Central and Eastern Europe

Germany

National Affairs

The German-American relationship, which soured over the U.S. decision to go to war with Iraq in 2003, improved slightly after President George Bush’s reelection to a second term, when, partially out of necessity, he and German chancellor Gerhard Schröder established a cordial working relationship. The two countries cooperated on several issues, including combating terrorism, fighting anti-Semitism, and promoting democracy, particularly in the Middle East.

President Bush publicly thanked Germany for playing a major role in the UN-mandated International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan, which was under German command from February 9 through August 10. While Germany maintained its policy of not sending troops to serve in Iraq, it continued to provide security for the U.S. bases on German soil and cooperated in providing intelligence on Iraq and the surrounding countries. As investigations in Great Britain and the U.S. revealed that the evidence for weapons of mass destruction in Iraq was even weaker than first thought, German cynicism about the war grew, compounded by revelations of abuse of prisoners in the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq.

Both Schröder and Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer stressed that the transatlantic partnership was essential to the security of Europe and the world. There was, however, some disappointment in Germany that the U.S. would not express clear support for the country’s bid for permanent-member status on the UN Security Council.

A major issue of transatlantic concern was Iran’s nuclear policy. The foreign ministers of Germany, England, and France negotiated intensively in 2004 with the Iranian government to prevent it from developing nuclear weapons. Both the U.S. and Israel questioned the efficacy of
these negotiations. In June, the International Atomic Energy Agency said it had found traces of enriched uranium—necessary to produce nuclear weapons—in Iran, as well as evidence that Iran was importing parts to build centrifuges.

The primary domestic issue in German national politics during 2004 was the slow economy. Reforms, scheduled to take effect in January 2005, designed to restructure the tax base, improve health care, and streamline welfare and unemployment payments—initiated by the center-left Social Democratic-Green government and supported by the conservative opposition parties—encountered growing resistance. Arousing particular anger was the reduction, in some cases, of government benefits, and a provision requiring recipients of welfare payments to accept low-paying temporary jobs. Groups from all across the political spectrum opposed to the reform program carried out protests. Paul Spiegel, head of the Central Council of Jews in Germany (CCJG), warned that extremist groups on the right or left could use these demonstrations to radicalize voters. Opposition to the reforms was strongest in eastern Germany, the formerly communist German Democratic Republic. Though the standard of living had risen there in the 15 years since unification, the area remained economically disadvantaged, with unemployment ranging from 20 to 40 percent.

The economic situation caused Schröder’s Social Democratic Party (SPD) to lose much popular support in 2004, and some of its left-leaning activists considered forming their own faction to challenge the prime minister in the next federal election. The Green Party gained strength, partly because of the personal popularity of its government ministers. The Free Democratic Party regained some of the popularity it lost in the 2003 election, and the reconstituted Communist Party, which had no seats in the Bundestag, also seemed to be on the upswing.

German-Jewish relations continued to play an important role in the transatlantic picture, as illustrated by a conference held in May in Washington, D.C. Hosted by the German Historical Institute, this “First International Dialogue Between Young Germans and Young American-Jewish Leaders” was the brainchild of Simon Nauerz, a young German volunteer associated with Action Reconciliation Service for Peace who was working with the American Jewish Committee in Washington. Other bodies beside the institute and the AJC involved in the planning were the German embassy, the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Jewish Youth Philanthropy Institute, the German School, and the Goethe Institute. The 20 young adults who participated began with a reception at
the German embassy followed by a roundtable discussion on the topic, “Beyond Anti-Semitism and Philo-Semitism: Searching for Normality in German-Jewish Relations.”

In May, CCJG head Paul Spiegel lauded Germany’s outgoing president, Johannes Rau, as a friend to Jews and to Israel, and thanked him for his commitment to building relations between Jews and non-Jews. Rau’s successor was Horst Köhler, 61, former head of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), who assumed the presidency on July 2. The role of president was nonpartisan and largely symbolic. Köhler, nominated by the conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU), narrowly defeated Gesine Schwan, president of Viadrina University in Frankfurt/Oder, gaining the support of 604 of the 1,205 delegates, half of whom were members of parliament and the other half chosen by the 16 states.

In the days before the election, controversy erupted over the Nazi past of one CDU electoral delegate. The Vienna-based Simon Wiesenthal Center pushed for the removal of Hans Filbinger, 90, a military judge during the Nazi era, who had handed down death sentences to deserters. Filbinger had resigned as governor of the state of Baden-Württemberg in 1978 after his past was revealed. According to the Wiesenthal Center, after World War II, Filbiger headed the Weikersheim Study Center, a controversial institute that had reportedly invited Holocaust revisionists and deniers to speak.

Immigration remained a live issue in Germany. There were some 7.3 million noncitizens living in the country—nearly 9 percent out of a population of 82 million. Most of the noncitizens, nearly six million, were from other European countries, mostly Turkey, Italy, Greece, and former Yugoslavia. The next largest groups, in descending order, were Asians, Africans, North and South Americans, and Australians. An estimated 200,000 foreigners were arriving in Germany each year.

A major debate developed during the summer, when a ship run by the private German humanitarian organization Cap Anmur docked illegally off the coast of Italy with Africans aboard. The organization claimed that these were Sudanese refugees escaping the brutal civil war in their country, and were therefore entitled to asylum. But the Italian government insisted that they were not from Sudan, and deported most of the passengers back to Africa. In the wake of this incident, German interior minister Otto Schily proposed that Europe set up refugee camps in North Africa to process applications for those seeking to immigrate to Europe, in order to deter people from taking the risk of going to sea to escape
poverty and discrimination. Some critics considered his approach a pre-text to prevent refugees from crossing into Germany.

**War on Terror**

A report released in May by the Federal Department for Protection of the Constitution indicated that Islamic extremism remained Germany's greatest domestic security threat. According to the report, there were 24 radical Islamic groups in the country in 2003 with a combined membership of 30,900, essentially unchanged from 2002. The vast majority of these people, 26,500, were of Turkish background, while 3,300 were Arabs. Interior Minister Schily, commenting on the findings, said that Germany was not only a staging ground for terror attacks elsewhere, but was also a potential target itself, “because Germany, in the eyes of Islamists, belongs in the camp of the so-called crusaders, the helpers of the U.S.A. and Israel.”

In August, it was learned that a September 11 terror suspect on trial in Hamburg reportedly approved of the Nazi genocide against Jews. In the retrial of Mounir El Motassadeq, a 30-year-old Moroccan, on charges of involvement in an Al Qaeda terror cell, Ralf G., 34, who had shared an apartment with the defendant in 1996 and 1997, testified that Motassadeq once said, “what the Germans did back then, that was really not so bad, with the Jews and so on.” According to the witness, he then told his roommate that he did not want to hear such statements, and ended the conversation. He described Motassadeq’s relationship with the leader of the September 11 attack, Mohammed Atta, as very close. The retrial followed the March 2004 decision of an appeals court to overturn Motassadeq’s 2003 conviction on the grounds that the U.S. had denied his lawyers access to testimony from a key member of the Al Qaeda Hamburg cell who was on trial in the U.S. After the Americans granted access to the testimony, Motassadeq’s retrial began on August 10.

In related news, Germany, in November, agreed to cooperate with the U.S. in the trial of French national Zacarias Moussaoui, charged in the September 11 attacks. The arrangement was predicated on American assurances that evidence obtained from Germany would not be used to obtain the death penalty.

In September, the Interior Ministry banned a planned “First Arab and Islamic Congress in Europe” scheduled for October 1–3 in Berlin. Conference organizer Fadi Mahdi—who, on his Web site, had condemned “American and Zionist Nazism” and called for the “final slaughter”—was
deported to his previous country of residence, Lebanon. German law allowed the banning of organizations whose activities were deemed illegal or anti-democratic. In response to the German decision, Fadi Mahdi told Der Spiegel that the congress might take place in Vienna, whereupon calls came for the mayor of that city to prohibit it.

Interestingly, an interfaith pro-democracy group with many members of Arab and Muslim background pushed for the German ban. It declared, in an open letter to Berlin mayor Klaus Wowereit, that “the extremists who want to meet here in October are declared enemies of the freedom for which we, and our city, stand. Their declared goal is to export extremism and violence.”

In December, a bid to lift Germany’s ban on an Islamist group failed. The Federal Administrative Court of Leipzig turned down a request by the Al-Aqsa charitable organization to be allowed to gather funds again, since the group supported terrorist organizations based in the Middle East, including Hamas, and thus “attacks the concept of understanding between peoples.” Interior Minister Schily had banned the group in 2002, but it had won a brief reprieve while the courts considered the case. Schily described the 2004 decision as a “clear signal that Germany will not tolerate organizations that collect donations to support violence and terror abroad. No one can hide under the cover of supposedly pure humanitarianism.”

Israel and the Middle East

Germany and Israel

In a dramatic story early in the year, Germany brokered a historic prisoner exchange between Israel and Hezballah. On January 29, under tight security, two jets landed at the Cologne-Bonn airport before dawn, within minutes of each other. One, from Beirut, carried kidnapped Israeli businessman and reserve soldier Elhanan Tannenbaum along with the bodies of three Israeli soldiers. The other, from Tel Aviv, had 36 Arab prisoners and a German Hezballah member, Steven Smyrek, who had been in Israeli custody. The exchange took place smoothly, unaffected by news of a suicide bombing on a bus in Jerusalem that killed ten. Smyrek promised police that he would not attack Israeli institutions in Germany, but later said he would ask for permission to live in Lebanon, where he would continue his fight against Israel.
Germany remained Israel’s strongest supporter within the EU in 2004, and its second biggest economic partner after the U.S. Nevertheless, there were signs of strain in the relationship as the route of Israel’s security fence, its expansion of settlements, and the continuing policy of “targeted assassinations” came under criticism.

In April, Foreign Minister Fischer condemned Israel’s killing of Hamas leader Abdel Aziz Rantisi. “We consider this [targeted assassination] a means that must not be used,” Fischer said.

In August, after the International Court of Justice ruled against Israel’s security barrier, Germany joined the rest of Europe in issuing a joint statement approving the decision and urging both parties to abide by the “road map” plan. Pressure for such a statement came from France, and Germany agreed to it only after securing language that emphasized Israel’s right to self-defense in accordance with international law. Even so, supporters of Israel in the U.S. feared that, in the name of European unity, Germany was abandoning its usual policy of abstaining or voting against such anti-Israel measures.

Germany’s particular sensitivity to the issue of the security fence was underscored in February, when Ludger Volmer, a Green Party member of the Bundestag, made a comparison that drew considerable attention. Volmer, his party’s foreign policy spokesman, said he welcomed Prime Minister Ariel Sharon’s proposal to remove Jewish settlements from Gaza, but criticized what he called a policy of “strict separation” between Israelis and Palestinians in the form of “this monstrous barrier that is being built there and that bears a fatal resemblance to the Berlin Wall.” To be sure, he went on to say, the Palestinians “must find the power to finally bring terrorism by Palestinian groups to an end, and they must discontinue their inflammatory anti-Israel and anti-Jewish propaganda.” Critics were quick to point out the fundamental difference between the two barriers: the Berlin Wall was designed to stem a mass exodus of skilled workers and professionals from East Germany, while the one Israel was erecting, as Volmer acknowledged, was to block acts of terror.

In June, during the election campaign for delegates to the European Parliament, the Green Party distributed about 5,000 posters featuring a photograph of a peace march in London, where a banner could be seen that said “Victory to the Intifada.” The problem was not discovered until three weeks after the posters’ release, and though instructions were given to destroy them, some were still visible in four cities on the day of the election. The Greens reportedly also scrapped flyers that included photos of another banner supporting a boycott of Israel. The party’s director, Steffi
Lemke, apologized to Israeli ambassador Shimon Stein. Campaign posters expressing love and support for Israel were put up by a conservative fringe party, the Bible-True Christians.

This was not the only indication during 2004 that German fundamentalist Christians were fascinated by Israel: they also set up an “Institute for Israelology” at the Free Theological Academy in Giessen. Billed as “the first of its kind in the 2,000-year history of Christianity,” it was designed to disseminate information about Israel from a fundamentalist standpoint, based on a belief that Israel should not give up any territory and that Jews should convert to Christianity. The initial seed money for the institute was close to $1 million.

In August, Foreign Minister Fischer made his second visit of the year to Israel as part of a larger Middle East trip that also took him to Lebanon, Syria, and Egypt. He avoided meeting with Yasir Arafat, his office saying that scheduling difficulties prevented him from visiting the Palestinian territories. Instead, he met Palestinian prime minister Ahmed Qurei and Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak in Cairo. In Israel, Fischer praised Prime Minister Sharon’s plans to dismantle the settlements in Gaza, telling his Israeli counterpart, Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom, that the move was a step toward restarting the peace process. Fischer raised with Shalom European concerns about the route of the security fence, plans for expanding some settlements, and the Iranian nuclear program, a subject that also worried Shalom.

At a November discussion on Mideast policy hosted by the Bundeswehr in Berlin, Israeli ambassador Stein said he found it “unbelievable that the European Union had not yet put Hezballah on the list of terror organizations. Germany has tried to do this,” he said, adding that “there should be a clear signal” from Europe on this matter.

In an effort to gauge what young Germans knew about Israel, the German-American Society of Hamburg conducted a survey of 1,500 people aged 15–24 living in the city. The results indicated considerable ignorance about the Jewish state. While 71 percent knew that Israel was founded in 1948, 59 percent thought Israel was a military state or a monarchy, only 28 percent knew that almost one-third of Israel’s citizens were not Jewish, and just 39 percent were aware that Germany was Israel’s second most important economic partner.

PA Corruption

An EU investigative team reported in February that it had evidence that Yasir Arafat channeled Palestinian Authority money to politicians and
diplomats for their personal use, and to the terrorist Al-Aqsa Brigades, a group connected with his Fatah movement that had claimed responsibility for suicide bombings since the start of the second intifada. To make matters worse, German media carried reports that PA funds were also siphoned off to Arafat’s private accounts in Cairo and Switzerland.

In June, Uzrad Lew, an Israeli banker and Arafat’s former financial adviser, told the ARD TV news magazine “Report München” that the PA was building the “world’s largest terror financing network” with EU money. ARD cited documents showing the transfer of about $65 million from an account in Geneva via a London bank to the PA in Ramallah. The funds landed in the same account to which the EU made its contributions. ARD said it also had proof that Fatah activists—including Marwan Barghouti, then serving five life terms in an Israeli prison for his role in terrorist attacks—had access to these funds. And ARD reported the existence of money orders signed by Arafat for terrorists who had committed murder in Israel and Jordan.

The issue was brought up in July at the EU Parliament, where German members condemned European foreign ministers for failing to address the problem. No action was taken, however, and further discussion was postponed until September. “This is a mistake, because even the Palestinians are talking about Arafat, and there are demonstrations for reform in the PA,” said Armin Laschet, CDU representative to the EU body, and one of several German politicians who pressed the matter. Laschet charged that the PA apparently had “enough money to buy Challenger airplanes in the Caribbean or to give millions of euros to Mrs. Arafat in Paris,” while average Palestinians lived in substandard conditions. Abdallah Frangi, the PA representative in Germany, denied the allegations, suggesting that they were part of a campaign by supporters of Israel to “manipulate German public opinion against the Palestinians and their striving for their own state.” The complaints of Germans and others did lead to a change in the disbursement of funds to the PA. Through the end of 2003, the EU contributed ten million euros per month with virtually no controls on how it would be spent. But it tightened oversight procedures beginning in 2004, so that money could go only to specific, authorized projects.

Germany viewed the death of Yasir Arafat in November as an opportunity to build a new Palestinian leadership that not only would be more committed to peace with Israel, but also more transparent in its financial operations.
Anti-Semitism and Extremism

Good and Bad News

Two significant events in Germany called attention to anti-Semitism in 2004. On the positive side, Germany hosted a historic conference on anti-Semitism in Europe. But on the negative side stood the alarming electoral success, in the eastern part of the country, of two extreme right-wing parties.

The conference took place on April 28–29 in Berlin under the auspices of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). It was hosted by German foreign minister Joschka Fischer and chaired by Bulgarian foreign minister Solomon Passy. To a large extent, it was the result of a German-American effort to raise awareness, on the eve of EU enlargement, of the spread of anti-Semitism in Europe, especially the extent to which it was triggered by anti-Israel sentiment. The conference featured addresses by U.S. secretary of state Colin Powell, German president Johannes Rau, and Holocaust survivors Simone Veil and Elie Wiesel. Several hundred participants, ranging from politicians to religious leaders to OSCE personnel, attended. Also present were representatives of Egypt, Israel, Jordan and Tunisia, countries with the status of “Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation” in the OSCE.

A resolution was originally proposed—initiated by Jewish organizations (including the American Jewish Committee) and reflecting input from the U.S. State Department and the German Foreign Ministry—that condemned Muslim anti-Semitism tied to criticism of Israel, but this was opposed by Arab countries and some OSCE members. The final language of the resolution, released April 29, only hinted at this connection, stating “unambiguously that international developments or political issues, including those in Israel or elsewhere in the Middle East, never justify anti-Semitism.”

Several concrete recommendations emerged from the conference, including the appointment of a coordinator for monitoring anti-Semitic crimes in Europe. Wolfgang Benz, head of the Center for Research on Anti-Semitism of the Technical University of Berlin, said the conference showed “that anti-Semitism is not a legitimate political instrument, and it sends a signal to the Eastern European states that have not always seen it that way.”

There were a number of important preconference events. The AJC and CCJG hosted a gathering of nongovernmental organizations. This was
an outgrowth of work by the AJC Task Force on Anti-Semitism and Education, which had received a German government grant for a European Workshop on Anti-Semitism and Education, April 18–20, for educators from six countries. The World Jewish Congress hosted a meeting featuring presentations by German politicians, and cosponsored, together with the World Union of Jewish Students, a gathering at the Berlin Jewish Museum of some 50 young Jews from 23 countries. Also prior to the conference, the Anti-Defamation League released a poll that showed declining anti-Semitism in Europe at the same time that anti-Israel sentiment was rising there.

In June, less than two months later, far-right parties surprised the country by taking nearly 7 percent of the vote in local elections in the state of Saxony. The largest of these groups, the National Democratic Party (NPD), attracted enough votes to qualify for about one million euros in campaign costs. For the June elections to the European Parliament, the NPD fielded a joint “National Alliance” list together with two other extremist parties, the German People’s Union (DVU) and the Republikaners, and it managed to win 10.3 percent of the vote in the town of Chemnitz, in what had been East Germany.

With state elections in the former East German states of Saxony and Brandenberg scheduled for September 19, the right-wing groups campaigned for support by blaming foreigners for crime and unemployment, expressed resentment at reminders of the Holocaust, and propounded vehemently racist, anti-Semitic, and anti-American views. The NPD and DVU reached an agreement whereby the former would not run in Brandenburg and the latter would sit out the Saxony election, so as to maximize the chances that each party would garner the 5-percent threshold vote necessary for parliamentary representation in one of the states.

The strategy worked, as the extremists made significant gains. For the first time since 1968, the NPD crossed the 5-percent threshold to place representatives in Saxony’s parliament, gaining 9.2 percent of the vote. The DVU, which was already represented in the Brandenburg parliament, won 6.1 percent of the vote there.

The results were greeted with alarm within the German mainstream. Sociologist Richard Stöss and political scientist Jürgen Falter of Mainz suggested that as many as half of those who voted for these fringe parties were not ideological supporters but rather protest voters, and predicted that “if there is no kind of economic miracle” in the former East Germany, the extremist right wing could soon get as many as 15 percent of the vote. The pro-democracy Antonio Amadeu Foundation, founded
by Annette Kahane, a member of the Berlin Jewish community, called on the moderate parties to make funds available for a long-term fight against right-wing extremism.

Paul Spiegel, the CCJG president, told the Tagesspiegel newspaper that the election results were due to two factors, the economic situation and the failure of the political mainstream to educate the voters in Saxony and Brandenburg about the nature of democratic reforms. Spiegel also pointed out that the election results could make things even worse for the economy by discouraging foreign investment, and criticized Interior Minister Schily for having dropped attempts to ban the NPD in 2003 (see AJYB 2004, p. 373).

Not long after the election, in late September, charges were filed against Udo Voigt, president of the NPD, for remarks he made in an interview with the extreme right-wing newspaper Junge Freiheit. Voigt called Hitler a "great statesman" and the current government of Germany an "illegitimate system" requiring "revolutionary change."

SURVEYS AND STRATEGIES

In all, Germany registered 869 anti-Semitic incidents in 2004, according to the annual report prepared by the postcommunist Party of Democratic Socialism. Most were committed by right-wing extremists; only 11 were attributed to "foreigners." The bulk of the anti-Semitic incidents relating to Israel, however, were the work of left-wing extremists, the report said.

In December, the Berlin Senate's Department on Constitutional Protection issued a study reporting that there had been nine violent anti-Semitic attacks in the city during the first nine months of the year; in 2003, there were 12 such incidents, representing about 3 percent of all violent crimes in the capital. The anti-Semitic attacks were being committed by younger people; according to the study, the average age of known perpetrators in 2003 was 16, and the youngest arrested was 12. Claudia Schmid, head of the department that prepared the report, said it was unlikely that right-wingers would join forces with the 3,700 estimated Islamic extremists in Berlin, as neo-Nazis tended not to cross cultural boundaries.

Another study was issued in December, the annual "German Situation 2004," third in a series by sociologist Wilhelm Heitmeyer of the University of Bielefeld. It indicated that racism and xenophobia were on the rise, finding that 60 percent of Germans agreed that there were too many
"foreigners" in Germany, up from 55 percent in 2003. Of the 2,600 people interviewed, almost 70 percent agreed that Muslim culture did not fit with Western mores; in 2003, 66 percent held this view. The study also found increased animosity toward homeless people, homosexuals, and the handicapped, and a growing number of respondents said they were worried about their economic situation.

Combating anti-Semitism remained a central theme in 2004, on both the European and national levels. The American Jewish Committee in Berlin teamed up with the Heinrich Böll Foundation, associated with the Green Party, to host a series of roundtable discussions on anti-Semitism. In November, the Kreuzberg Museum in Berlin held a daylong symposium titled “United Against Anti-Semitism,” featuring lectures and discussions. Also in November, at a meeting in Berlin, the European Jewish Congress pledged to continue its fight against anti-Semitism. Cobi Benatoff of Italy, EJC president, said the group would meet with EU education ministers to “find ways of introducing into the curricula in Europe subjects that will act as a vaccine against prejudice in our younger generations.”

**Islamic Extremism**

Muslim anti-Semitism continued to be a problem, though for the most part it was nonviolent. In August, however, police arrested a 19-year-old man of Arab background in connection with an attack on an Israeli tourist near the Berlin Jewish Museum (the victim was not seriously injured). The alleged perpetrator was accused of coming up to three members of a tour group who were wearing kippot, identifying himself as a Palestinian, saying “Jews must be killed,” and proceeding to kick the victim in the stomach. The suspect had a previous record of violent crimes.

In November, some 1,000 people demonstrated in Berlin, in one of several Shiite Islamist parades held around the world marking the end of the Ramadan month. The annual event was initiated in 1979 by Ayatollah Ruholla Khomeini of Iran, with the goal of condemning Israel’s existence. Marchers held posters condemning “all forms of terrorism” and proclaiming the equal value of the three major faiths, which would one day live together in a “liberated Palestine.” A pro-Israel counterdemonstration organized by the Berlin Alliance Against Anti-Semitism included many Iranian exiles who protested human rights abuses in their former country.

On December 1, *Vakit*, a Turkish-language newspaper, ran an article
in which author Hasan Karakaya wrote, "The truth is: There was no Holocaust. And the so-called gas chambers also are a lie." Holocaust denial was illegal in Germany, and the state prosecutor in Hessen filed suit against the paper. Kristina Köhler, a CDU representative in the Bundestag, described the article's contents as "the most crass smear campaign," and Berlin's Department for Constitutional Protection noted that the paper was already notorious for earlier Islamist and anti-Semitic statements.

A Turkish national identified as Yakup T., imam of the Mevlana Mosque in Berlin, was ordered to leave Germany in December because of sermons he delivered expressing sympathy for suicide bombers, fomenting hatred toward Americans and Jews, and predicting "hellfire" for Germans. Senator for the Interior Ehrhart Körting (SPD) said the religious leader was preparing "fertile ground for terror acts," since, as an imam, he might be "a role model for many." Körting added that most Muslims living in Germany were opposed to violence.

RIGHT-WING EXTREMISM

Right-wing extremist organizations continued to try to evade the laws banning publication and distribution of neo-Nazi and racist literature and paraphernalia. In 2004, some of these groups claimed success in distributing a new CD in front of schools. Experts who examined the CD reported that it contained racist and nationalist ideology in a form designed to appeal to youth, and suggested that the coordinated effort represented a growing tendency of such groups across Germany to work together.

On January 30, an estimated 1,200 neo-Nazis and 3,500 counter-demonstrators came to blows over the controversial exhibit "Crimes of the Wehrmacht," which opened the day before in Hamburg, its last scheduled public display. A police contingent of 3,250 proved unable to keep the opposing groups apart. The exhibit, a project of the Hamburg Institute for Social Research, documented war crimes committed by the Nazi army during World War II. Protests against the traveling exhibit had been mounted since its first appearance in 1995, as critics claimed it wrongly criminalized German soldiers.

In March, the Münster Higher Regional Court, basing itself in part on the party's record of anti-Semitism, confirmed a ban by local authorities on planned demonstrations by the NPD against the construction of a synagogue in Bochum. The NPD formally protested the decision in Ger-
many's highest court, in Karlsruhe. In June, after local police banned yet another NPD demonstration against the synagogue, the party obtained a temporary injunction from the court in Karlsruhe, and held its demonstration on June 28.

In April, the country's chief federal prosecutor charged four members and one supporter of the extremist Kameradschaft Süd of terrorism. They had been among those arrested in September 2003 for allegedly planning to explode a bomb at the cornerstone-laying ceremony of Munich's new Jewish community center (see AJYB 2004, p. 372). The leader of the group, Martin Wiese, was a well-known neo-Nazi who had led a right-wing demonstration against the Iraq war. Their defense attorney, however, argued that the only one who had expressed "clear criminal intentions" was a government informant who had infiltrated the cell.

