.S. and British bombing of Iraq in December. In May Iraqi deputy prime minister Tariq Aziz had met with the pope and senior Vatican officials in Rome. A Vatican spokesman at that time expressed sympathy for Iraq, saying that it was suffering “negative consequences” from the UN embargo.

**Holocaust-Related Developments**

This year marked the 60th anniversary of the imposition of anti-Semitic racial laws by the Fascist government of Benito Mussolini. Italy's public authorities, as well as Italy's Jews, marked the anniversary with a wide array of commemorations, conferences, exhibits, concerts, publications, and other activities. These were aimed at memorializing the Jews who were persecuted, condemning the policy of the Fascist state, and also examining the behavior of mainstream Italians, most of whom did little to protest or combat the racist restrictions.

The series of anti-Semitic laws—passed between September 2 and November 17, 1938—barred Jews from public life and subjected them to a wide range of restrictions and persecutions. The racist laws were especially shocking for the highly acculturated Jews of Italy, because, unlike in Nazi Germany, the persecution began with relatively little warning, and it more or less reversed the prior, largely nondiscriminatory policy of the Fascist regime. Only about 40,000-50,000 Jews lived in Italy before World War II. They were well integrated into Italian society, so much so that, before 1938, thousands of them had become members of the Fascist Party. Although most Italians did little to actively oppose or protest the racist laws, it was not until Mussolini was deposed in 1943, and the Germans occupied the northern part of Italy, that Italian Jews were rounded up and deported to death camps. After the German occupation, however, many Italians hid Jews and helped them escape deportation. Israeli ambassador Yehudah Millo acknowledged this fact in a speech in late November in which he thanked the Italians for saving Jews during the Holocaust.

A conference on “Anti-Semitism in Europe in the 1930s: Comparing Legislation,” was held in Milan in November, sponsored by the Center for Contemporary Jewish Documentation, Italy's only institution devoted to the study of the Holocaust and anti-Semitism. Another conference examined the experience of Jews under the racist laws in one Rome neighborhood. There were also reunions of classmates who were ousted from their schools in 1938 because of these laws. In Rome, a special course for school teachers on the laws and their effects was offered in November.

In January Carlo Maria Cardinal Martini of Milan joined Chief Rabbi Giuseppe Laras of that city in a ceremony unveiling the first public monument to the more than 1,500 Jews and antifascists deported from Milan to Nazi death camps. The memorial plaque, located at Milan's central train station, indicates that the deported included 1,237 Jews and 343 others who had been detained for
political reasons. In April the Italian Parliament held a special ceremony attended by Italian Jewish leaders and senior Italian political figures to commemorate the 55th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising.

**VATICAN ACTIONS**

Pope John Paul II bestowed two church honors this year that were viewed as troubling in the Jewish world. On October 3, during a two-day visit to Croatia, he beatified Zagreb's World War II archbishop, Alojzije Stepinac, a controversial prelate revered by Croatians as an anti-Communist martyr but reviled by some others as a Fascist collaborator. A week later, at the Vatican, he canonized Edith Stein, a German Jew who converted to Catholicism, became a nun, and was killed at Auschwitz. He called Stein both "an eminent daughter of Israel and a faithful daughter of the Church" and used the canonization to appeal for tolerance, dialogue, and reconciliation. He said that Stein's saint's day, August 9, would be celebrated each year as a Holocaust memorial, to remind the world "of that bestial plan to eliminate a people, which cost millions of Jewish brothers and sisters their lives."

For the Vatican, elevating Stein to sainthood was viewed as a way to honor Holocaust victims, but the move offended Jewish sensibilities. Efraim Zuroff, head of the Simon Wiesenthal Center's Jerusalem office, said, "The Pope is sending an extremely negative message to the Jewish community, that in the eyes of the Catholic Church, the best Jews are those that convert to Catholicism."

In November Israel's ambassador to the Vatican called for a half-century "moratorium" on the Holy See's plans to beatify controversial Pope Pius XII, whom critics accuse of remaining silent in the face of the Holocaust.

