Central and Eastern Europe

Germany

National Affairs

OPPOSITION TO THE U.S.-led war in Iraq and how to deal with the threat of terrorism were the primary issues that concerned Germany in 2003. The question of revising the nation’s immigration laws remained unaddressed, even though the weakening economy and the activities of extremist Muslims in the country generated mounting concern about the continuing flow of immigrants.

Substantive criticism of U.S. policy in Iraq crossed the line, at times, into sheer anti-Americanism, and, on occasion, into anti-Semitism, both among fringe groups and in the political mainstream. Germany came to the debate over the war with a strong post-Nazi pacifist tradition, rarely broken since 1945. The one major exception—justified by the “lessons” of World War II—had been Germany’s decision to send troops into Kosovo in 1999, in order, as Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer put it at the time, to prevent another Auschwitz. As a U.S.-led attack on Iraq appeared imminent early in 2003, German leaders opposed the use of force as a solution, and urged that Saddam Hussein be given more time to comply with the demands of UN weapons inspectors. German officials insisted they needed proof that Iraq was a threat to world peace before they would approve a war.

Although Paul Spiegel, president of the Central Council of Jews in Germany (CCJG), supported war—he pointed out that Nazi concentration camps were not liberated by peace demonstrators but by soldiers—surveys suggested that Jews in Germany were almost as likely to oppose war as the overall German population.

After an antiwar demonstration on February 15 that drew some 500,000 people, the Berlin Association Against Anti-Semitism complained about the anti-American and anti-Israel sentiment expressed
there, and urged the German peace movement to distance itself from both. The association accused many among the demonstrators of spreading anti-American clichés and of relativizing the Holocaust by comparing the U.S. administration's politics with "the German war of extermination." It also noted that anti-Israel chants were heard, that Israel was depicted as pulling the strings in the Iraq conflict, and that participants waved the flags of Islamic extremist groups Hamas and Hezbollah. The association also charged the demonstrators with ignoring "the reality of the suffering of the Iraqi people under Saddam Hussein and his support for terror attacks against Israel, for which an abstract desire for peace is not an answer." A public letter signed by some 100 prominent scholars, Jewish religious and communal leaders, and activists from Germany and abroad also criticized the demonstration, noting that it seemed to encourage "nationalism, racism, and anti-Semitism."

Demonstration organizers responded that criticism of the U.S. did not constitute anti-Americanism. Jens-Peter Steffen, a spokesperson for International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW), told the Berlin daily *Tagesspiegel*, "it is not the organizer's job to muzzle people, even though we didn't like many of the banners." But he did acknowledge that it made sense for organizers to discuss how to distance themselves from openly anti-Semitic demonstrators in the future.

Anti-American sentiment intensified after the war ended and no weapons of mass destruction were found in Iraq. Transatlantic relations were severely strained, and only in September, after a 16-month hiatus, did German chancellor Gerhard Schröder and U.S. president George W. Bush meet, in New York, where both pledged their commitment to peace and freedom. The profound deterioration in relations was of concern to many in both countries, and led to several conferences on the topic. Jewish organizations in the U.S. and Germany had special reason to worry, since any German retreat from its post-World War II ties to the U.S. could weaken the country's "special relationship" with Israel and world Jewry. David A. Harris, executive director of the American Jewish Committee, held a series of high-level meetings with German, American, and Israeli officials in October, and said he felt reassured that many German leaders were attuned to the growing danger of anti-Semitism as well as "to Israel's impossible situation." Nevertheless, Harris noted, the Germans were uncomfortable with the apparent role of religious-based notions of good and evil in the conduct of American foreign policy.

Germany continued to participate in the international war on terror, contributing troops to Afghanistan and sharing intelligence information
with the U.S. Security remained a primary concern in Germany. The knowledge that three of the four September 11 pilots had lived in Hamburg in the 1990s had a profound impact on public opinion, and authorities took tough measures against potential terrorist cells in 2003. At the same time, conspiracy theories that the Mossad or the CIA was behind the attacks of September 11 were popular in Germany, and a book promoting such theories, *9/11 and the C.I.A.*, by former cabinet minister Andreas von Bülow, became a best-seller. A poll taken during the summer indicated that 30 percent of Germans under the age of 30 believed there was some truth to the allegations.

On January 15, Interior Minister Otto Schily banned the Hizb ut-Tahrir (Party of Liberation) group. Founded in east Jerusalem in 1953 with the aim of establishing an Islamic state, Hizb ut-Tahrir had reportedly been banned in Egypt in 1974. Before it was closed down in Germany, it operated a Web site containing anti-Semitic propaganda and incitement to terror, and published a German-language magazine distributed at universities and mosques. Also in January, a German court detained two Yemeni citizens suspected of links to Al Qaeda who were being sought by U.S. authorities: Sheikh Mohammed Ali Hassan al-Mouyad and Mohammed Moshen Yahya Zayed were arrested in a Frankfurt hotel. In March, four Algerian Islamic extremists arrested before the September 11 attacks on the U.S. were sentenced to 10-to-12 years in jail. They were found guilty of planning a bomb attack on the Strasbourg Christmas market at the end of 2000 as part of a larger scheme of attacking Christian and Jewish symbols in Germany. The four admitted to having undergone training in camps in Afghanistan to carry out a “holy war” against Christians and Jews, but denied any connection to Al Qaeda.

Berlin decided in November to cooperate in the U.S. trial of French national Zacarias Moussaoui, charged in connection with the September 11 attacks. The government only agreed to do so after receiving assurances from American officials that the evidence supplied would not be used to obtain the death penalty.

Also in November, Shadi Moh'd Mustafa Abdalla, a 27-year-old Palestinian, was sentenced to four years in jail after admitting to planning attacks against Jewish sites in Berlin and Düsseldorf. His admission came during the trial of suspected members of the Al Tawhid group, considered to be part of the Al Qaeda network. Abdalla, a former bodyguard of Osama bin Laden, came to Germany directly from a training camp in Afghanistan in August 2001. He did so “full of hate against Jews and the state of Israel” and “ready to commit terror acts in Germany,” explained
Ottmar Breidling, chief judge of Düsseldorf, in announcing the sentence. Abdalla agreed to testify against four alleged accomplices in trials set to begin in early 2004.

In 2003, there were some seven million noncitizens residing in Germany—nearly 9 percent of the country's total population of 82 million—with an estimated 200,000 arriving each year. The overwhelming majority of the immigrants, nearly six million, came from European countries, mostly Turkey, Italy, Greece, and former Yugoslavia. The next largest groups were Asians, Africans, North and South Americans, and Australians. Even though the German government had proposed legislation as far back as 1998 to streamline regulations for asylum seekers, facilitate the integration of foreigners, and develop a method of determining who might enter the country in order to work, no law had yet been passed.

Israel and the Middle East

In 2003, Germany remained Israel’s strongest supporter within the EU, notwithstanding the U.S.-led war in Iraq. But that support, based on recognition of guilt for the Holocaust, was colored by widespread disapproval of the policies of the current Israeli government. A survey of public opinion conducted by the Emnid firm found that 73 percent of Germans were critical of “Israel’s tough treatment of the Palestinians.” On two key votes in the UN Security Council relating to Israel, Germany abstained. In September, Germany joined Great Britain and Bulgaria in abstaining on a resolution demanding that Israel halt threats to expel Palestinian leader Yasir Arafat from Ramallah. It passed 11-1, but the lone vote against was a U.S. veto. In October, Germany again abstained, along with Great Britain, Bulgaria, and Cameroon, on a resolution condemning Israel’s construction of a security fence. Once again, the U.S. exercised its veto even though the resolution passed 10-1. Within the EU, Germany subtly shifted its posture: while it had often opposed anti-Israel resolutions in the past, it now began to abstain, in order not to set itself in outright opposition to EU positions.

Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer continued his shuttle diplomacy in the Middle East. German diplomats continued to meet with Yasir Arafat, though doubts were increasingly raised about his leadership abilities. Germany also worked secretly to organize an historic prisoner exchange between Israel and Hezbollah, to be carried out, it was hoped, in early 2004.

In October, Chancellor Schröder, on a visit to Egypt, condemned Is-
rael's bombing of a terrorist training camp in Syria, calling it a violation of Syrian sovereignty. At the same time, he also condemned a Palestinian suicide bombing at a Haifa restaurant. That same month, Israel's foreign minister, Silvan Shalom, made his first official trip to Germany and held talks with Chancellor Schröder and Foreign Minister Fischer. He used the occasion of a visit to the memorial at the site of the Sachsenhausen concentration camp, outside Berlin, to appeal for vigilance against anti-Semitism. Calling modern Germany a democratic bastion against xenophobia, Shalom warned against growing anti-Semitism in the Arab and Muslim world. His sole public criticism of the German government concerned its continuing willingness to deal with Arafat.

Outside the Jewish community, evangelical Christians were the most vocal supporters of Israel in Germany, many of them seeing the Jewish state as a fulfillment of New Testament prophecies. Keren Hayesod (United Israel Appeal) sought to reach out to this population both as a way of enhancing pro-Israel sentiment in the country and of raising funds. In January, Keren Hayesod held pro-Israel events for Christians in Hamburg and Berlin, bringing in former New York City mayor Rudy Giuliani as guest speaker. In April, it brought Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein, founder and president of the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews, for a speaking tour of German churches. On the basis of his positive experience in the U.S., where fundamentalists gave some $21 million to Israel in 2002, Eckstein hoped to build a similar network of support for Israel in Germany. Eckstein's only condition was that he would not work with groups that missionized to Jews.

Attempts were also made to introduce Germans outside evangelical circles to the complexities of Israel's situation. The American Jewish Committee's Berlin office sponsored several events to increase such awareness among German opinion leaders. In June, the German Parliament held a symposium on how the print and electronic media reported the Middle East conflict. In September, New York UJA-Federation organized a mission to Germany and Israel. In Germany, the Americans emphasized the importance of Germany's commitment to Israel in meetings with Jewish communal leaders, U.S. ambassador Daniel Coats, Israeli ambassador Shimon Stein, and Foreign Minister Fischer.

Anti-Semitism and Extremism

Overall, the number of anti-Semitic incidents in Germany fell sharply in 2003, while violent attacks rose. Germany registered 1,300 anti-Semitic incidents, down 20 percent from 2002. So-called "propaganda crimes"—
public expression or display of illegal material such as swastikas, the raised arm of the "Hitler greeting," the singing of SS songs, and Holocaust denial—constituted 166 of them. Violent attacks, however, continued to climb, from 18 in 2001 and 28 in 2002 to 35 in 2003, with 22 people injured. There were 12 instances of violence in Berlin alone. Government sources attributed half of the violent attacks in the country to young people of non-German background.

Right-wing extremist incidents declined from 10,900 in 2002 to 10,500 in 2003. Nevertheless, authorities believed that the number of extremist cells was growing. In addition, 30 books, recordings, and videos were banned during 2003 as anti-Semitic and/or xenophobic. These included recordings of speeches by Hitler and Goebbels and neo-Nazi music, much of it brought in from the U.S., where its dissemination was legal.

Acts of physical violence were directed at individuals who bore outward signs of Jewishness. In June, for example, a 14-year-old Ukrainian-born girl wearing a Star of David necklace was attacked and suffered light injuries. This occurred aboard a Berlin bus, and witnesses told police that the perpetrators were four girls of Turkish or Kurdish appearance who first cursed the victim, "referring to her nationality and to her Jewishness" before hitting and kicking her. Similarly, a non-Jewish man wearing a Star of David necklace was attacked while riding the same bus line earlier in the year. On two separate occasions, students of Berlin's Chabad rabbi, Yehudah Teichtal, were attacked in broad daylight, presumably because their Hassidic garb made them stand out as Jewish.

Vandalism aimed at Jewish cemeteries remained an ongoing problem. In May, vandals left an eviscerated piglet at a Jewish cemetery and Holocaust memorial in Neustadt, a town in northern Germany. The unknown perpetrators marked the site with "88," a neo-Nazi code for "HH," or Heil Hitler, apparently written in blood. The incident was reminiscent of a handful of cases the previous year, in which vandals left pigs' heads on Holocaust memorials, mostly in former East Germany (see AJYB 2003, p. 477). After neighbors reported the Neustadt desecration, Mayor Henning Reimann offered a reward of 1,000 euros for information leading to an arrest.

In July, unknown perpetrators damaged a Jewish memorial in the Moabit section of Berlin. According to police, the incident took place in broad daylight. The memorial was dedicated to the former Levetzowstrasse Synagogue, used by the Nazis as a detention center for deporting Jews. Later, the synagogue was damaged during bombings of Berlin, and was torn down in 1955.

The next month, massive vandalism was discovered at a Jewish ceme-
tery dating back to the sixteenth century in the central German city of Kassel, described by Rachel Grossbach, president of the 1,200-member Jewish community, as "one of the most beautiful and largest Jewish cemeteries in Germany." Workers arriving on August 18 found that 56 gravestones, some weighing more than 900 kg, had been overturned. Police spokesperson Volker Pieper described the vandalism as the worst he had seen, and said that it must have been committed by several perpetrators. Local and state politicians contacted the Jewish community the next day to express their shock at the crime.

In September, 14 members of a right-wing extremist group were arrested in Munich on charges of planning to detonate a bomb at the November 9 cornerstone laying ceremony for the city's new Jewish community center (see below, p. 383). Police confiscated 31 pounds of explosives. The group's leader, Martin Wiese, was a neo-Nazi who had led a protest demonstration against the Iraq war in March. In response to the arrests, some 1,000 residents of Munich participated in a protest march, organized by a coalition of interfaith groups, unions, and youth organizations, against anti-Semitism and for the new Jewish center.

In October, anti-Semitic graffiti were found at a Jewish cemetery in the Brandenburg town of Beeskow. The walls and several gravestones had been defaced with swastikas and other illegal Nazi symbols and slogans.

Among the anti-Semitic acts that went under the "propaganda" category, two in October were notable. In the town of Kladow, in Berlin's Spandau district, 50 flyers were found that blamed Jews for contaminating a lake near Berlin and the trees around it. Investigations into the incident yielded no leads. Also in Berlin, a man who allegedly trained his dog, Adolf, to raise his right paw in the "Hitler greeting" appeared in court on charges that he himself used the illegal Nazi salute and said "Sieg Heil." The dog's owner, "Roland T." of Lichtenrade, also reportedly sported a T-shirt with Hitler's face printed on it.

A number of studies were released during the year that focused on German attitudes toward Jews and other minority groups. More than half of the respondents in a survey released in January by the Justus-Liebig-University in Giessen said that Jews took advantage of the persecution that they or their families had suffered in the past. The survey was part of a ten-year project financed in part by the Volkswagen Foundation.

In February, the Center for Democratic Culture released a study of attitudes in several Berlin neighborhoods that had large immigrant populations. It showed that anti-Semitic feelings were widespread among youths of Arab descent, and that these sentiments were often shared by those of Turkish descent.
In November, a survey suggested that right-wing extremist views were gaining favor in parts of the former East Germany. The survey of 1,000 voters in the state of Thuringia found a growing dissatisfaction with democracy and nostalgia for dictatorship. While 80 percent supported democracy as an ideal, only one in three respondents said they were satisfied with the transition to democracy, down from 40 percent the previous year. About 23 percent supported right-wing extremist views, an increase of 2 percent over 2002. More than half the respondents—56 percent—said that the presence of "too many foreigners" endangered Germany. Twenty percent would favor a national dictatorship under certain circumstances, with an equal percentage asserting that there were positive aspects to National Socialism. The survey was carried out by Infratest Dimap and the University of Jena.

In March, Germany's attempts to ban the extreme-right-wing National Democratic Party of Germany (NPD), begun in 2001, fell apart when the nation's Supreme Court in Karlsruhe ruled that planting paid government informants in the party and then calling them as expert witnesses violated the law protecting political parties from state interference. "The presence of the state on a party's leadership level has an unavoidable influence on its plans and activities," Winfried Hassemer, head of the panel of judges, said. Chancellor Schroeder compared the NPD to the Nazis of the 1920s. The NPD, which had some 7,000 members in 2001, blamed "outsiders" for Germany's social and economic woes, resented reminders of the Holocaust, expressed vehement racist, anti-Semitic, and anti-American views, and advocated violence. In 2003, some of its leaders openly associated with members of an Islamic extremist group in Berlin that was later banned.

Another right-wing organization, the Schiller Institute, came under scrutiny when Jeremiah Duggan, a 22-year-old British student of Jewish background, died in March when he apparently ran into street traffic after attending an antiwar conference organized by the institute in Wiesbaden. Witnesses reported that when speakers at the conference began blaming the Iraq war on Jews, Duggan announced he was Jewish. According to his mother, Erica Duggan, Jeremiah tried to make telephone contact with her in England less than an hour before his death, but the call was cut off. German authorities ruled the death a suicide, but a British coroner dismissed this finding in November. Erica Duggan continued to press German authorities to investigate.

March was also the month that independent Düsseldorf legislator Jamal Karsli, who alleged the existence of a conspiratorial "Zionist lobby," lost a suit against two Jewish leaders. In May 2002, Karsli, who
had just switched from the Green Party to the Free Democratic Party (FDP), was quoted in a newspaper saying: "One must certainly accept that the influence of the Zionist lobby is also huge. It contains the majority of the world's most powerful media and can make the most important personalities 'small'. . . . It is understandable that German people are afraid of this power." Paul Spiegel and Michel Friedman, president and vice president of the CCJG, accused him of anti-Semitism. Karsli sued the two for defamation before the Düsseldorf district court, calling on the judges to make sure that they never make such accusations against him again. The court rejected his suit, although he still had the right to appeal.

In May, controversial German historian Ernst Nolte evoked outrage by comparing Israel with Nazi Germany. In a speech delivered before the Roman Senate on May 6, the eve of Israel Independence Day, Nolte, 80, said, "the only element that distinguishes Israel from the Third Reich is Auschwitz." Members of the audience, including Senate president Marcello Pera, immediately protested. The Jewish community in Rome expressed surprise that Nolte had been invited to speak, since his eagerness to relativize the Holocaust as one atrocity among many in history was well known.

In September, the American Jewish Committee's Berlin office and the Heinrich Böll Foundation (linked to the Green Party) sponsored an emergency meeting on the rise of anti-Semitism in segments of German society. Out of the meeting came plans for a series of four public events on aspects of anti-Semitism.

October saw the government take two firm steps against expressions of anti-Semitism. First, Foreign Minister Fischer, the most popular politician in Germany, called in the top Malaysian diplomat stationed in the country to protest anti-Semitic comments by the Malaysian prime minister, Mahathir Mohamad, calling them "completely unacceptable." Also, Germany commenced its first trial against a neo-Nazi rock band. Federal prosecutors in Berlin charged the three members of Landser—meaning "soldier" in German slang—with using their lyrics to promote hatred against foreigners and Jews. They were found guilty in December of forming a criminal association and incitement to racism and anti-Semitism. Bandleader Michael Regener was sentenced to three years and four months in prison, and the others to community service.

That same month, however, Germans were shocked to learn that a member of the Bundestag from the conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU) had made a speech calling Jews a "nation of perpetrators."
Martin Hohmann, 55, delivered the speech on October 3, Germany Unity Day, to local constituents in Neuhof in the state of Hessen. But it went largely unnoticed until October 30, when observers of the right-wing extremist scene saw it reproduced on a neo-Nazi Web site.

In his speech, Hohmann said Jews had influenced the communist revolution in Russia and "because of the millions of people killed in the first phase of the revolution, one might be justified in calling the Jews 'perpetrators.'" He added that Jews, as prominent leaders of the Soviet secret service, were also involved in executions, so again "one could be justified in describing Jews as a 'Tätervolk'"—a nation of perpetrators, according to the same logic whereby Germans were given that label. And since "those Jews who were committed to Bolshevism and to the revolution had already cut themselves off from religion, they were Jews according to background and upbringing, but their outlook was that of burning hatred against all religion. It was similar with the National Socialists."

Hohmann's speech raised alarm about the penetration of right-wing extremist ideology into the political mainstream and became a subject of debate both within his party and in the broader German society. Critics charged Hohmann with seeking to boost national pride, reducing the magnitude of German crimes against humanity in World War II by portraying the victims as no better than the perpetrators. Wolfgang Benz, director of the Berlin-based Center for Research on Anti-Semitism, called the Hohmann case "unique" in the postwar era because it was "not merely a slip of the tongue or a slogan. No, it is a complete argument, a whole anti-Semitic speech using old stereotypes." Dieter Graumann, a member of the board of Frankfurt's Jewish community, saw it as one more piece of evidence that old taboos against anti-Semitic speech were breaking down. While Hohmann asserted, on October 31, that he had not meant to hurt anyone's feelings, Paul Spiegel, president of the CCJG, said he would look into the possibility of suing him for inciting hatred. The courts, however, found that this was not an actionable case.

A survey by the German opinion research firm Infratest Dimap showed that 49 percent of CDU voters and sympathizers did not consider Hohmann's words anti-Semitic, agreeing that "such statements must be possible today," while 44 percent disagreed. A reprimand was enough punishment, said 48 percent, while 45 percent favored Hohmann's ejection from his seat. The CDU leadership, which leaned toward a reprimand, was forced to act after Defense Minister Peter Struck, of the Social Democratic Party, fired General Reinhard Günzel on November 4 for ex-
pressing support for Hohmann's views. Embarrassed by Struck's prompt action, the CDU removed Hohmann from its parliamentary fraction, but he retained his seat and his party membership. In all, 198 CDU parliamentarians voted to cut party ties to Hohmann, 28 opposed the move, and 16 abstained.

On December 1, the European Jewish Congress released a previously unpublished report, "Manifestations of Anti-Semitism in the European Union," that had been prepared for the European Union Monitoring Center on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) by Berlin's Center for Research on Anti-Semitism. Completed in February, it had been suppressed for ten months. Many believed that EUMC wanted to bury the study because it was unhappy with its conclusions. The 105-page report, finished just before the war on Iraq began, found an increase in anti-Semitic crimes committed by youths of Arab or Muslim background, as well as by some left-wing extremists and antiglobalization activists. The study also cited examples of Muslim-Jewish cooperation and Muslim condemnation of anti-Semitic acts, and noted that Muslims were often victims of prejudice themselves. The report suggested, as well, that some criticism of Israel crossed the line into anti-Semitism.

On December 4, three days after the unauthorized release, EUMC put the document on its own Web site, insisting that it had been withheld because of questions about its methodology, and announcing that a fuller report would be available early in 2004. The next day, Natan Sharansky—Israel's minister for Jerusalem and Diaspora affairs—arrived in Berlin for the fifth annual European-Israel Dialogue Conference, sponsored by the Axel Springer Foundation. He met with the authors of the study, and, at a press conference, criticized the EU for ignoring what he saw as growing Muslim anti-Semitism both in Europe and in Arab countries. Sharansky showed excerpts of a 29-part TV series that Syrian TV had aired during the month of Ramadan, in which Jews were depicted slaughtering a boy in order to use his blood for making matzo, and torturing and killing a fellow Jew accused of having an affair with a non-Jewish woman. Sharansky said the film was part of a package of shows for which Arab-language cable providers in Europe were bidding.

The cumulative effect of the Hohmann affair and the release of the EUMC survey induced the German Bundestag to hold a special session on anti-Semitism. On December 11, that body voted unanimously to condemn anti-Semitism and pledged to continue the fight against it.

There were also encouraging signs, toward the end of the year, that the general public objected to extremism and anti-Semitism. Following the
terror bombings in Istanbul in November that damaged several buildings, including two synagogues, and left 51 dead and hundreds wounded, an unprecedented interfaith ceremony took place in Berlin, organized by the American Jewish Committee office. The November 22 event became a political platform against terrorism and for democracy, as representatives of the Israeli, American, British, and Turkish embassies, as well as leaders of Germany’s Jewish and Turkish communities, called for courage and resolve against fanaticism, and for greater interfaith cooperation. Another event was also held that day, organized by a group of Germans calling themselves “immigrants against anti-Semitism.” This was also, in part, a protest against an anti-Israel demonstration that had been planned for the next day.

Holocaust-Related Matters

In April, construction began on Germany’s memorial to the murdered Jews of Europe, four years after Parliament approved its design. Completion was anticipated for 2005, before the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II, and costs were estimated at around $22 million. Designed by American architect Peter Eisenman, the memorial was to consist of 2,700 cement steles, some up to 15 feet high, on a 204,500-square-foot site near the Brandenburg Gate. A documentation and information center would be situated under the memorial.

