Hopes for meaningful change in Mexico were frustrated in 1998, as deep-seated problems continued to plague the country. The death in April of internationally acclaimed poet-politician Octavio Paz highlighted the lack of visionary leadership needed to take the country smoothly into the next millennium. Until his last illness, Paz remained part of the political life of the country, offering a vision of cultural harmony, even while criticizing the political system.

In April Mexico participated in the Second Summit of the Americas in Chile, at which 34 countries in the Western Hemisphere tried to create the world's largest free trade zone. Goals were set for the year 2005. The Mexican polity, however, was still far from solving its own problems. The adoption in 1997 of a new voting system had produced the first signs of national political pluralism, but democracy was still far from being realized.

The dialogue with the indigenous people of Chiapas, in its fifth year, remained at an impasse after the massacre of more than 40 Chiapans in a church in December 1997 by paramilitary groups sympathetic to the government. The proliferation of political voices in that state made negotiations difficult. In March President Ernesto Zedillo sent proposals to Congress designed to give the people of Chiapas greater self-rule and autonomy; however, passage of such measures was contingent on their not infringing on the accepted provisions of the constitution regarding national sovereignty, unity, land ownership, and other provisions.

Economically the country seemed able to stand its ground through the upheavals affecting the ailing Asian economy and other markets. Foreign investment in 1998 was $10.5 billion, 10 percent higher than the previous year, with over half coming from the United States. However, at the end of the year, faced with mounting internal economic problems, the government increased taxes, raised the prices of local oil consumption and electricity, and even lowered the subsidy on corn, which affects the price of tortillas, the staple food of the country. These measures came after three budgetary adjustments: in January, oil prices were revised...
downward from $15.5 to $13.5 per barrel; in March the oil barrel price went further down to $12.5; and by June a comprehensive oil export reduction was imposed, reducing net production to 200,000 barrels per day. Even with all these measures, the budget deficit of 1.25 percent of GDP for 1998 fiscal year remained unchanged.

The most serious social problem was crime; it affected the whole population regardless of social class and created a pervasive and paralyzing fear everywhere. The causes included both police complicity with the drug cartels, which had infiltrated the northern states and the largest urban centers of the country, and the inability of the police to control the proliferation of pickpockets and armed gangs who carried out theft, kidnapping, rape, and murder in broad daylight. Mexico City was the most embattled area: with its 8.5 million inhabitants in the Federal District plus another ten million outside the district lines, sheer numbers aggravated the problem exponentially. The promise given by Mayor Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas when he took office in 1997, “to control the city in 100 days,” evaporated very quickly. The first two weeks in November alone saw an increase of 20 percent in the city’s crime rate, to the dismay and fear of the general population.

In foreign relations, Mexico continued to cooperate with the United States to develop cooperative strategies in the hope of stemming the drug traffic.

Israel and the Middle East

President Zedillo designated Juan Antonio Mateos Cicero, former Mexican ambassador to Kenya and Tanzania, as ambassador to Israel, replacing Jorge Alberto Lozoya. Javier Treviño, undersecretary for international cooperation, visited Israel in February to strengthen bilateral relations. Former Israeli prime minister Shimon Peres visited the Mexican Jewish community in the same month.

The renewal of peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians was covered in the media, but in general, events in the Middle East received moderate attention in 1998.

In June the Mexico-Israel Institute, celebrating its 50th anniversary in conjunction with the 50th anniversary of the State of Israel, presented the Mexico Israel 1998 Cultural Award to 25 people distinguished in a variety of fields. Recipients included David Amato, columnist for The News and Novedades and winner of the Order of the Aztec Eagle, Mexico’s highest decoration given to foreigners (Amato is an American Sephardic Jew, resident of Mexico for 35 years), who had fostered exchange programs with Israel. Other recipients were former President Miguel de la Madrid; politician Miguel Aleman Velazco; philanthropist Max Shein Heisler; ambassadors Jorge Alberto Lozoya and Rafael Rodriguez Barrera; economist Jesús Rodriguez y Rodríguez; architect Pedro Ramirez Vázquez; television news anchorman Jacobo Zabludovsky; former oil company director Francisco Rojas; philanthropist Alejandro Saltiel Suzette; historian Victoria Cohen; surgeon Jaime P. Constantiner; writer Eduardo Feher; historian Ali-
cia Gojman de Backal; director of Tribuna Israelita Eugenia Hoffs; historian Enrique Krauze; physician Marcos Moshinsky; painter Leonardo Nierman; activist Sergio Nudelstejer; TV director José Maria Perez Gay; sociologist-journalist Esther Shabot; and surgeon Jacobo Zaidenweber. Many of the original founders of the institute, distinguished personalities in the arts, letters, and politics of the country, mostly deceased, were honored posthumously.

In February Mexico hosted the 11th annual forum, “Three Women: Three Expressions,” featuring three Israeli academics from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem: Rachel Nechushtai, a botanist who works with pharmaceutical companies; Ronit Nativ, an expert on hydrogeology and water contamination; and Ada Zohar, a psychologist who specializes in genetic behavior. In addition to speaking, the women met with Mexican officials in their fields and lectured at universities. Dr. Leo Joskowics of the Institute of Computer Science at the Hebrew University lectured to 60 second-year students of the Anahuac University. Dr. Carlos Montemayor of the Anahuac University traveled to Israel to teach as part of the recently established (1997) Rosario Castellanos Chair in Literature, named for the former Mexican ambassador, at Tel Aviv University.

Mexican and Israeli medical experts met on several occasions during the year, some of the gatherings arranged by one or more groups of “Friends” of Israeli institutions. A conference on the political situation in the Middle East was held December 1–3, a collaboration between Tel Aviv University, the Colegio de Mexico, and the Ministry of Foreign Relations. The Itzjak Rabin group, a new organization devoted to promoting peace among all peoples, invited Israeli and Palestinian professors, Edy Kaufman from Hebrew University and Manuel Hassasian from Bethlehem University, to speak on issues related to peace. Dr. Adolfo Roitman, Israel Museum curator and expert on the Dead Sea Scrolls, visited Mexico as a guest of the Ministry of Exterior and the Colegio de México.

Israeli ambassador Moshe Melamed was kept busy with celebrations of Israel’s 50th anniversary, organized by a committee headed by Lizzet Mussali. Among the many cultural events offered was an exhibit in the Palacio de Bellas Artes on Israel’s new Supreme Court building. A widely seen television program about Israel today, presented by now retired television personality Jacobo Zabludovsky, was well received.

