

# Thousands In Jerusalem Slums Neglected In City's Housing Boom

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Jerusalem, March 7—Despite a controversial building development plan designed to settle tens of thousands of new immigrants within Jerusalem's newly expanded borders, much of the city's existing Jewish population is suffering a critical housing shortage.

According to figures compiled by city officials, nearly half the housing in the older part of Jerusalem, excluding the new apartments going up on mostly expropriated Arab land north of the city, is classified substandard.

## Overcrowded Housing

In the view of municipal officials close to the problem, the growing disparity between the new development plans and the neglected, overcrowded housing in which thousands of older residents have been living for more than 20 years is nothing less than social "dynamite."

The problem is further aggravated by the fact that the poor of west Jerusalem are with few exceptions Jews of North African or Middle Eastern origin, the "Oriental" Jews who make

up a majority of Israel's Jewish population, but who still have only a fractional share in running the country.

In recent weeks Israelis have been shocked by reports of an alarming increase in juvenile delinquency in Jerusalem, particularly in older, poorer neighborhoods where families of oriental Jews still live with inadequate plumbing and with up to 12 people crammed in two-room apartments.

## Jerusalem Black Panthers

Only last week a Jerusalem street gang calling itself "the Black Panthers" scheduled a demonstration to protest what they consider government neglect of their problems, while new immigrants from Europe or the United States get top priority in the Jerusalem expansion plan.

Police moved quickly and arrested most of the Panthers before the demonstration could take place. But several hundred middle-class Jerusalem youth demonstrated instead under the banner of Israel's minuscule New Left, urging that the Panthers be freed. They were the next day.

Such displays of youthful dissent, however mild by American or European standards, still are profoundly disturbing to most Israelis. But they are no surprise to Jerusalem officials who have been in close touch with the growing social discontent in their city.

And the housing crisis in the words of Dr. Eliezer D. Jaffe, director of the city's Social Welfare Department, is "one of the central pieces of the problem."

## City Official's Proposal

As long ago as last fall, Dr. Jaffe proposed in a little, publicized report that the municipality, with government backing, set up an emergency housing fund for the immediate rehabilitation of housing in some of Jerusalem's most depressed neighborhoods.

"It is not possible any longer," the report bluntly explained, "to cater chiefly to the problems of western immigrants while by-passing the slum conditions of early Middle Eastern Jews."

Moreover, the problem in recent months has been greatly aggravated by the social phe-

nomenon of "rising expectations," Dr. Jaffe explained in a recent interview.

The adolescent children of Jerusalem's Eastern Jews, many of them school dropouts and Army rejects, are intensely aware of the growing prosperity of a city making way for an expected influx of prosperous immigrants from Europe and America.

The new apartment developments springing up all over the nearby hills are a concrete evidence of the prosperity in which they are not sharing.

Many east Jerusalem Arabs live in even worse conditions, Dr. Jaffe said. But they mingle little with Israelis and the problems of "rising expectations" have not much affected their youth. And youth crime is not yet a problem there. His report therefore concentrated on Jerusalem's Jewish poor.

Dr. Jaffe's report gave these statistics: some 60,000 families in Israel were living in a density of three persons per room as recently as 1970. Some 15,000 of these families still were living in temporary barracks made of as-

bestos wallboard and corrugated metal.

In Jerusalem, as of 1969, before the housing boom for Western immigrants was fully underway, 47.3 per cent of all housing units were substandard in terms of their condition or a lack of certain basic plumbing facilities.

The Jaffe report concentrates on three separate aspects of the problem, exemplified by three Jerusalem neighborhoods: One, a tract in which some 350 families live crammed in two-room concrete block tenements; another, where some 450 families still live in emergency barracks; a third, a warren of tumble-down buildings put up by the Turks 70 or 80 years ago and rented by elderly Jews, most of them on minimal fixed incomes.

## \$68 A Month

The people who live in these conditions are among the 19 per cent of Jerusalem's Jewish population that receives some kind of public assistance, either in welfare grants or in the form of occasional supplementary grants.

Virtually all of them, Dr. Jaffe explained, are poor

enough to be considered on or near the "poverty line"—an arbitrary monthly income level which the Israeli government, despite several recent increases, pegs at a near subsistence level.

For a family of four to be below the poverty line, for instance, family income must be lower than \$68 a month. Most oriental Jewish families are considerably larger than that, however, and the average allowance per extra child is figured at no more than \$11 a month.

Dr. Jaffe's proposal would cost \$1 million to get started and keep going for the few years it would take to launch a more concerted attack on Jerusalem's slum problem.

Most of the money would be spent modestly: on adding a room to the two-room tenements in which families with 6 to 10 children have been living, or providing grants to elderly couples who want to install an inside toilet or a hot water heater. Within the scope of the proposal there is no "first aid" that can be carried out on the asbestos barracks, which would have to be torn down and replaced altogether.