Construction did not go smoothly. The discovery of bidding irregularities led to a decision to open up competition once more to choose the firm that would prepare the cement steles. Then, in the autumn, reports surfaced that Degussa, the company responsible for providing protection from graffiti, had ties to the firm that prepared the Zyklon B poison gas used in Auschwitz. Degussa announced its willingness to step away from the project. But the board of the memorial foundation announced in November that Degussa would stay on—despite concerns about the feelings of Holocaust survivors and their families—since it would be too costly to redo all the work already done by the firm. The board also decided that the controversy about Degussa, as well as information about its role in the Third Reich, would become part of the memorial’s documentation center.

In March, the government announced it would also finance a memorial for the approximately half-million Sinti and Roma (Gypsies) murdered by the Nazis in World War II. It was expected to cost more than $2 million.
Neo-Nazi leader Horst Mahler made news in July, when he was formally charged with inciting hatred through the distribution of printed anti-Semitic material at a program of the extreme-right National Democratic Party in September 2002. (Mahler was no longer a member of the party.) His trial was scheduled for early 2004. That same month Mahler—who had been a left-wing lawyer before becoming involved in neo-Nazism—was prevented from visiting the Auschwitz concentration camp memorial, where he reportedly planned publicly to deny the Holocaust and to demonstrate together with other neo-Nazis. Holocaust denial was illegal in Germany, and punishable by up to five years in prison.

In November, Jewish and non-Jewish groups protested plans by the animal protection group PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) to display posters in Germany comparing the suffering of livestock with that of Jews in concentration camps. Paul Spiegel, head of the CCJG, called the fundraising campaign—"The Holocaust on Your Plate"—"the most disgusting abuse of the memory of the Holocaust in recent years." The CCJG was looking into the possibility of using legal means to ban the campaign, scheduled for early 2004.

Compensation

By 2003, the Claims Conference had approved the compensation claims of 60,372 Jewish Holocaust survivors to its Article 2 monthly pension fund, and had paid out approximately $1.2 billion in German government funds under the program. This fund was established in 1992 to compensate the neediest Holocaust survivors who had received little or no previous payment from Germany. Its name derived from the fact that it was mandated by Article 2 of the Implementation Agreement to the German Unification Treaty of October 3, 1990.

The program was originally intended to benefit 25,000 survivors with payments of 255.65 euros per month, but negotiations in early 2003 increased the sum to 270 euros, and added new categories of beneficiaries from Romania, Hungary, and certain West European countries. Survivors receiving monthly pensions from the Central and Eastern European Fund (CEEF) of the Claims Conference would also receive an increase, monthly payments to some 16,000 people in 23 countries rising from 128 euros to 135, with additional beneficiaries included as well. Both programs were administered by the Claims Conference for the German government.

During the year, the International Commission on Holocaust Era In-
surance Claims (ICHEIC), gave over $15 million to the Claims Conference for distribution to elderly, needy Jewish Holocaust survivors in 31 countries. This was the first of an expected ten annual ICHEIC disbursements from the $132 million in humanitarian contributions received from the Remembrance and Future Fund that had been set up by the German government and industry in 1999 (see below).

In May, ICHEIC made available on its Internet site a list of 363,232 names of people who had bought insurance policies during the Nazi era that were as yet unpaid. Most of the policies had belonged to German Jews. This was the most comprehensive such list ever publicized, "unprecedented in the world of Holocaust-era restitution," said ICHEIC chairman and former U.S. secretary of state Lawrence S. Eagleburger. Its preparation and publication were made possible by an October 2002 agreement with German insurance companies, negotiated in part by the Claims Conference. ICHEIC extended the deadline for claims to December 31, 2003.

Another application deadline passed in the summer: June 30, 2003 was the final date for survivors of Nazi ghettos to apply for German pensions for labor they performed there, calculated retroactively to 1997. Late applicants would only be eligible for payments from the time their petitions were received. Monthly payments were about 250 euros. The German Association for Information and Support to Survivors of Nazi Persecution administered a telephone hotline to help potential applicants. What made such advice necessary, in many cases, was the difficulty of distinguishing between different kinds of labor under the conditions that prevailed in the ghettos. Christine Reeh, a consulting attorney for the Claims Conference, wrote a handbook on how to apply for the pensions, available through the Claims Conference Web site.

By the end of 2003, more than 1.5 million former Nazi slave and forced laborers had received compensation from the 5-billion-euro Remembrance and Future Fund, created by the German government and industry. A total of 2.74 billion euros had been paid to 1.516 million elderly former slave and forced laborers in numerous countries. The symbolic payments ranged from 2,500 to 7,700 euros. Recipients included 447,000 Poles; 470,000 Ukrainians; 189,000 Russians; and 75,000 Czechs. Funds for 138,000 recipients were paid to the Claims Conference and for 74,000 others to the International Organization for Migration. More than 7 percent of payments went to heirs of people who died while waiting for their claims to be processed. In addition, the foundation helped fund some 120 projects, such as youth exchanges for students in Europe, Is-
rael, and the U.S. Estimating that some 1.7 million survivors were eligible to receive money, the foundation expected that all payments would be completed by 2005.

In 2003, the Claims Conference identified 1,778 living Jewish victims of Nazi medical experiments, and arranged one-time reparation payments to them. The testimony given by these survivors was deposited at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington and at Yad Vashem in Israel.

In June, the Supreme Court in Karlsruhe rejected demands for reparations for a 1944 massacre carried out by Waffen SS soldiers in a Greek village, since only states, not individuals, could sue states for war-crime reparations. The European Court for Human Rights and the Greek high court had already thrown out, on the same grounds, similar suits against Germany. The plaintiffs were the children of a pair murdered in the massacre of 300 residents of Distomo on June 10, 1944, that the Nazis carried out as revenge for a partisan attack. The German government called the event a regrettable and all-too-common action by the German military during World War II, but refused to accept responsibility for payment of damages, fearing that this would open the door for more suits for billions of dollars.

In June, an unusual sale of "voided securities" took place in Berlin, symbolizing the closing of another chapter of Holocaust history. These 12 million Nazi-era stock and bond certificates (many bearing the swastika), declared valueless decades ago, would end up benefiting Holocaust survivors. Sold to the highest bidder, they brought in more than 2 million euros, according to the Frankfurt-based auction house Dr. Busso Peus Successors, which handled the sale. However, certificates bearing the Nazi "J" stamp, denoting Jewish ownership, were not placed in auction and were instead earmarked for museums. Ninety percent of the auction proceeds would go to a general German fund for victims of National Socialism and for postreunification reparations, covering Jewish property confiscated in East Germany. The rest would go to the Claims Conference, according to an arrangement reached in 1998 with the Federal Department for Unresolved Property Questions in the German Finance Ministry, which held legal ownership of the certificates. The Claims Conference was to use its share to support old-age homes and other programs benefiting impoverished Holocaust survivors.

In November, the German government announced it would relinquish its claim to properties that had once belonged to the prominent Wertheim family, German-Jewish owners of a successful chain of department stores. The decision helped "correct an indisputable Nazi injustice," said Karl
Brozik, German representative of the Claims Conference. The case was one of the last major unresolved property disputes in reunified Germany, and involved lots in what had become prime locations since the 1990s. The Wertheims were forced to sell their property because of the Nazi "Aryanization" laws. After the war, Karstadt, a major department-store company, bought up the former Wertheim shares from heirs who had escaped Nazi Germany. The communist government then nationalized those properties located in East Germany, and some remained part of the no-man's-land around the Berlin Wall. Only one original building still stood. After reunification, the Claims Conference, as the successor organization, applied for restitution. The German Restitution Authority validated the claims, but both Karstadt and the German government contested this decision. Members of the Wertheim family, meanwhile, claimed that Karstadt, in purchasing their shares 52 years earlier, deliberately cheated them, paying some $5,000 for property that Karstadt claimed was worthless but knew was hugely valuable. The announcement that the government was giving up its claim was not the end of the story, however, since Karstadt still maintained that it was the rightful owner.

**JEWISH COMMUNITY**

*Communal Affairs*

In the new chancellery in Berlin, on January 27—Holocaust Remembrance Day—Chancellor Schröder signed a contract with the CCJG that placed the Jewish community on a legal par with the Protestant and Catholic churches. Of paramount importance were the new financial arrangements—a tripling of government support for the German Jewish community.

The CCJG had been set up after World War II as the coordinating body for all Jewish communities in Germany, with a mandate to defend their rights and interests, set policies and programs (aside from religious services), and generally represent German Jewry to the federal government. Membership in the Jewish community was based on Jewish law, requiring either a Jewish mother or Orthodox conversion. Members chose representatives to the CCJG and to the individual local community organizations by democratic election. In the 1980s, Helmut Kohl, chancellor at the time, created an endowment of nearly $20 million whose interest, nearly $1 million annually, funded the community's budget.

Recognizing that the size of the Jewish community had multiplied
threefold since the fall of the Berlin Wall, the new contract obligated the government to contribute 3 million euros per year (adjusted annually for inflation) to cover the costs of Germany's growing Jewish community. The funding would cover communal, educational, and infrastructure costs for congregations representing about 105,000 Jews in 2003, up from 98,353 in 2002, according to Heike von Bassewitz, public information director for the Frankfurt-based Central Welfare Council of Jews in Germany. This federal agreement did not affect the contracts that individual states had with their local Jewish communities.

Since 1991, Germany had allowed 5,000 Jews per year to emigrate from the former Soviet Union, so as to help rebuild German Jewry. The number of former Soviet Jews in Germany's Jewish community rose from 83,604 in 2002 to about 85,000 in 2003. Germany granted these Jewish immigrants "contingent refugee" status, which gave them residency and full social benefits, but not immediate citizenship. Jewish leaders expected the community to grow to at least 130,000 over the course of the next decade.

Not all were happy with the new arrangement. Representatives of the Union of Progressive Judaism in Germany, which had about 2,000 members, wanted some of the funding to go to their congregations, which, they claimed, had not been accepted into the CCJG. In an open letter to Chancellor Schröder, Uri Regev, executive director of the World Union for Progressive Judaism (WUPJ), demanded that the contract make an "explicit reference to the Progressive Union and the communities affiliated with it." But CCJG president Spiegel said that his council included all streams of Judaism already, so long as they met the requirements of Halakhah, Jewish law. Indeed, all CCJG congregations adhered to the traditional principle that matrilineal descent determined Jewishness, while a few of the synagogues had mixed seating and equal participation for women. Although the German Progressive group also abided by the matrilineal criterion, it accepted the validity of conversions performed under non-Orthodox auspices, a matter of great significance for the many immigrants from the former Soviet Union whose mothers were not Jewish. Spiegel encouraged each Progressive congregation to "submit lists of members" with its application for membership in the CCJG. As the year ended, none of the congregations had yet been accepted.

In July, the WUPJ marked an historic anniversary, holding a four-day congress in Berlin, the same city where it held its first congress 75 years before. The event received wide publicity as another sign of the renewal of Jewish life in postwar Germany. Most important for the organizers and
participants, the kick-off session, held in the Jewish community center—an official Jewish venue—indicated a growing positive response to liberal Judaism by the predominantly traditional German "united community." CCJG president Spiegel, on vacation in Israel, sent a message through Executive Director Stephan Kramer that Progressive Judaism could be seen as a boon to Jewish life in Germany.

Another possible sign of rapprochement between the CCJG and the Progressives came in November, when Congregation Beth Shalom, a Union for Progressive Judaism congregation in Munich, formally dedicated its new quarters. For the first time, an official CCJG representative attended an event at the independent synagogue. The congregation hoped to be included under the umbrella of the main community, said Jan Miihlstein, president of the congregation and of the Union for Progressive Judaism.

The growth of the German Jewish community attracted the interest of the State of Israel, especially the news that more Soviet Jews had immigrated to Germany than to Israel in 2002, about 19,000 vs. 18,000. The Jewish Agency appointed a task force on Germany that visited Jewish communities across the country in July 2003. Afterward, it announced plans for increased emphasis on Jewish education and religious life in Germany and an expansion of its staff there, which, at that point, amounted to one person. Aliyah, resettlement in Israel, the agency said, would remain the long-term goal. There was also anecdotal evidence that Israeli emigration to Germany had increased since the onset of the second intifada, but neither the Israeli embassy nor the Central Welfare Council of the Jews in Germany kept statistics on this.

On November 9, 65 years after Kristallnacht—when synagogues across Germany and Austria were destroyed—the Jewish Community of Munich set the cornerstone of a new community center in the middle of the Bavarian capital. The ceremony took place at the Jakobsplatz site where the new facility was to be built. (In September, several neo-Nazis were arrested for allegedly planning to set off a bomb at the ceremony). "Those who build, stay," Charlotte Knobloch, president of the community, told some 700 guests under a tent at the construction site. Recalling the terror of Kristallnacht, Knobloch—who survived the war in hiding—said: "the tears that I shed as a six-year-old girl have never stopped." A unique item on display was the original cornerstone box from the Munich synagogue that Hitler ordered torn down. The box contained architectural plans, documents signed by local dignitaries, and coins from the year 1887, when the cornerstone was laid. It had sat forgotten in a storeroom
of the Munich city archives, where it was put after the synagogue was demolished. The box was rediscovered by a team of historians hired to document the history of the original synagogue. Munich's Jewish community has doubled to about 8,000 over the last 12 years with the influx of Jews from the former Soviet Union. In 1910 there had been some 11,000 Jews in the city, and 9,000 when Hitler came to power in 1933.

A new foundation, Friends of the Jewish Cemetery Berlin-Weissensee, was created to secure the future of the Weissensee Cemetery in the former East Berlin, which, with 115,000 graves over 103 acres, was the largest Jewish cemetery in Europe. Opened in 1880, it was left largely untouched after the Nazis shut it down. But after decades of neglect under communist rule, much of the cemetery lay in shambles. Berlin businessman Michael Mamlock, a son of Holocaust survivors, chaired the effort to save the cemetery. The foundation, which had no overhead costs, was seeking 4 million euros "just to fix the stones that are falling down," Mamlock said, "and about 100,000 euros per field, to clear trees and pathways."

In June, the Rykerstrasse Synagogue and the Ronald S. Lauder Jewish School in Berlin opened their doors to the general public for the first time, allowing neighbors a glimpse of a world that was normally protected by a locked gate. Kosher food was served and tours conducted. Neighbors said they "always thought it was a closed community" and that now they felt more comfortable about visiting again. The neighborhood party was the idea of Wolfgang Thierse, president of the German Bundestag, who lived a few streets away. "I considered it important that the school and synagogue are not hidden," said Thierse, who is not Jewish.

In December, Israel’s Ashkenazi chief rabbi, Yonah Metzger, made his first official visit to Germany. At the invitation of Rabbi Netanel Teitelbaum of Cologne, Metzger helped dedicate the Jewish community’s new administrative headquarters there, which also contained an old-age home and would eventually house the Ronald S. Lauder Morijah Elementary School. The new building was to be completed early in 2004. Cologne’s Jewish community numbered some 4,500.

Steps were taken to strengthen relations between German and American Jews. In March, an American Jewish Committee delegation visited with the executive board of the CCJG. This was the first time that the AJC had ever formally met with the executive committee, and CCJG president Spiegel deemed it a milestone in relations between the two Jewish communities. In addition, twice during the year German Jewish leaders came to the U.S., hoping both to increase American Jewish awareness
of the community in Germany and, upon their return, to apply what they had learned about how American Jews handled such issues as immigration, assimilation, Middle East politics, and anti-Semitism. One was a fact-finding trip to Washington and New York organized by the Central Welfare Council of Jews in Germany and by Bridge of Understanding, a German program interested in building connections between American Jews and Germans. The other was a tour, sponsored by the Friedrich-Ebert Foundation and Bridge of Understanding, by three pillars of Berlin's Jewish community—Hermann Simon, director of the Stiftung Centrum Judaicum, Rabbi Andreas Nachama, director of Topography of Terror, and Julius Schoeps, director of the Moses Mendelssohn Center of Potsdam University.

In March, Rabbi Gesa Shira Ederberg, 34, was installed as leader of the small Jewish community of Weiden, in Bavaria—a CCJG congregation numbering some 300 Jews, almost all immigrants from the former Soviet Union. She thus became the second female rabbi in Germany. Ederberg, head of the Masorti Association for the Support of Jewish Education and Jewish Life in Berlin, was a convert to Judaism, and had been instrumental in establishing an egalitarian congregation in Berlin in the mid-1990s. She was ordained in January 2002 in Jerusalem, after four years of study at the Schechter Institute for Jewish Studies, the Jewish Theological Seminary's branch in Israel. (The first female rabbi in Germany, also Masorti, was Bea Wyler, a Swiss citizen ordained at JTS in New York in 1995, who served the Jewish community of Oldenburg.)

The Berlin Jewish Community suffered from financial problems, its annual deficit reaching 1.4 million euros ($1.6 million). There was talk of closing a Jewish community library and eliminating or cutting back various other services, including the monthly magazine **Jüdisches Berlin**.

**THE FRIEDMAN AFFAIR**

In 2003, the Jewish community endured a scandal involving one of its most prominent leaders, Michel Friedman, a 47-year-old vice president of the CCJG. Friedman, a brilliant public speaker, was widely considered the most effective spokesperson for the Jewish community. An attorney in Frankfurt whose late parents were saved from the Holocaust by Oskar Schindler, Friedman had been active in the Frankfurt Jewish community since his student days. He was elected CCJG vice president after the death of its former president, Ignatz Bubis, in 1999.

Ironically, the criminal investigation that brought Friedman down came
soon after the apparent suicide of his political nemesis, Jürgen Möllemann, head of the German-Arab Society, who sullied the 2002 national election campaign by blaming Friedman for causing anti-Semitism. Möllemann’s statements elicited general public outrage, contributing to the weak showing of the Free Democratic Party with which he was affiliated and to his own subsequent political marginalization. On June 5, 2003, soon after the release of his new book arguing that the Mossad, Israel’s secret service, was out to destroy his political career, Möllemann failed to open his parachute in a skydive, and was killed in the fall.

But Friedman was in for a free fall of his own, as police launched an investigation into charges of cocaine possession. At a press conference in Frankfurt on July 8, Friedman admitted past mistakes and formally resigned his position as a vice president of the CCJG as well as the presidency of the European Jewish Congress, and quit his job as a TV talkshow moderator. He asked forgiveness from the public, from his colleagues, and from his girlfriend. Drugs, he said, are not a solution to life’s problems. He paid a fine of 17,400 euros for cocaine possession in lieu of serving jail time. Friedman’s withdrawal was “the step of a very responsible person,” said CCJG president Speigel.

Observers generally agreed that mainstream reaction to the scandal, both among public officials and in the press, was not anti-Semitic. In October, Friedman started a new career as head of the political section of the Berlin-based Aufbau publishing company.

Salomon Korn, the 60-year-old head of the Jewish community of Frankfurt, was named vice president of the CCJG in place of Friedman. Korn had been born in 1943 in Lublin, Poland, where his family survived the Holocaust, and then entered a DP camp in Germany. He studied at universities in Berlin and Darmstadt, and later worked as an architect.

Education

In January, some 65 students from across Germany debated controversial topics at the second “winter university” of the Union for Jewish Students in Germany (BJSD). The event was cosponsored by the CCJG, the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation, the Jewish Agency, Hagshama (a department of the World Zionist Organization), and the Jewish Community of Würzburg, which hosted the students in its community center, still under construction. The BJSD had about 1,000 names on its mailing list, only a small percentage of the estimated 15,000 German Jews between the ages of 18 and 25.
On February 19, Touro College, a New York-based institution under Jewish sponsorship, announced it would open a branch in Berlin. Hoping to reach both Jewish and non-Jewish students from Germany and the former Soviet Union, it would provide an American degree in business administration as well as a traditional Jewish education. Bernard Lander, Touro’s founder and president, signed a four-year contract with the State of Berlin. Classes began in October under the leadership of founding director Sara Nachama.

In May, Berlin hosted the third Bet Debora conference for female rabbis, cantors, and educators. Some 150 women came to Berlin from across Europe, Israel, the U.S., and the former Soviet Union for three days of workshops and lectures under the theme of “Power and Responsibility.” Speakers included communal and religious leaders, political activists, artists, and writers. The next conference was planned for Budapest in 2005. Bet Debora was the brainchild of Berliners Lara Dämmig and Elisa Klapheck.

Also in May, courses in Judaism for non-Jews were offered at the three-day Kirchentag, “Church Days Convention,” a massive conference in Berlin with more than 3,200 events organized by Germany's Catholic and Protestant churches. This event took place every two years in different cities. In 2003, Christians flocked to a “mini-university on Judaism” offering courses on such topics as “Diversity and Denominations of Judaism Today,” “Christian-Jewish Bibliodrama on Sabbath,” and Reform Judaism.

In June, 15 young men aged 15–25 participated in Central Europe Yeshiva Week, sponsored by the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation in Berlin under the directorship of Rabbi Josh Spinner. Classes were given by scholar-in-residence Aviezer Woldson of Israel and the staff of the Lauder Yeshiva in Berlin. Later in the year, Lauder initiated a program for women as well, called Mayan. It began with study groups, a monthly brunch featuring guest speakers, and Shabbat and holiday programs.

In July, Shila Khasani, 27, became the eighth German student to receive a diploma from the Bayit Meshutaf young leaders program in Israel, initiated in 1999 by Israel's Foreign Ministry. Through 2003, 145 young Jewish leaders from around the world had completed the two-week program on topics ranging from Israel’s economy to anti-Semitism, from security to sociology.

In September, the American Jewish Committee’s “Hands Across the Campus” core values curriculum program came to Germany. It had been used with some success in a number of American communities to train
students to avoid ethnic and religious stereotyping. A pilot program adapting the curriculum for a German audience began in three Berlin high schools.

In November, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, in cooperation with Humboldt University in Berlin, hosted a conference of lawyers from Israel, Poland, and Germany, initiated by the German-Polish Lawyers’ Association. The focus was on “human rights as a review criterion of legislation and jurisdiction.” Two further conferences were planned, for Warsaw and Jerusalem, in 2004.

**Culture**

Berlin’s Jewish Museum continued to attract record crowds. On November 12, the museum greeted its 1.5-millionth visitor since opening on September 9, 2001. The Association of European Jewish Museums held its annual meeting there on November 16–18.

At the 53rd annual Berlinale Film Festival in February, German Jewish film producer Artur Brauner, 84, received the Berlinale Camera Award for his efforts to keep alive the memory of the Holocaust. “I have fulfilled my duty to make sure the victims will not be forgotten,” Brauner said after a screening of his film *Babij Jar*, about the Nazi slaughter of 33,771 Ukrainian Jews on September 29–30, 1941. Brauner, who was born in 1918 in Lodz, Poland, and survived several concentration camps, came to Berlin in 1946 where he established the Central Cinema Company. He made 250 films, 20 on Holocaust themes, and was credited with encouraging exiled filmmakers Fritz Lang and Gottfried Reinhardt to return to Germany after the war. Among his best-known films was *Europa, Europa*, the true story of Solomon Perl, a Jewish boy who survived the Holocaust disguised as a Nazi.

In June, a comedy about an Orthodox superhero won the annual Gerhard-Klein Public Prize of the Jewish Film Festival in Berlin. In *The Hebrew Hammer*, written and directed by 28-year-old Los Angeles native Jonathan Kesselman, the hero—private detective Mordechai Jefferson Carver, played by Adam Goldberg—stops a mean Santa Claus from destroying Hanukkah.

In November, the annual two-week Jewish cultural festival in Berlin—one of several such events in Germany—was dedicated to Yiddish language and culture. The festival included dozens of programs, including theater, music, exhibits, readings, and films.

Several important books on Jews and Jewish issues were published during the year. The Munich firm Verlag C.H. Beck released *Überleben...*
im Dritten Reich: Juden im Untergrund und Ihre Helfer (Surviving in the Third Reich: Jews in the Underground and Their Helpers), a collection of first-person narratives edited by historian Wolfgang Benz, director of the Berlin-based Center for Research on Anti-Semitism.

Das Ma’assebuch — Altjiddische Erzählkunst, a collection of Yiddish stories and legends first published in 1602, appeared in a new edition edited by Ulf Diederichs for the Deutsche Taschenbuch Verlag in Munich. The book had been brought out of obscurity in 1930 when it was translated into German by Bertha Pappenheim, also known as “Anna O.,” a former patient of Sigmund Freud and a prominent member of the pre-war Berlin Jewish community.

