At the beginning of 1998, the Liberal-National Party coalition government led by Prime Minister John Howard entered its third year in office and a prolonged period of preparation for a fall election. The government’s priorities included passage in the Senate of far-reaching legislation on Aboriginal native title—after one earlier failure and months of impassioned debate—and also industrial relations reforms. The government’s Native Title Amendment Bill (commonly known as the Wik legislation), which would greatly diminish the rights of Aborigines to claim ownership of ancestral lands, and which drew critical responses from many in the Jewish community, was eventually passed in the Senate midyear.

The national election in early October resulted in the return of the Liberal-National coalition government for a second term, albeit with a greatly reduced majority in the Parliament and the prospect of minority parties and independents holding the balance of power in the Senate. Prime Minister Howard went to the election buttressed by a large parliamentary majority, though hampered by his proposed tax reform package, which included an unpopular and previously rejected goods and services tax. Though skeptical of the government’s tax proposals, the electorate was not yet ready to re-embrace the opposition Australian Labor Party, led by Kim Beazley since after the last election, which had governed for five consecutive terms from 1983 to 1996.

The federal election also marked the decline of far-right populist Pauline Hanson, perhaps the most controversial figure in Australian politics since 1996. The divisive independent and her party, Pauline Hanson’s One Nation, failed to win a lower house seat, even that of its leader. Its sole victory was one of six Senate seats in Hanson’s home state of Queensland. Only four months earlier the party performed spectacularly well in the Queensland state election, winning 23 percent of the vote and picking up 11 seats, which sent shock waves through the nation’s major political parties. But in the wake of the federal election disaster, the resignation of 6 of its 11 Queensland parliamentarians and deep-seated internal divisions over the party’s undemocratic structure, the future of Hanson and One Nation appeared bleak.

The Jewish community was among the most vocal in denouncing the phe-
nomenon of racially charged debate and divisive politics, especially over Abor
tigine issues. After the shock of One Nation's electoral success in Queensland
the community — and the Australia/Israel and Jewish Affairs Council (AIJAC)
in particular — was in the forefront of a campaign that successfully persuaded the
governing coalition parties to change their strategy from the Queensland election
and to make One Nation their last preference on the "how-to-vote" cards, instead
of their natural opponents, the Labor Party. After some division within coalition
ranks on the issue, it was finally agreed that One Nation's electoral defeat was
the top priority. Even so, by then some within the Jewish community had alread'
decided that the government's handling of the One Nation preferences issue and
Aboriginal reconciliation deserved a rebuke. The most notable of such critics was
mining magnate and former Liberal Party supporter Joseph Gutnick, who indi-
cated he would switch his vote to Labor.

In a controversial step, the Australia/Israel Review, a publication of AIJAC
published in July a list of 2000 One Nation members and 200 donors, obtained
from disgruntled senior party figures concerned at the lack of transparency and
democracy in the party. The move prompted a vigorous and often ill-tempered
debate as to whether the publication infringed the privacy of those members or
whether One Nation's divisive policies and internal structure justified publication
of the names in the interest of preserving and protecting democracy.

This debate was taken up within the Jewish community also. Some well-known
figures expressed concern that publication of the list could make the Jewish com-
munity collectively vulnerable to some form of anti-Semitic retribution. Other
community figures argued that a Jewish magazine had as much right as any to
expose persons who voluntarily joined a party that fosters racial antagonism, big-
osity, and division, and deserved praise for so doing.

Despite the continuing economic crisis in Asia throughout the year and some
significant domestic currency devaluations, the Australian economy performed
with surprising resilience. Inflation remained at less than 2 percent, while eco-
nomic growth averaged a steady 4 percent. Unemployment, a long-standing prob-
lem, fell slightly but still remained around 8 percent.

Israel and the Middle East

The Australian government continued to have warm relations with Israel and
expressed full support for a continuation of the Middle East peace process. In-
deed, the government's approach was largely shared by the opposition Australian
Labor Party.

The contentious nature of the issues surrounding the peace process occasion-
ally resulted in some counter-productive statements. An official Australian par-
liamentary delegation of five went to Israel (and the West Bank), Jordan,
Lebanon, and Syria in June, led by former National Party leader and House
Speaker Ian Sinclair. The report they submitted to Parliament in July contained
numerous historical errors of fact and unbalanced assessments reflecting only one side of the Arab-Israeli question. A storm of criticism from the local Jewish community and beyond ensued. Foreign Minister Alexander Downer distanced himself from the report, saying it reflected the views of the parliamentary delegation only and was not a representation of the government's position. Another federal parliamentary delegation, sponsored and led by the PLO, visited the Palestinian-controlled territories and Jordan in April. The weeklong trip was led by the PLO's Australian spokesman, Ali Kazak, and funded by Said Meshal, a Palestinian industrialist who resided for many years in the Gulf state of Qatar before emigrating to Australia. Several of the MPs subsequently voiced criticism of Israel in Parliament.

On a more positive note, there was widespread recognition across the political spectrum of the achievement of Israel's 50th anniversary. A motion was passed by the House of Representatives congratulating Israel, and members from all the major parties spoke in support, though one ALP member, Leo McLeay, severely criticized Jewish settlements in the West Bank. Prime Minister Howard spoke of "our strong commitment to and affection for Israel. . . . The [right of the people of Israel] to exist behind secure, defensible and impregnable boundaries is something that successive Australian governments have always held dear, and that will continue to be our policy. I think it is very important that the aspirations of the Palestinian people . . . also be respected. It will be the intention of my government to see that fairness and justice is done to all parties in the Middle East."

Foreign Minister Downer visited Israel and the Middle East for the first time in June, shortly after the anniversary celebrations, and held productive meetings with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and other senior ministers and officials. He then announced that Australia's continuing financial aid for peace initiatives in the region would include an additional $3.4 million in assistance for Palestinian refugees. Netanyahu was scheduled to visit Australia in August, but the visit was postponed indefinitely shortly beforehand owing to a resumption of talks with the Palestinians and domestic political exigencies in Israel.

Both major parties supported the efforts of the United Nations and U.S.-led military interventions to secure Iraqi compliance in eliminating its weapons of mass destruction. In February, Australian navy vessels and troops were sent to the Persian Gulf to support U.S. forces during a stand-off with the Iraqi dictator, and both party leaders voiced support for the U.S.-British strikes on Iraq in December. Domestic opposition to these moves came largely from elements in the Arab and Islamic communities, students, and long-time academic apologists for Iraq. Similarly, both major parties warmly applauded the Wye River agreement concluded between Israel and the Palestinian Authority in October.

After years of criticism, the Australian government finally moved to revise its credit arrangements with Iran, including the removal of the previous (U.S.) $750 million line of credit made available to Iran. Instead, requests for credit from the Iranian Central Bank would be considered on a case-by-case basis via consulta-
tion between the government and the Export Finance and Insurance Corporation. Although it was never drawn upon, the line of credit was the largest offered by Australia to any nation and by far the largest offered to Iran. For several years, the Australia/Israel and Jewish Affairs Council, among others, had called for the withdrawal of the credit because of Iran's poor credit rating and particularly for its long-standing sponsorship and assistance for international terrorism.

