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TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Albright urges talks

U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright expects negotiations on a further Israeli redeployment in the West Bank to conclude by the end of the month and is urging Israeli Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai to meet with Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat's deputy, Mahmoud Abbas.

But the defense minister said he would meet with Abbas only if Mordechai is given the authority to reach an agreement for breaking the 16-month deadlock in negotiations. [Page 3]

Ambassador criticizes sanctions

Planned sanctions against Swiss banks by U.S. state and city financial officials are "illegal," the Swiss ambassador to the United States, Alfred Defago, told a Swiss newspaper.

His comments came as New York City Comptroller Alan Hevesi wrote Switzerland's point man on Holocaust-restitution issues, Thomas Borer, that Switzerland had "reversed itself" with recent statements that it would not participate in any global settlement of Holocaust-era claims.

The letter from Hevesi, who quoted earlier statements by Swiss officials that they would seek justice for Holocaust victims, came after Borer wrote him claiming that Switzerland had never committed itself to participate in a global settlement.

Hezbollah leader discusses Arad

The leader of Hezbollah said missing Israeli airman Ron Arad was treated for wounds he received after being shot down over Lebanon in 1986.

But Sheik Hassan Nasrallah added in an interview that Arad "disappeared" from his Hezbollah captors and "we do not know whether he is dead or alive."

Israel holds Iran responsible for Arad's fate, but Tehran says it knows nothing of his whereabouts.

Neo-Nazis control town sites

Neo-Nazis have taken control of several sites in a town northeast of Berlin, according to the German newspaper *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*.

Armed neo-Nazis patrol the railway station in Eberswalde, the paper reported, and at a local gas station they pressure people to give the Nazi salute when they come to fill up their gas tanks. [Page 4]

FOCUS ON ISSUES

National program recruits Jews to pass on a 'surplus of literacy'

By Julia Goldman

NEW YORK (JTA) — When Eileen Lieberman was asked to lead a team of literacy tutors at the Lucy Stone School in Boston's inner city, she was apprehensive.

Volunteers from the Women's Division of the Combined Jewish Philanthropies would be intimidated by the elementary school's surroundings, she thought. "People will say, 'Where do I park my car? I don't want to go alone.'"

After only one visit to the school, however, she knew the program would work. "It was a very welcoming atmosphere," she said. She was confident that she could find others to participate.

Her 25-person team, like many others in the Boston area, now far exceeds the initial 10-member commitment requested by the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston.

"It's just blossomed," said Lieberman, who recently concluded her first academic year.

Boston is the model project for the year-old National Jewish Coalition for Literacy, the brainchild of Leonard Fein, director of the Reform movement's Commission on Social Justice.

Jewish communities in Boston and 10 other cities have so far signed on to the project.

By the year 2000, coalition administrators hope to engage every Jewish community nationwide.

They are working in association with 17 national Jewish organizations from across the Jewish spectrum and, to date, 11 local affiliates.

"Jews should be involved massively in tutoring," Fein said. "If we have a surplus of anything, we have a surplus of literacy."

The founder of *Moment* magazine and *Mazon: A Jewish Response to Hunger*, Fein was moved to action on his latest initiative when, in the fall of 1996, President Clinton announced a national campaign for childhood literacy.

In response to the president's call for 1 million volunteer tutors over the next five years for the "America Reads Challenge," Fein promised the Department of Education he would recruit 100,000 people from the Jewish community to serve as tutors, readers and book-drive operators.

Unique to the Jewish initiative, each local affiliate is also encouraged to promote Jewish literacy among its volunteers through study and discussion of Jewish texts. Some texts studied include the Passover Haggadah's four questions and four children, recognizing as one volunteer said, that "the simple son has as much value as the smart one."

"Everything about Jewish culture, its history and tradition lends itself to leadership on this issue," said Craig Sumberg, executive director of the national coalition. He said he hopes the "Jewish literacy piece" will encourage Jewish continuity by bringing communities together in pursuit of a larger goal.

For Susan Abravanel, the national vice chair of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs and the co-chair of the Portland Jewish Coalition for Literacy, the Jewish component provides volunteers with a "double benefit": the chance to help children and to learn about Jewish sources of literacy and good deeds.

"The concept of community service has, unfortunately, far outlasted the idea of

MIDEAST FOCUS

Report: Increased chance of war

A draft Israeli army report concludes that a deadlock in Middle East peacemaking has increased the likelihood of war in 1999, according to news reports. The 1998 working estimate of Israel's military intelligence was that the likelihood of Middle East hostilities were slim. The new appraisal is pegged to a target date of May 1999, when Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat has said he will declare an independent Palestinian state if final status talks are not completed.

