President’s message:

Our common interest and purpose . . .

by Mike Getz

I am happy to acknowledge copies of family research sent to me by a few members, which included information on Latvian Jewish communities. These represent a modest beginning to creating a resource otherwise not available. Of particular value are notes of a trip by Sondra and Howard Epstein to Latvia during Summer, 1995. They also motivated the article on Dankere (Gostini) which appears in this issue. This initiative to share experience, research and knowledge is exemplary and valuable, but it is also isolated. A resource in English serving our common purpose can only be created by many more members following the Epstein example.

Marion Werle’s bibliography is in preparation and should appear in our next issue. Developing a resource in English of Latvian Jewish communities remains an important priority. I would appeal that members share with us personal material acquired or prepared in the course of family research. It would be useful and important to include as a resource supplementing a bibliography of standard work.

The 1997 Jewish Genealogy Seminar is in Paris, July 13-17. Further details are included in this issue. I would appreciate members of our SIG advising me of their interest. This would help in coordinating plans and programs covering our special interests in both Paris and Latvia. Please write, fax or E-mail your thoughts. Your response would help to accommodate both members’ personal programs as well as projects that would provide shared benefits. Please let me know.

In this context it is important to remember that records relating to property, synagogues and other sources have important genealogy potential, when they are available.

Contacts in Latvia are building slowly as illustrated by contributions from Sofia Me’erova of Daugavpils and Aleksandrs Feigmanis of Riga. Sofia has already provided detailed information on families of Daugavpils Holocaust survivors, part of a project motivated by the JGS of Greater Washington. In his most recent letter Aleksandrs mentions work he is doing on the Jews of Riga and Latgalle, which we hope to publish in the near future. I would welcome information on contacts in other Jewish communities who would see COMMON, page 35

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First of all, please accept my sincerest apologies for this newsletter being late—very late. My father has been seriously ill.

Secondly, this is my last issue as editor of Latvia SIG. Originally I signed on to only edit and publish Issue #1 until an editor could be found. Soon came time for Issue #2, still no editor; then of course came Issue #3; and here is Issue #4.

Although I [briefly] considered continuing next year, my father's illness now prevents me from doing so. Earlier this month, I asked Mike Getz to definitely find another editor for 1997. (In addition to my father's illness, my son is getting married in March at the same time we would publish the next issue.)

It's also time for other Latvia SIG members to volunteer. This organization cannot remain viable if only three, four or five members take on responsibility. Mike, Marion and I worked hard to make Latvia SIG successful. Paid membership grew from 19 [on January 1, 1996] to 105 [on December 31, 1996]. For a one-and-one-half-year old fledgling organization, that's impressive.

Thank you for supporting Latvia SIG, and thank you for your many kind comments and compliments about the newsletter. To tell the truth, I never produced a newsletter before (and I don't have a newsletter computer program to make the job easier). Needless to say, I'm proud of the results.

Great news—Latvia SIG's reputation is spreading. . . . We've been reprinted! The Cleveland Kol, Volume 10, Numbers 3 & 4, reprinted the two-page Libau article along with the 11-page Libau Survivors List from our September 1996 issue. (Did you find a relative's name on this list?) Permission was requested and granted!

Another APOLOGY—To anyone who did not receive a timely response to queries about membership or timely receipt of back issues for new members. Everything is now up-to-date.

Have you moved, changed your telephone, FAX or E-mail? Since a new membership list will be included with the soon-to-be-published LFF, send changes to the Treasurer ASAP.

"Whom are you researching?" Have you sent in your LFF form? (You must be a 1997 paid-up member to receive the LFF.)

One final note—it's Dues renewal time, so please fill out the form, and mail it with your check.

D.L.H.
Letters to the Editor . . .

An E-mail was received regarding my column, "Beginner's Corner . . . Rules to live by" which appeared for the first time in the September 1996 issue. In question was the sentence reprinted as follows:

- DO send a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) when sending queries. Last month, your editor received 13 queries from around the world—not one SASE.

Dear Editor:

> On p.40 of Vol.1,#3, you require to send a SASE with one's query: do you suppose that everybody is a US citizen?! This is not the case...
> You should better have indicated "use email, or send a SASE or one (or 2?) International Reply Coupon". We cannot buy US stamps over here.
> Thank you.
> Sincerely
> Basile Ginger, Cercle de Genealogie Juive, Paris
> BasGinger@aol.com

Dear Basile Ginger:

You are absolutely correct. You cannot buy U.S. stamps in France, but even if you could, you could not use them to mail directly from France to America. Mail sent from France or other countries must have stamps issued by that country. When Americans visit France, they should not take U.S. stamps for letters to be mailed from France back to America.

