

4. *Izvestiya* (November 3, 1992).
5. See, however, Rozalina Ryvkina and Rostislav Turovskiy, *The Refugee Crisis in Russia*, edited by Robert J. Brym and translated by Patricia Patchet-Colubev (Toronto: York Lanes Press, 1993).
6. Robert J. Brym, "The Emigration Potential of Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland and Russia: Recent Survey Results," *International Sociology* 7, no. 4 (December 1992), 387-95.
7. Based on data from the State Statistics Board of the Russian Federation and the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation.
8. Sidney Heitman, "Jewish Emigration from the Former U.S.S.R. in 1992," unpublished paper (Fort Collins: Colorado State University, Department of History, 1993).
9. *Information Bulletin N17-1-16/4* (Moscow: State Statistics Board of the Russian Federation, January 14, 1993). In June 1992, an additional questionnaire concerning sociodemographic characteristics was included in the departure coupons. Beginning in 1993 this information will be analysed on a quarterly basis.
10. See *The Social and Socio-Political Situation in Russia: Status and Prognosis* (Moscow: Institute of Socio-Political Research, Russian Academy of Science, 1993), 60-61.

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Troubled Settlement of Refugees in Russia

Tanya Basok and Alexander Benifand

At present, there are 500,000 officially registered refugees in Russia, although, according to some estimates, the actual number may be as high as a million.¹ These refugees experience significant problems with housing and employment and their movement is limited by *propiska* or domicile registration.

In their recent report, Ryvkina and Turovskiy claim that "the domicile registration situation for refugees in most areas is not bad."² Yet their conclusions are contradicted by a number of other analysts.³ According to a researcher with Helsinki Watch in New York, domicile registration has been declared unconstitutional, but the Constitutional Oversight Committee allowed cities to continue this practice in order to maintain public order.⁴ Thus it seems that any city council may use its discretion to decide whether refugees will be allowed to settle in it or not. With respect to Krasnodar in particular, in their August 1992 report, the *Helsinki Watch* notes that:

The Krasnodar region has recently become a magnet for displaced persons escaping ethnic violence in the Caucasus.... In response to this influx of displaced persons, the regional legislative body adopted a resolution that officially banned issuing new residence permits.... Last year the public prosecutor of Krasnodar lodged a protest against the city's ban on issuing new residence permits. Instituted in 1988, the ban is still in effect. City authorities indicate that they do not welcome any interference from Moscow in their internal city affairs....⁵

There are ten million families in Russia who do not have adequate housing. Their waiting list is regulated by domicile registration. According to Tatyana Regent, the head of the State Migration Office of Russia (formed in June 1992),

eliminating the domicile registration will be unfair to these people and can be viewed as a violation of their human rights. At the same time, some regions have been heavily depopulated and underdeveloped and refugees are considered the only hope for their revival.⁶ Thus refugees have been offered domicile registration if they agreed to go to depopulated and agriculturally underdeveloped regions. According to Viktor Prevedentsev, an acclaimed Russian demographer who started studying internal migration in the 1970s, this is against their basic human rights. He explains: "Russians in the ex-Soviet republics live mainly in large cities, for the most part in republican capitals. They are intellectuals engaged in the production, scientific and humanitarian [liberal arts] spheres, or skilled workers. But those who have moved into Russia are being sent primarily into the rural hinterlands of the regions, which have lost their population. The idea is to make them work in agriculture. No greater mockery of people and common sense could have been devised."⁷ But the problem is not only one of adjustment for these urban dwellers or a lack of skills in agricultural production. The problem is that they have not received the financial aid required to start up rural activities and build houses. Lidia Grafova, a journalist and a refugee advocate since the late 1980s, reports that funds allocated to refugees and transferred by the Central Bank to local authorities, are not distributed. Refugees are told that these funds have not been received yet, or that they were going to be used to cover the expenses of the referendum. According to the most recent information, the allocated funds, even if distributed, would cover only the needs of barely 20 percent of the refugees.⁸ Older people are among the most disadvantaged as their old-age pensions are not restored. An elderly refugee from Tadjikistan reports that their one-time emergency aid was 1,000 rubles per person,⁹ whereas old-age pen-

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sions in Russia have been raised to a minimum of 8,000 rubles. In Grafova's words, the emergency aid offered to refugees was largely symbolic under the conditions of the soaring inflation in the country.¹⁰

An example of a Russian teacher and her family who fled from violence in Tkvarcheli, Georgia, and who were settled in a rural farm in the Belgorod region, provides an illustration. When they arrived, they did not have housing or any means of subsistence. When they requested assistance from an organization called *Sootechestvenniki* ("Compatriots"), they were told that the 200,000 rubles promised by the government would hardly cover the cost of a house foundation and that they would require additional 2 million rubles to build a house.¹¹ Yet, more aid is not forthcoming.