Das Licht Velöschte Nicht: Ein Zeugnis aus der Nacht des Faschismus (The Light Did Not Go Out: A Testimony from the Night of Fascism), published by Hentrich & Hentrich, was a reprint of a wartime memoir by Rabbi Martin Riesenburger of East Berlin, first published in 1960. It also contained a biographical sketch of Riesenburger by Hermann Simon, director of the Foundation New Synagogue — Centrum Judaicum in Berlin; a personal reminiscence by Rabbi Andreas Nachama; and a selection of sermons by Riesenburger, who died in 1965.

On August 7, the Frankfurt-based publisher Suhrkamp withdrew the German edition of a controversial book originally published in English, After the Terror, by Ted Honderich, after a prominent Jewish academic criticized it. In an open letter to the Frankfurter Rundschau, Micha Brumlik, head of the Fritz-Bauer Institute in Frankfurt—a research institute on Holocaust and xenophobia issues—had said he “barely could believe his eyes” when he saw the “incredible nonsense” in the book, including the justification of Palestinian terrorist attacks on Israeli citizens.

Other publications included In Deutschland unerwünscht (Not Wanted In Germany), a biography of Hermann Gräbe, a German who rescued Jews during the Holocaust, by Douglas K. Hunekes; Zeugen aus der Todeszone (Witnesses from the Death Zone), on the Jewish Sonderkommandos in Auschwitz; and Der Holocaust in den Zeugnissen griechischer Jüdinnen und Juden (The Holocaust as Witnessed by Greek Jews), by Tullia Santin.

Personalia

American Jewish businessman Arthur Obermayer presented the fourth annual Obermayer German Jewish History Awards in Berlin on January 27, 2004, Germany’s Holocaust Remembrance Day. The award honors non-Jewish Germans who contributed toward recording or preserving the
Jewish history of their communities. The winners were: Lothar Bembenek and Dorothee Lottmann-Kaeseler, who set up a museum in Wiesbaden about the history of Jews in the area; Klaus-Dieter Ehmke, who located and repaired old Jewish gravestones in Niederhof, in Western Pomerania; Cordula Kappner, who had spent 20 years researching and archiving materials about the history of Jews in Hassfurt County, Franconia; Jürgen Sielemann, a Hamburg archivist who founded Germany's first and only society for Jewish genealogy; and Christiane Welesch-Schneller, who saved the site of the former headquarters of the Jewish community in Breisach am Rhein, Baden-Württemberg, from demolition, and converted it into a Jewish research and educational center.

The Konrad Adenauer Foundation presented prizes to students who participated in its "Remembrance Day on the Internet" competition. Internet projects that won included interviews with Holocaust survivors, with the students' own grandparents who lived through the Nazi period, and with young people who had broken away from right-wing extremism.

Paul Spiegel, president of the CCJG, was recognized in March for his work in the area of interfaith reconciliation, receiving the State Prize of North-Rhine Westphalia. Spiegel and Polish composer Krzysztof Penderecki each received the 25,000-euro award at a ceremony in Düsseldorf.

In March, Foreign Minister Fischer received the Buber-Rosenzweig medal in Münster for his "commitment to understanding between Christians and Jews." Fischer used the occasion to stress his commitment to peace talks in the Middle East and a peaceful solution to the Iraq crisis. The prize, named for the German-Jewish philosophers Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig, was given annually starting in 1968 by the German board of the Society for Christian-Jewish Cooperation.

Also in March, Uri Regev, executive director of the World Union for Progressive Judaism (WUPJ), received the organization's Israel-Jacobson Prize for his work toward "equal treatment of Jews of all religious backgrounds." The award was presented at the WUPJ congress at the Jewish community center in Berlin (see above, pp. 382–83).

In June, Israeli writer Amos Oz was given a peace prize by the Korn and Gerstenmann Family Foundation in ceremonies at the Ignatz Bubis Community House of the Jewish Community of Frankfurt. The 40,000-euro award was presented by Foreign Minister Fischer, who called Oz a "pragmatic visionary," who analyzed the current Middle East situation soberly and unflinchingly. Oz was the second recipient of the prize, following Shimon Peres, who won it while serving as Israel's foreign minister in 2001.
The CCJG presented its annual Leo Baeck Prize to the philosopher and writer Ralph Giordano in September at the Centrum Judaicum in Berlin. Giordano, himself a Holocaust survivor, was recognized for his efforts to counteract neglect and denial of the Holocaust, as well as his active promotion of a civil society.

In October, Ernst Cramer, 90, who escaped Nazi Germany and returned after the war to build a distinguished career in journalism, was honored by the city of Augsburg, where he was born. Mayor Paul Wengert restored Cramer’s city residency in a ceremony on October 15, citing Cramer’s commitment to building Germany’s relations with Israel and the U.S., his support for German reunification, and his promotion of the peaceful resolution of international conflicts. Cramer had been a journalist and publisher at the Axel Springer Company in Berlin since 1958, and, since 1981, headed the late publisher’s philanthropic foundation in Berlin. The mayor said he hoped to “return to him a part of the home that was torn so violently from him in his youth.”

American Jewish writer Susan Sontag, 60, a harsh critic of both the U.S. and Israeli governments, received one of Germany’s most prestigious awards, the Peace Prize of the Frankfurt Book Fair, in October. In her acceptance speech Sontag called literature a tool to free oneself from the prison of national chauvinism, and lambasted Daniel Coats, the U.S. ambassador to Germany, for not attending the event.

On November 26, Jan Philipp Reemstma, founder of the Hamburger Institute for Social Research, received the highest honor from Berlin’s Jewish Community—the 15th Heinz Galinksy Prize—for his dedication to promoting confrontation with the Nazi past through research and education. Reemstma’s institute was responsible for the traveling exhibition “Crimes of the Wehrmacht,” which documented the war crimes committed by Nazi soldiers.

Rabbi Ady E. Assabi died in June after a long illness. The Berlin Jewish Community had hired him at the end of 2002 to serve the non-Orthodox congregations in the city: Oranienburgerstrasse, Frankelüfer, and Rykerstrasse. Born in Tel Aviv in 1947, he had been ordained at the Leo Baeck College in London. His regular Bible discussion classes were well attended by Jews of all persuasions as well as by a handful of non-Jews and would-be converts to Judaism.

Toby Axelrod
In March 2003, after protracted on-again, off-again negotiations with the opposition parties following the national election of November 24, 2002, Chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel’s People’s Party (ÖVP) revived its coalition with the far-right Freedom Party (FPÖ). That coalition had collapsed in September when the chancellor called for new elections. His decision to reconstitute the old coalition, which raised eyebrows in the country, appeared to have been prompted by a failure to find common political ground with the two other political parties, the Socialists and the Greens. Another and perhaps more important factor was that the politically weakened FPÖ was likely to prove a far more tractable partner than either of the other two parties. Ideologically, moreover, the ÖVP and FPÖ shared similar views on a wide range of domestic matters.

The original coalition between the conservative People’s Party (commonly referred to by its color, blue) and the Freedom Party came about following the national election in late 1999, when Schüssel struck a deal with its leader, Jörg Haider, to bring the FPÖ (commonly referred to by its color, black) into the government. Thus the FPÖ became the first far-right party to share power at the national level in any member state of the European Union. Haider, although a commanding presence in his party, was not invited to serve in the government because of past remarks praising certain aspects of Hitler’s policies and his unrestrained anti-foreigner views. As his grip on the party machinery was loosened by more moderate colleagues, Haider took to criticizing the government, a stance that became more pronounced as FPÖ electoral fortunes in provincial elections declined. It was this criticism that finally prompted the chancellor to dissolve the coalition and call for new elections in 2002.

The results transformed the political map of the country. The chancellor’s ÖVP received 42 percent of the vote. In second place were the Social Democrats (SPÖ, commonly referred to by their color, red) at 37 percent. The Freedom Party was knocked from its high-standing perch, receiving a bare 10 percent, as compared to the 27 percent it had won in the previous national election. The Greens came in last with 9 percent. Thus Schüssel’s move paid off handsomely. He calculated, correctly, that
the FPÖ's plummeting vote in the provincial elections reflected its true standing at the national level. He also succeeded in splitting the Freedom Party by convincing its more moderate members to turn away from its xenophobia and give their support to the European Union's eastward expansion. At the same time, Schüssel adopted some of the more reasonable positions of the FPÖ, such as faster privatization of state-owned industries, pension cutbacks, and retrenchment in government spending (see AJYB 2003, pp. 497–98).

Despite its impressive showing at the polls, the ÖVP still needed a coalition partner to form a government. Initially, the chancellor entered into negotiations with the SPÖ in what was seen as an effort to recreate the broad blue-red coalition that had ruled the country for many years. But while there was widespread popular support for such a government, the Socialists proved unwilling to become a junior partner in a government committed to cutting pensions, reducing social programs, and accelerating the privatization of state-owned industries. Similarly, no common political ground could be found with the Greens, the other possible coalition partner.

Chancellor Schüssel finally turned to his erstwhile Freedom Party partner, and, on March 2, announced the formation of a new government. Although the revival of the blue-black coalition seemed to revive the pre-election status quo, this was far from the case. The Freedom Party was no longer the power it was in 1999, a fact reflected in the reduced role it was given in the new government. The leading members of the FPÖ who stayed on were, moreover, quite amenable to Schüssel's direction in most matters of policy. Furthermore, the chancellor could argue that he and Finance Minister Karl-Heinz Grasser, formerly a leading figure in the FPÖ but now associated with the ÖVP, were the only ones capable of reforming the country's expensive pension and health-care systems, a task that neither the Socialists nor the Greens had much stomach to take on.

Haider still retained a dominant presence within the FPÖ despite having given up formal control over the party machinery, but his political influence had shrunk dramatically at the national level. Although he remained bitterly critical of the chancellor, Haider was eager to stay on as governor of the southern province of Carinthia, and for that he needed ÖVP support. In June, Haider announced that he was prepared for a comeback, and planned to resume the leadership of his party. Leaders of the People's Party referred to changes in the leadership as an "internal matter," but Austrian media cited high-ranking government officials as
saying they would not deal with Haider, and that his return could force new elections.

Notwithstanding Haider's announced intentions, the Freedom Party continued its free-fall in provincial elections that took place in October. These elections confirmed the existing political alignment in the country. In both Tyrol and Upper Austria, the ÖVP, the SPÖ, and the Greens improved their standing at the expense of the Freedom Party, which wound up in fourth place. In Upper Austria, the larger of the two provinces electing local parliaments, the FPÖ managed to garner just 8 percent of the vote as against 19.6 percent in 1999. The ÖVP won 43.4 percent as against 42.7 percent four years earlier, cementing its position as the leading party in the province. The Socialists showed a dramatic improvement, raising their total from 21.8 in 1999 to 26.0 percent, and the Greens almost doubled their percentage of the vote over the same period, going from 8.0 to 15.5 percent. Following the elections, Chancellor Schüssel stated that the results would not affect the national coalition.

Israel and the Middle East

After a hiatus of three-and-a-half years, Israel agreed to restore full diplomatic ties with Austria, which had been downgraded following the Freedom Party's inclusion in the governing coalition. This change in policy was first indicated in July 2003, following talks in Israel between Benita Ferrero-Waldner, the Austrian foreign minister, and her Israeli counterpart, Silvan Shalom. Throughout the period when Israel was represented in Vienna only by a chargé d'affaires, Austria continued to maintain its ambassador in Tel Aviv. In December, following the normalization of relations, the Israeli government elevated its chargé, Avraham Toledo, to the rank of ambassador. The current Austrian ambassador to Israel, Kurt Hengl, continued to serve in Tel Aviv.

When the Freedom Party was first invited into the government in 2000, Israel, along with the EU nations, withdrew their ambassadors in protest. The Sharon government continued to show its displeasure by refusing to send an ambassador to Austria even after the EU countries resumed normal diplomatic ties. Voices were raised in Israel questioning this stand in view of Jerusalem's continued normal relations with other EU countries that included far-right parties in their governing coalition, such as Italy, Portugal, and the Netherlands. What eased Israel's decision to restore full ties with Vienna in 2003 was that the Freedom Party had been reduced to a minor role in the government, and Haider was no longer its leader.

Reciprocating the visit of Ms. Ferrero-Waldner, Foreign Minister
Shalom made an official visit to Vienna in November during which he praised "the new impetus" in relations between the two countries. At a joint press conference, the Austrian foreign minister stated that with Shalom's visit, "we are definitively closing the chapter on sanctions imposed on Austria." The two diplomats discussed initiatives to intensify trade and cultural exchanges between the two countries. Ms. Ferrero-Waldner underscored the importance of the events being planned for 2004 to mark the centenary of the death of Theodor Herzl, the founder of political Zionism, who, she stated, "is an important link connecting Austria and Israel." She also stressed the priority that Austria and the other EU members gave to finding a solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict. At the close of the press conference, both foreign ministers laid wreaths at the Albertina Memorial and the Holocaust Memorial on the Judenplatz in Vienna.

Although the EU was Israel's most important trading partner, with a 33-percent share of Israel's foreign trade (as compared to 28.6 percent for the U.S.), Austria's share was a bare 0.97 percent. As of October, Austrian exports to Israel amounted to 141 million euros, much of this concentrated in machinery and equipment, motor vehicles and parts, paper products, metal goods, iron and steel, textiles, and foodstuffs. The value of Israel's exports to Austria for the comparable period was 61 million euros, mainly involving electronics, machinery, chemicals, metal products, plastic, and agricultural goods. The Austrian-Israeli Trade Commission (AICC) announced in October that it would promote efforts to expand trade relations between the two countries and stimulate investment. Austria, the commission noted, was missing out on 150 million euros (over $187 million) a year in exports to Israel because of a lack of knowledge of the Israeli market. To help alleviate the problem, the AICC initiated a campaign, "Export Market to Israel, 2003." The Federation of Austrian Industry, for its part, saw great potential in mutual research projects.

Cultural exchanges between the two countries were a one-sided affair; numerous Israeli dance, music, and theatrical groups came to Austria, but few Austrian counterparts performed in Israel. The disinclination to come to Israel was attributed to security considerations. Over the summer, a group of 20 Austrian teachers visited Yad Vashem for a training course on teaching about the Holocaust in Austrian schools.

At the UN, Austria joined with other EU countries in voting against Israel on a number of issues relating to the Palestine question. Of special note was the position that Austria and other EU members took in voting for a resolution in July at the UN Commission on Human Rights. Addressing the question of Jewish settlements in the West Bank and
Gaza, it went beyond the language of past calls to “reverse” the settlement policy and explicitly demanded a halt to “the expansion of existing settlements, including natural growth,” as “a first step towards their dismantling.” On the other hand, most EU states on the commission, including Austria, abstained on a resolution expressing “grave concern ... at the gross violation of human rights and international humanitarian law, in particular, acts of extrajudicial killing, closures, collective punishments, the persistence of establishing settlements.” The language was supported by 33 countries, with 15 abstaining and 5 opposed.

In reporting and editorializing about the ongoing Palestinian intifada and Israel’s countermeasures, the Austrian media, by and large, remained critical of Israeli policy.

Austria sided with its EU partners, Germany and France, in opposing the U.S.-led war on Iraq in the absence of a UN Security Council resolution. In mid-February, as hostilities drew near, Austria aroused the ire of U.S. secretary of defense Donald Rumsfeld by forbidding troop movements through its territory or overflights through its airspace. Austria invoked its tradition of neutrality, but Rumsfeld noted that the decision would add days to the journeys of American and allied military personnel. Jörg Haider, who maintained close relations with several Iraqi leaders, paid a visit to Iraq a few weeks before the war began to bring (unauthorized) “greetings” from the Austrian people.

Anti-Semitism

Unlike the situation in several other Western European countries, there were only a few minor anti-Semitic incidents in Austria. The controversial report of the Vienna-based European Monitoring Center on Racism and Xenophobia on the subject of anti-Semitism in Europe—first suppressed and later released—concluded that Arab and Muslim groups were largely responsible for increased attacks against Jews and Jewish institutions. However, in regard to Austria it stated that “no physical attacks were reported, verbal threats and insults were seldom. Anti-Semitic stereotypes in relation to Israel were found essentially in right-wing newspapers and amongst far-right groupings.”

In a controversial poll on world peace taken by the European Commission—the administrative arm of the European Union—59 percent of the sample asserted that Israel was a threat to world peace, the highest percentage for any country on the list provided to respondents. Those who completed the survey in Austria ranked Israel and North
Korea as posing the greatest threats to world peace, each reaching 69 percent in the poll. The U.S. placed third at 63 percent, while Iran received 49 percent. Not only was the poll criticized by Jewish organizations on methodological grounds—notably its failure to give respondents an opportunity to distinguish between concern over the Israel-Palestine conflict in general and Israel in particular—but the very release of this poll after the attempted suppression of the findings of the anti-Semitism survey led to suspicions of anti-Jewish bias.

Vienna was the site of a two-day conference on anti-Semitism in June that brought together representatives from the 55 member countries of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). This was the first major international conference devoted exclusively to the topic of anti-Semitism. It had originally been proposed by members of the Parliamentary Commission, a group of legislators from several countries, to the U.S. State Department, which strongly backed the idea. Indeed, Secretary of State Colin Powell insisted that the conference treat anti-Semitism as a separate subject and not, as a number of states wished, under the broader rubrics of racism and discrimination. More than 350 delegates from Europe, the U.S., Russia, Central Asia, and Canada participated. Former New York City mayor Rudy Giuliani, who headed the U.S. delegation, noted that the meeting was being held only a short distance from the square where great numbers of Austrians welcomed Hitler after the Anschluss of 1938. He said that the U.S. supported the development of common European-wide statistical methods for defining and measuring anti-Semitism, and the enactment of hate-crimes laws.

While a number of conference participants said that OSCE states were not doing enough to combat anti-Semitism, the OSCE itself, founded during the cold war to promote security, had no power to impose its views on member states. Ultimately, the real significance of the gathering was placing the issue of anti-Semitic violence in Europe on the international agenda. Germany offered to host a second OSCE conference on the topic in 2004.

Holocaust-Related Matters

Remembrance

In January, two Austrian journalists, Andreas Kuba and Josef Neu- mayr, initiated a student-run project commemorating the lives of all 80,000 Austrian victims of the Holocaust—the 65,000 Jews, along with
the 15,000 gays, Gypsies, disabled persons, and political opponents murdered by the Nazis. The initiative received endorsements from the Austrian government (in addition to the personal encouragement of President Thomas Klestil) and the Jewish Community of Vienna, and enjoyed financial support from private sources. Each student researched one victim of the Holocaust, documenting his or her life and then writing a personal letter to that individual. All the material would be deposited in the Shoah Center planned for the city of Vienna, and would be made available on a Web site. On May 5, the National Day of Remembrance for the Victims of National Socialism, a public ceremony was held where many of the letters were tied to balloons and released into the sky.

A number of events took place in late April at the site of the infamous Mauthausen concentration camp, where tens of thousands suffered and died during the Nazi period. These included wreath-laying ceremonies, speeches, and visits by school children. At one end of the camp, a small group of American veterans of World War II unveiled a plaque crediting the 26th Infantry Division of the Third Army—known as the Yankee Division—for liberating the camp on May 5–6, 1945. Alongside the plaque, however, stood a much older one recognizing the role of the 11th Armored Division in liberating the camp. At the other end of the camp's stone retaining wall, workers poured concrete for a 25,000-square-foot visitors' center whose purpose was to show Austrian complicity in Nazi crimes. The center would show films and host exhibitions and discussions, while the camp itself was to remain more or less as it was when liberated by the Americans.

The Jewish Welcome Service (JWS), headed by Leon Zelman, brought back to Vienna several groups of Austrian Jews who had been forced to flee during the National Socialist period. One group of about 80 was welcomed in November by President Klestil. Addressing them, the president said that although no one could undo their suffering, the overwhelming majority of Austrians “have the good will to draw the right conclusions from the past.”

A group of 51 Holocaust survivors visited Carinthia for a week in July at the invitation of Jörg Haider, governor of the province. They visited places recalling childhood memories as well as tourist sites. Of special interest was a special exhibition of prewar Jewish cultural and business activities, and reportage and photos of daily life of the Jews of pre-Nazi Carinthia. Fewer than a dozen Jews had returned after the war. Haider, in meeting with the group, expressed joy over the “special visit,” spoke of the “Nazi terror,” and said that he was intent on “promoting a dia-
logue of peace in Carinthia.” But Haider also mentioned alleged “former Carinthians who during the course of World War II chaos immigrated to Israel,” indicating that he refused to acknowledge the true cause of why they left the country and provoking an outcry in Jewish circles.

**RESTITUTION AND COMPENSATION**

Under terms of the agreement signed in Washington on January 17, 2001 (see AJYB 2002, pp. 438–39), the Nationalfond, established in 1995, was to distribute $150 million in an expedited manner to victims of the National Socialist era. Each claimant was to receive $7,000 for losses of rental apartments, small-business leases, household property, and personal valuables and effects. In the event an eligible person died after October 24, 2000, his or her heirs could apply for the money. As of December 31, 2003, payments had been made to 19,500 survivors or heirs living in many different countries. That payments had been made over the year 2003 to only 500 survivors or heirs reflected the difficulties in finding potential beneficiaries.

In addition to these payments to individuals, the Nationalfond provided financial support to medical, cultural, and social-service organizations catering to the needs of survivors. In March, it contributed 70,000 euros to the Amcha Association in Israel, which provided psychological services to survivors who continue to suffer from emotional problems. An estimated 250,000 survivors lived in Israel, and some 500 sought psychological help during 2002. Most traced their roots to Austria, Hungary, Poland, and Russia.

Another major component of the Washington agreement was the establishment by the Austrian government of a General Settlement Fund (GSF) so as to acknowledge, through voluntary payments, Austria’s moral responsibility for losses and damages inflicted upon Jewish citizens and other victims of National Socialism. The fund began its operations in January 2002 with $210 million. These monies, administered by the Nationalfond, were provided by the Republic of Austria and by Austrian companies. Persons or associations persecuted by the Nazi regime or forced to leave the country to escape such persecution, and who/which suffered property losses or damages, were eligible to apply. Categories of property for which compensation could be sought were liquidated businesses, real property, bank accounts, stocks, bonds, mortgages, insurance policies, and occupational or educational losses. Payments would be made either through a “claims-based” process whereby claimants would
submit proof of losses or damages, or through an "equity-based" process—if the claimant could not document specific claims even under relaxed standards of proof, the panel could still approve if there was reason to believe that there had been a loss of property. In addition, Austria was to provide, on a case-by-case basis, in rem restitution of publicly owned property. The deadline for filing claims for the restitution of such properties was May 28, 2003. By that date 19,100 claims had been filed.

Under the terms setting up the GSF, claimants turned down by the claims committee might appeal to a special three-person arbitration panel, one of whose members would be named by the U.S. government, another by the Austrian government, and the third, chosen jointly by them, would serve as chair. Appeals had to be filed no later than October 4, 2003 or, at the latest, one year after the Austrian Historical Commission issued its final report (see below).

A key condition of the agreement was that no money would be paid out of the GSF until all class-action suits against Austria and/or Austrian companies relating to the National Socialist era were dismissed. As the year ended, there were still two such suits pending in U.S. federal courts, one in New York and the other in Los Angeles.

The Holocaust Victims' Information and Support Center (HVISC, or Anlaufstelle), established by the Israelitische Kultusgemeinde (IKG)—the official organization of Jews in Austria—in July 1999, expanded its work of promoting and protecting the interests of Jewish Holocaust victims and their heirs in and from Austria. In seeking to identify and quantify the assets of the Austrian Jewish community before 1938, the Anlaufstelle conducted research into what happened to these assets during the war and whether their owners, heirs, or successor organizations regained possession of any of them, or were properly compensated. These assets included cash, bank accounts, stocks, real estate, books, religious objects, manuscripts, and insurance policies. As part of this activity it continued to work with the Erste Bank on researching Jewish assets that the bank held during the Nazi regime and thereafter.

The HVISC proved particularly effective in securing restitution of artworks, since it was represented on the Austrian Commission for the Investigation of the Provenance of Art Objects and also provided technical support to several of the provinces—notably Styria, Vienna, and Upper Austria—in crafting legislation for restituting artworks from provincial museums and collections.