After receiving your E-mail, I contacted the U.S. Post Office in Cleveland OH and received the following information on International Reply Coupons—from the International Mail Manual (issued 9-12-96, page 140):

The sender of a letter may prepay a reply by purchasing reply coupons, which are sold and exchangeable for postage stamps at post offices in member countries of the Universal Postal Union. . . .

. . . The front of each coupon is printed in French. The reverse side of the coupon shows the text relating to its use in German, English, Arabic, Chinese, Spanish, and Russian.

Coupons sold in the United States have the selling price printed on them, while coupons in other countries may not . . .

The selling price of a reply coupon in the United States is $1.05. One coupon is exchangeable in any other member country for a stamp or stamps representing the minimum postage on an unregistered air letter. Unused U.S. coupons (that is, those with the U.S. selling price stamped on them) may be exchanged only for United States postage stamps by the original purchaser at a discount of 1 cent below the purchase price. . . .

International reply coupons purchased in foreign countries are exchangeable at U.S. post offices toward the purchase of postage stamps, postage meter stamps, postage validation imprinter (PVI) labels and embossed stamped envelopes (including aerograms) at the rate of $0.60 per coupon, irrespective of the country where they were purchased. . . .

Your point was well taken! Therefore, I amend my original sentence [above] to read as follows:

- When mailing queries within your own country, DO send a business-size, self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE).

- When mailing queries to another country, DO send a business-size, self-addressed envelope along with one or two International Reply Coupons.

Basile, thank you for your comments, and please keep them coming (especially the nice ones)!

[D.L.H.]
Columnist from Riga, Latvia . . .

Chronicle of Kurland's Jewry

by Aleksandrs Feigmanis

Between the Baltic seashore with its many rows of dunes, the Lithuanian border and the left bank of the Dauga River are located two historical regions of Latvia—Kužermes and Zemgale, better known as Kurland. It was a duchy, a semi-independent state, loyal to Poland from 1561 to 1795. Kurland was a province of the Russian Empire from that date.

Cities and shtetls of Kurland:

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<td>Vaidemarpils</td>
<td>Sassmacken</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ventspils</td>
<td>Windau</td>
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</table>

These towns were well known during the centuries for their skillful Jewish craftsmen, entrepreneurial merchants, doctors, scientists, writers and rabbis.

The following are only a few names from the long list of famous Kurlanders:

- Rabbi Mordehay Eliasberg (1817-1884), rabbi of Bausk, pioneer of Zionism in Latvia.
- Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kuk, also of Bausk, Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Palestine, 1921-1935.
- Dr. Max Laserson, international lawyer, member of Latvian parliament, professor at Columbia University.

Aspirations for a thorough education, and an affinity for German "culturality" were typical features of local Jewry.

The Holocaust—tragedy of the Jewish people—destroyed the world of Kurland's Jewry. Thousands were killed, synagogues burned and desecrated. In Talsi, five years ago, I saw broken tombstones among the dense overgrowth of brushwood. This is the picture to be seen in other cities too—a terrible picture. It is in our hearts that we must keep the best monument to the Jews who lived there and our memory of them. This chronicle of Kurland's Jewry is a small brick to that monument. Let us turn the pages. . . .

THE START OF XVI CENTURY

Tombstones found on the cemetery in Mitau at the beginning of the twentieth century testified to a Jewish presence during this period.

1561

The duchy of Kurland was established on the former territory of the Livonian Order of Knights, as the property of Polish kings. In the treaty concerning Livonia, signed between the Polish king and the Magistre (chief) of the Order, Gottard Kettler, the following appears: "We don't allow Jews occupation by trade as well as collecting taxes or loans."
SECOND HALF OF XVI CENTURY

Johan von Munhausen, the bishop of Pilten district, in search of increased revenue and trade, supported the settlement of Jewish craftsmen and merchants from Holland, Denmark and other western countries in the region under his control. Until 1819, Pilten was a unique "state within a state." This district, as opposed to other parts of Kurland, was under direct rule of the Polish king. Jews lived there under the protection of tolerant Polish laws.