In the United Nations, the Australian government continued its relatively favorable support of Israel in the General Assembly. In an Emergency Session resolution in March condemning Israel for construction at Har Homah and proposing to "determine how to enforce provisions of the Geneva Convention relevant to 'Occupied Palestinian Territory,'" Australia was one of five abstaining countries in a vote of 120-3. Australia's representative expressed concern about the state of the peace process but said that such resolutions—described later by Foreign Minister Downer as "sloganeering against Israel"—would not advance the process.

In July, Australia was one of 124 countries to vote in favor (to 4 against) of a resolution granting the Palestinian delegation to the UN additional rights and privileges as part of its Observer status. Australia's representative said the resolution would clarify Palestine's place in the UN, but had no bearing on the issue of Palestinian statehood, which would be determined through negotiations.

Anti-Semitism and Extremism

In its most recent annual report, the Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ) reported that anti-Semitic telephone calls, hate mail, and threatening electronic mail had reached record levels in the 12-month period ending September 30, 1998, contributing to a large increase in the volume of overall anti-Semitic incidents over the previous year. The total of 324 reports of anti-Jewish violence, physical harassment, vandalism, and intimidation represented an increase of 22 percent over the previous 12 months and was 16 percent higher than the previous worst year. It was also 43 percent higher than the average since detailed record-keeping commenced in 1989. In presenting the report, ECAJ executive vice-president Jeremy Jones noted that the Internet was the main growth area for anti-Semitic rhetoric and incitement, complementing the traditional activities of anti-Jewish groups such as leafleting, articles in the print media, and talk radio.

On the positive side, the number of violent incidents and serious physical confrontations was well below average. Increased security at synagogues and other Jewish institutions was seen as the most important contributing factor in this area. The report also gave good marks to the Australian media for a decline in the volume of commentary, published letters, and reporting that crossed over from political criticism into racist or anti-Jewish abuse. Another area in which there appeared to be a decrease in anti-Jewish commentary was the ethnic media. Addressing the issue of response to anti-Semitism, the report praised the activi-
ties of a number of churches and state and federal antidiscrimination bodies and those politicians who "consistently demonstrated moral leadership" in confronting racism.

Prominent mining magnate and Chabad community leader Rabbi Joseph Gutnick was the subject of a series of anti-Semitic incidents in 1998. Gutnick had a particularly high profile in his home city of Melbourne, where he became a household name after financially rescuing the ailing Melbourne (Australian Rules) Football Club. A series of audiotapes of meetings of senior executives in the JB Were & Son brokerage firm, which came to light during an insider trading case, revealed that Gutnick had been the target of venomous anti-Semitic slurs and jokes. In the furor that followed, the company's executive chairman, Terry Campbell, personally and publicly apologized to Gutnick and the wider Jewish community. Two of the company's employees later resigned.

Mainstream media coverage of issues relevant to the Jewish community was extensive—generally positive on issues relating to the domestic Jewish community, but far less favorable on Israel and the Middle East, occasionally exhibiting a bias with some anti-Semitic overtones. One Middle East correspondent for a major newspaper, Robert Fisk in the Canberra Times, drew an analogy between the Holocaust and the historical experience of the Palestinians, claiming that Israel escapes criticism due to "its immensely powerful lobby in the United States" and "the pathetic obeisance of journalists (too frightened to criticize Israel for fear of being accused of anti-Semitism)." In the electronic media there was generally much less anti-Jewish commentary, most of it coming from talk-show callers who had not been properly screened before being allowed to speak on air.

Of particular concern for some years had been the anti-Israel bias of the ethnic SBS (Special Broadcasting Commission) television network in its news and current affairs reporting. The occasion of Israel's 50 anniversary was cause for a series of specials, including a biography of Palestinian author Emile Habiby, I Stayed in Haifa; a documentary on the wife of Yasir Arafat, Souha Arafat; and the three-part series, Palestine: Story of a Land. By way of balance, SBS also broadcast the six-part Tkuma series produced by the Israeli Broadcasting Corporation, though the documentary proved to be highly controversial in Israel because of its depiction of Israeli history in relation to the Palestinians and Israel's religious-secular divide.

Through the dramatic growth of electronic communication, Australians now had increasingly easy and cheap access to anti-Semitic and racist material that was previously difficult to obtain. In addition, anti-Semitic and threatening e-mail was reported at a steadily increasing rate as more members of the Jewish community, including Holocaust survivors, established e-mail accounts. Unmoderated newsgroups and Internet newsletters dealing with Australian issues gave individual bigots a new and wider audience. Almost all of the major racist groups in Australia now had an Internet presence. The more sophisticated of these had managed to establish links with less overtly racist sites. The sites of concern to
the Jewish community focused on the themes of Holocaust denial, White Supremacy/Neo-Nazism, Christian Identity, and Islamic fundamentalism.

One site of particular concern was the **Adelaide Institute**, a small organization devoted to Holocaust denial, run by Frederick Toben. It was linked to other Holocaust denial sites around the world, continually published material designed to influence media opinion, and sent unsolicited copies to Jewish individuals as a form of hate mail. When the site was launched in 1996, the executive vice-president of the ECAJ, Jeremy Jones, lodged a complaint with the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission alleging that the site breached the Racial Hatred Act. Toben issued a series of media releases attacking the complainants and portraying the legal process as a “Stalinist” attempt to conceal the truth. The hearings took place in November, and a decision was expected in 1999.

Sections of the Arabic media also produced anti-Semitic material. Other local anti-Semitic sites included **Covenant Vision Ministry** (linked to the America's Promise Ministries of Pastor Dave Barley) and **The Bible Believers**—both cast Jews as the anti-Christ and “the Great Satan” that will ultimately be destroyed by “The Lord”—and neo-Nazi sites such as **Southern Cross Hammerskins** and **National Action** (the site of the white supremacist activist group that engages in harassment, abuse, and often violent assault).

### Extremist Groups

While the better-known Australian extremist groups did not always articulate open anti-Semitism, the links they had with foreign extremist groups (notably U.S. militia movements), Identity churches, the Lyndon LaRouche organization, a variety of conspiracy theorist groups, the Australian League of Rights, or others who promote anti-Jewish myths indicated their openness to anti-Semitism.

The Australian League of Rights—described by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission as “undoubtedly the most influential and effective, as well as the best organized and most substantially financed, racist organization in Australia”—received widespread though largely negative publicity. Though the group did not put forward candidates and claimed to stand apart from party politics, the League’s “great white hope” was Graeme Campbell and his Australia First party. With the lion’s share of the 1998 far-right vote going to Pauline Hanson’s One Nation, Campbell lost his largely rural seat of Kalgoorlie after 18 years of incumbency. No other Australia First candidates came close to winning. The League itself continued to equip “actionists” around Australia with information to combat their Zionist, Fabian, and humanist enemies, as well as material encouraging hatred of Jews.

The Citizens Electoral Councils (CEC), based in a well-staffed office in suburban Melbourne, engaged in mass mailings of literature reflecting the views of their guru, Lyndon LaRouche, containing some of the most bizarre and offensive anti-Semitic conspiracy theories. Politically-oriented Jewish organizations in
Australia (and antiracist groups in general) were among the CEC's favorite targets. Compared with the mid-1990s, the scale and effectiveness of the CEC's operations had been curtailed, and the group's operations were now almost entirely funded from LaRouche headquarters in Leesburg, Virginia.