On May 13, Martin Hohmann, a CDU member of the Bundestag, learned he would not face court charges connected to a speech he delivered on German Unity Day in 2003 (see AJYB 2004, pp. 375–76). The state prosecutor in Fulda announced that Hohmann, despite his reference to Jews as a "nation of perpetrators," had committed no statutory offence. The court rejected protests against its decision from the CCJG and the Jewish association in Hessen. Hohmann had kept his parliamentary seat after the incident but was dismissed from his party's caucus. Meanwhile, Defense Minister Peter Struck, who had reportedly received numerous death threats after firing Brigadier General Reinhard Guenzel for expressing support for Hohmann's anti-Semitic ideas, was under the highest security protection.

In June, swastikas and SS symbols were found scrawled across 45 stones in a Jewish cemetery in the western German city of Düsseldorf. Police said that the vandals probably climbed over the wall surrounding the cemetery. "It was very shocking," said Herbert Rubinstein, director of the State Association of Jewish Communities of North Rhine, who discovered the damage. The incident was barely reported in the German press, in conformity with the policy of the Jewish community to avoid sparking copycat crimes.

In August, nearly 4,000 neo-Nazis from across Europe marched into Wunsiedel, a town of 10,000. They had been doing this every year since 2001 in honor of Rudolf Hess, Adolf Hitler's deputy, who killed himself in the Spandau prison on August 17, 1987. The Bavarian administrative court turned down a request from city officials to ban the march. Instead, citizens of this small town responded with a festival promoting democracy and diversity, and hundreds of people—including the mayor, local
legislators, priests, and church elders—sat down on the town’s main street to block the path of the neo-Nazis. According to the U.S. State Department’s annual report on human rights, police arrested 105 individuals for carrying guns and illegal symbols at the event.

Jewish visitors to Berlin in August discovered swastikas painted on a Holocaust memorial at Levetzowstrasse in Tiergarten, where one of Berlin’s largest synagogues once stood. The design of the memorial represented the boxcars used to deport Jews from the synagogue, which the Nazis turned into a detention point for nearly 40,000 Jews.

In November, more than 1,000 right-wing extremists from around Germany demonstrated at a World War II military cemetery in Halbe, a city outside Berlin in the former East German state of Brandenburg. The demonstration, which the state high court had barred until 2003, was intended to mark Germany’s national day of mourning for fallen soldiers. Some right-wingers had adopted the day as a time to celebrate their heroes, members of the SS and the Wehrmacht. Their theme was “Glory and Honor to the German Frontline Soldiers,” and although photographers were kept away, eyewitnesses described participants marching in formation around a memorial stone where 24,000 SS men and German soldiers were buried, and a wreath-laying at the site. A roughly similar number of counterdemonstrators were there, saying they wanted to memorialize the victims of the Nazis as well as the Soviet soldiers who fell trying to defeat the German army. Some 1,800 police kept the two sides apart.

Holocaust-Related Matters

Remembrance

Nearly 60 years after the end of World War II, with the EU preparing for enlargement, the president of the Bundestag called for a European-wide Holocaust memorial day. Wolfgang Thierse (SPD) made the statement on Germany’s annual remembrance day, January 27, the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz by Soviet troops in 1945. Calling the Holocaust “the largest, most terrible crime in world history,” he argued that a common day of commemoration would promote the cultural integration of European member states.

In June, French president Jacques Chirac took an historic step, inviting German chancellor Schröder to participate in ceremonies in Caen,
France, marking the 60th anniversary of D-Day, one of many commemorations held in 2004 recalling the downfall of the Nazi regime. This was the first time that a representative of the German government was invited to attend this annual ceremony, and the invitation was widely praised in Europe as proof of German-French reconciliation. Schröder used the occasion to stress Germany’s special obligation to ensure that the crimes of Nazi Germany not be repeated.

A few weeks later, Schröder visited the grave of his father, a German soldier killed fighting in Romania, and was greeted warmly by the local population. He also visited Poland on the 60th anniversary of the beginning of the Warsaw uprising, where he said that Germans had no claim against Poland for expelling millions of ethnic Germans after the war. This angered organizations in Germany that represented the expellees, since their constituents felt that both Poland and the Czech Republic should compensate Germans for lost property and for the death of family members who perished as a result of the expulsion.

The chancellor found himself in hot water with these groups again when, agreeing with former president Johannes Rau, he rejected a proposal for a memorial to ethnic German expellees to be placed near the central Holocaust memorial, which was to open in 2005. Eastern European leaders also strongly opposed this private German initiative on the grounds that it could have the effect of minimizing German responsibility for World War II.

Indeed, funding for sites of memory in Germany became a controversial issue in 2004, as public opinion came increasingly to resent the alleged neglect of the suffering of German civilians and those persecuted by the postwar communist regime in East Germany. Politicians from the conservative CDU pushed for creation of a national foundation to oversee all memorial sites in the country, but critics said that the wording of their proposed legislation—including as “victims” those mistreated by the communists as well as civilians who suffered during the war—paved the way for the relativization of history. Avner Shalev, chairman of Yad Vashem, Israel’s Holocaust memorial, wrote an open letter to CDU leader Angela Merkel urging her to reconsider the proposal. As the year ended, the proposed legislation was to be revised by the Bundestag’s Cultural Commission. Earlier, in January, the CCJG, together with Holocaust memorial directors across the country, announced their withdrawal from the memorial foundation in the state of Saxony, in protest against what they called the relativization of history.

Germany marked two milestones in 2004 in the construction of its na-
tional Holocaust memorial, due to open in May 2005 near Berlin’s Brandenburg Gate. In July, Bundestag president Thierse presided at ceremonies marking the completion of the roof on the memorial’s cavernous underground “documentation center.” And in December, another public event marked the placement of the last cement stele in the memorial, which was to have a total of 2,751 of the gray cement pillars on the 204,440-square-foot site. Architect Peter Eisenman, who had designed the memorial with artist Richard Serra, said he hoped the structure would “bring a new sense of the relationship of history to the present, so that the history is not clouded over.”

The question of whether demonstrations should be banned near the memorial arose when NPD leaders applied for permission to rally at the Brandenburg Gate on May 8, 2005, the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II. Among those favoring a ban were CCJG head Paul Spiegel and Minister of the Interior Schily, but Eisenman, the architect, opposed attempts to curb demonstrations. Bundestag president Thierse agreed with Eisenman. Acknowledging there was no way to protect the memorial from all vandalism, he said he had faith in the goodwill and decency of the public. There would be a 24-hour-a-day watch, but no fence and no constant police presence.

Another major topic of discussion in Germany in 2004 was whether the vast art collection of Friedrich Christian (“Mick”) Flick, grandson of convicted Nazi war criminal and industrialist Friedrich Flick, should open at Berlin’s Hamburger Bahnhof Museum. Critics said Flick’s collection of works by such artists as Marcel Duchamp, Marc Chagall, Piet Mondrian, Gerhard Richter, Sigmar Polke, Richard Serra, and Cindy Sherman was bought with profits inherited from his grandfather’s huge wartime armaments factory, which used slave labor. Furthermore, Flick had not contributed to the German fund for slave laborers. Flick, for his part, complained about being held liable for the crimes of an ancestor. In an open letter, he wrote, “the family name Flick comes with a special responsibility,” adding that he did not intend to “relativize or make people forget” his grandfather’s crimes. The exhibit opened in September, but not before a special program in Berlin, organized by the Fritz-Bauer Institute of Frankfurt, where several women described what it was like to work as slave laborers in the Flick explosives factory. Afterward, the Institute of Contemporary History in Munich said it would initiate a research project on the wartime history of the Flick family.

In June, the Anne Frank Center in Berlin marked the 75th anniversary of Anne Frank’s birth with an exhibit of 40 photos by her father, Otto Frank, including images never before seen by the public. Similar exhibits
also opened at the Kraushaar Gallery in New York and the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam. Included in the Berlin showing were pictures of Anne and her sister Margot as children, school photos, and street scenes. The family was arrested and deported in August 1944. There were no photos taken of the family in hiding.

Also in June, the American journalist Varian Fry, who helped more than 1,500 people escape Nazi-occupied France, was posthumously honored with an "information" bus shelter in Berlin, including a photo of Fry in Berlin and an accompanying text in German and English. It was located at the crossroads of a street named for Fry in Berlin's newly redeveloped Potsdamer Platz. The project was supported in part by the AJC office in Berlin and by Wall AG, a bus-shelter manufacturer.

Construction of a permanent home for Topography of Terror, Berlin's archive and exhibit about the Nazi secret police, began in June. The center's temporary building, located over the unearthed basement of an annex to Gestapo headquarters and open to visitors and researchers, contained documents and photographs related to the history of the Gestapo and the SS. The new documentation center was expected to open in 2007.

Due to the advanced age of the defendants, neither of two cases involving alleged Nazi war criminals resulted in any jail time. The state court in Hagen announced in February that the 88-year-old Dutch-born Herbitus Bikker, a former SS man accused of murdering a member of the Dutch resistance in 1944, was unable to follow the proceedings, and therefore the case had to be dropped. Bikker had been convicted of murder and sentenced to death in Holland in 1949; the sentence was later commuted to life in prison, but he escaped the Breda jail in 1952 and found a haven in Germany. As a former soldier in the German army, he was safe from extradition.

In June, Germany's highest court announced that 95-year-old Friedrich Engel, the former SS chief in Genoa, would not have to serve his seven-year sentence for shooting 59 Italian prisoners in 1944, because of his physical condition. Engel had organized the shootings as revenge after Italian partisans attacked a cinema for German soldiers, killing five of them. In a book about Engel's case published in Germany in May, *History on Trial—The Case of Engel*, a former Hamburg deputy mayor and international law specialist, Ingo von Munch, called Engel's actions morally reprehensible but not murder according to German law.

There was a great deal of interest in Nazi memorabilia, both authentic and fake, during the year. In January, the yacht that belonged to Hermann Göring went on sale in Egypt. German boat dealer Christopher
Brunner-Schwer said he hoped to make a fortune selling the boat, put up for sale by the American widow of an Egyptian oil agent. "Arabs like the boat's history," he said, "and that is raising the price."

The forged Hitler "diaries" resurfaced in 2004, as well. In April, the second part of the scandalous fake went on the auction block in Berlin. Written by the late con artist Konrad Kujau and passed off as the real thing to Stern magazine in 1983, it was expected to bring in some 7,000 euros. Reportedly, Kujau wrote this last volume, which covered the period April 15-30, 1945, well after the Stern scandal broke.

In October, 13 pages from the authentic diary of the notorious Nazi doctor Josef Mengele surfaced in the possession of the Federal Police of Brazil, in São Paulo. In these papers, Mengele defended his views on racial superiority. They were originally taken in 1985 from the home of a friend of Mengele. After the war, the Nazi doctor hid out with a farmer's family in Upper Bavaria, and fled to Argentina in 1948. Ten years later, he went to Paraguay and finally to Brazil, where he died in 1979 at the age of about 67, in a swimming accident.

In December, Walter Gaudnek, a 71-year-old German-American art professor who taught at the University of Central Florida, caused a stir with an exhibit featuring caricatures of Hitler that went on display for two weeks in a town 25 kilometers from Dachau, the former Nazi concentration camp. Gaudnek's cartoon-like works depicted Hitler as a "pop icon," and included swastikas and other Nazi symbols. Charlotte Knobloch, a vice president of the CCJG, commented that it was "extremely dangerous" to depict Hitler in such a light "because these presentations can be completely misunderstood; the perpetrator can appear to be a victim." The local mayor, Konrad Wagner, agreed, saying that the exhibit gave a "disagreeable" impression, adding, "if the artist had asked me in advance, I would have advised him against presenting it."

Compensation

In 2004, the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany distributed approximately $820 million in direct compensation payments to Jewish victims of Nazi persecution and their heirs in more than 60 countries. This was the largest single-year distribution of compensation payments in the history of the organization. The funds came from eight different compensation and restitution programs that the organization administered (see "Fifty Years of Holocaust Compensation," AJYB 2002, pp. 3–84).
The largest source of money was the Program for Former Slave and Forced Laborers, which concluded three years of payments in August 2004 with a second payment to 131,000 survivors totaling $401 million. Between June 2001 and July 2004, a total of $703 million was paid as a first installment. In 2004, each former slave laborer received approximately $3,000, and former forced laborers a smaller amount.

In addition, the Claims Conference made slave labor payments from the Swiss Banks Settlement, as compensation for Nazi profits transacted through Swiss banks. Under this portion of the program, the Claims Conference paid more than $217 million to 150,140 survivors. Including the new payments, the Claims Conference had distributed more than $1.3 billion in compensation payments to Jewish former slave and forced laborers since 2001. Also under the Swiss Banks settlement, the Claims Conference paid those who were turned back at the border, expelled from the country, or mistreated while there.

In February, the German government and industry’s Foundation for Remembrance, Responsibility and the Future said it wanted unclaimed funds returned to it over the next 30 months so that they might be distributed to other survivors. Some organizations in eastern and central Europe entrusted with the task of distributing funds to survivors had been overwhelmed with claims, and some funds reportedly were squandered. Most claimants in the slave and forced labor category were not Jewish.

Other programs from which payments were made in 2004 included the Article 2 and Central and Eastern European Fund (CEEF) pension programs, the Hardship Fund, and the Fund for Victims of Medical Experiments and Other Injuries. The Claims Conference negotiated these programs and tried to expand eligibility for additional survivors. In 2004, for example, the German government agreed to include in the Article 2 and CEEF programs survivors of Bulgarian labor battalions, and liberalized criteria for survivors who had lived illegally under a false identity or with false papers, provided they met the other eligibility requirements of the programs.

Payments in 2004 of approximately 27 million euros were made from the Claims Conference Goodwill Fund to heirs to Jewish property in the former East Germany. These were for properties claimed by the Claims Conference under German law, and for which heirs came forward with a valid claim after the German deadline. The conference negotiated the law establishing the right of owners and heirs to claim properties in former East Germany.

The Claims Conference also provided technical assistance in process-
ing claims and payments to the International Commission on Holocaust Era Insurance Claims and the Claims Resolution Tribunal responsible for dormant accounts under the Swiss Banks Settlement. These two programs paid a total of about $54 million in 2004, an amount not included in the Claims Conference compensation total. Gideon Taylor, executive vice president of the conference, said that ongoing needs would be discussed with the German government.

The conference in 2004 identified and issued a symbolic payment of 8,300 marks (approximately $5,400, or 4,240 euros) to an additional 704 living Jewish victims of Nazi medical experiments, bringing to 2,482 the number of survivors in this category receiving compensation. And the organization uncovered new information about gruesome experiments that had never before been recorded, enabling many victims to be declared eligible for payment. Testimonies of survivors were turned over to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., and to Yad Vashem in Israel. Some were posted on the Claims Conference Web site, www.claimscon.org. Survivors could collect from a 50-million-mark fund for Jewish and non-Jewish victims of Nazi experimentation and for children of forced laborers who were in special homes.

In May, Germany committed funds for homecare for Nazi victims, in a move that the Claims Conference saw as a breakthrough. Following negotiations, the government agreed to allocate an initial sum of $7.2 million in 2004. The Claims Conference said that the funds would be distributed by social service agencies worldwide.

Following the death of Karl Brozik on August 18 at the age of 78 (see below, p. 441), the Claims Conference named Moshe Jahoda to succeed him as head of its office in Germany. Born in 1926 in Vienna, Jahoda had been serving as associate executive vice president of the conference and head of its Austrian office.

JEWISH COMMUNITY

Demography and Immigration

According to the Central Welfare Council of Jews in Germany, the official Jewish population in Germany rose from 102,000 in 2003 to roughly 105,600 in 2004. About 4,700 new immigrants arrived in 2004, mostly from the former Soviet Union. But newly enacted legislation was likely to diminish this flow.
Jewish immigration from the FSU began in earnest in 1990, when Germany, eager to rebuild its shattered Jewish community, applied to these Jews the “contingency refugee” regulations initially created in response to the Vietnamese “boat people.” Up to 5,000 Soviet Jews per year were allowed to enter Germany, where they would enjoy residency rights and the full package of social benefits, but not immediate citizenship. This influx tripled the size of the Jewish community over the next 14 years.

However, new rules announced in December 2004, to go into effect the next month, imposed certain restrictions: the newcomers would have to demonstrate that they would be self-supporting, that they could speak German, and that there was no impediment to their acceptance into a Jewish congregation. Federal Interior Minister Schily insisted that these regulations in no way signaled a departure from the policy of welcoming Jewish immigrants. The Conference of Interior Ministers of the German states was charged with overseeing implementation of the new system.

It was no secret that the Israeli government had a hand in designing the new rules. Beginning in 2002, the number of Soviet Jews opting for Germany had exceeded the number choosing Israel as their destination, not only siphoning off badly needed Jewish immigrants from the Jewish state, but also calling into question Zionism’s central contention, that Israel was the haven for the world’s Jewish refugees. Jewish leaders in Germany, however, were not pleased, CCJG vice president Charlotte Knobloch reporting that the new law left her with a “bitter taste.” Of special concern was the possibility that 27,000 Soviet Jews who had already submitted applications for admittance to Germany might have to begin the process from scratch. Interior Minister Schily reassured the CCJG that such decisions would be made only after consultation with the Jewish umbrella organization.

Judith Kessler, a sociologist who had written about FSU Jewish immigration to Germany, and who also served as editor of *Juedisches Berlin*, the Jewish community’s monthly, calculated that implementation of the law in its present form would mean that “only 30 people will come for every 100 that used to come.” Kessler believed that the government’s action was “a trial balloon” to gauge public reaction, and might be followed by further restrictions.

**Communal Affairs**

In July, the Reform movement, which originated in nineteenth-century Germany, took the first step toward regaining an official place in the land-
scape of German Jewry when the CCJG for the first time welcomed congregations of the Union for Progressive Judaism under its umbrella. This meant that the 15 UPJ congregations, which had a combined membership of about 3,000, could now proceed to seek legal corporate status, and each congregation that did so would become eligible to apply for a share of the approximately $4 million in federal funding that the CCJG distributed to member congregations.

Leaders of German Reform saw the move as a milestone in the history of the movement. The announcement followed years of intensive lobbying by the UPJ, with help from the American Reform movement and the World Union for Progressive Judaism (WUPJ). Originally, the CCJG had fought such recognition on the grounds that the UPJ threatened to split German Jewry and that its congregations recognized non-Jews as Jews. In fact, Germany's Reform movement required that members have a Jewish mother, or else convert to Judaism. But it did open its doors, without offering membership, to non-Jewish spouses and children, and its conversions were not necessarily recognized by the Orthodox.

As the opposition to Reform had gradually subsided over the previous decade, the CCJG had slowly increased support for nontraditional forms of Judaism. Once the UPJ congregations received full funding from the CCJG, they were expected to use the money for projects aimed at integrating new immigrants and for youth programming. There were those who argued that Reform, which did not make stringent demands on its followers, was the Jewish sector that was most likely to attract the Russian-speaking immigrants.

Albert Meyer, the new president of the 12,000-member Berlin Jewish Community, insisted in January that the Claims Conference ante up more money to help his financially strapped community. Meyer, a 56-year-old attorney, said that the conference was legally bound to support German Jewry through a share of its profits from unclaimed Jewish property, but that so far it had contributed only "peanuts."

In March, Israel's Ashkenazi chief rabbi, Yonah Metzger, visited Berlin for the cornerstone-laying ceremony of the new Chabad-Lubavitch Albam Jewish Education and Family Center. The following month, Daniel Coats, the U.S. ambassador to Germany, and former New York City mayor Ed Koch—who was in town to chair the American delegation to the OSCE conference on anti-Semitism—were among those to attach the first mezuzah on the building. The center, "a meeting place for hundreds of women and men of different ethnic origins," was to include a day-care
center and school, library, youth lounge, multimedia center, café, lecture hall, synagogue, visitor center, and playground.

Berlin’s Rykestrasse Synagogue, one of the few in Germany to survive the Kristallnacht pogroms of November 9–10, 1938, marked its centennial in April. The celebration featured cantorial performances, addresses by Berlin public officials, and a benediction by Rabbi Ernst M. Stein. Hermann Simon, a historian and director of the Foundation for the New Synagogue-Centrum Judaicum, the central archive of Germany’s Jewish community, wrote a small volume on the synagogue’s history to mark the occasion. Five hundred copies were to be given to Berlin schools to raise awareness of local Jewish history. On November 9, 1938, when Nazis burned and looted synagogues across the country, the fire department protected this magnificent structure because of the danger that any fire might spread to neighboring non-Jewish property.

Israeli president Moshe Katzav was in Berlin for Israel Independence Day, and joined Ambassador Stein at the annual concert and reception at the Berlin Philharmonic on April 29. In May, on the secular date of Israel’s 56th birthday, some 75 Berlin Jewish students held the city’s first European “Israel Day” celebration. The first such event, in 2003, had been held in Munich, and sites scheduled for upcoming years included London and Bologna.

That Germany desperately needed more rabbis and Jewish educators was the conclusion of a high-level U.S. rabbinic delegation that visited Germany in May. The 12 rabbis, members of the United Jewish Communities Rabbinic Cabinet, spent several days in Berlin meeting with leaders of the Jewish community. The delegation issued a statement urging American Jews to be more supportive of Jews in Germany, and suggesting that American rabbinic groups encourage young rabbis to spend time working in Germany.

Also in May, “Sarah-Hagar,” an interfaith group of Jewish, Muslim, and Christian women, held its first conference, in Berlin. A culmination of several smaller gatherings, the event was supported by the Federal Ministry of Family, Seniors, Women and Youth, and included an ecumenical service. The participants said they would petition the German government to fund an ongoing women’s educational center to promote dialogue and conflict resolution.

In July, three well-known Jewish musicians—klezmer clarinetist Giora Feidman, pianist Uri Cain, and Alan Bern of the Brave New World klezmer group—took the stage at Munich’s Staatsoper International
Theater to raise money for Munich’s new Jewish community center, under construction at Jakobsplatz. A portion of the sold-out concert’s proceeds went toward the building fund; costs for the land and the complex were covered by the Jewish community, the state of Bavaria and the semi-private Bavarian State Trust, the city of Munich, and private donations. Construction was expected to be complete by the end of 2006.

Julius Schoeps, director of the Moses Mendelssohn Center at the University of Potsdam, announced the establishment of the Moses Mendelssohn Foundation in September. Its stated goal was to uphold the values of Mendelssohn, the eighteenth-century Jewish philosopher who lived in Berlin: enlightenment and tolerance in education, science, and society. The foundation would support programs dealing with the history of Jews in Europe and specifically in Germany, as well as the building and administration of senior homes and student dormitories.

In November, the AJC in Berlin marked ten years of close cooperation with the German army on educational matters. AJC executive director David Harris received the Golden Cross, the army’s highest honor, from Defense Minister Peter Struck, in recognition of “ten years of fruitful cooperation.”

Education

In January, Touro College Berlin, which opened in the fall of 2003, was feted as an affirmation of the rebirth of Jewish life in Germany and of the enduring U.S.-German relationship. Present at the event was Bernard Lander, founder and president of Touro College in New York, who was in his late 80s. The 18 original students in the Berlin college had grown to 70 in 2004. The school, which prepared students for an American business degree, also had a required course on the Holocaust.

The Network of Jewish Women, cofounded in 2002 by Gabriel Noa Lerner and Ewa Alfred, held its second national congress in May in Munich, focusing on the self-image of Jewish women. The event was supported by the Jewish Community of Munich and Upper Bavaria, and the Federal Ministry of Family, Seniors, Women and Youth.

A new textbook for Russian-speaking Jewish immigrants in Germany appeared in July 2004 that combined instruction in the German language with lessons about Judaism. Pluspunkt Deutsch fuer juedische Einwanderer (Extra Credit German for Jewish Immigrants), published by the Berlin-based Cornelsen Publishing Company, was the brainchild of Rabbi Gesa Ederberg, who had led the small Jewish congregation in Weiden on a part-
time basis since 2001, and the project received funding from the CCJG and the School for Adult Education in Weiden. Designed to ease the integration process into German life and to forestall the influence of Christian missionary groups, the text did not favor any particular interpretation of Judaism.

Rabbi Ederberg also organized a day of workshops in Weiden for the Conservative movement in Germany on how to organize and lead synagogue services, with funding from the CCJG. And in August, he opened a kindergarten in Berlin for children aged two to five.

The Association of Jewish Students in Germany, representing some 15,000 Jews between the ages of 18 and 25, held several significant programs in 2004, including a seminar marking the centennial of the death of Theodor Herzl. Held in Hohenems, Austria, in July, it focused on Herzl’s life and the meaning of Zionism in the twenty-first century.

For the fourth year, four Berlin universities and the University of Potsdam presented a joint summer semester program in Jewish studies. Courses covered such diverse topics as Jewish texts and liturgy, the role of women in rabbinic literature, German-Jewish literature of the twentieth century, introduction to Midrash, and Yiddish for historians.

In 2004, the AJC marked the completion of the first of a projected three-year tolerance and pro-democracy training program in three Berlin high schools. The program was based on AJC’s model American program “Hands Across the Campus,” started in 1981.

Culture

With more than 700,000 visitors in 2004, the Berlin Jewish Museum continued to break records. The two-millionth visitor crossed the threshold of the three-year-old museum in August. (That total included 18,691 visitors to the museum annex in the Mitte section of Berlin, the former Otto Weidt Workshop for the Blind, where several Jews were hidden from the Nazis.) Of the many exhibits mounted in 2004, one that drew particular attention was “10+5=God: The Power of Numbers and Signs,” which focused on the power of symbols in Judaism and the tension between religious tradition and modern conventions. It revealed subtle connections between science, religion, and the everyday within the context of the last 200 years of German Jewish history.

