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THERE'S NOTHING NEW about rich old men tying the knot with beautiful young girls. But men who are hardly millionaires successfully seducing women barely out of their teens with a few thousand dollars and a visa? In "Ukrainian Brides," Nili Tal follows a group of Israeli men on an organized trip to the city of Kherson, Ukraine, to find themselves brides.

Tal, whose film has recently been broadcast in Israel, Poland, Holland, France and Finland, was surprised by what she encountered. "I realized all the men are looking for the same thing: a family and not just sex. The girls are desperate to escape poverty but they are strong-willed and not prepared to be puppets," says the 58-year-old documentary filmmaker during an in-



Seven Brides for Seven Bachelors

Filmmaker Nili Tal follows a group of Israeli men to Ukraine and back, in their search for the perfect young bride

terview at her Ramat Aviv apartment, which has film cassettes stacked in every corner.

The phenomenon of Israeli men traveling to Ukraine to find wives was brought to Tal's attention while she was researching a story on the traffic in Eastern European women in Israel. "The Russian doctor helping me with my story told me there are other ways in which women from Eastern Europe get to Israel to rescue themselves from poverty. He knew of three local matchmaking agencies that arrange marriages of Ukrainian women to Israeli men."

The first agency she visited was a sideline business for a 50-year-old Israeli computer programmer married to a 20-year-old Moldavian. When he preferred to keep his moonlighting quiet, Tal approached Rami Yahav, 45, who arranges matches through an agency in Kherson, the hometown of his 24-year-old wife, Olga. His fee: \$2,000, with an additional \$600 for the women to travel to Kiev to get documentation and another \$100 for a wedding dress

and shoes. A group of seven men traveling with Rami last July to Kherson — a city of 380,000 with an estimated 3,000 Jews, a three-hour flight from Odessa — agreed to allow Tal, a cameraman and a Russian immigrant sound engineer to film their trip. With funding for the documentary from Israel Channel 2 television, Tal and crew returned for a week in August to film the wedding preparations and two civil ceremonies in the Kherson town hall. In January this year, another trip was made to interview one bride who decided not to join her new husband in Israel (Tal helped them resolve their differences and the couple ultimately reconciled), and another who had already returned to Kherson after the relationship did not work out. Thirty hours of footage from the trips was pared down to produce two installments of 60 minutes each.



PHOTOS FROM NILI TAL'S MOVIE 'UKRAINIAN BRIDES'

In Part One of "Ukrainian Brides," the opening scene fits all a viewer's pre-conceived ideas about older men looking for sex objects. Prior to their trip, the megle over the Ukrainian Internet site that features 500 young women, many of whom could easily be mistaken for models, looking for their Western man. The men complain that Israeli women have become too