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WITH SUBSIDIES OVER AND JOBS SCARCE, SOVIET OLIM ARE SUDDENLY IN A PINCH

By Charles Hoffman

JERUSALEM, May 16 (JTA) -- The Soviet immigrants who came to Israel last year in the first big wave of newcomers are caught in a squeeze: Their initial absorption grants are now exhausted, their rents and other living expenses are climbing and their prospects for employment are bleak.

About a year ago, the monthly immigration rates started rapidly climbing, from about 7,000 to 11,000 a month, reaching a monthly high of 35,000 by the end of the year.

For the past year, most of these immigrants have been busy with Hebrew studies and have subsisted on the absorption grants provided by the government and the Jewish Agency for Israel.

Now thousands of these people each month will be entering a job market already plagued by a 10 percent unemployment rate.

Julia Appelbaum, an English teacher in her mid-40s, lives in the Jerusalem suburb of Neveh Ya'acov with her husband, Gregory, an artist, and their 9-year-old daughter, Miriam. They came last June from Moscow.

"I don't know what's going to happen now," she said.

"We managed somehow on the absorption grant for the past year. Now I earn a little bit teaching English, but that's not near enough, especially since we have to pay higher rent."

She also got a $250 monthly stipend while attending a teacher training course, but that is finished too.

Gregory, she said, "was a successful artist in Moscow, but here he hasn't sold a painting yet." He was fortunate enough to have his work exhibited at a major Jerusalem gallery, but there have been few customers this year because of the tourism slump.

Julia hopes to teach English in school next year, but if no job is available, she will have to take what comes along. The salary from a low-paying job, however, will barely be enough to cover the rent.

Cheaper Housing In The Territories

The Appelbaums paid $350 a month for an unfurnished apartment in an undesirable neighborhood, but will now, due to the acute housing shortage, probably be asked to pay $500 a month.

Immigrants living in better areas of town are being socked with even bigger rent increases. Many of them will be forced to look for cheaper housing or double up with other families.

The Appelbaums are still in relatively good shape. Some immigrants are eating in public soup kitchens or picking over the piles of fruit and vegetables thrown out at the open air markets.

Several dozen families in the Galilee town of Carmiel who could not afford to pay higher rents are now living in tents, and many more are expected to join them over the summer. Single-parent families, most of them headed by women, are in particularly difficult straits.

The Housing Ministry has imported several thousand mobile homes to alleviate the housing shortage, but only a few of those located within Israel proper have been hooked up to water, electricity and sewage.

Hundreds of the mobile homes set up in the administered territories, however, were hooked up within days. More immigrants will be forced to look in the territories for cheaper housing.

"The employment situation for immigrants is bad and getting worse," said Deborah Lipson, spokeswoman for the Soviet Jewish Zionist Forum. "Almost no one is working in the profession for which they were trained."

40 Percent Unemployment

Many, in fact, are not working at all, according to a survey conducted recently by the Tatzpit Institute.

This poll found that among the immigrant families who arrived at the end of 1989, only 60 percent had at least one family member working. That means that in 40 percent of the cases, no one in the family was employed.

Among those who arrived in mid-1990, the jobless rate was at least 50 percent.

Yolanda Straus, an official of the Absorption Ministry who organizes training courses for immigrants, said that immigrants who fail to find work in their profession through the state Employment Service are eligible for unemployment compensation from the ministry.

This comes to about $400 a month for a family of four. The government recently approved a proposal to make it tougher to qualify for unemployment grants.

Of the 200,000 immigrants who came last year, over half are in the labor force. About 23,000 immigrants received unemployment grants last year, and were jobless for about four months on the average.

This year, Straus said, they are staying on the dole even longer. "Many of these people eventually take some menial job, because that's what's available," she said.

"For a scientist or some other highly qualified professional, this is a real tragedy, but the others will have to get used to this for the next few years."

Although there is a severe shortage of construction workers, most builders prefer to hire cheap, experienced foreign labor rather than take on immigrants, who need to be trained.