It is useful to note that in the 17th and particularly the 18th century, Jews from Western Europe continued to settle in Kurland. Nadezhda Mandelstam, wife of the famous Russian poet Ossip Mandelstam (born 1891 in Warsaw; died c. 1938 in a Soviet camp; parents married in Dvinsk), recalls that in 1928 in Yalta, the wife of a local watchmaker showed them the genealogical tree of the Mandelstam family. It begins a little before a patriarch of the family left Germany for Kurland. He was invited there by Duke Ernst Johann Biron (1690-1772) because of his skills as a watchmaker and jeweler. Documents of the 19th century show that the Mandelstam family was registered in the shtetl Novye Zhagory on the Lithuanian side of the border with Latvia.

1570

Citizenship and rights to own immovable property were granted to the Jews of Pilten.

1625

The Duke of Kurland prohibits the settlement of Jews in Libau.

Although some of Kurland's noblemen were interested in the settlement of Jewish merchants and craftsmen because they paid good taxes, Christian tradesmen and craftsmen in the cities both feared and envied Jewish competition. For this reason, they asked for the expulsion of Jews from Kurland.

1686

The following is an extract from the foundation act of New-Subbath, composed by Baron Osten-Saken: "We do not want to allow the settlement of Jews in our city or the use of the inn."

END OF XVII CENTURY

Jews are officially prohibited in Kurland but continue to arrive. Principal occupations were in trade, crafts and the distilling of wine.

1708

First mention of a synagogue's existence in Pilten.

1710

July 9, 1710, Duke Friedrich-Wilhelm agreed to the establishment of a Jewish cemetery in Mitau.

1717

By decree, Jews were forbidden in the Pilten district; gentiles were forbidden, under fear of penalty, to give asylum to Jews.

FIRST HALF OF XVIII CENTURY

Duke Friedrich published decrees on expulsion of Jews. However, Landtag (nobleman's assembly) sought permission for Jews to settle, arguing their contribution to the development of crafts and trade in the duchy.
Isaac ben Jehuda founded a Chevra Kadisha (burial society) in Mitau.

Jewish tax collectors appointed by officials.

Itshak Libman (also called Levi Lippman), governs trade and crafts in the duchy. He was the "court Jew" of Duke Ernst Johann Biron. This prominent financier, whose origin and death is still covered in mystery, ruled trade of the whole Russian empire when his patron, the duke, was a favorite of Empress Anna Joanova, who reigned from 1730 to 1740.

TO BE CONTINUED

Please address questions and comments directly to:

Aleksandrs Feigmanis
Museum "Jews in Latvia"
Skolas str. 6 LV-1322
Riga LATVIA

[Ed: This article was edited by Mike Getz.]

Personal travel notes,
correspondence and family histories

by Mike Getz

Many of these have historically and otherwise interesting accounts of life and events in particular locations of Jewish life in Latvia. It would be useful and valuable if members could forward these for possible inclusion in special issues of the newsletter that would be dedicated to particular communities, their history and families.

This would also take us a little further on the route to building a record in English of Jewish life in Latvia.

Please mail to:

Mike Getz
Latvia SIG President
5450 Whitley Park Terrace #901
Bethesda MD 20814-2061
(301)493-5179 – Home
(301)493-9081 – FAX
mgetz@capaccess.org – E-mail
Kurlander Young Men's Mutual Aid Society

by Mike Getz

We are indebted to Naomi Freistadt for the Kurlander Young Men's Mutual Aid Society (KYMMAS) records, a summary of which follows. Recorded are the names, dates of birth, towns of origin and names of spouses, where available, of members born in Latvia. The records include a large number born in the USA and elsewhere, which have not been included. The period covered stretches from the 1870s to the 1920s and later.

As the example of these records illustrate, further details, including names of children, vocations and professions also appear. Occasionally, siblings and others are mentioned as heirs where there is no other family. Deadlines and space precluded including these. We will be happy to provide copies to those interested.

Please send a business-size (#10) SASE [self-addressed, stamped envelope], and, a token donation to our Latvia SIG would be welcome from those so inclined.

Mail the SASE and your check payable to: LATVIA SIG

c/o Mike Getz
5450 Whitley Park Terrace #901
Bethesda MD 20814-2061

Spelling used in these records has been adhered to with some attempt to standardize. SIG members will be able to identify the names of towns, and where necessary, relate them to those current. A few names are new to us and may be variations we are unfamiliar with.

We also include the copy of an address to the KYMMAS on its 50th Anniversary in 1939 by Rabbi Mordechai Nurock, one of Latvia's most prominent Jewish leaders. He moved to Israel and was a leading member of the Knesset there until his death.