Militants rally in Gaza

Hundreds of followers of the militant Islamic Jihad movement rallied in the Gaza Strip.

The demonstrators chanted "Death to Israel and the United States" and burned the flags of both countries. Leaders of the group threatened renewed violence against the Jewish state.

Arafat seeks Beijing's support

Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat hopes that Beijing will support his drive for an independent Palestinian state, he was quoted as telling the Chinese news agency Xinhua. Arafat is slated to arrive in Beijing on Monday for three days of meetings with Chinese leaders.

Arafat traveled over the weekend to Libya to visit strongman Muammar Gadhafi, who had surgery last week on a broken hip. Arafat's trip came days after Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak also visited Libya to wish Gadhafi well.

Rabbi's car stoned

Fervently Orthodox demonstrators in Israel stoned the car of a leading rabbi, Yosef Shalom Eliashiv, who had ruled that it was permissible to move Jewish graves to make way for a new highway. The demonstrators accused him of showing disrespect for the dead.

studying our own tradition," she said. "Tikkun olam is very much there for many people, but they don't understand why."

Coalition organizers from southern Florida to Seattle report an unprecedented response from volunteers and funders, including an \$85,000 donation of seed money to the coalition from the Righteous Persons Foundation, which is run by Steven Spielberg.

"You don't have to explain this to anybody," said Naomi Cohen of Hartford, Conn., where plans are under way to place 100 volunteers in schools by the fall. "We know that reading is key to so many things."

For children who cannot read independently by the third grade, "the chances of not doing well are greatly enhanced," she said, citing national education studies. "I guess that's a double negative."

The national Jewish coalition aims to re-engage suburban Jews in the lives of cities, where many of them grew up.

"Just because we chose to move to the suburbs doesn't mean we don't care about what goes on in our cities," said Nancy Kaufman, the executive director of the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston.

The challenge, she said, is to find a way to "be partners, not patrons."

From its inception, the national coalition was not intended to create a new literacy program.

Rather, the coalition has sought to provide a framework for channeling Jewish volunteers into existing literacy programs, such as S.M.A.R.T. (Start Making a Reader Today), a Portland initiative begun in 1991 by former Gov. Neil Goldschmidt, and Avodah B'Yachad, a social action coalition in the Twin Cities funded by the 3M Corporation.

Sumberg is quick to point out that Jewish groups, such as the National Council of Jewish Women and Hadassah, have been involved in literacy efforts for decades.

However, he said, the national Jewish coalition is the first organization to focus on a local level, with autonomous affiliates held responsible for creating relationships within their own communities.

"What we can do well in the Jewish community is organize people," said Rich Meyer, the literacy coordinator of the Boston Jewish Coalition for Literacy, which created a partnership with Read Boston and Boston Partners in Education to train and place over 250 volunteers in public schools.

"It's collaboration to its fullest extent," said Margaret Williams, the executive director of Read Boston, which also provides a "quality-control mechanism" for its Reading Partners program.

One of her main concerns when placing volunteers in schools was echoed by literacy program administrators across the country: finding tutors willing to commit at least one hour a week for one-on-one sessions with the same student.

"Consistency is the important piece," said Portland's Abravanel. "These are kids for whom the rule is disappointment."

If Boston is any measure of volunteer commitment, however, consistency does not appear to be a widespread problem.

Once volunteers start working with children, most say, they do not consider missing a session.

Eileen Lieberman recounted her work on alphabet recognition with a 6-year-old girl too young to read.

After four months, the student could identify all of the letters.

"She said, 'I'm really learning,'" Lieberman recalled with pride. "That's all you need to hear."

School principals also report full satisfaction.

Maria de los Angeles Montes, who has run the Stone School for seven years, said she saw the benefits of having tutors right away and hopes to accommodate more volunteers next year.

Carol Geyer said of tutors at Boston's William H. Ohrenberger School, where she is principal:

"These are extremely capable people, people I felt had a great love of reading, and they really passed that on to the kids." □



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JEWISH WORLD

Conviction in Crown Heights case

A man convicted of inciting the crowd before the killing of a Chasidic scholar in Crown Heights in 1991 was sentenced to 21 years in prison.

Charles Price was convicted of violating the civil rights of the victim, Yankel Rosenbaum, by egging on a crowd during the first of four nights of violence that rocked the Brooklyn neighborhood. The sentence is even longer than the one given Lemrick Nelson, who was sentenced to 19 1/2 years in prison for carrying out the stabbing.

Holbrooke involved in talks

President Clinton's nominee to be U.S. ambassador to the United Nations played a secret role in negotiations between Swiss banks and Holocaust victims.