Anti-Semitism

Two negative incidents in the national press were surprising: one, in June, was a notorious article by Carlo Cocchioli linking President Bill Clinton’s personal problems to the Jews. Cocchioli argued that the failure of the U.S. Jewish community to dissociate itself from Monica Lewinsky, a Jew, was proof of Jewish involvement in the scandal. Recognized Jewish journalists and private persons protested Cocchioli’s analysis in the press. Journalist Miguel Angel Granados Chapa denounced two other gratuitous anti-Semitic articles that appeared on Au-
gust 31, one by Eduardo del Rio and the other by Juan Jose Rodriguez Soto. The latter, who had been promoting himself as a candidate for the year 2000 presidential contest, reiterated his promise to control what he called “Jewish power” and to fight the “exaggerated” stories of Jews under Hitler, their problems in the UN, their sinister intentions toward the Palestinians, and all the self-inflicted problems that Jews attempt to dump on others. Rodriguez Soto even suggested that to solve all of Mexico’s problems, one needed to control the international Jewish-Zionist conspiracy rooted in Jewish control of the mass media and the Mexican political system.

In November a swastika was painted on a staircase wall at the Iberoamerican University together with slogans against Jews.

**JEWISH COMMUNITY**

**Demography**

Mexico remained home to the third largest Jewish community in Latin America, after Argentina and Brazil, and followed by Uruguay and Venezuela, both with equal numbers of Jews. There are an estimated 40,700 Jews in Mexico, most living in Mexico City, but also in Monterrey, Guadalajara, Tijuana, and a few families in Yucatan and now also Cancun. Although the numbers seem stable, a number of families have left the country, some to the United States, others to Canada. In addition to anecdotal reports of this migration, Jewish schools have reported changes in enrollment as families have left the country. The main reason given for the exodus is the high crime rate that has created a climate of fear.

**Communal Affairs**

The newly formed Consejo Ashkenazi de México, or Ashkenazi Community Council, continued to organize and promote itself as the legitimate successor to the dismantled Kehillah, the body previously representing Ashkenazi Jews. A new monthly journal, *Tu Mundo*, was established in an effort to clarify the changes that had taken place and to seek needed support. However, the response of the community appeared to be largely apathetic, and critics pointed to a lack of accounting of monies spent (by no means a new issue in the Kehillah) and insufficient explanations of changes to the public. The main justification for the 1997 coup and the changes proposed by the council of 12 members was the desire to unite all Ashkenazi communal organizations and religious congregations under one umbrella. A year later, however, there was no evidence that that had occurred. The Conservative Congregation Bet-El remained independent and showed no interest in deferring to or allying itself with the council. Many small organizations had not been assigned space in the new premises or allotted budgets. Within the
Orthodox camp there were indications of a breakdown in organization, with no clear agreement on the hierarchy of rabbinic positions.

One issue of particular concern to the council was the neglect of the young adult Jewish population, aged 18–30. This cohort includes high-school graduates who enter either the work force (a minority) or the university (the majority). Since neither had a niche within the communal organizations, their needs and interests were not being addressed. Another pressing issue for the council was the community’s economic situation, which had worsened under the NAFTA agreements, affecting in particular small business owners, and resulting in larger numbers of people needing psychological and financial support. The council was trying to organize services so as to reach those in need.

To honor the memory of the late Shimshon Feldman, the former president of the Ashkenazi Kehillah, a special ceremony was held at the Nidkheï Israel Community Center, at which his family donated a Torah scroll.

The tightly organized Sephardi communities focused on a variety of social service projects. At their initiative, and with indirect support of the Ashkenazi community as well as other smaller groups, they brought six major hospitals in the capital together to form the Grupo Angeles, offering “integrated health services,” such as kosher food and information banks.

The Jewish Community Council, with help from the Jewish Central Committee (the representative political body of Mexican Jewry), Tribuna Israelita, and the Mexican Union of Members of the Resistance and Survivors of the Holocaust, joined the Swiss Fund for Holocaust Victims, in collaboration with the World Jewish Organization for Restitution, seeking compensation for Mexican Holocaust victims.

On October 27, Tribuna Israelita, the human-relations and “defense” arm of the Central Committee, and the American Jewish Committee signed an affiliation agreement that would advance their joint interests in key communal issues without either relinquishing its autonomy. Both institutions base their work on research and analysis and advance their agendas through private diplomacy and public advocacy. The AJCommittee has similar affiliations with London’s Institute for Jewish Policy Research (1994) and the Australian/Israel and Jewish Affairs Council (1997).

Israel-Related Activities

As in the past, Yom Ha’atzmaut, Israel Independence Day, was widely celebrated, but this year with greater fanfare to mark the jubilee. On April 29, a multimedia concert was presented in the UNAM’s Netzahualcoyotl Theater. Other cultural events in this period included performances by the Anahnu Ve’atem dance group and the Kibbutz dance troupe; the Latinamerican Quartet with violinists Saúl and Aarón Bitrán, cellist Alvaro Bitrán, and violinist Javier Montiel; and several Klezmer groups.
A number of events took place in the fall: a film festival was part of the Jornadas Culturales Judeo Mexicanas; paintings and sculpture by Jewish Mexican artists were exhibited at the Mexico-Israel Cultural Institute; and a festival of dance and music was offered in the Parque México. The Sephardi Zionist Organization and the Sephardi community organized a celebration called Luna Park in the Hebrew-Sephardic school; the Monte Sinai and Maguen David communities, with the Sephardic School and the Jewish National Fund, celebrated the Israeli anniversary with singer Jo Amar and dancers of the Aviv Festival. The Museo del Chopo presented an exhibit of works by Israeli-Canadian artist Dorrit Yacoby, a joint effort with the Israeli and Canadian embassies and the Mexican-Israeli Institute.

The Mexico-Israel Cultural Institute opened its new quarters at República del Salvador #41, in the old center of town, with a photo and document exhibit, “The Jewish Presence in Mexico,” and an exhibit on “Jerusalem, Traditions and Festivities, and Festivities of Jews and Israel Today.” The work of Ethiopian Israeli artist Tzagaye Barihum was exhibited in Mexico in April, arranged by the Sport Center and ORT.

A special ceremony was held in December to recognize the effort of intellectuals, writers, and politicians who created the Mexican Pro Jewish Palestine Committee in 1945. In Jerusalem, during the Week of the Hebrew Book, the Israeli Association of Writers in the Spanish Language offered a special presentation and workshop on Octavio Paz.

Education

The Universidad Hebraica, which opened in 1989 as the successor to the older Yiddish Teachers Seminary, and whose purpose is to help further the education of teachers within the community, continued to offer courses and degrees. Its faculty, led by rector Asia Levita, includes teachers from abroad who give short-term courses. The school’s degrees are recognized by the Ministry of Education in Mexico, UNESCO, and the Ministry of Education in Israel (since March 1997). It offers undergraduate and graduate degrees in fields such as cognitive psychology, philosophy of science, applied mathematics, anthropology, and human development, in addition to specialized education and Jewish studies courses. The school has about 500 part-time students at the diploma level and about 84 full-time BA students.