Despite the rise of far-right populism channeled by Pauline Hanson's One Nation, the CEC was unable to capitalize on this activity, and its electoral vote in 1998 was minuscule, even compared with similar parties. It did, however, continue to produce its newsletters and media releases, some of which attacked Jewish targets, including one prompted by the *Australia/Israel Review*’s exposés of One Nation. Titled “The Dirty Secrets Behind the Australia/Israel Review,” this long feature was error-ridden and based on a ridiculous conspiracy theory relating to “Australia's financial oligarchy” and “a London-directed international anti-defamation apparatus.”

Small groups of neo-Nazis were present in all the major Australian cities. The largest neo-Nazi group, National Action, was based in Adelaide, with a substantial cell in Melbourne. It distributed a newsletter and maintained a Web site.

**Holocaust-Related Matters**

**Nazi War Criminals**

The prosecution of suspected Nazi war criminals appeared to have ground to a standstill. After the Special Investigations Unit (SIU) was disbanded in June 1992, no new investigations were mounted, and all continuing investigations were passed for handling to the Australian Federal Police (AFP). Two pending cases were those of Konrad Kalejs and Karlis Ozols. Both men, now in their 80s and living in Melbourne, had been deeply involved with the notorious Arajs Kommando, the Latvian internal police units in World War II responsible for the rounding up and mass slaughter of tens of thousands of Jews and Gypsies. Kalejs was deported from the United States and then Canada for misrepresenting his wartime record to immigration authorities, before resuming the Australian citizenship he obtained in 1957 under a similar misrepresentation. Both men profited from an anomaly in the Citizenship Act, a ten-year limit on the revocation of citizenship, even where it is apparent that false or misleading information was given in obtaining citizenship. While this anomaly was finally changed in 1997, it did not apply retroactively; thus, an entire generation of war criminals from World War II who misrepresented their past in gaining Australian citizenship would not be affected.

Evidentiary requirements under Australia's War Crimes Act posed seemingly insurmountable obstacles to mounting viable war-crimes cases, while the AFP's budgetary constraints and other responsibilities prevented it from effectively pursuing war-crimes investigations. The federal government, after stating that it would instruct the AFP to review both cases, indicated in 1998 that there was in-
sufficient evidence to mount a trial. The Latvian government, which had sought Australia's assistance in the Kalejs case, by year's end appeared to have abandoned any attempt to mount a trial for the wartime atrocities. AJJAC's national policy chairman, Colin Rubenstein, continued to call for war criminals to be stripped of their citizenship and deported, and for retrospective legislation to be enacted, if necessary, to close the legal loopholes.

RESTITUTION

In August the Executive Council of Australian Jewry welcomed the agreement reached between Jewish groups, Holocaust survivors, and Swiss institutions for the return of US$1.25 billion worth of assets belonging to Holocaust victims that was seized by the Nazis or wrongly kept by Swiss banks after account holders had been murdered. ECAJ president Diane Shteinman said, "This is not an act of charity—it is the partial return of stolen property. We must also recognize that there is now a chance that the historical record will be written accurately, after so many decades of denial by the Swiss and other governments that they had profited from the Nazis' evil. It is important that there is now a fair and caring formula for the disbursement of the returned assets so that Holocaust survivors can have their needs catered for." The Australian Jewish community had the highest proportion of Holocaust survivors in any Jewish community outside Israel.

JEWISH COMMUNITY

Demography

The Australian Jewish community continued to grow through immigration, particularly from South Africa and the former Soviet Union. Estimates of the total number of Jews in Australia ranged from 100,000 to 120,000, out of a total population of 18.4 million. More than half the total number of Jews in Australia were born overseas, with South African-born Jews being the largest group, followed by natives of Poland, Russia, Hungary, and Germany. The Jewish community was heavily concentrated in Melbourne and Sydney, with the Brisbane-Gold Coast area showing the fastest growth.

There were between 14,000 and 20,000 Jews from the former Soviet Union in Australia, mostly living in Sydney and Melbourne. Per capita, Australia's Jewish community has received more immigrants from this source than even Israel, at least double the proportion received by the American Jewish community and seven times the number to go to Canada. The communal leadership remained concerned that the group was proving to be more successful in its integration into Australia generally than into the Jewish community.
Communal Affairs

At year's end, Nina Bassat was elected president of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, taking over after three years of leadership by Diane Shteinman. Bassat was formerly president of the Jewish Community Council of Victoria. Ron Weiser continued as president of the Zionist Federation of Australia, while Mark Leibler remained president of the United Israel Appeal.

The Australia/Israel and Jewish Affairs Council continued under the leadership of Mark Leibler as national chairman and Colin Rubenstein as national policy chairman. In October the editor of the Australia/Israel Review, Michael Kapel, resigned after five years at the helm and was succeeded by Middle East analyst Adam Indikt. AIJAC continued its affiliation with the American Jewish Committee. A joint research study by AJC's Pacific Rim Institute and AIJAC on the impact of Islamic fundamentalism in the Asia-Pacific region was well advanced.

Sam Lipski retired as editor-in-chief of the Australian Jewish News and was replaced by David Bernstein as acting editor.

Maccabiah Tragedy

Reverberations continued from the disastrous collapse of the bridge over the Yarkon River near Tel Aviv before the opening ceremony of the 15th Maccabiah games in July 1997. Four Jewish Australian athletes were killed and over 70 injured. The subsequent furor over the slow reactions of the Israeli government and Maccabiah World Union and their alleged negligence severely strained the Australian Jewish community's ties with Israel. Maccabi Australia president Tom Goldman said that Australia would not attend the 2001 Maccabiah Games unless Israel could guarantee the competitors' safety.

The first official investigation, in 1997, headed by Brig. Gen. Yishai Dotan, refused to assign specific blame for the collapse, although the bridge was reputedly hopelessly substandard and its builder had been selected on the basis of an astonishingly cheap construction bid. In December 1997 Israeli authorities filed criminal negligence charges against five of those involved in the bridge collapse, including the contractors and the engineer. The case in the Tel Aviv magistrates court continued through 1998 and, because each defense was being mounted separately, was expected to last well into 1999.

During the year, Jewish community representatives and the families of the victims pursued the Israeli government for interim compensation while the negligence trial continued. Zionist Federation of Australia president Ron Weiser attended Israeli parliamentary hearings on the matter, and Australian foreign minister Downer also took up the compensation issue with Prime Minister Netanyahu in June. Amid the legal wrangling, Israeli treasury officials had not yet accepted the compensation proposal.
The only good news was that Australian teenager Sasha Elterman was finally released from the hospital in Sydney after battling the life-threatening effects of pollutants in the Yarkon River for almost a year. Visiting Israeli figures in Australia, including former prime minister Shimon Peres and singer David Broza, made a point of visiting Sasha in the hospital. Her father, Colin Elterman, launched a separate legal action in Israel.

Education

There were 19 Jewish day schools in Australia with more than half of all Jewish children aged 4-18 and close to 70 percent of those aged 4-12 receiving full-time Jewish education. Spanning the religious spectrum, Jewish schools continued to rank at the highest level for academic achievement. This reflected the community's major investment in the schools as a means of preserving Jewish continuity. Day school enrollments continued to expand, despite ongoing concerns over high costs. Melbourne had over 5,500 children in Jewish day schools, and one of Sydney's schools had a waiting list of over 300 children.