In 2003, the efforts of the HVISC and the University of Linz accomplished the return from Upper Austria of the painting *Fowl* by the Dutch
painter Melchior Hondecoeter, dating to about 1670. It had belonged to a Jewish woman in Vienna and was confiscated by the Nazis in 1938. Hitler had the painting bought at auction in 1942 for the planned “Museum of the Fuehrer” in Linz. The province of Upper Austria returned the painting at a special ceremony in June to members of the family of Martha Neumann, heir of the original owner. In September, the Austrian Gallery returned a much-valued Klimt painting, Damen Bildnis, to the heirs of Bernhard Altmann.

The National Bibliothek published, in December, a voluminous report identifying the books, papers, original manuscripts, musical scores, and letters in its possession that were of questionable provenance. The issue of looted art gained much added prominence with the publication of the book Was Einmal War (What Once Was), a “handbook of Viennese plundered art collections.” The author, Sophie Lilly, was a researcher and writer who specialized in the investigation and restitution of looted Austrian artworks.

The issue of looted artworks came before the European Parliament late in the year, and it adopted a resolution in December calling on its administrative arm, the European Commission, to take steps to help the legal owners of such art regain their property. The lawmakers called upon the commission to research public and private archives for the purpose of creating a catalog of possibly looted items, and to document existing claims, by the end of 2004.

The U.S. Supreme Court announced in September that it would rule as to whether the Austrian government and its national museum could be sued by a California woman seeking to recover six paintings she said were seized by the Nazis during World War II. The case at hand was essentially an appeal by Austria claiming that U.S. courts did not have jurisdiction. The original suit had been filed in federal court by Maria Altmann alleging the theft of six Klimt paintings from her uncle, Ferdinand Bloch. Valued at $135 million, the paintings had been housed in the Austrian Gallery. Altmann, who fled to the U.S. to escape Nazi persecution, claimed in her suit that the family had been coerced into signing away its rights to the paintings, whereas Austria contended that it owned the paintings based on the will of Altmann’s aunt, who died long before the Nazi takeover. In a landmark decision in California, a three-member panel of the U.S. Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled unanimously, in 2002, that Maria Altmann could sue the Austrian government in U.S. courts to recover the paintings (AJYB 2003, p. 504). This had been the first time a federal appeals court ever required a foreign government to
answer in the U.S. for a Holocaust claim, and it was this ruling that the Austrian government appealed to the Supreme Court.

The Austria Reconciliation Fund continued to make payments to former slave and forced laborers. The fund, drawing on contributions from the Austrian government and Austrian businesses, had disbursed over $300 million to more than 100,000 applicants. Payments ranged from approximately $1,700 to $9,000, with those forced to labor in factories receiving $3,000. These sums were acknowledged to be only token compensation for the enormity of the suffering.

CONFRONTING HISTORY

The year 2003 marked an important turning point for Austria and Austrians in their confrontation with their National Socialist past. One important event in the process was the submission by the Austrian Historical Commission of its final report on the systematic confiscation of property of Jews and other victims. The 14,000 pages, consisting of 53 individual reports on specific topics written by 160 international researchers over four-and-a-half years — at the cost of 6.5 million euros — were distilled in a 453-page summary.

It presented conclusive evidence that a mixture of anti-Semitism, social factors, and greed drove ordinary Austrians to join with the Nazis in looting the homes and businesses of some 200,000 Jews. "This unprecedented expropriation of property," the report stated, "took place with the broad involvement of the Austrian population. Individual, group, and state interests were linked." The commission found that Austrians helped the Nazis drive Jewish tenants out of 59,000 apartments, sometimes in violent break-ins, to make up for a shortage of housing. Austrian companies were quick to take over Jewish-owned businesses so as to eliminate competition: about 18,800 Jewish businesses were liquidated, more than 90 Jewish banking houses closed, and 600 Jewish associations and 325 foundations dissolved by 1945. Historian Clemens Jobloner, the commission chairman, grimly stated: "The looting of some 200,000 Jews who were living in Austria before World War II was the first step toward their annihilation by the Nazis."

The report blamed Austria's postwar governments for their reluctance to indemnify Nazi victims, saying they acted "often halfheartedly and hesitantly." When Jews who lost their belongings and livelihoods sought restitution, they were faced with a maze of legal restrictions that the commission characterized as "labyrinthian" and costly. Where restitution
law was unclear, it was often interpreted negatively for the victims and, in many cases, judges ruled “against the clear intention of the law” and denied relief. In another finding, the report stated that it was not until 1958 that the government helped those surviving Jews whose pension funds had been seized by the Nazis. The “main problem with the restitution,” it noted, “was the Austrian refusal to accept any responsibility for Nazi crimes and their consequences.” This was rooted in Austria’s insistence that it had been an invaded country, and therefore not a willing partner in Nazi crimes. Only after Chancellor Franz Vranitzky, on a visit to Israel in 1993, acknowledged some moral responsibility did Austria begin to recognize its obligation to the survivors of the Holocaust and their heirs. But even then, it took the government eight more years to set up a compensation fund.

The report was generally well received, but some scholars felt that it did not go far enough in emphasizing and condemning Austrian collaboration with the Nazis.

Also in 2003, for the first time, research findings were released about the relationship between National Socialism and Austrian universities, particularly in the sciences. An international symposium was held at the University of Vienna on June 5–6 on “Austria and National Socialism: Implications for Scholarship in Science and the Humanities.” The idea for the symposium was suggested to President Klestil by Eric Kandel of Columbia University, who received the Nobel Prize for Medicine in 2000. The Austrian-born Kandel had been forced to flee Austria as a child along with his family in 1939. The symposium, attended by internationally renowned scientists and educators, sought to convey to the Austrian public and to the scientific community—in particular the younger generation of scholars and students—the disastrous effects of Nazi rule on Austrian education and research.

Historian Mitchell Ash of the Institute of History at the University of Vienna noted in his contribution to the symposium that there were some 30 scholarly studies underway dealing with the topic. Austrian universities had long contended that the Nazis had abused science, and that they, the universities, were victims of this abuse. Professor Ash, in contrast, delineated the mutually beneficial relationship between the Nazis and the universities. The research he reviewed covered a range of topics, such as the expulsion of Jewish scientists and its consequences for scientific research, censorship at university libraries, and scholarly contributions by Austrian scientists to the so-called principles of racial purity advocated by the Nazis. A finding of particular interest was that already in the
1920s racist thinking had permeated Austrian academia, and Jewish scientists were not promoted to professorial rank for "reasons of race."

The city of Vienna launched a research project in January to uncover the sources of all public real estate that could possibly have been acquired unlawfully during the National Socialist period. In cases where return of real estate occurred under the restitution laws of 1946 and 1947, historians were to investigate whether restitution was carried out in a fair manner. Acting under the authority of the Federal Law of the Restitution Fund, an arbitration body was to decide whether properties had been illegally confiscated and, if so, which of those properties were to be returned to their former owners or their heirs.

The city of Vienna also announced, in September, that it would review all "graves of honor" awarded to citizens while Austria was part of Nazi Germany. Thousands of such awards were given to prominent citizens who performed outstanding service to the Nazi regime. The move was seen as a new step in Austria's effort to atone for the role it played as a partner to Nazi Germany. The initiative was suggested by David Ellenson, a city councilor of the Green Party, whose grandfather, an RAF pilot, was shot down over Belgium. Earlier, in May, the city took the controversial step of stripping the designation from an officer in the German Luftwaffe who shot down 258 enemy planes during the war.

A report issued by the Los Angeles-based Simon Wiesenthal Center stated that Austria had an exceptionally poor record in bringing Nazi war criminals to justice. The 40-page report, posted on the organization's Web site in July, reviewed the investigation and prosecution of Nazis in 39 countries between April 2002 and March 2003. Austria received a grade of "D," along with such other countries as Argentina, Australia, Britain, Croatia, Denmark, and France. "Austria," the report stated, "has failed to convict a Holocaust perpetrator in more than two decades and refuses to establish a special prosecution agency despite the existence of numerous suspects in the country."

The Anlaufstelle (HVISC) continued to microfilm IKG archival material, under a contract with the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. This included the documentation of social services provided to the hard-pressed Jewish community of Austria when the IKG came under Nazi control and was forced to do its bidding. Burial and death certificates were also to be microfilmed. In November, a contract was signed between the museum, the IKG, and the Jerusalem-based Central Archives of the History of the Jewish People to microfilm the latter's holdings of IKG Holocaust-related material. The IKG also contracted with the Utah-
based Church of the Latter Day Saints (Mormons) in December for the church to microfilm its records of pre-1938 births and deaths in the Austrian Jewish community.

**JEWISH COMMUNITY**

**Demography**

The number of Jews registered with the Israelitische Kultusgemeinde (IKG) stood at 6,792 at the end of the year, a decrease of 82 from 2002. The decline was attributed to the rising death rate of the community's aging population, continued emigration of young people, and the absence of immigrants to make up these losses. Knowledgeable observers placed the actual number of Jews (as defined by Jewish law) at about 12,000. Following a long historical pattern, the overwhelming majority of Jews lived in Vienna; only some 300–400 made their homes elsewhere, primarily in the large provincial cities of Salzburg, Graz, Baden, and Linz.

**Communal Affairs**

The IKG continued to experience severe financial difficulties in paying for rising security costs, the improvement of Jewish schools, renovating synagogues, and providing services to members of the community having special needs. As a result, IKG president Ariel Muzicant announced severe cuts in personnel and services. These would have been unnecessary, Muzicant argued, had the federal government provided the financial resources to which the IKG was entitled. Upon the conclusion of the Washington agreement of 2001, Muzicant had demanded a separate agreement with the Austrian government to help underwrite the IKG's expenditures (see AJYB 2003, p. 501). He refused to take GSF money for the IKG, since that was earmarked for individual victims of the National Socialist regime.

In response to Muzicant's demand, the government in 2003 offered the community interim financial aid in the form of interest-free loans amounting to 772,000 euros annually for 2003, 2004, and 2005, which the IKG accepted. In addition, the Austrian provinces agreed in November to make an immediate payment of half of the 18 million euros they had pledged to the Federation of Jewish Communities of Austria under an agreement signed in May 2002.
A 14th-century kabbalistic manuscript housed in the IKG library in Vienna until stolen by the Nazis turned up in a New York auction house in 2003. After the auction house sold the manuscript over the objections of the IKG, Erika Jakubowitz, the IKG executive director, contacted the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Immigration and Customs Enforcement Division, and it barred delivery of the manuscript to the buyer. A description from the auction catalog stated that the Hebrew manuscript was an early version of a part of Sefer Yetzirah (Book of Formation), the "oldest and most esoteric of all kabbalistic texts." Jakubowitz said the manuscript was one of 625 looted by the Nazis on Kristallnacht, November 9–10, 1938. Only six other of those documents had been recovered and restored to the IKG, and none since the 1950s.

Among the exhibitions mounted by the Vienna Jewish Museum was one entitled “Jewish Gangsters in America 1890–1980” by artist Oz Almog. In the exhibition, which was to run from December 3, 2003 through April 25, 2004, Almog created an impressive documentary summary of an entire epoch of crimes committed by Jewish gangsters. Through pictures, newspaper articles, and official documents, it showed how such criminals as Meyer Lansky, Benjamin “Bugsy” Siegel, and Louis “Lepke” Buchalter had a determining influence on the development of organized crime in America.

Another exhibition at the museum, running from November 18, 2003 through January 10, 2004, was of paintings by the Israeli artist Osnat Kollek-Sachs. It included paintings of her father, Teddy Kollek, who served as mayor of Jerusalem for some 30 years.

An exhibition about Jews and the musical world of Vienna entitled Quasi Una Fantasia (Almost a Fantasy), was mounted by the museum from May 14 to September 21. In featuring the lives and work Arnold Schoenberg, Ignaz Brüll, Karl Goldmark, and other Jewish composers, it demonstrated the role that Viennese Jews played in the creation of modern as well as classical music. But it also showed that the alleged Jewish-Austrian “musical symbiosis” was nothing more than wishful thinking—Jewish musicians were expelled and murdered between 1938 and 1945.

An exhibition of the life and works of the writer Stefan Zweig opened in May at the Austrian Jewish Museum in Eisenstadt. Entitled “Stefan Zweig—A European from Europe,” it depicted the various phases of the author’s life through photographs, letters, Zweig’s own writings, and other documents—such as his school grades and letters from fellow author Joseph Roth warning about the dangers of National Socialism for
the Jews. An article from the Nazi daily Der Stürmer dated August 22, 1940, about "Jew Stefan Zweig," described him as having contributed "to spoiling and jewing German art." The exhibition closed September 20.

**Personalia**

Author Frederic Morton was awarded the Austrian Decoration of Honor for Science and the Arts First Class by President Klestil. Born Fritz Mandelbaum in 1924, Morton left Austria with his family for the U.S., which became his adopted home. Twice an American Book Award nominee, Morton wrote numerous books, stories, and articles. Among his books were *The Rothschilds*, *A Nervous Splendor*, and *The Forever Street*. In singling out *The Forever Street*, which has been translated into 23 languages, Klestil said that it "brings alive the life of Vienna at the turn of the century, the years between the two world wars, and the period giving rise to National Socialism." The president further remarked: "never has the Jewish contribution to the cultural life of Austria been so expressively represented" as in this book.

Murray Gordon Silberman
East-Central Europe and the Balkans

DOMINATING THE YEAR in this part of the world were the war in Iraq, European integration, and the challenge of balancing national loyalties between the United States and Europe. On the domestic front, countries had to deal with struggling economies, endemic corruption, and organized crime.

At the end of March, less than two weeks after the attack on Iraq began, foreign ministers from seven former communist states—Romania, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Lithuania, Slovenia, Estonia, and Latvia—officially approved the formal protocols of adhesion to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). These countries were to join in May 2004, pending their parliaments’ ratification of the treaties.

Washington firmly supported NATO’s eastward expansion, and most of the NATO newcomers backed the U.S.-led war on Iraq, to the point where U.S. defense secretary Donald Rumsfeld said they reflected a “new Europe” as opposed to the “old Europe” dominated by France and Germany. French president Jacques Chirac, on the other hand, criticized the reluctance of the NATO newcomers to back his own antiwar stance. Bulgarian foreign minister Solomon Passy, a driving force behind Bulgaria’s entry into NATO, told Israel’s Ha’aretz newspaper later in the year that it was “no coincidence that the newly liberated democracies of Europe all took similar positions on the Iraqi crisis. We have a sensitivity to dictatorships. Because of this, our empathy for the suffering of the Iraqi people was much greater.”

Five of the new NATO members, along with Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic (all of which joined NATO in 1999), were slated to join the European Union in May 2004. The European Parliament approved the accession of the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, Slovenia, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Malta, Cyprus, and Slovakia in April. Romania and Bulgaria were expected to join the EU in 2007.

Israel sought to strengthen its already close ties with Eastern European countries in the hope that they might serve to counteract the influence of Israel’s critics in both the EU and NATO. An Israeli diplomatic official told the Jerusalem Post that the relationships Israel had developed with these countries stemmed, in part, from their strong pro-American orientation as well as from their reaction against the heavily pro-Arab
foreign-policy bias of the former Soviet Union. Anti-Semitism was a concern in East-Central Europe, but, in most countries of the region, not to the extent that it was in Western Europe, where there were large populations of recent Muslim immigrants.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

Based on the Dayton accords that ended the 1992–95 war, Bosnia remained an independent country divided into two ethnic ministates: a Serb republic and a Muslim-Croat federation, jointly run by a three-person collective presidency. The economy remained extremely depressed throughout the year. Only about half of the 1.8 million refugees who fled Bosnia during the war had returned since the conflict ended. On a visit to the country in June, Pope John Paul II urged Bosnians to work together for a "genuine purification of memory through mutual forgiveness." The pope met with leaders of local religious communities, including the president of Bosnia’s Jewish community. One sign of optimism for Bosnia’s future came in August, when workers completed the structural rebuilding of the 16th-century Old Bridge in Mostar, destroyed by Bosnian Croatian fire in 1993. Alija Izetbegovic, who led the Muslims during the war and served in the presidency until stepping down in 2000, died in October at age 78.

In February in Sarajevo, the Polish ambassador to Bosnia presented Poland’s “Auschwitz Cross” honor to Bosnian Jewish Auschwitz survivor Greta Ferusic. Ferusic was to have received the award at a ceremony in Belgrade in 1991, but had refused to leave Sarajevo at the time because she feared that war was imminent.

On October 28, the Jewish community in Mostar officially opened its small new community headquarters in the presence of the deputy to the UN high representative in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the mayor of Mostar, and the American consul there. Two days later a ceremony marked the inauguration of the elaborate Bejt Shalom Jewish Cultural Center and synagogue in the town of Doboj, in the Serbian-controlled part of the country.

There were a number of Jewish cultural events during the year. Important among them was the production of the play Visiting Mr. Green at Sarajevo’s winter festival in February. Written by the American Jeff Baron, it was directed by Stefan Sablic, cantor of the Jewish community in Belgrade, and starred two leading Jewish actors from Belgrade. The performance drew a large, enthusiastic audience.
Bulgaria

Bulgaria faced serious problems of corruption and organized crime. Law-enforcement authorities appeared unable to cope with a surge of drug smuggling, human trafficking, racketeering, and counterfeiting. In October, the secretary of a government commission that coordinated anticorruption efforts announced that more than 200 government officials had been dismissed. About 1,800 such cases had been investigated, hundreds in the Interior Ministry alone.

Like other postcommunist states, Bulgaria was a strong ally of President Bush in the war on Iraq. Foreign Minister Solomon Passy defended Bulgaria's position in a speech on April 2 in which he compared opponents of the war to pacifists prior to World War II who did not want to fight Hitler. "What is just need not be popular, and the popular is not always just," he said. Bulgaria sent a 500-member stabilization force to Iraq in the summer, and Passy made a one-day visit to Iraq in August.

In May, Passy, who is Jewish, visited Israel. Reportedly, he was pressured by the U.S. and Israel not to meet with Yasir Arafat, and by the EU to meet with him. Prime Minister Sharon announced he would not meet with Passy if Passy saw Arafat. According to news reports, Passy nearly canceled his trip, but in the end did not meet with either Arafat or Sharon. In retaliation for his failure to speak with Arafat, the Palestinians canceled all their scheduled meetings with him. In an interview with Ha'aretz, Passy denied that he had ever intended to meet with either Arafat or Sharon. "I wanted to meet with Arafat? Who told you that?" he was quoted as saying. "Why did I boycott Sharon? I never even requested such a meeting."

A number of public and Jewish community events in March commemorated the 60th anniversary of the rescue of Bulgaria's Jews during the Holocaust. The government named March 10 as Holocaust Memorial Day, and the National Assembly, Bulgaria's parliament, unanimously adopted a declaration condemning all forms of xenophobia, anti-Semitism, and religious and ethnic prejudice. A national ceremony took place in Kyustendil attended by dignitaries such as Foreign Minister Passy, Interior Minister Georgi Petkanov, National Assembly deputies, Israeli embassy officials, and members of an association of Bulgarian Jews in Israel. Kyustendil was the hometown of Dimitar Peshev, vice president of the Bulgarian parliament during World War II, who mobilized action to prevent the deportation of 50,000 Jews in March 1943. Other events included a ceremony in the great synagogue in Sofia, a rally
in Plovdiv addressed by Bulgarian vice president Angel Marin, special classes in schools, a gala concert, and an international conference in Sofia on the subject of tolerance. Former Israeli president Yitzhak Navon paid a visit to the country for the observances, and a commemorative coin and postage stamp were issued.

In September, the National Assembly passed a law banning discrimination on grounds of race, gender, religion, disability, age, or sexual orientation.

JEWISH COMMUNITY

About 5,000 Jews lived in Bulgaria, although Jewish communal officials estimated that the number could be as many as 8,000. According to the JDC, approximately 1,400 Jews were over the age of 65. Bulgarian Jews maintained international contacts with other Jewish communities and attended international meetings, including a conference of Jews in the Balkans held in Thessaloniki, Greece, in April. Bulgarian Jews had a partnership arrangement with the Jewish Federation of Kansas City, which, early in the first year, sent a delegation of Jewish community professionals to meet with colleagues in Bulgaria.

At least half of Bulgaria's Jews lived in Sofia, nearly 1,500 were estimated to live in Plovdiv, and perhaps 500 in Varna. Supported in part by the JDC, Sofia boasted a full infrastructure for Jewish communal life, including a synagogue, a lively Jewish community center with a kosher restaurant, an extensive social welfare network (including an old age home), social and educational programs for young people, seniors, and the middle generation, and many other activities. Some 350 Jewish children made up nearly half the student body of a state-run school in Sofia that taught Hebrew and Jewish subjects in addition to the standard curriculum, and received support from the Lauder Foundation. The community maintained a Jewish camp near Sofia that had summer and winter activities, and it hosted a range of cultural activities throughout the year. In July, for example, the Canadian klezmer group Shtreiml performed at the summer camp as well as in Sofia and Plovdiv.

Jewish communities around Bulgaria were linked through the Shalom Bulgaria organization, which had 19 branches and ran cultural, educational, and communal programs, including Sunday schools in Sofia, Plovdiv, Burgas, Ruse, and Varna for about 300 children aged 6–16. In September, communities throughout the country marked the European Day of Jewish Culture. In December, a gala ceremony inaugurated the newly restored
nineteenth-century Zion Synagogue in Plovdiv, one of two functioning synagogues in the country. The city's mayor, the Israeli ambassador, and other dignitaries and government officials joined Jewish community representatives in the celebration. Funding for the restoration was arranged by the U.S. Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad and the London-based Hanadiv Charitable Trust.

The Jewish Heritage Program of the World Monuments Fund announced a grant toward the restoration of the synagogue in Varna. Built around 1890, the synagogue was still owned by the small Varna Jewish community and had been designated a National Cultural Monument. There were also plans in Varna to erect a memorial to the 200 victims, including 66 children, who died in 1940 when a ship, the Salvador, carrying illegal Jewish immigrants to Palestine, sank in the Sea of Marmora. Hanukkah was, as usual, marked with high-profile celebrations in Sofia, where a candle was lit by the Bulgarian president. During the year, the community also celebrated the 70th anniversary of its newspaper, Jewish News. Among the events was a roundtable featuring editors, publishers, and journalists from other ethnic minority publications.

A film called Journey to Jerusalem by Ivan Nichev won praise in Bulgaria. Based on a true story, it recounted the plight of a young Jewish brother and sister who, trying to flee Nazi Germany for Palestine in 1942, found themselves stranded in Sofia. A previous film by Nichev, After the End of the World, was about an Israeli professor who returns to his Bulgarian birthplace after World War II.

Croatia

Unlike a number of its neighbors, Croatia did not back the U.S.-led war on Iraq. In a televised address after the attack was launched, President Stipe Mesic said that while Croatia would remain a friend of the United States, the war lacked legitimacy since it was not based on a UN Security Council resolution. He said, "We cannot accept the establishment of a model of behavior in international relations that would allow, to put it simply, those who possess force to decide to take military action against the regime of any country. For if we accept that in the case of one country, with what moral right could we turn it down in the case of another?" The U.S. ambassador commented in an interview that Croatia "chose not to be part of that coalition, and has decided to take a low profile, and that's very disappointing."
There were indications through the year of growing dissatisfaction with the Social Democratic government led by Prime Minister Ivica Racan. Rightist and nationalist sentiment was commonly expressed, sometimes spilling over into racism. Croatian skiing star Ivica Kostelić, for example, was quoted as making pro-Nazi statements, though she later apologized. Folk singer Marko Perković Thompson was a favorite of nationalists, many of whom frequented his concerts. In February, Thompson shouted a slogan used by Croatia’s Nazi forces during World War II. This happened at a huge street party in Zagreb welcoming home Croatia’s handball team, newly crowned as world champions. Dozens of fans among the 50,000-strong crowd answered with Nazi salutes. Prime Minister Racan condemned the incident, saying that such behavior “cannot be tolerated in Croatia.” In June, a poll indicated that 86 percent of Croatians felt that corruption was widespread in the country, and some 30 percent thought that Racan’s center-left government was more corrupt than that of the late President Franjo Tudjman, a fervent nationalist who died in 1999.

At the end of the year, Croatia swung sharply to the political right, but the country’s new leadership was careful to distance itself from the extremists. The ruling Social Democrats (SDP) lost parliamentary elections to the conservative Croatian Democratic Community (HDZ), returning the HDZ to power after four years in the opposition. Prime Minister Racan stepped down and a new center-right government headed by Ivo Sanader took office on December 23. Sanader announced a reformist, pro-Western platform emphasizing respect for law and human rights. In doing so he hoped to restore international trust in the HDZ, whose nationalist agenda under Tudjman in the 1990s had isolated Croatia. Croatia had formally applied to join the European Union in February, and Sanader’s agenda included support for EU membership.