The Colegio Israelita de México, the first Jewish day school in Mexico to incorporate Yiddish and Hebrew in the curriculum, celebrated 50 years of the founding of its high school. Joined by the Friends of the Hebrew University, in March the school offered a week-long series of symposia, with Howard Dichter, Zeev Mankowitz, Miguel Abruch, and Enrique Krauze among the guest speakers. Students also took part in the programs.

Nearly all Jewish schools reported slight losses in student enrollment due to
emigration. The two newest schools, Atid and Gan Montessori, reported increased enrollment. Atid was building a new school; Gan Montessori, which started only last year with 20 students, had 64 for 1998 and was expecting 81 in 1999. These schools used little Hebrew and were not yet connected to the Va’ad Hahinukh, the education committee of the Community Council.

In June the CEJ (Center for Jewish Studies) offered courses at the Bet El Congregation on “The Jewish Communities in Mexico: From the Traditional World to the Postmodern. Challenges for the New Millennium.”

Community Relations

Public school No. 15 in Mexico City, known as the Albert Einstein School, celebrated its 50th anniversary this year. It was created by the Jewish community in 1948, after the then president of Mexico requested help in building schools for underprivileged children. To date, some 90,000 children have studied in this middle school. The president of the Central Committee, Isaias (Ishie) Gitlin; the delegate of the Miguel Hidalgo region, Jorge Abraham Fernandez Souza; and the Mexican Council of Jewish Women were all there to mark the occasion. Representatives of the Colegio Hebreo Sefaradi, Colegio Israelita de México, and students of the school performed for the attendees.

The Jewish Journalists and Writers Association organized a commemoration in April of the 60th anniversary of a little-known historical episode: a speech delivered by President Lázaro Cárdenas to the League of Nations, protesting the German invasion of Austria, the Anschluss, of March 12, 1938. Prof. Friedrich Katz of the University of Chicago lectured on “Cardenas and Fascism: The Austrian Case” in the University House of the Book, UNAM. Austria had shown its appreciation of the Mexican government’s support by naming a square in Vienna Plaza México. The events were coordinated by Dr. Ariel Kleiman, who was also a participant, with Gilda Waldman, both on the faculty at UNAM. Walter Frisch, a member of the Austrian Center in Mexico, offered his own recollections of the episode.

On April 28, WIZO members organized a celebration of Children’s Day at the IESSSESTASNCIA Rosario Castellanos, a day-care facility; they also continued their work with the primary school in Cuajimalpa they support.

A weeklong seminar was held in October to mark the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It was organized by Tribuna Israelita, the National University UNAM, and the UNESCO Committee for Human Rights.

For the first time, an active member of the Jewish community was elected to a high position in the Red Cross. Noemi Tiktin was elected vice-president of the Women’s Committee of the Red Cross for Mexico City. She had been working in the organization for 26 years through the Jewish-Mexican Volunteers.
Culture

Two major exhibitions took place this year. An exhibit of works by painter Tamas Szigeti, who studied in Hungary and in Mexico, opened on May 28 at the Sports Center. The Hungarian ambassador and other dignitaries attended. An event of larger scope, titled “Images of Polish Jews” opened June 24, in the presence of the president of Mexico, Polish and Israeli diplomats, and representatives of the UNAM University, headed by Chancellor Francisco Barnes de Castro. The Central Committee played a key role in coordinating the events, which were held in the old part of the city in the Antiguo Colegio de San Ildefonso. The exhibit presented a photographic record of Jewish life in this century up until World War II, organized by the Shalom Foundation of Warsaw. A program of events held in conjunction with the exhibition included a series of conferences with participants Judith Bokser, Alicia Gojman, Lázaro Azar Boldo, Ludwik Margules, Gilda Waldman, and Raquel Kleinberg; a dialogue among Mexican Jewish writers Margo Glantz, Babina Berman, and Myriam Moscona; and a film festival of six Polish films, with comments by José María Espinasa.

The Habima Theater Festival, a forum for different performing groups, took place early in June at the CDI Sports Center. The jury was made up of well-known Mexican actors: Isaura Espinoza, Muriel Fouilland, Enrique Galván, Luis Miguel Huesca, Veronica Langer, and Carlos Pouliot.

On November 8, the Mexican Association of Friends of the Hebrew University presented a performance of Brundibar, an opera for children, by the children’s chorus of the Niños Cantores de Chalco, under the direction of Leszek Zawadka. Brundibar was written in 1938 by Hans Krasa for a competition organized by the then Czech minister of education and culture; it had its premiere in Terezin concentration camp in 1942, where it was performed 55 times and was extremely popular. In 1944 Krasa was deported to Auschwitz. The CDI Sports Center organized a literary contest open to all members of the community; it received over 100 submissions. Becky Rubinstein received an award from the state of Jalisco for her children’s book, illustrated by Santiago Rebolledo.

The Center for Documentation and Research of the Ashkenazi Community, which opened in 1993, had in its short existence developed a library, including photographs, magazines, and an oral history archive in Spanish, Yiddish, Hebrew, Russian, German, and Polish. Under director Alicia Gojman de Backal, the center was carrying out a number of research projects in Mexican Jewish history.

Jewish-Christian Relations

On August 23, the Committee on Jewish-Christian Relations of B’nai Brith hosted a get-together in honor of Norberto Rivera Carrera, archbishop of Mexico, in the Adat Israel Synagogue. B’nai Brith was reciprocating an invitation ex-
attended by Rivera Carrera after being appointed a cardinal. The chairman of the committee, José Kably, president of B’nai B’rith Enrique Elías, president of the Central Committee Ishie Gitlin, and Archbishop Rivera Carrera all spoke.

Publications

The first Yiddish book published in Mexico, *Drai Vegn* (Three Roads), in 1928, a collection of works by the poets Glantz, Glikovsky, and Berliner, was published in Spanish, with translations by Becky Rubinstein. *Anita Brenner: A Mind of Her Own*, written by her daughter, Susannah Joel Glusker, is the story of a woman whose archive has been an important source for the study of early Jewish life in Mexico. *Las Genealogias* (The Genealogy), by Margo Glantz, originally published in 1982, was revised by the author to pay homage to her mother who passed away in 1997, 15 years after her husband, poet Jacobo Glantz. Other new nonfiction books were *La Propuesta del Judaismo* (The Proposal of Judaism) by Bernardo Kligsberg; *El Convenio Iłusorio; Refugiados de Guerra en México (1943–1947)* (The Illusory Agreement: War Refugees in Mexico 1943–1947) by Gloria Carreño and Celia Zack; and *Lej Leja, Destino de una Familia* (Go Yourself, Destiny of a Family) by Peter Katz.

