



# Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 77, No. 192

Friday, October 15, 1999

82<sup>nd</sup> Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### U.S. Army took looted gold

Property looted from Hungarian Jews by the Nazis and their Hungarian collaborators was seized by American forces and subsequently taken by generals and soldiers in the U.S. Army, according to the Presidential Advisory Commission on Holocaust Assets in the United States.

The property, carried aboard what the panel called the Hungarian Gold Train, was seized by the Army on May 16, 1945, the commission added Thursday during a meeting in Washington. The commission is investigating the fate of Holocaust assets that came into the possession of the U.S. government.

### Barak calls for Wye aid

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak warned that aid pledged by the United States to implement last year's Wye agreement is crucial to the peace process, the Jerusalem Post reported.

"Without such aid, it will be more difficult to move forward to the most crucial stages of the peace process," Barak told visiting delegates of the United Jewish Communities on Wednesday night. Congress has not appropriated the \$1.2 billion for Israel and \$400 million for the Palestinians that the Clinton administration requested to help implement Wye.

On Thursday, President Clinton criticized Congress for its "failure to pass a bill that would meet our obligations to the Middle East peace process."

### Rabbis excommunicate Amir

A group of 54 Orthodox rabbis in Israel excommunicated the assassin of former Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

Thursday's ruling, which came prior to the fourth anniversary of the Nov. 4, 1995, assassination, bars Jews from visiting Yigal Amir in prison, talking with him or writing to him. Prison personnel and Amir's family are exempt from the edict.

### Israel, settlers compromise

Jewish settler leaders agreed not to block the evacuation of 12 West Bank outposts the government has declared illegal.

Prime Minister Ehud Barak originally called for the dismantling of 15, but lowered the number after settlers agreed Wednesday to back off earlier threats to fight the action.

## FOCUS ON ISSUES

### Israel may be high-tech superpower, but its people are still not logging on

By Avi Machlis

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The world's largest software company is coming to Israeli computer screens in a big way.

Microsoft announced last week that it will soon launch its first Hebrew-language portal Web site — or gateway — backed by a non-Israeli company together with Internet Gold, a leading Israeli Internet service provider.

But it is unclear whether even the behemoth of Microsoft will get Israelis to join the online revolution.

Even though Israel has gained international acclaim for its rapidly growing high-technology sector, its Internet market lags behind the rest of the world's. Players and analysts in Israel's high-tech and Internet industries said a combination of factors, ranging from the language barrier to the structure of Israel's telecommunications sector, have combined to inhibit the development of the Internet in Israel.

"There are thousands of Israeli start-up companies and so many great ideas and entrepreneurs launching initiatives for the Internet," says Avi Weiss, an Internet researcher for the International Data Corp., a market research company. "But there is a wide gap between the new technology coming from Israel and local Internet usage."

According to Weiss, who is compiling his second comprehensive survey of the Internet in Israel, the Internet penetration rate in Israel is about 10 percent, compared with about 15 percent in Europe and more than 30 percent in the United States. Weiss points to several reasons for the lag:

- Personal computers are expensive in Israel — often twice the price of computers in the United States — and therefore only about 36 percent of all Israeli households have PCs, compared to about 46 percent in the United States.

- Standard Web browsers were not designed for right-to-left languages like Hebrew. Companies took a long time to agree on a standard technology to deliver Hebrew content online, and even this requires users to set up their browsers to read Hebrew characters.

- Internet usage in Israel is expensive. Until last year, Israel's leading Internet service providers did not offer monthly unlimited surfing packages, and there is no flat monthly fee for local telephone calls as there is in the United States. This means that during most hours of the day, Israelis pay per minute to use the phone lines that link them to the Internet.

"The reality of Israel's high-tech infrastructure stands in stark contrast to Israel's image as a high-tech superpower," says a report on the Internet published last August by the Institute for Advanced Strategic and Political Studies, an Israeli-based liberal economic think tank.

"Both the users and the public at large suffer."

According to the report, Israel ranked 36th out of 44 countries in terms of Internet charges.

The study says the total cost of 20 hours of surfing the Web in Israel is about \$49.83, compared with about \$19.95 in the United States.

Much of the problem is attributed to a lack of competition for the Internet infrastructure.

Although there is fierce competition among Internet service providers, local telephone hookups are controlled by Bezek, the state-owned telecommunications

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Vatican criticizes mosque plan

Israel's approval for building a mosque near the main Christian shrine in Nazareth may block a visit to the region by Pope John Paul II, the Vatican said.

"Such a situation does not help in the preparation of a possible pilgrimage" by the pope, Vatican spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls said Thursday after Muslim and Christian representatives in Nazareth accepted an Israeli compromise for building the mosque on a plot near the Church of the Annunciation.