A highlight at Berlin’s New Synagogue-Centrum Judaicum Foundation was an exhibit on “Pioneers in Celluloid,” Jews in the early years of filmmaking. Accompanied by a showing of films, the exhibit delved into the
early years of the industry in Germany, including the impact of anti-Semitism.

Marking 50 years since the end of the Auschwitz trials in Frankfurt, the Fritz-Bauer Institute of Frankfurt curated a traveling exhibit on the trials. In all, 20 defendants—19 SS men and one former prisoner—stood trial, and there was testimony from 211 eyewitnesses. The proceedings, widely covered by the press, opened the eyes of many Germans to the crimes committed in their name.

The Fritz-Bauer Institute also teamed up with the Hessian Ministry for Science and Art to mount an exhibit on "Legalized Robbery," about how Nazi Germany robbed Jews of their property before allowing them to emigrate, or deporting them to concentration camps or death camps. The exhibit included several lectures, films, and a walking tour of Wiesbaden. As a complement to the exhibit, the Museum for German Jewish History in Wiesbaden, Aktives Museum Spiegelgasse, opened an exhibit in November on "Jewish Neighbors in Wiesbaden and Mainz," about the fate of several local Jewish families during the Nazi period.

"Medicine and Crime," exhibited at the Memorial and Museum at Sachsenhausen, near Berlin, dealt with the misdeeds committed at this former concentration camp in the name of science. It included material donated by the University of Tübingen about Nazi anthropologist Robert Ritter, who did "Gypsy research."

The Jewish Museum of Franken mounted an exhibit about kashrut that was both educational and entertaining. Museum director Daniela Eisenstein said that the aim was to show both how simple the Jewish dietary laws were, and also how difficult it could be to keep kosher in Germany. Included was a "supermarket" that challenged visitors to check if the items for "sale" were kosher. The museum also presented an exhibit on "The First Family Archive of the Rothschilds," showing for the first time objects gathered for the 70th birthday of Salomon von Rothschild in 1844 in Frankfurt. The material, stolen by the SS in 1938, was brought by Soviet troops to Moscow in 1945, and returned to the Rothschild Archive in London in 2001.

The Jewish Film Festival in Berlin celebrated its tenth anniversary in June with a varied program of new and classic films. In all, there were 23 films from Israel, Great Britain, the U.S., Australia, Sweden, Portugal, Russia, Argentina, and France. A retrospective book about the festival was published.

Two books published in 2004 focused on Jews and Jewish issues in post-war Germany for an English-speaking readership. The Humanities Lab-
oratory published *A Jew in the New Germany*, a collection of essays by the witty and acerbic German Jewish columnist Henryk Broder, edited by Sander L. Gilman and Lilian M. Friedberg. Y. Michal Bodemann’s *A Jewish Family in Germany Today: An Intimate Portrait*, which came out toward the end of the year, was published by Duke University Press. Bodemann, a sociologist, traced the history of one family with origins in Eastern Europe through the generations, illuminating postwar trends in German Jewish identity.

The “Jewish Miniatures” series—short books on important Jewish figures and institutions—added six titles in 2004: biographies of prewar German department store magnate Oscar Tietz, former head of the German Jewish community Heinz Galinski, film director Billy Wilder, and TV personality Hans Rosenthal; a book on the historic Rykestrasse Synagogue; and a guide to Jewish holidays in Russian.

Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag published several notable titles of Jewish interest in 2004: *Marcel Reich-Ranicki*, a portrait of the German Jewish literary critic, by Thomas Ainz; *Isaac Bashevis Singer* by Stephen Tree, the first German biography of the great Yiddish writer, marking the centennial of his birth; and a German edition of Eli Barnavi’s *Universal History of the Jews, from Their Beginnings to Today*, edited by Israeli historian Frank Stern.

**Personalia**

Michel Friedman was elected president of the German board of Keren Hayesod, the fund-raising umbrella for Israel of non-American Diaspora Jewish communities. Friedman, 48, was a longtime communal activist and outspoken supporter of Israel. An editor and TV journalist as well as an attorney, Friedman had served as vice president of the CCJG and president of the European Jewish Congress, but had to resign these positions in 2003 following charges of cocaine possession. At that time he pledged to mend his ways and return to public life (see AJBY 2004, pp. 385–86).

In another communal appointment, CCJG vice president Charlotte Knobloch, who headed both the Jewish Community of Munich and that of Upper Bavaria, became vice president of the World Jewish Congress.

American Jewish businessman Arthur Obermayer presented the fourth Obermayer German Jewish History Awards in Berlin on January 27, 2004, Germany’s Holocaust Remembrance Day. These honored non-Jewish Germans who contributed toward recording or preserving the Jewish history of their communities. The honorees were Lothar Bem-
benek, a teacher from Wiesbaden who helped create the Aktives Museum Spiegelgasse for German Jewish History in Wiesbaden; Dorothee Lottmann-Kaeseler, who, as curator of the museum in Wiesbaden since 1998, pushed to preserve the city's oldest Jewish building; Klaus-Dieter Ehmke, a medical doctor from Berlin who restored a Jewish cemetery in Niederhof; Cordula Kappner, a librarian from Hassfurt, Bavaria, who spent 20 years researching local Jewish history in the Franconia region and mounted 34 separate exhibits in villages that once had Jewish communities; Jürgen Sielemann, an archivist and historian from Hamburg who initiated a project to post on the Internet the names of 5 million emigrants who came through the port of Hamburg, and who founded Germany's only society for Jewish genealogy; and Christiane Walesch-Schneller, a medical doctor from Breisach, Baden-Wuerttemberg, who saved the site of the former headquarters of the Jewish community in that town from demolition, and converted it into a Jewish research and educational center.

Daniel Barenboim, conductor of the Staatskapelle and the Staatsoper Berlin, received the year's Buber-Rosenzweig medal in Münster from the German Coordinating Council of the Societies for Christian-Jewish Cooperation. Named for the philosophers Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig, the annual prize was initiated in 1968.

The CCJG presented its annual Leo Baeck Prize to historian Fritz Stern, professor emeritus at Columbia University, in November in New York City. Foreign Minister Fischer, who spoke, said that Stern, whose family fled Nazi Germany in 1938, was largely responsible for the "excellent and balanced research being conducted on Germany and German history" in America. Stern's best known book, a study of Otto von Bismarck and his Jewish banker, Gerson von Bleichröder, was *Gold and Iron: Bismarck, Bleichröder and the Building of the German Empire*.

In November, the Berlin Jewish Community gave its 16th annual Heinz Galinski Prize to Ernst Cramer, 91, who escaped Nazi Germany and returned after the war to build a distinguished career in journalism with the Axel Springer Company. Since 1981, he headed the late publisher's philanthropic foundation in Berlin. The 5,000-euro prize was named for the former leader of Berlin's Jewish community, who died in 1992. Cramer said he would donate the 5,000-euro award to the Women's International Zionist Organization (WIZO).

On September 6, Hilde Schramm, 68, the eldest daughter of Nazi armaments minister Albert Speer, received Berlin's Moses Mendelssohn Award for her work promoting tolerance and reconciliation. In 1994, she
started a foundation called Zurückgeben (Giving Back), using her inheritance to promote Jewish women in the arts and academia. She said she would donate part of the 10,000-euro prize to her foundation, and the rest to another foundation, Kontakt, which helped Nazi victims in Eastern Europe not covered by the German government fund for former slave laborers, and the Berlin-based Center for Victims of Terror.

Karl Brozik, who championed the rights of Holocaust survivors, died at the age of 78 on August 18. A survivor of Auschwitz, he led the Frankfurt office of the Conference for Jewish Material Claims Against Germany since 1987. His funeral in Frankfurt was attended by German Jewish leaders as well as representatives of the worlds of politics, social work, and the arts. Born in what is now the Czech Republic, Brozik was the only member of a family of 26 to survive the Holocaust. Over the years, Brozik's work helped make about $8.7 billion in restitution funds available to Holocaust survivors and institutions that support them around the world. He received the Wilhelm Leuschner Medal of the State of Hessen in 1997, and the Medal for Resistance Against Fascism from the Czech Republic in 1999. The city of Frankfurt honored him with a plaque in 2002.

Toby Axelrod
AUSTRIAN PRESIDENT Thomas Klestil died on July 6, two days before his the end of his term, at the age of 71. One of his chief accomplishments was helping Austria shed the taint of its Nazi past by acknowledging it honestly on numerous occasions. In a state visit to Israel early in his presidency, he expressed sympathy for the victims of the Holocaust and noted, with sadness, the role that many Austrians played in carrying it out. President Klestil appeared in his official capacity at numerous commemorative ceremonies for Austrian Holocaust victims and at Jewish religious and cultural events, the last one being an address at the Theodor Herzl Symposium on June 14 (see below, p. 445). Critics occasionally complained that Klestil overstepped the ceremonial bounds of his office, as when he unsuccessfully opposed the decision of his own conservative People’s Party (ÖVP) to form a coalition with the far-right Freedom Party (FPÖ) in 2000. Front-page photos of a stone-faced Klestil swearing in members of the Freedom Party to government posts spoke volumes about his opposition to letting those linked to anti-foreigner and past anti-Jewish sentiments into the government.

Klestil’s successor was Heinz Fischer, 65, of the opposition Social Democrats, who was elected in April, defeating Foreign Minister Benita Ferrero-Waldner of the ruling People’s Party by 52.4 to 47.6 percent. Fischer, Austria’s first head of state from a leftist party in 31 years, won on a platform of defending the welfare state and Austria’s neutrality (Austria was one of four neutral EU nations, along with Finland, Ireland, and Sweden). Following his election, the new president announced he had suspended his membership in the Social Democratic Party so that he could be seen as representing all Austrians. His acceptance speech was interrupted by applause when he described how happy he was that his 95-year-old father-in-law, who survived a Nazi concentration camp, was at the ceremony.

Most political analysts felt that the presidential contest would have little impact on national parliamentary elections, due by 2006, or on the current balance of power between the center-right ÖVP-FPÖ coalition.
headed by Chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel, and the opposition, made up of Social Democrats and Greens.

The governing coalition continued in office despite threats from the FPÖ to resign if Chancellor Schüssel supported EU entry talks with Turkey. Even the already completed enlargement of the EU, which accepted ten new countries in April, caused unease among Austrians, many of whom feared a loss of jobs to cheap labor pouring in from the neighboring Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary. On the traditional May 1 holiday, an estimated 100,000 people marched through the streets of Vienna in protest against the government, charging that it had done little to protect Austrian workers in the enlarged Europe.

After suffering a string of electoral defeats since 2000, the far-right Freedom Party scored a surprise victory in March in the Carinthia provincial elections, receiving 42.5 percent of the vote, slightly up from the 42.0 percent it won in 1999, insuring that Jörg Haider, the former leader of the FPÖ and still its best known figure, would remain governor of the province. But few expected a return to Haider’s heyday of 2000, when he stunned Europe by taking his anti-immigration party into the national government (see AJYB 2001, pp. 397–98).

Analysts were quick to point out that the Carinthia vote did not portend a national trend, as that same day, in the regional election in Salzburg, the Freedom Party vote fell by more than half, to 8.7 percent. In elections for the European Parliament in June, the party lost over 17 percentage points from its previous showing, taking just 6.3 percent of the vote. The party confirmed its dramatic slide in popularity in September, when, in the small alpine province of Voralberg’s election, the FPÖ lost more than half its support, declining from 27.5 percent in 1999 to 13 percent. In contrast, the front-running People’s Party gained 11 percent, and the Social Democrats and Greens about 4 percent each. By year’s end, Haider’s home turf, Carinthia, was the only one of the nine Austrian provinces where the FPÖ had not suffered a sharp defeat in regional elections since 2000.

Israel and the Middle East

Israel had withdrawn its ambassador from Vienna when the Freedom Party entered the coalition government in 2000, and only in July 2003 did it announce that it was prepared to normalize relations, even though the party was still in the coalition. On February 5, 2004, Ambassador
Avraham Toledo, previously the Israeli chargé d’affaires, presented his ambassadorial credentials to President Klestil. Austria had kept its ambassador in Tel Aviv the entire time. In December, Ambassador Toledo completed his tour of duty and returned to Israel. A new ambassador had not yet been named.

Austria continued to cast its vote in the UN together with the bulk of the EU countries, generally against Israel and in favor of the Palestinians. Thus on July 20, Austria was part of the large General Assembly majority that supported a resolution calling on Israel to dismantle its West Bank security barrier, in conformity with the decision by the International Court of Justice.

Even so, bilateral relations between Israel and Austria received a boost with the visit in October of Israeli president Moshe Katzav, the first time an Israeli head of state had set foot in the country. During his four days in Vienna, Katzav held talks with President Fischer, Chancellor Schüssel, and the new foreign minister, Ursula Plassnik, who had been sworn in only a few hours before the meeting. Katzav’s message was that Israel preferred to look to the future rather than dwell on past tensions between the two countries. Fischer characterized the Israeli president’s visit as “very, very significant,” and Ariel Musicant, head of the Israelitische Kultusgemeinde (IKG), Austrian Jewry’s communal organization, said it was a “step towards normalcy” in Israeli-Austrian relations. Katzav ended his stay in Austria by laying a wreath at a memorial for the country’s Holocaust victims.

There was also an exchange of visits between the respective presidents of the two countries’ parliaments. Reuven Rivlin, president of the Knesset, arrived in Austria in September. Characterizing his visit as a “gesture of friendship,” he called Austria an “honest broker” in Israel’s relationship with the European Union, and spoke positively of Austria’s dealing with its dark Nazi past. In a meeting with Austrian parliamentarians, Rivlin discussed his country’s policy toward the Palestinians and defended the West Bank security barrier as a justifiable means of protecting Israeli citizens from terrorist attacks. The president of Austria’s parliament, Andreas Khol, came to Israel in December, and met with government and political leaders. While in Tel Aviv, he spoke with a group of Israelis of Austrian origin about programs to provide compensation to victims of National Socialism.

The 100th anniversary of the death of Theodor Herzl—both the founder of modern Zionism and a notable Viennese cultural figure—provided occasion for interaction between Austrians and Israelis. In the first
diplomatic exchange to follow the reestablishment of Austrian-Israeli relations, Austria’s interior minister, Ernst Strasser, represented his country at an international conference on Herzl and Zionism held in Jerusalem in June. Strasser told the participants that he fully understood Austrian Jewish survivors of the Holocaust who had made new lives for themselves in Israel, but also had great respect for those who chose to return to Austria. Strasser held consultations with Israeli experts on the subject of international terrorism and visited the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem, which cooperated closely with Austria’s Holocaust Memorial in Mauthausen, the site of Austria’s notorious death camp. Strasser, whose office was responsible for that memorial, announced an “intensification” of exchanges between the two institutions.

On June 14, Vienna hosted the Theodor Herzl Symposium at its city hall. President Klestil delivered the opening address, praising Herzl’s vision that led to the establishment of the Jewish state, pointing out the contributions Jews had made to Austrian culture, and warning of a new form of anti-Semitism endangering Europe. This was the fifth and last Herzl Symposium, a series that began in 1986 to mark the centenary of the publication of his landmark Der Judenstaat (The Jewish State), with successive symposia dedicated to the centenaries of other milestones in Herzl’s career.

In a festive ceremony on July 3, the actual date of Herzl’s death, Vienna renamed a city square Theodor Herzl Platz. Addressing the large crowd, Israeli ambassador Toledo said that the location was chosen, in part, because it was situated near the offices of the daily newspaper Die Presse, whose predecessor, Die Neue Freie Presse, had employed Herzl as a correspondent. The decision to rename the square after the Zionist leader was not without its detractors. About 20 Orthodox Jews protested at the dedication, chanting “Zionism is Atheism.” Complaints also came from the Arab League, which urged the city to reconsider the move for the sake of continued “good relations” with the Arab world, and from a spokesperson for Vienna’s Muslim population, which numbered about 120,000.

In another event marking the Herzl anniversary, the postal services of Austria, Hungary (where Herzl was born in 1860), and Israel issued a commemorative stamp. The stamp was identical in all three countries except for the denomination and country name. On the left side it depicted the head of Herzl with a full beard, and on the right was the title of his famous book in Hungarian, German, and Hebrew.
Holocaust-Related Matters

RESTITUTION

The Nationalfond, responsible for handling claims for restitution by Austrian survivors of the National Socialist era, announced that it would make an additional payment of 1,000 euros to each victim. In 2002, the fund was authorized to distribute $150 million dollars to be paid out as partial compensation for the loss of property of various kinds, setting a deadline for applications of June 2004. An estimated 20,000 claimants had each received $7,000 dollars, and the new 1,000-euro disbursement per person came from the 21-million-euro balance that remained in the fund. Hannah Lessing, secretary general of the Nationalfond, announced that the money would be distributed in 2005, in order of the age of the claimant.

In addition to payments to individuals, the Nationalfond provided financial support to medical, cultural, and social-service organizations catering to the needs of survivors. For example, it distributed money to the Amcha association in Israel, which provided psychological services to survivors suffering emotional problems, to Yad Vashem for archival purposes, to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum for digitalizing archival material of the Austrian Jewish community, and to a Jewish social center in Buenos Aires, Argentina, for purchasing a computer and engaging the services of instructors to teach Austrian survivors how to use the Internet to contact relatives and friends in far-off countries.

Another major activity of the Nationalfond was related to the General Settlement Fund (GSF), established by the Austrian government under terms of an agreement signed in Washington, D.C., on January 17, 2001. Through voluntary payments from the GSF, Austria acknowledged its moral responsibility for losses and damages inflicted upon Jewish citizens and other victims of National Socialism. Monies for the fund were to come from the Republic of Austria and Austrian companies, which had pledged $210 million. 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. By the filing deadline of May 28, 2003, 19,100 claims had been submitted (see AJYB 2004, pp. 399–400). A condition of the agreement setting up the GSF was that no money would be paid out until all class-action suits against Austria and/or Austrian companies relating to the Holocaust were dismissed. At year’s end, two such suits were still pend-
ing in U.S. federal courts, in New York and Los Angeles. Even when they were settled or dismissed, the fund could not make any payments until all claims were processed. In anticipation, the Nationalfond enlarged its administrative staff so as to complete the research on the claims already submitted.

The Holocaust Victims' Information and Support Center (HVISC, or Anlaufstelle), established by the IKG in July 1999, continued 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 real-estate assets owned by the Jewish community before 1938, the Anlaufstelle had a team of historians conducting research in January 2004 into 2,722 properties now owned by the Austrian government, and, in December, into 1,964 properties in the hands of the city of Vienna. Both investigations turned up flaws in the initial restitution process. In the first group, there were 15 cases of “extreme injustice,” and in the second, 33. Meantime, the deadline for filing claims, extended to December 31, 2004, could possibly be pushed back even further. As part of its work, the Anlaufstelle prepared applications on behalf of these heirs for submission to the GSF.

The HVISC was also preparing a detailed report, to be released in 2005, on the properties owned by the 34 prewar Jewish communities of Austria, along with those that had belonged to Jewish associations and foundations. The successor organizations of these bodies were now in Vienna, Linz, Innsbruck, and Graz. Once this work was completed, the IKG would use the report as the basis for seeking compensation. Another activity of the HVISC was reconstructing and reorganizing the archives of the Vienna Jewish community to have them available on line by 2005. Once inventoried, this mass of documentation will be microfilmed by the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum and the Genealogical Society of Utah.

The Versohnungsfund (Reconciliation Fund) continued to make payments to former slave and forced laborers. Drawing on contributions from the Austrian government and Austrian businesses, the fund disbursed 350 million euros to more than 130,000 people since beginning operation in 2001. In 2004, the fund paid out 50 million euros to approximately 17,000 applicants. Payments ranged from 1,500 to 7,600 euros, with those forced to labor in factories receiving 2,500 euros. The fund was slated to wind up its work by the end of 2005.

Representatives of the Anlaufstelle sat on two governmental bodies dealing with the restitution of looted artwork, the Austrian Commission
for the Investigation of the Provenance of Art Objects, and the Viennese Restitution Commission. The Anlaufstelle assisted both bodies in formulating criteria for research and restitution. In that capacity it located and arranged the return of an Egon Schiele painting that was hanging in the Austrian Gallery to the estate of Heinrich Rigger, as well as six paintings from the former collection of Gottlieb and Mathilde Kraus that were in the possession of the Austrian Gallery, the Albertina, and the Joanneum Museum in Graz.

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 2004 that Austria and its national museum could be sued by an 88-year-old Los Angeles woman seeking to recover six paintings that belonged to her family before the Nazi takeover of Austria. By a 6-to-3 vote, the court upheld an appeals court ruling in 2002 that rejected a request by Austria and its government-run museum to dismiss the case. The original suit had been filed in federal court by Maria Altmann, alleging the theft of six Gustave Klimt paintings from her uncle, Ferdinand Bloch. Valued at $135 million, the paintings had been housed in the Austrian Gallery. In a unanimous ruling, the appeals court held that if Altmann's allegation of wrongful taking were proven, the paintings were indeed appropriated in violation of international law, and she therefore could sue the Austrian government in U.S. courts (see AJYB 2004, pp. 401–02). The issue before the Supreme Court was jurisdictional—whether the Foreign Sovereign Immunities Act, adopted in 1976 to open the federal courts to specific categories of cases against foreign governments, applied to cases that predated the law's enactment. Speaking for the majority, Justice John Paul Stevens answered that question in the affirmative.

Lawyer Edward Fagan, on behalf of the Association of Holocaust Victims for Restitution of Artwork and Masterpieces, filed an $18-billion lawsuit in July against the Austrian government, alleging the country profited from, or wrongly kept, artworks stolen by the Nazis. The suit was filed in New York federal district court. Fagan, best known for landing a $1.25-billion settlement in 1998 from Swiss banks on behalf of Holocaust victims, filed an identical suit against Germany the previous month.

Remembrance

President Fischer, in October, unveiled a plaque at an army barracks in the town of Enns honoring Robert Bernardis, the highest ranking Austrian officer executed by the Nazis for involvement in the unsuccessful
plot to kill Adolf Hitler on July 20, 1944. His family had been punished as well: his wife and mother were sent to concentration camps, and his two children to "reeducation" camps. At the ceremony—attended by Bernardis' 95-year-old widow—Fischer said the honor came "late, but not too late."

The president was alluding to the great reluctance of conservative military officers to commemorate the heroism of Bernardis and the anti-Nazi resistance, which they viewed as treason against the state, a view that was shared by many older Austrians. Not only did their opposition delay creation of the memorial for 60 years, but it also induced Defense Minister Günther Platter to reject suggestions by Austrian political figures to rename an actual barracks after Bernardis, and to dedicate just the plaque. Even so, the marked change that had occurred over the years in Austrian public opinion about the Nazi era became evident when a spokesman of the far-right Freedom Party used the occasion to praise Bernardis. A Green Party representative urged the government to go even further and rehabilitate the reputations of the "simple soldiers" who had been court-martialed and executed for refusing to obey orders in Hitler's army, and who still were considered criminals under Austrian law.

Vienna's head of municipal planning, Rudolf Schicker, announced plans, in cooperation with the IKG, to erect a memorial to the 65,000 Austrian Jews deported by the Nazi regime. It would be built on part of the grounds of the former Aspang railway station in the Landstrasse, presently a huge abandoned area. The first step in the process was an international architectural competition to take place in 2005. Elsewhere on the grounds a school would be built dedicated to the memory of Aron Menczer, an important Zionist educator. In September 1942, Menczer was deported to the Theresienstadt ghetto, where he continued his educational work. A year later, in October 1943, he accompanied a group of children to Auschwitz, where he met his death. Also planned on another part of the site was a residential project called "Eurogate" that would house 13,000 people and have at its entrance a memorial commemorating the 40,000 Jews who were deported from the Aspang station. The original railroad tracks were to be integrated into the memorial.

The National Library staged an exhibition of books, manuscripts, and photos that were looted from Jews between 1938 and 1945. The library was then headed by a high-ranking Nazi, Paul Heigl, who, along with members of his staff, ordered the ransacking of Jewish books and manuscript collections in Germany and the occupied countries. In recent years researchers had been working to identify looted books and manu-
scripts and determine their provenance and, following approval by the Ministry of Education, then seek the assistance of the IKG and the Nationalfonds in tracing the owners or heirs. The library published a volume of articles, *Looted Books: The Austrian National Library Confronts its National Socialist Past.*

Two Austrian historians writing in the German weekly *Der Spiegel* in October reported that SS chief Heinrich Himmler gave orders in the fall of 1944, when German troops were retreating before the Russian army, to dismantle the gas chambers and crematoria at Auschwitz so as to erase evidence of Nazi crimes, and send some of the equipment to the Mauthausen concentration camp, in Austria, for reuse. The historians, Bertrand Perz and Florian Freund, found a letter, dated February 10, 1945, to Mauthausen officials from J.A. Topf and Sons, a German company that made many of the incinerators for the Nazi death camps, that talked about sharply expanding the Austrian camp’s gas chamber on the assumption that “all the parts of the Auschwitz Concentration Camp be used again.” Accounts by Mauthausen survivors indicated that some equipment from the Auschwitz camp did arrive, but there was not enough time to redeploy the gas chambers at Mauthausen before Germany surrendered.

**JEWISH COMMUNITY**

*Demography*

The number of Jews registered with the IKG stood at 6,890, an increase of 98 from 2003. The rise was attributed not to an actual growth in numbers—immigration was virtually frozen—but rather the registration of people who had not previously affiliated. Knowledgeable observers placed the actual number of Jews in the country, as defined by Jewish law, at about 12,000. As had been true for generations, the overwhelming majority lived in Vienna. Only 300–400 made their homes elsewhere, primarily in the large provincial cities of Graz, Salzburg, Innsbruck, and Linz.