New works of fiction include *Muerte Súbita* (Sudden Death) and *La Bobe* (published in English as *Bubbeh*) by Sabina Berman; *Una palabra clave* (A Crucial Word) by Becky Rubinstein; *Las Tierras prometidas* (The Promised Lands) by Rosa Nissan; and *Las Fuerzas Secretas de los Cuarzos* (The Secret Powers of Quartzes) by Sara Maya de Toyber.

Personalia

Recently retired newscaster and media personality Jacobo Zabludovsky, who had received prizes in Spain, the United States, and Mexico, was honored in France by Catherine Trautmann, minister of culture, with the title “Commentator of Arts and Letters.” Sara London won an Honorary Mention with her painting “Number of Gold 1.618” in the First Olga Costa Biennial. Architect Carlos Pascal and *Interior Design* magazine received a prize from the International Interior Design Association (IIDA) in Chicago for his work on the Ramat Shalom mikveh (ritual bath). The architectural plans were published in *Designing with Spirituality*. The Eishel Old Age Home in Cuernavaca, Morelos, celebrated its 50th anniversary and honored benefactor Max Shein Heisler.

Biologist Simon Brailowsky Klipstein (1948–1998), a distinguished scientist affiliated with the UNAM, died in a car accident in May. He was the author of many books and 79 articles in his field.

Adina Cimet
Argentina

National Affairs

Under President Carlos Menem, the country's nearly 35 million inhabitants continued to be ruled by the Justicialist Party (PJ) in 1998. Already preparing for the elections scheduled for October 1999, the Alliance of former president Raúl Alfonsín's Radical party (UCR) and the Solidarity Front (FREPASO) held a primary in 1998, which resulted in Fernando de la Rúa, the UCR head of the city of Buenos Aires's autonomous government, becoming the opposition's presidential candidate. De la Rúa's ample victory over FREPASO's Graciela Fernández Meijide led the latter campaigner for human rights to accept the slot of Alliance candidate for the governorship of the key province of Buenos Aires, with FREPASO's Carlos Alvarez teaming up with De la Rúa as the opposition's aspiring vice-president. Spokespersons for both parties sought to assure investors that the existing one-to-one parity between the Argentine peso and the U.S. dollar would not be compromised by an Alliance victory in October 1999.

Although in principle Menem was barred from seeking a third term—based on the country's 1994 constitution, which he himself had helped craft—like numbers of his supporters, he regarded this as a matter of interpretation. Menem's wish not to leave the Argentine political scene was seen as standing in the way of a PJ decision on who should be the party's presidential candidate, but this did not prevent the Peronist governor of Buenos Aires province, Eduardo Duhalde, from campaigning for the job, with Ramón Ortega, a one-time PJ governor of the northwestern province of Tucumán, temporarily appearing as Menem's favorite for the position.

Israel and the Middle East

The Argentine government, increasingly disappointed with the Netanyahu government's lack of movement on the peace process, postponed a mooted presidential visit to Israel. On the other hand, Argentina's new ambassador in Tel Aviv, Vicente Espeche Gil, was the country's first career diplomat who has achieved a degree of fluency in modern Hebrew. A former head of the foreign ministry's Middle East department during Alfonsín's presidency and a one-time ambassador to Algeria, Espeche also served at the Holy See.

Argentina's support for the Palestine Authority (PA) combined modest contributions for the development of Palestinian infrastructure and occasional political advice. Argentina pledged a total of $1.2 million over three years for the...
PA at the international donors' conference organized by the United States at the State Department in Washington in November. Indeed, Argentina was the sole Latin American participant.

Many Argentines did not share Menem's approbation of the U.S.-led military action against Iraq and his interest in pursuing an Argentine role, albeit a non-combative one, in the Persian Gulf. Opposition parties and other Menem critics sought unsuccessfully to challenge in Congress and through the judiciary the right of the president unilaterally to pursue such a policy. The debate was colored largely by the shared conviction that a higher profile in the Middle East than had been historically the case until the early 1990s had turned Argentina into an obvious target for terrorist attacks.

Bearing in mind the attack in February 1992 against the Israeli embassy and the bombing of the Buenos Aires Jewish community headquarters (AMIA) in July 1994, generally believed to have been Middle East-inspired, it was clear that progress on the Palestinian-Israeli and American-Iranian peace fronts—factors well beyond Argentina's control—could still affect the security of the country and the welfare of its inhabitants. Against this background, the importance of goodwill gestures was highlighted during the Argentine president's tour of Lebanon in February 1998, which in part was to reciprocate Lebanese prime minister Rafiq Hariri's 1995 visit to Argentina, and which earned Menem credit among Lebanon's inhabitants, including those suspected, though it was by no means proved, of having had a role in the anti-Israel and anti-Jewish attacks in Buenos Aires that left a toll of some 120 deaths and several hundred wounded.

The view of anti-Menem critics that the visit was prompted by a wish to appease Hezbollah and the latter's regional supporters plainly ignored the basics of diplomacy, in this case the need to provide a semblance of equidistance to his country's clear pro-Israel Middle East shift, itself a functional consequence of Argentina's international alignment with the United States during his incumbency. It was also oblivious to the benefits reaped from trade with Lebanon, which had yielded an accumulated surplus of some $100 million in Argentina's favor since 1992. More importantly, the visit provided an opportunity to express Argentine backing for Lebanese territorial integrity: Menem's address to the legislature in Beirut focused on Argentine support for Security Council resolution 425, which calls for Israel's withdrawal from southern Lebanon.

Most importantly for Argentinians of Arab ancestry, whose nonscientific self-estimates include 1.5 million persons of Lebanese descent and 3 million of Syrian descent, was the fact that Argentine journalists, following Menem's visit, described Hezbollah as a political party rather than a Shi'ite terrorist organization. However, in Egypt, during the subsequent leg of his trip, Menem clearly condemned "the scourge of international terrorism" and confirmed that Argentina's security controls—including a more thorough screening of non-Israeli Middle Eastern visa applicants, as well as the planned introduction of a new computer...
link of all the country's border crossings with a central database—had been increased to avoid the possibility of foreign-inspired terrorist attacks.

Menem's tour also helped promote Argentina's exports to its Middle East markets, the foremost being Egypt, Iran, Israel, and Turkey. In Egypt, the Argentine president joined his Egyptian counterpart, Hosni Mubarak, in the opening of a 22-megawatt nuclear reactor, intended for the production of isotopes for medical use and personnel training, built by Invap, an industrial offshoot of Argentina's Bariloche-based Atomic Center. None of this, however, represented a detour from Argentina's Mideast policy since 1991, which remained largely pro-Israel.

