

NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ Jewish leaders are growing impatient with what they say is the slow pace of negotiations regarding the return of Jewish assets deposited in Swiss banks during the Holocaust. The World Jewish Restitution Organization said it would press for a series of punitive economic actions against Switzerland if the talks are not accelerated. [Page 2]

■ Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian Authority leader Yasser Arafat met secretly in an effort to overcome obstacles to concluding a self-rule deal for Hebron. The Israeli prime minister said he and Arafat made progress, but failed to break their deadlock. [Page 3]

■ Residents near the Jewish settlement of Beit El removed seven mobile homes they erected in memory of two settlers killed by Palestinians last month. The Israeli Defense Ministry made the evacuation of the West Bank homes a condition for discussing demands to expand the settlement. [Page 3]

■ Police detained a right-wing extremist who threatened the Israeli officer who tackled Noam Friedman, the off-duty soldier accused of opening fire in the Hebron market. Meanwhile, police released a second man who was suspected of knowing of Friedman's plans. [Page 3]

■ Israel linked up to a U.S. missile warning system that will give the Jewish state more time to react if attacked. The system will help Israel intercept missiles at an early stage in their trajectory.

■ Germany and Iran suspended contacts to obtain information on captured Israeli navigator Ron Arad because of worsening ties between the two countries.

■ The archives of Arnold Schoenberg, one of this century's great composers, will move from Los Angeles to Austria. Some scholars, citing Austria's history of anti-Semitism, sharply criticized the decision by Schoenberg's heirs. [Page 4]

■ Workers for Israel Bonds in the United States are expected to return to work after ending their two-day strike.

AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD**Move over Barbie's CD-ROM;
Jewish IQ Baseball scores big**

By Faygie Levy

NEW YORK (JTA) — You sit down at your computer, hands on the keys. A baseball game is on the screen.

You step up to home plate. The pitcher throws the ball. Crack! You head around the bases as the crowd looks on.

Think this is an ordinary computer game? Think again.

This is Jewish IQ Baseball, a new generation of Jewish computer software. Unlike other baseball computer games, the player must correctly answer a question on Judaism in order to run around the bases.

Once available only at Jewish bookstores or through mail-order companies, Jewish software is now part of a growing market whose products are becoming increasingly available.

One such outlet is K kosher Komputer.

Located in the predominately Orthodox Jewish town of Monsey, N.Y., a suburb of New York City, K kosher Komputer is not your ordinary computer store.

There are no copies of Myst or Barbie's CD-Rom. Instead, K kosher Komputer fills its shelves with items such as Judaic Wizard, Jewish IQ Baseball and Where In Israel?

Jewish computer software is available at Jewish bookstores, but "it is not an important category," says Emanuel Fishman, co-owner of K kosher Komputer.

The fact that people "can actually see and work the software before they buy it" is one benefit of the store, Fishman says.

Created six months ago, K kosher Komputer was originally intended as a sales outlet for software designed by Torah Educational Software.

But it has since expanded and now sells software for all the major Judaic software companies.

A few years ago, only a handful of software was available for the Jewish computer user. Now more than 60 titles exist.

"The prices are dropping and the graphics are nicer," says Jeff Astor, K kosher Komputer's store manager.

Designed to educate

As in the secular world, Jewish software runs the gamut, from educational games to printing programs to advanced research tools for the scholar.

"People are looking to educate themselves in their homes," says Anna Young, the owner of the Jewish Software Center, a mail-order software company based in Los Gatos, Calif.

Young believes that the software is especially helpful to people in small communities. The software "helps people who don't have access" to other Jewish sources, she says.

Clients from as far away as Gibraltar and Japan take advantage of the wealth of mail-order and on-line companies now selling Jewish software.

"Pick any country in the world and we probably have someone in our database," says Barbara Singal, marketing director for the Chicago-based Davka Corp., makers of more than 50 Judaic software programs.

Instead of parents paying tutors, they can buy the software. "Invest once and it's a lifetime thing," says Chaya Teitelbaum, a sales representative at K kosher Komputer.