An estimated 40 percent of the Vienna Jewish community was now Sephardi, as was a majority of the Jewish population under age 25. This was believed to reflect their relatively large families. To address this demographic reality, a second Sephardi center was opened during 2004 in Vienna’s 20th district.
Communal Affairs

The IKG, the community’s official organization, completed a much-needed revision of its statutes, which were first promulgated in 1890. The new rules would go into effect following approval by the government. While the IKG’s financial situation had stabilized, the various programs it conducted continued to suffer from a budgetary shortfall due, according to its president, Ariel Muzicant, to the failure of the federal government to provide money to which the IKG was entitled. Upon the conclusion of the Washington agreement of January 2001 dealing with Holocaust compensation, he had demanded a separate agreement with the Austrian government to help underwrite IKG expenses (see AJYB 2003, p. 501). Muzicant refused to take money from the GSF, since those funds were earmarked for victims of the National Socialist regime.

The government responded in 2003 by offering 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. The government had already made good on the first and second of the annual payments, and supplemental subsidies in the amount of 200,000 euros were paid out to the IKG to cover the rising cost of its social programs. In addition, the Austrian provinces paid half the 18 million euros they had pledged to the Federation of Jewish Communities of Austria under an agreement signed in May 2002. The balance would not be forthcoming until the class-action suits against Austria and Austrian companies were withdrawn or settled.

Approximately 100 leading Orthodox rabbis from Europe, the U.S., and Israel met in Vienna in February to discuss means of stimulating a revival of Judaism in Eastern Europe, where Jewish life had been seriously diminished by the devastation of World War II and the Holocaust, and then repressed over more than four decades of communist rule. Participants in the three-day conference, sponsored by the Brussels-based Rabbinical Center of Europe (RCE), were welcomed by President Krestil, who asserted “that Jews from all parts of the world are welcomed in Austria.” Krestil paid special tribute to the role Jews had played in the intellectual, cultural, and scientific life of Austria, and said that Austrians must not forget “that our country also took part in unforgettable crimes directed at the Jewish people.”

The rabbinic conference made a symbolic gesture of reconciliation with the European Union, presenting European Commission (EC) president Romano Prodi an award for humanitarian achievement. It came as
Prodi and Jewish leaders sought to patch up differences following recent disputes. One involved an EU-commissioned survey in 2003 that listed Israel at the top of the list of nations seen by Europeans as threats to world peace, which several Jewish groups condemned as methodologically flawed and inflammatory. Another was the charge that the EC, the executive body of the EU, had sought to bury evidence that Arab and Muslim minorities were disproportionately involved in anti-Semitic attacks against Jews and Jewish institutions in Europe.

At the conference came the announcement of the pending inauguration of the first Jewish teachers academy in Vienna since World War II. The prewar school was burned down in 1938 on Kristallnacht, when synagogues and Jewish-owned businesses were destroyed throughout Germany and Austria. The new institution, financed by the Austrian government and the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation, would send its graduates to the former communist countries to help rebuild Jewish life there.

In February, Austria’s state secretary for the arts, Franz Morak, presided over the opening of Or Chadash, the new synagogue of Vienna’s liberal Jewish community, in Leopoldstadt, in the city’s second district. The city of Vienna contributed 125,000 euros to meet the costs of design and construction.

The projected Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies (see AJYB 2003, p. 507) had still not opened, as its supporters had not yet raised the requisite funds. Meantime, a board of directors was appointed and a search was underway for a chairman. Once established, the institute would be endowed with the combined resources of the IKG’s communal archives, the archives of the Austrian anti-Nazi resistance, and the Wiesenthal Documentation Center.

The Lauder Business School-Vienna International College, which opened in October 2003, completed its first year in 2004. The school offered a four-year program in international marketing and management, leading to a master’s degree. Students came from many different countries, and although the business courses were taught in English, there was also instruction in German, Russian, and Hebrew, and a program of Jewish studies was also available. The college maintained a kosher dining facility for students and faculty, and no classes were held on Saturdays or Jewish holidays. The city of Vienna donated the four buildings that housed the school, and the Lauder Foundation financed the renovation of the facility. As a publicly accredited educational institution, it qualified for funding from the federal government.

The Lauder Chabad Campus, which opened its doors in September
2000, had an enrolment of 400 students in classes ranging from kindergarten through elementary and high school. The high school’s first 14 graduates received their diplomas in June 2004.

Among the exhibits mounted by the Vienna Jewish Museum was one on the musical works of Hans Gal and Egon Wellesz, two prominent Jewish composers who made a mark in Vienna’s musical world during the interwar period. Both men fled in 1938 to Great Britain, and neither returned after the war, although Gal turned down an attractive offer. The exhibit, which ran from February 25 to May 2, featured musical scores, scripts, personal documents, and photographs.

The museum also had an exhibit titled “Children—Kindergarten—Children,” of photographs of Jewish children taken by Roy Mittelman. It ran from June 9 to September 12. For more than 20 years, Mittelman had taken photographs of Jewish children in Buenos Aires, Casablanca, Tallinn, Budapest, and other locations he had visited on behalf of humanitarian organizations. Silently and unobtrusively, he observed them learning, praying, playing, or napping. “A photographer,” Mittelman explained, “has to be a good listener, he has to listen with his eyes.”

Another exhibition presented by the museum was “The Liebens—150-Year History of a Viennese Family,” which ran from November 11 to April 3, 2005. The Liebens were a prominent Viennese Jewish bourgeois family that included merchants, bankers, grand dames, scientists, inventors, and artists who left their mark on the life of the city. Ignaz L. Lieben was appointed professor of chemistry at the University of Vienna, and from 1863 to 1937 the prize given in his name was considered one of the most prestigious awards in Austrian science. Ignaz’s grandson, Robert von Lieben, was a pioneer in the early development of the radio. Marie-Louise von Motesiczky, a great-granddaughter of Ignaz L. Lieben, distinguished herself as a painter. The family’s storied progress came to an abrupt end with the annexation of Austria by Nazi Germany in March 1938, leading to persecution, flight, and exile even for those members of the family who had long been baptized. The Lieben Prize was restored in 2004 through the generous support of the American chemist and entrepreneur Alfred Bader, who was also driven out of Austria in 1938.

**Personalia**

Great Britain awarded an honorary knighthood to Nazi-hunter Simon Wiesenthal in recognition of a “lifetime of service to humanity.” Wiesenthal, 95, survived imprisonment in German concentration camps during
World War II, and since then dedicated his life to bringing Nazi war criminals to justice. The knighthood also recognized the work done by the Los Angeles-based Simon Wiesenthal Center, founded in 1977 to promote Holocaust remembrance and the defense of human rights.

Franz Cardinal König, who served as archbishop of Vienna from 1956 until his retirement in 1985, died in March at the age of 98. He was a skilled diplomat who helped break down barriers between the Catholic Church and Eastern European governments during the Cold War, and was instrumental in bringing about the nomination of Cardinal Karol Wojtila, who was to become John Paul II. During the Second Vatican Council of 1962–65, Cardinal König was at the forefront of those who pushed for improved ties with Jews and Eastern Orthodox Christians.

Murray Gordon Silberman
East-Central Europe and the Balkans

Throughout the region, countries had to deal with struggling economies, endemic corruption, political bickering, and organized crime. Most governments remained allies of the United States, although some reevaluated their involvement in Iraq.

On May 1, less than 15 years after the fall of the Iron Curtain, the former communist states of Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia become full-fledged members of the European Union, along with the island nations of Cyprus and Malta. Little more than a month earlier, at the end of March, Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia, Lithuania, Slovenia, Estonia, and Latvia entered NATO.

Altogether, fewer than 150,000 Jews lived in the ten new EU states. Like their non-Jewish fellow citizens, Jews in these countries had to adjust to new political and economic realities and therefore viewed EU enlargement with emotions ranging from eagerness to anxiety. Many hoped to take advantage of enhanced business, educational, and other opportunities, and others believed that enlargement might facilitate contact among Jewish communities. But some Jews feared the prospect of inflation and other negative economic consequences. And there were those who worried that "new" forms of anti-Semitism couched in anti-Zionism might find their way from Western Europe into countries that, until now, had maintained policies supportive of Israel.

Albania

In May, Archaeology magazine reported that the ruins of an ancient synagogue had been unearthed in Albania by a joint team of Albanian and Israeli archaeologists. Dating from the fifth or sixth century CE, the synagogue was located in the coastal town of Saranda. The ruins included mosaic pavements depicting, among other images, a menorah, a citron tree, and a ram's horn, as well as a structure that may be an ark.

In September, the Albanian parliament adopted a law establishing a Holocaust Memorial Day. Official promulgation of the law took place in the capital, Tirana, in November.
Bosnia and Herzegovina

Bosnia and Herzegovina continued to recover slowly from the war that ended in 1995. By September, according to the UN, a million refugees had returned to the country. A major symbolic milestone was the completed restoration of the historic Old Bridge in Mostar, which had been destroyed by Bosnian Croat fire in 1993. Britain's Prince Charles, leaders from other Balkan states, the French and Italian foreign ministers, and European Union external affairs commissioner Chris Patten attended a gala rededication ceremony in July.

Still, the jobless rate was over 40 percent, salaries were low, and thousands of foreign soldiers remained stationed in the country to keep the peace. There were reports of radicalization among some segments of the local Muslim population, particularly elements linked to two Saudi-financed mosques. In October, Bosnia's Regional Museum in Sarajevo—which has a special room devoted to the historic Sarajevo Haggadah—had to close its doors to the public because of lack of funds to pay for salaries and winter heating.

In April, Sarajevo hosted a Balkan summit of leaders from Albania, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, and Turkey. The participants, who included heads of state and of government, issued a declaration calling for increased regional cooperation.

Fewer than 1,000 Jews lived in Bosnia and Herzegovina. About 700 lived in Sarajevo, of whom 180 were Holocaust survivors. There were also a few very small provincial communities such as Banja Luka (about 70 members), Doboj and Mostar (about 40 each), Zenica, and Tuzla. Bosnia had no resident rabbi, but Sarajevo-born Eliezar Papo, director of the Center for Sephardic Studies at Ben Gurion University in Israel, came twice a year to officiate, on the High Holy Days and Passover.

High Holy Day services this year had special significance. On the eve of Rosh Hashanah, Sarajevo's sixteenth-century Old Synagogue, which had been turned into a Jewish museum after World War II, was reconsecrated as a house of worship, and services were held there for the first time in more than 60 years. During the Bosnian War, the museum had been closed to visitors and the space used as a storage place for collections from other museums in the city. In the summer of 2004, the museum in the synagogue reopened under new management that included representatives of the Jewish community as well as city officials.

There were plans to update and convert the Old Synagogue and its mu-
seum into a facility that would serve as a cultural and educational center, with a new museum section detailing the operation of the Jewish community during the recent war, when the community’s social welfare organization, La Benevolencija, acted as a key conduit for nonsectarian humanitarian aid. For the time being, most Jewish communal activities in Sarajevo took place in the 100-year-old Ashkenazic synagogue complex, which, after the war, was converted to include offices and function rooms as well as a sanctuary.

There were Jewish-themed cultural and educational events during the year. In November, the King David Theater, a young-persons’ drama group from Belgrade, presented a play in Ladino by Laura Bohoreta Papo. Bohoreta, who died before World War II, was regarded as Sarajevo’s premiere female playwright in the Ladino dialect. This performance, Sarajevo’s first in Ladino in about 70 years, was funded by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC).

Also aided by the JDC and other international bodies, La Benevolencija continued to oversee programs that helped needy Bosnians, Jews and non-Jews alike. It distributed items ranging from used clothing to toiletries to reading glasses. A home-care program provided assistance to 670 elderly Serbs, Croats, Muslims, and Jews in Sarajevo and five provincial cities. There was also a countrywide breast cancer support and awareness initiative, and a training program to help local people set up small businesses. The World Bank helped support a “micro” credit institution to provide small loans to new enterprises.

A key source of funds for a number of projects was Dr. Alfred Bader, a successful chemist and art collector and dealer based in Milwaukee, who disbursed funds through the JDC for targeted programs that were overseen by local Jewish communities. Several of these helped disabled people in Sarajevo, Mostar, and Banja Luka (also see “Czech Republic,” below).

Throughout the year, Jewish community leader Jacob Finci continued to press for the establishment of a “Truth and Reconciliation Commission,” modeled on that of South Africa, to investigate the causes of the Bosnian war.

**Bulgaria**

Although Bulgaria remained the poorest EU candidate state, a jump in tourism improved its economic performance somewhat: GDP grew by 5.7 percent in the first nine months of the year as compared to 4.2 per-
cent in 2003. Despite the growth, average monthly wages remained around $150 and gross domestic product per person was less than a third of EU levels. Annual inflation for 2004 was 4 percent. The country was plagued by rampant corruption and organized crime, which EU officials said could slow its accession, which was scheduled for 2007. A poll showed that 96 percent of Bulgarians believed their country was corrupt. Gangland-style killings and other bloody street violence sparked protests against the government of Prime Minister Simeon Saxe-Coburg, whose approval rating late in the year plummeted to 10 percent, according to opinion polls.

Bulgaria remained a firm ally of the U.S. in Iraq. In May, Foreign Minister Solomon Passy said that Bulgaria would maintain its 500 troops in Iraq despite threats from Osama bin Laden against coalition forces. In November, a court in Pazardzhik convicted a radical Muslim prayer leader, Ahmed Moussa Ahmed, an ethnic Roma, of inciting religious intolerance and ethnic hatred and trying to convert the country into an Islamic state. He was fined and given a three-year suspended sentence.

This year, Bulgaria chaired the 55-member Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). In April, Foreign Minister Passy chaired a high-level international meeting on combating anti-Semitism that was sponsored by the OSCE and held in Berlin. There, he helped forge a “Berlin Declaration,” adopted unanimously by the OSCE governments, that pledged to fight “new forms” of anti-Semitism and rejected any use of the Middle East conflict to justify hate crimes against Jews. In a brief ceremony at the end of the conference, Passy presented the yellow star his grandfather had worn as a Jew in Bulgaria during the Holocaust to German foreign minister Joschka Fischer.

A major issue throughout the year was the case of five Bulgarian nurses and a Bulgarian doctor who were placed on trial in Libya on the charge of intentionally infecting more than 400 children with the AIDS virus as part of an experiment to find a cure. In May, a Libyan court sentenced the nurses and a Palestinian doctor to death on the charges, and jailed the Bulgarian doctor for changing money on the black market.

About 5,000 Jews were officially registered as living in Bulgaria, although Jewish communal officials estimated that the actual number of Jews could be as many as 8,000. At least half of the Jews lived in the capital of Sofia, nearly 1,500 in Plovdiv, and nearly 500 in Varna.

Supported in part by the JDC, Sofia boasted a full infrastructure for Jewish communal life, including a magnificent, recently restored synagogue; a Jewish community center, Beit Ha’am (which had a kosher
restaurant); a Jewish newspaper; 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. About 350 Jewish children made up nearly half the student body of a state-run school in Sofia that included Hebrew language and Jewish subjects in the curriculum and received support from the Lauder Foundation. The community ran cultural activities throughout the year and maintained a Jewish camp near Sofia that had both summer and winter activities.

Jewish communities around Bulgaria were linked through the Shalom organization, which had 19 branches and ran cultural, educational, and social programs, including Sunday schools in Sofia, Plovdiv, Burgas, Ruse, and Varna for about 300 children aged 6–16. Chabad ran a center in Sofia that had been in operation since 2001, as well as a Website, www.chabad-bulgaria.org.

Bulgarian Jews maintained contacts with Jewish communities outside the country, including a partnership arrangement with the Jewish Federation of Greater Kansas City. Bulgarian Jews took part in international conferences, seminars, and other events. In May, a Bulgarian Jewish singing group entertained delegates to the General Assembly of the European Council of Jewish Communities in Budapest.

There were efforts to preserve the Ladino language, culture, and traditions. The Shalom organization in Sofia, for example, had a weekly Ladino club for mostly elderly Ladino speakers to teach the language to younger people. Archivists at the State Archives in Sofia received a grant from a British source to go through a rich trove of Ladino material long kept in boxes in the basement. Also, Bulgarian artists and experts took part in the Esperansa festival of Sephardic culture that was held in Belgrade (see below, p. 494).

In July, Germany agreed to compensate Jews who had been forced to work in Bulgarian labor camps during World War II. Jews placed in any of the 112 Bulgarian camps were now eligible for monthly pensions and a one-time compensation payment. The extent of forced Jewish labor in Bulgarian camps only came to light when previously classified documents were released after the fall of communism. Bulgaria had long prided itself on the fact that it did not permit its 50,000 Jews to be deported to Nazi death camps, although it did allow 14,000 Jews in Bulgarian-occupied Greece and Macedonia to be deported. According to research conducted by the Claims Conference, however, tens of thousands of Jews were forced to work in labor camps under conditions of
“malnourishment, exploitation, and brutal labor.” The work they were forced to do “consisted primarily of road and railway construction, often in difficult marshy locations, involving long workdays, heavy work norms, and exposure to extreme temperatures.” The prisoners “faced frequent beatings by superiors, subsisted on an inadequate diet, and lacked the clothing or boots needed for working in the cold, rugged terrain.”

Throughout the year, an America woman, Sally Hindman, sought to raise funds to restore the synagogue in the seaport city of Varna and to create a monument there to the more than 200 Jews who died when the ship Salvador, which left Varna for Palestine on December 4, 1940, sank in the Sea of Marmara off the Turkish coast. Varna was a main point of departure for European Jews fleeing Nazi persecution who sought to reach Palestine.

_Croatia_

In January, at a ceremony in Zagreb attended by President Stipe Mesic, six Croats were honored as Righteous Gentiles for saving Jews during the Holocaust. In March, moving away from the hard-line nationalist approach his party had held in the past, Prime Minister Ivo Sanader condemned crimes committed by the Nazi-allied Ustashe regime during World War II. He did this on his first official visit to the site of the Jasenovac concentration camp where, between 1941 and 1945, the Ustashe brutalized or killed tens of thousands of Jews, Serbs, Gypsies, and antifascist Croats. “Croatia’s history had only too much suffering and Jasenovac was one of the worst. We have to speak up so that the Ustashe crimes are not forgotten,” Sanader said. His HDZ party was founded by the late President Franjo Tudjman, whose government was often accused of whitewashing Ustashe crimes and reinstalling some symbols of their rule.

Croatia and Israel maintained close relations, and tens of thousands of Israeli tourists visited Croatia. In October, the Israeli foreign ministry announced it would send a full-time resident ambassador to Zagreb. The two countries established full diplomatic links only in 1998, after Tudjman apologized for comments considered anti-Semitic. Since then, Israel had been represented in Croatia by its ambassador in Vienna.

In June, Efraim Zuroff, director of the Simon Wiesenthal Center’s Jerusalem office, launched Operation Last Chance, a public Nazi-hunting campaign, in Croatia (see also “Hungary,” below). It offered a $10,000 reward to anyone who helped uncover, prosecute, and punish Nazis or Nazi collaborators still at large. It did not take long for Zuroff to receive
death threats from Croatian extremists, and there were also threats against Croatian Jews. A letter signed “Anti-Jewish Movement” read: “[We] are looking for a sword which will cut off your head. Jew-boy Zuroff what you are asking for is what you will get. If a single Croat is arrested, detained or maltreated in any way because of your sick Jewish ideas, we warn you: We will start to kill your Jewish compatriots in Croatia! We know your names and addresses.” The letter was marked with a “U” to indicate sympathy for the Ustashe. Copies were also sent to the justice minister, the head of the country’s Helsinki committee, and Croatia’s Civic Center for Human Rights. A Croatian Web site went so far as to offer a reward to anyone who would kill Zuroff and blow up the offices of the Civic Center.

But his campaign brought results. Zuroff said that within three weeks of launching the appeal, the Wiesenthal Center had been able to make a fully documented war-crimes case against 91-year-old Milivoj Asner, who was still living in Croatia. And Zuroff said that President Mesic had pledged to help bring Asner, who was a Croatian police chief during World War II, to justice.

At the end of August, Sanader’s government ordered the removal of plaques put up to honor two Ustashe officials. One, set up in 2002 in the town of Slunj, honored military commander Jure Francetic. The other, erected earlier in August on a wall surrounding a church in the town of Lovinac by a group funded by nationalist emigrés, honored the writer Mile Budak. He served as religion and education minister in the Ustashe government and signed the racist laws that led to the murder of Jews, Roma, and Serbs. Budak was executed in 1945 as a war criminal. The government said the plaques went “against Croatia’s constitution and [harmed] Croatia’s reputation and interests.” The cabinet also requested the Justice Ministry to draft amendments to the penal code that would ban the promotion of all totalitarian ideologies, including communism and fascism.

According to the left-wing newspaper Novi list, 17 towns and villages in Croatia had streets named after Budak. This continuing positive evaluation of his career was further reinforced in August, at the very time that the government was removing the plaque honoring his name, when some 120 Croatian intellectuals signed a petition to reopen the 1945 case against Budak on the grounds that the proceedings had amounted to a communist show trial and did not meet standards of justice.

About 2,000 Jews lived in Croatia, most of them in Zagreb, which had a Jewish community center and prayer room, under the leadership of
Rabbi Kotel Dadon. The Zagreb community, almost self-sufficient financially, received some aid from the JDC to operate an old-age home accommodating up to 80 residents, including elderly Jews who fled Bosnia during the war there. In the summer, also with JDC help, the Jewish community reinstituted, for the first time since the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia, a children’s camp along the Dalmation coast that brought together some 60 youngsters for two weeks of activities. During the year, the community worked on plans for a new complex of buildings to house its activities, on the site of the Main Synagogue, torn down by the Nazis. The principal smaller Jewish communities in the country were those of Split, Dubrovnik, and Osijek.

There were a number of Jewish cultural and educational initiatives throughout the year. The community’s Israeli dance troupe performed regularly at Jewish functions and also for the general public. In January, an exhibition of photographs taken secretly by a German soldier in the Warsaw Ghetto in 1941 took place in Zagreb at the Jewish community center. President Mesic, Prime Minister Sanader, and the German ambassador to Croatia attended the opening. In August, the fifth biennial Conference on the Social and Cultural History of the Jews on the Eastern Adriatic Coast took place in Dubrovnik, sponsored by the University of Zagreb’s Center for Advanced Academic Studies. On Sukkot, the Croatian Jewish community hosted the annual Beyahad Jewish culture week, a gathering of more than 200 Jews from all over the former Yugoslavia as well as foreign guests, held on the island of Hvar. As usual, the program included a mix of social events, lectures, performances, and exhibits.

Czech Republic

The Czech Republic, which joined the European Union on May 1, marked the 15th anniversary of its “velvet revolution” that ousted the communist regime in November. The economy was shaky as unemployment soared throughout the year, reaching a post-World-War-II record of 10.8 percent in January 2005. The average monthly wage was about $700—five times what it was in 1989—but consumer prices were about ten times higher. Prime Minister Vladimire Spidla resigned at the beginning of June, touching off a government crisis that was only resolved in late August when a new prime minister, Stanislav Gross, was approved by Parliament.

The country enjoyed excellent relations with Israel, and Jewish observers said that media coverage of the Middle East situation was gen-
erally balanced, if not pro-Israel. In February, the Evangelical Church of the Bohemian Brethren, the country's largest Protestant church body, issued a statement backing the construction of Israel’s West Bank security barrier. It called Israel’s move “in the interest of the protection of its citizens against the monstrous aggression of Palestinian terrorism,” and declared, “Every appeal against the separating barrier should also be accompanied with the same appeal for the destruction of terrorist organizations in Palestinian territories and in Arab countries.” In March, however, President Vaclav Klaus called Israel’s assassination of Hamas leader Sheik Ahmed Yassin a “terrorist act.” Speaking in Lisbon, Klaus and Portuguese president Jorge Sampaio declared that such acts should not be repeated.

There were many visits by Czech officials to Israel and other countries in the Middle East, and by representatives of those nations to the Czech Republic. By July, Czech diplomats had traveled to the region at least 15 times and had received more than a dozen high-level visitors, including Israel’s foreign minister and deputy prime minister Silvan Shalom, King Abdullah II of Jordan, and Nabil Shaath, foreign minister of the Palestinian Authority. During Shalom’s visit in June, his first to one of the new EU members since accession, he said the Czech Republic “could play a positive role in shaping Europe’s approach toward the Arab-Israeli conflict.” In December, Czech foreign minister Cyril Svoboda spent three days in Israel, where he met with Shalom and discussed bilateral relations as well as relations between the EU and Israel. Svoboda urged greater EU and NATO participation in the Middle East peace process.

The Czech Republic marked its first official Holocaust Memorial Day on January 27. As part of the observances, the Prague Jewish community and the Mauthausen International Committee, an organization of Mauthausen camp survivors based in Austria, sponsored a performance at the Prague State Opera of *The Song of Terezin* by American composer Franz Waxman, a German Jew who fled to the U.S. to escape the Shoah. Written in 1962, the piece was inspired by poems composed by children held in Terezin. In June, the Mauthausen Committee awarded medals to Prague Jewish community chairman Tomas Jelinek and Austrian lawmaker Maria Berger for their role in organizing the concert.

**Jewish Community**

About 3,000–4,000 Jews were known to live in the Czech Republic, although community leaders said the number was probably higher. About half the Jews lived in Prague. In addition, about 2,000 Israelis were be-
lieved to live in the Czech Republic. The first baby in at least 30 years underwent brit milah (ritual circumcision) at Prague’s Jubilee synagogue in April; he was the son of the synagogue’s Orthodox rabbi.

Prague’s Jewish community, which controlled large real-estate holdings that had been returned by the state after 1989, was embroiled in bitter factional conflict throughout the year. Although mainly involving the lay leadership, it spilled over into the religious sphere as well. At the heart of the problem was an intense power struggle between supporters and opponents of Tomas Jelinek, an economic advisor to former president Vaclav Havel, who was elected to a second term as chairman of the Prague community in April. Jelinek took office promising to bring a new era of transparency and openness, and to reach out to non-Orthodox Jews. But the bruising electoral campaign exposed raw divisions in the community.

The victory of Jelinek’s faction, Coalition for a Democratic Community, brought the ouster from the community board of two veteran Jewish leaders, Leo Pavlat, director of the Jewish Museum, and Jiri Danicek, editor of the community monthly, Rosh Chodesh. Jelinek said their responsibilities as heads of institutions run, or partly run, by the community represented a conflict of interest with their board membership.

