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Project Renewal - Part II

to go home after school they would be subject to physical danger. Such a shocking thought is less surprising in light of the information about early marriage. Child abuse is much more likely to be found in the homes of these extremely young mothers and their equally inexperienced husbands. Moreover, the pattern in which the mother-in-law dominates the family entirely leaves little room for the young mother or father to display any control except over their offspring.

It is possible to conjecture that by the time the children of early marriage reach those ages (2-6) when oppositional behavior is the norm, their parents have begun to realize the predetermined pattern of their own lives and they may be less than able to cope with the kind of outgoing children we saw in the Home Environment Shelter.

Outreach To The Adult Gruzini Population

The professionals have made a number of attempts to make contact with the adult population and to draw them out. One year ago a team of two neighborhood workers, women who live in NI but are not Gruzini, went door-to-door inviting Gruzini to a Purim celebration. By making up to 4 visits at each home, they were able to attract 80 adults to the program. It was extremely successful and spoken about the population to this day.

This year a performing group of Gruzini was brought to the Berkovitz Center (the large center in the adjoining neighborhood). This time the outreach workers were able to attract 300 people to the performance.

The Emerging Residents Committee (RC)

There is a structure of committees with citizen participation in NI. At the top is the highly competent Mayor of the city.

Unfortunately, till recently, the history of establishing a Residents' Committee in the Shalom Neighborhood has been a history of failure. There have been as many as five of these committees attempted but they have lacked staying power. The participants have drifted away after a short time.

The Gruzini distrust of power may be the central reason for this failure. First, there is an avoidance of government authority and second, there is a pulling away

from any Gruzini who become politically active. Thus, the engineer who chaired the last attempt at a RC was labeled a "company man".

The current committee consists of a core of young men who have returned from the army and who have not as yet married. The chairman, Shimon, was exempt from the army for medical reasons. For whatever reasons, these young men found the strength to avoid the pressure for early marriage. Several of them indicate they are not yet employed and have not decided what they will do with themselves. When we first met them at a dinner for the Mission group they seemed defensive and hostile. Shimon introduced himself as the "Chairman of Silliness". But, when we returned for the consultation, they presented themselves in an entirely different light. In our private meeting with them they discussed the problems of the

neighborhood with understanding and with determination to act. They were able to share the floor at the meeting with other members of the RC who are older and who represent members of the Moroccan community as well as other elements of the Russian community other than Gruzini.

While these are prideful young men, they recognize their need to learn how to negotiate the system. Many of them are part of a special program to train political activists. The second day of our visit we saw them leaving along with members of the staff to attend a seminar for activists from around the nation who were gathering for the day in Tel Aviv. We learned they had paid their own way. These emerging leaders require all the support and status that it is possible to give. The professionals seem willing to be supportive despite their past disappointments with RCs.

These young men represent

a positive role model. As such they are a prime hope in redirecting the 13-18 year old males.

Summary

For three years, since the inception of Renewal, the professional community of NI has been planting seeds in the very rocky soil of the Shalom Neighborhood. It appears as if the first shoots of green are beginning to show among the Gruzini. The results of the work among the other half of the neighborhood is evident by walking into the community center at any hour of the day or evening.

In order to insure that these newest blades of grass will thrive, the cluster cities must first provide the dollars to repay what has been spent already as well as to cover the final two years AND BEYOND.

A close tie must be maintained with NI, and this can be accomplished through a focus-

ed use of Debbie Cooper, a former Memphis resident, who was hired by Memphis to observe Renewal in NI. She works through a government sponsored program which finds and supervises such observers. Till now, her role and her job have been very difficult because the Cluster had not set specific goals and recommendations. With the meeting in February, this situation was rectified and Debbie can use her natural and trained skills to monitor the process of the specific recommendations. The Shalom Neighborhood of Nazareth Illit is larger than the Jewish population of any of the cities in the cluster (6000). The value to Israel of that many whole and functioning citizens is incalculable. We have been given the blessed opportunity to function at the highest rung of Maimonides ladder of Tzedakkah — to help people to help themselves. For the sake of ourselves and our new found family in Nazareth Illit, we must succeed.

Phil's Deli

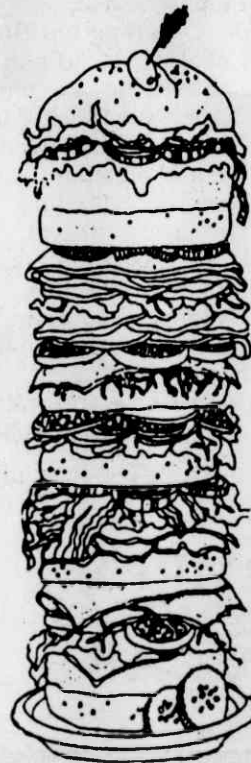
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