Central and Eastern Europe

Federal Republic of Germany

National Affairs

The adoption of a new capital city was only one transition among many that transformed the Bonn Republic into the Berlin Republic in 1999. In the spring, usually vocal intellectuals of the left watched in stunned silence as Chancellor Gerhard Schröder of the Social Democratic Party (SPD), and Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer, the leader of the Greens, led Germany into its first military engagement since World War II. For decades, pacifism had been the lesson drawn by the German left from Auschwitz, yet Fischer justified his support for the NATO bombing campaign in the Balkans by comparing Serbian crimes in Kosovo to the Holocaust. For his part, the “war chancellor” believed that the military engagement marked the dawn of a new age in which the German role on the world stage would reflect its economic strength.

Finance Minister Oskar Lafontaine shocked his loyal followers in the SPD in March when he resigned from both his government post and the chairmanship of the party. His retreat ended months of conflict within the government over economic policy. In addition to appointing a minister of finance more amenable to neoliberal thinking, the chancellor reluctantly assumed the chairmanship of the SPD. Then, when the government announced plans in the summer to tighten the reins on government spending, the left wing of the SPD revolted, and Schröder needed months to silence traditionalists within his own party.

This crisis within the SPD and the disillusionment of rank-and-file Greens with the performance of their party in the coalition translated into dismal returns for the governing parties in state elections throughout the year. The first victory for the opposition Christian Democratic Union (CDU) came in Hesse on the heels of a petition drive against Red-Green plans to introduce dual citizenship into German law. This election altered the makeup of the Bundesrat, the second house of the federal parliament, so that the government no longer held a majority. Dual citizenship was, for the time being, dead. Nevertheless, even the watered-down version of the reform, which was to take effect on January 1, 2000, granted citizenship for the first time to children of non-ethnic Germans born in Germany.
By the last state election of the year, in Berlin, several patterns had become clear. The SPD had suffered significant losses to its working-class base, while the CDU had achieved a majority in the Bundesrat on the strength of an anti-Schröder campaign. The realities of governance had torn the Greens asunder, and the liberal Free Democratic Party (FDP), which had played a critical role for decades as a small party in a system based on coalition government, faced the prospect of extinction. The postcommunist Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS), meanwhile, was maneuvering itself into the social democratic void to the left of the SPD, which occupied the "new middle." Aside from Brandenburg, where the German People's Union (GPU) secured seats in the parliament, extreme right-wing parties proved more successful in local races than in state or national elections.

On November 9, with the seat of government firmly established in Berlin, Germany celebrated the tenth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. One day prior to the festivities the highest court in the land rejected appeals from two former members of the politburo of the German Democratic Republic (GDR), ordering them to serve their prison sentences. Unemployment in the new federal states (the former GDR) was close to 18 percent.

As the year came to a close, a scandal broke that threatened to shake the CDU to its core. Among other embarrassing revelations, former chancellor Helmut Kohl acknowledged in a television interview that he had accepted suitcases of cash donations totaling at least DM 2 million ($1.2 million) over a period of five years without reporting it. Government attorneys considered indicting the "chancellor of unity." Nevertheless, Kohl found support among the many in his party who owed their rise to his favor.

Chancellor Schröder, buoyed both by the turmoil within the CDU and by the popularity of a tax-reduction plan he introduced just before Christmas, ended the year on a confident note. His New Year's Eve address to the nation called on German citizens to take greater responsibility for themselves in the century to come, making clear that he intended to continue reducing the role of the state.

Israel and the Middle East

After a few awkward moments in German-Israeli relations in the early part of the year, Schröder and Prime Minister Ehud Barak of Israel, the first members of the so-called second generation to be elected head of state in their respective countries, developed what they called a friendly relationship. A series of events in February highlighted the tensions between the countries under Barak's predecessor, Benjamin Netanyahu. First, Netanyahu's foreign minister, Ariel Sharon, called Avi Primor, Israel's ambassador to Germany, back to Israel after hearing of an interview with Primor published in the German daily Die Welt. Primor, widely respected in Germany, had called into question the democratic convictions of Shas, a religious party in Netanyahu's government. Although the German gov-
ernment remained silent about the recall, the German press backed Primor and harshly criticized the Israeli government’s action.

Less than two weeks later, on February 11, Foreign Minister Fischer arrived in Jerusalem for his first official visit. Because Germany held the presidency of the European Union Council of Ministers at the time, he represented the EU as well. The 15 member states of the EU, meanwhile, had voted two days earlier, together with 100 other states in the UN, to condemn the settlement policy of the Netanyahu government. Sharon canceled his meeting with Fischer, citing a foot injury; Netanyahu met with Fischer some eight hours later than planned. Neither Israeli officials nor Fischer attached political significance to these moves, but German headlines spoke of “diplomatic irritations.” Germany did, however, make good on its pledge to promote closer cooperation between Israel and the EU via Israeli participation in EU research and technology programs.

Back in Berlin, two Israeli guards shot and killed three of 50 Kurdish radicals attempting to occupy the Israeli consulate on February 17. Both the Israeli press and representatives of the Berlin SPD accused the police of failing to take the necessary measures to deter the protestors from entering the building. The German press, in turn, asked why no one in Israel had questioned whether or not the guards, who enjoyed diplomatic immunity and were recalled to Israel within days, had been justified in firing their weapons. The motive for the attack was said to lay in the cooperation of Israeli intelligence agents with Turkey in the capture of Kurd leader Abdullah Ocalan in Nairobi.

At his last press conference as Israeli ambassador, Primor announced that his embassy’s move from Bonn to Berlin on August 6 would inaugurate a new chapter in German-Israeli relations. Although Primor’s successor did not take office in 1999, the symbolism of Prime Minister Barak’s September trip to Germany lent credence to Primor’s assertion. Disregarding criticism back home, Barak accepted Schröder’s invitation to be the first foreign leader to visit the Berlin Republic in its new capital. Survivors of the Sachsenhausen concentration camp and their grandchildren accompanied Schröder and Barak to the memorial at the site of the camp just north of Berlin. After the German chancellor reassured his Israeli guests with the phrase “Never again Sachsenhausen,” the Israeli prime minister wrote in the guest book that it is “a strong and secure Israel that guarantees that there will never again be a Sachsenhausen or an Auschwitz.”

Beyond the political realm, the legacy of the Holocaust continued to define the German-Israeli relationship. In March, Yad Vashem granted seven women from Berlin the title “Righteous among the Nations,” the highest honor given by Israel to non-Jews. The women, four of whom were decorated posthumously, had risked their lives during the Second World War to save Jews. There are now 400 Germans among the approximately 16,000 Europeans so decorated.

An April production in Tel Aviv of a much-debated German play attracted a good deal of German press, but little controversy. Because a character named “the Rich Jew” embodied anti-Semitic stereotypes reminiscent of the Nazi era, Jews
in Germany had refused, in 1985 and again in 1998, to allow the play, Werner Fassbinder’s “Garbage, the City, and Death,” to be performed (see AJYB 1999, pp. 352–53). In contrast, the Israeli artists involved in the Israeli production understood the work as a confrontation with racism and hatred that could be applied just as easily to Tel Aviv as to any other setting. Nonetheless, the director of the production, Avi Malka, declined an invitation to perform the play in Berlin. Well aware of the controversy surrounding the play in Germany, he said that he had no desire to put a “kosher stamp” on Fassbinder’s work.

In spite of the persistent ambivalence underlying much of the German-Israeli dialogue, cultural institutions continued to pursue cooperative projects in 1999. For the first time in the history of the Federal Republic, Israel provided financial assistance to the Jewish community in Germany, in the form of grants from the Pinkus Foundation for youth projects. The University of Haifa established its first office in Germany in April with the goal of developing student exchange programs, visiting professorships, and a lecture series with partner institutions across Germany. On September 2, the Cologne-based Society for Jewish Information and Services (SJIS) sent its first group of high-school students to Israel for a year as part of a Europe-wide program called “Amichai.” The SJIS hoped the students would return from Israel able and willing to breathe new life into the Jewish community of Germany.

**Right-Wing Extremism**

While the number of crimes attributed to right-wing extremists fell by 9.2 percent in 1999, the number of violent crimes committed by skinheads and neo-Nazis rose from 708 in 1998 to 746 in 1999. The Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (FOPC) counted fewer individual activists in 1999 than in 1998, but Interior Minister Otto Schilly (SPD) nevertheless expressed concern about the greater visibility of their organizations and an increase in their willingness to resort to violence. Almost half of the recorded cases of right-wing violence were perpetrated in the new federal states of the former GDR, where just over a fifth of the German population lived.

According to FOPC vice president Klaus-Dieter Fritsche (CSU), neo-Nazis viewed the public debate over liberalizing the citizenship law as a call to action. Recruitment and communication within the radical right milieu followed trends established in previous years. The number of Internet sites maintained by German extremists rose from 130 to 330, and the FOPC estimated the worldwide total at 600. In the first half of 1999 alone, skinhead bands played at some 50 “birthday parties,” the time and place of which were generally announced only hours beforehand over the Internet or via mobile phones. The fashion, music, and camaraderie of the skinhead scene, if not its politics, had gained in popularity among German youth. Over half of the young people involved lived in the former GDR.
Skinheads in Brandenburg were especially aggressive. The number of violent hate crimes there in the first half of 1999 was 50 percent higher than in the first half of 1998. The death of a 28-year-old Algerian asylum seeker in the town of Guben caught the nation's attention. On February 13, after allegedly being injured in a fight with a “dark-skinned man,” a group of skinheads in three cars decided to “hunt down dark-skinned Africans.” They spotted Omar Ben Noui with a couple of friends at a gas station. The skinheads chased Ben Noui until he ran through the glass door of an apartment house and bled to death. The next day the Brandenburg SPD hosted a conference in Potsdam on xenophobia and rightist extremism. Government representatives explained that violence against foreigners had receded in 1998 because of the creation of special police units. Minister President Manfred Stolpe urged the public not to prejudge the youth of Brandenburg. Meanwhile, surveys revealed that almost one-fifth of young people over the age of 14 agreed to some degree with right-wing extremist rhetoric, and the police identified five different towns as centers of violence-prone gangs. The following Tuesday, February 16, an unknown vandal painted a swastika on the site where Ben Noui bled to death. Fearful of attracting more undesired attention, residents of the apartment house resisted efforts to erect an antiracist memorial at the site. Over the next several weeks German journalists flocked to Guben, a town of 28,000 that had also been the site of antiforeigner violence in the early 1990s. Now, hundreds of residents filed down the streets to protest against xenophobia and violence. A local social worker insisted that no more than 15 men constituted the hard core of the haters; their followers, numbering at least 150, were simply in search of belonging and recognition. The Greens and the PDS demanded that the CDU/CSU discontinue its petition drive against dual citizenship, which, they felt, had fueled the flames of xenophobia.

Echoing the views of many other observers, the minister for education in Brandenburg announced that changes were needed in the classroom. Teams would be sent to all state schools to instruct teachers—who had not been systematically replaced after the demise of the GDR—how to deal with rightist youth. The state also would increase the number of social workers in the educational system by 25 percent. Stolpe, who had originally suggested that the problem was one of violent individuals, now began speaking of a troubling “milieu” in his state.

Local residents, especially asylum seekers and immigrants, greeted the attention of politicians and reporters with cynicism, sure that Guben would return to its anti-foreigner status quo once the national wave of indignation wore off. Indeed, on February 22 an employee at the local youth club was fired for attending a demonstration in honor of Omar Ben Noui, and thereby jeopardizing the “foundation of trust with a portion of our young clientele.” The town made headlines again in March, when the director of a home for refugees lambasted the Guben police for ignoring his calls for protection against skinhead intimidation.

According to experts, though, skinheads had more influence in Saxony than
in Brandenburg or any other German state. In several towns of less than 20,000 residents, as few as 60 neo-Nazis could effectively close off sections of town to foreigners and leftists. The threat of violence combined with the silent complicity of the majority to enforce these “no-go areas” without the need for repeated physical attacks. Because they did not actually witness acts of violence or intimidation, local politicians and proprietors of youth hangouts rejected the notion that their towns had become the “nationally liberated zones” that neo-Nazi propaganda advocated.

In spite of the occasional crimes committed by their followers, leaders of the extreme right discouraged violence. Instead, they attempted to win the hearts and minds of citizens on the local level by speaking to their concerns. First infiltrating youth clubs, then neighborhood associations, then the city council, right-wing extremists hoped to make their nationalistic, xenophobic worldview part of the communal cultural fabric. Championing order, discipline, and cleanliness, the National Democratic Party won seats on six different city councils in Saxony in 1999. Government programs even subsidized efforts of NPD activists to start businesses and clean out long-neglected houses in small towns. In Berlin, it was the Republicans rather than the NPD who gained a foothold in local politics. While neither extreme rightist party made it into the municipal senate of the German capital, the Republicans did win seats on several district councils in October elections.

Opponents confronted these right-wing extremists at the local level with varying degrees of success. Coalitions of socialists, anarchists, unionists, and independent concerned citizens countered virtually every public march of skinheads with a demonstration of their own. In late February, after the courts lifted a municipal prohibition against their rally, skinheads roused by the NPD cry “No German Passports for Foreigners” faced off in Magdeburg with the Coalition against Rightists. Days later, in the wake of a similar court struggle over the right to demonstrate, 400 NPD supporters and 600 antifascists rallied in different parts of Angermünde. In March, residents of the Berlin district of Pankow protested the establishment of a Republican party office in a house formerly owned by a Jewish factory owner. Export-dependent business leaders recognized the damage that right-wing extremism could do to their international interests. In July, the EKO Steel Corporation held a “Festival against Xenophobia, Rightist Extremism and Violence” at its factory in the Brandenburg town of Eisenhüttenstadt. After another legal battle, local NPD activists held a counterdemonstration in mid-August for “Freedom of Opinion for Nationalists—Arguments instead of Prohibition.”

In contrast to the grassroots approach of the NPD, the German People’s Union (GPU) was little more than a troupe of disaffected loners following the orders of Munich-based publisher Gerhard Frey. In February 1999, a failed mutiny split the party caucus in parliament, and four members left the GPU to become independents. The GPU’s parliamentary tactics consisted of asking provocative questions—faxed from Munich—of the governing parties about the relation be-
tween foreigners and criminality. The party had no concrete policy proposals of its own. Several GPU members of parliament hired family members to receive salaries from the public treasury.

Despite this state of affairs, the GPU had great success in the 1999 state elections in Brandenburg. Following the same strategy that brought him success in Saxony-Anhalt (see AJYB 1998, pp. 338–39), Frey financed a direct-mail campaign in mid-August that placed GPU flyers in every Brandenburg household just weeks before the September 5 election. In response, the minister of justice in Brandenburg, Hans Otto Bräutigam, an independent, called on all democratic parties to distance themselves from right-wing tendencies generally and the GPU in particular. The SPD and the PDS, drawing on the experience of their colleagues in Saxony-Anhalt, launched a public-education campaign. The CDU, in contrast, did not want to alienate GPU voters. Jörg Schönbohm, the leader of the Brandenburg CDU, agreed that the presence of the GPU in parliament would damage the state’s reputation, but complained that the SPD-led state government had ignored the problem of left-wing extremism. Schönbohm, who himself had stirred controversy in 1998 with his comments about the Turkish minority in Berlin, had granted an interview to the skinhead publication Young Freedom in March, arguing that some CDU positions could appeal to a segment of the rightist crowd.

The campaign turned ugly in the last week of August. Vandals tore down signs and posters of the CDU, SPD, and PDS. In the Brandenburg town of Lauchhammer street fights broke out between rightists and leftists, who had been tearing down GPU materials. When the votes were counted on September 5, the GPU had just cleared the 5-percent hurdle necessary to win representation in the Brandenburg parliament.

In Mecklenburg-Pomerania, meanwhile, the NPD splintered in the aftermath of its poor showing in the September 1998 elections. On April 1, 1999, disgruntled members left the party to establish the Socialist People’s Party (SPP) and pursue an agenda based on the socialist model of the former GDR. State authorities considered the new party far more radical than the NPD.

**Anti-Semitism**

While rightist violence almost exclusively targeted foreigners and leftists, there were still 991 anti-Semitic crimes reported in 1998. This came to just about 9 percent of all “right-wing extremist” crimes, but the number becomes more significant in light of the fact that Jews made up only one-tenth of 1 percent of the German population.

On March 9, 1999, the same day that a bomb exploded outside the Wehrmacht exhibit in Saarbrücken, vandals desecrated a memorial in Berlin that marked the former site of a synagogue. On August 17 Berlin police arrested 26 men and women who were planning to commemorate the anniversary of Nazi party leader Rudolf Hess’s death; the same night, vandals desecrated another syn-
agogue memorial. Two weeks later, on August 31, arsonists in Berlin destroyed a subway car in which Miphasch/Begegnung, an association dedicated to interfaith and German-Israeli reconciliation, had installed an exhibit on the gradual social exclusion of Jews from everyday life in Nazi Germany. The next day marked the 60th anniversary of the German invasion of Poland.

Neo-Nazis also mobilized for the “Day of German Unity” on October 3. Tombstones in the Weissensee cemetery of the Berlin Jewish community were uprooted, and swastikas were painted on both a Berthold Brecht monument and a memorial to Jews deported from Berlin. Several local masons, outraged by the vandalism, offered to clean up the mess in Weissensee free of charge. The workshop of one of these masons was ransacked in November. His willingness to help the Jewish community had translated into DM 80,000 ($48,000) in damages.

Jewish public figures repeatedly complained of the standard German dismissal of anti-Semitic acts as isolated incidents. Author Jürgen Elsässer argued that the German authorities had the responsibility to repudiate the vandals’ October 3 message that Jews did not belong to the nation. Whereas Eberhard Diepgen (CDU), the mayor of Berlin, could find no time to attend a demonstration against hate the week following the “Day of German Unity,” Elsässer recalled the words of French president François Mitterand in response to the desecration of graves in Carpentras in 1992: “The Jews are part of the nation. We celebrate together—and we mourn together.” Mitterand, Elsässer noted, then walked at the head of a protest march in Carpentras.

Holocaust-Related Matters

Contested Memory

The so-called Walser-Bubis debate, in which German novelist Martin Walser offended Ignatz Bubis, president of the Central Council of Jews in Germany (CCJG), by speaking against the “hollow rituals” associated with Holocaust remembrance in Germany, dominated the German press in the last weeks of 1998 (see AJYB 1999, p. 345). The central actors in the dispute achieved a cold peace in December, and January 1999 brought a reassertion of the German commitment to memory. On January 27, German schoolchildren, politicians, and scholars participated in a variety of events to mark the fourth annual Memorial Day for the Victims of National Socialism, observed on the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. Representatives of several victim groups, including Jews, Roma (Gypsies), and homosexuals, held ceremonies to commemorate those who died at the hands of the Nazis. Over the course of the year, however, aftershocks of the Walser-Bubis debate would provide the subtext for an ongoing struggle over how to define the political culture of the Berlin Republic.

In what experts believed would be the last such trial in Germany, an 80-year-
old ethnic German from Ukraine was sentenced to ten years in prison for his role in the so-called Harvest Festival Action, in which the SS shot an estimated 40,000 Jews within 48 hours in Lublin, Poland. He was not required to serve his sentence, however, because he had already spent more than ten years in a Soviet labor camp.

German authorities agreed in 1999 that once the Central Office for the Clarification of National Socialist Crimes, which had the responsibility for pursuing such criminals, wrapped up its pending cases, it would be transformed into an archive on Nazi crimes. To date, of the 106,000 Nazi war criminals brought to trial before German courts, only 6,500 had been convicted.

In another act designed less to serve justice than to facilitate future historical research, state authorities in Bavaria were ordered in April to transfer all information related to the “treatment of the racially persecuted” to state archives. These papers included tax records that would shed light on the aryranization of Jewish property. The Bavarian authorities had denied the existence of such records for years. In accordance with the laws protecting the secrecy of tax records, the documents would not be made available to researchers for 80 years.