**RESTITUTION**

The issue of restitution of Jewish property had its echo in Italy, as in other countries. In June, five sacks containing jewels, watches, coins, gold teeth, and other personal belongings of Jews from the Trieste area killed in the Holocaust were returned by the government to the Trieste Jewish community at a ceremony in Rome. The sacks had been discovered in Treasury vaults in 1997 and turned over to the Union of Italian Jewish Communities (UIJC) later that year. In the 1998 ceremony, the valuables were formally restored to the Jews of Trieste.

Also in June, the Italian insurance company Assicurazioni Generali, one of 16 European insurance companies being sued for allegedly refusing to make good on policies taken out by Holocaust victims and survivors, provided Yad Vashem officials with a computer file containing names of some 300,000 Jews and non-Jews who had taken out policies before the war in Eastern and Central Europe. In August Generali pledged to pay $100 million as part of a settlement of Holocaust-era claims. In September, however, Generali canceled the offer.
November Generali was one of six European insurers who agreed to deposit a total of $90 million in an escrow account as proof of their intent to settle claims by Holocaust victims and their heirs. The decision to establish the fund came during a ten-hour meeting in London of a new International Commission on Holocaust Era Insurance Claims, headed by former U.S. undersecretary of state Lawrence Eagleburger.

In November Treasury Minister Carlo Azeglio Ciampi announced that Italy would contribute 12 billion lire ($7 million) to an international fund designed to help needy victims of wartime Nazi persecution. The fund was established in December 1997 at the first international conference on Nazi gold. Ciampi said Italy's participation in the fund would be administered by the Union of Italian Jewish Communities.

**Nazi War Criminals**

In March an appeals court in Rome handed down life sentences on former SS officers Erich Priebke and Karl Hass for involvement in the March 1944 massacre of 335 men and boys at the Ardeatine caves near Rome. Italy's highest appeals court, the Court of Cassation, confirmed these verdicts in November, and Priebke, 85, was moved from an apartment where he had been held under house arrest, pending the final appeal, to a jail cell. The November verdict appeared to have brought to a close a long and dramatic affair.

Priebke had already been tried twice for his involvement in the massacre since he was discovered living in Argentina in 1994 and extradited to Rome 18 months later. Military judges at the first trial, in 1996, found Priebke guilty but set him free, citing a statute of limitations and other extenuating circumstances. This verdict was annulled after public protest, and Priebke was tried a second time in 1997, this time along with fellow ex-Nazi Karl Hass, also in his mid-80s. At the second trial, Priebke was given a 15-year sentence, which was sharply reduced due to extenuating circumstances, leaving him only a few months to serve. Hass was sentenced to ten years and eight months but was set free immediately due to extenuating circumstances. Both men appealed these verdicts in order to clear their names; their appeals were rejected and the sentences made more severe.

In March, Tullia Zevi, president of the Union of Jewish Communities in Italy, applauded the life sentences given to Priebke and Hass but indicated that she would be willing to accept an act of clemency that would allow them to be released from custody. Her view angered a militant faction within the Rome Jewish community whose members had been prominent in earlier protests against Priebke.

In January the Rome newspaper *La Repubblica* reported that 83-year-old Wilhelm Schubernig, another former Nazi who may have taken part in the Ardeatine Caves massacre, had been discovered living in Austria. In June the trial began in Turin of former SS captain Theodor Saevecke, 87, who was accused of order-
ing the murder of 15 Italian partisans in Milan in August 1944. Saevecke, who lived in Germany, was being tried in absentia.

Anti-Semitism and Racism

Fallout continued throughout the year from a controversial book published in 1997, *Letter to a Jewish Friend*, by prominent political commentator and former ambassador Sergio Romano. Among other things, the author implied that anti-Semitism could originate in the “separateness” maintained by Jews themselves. He also called Israel an “imperious, arrogant warrior nation” that was exploiting the Holocaust to gain international legitimacy. Numerous Jewish commentators rebutted Romano in the media and on the lecture circuit. Italian-born Israeli diplomat Sergio Minerbi published a book called, simply, *Reply to Sergio Romano*. Romano raised eyebrows again in 1998 with a book and articles that re-examined Spain’s Franco regime with a sympathetic eye.