During the election campaign, Prime Minister Howard reassured the Jewish community that day schools had "an absolute guarantee that their right to exist and get a reasonable level of government support will continue," adding that tuition fees would be exempt from the proposed goods and services tax, as would any other activities included as part of the normal curriculum.

There was also an increased emphasis on adult education, with the Melton Program enrolling nearly 500 students in Sydney and Melbourne. Other short-term courses utilizing guest scholars also proved popular. In Sydney, the Jewish Free University attracted record crowds this year, with particular interest in the Russian and Yiddish language sections.

The whole system of Diaspora education through the World Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency was restructured during 1998, with the creation of a new Department of Education under the Jewish Agency. The Zionist Federation of Australia was the sole representative of the new education department in Australia. A conference of Jewish educators from Australia and New Zealand at Mount Scopus College in Melbourne was attended by over 250 participants. Plans were well under way for another conference in 1999 in Sydney.

There were also moves to expand opportunities for isolated communities to interact with educational institutions in Israel and the United States that offer a range of Jewish education programs via the Internet. In another development, the establishment of the US$100,000 Israel Experience Fund by the Zionist Federation of Australia and the United Israel Appeal would make visits to Israel available for the Zionist youth movements, the Australian Union of Jewish Students, and selected high-school students.
Jewish-Christian Relations

Interfaith and Jewish-Christian dialogue continued on a number of levels during the year in review. Jeremy Jones was reelected to chair the Advisory Group of Faith Communities to the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, where representatives from a number of Christian denominations, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, and Baha'is, together with the Jewish representative, meet and coordinate joint efforts for social justice and antiracism activity.

The most significant development in Jewish-Christian relations was the inaugural meeting of an official Catholic Bishops' Conference delegation with the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, directly resulting from the issuance by the Vatican of its call to Holocaust remembrance. The other two largest Christian denominations, the Anglicans and the Uniting Church, had previously established formal dialogue groups, and the prospects were positive for the Orthodox churches to commence a formal relationship in 1999.

Culture

Melbourne artist Esther Erlich won the prestigious and lucrative Moran Prize for portraiture for her widely acclaimed painting of long-distance athlete Steve Monaghetti.

The short film Intolerance won Australia's most prestigious short film award, with its writer and star, Sandy Gutman, also winning the award for Best Actor. A play about being a Jewish woman, Hungry, written and performed by Deborah Leiser, had its inaugural season in 1998. Adelaide surrealist artist Rimona Kedem exhibited a new series of paintings this year.

Publications

Diane Armstrong published Mosaic, a family history, to considerable acclaim; Peter Kohn wrote a well-received children's fictional work on the Jewish experience, View from a Sand Castle; Anna Rosner Blay wrote a Holocaust autobiography, Sister Sister; and Alan Gold published two thrillers centered around Holocaust restitution issues (the third in the trilogy was due in 1999).

Personalia

Sir David Smith, former secretary to the governor-general, retired Justice Howard Nathan, young Sydney lawyer Julian Leeser, and high-profile lipstick entrepreneur Poppy King—all from different political camps—participated as delegates in the Constitutional Convention, held in February 1998, to consider the options for Australia becoming a republic.
Michael Danby was elected to Federal Parliament as the new Australian Labor Party member for Melbourne Ports, the House of Representatives seat located in Melbourne’s inner bayside suburbs. The son of a Holocaust survivor, he is the first Federal MP to identify as a Jew since the retirement of Peter Baume as a NSW senator in 1991. Danby had a long association with the Australia/Israel Review and the Australia/Israel & Jewish Affairs Council—formerly Australia/Israel Publications—as a researcher from the late 1970s, editor of the Review from 1984 to 1992, and a member of the Review’s national editorial committee from 1993 to 1998. He also previously worked as an adviser to former Labor government ministers Barry Cohen and Alan Griffiths.

In the national honors for 1998, Richard Pratt AO was made Companion in the general division (AC), for service to the community and philanthropy. Pratt had been instrumental in encouraging business leaders to be more involved in the community, and the Pratt Foundation was one of Australia’s largest private philanthropies. The Honorable Justice Marcus Einfeld, a judge in the Federal Court of Australia, was made Officer in the general division (AO), for service to international affairs and the protection of human rights. Justice Einfeld held a number of important positions: chairman of Australian International Legal Resources Inc., a group helping to rebuild the Palestinian legal and justice system; AUSTCARE’s ambassador for Refugees; and the founding president of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. Mervyn and Sue Doobov were awarded the Order of Australia Medal for their religious and cultural support of the Jewish community in the Australian Capital Territory. Also, Sydney judge Jim Spigelman was appointed chief justice of New South Wales.

Sir Asher Joel, a renowned organizer of major events and public-relations consultant, died in November, aged 86. By turns a journalist, a navy officer, a member of NSW Parliament, and a newspaper and television station owner, Joel organized visits by Queen Elizabeth, Pope Paul VI, and U.S. president Lyndon Johnson, as well as the opening of the Sydney Opera House and dozens of other events. He was also awarded two British knighthoods, a Papal knighthood (the first given to an Australian Jew), a U.S. Bronze Star, and many other awards.

Other leading Australian Jews who died during 1998 included Rachel Holzer, an internationally acclaimed Yiddish theater star; Holocaust survivor and author Arthur Spindler; journalist, stockbroker, and community leader Richard Dreyfus; mathematical physicist Jose Enrique Moyal; Federal WIZO executive director Denny Govendir (murdered by unknown assailants in her home); and Adele Cohen, a Jewish community leader and arts advocate.

COLIN L. RUBENSTEIN
South Africa

National Affairs

The year 1998 saw the continuing transformation of South Africa in the post-apartheid era. Health, welfare, and educational reforms were undertaken, and the transformation of the "apartheid" civil service was well under way, as was the administration of justice. The housing backlog had been significantly reduced, and progress was being made in land redistribution and in the protection of people who were dispossessed of land as a result of racial discrimination or whose insecure tenure left them vulnerable to arbitrary and unfair eviction.

With general elections due to be held in 1999, there was substantial reflection on the government's performance. The ruling Government of National Unity, led by Pres. Nelson Mandela and the African National Congress (ANC), could point to substantial gains in safe access to clean water, electricity, telephones, meals for schoolchildren, and primary health care. But criminal violence remained at a shockingly high level, and corruption was an increasing source of concern.

The emerging markets crisis in Asia and Russia severely weakened the economy, which grew by only 0.1 percent. Inflation was about 8 percent, and unemployment was estimated at between 20 and 32 percent. However, a study conducted by the South African Institute of Race Relations in 1997 showed that at least 20 percent of people who said they were unemployed had casual employment in the informal sector.

Affirmative action was most evident in black appointments in large companies, and the 53 black-led companies listed on the Johannesburg stock exchange increased their market capitalization from 58 billion rand at the end of 1996 to 111 billion rand (approximately $20 billion), an increase of 92 percent, at the end of 1998.