In October, Professor Micha Brumlik, the Green politician and leader of the progressive Jewish movement in Germany, published a provocative editorial in a Jewish newspaper suggesting that novelist Günter Grass, recipient of the 1999 Nobel Prize for Literature, and Martin Walser represented two alternative views of the German future. Whereas Grass felt that the history of National Socialism placed a serious responsibility on the nation, Walser viewed it as a liability weighing down the nation. Brumlik believed the young Berlin Republic to be in the midst of a struggle between a “democratic culture” of responsibility and “an unculture of forgetting built on national pride.”

The events of November 9 seemed to bear out Brumlik’s analysis. For the first time, on the tenth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, the celebration of national unity overshadowed the commemoration of Kristallnacht. To be sure, in his speech at the Brandenburg Gate, Chancellor Schröder also mentioned the “other” anniversary that November 9 marked. What spoke volumes, however, was his absence from the central Jewish commemoration of Kristallnacht.

**DEATH OF IGNATZ BUBIS**

As a final act in a life devoted to raising public awareness of the relationship between the Nazi past and the German future, Ignatz Bubis provoked one last controversy. In late July, in an interview in the German weekly *Stern*, the CCJG president said that he had accomplished little to bridge the chasm between Jewish and non-Jewish Germans. He criticized the Jewish minority for segregating itself too much from the rest of the nation, and the non-Jewish majority for seeking, all too often, to cast off the historical burden of the Holocaust. Bubis also told the interviewer that in spite of his German patriotism, he would prefer to be buried in Israel. After vandals bombed the tombstone of Heinz Galinski, his pre-
decessor, in December 1998, Bubis saw too high a risk that "the dignity of the dead would be injured" in Germany. Bubis died on August 13, 1999, and was buried on August 15 in Tel Aviv. Jewish communities across Germany held memorial services. His successor as head of the CCJG was to be elected in January 2000.

A CENTRAL MEMORIAL

As 1998 came to a close, State Minister for Culture Michael Naumann appeared poised to bring the decade-long public debate over a central Holocaust memorial to an end (see AJYB 1999, pp. 342–44). As it turned out, however, it would take another year of controversy before a firm date could be set for the groundbreaking.

In January 1999, Naumann attempted to garner support for the construction of a "house of memory" on the designated site for the memorial in the center of Berlin. According to a compromise worked out with American architect Peter Eisenmann, the building would border a reduced version of Eisenmann's design—large stone columns reminiscent of a graveyard. But critics charged that Naumann had spent too much time seeking advice and affirmation abroad and not enough familiarizing himself with the needs and concerns of cultural institutions in Berlin. It was, in fact, true that the original impulse for his idea had come from Bruce Ramer, president of the American Jewish Committee. Furthermore, Naumann and Chancellor Schroder met with Steven Spielberg in early January to discuss the incorporation of Spielberg's Shoah Foundation video archives into the proposed Berlin educational center. Schroder acknowledged that he could live without a memorial, yet he also asserted that, in the aftermath of the Walser-Bubis debate, political pragmatism made opposition to the project untenable. By the middle of January, Schröder, other government figures, and representatives of the Jewish community had signaled their satisfaction with the Naumann-Eisenmann compromise.

The struggle was far from over, as critics continued to challenge Naumann's methods and ideas. Other finalists in the competition for the design of the memorial objected to the Naumann-Eisenmann behind-the-scenes deal before a winner had been officially determined. Furthermore, both architect Daniel Libeskind and conceptual artist Jochen Gerz complained that Eisenmann had incorporated elements from their work into his design. And the directors of other memorial sites in Berlin objected to the prospect of watching DM 100–180 million ($60–108 million) flow to the construction of a "house of memory" on a site with no relation to the Nazi past, at a time when their own institutions, situated where Nazi history was made, had to compete with one another for scant public resources. It also remained unclear what purpose this new center could serve that was not already being served by existing institutions. In mid-March Berlin mayor Eberhard Diepgen (CDU) withdrew the support of the Berlin municipal government for the undertaking.
By then opponents were rallying around yet another proposal, that of theologian and politician Richard Schröder (SPD). Instead of conjuring an image of a cemetery for the murdered, he maintained, the memorial should speak directly to the perpetrators and their descendants. Schröder suggested that the memorial bear the commandment, "Thou shalt not murder," in Hebrew as well as in the languages of all the victim groups, so as to include the non-Jewish victims and to emphasize the connection between Jewish law and Christian civilization. Jewish public figures objected that the proposal lacked specific historical reference to the Holocaust. They also considered the use of Hebrew in a message to Germans to be problematic. Within weeks, Schröder's contribution had nonetheless won support among prominent conservatives, including Mayor Diepgen, the chairman of the Council of Evangelical Churches in Germany, the president of the Central Committee of German Catholics, the Catholic Bishops' Conference, and Minister President Edmund Stoiber of Bavaria (CSU).

A diverse coalition of Naumann's opponents dominated both committee hearings that the Bundestag held on the subject, and 63 members of the German parliament announced their opposition to any form of central monument on May 5. Naumann managed nonetheless to win over many of his earlier critics by mid-June, when the committee voted along party lines to limit the Bundestag debate to the proposals of Naumann and Richard Schröder. Finally, on June 25, the German parliament capped ten years of debate by voting to build a central German Holocaust memorial, to restrict it to the commemoration of the murdered Jews of Europe, and to build it according to the Naumann-Eisenmann concept. In the fall, the Bundestag passed a law establishing a memorial foundation to oversee construction. The foundation's board of trustees met for the first time on December 17. The projected groundbreaking date, January 27, 2000, would mark the 55th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz.

As critics had feared, several other victim groups petitioned for their own memorials in Berlin. The municipal government said that it would carefully review proposals on behalf of Roma and Sinti (Gypsies), homosexuals, victims of the Nazi euthanasia program, deserters from the German army, women, and the Dutch Communist blamed for the Reichstag fire of 1933. The memorial foundation created by the Bundestag was charged with reconciling their interests.

WEHRMACHT EXHIBIT

Few issues over the last several years have brought into such clear relief the connections between academic debate, mainstream party politics, and right-wing extremism as the so-called Wehrmacht exhibit. Devoted to the photo-documentation of the crimes of the German army on the Eastern Front, this exhibit first attracted public controversy in March 1997, two years after its opening, when conservative politicians complained that it defamed the German army. Since then there had been demonstrations in the streets of Munich, Kiel, and
other cities where the exhibit was shown. In February 1999 the dispute flared up in Saarbrücken. Two days before the February 22 opening, 300 skinheads demonstrated with signs declaring that “Our fathers were no criminals.” Days later local CDU politicians Gerd Bauer and Manfred Hayo placed an ad in the city newspaper insisting that they would not allow the organizers of the exhibit to defame their fathers “and with them the millions of dead, who can no longer defend themselves.” The newspaper received many letters attacking the exhibit, among them a good number of form letters distributed by neo-Nazis in other cities.

On March 9 the building housing the exhibit exploded, causing an estimated DM 500,000 ($300,000) worth of damage. Police believed it to be the work of right-wing extremists. But Jan Philipp Reemtsma, director of the Hamburg Institute for Social Research that organized the exhibit, saw a direct connection to the rhetoric of mainstream politicians: “Wherever party politicians failed to distance themselves clearly from the far right, extremists have felt encouraged to use violence.” For his part, Bauer refused to acknowledge any connection between the bombing and his ad, which he continued to defend.

Opponents of the exhibit who preferred the methodical evaluation of documents over rhetorical appeals to nationalist sentiments ultimately forced Reemtsma and his colleagues to acknowledge inaccuracies in their exhibit. In detailed critiques issued in January, two East European historians asserted that some of the photographs in question documented crimes committed not by the German army, but by the Red Army, the Soviet secret police, and Hungarian soldiers. By October these critiques had found the support of a broad spectrum of the German press.

On November 4 the Institute for Social Research announced a moratorium on the display of the Wehrmacht exhibit. To ensure the project’s scholarly integrity, a panel of leading historians was charged with a thorough review of its content. Scheduled openings in Braunschweig and New York were postponed indefinitely. The panel convened for the first time on November 20.

RESTITUTION

After a year of tense negotiations, U.S. and German government representatives, class-action lawyers, Jewish organizations, and German industry officials reached agreement in mid-December on compensation for surviving victims of the National Socialist forced-labor system. Only after victim groups filed class-action suits in the U.S. in 1998 did a small number of export-driven German corporations agree to consider participating in a central compensation fund. On their behalf, Chancellor Schröder resolved to achieve an agreement that would protect German industry from any future legal action (see AJYB 1999, pp. 340–42).

Over the course of 1999 the nature of the discussion shifted dramatically. In January Alan Hevesi, the New York City controller, announced that he would approve the merger of Deutsche Bank with Bankers Trust only if the former made
a concrete compensation offer to Holocaust survivors. With Deutsche Bank then taking the lead, a handful of German corporations offered less than two billion marks. Headlines announced that Bonn and Washington had all but reached agreement, and that representatives of the two countries would soon meet to work out a way to insulate German industry from future legal claims. The Jewish organizations had agreed that German industry would establish two funds, one of which would be dedicated to the direct financial restitution of former forced laborers, while the other, a "memory fund," would promote research and the preservation of the memory of the Holocaust. The payments were to begin on September 1, 1999, the 60th anniversary of the German invasion of Poland. Bilateral negotiations with Israel and with East European states were expected to follow the successful conclusion of the German-American talks.

In late January, however, lawyers Mel Weiss and Michael Hausfeld filed new class-action suits in American courts against a number of German corporations on behalf of non-Jewish Polish victims. The lawyers insisted that there should be only one fund, which would compensate victims, and they called into question the granting of immunity to German industry from future lawsuits.

On February 15 Chancellor Schröder announced that 12 German corporations would voluntarily establish a compensation fund for former forced laborers, conditioned on immunity from future litigation. Although the federal government did not plan to contribute to this fund, it would set up a foundation to compensate forced labor in agriculture, communal work, and other sectors not covered by the industry initiative.

Public discussion, meanwhile, indicated that a final settlement was not going to be easy. Non-Jewish victim groups—Roma and Sinti, Ukrainians, Poles, and Russians—demanded to be represented in the negotiations. Historians of forced labor in the Third Reich, whose work was not yet widely known, announced at press conferences and in opinion pieces that forced labor during the war was far more extensive than previously assumed. New historical research detailed the involvement of Dresdner Bank, Bertelsmann Publishing, and the Deutsche Bank, which helped finance the construction of Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Within days of the establishment of the industry fund, lawyers in America filed a class-action suit against Bayer, which had been part of the I.G. Farben chemical combine during the war, on behalf of 112 surviving victims of Josef Mengele's infamous medical experiments. At the end of March, days after three survivors of Auschwitz filed a lawsuit against the I. G. Farben consortium, stockholders voted to create a foundation through which it would compensate former forced laborers. The following week, Stefan Zdzislaw Kozlowski, chairman of the Polish Association of Former Political Prisoners in Nazi Prisons and Concentration Camps, announced that more than 22,000 members of his association had filed suit against the German government. California governor Gray Davis also took to the courts, suing five German and two American companies to compel them to compensate surviving forced laborers living in his state. Not only did Ger-
man leaders from all points on the political spectrum express resentment at the multiplying number of lawsuits, but Ignatz Bubis and World Jewish Congress president Israel Singer also criticized the lawyers, who were seeking, in their opinion, to profit from the suffering of Holocaust victims. 

The prominent role played by Jewish organizations up to that point had contributed to the misperception that Jews had made up the majority of forced laborers exploited in the Nazi economy. Once the victims' lawyers were incorporated into the U.S.-German negotiations in May, Jews made up no more than 10 percent of the potential recipients of restitution payments. The entry of the victims' lawyers into the discussion also escalated the financial stakes enormously, and the consideration of boycotts of German companies by the legislatures of 12 U.S. states added to the urgency of the matter. During the summer, the number of lawsuits grew.

Hardball negotiations began in earnest on August 19. Claiming to represent some 2.3 million forced laborers, Michael Hausfeld insisted on a total exceeding $20 billion. Industry representatives had been speaking of less than $2 billion for an estimated 600,000 legitimate recipients, with guaranteed immunity from future claims. The result was stalemate. To move the negotiations forward, Chancellor Schröder announced in October that his government would contribute to the industry fund after all. Because the combined public-private compensation offer of DM 4 billion ($2.4 billion) still remained well below the plaintiffs' demands, the two sides spent the subsequent several weeks doing little more than throwing numbers around and trading accusations in the press.

By early fall, only 16 German companies had joined the industry initiative. In September, an appeal from the Berlin office of the American Jewish Committee to 117 additional German companies to contribute to the fund fell on deaf ears. Then, on December 7, the AJC office released a list of 255 German companies that, according to widely accessible sources, had ties to firms that used forced laborers during the war. The release of the list thus helped turn an issue concerning a handful of huge corporations into a multitude of stories about local complicity in National Socialist crimes. Within one week, 23 of the companies joined the industry initiative.

The list also contributed to a breakthrough in the negotiations. On December 17, agreement was reached on a figure of DM 10 billion ($6 billion) in compensation for forced labor. German taxpayers stood to shoulder the lion's share of that figure, through tax deductions for industry and direct contributions from federal and state treasuries. At a ceremony announcing the agreement, Federal President Johannes Rau sought to smooth over the ill will generated over the course of the negotiations by asking for forgiveness from the victims of National Socialism on behalf of the German nation.

The foundation to be created by the German government would have representation from all states where surviving forced laborers lived, and forced labor of all kinds would be compensated. The claims of those who died after the cre-
oration of the industry initiative on February 16 were passed on to their heirs. German officials acknowledged that there would not be enough money to compensate all eligible recipients. It thus remained unclear how much money would be available for the “Future Fund” dedicated to the preservation of the memory of the Holocaust. By year’s end, more than 90 companies had joined the industry initiative. Officials said that the first payments would be delivered in the summer of 2000, but Munich-based lawyer Michael Witti made headlines on December 31 by threatening not to withdraw his clients’ lawsuits. He complained of a proposed ceiling on compensation for aryanized property and the disqualification of former slave laborers who had previously received payments from the Federal Republic.

JEWISH COMMUNITY

Demography

Immigration from the former Soviet Union (FSU) gained momentum in 1999, reaching its highest level to date. Almost 9,000 Russian-speaking newcomers contributed to an increase in the total membership of communities represented by the CCJG from 74,289 to 81,730 over the course of the year. Almost half of the immigrants settled in the five new federal states of the former GDR. The numbers of affiliated Jews in the largest communities for 1999 were as follows, with 1998 figures as the basis for comparison: Berlin, 11,190 (up from 11,008); Frankfurt, 6,602 (down from 6,618); Munich, 7,219 (up from 6,595); Hamburg, 4,270 (up from 3,993); Cologne, 3,654 (up from 3,408).

Communal Affairs

A number of special programs facilitated the integration of Jewish immigrants from the FSU in 1999. Early in the year, the Central Welfare Administration of Jews in Germany (CWA) sponsored an exhibit of art created by Russian-speaking Jews. A series of chess tournaments in the federal state of Hesse fostered a spirit of belonging among the old and new members of the seven participating communities. Close to 200 young Jews traveled to Düsseldorf in March for the national Jewish Youth Congress sponsored by the CCJG and the CWA. The delegates, many of whom were native Russian-speakers, participated in social events and German-language discussions of current affairs.

In spite of these signs of cohesion, communal leaders also recognized and sought to address the problems generated by immigration. In an editorial entitled “We were all strangers,” Rabbi Henry Brandt asked the readers of the Passover edition of the national Jewish newspaper to show more understanding toward their brothers and sisters from the FSU. “The lack of Jewish education
and a familiarity with Jewish religious customs is all too often a premise,” Brandt charged, “to treat them as second-rate members of the community.” In the same forum, Andreas Nachama, president of the Berlin Jewish community, recalled the successful integration of the 2,500 Russian-speaking immigrants who had settled in Berlin between the mid-1970s and 1989. He drew on this positive example to urge representatives of established communal institutions to avoid paternalism and not to expect complete assimilation.

Jewish institutions followed the hundreds of government offices, nonprofit organizations, and media outlets that relocated to Berlin, the new capital, in 1999. On April 19, the same day the Bundestag convened its first session in the Reichstag, the CCJG installed a mezuzah on the door of its new home. The building, which was named the Leo Baeck House in memory of the late German Jewish leader, stood on the same spot where Baeck presided over the College for the Study of Judaism until 1942. The CCJG-sponsored national Jewish newspaper, the Allgemeine Jüdische Wochenblatt (AJW), also relocated there.

Jewish communities throughout Germany, experiencing remarkable growth, either opened or planned to build new facilities in 1999. In Cologne, for example, a century-old synagogue housing a community center—the only one of the city’s seven synagogues to have been restored after the Holocaust—could no longer accommodate the growing membership. The community announced plans in January for the construction of a second community center. In Bavaria, the Würzburg community sought to build on its reputation as a pillar of Orthodoxy with the construction of a Jewish community and cultural center that would train teachers of religion and serve as a gathering place for Jewish youth. The Jewish community of Munich also had plans for a new community center. On May 30, both the Delmenhorst and the Mülheim-Duisburg-Oberhausen communities celebrated the opening of substantial new community centers that housed synagogues, classrooms, administrative facilities, and more. Chemnitz had seen its membership rise from 11 to 290 during the 1990s. Reflecting the difficulties faced by many communities in the new federal states, its members discussed plans for a new synagogue despite the fact that they had no full-time rabbi.

Other communities had to deal with crises borne of corruption and avarice. Four years after being elected, the new board of the Hannover Jewish community finally took office on March 25. Rejecting the election as invalid and fighting every legal measure taken against him, former president Leo Kohn had refused to grant the new board access to the community center (see AJYB 1999, p. 347). Because neglect and a leaking roof had taken a serious toll on the building during the stalemate, the new board inherited an estimated bill of DM 900,000 ($540,000) to repair the center in addition to an existing communal debt of DM 1 million ($600,000). Eli Meir Gampel’s successor as president of the Halle community also inherited a troubled legacy. A new board was elected in March to replace Peter Fischer, who had been given interim authority over the community by the CCJG to restore order in the wake of Gampel’s alleged mismanagement.
Religion

A peculiar constellation of German law, historical legacies, and idiosyncratic personalities contributed to several religious conflicts within the Jewish communities of Germany in 1999. All religious communities in Germany are corporate entities under public law; the state collects fees for religious affiliation from taxpayers and passes them on to the institutions representing each confession. Based on a centuries-old system, Jewish communities in Germany are Einheitsgemeinden, meaning in theory that liberal and Orthodox congregations function under a single communal administration. Until this year Berlin had been the only community to maintain peaceful coexistence between the denominations.

The CCJG resolved at a meeting of its governing body on May 16 to provide financial support for the establishment of a central Orthodox religious court, a move favored by the European Conference of Rabbis. Such a body would provide, for the first time, national regulation of Orthodox conversions and resolve "who is a Jew" cases among the thousands of immigrants from the FSU, who would no longer have to prove their Jewishness over again when moving to a new community. This would not, of course, help immigrants or converts recognized as Jews by liberal rabbis.

Earlier that month, Eli Meir Gampel, the former chairman of the Halle Jewish community, established a new association designed to unite Orthodox Jewish communities. Gampel's enterprise planned to recruit among recently arrived immigrants from the FSU. Peter Sichrovsky, an Austrian Jewish politician in the right-wing Freedom Party of Jörg Haider, voiced his support for the initiative. With an eye to Gampel's scandal-ridden tenure in Halle and allegations of his association with the Church of Scientology, CCJG president Bubis dismissed Gampel's Association of Law-Abiding Communities as "law-abiding according to neither Jewish nor civil law."

More threatening to the unity of Jewish communities in Germany were ongoing disputes between Orthodox and Liberal congregations, and within Liberal Judaism itself. Over 100 women from all over the continent attended the first "European Conference of Women Rabbis, Cantors, Scholars and all Spiritually Interested Women and Men—Bet Debora," held May 13–16 in Berlin. The dialogue focused on egalitarian Judaism and the promotion of positive Jewish identity in East and Central Europe.

Despite the engagement of these women, the notion of females leading services remained anathema in most German Jewish communities. Marian Offmann, a member of the governing board of the Munich community, explained that "the overwhelming majority of community members do not live as Orthodox Jews, but they respect the Orthodox leadership because they know that such is the only way to ensure the survival of our community." In the eyes of many Orthodox leaders and their supporters, the inclusion of liberal and/or egalitarian congregations in communal structures would precipitate a schism, whereas liberals blamed the con-
friction on the refusal of the Einheitsgemeinden to accommodate their needs. One ray of hope for pluralism was the incorporation of an “egalitarian minyan,” which had existed independently for years, into the official Jewish communal structure of Frankfurt.