The World Jewish Congress said Richard Holbrooke flew to Zurich last year for talks with the Swiss president and the head of Credit Suisse, which was involved in settlement talks. The WJC said he also maintained intensive phone contacts.

At the time, Holbrooke was vice chairman of Credit Suisse First Boston, the U.S. branch of the giant Swiss bank. The WJC said Holbrooke, who faces confirmation hearings in the U.S. Senate, played a highly constructive role on the Swiss issue on his own initiative.

Claims Conference calls for talks

The Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany called on German companies that employed Jewish slave labor during World War II to enter into negotiations to make compensation payments.

The Claims Conference said Volkswagen's announcement last week that it would compensate slave laborers should serve as a precedent for other German firms that benefitted from slave labor.

Salberg re-elected

Melvin Salberg, president of the American Zionist Movement, was re-elected chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

Games' sponsor accused

The American Jewish Congress accused the chief sponsor of the Goodwill Games of showing a "lack of goodwill" by threatening to launch a boycott of U.S. products.

The games' sponsor, Nicholas Hayek, owns the Swiss watchmaking company, Swatch, which said last week it may boycott U.S. products in response to a move by U.S. state and local finance officials to impose sanctions against Swiss banks for failing to settle Holocaust-era claims.

Albright urges Palestinians, Israel to resume direct talks

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The United States wants to see negotiations on a further Israeli redeployment in the West Bank wrapped up in the coming weeks.

U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, who expects the negotiations to conclude by the end of the month, is urging Israeli Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai to meet with Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat's deputy, Mahmoud Abbas.

Albright last Friday called on Israel and the Palestinians to talk directly to each other to resolve the 16-month deadlock in negotiations.

"There is a limited amount that the United States or anyone can do if the parties themselves do not talk with each other to resolve the remaining difficult issues," she said.

Albright, who has intensified her efforts in recent weeks to get Israel to accept a U.S. plan that calls for a 13 percent further redeployment, appeared to be sending a message to the parties that the United States cannot play intermediary forever.

State Department spokesman James Rubin gave further evidence of American impatience after months of fruitless efforts by U.S. officials to bring the two sides to an agreement.

"We are clearly in the endgame. This cannot go on indefinitely," he said last week after Albright met in Washington with a Palestinian delegation headed by negotiators Nabil Sha'ath and Saeb Erekat.

But it remains unclear whether the meeting between Mordechai and Abbas will take place.

The defense minister said in a statement that he would meet with Abbas only if Mordechai is given the authority by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to reach an agreement for breaking the long impasse in negotiations.

Palestinian officials, meanwhile, said they would agree to the meeting only if Israel accepts a U.S. plan for a 13 percent redeployment.

The Palestinian negotiators, who say they have already made a large concession by agreeing to the 13 percent further redeployment, reportedly left the meeting with Albright feeling angered and betrayed that the United States was now asking them to consider an Israeli modification to the U.S. plan.

Netanyahu is reported to be pushing for a plan under which Israel would immediately redeploy from an additional 10 percent of the West Bank.

The remaining 3 percent would fall under nominal Palestinian control, with Israel retaining a veto over construction and planning.

There were no public statements after Albright met with Sha'ath and Erekat, but the two reportedly demanded that U.S. officials stick to their original proposal. □

Health Ministry: Coke is safe

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel's Health Ministry has reassured the public that Coca Cola is safe to drink.

Local bottlers reported a more than 20 percent drop in sales of the popular soft drink last week after five members of a family in Rehovot became ill from drinking one bottle possibly contaminated with paint thinner.

The five were hospitalized July 8, and released the next day, after doctors determined that whatever they drank was not life threatening.

The ministry initially believed that the problem was limited to Rehovot.

But after more suspect bottles were found in other parts of the country, the ministry urged the public to sniff-test bottles of Coca Cola for possible contamination before tasting the soft drink.

Coca Cola insisted that the bottles were contaminated outside the factories.

After concluding an investigation, the Health Ministry concurred, announcing at a news conference Sunday that Coke bottles had left the production lines without any defects and that some bottles were stored "improperly" at grocery stores. □

AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD**Israeli scientist seeks cure for high rate of road deaths***By Kenneth Bandler*

HAIFA, Israel (JTA) — A possible cure for Israel's high rate of road fatalities may have its roots in a click.

When he used to drive from Boston to Albany, N.Y., Simon Cohen recalls, he would hear a clicking sound as his car wheels rolled over the tiny cracks separating the concrete blocks that make up the interstate highway.

"I knew something could be done with those clicks," says Cohen, an Israeli who was studying at MIT.