### Defense secretary to meet Barak

Secretary of Defense William Cohen is scheduled to meet with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak during a weeklong trip to the Middle East that begins Sunday. The meeting will be the first since Barak was elected in May.

### Citibank to open in Israel

Citibank, the largest bank in the United States, announced plans to open its first commercial branch in Israel. Citibank will become the first major international bank to compete directly with Israeli banks.

### Arab elected to attorney post

An Israeli Arab attorney was elected to what is considered the Israel Bar Association's second most important position.

In what was described as the first such accomplishment by an Israeli Arab, Khaled Zuabi of Nazareth was elected this week chairman of the National Council of Lawyers.

### Talk show host was tortured

A Palestinian talk show host spoke out on television after Palestinian security forces held him for 20 days because a guest on his program denounced Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat.

Maher Dasuki said he was blindfolded, tortured and called a collaborator during his 20 days in prison.

company. The institute estimates that high prices and slow Internet speed caused \$61 million in charges to Internet users who suffered from inflated telephone and Internet bills.

Those who are willing to brave the charges and venture online despite high costs are enjoying more and more Hebrew language content. International Data Corp. says there were 7,200 Israeli Web sites in mid-1998 and this number is growing by nearly 6 percent a month.

But Israeli surfers are not doing much shopping.

Although American Jews are making the most of e-commerce, buying everything from Judaica to travel packages to Israel online, e-commerce in Israel is tiny. Last year Israelis only carried out about \$3 million in transactions online.

This year, that number will jump to about \$10 million, but these figures are tiny compared with the United States.

According to the Yankee Group, a U.S. market research firm, consumer online business is expected to jump from \$14.9 billion last year to \$37 billion this year.

Koby Bremmer, marketing director at Eagleshade.com, a Tel Aviv company that builds Web sites for Israel's biggest companies, says Israel's corporate sector still does not understand the Internet.

"Big Israeli companies do not yet understand the power of the Internet," he says. "They have not even budgeted the Internet into their business plans."

This, he explains, has created a chicken-and-egg situation, where Israeli companies are not yet willing to invest in the Internet until they see more people online, and the public does not come online until there are more local sites to shop on.

Shally Tshuva, managing director of Foresight, a Tel Aviv high-tech consulting firm, is more upbeat.

"We are about two years behind the U.S. in e-commerce," she says. "But we will begin to see the sparks of e-commerce during 1999."

In part, the e-commerce lag is a product of the low penetration rate. But it is also caused by Visa C.A.L., one of Israel's biggest credit card franchises, which during 1998 scared people away from online shopping by refusing to allow its credit card to be used for Internet transactions, claiming they were not safe.

Tshuva also says that the generally low level of development of the Internet in Israel is misleading.

"Israel is considered a very high-tech country not because of its 6 million population, but because of about 2 million who are relevant," he says.

There are, says Tshuva, about 1 million Arab citizens and 1 million Russians who are less well off than the average Israeli and are not interested in the Web. Another 1 million haredim and other religious Jews shun the Internet for religious reasons.

None of this bothers Eli Holtzman, chief executive of Internet Gold, the Israeli Internet service providers that sealed last week's deal with Microsoft. Since Internet Gold's launch in 1996, the company has grown to become one of Israel's top two service providers. Internet Gold is now a public company traded on the Nasdaq exchange in New York, and also hopes to become a regional service provider by buying up stakes in providers in Greece, Turkey and Cyprus.

"Israel may lag behind the U.S. by two or three years, but emerging markets are two or three years behind Israel," he says.

"I think it will all come together next year. By then, there will be between 1.5 million and 2 million Israelis online, and this will attract Israeli entrepreneurs to reach into their pockets and invest." □

## Nelson Mandela to visit Israel

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Former South African President Nelson Mandela is slated to visit Israel and the Palestinian self-rule areas next week.

Mandela, who several times planned, then postponed, trips to Israel while serving as president, is making the trip because he is pleased with recent progress in the peace process, Israel Radio reported Monday.

The report added that Mandela would be the guest of President Ezer Weizman during his stay in Israel. □



## Daily News Bulletin

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JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN is published five days a week, except holidays, by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency Inc., 330 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y. 10001-5010. For information about how to subscribe by e-mail, fax or regular mail, call (212) 643-1890, or visit our Web site at [www.jta.org](http://www.jta.org).  
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## JEWISH WORLD

### Clinton calls for hate crimes law

President Clinton on Wednesday urged Congress to approve hate crimes legislation before adjourning this fall. The Senate has passed legislation allowing the federal government to help prosecute hate crimes committed because of a person's race, religion, color, national origin, gender, disability, or sexual orientation. The House of Representatives has yet to act on the legislation.