There were a few isolated incidents of apparent anti-Semitism during 1998. In October a Jewish girl was taunted by a fellow pupil in a Rome public junior high school and as a result transferred to the Rome Jewish day school. In November two street signs denoting a city park in Rome named in honor of Yitzhak Rabin were destroyed by vandals. Graffiti on a nearby wall proclaimed “Death to Zionism.” A city council representative called the vandalism “a barbarous act of ignoble violence.” In December Italy’s soccer federation opened a disciplinary investigation of the Rome and Lazio soccer teams after rival fans unfurled anti-Semitic banners at a match between the two teams in Rome.

JEWISH COMMUNITY

Demography

About 26,000 people were registered as members of Italian Jewish communities. Many others did not formally affiliate, and the total number of Jews was estimated at 30,000 to 40,000.

Three-quarters of Italy’s Jews live in two cities: Rome, with about 15,000, and Milan, with about 10,000. The rest reside in a score of other towns and cities, mostly in northern Italy, in communities ranging from a handful to one thousand or so people.

About half of Italy’s Jews were born in Italy, and half came as immigrants in the past few decades. One-third to one-half of Rome’s Jews are Libyans who fled after bloody anti-Jewish riots in 1967 following the Six Day War. The Milan Jewish community consists of recent arrivals from more than two dozen countries, the largest contingent from Iran, and many from other Middle Eastern locales.
Communal Affairs

Official Judaism in Italy is exclusively Orthodox. There are no Reform or Conservative streams, and Reform or Conservative converts are not permitted to formally join Italian Jewish communities. In general, adult conversions are discouraged by the religious authorities.

The Chabad Lubavitch movement, which this year marked 40 years of activity in Italy, had a growing presence in the country. In Milan, in June, Chabad opened a study center and prayer room inside the famous shopping arcade, the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele, near the cathedral. Some 300 people took part in the inauguration ceremony, which included a joyous procession bringing the Torah, carried under a huppah, through the gallery past astonished tourists.

Most Italian Jews are highly acculturated and, while nominally Orthodox, are not strictly observant. The rate of intermarriage is 50 percent or more. A move toward stricter Orthodoxy in several communities, including Rome and Milan, has resulted in friction between increasingly militant religious traditionalists and nonobservant and secular Jews. Rabbis have expressed mounting concern that secular Jews have lost sight of what it means to be Jewish. In recent years, some younger people who adopted Orthodox observance became militant in criticizing Jews who were less stringent; they in turn were branded "fundamentalists" by secular Jews. Tensions in the community over who is a Jew and what is Judaism became so high that some predicted the community could be split apart. In Milan, in particular, the fact that many Jews from Muslim countries maintained their own rites and strictly observant lifestyle, which differ considerably from those of established Italian Jews, contributed to communal tensions. Some Italian Jews expressed the fear that the historic character of their community, with its tradition of integration into the surrounding society, was under siege.

A flashpoint of tension in 1998 was the ongoing controversy over the conversion of young children of mixed marriages. Many intermarried families in Italy raise their children as Jews, obtaining Orthodox conversions for them as infants or toddlers. In 1997, however, a rabbinical ruling decreed that small children could not be converted unless their mothers also converted, and that children of unconverted mothers would be barred from Jewish schools. The blanket ruling was relaxed to some extent, allowing each community with its rabbis to decide specific cases. But the deeper implications of the issue touched off widespread debate, protests, and specially convened public meetings, including a daylong seminar in Rome on March 15 called "To Be Born Jewish, to Become Jewish," devoted to examining many aspects relating to conversion and Jewish identity.