In May, President Mesic took part, for the first time, in a ceremony commemorating the scores of thousands of people—mainly Serbs, Jews, and Roma—murdered by Croatian fascists at the notorious Jasenovac concentration camp. At the same time, however, thousands of Croats gathered in the southern Austrian town of Bleiburg to commemorate the murder by communist partisans of tens of thousands of Nazi-allied Croatian troops and civilians repatriated by the British against their will after World War II. The Croatian government announced it would purchase land in Austria to erect a monument to those killed in what has been described as an uncompromising “squaring of accounts” at a time of bit-
ter postwar revenge and lawlessness. Croatian nationalists asserted that the killing of the returning pro-fascist troops and civilians was a worse atrocity than the slaughter at Jasenovac.

Israeli president Moshe Katzav spent three days in Croatia in July, becoming the first Israeli head of state to visit the country since Croatia became independent in 1991. He met with President Mesic (who had visited Israel in 2001) and with the Jewish community. Katzav also paid homage at Jasenovac, accompanied by government officials, Jewish, Serb, and Roma representatives, and a few elderly survivors.

Croatia’s Jews numbered about 2,000, about 1,500 of them in the capital, Zagreb, and the rest in eight other communities. In September, a new Jewish elementary school opened in Zagreb, the first in the lands of the former Yugoslavia since World War II. Financed in part by the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation and located in a building recently restituted to the Jewish community, it was named the Lea Deutsch School after a famous Jewish child actress—Croatia’s “Shirley Temple”—who was killed during the Holocaust. The school started with a first grade of 11 pupils, but was expected eventually to have eight grades. Most children in Zagreb’s Jewish community were products of mixed marriages; indeed, most of the children in the new school had only one Jewish grandparent.

A variety of Jewish cultural activities took place throughout the year. In March, around Purim time, two Israeli musicians toured several small communities in Croatia as part of the “Soul Train” program begun several years earlier to bring the “soul of Israel” to Diaspora Jews. In May, Croatia’s first Jewish museum opened in Dubrovnik. In October, during Sukkot, the Zagreb community organized the annual Beyahad Jewish cultural get-together. Held on the Adriatic island of Hvar, it attracted some 250 Jews from all parts of the former Yugoslavia, including some who had emigrated to Israel, North America, or other countries. Beyahad included educational, cultural, and social events, including the pre-premiere of Address Unknown, a new play directed by Belgrade cantor Stefan Sablic.

Beyahad also honored the World War II heroism of a Jewish combat battalion made up of inmates of a former Italian-run concentration camp on the Croatian island of Rab. The Rab Jewish battalion—made up originally of 245 Jews aged 15–30 with little military training and a medical unit of 35 girls who offered to serve as nurses—was formed in September 1943 after fascist Italy had surrendered. The former prisoners disarmed the Italian guards and organized military units. With the help of Croatian partisans, they reached the mainland and joined a partisan division fighting the Nazis and the pro-Nazi Croatian fascists. Other for-
mer prisoners joined the Jewish battalion, and it grew to nearly 700 members. More than 100 were killed in the fighting. An exhibition of photographs of the battalion was shown at Beyahad, which also hosted a reunion of about 15 elderly survivors. An official commemoration had taken place a month earlier on Rab.

Early in the year, the Croatian government indicated its willingness to support construction of a Jewish center and synagogue on the site of Zagreb’s old main synagogue, which had been destroyed during World War II. The site, now used as a parking lot, was restituted to the Jewish community in 1999. The government said it would provide the equivalent of $42,000 for the preliminary stages of the project, during which construction bids would be sought. The Zagreb Jewish community initiated a series of cultural events aimed at fund-raising. The design and final use of a new building was still under discussion.

Meanwhile, the president of the Jewish community in Osijek and an associate were trying to raise interest in rebuilding the synagogue in neighboring Vukovar for use as a center for multiethnic peace. The grandiose Vukovar synagogue was damaged during World War II, then sold, and torn down in 1958 under communist rule. Vukovar, near the border of Croatia and Serbia, was almost totally destroyed during the 1992–95 Balkan wars. No Jews lived now in Vukovar, but about 60 Jews from nearby towns in both Croatia and Serbia celebrated Passover there to draw attention to the synagogue project.

Czech Republic

On February 2, Vaclav Havel stepped down as the nation’s president. Jewish leaders praised Havel, a former dissident playwright who was a major force in the fall of communism and emerged as a champion of democracy, religious freedom, and civil rights. Throughout his time in office—first as democratic president of Czechoslovakia and then as president of the independent Czech Republic—Havel demonstrated sympathy and support for Jewish causes and acted to keep the memory of the Holocaust alive. Within weeks of assuming the presidency of Czechoslovakia at the end of 1989, he flew to Israel, taking a planeload of Czechoslovak Jews with him.

It took three attempts before Parliament finally elected a new president, former prime minister Vaclav Klaus, a conservative economist affiliated with the opposition Civic Democratic Party. A longtime rival of Havel, Klaus, 61, was elected on February 28 to a five-year term.
In January, before he left office, Havel joined the leaders of Britain, Spain, Italy, Portugal, Hungary, Poland, and Denmark in signing an op-ed expressing solidarity with the U.S. over the Iraq crisis and urging strong UN Security Council action to force Baghdad to disarm. It said, "the Iraqi regime and its weapons of mass destruction represent a clear threat to world security." Nonetheless, in mid-March, less than a week before the U.S.-led attack on Iraq, a poll by the Center for Public Opinion Research indicated that 79 percent of Czechs opposed an attack without a prior resolution by the Security Council. On March 20, after the onset of hostilities, President Klaus said that "the Czech Republic is not part of the coalition that launched a military operation against Iraq," and Prime Minister Vladimir Spidla declared that the government's position on the war was "precisely halfway" between those of the United States and the European Union. Spidla said the government regretted that the U.S.-led coalition had not obtained a new mandate from the UN before acting. The Czech Republic eventually sent about 700 military personnel to Iraq.

With the onset of the war, security measures were beefed up in Prague's historic Jewish quarter, which attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors a year.

In July, Foreign Minister Cyril Svoboda made a major diplomatic tour of the Middle East. He started in Baghdad, where he met with the U.S. administrator in Iraq, L. Paul Bremer, and reopened the Czech embassy, which had been closed ahead of the war in March. He also visited a Czech military field hospital in Al-Basrah. The next day Svoboda went on to Israel, where he had talks with Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom. He pleased the Israelis by not visiting Palestinian Authority territory or meeting with Palestinian leaders.

In a June referendum, more than 77 percent of Czechs endorsed accession to the European Union. In November, the lower house of Parliament voted to make January 27 the national Holocaust memorial day.

Right-wing extremism and racism—particularly manifested against Roma—remained a major issue in the country. In November, an Interior Ministry report stated that in 2002 police registered 544 criminal acts by political extremists, up from 534 in 2001; 469 in 2000; 449 in 1999; and 364 in 1996. Acknowledging that the rate of increase of such acts was waning thanks to better law enforcement and careful monitoring by the secret service, the ministry nevertheless warned that extremist ideology was spreading on the Internet.

In January, four men were sentenced to at least four years in prison for
a racially motivated attack against three Roma that took place two years earlier in Ostrava. Also in January, authorities in Prague issued a last-minute ban on a planned march through the Jewish quarter by a right-wing extremist group. The authorities had come under heavy pressure from local and international Jewish groups to prevent the march, which, organizers said, was aimed at commemorating “Palestinian Holocaust victims.” About 40 demonstrators had already gathered near Jewish sites when word came that the march was off. They then marched for about half an hour through other parts of the historic Old Town carrying flaming torches. Jewish leaders welcomed the decision to ban the march but said it should have been taken earlier. About 150 people had gathered near the Jewish quarter ready to block the extremists from entering the district. In April, the Sparta Prague soccer team was fined $3,000 after fans shouted racist and anti-Semitic slogans during a match.

Early in the year, sociologist Tomas Kamin filed a criminal defamation complaint about a book, *Taboos in Social Sciences*, by Petr Bakalar. He charged that the book sought “to present racist and anti-Semitic views” in the guise of science. The president of the Prague Jewish community compared the book to Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*. In June, Michal Zitko began a retrial before a Prague district court for publishing a Czech translation of *Mein Kampf*. He had been sentenced by the same court to a five-year suspended sentence in 2001, but the Supreme Court quashed the verdict in 2002 and ordered a new trial (see AJYB 2003, pp. 518–19). The retrial resulted in a 22-month suspended sentence and a three-year period of probation for defaming the Jewish people. The verdict, handed down in August, also threw out a 2-million-crown ($71,000) fine.

Skinhead groups continued to be active. For example, some skinheads attacked a Roma wedding in September. In November, Jewish leaders protested that police allowed a private skinhead rock concert in a village near Prague. During the year, there were several cases of vandalism against Jewish sites, including the desecration of Jewish cemeteries in Turnov and Trutnov and Holocaust memorials in Ostrava and Krupka.

In July, UNESCO added the former Jewish quarter and the St. Procopius Basilica in Trebic to its list of World Heritage Sites. The Jewish Heritage Program of the World Monuments Fund allocated grants toward the restoration of synagogues in Caslav and Dolni Kounice. In December, the Czech-German Fund for the Future announced a $92,000 donation toward the reconstruction of the nineteenth-century synagogue in Hartmanice, which will be turned into a museum. The synagogue had been bought a year earlier by a private individual who organized a civic
association in order to save the building. Restoration work progressed on the Smichov synagogue in Prague, which will be used as an archive and reference center for the Prague Jewish Museum. The 13th-century Old-New Synagogue in Prague reopened for worship on Passover following restoration work to repair damage caused by the devastating floods of August 2002. Prague’s Pinkas Synagogue, used today as a Holocaust memorial, was reopened in September. Another former synagogue, in Roudnice nad Labem, was sold off by the Jewish community when no renter could be found. The abandoned, century-old synagogue was seriously damaged during the 2002 floods.

Cleanup and repair continued through the year on various sites damaged by the floods. German foreign minister Joschka Fischer forwarded the Prague Jewish community nearly $12,000 for flood relief. He had received this sum in 2002 when he was honored for his efforts to bolster German-Israeli relations and find a peaceful resolution to the conflict in the Middle East (see AJYB 2003, p. 495). A charity ball organized by the Czech Union of Jewish Youth in February raised more than $5,000 to help repair flood damage at the Terezin Memorial, which suffered more than $2 million in damage—the flooding turned the whole town of Terezin into a lake five feet deep. Organizers said that the Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) had agreed to match the sum raised by the ball. The JDC also spurred efforts to preserve a recently discovered hidden synagogue in Terezin. It planned a multiyear conservation effort in partnership with the U.S. Commission for the Preservation of America’s Heritage Abroad and the Terezin Memorial. In September, American Express sent the Terezin Memorial a check for $100,000 for repair of flood damage. In December, the JDC distributed $100,000 on behalf of the U.S.-based Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation to reconstruct dining facilities at a public school complex in Prague. A Jewish philanthropist from Milwaukee also donated $20,000 for a playground at the school.

JEWISH COMMUNITY

Some 3,000–4,000 Jews were known to live in the Czech Republic. The Prague Jewish community had about 1,500 members, though hundreds of unaffiliated Jews were believed to live in the city, as well as an estimated 2,000 Israelis. Prague’s Jews were divided among a number of sometimes bickering institutions and congregations, including the official Orthodox community and several Reform and Conservative groups.

In 2002 the Federation of Czech Jewish Communities voted to accept
the Conservative movement as a recognized stream of Judaism, and altered its bylaws to allow member communities to accept patrilineal Jews—people with Jewish fathers and non-Jewish mothers. In the summer of 2003 a search was launched for a Conservative rabbi to serve Czech communities, and in November the official Prague community voted to recognize Conservative Jewry and to enable non-Orthodox congregations and institutions to receive community funding and use community-owned synagogues.

A Hanukkah celebration in Prague designed to introduce assimilated Jews to Judaism drew 1,500–2,000 participants, far more than expected. The event, widely advertised in the media and through posters, was organized by the nondenominational Bejt Praha congregation, but also received support from Prague's official Jewish community, the Prague Jewish Museum, and the Federation of Czech Jewish Communities.

A cyber-porn scandal highlighted a leadership crisis at Prague's only Jewish school, a combined elementary and high school funded by the Lauder Foundation, which had nearly 200 pupils. A conflict over the new school principal erupted in May, when the Jewish community appointed Vera Dvorakova over the acting principal, Petr Karas, who remained at the school as a teacher. Dozens of teachers, students, and parents demonstrated outside Jewish community headquarters to protest Dvorakova's selection. Karas was fired in October after administrators concluded he was responsible for the downloading of pornographic images, even though Karas denied the charges and a server administrator confessed in writing to having been the culprit. Teachers and students went on strike to protest the firing. Dvorakova herself ended up being dismissed for her handling of the scandal. By the end of the year, Karas was reinstated as a teacher, and the teacher who led the strike, Katerina Dejmalova, was installed as acting principal. Some observers suggested that the conflict reflected broader rifts in the Jewish community.

As usual, there were many Jewish-themed cultural events, conferences, and publications. Among them, the Austrian Institute for Jewish History, the Prague Jewish Museum, and the Czech Interior Ministry's archive commission signed an agreement in January allowing greater accessibility to archives dealing with Jewish cultural and economic life in the region during the 16th and 17th centuries. An exhibition of synagogue textiles from the collection of the Jewish Museum opened in March in the Imperial Stables at Prague Castle. In June, a two-day seminar brought together some 30 Jewish actors, directors, playwrights, and producers from a dozen European countries. Titled "Jewish Spaces in European
Theater,” it was convened by the London-based European Association for Jewish Culture. Also in June, an international seminar convened in Prague to examine contemporary anti-Semitism and Holocaust education in the Czech Republic. The annual summer “Nine Gates” festival celebrating the historical links between Czech, German, and Jewish cultures was dedicated this year to the 55th anniversary of the State of Israel. The organizers also included a session in memory of victims of the Holocaust who came from the Prague neighborhood of Holesovice, which served as a transit site to Nazi concentration camps. The second annual “Escape To Freedom” bike rally from Terezin to Prague took place in June, organized by HaKoach, the national Jewish sports club, and sponsored by the JDC and the non-Orthodox Liberal Union. In August, works by Jewish authors persecuted by the Nazis were given a public reading in Terezin as part of a German-Czech cultural festival. A cultural and information center for Russian-speaking Jews, run by the Association of Russian-Speaking Jews in the Czech Republic, opened in October in Prague. In December, a ten-foot tall bronze statue was unveiled in Prague commemorating Franz Kafka.

Viktor Feuerlicht, cantor of Prague’s Old-New Synagogue and a mainstay of the Jewish community, died in March at the age of 84. Also in March, at a ceremony in Buckingham Palace, Britain’s Queen Elizabeth knighted 93-year-old Nicholas Winton, a former stockbroker who saved the lives of 669 young Jews by helping them flee Czechoslovakia on the eve of the Nazi invasion in 1939. In the summer, Yad Vashem named an 89-year-old Czech woman as a Righteous among the Nations for having risked her life to save a Slovak Jewish boy at the Ravensbruck concentration camp.

**Greece**

There was concern throughout the year about a growing climate of anti-Semitism in Greece linked to the Middle East conflict. Aside from a few instances of vandalism, there were no physical attacks, but observers described a “fiercely anti-Israel” tone in the media and among a broad sector of the intelligentsia, which sometimes spilled over into anti-Semitism. Jean Cohen, the Athens correspondent for the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, told an interviewer that although Jews “have never had it better” in Greece, “the Greek news media is anti-Semitic,” with newspapers frequently running stereotypical cartoons and making gratuitous references to the Jewish identity of specific people.
In March, Moses Constantinis, president of the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece, wrote an op-ed in the Forward pointing out that "the Greek public does not clearly distinguish between Israelis and Jews, and even government officials often refer to all Israelis as Jews in their speeches, although not maliciously. There are Greeks who believe that anything done by Israel, whether positive or negative, is done in the name of all Jews." Later in the year the Central Board denounced a "climate of hysteria and anti-Semitism manifested under the pretext of the condemnation of the defensive military operations of the State of Israel, with anti-Semitic expressions, and the inadmissible vilification of the Holocaust of six million Jews."

In October, the Simon Wiesenthal Center and the Greek monitor of the Helsinki Accords presented a report, "Twenty Months of Anti-Semitic Invective in Greece (March 2002—October 2003)," to the Warsaw Human Dimension Meeting of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. The report found "a pattern of attacks," mostly in articles or interviews in the media, but it also listed pro-Palestinian rallies where the Star of David was equated with the swastika, and vandalism of Jewish sites. The Jewish cemetery and Holocaust memorial in Ioannina were defaced in October in what the Simon Wiesenthal Center said was the sixth such incident against Jewish monuments in Ioannina, Salonika, and Rhodes. In August, leftists objected to the presence of an Israeli delegation at the 50th anniversary commemoration of Israel's humanitarian aid after the 1953 earthquake on the island of Kefallonia. The Communist Party and Neo Aristero Revma (New Left Current) called the Israeli ambassador and visiting Israeli military officers "agents of the worst holocaust in contemporary times," and Israel a "Hitlerist regime."

Many critics charged that an exhibition that opened in October at an Athens art gallery glorified Palestinian suicide bombers. It featured an embroidery montage showing an Arab woman in a bomb belt destroying an Israeli supermarket. In November, Zorba the Greek composer Mikis Theodorakis was quoted as referring to Jews as the "root of all evil," sparking widespread and negative coverage in the international media. Within Greece, debate centered on whether Theodorakis was being criticized for expressing a legitimate political viewpoint. The affair prompted Foreign Minister Andreas Papandreou to write his Israeli counterpart, Silvan Shalom, asking for help in building a coalition of Greek Jews, Greek non-Jews, and Jews around the world to fight anti-Semitism in Greece. He also wrote the World Jewish Congress declaring that Europe must actively tackle any resurgence of anti-Semitism.
In November, the Wiesenthal Center went so far as to issue a travel warning urging Jews to avoid Greece “in the wake of the government’s failure to take steps to curb growing anti-Semitic hate crimes and rhetoric,” a move that drew sharp criticism from Greek Jews and the Greek and Israeli governments. The Israeli embassy in Athens issued a statement noting that “the Simon Wiesenthal Center is a private organization and does not represent the government of Israel,” adding that Israel “maintains excellent and friendly relations” with Greece. (Among other things, Israel was one of seven countries helping Greece plan security for the 2004 Olympic Games.) The Jewish Central Board, for its part, announced that it “disagrees completely and expresses its sorrow regarding the ‘travel advisory,’ ” which, it said, was based on “isolated incidents” of anti-Semitism “and creates an impression that is far from reality.”

In November, the government introduced legislation to establish January 27 as a national day of Holocaust remembrance. It also introduced legislation to crack down on hate crimes and anti-Semitism. Under the proposed law, anyone found guilty of religious or ethnic discrimination would face up to a year in prison.

About 5,000 Jews lived in Greece, organized in eight communities. Despite the concerns about anti-Semitism, there were numerous Jewish activities throughout the year. Two events, both in the northern city of Thessaloniki, were notable. In April there was a regional conference of Jewish communities from throughout the Balkans. During the summer, some 450 students and young adults from 30 countries met for the annual Summer University of the European Union of Jewish Students, whose theme this year was “sharing our vision for the future.” The number of participants was described as “record-breaking.”

Hungary

A Gallup poll published on January 27 showed 82 percent of Hungarians opposed to military action in Iraq under any circumstances. The remaining 18 percent said they would support a war, but two-thirds of those conditioned that support on UN approval. Prime Minister Pétér Medgyessy’s center-left government was included in the U.S.-led “coalition of the willing” as it granted the use of airspace and provided a transit route for shipments. The conservative opposition, led by former prime minister Viktor Orban, opposed the war. Extreme-right leader István Csurka called for a boycott of American and Israeli goods. In February, about 30,000 people took part in a peace march in Budapest. Some mil-
tant right-wing demonstrators chanted antigovernment, anti-American, and anti-Israel slogans, and demanded Medgyessy's resignation.

On the same day but unrelated to the peace march, police used barricades to separate simultaneous rival demonstrations by neofascists and Jews outside the National Assembly building. The former rally, attended by about 250 people, was organized by the Blood and Honor group to commemorate German Nazi and Hungarian fascist soldiers who died fighting Soviet forces liberating the city toward the end of World War II. About 1,500 people attended the counterdemonstration across the street organized by the Jewish community to commemorate the victims of the Nazis and their allies. The two sides jeered at each other, but there was no violence. In August, Blood and Honor held another rally on a Budapest sports field.

In March, voters approved a referendum for Hungary's entry into the European Union, scheduled for 2004. The poll was held on a Saturday, and, acting on a request from the Hungarian Jewish community, the government kept the polls open for an extra two hours to allow observant Jews to vote.

Foreign Minister László Kovács visited Israel in June as a representative of the ten countries set to join the EU in 2004. He met with President Katzav, Prime Minister Sharon, Foreign Minister Shalom, and other officials. Kovács pledged that when Hungary joined the EU it would continue to pursue a balanced policy in the Middle East, and announced that his government would not tolerate anti-Semitism.

The Palestinian Authority's foreign minister, Nabil Shaath, visited Budapest in July, meeting with Prime Minister Medgyessy and Foreign Minister Kovács as well as other political leaders. Kovács told him Hungary supported the "road map" peace plan, but added that he saw no reason to exclude Yasir Arafat from peace talks. Kovács repeated this when he visited Israel again in September, at the 80th birthday celebration for Shimon Peres. He told an interviewer that since Arafat's prestige and influence on the Palestinian side were "unquestionable," he should be encouraged to help the new Palestinian prime minister, Ahmed Qurei.

In March, a score of Hungarians were honored as Righteous among the Nations. In November, the Budapest city council granted posthumous honorary citizenship to Raoul Wallenberg, the Swedish diplomat who saved thousands of Budapest Jews during the Shoah. At the ceremony, Mayor Gábor Demszky said that a school in the city would be named in Wallenberg's honor. Prime Minister Medgyessy also attended.

In September, a Gallup poll showed that open anti-Semitism among
Hungarians had dropped over the previous decade. Some 6–7 percent of respondents in the 2002–03 poll said they “do not like Jews,” as compared to 14–15 percent in 1993–94. Still, anti-Semitism remained a visible component of public discourse and the media. In July, a group of prominent Hungarian intellectuals issued an open letter protesting what they said were anti-Semitic and racist programs on Hungarian state radio, and calling for the ouster of the station’s president and several staff members. Among those who signed the letter were actor Ivan Darvas, writer Gyorgy Konrad, philosopher Agnes Heller, and film directors Miklos Jancso and Karoly Makk. A group of conservative intellectuals and entertainers responded with their own open letter, defending the radio’s management and programming.

There were several anti-Semitic incidents during the year. Four teenagers were arrested for desecrating a cemetery in March, and in April, a swastika was scrawled on the car of a Budapest Jewish leader. Also in April, the Federation of Hungarian Jewish Communities issued a protest over an exhibition in the western town of Koszeg that depicted Ferenc Szalasi, the leader of Hungary’s fascist Arrow Cross movement in World War II, and his followers as heroes. “Nothing can explain how a memorial to a leader who was sentenced to death and executed for his war crimes and crimes against humanity can be created from public money,” the federation said in a statement. The Culture Ministry and others also protested, and the exhibition was closed after private donors withdrew items they had loaned for display.

In November, the Budapest Appeals Court overturned a lower court’s verdict issued in 2002 and acquitted Calvinist minister Lorant Hegedus, a former member of the National Assembly for the extreme right-wing Hungarian Justice and Life Party (MIEP), of having incited hatred in an article deemed anti-Semitic (see AJYB 2003, p. 525). About 200 jubilant supporters carried Hegedus out of the courtroom after the decision was announced. Jewish leaders condemned the acquittal, and Foreign Minister Kovacs also expressed dismay. Adding to the concern, at around the same time another court dismissed incitement charges against soccer fans who chanted anti-Semitic slogans during a nationally televised match.

There was a growing polarization of political opinion in Hungary during 2003. Noting this trend in an interview in December, the director of the Eastern Europe Project at the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies warned that the tone of Hungarian political discourse—which, he noted, included elements of anti-Semitism and
territorial revisionism—went beyond ordinary political rivalry and could well damage Hungary’s international reputation.