With respect to Iran, Argentina's unilateral reduction of diplomatic relations after the AMIA bombing in 1994 was followed in May 1998 by a decision to downgrade diplomatic relations to their minimum expression, limiting the number of Iranian representatives in the country to a single chargé d'affaires. Tehran responded by suspending commodity and other purchases worth more than $658 million in 1997. The decision to downgrade relations followed the visit to Argentina of Louis Freeh, director of the FBI, and an FBI report suggesting the existence of evidence, though not conclusive, of Iranian involvement in the embassy and AMIA bombings. A statement by the Argentine foreign minister that he was awaiting "proof positive [of Iran's role] to cut off diplomatic relations" confirmed why links with Tehran were not severed after all. The decision to avoid such drastic action was also influenced by Iran's acknowledged shift to a more accommodating attitude toward the United States and its allies after the election of Mohamed Khatami as the country's head of state, and Argentina's understandable interest in safeguarding as much as possible its commercial position in Tehran at a time when the world price of commodities has been falling.

The Argentine government took pains to stress that suspicions of an Iranian role in the bombings were not meant to cast aspersions on Islam and its local followers, claiming instead that in Argentina the Muslim faith and Islamic culture enjoy "the utmost respect."

Holocaust-Related Matters

In August the Commission of Inquiry into the Activities of Nazism in Argentina (CEANA)—presented the second of three interim reports at a conference held at American University's Washington School of Law. The commission's charge included determining a reliable estimate of the war criminals who settled in the country and the conditions that made their arrival possible; establishing whether Nazi loot was stashed away in Argentina or shipped elsewhere from Argentine ports; and, at the instigation of the B'nai B'rith, assessing the impact of Nazism in Argentine society, government, and political culture.

CEANA's report referred to the existence of some 150 named war criminals
who had struck roots in Argentina, comprising German, Franco-Belgian, and Eastern European war criminals. This number was bound to rise as research in Argentine and foreign archives progressed. Included among the newly detected war criminals were Emile Dewoitine—the father of Argentina’s first jet aircraft, the Pulqui I, who was condemned in absentia by the French to a 20-year forced labor term in 1948, when he was already in Argentina—and Radislaw Ostrowsky and Ante Pavelic, the presidents, respectively, of the pro-Nazi regimes of Belorussia and Croatia. Surpassing previous knowledge on the subject, CEANA’s report also throws light on Perón’s links with collaborationist war criminals who created a society that sponsored the arrival of like-minded Europeans, who lived unmolested long after Perón was deposed.

The CEANA findings were discussed at the commission’s plenary session in Buenos Aires in November 1998. The meeting was opened by U.S. undersecretary of state Stuart Eizenstat, who declared CEANA “a world-class effort,” an evaluation repeated by Sidney Clearfield, B’nai B’rith’s executive vice-president, at the closing press conference. Other favorable comments were made by Sir Sigmund Sternberg, of the International Council of Christians and Jews; David Harris, executive director of the American Jewish Committee; Manuel Tenenbaum, executive director of the Latin American Jewish Congress (CJL); Adolfo Gass, a vice-president of Argentina’s Permanent Assembly for Human Rights and former Radical party senator; and Marcos Aguinis, a former CJL assistant deputy director and secretary of culture during the Alfonsín administration. Argentine foreign minister Guido Di Telia, who also addressed the assemblage, urged dissemination of the commission’s findings among students of all ages, as well as all Argentinians, since the lessons of the Nazi and other genocides could help prevent their recurrence. The plenary unanimously decided to extend CEANA’s mandate for a second year.

**NAZI GOLD**

In June 1998 the U.S. State Department released the so-called Eizenstat II report, a study of the Nazi-era performance of the various states that remained neutral during World War II, Chile and Ireland excepted. This confirmed the U.S. Treasury’s conclusion on Argentina of May 1946, namely, that “Argentina had not become a haven for looted gold or assets.” Moreover, Argentine documents scrutinized more recently by the U.S. embassy led to the following clarification: no gold “had come [to Argentina] from Axis sources,” a statement in stark contrast to an array of hitherto unsubstantiated claims that wartime transactions in gold between the Portuguese and Argentine central banks were a channel for laundering Nazi gold and that Peronist Argentina had forwarded 25 tons of Nazi gold to Paraguay. The Eizenstat report also declared: “nor were any caches of gems or art treasures looted by Germans officially uncovered in Argentina.”

Without ignoring the unique base for operations that Argentina had afforded
to Nazi agents in South America, and their smuggling out of the country “small quantities” of strategic materials needed by the Third Reich’s war machine, Eizenstat II acknowledged that Argentina, unlike the other neutral states under scrutiny, “did not play a significant role in sustaining the Nazi war effort.” Instead, Argentina was described as the Americas’ foremost recipient of Jews fleeing Nazi persecution during 1933-45, a period that saw the arrival of some 45,000 Jewish refugees, not all of them legally.

Pursuant to Argentina’s pledge at the London conference on Nazi gold to contribute funds to the Eizenstat-proposed compensation fund for Jewish and other victims of Nazism, a bill to that effect was drafted. While the legislature had yet to approve it, Argentina remained the sole Latin American contributor by the time of the Washington Conference on Nazi Era Assets in December 1998, with its proposed contribution of $300,000 exceeding that of some central and Eastern European states.

**Nazi War Criminals**

Argentina’s position as the Latin American state with the highest number of extraditions was confirmed in May by the judiciary’s expeditious approval of Dinko Sakic’s return to Croatia. Sakic was also sought by Yugoslavia because of the countless Serbs murdered at the Jasenovac concentration camp during World War II, run by the pro-Nazi Croatian regime. The case of this former camp commander, active during 1942-44, had already elicited a B’nai B’rith request to Croatian president Franjo Tudjman, in July 1995, to have him brought to justice.

Argentina’s evident interest in recent years in erasing the stigma of Nazism also resulted in a headline-grabbing, though unfortunately self-defeating, initiative. Aimed at securing the additional extradition of other former Ustasis in Argentina, the Wiesenthal Center first targeted Juan (Ivo) Rojnica—a Buenos Aires-based industrialist whom Croatian president Tudjman had originally sought to accredit as his country’s first ambassador to Argentina, in recognition of his role in promoting South American diplomatic recognition of the newly independent Croatian state. Solid evidence of Rojnica’s war criminality amounted to little more than his being the alleged signatory of a 1941 edict banning the free circulation of Serbs, Jews, and others in the region of Dubrovnik. Neither Croatia nor Yugoslavia, nor for that matter other countries with jurisdiction in such cases, sought to bring Rojnica to trial. Not surprisingly, Rojnica’s daughter protested her father’s innocence in Argentina’s largest circulation daily, while the Wiesenthal Center’s Buenos Aires representative was left in the unenviable position of having to admit in public that the center was still looking for convicting evidence.