These frictions provided a troubled backdrop for the three-day congress of the Union of Italian Jewish Communities—the umbrella grouping of Italy's Jews—held in June in Rome. The congress is held every four years to chart policy and elect leaders, and delegates come from all Jewish communities around the country. Italy's president, Oscar Luigi Scalfaro, addressed the opening session, prais-
ing Jews and their heritage as a continuing patrimony of "enormous richness" for society at large. "Both for Italians in general and for me personally," he said, "friendship with the Jewish people and with Israel in particular is an absolute link that is not subject to discussion."

During the congress, Milan rabbi Giuseppe Laras, president of Italy's Rabbinical Assembly, warned that Jewish continuity was under threat. "At root is a widespread and advanced loss of Jewish identity, in religious, family and social terms," he said. "That which once seemed anomalous, illicit, dangerous and exceptional, today for many people no longer is so."

The congress marked a turning point for Italian Jews. Tullia Zevi stepped down as president of the UIJC after 16 years in office. During her tenure, Zevi had become one of the most prominent women in Italy, recognized as a national voice of moral authority. She also maintained a wide network of contacts with international Jewish organizations.

In July, at the first meeting of the new board chosen at the congress, Amos Luzzatto, 70, was elected to succeed Zevi as president of the UIJC. A physician by profession, Luzzatto, who lives in Venice, is also a respected scholar in Jewish studies and the editor of Italy's intellectual Jewish journal *La Rassegna Mensile di Israel*. He has also long been an active participant in interreligious dialogue.

The choice of Luzzatto appealed to a broad range of factions within the community, and Jews expressed the hope that he would be able to heal the rifts and enable different religious trends and traditions to coexist under an umbrella of unity. Though a secular intellectual himself, Luzzatto, who is descended from a venerable rabbinic family, has a profound knowledge of Jewish religious traditions. In an article published in a Jewish magazine in April, Luzzatto made clear his view that Italian Jews must learn to coexist in a flexible unity. "There should be a dialogue among everyone," he wrote, "not a standoff between rabbis and non-rabbis. . . . We must insist on the specific Italian situation, where the Rabbinate is not divided into opposing Orthodox and liberal, but is one sole entity, and is, with this, quite flexible." The community, too, he wrote, should be one all-encompassing entity that will welcome "Jews who belong to the 'Orthodox' as well as 'non-Orthodox' currents, as long as halakhic norms are respected."

*Jewish-Catholic and Jewish-Muslim Relations*

On October 16, Pope John Paul II marked the 20th anniversary of his election as pope. The occasion provided an opportunity to reflect on the changes that had taken place in Jewish-Catholic relations under his leadership. Most observers agreed that the two decades of his papacy had revolutionized relations between Roman Catholics and Jews. Through a variety of actions and statements, he instituted an official Catholic opening to Jews and showed an understanding of their sensitivities and their causes unprecedented in 2,000 years of church history. But there have also been serious gaps, particularly regarding the Vatican's handling of issues stemming from church and Catholic actions during the Holocaust.
Both the positive and problematic aspects of the pope's policy were evident throughout 1998. (See the discussion, above, of the canonization of Edith Stein and beatification of Cardinal Stepinac.)

In January the Anti-Defamation League honored Edward Cardinal Cassidy, president of the Vatican's Commission for Religious Relations with Jews, for his work in promoting Jewish-Catholic understanding. Cassidy was presented with the ADL–Joseph Lichten Interfaith Award during a three-day visit to Rome by a 20-member ADL delegation. The group's agenda included meetings with senior Vatican officials and Italian leaders, including an audience with the pope. They also visited Rome's Grand Mosque, marking the first time that an international Jewish organization was received there.

On March 16, the Vatican's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews released "We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah," a long-awaited official document on the Holocaust. The paper was represented as an official "act of repentance—teshuvah" for the past sins of Catholics both before and during the Holocaust. But it deeply disappointed many Jews on a number of points, chiefly by playing down the involvement of Catholics in the Holocaust, by defending Pope Pius XII, and by distancing historic religious anti-Semitism from Nazi ideology and the Nazi persecution of Jews.

