

'Without hope, future':

**Soviet Jews in Italy wait to emigrate to USA;**  
**'Glasnost' an immigration nightmare**

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**Byline:** Marilyn Greene

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## **Body**

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"Life here isn't a big problem for one or two months, if we would know our future," says Mark Glodner, 27, a urologist from Riga. "But we don't know anything. The problem is psychological."

This growing backlog is one of several pressing U.S. immigration problems: The tip of southern Texas is a hectic scene this week as throngs of Central Americans fleeing war and poverty seek political asylum. Since last June, 30,000 Nicaraguans have entered the USA, and thousands more are expected this year. Officials think several thousand of the 5 million Afghanistan refugees camped in Pakistan will want to emigrate to the country this year.

But the situation with Soviet Jews is perhaps the touchiest. Israel extends visas to Soviet Jews allowing them to leave the Soviet Union, but 90 percent want to go to the USA, where virtually all have friends and relatives. Israel is angry and embarrassed about that choice - and finds itself at odds with USA Jews who help resettle Soviet Jewish immigrants. Next year, at least 30,000 more Soviet Jews are expected to leave the Soviet Union, seeking homes abroad.

Glasnost is what brought these Soviet Jews from a life of waiting to waiting for a new life. Every week, hundreds more arrive by way of Vienna from the Soviet Union. But unless they gain refugee status allowing them entry into the United States - and many don't - the wait could be months to enter under normal immigration procedures.

The Italians will steer many of them to this sunny resort town, whose off-season empty apartments can accommodate the influx. But "it's not a resort for people who have no future," says optical engineer Mikhail Geller, 39, from Leningrad, who's been turned down twice for U.S. refugee status.

Leo Briskin, 21, sleeps on a cot in the kitchen of a three-room apartment he shares with six others. It's cold and damp, without central heat because it's meant to be used in summer. Two children have chronic coughs and runny noses. The \$ 450 rent will double when the holiday season begins.

"The problem isn't sleeping in the kitchen," says Briskin, who's from Moscow and wants to go to a USA college. "The problem is getting out."

But just as Mikhail Gorbachev's reform and openness programs result in more exit visas, the United States gets more selective - no longer automatically considering all Soviet Jews to be refugees from religious persecution.

Behind the policy change:

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- The White House last month agreed to participate in a 1991 Moscow human rights conference, based on a judgment there are fewer **Soviet** human rights violations.
- U.S. officials point to the Feb. 12 opening of the Solomon Mikloels Cultural Center - the first Jewish center of its kind in Moscow - as another sign of reversal in **Soviet** anti-Semitism.
- Bowing to Gramm-Rudman budget restrictions, the Justice Department wants to limit refugee costs. The government provides each refugee with \$ 1,000 in settlement assistance.

Since September, the **Immigration** and Naturalization Service has rejected 250 applications, a turnaround from past practice that almost always granted refugee status to any **Soviet Jew** who had obtained permission to leave his country.

"There is no consistency," says Merrill Rosenberg of the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society's office in **Italy**. "I see ill-trained interviewers. I see all decisions as being essentially arbitrary."

Says Amalia Rivkin, 34, a singer from Moscow: "I had a great dream to go to America with my son, who is good in mathematics." After six months in Ladispoli and one rejection, "I have no dream. We're **without hope, without a future**. We could not have expected this change in policy. We're stuck here **without** reasons, with nothing to say to our children."

**Soviet** emigres could enter the **USA** on "parole" status, but they wouldn't be eligible for benefits - or citizenship. The State and Justice departments are working on a new **immigration** class called "national interest," which supposedly would keep open the option of citizenship. Under regular immigrant status, only 270,000 people worldwide are allowed in each year, including a 20,000 person limit for each country.

Glodner, the urologist, wants to go to Savannah, Ga., to live near his Uncle Chaim. His refugee application was turned down Jan. 17. "Now we're **waiting**. We don't know for what. For a change in decision. We want the U.S. policy to be that all **Jews** are refugees. We don't understand how the embassy makes its decision. One person is a refugee, another isn't."

The Shulmans - Iosif, 38, Tatyana, 32, and their two children - have lived in Ladispoli more than a year, among the longest of any of the emigres.

A guitarist with the Minsk philharmonic orchestra, he left with his family - including Tatyana's ailing parents - to start a new life in New York. Last September, the parents were allowed to enter as immigrants, to live with their son. Tatyana and her family, rejected as refugees, now agonize over not being able to join them. "We want to live with our parents," she says. "They need us and we need them. Nobody expected this when we left Minsk."

Morton Kornreich, 62, chairman of the **USA's** United Jewish Appeal, says refugee status ought to be automatic for **Soviet Jews**. "Anti-Semitism is endemic in the **Soviet** Union," he says.

The UJA has just launched a \$ 200 million fund-raising campaign to provide emigres with housing and settlement assistance, particularly in Israel. But the organization finds itself in a bind. It publicly supports Israel's position - and urges refugees to go there. However, it also will provide relocation benefits for those who want to settle in the **USA** and regularly raises \$ 725 million a year for Jewish causes around the world.

"There's a lot of anguish and thought on how to deal with this," Kornreich says. But his "Israel needs you" pep talk falls on mostly deaf ears in Ladispoli.

The preferred destination: New York City, where 45 percent of **Soviet** emigres settle. Others go to Boston, Los Angeles, Chicago, Philadelphia and San Francisco. But, Kornreich says, "We have an obligation to try and induce them to go to Israel. Israel needs them - the United States doesn't."

New **immigration** policy starts in Texas today,3A - Supporters say it'll mean 'same day service' for Central American refugees. - Opponents say it will backfire and drive refugees underground.

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## Graphic

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PHOTO; color, Michele Pignatiello (Semyon Nemirovsky, son Stanislav, wife Lyudmila); PHOTO; color, Bob Fitzgerald (Tony Jose Garcia Ortiz, Judith del Carmen Togos, Ruth Elizabeth Garcia Ortiz); PHOTO; color, Marilyn Greene, USA TODAY (Morton Kornreich)

CUTLINE: IN ITALY: Refugees Semyon Nemirovsky, 60, with son Stanislav, 3, wife Lyudmila. After quitting the Communist Party and leaving the Soviet Union, he was turned down by U.S. CUTLINE: IN TEXAS: Nicaraguans Tony Jose Garcia Ortiz, left, Judith del Carmen Togos and Ruth Elizabeth Garcia Ortiz. CUTLINE: MORTON KORNREICH: 'Israel needs you'

## Classification

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**Subject:** IMMIGRATION (90%); JEWS & JUDAISM (90%); REFUGEES (90%); HUMAN RIGHTS (89%); MIGRATION ISSUES (78%); PHYSICIANS & SURGEONS (78%); PASSPORTS & VISAS (76%); POLITICAL ASYLUM (76%); RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION (76%); EMIGRATION (76%); RESETTLEMENT & REPATRIATION (71%); RELIGION (69%); HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS (61%)

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**Geographic:** SAINT PETERSBURG, RUSSIAN FEDERATION (79%); MOSCOW, RUSSIAN FEDERATION (71%); TEXAS, USA (79%); UNITED STATES (96%); NICARAGUA (79%); PAKISTAN (79%); AFGHANISTAN (79%)