The Wiesenthal Center’s admission prompted Rojnica to initiate legal action against Magda Drnasin, who had accused him of being a war criminal, in order to clear his name.

The second target was Sakic’s wife, Esperanza (Nada) Luburic Sakic, a former
commander of the Stara Gradiska concentration camp's female section. Evidence made available to the Argentine Interior Ministry by the Wiesenthal Center in Jerusalem led to her extradition, which had been requested by both Yugoslavia and Croatia and was granted to the latter, where she was flown back in October 1998. Not long after this, though, Mrs. Sakic's case was dismissed, with her release from custody generating no protests on the part of the United States, Israel, and other interested parties. Indeed, an evaluation by the American embassy concluded that Croatian justice had acted fairly in weighing the evidence against her.

The risks posed by claims unsubstantiated by evidence were also on display when Israel's ambassador Yizhak Aviran declared in June 1998 that there were "more war criminals, Nazis, and anti-Semites" in Bariloche, the city from which Erich Priebke had been extradited to Italy three years earlier. While the Israeli envoy's statement was on the mark insofar as Nazis and anti-Semites were concerned, his inability to identify the war criminals he had in mind lent credence to Bariloche mayor César Miguel's riposte: "The passion elicited by the subject of what happened with the persecution of Jews during World War II sometimes results in the loss of perspective, and in generalizations." That official reaction in Bariloche was not limited to Miguel's mild rebuff became evident when city councillors of all political stripes, including the ruling PJ and opposition UCR and FREPASO, supported a resolution directing the Argentine foreign ministry to request Aviran to furnish all the information he had on the subject. This was a polite, though barely concealed, sign of their irritation at the Israeli diplomat's earlier proclaimed inability to name names, and more generally perhaps at his comments over the years on issues that are not part of a foreign representative's bailiwick.

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL

In November 1998 a replica of the London monument to Raoul Wallenberg was dedicated in a central Buenos Aires square. It commemorated the rescue efforts in wartime Hungary of this Swedish diplomat who had also acted as a sort of Argentine foreign service official, inasmuch as Argentine interests in Berlin, Budapest, and other European capitals were represented by Sweden after Argentina's severance of diplomatic relations with the Axis early in 1944. The initiative for the memorial came from Sir Sigmund Sternberg, who in 1997 approached the Argentine foreign minister, Guido di Telia, and the head of the city of Buenos Aires's autonomous government, Fernando de la Rúa, to secure official funding as well as a site. The unveiling of the monument was presided over by the foreign minister, who took the opportunity to praise Simón Margel, a Jewish clerk of the former Argentine consulate in the wartime Hungarian capital, who was entrusted by the Swedes with the daily running of Argentine affairs and who saved numbers of fellow Jews. Other speakers included Sweden's commerce min-
ister, Leif Pagrotsky; Fernando de la Rúa; and Raoul Wallenberg's half-brother, Guy von Dardel. The ceremony was also attended by an array of Argentine and foreign diplomats and city of Buenos Aires officials, as well as representatives of ethnic and religious groups. Particularly noteworthy was the presence of Arab community representatives, among them religious leaders of Argentina's Orthodox, Muslim, and Druze communities, as well as lay leaders of the Buenos Aires-based Lebanese Club and the Cedars Foundation. In conjunction with the unveiling, the postal authorities issued a Wallenberg commemorative stamp.

Anti-Semitism

According to Antisemitism World Report, issued in London by the Institute of Jewish Policy Research and the American Jewish Committee, anti-Jewish manifestations decreased in 1998, after a peak recorded during 1996-97. However, this did not still fears of Judeophobia, especially after the collapse in 1998 of two Jewish-owned banks, Banco Patricios and Banco Mayo. (See below.) Banco Patricios's failure brought with it, among other losses, the evaporation of over $4 million of the monies contributed by the Argentine government toward the rebuilding of the AMIA headquarters. Even more disturbing was the fact that Banco Mayo, DAIA (the representative body of Argentine Jews), and the World Jewish Congress's Latin American constituent (CIL) were presided over by Rubén Beraja, a man who was regarded by many in the Jewish community as having set his bank's interests above his Jewish concerns; indeed, it was felt that for this reason he had failed to support investigations of the AMIA and Israeli embassy bombings as vigorously as some of the victims' relatives and human-rights activists would have expected. All this generated greater media interest in Beraja himself than in the irregularities surrounding Banco Patricios' collapse.

For the first time since antidiscrimination legislation was enacted in 1988, DAIA appeared as the aggrieved party in the trial of suspects accused of anti-Jewish activity. Originally suspected of being responsible for one of the vandalizations of a Buenos Aires Jewish cemetery, the defendants in question were instead prosecuted and convicted as disseminators of literature inciting to anti-Jewish hatred. The chief defendant, Jorge Russo, affiliated with the ruling Justicialist Party, was sentenced to prison for two and a half years; his codefendants—Aparicio Torres, Emilio Cañete, and Juan Núñez—were given shorter sentences. Since the four had been held in custody since 1996, the verdict meant they would all be released. DAIA's legal counsel, Jorge Kirshenbaum, declared himself satisfied with the outcome, an implicit recognition of the possibility that the four could have received lighter sentences. Russo and his codefendants, however, initiated legal action ultimately aimed at a Supreme Court ruling as to whether the entire process had not been vitiated by the trampling of their constitutional rights.

Contrary to the predictions of some doomsayers that Jews would shy away from
resorting to the aforementioned legislation, or that the judiciary would not allow such cases to proceed, Kirszenbaum, who for a short while served in 1998 as elected president of the left-of-center Jewish community group Convergencia (Convergence), also acted on behalf of DAIA in the case against Gen. Carlos Suárez Mason, who admitted to a Buenos Aires weekly that he was not free of anti-Jewish prejudice.

JEWISH COMMUNITY

Demography

The size of Argentine Jewry had been estimated in 1994 at 208,000 by the Hebrew University’s Institute of Contemporary Jewry, but some Jewish leaders regarded this figure as too low. In November 1998, during a visit to Buenos Aires, Jacob Kovadloff, the American Jewish Committee consultant on Latin America, and the Argentine Ashkenazi Jewish community (AMIA) held talks about the possibility of jointly sponsoring a new demographic study of Argentine Jewry, with Hebrew University demographer Sergio DellaPergola agreeing to undertake such an update once the requisite financing was secured.