And since it's interactive, Teitelbaum adds, "kids respond to it better."

According to Young, she and other parents want to "show their kids playing Jewish software games can be fun."

Despite the fact that the games are fun, Fishman does not think that they could compete for children's attention in a regular computer store.

"Parents want to get these for their kids" even though "kids don't necessarily want them," Fishman said. "It's serious stuff."

Unlike secular computer games, most of the Jewish software games are designed to educate and reinforce learning.

Miriam Wallach was hoping to teach her nine nieces and nephews

something beyond Judaism when she recently bought them Jewish software. She said she wanted them to "become computer literate and learn how to use the keyboard and the mouse."

Although a large segment of software is geared toward kids, there are plenty of adult-oriented programs as well.

People doing serious religious study find the software indispensable. "I speak frequently and I need to quickly locate a Rashi or a phrase," says a rabbi, referring to the medieval talmudic commentator.

"This fills a need," he said as he was shopping at K kosher Komputer and testing Bar Ilan's Judaic Library.

The Bar Ilan software is one of the most comprehensive compilations of "seforim," or Jewish books. More than 400 seforim are available on one CD-ROM.

Another shopper at K kosher Komputer was looking for software to teach him Hebrew. He has plenty of choices; there are at least nine different Hebrew-language computer programs.

Schools and publishers are among the many users of Hebrew word-processing programs and Jewish clip-art software.

Jews are not the only ones buying Judaic software. Christian families buy Hebrew-language software and Bible-study software, according to Young. "They also give them as Bar and Bat Mitzvah gifts."

Wallach says her primary goal was not to go out and buy Judaic software when she stumbled upon it at a Jewish bookstore.

But she says that now that she has sampled it, she will probably go out and buy more if it is "more user friendly" and has "better graphics."

Software designers are listening.

"The software is more sophisticated than it was several years ago," says Astor.

One of the newest software designs, Return To Life, will be available, not only through Judaic software sellers but at computer stores such as Comp USA.

Return To Life traces the lives of Holocaust survivors after the war.

Return To Life was designed by Torah Educational Software in conjunction with Yad Vashem in Israel and will be available in late January. □

Jewish groups grow impatient with Swiss over missing assets

By Michele Chabin

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Angered by what it termed "remarks bordering on anti-Semitism" by the outgoing president of Switzerland, the World Jewish Restitution Organization has announced a series of retaliatory measures that would include a boycott of Swiss banks.

Two top officials of the WJRO held a news conference here Sunday to unveil their proposals and to voice their impatience with the slow pace of negotiations regarding the return of Jewish assets deposited in Swiss banks during the Holocaust.

The two sharply condemned the remarks of outgoing Swiss President Jean-Pascal Delamuraz, who last week dismissed as "blackmail" calls from Jewish groups for his nation to set up a \$250 million fund to begin compensating Holocaust victims and their heirs who might be entitled to money deposited in Swiss banks in the World War II era.

"If we agreed now to a compensation fund, this would be taken as an admission of guilt," Delamuraz told the Tribune de Geneve newspaper the eve of stepping down from the presidency.

"This is nothing less than extortion and black-

mail," added Delamuraz, who occupied the largely ceremonial post of president until Jan. 1 under the rotating system. "This fund would make it much more difficult to establish the truth."

Instead, the Swiss government will wait until its newly appointed historical commission determines whether Switzerland misappropriated Jewish assets, said Delamuraz, who now serves as Swiss economics minister.

Delamuraz has since said he was sorry if he offended families of Holocaust victims but repeated his view that it was not the right time to set up a compensation fund.

At Sunday's news conference, the WJRO said it might attempt to implement the series of punitive measures if Swiss authorities do not denounce Delamuraz's statements and accelerate their investigation into Swiss-held Jewish assets from the Holocaust.

The WJRO, which was created in 1992 by the World Jewish Congress and the Jewish Agency for Israel, said Sunday the measures included calls for a withdrawal of investments in Swiss banks, cancellation of the banks' operating licenses and a class action suit against the banks.