MIEP, headed by Istvan Csurka, did not have enough electoral support to hold any seats in the current National Assembly, but still wielded influence in right-wing circles. In October, MIEP hosted a visit by Jean-Marie Le Pen, leader of the French extreme right, and British Holocaust-denier David Irving to mark the anniversary of the 1956 Hungarian uprising against the Soviets. A new right-wing party, Movement for a Right Hungary, was established in the spring.

In December, the National Assembly narrowly voted to tighten legislation against hate speech. Under the new law, public incitement against any nation or against any national, ethnic, racial, or religious group was punishable by up to three years in prison. President Ferenc Madl, however, decided to send the bill to Hungary’s Constitutional Court for approval rather than sign it immediately into law.

JEWISH COMMUNITY

The year began with what was believed to be the first ordination of an Orthodox rabbi in Hungary since the Holocaust. President Madl and Budapest mayor Demszky attended the January 7 ceremony in the city’s Chabad Lubavitch synagogue. Former Israeli chief rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu and Berel Lazar, the Chabad-recognized chief rabbi of Russia, were also present at the ordination of 23-year-old Shlomo Koves, who had studied in the U.S. and at the Chabad yeshivah in Budapest.

Only a few hundred of Hungary’s 80,000–100,000 Jews were religiously observant according to Orthodox standards; most Hungarian Jews were highly assimilated and secular. Only about 20,000 Jews had any sort of formal relationship with the Jewish community or other Jewish institutions. The main Jewish religious denomination was Neolog (the Hungarian version of Reform), and there was also a small liberal (Reform) congregation in Budapest that operated outside the established Jewish umbrella organization.

Budapest had the infrastructure for a full Jewish life, including about 20 synagogues, kosher shops, three Jewish day schools, and the Jewish University that included a Neolog rabbinical seminary. The JDC and Lauder Foundation summer camp at Szarvas in southern Hungary hosted seminars and training programs as well as camping sessions for young people that drew more than 2,000 participants annually from all over the
world. The Balint House Jewish Community Center in Budapest was the site of conferences, social events, exhibits, and meetings. In November, for example, at the Balint House, the JDC sponsored a training session for Jewish educators from formerly communist countries about bar mitzvah preparation. The same day, a well-attended ceremony honored Jewish community volunteers for their work with the elderly and needy.

In April, Andras Heisler, vice president of the Federation of Jewish Religious Communities in Hungary (MAZSIHISZ)—the umbrella institution of Jews in Hungary—was elected its new president, defeating incumbent Peter Tordai by a single vote. Heisler, a 48-year-old engineer, told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency that he would step down if his goals of strengthening Jewish life in Hungary and improving relations with foreign Jewish groups were not accomplished within a year. Heisler’s father was president of Budapest’s main congregation, the Dohany Street Synagogue.

Yonah Metzger, Israel’s new Ashkenazi chief rabbi, visited Budapest on Hanukkah. He helped light a six-meter-tall outdoor menorah and danced in the street along with the approximately 500 people in attendance. Metzger was the first Israeli chief rabbi to visit Hungary while in office.

As usual, there were numerous conferences, exhibitions, concerts, seminars, and other Jewish-themed cultural and educational events. In May, the Israeli transsexual singer Dana International headlined an Israeli Independence Day celebration in Budapest sponsored by the Jewish Agency for Israel. About 3,000 people attended. The annual Summer Jewish Festival took place in Budapest. In September, as part of its ongoing Jewish studies lecture series, Central European University (CEU) in Budapest hosted a series of talks on Jewish mysticism by the eminent Israeli scholar Moshe Idel. Also in September, former Hungarian president Arpad Goncz joined historians, jurists, and scholars at a conference in the northeastern town of Nyiregyhaza marking the 120th anniversary of the notorious blood libel trial in nearby Tiszaeszler. In 1882, Jews there were accused of killing Eszter Solymosi and using her blood for ritual purposes. The charge sparked a public debate about Jewish emancipation and also a wave of anti-Semitic violence. Though the Jews were acquitted when the case went to trial the following year, the event precipitated formation of the first anti-Semitic political party in Hungary. It has remained a symbol for anti-Semites even today: on the same day as the conference, according to a Budapest newspaper, Istvan Csurka and some of his MIEP followers laid wreaths at Solymosi’s grave.

Work continued throughout the year on a new Holocaust museum to
open in Budapest in 2004. This entailed restoration of the synagogue on Pava Street, designed by Budapest architect Lipot Baumhorn (1860–1932), Europe's most prolific modern synagogue architect. Baumhorn's masterpiece, the synagogue in Szeged, celebrated its 100th anniversary this year. At the end of 2003, work got under way on a film version of the Holocaust novel *Fateless* by Nobel Prize laureate Imre Kertész.

**Macedonia**

The Macedonian government supported the United States in its war against Iraq. On the domestic scene, corruption was a serious concern throughout the year. According to the *Corruption Perceptions Index 2003*, released in October by the anticorruption watchdog Transparency International, which listed countries in the order of least to most corrupt, Macedonia ranked 106th among the 133 surveyed.

About 200 Jews lived in Macedonia, almost all of them intermarried and living in the capital city of Skopje. About 30 were young people.

In March, there were numerous public events to mark the 60th anniversary of the deportation of almost all of Macedonia's Jews to their deaths at Treblinka in 1943. These included commemorative ceremonies, an exhibition at Skopje's city museum about Jewish life in Macedonia, and the screening of a documentary film. Joining the Jewish community for the events were visitors from the U.S. and Israel, as well as representatives from Jewish communities in Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Bulgaria, and Greece. The ambassadors of Israel, the U.S., and Germany took part, along with government officials.

A few days before the anniversary, the Jewish community demanded an official apology from the Bulgarian government for the deportation. The Macedonian Holocaust Fund, formed in 2002, demanded that Bulgaria return property confiscated from the Jews. The head of Macedonia's Jewish community, Viktor Mizrahi, met with Bulgarian foreign minister Solomon Passy and proposed that the two governments work out the return of Jewish property, estimated to be worth about $16.5 million. Mizrahi told a news conference that the Jewish community would invest any compensation received for the deportation or for restituted property in educational and health projects.

In May, the Holocaust Forum sponsored a conference, "Together in Europe," focusing on the role of religion and religious communities in encouraging intergroup understanding as a basis for integration into the European Union.
Poland

Poland backed the U.S.-led war on Iraq, and President Aleksander Kwasniewski emerged as one of Washington's staunchest allies. About 200 Polish troops took part in the war itself, and Poland eventually sent 2,400 troops to Iraq. In September, U.S. marines handed over control of part of central Iraq to a Polish-led multinational force. President George W. Bush showed his satisfaction by making a brief visit to Poland in June during which he visited Auschwitz. Many commentators considered Washington's demonstrative favoring of Poland as a pointed message to the "old Europe" that criticized the war and failed to back U.S. policy. In November, Poland's outgoing ambassador to Israel, Maciej Kozlowski, said that when Poland joined the EU it would press for a more balanced approach to the Middle East conflict and Israel. In December, Polish authorities issued a first-ever warning of possible international terrorism in the country, prompting the Jewish community and Jewish institutions to implement tighter security.

As it moved toward membership in the EU, Poland struggled with a jobless rate of nearly 20 percent and an unpopular minority government. In December, a summit that had been expected to agree on a constitution for an enlarged EU collapsed when Poland and Spain refused to accept changes in a voting system agreed to in 2000 that gave them nearly the same voting rights as Germany, which had a much larger population. Poland also supported a reference to Christian values in the EU constitution.

There were several high-profile corruption scandals involving officials and other prominent people. The most notorious was the so-called "Rywingate" affair. Movie producer Lew Rywin, who coproduced the Academy Award-winning Schindler's List and The Pianist, was accused of soliciting a $17.5-million bribe from the Agora publishing group in exchange for his lobbying for amendments to a media law that would allow Agora to buy a television station. Agora published Poland's leading newspaper, Gazeta Wyborcza, and Rywin was alleged to have made the bribe bid to Gazeta editor Adam Michnik. (Incidentally, both Rywin and Michnik are of Jewish origin.) A parliamentary commission investigated for months, questioning prominent political and media figures. Rywin pleaded innocent when he went on trial before the Warsaw District Court in December, but refused to testify or answer any questions.

This year marked the 60th anniversary of the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto uprising. Poland's Jewish community marked the milestone with a small cer-
emony on the secular calendar date on which the uprising began, and staged other events as well (see below, p. 432). The Polish government hosted high-level official commemorations on April 29 and 30, to coincide with Yom Hashoah, Israel's Holocaust Memorial Day. The nationally televised events included wreath-layings at the memorial to the heroes of the uprising on the site of the Ghetto, and a gala concert. These were attended by President Kwasniewski, visiting Israeli president Katzav, and other dignitaries. The last living participants in the uprising received high state honors. On April 29, Kwasniewski and Katzav joined 3,000 teenagers and others at Auschwitz-Birkenau for the culmination of the annual March of the Living Holocaust commemoration, always timed to coincide with Yom Hashoah. During his visit to Poland, Katzav described relations between the two countries as "warm." (During his stay, the kitchens of the Presidential Palace were made kosher and only strictly kosher food was served.)

There were numerous political, economic, and cultural contacts between the two countries, some constructive and others disturbing. In Israel, hundreds of Israelis of Polish origin applied for Polish passports. Israeli police, in July, arrested a fugitive Polish businessman wanted on criminal charges including alleged embezzlement. In October, Poland's National Remembrance Institute (IPN) requested a Katowice court to ask Israel for the temporary arrest and extradition of Salomon Morel, a recent emigrant to Israel who was suspected of torturing and killing some 1,500 Silesians and Germans at the Swietochlowice concentration camp in 1945, when he served as the camp's commandant after the defeat of the Nazis. In December, Poland signed a $250-million deal with Israel's Rafael Armament Development Authority to purchase Spike missiles.

Auschwitz was the focus of a number of events. In March, a memorial with an inscription in Ladino was unveiled to commemorate the 150,000 Sephardi Jews killed in the Shoah. In May, as part of an extraordinary initiative to help promote Arab-Israeli understanding, 120 Israeli Arabs toured Auschwitz with 130 Israeli Jews, other Jewish survivors, and about 200 young Jews and Arabs from France. The visit was the idea of Rev. Émile Shoufani, an Arab Catholic priest from Nazareth. One commentator called it an "unprecedented act of Arab solidarity with the greatest tragedy of the Jewish people." In June, a state-of-the-art, multimillion-dollar conservation laboratory was inaugurated as part of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Preservation Project established in 1990 by the Lauder Foundation to protect and preserve the exhibits and
buildings at the site. A two-day international conference on preservation concerns relating to Auschwitz was held to coincide with the dedication of the lab.

In September, three Israeli fighter jets piloted by descendents of Holocaust survivors flew over Auschwitz to memorialize the 1.5 million Jews killed there, and 200 visiting Israeli military personnel prayed at the Birkenau site where Jews were unloaded from cattle cars and sent to the gas chambers. Polish aviation authorities authorized the fly-past, but the move drew criticism from the Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum. The Jewish cemetery in Oswiecim (the town where the Auschwitz camp is located) was desecrated in early December, as 16 tombstones were toppled or broken. Police detained a man for the crime. Two weeks after the incident, unknown individuals secretly repaired the vandalized tombstones.

Holocaust-related developments elsewhere also made news. Ceremonies marked the destruction of wartime ghettos in Rzeszow, Kraków, Lublin, and Bialystok. In February, prosecutors launched an investigation into three men, two currently living in the United States and one in Germany, suspected of involvement in liquidating Nazi ghettos and committing genocide as SS death-camp guards. The National Remembrance Institute (IPN) formally closed its investigation into the 1941 massacre of 1,600 Jews in the town of Jedwabne, saying there was not sufficient evidence to charge anyone still alive. At communist-era trials in 1949 and 1953, more than a dozen people were convicted of participation in the massacre. The IPN investigation found that at least 40 local Poles burned alive at least 400 Jews in a Jedwabne barn, but those responsible were already dead.

During the year, a cooperative effort between the Polish government and the American Jewish Committee enabled construction of a new Holocaust memorial at the site of the Belzec death camp. The work was being carried out under the supervision of Michael Schudrich, the Orthodox chief rabbi of Warsaw and Lodz, and other rabbis, and had the support of the Israeli Foreign Ministry. Nonetheless, Rabbi Avi Weiss of New York tried to block construction. Weiss claimed that an underground walkway that was part of the monument disturbed the remains of the dead. At one point, an 83-year-old survivor who lost family at Belzec sued the AJC to stop construction, but he withdrew the suit after ten days. Other people whose relatives were killed at Belzec supported the monument, including the project’s initiator, Miles Lerman, and a number of other major donors to the project.

In April, the Supreme Court rejected an appeal by 80-year-old Hen-
ryk Mania, convicted in 2001 of aiding the Germans in the extermination of Jews in the Chelmno concentration camp. In November, a memorial plaque was unveiled on the 60th anniversary of mass executions of nearly 30,000 people at the Majdanek and Trawniki concentration camps. Also in November, an 81-year-old accused Nazi collaborator, Bohdan Koziy, died of a stroke in Costa Rica, just nine days after Poland requested his extradition.

**Jewish Community**

Estimates of the number of Jews in Poland ranged widely, from the 7,000–8,000 who were officially registered with the community, belonged to Jewish organizations or received 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 descended from Jews. The Ronald S. Lauder Foundation ran the country’s most extensive Jewish educational programs, carrying on activities in several cities. The JDC provided extensive social welfare aid, and ran education and leadership-training programs. The Polish Jewish community’s Web site, www.jewish.org.pl, provided information about the community and its activities. Another valuable Web site for Polish Jewish developments was www.forum-znak.org/pl.

Officially recognized Jewish religious communities were organized under the umbrella of the Union of Jewish Religious Communities in Poland. In October, Piotr Kadlcik, president of the Warsaw Jewish community, was elected president of the union’s board. He replaced Jerzy Kichler, who had served as president for six years. Kichler had to resign in September after his defeat for reelection as president of the Jewish community in the southwestern city of Wroclaw, which cost him his seat on the board.

Non-Orthodox Judaism appeared to gain strength during 2003. In August, Beit Warszawa, Warsaw’s havurah-style progressive Jewish community, launched an international search for a permanent rabbi. The group, founded in 2000, was not a member of the Union of Jewish Religious Communities, but cooperated with the Warsaw Jewish community in some matters. It had a membership list of 400, with 20–50 people meeting for Shabbat services every Friday night. About 100 attended services on major holidays, which were led by visiting rabbis.

Several Jewish groups operated separately from and in opposition to communities that were members of the Union. Such breakaway elements
existed in Gdansk, Poznan, and Warsaw (the Warsaw faction was founded by the former caretaker of the city’s Jewish cemetery, who had been fired in 2002). It was not clear whether religious differences, personality clashes, or financial motivations prompted the formation of these independent communities. According to published reports, in at least some cases the mandatory number of members needed officially to form such associations was reached by recruiting people who were not Jews by any possible criterion.

Sweeping changes took place in the Social-Cultural Association of Jews in Poland (TSKZ), a secular organization established in 1950 that had functioned in many communities during the communist era. This year its 17 regional branches had a total membership of 2,700. TSKZ was headed by Szymon Szurmiej, director of the State Jewish Theater for some 30 years. In December, TSKZ, reported to be on the verge of bankruptcy earlier in the year, deposed Szurmiej, and its board elected a new executive committee with a new chairperson, Maria Giercuszkiewicz. (The board had attempted this in 2002, but Szurmiej challenged the move; even after the latest changes, the legal battle for legitimacy between two contending factions continued.)

In May, the Jewish community in Warsaw received a new Torah scroll. It was installed in the city’s Nozyk Synagogue in a gala ceremony that was part of commemorations marking the 60th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. Visiting Israeli president Katzav brought the scroll into the synagogue after community leaders and dignitaries carried it through the streets under a huppah (canopy). The ceremony was attended by the mayor of Warsaw, former foreign minister Wladyslaw Bartoszewski (recognized as Righteous among the Nations by Yad Vashem), the papal nuncio to Poland, diplomats, representatives of the Polish president and prime minister, and visiting Jewish leaders.

Following the installation of the Torah, family members of three deceased Polish non-Jews who saved Jews during the Holocaust were awarded Righteous among the Nations medals. They were among a number of Poles who received the award at ceremonies in various cities during the year. In October, a two-day event honoring Catholic Poles who saved Jews during the Holocaust was held in Kraków. It was organized by the Polish/American/Jewish Alliance for Youth Action (PAJA), a recently formed group dedicated to educating Jewish and Polish Catholic young people about their common history.

In June, more than 300 people attended the wedding of Yisroel Szpilman and Sarah Malka Prymka in the Nozyk Synagogue. Rabbi Schudrich
performed the ceremony. Yisroel (whose grandfather was a first cousin of Wladislaw Szpilman, whose story inspired the film The Pianist) served as director of the Jewish cemetery in Warsaw, and Sara Malka was completing her studies at Warsaw University. The couple met at an educational program sponsored by the Lauder Foundation. Two other weddings of young Polish Jews took place in June, one in the U.S. and the other in Israel.

More than 100 people attended a ceremony in that same synagogue in November, after the conclusion of Shabbat, to commemorate the victims of the terrorist attacks in Istanbul. The ambassadors of Israel and Turkey addressed the gathering, and the Catholic cochair of the Polish Council of Catholics and Muslims expressed his solidarity. He also read a statement from Imam Selim Chazbijewicz, head of the Association of Polish Tartars, the traditional Polish Muslim community, stating that the terrorists were not true Muslims and apologizing for the presence within Islam of criminals claiming to represent it.

There were a number of interfaith activities during 2003. January 17 was the Roman Catholic Church's sixth annual Day of Judaism. The main events took place in Bialystok, where Archbishop Stanislaw Gadecki, Israeli ambassador Shevach Weiss, Jerusalem-based Rabbi David Rosen—International Interreligious Director of the American Jewish Committee—and others gathered in a church for a Christian-Jewish biblical meditation, and took part in a conference on "The Covenant and Mercy in Jewish and Christian Tradition." Later, services were held in the 17th-century synagogue-museum in nearby Tykocin. Cultural events, including a book launch and an exhibition, were held in Bialystok as part of the observance. A remark by one of the Catholic speakers, that God is merciful because Jews can still convert, drew a vigorous response from Stanislaw Krajewski, a Polish Jewish leader and the American Jewish Committee consultant in Warsaw, who described the statement as anti-dialogue. The debate led to a spirited exchange in a leading Catholic intellectual weekly.

There were also interfaith meetings in other towns. In Wroclaw, a new Internet Web site was inaugurated dedicated to the so-called "quarter of mutual respect," a city neighborhood where, within the space of a few hundred yards, a Catholic, a Protestant, and an Orthodox church, as well as a synagogue, were located. In June, the Polish Forum for Dialogue, located in the southern Polish city of Gliwice, organized workshops in local high schools on the topic, "What Does Tolerance Mean?" The forum, which fostered interfaith and interethnic projects, celebrated its
fifth anniversary in 2003 by unveiling its new Web site—www.jewish
memory.gliwice.pl—devoted to the prewar Jewish community of Gli-
wice. In ceremonies in October commemorating the destruction of the
Jewish community there, a plaque was placed on the square where the syn-
agogue had stood before its destruction on Kristallnacht, November 9,
1938. The forum also organized a visit by former Jewish residents of Gli-
wice and their families.

There were, as usual, numerous Jewish-themed cultural and educa-
tional events, of which only a few can be listed here. In March, the movie
*The Pianist*, about survival in the Warsaw Ghetto, won three Academy
Awards, including best director for Polish-born Roman Polanski and best
actor for Adrien Brody. Bejt Warszawa was a coorganizer of the third
Warsaw Multicultural Week, held in the spring. A “Jewish Day” cultural
festival took place at Warsaw University in May. Also in May, there was
a conference in Lodz on “Memory of the Shoah—Current Representa-
tions.” The annual Kraków Jewish Culture Festival took place from late
June through the beginning of July. In August, there was an exhibit in
Bialystok linked to the 60th anniversary of the ghetto uprising there. The
Israeli Philharmonic Orchestra gave a concert in Lodz in September dur-
ing the city’s Four Cultures Festival celebrating Polish, Jewish, German,
and Russian cultural contributions. In the fall, the Judaica Foundation-
Center for Jewish Culture in Kraków marked its tenth anniversary. Be-
sides programming a full series of events throughout the year, it hosted
the annual Bayit Hadash festival of concerts, lectures, photo exhibits,
meetings, and panel discussions.

The sixth annual Jewish book fair took place in Warsaw in October. It
featured a major new publication of Torah commentaries—in Polish—
by writer Konstanty Gebert. This was believed to be the first book of
Torah commentaries ever published in Polish. A Jewish film festival took
place in Warsaw in November. That same month, the San Francisco-
based Taube Foundation for Jewish Life & Culture inaugurated, as its
first international initiative, a program on Polish Jewish heritage. It pre-
sented awards to three key figures in the revival of Jewish culture in
Poland: Janusz Makuch, director of the Kraków Jewish Culture Festi-
val; Joachim Russek, director of the Kraków Center for Jewish Culture;
and Feliks Tych, director of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw.

There were various initiatives to preserve Jewish heritage and culture.
The government announced in May that it would finance at least a quar-
ter of the $63-million budget for the planned Museum of the History of
Polish Jews. The project director said that a decisive factor was a pledge
by a group of American Jewish donors to match Polish government funding. Nonetheless, financial and other problems plagued the project. In December, architect Frank Gehry, who had originally agreed to design the building, pulled out, and a new international competition for the assignment was announced. In July, a pastor from the Evangelical Church in Warsaw, with a group of 80 people, started cleaning and repairing the Warsaw Jewish cemetery; the Israeli embassy helped by paying for tools. The Poznan Synagogue Project was an American initiative aimed at turning the Poznan synagogue (converted by the Nazis into a swimming pool during World War II) into a center for tolerance, dialogue, and education. Friction developed, however, between the project director and the Union of Jewish Communities. Among other things, the director accused the union leadership of lack of transparency in the Holocaust restitution process.

On March 8, a ceremony at the Warsaw Dworzec Gdanski train station commemorated the 35th anniversary of the anti-Semitic purges that forced 20,000 Jews to leave Poland. In July, Jews who had been forced to leave the port city of Szczecin in 1968 came back from all over the world for a reunion. It was the latest in a series of reunions by exiled Jews to be held in recent years.

In June, President Kwasniewski presented Szymon Szurmiej, the longtime director of the State Jewish Theater and TSKZ, with the Grand Cross of the Rebirth of Poland. In July, the American Center of Polish Culture presented Irena Sendler, 93, with the 2003 Jan Karski Award for Valor and Compassion. Sendler risked death to save 2,500 children from Nazi genocide by organizing a secret network of Polish women to smuggle them out of the Warsaw Ghetto. Captured and tortured by the Nazis, she refused to provide information on the rescued youngsters. In November, President Kwasniewski decorated Sendler with the Order of the White Eagle, Poland's highest civilian award. In the summer, Kwasniewski presented state decorations and promotions to officer rank to a dozen Jewish World War II veterans who had been fired from the Polish armed forces or stripped of their military ranks in the 1967–68 anti-Semitic purges. In October, Polish Jews honored Oskar Schindler, the German industrialist who helped save Jews during the Holocaust, with a plaque at the factory where he employed Jewish laborers.

Kraków-born Rafael Scharf, a writer, historian, and public figure who strove to build bridges between Poles and Jews and promote the post-communist reemergence of Jewish life and culture in Poland, died in September in London at the age of 89. He had lived in London since 1938.
Romania

Romania firmly supported the U.S.-led war on Iraq. The day after the attack was launched, a spokesperson for President Ion Iliescu said, in the president's name, that Romania's backing underlined the country's insistence on the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, which endangered peace and security in a region already fraught with dangers. In October, the U.S. Helsinki Commission said that though Romania had made "significant strides" since the overthrow of communist dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu in December 1989, much remains to be done in promoting respect for human rights and consolidating democratic institutions and the rule of law.

Economic problems and corruption dogged the country throughout the year. In November, a study by the World Bank showed that 29 percent of Romanians lived in poverty in 2002. Though grim, this was an improvement over 2001, when the figure was 35 percent. In October, a few days after Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index 2003 ranked Romania 83rd on its list of 133 countries, the government adopted a series of new measures aimed at combating corruption. Reported instances of corruption in Romania ranged from abuse of political power to money laundering. In October, a Gallup poll showed that 84 percent of respondents wanted a tough, authoritarian leader to bring order to the country, and more than half said that life had worsened in Romania over the past five years.