Friction within the Berlin Einheitsgemeinde in 1999 demonstrated the difficulties of “unity in diversity.” Early in the year, the World Union for Progressive Judaism sent letters to the CCJG and to various government offices complaining of discrimination against progressive congregations in Germany. Because the state only recognized communities represented by the CCJG, the letter stated, progressive Jews preferring to organize their religious lives outside of Orthodox communal institutions had no access to tax money or state subsidies. At an October meeting of communal representatives, Moishe Waks, a member of the governing board of the CCJG, responded by proposing that the Berlin community resign from the World Union. The suggestion provoked heated debate because of the historical and personal connections between the World Union and the Berlin community. Jews from Berlin had been among the founders of the World Union in the 1920s. Both the community as a whole and the Pestalozzistrasse Synagogue held memberships. Andreas Nachama, president of the community and lifelong member of the congregation, sat on its board of governors.

Rabbi Walter Homolka played a prominent role in the controversy. In 1997 Homolka cofounded the Union of Progressive Jews in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland (UPJGAS) as a branch of the World Union, in which Homolka also played a leading role. In previous years, his conversion to Judaism and Protestant theological training had raised doubts among progressive and Orthodox observers alike. In its first years of existence, the UPJGAS granted membership to 12 congregations that had been established outside of their cities’ Einheitsgemeinden and, therefore, outside of the CCJG. Supporters of the already existing institutional framework in Germany interpreted Homolka’s activities as an attempt to build the UPJGAS into a competitor with the CCJG for tax money and for the right to represent Jews in Germany. Waks demanded that the World Union distance itself from Homolka as a condition of the Berlin community’s continued membership. He thereby shifted the focus of the dispute from the general issue of progressive efforts to undermine Orthodox control of Einheitsgemeinden to Homolka, a specific problem for progressives opposed to schism, like Nachama.

Together with Walter Jacob, former vice president of the World Union and a rabbi in Munich, Homolka planned to establish an Abraham Geiger Theological Seminary in Potsdam. The seminary would be the first educational center for progressive rabbis in postwar Germany. The announcement of their intentions infuriated leaders of the Berlin Jewish community. Just as the CCJG had resented the World Union effort to undermine the Einheitsgemeinden, Nachama and his colleagues insisted that any seminary established without the cooperation of communal institutions would be doomed to failure. The only show of support for Homolka came in the form of an editorial by Julius Schoeps, director of the
Moses Mendelssohn Center of Potsdam University, welcoming the Abraham Geiger Seminary to town. In spite of these initial words of welcome, Schoeps declared at a November 4 meeting of the Berlin Assembly of Representatives that the Mendelssohn Center had no plans to cooperate with Homolka's seminary. A letter from Rabbi Richard Block, the president of the World Union, was read aloud at the same meeting. It made clear that the World Union also had nothing to do with the seminary and that Homolka was acting only with the support of the UPJGAS. Nachama convinced a majority of the assembled representatives to postpone any action on Waks's resolution until its meeting on January 19, 2000, when Rabbi Block would be invited to explain his position on the tensions between the Berlin community and his organization.

A new year did not promise an end to these intracommunal struggles. Julius Schoeps planned to call for a vote of no confidence in Waks, the vice president of the Berlin community, at the January 19 meeting. Waks's proposal to withdraw the communal membership in the World Union, Schoeps argued, was an obvious effort to discredit Nachama and to roll back the religious pluralism that had defined the Berlin community for generations. Nachama endured a setback in December when he failed to win a seat on the governing board of the CCJG. He attributed his loss in part to Orthodox hostility to his activities in the Progressive movement, but also to the jealousy of other communities toward the vibrant and populous Berlin community.

In the synagogues of Berlin, meanwhile, liberal Rabbi Walter Rothschild attempted to address the needs of a diverse community. Rothschild arrived in Berlin in the fall of 1998 to fill a position that had been vacant for years. Trained in England, where he also began his rabbinic career, Rothschild had to adjust to the unique legal framework and social milieu of the Berlin Jewish community. Although more than 10,000 of the 11,500 members of the community considered themselves liberal, their definition of liberal Judaism did not always extend as far as Rothschild's progressive religious views. Indeed, disagreements over the structure and content of services in the Pestalozzistrasse, one of the four liberal congregations under his jurisdiction, reached such a boiling point that Nachama attacked Rothschild in the December community newsletter. Under the title "Polarization," Nachama declared it to be the "job of a rabbi to bring the community together and not to allow it to become polarized. Especially for a rabbi who comes in from the outside, it is imperative to develop an understanding of the needs, the religious sensibilities and the accepted practices of the synagogue." Nachama also demonstrated his commitment to the religious pluralism of the community by hiring Rabbi Yizhak Ehrenberg to serve the religious needs of the Orthodox Jews of Berlin.

**Interfaith Relations**

At the annual meeting of Evangelical Churches in Germany (ECG), held in Stuttgart in the fall, the Working Group of Jews and Christians condemned
Christian efforts to convert Jewish immigrants from the FSU. Manfred Kock, president of the ECG, chose to boycott the meeting, which he dismissed as “onesided in its fixation on a rejection of a mission to the Jews.”

The Society for Christian-Jewish Cooperation (SCJC) in Oldenburg helped finance the construction of a new local Jewish community center by selling a valuable piece of art. The German-Jewish artist Felix Nussbaum painted “Jew at the Window” in 1943 while in Belgian exile. The SCJC sold it to the Felix Nussbaum Collection in Osnabrück for DM 250,000 ($150,000). Viewing the “memory of the Shoah as a living responsibility for the present,” the association donated all of the proceeds, which will cover almost a third of the center’s construction costs, to the Jewish community.

The theme of the SCJC’s Brotherhood Week in March was Poland. Henryk Josef Muszynski, archbishop of Gniezno, received the Buber-Rosenzweig Medal in Potsdam for his contribution to Polish-Jewish and Catholic-Jewish understanding.

Academic institutions also sought to further the Jewish-Christian dialogue. In August the Center for Christian-Jewish Studies of the Humboldt University in Berlin hosted the seventh annual Christian-Jewish Summer University. Professors from Israel, Germany, and the United States came together with students to explore the theme of “State and Religion in Jewish and Christian Perspective.” In October, scholars analyzed the troubled relationship between “Judaism and Protestantism: Historical Patterns of a Religious, Political, and Philosophical Confrontation.” Conference panels ran concurrently in Halle and Wittenberg, the locations of the sponsoring institutions, the Leopold Zunz Center for the Research of European Jewry and the Center for the History of the Reformation and Lutheran Orthodoxy.

**Education**

Jewish communities in Germany still lacked enough rabbis and teachers of Judaism to meet the needs of their burgeoning memberships. To remedy the situation the Lauder Jüdisches Lehrhaus, established by the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation (see AJYB 1999, pp. 349–50), offered its first courses in the summer of 1999. The school sought to prepare future teachers of Hebrew and religion, and to help active teachers and communal workers deepen their understanding of the Hebrew language, as well as Jewish history and religion. Joel Levy, founding director of the Lehrhaus, envisioned it as a “third Jewish center” in the new German capital alongside the Centrum Judaicum and the community center in western Berlin.

The College for Jewish Studies in Heidelberg also announced plans to expand its training program for educators. The college had been criticized for not achieving more along these lines over the previous 20 years. Indeed, non-Jews constituted a large majority of the 432 students to have enrolled since the CCJG founded the college in 1979. Of the 20 Jewish students who received the M.A.
from the college, two went on to pursue rabbinical training elsewhere, nine went
to work in Jewish institutions, and another became professor of Jewish history
and culture at a German university. In light of the dearth of rabbis in Germany,
Rabbi Nathan Peter Levinson publicly called for closing the Heidelberg college
and its replacement with a rabbinical seminary in Berlin. Notwithstanding this
controversy, German politicians were unanimous in their praise of the college at
a ceremony marking its 20th anniversary.

In November, youth leaders, teachers, and social workers from Switzerland, Vi-
enna, Amsterdam, Berlin, Munich, Düsseldorf, and Cologne traveled to Zurich
to discuss religious education and youth programs. To redress the shortage of
German-language educational materials, they agreed to support the work of the
Pedagogical Center of the Zurich Jewish community. With the opening of the
Jüdisches Lehrhaus in Munich, meanwhile, founding director Rabbi Moshe Dick
planned to build on the tradition of Franz Rosenzweig's interwar efforts to cul-
tivate Jewish knowledge among adults via lectures and discussion groups.

Finally, on the university level, Leipzig University opened the Simon Dubnow
Institute for Jewish History and Culture on July 1, 1999. Historian Dan Diner
was named director of the institute, which would focus its research on the cul-
tural exchange between the Jewish communities of Eastern Europe and those of
Central and Western Europe from the Middle Ages to the present. Named after
the great historian of Jewry murdered by the Nazis in Riga in 1941, the institute
also sought "to strengthen awareness of the uniqueness of the Holocaust."

Culture

Once again in 1999, German anti-Semitism before, during, and after the Holo-
cast took to the stage, the silver screen, and the television screen. An “alterna-
tive” cabaret in Cologne, renowned for provoking controversy with its taboo-
breaking satires, offended many in the local Jewish community with its production
"Hey Jude 2000." Taking aim at the cynical foot-dragging of German industry
in restitution negotiations, the troupe portrayed the efforts of the advertising
agency "Sit and Watch" to develop a "pro-Jewish image campaign." Jewish mem-
bers of the audience did not appreciate the humor of the campaign slogan, "Taste
the feeling of Jewish culture, or, it also works without smoke." The affair made
headlines in the local press before Jewish representatives sat down with members
of the cabaret to express their concerns. The president of the Cologne Jewish com-
nunity did not question the intent of the piece, but had qualms about the impact
of the language on the sensibilities of Holocaust survivors.

From September 1943 till September 1944, before most of them were deported
to Auschwitz, children in Theresienstadt performed a fairy-tale opera, Brundibár,
more than 50 times. While the production provided both performers and audi-
ence with some degree of hope, the Nazis used it as propaganda to demonstrate
the normality of life in the concentration camp. On January 27, 1999, the day des-
ignated in Germany to commemorate victims of the Holocaust, children from across Berlin participated in the premiere of a new interpretation of the opera. On the night of the premiere, a surviving member of the Theresienstadt cast joined the children on stage for the final scene.

Later in the year, the State Theater of Stuttgart returned the tragic historical figure of Jud Süß Oppenheim to the stage. The portrayal of the 18th-century judicial lynching of a Jewish financier in Stuttgart played to full houses every night. Critics understood the pedagogical intent of the play as a protest against the Holocaust fatigue of the German public.

The Berlinale film festival offered another response to German Holocaust fatigue, devoting the documentary portion of its program to the theme, "Looking more closely at the turning away." Israeli filmmaker Eyal Sivan showed his film "The Specialist," which consisted exclusively of filmed excerpts from the testimony of Adolf Eichmann at his 1961 trial in Jerusalem. Other documentaries featured in this series included Kaspar Kasic's "Closed Country," an exploration of Swiss policy toward Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany, and Ilona Ziok's "Kurt Gerron's Carousel," about the Jewish film star of Weimar Germany. Outside the documentary series, the Holocaust figured in many other festival entries. In "Aimée and Jaguar," director Max Förberbock dramatized the love affair between Felice Schargenheim and Lissy Wust. Wust, whom Yad Vashem honored in 1999 as one of the Righteous among the Nations, helped Schargenheim survive for years in the Berlin underground. The Berlinale chose the life work of Otto Preminger, the Austrian-born director of "Exodus," for its annual retrospective.

Of the many films to deal with the Holocaust at the Munich Film Festival, Israeli director Dan Setton's documentary "Kapo" proved the most provocative. For obvious reasons, the collaboration of Jewish inmates as police in ghettos and concentration camps has not received the attention in Germany that it has in Israel, where a number of Jewish collaborators were tried and sentenced to prison terms. Jewish participants in the discussion in Munich criticized the narrow focus of Setton's film. They argued that Germans were responsible for the construction of the twisted world that created Kapos in the first place, that most Kapos were not Jewish, that Jews had no opportunity to affect the course of events, and that expectations of Jewish solidarity were historically unrealistic. These criticisms took on added urgency in view of the interest shown by a German television station in broadcasting an abbreviated version of the film.

The star power of its leading man contributed to the hype generated by the September release of "Nothing but the Truth." In this fictional portrayal of Josef Mengele as an elderly Nazi living in exile, Götz George played the doctor responsible for carrying out medical experiments on concentration camp inmates. Suffering from cancer, Mengele voluntarily turns himself in to stand trial and justify his actions. Whatever the intentions of the filmmaker, critics judged the film harshly for giving the Mengele character a charismatic and sympathetic presence, allowing him to dominate both the trial and the film as a whole.
Similar hype surrounded the television miniseries "Klemperer: A Life in Germany," based on the best-selling diaries of the sociolinguist and victim of Nazi persecution Victor Klemperer. The series set itself apart from other German-made dramatizations of the Nazi era by portraying the gradual and seamless transformation of "normal" Germans into Nazis. Whether because of German Holocaust fatigue or because the series did not accommodate the traditional hero/villain formula for successful television, the ratings of its October broadcast did not live up to expectations.

Seeking to focus on Jewish life rather than on Nazi crimes, an exhibit at the Nassau Art Association in Wiesbaden showcased the work of 13 Israeli artists. The German past, though, exerted an impact on the German stopover of the exhibit, which was originally scheduled only for London and Athens. Moshe Kupfermann chose to withdraw his work from the Wiesbaden presentation. The show nonetheless represented an unusually comprehensive overview of three generations of Israeli art. One of the artists, Yigal Azeri, even traveled to Wiesbaden for the opening.

The building erected to house the Berlin Jewish museum was opened to the public in August. The structure, built according to architect Daniel Libeskind's innovative design, represented a Holocaust memorial in itself and attracted hundreds of thousands of visitors within months. Director Michael Blumenthal announced in December that the permanent exhibit would not open until summer or fall of 2001. In Munich, scholars and museum curators met in July and again in November to discuss both the general question of how to treat Jewish history in Germany and the specific challenge of constructing a Jewish museum in the former "capital of the movement."

Publications

A number of books published in 1999 either documented or contributed to public discussion of the meaning of Auschwitz in the Berlin Republic. Political scientist Helmut Dubiel provided historical perspective on the topic with his Niemand ist frei von der Geschichte (No One is Free From History), an edited collection of the most important Bundestag debates concerning the Nazi era since 1945. Andy Markovits and Jürgen Elsässer explored the application of the lessons of history to current affairs in Die Fratze der eigenen Geschichte. Von der Goldhagen Debatte zum Jugoslawien-Krieg (The Ugly Face of One's Own History. From the Goldhagen Debate to the War in Yugoslavia). Considering German participation in the NATO bombing campaign in Kosovo, Elsässer questioned whether a similar intervention in Israel might not be a logical consequence in Nie wieder Krieg ohne uns. Das Kosovo und die neue deutsche Geopolitik (Never Again War Without Us. Kosovo and the New German Geopolitics).

Die Walser-Bubis-Debatte (The Walser-Bubis Debate), edited by Frank Schirmacher, provided one-stop shopping for readers interested in sorting out who
wrote what amidst the dizzying rhetorical crossfire that characterized the affair. An otherwise underrepresented constituency in the debate expressed its views in Was bleibt von der Vergangenheit? Die junge Generation im Dialog über den Holocaust (What Remains of the Past? The Young Generation in Dialogue About the Holocaust), which was published by the Foundation for the Rights of Future Generations, with a foreword by Roman Herzog, the former federal president.

Reflecting on her ten years of experience as the leading advocate of a central Holocaust Memorial, Lea Rosh released Ein deutsches Mahnmal. Der Streit um das Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas (A German Memorial. The Debate over the Monument for the Murdered Jews of Europe). Several collections of previously published essays also documented the debate.


The complicity of historians in the Nazi regime also remained a focus of debate in 1999 (see AJYB 1999, pp. 344–45). In the spring and summer three history students at the Humboldt University questioned 17 historians born between 1922 and 1942 about their experiences as graduate students, their views on the complicity of historians in the Third Reich, and the political dimension of historical writing. The results were published, under the title Fragen, die nicht gestellt wurden (Questions That Were Not Asked), on the homepage of the Internet magazine H-Soz-u-Kult.

Three prominent public figures published memoirs of their persecution at the hands of the Nazis. Michael Blumenthal, director of the Jewish Museum, recounted his family's 300-year history in Die unsichtbare Mauer (The Invisible Wall). The popular German stage actor Michael Degen paid homage to the Germans who saved his life in wartime Berlin in Nicht alle waren Mörder. Eine Kindheit in Berlin (Not all were Murderers. A Childhood in Berlin). Literary critic Marcel Reich-Ranicki entitled his own memoir Mein Leben (My Life).

The Berlin-based group Meshulash sought in 1999 to generate a Jewish culture independent of the much larger and more assertive communities in Israel and North America. In November the group published a catalog to its museum exhibit, Davka. Jüdisches Leben in Berlin-Traditionen und Visionen (Davka. Jewish Life in Berlin-Traditions and Visions). With the establishment of the magazine Golem-Europäisch-jüdisches Magazin (Golem-European-Jewish Magazine), the first issue of which appeared in December, Meshulash broadened its vision beyond Berlin and Germany. Contributors from all over Europe, including novelist Albert Memmi, poet Esther Discherheit, and historian Diana Pinto contem-
plated the familiar question of how to define being Jewish in the specific context of post-Auschwitz, post-Cold-War Europe.


**Personalia**

In accepting the 1999 Peace Prize of the German Book Trade, Fritz Stern, the eminent Columbia University professor, expressed his confidence in the democratic foundations of the Berlin Republic and reflected on the vulnerability of democracy in times of social upheaval. The 73-year-old Breslau native emigrated with his family in 1938 to the U.S., where he went on to become one of the world's most respected historians of modern Germany. In light of the fact that the recipient of the 1998 Peace Prize, Martin Walser, had used his acceptance speech to ignite a controversy about historical memory in the Berlin Republic, the selection of Stern took on added significance. It was announced in December that Stern would return to Germany in 2000 as the first Gutenberg Foundation Visiting Professor at the University of Mainz to teach a seminar on “National Socialism as a Temptation.”

Three Jewish Berliners who were also forced to flee their hometown in the 1930s were honored in 1999 for their commitment to cultural life in postwar Germany. Meinhard Tennefeld fled to Switzerland with his father in 1938; his mother and sister were killed in Auschwitz. After settling in Stuttgart in 1970, Tennefeld occupied key positions in the local Jewish community, the German-Israeli Society, the CCJG, and the SCJC. The city of Stuttgart awarded him the Otto Hirsch Medal in January for his contribution to Christian-Jewish understanding and to the integration of Jewish immigrants from the FSU.

After leaving Berlin in 1936, Heinz Berggruen returned to Germany in 1944 as an American soldier. In 1995, he decided to bring his priceless collection of expressionist paintings to the city in which he first learned to appreciate art in the 1920s. The Berggruen Collection, with its impressive array of Picassos and Paul Klees, immediately became a fixture in the cultural landscape of the new Berlin. In recognition, Berggruen received the National Prize in June 1999.

Michael Blumenthal left Berlin with his family for Shanghai when he was 13. In 1997 the former secretary of the treasury of the U.S. became the director of the Jewish Museum in Berlin. In June, Berlin mayor Eberhard Diepgen conferred the Officer's Cross of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany
on Blumenthal. In his acceptance speech Blumenthal praised the German "willingness to confront, recognize and learn from the past."

Contributions of the second generation to Jewish life in Germany were also celebrated in 1999. Rachel Salamander was born in 1949 in a Bavarian DP camp. In recognition of the role her Jewish bookstores have played in the spread of Jewish knowledge in Germany, the city of Munich granted her its cultural prize. The historian Michael Brenner was singled out by the World Zionist Organization for his service to the Zionist idea. In November, the National Architecture Prize went to Daniel Libeskind for his Jewish Museum in Berlin.