Jewish Agency Chairman Avraham Burg and World Jewish Congress Secretary General Israel Singer said at the news conference that the WJRO had reluctantly formulated the list of punitive actions after Delamuraz made the comments last week.

Singer said the WJRO would wait four weeks before implementing the steps outlined in their proposal.

"This gives the Swiss enough time to consider their position," he said.

'We do not take this matter lightly'

Noting that the Swiss government as a whole did not denounce Delamuraz's statement — though a few legislators did register their displeasure — Singer said that there has apparently been a "sea change" in the government's desire to resolve the issue of Jewish assets.

In light of this change, Burg said it is "incumbent upon us to establish a strong policy."

In addition to its proposal for a boycott of Swiss banks by Jewish business leaders and organizations, the WJRO may file a class-action suit against the Swiss Bankers Association on behalf of hundreds of thousands of Holocaust survivors and their heirs.

Other proposals include a call for private organizations, as well as federal, state and local authorities in the United States and elsewhere to withdraw their investments from Swiss banks. If the Swiss government does not act quickly, the WJRO may also ask U.S. legislators to scrutinize the licensing of Swiss banks.

Acknowledging that the measures, if implemented, could have wide-ranging repercussions, Singer said, "We do not take this matter lightly. But we cannot take the words of a person who speaks for a nation lightly, either."

Delamuraz's comments must be "rejected by Switzerland and the bankers clearly and very, very decisively," Singer added.

Switzerland has been at the center of an international furor over its wartime dealings with Nazi Germany and the fate of Jewish assets deposited during the Holocaust. Jewish groups have suggested that Switzerland set up a preliminary fund as "a good faith financial gesture."

U.S. Senate Banking Committee Chairman Alfonse D'Amato (R-N.Y.) echoed the call at a congressional hearing in December.

Jewish and Swiss officials have been discussing creation of such a fund in recent weeks, and negotiations have centered around the \$250 million figure. □

(JTA correspondent Daniel Kurtzman in Washington contributed to this report.)

Hebron deal remains elusive after Netanyahu, Arafat meet

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — An Israeli-Palestinian agreement for the turnover of most of Hebron still remains elusive.

After more than 13 weeks of intensive discussions — as well as a secret meeting this week between the leaders of the two sides — repeated statements that an agreement was imminent have proven premature.

Observers say the agreement is now being held up over a Palestinian demand that Israel adhere to a strict timetable for redeploying from rural sections of the West Bank, as called for under the terms of the Interim Agreement signed in September 1995.

As far as Hebron itself is concerned, the two sides have reportedly resolved most security issues relating to the Israeli troop redeployment in the West Bank town, which is home to some 500 Jewish settlers and 130,000 Palestinians.

Not yet resolved is the matter of joint Israeli-Palestinian patrols near the Tomb of the Patriarchs, which is holy to both Jews and Muslims.

But the Palestinians are now calling for commitments from Israel to implement aspects of the Interim Agreement that are not related to Hebron.

Along with the further redeployments in the West Bank, these include opening a safe passage route for Palestinians traveling between the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and the release of Palestinian security prisoners from Israeli jails.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian Authority leader Yasser Arafat met secretly early Sunday morning at the Erez Crossing separating Israel from the Gaza Strip in an attempt to work out the remaining issues.

But after more than four hours of discussions, the two failed to resolve their differences.

The talks came after a week of indications that the two would soon hold a summit to initial an agreement.

Instead, they apparently decided to hold a behind-the-scenes meeting in an effort to iron out the final obstacles.

'Meetings help build trust'

Netanyahu later said he regretted that word of the meeting had been leaked to the media.

"I had hoped the meeting would remain secret because I think it is important for such meetings to help build trust, to build working relationships," Netanyahu told a business conference Sunday. "There are some meetings which should not take place in the light of the cameras."

The leak to the media apparently took senior aides from both sides by surprise.