"About 60 percent of the immigrants are academically trained," Straus said, "and it is difficult for the economy to absorb them so fast. There will have to be radical changes in the economy to provide work for them. We can't solve their problems with temporary solutions."

'A Year Has Been Wasted'

Dov Lautman, the head of the Manufacturers Association, told Israel Radio that there are now 19,000 immigrants employed in industry.

"Over the next three to four years, we are expected to hire another 150,000," he said. "There is no way that we can do that now.

"The government has to adopt new policies that will stimulate investment and economic growth. This is the only way to solve the employment problem," Lautman said. "But a year has been wasted and nothing has been done."

Last September, Finance Minister Yitzhak

Moda'i presented a program to stimulate the economy and create jobs, but he failed to get it approved by his Cabinet colleagues. The plan sat on ice until recently and is now being revived piecemeal, still with little chance of being passed.

As a stop-gap measure, Moda'i recently proposed to pay large industrial firms to take on a total of 25,000 immigrants as temporary labor -- even if they do no productive work. This plan has aroused stiff opposition among employers and in the government, and also has little chance of being adopted.

Another plan calls for the creation of 35,000 new jobs by the government before the end of the year. The jobs would be mainly public works projects, such as road-laying.

That plan was considered Monday by a new ministerial committee, chaired by Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir. Its other members include Finance Minister Yitzhak Moda'i, Housing Minister Ariel Sharon and Moshe Nissim, the minister of industry and trade.

This marks the first time that Shamir has involved himself personally in the detailed work of boosting the economy to provide jobs for the Soviet newcomers.

For the immigrants, the proof of the pudding will be whether the job outlook improves.

"Most immigrants are willing to take low-paying, menial jobs for now," said Lipson of the Zionist Forum, "but they need the hope that in a year or two things will be better. If they don't have even that hope to live on, this will bring people to despair."

DIRECT ABSORPTION OF IMMIGRANTS MUST END, FINANCE MINISTER SAYS
By David Landau

JERUSALEM, May 16 (JTA) -- Finance Minister Yitzhak Moda'i has raised eyebrows here by calling for a drastic change in the way Soviet immigrants are absorbed into Israeli society.

"The age of direct absorption is over," the senior Likud Cabinet minister declared Wednesday. Since the "reservoir" of apartments and jobs that was available around the country when mass aliyah began early last year has been exhausted, the government must intervene in the placement of olim, he said.

While it was not immediately clear what changes he has in mind, Moda'i apparently intends for the government to exercise much tighter control over where the immigrants live, taking into account the availability both of housing and jobs in any given part of the country.

That would mark a move back toward the immigrant absorption system scrapped a few years ago, in which immigrants were sent to absorption centers for their first year, while they learned Hebrew and looked for jobs.

When the Soviet immigrants started coming en masse, Israel switched to a "direct absorption" system, in which immigrants are pretty much left on their own to find housing and jobs wherever they chose. After processing at the airport, they are handed a cash subsidy for their first year in the country.

Informed sources said Moda'i first spoke about changing the system two weeks ago without eliciting a public reaction.

But observers noted that decisions of such a far-reaching nature affecting the absorption process require the approval of the ministerial absorption committee, if not the full Cabinet.

NEW SETBACK REPORTED IN ADOPTION OF SOVIET EMIGRATION REFORM BILL
By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, May 16 (JTA) -- The Soviet legislature appears to have taken a step backward Thursday in its long effort to adopt an emigration reform law.

One of the two houses of the Supreme Soviet, the Council of the Union, which approved the law Monday, failed by two votes to adopt it Thursday. The other chamber, the Council of Nations, was 12 votes short when it voted Monday.

News of the votes was reported by the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews, a coalition of Soviet Jewry advocacy groups.

The Supreme Soviet is expected to try again to adopt the legislation that would codify emigration reforms, many of them now in practice.

The National Conference on Soviet Jewry said it was told another vote could come as early as Monday or could be delayed to next month.

The vote Thursday was on approving the law in principle and allowing the government to work out details. Even if adopted, it would not go into effect until July 1992.