Several important figures in the reconstruction of Jewish life in postwar Germany passed away in 1999. On February 11, the lifelong Zionist Maximilian Tauchner died in Munich after a long illness. After living and studying in Vienna, Kraków, and Lemberg, Tauchner established a legal practice in Munich in the 1950s to represent Holocaust survivors seeking restitution. Walter Feuchtwanger, nephew of the novelist Lion Feuchtwanger, also returned to Munich after World War II. Among his many services to the Jewish community, he played a central role in restitution negotiations and founded the German branch of the Maccabi sports association. He died at the age of 83. Like Bubis, Feuchtwanger wished to be buried in Israel.

In the 1950s, Rabbi Hans Isaak Grünewald left Israel, where he had studied with Martin Buber and Gershom Scholem, to pursue rabbinical studies in London in order to serve Jewish communities in Germany. From 1963 until 1988 he devoted himself to the religious and communal life of Jews in Munich. He died in Jerusalem on November 28. Hanna Herzberg, a leader in the Women’s International Zionist Organization and active participant in Jewish-Christian dialogue, died on July 23 in Esslingen outside of Stuttgart. Another key player in that postwar dialogue, the novelist Shalom Ben-Chorin, died in Jerusalem at the age of 85. Born in Munich as Fritz Rosenthal in 1913, he took on the Hebrew name meaning “Peace, Son of Freedom” after emigrating to Palestine in 1935. His German-language writings earned him honors in his native country.

GREG CAPLAN

EDITOR’S NOTE

The reference to Prof. Dr. Michael Wolffsohn that appeared in the 1997 AJYB stated that he was “labeled positively” as “nationally oriented” by the neo-Nazi publication Wer ist wer im Judentum? In fact the neo-Nazi publication says that Prof. Dr. Wolffsohn is “hostile to the National Right in Germany.”
Austria

National Affairs

NATIONAL ELECTIONS

Nothing short of a political volcano erupted at the national elections on October 3 when the far-right Freedom Party (FPÖ) emerged as the second strongest political party, edging out the mainstream conservative People’s Party. The Social Democratic Party, which finished first with 33.4 percent of the vote, garnered 65 seats in parliament. In scoring an unprecedented 27.2 percent of the vote, the Freedom Party upped its representation from 41 to 53 seats. The People’s Party fell to third place in the polling with 26.9 percent, retaining the 52 seats it had held in the outgoing parliament. The Greens won 7.1 percent of the vote, increasing their representation from 9 to 13 seats. The Liberal Forum, with only 3.4 percent, was no longer represented in parliament, having failed to pass the requisite 4-percent threshold.

After the election, President Thomas Klestil ignored the electoral gains of the FPÖ and invited Chancellor Viktor Klima, the leader of the Social Democrats, and Foreign Minister Wolfgang Schüssel, head of the People’s Party, to form another government and extend their longstanding coalition. The left-of-center Social Democrats had been ruling the country for the previous 13 years with the support of the People’s Party.

Following three months of sporadic and sometimes acrimonious negotiations the two sides proved unable to form a new government as the year ended. A seeming sticking point was Schüssel’s insistence that the Social Democrats give up control of the powerful Finance Ministry, and Klima’s refusal to do so. It was widely rumored at the time that the People’s Party deliberately created an impasse in the talks, leaving President Klestil no other choice but to turn to it and the Freedom Party to form a government. These two parties controlled 105 out of the 183 seats in parliament, more than enough to win a vote of confidence. It was assumed that, in such an arrangement, Schüssel would become chancellor and the Freedom Party would play a junior role. Under this scenario, Jörg Haider, the head of the Freedom Party, would remain out of the federal government and continue to serve as governor of the province of Carinthia. For some time it had been common knowledge that a powerful element in the People’s Party wanted to join with the Freedom Party in forming a government. Chancellor Klima, in contrast, had unequivocally opposed a coalition with Haider’s party on the ground that its racist and anti-immigrant proclivities placed it outside the bounds of acceptable political discourse.
The Freedom Party's success placed Haider front and center in Austrian politics. A charismatic politician, Haider had taken over the party in 1985 when it polled a mere 5 percent of the vote. In strident tones he inveighed against the numerous foreigners and immigrants who were living in Austria, insisting that they took away jobs from Austrians and were the source of much of the country's crime. In one speech Haider blamed Africans residing in Austria for the sale of illegal drugs. Sometimes Haider maintained that he was not against all foreigners, only those working in the country illegally. Partially in response to the popularity of Haider's views, the government had slowed immigration to a trickle and had tightened the criteria for people seeking political asylum. To many observers, it was actually somewhat surprising that Haider had managed to fan the flames of xenophobia with his talk of job loss and crime. Not only was the rate of unemployment in Austria a mere 4.3 percent—well below the average for European Union countries—but, by all objective standards, the incidence of crime was low.

What fueled the growing fear at home and abroad of a coalition that included the FPÖ was that never, since the end of World War II, had any politician widely considered to have Nazi sympathies and antecedents come so close to power in a German-speaking country. To be sure, he had disavowed earlier pro-Nazi statements and had characterized Hitler's rule "a cruel and bloody dictatorship." Nevertheless people found it hard to forget his praise for Hitler's "employment policies" and his appearance at a meeting of Austrian Waffen-SS veterans whom he described as "decent fellows." His father had been a Nazi and served in the German army during the war, while his mother had been a member of Hitler's League of German Maidens. The large estate Haider owned was aryanized property that had belonged to Jews.

The Freedom Party's growing popularity was not just due to the appeal of xenophobia. It was also rooted in its positions on other, more conventional, issues. Many people were fed up with 13 years of the same "Red-Black" (socialist and conservative) government, and almost 30 years under Social Democratic chancellors. Also, the party opposed the time-honored but widely unpopular system whereby the two main parties carved up most of the public-sector jobs, from ambassadors to secretaries. Another winning issue was the party's complaint about the stifling hand of government regulation over the economy. A right-wing alliance between the People's Party and the Freedom Party, it was thought, would presumably hasten the pace of economic privatization and deregulation.

Foreign policy also played a role in Haider's rise. He and his party had opposed Austria's entry into the European Union, warning that it would bring in its wake a new flood of foreigners. Bowing to reality, however, Haider accepted the irreversibility of membership. But he sounded hostile to the idea of the EU's expansion eastward, a step that would confer membership on Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Poland. The Freedom Party leader played on the fears of blue-collar workers that immigrants from these countries would steal jobs from Austrians. A coalition between the Freedom Party and the People's Party could also
lead to a break in Austria's tradition of "perpetual neutrality" since, unlike the Social Democrats, both rightist parties were strongly in favor of Austrian membership in NATO. In fact, opposition to NATO membership may very well have cost the Social Democrats support among voters who wished to see Austria move closer to Europe's security system.

The election results provoked a sharp reaction. On November 12 some 75,000 people gathered in the center of Vienna to hear speaker after speaker denounce the Freedom Party and its leader, and warn against the inclusion of the party in any coalition. Ariel Muzicant, the president of the Israelitische Kultusgemeinde (IKG), the nation's Jewish community organization, also came out strongly against allowing the Freedom Party into the government, warning that such a step would seriously threaten all freedom-loving people.

OTHER ELECTIONS

Indications that the Freedom Party would make striking electoral gains nationally had been evident in regional elections held earlier in the year. In the March elections in Carinthia— the poor, unemployment-ridden, and conservative southern province which was Haider's political base—the Freedom Party received 42 percent of the vote, an 8-percent gain since the last election, pushing the Social Democrats into second place and the People's Party into third place. As a result, Haider once again became governor of the province, a post he had been forced to resign in 1991 after he praised the employment policies of Adolf Hitler. In Voralberg, the country's westernmost province, the party increased its popularity by more than a third in the September elections, its vote shooting up to over 27 percent from 18 percent in the last Voralberg election held five years earlier. In both provincial elections, Freedom Party posters exploited suspicion of foreigners by promising to stop "overforeignization" and "misuse of asylum," a pledge that was widely understood as calling for a ban on immigration.

Paradoxically, however, the ascendancy of Haider and his party could not have been foretold from the outcome of the elections to the European Parliament that took place in May. The campaign to fill the 21 Austrian seats in the 626-member Strasbourg parliament centered largely on the issue of the country's neutrality. The Social Democrats favored maintaining Austria's status as a neutral, while their conservative coalition partners had gone on record in favor of joining NATO. Chancellor Klima's anti-NATO views helped his party during the election campaign because most Austrians abhorred the NATO bombing of Serbia even more, it seemed, than they deplored the actions of Yugoslav president Slobodan Milosevic in Kosovo. (The Austrian government refused to grant NATO warplanes permission to fly over Austrian territory for bombing missions against Serbian targets.) The Social Democrats won 31.74 percent of the vote while the People's Party came in second with 30.64 percent, a reversal of the result of the previous election for the European Parliament in 1996. Haider's Freedom Party finished third with 23.4 percent. Some 5.8 million people were eligible to vote,
but apathy cut turnout to 49 percent, as opposed to the 68 percent who had voted in the 1996 elections.

**Israel and the Middle East**

Relations between Austria and Israel remained friendly, still benefiting from the aftereffects of the 1998 visit of Chancellor Klima to the Jewish state. At the diplomatic level, Austria supported Israel's efforts to gain membership in the Western Europe and Others Group (WEOG), the regional grouping of western-style democracies at the UN. Israel remained the only country in the world organization that was not a member of a regional group, and the support of such a group is necessary for a country to be elected to one of the UN's permanent bodies such as the Security Council or the Economic and Social Council.

Since both countries were busy with national elections, there were no new diplomatic initiatives between Israel and Austria until the Austrian election in October. When it became clear how well Haider's party had done, the real possibility that the Freedom Party could enter the government provoked a strong reaction in Israel. Foreign Minister David Levy warned that if this were to happen, Israel might withdraw its ambassador from Vienna. Following the election, the Knesset Diaspora Committee invited the Austrian ambassador, Wolfgang Paul, to discuss the results, and the ambassador was also invited to appear on the Gideon Levi TV talk show. Both the Austrian and the Israeli media gave extensive coverage to Israel's reaction to the election and to Ambassador Paul's view that the results would not change Austria's friendly attitude toward Israel.

Low-level diplomatic exchanges continued following the Austrian elections. Israeli justice minister Yossi Beilin received a delegation of Austrian judges in October and, in December, the presidents of the Vienna and Upper Austria school boards held a meeting with Education Minister Yossi Sarid. Under an agreement signed by Sarid and the school-board presidents, Austrian teachers were invited to visit the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial. In the cultural sphere, the Israeli Philharmonic Orchestra performed twice in August at the Salzburg Festival, and the Batsheva dance troupe gave a performance in Austria in September.

**Holocaust-Related Developments**

**War Criminals**

Justice Minister Gerhard Litzka announced that a former Nazi doctor, 84-year-old Dr. Heinrich Gross, would be tried in March 2000 for the murder of five of the estimated 700 disabled children killed at the Spiegelgrund Children's Clinic in Vienna. This was the first such prosecution to be brought in Austria in 20 years. In March 1950 Dr. Gross had been convicted of a single charge of "inciting homicide," but a higher court overturned the verdict. Although a retrial was or-
pered, it was never held, and the case was subsequently abandoned. Permitted to return to his work, Dr. Gross became a well-known neurologist and forensic psychiatrist. The case was reopened in 1998 after fresh evidence, including thousands of documents from the archives of the former East German secret police, surfaced. In an interview, Dr. Gross admitted referring children to a euthanasia board but denied ever having killed anyone.

Compensation

The Austrian government created the Historiker Kommission (Historical Commission) in September 1998 to examine instances of property confiscation during the Nazi period and to determine what had been done after the war to restore such property to the rightful owners or heirs, or to compensate them. It was also charged with investigating the use of slave labor in Austrian factories and farms during the war (see AJYB 1999, pp. 361–62). The nine-member commission, created on the initiative of IKG president Ariel Muzicant and chaired by Clemens Jabloner, president of the Austrian Administrative Court, engaged a professional staff of historians and archivists, and in August 1999 it issued a document setting forth the main lines of the work it intended to pursue.

In July the Federation of Jewish Communities in Austria established a Claims Office for Jewish Holocaust Survivors in and of Austria and their Heirs. Located in Vienna with a professional staff of nine, the office will conduct research to document individual compensation claims filed by Austrian and former Austrian Jewish victims and their heirs, whether or not they now lived in the country. By retracing the mechanism of Nazi expropriation and identifying those institutions that seized Jewish assets, the office was expected to develop the groundwork for future restoration of, or compensation for, looted Jewish assets, should the Austrian parliament vote to authorize such restitution or compensation.

The Nationalfond was the special fund established by the Austrian government in June 1995 "for the victims of national socialism." It was to help compensate anyone, Jew or non-Jew, who had been persecuted because of political beliefs, religion, nationality, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, or whom the Nazis considered "asocial," as well as anyone forced to flee Austria to escape persecution. By 1999 it had contacted 31,000 people considered eligible to receive payments under terms of the fund. By September 1999, payments had been made to 27,000 of those people in 65 countries. The largest number lived in the United States (9,863), followed by Austria (5,736), Israel (3,611), the United Kingdom (3,024), and Australia (1,356). Of the recipients, 228 had been born between 1891 and 1900. Originally, a certification of Austrian nationality and proof of residence in the country as of March 13, 1938, were needed to qualify, but the cutoff date had been moved back to July 12, 1936 (the date of a new German-Austrian treaty), thus making several hundred more people eligible.

The amount paid to each beneficiary was fixed at 70,000 shillings ($5,800),
though in special cases this could be tripled. In 1999 the Ministry of Finance allocated 150 million shillings (approximately $11.5 million) to the fund. The steep decline from the 1998 allocation, which had been 500 million shillings, was explained by the fact that the fund had by now already paid out money to most of those qualified. Since the establishment of the fund in 1995, the government had allocated a total of 1.95 billion shillings (approximately $155 million) to it. In addition, the government allocated to the fund the $8.5 million in gold it received at the Tripartite Gold Conference that was held in London in December 1997 (see AJYB 1999, p. 360). This additional money went to needy survivors who did not meet the fund's criteria for eligibility, to so-called "double victims" who had suffered under both Nazism and Communism, and for special projects.

Two noteworthy amendments were made to the law in 1999. The first, adopted in January, established a center that would provide information on the restitution issue. The second, in July, allowed the fund to accept money from any legal entity. Under its own authority, the fund changed the composition of the Kuratorium, its policy-making body. Heretofore only government representatives could serve. Now the Kuratorium could also include a single new member from each of several victims' organizations: those representing the Roma and Sinti (Gypsies), Jews, and victims of political persecution.

"The Presence of the Absence: International Holocaust Conference for Eyewitnesses and Descendants of Both Sides," was held September 1–3 at the University of Vienna. The sessions focused on interdisciplinary approaches to the Holocaust from the perspectives of the descendants of the victims and of the perpetrators.

**Jewish Bank Assets**

The shareholders of the Bank of Austria voted to approve the settlement of class-action lawsuits filed in the United States by survivors of the Holocaust and their families. The settlement, which called for the bank and its Creditanstalt subsidiary to provide $45 million to set up a fund for the claimants, was to be presented to the Federal District Court in Manhattan for approval. Of this sum, $30 million was to be distributed by a committee chaired by Simon Wiesenthal to survivors who held accounts in the bank or their heirs; $10 million was to be allocated for administrative expenses, legal fees, and the work of a historical commission that will examine the relationship of the bank to its German sister bank during the Nazi period; and the other $5 million was to go to the Conference on Jewish Material Claims.

**Looted Jewish Artwork**

The Jewish community of Austria issued a final report on the so-called Mauerbach Fund, established in 1996 from the proceeds of a sale of artworks plundered
from Jews by the Nazis (see AJYB 1999, p. 362). The auction of some 8,000 works yielded $14.5 million, of which 12 percent was set aside for needy non-Jewish Holocaust victims and the balance went to needy Jewish victims of Austrian origin living in Israel, Austria, and other countries.

On November 5, 1998, the Austrian Parliament approved legislation allowing works of art seized by the Nazis and later incorporated into federal and state museums to be returned to their rightful owners. Valuable artworks belonging to hundreds of Austrian Jews had been confiscated during the Nazi rule of Austria between 1938 and 1945, and much of it was still held in Austrian museums. Following World War II, the government had imposed what amounted to an “art tax” on the survivors of Nazism when they sought to take their recovered artworks to their new homelands. This tax was now abolished.

One of the more prominent people to benefit from the new legislation was the widow of Alphonse de Rothschild, younger brother of Louis de Rothschild, head of the Austrian branch of the family. Following the war, Mrs. Rothschild had left behind 170 works of art — 5 percent of the family’s holdings — in Vienna, including three paintings by Frans Hals that she donated to the famed Kunsthistorisches Museum. In July 1999 the trove of artwork returned to the family was sold at auction by Christie’s in London. The sale of the collection, which included Old Master paintings, medieval manuscripts, and antiques of every variety, brought in $89.9 million, more than twice the amount expected. Lord Hindlip, chairman of Christie’s, said: “It was one of the most successful sales in the history of auctions in Europe. Never before has such a cross section of the arts fetched such extraordinary sums of money in one evening.”

The Austrian government also agreed to the restitution to the heirs of Ferdinand Bloch-Bauer of certain items from his art collection. Seized by the Nazis in 1939, this collection came into the possession of the Austrian government after the war, and, like other paintings and drawings from other collections held by the government, many of the pieces had been hanging in Austrian museums without the knowledge or permission of the owners or their heirs. The government, acting under the new law, agreed to return to Ferdinand Bloch-Bauer’s heirs 19 porcelain settings and 16 Klimt drawings, but only one of the six Klimt paintings from the collection. Some of the heirs served notice that they will sue the government to recover the other five Klimt paintings, whose estimated market value was $100 million.

In January 1998 Manhattan district attorney Robert M. Morgenthau had obtained a subpoena ordering the Museum of Modern Art in New York to hold on to two Egon Schiele paintings pending a criminal inquiry into their ownership. The paintings, “Portrait of Wally” and “Dead City,” had been exhibited at the museum beginning in late 1997 as part of a 150-piece collection owned by the Austrian-government-financed Leopold Foundation. Just hours before they were to be returned to Austria, Morgenthau, in response to complaints from relatives of the former Jewish owners that the paintings had been stolen by the Nazis, impaneled a grand jury to determine the truth of the allegations. Pending the out-
come of these judicial proceedings, the museum was ordered to retain custody of
the paintings (see AJYB 1999, p. 363). The museum filed suit, challenging the
seizure on the grounds that a 1968 law prohibited such action. The New York
Supreme Court found for the museum in May 1998, but the Appellate Division
reversed that ruling in March 1999. In a unanimous decision, the four-member
tribunal ruled that the state law was intended to apply to civil matters, not crim-
inal proceedings. The court declared that "the public interest is not served by per-
mitting the free flow of stolen art into and out of the state." But the Court of
Appeals, the highest court in the state, handed down a ruling in September 1999
that once again reversed the decision and allowed the paintings to go back to the
Leopold Foundation. Shortly after this latest decision, however, the United States
attorney in New York filed a complaint in federal court alleging that the "Por-
trait of Wally" painting was stolen property when brought into the United States,
and therefore should be impounded. Pending a ruling on the complaint, the mu-
seum was to retain custody of the painting.

JEWSH COMMUNITY

Demography

About 6,500 Jews were registered with the Israelitische Kultusgemeinde (IKG),
but knowledgeable observers claimed that the actual number of Jews was twice
as large. In recent years, to encourage affiliation, the IKG had been offering fi-
nancial incentives to parents to register newborn children with the community.
Continuing a long-established pattern, the overwhelming majority of Jews were
concentrated in Vienna, with only about 500 making their homes elsewhere, pri-
marily in the large provincial cities of Salzburg, Innsbruck, Graz, and Linz.

For the first time in some years, the Jewish community was shrinking in size,
between 300 and 400 people leaving the country during 1999. Many of the Jews
emigrating had originally come from the former Soviet republic of Georgia.
These Georgians, and other Sephardi Jews as well, were concentrated in the gar-
ment and shoe trades, which were undergoing a severe depression, and so they
left to seek better economic opportunities in Eastern Europe. The IKG requested
the government to waive certain provisions of Austria's highly restrictive immi-
gration laws so as to allow in the same number of Jews as had left. Reflecting a
trend in all European Union countries, immigration to Austria had slowed to a
trickle—only 9,000 immigrants were allowed into the country in 1999.