For several weeks Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris was privy to the best-kept secret in South Africa—the marriage of President Mandela to Graca Machel, widow of the former Mozambican president, Samora Machel, on July 18, to coincide with the president's 80th birthday. While clerics from the Christian, Muslim, and Hindu faiths gave their blessing during the marriage ceremony in Mandela's home, which took place on a Saturday, the president arranged for Rabbi and Mrs. Harris to be present on Friday afternoon, where they were among the limited number of guests invited to the president's birthday celebration.
TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), established in 1995 to investigate gross violations of human rights in South Africa and beyond its borders between 1960 and 1994, completed its work. Over a two-year period, the TRC collected over 22,000 statements from victims and perpetrators and called more than 2,000 witnesses at public hearings. Testifying before the commission in May, Mohammed Iqbal Shaik, a member of the military wing, Umkhonto weSizwe (Spear of the Nation), of the ANC, admitted bombing the Temple Israel Synagogue in Hillbrow in 1983 because of the military and economic ties between South Africa and Israel at the time. A limpet mine had been planted the night before then state president Marais Viljoen was due to visit the synagogue (Star, May 8, 1998).

The TRC's first published report contained a full section on the role of the “faith communities” under apartheid. Among the findings it was noted that Christianity, as South Africa's dominant religion, abetted apartheid in various ways, including the overt promotion of biblical and theological teaching in support of it, as was the case in the white Afrikaans Reformed Churches. The report stated: “Religious communities in general, as a rule, failed adequately to support dissident ministers, priests, imams, rabbis and lay persons who found themselves in confrontation with the state” (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report, volume 4, Cape Town, 1998, p. 91). The report argued that “contrary to their own deepest principles, many faith communities mirrored apartheid society, giving lie to their profession of a loyalty that transcended social divisions” (p. 65). “While members of the Jewish community made their greatest contributions to South African human rights as individuals, some organizations also played a role. During the last years of apartheid, Jews for Justice and Jews for Social Justice were important voices of protest” (p. 64), the report noted.

In October Yasmine Sookei, a commissioner from the TRC, spoke to the Cape Council of the Jewish Board of Deputies on the successes of the TRC and the potential role of the Jewish community in nation building. She noted the cooperation and sense of community displayed by the different religious groups in the past in opposing apartheid and urged them to play a role in dealing with corruption and in developing programs to teach young people a sense of right and wrong. “Given the Jewish community’s own history when they came to South Africa, the role it can play in teaching tolerance is a critical part of nation building,” she said (Jewish Chronicle, November 1998).

Israel and the Middle East

In an article in the Sunday Times (January 18, 1998), South African foreign minister Alfred Nzo expressed support for the Middle East peace process and indicated that the government would not remain mute when any of the parties dis-
regarded its commitments. Deputy President Thabo Mbeki, in a meeting with Asaad Abdel-Rahman, a special envoy of Yasir Arafat, in February, said the United States should exert greater pressure on Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu. He did not anticipate President Mandela getting directly involved in the peace process (Citizen, February 11, 1998).

Although Israel’s ambassador to South Africa, Uri Oren, told the Cape Council of the Jewish Board of Deputies in February that he was optimistic about Israel–South Africa relations, South Africa’s self-proclaimed even-handed policy toward the Middle East was a source of concern to Jewish leaders. Nonetheless, Oren believed that “there were members who were listening to Israel’s point of view, despite the government’s consistent support of the Palestinian cause.” He saw these ties to the Palestinians as an asset rather than a disadvantage (Jewish Chronicle, March 1998). Writing at the time of Israel’s 50th anniversary, Oren noted that trade between South Africa and Israel had steadily increased. South African exports to Israel, which exceeded R1.5 billion ($2.5 million), were nearly equal to South African exports to all other Middle Eastern countries (Sunday Times, May 3, 1998).

Although President Mandela offered congratulations to Israel on its 50th anniversary and took note of the achievements of the Jewish state, there were indications that the government informally boycotted the Israeli embassy celebrations in Cape Town. The ANC national treasurer, Mindi Msimang, told the Jewish Board of Deputies that he would ask Deputy President Mbeki if an official boycott instruction had been issued. Commenting on the government’s links to countries hostile to Israel, Msimang said the ANC would “never desert Israel and would not support anybody who attacks the country” (SA Jewish Report, May 29, 1998).

In May an invitation to the New National Party mayor of the Cape Metropolitan Council, Rev. William Bantom, to attend an international conference of mayors in Israel led to a fierce debate and heavy pressure on Bantom from Muslim organizations (supported by the ANC caucus) not to accept. The president of the Jewish Board of Deputies, Mervyn Smith, expressed annoyance at the ANC, which, he pointed out, had no objections to visits to Libya and Syria. “Jews have contributed to the City of Cape Town as citizens, as business and professional people and served the city as mayors and councilors for over a 100 years. The city owed it to its Jewish citizens to acknowledge this wonderful occasion of the 50th anniversary of the statehood of Israel” (SA Jewish Report, May 15, 1998). Bantom, who did not give in to the pressure, attended the conference and reported back positively.

The jubilee celebrations in Cape Town were marred by Muslim protesters led by the radical Islamist group Qibla. About 70 protesters shouted “One Zionist, one bullet,” “Viva Hezballah and Hamas.” Placards were displayed outside the celebration venue, the Civic Center, equating Zionism with apartheid and praising Hamas. Tensions ran high as protesters and guests came face to face outside
the hall. Condemning the protests, the Jewish Board of Deputies issued a statement: “It is repugnant that any South African calls for the death of other South Africans. Let there be no misunderstanding. South African Jews are Zionists and nothing will deter us from standing with Israel on this joyous occasion” (Cape Argus, May 1, 1998).

In a letter to the Cape Times (May 5, 1998), the secretary-general of the Muslim Judicial Council, Sheikh Achmat Sedick, claimed that it was appalling for any South African to share in the celebration of the Jews and Zionists on the occasion of the jubilee. Seymour Kopelowitz, national director of the Jewish Board of Deputies, said the letter was offensive, irresponsible, and likely to incite tension. These demonstrations, he noted, “were clearly aimed at South African Jews and not towards people living many thousands of miles away in the Middle East” (Cape Times, May 11, 1998).

In May the South African government refused to issue a visa to Sheik Ahmed Yassin, spiritual leader of Hamas. In a telephone interview from Kuwait, broadcast on a Cape Town Muslim radio station, Yassin denounced all Zionists as terrorists. The interview was broadcast live to a public meeting in Gatesville, Cape Town, where those who had invited Yassin reported back to the Muslim community.

According to a government spokeswoman, Vikki Maharaj, Yassin was refused a visa “due to the delicate state of the negotiations in the Middle East,” but she said a visit could not be ruled out in the future (SA Jewish Report, May 15, 1998). The Jewish Board of Deputies welcomed the decision to deny Yassin a visa, although a prominent Jew and former editor of the Mail & Guardian, Anton Harber, condemned the refusal. Harber noted that Jewish leaders were silent when the Netanyahu government undertook provocative acts that undermined the peace process and failed to meet its obligations under the Oslo agreement, but were quick to speak out against the Yassin visit.

The government’s refusal to grant a visa to the Hamas leader led to a protest outside the gates of Parliament by Qibla, which supported Hamas. An Israeli flag was burned, other flags were hurled into the street, and protesters were urged to “clean their shoes on them.” Marchers chanted slogans such as “death to Israel” and “One Zionist, one bullet.” Commenting on the burning of the Israeli flag, Sheikh Ebrahim Gabriels of the Muslim Judicial Council said they “did not recognize the Israeli State which was founded illegally on Palestinian land” (SA Jewish Report, May 22, 1998).