In June, the leadership fired Rabbi Karol Sidon as chief rabbi of Prague. “Rabbi Sidon has not been able to do his job as a chief rabbi properly, and he failed in all important aspects of what his office is expected to do,” Jelinek said. “There was criticism from the left and the right. He was running the rabbinate in such a way that it would never have religious authority.” There had been specific complaints that Sidon was too Orthodox for a community whose members were largely secular, and that he did not reach out to non-Orthodox Jews.

While Sidon retained his post as chief rabbi of the Czech Republic, with the support of the Federation of Czech Jewish Communities, the Prague community appointed the local Chabad rabbi, Manis Barash, as rabbi of the historic Old-New Synagogue, the symbol of Prague Jewry that had been in continuous use for more than 700 years. Sidon accused Chabad of trying to take over the Prague community, a charge Barash denied. But the replacement of Sidon with Barash upset the small number of Czech Jews who regularly attended the Old-New Synagogue. Eventually, Sidon began conducting services for them in the High Synagogue, located directly across the street from the Old-New Synagogue. The latter, by the end of the year, was mainly attended by Israelis and tourists.

The conflict rocked the Jewish community and also spilled over into the mainstream media, which ran articles and commentaries about it. The
case went before a rabbinical court in Israel, which ruled that the post of Prague chief rabbi should be left vacant and that Sidon should become “president” of the rabbis in Prague and in the Czech Republic.

Meanwhile, more strife shook the community. Seventeen teachers at the Lauder Jewish school quit following the resignation of the school’s principal under pressure from the Jelinek leadership. The principal’s ouster, in turn, was related to a scandal in 2003, when pornography was found on the school’s Internet server (see AJYB 2004, p. 419). Another controversy flared when Jelinek gave a public-relations firm community members’ addresses and e-mail contacts without their knowledge or approval. (Jelinek said he had signed a data-protection agreement with the firm and that the information would be used only within the community.) Yet another point of contention was one of Jelinek’s key projects, a proposed old-age home for Holocaust survivors. He accused the previous community leadership of neglecting the needs of Holocaust survivors and spending too much of the community’s assets on “stone”—that is, on the Jewish Museum and the restoration of historic cemeteries, synagogues, and Jewish heritage sites.

During the summer, opponents of Jelinek—many of them members or allies of the old leadership—formed an opposition group that they called the Platform for a Community for All. It accused the Jelinek administration of “dictatorial methods” that were “unbefitting the leadership of any Jewish community,” and pressed for its ouster. In November, at the end of a nine-hour community assembly that, according to witnesses, was marked by name-calling, shouting, and insults, 173 out of the 190 people present voted to remove Jelinek and his three deputy chairpersons from office. But Jelinek refused to accept the decision. (That same month, results of an audit of the community ordered by Jelinek were released. Conducted by the firm Ernst and Young, it found that poor property management may have cost the community millions of dollars over the years and that community rules were violated.)

At year’s end it was still not clear who was in charge. A new community assembly in December confirmed the November vote to oust Jelinek, but all the 230 members who attended the meeting were supporters of the Platform for a Community for All. Meanwhile, the Jelinek leadership organized a mail-in ballot, and 404 out of the 500 people who responded voted to keep Jelinek in charge. Platform supporters called the mail-in vote invalid, and Jelinek supporters called the community assembly vote invalid. The Czech government, for its part, recognized the rival community chairman chosen by the Platform, Frantisek Banyai, and
registered him as the legitimate communal leader. Jelinek supporters protested, and Jelinek himself refused to vacate his office in the Jewish Town Hall. On December 17, there was a scuffle when private security guards hired by Jelinek prevented Banyai from entering community headquarters. Petr Halva, head of the community’s election oversight committee, charged Banyai supporters with breaking Jelinek’s door and cutting some phone lines.

Despite the turmoil, there were numerous Jewish-themed cultural and educational events throughout the year. In January, an exhibit on 85 years of JDC activity in Czech and Slovak lands opened at Prague’s National Library. At the end of April, Prague hosted an international conference titled “The Future of European Jewish Heritage,” which drew scholars, museum directors, activists, and others from across Europe as well as the U.S. and Israel. A number of efforts were under way to restore or preserve sites of Jewish heritage. In Libochovice, about 40 miles from Prague, volunteers from Germany, Italy, France, and Estonia joined young local volunteers to clean up and restore the historic Jewish cemetery, which was devastated during and after World War II. The project, financed by the Czech-German Future Fund, also included workshops about Judaism and Jewish culture, as well as trips to Terezin and Prague. During the summer, a group of Israeli students made a detailed documentation of Jewish heritage in several towns.

In the fall, the Jewish Museum of Prague marked ten years since the government transferred ownership to the Jewish community. The museum had originally been founded in 1906. During World War II, the Nazis used it to store items looted from more than 150 destroyed Jewish communities in Bohemia and Moravia. After the war, it was nationalized and run by the communist state. Visited by more than half a million people a year, it was now one of the Czech Republic’s most popular museums. As part of the anniversary celebrations, museum director Leo Pavlat announced that the institution would expand its operations outside of Prague to help preserve and promote Jewish heritage in provincial towns and cities. Beginning in 2006, he said, hundreds of thousands of dollars from museum profits would be channeled to ten Jewish communities, and they, in turn, would decide how best to use the funds. The museum also completed a $2.2-million renovation and reconstruction of the synagogue in Prague’s Smichov district, for use as a central archive of surviving documents from Jewish communities in Bohemia and Moravia dating back to the fifteenth century. In April, a book produced by the museum about synagogue textiles won an award from the Ministry for Culture.
In July, the town of Holesov hosted a six-day Jewish culture festival focusing on Jewish mysticism. Among those attending the festival were young people from South Korea, the U.S., Canada, Poland, Belgium, France, and other countries who had volunteered to clean up the Holesov Jewish cemetery. Another Jewish cultural festival during the summer took place in Trebic. In August, “Israel Uncensored,” an exhibit of polemical posters created by Israeli designers and students, formed part of an exhibition mounted in the former barracks at Terezin to commemorate the anniversary of the 1968 Soviet-led invasion of Czechoslovakia. In November, a collection of rare Hebrew manuscripts and medieval texts known as the Saraval Legacy was exhibited at Prague’s National Library.

There were also numerous educational programs on Judaism, Jewish culture, Jewish history, and the Holocaust. In November, some 60 teachers had to be turned away from “How to Teach the Holocaust,” a Holocaust education program at Terezin, because there was no room for many of the applicants. The program, for elementary and high-school teachers, was initiated in 2000.

Still, anti-Semitic sentiments existed in the Czech Republic, and Jewish sources in Prague believed that the ugly turmoil in the Jewish community, widely reported in the local media, could only strengthen them.

To be sure, the government was responsive to Jewish concerns. In January, Michal Zitko, who published a Czech translation of Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*, received a three-year suspended sentence on charges of promoting Nazism. In April, skinhead leader Jaroslav Broz was convicted of organizing the distribution of Nazi propaganda and songs with lyrics that incited hatred; he was sentenced to five years in jail, and four codefendants were put on probation for three years. Also in April, Jewish leaders protested the publication of *Bolshevism from Moses to Lenin*, a Czech translation of dialogues between Adolf Hitler and Dietrich Eckhart, editor-in-chief of the Nazi daily *Volkischer Beobachter*. Senator Daniel Kroupa called for a police investigation, saying the book was “quite simply a piece of overt anti-Semitism.”

There were also acts of vandalism against Jewish targets. For example, thieves stole valuable tombstones from the historic Jewish cemetery in Mikulov, apparently to reuse them for new grave markers. In May, the synagogue in Krnov was defaced, and in September, for the second time in two years, a Holocaust monument in Ostrava was spray-painted with Nazi symbols and anti-Semitic slogans. These episodes led Jews to form a Czech Anti-Defamation Association in the summer.
In October, authorities charged seven fans of the Sparta soccer team with chanting anti-Semitic slogans at a rival team from Ostrava, Baník Ostrava. In December, a court in Jesénik sentenced 22-year-old Petr Blajze to seven months in prison for having used Nazi slogans and other threats while apparently trying to break into an asylum house for Roma (Gypsies); a second man was given a suspended sentence. Blajze had previously been accused of other violent incidents against Roma: in June, for example, he and two other men were charged with carrying out a racially motivated attack on a Roma couple in Jesénik.

In December, a Prague court reversed an earlier ruling that had acquitted Russian rock singer Denis Gerasimov of propagating racism and possessing Nazi propaganda. Gerasimov, whose group, Kolovrat, was popular with skinheads and other extremists, had been arrested at Prague airport in February. About to return to Russia after giving a concert in eastern Bohemia attended by skinheads from all over the region, Gerasimov was charged with possessing Nazi symbols and neo-Nazi music CDs, having neo-Nazi symbols on his clothes, and supporting a movement aimed at suppressing others’ rights and freedoms. The court decision that acquitted him in October, subsequently reversed, said that neither his clothes nor the CDs could spread neo-Nazism, as “all the objects were shut in a suitcase.”

In April, Yad Vashem recognized a Czech woman, Alice Horakova, as a Righteous Gentile for having saved a Jewish girl from being transported to the Terezin concentration camp in 1944. In the same ceremony, two other Czechs were posthumously recognized as Righteous Gentiles. Also in April, Jewish filmmaker Martin Smok was fined $1,500 by Czech authorities for obstructing an investigation into the death of Charles Jordan, a JDC official whose body was found floating in the Vltava River in Prague in 1967. Smok had approached the police to present a fresh lead in the case, based on the statement of a witness who came forward after a documentary by Smok on the murder was broadcast on Czech TV. The fine was ordered because police said Smok refused to reveal the identity of the alleged witness.

In September, the country’s Via Bona Honorary Award for outstanding philanthropy was presented to Alfred Bader, an 80-year-old Vienna-born chemist and art collector and dealer who lived in Milwaukee. In 1938, when he was 14, Bader fled Vienna on a kindertransport train for London. He lost his family in the Holocaust. Bader’s charitable efforts in the Czech Republic include annual awards to chemistry students, a
chair at Masaryk University in Brno, a community-based project to help Roma, an art history grant, and the rebuilding of a Prague playground after the devastating floods of 2002.

**Greece**

Kostas Karamanlis of the conservative New Democracy Party was elected prime minister in March. In elections for the European Parliament in June, Georgos Karatzaferis of the extreme nationalist and xenophobic People’s Party (LAOS) won a seat with 4.1 percent of the vote, the first electoral success for the far-right in 20 years. (The party failed to win any seats in the Greek parliamentary elections earlier in the year.) Greece marked its first National Day of Remembrance of Greek-Jewish Victims of the Holocaust on January 27.

Greece hosted the Olympic Games in August, where windsurfer Gal Fridman presented Israel with the country’s first gold medal ever (he had won a bronze in 1996). For the Olympics, a kosher restaurant opened in Athens to serve Jewish athletes and tourists. In July, to mark the upcoming Olympics, a park named Athens 2004 was dedicated in Zur Moshe, a moshav (cooperative settlement) near the Israeli town of Netanya that had been founded by Greek Jews in the 1930s. The creation of the park, funded by the Greek Foreign Ministry and private donors in Greece and Israel, was initiated by Elias Messina, a Greek Jewish architect who divided his time between the two countries, and his wife.

In October, a delegation from the American Jewish Committee met with Foreign Minister Petros Molyviatis, Education and Religious Affairs Minister Marietta Yiannakou-Koutsikou, George Papandreou, leader of Greece’s main opposition party, and Athens mayor Dora Bakoyannis. The AJC urged the government to deepen its contacts with Israel and stressed how important it was for Greece to continue to support its small Jewish community.

About 5,000 Jews lived in Greece. Most were well integrated into society and many were intermarried. There were nine organized Jewish communities—Athens (the largest), Thessaloniki (or Salonika), Larissa, Chalkis, Volos, Corfu, Trikala, Ioannina, and Rhodes—all of them grouped under the umbrella Central Board of Jewish Communities (KIS). The only synagogues to hold regular services were in Athens, Thessaloniki, and Larissa, and there were Jewish schools in Athens and Thessaloniki. The 1,000-member community in Thessaloniki was considered
to be the most active in the country, with a Jewish choir, social welfare programs, an old-age home, and a Jewish community center that was a focal point for younger Jews. In January, Elie Wiesel spoke at a Holocaust memorial ceremony in the city, and the Jewish community made Wiesel and his wife honorary members. In July, Thessaloniki resident Hella Kounio, the oldest survivor of the Greek Holocaust, died at the age of 98. She had been 37 when she was deported to Auschwitz in 1943.

The Jewish Museum, founded in 1977 in Athens, mounted exhibitions and held events relating to the Greek Jewish heritage. During the year, Greece joined the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research. David Saltiel, president of the Jewish community of Thessaloniki, Moisis Konstantinis, president of KIS, and Zanet Battinou, director of the Jewish Museum, had worked with the Ministry of Education for several years on how to incorporate Holocaust education into the Greek school system.

Some observers raised concern about mounting anti-Semitism in the country. Anti-Semitic articles appeared in the extreme right-wing media, and even mainstream newspapers occasionally ran anti-Semitic political cartoons that were critical of Israeli policies and of Prime Minister Sharon. Some compared Israeli policy toward the Palestinians to Nazi treatment of the Jews. In October, for example, the financial newspaper Epihiro ran a photograph of ovens with a caption making that equation. Anti-Semitism and anti-Israeli sentiment were often linked with anti-Americanism. In August, after the Olympic Games, racist and anti-Semitic graffiti appeared along a 70-kilometer stretch of highway between Athens and Tripolis.

In October, when Israeli ambassador Ram Aviram paid a courtesy call on the prefect of the Cretan town of Chania, the latter, George Katsanievaki—well known for his hostility to Israel—unleashed a diatribe against the Jewish state, calling Sharon the “anti-Christ” and telling the ambassador that “the feelings of the people of Chania toward Israel are anything but friendly.”

Mikis Theodorakis, the Greek composer best known for the score of the film Zorba the Greek, sought to mend his relations with Jews by arranging an interview with a reporter for the Israeli daily Ha'aretz. Theodorakis, however, who had outraged Jews around the world by allegedly calling them “the root of all evil” in November 2003 (see AJYB 2004, p. 421), only made matters worse in August 2004 by explaining that he actually said that Jews were at the root of all evil. He went on to allege that Jews controlled the world’s banks, mass media, and symphony
orchestras, and had manipulated the American government to go to war in Iraq. Even while professing himself a “true friend of the Jewish people,” he condemned the Jewish religion for promoting “psychological masochism.”

Hungary

Hungary joined the European Union on May 1. In September, 43-year-old multi-millionaire Ferenc Gyurcsany was named prime minister of the Socialist-led coalition. He replaced Peter Medgyessy, who resigned. Hungary had been part of the “coalition of the willing” in Iraq, but the deployment of its 300-member military contingent was unpopular among Hungarians. The government pulled its troops out of Iraq in December, after parliament refused to extend the unit’s mission beyond 2004.

Relations between Hungary and Israel were close. Israeli investment in Hungary was particularly strong. According to Peter Kiss, an aide to the prime minister who visited Israel in July, Israelis had invested over $2 billion in Hungary over the past decade, an amount second only to investors from the U.S. Israeli investment focused on real estate, infrastructure, and industry, including pharmaceuticals. Israeli president Moshe Katzav visited Hungary in April for ceremonies marking 60 years since the Nazi deportations from Hungary (see below, p. 474). In June, Hungary resigned from the UN Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. The Anti-Defamation League praised the move, calling the committee, “a body which promotes a one-sided and propagandistic perspective of Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.”

In January, visiting former U.S. secretary of state Madeleine Albright told former Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orban that she was concerned about “some of the more extremist views” expressed by members of Orban’s opposition FIDESZ party, and warned that it was counterproductive for FIDESZ to support “extremist nationalist views.” Orban, however, defended his record and disagreed with her criticism. On February 12, FIDESZ stayed away from a wreath-laying ceremony honoring victims of World War II and those killed by Hungary’s Nazi occupiers and the home-grown fascist Arrow Cross militia. The next day, FIDESZ also boycotted a ceremony marking the 59th anniversary of the liberation of Budapest by Soviet troops, saying that that event had not represented liberation, but rather the start of a brutal communist occupation. On the day after that, February 14, about 800 members and sympathizers of the neo-Nazi Blood and Honor Association held a “counter-
commemoration” honoring the Germans and pro-Nazi Hungarians defeated by the Soviet troops.

At the beginning of the year, the radio station Tilos Radio was at the center of controversy. It stemmed from a live program aired on December 24, 2004, during which host Zoltan Bajtai, apparently intoxicated, said he would like to “exterminate all Christians.” The remark drew widespread protest, Tilos Radio apologized, and Bajtai was fired. But the incident escalated into a broader scandal with overt anti-Semitic overtones. On January 11, several thousand people held a protest rally against Tilos Radio organized by right-wing groups, whose leaders whipped up the crowd. The writer Kornel Dobrentei stated: “It is good if one has the will and courage to protest the religion-cloaked war waged on us to eliminate our people; to protest the moral holocaust of the Hungarian nation directed by fake prophets dressed in camouflage and hiding their faces behind masks—only their beards are real!” He went on, “And they are waiting, ready to pounce, to censure our gripe as nationalism and anti-Semitism, to sully our reputation worldwide.” The crowd chanted “dirty Jews,” and far-right protesters burned an Israeli flag.

This drew sharp protest from mainstream political parties, the Israeli embassy, and the Hungarian Jewish community, which condemned both the flag-burning and the remark about eliminating Christians. Two men were arrested for burning the flag, and police seized right-wing nationalist material at the home of one of them. On January 21, the National Radio and Television Authority ordered Tilos Radio off the air for 30 days, but a court reversed the ban eight days later. The station got into more hot water when an announcer read out what was described as a text message from a listener that called former prime minister Orban a fascist. On February 11, police said they had concluded that Bajtai had not committed a crime with his remark about Christians, since it was not “incitement against a community.” The affair had further fallout. Dobrentei was on the board of the Hungarian Writers Association, and, beginning in March, more than 160 writers quit that organization to protest its refusal to distance itself from Dobrentei’s remarks. The association issued a statement explaining that it did not want to “play the role of the thought-police.”

The U.S. State Department’s annual Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 2003, released in February 2004, noted that the Hungarian Jewish community was concerned about anti-Semitism in the media, including some that were state-run. This assertion drew criticism from the Federation of Hungarian Electronic Journalists, which charged that the
There were various manifestations of right-wing extremism and racism. A neo-Nazi group called the Hungarian Future Group, believed to have only a few dozen members, placed posters around Budapest honoring World War II fascist leader Ferenc Szalasi; the government closed down its Web site in September. Also in September, widespread criticism in the media, from political parties, and from organizations—including the Alliance of Hungarian Jewish Communities—greeted a decision by the police to grant a permit to the Hungarian Future Group for a rally on October 15 marking the 60th anniversary of the coup that put the Arrow Cross, Hungary’s pro-Nazi fascist militia, in power. Among other protests, about 1,000 people staged a demonstration against the planned rally outside Budapest’s House of Terror museum.

Police, meanwhile, arrested the group’s leader, 26-year-old Diana Bacsfi, who was sentenced to ten days in jail for disturbing the peace. The October 15 rally was canceled at the last minute on a technicality, after Budapest officials issued a permit allowing the youth wing of the Alliance of Free Democrats, a party that was in the government coalition, to stage its own counter-rally in the same place where the neo-Nazis wanted to demonstrate. In the end, about 25,000 people took part in an antifascist rally that day, organized by various groups, including the Jewish community, human-rights organizations, and parties of the center-left government. Culture Minister Istvan Hiller told the crowd, “We don’t tolerate fascism in any of its forms.”

A Holocaust memorial in Budapest was vandalized on January 27, the date marked as Holocaust Memorial Day in parts of Europe. In February, the Budapest Municipal Council rescinded permission it had granted earlier for the erection of a statue to Pal Teleki, prime minister in 1920–21 and 1939–41. (A statue of Teleki had already been erected in the town of Balatonboglar, despite Jewish protests.) Under Teleki’s rule Hungary introduced anti-Semitic legislation, including a “numerus clausus” law limiting the admission of Jewish students to universities—the first such measure in Europe. The Ministry of Culture, the Alliance of Hungarian Religious Jewish Communities, and the Simon Wiesenthal Center had all protested erection of the statue.

In February, a government commission consisting of scholars, church dignitaries, and politicians that had been set up to examine and evaluate evidence on the Holocaust in Hungary held its first session, chaired by Prime Minister Medgyessy. Results of a survey on Holocaust awareness
in Hungary released that same month indicated that only 2 percent of adult Hungarians were well informed about the Holocaust, and 16 percent knew nothing about it. The best-informed respondents were in the 26–45 age bracket. This poll of 1,000 people was commissioned by the Holocaust Documentation Center.

Various high-profile events marked the 60th anniversary of the deportation of Hungary’s Jews to Auschwitz. Principal among them was the opening in April of a Holocaust memorial, museum, and documentation center in Budapest. The $8.5-million complex was built around an ornate synagogue on Pava Street, just outside the city center, which had been used as an internment camp in 1944–45 and then stood abandoned for many years. The new structures surrounding it featured broken contours, slanted walls, and narrowing corridors aimed at evoking a nightmare world.

Israeli president Moshe Katzav joined Hungarian Jewish and governmental leaders for the inauguration of the new facility on April 15. Security was very tight. On the day before the opening, Hungarian police detained three Arabs for allegedly plotting to blow up “a Jewish museum” in Budapest. Police denied a link between the terror plot and Katzav’s three-day visit.

The new museum was only partially completed when it opened. A temporary exhibition was installed, as its planned permanent exhibition tracing the development of the Shoah in Hungary, including Hungarian complicity, was not yet ready. When fully functional, the complex would include archives and databases concerning the Holocaust in Hungary, as well as a memorial wall bearing the names of Holocaust victims—more than 40,000 had been inscribed so far. To be sure, this ambitious project drew criticism over its goals, concept, and location, as well as over the political maneuvers involved in setting it up. Critics included prominent members of Hungary’s Jewish community, who faulted organizers for, among other things, going ahead too hastily without first thinking through many details.

The Simon Wiesenthal Center launched its Operation Last Chance campaign in Hungary in July, offering rewards of 10,000 euros for information leading to the capture of Nazi war criminals (see Croatia, above). Within two weeks, the campaign’s local project manager resigned, after Hungary’s data-privacy ombudsman said that the transmission of information about Hungarian individuals to the Wiesenthal Center headquarters in Israel could violate the nation’s privacy laws. In October, the state-sponsored House of Terror museum launched a campaign to iden-
tify people who had helped rescue Jews during the Shoah. That same month a Socialist member of parliament, Janos Zuschlag, was forced to resign his seat after being caught on camera making a joke about Holocaust victims.

JEWISH COMMUNITY

Estimates of Hungary’s Jewish population ran from 54,000 to 130,000, about 90 percent of whom lived in Budapest. The vast majority of Jews were nonpracticing and secular, and unaffiliated with Jewish institutions. Hungarian Jewish communities were grouped under an umbrella body, the Alliance of Hungarian Jewish Communities. It was the official representative of Hungarian Jews to the state, which provided it $15 million in funding per year. Critics within the Jewish community had long called the alliance undemocratic and monopolistic, noting that it represented only about 5,000–6,000 dues-paying members, a tiny fraction of the total Jewish population, and had been managed by one executive director, Gusztav Zoltai, for 12 years.

In April, the alliance responded to the criticism by adopting a new constitution that promised to create a clearer and more transparent process for decision-making and financial management. It also transferred some powers from the executive director by delegating them to the elected leadership, and raised the possibility of involving Jewish organizations that were not members of the alliance, and thus “cautiously opening toward a wider segment of the Jewish community,” explained Andras Heisler, president of the alliance.

Among the significant groups that operated outside the alliance were the Reform congregation Sim Shalom and Chabad, which, besides running its own synagogue and yeshiva, sponsored a variety of educational programs. In May, Chabad helped found a new Jewish community that, if its goals were met, would be able to mirror established Jewish communal structures and compete for public funding. It was called the Unified Hungarian Israelite Community (EMIH), and claimed to be the resurrected embodiment of the prewar “Status Quo Ante” community, one of Hungary’s traditional Jewish streams. After obtaining the requisite 100 signatures, EMIH was registered with Hungarian authorities as an officially recognized religious body. This essentially put it on a juridical par with the Neolog and Orthodox communities. Its leader was Rabbi Shlomo Koves, a Hungarian-born adherent of Chabad.

The Pesti Shul, which was Modern Orthodox, functioned as a semi-
autonomous congregation, based in a small synagogue in central Budapest. Members paid nominal monthly dues. The congregation organized classes and monthly Shabbat gatherings, as well as a six-day camp around the Shavuot holiday. In December, the Pesti Shul had a joyous celebration to mark the accession of a Torah scroll from Lithuania, one of the 300 Torahs turned over to world Jewry several years earlier after languishing abandoned in storage since the Holocaust in Lithuania’s National Library.

In May, Budapest hosted the third General Assembly of the European Council of Jewish Communities (ECJC). More than 1,000 representatives from over 40 countries attended the four-day event, whose theme was “Toward a New Era: Facing Together the Challenges of Being Jewish in an Enlarged Europe.” This was just three weeks after ten new countries, including Hungary, joined the EU. “The significance of this, for Jews, cannot be overstated,” said incoming ECJC president Jonathan Joseph. “We are looking at a politically united Europe for the first time ever. We are experiencing a reawakening of Jewish life and culture in Europe on a scale not seen for 100 years. How we respond over the next few years will be one of the most significant things we will do as a Jewish people, and particularly as a European Jewish people.”

On the last day of the conference, police detained six members of a right-wing group called Conscience ‘88, who tried to stage an anti-Israel (verging on anti-Jewish) demonstration in a downtown square where Jewish organizations were marking the 56th anniversary of Israel. One woman burned a paper Israeli flag.

There were numerous conferences, exhibitions, concerts, seminars, and other Jewish-themed cultural and educational events throughout the year. In February, the Hungarian government awarded a grant to Centropa.org, an Internet-based oral-history project devoted to Central and Eastern European Jewry, to create a Hungarian-language Web site combining interviews of elderly Jews with their family photographs.