Communal Affairs

The year 1998 was dominated by the collapse of two Jewish-owned cooperative banks—Banco Patricios and Banco Mayo—from which various Jewish institutions received a measure of support through overdraft facilities, commercial and soft loans, and/or grants. The failure of Patricios in March 1998, following the discovery of undocumented debts that were reported to the judiciary, and later that of Mayo, took place against the backdrop of banking activities worldwide being increasingly concentrated in the hands of fewer, larger, generally more efficiently run, privately owned credit institutions. (Mayo had been among the early beneficiaries of this trend, having absorbed six other banks in May-December 1995, and bidding successfully for Patricios in June 1998.) Although no depositor lost a single penny, not all the members of the respective work-forces were absorbed by successors after the change in ownership of Patricios and Mayo. Moreover, depositors seeking higher yields with Mayo’s offshore operations or through both banks’ informal operations in Argentina suffered heavily. Likewise, because some of the grants to institutions were recorded as loans, various Jewish bodies were left saddled with debts, which led several to seek assistance from the World Jewish Congress in New York. For its part, AMIA unsuccessfully sought Israeli and U.S. Jewish support.

Leaving aside the pain endured by numbers of employees and depositors, Patricios and Mayo’s collapse may have signaled the end of an era; without a drastic rethinking of the form and allocation of funds raised locally, the banks’ failure
was bound to result in the survival of only the economically fittest Jewish institutions. Indeed, this was the alarmist view of some, including Carlos Szraibman, the new DAIA administration’s secretary general, for whom both banks’ fate was akin to a third terrorist attack.

In fact, rather than being the result of terrorism, Patricios went under due to internal mismanagement and the withdrawal of some $25 million by a big depositor and potential buyer in February 1998. Mayo’s problems derived from the proposed sale of its credit-card operations to the Connecticut-based Newbridge fund falling through because of the latter’s losses in debt-ridden Russia. In both cases, the chain of developments triggered an unstoppable wave of withdrawals. Seeking to restore investors’ confidence, the Central Bank pumped some $326 million into Banco Mayo, a figure in excess of the latter’s assets and the highest level of assistance ever offered to an ailing credit institution since 1991. Some of the monies, the Central Bank later concluded, were “unacceptably” used to benefit firms belonging to Mayo shareholders and associates.

With the closing of Banco Mayo, Rubén Beraja, the high-profile president of both the bank and DAIA, was forced to give up all his communal positions. Briefly mentioned as a candidate for the vacated DAIA presidency was author Marcos Aguinis, a former CJL and Alfonsin administration official, whose bid, had he considered running, would have been supported by, among others, the Israeli ambassador. By year’s end, Beraja’s former secretary general, Rogelio Cichowolsky, secured the position. Far from being unanimously elected, Cichowolsky’s success was due to the support he received from different institutions (whose representatives choose the DAIA president on the basis of one institution-one vote), including the sports and social clubs he hailed from, as well as the Orthodox and Masorti (Conservative) Jewish movements.

The problems created by the loss of a third of government funds for the reconstruction of the destroyed AMIA headquarters, with the AMIA leadership appealing to Israel for aid, prompted the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem to dispatch a delegation to Buenos Aires to report on Argentine Jewry’s predicament in the aftermath of the bank debacle. The visit confirmed Israel’s traditional perception of Diaspora Jewry as a potential reservoir of immigrants for the Jewish state. Hence, the delegation urged the promotion of a system of Zionist education, rather than recommending that the lion’s share of funds raised for Israel be allocated for local use.

Journalist Herman Schiller, the late Masorti rabbi Marshall Meyer’s partner as co-founder of the Jewish Movement for Human Rights (MJDH) in the 1980s and more recently involved in the setting up of Memoria Activa, had his four-day-a-week “Memoria y realidad” (Memory and Reality) radio program on FM Chai (spelled Jai in Spanish) cut from two hours daily to single hour and later in the year terminated altogether. Although the management of the Buenos Aires Jewish broadcasting station ascribed both moves to business considerations, political factors were undoubtedly involved as well. Schiller took a consistently anti-Menem government line and was also quite critical toward official Israeli
policies. Several hundred listeners and other supporters protested the move. Some of them joined in setting up a Memoria y realidad human-rights organization, and together with a number of city of Buenos Aires lawmakers tried unsuccessfully to intercede on Schiller’s behalf with Chai proprietor Miguel Steuermann. A subsequent request to the Buenos Aires legislature that a time slot for a Schiller program be allocated on Radio Ciudad, the local government-supported AM broadcaster, was granted. This gave Schiller the opportunity to reach a potentially wider audience with his one-hour weekly broadcast on Saturdays night.

In September the finances of the Buenos Aires Jewish hospital Ezrah resulted in a drastic reduction in the number of beds, from 400 to 250, and prompted the institution’s management to fire over a hundred members of its staff. While the victims of these measures raised questions concerning the ethical probity of what they viewed as Ezrah’s self-perpetuating management, many factors contributed to the situation.

Memorials to the Bombing Victims

In September 1998, not long after the fourth anniversary of the attack against AMIA, a sculpture designed and donated by Israeli artist Ya’acov Agam was unveiled in the presence of community leaders, as well as relatives and friends of the victims, at the site where the Jewish community headquarters was being rebuilt. Unlike the competition organized by the sponsors of Project Hatikvah—the planned square to be developed with local and foreign donor support at the former Israel embassy site—the AMIA statue was commissioned from Agam directly. Without calling into question his credentials, some Argentine Jews would have preferred to see the commission go to a local artist, especially in a country that boasts such sculptors as Noemi Gerstein, who in the 1950s was one of the winners of the London-based Institute of Contemporary Arts competition for the design of a monument to the unknown political prisoner, and internationally renowned Marta Minujin, who three decades later created a pyramid of books in central Buenos Aires (to symbolize the freedom of thought that had been recovered after its severe curtailment by the military during 1976-83). In a decision to use local talent, Memoria Activa, an organization dedicated to the memory of those killed in the Israeli embassy and AMIA bombings, commissioned a memorial from Mirta Kupferminc that was erected in July 1996 in Libertad Square, where relatives and supporters of the victims met every Monday morning to demonstrate against the government’s apparent unwillingness to investigate the horrors.

Jewish-Christian Relations

In March 1998, Monsignor Justo Laguna, bishop of the greater Buenos Aires town of Morón, opened his cathedral for an ecumenical service for relatives and supporters of the Christian and Jewish victims of the attacks against the Israeli
embassy and AMIA, on the occasion of the sixth anniversary of the embassy bombing. Mario Rojzman, a Masorti rabbi of Beth El synagogue, who is also associated with Memoria Activa, participated in the service. He described the commemoration as a truly "historic" occasion.