Until the law is passed, President Bush will not ask Congress to ratify a trade pact he signed last year with Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev.

Bush also has made adoption of the law a condition for waiving sanctions contained in the Jackson-Vanik Amendment to the U.S. Trade Act of 1974, which denies U.S. trade benefits to the Soviets until emigration reforms are in place.

However, the president granted a partial waiver of Jackson-Vanik sanctions last year to allow the Soviet Union to get $1 billion in credits for agricultural products to prevent starvation.

The Senate voted Wednesday to urge Bush to grant the Soviets another $1.5 billion in credit guarantees to buy agricultural products.

GERMAN OFFICIAL SAYS SOVIET JEWS WON'T BE EXPELLED FROM GERMANY
By David Kantor

BONN, May 16 (JTA) -- A ranking official on Thursday rejected rumors that 250 Soviet Jews who came to Berlin from Israel last winter would be expelled.

Interior Minister Dieter Heckelmann of Berlin, one of Germany's 16 federal states, said that while their legal status is still undecided, the Jews would not be forcibly ejected.

About 300 Jews who immigrated to Israel from the Soviet Union last year flew to Berlin in January, saying they were fleeing Iraqi Scud missile attacks. Their temporary visas expired in March, but all but 50 refused to return to Israel, where they alleged they were poorly treated.

Speculation that they faced imminent expulsion arose last week, when federal Interior Minister Wolfgang Schaeuble wrote from Bonn that Soviet Jews who come from Israel must be treated as Israeli nationals, not refugees.

"Special arrangements for Soviet Jews do not apply to this group," who are considered tourists from Israel and are ineligible for permanent residency, Schaeuble advised the Berlin authorities.

Under new German regulations, Soviet Jews may immigrate to Germany, but must apply for immigration visas at German consulates in the Soviet Union. To qualify, they must prove German origin or have relatives in Germany.

BAKER LEAVES ISRAEL WITH FEW RESULTS, BUT SAYS HE WILL CONTINUE HIS EFFORT
By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, May 16 (JTA) -- Secretary of State James Baker left Israel on Thursday without accomplishing his peace mission but promising to try again.

"There is a chance to produce a process which can result in direct negotiations between Israel and Arab states, and between Israel and Palestinians," Baker told a news conference at Ben-Gurion Airport before boarding a plane for Washington.

"There are, of course, remaining issues that have to be resolved, and there is additional work that has to be done," he said.

The implication was that he would return to the region, though he made no such commitment.

Baker said he would report to President Bush on the results of what was his fourth try at shuttle diplomacy since mid-March.

He began shuttling between Israel and Arab capitals in the immediate aftermath of the Persian Gulf War, when Arab states that had collaborated with the United States in defeating Iraq seemed ready for the first time to negotiate directly with Israel.

Baker's efforts to set up a peace conference under U.S.-Soviet auspices foundered over apparently irreconcilable differences between Syria and Israel on the nature and duration of the peace conference.

Syria insists on a active role for the United Nations, which Israel absolutely rejects. Israel says the conference must be a one-time ceremonial opener that would adjourn once direct talks began on the substantive issues.

Syria wants an ongoing conference, to which the parties could appeal in case of impasse.

Baker was unable to soften Syrian President Hafez Assad's position in six hours of talks in Damascus last Sunday, nor did he make much progress with the Israelis in two days of meetings here.

But the United States and Israel were reported to have reached understandings on several points not necessarily acceptable to the Arab parties.

East Jerusalem Issue Avoided

According to the report, they agreed that the peace conference, in whatever form, would not have arbitration powers or the authority to enforce solutions or veto results.

Baker remarked at his news conference that this understanding of the conference role is shared by all countries where it was discussed.

Israel and the United States also were said to share the view that a joint Jordanian-Palestinian negotiating delegation is preferable to a separate Palestinian delegation.

The delicate issue of Palestinian representation from East Jerusalem, totally opposed by Israel, was avoided in Baker's talks here.