Danny Naveh, Cabinet secretary, told Israel Radio that the prime minister is not required to inform his aides or ministers of every planned meeting with the Palestinian leadership.

Naveh added that while no additional talks with Arafat were scheduled, he was sure that the two would meet again soon.

U.S. Special Middle East Coordinator Dennis Ross continued his efforts to get the two sides to reach an agreement.

President Clinton is pressing Israel and the Palestinians to conclude the accord before his Jan. 20 inauguration to a second term, according to the Israeli daily Ha'aretz.

Both Netanyahu and Arafat have been invited to visit Washington shortly after the inauguration.

In Hebron, police detained a right-wing extremist who threatened the Israeli officer who tackled Noam Friedman, the off-duty soldier accused of opening fire last week in the Hebron market, wounding seven Palestinians.

Avraham Waldman was arrested for threatening Lt. Avi Buskilo, warning him not to be a hero, because slain Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin "was also a hero."

Meanwhile, police released Yuval Jibli, who was suspected of knowing of Friedman's plans before the Jan. 1 shooting took place, because of a lack of evidence. □

Settlers remove homes from hill in West Bank

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Jewish settlers from Beit El have backed away from plans to expand the West Bank settlement by creating a neighborhood on a nearby hill.

The settlers removed seven mobile homes Sunday after Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai agreed to meet with them to discuss expanding the settlement.

Last Friday, the settlers set up the seven homes on Artis Hill, where they wanted to establish a new neighborhood in memory of Ita and Ephraim Tsur, an Israeli mother and son from Beit El who were killed in a terrorist shooting last month.

The government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu voted last year to expand existing Jewish settlements.

But with the government citing bureaucratic and technical problems, few steps have been taken on the ground — prompting the anger of settlement activists.

Mordechai was appointed last year to review all settlement expansion plans before any government approval was granted. □

Jewish institutions excel among Australian schools

By Jeremy Jones

SYDNEY, Australia (JTA) — Jewish day schools in Victoria have taken the top five positions in the first-ever official listing of academic achievement in the Australian state.

In a study prepared for the government by Melbourne University that was based on results in high school final examinations in 1996, Bialik College, which has a strong emphasis on the Hebrew language and Israel, topped the list.

It was followed by the Modern Orthodox Mount Scopus Memorial College and Liebler-Yavneh College, and then by Beth Rivkah Ladies College and Yeshiva College.

"The day schools' performance has established that the time devoted to Jewish education has not detracted from the quality of secular education at our schools," Diane Shteinman, president of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, said in an interview.

"Australian Jews appreciate that the focus of the day schools has been to encourage their pupils' development as members of the Jewish and broader Australian communities, which they have achieved admirably," she added.

Rabbi Mordechai Gutnick, education chairman of the Jewish Community Council of Victoria, attributed the results to "the importance of study" that "Judaism has always stressed."

Although their schools won the two top positions in the rankings, senior educators at Bialik and Mount Scopus colleges have criticized the publication of the Achievement Index, arguing that it "sends the wrong message" regarding education. □

Archives of Jewish composer to move from U.S. to Austria

By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — The Arnold Schoenberg Institute, which holds one of the world's most valuable musical archives, is leaving Los Angeles for Vienna.

The decision by Schoenberg's heirs has been sharply denounced by some university scholars, who point to the Austrian capital's long history of anti-Semitism before and during the World War II era.

Claudio Spies, emeritus professor of music at Princeton University, called the move a "form of blasphemy" and "outrageous beyond measure."

The institute, created in 1973, has been housed in its own building on the University of Southern California campus.

The collection, now valued at \$50 million, includes the published and unpublished music, drawings, essays, poems and memorabilia of one of the most influential composers of the 20th century, frequently described as "the father of modern music."

Since its inception, the institute has been at the center of bitter disputes between Schoenberg's three heirs, who donated their father's collection, and USC administrators.

Schoenberg's family has charged USC with consistently violating the terms of their donation.