### AJCongress blasts Buchanan

The American Jewish Congress called on American leaders to reject the views of presidential hopeful Pat Buchanan, who questioned in a recent book whether the United States should have fought Nazi Germany.

In an ad in Wednesday's New York Times, the group accused Buchanan of becoming "the spokesman for a virulent cadre of extremists and revisionists who insist on ignoring the entire point of the 20th Century's greatest challenge to mankind." Buchanan is expected to seek the Reform Party's presidential nomination later this month.

### Holocaust memoir withdrawn

A German publisher withdrew a highly acclaimed Holocaust memoir whose authenticity has been questioned. The withdrawal of Benjamin Wilkomirski's "Fragments," which comes amid reports that a draft of a study commissioned by his agent indicates that Wilkomirski was a Christian child who lived in Switzerland during World War II and not a Jewish orphan who survived concentration camps.

Schocken, publisher of the English translation of the memoir, which won a National Jewish Book Award, has yet to decide whether it will also withdraw the book.

### Californian pressures insurer

California's insurance commissioner called for the review of a German insurer's takeover of a firm based in the state because it is refusing to publish a list of unpaid Holocaust-era claims.

Chuck Quackenbush's letter regarding Allianz comes as the International Commission on Holocaust-Era Claims is attempting to settle such claims. Under a new California law, firms doing business there are required to publish such lists.

### Zabar's lox man dies at 86

The longtime top lox slicer at one of America's Jewish eating landmarks died Saturday at the age of 86. Sam Cohen, who worked behind the counter at Zabar's in Manhattan for decades, was an active Zionist in Poland before he survived a Nazi concentration camp and immigrated to the United States.

## Citing inactivity, U.S. erases Palestinian group from terror list

By Michael Shapiro

WASHINGTON (JTA) — At a time when its leader has expressed a more moderate view of the Middle East peace process, a Palestinian terrorist group known for killing 22 Israeli schoolchildren has been dropped from the U.S. list of foreign terrorist organizations.

The State Department said the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine was taken off the list, which is issued once every two years, because the group has not been engaging in any terrorist activity since the department last issued the list.

The U.S. decision, made in consultation with the Israelis, comes at a time when the DFLP's leader, Nayef Hawatmeh, has said he is willing to discuss final-status issues with Israel. The DFLP is best known for a 1974 terrorist attack on schoolchildren in the northern Israeli town of Ma'alot.

While still a critic of the Oslo peace process, which drives Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, Hawatmeh has spoken of coexistence with the Jewish state.

The list is called for under a 1996 counterterrorism law aimed at stemming the fund-raising activity in the United States by foreign terrorist groups.

The designations make it illegal for Americans to provide the groups with funds or other support. In addition, members of the groups can be denied entry to the United States, and U.S. financial institutions can block the groups' funds.

Although the DFLP was removed from the list, the group is still subject to the provisions of a 1995 executive order that prohibits financial transactions with terrorist groups opposed to the peace process and blocks their assets in the United States.

Unlike the State Department, which is required to review the list of designated groups every two years and remove those not engaging in terrorist activity, the White House, under the executive order, is not required to do so.

In recent months, Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat has reached out to Palestinian groups long opposed to the peace process and Israel's existence. Hawatmeh and Arafat met in August in Cairo. The meeting was the first between the two in six years.

Last February, Hawatmeh created a stir when he shook the hand of Israeli President Ezer Weizman at the funeral of Jordan's King Hussein.

The handshake angered other Palestinian rejectionist groups, which ended their association with the DFLP as a result.

Although the Israeli government agreed with the U.S. move, some Israelis who were victims of attacks for which the DFLP claimed responsibility criticized the decision.

Baruch Ben-Yaakov, originally John Wicks from Nesconset, N.Y., who now lives in Kiryat Arba, was attacked by an ax-wielding DFLP member on Oct. 16, 1993 in Hebron.

"If the DFLP has really given up being a terrorist organization, why hasn't it surrendered the terrorist who tried to murder me?" he said in a letter to President Clinton and U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright. "As an American citizen, I believe I am entitled to expect that the U.S. government will make every effort to capture those who attacked me, not reward the group that sponsored the attack."

Another family, the Nadlers of Rehovot, whose son Michael was killed in a 1975 attack, said in a letter to the president that they were "shocked" and "horrified" after reading news reports that the United States was prepared to remove the DFLP from the list. But when reached at their home, Samuel and Evelyn Nadler, originally from Miami, seemed unfamiliar with the issue.

Both letters were provided by the Zionist Organization of America, which has called on the United States to apprehend and prosecute Palestinians suspected in killing or injuring Americans.

The list of 28 designated foreign terrorist organization includes six Palestinian groups. It also includes two Israeli groups — Kach and Kahane Chai — and one Lebanese group, Hezbollah. □

## Teacher training programs find ways to educate the educators

By Julie Wiener

NEW YORK (JTA) — Last January, midway through his first year of teaching Sunday school, Dennis Niekro was tempted to quit.