Communal Affairs

The IKG celebrated its 150th anniversary on June 20—the first representative
dlegation of Austrian Jewry had met with the young Kaiser Franz Joseph in
1849. The historic anniversary event, held at the famed Burg Theater in Vienna,
was attended by over 1,000 guests, including leading members of the government and of the Jewish community, representatives of the Catholic and Evangelical Churches, and foreign ambassadors. Among Austrian government leaders present were President Klestil, Chancellor Klima, cabinet members, the president of the national parliament, and the mayor of Vienna. Presiding was Dr. Ariel Muzicant, president of the IKG.

The European regional office of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), located in Vienna, which opened in August 1997 under the direction of journalist Marta Halpert, broke new ground in the development of training programs for leaders of the Hungarian and Polish Jewish communities, who were taught techniques of combating anti-Semitism and xenophobia in their countries.

A new monthly journal, *Jewish Austria: Past and Present*, made its first appearance in November 1998. The journal featured articles about anti-Semitism in Austria, the Holocaust, and Jewish contributions to Austria's culture, history, and economy. Published by the Institute for the History of Jews in Austria, it will also provide information about new research projects and data about public attitudes on topics of interest to Jews.

Among the several exhibitions mounted by the Jewish Museum of Vienna in 1999, one attracted special attention. This was "Eden*Zion* Utopia: The History of the Future In Judaism," which opened on November 24, 1999, and was scheduled to run through February 20, 2000. Taking the new millennium as its theme, the exhibition focused on strategies that Jews have historically used for dealing with the problems associated with approaching momentous dates or other kinds of uncertainty, strategies ranging from fatalism, to messianic speculation, to plans for utopian Jewish societies. George Segal's installation, "The Expulsion from Paradise," started off the exhibition, followed by Avraham Ofek's sculpture, "The Bird of Choice," which examined how 20th-century painters have depicted prophets and others who claim to be in contact with the future.

Robert S. Wistrich, professor of modern European history at Hebrew University, made an official presentation of his recent publication, *Österreich und das Vermächtnis des Holocausts* (Austria and the Legacy of the Holocaust), at IKG headquarters in Vienna on June 21. This study, published by the American Jewish Committee and released in both English and German, traced in detail the development of Austrian attitudes and government policies toward the legacy of the Holocaust in the country since the end of World War II.

*Murray Gordon*
East-Central Europe

The year 1999 marked the tenth anniversary of the fall of Communism in Europe, an appropriate time to take stock of a decade of astonishing change both for the states involved and for their Jews. In March three of these states—Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary—joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), once the sworn enemy of the Soviet bloc. That same month the Kosovo crisis flared up and the NATO bombing campaign against Yugoslavia began. Several Jewish communities in the region were directly involved, and Israel and international Jewish organizations were among those providing humanitarian aid. In December the European Union (EU) agreed to invite five former Communist states—Slovakia, Latvia, Lithuania, Bulgaria, and Romania—as well as Malta, to begin talks aimed at achieving their membership in the EU. Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Poland were already negotiating entry terms.

The Jewish communities in these postcommunist countries continued their transformation into “normal” communities, sharing the same issues and concerns as long-established communities in the west. Continuing evidence for this was their participation in international Jewish conferences, including a February meeting in Brussels with delegates from the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, and the landmark General Assembly of the European Council of Jewish Communities, which drew some 600 delegates from more than 30 countries to Nice in May. Key issues for the postcommunist communities were compensation for elderly Holocaust survivors and the restitution of Jewish property, as well as education, social welfare, and the development of a new generation of lay leaders. Religious tensions between secular and Reform streams, on the one hand, and Orthodox official structures, on the other, also emerged in some communities, often centering on the question of “who is a Jew.”

Albania

Albania was sorely tested during the NATO bombardment of Yugoslavia as hundreds of thousands of ethnic Albanians sought refuge there. Jewish and Israeli organizations sent teams of relief workers to help. The first Jewish Agency relief mission arrived in early April. Only a handful of Jews were known to be living in Albania, where the political and economic situation remained anarchic.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

In November, at a luncheon in New York hosted by the American Jewish Committee and the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organiza-
tions, Bosnia’s three presidents thanked the American Jewish community for the support that enabled La Benevolencija, the Sarajevo Jewish humanitarian aid organization, to operate during the Bosnian war. That same month New York’s Shearith Israel (Spanish and Portuguese) Synagogue said it would donate four-dozen prayer books to La Benevolencija.

In early December there was an emotional ceremony in the Jewish cemetery of Mostar to dedicate a Holocaust memorial bearing the names of 138 Mostar Jews killed in the Shoah. Both the Muslim and ethnic Croatian mayors of the divided city attended the ceremony, as well as leading Orthodox, Catholic, and Muslim clergy. Following the ceremony there was a screening of “Mandlbaum’s Mission,” a Dutch-made film that detailed how Mostar Jewish community leader Zorin Mandlbaum saved several people and carried out other humanitarian acts during the recent war in Bosnia.

**Bulgaria**

Despite some strong domestic opposition, the Bulgarian government not only publicly supported the NATO air campaign against Yugoslavia but also provided logistical support and allowed NATO the use of Bulgarian airspace. This paved the way for a 35-hour visit to Bulgaria in November by President Clinton, the first-ever official visit to Bulgaria by a U.S. president. Bulgaria paid a high economic price for the bombing, however. By the end of the year, vital trade routes across Yugoslavia—including the Danube River, a major shipping route—remained closed. Over the first eight months of 1999 Bulgaria ran a deficit of $426.4 million, as compared to a $53.5-million surplus in the same period in 1998. Exports dropped by 16 percent and it was predicted that the growth rate for the year would be zero. In December two rapporteurs for the Council of Europe expressed concern over “widespread corruption” in the country, but praised some human-rights developments, including Bulgaria’s abolition of the death penalty.

In April an Anti-Defamation League delegation visited Sofia and met with President Petar Stoyanov and other officials to express appreciation to Bulgaria for saving the Jewish population of Bulgaria during World War II, despite the country’s alliance with Germany and despite the fact that it deported 14,000 Jews of Bulgarian-occupied Macedonia and Thrace to their deaths. The ADL funded a Bulgarian translation of *Beyond Hitler’s Grasp: The Heroic Rescue of Bulgaria’s Jews,* by Israeli author Michael Bar-Zohar, and pledged to distribute 30,000 copies to Bulgarian educational institutions.

About 4,000 Jews lived in Bulgaria, most of them in Sofia; more than 1,000 Bulgarian Jews had left for Israel since the sharp downturn in the economy that began in early 1997. Still, about 400 Jewish children attended the Jewish elementary school in Sofia, and there was also a Jewish summer camp.

At the end of November, B’nai B’rith International held a ceremony in Sofia to commemorate 100 years of the organization’s activity in Bulgaria and the 90th
anniversary of its Carmel Lodge in Sofia. Seymour Saideman, just elected president of B’nai B’rith Europe, headed a delegation that met with President Stoyanov, other high government officials, and members of the National Assembly. The Bulgarian leaders pledged restitution for Jewish property expropriated by Bulgarian authorities during World War II and retained by the Communist regime.

**Croatia**

President Franjo Tudjman, the Communist partisan general in World War II who became Croatia’s founding father, died in December at the age of 77, leaving a mixed legacy. Throughout his tenure Tudjman was accused of trying to whitewash Croatia’s past by rehabilitating the homegrown fascist Ustasha regime that ruled Croatia as a Nazi puppet state during World War II. Ignoring the record of Ustasha atrocities, he incorporated symbols and personalities of the fascist state into Croatia’s political fabric. Streets and squares were renamed, and anti-fascist monuments were destroyed. His autobiography included statements that were interpreted as anti-Semitic, and Tudjman attempted to turn the memorial to scores of thousands of Jews and Serbs slaughtered during World War II at the Ustasha’s infamous Jasenovac concentration camp into a memorial to victims of Communism and the 1991 Serbo-Croat war as well. All this drew sharp protests from Jews, former anti-fascist partisans, and others inside Croatia, as well as condemnation from Israel, which did not establish diplomatic relations with Croatia until September 1997.

Yet Tudjman openly courted Jewish support. Local Jewish leaders met regularly with him and other senior officials, and several high-ranking members of the government were Jews or of Jewish origin. These included Nenad Porges, a former president of the Jewish community, who was commerce minister at the time of Tudjman’s death, and Slobodan Lang, a top adviser on humanitarian affairs.

In February Croatian defense minister Paval Miljavac visited Israel and the two countries signed a multimillion dollar arms and defense pact. Under the deal, Israel agreed to upgrade Croatia’s fleet of aging MIG-21 jets at a cost of about $100 million. The agreement drew criticism from the Labor opposition in Israel.

Croatia was home to about 2,000 Jews, the majority living in the capital of Zagreb. Most community members were secular and assimilated into the mainstream community; indeed, most of the children were from mixed marriages. Rabbi Kotel Dadon, who was officially installed as chief rabbi in November 1998, served the community’s religious needs. Croatian Jews took part in a meeting of Jews from all parts of the former Yugoslavia, which was held in September on the Adriatic coast.

The Jewish community in the historic Adriatic town of Dubrovnik celebrated the return, in late 1998, of three centuries-old Torah scrolls and other precious
ritual objects that had been taken to the U.S. several years earlier by Michael Papo, a former president of the tiny Dubrovnik Jewish community, when he moved to the United States. Papo had argued that the objects would not be safe in Dubrovnik given the continuing Balkan conflicts. Backed by the Croatian government, the Dubrovnik Jewish community won a long legal battle in Zagreb and New York courts to get the objects returned.

Croatian Jews reported little overt anti-Semitism, though they worried about the open sale this year of Mein Kampf and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion. Jews were also concerned about the officially sanctioned historical revisionism that had emerged during the Tudjman era and the potential danger that the state might exploit the Jewish community for its own political ends.

Against this background, a Zagreb court's guilty verdict pronounced in October against Dinko Sakic, the former commander of the Jasenovac camp, was hailed as a landmark of justice. Sakic had been extradited to Croatia from Argentina in 1998 after he gave an interview there on local television. The subsequent six-month trial forced Croatians to confront their country's history as an ally of the Nazis and a participant in the Holocaust. Sakic, who expressed no remorse and dismissed the testimony of survivors as "anti-Croat propaganda," was found guilty of crimes against humanity and received the maximum sentence—20 years in prison. This was the first time that a postcommunist regime in Europe had convicted one of its nationals for such crimes. "We hope that this sentence, made 55 years after the events, will be a warning that all those who committed crimes in the near or distant past will not escape justice," said the chief justice.

Czech Republic

Along with Hungary and Poland, the Czech Republic joined NATO in March. Xenophobia and racism, particularly against Roma (Gypsies), continued to raise considerable concern throughout the year. There were also manifestations of anti-Semitism from the far right. In December photographs of President Vaclav Havel, Premier Milos Zeman, Civic Democratic Party chairman Vaclav Klaus, and Freedom Union chairman Jan Ruml, all labeled "Jewish Free Masons and Murderers of the Czech Nation," were displayed in the town of Decin, in an exhibit organized by the extraparliamentary far-right Republican Party. The display also included a list of hundreds of names identified as a "partial list of Jews and Jewish half-breeds in politics since 1989." The list was quickly removed from the exhibit, and party leaders disassociated themselves from it. The chairman of the local Jewish community lodged a complaint against the exhibit's organizers, and on December 28 local police charged a party member with racial defamation and incitement to ethnic hatred.

Skinheads were active around the country throughout the year. In February police detained 12 leading skinheads and seized lists of skinhead supporters as
well as racist and neo-Nazi magazines, CDs, cassettes, and badges, in an unprecedented operation that followed a nine-month investigation. In another operation, Czech riot police detained more than a score of anarchists and neo-Nazi skinheads after the two groups clashed during demonstrations in downtown Prague on May Day. Police separated the two groups, but later some 300 skinheads wearing fascist insignia marched through the city chanting anti-Semitic slogans and giving Nazi salutes. In November, 23 skinheads were charged with violent behavior, hooliganism, and causing damage to property after attacking a group of Roma (Gypsies) in a restaurant in Ceske Budejovice. A survey carried out for the American Jewish Committee in late August and early September showed that 81 percent of Czechs “prefer not” to have Gypsies as neighbors, and 76 percent believed that Gypsies “behave in a manner which provokes hostility in our country.”

The most highly publicized anti-Gypsy action took place in the northern town of Usti nad Labem where, in October, a fence-like concrete wall two meters high was erected separating Roma living in a low-income housing project from private homeowners across the street who complained about noise and other disturbance. Construction of the wall evoked protests from politicians and human-rights groups in the Czech Republic and abroad, including the European Union. Under pressure from the Czech government, the Usti nad Labem city council pulled down the wall in November.

The American Jewish Committee survey of Czech opinion also examined knowledge about the Holocaust, feelings about Holocaust remembrance, attitudes toward Jews and other minorities, and awareness of the role of Jews in the Czech historical experience. The survey showed that 74 percent of respondents felt that “we should keep the remembrance of the Nazi extermination of the Jews strong even after the passage of time,” while 17 percent maintained that “50 years after the end of World War II, it is time to put the memory of the Nazi extermination of the Jews behind us.” Some 57 percent answered “yes” when asked whether “teaching about the Nazi extermination of the Jews during the Second World War should be required in Czech schools.”

In the survey, 92 percent could correctly identify Auschwitz, Dachau, and Treblinka as concentration camps, and 67 percent cited the yellow star or a variant as the symbol that Jews were forced to wear during the Second World War. But only 31 percent, in a multiple-choice format, selected six million as the approximate number of Jews killed by the Nazis during the Second World War, 40 percent chose much lower figures, and 20 percent answered “don’t know.” Both knowledge of the Holocaust and recognition of the importance of remembering it tended to correlate with education, as university-trained Czechs scored considerably higher on both measures. According to the survey, a large majority of Czechs supported some form of property restitution to Jews: 36 percent maintained that “all property [Jews were deprived of during World War II] should be returned to Jews,” while 35 percent felt that “only buildings serving religious pur-
poses should be returned to Jews.” Just 18 percent opposed the return of any property to Jews.

Current attitudes to Jews were mixed. Only 4 percent believed that Jews “behave in a manner which provokes hostility in our country” and 8 percent thought that Jews have “too much influence in our society.” But 34 percent (9 percent “strongly”) subscribed to the idea that, “as in the past, Jews exert too much influence on world events.” Similarly, 23 percent (6 percent “strongly”) agreed that “Jews are exploiting the memory of the Nazi extermination of the Jews for their own purposes.” Only 34 percent said they knew someone who was Jewish, 41 percent had visited the Jewish ghetto memorial in Terezin, and only 16 percent had been to the Jewish Museum in Prague.

In October President Havel hosted “Phenomenon Holocaust,” a conference held at Prague Castle and at the Terezin ghetto concentration camp. The conference, aimed at continuing the Czech Republic’s examination of Holocaust issues that had been ignored under Communism, was part of Havel’s two-year-old initiative to engage the country in a dialogue about its own history. Participants included representatives of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Israel’s Yad Vashem, and Poland’s State Museum at Auschwitz, as well as other academics, teachers, and Holocaust specialists. The Czech cabinet allocated the equivalent of more than $14,000 to support publications based on the conference, and the ministry of education was instructed to develop Holocaust curricula for the schools.

Early in the year German prosecutors said that there was not enough evidence to try Anton Malloth, a Terezin guard who had been convicted of war crimes and sentenced to death in absentia by a Czechoslovak court in 1948, and had been discovered in Munich in 1987. But in November the Czech state attorney sent new evidence implicating Malloth to German authorities.

In other developments, new tourist maps showing Jewish heritage sites in Moravia and Czech Silesia were published in the spring. Jewish journalist and intellectual Daniel Kumermann was named Czech ambassador to Israel in May. In June, Austrian Nazi-hunter Simon Wiesenthal received the Czech Republic’s highest honor, the Order of the White Lion, from President Havel, who described Wiesenthal as a “physical symbol of human memory.” In July the government completed an investigation of the collections of the National Gallery to identify works stolen from Jews by the Nazis, or from the Jewish Museum by the Communists. The government then ordered the minister of culture to prepare legislation that would transfer stolen works from the National Gallery to the Jewish Museum.

Jewish Community

There were ten official Jewish communities in the Czech Republic, with a total of approximately 3,000 registered members. About half lived in Prague. But Jew-
ish leaders estimated that there were many more—perhaps as many as 10,000–15,000—unaffiliated Jews in the country. The official communities and a number of secular Jewish institutions came under the aegis of the Federation of Jewish Communities. Among the secular organizations were Beit Praha, a non-Orthodox congregation in Prague that attracted mostly expatriate Americans and other foreigners, the Union of Jewish Youth, the Maccabi and Hakoach sports clubs, the Women’s Zionist Organization (WIZO), and the Terezin Initiative, a group of Czech Holocaust survivors. In addition, there was the independent group Bejt Simcha, which maintained links with Progressive Judaism, and Chabad-Lubavitch. Three synagogues functioned regularly in Prague: the Old-New Synagogue (Orthodox), the High Synagogue (modern Orthodox) and the Jubilee Synagogue (Neolog/Conservative). Beit Praha held regular services in the Jewish Town Hall on Friday nights and the High Holy Days, and sponsored lectures and other events. Bejt Simcha held Friday night services and other gatherings, which often featured rabbis and other guest lecturers from abroad. The Jewish community in Prague operated a kosher restaurant and a home for the elderly, as well as a Jewish kindergarten, day school, and high school with a combined student body of about 100.

Simmering religious tensions within the nominally Orthodox official Jewish community were highlighted by a dispute over a wedding ceremony in Pilsen in the fall. Chief Rabbi Karol Sidon refused to send a rabbi to officiate at the ceremony, the first in the Pilsen synagogue in 50 years, since the bride had converted to Judaism under the auspices of the American Reform movement. A rabbi flew in from the United States to perform the wedding.

Many Jewish groups visited Prague during the year. One of them, a ten-member delegation from the North American Boards of Rabbis (NABOR), made a two-day visit in March. They met with senior government officials and said they found no signs of serious anti-Semitism in the Czech Republic.

Construction continued on a new synagogue in Liberec, in the Sudetenland near the border with Germany. It will be part of a complex on the site of the pre-war synagogue that was burned down on Kristallnacht in 1938. Beside the synagogue the complex will include a municipal library housing a large collection about the Sudetenland, and a Jewish community center. As a so-called “building of reconciliation,” the complex qualified for funding from Germany. The Sudetenland, historic home to many ethnic Germans, was ceded to Hitler’s Reich in 1938, and the Czechoslovak government, regaining the territory after World War II, expelled several million ethnic Germans.

A newly discovered medieval Jewish cemetery in Prague became the center of controversy. Dating to the 13th century and voluntarily relinquished by Prague’s Jewish community in the 15th century, the cemetery had been built over ever since. It came to light in 1999 when a Czech insurance company began preparations for the construction of a high-rise apartment block and underground garage on the site. Before construction began, archaeologists brought in by Prague city au-
authorities confirmed the cemetery’s existence and estimated that the site contained some 400 graves. The building project infuriated Jewish groups around the world who believed that the cemetery had been desecrated. Many, however, were reacting to false information relayed over the Internet that the famous old Jewish cemetery in Prague’s medieval ghetto was threatened. On September 28, after some 100 gravesites had been removed and transferred to another cemetery, Prague Jews led a protest demonstration at the site, and the next day the minister of culture called for a halt to the archaeological work. In November Chief Rabbi Karol Sidon reached a compromise with the insurance company. It called for excavating ground beneath the existing level of burial remains, encasing the remains in concrete, and then sinking these remains to a deeper level, which would be undisturbed by any future development on the site. This solution, however, was decisively rejected by many Orthodox groups around the world, and at year’s end the situation remained unresolved.