After a full-scale restoration, the historic Baroque synagogue in the northeastern village of Mád was dedicated at a ceremony in May that also commemorated the 60th anniversary of the deportation of local Jews to Auschwitz. According to the 2001 Hungarian Law on Cultural Heritage, the synagogue was on the list of the 263 most important monuments in the country, and therefore had to remain state property. The State Treasury Directorate sponsored the restoration, with additional funding from private donors through the Jewish Heritage Grant Program of the World Monuments Fund (WMF).
In the summer, a citizens’ group called Ovas was formed to preserve Budapest’s old Jewish neighborhood in the city’s seventh district, where many buildings were threatened by the wrecker’s ball of urban development. Ovas staged outdoor protests, meetings, and walking tours of the district, and sponsored a day-long conference on the issue in November. The group applied for a temporary preservation order for the whole neighborhood, which was granted in June. This designated the Jewish quarter as a cultural heritage area, so that only demolitions approved before June could be carried out, but not new ones.

In June, the 100th anniversary of the death of Theodor Herzl, father of Zionism, was marked with a ceremony at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Herzl was born in Budapest on May 2, 1860, next door to the city’s main Dohany Street Synagogue, occupied today by the Jewish Museum. The seventh Jewish Summer Festival was held in Budapest at the end of August and beginning of September. Through the year, work progressed on a $15-million film version of Nobel Prize-winning author Imre Kertész’s book *Fateless*. Kertész himself wrote the screenplay.

The Vienna-based Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) named the Jewish Hungarian writer and political activist Miklós Haraszti as its representative on freedom of the media, charged with monitoring media developments in the OSCE participating states, and advocating and promoting full compliance with OSCE principles and commitments regarding freedom of expression. Haraszti, a former anti-communist dissident, was born in 1945 in Jerusalem. In the 1980s he edited the underground Hungarian periodical *Beszelo*, and after the fall of communism served in the Hungarian parliament. In May, Education Minister Balint Magyar wrote an article in Hungary’s leading newspaper that for the first time openly discussed his Jewish roots.

In July, the minister of culture presented Israel’s outgoing ambassador to Hungary, Judit Varnai-Shorer, with the prestigious Pro Cultura Hungarica Prize, honoring her role in the establishment of the Holocaust memorial and museum. Varnai-Shorer also received an award from Hungary’s president. Also in July, the Jewish Agency awarded Hungarian Jewish educator Anna Szeszler, principal of the Lauder Yavne Jewish Community School in Budapest, the Max Fisher Prize for Jewish Education in the Diaspora. In December, Katalin Karady, one of the most popular Hungarian singers and actresses in the 1940s, was posthumously honored as a Righteous Gentile by Yad Vashem for helping to save Jews during World War II. Karady, who left Hungary in 1949, died in New York in 1990.
Following the death of Herman Fixler, 93, who had served as president for 35 years, Hungary’s tiny Orthodox community elected Laszlo Herczog to succeed him.

**Macedonia**

President Boris Trajkovski, 47, was killed in a plane crash in Bosnia on February 26. Trajkovski, a strong advocate of European integration and friendship with the U.S., had had close ties with the Jewish community and attended Jewish holiday celebrations. In elections to replace him, Prime Minister Branko Crvenkovski won a decisive victory. In March, Macedonia applied to join the European Union. In November, the country held a referendum sponsored by Macedonian nationalists that would have reversed a law giving the Albanian minority more rights. Much of the country simply ignored it. Only 26 percent of Macedonia’s 1.7 million eligible voters turned out, too few to make the result valid. EU officials believed that this result could only help Macedonia’s chances of eventual EU membership.

About 200 Jews lived in Macedonia, almost all of them in the capital of Skopje and almost all of them intermarried. About 30 were young people. Thanks to far-reaching measures taken by the government to restitute Jewish communal property, the Jews of Macedonia were able to attain financial self-sufficiency in 2004. A special Holocaust Foundation set up by the government and the Jewish community—financed by revenues from property owned by Jews before World War II and left heirless afterward—made plans to build a $1-million Holocaust museum and education center in the old Jewish quarter of Skopje.

**Poland**

Prime Minister Leszek Miller resigned at the end of March after a group of lawmakers from his ex-communist Democratic Left Alliance split off and formed a rival social democratic party. Miller’s government, plagued by corruption scandals and infighting, had been highly unpopular, with polls giving his coalition only a 4-percent approval rating. Miller’s successor, former finance minister Marek Belka, was sworn in on May 2, the day after Poland joined the EU. He pledged sweeping reforms and described his foreign policy goals as “a successful fulfillment of our mission in Iraq” and overcoming obstacles to a new EU constitution. Belka lost a no-confidence vote less than two weeks after he was sworn in, but was confirmed in office several weeks later.
Poland was the largest of the ten new EU members, but it struggled with economic problems that included an unemployment rate of 20 percent. Warsaw was a staunch ally of the U.S. in the Iraq war, supplying a contingent of 2,400 Polish troops. Prime Minister Belka and Defense Minister Jerzy Szmajdzinski paid the troops a Christmas visit in December. At the beginning of April, Polish officials said there was a "clear" danger of a terrorist attack on Poland because of its Iraq role and close alignment with Washington.

Poland and Israel maintained strong links. During a visit to Poland in October, Israeli foreign minister Silvan Shalom said that Israel viewed Poland "as a true friend and close ally." He welcomed "the efforts made by Poland to address the past, and to educate the younger generation towards a future of tolerance, memory, cooperation, and understanding" and lauded "Poland's leading role in the global battle against anti-Semitism." Israeli investments in Poland amount to around $1 billion, but both Shalom and Polish president Aleksander Kwasniewski said that the level of trade between the two countries still fell short of its potential. Kwasniewski said he hoped that Poland's membership in the EU would attract more Israeli investment, especially in hi-tech, and increase trade. Defense ties between Poland and Israel were especially close.

Not only did the two countries share intelligence and counterterrorism information, but they were also engaged in a $255-million arms deal, under which Poland was purchasing 2,765 Israeli-made Spike LR anti-tank rockets over a ten-year period, part of a program to modernize its armed forces. At an official ceremony in Warsaw in November, Israeli defense minister Shaul Mofaz symbolically handed over to his Polish counterpart the first of the missiles. Mofaz signed a memorandum with Polish finance minister Jerzy Hausner to enhance industrial ties between the two nations.

With Poland now in the EU, a number of Israelis of Polish ancestry were reportedly attempting to gain Polish passports, both for business reasons and as a safety net should violence get worse in Israel. A staff member at the Polish embassy in Tel Aviv said the embassy was equipped to accept 100 applications a month, and about half of those received positive responses. In November, the town of Czestochowa, home of Poland's most sacred Catholic religious relic, the Black Madonna, signed a cooperation agreement with Nazareth and Bethlehem.

The U.S. State Department's report on global anti-Semitism, released in December, noted that surveys in Poland indicated a "continuing decline in anti-Semitic sentiment" over the past few years, and that "avowedly anti-Semitic candidates have won few elections." Nevertheless,
it went on, “anti-Semitic feelings persisted among certain sectors of the population, occasionally resulting in acts of vandalism and physical or verbal abuse.” There were persistent expressions of anti-Semitism, some contained in published pamphlets and others broadcast over the radical Catholic station Radio Maria. In April, the pastor of St. Brigid Church in Gdansk, Fr. Henryk Jankowski, told parishioners during services that “Jews killed Jesus and the prophets,” and displayed posters asserting that only Christians could be true citizens. The archbishop of Gdansk subsequently removed Jankowski — already notorious for his previous anti-Semitic utterances — for this and other improprieties.

Aside from frequent graffiti found scrawled on walls around the country, the State Department report listed some specific instances of anti-Semitic actions. In June, for example, just a few days before the annual Festival of Jewish Culture, vandals defaced the Tempel Synagogue in Kraków with swastikas and a Star of David hanging from gallows. And in October, a young Jew from Sweden, wearing a kippah, was harassed by three Polish youths who shouted anti-Semitic slogans at him during a visit to Auschwitz-Birkenau.

During the year, the government provided grants to a number of organizations involved in anti-bias education, including the Jewish Historical Institute (ZIH) in Warsaw, which was a joint public/private venture, and such nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) as the Jewish Historical Association, which produced educational material on Jewish culture, the Holocaust, and religious tolerance. The public education office of the Institute of National Remembrance -Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation produced materials for use in schools, and sponsored a research and documentation project on “The Extermination of Jews in Poland.”

During a meeting in November with a visiting delegation from the American Jewish Committee, the speaker of the Sejm (parliament), Jozef Oleksy, stressed that Poland condemned Europe’s current wave of anti-Semitism as well as all attempts to rewrite the history of World War II. He suggested that the March of the Living, which brought young Jews to Poland and then to Israel, not just visit sites of Jewish martyrdom in Poland but also include meetings with Polish youth.

### JEWISH COMMUNITY

Determining the number of Jews in Poland was no simple matter, with estimates ranging from a few thousand to as many as 20,000.

The Ronald S. Lauder Foundation, which, since the early 1990s, had
run the country's most extensive Jewish educational programs, closed its administrative offices in Poland this year. It still, however, supported a number of activities, including the Jewish school in Warsaw, the monthly magazine Midrasz, the Lauder Genealogical Research Center, and the Moises Schorr Institute, an adult education facility in Warsaw. The JDC provided social welfare aid and also ran educational and leadership-training programs. The Polish Jewish community's Web site, www.jewish.org.pl, provided information about activities and programs. Other useful Web sites for Jewish developments in Poland were www.forumznak.org/pl, and a new site, http://fzp.jewish.org.pl/english/engind.html.

In January, Warsaw's Nozyk Synagogue was the scene of a joyous and moving ceremony, the bar mitzvah of Daniel Krajewski, son of Stanislaw Krajewski, the American Jewish Committee's Warsaw consultant, and his wife, Monika, an artist and teacher at Warsaw's Jewish school. Daniel was born with Down's syndrome, and a special format for the religious ceremony was worked out for him. Many members of the congregation were moved to tears, and the ceremony was the subject of a lengthy article in Poland's leading newspaper. This was believed to be the first bar mitzvah of a Down's syndrome boy in Polish history.

Officially recognized Jewish religious communities were grouped under an umbrella organization, the Union of Jewish Religious Communities in Poland. Though most Polish Jews were secular or not very observant, the religious orientation of the established Jewish communities was Orthodox. There were some complaints, even from religious Jews, that synagogue practices were "too orthodox" for many community members.

In Warsaw, the non-Orthodox group, Beit Warszawa, expanded its operations. Not a member of the union, it nevertheless cooperated with the Warsaw Jewish community on some initiatives. It had new premises in southern Warsaw, and was largely funded by a Polish-born American donor. Beit Warszawa had regular services, social events, concerts, and other programs. In June, singer and actor Theodore Bikel spent two weeks at Beit Warszawa. An American rabbinical student, Scott Perlo, served as a visiting rabbi there in the fall. The group also established "partner" arrangements with several Reform congregations in the U.S.

This year, for the first time, Chabad-Lubavitch sent full-time emissaries to Poland. On December 13, the deputy mayor of Warsaw, Andrzej Urbanski, together with Rabbi Yonah Metzger, Ashkenazi chief rabbi of Israel, participated in the first Chabad-sponsored public lighting of a Hanukkah menorah in the history of the Polish capital. Also taking part was Rabbi Michael Schudrich, who had just been named chief rabbi of Poland by the Union of Jewish Religious Communities. Schudrich, an Or-
thodox rabbi from the U.S., had a long history in Poland. He directed the Lauder Foundation in Poland in the 1990s, and for the past several years had served as rabbi of Warsaw and Lodz. The appointment as chief rabbi essentially formalized his role.

Several other Jewish groups operated in opposition to communities that were members of the union. Such bodies operated in Gdansk, Poznan, and Warsaw (where the breakaway community was founded by the former caretaker of the Jewish cemetery, after he was fired in 2002). In some cases these factions sharply criticized the established Orthodox communities and their leaders, including Rabbi Schudrich, and on occasion the rhetoric crossed the line of civility. It was often unclear to what extent religious differences, personality clashes, and/or financial motivations prompted the actions of the dissidents.

The Social-Cultural Association of Jews in Poland (TSKZ), a secular organization established in 1950 that had functioned throughout the communist era, also remained in existence, as did a number of other Jewish and pro-Jewish organizations around the country. Two of these, both in Kraków, were a small, independent Jewish student group called Cholent, and an association for Polish-Jewish dialogue, Gesher, made up of students from the Department of Jewish Studies of Kraków’s Jagiellonian University.

Kraków, in fact, despite the small size of its Jewish community—about 200 members—hosted two important events in December. That month, the community marked the 700th anniversary of Jewish life in the city. A ceremony and concert in the restored Tempel Synagogue drew local and national dignitaries, including the city’s archbishop, Cardinal Franciczek Macharski. Also, some 70 participants from 11 European countries, the U.S., and Israel came to Kraków on the occasion of the first pan-European conference for Jewish community volunteers, cosponsored by the JDC, the European Council of Jewish Communities, and the Polish Social Welfare Commission. Professionals and volunteers from each country presented information and conducted workshops about volunteer programs that helped the poor, the elderly, and children.

Numerous Jewish cultural, communal, and educational events took place around the country. In March, a Purim charity ball in Warsaw raised money for victims of terrorist attacks in Israel. It was hosted by the Israeli embassy and the Jewish Agency, and organized by local Jewish organizations with the assistance of the JDC and the Lauder Foundation. Several events took place that month to commemorate the forced emigration of 20,000 Jews from Poland during the “anti-Zionist” cam-
campaign by the communist government in 1968. In April, the first Warsaw International Jewish Motifs Film Festival took place, featuring more than 60 films from 20 countries. The Golden Phoenix grand prize went to Oren Rudavsky and Menachem Daum for *Hiding and Seeking*. Michal Nekanda-Trepka received the Warsaw Phoenix for the best Polish film, as well as an award from the Association of Playwrights and Composers, for his film, *The Last Witnesses*. A special award from the International Cultural Forum in Stockholm went to Vladimir Divinsky for *Once Upon a Time There Was Odessa*.

Also in April, the new Galicia Jewish Museum opened in Kraków. The museum was founded and run by British photographer Chris Schwarz and featured a permanent display of his photographs of Jewish sites in southern Poland. In June, a 200-page prospectus for the permanent exhibition of the planned Museum of the History of Polish Jews was issued in Warsaw. In addition, a major exhibition on local Jewish life and history opened in Częstochowa. Some 350 people who came from the city or traced their ancestry to it attended the opening events, which included the rededication of the restored Jewish cemetery and a three-day conference titled “Coexistence, Holocaust, Memory.” The exhibition, cosponsored by the city of Częstochowa and the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, moved to the Polish capital in October.

Several cities hosted festivals of Jewish culture during the year. In June, Wrocław had its sixth SIMCHA Jewish culture festival; the Galicia Festival displayed images of formerly Jewish towns in the area; and the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw held an exhibition of photographs from the family of Zalman Kaplan, who was the photographer for the town of Szczecznyn before World War II. The annual Jewish Cultural Festival in Kraków featured some 150 lectures, concerts, exhibitions, book-launches and other events.

In October, in honor of the 100th anniversary of the birth of Isaac Bashevis Singer, Warsaw hosted a culture festival called “Singer’s Warsaw.” Organized by the Shalom American-Polish-Israeli Foundation, the program featured some 40 events, including plays, movie screenings, exhibitions, literary meetings, recitals, concerts, and large outdoor shows. That same month also witnessed the seventh Warsaw Jewish Book Fair, with readings, book-signings, and sale displays accompanied by meetings with authors, film screenings, and workshops in singing, calligraphy, and paper cutouts. There was significant Jewish participation in the annual Festival of Four Cultures in Lodz, honoring the four ethnic communities that historically coexisted in the city—Polish, Jewish, German, and Russian.
There were a number efforts aimed at conserving and repairing Jewish cemeteries and other Jewish heritage sites, with funding coming from a variety of private and public sources. In May, the U.S. and Poland signed an agreement, negotiated by the U.S. Commission for the Preservation of America’s Heritage Abroad, to preserve Jewish cultural sites remaining from the Nazi occupation. The cemetery in the ski resort of Zakopane was refenced and cleaned up thanks to a donation from the U.S. ambassador to Slovakia, Ronald Weiser, and the efforts of the Foundation for Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland, established in 2001 by the World Jewish Restitution Organization and the Union of Jewish Communities in Poland. During the summer, about 45 American, Israeli, and Polish students spent three weeks cleaning up an overgrown Jewish cemetery and touring Jewish and other historic sites in Poland as part of Project Restore and Rebuild, a partnership between the Polish Union of Jewish Students (PUSZ), the Israeli branch of the World Union of Jewish Students, the Claims Conference, and the JDC.

There were several commemorative events related to the Holocaust. In January, low-key ceremonies at Auschwitz marked the 59th anniversary of the liberation of the notorious death camp, while plans went ahead for major ceremonies to be held in 2005 to mark the 60th anniversary. The Roman Catholic Church’s annual Days of Judaism in January featured a commemorative event in Poznan, where artist Janusz Marciniak (who is not Jewish) shaped 600 burning memorial candles into a huge Star of David and set it floating on the surface of the swimming pool now located in what had been Poznan’s synagogue. As the glowing Star of David floated on the water, some 600 people, most of them holding blue torch lights, crowded into the once-grandiose structure. Catholic officials and Warsaw’s Rabbi Schudrich gave speeches, followed by a concert by the Poznan University Choir reflecting the themes of hope, reconciliation, and peace. At the end of the ceremony, Poznan’s small Jewish community placed a commemorative plaque on the synagogue wall.

In April, President Kwasniewski attended the 60th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and met with visiting officials representing the European Jewish Congress. Also in April, some 7,000 people, mostly teenagers from a score of countries, took part in the annual March of the Living commemoration at Auschwitz. In June, President Kwasniewski was at the dedication of a $4-million memorial at the long-neglected site of the Belzec death camp in southeastern Poland, where the Nazis murdered 500,000 Jews. The striking memorial was sponsored and financed jointly by the Polish government and the American Jewish Committee, exemplifying what was called a “model of cooperation between a gov-
ernment agency and Jews from abroad.” That month it was announced that the ruins of gas chambers and crematoria at the former Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp complex would be preserved as a “warning” to future generations, and, at a government-sponsored international conference, Poland announced plans to open an international center for human-rights education in Oswiecim.

In July, Polish officials, the Israeli ambassador, and other dignitaries joined survivors to mark the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the former Nazi concentration camp at Majdanek. In August, Prime Minister Belka and other officials, along with hundreds of survivors and thousands of townspeople, participated in ceremonies in Lodz to mark the 60th anniversary of the liquidation of the Lodz Ghetto. A monument was inaugurated at the site of a former train station from which the Germans sent nearly 150,000 Jews to their deaths, plaques and markers were put up in the ghetto, and a guidebook to Jewish heritage and suffering in Lodz was published.

In September, the remains of 11 people believed to be Jews killed in the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto Uprising were buried at a ceremony in Warsaw’s Jewish cemetery. The remains had been discovered during renovation of a building in the one-time ghetto area. The remains of about ten other Holocaust victims, recently discovered in the town of Nadarzyn, were buried at the same time. In early October, ceremonies in Warsaw marked the 60th anniversary of the suppression of the Warsaw Uprising, which began August 1, 1944, pitting 23,000 poorly equipped Polish fighters (including some survivors of the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto Uprising) against thousands of crack Nazi troops. The battle left 200,000 dead and the city almost totally destroyed.

There were a variety of educational initiatives in Poland centering on the Holocaust and Polish-Jewish relations. Prominent among them were the activities sponsored by the Borderland Foundation, in the northeast town of Sejny, and the Forum for Dialogue among Nations, based in the southern city of Gliwice. Two of the forum’s initiatives were carried out jointly with the American Jewish Committee—a Polish-Jewish exchange program and a “next generation” program tied to the annual March of the Living—while others were the development of curricula on religious tolerance for Polish students; a program for Polish high school students to help maintain Jewish cemeteries; and a summer seminar for students of the Yiddish language. The forum also organized exchange programs between Polish and Israeli teachers and operated a Jewish Memory Project about the destroyed Jewish community of Gliwice.

In April, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
(OSCE) Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, in cooperation with the Judaica Foundation in Kraków, published a book of essays on the importance of teaching about the Holocaust. In June, the Polish government sponsored an international conference where it proposed to open an international center for human-rights education in Oświęcim, the town near the site where the Auschwitz camp was built. And in July, experts from several Israeli institutes for Holocaust remembrance attended a seminar on Auschwitz in the Collective Memory in Poland and Abroad, held at, and organized by, the Auschwitz Museum Educational Center.

More than half a million people visited Auschwitz, including dignitaries, school and tour groups, and individuals. Some 6,000–7,000 people took part in the annual March of the Living in April. In addition to foreign teenagers, they included members of the Polish-Israeli Friendship Society, Polish survivors of Auschwitz, and members of the Polish Union of Jewish Students. In August, hundreds of Roma (Gypsies) from all over Europe gathered at Auschwitz to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Roma Holocaust; at least 19,000 Roma were killed by the Nazis. In September, members of the English national soccer team, in Poland to play against the Polish team in nearby Katowice, visited Auschwitz after several team members requested that time be found in their schedule to do so.

In June, during an excavation of the foundations of the destroyed Great Synagogue in Oświęcim, archaeologists unearthed a trove of Jewish ritual objects buried since the Holocaust. And the Auschwitz Jewish Center, a place of prayer and study in the complex of a restored synagogue in Oświęcim, announced that the house next door to it, where the last Jew in town had lived until his death in 2000, would be turned into a museum of Jewish life.

The Simon Wiesenthal Center launched its Operation Last Chance initiative in Poland, as it did in other European countries (see above, pp. 460–61, 474), offering monetary rewards for people providing information leading to the capture of Nazi war criminals or collaborators. But the financial aspect of the initiative drew criticism from Jews and others, and one newspaper even refused to publish an ad for the campaign. In July, the Wiesenthal Center announced that it was launching inquiries into ten people as the result of calls received in response to the campaign.

Stanisław Ryniak, the first person imprisoned at Auschwitz, died in February at the age of 88. Ryniak was not Jewish, but was arrested, accused of being a member of the Polish resistance, and sent to Auschwitz
in June 1940. In March, the Rev. Stanislaw Musial, a Jesuit priest who was a Polish Catholic leader in interfaith dialogue, died in Kraków at the age of 65. Jacek Kuron, who led the struggle against Poland's communist leaders as a dissident in the 1970s and later became a popular government minister, died in June, aged 70. In August, the Nobel Prize-winning Polish poet Czeslaw Milosz died in Kraków at the age of 93. Milosz was close to Jews and Jewish causes from an early age, and some of his most eloquent and disturbing works dealt with Holocaust memory and the complex relations between Jewish and Catholic Poles. In November, Erna Rosenstein, a surrealist painter and poet whose works evoked her experience as a Jew in Nazi-occupied Poland, died in Warsaw at the age of 91.

In January, President Kwasniewski awarded outgoing Israeli ambassador Shevach Weiss the Great Cross of the Order of Merit, and named Joseph Malovany, the Israeli-born cantor of New York City's Fifth Avenue Synagogue, a commander of the Legion of Honor, Poland's equivalent of knighthood. In August, Prime Minister Belka awarded Eugene Ribakoff, president of the JDC, the Polish government's highest presidential honor, the Star Order ofMerit of the Republic of Poland, both in honor of the JDC's 90th anniversary and in recognition of the organization's contribution to Polish Jewry since World War I. Also in August, President Kwasniewski posthumously conferred a Polonia Restituta Commander's Cross With a Star on Henryk Slawik, who, during the war, saved 5,000 Jews in Hungary when he headed a committee aiding Polish refugees in that country. Arrested by the Nazis in 1944, he died in the Mauthausen concentration camp. In October, Israeli ambassador David Peleg honored two Poznan families as Righteous Gentiles for saving Jews during the Holocaust.

**Romania**

Romania joined NATO in April. It hosted a meeting of NATO defense ministers in October, and had more than 700 troops stationed in Iraq.

Romania hoped to join the EU in 2007, but remained one of the poorest EU candidates, beset by widespread crime, abuse of power, and corruption. Transparency International, a watchdog agency, listed Romania as the most corrupt of the EU's new and candidate members. A report adopted by the European Parliament in March said Romania faced "serious difficulties" in fulfilling the requirements of EU membership and warned that accession by 2007 would be impossible in the absence of eco-
nomic and political reforms. Specifically, it said, Romania had to fight corruption, end political interference in the judicial system, ensure freedom of the media, and curb police brutality.

Mindful of the need to conform to criteria for EU membership, Romania sought to make amends for the 2003 row over President Ion Iliescu's apparent denial that his nation had been involved in the Holocaust. In June, the education minister announced plans to teach about the Holocaust in high schools, saying that about 500 teachers had been trained in Holocaust education with the help of experts from Yad Vashem. In October, Romania marked its first official Holocaust Remembrance Day. The official date was October 9, but the ceremonies were postponed three days to avoid conflict with Shabbat. The two houses of Parliament staged a joint session to mark the occasion, at which President Iliescu admitted Romania's role in the Shoah: "We must not forget or minimize the darkest chapter of Romania's recent history, when Jews were the victims of the Holocaust," he said, adding, "Taking the blame for the past means that we not only exercise our honesty but prove our democratic convictions." He acknowledged that death trains, mass deportations, and pogroms took place in Romania during World War II, and that state-sponsored anti-Semitism had existed in Romania before the war.

Other commemorative events were held in more than 30 towns and cities. In addition, there were lectures, symposia, exhibitions, film screenings, and other events dealing with the Holocaust in Romania. In August, government officials, including Romania's former king, participated in ceremonies marking the 60th anniversary of the palace coup that overthrew the pro-Nazi regime of Marshal Ion Antonescu and led to Romania joining the Allies in August 1944.