A spokesman for President Mandela said he did not think the president wished to comment on the protest. Citizens had the right to express themselves on any issue of public concern as long as they did not break the law. Flag burnings were common practice throughout the world as a means of expressing “revulsion,” and it was “acceptable” as long as it did not cause harm to individuals or endanger human life.

The Islamic Students’ Society at the University of Cape Town staged a protest
outside the University's Isaac and Jessie Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies and Research. The protest marked the 50th anniversary of what the Palestinians call Al Nakba (the "catastrophe"), the creation of Israel in 1948.

A high-level South African government delegation led by Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Aziz Pahad visited Israel and other Middle Eastern countries in June. The delegation wished to gain firsthand knowledge of the situation and to foster mutual cooperation. On their return, Pahad warned that Israel would face isolation unless Prime Minister Netanyahu demonstrated less intransigence. He believed that the view of the South African government coincided with that of the vast majority of Israelis and Palestinians.

In September Pahad shared a platform in Cape Town with former Israeli ambassador to South Africa Alon Liel, to discuss the Middle East. Pahad said he appreciated the opportunity to have open discussions with the local Jewish community and the Jewish Board of Deputies. Peace, he contended, should be achieved through a process of negotiation. Pahad was critical of Israel and saw Natanyahu's government as deviating from Oslo. "The guns of war must be silenced. . . . If we fail, extremists on all sides will celebrate" (Jewish Chronicle, October 1998). Liel shared Pahad's views and accused Netanyahu of "playing games" and causing Israel to lose her international standing. Liel was speaking in his position as political adviser to Ehud Barak, leader of Israel's Labor Party.

At the Cape Council of the Jewish Board of Deputies conference in August, national president Mervyn Smith spoke of the South African Jewish community being "hostages to the peace process. The government has long ago moved away from even-handedness on the Middle East." He believed both that there was an anti-Israel lobby in the high echelons of the ANC, and that Deputy President Mbeki was influenced in his views by the American lobby.

The visit of Yasir Arafat in August to address Parliament and attend the Non-Aligned Movement Summit in Durban generated substantial controversy for the Jewish community. In his speech thanking Arafat after his address to Parliament, ANC parliamentarian Gora Ebrahim equated Zionism with racism. In an official communication to the Speaker of Parliament, Frene Ginwala, Israeli ambassador Oren expressed outrage, noting that Ebrahim should have known that the United Nations General Assembly had revoked the 1975 resolution declaring Zionism as racism in 1991 (Citizen, August 14, 1998).

Discussing the Arafat visit, the SA Jewish Report called for "cool heads." "The blood has to leave the head before statements are rushed to the media. . . . What has to be remembered at all times is that while all Jews have an umbilical cord attached to our Homeland, they are nevertheless loyal, productive South Africans. There is definitely no conflict of interest" (SA Jewish Report, August 21, 1998).

Further insult was added when Ze'ev Luria, political counselor at the Israeli embassy, discovered that his invitation to attend the 113-nation Non-Aligned Movement Summit as an observer had been withdrawn. Luria was unable to get any form of accreditation, and the South African government was unable to
solve the problem due to pressures from Libya, Iran, and Syria. At the summit, President Mandela lashed out at the Netanyahu government, which he accused of blocking progress toward a peaceful solution. Predictably, Israel was the subject of much criticism from those present, and solidarity was expressed with the Palestinian people. Arafat called on the international community to "protect" the Middle East peace process, which he called an "international peace process."

The Jewish Board of Deputies indicated its distress and disappointment at the withdrawal of Luria's invitation, and Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed "dissatisfaction" with Mandela's speech. "Mandela's call to establish a Palestinian State was a step to dictate facts before negotiations, thereby making the negotiations void" (SA Jewish Report, September 11, 1998). Commenting on the debacle, the SA Jewish Report noted that Jews "will have to accept that the South African environment has become extremely Jewish-unfriendly. It seems as if a small band of militant Muslim extremists have managed to occupy the high moral ground, despite horrifying atrocities which they either deny, or blame on ulterior factors" (September 11, 1998).

In a wide-ranging interview with the president of Ben-Gurion University, Prof. Avishai Braverman, which took place in Cape Town before Yom Kippur, Mandela reiterated his wish to visit Israel, despite his criticism of the Israeli government's handling of the peace process. He also expressed his admiration for the South African Jewish community.

The Mercury (September 26, 1998) reported that financial support for the Islamic Propagation Centre in Durban came from the Saudi Arabian based Bin Ladin family.

Anti-Semitism

Although anti-Semitism was of marginal significance in South African public life during the period under review, a number of troubling incidents occurred. These included a Nazi salute and chanting of "Heil Hitler" by pupils of Glenvista High School at the start of a rugby match against King David High School; an inter-house sports meeting between two Afrikaans-speaking teams in Sasolburg where vulgar Holocaust associations were made; occasional swastikas painted on Jewish shops; and anti-Jewish letters to the press and e-mails to Jewish lists. According to the Board of Deputies, false letters about Jews and Israel were flooding the pages of the country's daily newspapers.

Of greater concern was an emergent Islamism in which anti-Israel sentiment very often spilled over into blatant anti-Semitism. This could be seen in the rhetoric associated with Al-Quds Day, during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, and in the slogans of Pagad (People Against Gangsterism and Drugs) and Mago (Muslims Against Global Oppression). Muslims calling in to radio talk programs and letters written to the press were often undisguised in their antipathy to Jews.
In December a pipe bomb exploded outside the Wynberg Synagogue in Cape Town at approximately 2 A.M. on a Friday morning. No one was injured, but extensive damage was done to the synagogue. It was thought that the pipe bomb was related to the bombing of Iraq by the United States and Britain. A statement issued by the Cape Council of the Jewish Board of Deputies pointed out that "the aim of the perpetrators is no doubt to bring aspects of an international political conflict to South Africa through acts of violence targeted at the local Jewish community (Cape Times, December 21, 1998).

Discussing the question of Muslim anti-Semitism in his inaugural lecture at the University of Cape Town in September, Prof. Milton Shain contended that a significant element among the Muslim community shared the conspiratorial ideas of the far right with regard to Jews: their anti-Zionist rhetoric revealed and displayed classic anti-Jewish motifs, and for at least some Muslims, Jews and Zionists had become diabolically evil. Shain nonetheless warned that Muslim hostility had to be put into perspective. Their population, although relatively large in the Western Cape, was only about 1.3 percent of the total South African population, and the vast majority of Muslims wished to share a multifaith and multicultural South Africa. Only a small minority, argued Shain, were intent on dragging the Middle East conflict, with all its hostility, into local politics.

**JEWISH COMMUNITY**

**Demography**

According to the preliminary results of the 1996 Census, the total South African population was 39.8 million, 4.2 million fewer than previously estimated. At the same time, the World Population Data Sheet projected a South African population of 45.7 million in 2010—21 percent fewer than estimated the previous year. The drop in population—both actual and projected—was related both to a decline in the fertility rate and to the impact of AIDS. It was estimated that one in eight South Africans had the AIDS virus.

According to the 1996 Census, the white Jewish population of South Africa was 55,734; however, an estimate of closer to 70,000 was probably more accurate. Either way, the Jewish population had declined significantly: in the 1991 Census, the estimated Jewish population was between 92,000 and 106,000.