Among other things, the document prompted renewed calls by Jewish leaders for the Vatican to open its World War II-era archives. One such call came a week after the document was released, during talks at the Vatican between the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations and the Vatican's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews. Further calls were made in Washington in December, at an international conference on compensation of Holocaust survivors for art and communal property seized by the Nazis, as well as insurance claims. The Vatican rejected demands for complete access to its World War II archives.

The document on the Holocaust came as part of the Vatican's preparations for the millennium year 2000, a Holy Year for the church. The pope made clear that he wanted the church to begin the new era by owning up to and repenting for past sins, including its treatment of the Jews. Several steps in that direction were taken during the year. In March the Bishops' Conference of the Roman Catholic Church in Italy presented Italian Jewish leaders with a formal letter strongly condemning anti-Semitism and apologizing for the church's past mistreatment of Jews. In April the pope's Easter observances included open Catholic self-criticism of the longtime Christian teaching that the Jews were responsible for the death of Jesus. During a visit to Austria in June, the pope said that seeking reconciliation with Jews "is one of the most fundamental duties of Christians in Europe." At the end of October, several dozen international historians, scholars, and other experts met for three days behind closed doors at the Vatican in the church's first official examination of the Inquisition. The pope indicated to the participants that the Vatican planned to ask forgiveness for the injustices committed by that church body.

In September the pope had his first meeting with a United Jewish Appeal
group, a mission from Chicago, granting them a half-hour private audience at his summer residence at Castel Gandolfo, south of Rome. The same month, Milan's Carlo Maria Cardinal Martini issued a pastoral letter condemning anti-Semitism and calling for fraternal relations between Christians and Jews.

Culture

A wide range of concerts, lectures, exhibits, conferences, seminars, festivals, and other Jewish cultural initiatives were programmed by Jewish communities all over Italy. The main Jewish communities, in Rome and Milan, featured several cultural or educational events virtually every week. The Union of Italian Jewish Communities' department of cultural assistance held its fifth annual conference and study retreat, Moked, at the end of April and beginning of May. The main theme was the question of Jewish identity. Speakers from Italy, Israel, and elsewhere addressed topics such as “Jewish Identity and Cultural Pluralism in the Jewish World Today,” “The Shoah and Israel: Their Role in Jewish Identity,” “Jewish Identity and Italian Identity: Contrasts and Convergences.”

In addition, many events with Jewish themes were held outside the sponsorship of Jewish bodies, or were jointly sponsored by Jewish and civic or private organizations. Jewish events and cultural programs drew an increasing audience of non-Jews. There was lively interest in Yiddish and East European Jewish culture, with Yiddish classes offered in Rome, Venice, and Bari. Reflecting the growing popularity of Jewish music, particularly Klezmer music, the Rome-based Klezroym group issued its first CD and toured widely around the country. A television special by performer Moni Ovadia, featuring Jewish jokes and Klezmer music, was broadcast on state-run television in January and drew one million viewers. Italian state radio initiated a regular program on Jewish music in the summer. It was produced by Francesco Spagnolo, the director of the Milan-based Yuval Center for the Study of Jewish Music, who also presented a weekly program on Jewish music and culture on a private Milan radio station.

There were numerous Jewish culture or music festivals and other festivals and exhibitions highlighting Jewish culture, music, film, and the arts. Among them: the third annual Klezmer music festival in Ancona, in July; a series of concerts, exhibitions, tours, theater performances, and other events in Trieste, called “Shalom Trieste,” that ran from the end of June to the end of the year; a three-week Jewish theater and performance festival in the neighboring cities of Parma and Reggio Emilia in the fall; a Jewish culture festival in Andria, near Bari, in the summer; a Jewish culture festival in Pitigliano in October; open-air Jewish festivals in Rome at Shavuot and in the summer. There was a festival of Roma (Gypsy) and Jewish music in the Abruzzi region in October, and the prestigious Ravenna music festival in July featured Jewish classical music and performers.