In November, a 33-member international committee that had been set up in 2003—in the wake of Iliescu's controversial remarks—to study the Holocaust in Romania presented Iliescu with a 400-page report on its findings. The panel, headed by Elie Wiesel, reported that Romanian authorities were responsible for the deaths of between 280,000 and 380,000 Jews and more than 11,000 Roma (Gypsies). In addition, some 132,000 Jews in Hungarian-occupied northern Transylvania were killed. The commission recommended establishing a Holocaust museum in Romania. Upon receiving the report, Iliescu repeated that Romania took responsibility for the actions of its wartime leaders and pledged to help educate Romanians about the findings "so that such tragedies will never happen again."

During 2004, Corneliu Vadim Tudor—chairman of the ultranationalist Greater Romania Party and a man with a history of outspoken anti-
Semitism, Holocaust denial, and promotion of the memory of Marshal Antonescu—sought to demonstrate that he was a changed man by associating himself with Israel and Jewish causes. In January, ignoring protests by Israel and the Jewish community, Tudor dedicated a statue to slain Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin in the city of Brasov. “You cannot be a Christian and hate Jews,” he told a crowd of about 1,000 people. “They gave us the Bible.” But in Israel, Rabin’s children issued a statement saying, “The whole issue is a false communication spin, and we fully protest Mr. Vadim Tudor’s effort to use Yitzhak Rabin’s memory for his own political profit.”

In March, Tudor hired an Israeli company, Arad Communications, to run his campaign for the December presidential election. Company chief Eyal Arad, a former media adviser to Prime Minister Sharon, accepted the job despite protests in Israel and from Jewish groups. Arad said that Tudor had sincerely changed his views and that only Tudor had “the courage and the strength to change Romania.” The ADL, however, issued a statement saying it was “appalled” that “a prominent Israeli” had agreed to run Tudor’s campaign, “thereby giving credibility to Mr. Tudor and his party.” In May, Tudor led a delegation of 100 members of his party on a visit to Auschwitz, where he was quoted as saying that the memory of the Holocaust should be preserved, as should the memory of “other crimes against humanity.”

The new president elected in December to succeed Iliescu was not Tudor, but rather a centrist, Traian Basescu, who pledged to fight corruption and overhaul the government and the tax system. The parliamentary elections held the previous month brought to power a four-party centrist coalition headed by Prime Minister Calin Tariceanu and largely composed of young, Western-educated academics. The incoming foreign minister, Mihai Razvan Ungureanu, 36, a non-Jew, was a well-known scholar of Jewish studies and founder of the Center for Jewish Studies at A.I. Cuza University in Iasi, which he planned to continue to direct despite his new political post. Sworn in at the end of December, the new government pledged to implement tax reforms, fight corruption, and boost investment.

Just before leaving office, President Iliescu raised eyebrows when he awarded Tudor and another extreme nationalist politician, Gheorghe Buzatu, Romania’s highest honor, the Star of Romania. Elie Wiesel, who had received the same honor from Iliescu in 2002, was so disgusted that he returned his award. “I hope you will understand that I cannot belong to any group of which Vadim Tudor is a member,” Wiesel said.

Romania and Israel enjoyed close relations, partly due to the large
number of Israelis of Romanian origin. There were also numerous Romanian guest workers in Israel. In March, President Iliescu postponed an official visit to Israel because of security fears following Israel’s assassination of Hamas leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin. In April, a gala concert at the Romanian Atheneum in Bucharest marked Israel Independence Day.

JEWISH COMMUNITY

About 12,000 Jews were believed to live in Romania, just under half of them in Bucharest and the others scattered in dozens of communities around the country. Only a handful of these had more than a hundred members. In August, Chabad celebrated five years of activity in Bucharest, and on September 1, a ceremony took place dedicating a new Torah at the Chabad synagogue, Yeshua Tova. Israel’s former Sephardi chief rabbi, Mordechai Eliyahu, took part.

The Romanian Jewish community lost two of its most prominent personalities this year. Dr. Nicolae Cajal, the longtime president of the Federation of Romanian Jewish Communities (FEDROM) died in March at the age of 84. Cajal, FEDROM president since 1994, was also president of the Romanian Medical Sciences Academy and vice president of the Romanian Academy of Sciences. FEDROM director-general Iulian Sorin took over as interim president, serving in the role of community lay leader. Rabbi Ernest Neumann, who had served for many years as rabbi of Timisoara, died in April.

Supported by the JDC, FEDROM, and the Jewish Federation of Kansas City, a score of clubs for middle generation (aged 35–65) Jews operated around the country, part of a concerted policy to get members of this group more involved in communal life. In Iasi, there was a particularly well-attended program of lectures on Jewish topics, launches for books by Jewish authors, and communal celebrations of Jewish holidays. In Baia Mare, actress Maia Morgenstern, who played Mary in Mel Gibson’s film The Passion of the Christ, drew a crowd when she discussed her career at an event for a middle-generation club. In June, middle-generation leaders from many communities took part in a seminar in Radauti. Eleven OTER clubs, for Jewish youth, were also active, organizing a number of activities and maintaining a Web site.

In October, about 40 Romanian Jewish communities staged the first “Mitzvah Days,” part of an international project that emerged from a meeting of social welfare directors from European Jewish communities
held earlier in the year in Budapest. Aimed at encouraging volunteerism, Mitzvah Days organized volunteers to visit elderly, sick, and lonely people at their homes, hospitals, old-age homes, seniors clubs, and day-care centers, and also to establish phone contact with welfare recipients who lived isolated in villages or in the countryside.

Many educational and cultural events took place throughout the year. At the end of March, a Romanian Cultural Institute was inaugurated in Tel Aviv. For the occasion, Romania’s State Yiddish Theater troupe toured Israel for the first time. In May and June, Israel’s Hacameri Theater troupe performed Hanoch Levin’s *Requiem* at the International Theater Festival in Sibiu and at the National Theater in Bucharest (President Iliescu was in the audience). In May, a seminar on teaching the Holocaust in Romania was held at the Goren-Goldstein Center of the University of Bucharest. Participants came from Romania, Israel, the Czech Republic, and Hungary. In September, Romania took part in the European Day of Jewish Culture. Synagogues around the country opened their doors to visitors, as did the Jewish museums in Bucharest, Iasi, and Bacau. In October, the third Avram Goldfaden International Theater Festival took place in Iasi, featuring works by Jewish authors or dealing with Jewish topics. In December, the State Theater in Oradea hosted the premiere of *Shoah: Primo Levi’s Version*, an adaptation of interviews with Levi, directed by Mihai Maniutiu.

In February, the Romanian-born Israeli scholar of Jewish mysticism Moshe Idel was awarded an honorary doctorate from the University of Bucharest. In March, President Iliescu awarded Rabbi Menachem Hacohen the Order of Cultural Merit of Officer Rank. Painter Alma Redlinger held a retrospective exhibition to mark her 80th birthday, and also was awarded a state medal. In September, Israeli author Amos Oz received the Ovidius Prize of the International Literature Days and Nights Festival, organized by the Romanian Writers’ Union.

**Serbia and Montenegro**

Ten years after the Dayton Agreement that ended the war in Bosnia and five years after the NATO bombing campaign against Serbia proper, the country remained beset by a host of economic, social, and political woes. These included a low standard of living, unemployment, corruption, crime, and bitter political infighting. Throughout the year, former Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic remained on trial at The Hague for war crimes.
The worst interethnic violence in several years flared in Kosovo in March, prompting NATO to send in troops. Clashes between Serbs and Albanians in more than ten towns left 22 dead and 500 injured, and a number of Serb homes and religious buildings were damaged or destroyed. In addition, the Hungarian minority in multiethnic Vojvodina province raised an alarm over Serb extremist violence against them. In July, the New York-based Hungarian Human Rights Foundation (HHRF) issued a report stating that assaults on non-Serbs, threats against ethnic Hungarian leaders, desecration of cemeteries, vandalism, and the proliferation of racist, xenophobic, and anti-Semitic graffiti were becoming “a near-daily occurrence” in Vojvodina.

That month, U.S. congressman Tom Lantos (D., Cal.) sent a letter to Serbian prime minister Vojislav Kostunica calling for “vigorous and substantive action to insure the safety and security” of the ethnic Hungarian community in Vojvodina and stating that he was “deeply troubled by the alarming escalation of anti-Hungarian, anti-Semitic, and anti-Roma violence.” In September, Hungarian foreign minister Laszlo Kovacs called on EU foreign ministers to express concern over “atrocities against non-Serb communities in Vojvodina.” He provided no examples, and Serbian officials said that the incidents had been exaggerated.

About 3,200 Jews lived in Serbia, about 2,000 of them in Belgrade and the rest in nine smaller communities. Few if any Jews lived in Montenegro. Serbian Jews were largely secular and the vast majority was intermarried, but the community’s rabbi, Yitzhak Asiel, said there appeared to be a renewed interest in religious practice. Services were held at Belgrade’s one synagogue on Friday nights, Saturdays, and holidays. Up to 300 people attended holiday services, and as many as 150 on Shabbat. Some 200 children attended Hebrew school, and according to Rabbi Asiel, who was also the community’s ritual slaughterer, more people were attempting to keep kosher.

A high-level delegation from the World Jewish Congress visited Belgrade in October and met with Serbian political leaders as well as the Jewish community. As a result of the discussions, Serbia and Montenegro signed a World Jewish Congress petition for a UN resolution condemning anti-Semitism. Foreign Minister Vuk Draskovic pledged to fight anti-Semitism. He described it as “part of terrorism, and there must be no double standards in dealing with terrorists.” The restitution of Jewish communal property seized during or after the Holocaust was also raised at the meetings.

Nonetheless, there were warnings during the year of increasing anti-
Semitism. In January, the editors of a Montenegrin literary periodical wrote to the public prosecutor of Montenegro charging that “a wave of anti-Semitism has spread over Montenegro” emanating from neo-Nazi, fascist, and extreme nationalist media. It noted two newspapers in particular, Dan and Istok, the latter having recently published a feature on the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, presenting that anti-Semitic forgery as factual. Also in January, a Holocaust monument in Novi Sad was vandalized. The Federation of Jewish Communities of Serbia and Montenegro, which had a commission that monitored anti-Semitic incidents, held a meeting in March to discuss the situation.

That month, Holocaust survivor Aca Singer was reelected president of the federation. The JDC, which provided substantial support for communal operations, sent a letter during the year to all Jewish communities in the country advocating greater transparency and democratic procedures. At Passover, the JDC sponsored a seder for the few Jews remaining in Kosovo as well as for Jewish soldiers stationed in the restive province.

In July, Mira Poljakovic, president of the Jewish community in Subotica—the country’s third largest community with about 200 members—stepped down after receiving death threats. It was not clear who made these threats, but in 2001, Poljakovic, a well-known lawyer, had been attacked twice and beaten up, apparently for her activities in opposition to Milosevic. The Subotica community, in fact, was split between supporters and opponents of Poljakovic. The opposing faction organized its own association, called Shalom, which sponsored various activities, including a Passover seder held at Palic, a park outside of town, and a small Shabbat service in Sombor, gathering the first minyan there in years (fewer than 40 Jews live in Sombor). Organizers said they would hold similar Shabbat events in other tiny communities. At a meeting of the federation executive board in December, Shalom was granted subsidiary membership status.

Hanukkah was celebrated around the country with great enthusiasm. In an event initiated by the JDC, a torch was brought from one Jewish community to the next, from north to south throughout the country starting in Subotica, on the Hungarian border, to Novi Sad and Zrenjanin, and finally to Belgrade. At each stop, there was celebration with food, music, performances, and other events. A Jewish singing group from Bulgaria performed traditional Jewish songs.

There were many cultural activities throughout the year, as detailed in the federation’s monthly newsletter, Bilten. In June, Belgrade, for the first
time, hosted Esperansa, a major festival of Sephardi culture that takes place every two years. Events included exhibitions, concerts, performances, lectures, panel discussions, and workshops on Ladino and on Sephardi cuisine. More than 200 participants came from Jewish communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Macedonia, Romania, Slovenia, Serbia and Montenegro, and Turkey, as well as from Israel, Spain, France, Belgium, and the U.S. In September, events around the country marked the annual European Day of Jewish Culture. They included art exhibitions, bus tours of Jewish sites in Belgrade and Zemun, concerts, folk dancing, receptions, an exhibition of Purim masks, lectures on Jewish education and on Theodore Herzl, visits to synagogues, and klezmer music concerts. The Federation of Jewish Communities described the day as “remarkable,” saying that nearly 2,700 visitors attended.

Through the year, work continued on a series of volumes called We Survived, which included the memoirs of dozens of Jews from all of the former Yugoslavia recounting how they survived the Shoah. In October, Serbia signed an agreement with the U.S. Commission for the Preservation of America’s Heritage Abroad under which it committed itself to preserve and protect sites of Jewish cultural heritage.

In the summer and fall, a major clean-up operation took place at the historic Jewish cemetery in Nis, thus resolving a crisis that had attracted national and international media attention. The cemetery, abandoned after World War II, had become the site of a Roma (Gypsy) settlement. Some of the 120 homes used tombstones for building material, and much of the cemetery was used as a dump for rubbish and human waste. The summer clean-up took place in the open part of the cemetery, where the Roma did not live and where hundreds of tombstones still stood. It was organized by the JDC, funded by a donation of $18,000 from Dr. Alfred Bader of Milwaukee (see above, pp. 457, 468), who also funded other non-sectarian aid projects in Serbia. Paul Polansky, a Roma rights activist, was enlisted to oversee the project, employing workers from the Roma community living on the site. In September, Jasna Ciric, president of the tiny Jewish community in Nis, negotiated an agreement whereby the Serbian army sent 30 soldiers to work alongside the local Roma to clean up the area. In addition, the Nis municipality, the formal owner of the cemetery, agreed to carry out an extensive drainage project aimed at resolving serious sanitation problems surrounding the Roma settlement, and to provide a gate and fence. The synagogue in the town was also undergoing restoration.
Slovakia

In April, Ivan Gasparovic, leader of the Movement for Democracy (HZD), won election as Slovakia’s new president, replacing Rudolf Schuster. He took office in June, just six weeks after Slovakia joined the EU. In order to bring its laws into conformity with EU standards, the parliament passed a law making it illegal to discriminate against anyone on the grounds of gender, sexual orientation, religion, nationality, ethnicity, or disability.

Concern over neo-Nazi, skinhead, and right-wing extremist activity was voiced throughout the year. The League Against Racism, which launched a nationwide antiracism campaign in January, estimated that there were about 5,000 active neo-Nazis in Slovakia and that they committed “hundreds” of attacks each year, most of them against Roma. Also in January, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance issued a report saying that racial violence against Slovak Roma included “serious acts of police brutality.” In late February, demonstrations by Roma in eastern Slovakia protesting cuts in welfare benefits escalated into civil unrest, looting, and clashes with police. The government deployed 1,000 troops to help police maintain order, and there were a number of arrests and injuries.

In May, Slovak public television canceled the broadcast of a documentary that dealt with an anti-Jewish pogrom that took place in the Slovak town of Topolcany in September 1945. It said that the cancellation was ordered because one of the people interviewed had made sharply anti-Semitic and anti-Roma statements. The Slovak Jewish community, however, protested the cancellation, suggesting that some political elements did not want the truth of the postwar pogrom to come out. After considerable controversy and debate, the documentary was broadcast a week later, along with a panel discussion of issues surrounding it.

In March, about 200 people gathered in Bratislava to mark the 65th anniversary of the establishment of the Nazi-allied independent Slovak Republic in 1939 and honor its leader, nationalist priest Father Jozef Tiso, who was executed after World War II as a war criminal. The group laid flowers and candles at Tiso’s grave. In October, vandals painted swastikas on a World War II monument in northeastern Slovakia.

In January, President Schuster joined hundreds of other Slovaks at the annual commemoration of a Nazi massacre of 146 people in two Slovak villages. Just a few days earlier, 86-year-old Ladislav Niznansky was arrested in Munich and put under investigation for his role in that massacre.
and also in the firing-squad slaying of 18 Jews in another Slovak village. Formally charged with 164 counts of murder in March, he was accused of having headed the Slovak section of a Nazi unit code-named Edelweiss that hunted Slovak resistance fighters; a court in the former Czechoslovakia had tried him in absentia and sentenced him to death in 1962. Niznansky’s trial started in Munich in September. The indictment stated that he “ordered that no living soul be allowed to escape and that anyone who tried to flee be shot,” and that he personally shot at least 20 people. Niznansky pleaded innocent. In October, the court released him from custody, stating that witness testimony had not conclusively confirmed his participation in the massacres.

In June, a monument to Slovak Jews deported to Nazi death camps was erected in the town of Zilina. In March, a multimedia exhibition opened at the Slovak National Museum in Bratislava titled “Will We Leave?” Telling the stories of Jewish refugees trying to flee the Nazis, the exhibit was organized by the Jewish Museum of Vienna, the Culture Department of the city of Salzburg, the Austrian Culture Forum in Bratislava, and the Slovak Jewish Culture Museum. In August, impressive ceremonies marked the 60th anniversary of the Slovak national uprising against the Nazis. And in November, a monument honoring Raoul Wallenberg was unveiled in Bratislava.

There were a number of visits by government leaders to and from the Middle East. In January, President Schuster visited Egypt, where he and Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak agreed that a cessation of violence on all sides was a precondition for a renewed peace process between Israel and the Palestinians. In August, Defense Minister Juraj Liska visited the more than 100 Slovak troops stationed in Iraq, and also met with Iraq’s defense minister. In September, the speaker of Israel’s Knesset, Reuven Rivlin, visited Slovakia. Prime Minister Mikulas Dzurinda told him that Israel was entitled to protect its citizens by building its controversial security barrier. Rivlin also met with the new president, Gasparovic, and also participated in ceremonies honoring 12 Slovak families and individuals as Righteous Gentiles for having saved Jews during the Holocaust.

Slovakia’s known Jews numbered about 3,000, about 750 of them registered with the community in the capital city of Bratislava. Baruch Myers, an American-born Chabad adherent, served as community rabbi, leading regular services. Chabad also ran a kindergarten that admitted only children who were Jewish according to Halakhah, traditional Jewish law. Much of the community was nonobservant, and some members were dissatisfied with what they saw as Myers’s rigidity.
In April, the Bratislava Museum of Jewish Culture appeared to have won a reprieve from eviction when city authorities extended its lease until the end of 2004. The museum, a branch of the state-run Slovak National Museum, still faced possible eviction if the Bratislava city government went ahead with plans to sell the building in which it was housed. Museum directors and Jewish leaders launched a petition calling on the mayor to block the sale, saying eviction would “mean the end of the museum.” In cooperation with the Ministry of Culture, the museum launched a Jewish Heritage Center to provide information about Jewish sites in Slovakia.

The government allocated substantial funding toward the restoration of synagogues in Levice, Malacky, Banska Stiavnica, and Spisske Podhradie. During the year, a new exhibition on the Holocaust was installed at the recently restored synagogue in Nitra. In September, an exhibition of photographs of Auschwitz opened at the former synagogue in Zilina. The journal Architekura & Urbanizmus (Architecture and Town-Planning Theory) devoted a double issue to Slovakian synagogue architecture, history, and preservation.

Ruth Ellen Gruber
In 2004, the Russian Federation continued to move in an authoritarian direction and away from democratization and integration with the West. Beset with a serious problem of terrorism, the Kremlin sought to create single-party hegemony and state-controlled capitalism, with little room for economic freedom. There were also indications that the government was testing out a more independent and assertive foreign policy not necessarily to the liking of the U.S.

The December 2003 parliamentary election was a huge victory for President Vladimir Putin, as his party, United Russia, won about 40 percent of the seats in the Duma (lower house of parliament), nationalist parties 20 percent, and the Communists 13 percent. The liberal, Western-oriented parties that criticized the government’s rollback of post-Soviet democratic freedoms seemed unable to arouse the indignation of the public, and were left with virtually no representation.

Putin’s reelection to a second four-year term as president in March 2004 was a foregone conclusion. While there was no question that his overwhelming victory in the first round testified to his genuine popularity, the fact remained that much of the media reporting the election campaign was government controlled, and leaders of the democratic opposition were too demoralized even to run against him. Having promised to build a “dictatorship of the law” when first elected in 2000, Putin took an increasingly authoritarian path after his reelection.

One manifestation of this was his reaction to the acts of terror committed, apparently, by Chechen separatists. Three of the year’s deadliest terror acts took place over a period of ten days in late August and early September: the hostage-taking at a school in the southern town of Beslan left nearly 350 dead; explosions on board two civilian airplanes killed 93; and a bomb blast at a Moscow subway station left at least 12 dead. Showing no willingness to seek a peaceful solution to the seemingly intractable conflict in Chechnya, Putin used the terrorist threat to justify a sweeping constitutional reform, ending the direct election of provincial governors and turning them into Kremlin appointees.

The Kremlin tightened the screws on Yukos, the giant oil company, and
on its founder and former head, Mikhail Khodorkovsky, of Jewish descent, who had been imprisoned since the fall of 2003 pending trial on Kremlin-orchestrated tax-fraud charges. Since the company's huge tax bill could not be paid, the government seized control of Yukos assets, and, in a scheme widely believed to have been designed by the Kremlin, its main production subsidiary was sold in the first days of 2005 at auction for half its estimated value to a previously unknown company. Within a few days, that firm transferred ownership to the state-owned oil company Rosneft.

This blatant expropriation of the country's largest oil company caused jitters among foreign investors at a time when Russia's phenomenal economic growth showed signs of sluggishness, despite record high oil prices. The Yukos affair and other high-profile cases of businesses being targeted by the tax authorities and prosecutors—which looked suspiciously like extortion attempts—soured the business climate. The flow of domestic capital out of the country during 2004 was the highest since Putin took office.

Russian courts continued to show a lack of independence, and the law-enforcement agencies remained targets for corruption charges. While some of the larger national print media retained a level of independence that enabled them to criticize the Kremlin, newspapers in the provinces and nearly all of the national television stations were controlled by the authorities, either directly or indirectly. Late in the year, Freedom House, in its "freedom index" ranking of countries, downgraded Russia to "not free," reflecting the continued erosion of political rights and civil liberties there.

Following his reelection, Putin named Mikhail Fradkov, a previously little known bureaucrat of Jewish descent, as prime minister. The appointment triggered ambivalent feelings within the Jewish community. While some feared that any failure by Fradkov could result in increased anti-Semitism, others believed that the appointment signaled that ethnic background was no longer an obstacle for appointment to high public office. Fradkov, who was afterwards found to have had longstanding ties to the KGB, seemed content to play a bureaucratic role, and maintained a low public profile. Weeks after his appointment, he appeared in public at a nationally televised Russian Orthodox religious celebration, holding a candle and crossing himself. Most probably Fradkov did this to dispel talk about his alleged earlier connection to the Jewish community, which some Jewish leaders claimed to know about.

Despite the economic warning signs, Russia continued to benefit from
high oil prices. Salaries grew at an annual rate of 13 percent (after inflation) in the first three quarters of 2004. Consumer lending by Russian banks, which had risen by a multiple of 17 since 2000, doubled again in 2004. After years of stagnation, the number of small businesses in Russia rose by 10 percent this year, and direct foreign investment in the first half of 2004 grew by 35 percent. Russia continued to make the list of the most attractive countries for foreign investment, especially for retail expansion of Western businesses. In November, Fitch joined Moody’s in raising Russia’s credit rating to investment grade. Yet there had been no meaningful economic restructuring, and some analysts predicted that this would cost Russia dearly should oil prices drop.

As demonstrated by his landslide reelection, Putin remained very popular despite all the political, social, and economic problems. To some observers this fact demonstrated the weak democratic instincts of the Russian people, while others suggested that the nation quite reasonably admired his authoritarian approach as likely to maintain order, without reverting to the harsh repression of the past. In spite of the troubling trends, both the U.S. and the European Union remained fully engaged with the Putin government. For the Americans, Russia constituted an important ally in the global war on terror. As for the EU, access to Russian oil and gas made economic and political cooperation vital.

Late 2003 and 2004 brought drastic changes to a number of other FSU countries. In both Georgia and Ukraine, new leaders came to power after mass demonstrations protesting fraudulent elections. The new presidents pledged to address the difficult challenges of turning their nations into more transparent and predictable democracies with market economies, and developing respect for basic civil liberties such as freedom of speech and religion. In both cases, President Putin showed considerable irritation at the triumph of Western-oriented elements over political forces seen as closer to Russia.

In Georgia, the “rose revolution” of November and December 2003 forced the resignation of longtime president Eduard Shevardnadze, whose proclaimed reelection was clearly fixed, and his replacement by the U.S.-educated Mikhail Saakashvili. While most Georgian Jews had emigrated since the collapse of the Soviet Union, when the country had plunged into civil war and economic chaos, the small remaining Jewish community (estimated at less than 5,000) welcomed Saakashvili’s victory and his subsequent efforts to democratize Georgia.

The presidential election in Ukraine, held in November 2004, was tightly contested. The candidate of the authorities in Kiev and the favorite
of the Kremlin was Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich, and he was backed largely by the Russian-speaking and highly industrialized east and south of the country. His opponent was Viktor Yushchenko, who, campaigning as both a Ukrainian nationalist and a European-style liberal, drew considerable support from voters in central and western Ukraine. The country's 95,000-strong Jewish community was also split, a majority apparently siding with the pro-Russian Yanukovich out of fear of the anti-Semitism associated with some radical nationalist figures backing Yushchenko, and the candidate's seeming reluctance early in the year to distance himself from them (see below, p. 507).

But Yushchenko proved sensitive to Jewish concerns, and made several statements in support of ethnic coexistence and freedom of religion. At the height of the election crisis in December, when masses of people gathered in Kiev to protest the tainted "election" of Yanukovich that had been announced by the authorities, Yushchenko attended a Hanukkah celebration in a Kiev synagogue, becoming the first important Ukrainian politician to visit a Jewish house of worship. By the time the country's "orange revolution" succeeded in installing Yushchenko in office in late December, Jewish fears were largely alleviated and his presidency was welcomed even by many Jewish leaders who had voted against him.