As in past years, there were numerous Jewish cultural events in 1999. In March a new concert series, “Music in the Spanish Synagogue,” was launched with a concert by Cantor Joseph Malovany of New York. All concerts took place in the magnificent, newly restored Spanish Synagogue, which is part of the Jewish Museum. The museum’s Education Center sponsored regular lecture series on a variety of topics, as well as concerts and film screenings. It also held teacher-training seminars, including one in the spring on the history of the State of Israel, done in collaboration with the Institute of World History at Prague’s Charles University. The center also prepared study programs for university students and younger pupils on Jewish topics, among them one on the history of Jewish settlement in various parts of the country and another on Jewish holidays, customs, and traditions. The center also sponsored a project to teach tolerance to kindergarten pupils. With the support of the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation, the center brought to the stage “Jonah and the Others,” written and directed by Vida Neuwirthova, a play that acquaints preschool children with Jewish history and traditions. Its premier took place in January at the Theater Minor.

Early in the year Jewish Museum director Leo Pavlat and other Czech Jewish leaders became embroiled in a controversy over a new edition of Itamar Levin’s book, The Last Chapter of the Holocaust? Published at the end of 1998 by the Jewish Agency for Israel in cooperation with the World Jewish Restitution Organization (and including a foreword by Jewish Agency chairman Avraham Burg), it detailed the looting, dispersal, and destruction of Jewish property after the Holocaust in various European countries. It also sharply criticized the Prague Museum and called for its collection to be transferred to Israel. Pavlat prepared a 60-page rebuttal.

In September Czech Radio ran a series of programs, “Days of Jewish Culture,” which culminated on September 16 with the live broadcast of a memorial service at the Pinkas Synagogue, now a Holocaust memorial, for the Czech and Moravian Jews who died in the Holocaust. From six until ten P.M., 300 invited guests read out the names, one by one, of 3,000 victims. The readers including President
Havel, U.S. secretary of state Madeleine Albright, writer Ivan Klima, members of the Czech government, Holocaust survivors, and celebrities.

This year marked the 100th anniversary of the infamous Hilsner case, in which Leopold Hilsner, a Czech Jew from the small town of Polna, was sentenced to death for involvement in the alleged ritual murder of a Christian woman. The case, which was compared to the Dreyfus affair in France, sparked a wave of anti-Semitism, and only a few intellectuals, led by Tomas Garrigue Masaryk, the future president of Czechoslovakia, spoke out against the ritual murder accusation. Although an appeals court confirmed the verdict, the emperor commuted it to life imprisonment, and Hilsner was eventually released in 1918. A number of events were held to mark the anniversary. The Prague Museum presented an exhibition, "Murder in Polna," stressing the anti-Semitic atmosphere that surrounded the Hilsner trial. A conference of historians and philosophers that discussed the Hilsner case at the end of November decided to send a letter to Austrian president Thomas Klestil asking for Hilsner's full rehabilitation.

Hungary

Hungary had one of the fastest growing economies in Central Europe, with an estimated GDP of over 4 percent in 1999. It entered NATO in March and, as the only NATO country to border on Yugoslavia, immediately found itself on the front lines of the conflict there. While stressing its loyalty to NATO, the government also had to be sensitive to the 300,000 ethnic Hungarians living in Yugoslavia. In July the European Jewish Congress, the Conference of European Rabbis, and the European Council of Synagogue Organizations sponsored a conference in Budapest for Jewish, Christian, and Muslim leaders from the former Yugoslavia and other Balkan countries to discuss how religious leaders could work to overcome hate in the region. The group set up a permanent interreligious committee to instill a spiritual dimension into reconstruction efforts for the war-torn region.

Jews were concerned throughout the year about anti-Semitism and xenophobia. In January chess legend Bobby Fischer launched into an anti-Semitic tirade during a live interview on Hungarian public radio. Fischer, 55, ignored questions about chess and claimed that Jews had invented the Holocaust to make money. When the interviewer asked why he was saying such things, since Fischer was himself Jewish, the former chess champion responded, "Shall we go to the toilets and prove it?" In the studio, he began waving around photocopies of checks and said, "Those damn Jews are persecuting me. They are ripping me off all the time." When a tape of the interview was later rebroadcast, Fischer's anti-Semitic comments were cut out. (It was reported in September that Laszlo and Klara Polgar, the parents of three Hungarian chess masters, were planning to live in Israel for half the year because of the rise of anti-Semitism in Hungary. One of their daughters already lived in Israel, and another was married to an Israeli.)

More worrying was the evident growth of political anti-Semitism expressed not
just by skinheads and extremists, but by elements of the government and by mainstream parties and politicians. In February at least 600 neo-Nazis, including more than two dozen from outside Hungary, marched in Budapest, brandishing swastikas and giving the Nazi salute. In July police arrested two neo-Nazi skinheads in connection with the desecration of the Jewish cemetery in Szombathely, where swastikas and anti-Semitic slogans were scrawled on 15 graves. President Arpad Goncz denounced the incident. In October right-wing politicians unveiled a plaque honoring the Hungarian royal police who died during the two world wars. They did not mention that it was mainly these police who, after the German occupation in March 1944, carried out orders to round up Jews from the countryside and, in seven weeks, herded 437,000 Jews into ghettos and then deported them to death camps. In October Hungary was showcased at the Frankfurt Book Fair with a series of events, exhibits, and book presentations. Many Hungarian Jewish authors were represented, and the Hungarian Jewish Museum mounted an exhibition. Right-wing extremist politician Istvan Csurka attacked the event, claiming that Jewish writers were “overrepresented” in the exhibit and “only Hungary’s Holocaust literature” was on display.

Also in October, the Hungarian government had to drop plans to revamp its exhibit at Auschwitz. To be sure, no one denied that the original needed revamping, since it had been mounted in the Soviet era and exalted Communism. Prime Minister Viktor Orban, who had pledged to modernize the exhibit if elected, allocated the equivalent of $230,000 for the task. In late summer a 73-page draft of the exhibition proposal was sent to the Jewish Museum, Jewish officials, and historians for feedback. A copy of the draft was leaked to a leading newspaper, which warned that implementation of the proposal would spark “a scandal from Washington to Tel Aviv” since it laid the blame for the Holocaust in Hungary on Germany’s shoulders, ignoring the involvement of Hungarian fascists. Jewish leaders publicly charged the government with doctoring the historical record. In response to the furor, Orban dropped the Auschwitz project.

In August an obscure publisher released the first Hungarian edition of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion since the Holocaust, and two more editions were published during the year. Jewish leaders and antiracist civic organizations protested, accusing the publisher of inciting hatred against Jews. The publicity caused book sales to soar, reportedly from an initial press run of 3,000 into the tens of thousands. The Office of the Chief Prosecutor ruled that the book was intended to incite hatred, and in November police raided bookstores in Budapest and two provincial towns and confiscated copies. (In October a Hungarian edition appeared of The Lie That Wouldn’t Die, by the Israeli jurist Hadassa Ben-Itto, debunking the Protocols.)

In September the Council of Europe branded two of the six parties in Hungary’s National Assembly as “extremist.” On October 15 alarmed Jewish leaders forwarded to the prime minister’s office a legislative proposal, based on German and Austrian models, that would make fomenting intercommunal hatred a crime.
In November the Alliance of Jewish Communities in Hungary asked the government to take action against “fascist, racist, and anti-Semitic” outbreaks that were causing concern among the public. It specifically noted the planned rehabilitation of Laszlo Bardossy, Hungary’s World War II prime minister, the desecration of Jewish cemeteries, and the publication of anti-Semitic books. It noted that Maria Schmidt, an adviser to Prime Minister Orban, had described the Holocaust as a marginal issue of the war. In December the Anti-Defamation League issued a report citing “increasingly virulent expressions of anti-Semitism, xenophobia and racism in Hungary, especially among extreme national and far-right politicians,” and faulted Hungary’s political leaders for not protesting. Government officials rejected the ADL analysis and maintained that extremism was a marginal phenomenon.

There was, to be sure, evidence of more positive developments. Three Hungarian-born British Jews raised £20,000 to restore the Jewish cemetery in their hometown of Kapuvar, and about 500 people attended the dedication ceremony in August. Restoration of the Orthodox community’s large main synagogue in downtown Budapest neared completion, and other projects were under way.

In April a memorial to Raoul Wallenberg was unveiled in the Budapest neighborhood where the Swedish diplomat saved thousands of Jews during the Holocaust. In attendance were Budapest’s mayor, the Hungarian chief rabbi, politicians, and many Jews, including survivors saved by Wallenberg. The monument was to have been unveiled 50 years earlier, in 1949, but Communist secret police confiscated it two days before the scheduled event. Since the early 1950s the monument, depicting a man wrestling with a snake, stood outside a pharmaceutical plant in the eastern city of Debrecen, which was bought by an Israeli firm in 1995. Istvan Csurka and other right-wing politicians questioned the need to erect the monument, the third in Budapest to honor Wallenberg. Then in June President Arpad Goncz attended the opening of an exhibition, supported by the Simon Wiesenthal Center, on diplomats who saved Jews from deportation. In December Hungary announced plans to renovate a disused Budapest synagogue and make it a Holocaust museum. The government will also finance the renovation of the synagogue, located on Pava Street, which was designed by Lipot Baumhorn and is owned by the Jewish community.

JEWISH COMMUNITY

Estimates of the number of Jews in Hungary ranged from 54,000 to 130,000. The latter figure would make the community the third largest in Europe (after France and Great Britain) outside the former Soviet Union. About 90 percent of Hungary’s Jews lived in Budapest, the vast majority of them unaffiliated or secular. Only 6,000 or so were formally registered with the Jewish community and about 20,000 had some sort of affiliation with Jewish organizations or institutions. According to lists of contributions and other records—such as orders for
matzo for Passover—at most about 8,000 families (many of which consisted of just one person) led an active religious life. The dominant religious affiliation was Neolog, similar to America’s Conservative Judaism. There was a small Orthodox community made up of both modern Orthodox and Hassidim. Neolog communities were grouped in the Alliance of Jewish Communities in Hungary, while the Orthodox operated as the Autonomous Orthodox Community.

Sim Shalom, a 50-family Reform congregation established in Budapest in 1992, functioned outside these official umbrella structures. It was associated with the World Union of Progressive Judaism. This year Katalin Kelemen was ordained and took up her post as Hungary’s first progressive rabbi. There was also an active Chabad-Lubavitch presence, which this year included the opening of a Chabad yeshivah with an enrollment of 25 students, most of them from abroad. In December the Chabad synagogue in Budapest was robbed of ritual objects worth tens of thousands of dollars, and the next day some of the objects turned up in an auction of Judaica.

At the end of the year research was completed on an in-depth survey of Hungary’s Jewish community. It aimed to provide the first full-scale postwar demographic portrait of the community, and probe social, political, and religious attitudes, as well as lifestyle, identity, and behavioral patterns. Preliminary analysis of the results was expected in early 2000.

The Neolog community elected new officers early in the year. Businessman Peter Tordai was elected president of the Alliance of Hungarian Jewish Communities, and Tibor Lancz, also a businessman, was elected president of the Budapest Jewish Communities. Gusztav Zoltai was elected to a third, four-year term as executive director of both groups. Tordai introduced a seven-point “short-term executive program” to supervise and modernize the management of the community and inventory its real estate and other property. He stressed the importance of outreach to the unaffiliated, especially young people, and said that he would try to improve education and bolster communal institutions. A seven-member advisory board of experts and public figures was chosen to aid him.

In June, in a ceremony at Budapest’s main Dohany Street synagogue, two new rabbis were ordained after graduating from Budapest’s rabbinical seminary. These were the first ordinations in Hungary since the fall of Communism. One of the new rabbis, Tamás Vero, assumed the position of rabbi of the Ronald S. Lauder-Joint Distribution Committee International Jewish Camp at Szarvas in southern Hungary. This is where, each summer, some 2,000 Jewish young people from Hungary and neighboring countries spend two-week sessions participating in standard camping activities combined with Jewish education.

In addition to the rabbinical seminary, there were three Jewish day schools, a teachers college, and kindergartens operating in Budapest, with a total enrollment of 1,800 students. The day schools were the Scheiber Sandor community high school, the secular Ronald S. Lauder Javne School, and a downtown Orthodox school. Chabad also ran a kindergarten that extended into elementary grades. Bu-
Dapest was the site of a conference on Jewish education in November, which drew teachers and Jewish school principals from all over Europe.

When NATO began bombing Yugoslavia in March, several hundred Yugoslav Jews took refuge in Budapest to sit out the war, at the invitation of Hungary’s Jewish leaders. The offer was part of an unprecedented contingency plan worked out months before the bombing by Yugoslav and Hungarian Jewish leaders. The Budapest community conducted a seder for the earliest arrivals, about 140 Yugoslav Jews who came on the eve of Passover.

On the cultural front, the Balint Jewish Community Center, the site of many important cultural events, celebrated its fifth anniversary in 1999. The Budapest Jewish Museum mounted a major exhibition on the work of Lipot Baumhorn, Europe’s most prolific prewar synagogue architect, and another exhibit on Hungarian Jews in Hollywood. The second annual festival of Jewish culture took place at the end of August.

Central European University in Budapest—founded in 1990 by philanthropist George Soros to serve the needs of a student body coming mainly from the former Communist states—actively promoted Jewish studies. In 1999 it sponsored regular public lectures on Jewish topics and a summer course in Jewish studies. At the beginning of the academic year Israeli scholar Yehuda Elkana, a Yugoslav-born survivor of Auschwitz, took up his post as the CEU’s new rector. The press of the university released a major work, *Jewish Budapest: Monuments, Rites, History*, edited by Geza Komoroczy, the director of the Center of Jewish Studies at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. The book was an English-language translation of the two-volume Hungarian edition, which came out in 1992 and 1994.

Restitution and compensation issues remained high priorities throughout the year. In December 1998, as part of the state budget, the National Assembly had allocated the equivalent of $120 for each parent killed in the Holocaust, and half that for each sibling. Jewish leaders made it clear to Prime Minister Orban that they considered such sums “shameful,” “discriminatory,” and “insulting,” since they amounted to far less than the $4,500 that had been given to relatives of people killed or executed under Communism. In October evidence emerged that U.S. servicemen looted a train filled with the stolen property of Hungarian Jews toward the end of World War II. Hungarian Jewish leaders met in Budapest with U.S. officials to request return of this property.

**Macedonia**

Macedonia, with a population of two million, hosted more than 200,000 Kosovar refugees during the bombing of Kosovo. In April Israel set up a field hospital for refugees that operated for two weeks near the Macedonian capital, Skopje. It also contributed $100,000 worth of medicine to Macedonian relief, and took in a number of refugees. Macedonia itself was deeply affected by the conflict since 70 percent of its trade was with Yugoslavia, and the destruction of bridges over
the Danube River effectively cut Macedonia off from the rest of Europe. In presidential elections on December 5, Boris Trajkovski of the center-right Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization defeated Social Democrat Tito Petkovski. Trajkovski's party was the senior partner in the governing coalition that emerged, which also included the Democratic Alternative and the Democratic Party of the Albanians. One-third of the population was ethnic Albanian.

The Macedonian Jewish community consisted of some 190 registered members from 52 families. Most lived in Skopje, but community leaders estimated that there were 200 to 300 unaffiliated Jews elsewhere in the country. Macedonian Jews had excellent relations with local authorities, but, like the Jews of Yugoslavia, they walked a diplomatic tightrope during the Kosovo conflict since every statement could be construed as a political gesture. Jewish community president Viktor Mizrahi joined Yugoslav Jewish leaders in denouncing the NATO bombings. At the end of June Mizrahi helped Eli Eliezri, a representative of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), enter Kosovo and evacuate the leader of Pristina's Jewish community and his family to Skopje.

Despite the conflict, community members attempted to maintain normal lives. The rabbi from Belgrade visited once a month. Work began to build a synagogue on the top floor of the recently renovated Jewish center in Skopje. Classes in Jewish folk dancing were held regularly. Still, community leaders worried about the negative consequences of the ongoing instability in the region.

La Benevolencija Skopje, a Jewish social-service organization dedicated to non-sectarian humanitarian aid, was established at the end of June. It was modeled on La Benevolencija of Sarajevo, which provided nonsectarian aid in the besieged city during the war in Bosnia. The Skopje body dedicated itself to furnishing help to refugees from Kosovo who were still in camps or in private housing in Macedonia, as well as to Macedonian institutions that needed financial aid because of the conflict. Pledges to help fund the organization came from the JDC, the American Jewish Committee, the European Council of Jewish Communities, the Coordinating Committee of Belgian Jews, and the Union of Swiss Jews.

Poland

Though Poland's GDP dropped from 4.8 percent in 1998 to 4.1 percent in 1999, this was still one of the highest rates in Europe. Like Hungary and the Czech Republic, Poland entered NATO in March.

President Aleksander Kwasniewski made a state visit to Israel in January where he said that Poland was ready for a "new chapter" in its relations with the Jewish people.

Also in January, Poland marked its second annual Day of Judaism, a Catholic initiative designed to foster interfaith dialogue and education. A number of Polish churches included the theme in their services, and a million postcards bearing a photograph of Pope John Paul II together with Rome's chief rabbi, Elio
Toaff, were distributed in all the country's parishes. Leaders of Poland's Jewish community attended a Roman Catholic mass in Wroclaw celebrated by Bishop Stanislaw Gadecki, head of the Polish Church Commission for Interreligious Dialogue, and Gadecki and scores of other Catholic faithful attended Jewish services there.

These ceremonies, however, took place amid continuing tension over the hundreds of crosses that militant Catholics, led by the outspoken Kazimierz Switow, had erected at the site of the Auschwitz death camp in defiance of both the Catholic hierarchy and the Polish government. In addition, these militants had sometimes issued anti-Semitic statements. In May, with Pope John Paul II due to visit his native Poland the next month, the Polish government removed all but one of the crosses. The fate of the last cross, erected a decade earlier in honor of the pope, remained the subject of delicate negotiations. Switow was charged with inciting racial hatred.

In March the Polish government named Malgorzata Dzieduszycka, a former theater critic and Polish consul in Montreal, as its new roving ambassador to the Jewish Diaspora. She replaced Krzystof Sliwinski, who was the first person appointed to the unprecedented post that had been created in 1995 to improve the country's often-troubled relations with the world Jewish community.

Also in March a controversy over a planned housing complex on the site where 300,000 Jews were deported during the Holocaust was resolved. Warsaw's mayor agreed to turn over a different plot of land for the proposed complex, leaving the area around the Umschlagplatz free for the possible construction of a memorial. A monument stood at the Umschlagplatz since the late 1980s, but the site as a whole had not been maintained. In June the Pope stopped at the Umschlagplatz monument during his visit to Warsaw, part of his 13-day trip to his homeland. Visibly moved, he prayed in silence for at least five minutes, and then said, "Lord, hear our prayer for the Jewish nation, because its ancestry is very dear to you. Support it so that it receives respect and love from those who still do not understand the magnitude of its suffering."

There were some instances of vandalism at Jewish sites. On Rosh Hashanah, for example, several tombs of rabbis in Warsaw's historic Jewish cemetery were damaged.

Legislation came into effect in January that made Holocaust denial a crime in Poland. In the spring Dariusz Ratajczak, a 37-year-old historian from Opole, was suspended from his teaching post after issuing 320 copies of his book, Dangerous Topics, which presented the opinions of historians who deny that Zyklon B gas was used to kill Jews in Nazi death camps. In November Ratajczak went on trial before the Opole district court on charges of disseminating Holocaust denial. Ratajczak said he was not guilty since he had merely summarized the opinions of others without necessarily agreeing with them. The Ratajczak affair, considered the first real legal case involving Holocaust denial in Poland, became a rallying point for the extreme right. Ratajczak was accompanied in court by Kaz-
imierz Switon, the leader of the movement to erect crosses at Auschwitz, and Leszek Bubel, a Switon associate who edited a revised edition of Ratajczak's book. On December 7 the court confirmed that Ratajczak had supported revisionist views about the Holocaust in his book, but said that this did not warrant punishment since the "social threat" was of a "low degree." The court noted that in the revised edition and in public appearances, Ratajczak had criticized revisionist views.

Prime Minister Jerzy Buzek made an official visit to Israel in December, where he and his Israeli counterpart, Ehud Barak, discussed the possibility of a joint defense project, and the deputy defense ministers of the two countries discussed Poland's cancellation, in 1998, of an $800-million arms purchase from Israel. An immediate result of the meetings was an agreement to end visa requirements between the two countries. During his stay Buzek met with Holocaust survivors on an Israeli kibbutz. He acknowledged lingering anti-Semitism in Poland, but pledged to fight it. He told the Polish News Agency PAP that the Israeli side had assured him it would oppose attempts to blame Poles for the Holocaust.