The university, in turn, has accused the Schoenbergs of impinging on its academic freedom and trying to run the institute as a family shrine.

After a series of lawsuits, family members announced in May that they would seek a new site for the collection.

In the following months, Berlin, Vienna and The Hague emerged as the most serious suitors to house the Schoenberg collection.

In confirming the selection of Vienna, Lawrence Schoenberg, a son of the composer, said the bids from each of the European cities had been far superior to the current arrangements with USC.

While USC support for the institute runs at \$300,000 per year, the city of Vienna and the government of Austria have pledged \$1 million in annual support.

City of his birth

Schoenberg also said the new site at the Palais Fanto will house the collection in a permanent museum setting that will have a larger space for the composer's archives and paintings.

Renovations at the Palais Fanto are expected to take three to six months, after the official signing of the agreement this month.

Permanent relocation of the Schoenberg Institute is anticipated for early 1998.

Lawrence Schoenberg acknowledged that he and his siblings had considered political and emotional objections to the move, but that the Viennese were eager to house the composer's legacy in the city of his birth.

Schoenberg said he had hoped that the University of California at Los Angeles and the Getty Museum would act jointly to keep the collection in Los Angeles, but that he had not received any concrete proposals.

In a parting shot at USC, Schoenberg said, "I feel that we were evicted by the university."

The composer lived in Los Angeles for 17 years, until his death in 1951.

He taught at both USC and UCLA.

The music building on the UCLA campus bears his name.

Berlin's losing bid was blamed on the municipal

council in a scathing statement by Walter Jens, president of Berlin's Academy of Arts.

"I bow to the Viennese, who understand culture a little bit better than the incumbent village council of Berlin, which does not know who Arnold Schoenberg was," Jens said.

But one USC professor, Moshe Lazar, said, "Schoenberg hated Vienna."

Lazar, who has translated the composer's early neo-Zionist play, said the Viennese "don't understand his music. They like operettas."

Lazar had made an unsuccessful effort to have the institute transferred to Israel, thus fulfilling the composer's final wishes.

Shortly before his death, Schoenberg accepted the honorary presidency of the Israel Academy of Music and in one of his last letters directed that his legacy be housed at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

Herbert Zipper agreed with Lazar. The 92-year-old Viennese composer, conductor and musicologist, who described Schoenberg as his early mentor, said that "hardly any of Schoenberg's music is played in Vienna."

If Schoenberg's heirs "can change that and make his works part of the musical experience of the Viennese public, I will congratulate them [to] no end," Zipper said.

He added that even though much of Viennese culture was created by Jews, or through the support of the Jewish middle class, "the history of anti-Semitism in Austria is long and never-ending."

"If I could cry, I would," Zipper said, summarizing his reaction to pending move of the Schoenberg collection.

But the harshest words came from Princeton's Spies, who said he was both a student and teacher of Schoenberg's music, as well as a friend of the composer's family.

Spies also charged Vienna with anti-Semitism, bureaucratic incompetence and a lack of musical appreciation.

"There was no earthly reason to take the institute away from USC," he said.

"Arnold Schoenberg became an American citizen and this is a national treasure. It should stay in this country."

"Everybody knows how sloppy the Austrians are," he added.

"They certainly won't handle the archives any better than did USC."

Spies also said that as a Jew, he objected strenuously to the institute's transfer to Vienna.

"The Viennese were never friendly toward Schoenberg," he said in a telephone interview.

This move "is more monstrous than if it had gone to Berlin," he added.

"The heirs had no business dealing with the enemy." □

Israel, Hezbollah clash in Lebanon

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — For the third successive day, Israel and Hezbollah engaged in heavy exchanges of fire Sunday in southern Lebanon.

Israeli jets fired at suspected bases of the Islamic fundamentalist movement in Lebanon and returned safely to base.

In separate fighting, three Israeli soldiers were reported to be very lightly hurt in clashes.

The weekend was marked by Hezbollah attacks on Israeli outposts in southern Lebanon and by retaliatory raids launched by Israeli fighter jets. □