Belarus stood out as an exception to the democratizing tendency. President Alexander Lukashenko continued to exercise virtually complete authority, driving his country into further isolation from the rest of the region, including Russia. In October, deeply flawed parliamentary elections were followed by a national referendum that authorized Lukashenko, whose current term would expire in 2006, to serve an unlimited number of additional terms. Lukashenko was able to rule in this way because of the overall social tranquility in the country. While the press was strictly regulated, major religious faiths, including the Jewish minority, enjoyed considerable freedom so long as they avoided commenting on political matters.

Three of the former Soviet republics in Europe—Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia—became members of the European Union on May 1. Jews living in the three countries were divided in their assessment of their new status. While many welcomed the enhanced ease of travel across Europe and the new possibilities for employment abroad, others feared that the changes in economic policy instituted in order to gain entry into the EU could hurt the large number of elderly Jews in the Baltic states, who relied almost entirely on government assistance.

Among the states of Central Asia, Uzbekistan showed signs of grow-
ing instability as President Islam Karimov found himself under fire from two directions. First, there was the ongoing campaign of terrorism conducted by militant Islamists. On March 29, bomb blasts near a crowded outdoor market in Tashkent's old city killed at least four people and injured 70. Then, on August 4, suicide bombers attacked the Tashkent embassies of the U.S. and Israel, killing several policemen. At the same time, the president's iron-fisted control over the country, which he justified as the only way to ensure stability, elicited increasing criticism and even indications of civic unrest, suggesting that the nation's surface placidity might be deceiving.

In Kazakhstan, meanwhile, President Nursultan Nazarbayev oversaw an oil-fueled economic upturn. He also arranged to have his supporters win a comfortable parliamentary majority in October elections that were widely criticized as fraudulent. Nazarbayev continued to play a visible role in the region as patron of a dialogue between moderate Islam and other faiths, including Judaism.

**Israel and the Middle East**

Russian-Israeli relations remained generally positive, although certain complications developed in the second half of the year.

In early 2004, Russia earned Israel's praise when it sided with the U.S., EU members, and dozens of other nations in opposing the hearings on the legality of Israel's West Bank security barrier that took place at the International Court of Justice in The Hague. Israel, for its part, on several occasions expressed understanding of Russia's fight against Chechen separatist guerrillas, apparently in the hope that, in return, Moscow might abandon its largely pro-Palestinian stance. Especially in the wake of the attack on the school in Beslan at the beginning of September (see above), there was considerable hope that Moscow would show greater understanding for Israel's situation.

Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov visited Israel days after the Beslan tragedy. He told reporters that contacts were already under way between the security forces of the two countries and thanked Israel for its help, but stopped short of agreeing with Israeli leaders that they shared a common antiterror agenda with the Russians. According to Lavrov, the Palestinians were legitimate resisters against Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, while the Muslim separatist cause based in Chechnya was completely illegitimate.

Russia, a member of the diplomatic "Quartet" that was pushing the
“road map” peace plan, was also at pains to make clear that it would not neglect the Arab world. As an apparent counterweight to U.S. influence in the Middle East, Russia—following the example of the old Soviet Union—worked to develop its own regional ties there, paying special attention to Syria, Turkey, and Iran. News of a projected billion-dollar arms sale to Syria, expected to include Iskandar-E (SS-26) surface-to-surface missiles and Igla (SA-18) antiaircraft rockets, was the latest sign of a major shift in Russia’s Middle East policy that some experts feared might shake regional stability. Viewed in the context of Russia’s nuclear cooperation with Tehran, already in place for a decade, there was cause for alarm in the U.S. and in Israel, which felt itself directly threatened. Some ascribed Moscow’s new aggressiveness in the area to the war in Iraq, which had cost Russia its Middle East foothold, formerly provided by Saddam Hussein.

In Minsk, Belarus, the Israeli embassy was reopened in late 2004, a year after it was closed for budgetary reasons. The closure had troubled Belarusian Jews, whose leaders argued that it could damage diplomatic relations between the two countries.

Anti-Semitism and Extremism

Russian Federation

Hate crimes caused mounting concern in Russia in 2004. Organizations that monitored the situation noted an increase in the number of ethnically and racially motivated attacks and in the number of hate groups. Although Jewish and human-rights organizations acknowledged some improvement in the response of government and law-enforcement agencies, and noted the helpful condemnations of such activities by President Putin, the general tendency of previous years persisted—to downplay or altogether deny the problem. In fact, Jewish organizations decided not to go public after several incidents, apparently for fear of alienating the authorities on whose goodwill they relied for the conduct of their day-to-day activities.

The strength of anti-Jewish feeling in the country made this reluctance to speak out understandable. According to surveys conducted by the Expertise Foundation in the first half of 2004, over 42 percent of Russians agreed that it was necessary “to limit the influence of Jews in governmental bodies, politics, business, judicial and educational systems and in
the sphere of entertainment," while another 23 percent were unsure about the matter. Furthermore, 28 percent supported the idea of "limiting the area of Jewish residence on the territory of the Russian Federation."

The Coordination Forum for Countering Anti-Semitism, a coalition of groups that monitor and combat anti-Semitism around the world, brought together by the Israeli government, listed two of the FSU republics, Russia and Ukraine, third and fourth on its list of countries with the largest number of anti-Semitic incidents in 2004. Combined, the two contributed almost one-third of all the incidents recorded worldwide, 99 out of 282—55 in Russia and 44 in Ukraine. Only rarely were the perpetrators apprehended.

While there were very few violent physical attacks on Jews in Russia in 2004, a large number were perpetrated against other minorities. According to human-rights activists, there were 44 racist murders committed in 2004 in Russia. Such attacks were especially frequent in Moscow, St. Petersburg, and the central Russian city of Voronezh, and in most cases the victims were natives of the southern parts of Russia and the FSU, or foreign nationals from African and Asian countries. Human-rights groups blamed most of these crimes on neo-Nazi skinhead gangs, whose collective membership was estimated at anywhere between 15,000 and 50,000 in all of Russia. Police, however, generally attributed the crimes to hooligans, and tended to deny the existence of racial motivations. A few attacks against Jewish targets in the south of Russia were blamed on radical Islamists.

A particularly heinous crime was the murder, in June, in St. Petersburg, of Nikolai Girenko, a researcher on extremist groups. Girenko, who was not Jewish, served as an expert witness in several cases involving neo-Nazis. The killers, never identified, were assumed to be extreme right-wing nationalists.

The most shocking killing of a Jew during the year was probably unrelated to anti-Semitism. On March 5, 29-year-old Zaur Gilalov, a successful businessman and philanthropist from the Caucasus, and head of the World Congress of Mountain Jews, was shot to death in Moscow while shopping for his upcoming wedding. Knowledgeable observers, pointing out that his father had also been gunned down, suspected that this was a contract murder related to the victim's business operations, or a family vendetta.

Two violent attacks on Jews occurred within the span of one week, both in or near Moscow's Marina Roscha, an area densely populated by Orthodox Jews and home to the city's largest Jewish facility, the Marina
Roscha synagogue and community center. On December 16, a Jew from southern Russia who was a member of Marina Roscha was stabbed on a tram and sustained a serious lung injury. And on December 23, an Orthodox Jew from Israel was beaten up by three young men not far from the synagogue. Marina Roscha had been the scene of earlier anti-Semitic attacks over the years, although most had not been reported. In yet another incident earlier that same month in the same neighborhood, a driver employed by the Jewish community, an Azeri Muslim, was stopped by a traffic policeman who pushed the driver and uttered anti-Semitic slurs, apparently after noticing a menorah display on top of the car. In light of these events, the Federation of Jewish Communities of Russia, which ran the Marina Roscha facility, considered the creation of a special security unit in the neighborhood.

A brief rundown of other anti-Semitic incidents during the year gives a sense of the situation. On January 6, a group of teenagers shattered the windows at the Or Hadash Synagogue in Omsk, Siberia. On March 5, a bomb exploded near the Mekor Haim Center in Moscow, also known as the Steinsaltz Institute; no one was injured. Also in March, windows were shattered in two separate incidents at a Jewish welfare center in Tula, in Central Russia, and at the only kosher restaurant in St. Petersburg. A gang of intoxicated neo-Nazi skinheads broke into the Jewish community center in Ulyanovsk, in the Volga region, on April 22, shattering several windows and tearing off Israeli flags that were on display. The attackers managed to escape before the police arrived. On May 19, vandals destroyed a menorah displayed in front of the Volgograd synagogue. Three days later, Molotov cocktails were thrown at a synagogue in Tyumen, Siberia. On June 30, an explosive device found near the entrance to the Choral Synagogue in St. Petersburg was defused before it went off. On August 10, attackers threw stones at a synagogue in Kostroma. Some 40 skinheads armed with iron rods and metal chains attempted to attack a synagogue in Penza in November, but were dispersed by police.

There were many desecrations of Jewish cemeteries. The most serious incident took place in St. Petersburg on December 17, when more than 100 tombstones were vandalized—about 50 of them badly damaged—in the Jewish section of a local cemetery. In the southern city of Astrakhan, four separate attacks on the Jewish cemetery were reported between January and March. In the wake of the St. Petersburg outrage, one of Russia’s chief rabbis, Berel Lazar, urged authorities to set up a federal program to protect the cemeteries of the different faiths.
Human-rights investigators reported an increase in the number of anti-Semitic and neo-Nazi books, periodicals, and brochures published in Russia during the year. Dozens of newspapers, primarily outside the big cities, printed anti-Semitic articles, and many extreme nationalist Web sites continued to preach the hatred of Jews. In December, the Moscow Bureau on Human Rights called for a probe of two recently published books containing anti-Semitic propaganda that were freely sold in Russia, and were even available in a bookstore in the Russian parliament. The books, *Zionism as a Source of Fascism* and *The Time to Be a Russian*, violated Russian anti-hate legislation and propagated neo-Nazism, according to the bureau.

Since Putin became president in 2000, prosecutors opened a steadily increasing number of cases under Article 282 of the Russian Criminal Code prohibiting the incitement of ethnic and religious hatred. Putin reinforced the regime’s commitment to fight such hatred in October 2004, with a call for society to unite with the government in a struggle against xenophobia. One major milestone in dealing with hate crimes was attained in March, the country’s first-ever guilty verdict for a racially motivated murder: three skinheads were convicted of killing an Azerbaijani man. But this result was an exception—few of the cases that were initiated reached court, and, if they did, a suspended sentence was the usual outcome.

Some civil cases ended with closure of the offending media outlets. In Novosibirsk, a court shut down the anti-Semitic *Russkaya Sibir* newspaper for fomenting ethnic strife. A court in Ekaterinburg ordered the paper *Russkaya Obshchina Ekaterinburga* to cease publication since it had ignored multiple warnings from the Ministry of the Press to stop publishing anti-Semitic articles, including materials from the infamous *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. In December, a court in Moscow annulled the mild one-year suspended sentence handed down a month earlier in the case of Viktor Korchagin, a publisher of anti-Semitic works, opening up the possibility of a new criminal case against him. Korchagin had gained particular notoriety for publishing a Russian edition of Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*. But there were many similar cases that the courts dismissed, while leaving others to drag on for years with no resolution.

In a move that seemed to contradict at least the spirit of President Putin’s publicly stated opposition to racism and anti-Semitism, the Russian government in June eliminated a program aimed at promoting ethnic and religious tolerance, “Forming Tolerant Consciousness and Preventing Extremism in Russian Society.” Originally adopted in 2000
and scheduled to conclude in 2005, it was aborted a year early, ostensibly due to budgetary considerations.

As in previous years, there were cases of anti-Semitic remarks by high-level politicians, both Russian nationalists and leftists. Nikolai Kondratenko, a prominent Communist leader in the upper house of parliament known for his anti-Semitism, gave a speech in Beirut in June where he spoke of “Zionists” committing “genocide” against Russia, and called for Russians and Muslims to unite against a worldwide Jewish conspiracy. His remarks were widely reprinted. Vladimir Zhirinovsky, a member of the Duma, the lower house of parliament, and head of the nationalist Liberal Democratic Party of Russia, spoke on the floor of the Duma in August in opposition to a moment of silence in honor of Holocaust Remembrance Day, calling the commemoration “unacceptable.”

UKRAINE

On January 28, a judge in Kiev ordered the closing of the opposition newspaper Silski Visti after finding it guilty of inciting ethnic strife with an article about Jews. The piece in question, “Jews in Ukraine Today: Reality without Myths,” was laced with anti-Semitic slurs, describing Jews as a privileged minority in Ukraine that ran the country by controlling its media, finances, and economy. It even went so far as to accuse Jews of “organizing” the tragic 1932–33 famine in Ukraine to take “revenge” on millions of Ukrainians. The article claimed that the Soviet secret police had been almost entirely Jewish and run by “leaders of Zionism.” Even more bizarre was the allegation that the Nazi invasion of Ukraine was assisted by a 400,000-strong “horde of Jewish SS men.”

The court ruling became entangled in partisan Ukrainian politics, as many who opposed the government of President Leonid Kuchma—including liberals and moderate nationalists—accused Kuchma of masterminding the court decision with the intention of exploiting the offending article as an excuse to shut down the largest opposition paper, whose circulation of over 500,000 included many readers who resided in the provinces and rural communities. Opposition leader Viktor Yushchenko, who, later in the year, would be elected president of Ukraine, criticized the court verdict and said that the newspaper should only have been required to apologize. His stand worried some Jews, raising the fear that Yushchenko might side with extreme nationalists if elected president, a concern he later tried to address through friendly gestures toward the Jewish community (see above, p. 501).
There were several anti-Semitic incidents in Ukraine during the year, though few were reported by the media. In the capital city of Kiev, on May 23, more than 50 Jewish gravestones were vandalized at a cemetery. The Interior Ministry initially denied any vandalism, saying the graves were destroyed "all by themselves, because they were too old." But the local Jewish community described it as an organized anti-Semitic action. On July 11, a group of men approached Rabbi Chaim Pikovsky near Kiev's Brodsky Synagogue and started insulting him. One punched the rabbi in the face and the others struck him several times. Another rabbi was assaulted on a downtown Kiev street in September.

On three separate occasions, windows were shattered in the Chabad synagogue in Odessa, with no injuries reported. In the wake of these attacks, police set up security points around almost 30 Jewish sites throughout the city. On August 24, two rabbis were attacked on Odessa's busiest street by two intoxicated men, one of whom was arrested.

Gravestones in the Jewish section of the Don Sea cemetery in Donetsk, in the eastern part of the country, were vandalized on August 21; several were smashed beyond repair and others had swastikas daubed on them. That month there were also reports that yeshiva students had been beaten up in the city. Jews in Donetsk also became targets of harassment during the holiday of Sukkot, when a group of men disrupted a religious procession near a synagogue and threatened to kill the participants. On September 22, heavy stones were thrown through the front windows of the local Jewish orphanage in Donetsk, without injuring anyone. Four young men were apprehended and charged with the crime. In the last days of 2004, windows were shattered at a Jewish community center in the city of Simferopol.

**Other States**

In Belarus, Jewish activists and human-rights leaders complained that the government was not doing enough to counter anti-Semitism. Leonid Stonov, the U.S.-based director of the Bureau on Human Rights of the Union of Councils for Jews in the Former Soviet Union, even called for international sanctions against this former Soviet republic, citing frequent acts of vandalism against Jewish cemeteries and the open availability of anti-Semitic publications in stores selling Russian Orthodox literature. In July, Belarusian Jewish organizations announced the formation of an "antifascist" committee to stem rising anti-Semitism in the country.
The disrespect shown toward cemeteries in Belarus, some with graves dating back centuries, inflicted deep pain on the Jewish community. Local leaders in the Gomel region reported in January that the ancient Jewish cemetery in the town of Rogachev, which had not been used since the 1980s, had been turned into a soccer field. Another old and disused cemetery, in Chernikov in the Mogilev region, was used as a garbage dump and a place to graze cattle. Several years earlier, municipal authorities had removed the fence surrounding the 400-year-old cemetery, and the tiny Jewish community was unable to take care of its former burial ground. Despite repeated complaints to town officials and promises by the latter to protect the cemetery, nothing had been done.

In Moldova, several cases of vandalism against Jewish sites were reported in 2004. In March, 70 tombstones were damaged and defaced in the Jewish cemetery of Tiraspol, capital of the unrecognized Transdniestrian Republic, which split off from Moldova in the early 1990s. Jews there reported that the local authorities refused to help them clean off anti-Semitic graffiti and swastikas from the tombstones. In the same community of Tiraspol, arsonists attempted to set fire to a synagogue on May 5 by throwing Molotov cocktails at it and spilling flammable liquid near the front door. The fire was extinguished before it spread to the building.

In Uzbekistan, Jewish organizations in the capital, Tashkent, received warnings from the state security authority that they might become targets of militant Islamists who were becoming increasingly active in this Central Asian state, but no major incidents were reported.

Holocaust-Related Developments

Issues related to the crimes of the Holocaust era remained especially pressing in the Baltic countries, where the Nazi occupiers were often helped by local collaborators and where the postcommunist governments did not always display sensitivity to Jewish concerns. On July 6, for example, Estonian veterans of the Nazi Waffen-SS paraded through the capital city of Tallinn, attended a church service and a concert, and laid flowers at a war memorial. The celebration marked the 60th anniversary of battles fought by the Estonian SS against the Red Army. Many Estonians regarded the SS veterans as freedom fighters who fought alongside the Germans to liberate their country from Soviet occupation.

Russian Jewish groups—apparently acting on the advice of the Russian government, which complained about the treatment of ethnic Rus-
sians in the postcommunist Baltic states—several times accused Estonia and Latvia of fomenting anti-Semitism by allowing or endorsing such commemorations. In some cases, however, local Jewish leaders in these nations dismissed the accusations by Russian Jews and denied that their countries’ leaders endorsed anti-Semitism or Holocaust revisionism.

There were several other disturbing incidents in the FSU. In Lithuania, in August, vandals smeared paint on a Holocaust memorial in a forest near the town of Alytus, where thousands of Jews were murdered during World War II. In Belarus, both in the capital city of Minsk and in the town of Lida, about 110 miles west of Minsk, vandals defiled monuments to Jews killed in the Holocaust. In Ukraine, Oleg Tyagnybok, a member of Viktor Yushchenko’s opposition parliamentary faction, Our Ukraine, made public anti-Semitic statements related to Ukraine’s wartime history on July 17. But Yushchenko promptly issued a statement condemning Tyagnybok, and when the latter failed to apologize, expelled him from the party.

In Kharkov, Ukraine, a plan to build a gas station and stores on a highway near the location of a mass grave for thousands of Holocaust victims was scrapped following protests by local Jewish leaders.

**JEWISH COMMUNITY**

**Demography**

In October, Berel Lazar, the Chabad rabbi recognized as chief rabbi by the government, challenged the results of the first post-Soviet census in Russia that was taken in 2002, which found 259,000 Jews living in Russia out of a total population of 145 million. Lazar, like a number of other experts and religious authorities, believed that this figure represented only a fraction of all Russian Jews, since many hesitated to declare their nationality as Jewish. He called for the creation of a database of Jews living in the country using modern computer technology.

Meanwhile, the Jewish population of Russia and other FSU countries continued to decline due to unfavorable demographic trends—an aging Jewish population, high rates of intermarriage, and continuing, albeit slowed-down, emigration.

Jewish emigration to Israel continued to drop. In the calendar year 2004, 10,404 Jews from the FSU arrived in Israel, an 18-percent decrease from the 12,720 who left in 2003. Every FSU country except Moldova
showed a significant decline in the number of emigrants to Israel as compared to the statistics of 2003, with the largest drop, 28 percent, coming in the Baltic states that joined the EU in 2004. The smallest decline, 3 percent, was in Moldova, the poorest FSU nation in Europe. Jews from the Russian Federation accounted for 36 percent of all FSU Jews resettling in Israel, and Jews from Ukraine made up 29 percent. Only 1,134 FSU Jews emigrated to the U.S. in 2004, the lowest number in decades.

For the third year in a row, the largest proportion of emigrating Jews went to Germany, about 20,000, up from 19,000 in both 2002 and 2003. The explanation often given for this was the contrast between the economic difficulties newcomers faced in Israel and the generous benefits available in Germany. The fact that almost twice as many Jewish emigrants were going to Germany than to Israel was the cause of some embarrassment to Jewish leaders in the FSU, testifying as it did to the low level of Jewish identification among those leaving. Toward the end of the year, new legislation was proposed in Germany aimed at limiting the entry of Jews from the FSU (see above, p. 433).

Organizational Life

There were a number of significant developments during 2004 in the communal organizations of Russian Jewry.

The Chabad-oriented Federation of Jewish Communities (FJC), led by Chief Rabbi Berel Lazar and largely financed by Israeli diamond merchant Lev Leviev, strengthened its position as the leading organization of Russian Jews through the great scope and variety of its activities and its close relations with the Kremlin. President Putin praised the activities of FJC on several occasions, and, in a meeting with Lazar in October, offered the group government assistance to help solve the problems of Jewish communities in the country’s outlying regions.

The rise of FJC meant the continuing decline of its most important rival, the Russian Jewish Congress (RJC), linked, in the eyes of the authorities, to the now-exiled former media mogul Vladimir Gusinsky, once the most vocal critic of Putin. The RJC, now led by its president, Yevgeny Satanovsky, and chairman of the board, Mikhail Fridman — himself considered one of the Russian “oligarchs” stigmatized by the Kremlin — appeared incapable of challenging the power of the FJC. In late 2004, any remaining maverick proclivities of the RJC were stifled when Satanovsky was removed in an internal coup orchestrated by people close to Putin and to Moscow mayor Yuri Luzhkov. The new RJC president, Vladimir
Slutsker, was a financier and member of the parliament’s upper house, as well as a leading Kabbalah enthusiast, but had no leadership experience in the Jewish community. Slutsker announced that with his ascension, the era of infighting within the Russian Jewish community was over, and that his priority was to establish good relations with the Kremlin and the FJC. The latter, for its part, welcomed the leadership change at the RJC.

Whereas the end of community schism was widely regarded as a positive development, some Jews voiced concern over the Kremlin’s obvious manipulation of Jewish communal affairs, as the neutering of RJC removed the last vestige of independence in any national Jewish group. This was so despite the continued existence of a third body, the Congress of Jewish Religious Organizations and Communities (KEROOR), associated with another chief rabbi, Adolf Shayevich. Representing the interests of the country’s non-Chabad Orthodox congregations, KEROOR lacked strong leaders, funding, and government favor, and its future was uncertain.

The Union of Religious Congregations of Modern Judaism in Russia (OROSIR), the central body of the Reform movement, kept a low public profile during 2004, concentrating on internal community building and training its own young leaders and rabbinic paraprofessionals. OROSIR was affiliated with the World Union for Progressive Judaism (WUPJ), and that umbrella body’s global forum, scheduled to be held in Moscow in the summer of 2005, was expected to boost the local Reform group’s profile, activities, and funding.

Other Jewish organizations active across the FSU were the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), which ran major welfare programs through its network of Hesed centers; the Jewish Agency for Israel, involved in facilitating aliyah and Jewish and Zionist education; and Hillel, a student group that operated dozens of off-campus clubs seeking to attract unaffiliated Jewish college youth and young professionals. All of these groups maintained ongoing operations in almost every republic of the FSU, relying on funds from overseas sources, most notably the North American Jewish federations, private donors, and, in the case of the JDC welfare programs, Holocaust compensation money.

**Religion and Culture**

The Chabad-run FJC and its affiliated structures not only wielded great authority in the Jewish community and enjoyed the favor of the government, but also dominated religious services, formal Jewish edu-
cation, and culture. Most of the rabbis permanently working in FSU communities were foreign-born—mainly Israeli and American—emissaries of the Chabad Hasidic organization. At the third biannual FJC conference, held in Moscow in October, the organization announced that it ran 178 congregations in the Russian Federation, operated 35 synagogue buildings, maintained four yeshivahs, and employed 36 rabbis in 33 cities. Largely successful in getting across the message that its practices and lifestyle were virtually synonymous with traditional Judaism, Chabad was now the mainstream form of the Jewish religion throughout the region.

As for the other religious bodies, KEROOR claimed several dozen Orthodox non-Hasidic congregations and employed over a dozen rabbis, most of them Russian-born. OROSIR, affiliated with the Reform movement, had about 35 active congregations in Russia. There were also some 40 Reform congregations in Ukraine and another 20 in Belarus. Reform had six rabbis, all natives of the FSU and trained at the Leo Baeck College in London. They worked in congregations in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Kiev, and Minsk.

In Lithuania, the small Jewish community was rocked by a heated dispute over the post of chief rabbi that was extensively reported in the local and international press. The split was between indigenous Jewish activists and a U.S.-born Chabad rabbi, Sholom Ber Krinsky, who had long been the only resident rabbi in the capital city of Vilnius. The dispute erupted when Krinsky proclaimed himself Lithuania's chief rabbi without consulting community leaders. Many of them vigorously objected to a Hasidic rabbi exerting authority in Lithuania, which had a longstanding Mitnagdic (anti-Hasidic) tradition dating back more than two centuries. As accusations mounted between the two sides, the lay leaders went so far as to close the main Vilnius synagogue for a time. Raising the stakes of the battle was the matter of Holocaust restitution payments: whoever was considered the legitimate representative of the community would have the inside track on getting the money.

In Kazakhstan's capital city, Astana, a new synagogue, Beit Rachel Chabad Lyubavitch, was dedicated in September. President Nursultan Nazarbaev and Israel's Ashkenazi chief rabbi, Yonah Metzger, attended the opening ceremony for the new synagogue, which was built with funds provided by billionaire Alexander Mashkevich, leader of the Euro-Asian Jewish Congress, in memory of his mother. The event was widely covered in the media, and was used by the government to boost that country's international image as an island of tranquility and interethnic accord in an area that had lately seen a rise of Muslim fundamentalism.
There were about 100 Jewish day schools in the former Soviet republics, about two-thirds of them under the aegis of the Chabad-run Or Avner foundation, the movement's educational arm in the FSU. World ORT sponsored 15 schools in the region, focusing on computer training and technological education.

LEV KRICEVSKY