[Editor's note]

See Dov Levin's article, "The Jews and the Sovietisation of Latvia, 1940-41" on pages 20-29:

- Rabbi A. Nurock is mentioned on page 21 [small page 40] and in footnote #3 on page 27 [small page 53].

- Rabbi Mordecai Nurock is mentioned on page 24 [small page 46] and in footnote #33 on page 28 [small page 54].
KURLANDER YOUNG MEN'S MUTUAL AID SOCIETY

1. NAME: ARRANSON ISADORE
2. DATE OF BIRTH: Mazah 22 Apr 1883
3. PLACE OF BIRTH: Rusland
4. DATE OF LAST INITIATION INTO THE SOCIETY: 46 Apr 1913
5. MARRIED OR SINGLE: Married 6. NAME OF WIFE: Rebecca Barks
7. OCCUPATION: Mennonist 8. AMOUNT OF LIFE INSURANCE: 1300.00
9. CHILDREN: Name Are Son in Law Members?

- Stanley
- Gerson
- Samuel

10. BENEFICIARY, TO WHOM ENDOWMENT SHALL BE PAID: Rebecca wife
11. Relationship of Beneficiary to you: Daughter

STATE OF: New Jersey
COUNTY OF: Sussex

City of: Sussex

On this 11 day of October before me personally appeared Sander Abramson and Rebecca Abramson to me known and known to me to be the individual described in and who executed the foregoing instrument, and who duly acknowledged to me that he executed the same.

Signature of Witness: [Signature]
Notary Public

KURLANDER YOUNG MEN'S MUTUAL AID SOCIETY

Died 11/31/70

1. NAME: Abramson William
2. DATE OF BIRTH: April 5 1881
3. PLACE OF BIRTH: Lebanon
4. DATE OF LAST INITIATION INTO THE SOCIETY: 26 Oct 1904
5. MARRIED OR SINGLE: Married 6. NAME OF WIFE: Celia Rosenzweig
7. OCCUPATION: Painter
8. AMOUNT OF LIFE INSURANCE: [Amount]
9. CHILDREN: Name Are Son in Law Members?

- Abramson Samuel
- Abramson Albert
- Abramson Albert

10. BENEFICIARY, TO WHOM ENDOWMENT SHALL BE PAID: Wife, Celina
11. Relationship of Beneficiary to you: Wife

STATE OF: New Jersey
COUNTY OF: Sussex

City of: Sussex

On this 26 day of October 1904 before me personally appeared William Abramson and Celina Abramson to me known and known to me to be the individual described in and who executed the foregoing instrument, and who duly acknowledged to me that he executed the same.

Signature of Witness: [Signature]
Notary Public
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<th>Name First</th>
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<th>City/Town</th>
<th>Initiated</th>
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Jewish cemeteries and mass graves in Latvia

by Mike Getz

There is no record to date of Jewish cemeteries and mass graves in Latvia. The Latvia SIG would like to publish whatever is available. A number of members who visited Latvia have sent accounts of their experiences and included details on the location and condition of cemeteries and mass graves.

We invite members and others in possession of this type of information to mail it to me for inclusion in a future issue of our newsletter. It would not only help us fulfill a Jewish obligation to our past, but close gaps in our knowledge of Jewish life.
GREETINGS FROM LATVIA

by

Rabbi Mordechai Nurock

I PAUSE to muse with articulate pleasure of my dear Kurlander friends in America. Real, pleasant reminiscences pass before me of the evening when I was honored in your midst with a beautifully worded scroll electing me an honor member of your Society.

For this significant fiftieth anniversary of the Kurlander Young Men’s Mutual Aid Society, I should like to have pass before me the ever-changing conditions of the Jews in that particular territory that was Kurland under Tsarist regime and is now Latvia.

Before the World War, Kurland was not part of the pale of settlement (free entry State under Tsarist Russia). Free movement from city to city was allowed only those Jews who had been registered in Kurland prior to the year 1834. Other categories, such as certified craftsmen and businessmen, were only permitted to settle from time to time in certain few localities.

On July 21st, 1893, an Ukaz was issued by the all highest government authority according to which all those Jews who had settled in Kurland and Livland before March 1st, 1880, could obtain permanent city habitation rights. However, a further Senat Ukaz defined this order that under no circumstances can such immigrant Jew live anywhere else in Kurland, but in that city to which he was assigned and to which he had obtained his rights as an 1880 settler.

Of old Jewish communities, there were quite a number. The immigration of Jews to Kurland extends into the fourteenth century.