Also in October, nearly 90 percent of voters in a national referendum approved a new constitution that included reforms bringing the country in line with European Union regulations. However, there were widespread allegations of voter coercion, bribes, and other irregularities. Many potential voters stayed home, in part, reportedly, as a silent protest against poverty and corruption.

Romania's consciousness of the historical memory of the Holocaust was a theme throughout the year. To satisfy international scrutiny ahead of its entry into NATO in 2004 and its hoped-for entry into the EU in 2007, Romania in 2002 had passed laws banning expressions of fascism or racial hatred and outlawing fascist symbols. These symbols included statues of Marshal Ion Antonescu, Romania's Nazi-allied leader during World War II. In January, a court in Timisoara fined a man about $150 (the equivalent of a laborer's wages for two or three months) for painting a swastika on a building. In July, a high-school teacher in Brasov was
sentenced to two-and-a-half years in jail for spreading fascist ideas among his students.

President Iliescu announced the formation of a Holocaust Commission in October. This international group of historians, survivors, and others was headed by Romanian-born Nobel Peace Prize laureate Elie Wiesel. Iliescu also announced that Romania would observe a national Holocaust Remembrance Day, and that greater stress would be placed on educating Romanians about how, why, and where hundreds of thousands of Romanian Jews were killed in the Shoah. The commission would hold conferences every six months in Jerusalem, Washington, and Bucharest, and a summary report would be submitted by the end of 2005.

Iliescu's announcement came on the heels of embarrassing flip-flops on the issue in previous months. In June, the Romanian government issued a statement that appeared to deny that the Holocaust had occurred on Romanian territory. The Foreign Ministry retracted this, but, in subsequent comments to the media, Iliescu appeared to call into question the uniqueness of the Holocaust. The series of statements and counter-statements drew protests from Israel and the Jewish world, prompting Romanian officials, including Foreign Minister Mircea Geoana, to work with Rabbi Andrew Baker, the American Jewish Committee's director of international Jewish affairs, B'nai B'rith International executive vice president Daniel Mariaschin, Radu Ioanid, an expert on the Holocaust in Romania at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, and other experts to set goals and parameters for the Holocaust Commission. Yad Vashem also contributed to the project.

In November, the Romanian deportation of Jews to Transnistria was commemorated in Bucharest's Great Synagogue at a ceremony attended by government and Orthodox Christian representatives. Never before had Romania officially acknowledged its role in the deportation. An article in the Romanian Jewish newspaper commented: "For the first time, the participation of Romania in the Holocaust was clearly stated."

In a related development in September, Efraim Zuroff, director of the Simon Wiesenthal Center's office in Jerusalem, announced a reward of $10,000 to anyone who could provide information leading to the prosecution of World War II war criminals in Romania. He made what he called this "Operation Last Chance" offer during a trip to Bucharest, stating that not one Holocaust perpetrator had ever been "investigated, let alone prosecuted in postcommunist Romania."

Also in September, Romania introduced a manual for teaching high-
school students about the Holocaust. There were, in fact, several opportunities during the year for Romanian educators to learn about the Shoah and how to teach its history. An annual seminar on the methodology of teaching the Holocaust was held in Cluj in June, and, in November, 23 Romanian history teachers attended a similar seminar in Paris.

A poll conducted in October by the Institute for Public Policies showed that 27 percent of respondents believed that Jews exaggerated the persecutions they suffered in World War II. Some 23 percent of respondents said that Jews controlled politics and international finance, and 15 percent that Jews played a role in installing communism in Romania. About 14 percent of respondents said that Jews had too much influence in the country. The poll, part of the “Extremism in Romania” project financed by the German Marshall Fund, also indicated that about 26 percent believed that Romanian authorities took part in anti-Jewish persecution in World War II, while 25 percent did not think so (about half the respondents had no opinion on this). Some 36 percent said the suffering of the Jews was God’s punishment, 29 percent asserting that Jews could not be forgiven for crucifying Jesus.

Despite the flap over the Holocaust, Romania and Israel maintained close relations. Hundreds of thousands of Israelis were of Romanian ancestry, and it was estimated that 230,000 Romanians worked in Israel, 100,000 of them without legal working permits. Two Romanians were killed and eight wounded in a suicide bombing in Tel Aviv on January 5 that killed 22 and wounded more than 100 (see above, p. 155).

Israel’s outgoing ambassador to Romania, Sandu Mazor, who was born in Romania, sparked protest at home when he asked that his Romanian citizenship be restored after he left his post. He explained that this would make it easier for him to come and go when he took up a new job as manager of an Israeli investment company in Romania. After harsh criticism in Israel, he withdrew the request. Replacing Mazor was another Romanian-born ambassador, Rodica Gordon Radian.

The fourth Israel hi-tech trade fair, aimed at promoting business and commercial links between Romania and Israel, was held in April. Israeli finance minister Benjamin Netanyahu visited Romania in December. He met with Prime Minister Adrian Nastase and Foreign Minister Geoana, and said that the two countries shared “joint values” such as “intolerance towards totalitarian forces.” Talks centered on bilateral economic relations. Netanyahu also said he had received assurances that properties confiscated from Romanian Jews during the communist regime would be restituted.
In November, Yad Vashem inducted a Romanian woman into the Righteous among the Nations.

**Jewish Community**

Some 11,000–16,000 Jews were believed to live in Romania, about half in Bucharest. Most Romanian Jews were elderly, and were hit particularly hard by the poor economic situation—an average pension amounted to $20–$30 a month. Educational, religious, and welfare programs were carried out by the Federation of Romanian Jewish Communities (FEDROM), funded by the JDC. In November, about 80 community leaders and other Jewish representatives from around the country attended a special two-day meeting of FEDROM’s Council of Jewish Communities, the first such meeting in four years. Areas of discussion included how to improve relations between the FEDROM and outlying communities, and the encouragement of mutual aid among communities.

The nationwide youth movement OTER (Romanian Youth Organization), funded by the JDC, had 11 branches around the country. In addition, the Lauder Foundation ran the Lauder Reut Kindergarten and Lower School in Bucharest. A useful Web site for news about the Romanian Jewish community was www.romanianjewish.org. In July, more than 30 Jewish children aged 8–13 attended a weeklong summer camp developed, operated, and led by Romanian Jewish youth leaders. In August, more than three dozen young Jews from all over Romania took part in a two-week seminar on Jewish history and Judaism, the fifth annual event of this kind. The so-called “middle generation” of adults was also a target of education and outreach. During the year there were 18 middle-generation programs throughout the country involving about 800 people on a regular basis. An educational training session for Talmud Torah teachers took place in Piatra Neamt in November.

The Romanian Jewish community was in a partnership arrangement with Jewish communities in Kansas City, Bulgaria, and Israel. In March, professionals from all three locations who dealt with youth programming and social assistance for the elderly visited Romania.

There were numerous Jewish-themed cultural and educational events, conferences, and commemorations during the year. Among them, in March, the Jewish theater in Bucharest staged a Purim gala attended by political, religious, ethnic-minority, and diplomatic representatives, as well as local Jews. The second annual weeklong Abraham Goldfaden International Yiddish Theater Festival took place in October at the
National Theater in Iasi, including a seminar on Yiddish culture. Artists from seven countries took part. A plaque honoring Goldfaden (1840-1908), the “father” of Yiddish theater, was unveiled in a ceremony attended by B’nai B’rith International executive vice president Dan Mariashchin, the Romanian minister of culture, and the Israeli, French, and Polish ambassadors. B’nai B’rith International’s Romanian Jewish Heritage Project and FEDROM sponsored the plaque. A three-day Jewish culture festival in Timisoara was linked up with the Goldfaden festival, and plans were made to replicate festival performances in 14 other cities around Europe. Also in October, the annual Jewish studies conference took place at the Babes Bolyai University in Cluj. In September, Israeli author Amos Oz took part in a literature festival in Neptun.

In November, the Lempert Family Foundation in New York, working together with the Jewish community in Oradea, rededicated the newly restored monument to Oradea’s deportees that had originally been erected by survivors of the Holocaust in 1946. There was also a meeting to plan a new memorial at a site recently approved by municipal authorities.

Serbia and Montenegro

It was a tumultuous year in the new entity of Serbia and Montenegro, a loose union of the two former Yugoslav republics that formally came into existence in February, when “Yugoslavia” was officially abolished. In Montenegro, the parliament, in January, approved the new cabinet of Prime Minister Milo Djukanovic. Serbian prime minister Zoran Djindjic was assassinated in March in an attack blamed on underworld bosses and extreme Serbian nationalists. Zoran Zivkovic succeeded him. (Serbian Jews canceled Purim festivities as a sign of mourning.) In a crackdown on organized crime in the wake of the assassination, police arrested more than 10,000 suspected criminals, and charges were filed against about 3,200 of them. During the crackdown, the body of former president Ivan Stambolic, abducted in August 2002, was found in a lime-pit grave north of Belgrade. In August, prosecutors charged 44 people, including the former commander of an infamous police unit, in Djindjic’s murder.

In the summer, the International Crisis Group issued a devastating report on the situation in Serbia. It said that just a few months after Djindjic’s murder, “genuine reformers are again being hampered by strong obstructionist forces within the army, police, and security services, and the government itself. Should they challenge these forces too openly, the
reformers risk suffering the same fate as Zoran Djindjic." Despite the fact that Washington ended sanctions against Serbia in May, the economic situation remained grim. UN and Serbian experts estimated that 30 percent of the population lived below the poverty line.

The economic crisis was one reason why many voters, disillusioned and frustrated by the pro-Western government that ruled since it ousted the nationalist president, Slobodan Milosevic, in October 2000, chose extremist nationalist candidates in the December 28 parliamentary elections. The Serbian Radical Party (SRS), led by indicted war criminal Vojslav Seselj (who was in custody in The Hague awaiting trial), won 81 of the 250 seats, more than any other single party. The SRS was followed by the Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS), led by former Yugoslav president Vojislav Kostunica, with 53 seats, and the Democratic Party of the late Prime Minister Djindjic, with 37. The Socialist Party of Milosevic—also on trial in The Hague for war crimes—won 22 seats. Since they were heads of their parties’ electoral lists, both Seselj and Milosevic technically won seats.

A new Israeli ambassador, Yaffa Ben Ari, took up her post at the beginning of the year. An Israeli company was one of the major investors in what was planned to be the biggest mall in the Balkans. Work began on the project at a disused airport near Belgrade during the summer.

Serbia had about 3,300 Jews, about two-thirds of them in Belgrade. The vast majority was secular, highly integrated into the broader society, and either in, or the children of, mixed marriages. Leaders of the umbrella Federation of Jewish Communities had urged members to identify as Jews in the national census in 2002. Results of the census, released early in 2003, showed that 1,158 people declared themselves to be Jewish "by nationality." Although the federation and individual communities suffered from the economic crisis and attempted to cut expenditures, there was still a wide range of communal social, religious, educational, and cultural activities, all described in a monthly federation bulletin.

There were a tiny handful of Jews in Kosovo—mainly members of two extended families—and most of them intended to move to Israel. The JDC maintained an office in Kosovo that supported a nonsectarian aid project, but the organization scaled back its operations there in 2003.

In February, 200 Jews from Hungary and the countries of the former Yugoslavia took part in the fourth annual "Sholet" social and cultural get-together in Novi Sad. In May, 25 young leaders participated in a three-day seminar near Belgrade, organized by the federation and funded by the JDC and the Dutch Jewish Humanitarian Fund. Jews from Ser-
bia attended a conference of Jews from Balkan states held in April in Thessaloniki, Greece, and also took part in the Beyahad meeting on the Croatian island of Hvar in October (see above, p. 414).

Management of the federation and of individual Jewish communities came under scrutiny during the year. The JDC, which funded much of Jewish communal life, exerted particular pressure on Serbian Jews to incorporate guarantees for democratic elections and financial transparency in new communal and federation statutes. In October, the federation’s bulletin published a letter to community members from JDC country director Yechezkel Bar Chaim outlining the changes that needed to be incorporated in bylaws and indicating that the JDC would withdraw support from communities that did not comply. He wrote: “Our hope and our expectation is that the federation and all communities will welcome this opportunity to ‘turn the page’ together. Should anyone fail in this effort, however, then they [the federation and/or individual communities] will forfeit in 2004 their claim on administrative support from the Joint or the new clothing, distributed from the goods-in-kind containers sent from New York. Anything withheld would simply be redistributed among those who do choose the democratic way forward.”

Bar Chaim laid out the changes the JDC deemed “essential” for a smooth partnership. These included: adequate public notice of community meetings; definition of the quorum required to conduct community business; voting for community officials by secret ballot; the option to vote for individual candidates and not just party lists; the eligibility of a clear majority of community members to be elected to the presidency and any other communal office; a defined procedure for conducting elections covering such issues as the time of voting, whether absentee ballots are permitted or not, and the possibility of write-in candidacies; and specified procedures to convene meetings through the initiative of members.

There were continuing developments in the internal conflict that wracked the 200-member Jewish community in Subotica. The factions were led by the current community president, Mira Poljakovic, and her predecessor, Tomas Halbrohr, who lived part-time in Hungary and was ousted as president in 2002 (see AJYB 2003, pp. 546–47). The conflict was partially religious versus secular, but also between Jews of Serbian and Hungarian extraction. During 2003, the status of Stefan Lanji, a local man who served as lay religious leader for Subotica and several nearby communities, became part of the controversy. Lanji studied at the Jewish University in Budapest with the support of the JDC and the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture. Although his mother was not
born Jewish, before he began his studies, three elderly members of the Subotica community gave sworn testimony that she had converted to Judaism. In 2003, however, one of these witnesses stated publicly that she had lied (the other two witnesses were no longer living). In the recent intercommunal conflict, Lanji was associated with Halbrohr’s faction. He continued to maintain that his mother had converted, and as proof demonstrated that she had been buried in the Jewish cemetery. Toward the end of the year, Lanji signed an agreement to work with the community in Novi Sad. Despite the bickering, Jews in Subotica maintained an active communal program and took part in visits and exchanges with Jews in Hungary.

The condition of the devastated and vandalized Jewish cemetery in Nis, which dated back to the 17th century, caused concern. In the fall, the tiny Jewish community there launched an international appeal to protect what remained. In a dramatically worded e-mail message, the community described how the cemetery was now the site of a settlement of Roma (Gypsies) who had used many of the gravestones for building material. Industry had also encroached on the area, and the site was used as a dump for garbage and human waste. In addition, vandals had broken open tombs and scattered bones. The Jews petitioned municipal authorities to move the cemetery to a different location. At the same time, a Jewish section was incorporated in a new cemetery for all faiths that opened in Zrenjanin, and there were efforts to clear and clean up other cemeteries, including that in Kikinda, where an official Jewish community was reestablished in 2002.

There were numerous Jewish cultural and commemorative events. Among them, the second annual Maccabee games took place in Zrenjanin in July, with participants coming from throughout the former Yugoslavia. In September, Serbia and Montenegro took part for the first time in the European Day of Jewish Culture, holding events in Belgrade, Novi Sad, Subotica, Pancevo, and Zemun. In October, a new play directed by Stefan Sablic opened in Belgrade to widespread publicity and enthusiastic reviews. It was Address Unknown, by Katherine Kressman Taylor, a drama set in the 1930s about a German Jewish immigrant in America and his former best friend, who becomes a Nazi. It starred two of Serbia’s leading actors, both Jews. Sablic, 27, was also the cantor for Serbia and Macedonia. Before opening to the general public, the play was premiered, with support from the JDC, at the Beyahad Jewish culture festival on the Croatian island of Hvar. Sablic’s previous production, Visiting Mr. Green, by the American playwright Jeff Baron, was a box-office hit in Serbia and
performed to capacity audiences in various cities (see AJYB 2003, p. 547). Sablic also performed with a Sephardi music group, Shira u’Tfila (Song and Prayer), which showcased Jewish liturgical music from the Balkans, North Africa, and the Middle East. The European Association for Jewish Culture awarded the group a grant in 2003 to help produce its third CD, which was released in the fall.

The writer Aleksander Tisma died in Novi Sad in February, aged 79. Composer Enriko Josif died in March, aged 79.

Slovakia

On New Year’s Day, Slovakia marked ten years as an independent state, following its “velvet divorce” from the Czech Republic. Slovakia backed the U.S.-led war on Iraq even though Prime Minister Mikulas Dzurinda stressed that Slovakia was not a direct participant in the conflict. His government granted the U.S. overflight and transit rights, and deployed to Kuwait a Slovak/Czech anti-nuclear, -biological, and -chemical (NBC) unit.

Slovak and Israeli leaders carried out a number of official visits. During a two-day trip to Israel in April, Foreign Minister Eduard Kukan met with his Israeli counterpart, Silvan Shalom, opposition Labor Party leader Amram Mitzna, and other officials, but declined to meet with Yasir Arafat. Kukan, however, offered to host a meeting in Bratislava of Israeli and Palestinian nongovernmental organizations and academics to discuss new paths toward mutual understanding and tolerance. Kukan told the Jerusalem Post that Slovakia “definitely” wanted “to continue our good relations with Israel and expand them.” He said when Slovakia joined the EU in 2004, “we will have the same line toward Israel as we have now.” Slovaks approved accession to the EU in a referendum in May.

Israeli president Moshe Katzav paid a three-day official visit to Slovakia in July. In addition to his official duties, he visited Jewish sites and met community leaders. As in Poland, all meals and receptions—including the one held for Katzav at Bratislava Castle—were strictly kosher. Slovak prime minister Mikulas Dzurinda visited Israel in November. He met with Prime Minister Sharon, who joined him in pledging to fight international terrorism. Dzurinda said the European Union must “fight all forms of intolerance.” Sharon praised Dzurinda for fighting anti-Semitism in Slovakia, where, he said, there had been only a small number of disturbing incidents.

Notwithstanding Sharon’s remark, 2003 was reported to be a “record
year" for Jewish cemetery desecrations. Vandalism was reported at ceme-
terries in Banovce nad Bebravou, Topolcany, Michalovce, Puchov, Nove Mesto nad Vahom, and Humenne. In addition, a Holocaust memorial was vandalized in Nemecka.

There was also continuing concern about the activity of skinheads and other right-wing extremist groups. In March, about 100 skinheads and elderly Slovaks marked the 64th anniversary of the establishment of Slovakia’s World War II Nazi puppet state with a demonstration outside the presidential palace in Bratislava. Some gave Nazi salutes. About another 150 people marked the day at the grave of Father Jozef Tiso, who headed that state. (To be sure, also on that day a group called People against Racism launched a nationwide campaign as part of the European Week against Racism.) A report released in April noted that the number of racially and ethnically motivated crimes in 2002 had more than doubled over the previous year’s figure—authorities registered 109 such crimes in 2002, as compared to only 40 in 2001. Slovakia’s police chief said that while most cases in 2002 involved “verbal, racial, intolerant discourse” or acts such as public display of Nazi symbols and the Nazi salute, 27 of the 109 cases involved violence.

In June, vandals scrawled Nazi and racist graffiti on walls in several Slovak cities. In Nitra, vandals spray painted racist slogans and daubed about 40 swastikas on walls immediately before an antiracist stadium event, “Football Against Racism—We Are All People.” A huge swastika was found painted in the middle of the stadium itself. Also in June, police raided the apartments of three musicians involved in the skinhead scene who had already released a CD with racist lyrics. The police found racist and fascist tapes and leaflets, and charged the musicians with racial intolerance and dissemination of fascist propaganda.

Slovakian officials launched a national program to combat corruption. In November, an Interior Ministry report said that the initiative had had some effect, but it also described continuing instances of corruption in the granting of contracts, the distribution of government subsidies, health care, education, taxation, the judiciary system, customs collection, and contacts with local authorities.

Slovakia’s known Jews numbered some 3,000, with about 750 people registered with the community in the capital city of Bratislava. Baruch Myers, the American-born Chabad rabbi, led regular services. In June, a celebration marked the tenth anniversary of his inauguration. The Jewish community in Bratislava included a kosher kitchen. There was a kindergarten that admitted only children who were Jewish according to
Halakhah (traditional Jewish law). About 40 children from various Slovak and Czech communities attended the 11th annual Gan Israel summer camp.

In January, a Berlin court rejected a second appeal by Slovakia's Central Union of Jewish Religious Communities, which was claiming compensation for payments the World War II Slovak Nazi puppet state made to Nazi Germany to deport more than 57,000 Jews to Nazi death camps.

There were many cultural and educational events, exhibitions, concerts, and publications. Among them was the publication of a Slovak translation of the long religious poem *Keter Malkhut* (Crown of the Kingdom), by the 11th-century Spanish poet and philosopher Solomon ben Judah Ibn Gabirol. This was the first time a classic Hebrew work had been translated into the Slovak language. The official book launch in June, which took place in Košice, drew widespread publicity.

In January, the former Sephardi chief rabbi of Israel, Mordechai Eliyahu, visited Jewish sites in Bratislava.

**Slovenia**

At the beginning of the year, the tiny Jewish community in Slovenia acquired a synagogue, a Torah scroll, and an official rabbi. A ceremony in February formally installed Ariel Haddad as chief rabbi of Slovenia and welcomed the Torah scroll. Government officials, diplomats, and local Christian and Muslim leaders joined local Jews at the event. Two weeks earlier, Haddad had led Shabbat services in the community’s new synagogue—a transformed suite of rooms in the office block housing the Jewish community’s headquarters. This was the first synagogue to function in Slovenia since the Holocaust, and the first in Ljubljana since the Jews were expelled from the city in 1515.

An American lawyer, Mark Cohen, aided by a British businessman, arranged the donation of the Torah, which was brought to Slovenia from Israel via London. In London in January, Slovenian-born Lady Knott hosted a reception to raise funds for the Torah’s silver ornaments.

Slovenia’s Jewish community numbered about 150, but at least twice that many Jews were believed to live in the country. A Jewish organization had technically existed in the post-World-War-II period, but it carried out almost no cultural, social or religious functions until a change of leadership in the late 1990s. Since then, aided by the JDC, the community obtained a meeting room and began sponsoring activities. It also arranged for Haddad, director of the Jewish Museum in the Italian city
of Trieste, an hour's drive from Ljubljana, to visit every few weeks as informal rabbi.

During the year, thanks to Rabbi Haddad's involvement, there were increased exchanges with the Jewish community in Trieste. In May, the presidents of the two Jewish communities signed a joint statement formally declaring their intention to collaborate. In June, Jewish children from Slovenia joined their peers from Croatia and Albania, as well as from around Italy, for an educational seminar in a newly renovated Jewish activity center near Trieste.

In December, Slovenia's first academic center for Jewish studies was inaugurated, at the University of Ljubljana.

RUTH ELLEN GRUBER
The economy of the Russian Federation continued to advance dramatically in 2003 as it had the previous year, and the Baltic states, preparing to enter the European Union, continued on the path toward viable market economies. But many of the former Soviet republics—especially those in Central Asia—still carried the burden of state-run, inefficient enterprises, or had privatized in such a way that the gap between rich and poor widened, with little “trickle down” effect.

In Russia, many indicators pointed to a rapidly improving economy. The primary factor was oil: prices for petroleum products continued to rise on world markets, and Russia emerged as the world’s second largest oil producer after Saudi Arabia, enabling the country to export almost twice as much, in value, as it imported. Oil and gas production rose nearly 12 percent in 2003, the fifth straight year of increase. Gazprom, the state-dominated gas monopoly, accounted for 8 percent of Russia’s entire economic output. Foreign direct investment (FDI) increased, with British Petroleum making the largest single investment in Russia’s post-Soviet history, $6.75 billion. Russia’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew about 5 percent in 2002, and in the first half of 2003 the growth was over 7 percent, making this the fourth straight year of robust growth. But despite the upward trajectory, in absolute terms the GDP was still only $346 billion, less than that of the Netherlands. Personal income was up, but the rise was very unevenly distributed among the regions, the Moscow area being far more prosperous than any other.

The merger of Yukos, headed by Mikhail Khodorkovsky, and Sibneft, led by Eugene Shvidler, brought together the largest and fifth largest oil companies in Russia, and their combined output was roughly equivalent to that of Kuwait. Khodorkovsky, 39, said he envisioned leaving the oil industry in about five years, and began to make financial contributions to several market-oriented political parties. He was reported to believe that the Russian Federation should make a gradual transition away from a strong presidency and toward a parliamentary system.

