Friday, November 24, 1989

Jewish Agency Leaders Optimistic About Plan For Absorbing Soviets

JERUSALEM (JTA) -Leaders of the Jewish Agency for Israel are pleased with the "historic," agreement they reached with the Israeli government recently on a comprehensive program to absorb an expected influx of immigrants from the Soviet Union.

They waxed enthusiastic over the prospects at a news conference held by agency officials and top leaders of the United Jewish Appeal from the United States.

The agreement, announced and endorsed by the Jewish Agency Board of Governors, provides for a \$2 billion housing, absorption and employment program based on the expectation that 100,000 Soviet Jews will come to Israel in the next three years.

The plan calls for the construction of 25,000 new housing units and renovation of 5,000 existing units.

Mendel Kaplan, chairman of the Board of Governors, remarked that it is especially auspicious that the agreement was concluded during a week in which a record high for Soviet aliyah was announced.

The figures showed that 1,464 Soviet Jews came to Israel in October, out of 9,450 who left the Soviet Union that

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month. The message going out of Jerusalem to the whole world is that "Israel and the Jewish people will absorb every single immigrant who wants to come here," Kaplan said.

Simcha Dinitz, chairman of the World Zionist Organization - Jewish Agency Executive, stressed the related decision by the Board of Governors to put the Jewish Agency in charge of coordinating all Jewish cultural and educational work inside the Soviet Union.

It will devote manpower and resources to. in Dinitz's words, "condition the hearts and minds of Soviet Jews to immigrate to Israel."

That would be done. Dinitz said, by educating

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Soviet Jews about their dorsed at a meeting of Zionism.

The agency' has recommended that UJA in the United States and Keren Hayesod elsewhere in the world launch a special campaign to raise \$500 million of the required \$2 billion over the next five years.

The recommendation is expected to be en-

Jewish heritage and UJA leaders in New York.

> According to the UJA officials visiting Jerusalem, the special campaign will not compete with ongoing fundraising for domestic and overseas needs.

They expect a substantial easing of the financial burden that has been put on American Jewish federations by

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the influx of Soviet Jews into United States during the past year.

Because the number of Soviet Jews applying to come to the United States as refugees now greatly exceeds the number of federally funded refugee slots, UJA leaders expect that many Soviet Jews will opt to settle in Israel.

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