Among many conferences and seminars on Jewish themes were a conference in Rome in April on Fascism and anti-Fascism; a conference during the summer in Trento on Science and Judaism in the Middle Ages; a conference in Rome in
October on “Israelis and Palestinians, Two Cultures as a Bridge for Peace?”; a conference on Yiddish in Rome in November; a conference on transmitting Holocaust memory, also in Rome in November.

In the spring, an enlarged and renovated Jewish museum, funded by municipal authorities and operated by the local branch of the Italy-Israel Friendship Association, opened in the city of Gorizia, on the border with Slovenia. In June civic and religious leaders, including the mayor and the local bishop, took part in the ceremonial opening of a new Jewish museum in the synagogue of Merano, a spa town in northern Italy’s Alto Adige region, where only a few dozen Jews live today. During the ceremony, Bishop Wilhelm Egger took the opportunity to apologize for Catholic failings in the past in fighting anti-Semitism. Work on the first phase of the restoration of the historic Old Jewish Cemetery on the Lido of Venice, founded in the 14th century, also began in June, and state-funded restoration of other Jewish sites was under way.

La vita e bella (Life Is Beautiful), a tragicomic film set partly in a Nazi death camp, which was released at the end of December 1997, became Italy’s most popular and honored film in 1998. It also prompted much debate in the media and in Jewish circles about how the Holocaust should be depicted on screen, and whether humor can be used in such presentations. In July the movie swept the David of Donatello awards, the Italian film industry’s version of the Oscars. It won the prize for best film, and comedian Roberto Benigni won for best director, best actor in a leading role, and, with his cowriter, best screenplay. In November Italy selected the film as its official nominee for Hollywood’s Academy Award for best foreign-language film. The movie also won a number of other prizes and honors, including a major award at the Cannes Film Festival, and was highly praised in Israel. It opened in the United States to generally favorable reviews.

In early 1998, the Milan-based Jewish art historian, essayist, poet, and art collector Arturo Schwarz donated some 700 modern works of art, mainly surrealist and Dada pieces, worth about $25 million, to the Israel Museum in Jerusalem.

In November performer Moni Ovadia premiered a new production centered around the image of the mother, with a heavy emphasis on the “Yiddishe Mameh.” The musical show began with a rendition of the Kaddish and included Ovadia’s trademark Jewish jokes and Yiddish songs. The same month, Garbage, the City and Death, a controversial play by the late German playwright and filmmaker Rainer Werner Fassbinder, opened in Milan. Set in postwar Germany, the play is considered by many to be anti-Semitic because of its negative portrayal of a real estate speculator identified as “the Rich Jew,” who exploits his position as a Jewish survivor. It was the play’s first public production in Italy and took place just over a month after a theater in Berlin dropped plans to produce it. Written in 1975, the play had been performed in various countries, including the United States, but had never been publicly performed in Germany, because of post-Holocaust sensibilities. A reviewer in Milan’s Jewish monthly gave the Milan production a sympathetic review, saying that the production “made one think”
about all aspects and effects of prejudice and hatred. In the Milan production, he wrote, it was the anti-Semite who was demonized, not the Jew.

Publications

Massimo Caviglia, a well-known mainstream journalist and cartoonist, became the new editor of Shalom, the monthly magazine of Rome’s Jewish community. He took over from Lia Levi and Luciano Tas, who had founded the magazine 30 years earlier. The change in editorship came amid charges that the Rome community was coming under the control of Orthodox Jews who excluded the nonobservant. Anna Foa, a prominent Jewish writer and intellectual, wrote a letter to Shalom saying she would not write for the magazine because Caviglia’s editorial stance rejected pluralism and instead represented a “progressive religious and Orthodox closure” that bordered on fundamentalism. Caviglia rejected Foa’s charges and said that he regretted the loss of her involvement.

Scores, if not hundreds, of books by Jewish authors or on Jewish themes were published in Italy, including works written originally in Italian or translated from other languages. A Jewish bookstore, Menorah, operated in Rome and maintained a Web site, and the Claudiana bookstore in Milan also specialized partly in Jewish books. A new bookstore called Tikkun, which specialized in part in Jewish books, opened in Milan. Milan was the scene of the second annual Jewish Book Fair, “Sefer,” organized by a Milan Jewish cultural association, May 10-13.