Despite rapid economic growth, corruption continued to plague Russian society and its economy. Based on a survey of over 7,500 citizens, the
Information for Democracy Institute estimated that each year Russian citizens were paying about $37 billion—or 10 percent of the gross domestic product—in bribes. This was about half the amount the state treasury collected in income taxes. Traffic police were said to take in $368 million in bribes, and employees of the educational system about $449 million.

The gap between rich and poor in Russia was illustrated dramatically during a very cold winter when hundreds of homeless and alcoholics froze to death on Moscow's streets. In northern regions of Russia, burst pipes and poor energy supplies in the oil-rich country left thousands without heat. Despite the improved economy, population continued to decline, in the first half of 2003 by 454,200 (the total population was 144,500,000). The high adult death rate was quite unusual for a developed country; rampant alcoholism and a poor system of health care were cited to explain it. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, birthrates had fallen 20 percent, with 1.25 births per woman of childbearing age recorded in 2002. On average, Russian women were said to have three abortions during their lifetime, a lower rate than under communism. The reason the population did not decline even faster was that Russia continued to attract immigration from the "near abroad"—Ukraine, Moldova, and the former Soviet states in Central Asia and the Caucasus.

Indicators of the poor state of the health system were the rapid rise of HIV infections, and the spread of tuberculosis and other diseases among inmates of Russia's prisons. An estimated 1.2 million people were infected with HIV (Russian officials admitted to only 250,000), as compared to 850,000 in the United States, which had almost twice Russia's population. In 2001, there had been 29,000 deaths from HIV infection, many times more than the comparable figure in the U.S., 781. Life expectancy for Russian males was 58 (74 in the U.S.) and for females, 72 (79 in the U.S.).

The political picture was, in the view of many domestic and foreign observers, less rosy than the economic. In March, President Vladimir Putin, whose popularity ratings were very high, consolidated several law enforcement agencies and strengthened the Federal Security Bureau (FSB), heir to the Soviet-era KGB, the institution in which Putin had built his career. Putin's power increased even more in December, when the party that supported him, United Russia, won about 40 percent of the votes for the Duma (lower house of parliament), nationalist parties about 20 percent, and the Communist Party—which had been the largest single party in the Dumas of the 1990s—only about 13 percent. Liberal, Western-oriented parties such as Yabloko and the Union of Right Forces
failed to pass the 5-percent threshold, but these two managed nevertheless to gain six seats between them, since in addition to elections on the basis of party lists, some individual legislators were chosen from so-called “single-mandate” electoral districts, where candidates were chosen on a simple majority basis.

While Putin remained in the background, the government he headed hounded his political critics and potential rivals. Vladimir Gusinsky, the self-exiled former owner of Media-MOST, a media conglomerate whose publications and radio/television stations were critical of the government, was arrested on a warrant issued by Russia when he landed in Athens airport. The Russian government accused this former president of the Russian Jewish Congress of massive fraud and the illegal transfer of $263 million out of Russia. Gusinsky was eventually freed.

Boris Jordan, an American citizen who ran the NTV television network, was fired in January as CEO of Gazprom Media, which had taken over both that network and the radio station Ekho Moskvy from Gusinskii. In October 2002, NTV had provided 24-hour coverage of the seizure of a Moscow theater by Chechen terrorists, which had ended with 129 people dead, most of them killed by gas let loose by Russian security forces. The government accused NTV of endangering hostages’ lives. Another case of governmental pursuit of journalists was that of Grigory Pasko, who had reported on the Navy’s mishandling of nuclear waste and was sentenced to four years in jail. Pasko was released on parole after serving two-thirds of his sentence.

In April, Sergei Yushenkov, cochairman of the Liberal Russia Party, was shot and killed in front of his home. Eight months earlier, another cochairman of the party, Vladimir Golovlyov, was also assassinated. Liberal Russia was financed by Boris Berezovsky, an “oligarch” who had taken refuge in England after the Russian government indicted him for criminal activities. Berezovsky, a Jew who had converted to Russian Orthodoxy, was expelled from the Liberal Russia Party in October 2002 when it was discovered that he was courting support from the Communist Party in his opposition to Putin.

The much-respected All-Russian Center for Public Opinion Studies (VTsIOM), headed by the distinguished sociologist Yuri Levada, published some results from its polls regarding the war in Chechnya and attitudes toward the dominant United Russia Party that were unflattering to Putin and his administration. The government then announced that it would place its own representatives on the center’s board of directors.

There were signs of increasing distrust of Westerners. In January, the
government announced that it would not permit the U.S. Peace Corps to continue its work in the Russian Federation. Western aid workers and journalists, some of whom had been working in Russia for more than a decade, were denied visa renewals or expelled. The mission set up by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe to monitor events in Chechnya was closed down by the government in January, while at the same time a military court acquitted Col. Yuri Budanov of murdering an 18-year-old Chechen woman nearly three years earlier. But Russia's civilian Supreme Court ordered a new trial, and Budanov was convicted.

A dramatic confrontation between the government and the economic "oligarchs" began in July with the arrest of Platon Lebedev, chairman of Menatep, which owned 61 percent of Yukos Oil, on charges that he had embezzled from a state company in 1994. This was widely interpreted as a signal to Mikhail Khodorkovsky, chief executive of Yukos, to stop supporting Putin's political rivals financially, and to get out of politics. As Yulia Latinina, a writer and journalist, put it, this was "a clash between the people who own Russia and the people who run Russia." A week after Lebedev's arrest, police raided Yukos offices. The Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs appealed to President Putin to halt the investigations, but the president responded ambiguously. Some saw this as a political war between the siloviki, the power-holding agencies headed by the FSB, and the newly rich "oligarchs," with Putin determined to weaken the latter and keep them far from politics, an area in which they had been very much involved during the tenure of Boris Yeltsin, Putin's predecessor.

On October 25, FSB officers in Novosibirsk pulled Mikhail Khodorkovsky from his charter plane and arrested him. He was charged with seven counts of tax evasion and embezzlement, acts supposedly committed in the early 1990s, when Russian laws on such matters were poorly defined. The value of Yukos shares on the stock market plummeted briefly, and there were restrained expressions of concern among Russian and foreign entrepreneurs, and some politicians. Though Khodorkovsky is Jewish, as is Gusinsky and Berezovsky (by birth), there was no suggestion from official circles that this played a role in the affair. However, among certain strata of society there seemed to be satisfaction that the power of the "Jewish capitalists" was being curbed by the "authentically Russian" Putin.

The greatest challenge to President Putin was the ongoing war in Chechnya, and terrorist acts connected to it. Putin had come to power in 1999–2000 largely on the strength of his promise to beat off Chechen de-
mands for independence and to end the war on Russia's terms. But in 2003, Russia found itself in the fifth year of a second war in Chechnya, and there was no end in sight despite a new constitution for the region that had been approved by over 90 percent of the voters, with 85 percent of the people supposedly participating. While the constitution affirmed Chechnya's status as part of the Russian Federation, it was designed to give the area considerable autonomy. In December, Akhmed Kudyrov, supported by the Russian government, won an overwhelming victory in Chechnya's presidential election, although the vote was widely criticized as unfair by foreign and Russian observers.

While many Chechens—perhaps even a large majority—would have been happy to accept the constitution and the president, militant rebels kept up attacks on Russian military personnel in Chechnya. They also mounted terror attacks in several other parts of the Russian Federation. At least six major attacks on civilians resulted in hundreds of deaths. For example, a truck bombing killed 59 in northern Chechnya on May 12, and injured over 200. The same week, a suicide bombing killed 18 people who had gathered for a religious festival. Two suicide bombers killed themselves and 13 others at a Moscow rock concert, and a truck bomb resulted in the death of 35 people in Mozdok, North Ossetia. President Putin declared that these acts were part of the global terrorist war that targeted the U.S., countries in Western Europe, and Israel. By arguing that the Russians were fighting Islamic fanaticism just as the Americans were doing, he sought to deflect criticism of Russian human rights abuses in Chechnya that had come from Western NGOs and some governments. But Russia remained critical of the American invasion of Iraq, refusing to construe it as part of the war on terror.

Israel and the Middle East

In June, Israeli foreign minister Silvan Shalom met in Moscow with his Russian counterpart and pressed for an end to Russian support for Iran's nuclear development program. On November 3, Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon met for three hours with President Putin. They discussed the Middle East conflict, and Sharon raised once more the issue of Russia's continuing supply of material for the expansion of Iran's nuclear facilities. But Putin was unrepentant, and in fact noted with satisfaction that whereas there had been practically no economic relations between the two countries in 1990, the volume of Russian trade with Iran had now risen
to over $1 billion. Sharon also touched on the Yukos affair, expressing concern that "Jewish businessmen are being arrested in Russia." The Israeli leader later said that he had received a "satisfactory" explanation.

In November, the Russian Federation requested Hungary to extradite Avraam Traub, vice president of the Israeli diamond exchange, who had been arrested in Budapest. Charges of massive fraud and diamond smuggling were lodged against him. Another Israeli was arrested in Novisibirsk airport for allegedly attempting to smuggle out a computer diskette holding possibly classified scientific data.

Two hundred Israeli officers visited Lithuania for two days in June. This was part of an ongoing program in which the Israeli Defense Force sent troops each year to a country where Jewish communities were destroyed during the Holocaust. The officers toured formerly Jewish sites in Lithuania. The commander of the Israeli air force, Brigadier-General Yair Dori, met with the Lithuanian minister of defense, Linas Linkevicius, to discuss the possibility of military cooperation between the two countries.

Anti-Semitism

There were quite a few manifestations of anti-Semitism during the year in Belarus. On May 26, the Holocaust memorial in Minsk, one of the very few erected in the Soviet Union before the 1990s, was spray-painted with anti-Semitic slogans and swastikas. The ambassadors to Belarus from France, Germany, and the UK, accompanied by a representative of the Israeli embassy, toured Jewish memorial sites in Minsk four days later to express solidarity with the Jews. Though Belarussian television had been notified of this diplomatic "tour," no one was sent to cover it. A similar incident occurred in Lida, western Belarus, in October, when vandals smashed paint cans against a recently installed Holocaust memorial and daubed anti-Semitic slogans on it.

Also in Belarus, Jewish cemeteries were desecrated in Bobruisk and Timkovichi. During the summer, a 300-year-old Jewish cemetery in Grodno was excavated in order to expand a soccer stadium. Many of Grodno's 20,000 Holocaust victims had been buried there in mass graves. The cemetery, closed in 1958, had approximately a fifth of its territory taken in 1963 to build the original soccer stadium, which was now scheduled for enlargement. In Mogilev, the Jewish cemetery was opened to non-Jews. Local Jews claimed that over a thousand older graves were damaged or destroyed in order to make room for new burials. As long as it had been
an exclusively Jewish cemetery, overseas Jewish donors had paid for its upkeep, but this assistance was terminated after local authorities declared it a public, nonsectarian burial ground.

Leaders of four Jewish organizations in Belarus petitioned the government to halt distribution of the Russian-based newspaper Russkii Vestnik, claiming that it disseminated anti-Semitic propaganda, such as the allegation that Jews used "sacrificial blood" in their religious rites. In late May, it was reported that the Belarussian Ministry of Information would shut the paper down.

There were also official steps taken to diminish or halt Jewish education. With no explanation, officials in Minsk refused to renew the lease on the city's only Hebrew school, where classes had been held since 1999 and which now educated about 70 students. The school ceased operations when the lease was not renewed.

The International Institute of Humanities, a division of the Belarussian State University in Minsk, had opened in 1999 and included a program in Judaic studies. On September 5, 2003, however, the institute was closed, and the Ministry of Education offered no explanation. It was noted that Metropolitan Filaret of Slutsk and Minsk, the highest ranking official of the Russian Orthodox Church in Belarus, had complained that there were "too many Jews" at the institute. Its director, sociology professor Zelik Pinkhasik, and Leonid Levin, president of the Jewish community of Belarus, asserted that the closing reflected the growth of anti-Semitism in the country.

In Russia, too, there were anti-Semitic expressions, though most were at the grass-roots level. Indeed, governmental agencies took some steps to curb public expressions of anti-Semitism. The Justice Ministry revoked the registration of the National Power Party of Russia (NDPR) whose cochairman, Boris Mironov, had stated that citizens with "non-national ethnicities," including Jews, are "genetically disloyal to Russia and should not be allowed to vote." The official grounds for removing the party from the registry of recognized political organizations was not its anti-Semitism or xenophobia, but that it had not registered branches in 45 regions, as required by law. Before this action was taken, NDPR members had picketed the headquarters of the World Congress of Russian Jews.

The Russian Orthodox Church promoted a book, Foundations of Orthodox Culture, for use in public schools, and it was endorsed by the minister of education. The book was criticized as anti-Semitic and of containing slurs against the Armenian and other non-Orthodox Christian
groups. In a study guide, the following question was asked: "Why did the Jews crucify Christ? What prevented them from understanding the spiritual meaning of Jesus' teaching on the Heavenly Kingdom?" The correct answer was "greed," and the explanation was that Jews "thought only about power over other peoples and earthly wealth."

Sergei Seryubinym, editor of the newspaper Pravoslavnyi Simbirsk (Orthodox Simbirsk), was put on trial for an article he published on April 24, 2002, that warned parents that "Jews are murdering Christian children for ritual purposes."

On July 25, a sign declaring "Kill the Yids" was found on a highway in the Moscow region. This was the 16th anti-Semitic highway sign to appear "in several months," as one newspaper put it. At the same time, several senior officials in the Kaliningrad region received threatening anti-Semitic letters.

President Putin attended the world conference on Islam held in Malaysia. He ignored the comments made by Malaysian prime minister Mahathir Mohamad that "Jews rule the world by proxy, and get others to fight and die for them." Putin told NTV on October 17 that "there were some extreme controversial opinions and it is worthwhile to know what they are," but he declined to address the issue of anti-Semitism explicitly.

On September 20, vandals overturned 20 gravestones in a Jewish cemetery in Riga, Latvia.

**Holocaust-Related Matters**

Reuven Rivlin, speaker of the Israeli Knesset, addressed the Lithuanian parliament on September 23, the 60th anniversary of the destruction of the Vilna (Vilnius) ghetto. He lauded former president Algirdas Brazauskas for his 1995 speech apologizing for Lithuanian involvement in the Holocaust, and spoke in a more conciliatory tone than some previous Israeli spokesmen.

In October, the ambassadors of Germany, the UK, and the U.S., officials of the Belarussian government, and representatives of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe participated in a mass meeting to commemorate the final liquidation of the Minsk ghetto on October 21, 1943, when the surviving 4,000 Jews were massacred. Metropolitan Filaret of the Orthodox Church and Leonid Levin of the Belarussian Jewish community were among the speakers.

The Simon Wiesenthal Center sought to place advertisements in three Estonian newspapers offering rewards of up to $10,000 for information
leading to the conviction of Nazi war criminals, but the papers refused to publish them. Their editors, like many other Estonians, resented what they saw as the Wiesenthal Center’s implication that their nation was collectively guilty of murdering Jews.

In November, after much controversy, Estonian officials decided to build a monument honoring their soldiers who had fought alongside the Nazis. This evoked protests in Israel and elsewhere. Later, the monument’s message was altered to honor all Estonians who had fought in the war, apparently without reference to the armies in which they fought.

JEWISH COMMUNITY

Demography

The Russian census of 2002 counted 259,000 Jews, and an earlier Ukrainian census enumerated 103,700. These figures marked drastic declines from the 1989 statistics of 551,000 in the Russian Republic and 486,000 in Ukraine. Very low fertility, high mortality, emigration, and intermarriage all played roles in the Jewish population decline. Jews were now the 28th largest ethnic group in Russia, and 78 percent of them lived in Moscow and Saint Petersburg.

In Moscow, the ratio of Jewish deaths to births was almost 10:1, and the average age of Moscow Jews was 52–56. Of all marriages in the city, 22 percent were ethnically mixed, 20 percent of them between Russian Orthodox Christians and Muslims. No recent data for interethnic marriages involving Jews were published.

Jewish leaders estimated that in the previous five years about 10 percent of Jews who had emigrated from Ukraine had returned there. In fiscal year 2003, only 1,580 Jews from the FSU immigrated to the United States. In calendar year 2003, 11,311 Jews went to Israel (the 2002 number was 18,878) and about 19,000 to Germany, roughly the same number as the previous year. Thus, for the second year in a row, more Jews went to Germany than to Israel, and 2003 had the smallest immigration to the U.S. in decades.

Communal Affairs

In March, Leonid Nevzlin, former vice president of Yukos Oil and president of the Russian Jewish Congress, resigned after 15 months as
representative of Mordovia on the Federation Council, the upper house of the Russian parliament. He said he would head the charitable fund “Open Russia.” He also became rector of the Russian State University for the Humanities, to which Yukos had pledged $100 million over ten years, the first significant corporate gift to a Russian university. Nevzlin was put in charge of university management and fund-raising. He continued to hold 8 percent of Yukos stock, and his fortune was estimated at $1.1 billion. However, after other high officers of Yukos were arrested, Nevzlin was told that his presence in Russia was “undesirable.” He received Israeli citizenship and emigrated from Russia before the year was out. Eugene Satanovsky succeeded him as president of the Russian Jewish Congress.

Mikhail Mirilashvili, 43, a major funder of the Russian Jewish Congress in St. Petersburg and owner of the historic Astoria Hotel, was sentenced on August 1 to 12 years in prison for organizing a kidnapping and being involved in contract murders. He had already been in prison for two years, during which time he continued to support a soup kitchen that served Jewish and non-Jewish poor.

Leaders of the Russian Jewish Congress, established in 1996, were not invited to a June 10 meeting at the Kremlin between President Putin and visiting American Jewish dignitaries. Berel Lazar, the Chabad (Lubavitch) chief rabbi of Russia, and others from the Chabad-controlled Federation of Jewish Communities, formed in 1999, were invited to the meeting, which was apparently organized by Lev Leviev, a successful diamond merchant born in Uzbekistan who now lived in Israel. He was the major backer of Chabad in Russia, and was considered close to Putin. Congress officials protested their exclusion, but it was clear that the Putin government saw Chabad as the Jewish body with which it preferred to work.

The second congress of Jewish editors and journalists of the Commonwealth of Independent States (the former Soviet republics, excluding the Baltic states) took place in Moscow on March 3–5. Forty-six journalists from 27 cities attended. They reported that the readership of the approximately 500 Jewish periodicals was mostly elderly, and that this hampered their ability to attract advertising and subscriptions. Furthermore, the periodicals remained dependent on local Jewish organizations or entrepreneurs, limiting their independence. Though most publications were regional or local, the two rival national organizations produced weeklies, the Russian Jewish Congress publishing the Jewish News, and the Federation of Jewish Communities the Jewish Word. Each generally ignored the existence of the other.
Keren Hayesod, the major international fund-raising body of the Jewish Agency for Israel, planned to begin raising funds in Russia on a regular basis. It assumed that the Russian Jewish community was now sufficiently well established that it could play a role in the worldwide philanthropic effort that had raised $130 million the previous year. However, the Russian Jewish Congress opposed the opening of a Keren Hayesod office on the grounds that it would siphon off funds that were badly needed for Russian Jewry. Rabbi Lazar and the Federation of Jewish Communities were also cool to the idea, believing that poor Jews in Russia should have priority.

The World Congress of Russian Jewry, an organization seeking to unite Russian-speaking Jews the world over, launched a campaign in June to aid victims of terror attacks in Israel, among whom the proportion of Russian-speaking Jews was very high. Matvei (Motya) Chlenov, administrator of the organization, announced that $25,000 had been raised from a thousand Muscovites in just a few weeks.

The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) announced plans to build three major Jewish community centers in Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Kiev at a total cost of some $50 million. The Kiev center would be located near the site of the Babi Yar massacre, in which the Nazis shot 33,700 Jews on Rosh Hashanah, 1941. But Josef Zissels, head of the Ukrainian Va’ad (Jewish community organization) and Ukrainian representative to the Euro-Asian Jewish Congress based in Kazakhstan, and Leonid Finberg, director of Kiev’s Institute for Judaic Studies, protested the site selection. They, and the representatives of 12 national minorities in Ukraine, wrote President Leonid Kuchma pointing out that the planned location would lead to conflict with Ukrainians and others who also had victims of the Nazis buried in mass graves at the site. The dispute became heated, and a council of Jewish leaders, including Ukrainian chief rabbi Yaacov Bleich, Rabbi Moshe-Reuven Asman—called the chief rabbi of Kiev—and important lay figures declared Zissels “persona non grata,” with no right to represent the Ukrainian Jewish community before Ukrainian or foreign authorities, or to nongovernmental or religious organizations, domestic and foreign.

In October came the announcement that a $3-million Holocaust memorial museum would be built in the Ukrainian city of Dnepropetrovsk, where a very active Jewish community was led by a Chabad rabbi. The museum would be funded by the JDC, the Claims Conference, and the local Jewish community. The building would be multistory and
multifunctional, including a historic restored synagogue, exhibits on Jewish life in Ukraine, and exhibits about the Holocaust.

In the United States, many Jewish leaders advocated lifting the Jackson-Vanik amendment to the trade act of 1974 that tied trade policy to human rights, including the right to emigration, since the FSU no longer prevented people from leaving. But the American poultry industry, whose exporters were being restricted by Russian regulations, opposed the step.

**Religion**

According to the Russian Ministry of Justice, there were 270 registered Jewish religious communities in the Russian Federation. The ministry classified 197 as "Orthodox" (including Hassidic), and 73 as "modern," largely Reform or Progressive. The Council of Jewish Religious Organizations and Communities (KEROOR), affiliated with the Russian Jewish Congress, claimed to have 58 Reform and 74 Orthodox congregations as affiliates. The Chabad-sponsored Federation of Jewish Communities claimed 173 congregations, and there were some that were nominally affiliated with both KEROOR and the Federation. Chabad refused to affiliate with KEROOR since Reform rabbis—there were only two—belonged to that roof organization. KEROOR was largely funded by the Oklahoma-based Schusterman Foundation, which awarded it $200,000 in 2003.

In May, a third organization, the Federation of Orthodox Jews, was formed, claiming as its raison d'etre bringing Hassidic and non-Hassidic Orthodox Jews under a single umbrella. Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt, chief rabbi of Moscow, explained that there were many unemployed rabbis in Israel who could find work in the Former Soviet Union where they would offer an alternative to Chabad. He stressed the need for new outreach techniques and lamented the fact that many Jewish communal leaders and donors were nonobservant.

There was some tension even within the Chabad movement, which apparently dissociated itself from Rabbi Moshe-Reuven Asman in Kiev and brought in 73-year-old Azriel Haikin from Brussels and "elected" him "chief rabbi of Ukraine," ignoring the fact that Rabbi Yaacov Bleich, affiliated with the Karlin-Stolin Hassidic group, had been chief rabbi of the country since 1992, and that Asman had been previously designated "chief rabbi of Kiev."

The new Jewish book room in the Russian National (formerly Lenin)
Library was fully ready for use in September. It contained 40,000 Hebrew volumes and 20,000 in Yiddish, and also housed the collection of books that had belonged to Rabbi Yosef Yitzhak Schneersohn, the world leader of Chabad who died in 1950, and had been confiscated by the Soviet authorities when he left the USSR in 1929. The Federation of Jewish Communities continued to protest the government’s refusal to return the collection to the Chabad movement. The JDC, on the other hand, expressed satisfaction at the opening of the Jewish room.

The government of Belarus announced that all religious organizations would have to register with the authorities once again. Minimal requirements for registration were having at least 20 members and ten communities, at least one of which had been practicing its religion in Belarus for a minimum of 20 years.

A new synagogue was opened in Baku, Azerbaijan. The Grand Choral Synagogue in Kiev, Ukraine, built in 1894 and closed in 1929 by the Soviets but opened again after World War II, had been under repair since 2001, and was rededicated in March. A third synagogue, the “Galician shul,” near the historic Evbaz (Jewish market), was opened in Kiev. Its restoration from its previous function as a factory was funded by the Jewish Agency and the Jewish Confederation of Ukraine.

The president of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbaev, met in June with the chief Ashkenazi rabbi of Israel, Yonah Metzger, to discuss preparations for a conference on the world’s major religions scheduled for September 2003 in Astana, the Kazakh capital.

Zvi Gitelman