According to the new U.S.-Israeli points of agreement, Palestinians attending the conference would be from "the territories," which were not specified.

Baker spoke at his news conference of having a "better understanding" of the exact nature of the process.

He said he was not disappointed by his failure to get a peace conference started, because "for the first time ever, we have Arab governments expressing readiness to sit in direct discussions, face to face with Israel."

He was referring to the Gulf Cooperation Council, an organization of six major oil-producing states, which expressed a willingness to participate in a peace conference as an observer.

Israel dismissed the offer, claiming that every country technically at war with it must participate fully in peace talks.

Foreign Minister David Levy who saw Baker off at the airport, refused to comment on Israel's position and put the onus on Syria.

"Let us not give Syria any pretext for impeding this process," he said.

Baker is expected to send an emissary to find out if King Hussein of Jordan would be ready to join in a limited peace conference with Israel that would not include Syria. Jordan so far has refused to participate in talks without Syria.

Levy praised Baker for his efforts for the cause of peace. He admitted the talks here were held in an atmosphere that "was sometimes not all that good," but he was pleased nevertheless with the progress made.

THREE INQUIRIES LOOK AT CHARGES ISRAELI SECURITY ABUSED ARABS
By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, May 16 (JTA) -- Three separate investigations are under way into allegations that members of the various Israeli security services employed brutal methods to suppress the Palestinian uprising, including torturing prisoners under interrogation.

The accusation was made by the human rights watchdog group B'tselem, in a report titled "The Interrogation of Palestinians During the Intifada," which was published in March.

The allegations were initially rejected by the Israel Defense Force.

But Lt. Gen. Ehud Barak, the new IDF chief of staff, ordered an investigation last week of charges that soldiers physically abused Palestinian prisoners. He put reserve Gen. Rafael Vardi in charge.

The General Security Services, or Shin Bet, has begun its own inquiry into B'tselem's charges that Palestinian detainees were tortured while being questioned at Shin Bet facilities.

The investigators are two senior Shin Bet officials and a senior lawyer from the Attorney General's Office.

The Justice Ministry announced, meanwhile, that a ministerial committee would investigate whether Shin Bet abided by the rules for interrogation laid down after the so-called "Bus 400 affair."

That occurred in April 1984, when two captured Palestinian bus hijackers were shot to death after the soldiers handed them over to Shin Bet operatives.

Another investigation was ordered by Jerusalem Magistrate Ezra Kamah, who inquired into the role of Jerusalem police during the Temple Mount riots last year.

Two senior police officers were summoned for further questioning about their participation in the police action of Oct. 8, 1990, when at least 17 Palestinian rock-throwers were shot to death in the Old City.

The judge reopened the probe on the basis of new information, which indicated that at least one of the officers might have opened fire although his own life was not endangered.

IRAQI SEEKING CANADIAN ASYLUM SAYS HE SPIED FOR ISRAEL, IRAQ
By Gil Kezwer

TORONTO, May 16 (JTA) -- A Baghdad-born man who claims to have been a double agent working for the Iraqi and Israeli intelligence agencies is seeking political asylum in Canada.

Ali Hussein Sumaida, 27, disguised by a wool hat and dark sunglasses, told an immigration panel here Tuesday that he was employed by both the Iraqi secret service, Mukhabarat, and Mossad.

He said he would be "killed like a dog" if he is returned to his native country.

He also claims in a recently published book that the 1981 Israeli air attack on the Iraqi nuclear reactor failed.

Under Canadian law, those requesting asylum must pass a credibility hearing before appearing in front of a full adjudication panel, which then decides whether to grant immigrant status or recommend deportation proceedings.

Sumaida is in the first stage of a normally lengthy process, which moved remarkably fast recently for another Iraqi seeking asylum.

To the embarrassment of Prime Minister Brian Mulroney's government, the former Iraqi ambassador to the United States, Mohamed al-Mashat, was admitted to Canada during the Persian Gulf War, unbeknown to a single member of the Cabinet.

Mashat, Iraq's chief apologist in the West during the prewar military build-up, applied for Canadian immigration in Vienna in late February and now lives in Vancouver.