A convert to Judaism, the 30-year-old Niekro had initially agreed to take the part-time job teaching fifth grade at his Columbus, Ohio, temple because he thought it would be another way to connect to Jewish life.

Instead, as a novice teacher with little training or support and only a vague curriculum to guide him, he felt "isolated and alone."

With part-time schedules, little professional development and few opportunities to develop relationships with colleagues, many supplemental school teachers share Niekro's feeling of isolation.

Making their jobs even harder is the fact that many have limited Judaic knowledge and, as several educators have noted, "are one lesson ahead of the students."

As communities around the country are talking about re-envisioning congregational schools — attended by far more American Jewish children than day schools — a number are focusing on the teachers.

"When people try to do reform, it's very easy to go quickly for structural issues," said Barry Holtz, a consultant to the Mandel Foundation, which runs an institute that helps communities and schools develop effective teacher development programs.

"But if you try to change structure without working with personnel, you just move deck chairs around on the Titanic," he said. Changes in a school's schedule or activities have little long-term impact if teachers are unable to help students "grow as Jews and find Judaism deeply interesting."

Since its founding four years ago, the Mandel Foundation's Teacher-Educator Institute has spawned new training and professional development programs around the country, including one that convinced Niekro to sign on for another year of teaching.

Most focus on both strengthening knowledge of Jewish texts and helping teachers figure out effective ways of conveying that knowledge to children.

The institute grew out of a 1994 Mandel Foundation study of Jewish teachers that found not only relatively low levels of Jewish education, training and ongoing professional development, but also — perhaps more surprisingly — relatively low turnover rates.

This disproved common perceptions that teachers — particularly Hebrew school teachers — were transient and not worth investing in, said Holtz.

The overwhelming majority of Hebrew school teachers work only a few hours per week while holding down other jobs. Some are teachers elsewhere, either in day schools or public schools, indeed — according to the Mandel report — 55 percent have general education experience.

But many are college students, retirees or professionals in other fields.

A growing number of congregations — particularly those in small Jewish communities — are starting to recruit and train their

congregants to be avocational teachers.

Reasons for teaching vary.

Some teachers are looking for extra income, some want to work with children and others, such as Niekro, are looking for ways to be involved in Jewish life.

According to the Mandel report, 29 percent of congregational school teachers had received no Jewish education after age 13, and only 12 percent had earned a degree in Jewish studies.

"I would love to be able to say they're all certified and degreed, but that's just not so," Wendy Sadler, director of school services at the Agency for Jewish Education of Metropolitan Detroit, said of the Hebrew school teachers in her community.

Sadler said her teachers have diverse educational and Jewish backgrounds, but that most are clamoring for more training both in Jewish studies and basic pedagogy.

In response, her agency is stepping up its professional development programs, offering 60 workshops this year as well as an annual conference.

Other central education agencies are also reviewing their professional development offerings and some — like those in Chicago and Los Angeles — have created master classes, in which highly esteemed teachers mentor their colleagues and give demonstration lectures.

In what appears to be one of the most intensive projects, Cleveland's College of Jewish Studies and the city's central agency for Jewish education have enrolled 11 prospective supplemental school teachers in a fully subsidized, 12-hour-per-week, two-year program of study.

Teacher development initiatives are taking place on the synagogue level as well as the community level.

At Congregation Beth Am Israel in suburban Philadelphia, teachers go on a Shabbat retreat once a year. Twice a month, during school hours, they study texts together.

The goal is to enrich teachers' Judaic knowledge, ensure they use consistent approaches to teaching Torah and give them an opportunity to "develop their own relationship to the texts," said education director Cyd Weissman.

"Teachers are saying they teach differently than before, and they have relationships with their colleagues," she said, adding that she believes it is important to "nurture" teachers.

The Florence Melton Adult Mini-School network, best known for its two-year adult education program, is also weighing in on the teacher enrichment front.

Last spring it piloted an effort in four communities called the Supplemental Teacher Education Project.

That program — in which teachers study texts once a week through the mini-school and have monthly discussions about teaching practices — is what is keeping Dennis Niekro in the classroom.

Teachers read articles about educational theory, keep journals evaluating how their lesson plans actually worked in the classroom, observe experienced teachers and brainstorm lesson plans together. This year they will also be paired with mentors.

"I don't have a background in educational theory or curriculum development, and this gives me the opportunity to work with individuals who do have that knowledge and expertise," said Niekro, who is now considering taking on another Hebrew school job as well.

"What comes out of this," he added, "is inspiration and the motivation to try new ideas." □

### Rethinking Hebrew School Part 4 of a Series