Books on Jewish themes were given broad public exposure, with a number of books and authors receiving prominent write-ups in the mainstream press. When two works by performer Moni Ovadia were published simultaneously in the fall—an autobiography, Speriamo che tenga (Let’s Hope It Lasts), as well as a book of Jewish humor that was sold along with a video of the author telling Jewish jokes—the books’ introduction took place in a leading theater in Rome and was treated as a major cultural event. Viaggio alla fine del millennio (A Journey to the End of the Millennium), by Israeli author A.B. Yehoshua, was published in Italian translation even before the English version, and Yehoshua visited Italy on a well-publicized book tour to promote it.

The following selected titles show the range of Jewish books on the market: Marco Buticchi’s thriller Menorah, about a search for the candelabrum looted by the Romans when the Temple was destroyed in 70 C.E.; Per via invisibile (Invisible Ways) by Alberto Cavalion, the fictionalized story of a family in Turin during the Holocaust; Lettere della giovinezza (Letters from Youth), a collection of letters written from prison between 1935 and 1943 by the Jewish anti-Fascist Victorio Foa; Come le cinque dita di una mano: Storia di una famiglia di Ebrei da Firenze a Gerusalemme (Like the Five Fingers of a Hand: The Story of a Family of Jews from Florence to Jerusalem), the stories of five prominent intellectual members of the Nirenstein family; and journalist and European Parliament member Corrado Augias’s biography of the Jewish Italian painter Amedeo Modigliani.
Two—out of many—books on Holocaust themes that were particularly well publicized and also well received were *L'uomo che ferma Hitler* (The Man Who Stopped Hitler), by Gabriele Nissim, the story of the Bulgarian politician Dimitar Peshev, who prevented the deportation of Bulgaria's Jews; and *Il guardiano* (The Guardian), based on interviews with Warsaw Ghetto uprising leader Marek Edelman, edited by Rudi Assuntino and Wlodek Goldkorn.

In August it was announced that the historic Jewish-run publishing house Fratelli Treves, founded in 1861, would be revived, 60 years after it was forced to fold due to the anti-Semitic laws.

**Personalia**

Moni Ovadia, Italy's best-known Jewish performer, was honored by the city of Pordenone in northern Italy as the subject of its annual "Dedication" program in January-February. This entailed a series of performances and lectures, as well as publication of a special volume of essays dedicated to Ovadia.

In May Rabbi Mordechai Waxman of Great Neck, New York, received a high papal honor in acknowledgement of his work in Catholic-Jewish dialogue. Waxman became the fifth Jew, and first rabbi, to be named a Knight Commander of Saint Gregory the Great.

Jewish author and director Giorgio Pressburger, who was born in Budapest, survived the Budapest ghetto as a child, and moved to Italy in 1956, took up the post of director of the Italian Culture Institute in Budapest in September. Pressburger's collection of short stories, *La neve e la colpa* (Snow and Guilt), was awarded the Viareggio literary prize for 1998. Venice-based historian Riccardo Calimani was named counselor to the administration of the Venice Biennale exhibition. In August Clemente J. Mimun, director of TV news on the state-run RAI-2 channel, received the Golden Quill award honoring outstanding personalities in the field of "Culture in Journalism."

In the summer of 1998, Tullia Zevi was named a member of the Italian National Commission for UNESCO.

Jewish left-wing political folksinger Dodi Moscato died in February at the age of 55. Journalist Vittorio Orefice, a Jew who covered Italian politics for Italian TV and newspapers for more than 40 years, died in October at the age of 74.

A prominent non-Jewish author, Gregor von Rezzori, died in Florence, in April, at age 83. Among his best-known novels, many of which are about life in Central Europe and the Jewish presence there, is *Memoirs of an Anti-Semite*, first published in 1979.

Ruth Ellen Gruber