JEWISH COMMUNITY

This was a tumultuous year for Poland's emerging Jewish community. Estimates of the number of Jews in Poland ranged widely, from the 7,000-8,000 officially registered with the community or receiving aid from the JDC, to the 10,000-15,000 people of Jewish ancestry who had shown interest in rediscovering their heritage, to as many as 30,000-40,000 people with some Jewish ancestry.

The Lauder Foundation ran the country's most extensive Jewish educational programs. Each week 16 Jewish organizations used the premises of the Lauder Community Center in Warsaw for Jewish education. The foundation itself sponsored five youth clubs and education centers around Poland, including schools in Warsaw and Wroclaw, and supported the glossy monthly Jewish magazine Midrasz. In October it sponsored Poland's second postwar Jewish book fair. In that month, too, the Lauder Morasha School's state-of-the-art new campus opened in Warsaw, serving 165 pupils from kindergarten through 12th grade. Ronald Lauder and senior Polish government officials took part in the opening ceremonies. Hillary Rodham Clinton had already visited the school during a trip to Warsaw a week before the official opening.

The Jewish community had difficulty grappling with the gap left by the departure in 1998 of Rabbi Michael Schudrich, a charismatic American who, for over a decade, had been the director of the Lauder Foundation in Poland and a key catalyst for Jewish renewal. In March the Warsaw Jewish community hired its own rabbi, the Orthodox 25-year-old Baruch Rabinowicz. He was the first rabbi hired by the community in at least four decades, and the move was hailed as an important symbol of Jewish revival. Since the late 1980s Poland had been served by an elderly chief rabbi, Menachem Joskowicz, in addition to Schudrich. A Polish-born Hassid and an Auschwitz survivor, Joskowicz spent much of his
time in Israel and was criticized for being out of touch with Polish Jewry. His Orthodoxy put him in conflict with the younger, more liberal Jewish leadership, and he demonstrated little sympathy for assimilated young Poles seeking to recover their Jewish roots, many of whom were the products of mixed marriages.

Joskowicz retired from his post in June, shortly after angering and embarrassing Poland's Jewish leaders by what they saw as the clumsy and disrespectful way he appealed to the visiting Pope John Paul to remove the one remaining cross standing outside Auschwitz. The Union of Jewish Communities in Poland issued a statement declaring that Joskowicz had spoken in a strictly personal capacity, not in the name of the Jewish community. Their complaint was not with what was said but the manner in which he said it. The incident reflected the deep changes, including generational changes, which had occurred in Polish Jewry in the past decade. It spotlighted the question of who should speak for Polish Jewry as well as the insistence of Poland's baby-boom generation of Jewish leaders on managing communal affairs on their own. This underlying ferment in the community was evident in intense, sometimes public, debates on Jewish identity. Local Jewish leaders also engaged in at-times heated negotiations with the World Jewish Restitution Organization on how restituted property or income from such property should be distributed.

Several other problems also demonstrated the growing pains of the emerging community. There was a financial scandal that forced the Union of Jewish Communities to fire its treasurer, Jakub Szadaj, who was also chairman of the Gdansk Jewish community, and downgrade the status of the Jewish communities in Gdansk and Poznan. The union's board cited "very serious financial irregularities" committed by Szadaj, as well as a "slanderous campaign" by Szadaj in the mainstream media against the board and other Jewish organizations. The problem had not been fully resolved by the end of the year.

Problems also arose regarding Rabbi Rabinowicz. In November, six months into his two-year contract, Rabinowicz resigned as rabbi of Warsaw. Community leaders greeted his departure with relief, as tensions regarding both style and substance had been mounting since his arrival. Most of the younger members of the Warsaw community, including its lay leaders—Jews with a secular or liberal orientation—were put off by Rabinowicz's Orthodoxy, as well as by his apparent timidity. Rabinowicz, on the other hand, complained that the community was fragmented and factionalized, and seemed unprepared to support a rabbi and other religious professionals in the traditional fashion. He had also been the target of taunts by local children, and on one or two occasions had had tomatoes thrown at him.

There were, as usual, cultural events, seminars, conferences, and exhibits on Jewish themes throughout the year. Some were sponsored by the Jewish community or Jewish institutions and directed toward the Jewish public. Others were sponsored by the Israeli embassy and other organizations, such as the Jewish Culture Center in Kraków, and directed to the public at large as well as Jews.

Kraków again held its annual summer festival of Jewish culture. In Septem-
ber, to mark the 60th anniversary of the outbreak of World War II, Yad Vashem held a conference in Warsaw, sponsored jointly with the Jewish Historical Institute in the city, on Europe under Nazi rule and the Holocaust. This was the first time that Yad Vashem had ever held a conference outside Israel. Also in September, the town of Plonsk, where David Ben-Gurion was born, held a Jewish culture week at which prizes were awarded in the international essay competition that Plonsk authorities had sponsored on the topic of Polish Jewish remembrance. On November 25 the University of Humanities in Pultusk, in cooperation with the Israeli embassy, celebrated "Israel Day" with lectures about Israeli history, society, culture, and Jewish traditions, displays of books and photographs, and Israeli dancing. There was an Israeli film festival in Warsaw in early December.

The formal groundbreaking for the restoration and expansion of the only surviving synagogue in Auschwitz, the town in southern Poland near the death camp, and the creation there of an information center as well as a place for prayer and Jewish study, occurred in early November. The old synagogue, used for years as a carpet warehouse, had been returned to the community in 1998. Participants—including local bishop Tadeusz Rakoczy, former speaker of the Knesset and Holocaust survivor Shevach Weiss, and visiting American Jews—donned souvenir hardhats and buried stones from Jerusalem in a corner of the sanctuary. The $10-million project was conceived and sponsored by the New York-based Auschwitz Jewish Center Foundation, founded in 1995 by businessman and philanthropist Fred Schwartz. A Torah scroll donated by a Long Island congregation was placed in the synagogue during the summer in a joyous celebration.

Romania

Romania continued to suffer economic, social, and political problems. The average wage was only $80 a month, the 1999 inflation rate was 55 percent, and workers staged numerous protests and strikes over working conditions and living standards. Polls taken in the fall, as the country prepared to mark the tenth anniversary of the overthrow and execution of dictator Nicolae Ceausescu, indicated that many Romanians were nostalgic for the Ceauşescu era: As many as two-thirds felt they were better off under Communism. Nonetheless, on December 10 the European Union invited Romania, along with five other states, to talks about joining the EU. On December 13 President Emil Constantinescu dismissed Radu Vasile from his post as prime minister. Under the constitution, however, the president does not have the authority to dismiss the prime minister, and Vasile refused to resign for several days. Constantinescu justified the dismissal on the grounds that the government had become paralyzed after most of its ministers resigned. Vasile was eventually forced to step down, and Mugur Isarescu, governor of the National Bank, was named prime minister.

Some Romanians were nostalgic not just for the Ceauşescu regime, but for the
World War II fascists, including pro-Nazi leader Ion Antonescu, and the Iron Guard, the fascist organization that terrorized Romanians and Jews before and during World War II. On November 30 about 100 people, most of them elderly, held a ceremony in a forest near Bucharest to mark the anniversary of the death of Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, the first head of the Iron Guard. The ceremony took place at the spot where Codreanu was shot dead in 1938 on orders of King Carol II. Some wept openly as the group sang fascist songs, some gave the Nazi salute, and an Orthodox priest led a brief service.

On December 2, B'nai B'rith International president Richard D. Heideman sent a letter to President Constantinescu calling on him to combat the continuing campaign to honor Antonescu. He noted that, after 11 unsuccessful attempts, the mayor and city council of Cluj had cleared the way for the erection of a statue of Antonescu on public land. This followed the decision of Timisoara, another Romanian city, to name a main street for Antonescu. Heideman wrote that his organization was “particularly disturbed” that two of Constantinescu’s coalition partners, the National Peasant Christian and Democratic Party and the National Liberal Party, voted with the far-right Romania Mare Party to permit Cluj to erect the statue.

**Jewish Community**

About 12,000 Jews were known to live in Romania, most of them elderly. About half lived in the capital, Bucharest, and the rest were scattered in more than 40 communities around the country. Fewer than 700 Romanian Jews were under the age of 35 and fewer still were middle-aged adults. Two rabbis served the country: an elderly rabbi in Timisoara and a chief rabbi in Bucharest, Menachem Hakohen, who spent most of his time in Israel and visited Romania every month or so. Educational, religious, and welfare programs were carried out by the Federation of Romanian Jewish Communities (FEDROM), funded by the JDC. The economic problems in the country had induced hundreds of elderly Jews who never had contact with the community to step forward and join in order to be eligible for welfare benefits and emigration to Israel. Non-Jews, too, attempted to join the Jewish community for the same reasons, compelling Rabbi Hakohen to tape a sign to his door: “We do not convert people to Judaism.”

The Lauder Foundation ran the Lauder Re’ut Kindergarten and Lower School in Bucharest. It was considered one of the best schools in the city, and many non-Jews sent their children there. The Jewish publishing house HaSefer issued books on Jewish themes, and a biweekly Jewish newspaper, Realitatea Evreiasca, included pages in Hebrew and English as well as Romanian. In October, the Moshe Carmilly Institute for Hebrew and Jewish History at Babes-Bolyai University in Cluj held its annual conference on Jewish studies. An institute for Jewish studies also operated in Craiova.

For decades the pattern of Jewish life in Romania had been to encourage aliyah
among young people and, with the support of the JDC, to make sure that the elderly who wanted to stay lived out their lives in dignity. At the end of October, however, Romanian Jewish leaders sought to reverse this pattern and approved plans for an ambitious and unprecedented program of outreach and leadership development. This entailed revamping the educational system, developing clubs and cultural and recreational activities for children, teenagers, and university students, and reaching out to unaffiliated adults.

There were episodes of vandalism against Jewish cemeteries during the year. Tombstones were smashed in Alba Iulia in February and in Satu Mare and Resita in November.

**Slovakia**

In May, Rudolf Schuster, the popular mayor of the eastern city of Kosice and the candidate of Slovakia’s pro-Western government, was elected to a five-year term as president in the country’s first direct presidential election. He soundly defeated Vladimir Meciar, the authoritarian former prime minister who was voted out of office in 1998. Slovakia had been without a president since Michal Kovac’s term expired in March 1998. Parliament, which had the responsibility of appointing a president, had been unable to agree on a successor to Kovac, and the choice was put to a direct vote. Schuster’s election was seen as strengthening the new democratic image of Slovakia that had come with the 1998 election of Mikulas Dzurinda as prime minister. A further step in this process occurred in December, when Slovakia was one of six countries invited by the European Union to begin talks about joining.

Nonetheless, racism and xenophobia, directed particularly against Roma (Gypsies), was a constant concern. In December, meeting at a human-rights conference in Bratislava, representatives of Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary asked the European Union to help them resolve the social problems of the region’s Romany population since this was an issue “of European dimensions.” An opinion poll conducted by the TNS polling institute and published in December showed that 60.4 percent of Slovaks said they favored separating the country’s Romany minority from the majority population, including separate schools. Earlier in December Slovakia’s deputy prime minister for minorities, human rights, and regional development met with journalists to announce the publication of the first textbook on Roma history to be used in Slovak schools.

A survey gauging knowledge about the Holocaust, feelings about Holocaust remembrance, attitudes toward Jews and other minorities, and awareness of the Slovak Jewish experience was conducted for the American Jewish Committee at the beginning of September. More than three-fifths of the respondents favored keeping the remembrance of the Holocaust alive. The great majority of Slovaks knew some of the basic facts of the Holocaust, 81 percent correctly identifying Auschwitz, Dachau, and Treblinka as concentration camps and 78 percent citing the yellow star or a variant as the symbol that Jews were forced to wear. But only
24 percent, in a multiple-choice format, selected "six million" as the approximate number of Jews killed by the Nazis during the Second World War; 42 percent chose much lower figures.

Slovaks demonstrated mixed attitudes toward Jews. Only 9 percent believed that Jews "behave in a manner which provokes hostility" in Slovakia and 15 percent thought that Jews have too much influence in the country. But 53 percent believed (23 percent "strongly") that "Jews exert too much influence on world events" and 25 percent (7 percent "strongly") that Jews were exploiting the memory of the Holocaust for their own purposes. As for Slovak involvement in the Holocaust, 49 percent agreed (19 percent "strongly") that Slovak leaders bore a share of the responsibility, 19 percent disagreed (5 percent "strongly"), and fully 30 percent said they did not know—a breakdown almost identical to the responses given to the same question in a 1993 survey. As was the case in the AJC survey of the Czech Republic, those with more education tended to know more about the Holocaust and cared more about keeping its memory alive.

Slovakia and Israel kept up their extensive diplomatic and commercial contacts, and tourism between the two countries remained at a high level. In the fall an Israeli-run fertility and assisted-conception clinic opened in the capital city of Bratislava.

**Jewish Community**

Fewer than 4,000 Jews were known to live in Slovakia, though there were surely other nonaffiliated or nonidentifying Jews. The two largest communities were in Bratislava, home to 500–800 Jews, and in the eastern city of Kosice, which had about 700. Both had a rabbi and a kosher restaurant, Jewish classes, clubs, and other activities. The Ohel David old-age home, which opened at the end of 1998, functioned in Bratislava, where there was also a new Holocaust documentation center. Smaller Jewish communities functioned in about a dozen other towns. All came under the umbrella of the Union of Jewish Religious Communities headquartered in Bratislava. There were Jewish museums in Bratislava and Presov, and an Institute of Jewish Studies in Bratislava. Restoration work was under way at several Jewish cemeteries and synagogues around the country. In July a landmark agreement was reached between the Bratislava Jewish community, the Bratislava municipality, and the New York-based International Committee for the Preservation of the Gravesites of Geonai Pressburg, for the reconstruction of the tombs of the revered 19th-century rabbinic scholar Hatam Sofer and other sages. The tombs are located underground, and the project entails rerouting a major city tramline and building a prayer house. The reconstruction was to be completed in 2001. On a brief visit to Bratislava in October, Hillary Rodham Clinton visited both the old-age home and Hatam Sofer's tomb. In November the government passed legislation to compensate World War II victims.

In Bratislava, American-born Chabad rabbi Baruch Myers published a newsletter, *Keser*, in Slovak and English. He ran adult classes ranging from basic prayers
to the Kabbalah, as well as seminars, including a two-day seminar in June on Jewish feminism and the role of women in Jewish law. There was a Sunday school for children aged 6–11 and a kindergarten cosponsored with the Lauder Foundation and taught by Myers’s wife. Holidays were celebrated with communal activities, and some 30 children attended a two-week summer camp in July. More than 100 people attended a Purim party on March 2, which featured the local Pressburger Klezmer band and “all you can drink” beer donated by the Stein brewery. On Passover more than 100 people attended communal seders, at a local hotel on the first night and at the Myers home on the second night. There was also a model matzo bakery for children. On the holiday of Lag b’Omer, in May, more than 150 people attended a bonfire party that coincided with the opsherenish, or first haircutting ceremony, for the Myers’s 3-year-old son.

Yugoslavia

Thanks to an arrangement made by Yugoslav and Hungarian Jewish leaders, as many as 500 of Yugoslavia’s 3,500 Jews, most of them elderly people, women, and children, were able to leave Yugoslavia for neighboring Hungary during the four-month NATO bombing campaign, which began in March. About 200 of these people then went on to Israel.

Those who remained in Yugoslavia shared the same fears, hardships, and concerns as their Serbian neighbors during the bombing. Electric power and water were cut, bombs and missiles destroyed buildings, roads, and bridges, air-raid sirens sent people running for shelters, and food and other consumer goods were either rationed or in short supply. Throughout the NATO campaign, however, Yugoslav Jewry’s strong central organization helped sustain a semblance of normality for community members, two-thirds of whom lived in Belgrade. Contingency measures had been adopted months before, including stockpiling medicine and other essentials and providing for the temporary housing of people unable or afraid to stay in their homes. Regular communal activities that ceased for the first month of the bombings resumed thereafter, though only during daylight hours: the Maccabi sports club met, the Jewish choir held rehearsals, and the monthly community newsletter, Bilten, did not miss an issue. Community leaders in Belgrade maintained daily phone contact with the eight smaller communities in the provinces, including the tiny Jewish community of Pristina, the capital of Kosovo.

Most of Yugoslavia’s Jews, though not strong supporters of the Milosevic regime, tended to share the Serbian view of the bombing, and thus felt quite isolated from the rest of the Jewish world. They complained about “one-sided” support by foreign Jews and Jewish organizations for the Kosovar refugees and the NATO bombing. Some Belgrade Jews expressed disappointment that the Israeli ambassador left Yugoslavia shortly after the beginning of the air strikes.

At the end of May, Misa David, a leader of the Belgrade Jewish community,
and Aca Singer, president of the Federation of Jewish Communities in Yugoslavia, got permission from Yugoslav military authorities to attend the General Assembly of the European Council of Jewish Communities, held in Nice. At the meeting, attended by 600 Jewish representatives from all over Europe, they issued an appeal for an end to the bombing.

Once peace was restored, the JDC and other Jewish aid organizations tried to help the community face its uncertain future. The first priority was bringing home the Jews who had sat out the war in Budapest. Other necessary tasks were arranging emergency cash relief for the elderly, including as many as 800 destitute Holocaust survivors; arranging shipments of medicine to replenish the pharmacy in Belgrade, which was set up long before the conflict and was maintained by World Jewish Relief; refurbishing the kitchen in the Belgrade community and opening soup kitchens there and in Novi Sad; and expanding non-sectarian medical aid for the sick and wounded in the Pristina hospital and for autistic children in Belgrade.

Before the bombing some 40 Jews were known to be living in the Kosovo capital of Pristina. At the end of June only seven were there. The leader of Pristina's Jewish community, Chedar Prlinevic, and his family had been evacuated to Skopje, Macedonia, after armed men—apparently rogue paramilitaries operating on their own—entered their home and ordered them to leave town, presumably because they identified the Serbian-speaking Prlinevic family as Serb. In the aftermath of the bombing, a small group of Albanian-speaking Jews was identified in the Kosovo town of Prizren.

When the conflict was over Jews shared with fellow Yugoslavs the hardships brought on by the devastated economy. In Belgrade a Jewish business club met every two weeks in the hope of developing a coordinated plan for small-business owners to provide jobs to the unemployed. In November and December JDC-supported soup kitchens began operating in the three largest Jewish communities of Belgrade, Novi Sad, and Subotica. Problems were reported in finding vehicles that could distribute meals to the homebound sick and elderly. In December, at the annual assembly of the Federation of Jewish Communities in Yugoslavia, President Aca Singer described the situation of Jewish refugees from Kosovo as still "very difficult and uncertain."

RUTH ELLEN GRUBER
Former Soviet Union

National Affairs

BORIS YELTSIN, PRESIDENT of the Russian Federation, chose the last day of the year, the century, and the millennium to make one of his characteristically surprising announcements—he was resigning. Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, in office only since August, became acting president, instantly gaining the leading position in the race for the presidency, with the election to be held on March 26, 2000.

Yeltsin had been Communist Party secretary in his native Sverdlovsk region before joining the central leadership in Moscow. A major rival of the last Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, he had weathered many political storms, including an armed confrontation with a recalcitrant parliament in 1993, a presidential election, a two-year war in Chechnya, and continuous economic crisis and political upheaval. As the economy spiraled downward and Yeltsin was often incapacitated by health problems, his popularity plummeted. Whereas in the late 1980s many Russians were fascinated and energized by new freedoms and political opportunities, a decade later the mood had turned apathetic, cynical, and despairing.