David Saks, research officer at the Jewish Board of Deputies, adjusted the white Jewish population total of the census upward to 69,573, based on several factors. For one thing, the question on "religion" in the census was optional, and "Judaism" was excluded from the options, so that respondents had to write in "Judaism" if they wished to indicate their religion. Also, approximately 17 percent of the total population did not indicate any religion. Allowing for a similar proportion of Jews doing the same, and adjusting the figures accordingly, he arrived
at a white Jewish population of 65,023. In addition, Saks noted that census figures were widely considered to be too low, and that a total South African population of 43 million was more realistic. If this were the case, the Jewish population should be further adjusted upward by about 7 percent, resulting in a final total of 69,573.

In addition to the figure for white Jews, the census reported 10,449 black Jews; 1,058 coloured Jews, and 359 Indian Jews. Initially it was thought that the black Jews belonged to the Lemba group in the Northern Province, but this was not entirely certain. There were an estimated 40,000 Lemba in all of southern Africa who claimed their origins from a Jewish tribe in Sana'a, Yemen. The claim was greeted with skepticism by Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris, who said they had failed to substantiate their Jewish origins and connections. Prof. Jocelyn Hellig, of the University of the Witwatersrand's department of religious studies, noted that the Lemba had pressed for affiliation for 15 years but had failed to be accepted by Jewish religious authorities on halakhic grounds. She believed the Jewish Board of Deputies should engage with the Lemba and investigate their claims.

It was estimated that an average of 1,500 Jews had emigrated each year over the past three years. Some of this immigration, according to Seymour Kopelowitz of the Jewish Board of Deputies, had been offset by Jews returning to South Africa. Of those emigrating, 50 percent chose Australia, followed by North America, Israel, the United Kingdom, and New Zealand. Kopelowitz noted that Israel's position on the list was not attributable to aliyah by South Africans but to Israelis returning to the Jewish state. Kopelowitz also pointed to internal Jewish migration from Johannesburg to Cape Town, "because of the perceived lower rate of crime and the superior quality of life" (SA Jewish Report, May 12, 1998). Marlene Bethlehem, national chairwoman of the board, added that Orthodox marriages were on the decrease and divorces were rising. Despite the declining Jewish population, Bethlehem remained upbeat and believed that the Jewish community "will not fail and will survive" (SA Jewish Report, July 28 1998).

The impact of emigration on the community could be seen in the decline of members and donors to such organizations as the Jewish Woman's Benevolent Society and the Durban Jewish Club.

Communal Affairs

Financial rationalization, security, and the need to establish sound relations with the wider population dominated the Jewish communal agenda. Among the priorities of the Jewish Board of Deputies were monitoring acts of anti-Semitism and safeguarding the rights of Jews, as South African citizens, under the new constitution. In pursuit of these objectives, the board maintained contact with government and public officials and informed opinion makers, the press, and politicians on issues relevant to the Jewish community.

In June the board indicated that it planned to reduce its operational budget by
10 percent. According to Marlene Bethlehem, the "old donor base is disappearing. In recent years this historically small community has been losing as many as 250 families—or roughly a 1,000 members per year—and the community is aging. As a result, there has been a falling off of subscription fees to the Board which are decided in proportion to the size of each of the 107 affiliated organizations that make up the Board's membership.” Cost cutting, said Bethlehem, was to be combined with efficiency.

In order to streamline costs, in October the South African Zionist Federation, the Jewish Board of Deputies, and the Israel United Appeal/United Communal Fund (IUA/UCF) established a joint commission to create a single administration for the three groups. Under the new plan, each organization would continue to follow its own agenda and maintain its own identity. The SAZF would sell its seven-story building in the Johannesburg central business district, a building that had been unoccupied since August 1994, following the SAZF move to the northern suburbs of Johannesburg.

The progressive Jewish organization Gesher (Bridge), which promotes contacts between Jews and the wider South African society, postponed its vote on whether to affiliate with the Board of Deputies. One faction feared the loss of independence and questioned whether the board was a democratically run organization. Vice-chairman Steven Friedman and chairman Geoff Sifrin were reelected to their positions.

Numerous events were held to celebrate Israel’s 50th jubilee. In Cape Town over 6,000 people attended a glittering Yom Ha’atzma’ut production, “A Time to Rejoice.” The occasion was marred by Muslim protests (see above).

Community Relations

Jewish communal institutions continued to engage with the wider society. An umbrella body, Tikkun, which brings together Jewish organizations working to help the disadvantaged in South Africa, continued to mobilize Jewish community resources in the areas of health, welfare, education, youth, agriculture, business, and sport. Herby Rosenberg was appointed CEO of Tikkun.

The Jewish community and Judaism were represented by Chief Rabbi Harris at a meeting of the National Religious Leaders’ Forum in Johannesburg in April. The forum aimed to create a moral lobby to deal with corruption in society and to enable the various religious communities to speak with one voice on issues of common concern. In October the National Religious Leaders’ Forum convened a “Moral Summit” in Johannesburg at the request of President Mandela. The summit brought together all the major religious groups in South Africa as well as political representatives of major political parties. A code of conduct for persons in positions of responsibility, called the Ubuntu Pledge, was agreed upon. (Ubuntu means “humanness,” an African concept conveying the sense that “people are people through other people.”) Rabbi Harris warned the summit to be
aware of the "chasm between principle and practice." Rabbi Hillel Avidan, of the Association of Progressive Rabbis, said that the goals of the summit and the Ubuntu Pledge were compatible and that he would encourage congregations to accept the pledge.

In a wide-ranging interview in the *SA Jewish Report* (May 11, 1998), Nobel Peace Prize winner Archbishop Desmond Tutu praised those Jews who had played a significant role in the struggle against apartheid and who had involved themselves in social betterment programs. At the same time, he contended that since South African Jews (together with all whites) had reaped the benefits of apartheid, they should consider paying reparations to the victims. "They've [Jews] made a wonderful packet in South Africa and, as every white person benefited whether they liked it or not, it would be wonderful for the process of healing," he said.

Cape Town Jews sent a warm "mazel tov" to President Mandela on the occasion of his 80th birthday on July 18. Jack Tworetzky, chairman of the Cape Council of the Board of Deputies, wrote to the president expressing "this community's warm appreciation of the manner in which you have always made yourself available to deal with issues of concern to the Jewish people in the Western Cape in particular and the Republic of South Africa in general. . . . The Jewish community applauds you for your efforts to democratize this country and is grateful that you have been spared to see a successful culmination of your struggle for liberation" (*Jewish Chronicle*, August 1998).

In August the Cape Council conference highlighted the need to restructure the Cape Town Jewish community. Also discussed were security hazards in the wake of increasing militance on the part of the Muslim population. A resolution was passed "to establish a forum for dialogue between members of the Muslim community and Jewish community to educate Jews and Muslims about each other's community and to dispel misconceptions that lead to stereotypes within each community about the other." The conference also created a Communal Involvement Forum (CIF), led by Brenda Stern, to develop and train young leaders.

**Religion**

Messianic Jews, commonly known as Jews for Jesus, stepped up their drive for new recruits. University campuses and Johannesburg Jewish neighborhoods, Jewish day schools, and even old-age homes were targeted. Commenting on the upsurge in this activity, Rabbi Graeme Finkelstein, head of the countercult Jewish group "Jews for Judaism," which monitored messianic Jewish organizations, said the increased missionary efforts were related to the approaching millennium. In the view of Avi Krawitz, national president of the South African Union of Jewish Students (SAUJS), Jewish communal leaders were underestimating the extent of the threat (*SA Jewish Report*, May 22, 1998). In June Jews for Jesus was banned at the University of the Witwatersrand.