Opposition members of Parliament have questioned whether the diplomat's application was expedited in return for sensitive information he may have given Canadian security agencies.

Claims Reactor Not Destroyed

Sumaida, meanwhile, has made claims he spied for both Israel and Iraq in a 308-page book, "Circle of Fear: A Renegade's Journey from the Mossad to the Iraqi Secret Service," co-authored with Carole Jerome, which was published here May 6.

He says he was motivated by a desire for revenge against his abusive father and hatred of the ruthless regime of Saddam Hussein.

According to the writer, he was threatened by his father, Ali Mahmoud Sumaida, a Hussein loyalist who is Iraq's ambassador to the Philippines and a ranking official of the Ba'ath party.

The younger Sumaida said he became interested in the Mossad through confiscated books in the library of his father, who was chief censor after the 1968 coup that brought the Ba'ath to power.

Sumaida said he grew up idolizing Elie Cohen, the Mossad agent hanged in Damascus in 1965.

He also claims the Israeli air raid on June 7, 1981 failed to destroy its target, the Osirak nuclear reactor near Baghdad.

Sumaida wrote that he worked for Mossad in England from 1984 to 1985, when he was a computer science student at the University of Salford, near Manchester.

He said he gathered information and recruited sympathizers.

The two-man panel that will rule on Sumaida's petition will have to decide whether certain obvious errors in his book cast doubt on his tale as a whole.

TWO NAZI SYMPATHIZERS ARE ARRESTED FOR ARGENTINE CEMETERY DESECRATION

NEW YORK, May 16 (JTA) -- Argentine authorities have arrested two Nazi sympathizers and charged them with the desecration last month of a Jewish cemetery on the outskirts of Buenos Aires, according to reports from the country.

Horacio Carrondi, 34, an unemployed resident of Berazategui, where the vandalism took place, was arrested at his home Tuesday. A self-professed neo-Nazi, he had worked in the Argentine army's intelligence service until 1986.

Judge Orfeo Maggio, who has been investigating the cemetery desecration, told reporters in Buenos Aires after the arrest that Carrondi probably acted with others. The judge and police base this assumption on the extent of damage at the cemetery, at which 110 graves were smashed.

On Thursday, a second suspect, Luis Kesseller, was arrested and, like Carrondi, charged with violating the country's anti-discrimination law, as well as robbery and damage to private property.

The police searched Carrondi's home, where they found Nazi paraphernalia, an army rifle, and a metal plaque which the judge said had been taken from a grave. Nazi literature was found at Kesseller's home as well.

Police also found the judge's name and telephone number in a notebook in Carrondi's apartment. The judge had been receiving anonymous threatening phone calls warning him not to proceed with the investigation.

The judge has been placed under special protection.

Carrondi identified himself to television reporters as a "nationalist and a Nazi."

Legislation providing severe penalties for attempts to discriminate on the basis of race, religion, sex, ideology or social status was passed in Argentina in 1988. B'nai B'rith had lobbied hard, in Argentina and internationally, for the landmark legislation.

The Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, while hailing that legislation, had reported at the time that anti-Semitic and right-wing extremists threatened both Jews and the government.

There has been an outpouring of sympathy for the Jewish community since the desecration, the worst attack on Jewish property in years.

BOMB HURLED AT SHUL IN PARIS
By Michel Di Paz

PARIS, May 16 (JTA) -- A small bomb hurled from a moving car exploded outside a synagogue in a southern district of Paris late Wednesday night, hurting no one and causing only slight damage.

No group or individual has claimed responsibility. The synagogue sexton told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency there had been no threats.

But a Jewish community leader who asked not to be identified said she was not surprised by the attack.

It came a day after a man claiming to belong to a fringe group of Jewish militants threatened, on Paris' Jewish FM radio station, to strike not only French neo-Nazis but their wives and children.

The attack is believed to be the first on a synagogue in Paris since a bomb killed four people outside the Rue Copernic Reform Temple in October 1980.