A month later, Laguna and Rojzman went on a joint pilgrimage to Jerusalem and Rome, described in a volume of their reflections—*Todos los caminos conducen a Jerusalem . . . y tambien a Roma* (All roads lead to Jerusalem . . . and also to Rome)—as the first such sacred journey undertaken ever by a Latin American bishop and a rabbi. During their meeting with Pope John Paul II, they delivered a Memoria Activa letter requesting papal support for the group’s efforts to see the cases of both bombings resolved.

In October, Buenos Aires' First Methodist Church organized a dialogue on "Abraham, Faith, and Exile," with presentations based on Jewish, Christian, and Muslim sources, by, respectively, Masorti rabbi Daniel Goldman of Beth El; Catholic priest Hugo Mujica; Methodist bishop Aldo Etchegoyen; and Sheikh Abdul Karim Paz, director of the al-Tawhid Shiite Muslim mosque. All four religious leaders were also the first recipients of the Ecumenical Award for Dialogue and Social Justice, a new honor created by the Ecumenic Press (PE) news agency on its 15th anniversary.

As in previous years, in November B’nai Brith, the Catholic archdiocese of Buenos Aires, and AMIA sponsored a walk in support of the integration of handicapped persons. Later that month, *Kristallnacht* was commemorated at a B’nai Brith-initiated gathering in a Buenos Aires Catholic church, the basilica of Our Lady of Guadeloupe. The program included the reading of a text coauthored by Rabbi Leon Klenicki, a former Buenos Aires pulpit rabbi currently serving as the Anti-Defamation League's director of interfaith affairs.

In late 1998 the Argentine Episcopal Conference’s Commission on Ecumenism and Relations with Judaism and Other Creeds organized a two-day meeting to discuss the concept of spirit in Catholic, Jewish, and Muslim revealed texts. Part of a growing effort to familiarize the country’s clergy with Islam and its local leaders, and in the process recover for Argentina’s Catholic Church an important role in the construction of a pluralist society, the two-day event included presentations by Imam Mahmud Husain, director of the Buenos Aires-based Center of Islamic Studies; Masorti rabbi Abraham Skorka, rector of the Latin American Rabbinical Seminary; and Monsignor Luis Rivas.

Publications

April 1998 saw the publication of *Proyecto Testimonio* (Memorial Project), a two-volume selection of documents on Nazis and Nazism in Argentina. Arising out of research sponsored by DAIA, the first volume was compiled by Beatriz Gurevich and features documents which reveal that the Perón government had enlisted the support of alleged and convicted war criminals, as well as of other tainted Europeans, as “informal advisers” to the Immigration Directorate. Tes-
timonio's second volume was compiled by Paul Warszawski, who also authored an important analysis of Argentina's record on Nazi war criminal extraditions. The two volumes failed to support reports in the *New York Times*, dating back to 1993 and 1997 respectively, about researchers of DAIA having unearthed data on more than 1,000 Nazi war criminal suspects in Argentina. In fact, DAIA executive director Claudio Avruj clarified that his organization subscribes "to no figure that is beyond substantiation in evidence."

Another volume that did not substantiate the claims of the *New York Times* articles was *Perón y los alemanes. La verdad sobre el espionaje nazi y los fugitivos del Reich* (Perón and the Germans: The Truth about Nazi Espionage and the Reich's Fugitives) by Uki Goñi. The volume is noteworthy for its investigative journalism, but it contains a number of factual inaccuracies, such as the suggestion that Joseph Mengele arrived in Buenos Aires with an Argentine passport instead of, as has been proved, a Red Cross travel document (a fact that does not, however, contradict Peronist Argentina's welcoming attitude toward former Nazis).

Another volume on a similar theme was *War Criminals and Nazism in Latin America: Fifty Years Later*, a collection of essays drawn from a conference at the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, by a group of Argentina specialists—Sandra McGee Deutsch, Ignacio Klich, Ronald Newton, Leonardo Senkman, and Paul Warszawski—in addition to contributions by American University legal experts on the subject of Nazi and other war criminal trials, originally presented at a B'nai B'rith-organized symposium two years earlier.

Alejandro Bertocchi Moran's *El Graf Spee en la trampa de Montevideo* (The Graf Spee in the Montevideo Trap), a book about the German warship scuttled in the Rio de la Plata in 1939, marked the return to Nazi subject matter by one of Argentina's surviving nationalist publishing houses, Ayer y Hoy (earlier responsible for a biography of Martin Bormann and a single issue of a magazine devoted to Eichmann in Argentina).

*Memoria activa. 4 años de impunidad* (Active Memory: Four Years of Impunity) is a collection of speeches made in 1997–98 by relatives of the victims of the Israeli embassy and AMIA bombings, at weekly gatherings opposite Buenos Aires's foremost court building, as well as statements by local and foreign friends of Memoria Activa and human-rights campaigners.

*Arab and Jewish Immigrants in Latin America: Images and Realities*, compiled by Ignacio Klich and Jeffrey Lesser, is the first collection of academic essays comparing the experiences of both groups in Argentina and other countries. Raanan Rein's *Peronismo, populismo y politica. Argentina 1943–1955* (Peronism, Populism and Politics: Argentina 1943–1955) is a varied collection of essays, some of which appeared first in Hebrew, highlighting the importance of modern Latin American studies at Tel Aviv University. The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee-sponsored *En el mundo hay lugar para los dos. Una indagación acerca de la diferencia* (There Is Room for Both in the World: An Exploration of Difference) is a thought-provoking volume about difference and dissent by social psy-
chologist Juan Jorge Nudel, a highly respected Jewish community adviser on group and institutional dynamics.

Financial constraints, in effect the ripple effects of Banco Patricios's failure, led to the shutdown of the weekly newspaper Masorti, leaving Mundo Israelita, Comunidades, and La Voz Judía as the sole remaining Jewish weeklies/fortnightlies. The Jewish cable TV channel Alef, partly owned by Rubén Beraja, did not survive the financial turbulence following Banco Mayo's collapse. It was eventually sold to a group led by Fernando Sokolowicz, publisher of the daily Página 12.

**Personalia**

Presidential secretary Alberto Kohan (whose father was Jewish) and Foreign Minister Guido di Telia—who accompanied President Menem to Lebanon—were among the 36 Argentine recipients of Lebanon's National Order of the Cedar.

In November Joseph Domberger was given B'nai B'rith Argentina's Dignity and Justice award for his work in support of Latin American Jewish communities. The Latin American Jewish Congress did not award its Human Rights prize in 1998, but writer Simja Sneh received the organization's Intellectual Merit award.

Alberto Laniado, scion of a prominent Lebanese Jewish family active in Sephardic circles, died, at the age of 94, in June 1998. Felipe Yaryura, president of the Buenos Aires-based Lebanese Club, delivered the eulogy at the ceremony marking the 30th day after burial.

IGNACIO KLICH