After more than 30 years in Yeoville, Johannesburg, the headquarters of the
Union of Orthodox Synagogues (UOS) announced that, in line with other communal institutions, it was moving to the northern suburbs. The move was not motivated by security concerns.

A new ultra-modern, multifaceted Mizrachi/Bnei Akiva Kollel was established in Glenhazel, Johannesburg. It was announced that a new Great Park Synagogue was to be built in Glenhove Road, Johannesburg. The Oxford Synagogue in Johannesburg was experiencing financial pressure due to declining membership.

Rabbi Ady Assabi of the Shalom Independent Movement in Johannesburg was moving to Israel. The congregation, which was affiliated with the World Council of Conservative Synagogues, was founded after Assabi broke away from the Reform movement in 1993. The synagogue building was sold to the Lubavitch Association of South Africa, and David Alswang, chairman of the Shalom Independent Movement, said the congregation would be looking for smaller premises.

Rabbi Simon Harris, formerly of the Marble Arch Synagogue in London, was appointed to the Great Synagogue, Gardens, Cape Town; Rabbi Chaim Willis was appointed executive director of Aish HaTora; and Harold Novick was appointed the new chairman of the United Orthodox Synagogues (UOS).

Geoff Ramokgadi was the first black South African to register with the Johannesburg Beth Din for conversion to Judaism.

The newly passed Divorce Amendment Act (Section 5A) empowered the courts to refuse to grant a decree of civil divorce until a religious divorce (get) was obtained. The new legislation would remove the barrier preventing a woman from remarrying because her husband refused to grant her a get. Under the new act, a judge could no longer claim that the get condition was a religious matter and therefore beyond the jurisdiction of the court.

Education

According to David Saks, research officer at the Jewish Board of Deputies, the collapse of apartheid had resulted in a boost for Jewish education. Fears of falling standards in state schools meant a steady exodus of pupils from these schools to private colleges and the Jewish day schools. Despite emigration, therefore, enrollment in Jewish day schools had remained stable and even showed a slight increase in the last few years. Three out of four Jewish children attended these schools—a total of 7,443 out of the estimated 9,850 Jewish children of school age. The schools were concentrated in Johannesburg and Cape Town. The sole exception, a school in Port Elizabeth, survived only because the majority of its pupils were not Jewish. The schools range from tiny splinter institutions like the Yeshiva Maharasha to large day schools like King David High School in Johannesburg. In ideology they encompass the strictly Orthodox (e.g., Yeshivas Toras Emes), the modern/centrlist Orthodox (Yeshivah College), and the national-traditional (King David Schools and the United Herzlia Schools).
A perennial cloud over the Jewish day-school horizon was funding. According to Cyril Linde, financial director of the South African Board of Jewish Education (SABJE), subsidies from the state could no longer be relied upon. This meant that Jewish parents were doubly burdened, having to pay school fees and government taxes and receive diminishing assistance from the government. In April a government White Paper effectively cut off state funding for private schools, beginning in April 1999. Under the new formula, any school that charges more than two and a half times what it costs the government to educate a child will not be eligible for state funding. According to Leon Kawalsky, chairman of the SABJE, King David School will not qualify for government funding. Kawalsky argued that as taxpayers, those choosing Jewish education were justified in expecting that a portion of their tax money be returned in the form of education for their children. At one time the Jewish day schools received 45 percent of costs, but this percentage had steadily decreased. Kawalsky anticipated difficult times ahead, not only for the Jewish day schools but for all Jewish communal institutions. Emigration, which by and large involved the wealthier, best-qualified members of the community, would have a continuing impact in this area.

The Rabbi J. L. Zlotnik-Avida Hebrew Teachers' Seminary in Johannesburg was closed due to financial constraints experienced by the South African Board of Jewish Education. Meish Zimmerman, head of Jewish studies at the board, said that student numbers had dwindled. The closure followed the closure of the Jewish Students University Program in 1996. The seminary was established in 1947 by Rabbi Jehuda Leib Zlotnik, from Poland.

**Culture**

Building began in March of the Cape Town Holocaust Centre. Myra Osrin, chairwoman of the Holocaust Memorial Council, announced that the center would comprise a 205-square meter exhibition, a large seminar room, a reception lobby, an administrative office, and a library as well as computers and other research and study facilities.

It was also announced that Mendel Kaplan, former chairman of the Jewish Agency, would fund the building of a South African Jewish Museum at the site of the Gardens Synagogue in Cape Town. Vivienne Anstey was appointed director, and international and local specialists are involved with the design. The museum will form part of an existing revamped campus, which will house the Jacob Gitlin Library and the Cape Town Holocaust Centre. It will open in early 2000.

The Kaplan Centre at the University of Cape Town, in association with the Mayibuye Centre at the University of the Western Cape, mounted a major photographic exhibition, “Looking Back: Jews in the Struggle for Human Rights and Democracy in South Africa.”

The *SA Jewish Report*, a weekly newspaper, began publication in May, under the editorship of Janine Lazarus. An opening editorial, “SA Jewry has much to
offer," noted that the birth of the new publication was a symbol of commitment on the part of a Jewish community, which has "something strong, vibrant and universal to offer" (SA Jewish Report, May 15, 1998).

**Publications**

Some noteworthy new publications of Jewish interest, all nonfiction, were *Antisemitism* by Milton Shain; *A Life at Law: The Memoir of IA Maisels, QC*, by Israel Maisels; *The Fraenkel Saga* by Clara Friedman-Spits; and *Final Postponement: Reminiscences of a Crowded Life* by Cecil Margo.

**Personalia**

Dayan Gross was appointed executive director of the Cape Council of the Board of Deputies in August. He replaced Ian Sacks, who retired. Gross was educated at Rhodes University in South Africa before completing a master's degree in Jewish communal service at Brandeis University in the United States.

Charles Loeb was elected Grand President of the Hebrew Order of David, which was founded in 1904 to assist immigrants from European countries. Dina Saffer was elected chairwoman of the South African Union of Jewish Students.

Prominent industrialist and philanthropist Robert Kaplan received Keren Hayesod's new Yakir Award at a ceremony in Jerusalem; Michael Katz, tax expert, professor of law, and former president of the Jewish Board of Deputies, received an honorary law degree from the University of the Witwatersrand.

Among prominent South African Jews who died in 1998 were Adele Searll, communal personality and fund-raiser in the fight against drug abuse; Olga Horowitz, well-known journalist; Arthur Markowitz, writer and former editor of the *SA Jewish Times*; Minna Levitas, communal fund-raiser and leader of a team from South Africa that joined the Joint Distribution Committee working in the DP camps in Europe in 1946; Xavier Piat, Holocaust survivor and renowned philatelist; Gerald Gordon, lawyer, soldier, politician, author and champion of civil rights; Rabbi Irma Aloy, doyen of the rabbinal fraternity of South Africa; Clara Friedman-Spits, author and one-time curator of the Cape Town Jewish museum; and Rhona Stern, noted sculptor and writer.

MILTON SHAHN