A nationwide survey taken in July 1999 showed only 3 percent of the population expressing confidence in Yeltsin. When Putin succeeded Sergei Stepashin as prime minister in August, 56 percent of a nationwide sample said they “felt nothing in particular” about the latest leadership change. Indeed, the Russian people had seen four prime ministers come and go within 14 months. Back in May, Stepashin had replaced Yevgeny Primakov, one of the most popular politicians in the Russian Federation. The next day the Duma (lower house of the parliament) began debating the impeachment of Yeltsin on five counts—conspiring to break up the USSR, overthrowing the constitutional order in 1993, launching war against Chechnya, undermining the defense of the country, and committing genocide against the Russian people through harmful economic reforms. None of the five charges got the necessary 300 affirmative votes, and Yeltsin, like his American counterpart earlier in the year, survived impeachment.

Three key problems shook confidence in Yeltsin’s ability to govern and undermined his hold on power: economic crisis, which profoundly affected the lives of the Russian people; corruption, which ranged from petty schemes to scandals reaching into his own family; and Islamic terrorism and militancy, which spread from Chechnya into Dagestan, and even to Moscow and other Russian cities.

In 1998 the Gross Domestic Product of Russia had fallen by 5 percent, and it continued to decline in 1999. Inflation was calculated at 55 percent. The number
of people officially categorized as living in poverty rose from 33 million in 1998 to 55 million in 1999. The newspaper *Argumenty i fakty* (No. 21) calculated that if one pegged the amount of goods and services consumed by an “average” American at 100, the average consumption in Russia would be 17.7, in Latvia 16, in Belarus 14.3, in Ukraine 10.3, and in Moldova 7.7. The average wage in Russia was $50 a month—and millions of employees were not being paid on time—while the average monthly pension was $17. The Communist-dominated Duma continued to block legislation that would permit the buying and selling of land, protect foreign investments, and overhaul a distorted and inefficient tax system.

One consequence of the economic crisis was a continuing population decline. From 1992 till 1998 the population of the Russian Federation dropped by two million. In the year 1998 alone it declined by 600,000, and in the first half of 1999 by another 406,000 to a total of 146 million. If not for migration into Russia by people from other successor states of the USSR, the decline would have been even sharper. There were twice as many abortions as births; one of every five families had only one parent; and a quarter of all births were out of wedlock. Drug use was increasing among the young, and their health was declining.

One study found that there were 950 single-industry towns in Russia, and these were home to 25 million people, nearly a fifth of the population. Those towns had very high unemployment, leading many of the inhabitants to resort to subsistence farming. It was also in these places that Vladimir Zhirinovsky, leader of the anti-Semitic, extreme nationalist Liberal Democratic Party, and Viktor Anpilov, head of the Stalin Bloc for the USSR, received very high levels of support.

Widespread economic despair was compounded by the cynicism of the economic and political elites. For example, money that the International Monetary Fund had loaned Russia was transferred by the Russian Central Bank to a secret offshore financial firm. Yeltsin’s immediate family was said to have received huge economic favors from Swiss companies doing business in Russia, and one of Putin’s first decisions as acting president was to grant Yeltsin and his family immunity from prosecution. The Bank of New York was exposed as being heavily involved in laundering millions of dollars coming out of Russia, not only from criminal elements, but, presumably, from businessmen and high government officials as well. Several employees of the bank, Jewish émigrés from the former Soviet Union (FSU), were dismissed for their involvement in these schemes, though it was later shown that some of them were innocent.

A two-year war in Chechnya had ended in 1996, but in 1999 Islamic forces from that region infiltrated into bordering Dagestan, a multinational region in the northern Caucasus with many Muslims. Under the leadership of Shamil Basayev, a Chechen, and “Khattab,” a Chechen reputed to have been born in Jordan, these forces seized several villages in Dagestan in the late summer till they were chased out by federal troops. In September, within less than three weeks, five apartment houses in Moscow and other cities were blown up, killing over 300 people and injuring many more. It was widely assumed that this was the work of Islamic mil-
itants. The Russian air force began massive bombardment of Chechnya in late September, causing hundreds to flee to neighboring Ingushetia. When Russian troops proceeded to capture major Chechen towns and close in on the capital of Grozny in December, Prime Minister Putin's popularity, as measured in the opinion polls, soared, propelling him from obscurity into the forefront of the candidates to succeed Boris Yeltsin as president.

In the political jockeying that preceded the elections to the Duma in December, former prime minister Yevgeny Primakov allied himself with Yuri Luzhkov, mayor of Moscow, in a "Fatherland-All Russia" coalition. Three other former prime ministers—Sergei Stepashin, Viktor Chernomyrdin, and Sergei Kirienko—also formed a joint electoral bloc. Zhirinovsky's xenophobic Liberal Democratic Party was disqualified because too many of the candidates on its list were either convicted criminals or under police investigation; rumor had it that he had sold places on his list to those seeking parliamentary immunity from criminal prosecution. Zhirinovsky himself managed to maintain his candidacy for president. With 28 parties and movements running in the election, the Communist Party once again emerged as the most popular, garnering 24 percent of the vote. In a big surprise, a list hastily put together and backed by Putin managed to get 23 percent, signaling significant public approval of Putin and his aggressive handling of Chechnya. Fatherland-All Russia got only 13 percent, and Kirienko's Union of Right Wing Forces only 9 percent.

In other former Soviet states with significant Jewish populations, President Leonid Kuchma was reelected president of Ukraine after four rivals, who had united to oppose him, split up the following day. In Belarus, President Aleksandr Lukashenka stepped up his repression of political opponents. Some disappeared without a trace, others were jailed, and still others took refuge in neighboring countries or in the United States. Police suppressed mass demonstrations against the government.

Israel and the Middle East

Israeli foreign minister Ariel Sharon visited Moscow in January in the hope of persuading his hosts to end Russia's cooperation with Iran on dual-use technologies. In March, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu made a whirlwind tour of Kiev, Tbilisi, and Moscow in what many interpreted as an attempt to win the votes of Soviet immigrants in Israel. (As it turned out, the victorious Ehud Barak won more of that immigrant vote in the May 17 election than Netanyahu.) While in Moscow, Netanyahu reiterated Israel's worries about the supply of Russian technology and expertise to Iran. In August, Ehud Barak, now the Israeli prime minister, arrived in Moscow, where President Yeltsin greeted him warmly. Barak said that Russia could play a leading role in the Middle East peace process, and Yeltsin promised to "fight anti-Semitism together." Like the other visiting Israeli officials before him, Barak asked Yeltsin to reconsider plans to transfer nuclear
and missile technology to Iran, and also requested that he intervene on behalf of 13 Iranian Jews arrested in April. There were rumors in Moscow that the wealthy and politically well-connected Vladimir Gusinsky had contributed heavily to Barak's election campaign, and that Barak had asked Yeltsin to persuade the Russian government to ease its "attacks" on Gusinsky's Most bank. Journalist Zakhar Gelman claimed that Israel supported Russia's attacks on Chechnya and had contributed funds and medical aid to the refugees fleeing the republic, thus helping relieve the burden on the Russian government and, by encouraging the population to flee, depriving the Chechen fighters of logistical support and hiding places.

Anti-Semitism

There were several attacks on Jewish institutions over the course of the year. In May a large unexploded bomb was found at Moscow's Bol'shaya Bronnaya Synagogue. Bombs did go off near two Moscow synagogues on May 1, and the synagogue in Birobidzhan in the Jewish Autonomous Oblast in Siberia was vandalized twice in five days. Ten swastikas were formed out of stones in the yard, and windows and a menorah were smashed. Also in Siberia, the synagogue in Novosibirsk was vandalized and symbols of the neo-Nazi Russian National Union (RNU) daubed on its walls. The RNU organized a march in Moscow in January and was active in Belarus and Latvia as well. On February 5 the prosecutor of Moscow's northern administrative district dropped proceedings that had been initiated against RNU leader Aleksandr Barkashov. In July, outside the Choral Synagogue in Moscow, a student stabbed and seriously wounded 52-year-old Leopold Kaimovsky, commercial director of a Jewish arts center. According to one report, the assailant, Nikita Krivchun, was wearing a swastika on his chest. Anti-Semitic pamphlets were disseminated in the Kirov region and in Krasnodar, southern Russia.

General Albert Makashov, a Communist deputy in the Duma who had caused a sensation by making public anti-Semitic statements in late 1998, caused a stir once again in February 1999 by stating that "The reason Jews are so insolent . . . is that none of us has yet knocked on their door, none of us has yet pissed on their windows." Of his "Movement to Support the Army" he defiantly said: "We will be anti-Semites and we will triumph." Communist Party leader Gennady Zyuganov refused to condemn Makashov's sentiments. The prosecutor of the Rostov region said that Makashov's remarks contained "nothing prejudicial," and the federal Duma refused, in March, to put a resolution on its agenda condemning the statements. Instead, the Duma adopted a resolution asserting that those responsible for "political extremism" were "a number of television channels, certain press publications, and the forces behind them." Nevertheless, Yuri Skuratov, the prosecutor general of Russia (dismissed from office the next month for unrelated reasons), initiated criminal proceedings against Makashov under
Article 282 of the Criminal Code of Russia, which categorizes the incitement of ethnic, racial, or religious hostility as a crime. Then in August, "Civil Control," a watchdog organization in St. Petersburg, asked the prosecutor's office to initiate criminal proceedings against a local television station which, it charged, had an "overt anti-Semitic orientation" and had invited viewers to take part in polls asking whether "ethnic purges should be carried out in St. Petersburg."

The U.S.-based Anti-Defamation League commissioned a Russian polling firm to survey attitudes on anti-Semitism in the country, and over 1,500 people were interviewed in May and June. The survey concluded that 44 percent of the respondents held views "that would be considered anti-Semitic by most analysts," as compared to 12 percent of an American sample that were asked the same questions in 1998. The report noted that anti-Semitic attitudes were spread more widely through the population of the Russian Federation than in the United States, where anti-Semitism tended to be concentrated within specific groups. Russian respondents were most critical of what they saw as Jewish clannishness, power, and unethical behavior. Men over 45, Communist Party members, and men with no higher education tended to be more anti-Semitic than other Russians. Many observers, however, questioned the value of the survey, since the questions seemed based on American conceptions of anti-Semitism that were not necessarily applicable to Russia. For example the notion that "Jews, more than other groups, support each other," which may have had anti-Jewish connotations in the U.S., could have been interpreted as a positive attribute in Russia.

**Holocaust-Related Developments**

The government of Lithuania continued to avoid prosecuting Nazi war criminals who had been deported from the United States to the land of their birth. Though the government did bring legal action against Vincas Valkavickas, who had left the United States before he could be deported for complicity in Nazi war crimes and returned to Lithuania, it delayed the trials of several others. Kazys Ciurinskas, who had led a battalion involved in the mass killings of Jews and others, was deported by the American authorities in May. The Lithuanian prosecutor's office said it had been collecting information on Ciurinskas for two years but had "insufficient evidence to launch proceedings against him." Kazys Gimzauskas, a 90-year-old accused of handing Jews over to execution squads when he was deputy police chief in Vilnius, did not attend the opening of his trial since, his lawyer said, he was too old to do so. No trial had taken place by the end of the year. Similarly, the trial of Aleksandras Lileikis, Gimzauskas's superior, was suspended pending medical tests to determine whether he was fit to stand trial.

On a visit to Vilnius on January 14, Dan Tichon, the speaker of the Israeli Knesset, said that Lithuania should be "more vigorous" in prosecuting Nazi war
criminals. The U.S. Department of Justice also criticized the continuing postponements of these trials. At an official event in Vilnius on June 21, Oded Ben-Hur, Israel's ambassador to Lithuania, charged that the country had become a paradise for war criminals, and criticized the commission established by President Valdas Adamkus to investigate both Nazi and Soviet war crimes. Lithuanian politicians protested and suggested that Israel replace Ben-Hur. In September, President Adamkus claimed that Lithuania "firmly supports the further prosecution of those who participated in Nazi war crimes" and insisted that the postponement of trials "should not be interpreted in any way as a weakening of the Lithuanian government's resolve to bring those who are guilty of such crimes to justice."

In March the Latvian Parliament voted to retain the celebration of March 16 as Latvian Soldiers Day, even though veterans of the Latvian Waffen-SS marked the occasion as commemorating the day they first went into combat against the Soviet army. Jewish leaders said they would boycott the celebrations and defy the law requiring all buildings to display the Latvian flag on that day.

**JEWISH COMMUNITY**

*Emigration*

There was a dramatic rise in Jewish emigration from the FSU in 1999, probably due to the deepening economic crisis and to the anti-Semitic outbursts of Albert Makashov that began in late 1998. 72,372 Jews (and their non-Jewish first-degree relatives) left in 1999, an increase of about a third over 1998, when 53,720 emigrated. Of the 1999 total, 66,190 went to Israel and only 6,182 to the United States (7,347 came to the U.S. in 1998). Some claimed that the decline in immigration to the U.S. was due to the expense and difficulty of getting to Moscow for the required personal interview. Of all the Jewish emigration from the FSU, the Russian Federation showed the largest percentage increase, more than doubling from 13,019 in 1998 to 29,534 in 1999. Within the Russian Federation, Jewish emigration was especially large from the areas hardest hit economically—the Russian Far East, the Urals, and northern Russia.

Among the immigrants arriving in Israel, only 11 percent were over 65 years old and nearly a quarter were younger than 24. For the first time since 1995, Russia accounted for nearly half the immigrants from the FSU to Israel. The proportion of non-Jews among the immigrants—according to the criteria of Israel's Ministry of the Interior—reached about half in 1999. In November, 18 veteran Soviet immigrants in Israel, several of them prominent former "refuseniks," issued a statement asking the Israeli government to limit the number of non-Jews allowed to settle in Israel. And on the floor of the Knesset, Shas deputy Shlomo
Benizri not only attacked the non-Jewish immigrants but went so far as to criticize the post-Soviet immigration as a whole as being full of "prostitutes, criminals and goyim."

Communal Affairs

In April Vadim Rabinovich, a leading businessman in Ukraine, convened over 1,600 delegates in Kiev to found the United Jewish Communities of Ukraine, which was intended to serve as an umbrella organization and national representative for Ukraine’s nearly 300,000 Jews. Popular singer Iosif Kobzon was elected honorary chairman of the organization. Rabinovich, who owned a four-story building in central Kiev that housed the offices of many Jewish organizations, claimed to have succeeded in gaining back for the Jewish community the building of the famed Brodsky Synagogue, which had been confiscated decades earlier by the Soviet government and was being used to house a puppet theater. However in June, Ukraine’s State Security Service (SBU) barred Rabinovich from entering Ukraine for five years because of his supposed ties to organized crime, especially to Leonid Wolf, a Ukrainian immigrant to Israel. The U.S. had previously refused to issue Rabinovich a visitor’s visa for the same reason. Rabinovich retorted that he was being framed by Volodymyr Horbulin, chairman of the National Security and Defense Council and a politician close to President Kuchma. Three prominent Ukrainian Jewish leaders—Iosif Zissels of the Va’ad, Chief Rabbi Yaacov Bleich, and Ilya Levitas—set up an alternative umbrella organization, which they called the Jewish Confederation of Ukraine.

In Russia, the Russian Jewish Congress (RJC) was clearly the most powerful national Jewish organization. Backed by some of Russia’s "oligarchs"—wealthy and politically connected businessmen and bankers—it had a 1999 budget of $2.6 million. The RJC had representation in 45 cities and was said to have distributed $5.2 million outside of Moscow over the previous three years. Vladimir Gusinsky and Boris Khait, two "oligarchs," were said to be contributing 60 percent of the RJC’s budget. In the late 1980s Gusinsky had become close to Yuri Luzhkov, then deputy chairman of the Moscow city soviet, and was put in charge of the burgeoning cooperative movement in that city. After winning contracts to restore some municipal buildings, in 1989 he founded the Most bank, which did a lot of business with the city of Moscow. Gusinsky controlled the Media-Most conglomerate that owned the NTV television network, the Ekho Moskvy radio station, the daily newspaper Segodnya, and other holdings.

Gusinsky’s chief rival was Boris Berezovsky, a confidant and strong supporter of President Yeltsin. Berezovsky had started his career as an academic mathematician, but had become perhaps Russia’s wealthiest businessman. At one point he took out Israeli citizenship but was forced to give it up when he became secretary general of the Commonwealth of Independent States. Yeltsin dismissed him from this post in March. Though Berezovsky was rumored to have con-
verted to Russian Orthodoxy, he was still widely perceived as Jewish. Berezovsky controlled a television network (ORT), three newspapers (*Komersant*, *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, and *Novyiye izvestiya*), a major oil company (Sibneft), and a net of automobile distributorships (Avtovaz). He also had a controlling interest in Aeroflot, a major airline. While Evgeny Primakov was prime minister, charges of embezzlement and other criminal activities were lodged against Berezovsky and a warrant was issued for his arrest. Berezovsky left the country for a while and returned to announce that he would run for the Duma from one of the national regions of the Russian Federation.

In November a new national organization came into being. Calling itself the Federation of Jewish Communities and apparently dominated by Chabad-Lubavitch, it quickly arranged for a meeting with Vladimir Putin.

In December, the Russian Va'ad (Federation of Jewish Organizations and Communities in Russia) held its third congress in Moscow, with 117 delegates from 57 localities. They represented religious, cultural, welfare, educational, and social organizations said to encompass 23,000 active members, and to reach about 52,000 others who occasionally participated in their activities.

On the local level, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) continued to play a major role in funding and organizing educational, cultural and welfare activities, with the staffing increasingly being taken over by local people. The network of organizations providing assistance to the elderly, poor, and disabled grew apace, and their personnel were becoming more professional.

To cite one example, Penza, a city southeast of Moscow, was a typical small Jewish community. In the late 1980s a couple from Penza visited Moscow and contacted one of the first Jewish organizations that had emerged there during perestroika. Upon their return to Penza they founded a Jewish cultural club, Hatikvah. Then they struggled, successfully, to have the local synagogue, built at the turn of the century and sequestered by the Soviet government in 1931, returned to the local Jews. It now serves as headquarters for local Jewish organizations, including a choir, a handicrafts club, a Yiddish study circle, and a welfare organization, Hesed Mordechai. The latter, operating with 50 volunteers servicing 590 clients, provides medicines and serves meals to needy people five times a week. A supplementary school that meets five days a week has 48 pupils who study Jewish history and traditions, and the Hebrew language. Among the other organizations in the community are a Hillel group, a club for war veterans, and youth groups. Several holidays are celebrated communally. There is a Hebrew *ulpan* (intensive language program) and a “distance learning” arrangement with the Open University of Israel.

**Education and Culture**

The Institute for Jewish Education of the Petersburg Jewish University surveyed Jewish education in the FSU in 1997–98. It found 51 Jewish day schools —
19 in Russia and 16 in Ukraine—with a total of 10,700 students and nearly 1,600 teachers, including teachers of general studies. In 1992–93 there had been only 28 schools. The survey found 213 Sunday schools with a total of 10,000 students and a thousand teachers. Altogether, there were 296 schools, nearly 22,000 students and over 2,800 teachers. Despite the fact that 77 percent of the schools were supplementary, nearly half the students were in day schools. The number of schools and students had leveled off since 1996, probably due to ongoing emigration.

The Institute of Jewish Studies in Kiev, Ukraine, sponsored lectures, symposia, and exhibits, as well as several historical research projects, including the collection of oral histories, documents, and photographs of Jewish life in Ukraine. Several projects focused on contemporary affairs, including the development of a demographic data bank and the documentation of the revival of public Jewish life since 1988.

The Hillel movement, which was established in Russia in 1994, expanded to 22 centers and over 60 affiliates in six former Soviet republics. In each of seven cities Hillel established a “lehrhaus,” where knowledgeable students taught basic Judaism to their peers. In many localities Hillels came under pressure from local representatives of Jewish denominations to affiliate with them, but Hillel sought to maintain its nondenominational character.

The Jewish Agency for Israel, whose main mission was the promotion of immigration to Israel, employed 67 emissaries in the former FSU and administered 22 stations that provided direct flights to Israel. It also sponsored nearly 300 ulpanim, in which, it claimed, over 21,000 students were enrolled.

Judaic higher education was available at the Jewish universities of Moscow and St. Petersburg, and at “Project Judaica” at the Russian State University for the Humanities. The Hebrew University of Jerusalem joined with Moscow State University’s Institute of African and Asian Studies to mount a Judaica program in cooperation with Moscow’s Jewish university. There were also a number of less formal institutions for adult Jewish education in several of the major FSU cities.

Zvi Gitelman