According to Tatyana Regent, the law on refugees, passed in February 1993 after the December ratification of the UN Convention on refugees and enacted on May 2, 1993, is idealistic and cannot be implemented under the present conditions. She claims that the economic conditions were not considered when the law on the definition of and assistance to refugees was passed and that it is purely symbolic at the moment. She fears that there will be a gigantic inflow of refugees and that without adequate financial means, regional authorities would be inundated. New measures would have to be taken that would undermine the refugee law. The government of Russia has allocated 24 billion rubles for 1993, yet the actual requirement is 180 billion, according to Regent. She concludes that the government is unable to fulfil its obligations to the refugee population.¹²

Refugees settling in smaller towns and rural areas have experienced significant problems in finding jobs. As Ryvkina and Turovskiy report, the unemployment rate of refugees in Russia "is tragically high at about two-thirds of the labour force."¹³ Consequently, there has been a growth in illegal agencies that exploit refugees by 'helping' them find employment under slave-like conditions.¹⁴ Compounding the problem is the social rejection by the local population. As Grafova reports, "On their own Rus-

sian territory, the refugees have heard the same words they heard in the former republics from which they fled—get out of here."¹⁵ Similarly, Ryvkina and Turovskiy report that there have been steadily growing tensions between local populations and refugees. Refugees are perceived in pejorative terms and are often believed to engage in illegal activities.¹⁶ Moscow has become a virtually closed city. The mayor of Moscow has signed an order that requires registration for new arrivals who have their permanent residence outside Russia within the borders of the former U.S.S.R. or who do not have a permanent place of residence. Twenty-four hours after arriving in Moscow, a person will have to present a passport and a form indicating the purpose of the visit and the intended length of stay. (Initially, it can be up to forty-five days, after which an extension is possible up to a maximum of one year.) Staying longer than twenty-four hours without registering carries the threat of a heavy fine. If the purpose of the visit is commercial or involves other income-producing activity not stated on the original registration form, a person can be fined ten times the regular fine or be jailed for up to fifteen days.¹⁷ This regulation gives authorities the right to expel undesirable people from Moscow.

The official draft Constitution of the Russian Federation contains a point about the freedom of movement of its population. Yet Viktor Perevedentsev estimates that it will take twelve years for the transition to take place.¹⁸ Whether such a transition will occur at all will depend on a number of factors, including availability of jobs, housing and consumer goods in Russia.

It seems that, given the lack of housing in big cities and the depopulation and underdevelopment of rural areas, domicile registration is unlikely to be cancelled. Without *propiska* refugees cannot settle in many Russian cities and towns. They are forced to go to those areas that lack adequate infrastructure for decent housing or employment. At the same time, the government is unable to provide financial assistance to develop these regions. As mentioned earlier, often when federal authorities allocate some

funds for refugees, they end up in the hands of local officials. Millions of Russian-speaking minorities in the former Soviet republics are therefore trapped. Many experience an infringement of their rights, yet they are afraid to migrate to Russia, knowing that their basic subsistence needs will not be met and that they may be socially rejected. ■

Notes

1. Andrei Anatoliev, "Prisutstvie Bezhentsev nezhelatel'no" ("Refugees are not Welcome"), *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* (April 29, 1993).
2. Rozalina Ryvkina and Rostislav Turovskiy, *The Refugee Crisis in Russia*, edited by Robert Brym and translated by Patricia Patchet-Golubev (York Lanes Press, 1993), 19.
3. Ryvkina and Turovskiy's report is based on interviews with twenty-one experts. Of their twenty-one experts, ten are government officials. Unfortunately, the old Soviet-style nomenclatura still occupy most administrative positions in many regions. Even some newly elected or appointed officials often have the old Soviet mentality. There was only one "refugee leader" included in the sample. If the authors had included more refugee representatives from various regions of origin and located in different areas of Russia, perhaps the picture of the refugee situation would be fuller. The study would also have been more balanced if, in addition to officially compiled statistics, the authors had compiled statistics based on independent research.
4. Helsinki Watch, New York (January 1992).
5. Helsinki Watch no. 14 (August 1992).
6. Andrei Baiduzhiy, "Tatyana Regent: Russia Cannot Fulfil Its Obligations Towards Refugees," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* (April 23, 1993).
7. Viktor Perevedentsev, "Russians Outside Russia: Potential Refugees?" *Moscow News* nos. 2-3 (January 15, 1993).
8. Lidia Grafova, "Molites za nas!" ("Pray for us!"), *Literaturnaya Gazeta* (March 24, 1993).
9. "Khorosho, khots' v seno mozno zarit'sya" ("At Least We Can Sleep in the Haystack"), *Literaturnaya Gazeta* (March 24, 1993).
10. Grafova, "Molites za nas!"
11. V. Klyueva, "V Tkvarcheli razbombili moi dom" ("My House in Tkvarcheli Was Bombed"), *Izvestia* no. 84 (May 6, 1993).
12. Baiduzhiy, "Tatyana Regent: Russia Cannot fulfil Its Obligations Towards Refugees."
13. Ryvkina and Turovskiy, *The Refugee Crisis in Russia*, 19.
14. Grafova, "Molites za nas!"
15. Ibid.
16. Ryvkina and Turovskiy, *The Refugee Crisis in Russia*, 21-22.
17. Viktor Belikov, "Moscow Will Register New Arrivals," *Izvestia* (February 20, 1993).
18. Perevedentsev, "Russians Outside Russia: Potential Refugees?"