Now, the Israeli engineering student turned entrepreneur has developed a computerized system to enforce traffic laws — and he hopes to save lives in a country where more than 500 people die each year in car accidents.

The patented system works by embedding two sensors in the road, about a yard apart, and linking them to a computer at a police station. The sensors can detect the speed of a moving vehicle and determine if it is tailgating. When the sensors record a moving violation, a camera on a pole near the sensors takes a picture of a vehicle's rear, including the license plate.

Cameras are now used at intersections in some U.S. cities to try to catch drivers who run red lights. But those systems, Cohen says, require someone to collect the film — and tickets come in the mail weeks later.

His product, says Cohen, integrates the sensors and the software, enabling the whole system to run automatically and issue tickets almost immediately.

Few entrepreneurs have the financial resources to turn their technological ideas into marketable products. But with the help of an incubator for business start-ups run by an Israeli university and with support from the Israeli government, Cohen's innovation is about to be hatched.

The Technion-Israel Institute of Technology, Israel's leading engineering school, established its incubator in 1991, to assist some of the many Russian scientists who were immigrating to Israel to develop their ideas into high-tech products.

The Technion Entrepreneurial Incubator Company Ltd. later opened up to other Israelis and, over the past seven years, more than 40 companies have been born there.

"The incubator system is not a minor factor in the success of start-ups in Israel," says Ami Lowenstein, who runs the incubator.

A project accepted by the Technion incubator must pass muster with the Office of the Chief Scientist, a division of Israel's Ministry of Trade and Industry that grants \$300 million a year to high-tech start-ups. Some 25 other incubators exist around the country.

There is space for as many as 21 projects at the Technion incubator and each one can stay for two years. Currently, there are 17 start-ups at the incubator's Haifa facility.

"We dedicate a lot of time and energy to help the entrepreneur," says Lowenstein.

Emphasis is placed on counseling entrepreneurs in marketing and raising capital, skills that high-tech innovators in Israel generally lack.

Cohen, a graduate of the Technion, spent several years in the United States — first at MIT and later working at General Electric in Schenectady, N.Y. — before returning to Israel.

After nearly two years in the incubator, Cohen's small company, Tracon System Ltd., is getting ready to leave and venture out on its own.

He is looking to market the \$65,000 per unit traffic enforcement system in Israel and in foreign countries as well, believing that it would be especially useful to monitor vehicles in school zones and at intersections.

Meanwhile, Israeli police are training over the summer to use the Tracon system at its current test site, located on a heavily traveled highway between Haifa and the industrial town of Yokne'am.

Some 30,000 vehicles travel that road each day. Cohen says the system could potentially issue up to 2,000 tickets a day from that site alone.

Police officers, reviewing the computer files, key in the license plate numbers before the system issues the tickets.

Such human intervention is unnecessary for the system's operation, says Cohen, but is required by Israeli police to avoid errors.

With ticketing expected to begin Sept. 1, Cohen admits that he does not expect to be the most popular person in Israel. Just the same, he hopes that his product will curtail one of the leading causes of death in his country. □

Neo-Nazis intimidating travelers in German town*By Daniel Dagan*

BERLIN (JTA) — Neo-Nazis have taken control of several sites in a town northeast of Berlin, according to the German newspaper *Suddeutsche Zeitung*.

The paper dispatched a correspondent to Eberswalde after neo-Nazis said they had "liberated" the town — a claim denied by German security officials.

Among the correspondent's findings:

- Armed neo-Nazi patrol the town's railway station. A cleric cited in the newspaper's report said he had seen a group of neo-Nazis walking the platform, intimidating some 40 waiting passengers.

Two Asians who appeared at the station were insulted with racial slurs.

- Neo-Nazis have all but seized control of a local gas station, where they pressure people to give the Nazi salute when they come to fill up their gas tanks. Two people who refused to give the salute were admitted to a local hospital after they were beaten up.

- Many youths in the town display Nazi symbols, which are banned in Germany. Some, for example, wear T-shirts with the letters "N," "S" and "D" — the initials of the Nazi Party during the Third Reich.

Some students turn in tests dated "88" rather than "98" — which is a code rather than an error in the date. "H" is the eighth letter of the alphabet, and "HH" stands for "Heil Hitler."

Eberswalde is not the only German town to fall under the domination of neo-Nazis, according to Bernd Wagner, a right-wing extremism expert who says he is receiving increasing numbers of reports from people who feel intimidated by neo-Nazi activities in their hometowns.

Towns in eastern Germany with populations between 15,000 and 50,000 are especially vulnerable to the problem, he said. □