Economically, the condition of the Jews in Kurland was fairly satisfactory. The Tsarist impediments were surely no pleasure. No immigrant Jew had any right to own any kind of immobile property.

A curious fact is worthy of note. None of the immigrant Jews had any property rights, and for that reason, had also no right to membership in any kind of Society.
therefore, none but one hundred per cent Kurlanders had the right to become members of such innocent activity as the Chevra Kadisha. (Cemetery Comm.) Ed.

At a special session of the highest court of the land, it became incumbent upon me as chief Rabbi to point out to the Juridical body that, although the Jews deem the caretaking of their dead a lovework, truly unselfish because there is no hope of reciprocation from the dead, it is singular that only one hundred per cent Kurlanders should have the privilege of that honored usage. An exception was made, and all Kurlanders could be members of the Chevra Kadisha thereafter. I permitted myself to relate this incident only to give a clear picture of the position of the Jews in Tsaristic Kurland, which otherwise could hardly ever be visualized in free America.

Culturally the Jews of Kurland stood on a fairly high Niveau, although Jewish national education limped considerably. This was so, because the influx of a refreshing stream of enlightened Jewish elements from the regular Jewish pale, where Jewish life pulsed vibrantly was legally not possible.

A serious turning point in the life of the Kurlander Jews was brought on by the World War.

In April, 1915, when the military front neared Kurland, the uncle of the Tsar, Duke Nicolai Nicolaievich, issued an Uказ that within twenty-four hours every Jew, men, women, and children, must vacate their homes, leave their possessions, and get out to parts later to be designated.

This terrible chapter would be worth describing in greater detail, but the most heartrending scenes, especially those of the old, the children, and the sick, beggar all description.

But a small part of Kurland remained unaffected, because the German army had already occupied Libau, Grobin, Hosenpot, and Goldingen, a few days earlier.

Five states in Russia proper were later assigned for the immigration of the Jews from Kurland.

To me, personally, an exception was offered. I was to continue in office as war censor and I was at the same time to supervise the welfare of the Jewish soldiers.

I replied by concrete interpolation, if this be an order to me, or only a special favor. I was assured that the offer really was an exception and might be regarded as a special favor.

I declined, naturally, and explained that I could see only one course open to me, and that was to follow the course of my unfortunate brethren and sisters in exile.

Various steps were then taken to obtain permission for the return of the exiles. On the 4th and 5th of May, 1915, I headed a delegation of prominent Russian Jews before the Minister President Goremykin and the Minister of State Maklakov at Petersburg.

I pointed out that the charge of espionage against all the Jews was a still greater calamity than the Baillis Blood accusation. In the latter, only one sert was accused, while in the espionage charge, entire Jewry was condemned without proof of guilt.

It developed then, that the civil authorities were never in sympathy with this drastic act and that only the head of the general staff, General Janish Krwitz was responsible for this fearful crime.

A few weeks later Count Reuter Nolken, the last Kurlander Governor, appeared
before the last Tsar Nikolai II and portrayed to him the indescribable misery of the exile Kurlander Jews.

As I was later told by the Governor, the Tsar already knew from Minister of the Interior, Maklakov, of the plight of those people and expressed the hope that this Ukaz will be soon rescinded. This would probably have happened had the Germans not occupied all of Kurland in the meantime.

And so the Jews of Kurland were dispersed all over the deepest parts of Russia. A great many fell victims to general war calamities. Revolution and counter revolutions, fearful pogroms and hunger epidemics took their toll in their turns. I lived from 1915 to 1921 in Moscow and was always in closer contact with these hapless people.

On November 18, 1918, Lettland was proclaimed a sovereign state and slowly the trickle of Kurlander Jews back to their old homesteads began. Difficulties were met only by those who had no Kurlander passports.

In the free Lettish Republic, full equality and full cultural rights for the Jewish minority was proclaimed. An entire school system from kindergarten to gymnasium in Jewish and Hebrew was established with recognition of all rights for acceptance to the higher educational institutions.

We Jews of the former Kurland were, indeed, even decades before, very close to the Lettish people.

When Nikolai II, called in the first Duma, the Jews and the Letts went to the polls in a closed block, and in four other elections the Jews and the Letts were inseparable and similarly went to the polls in closed formation. This was remembered by the first President of Lettland, Janis Tschalske, and it was the pleasure of the writer to point toward that fact with pride.

Now that Lettland celebrates its twentieth anniversary, we can claim with true satisfaction, that we are a really loyal element in the State. At a time when world Jewry strives with all its might to bring to realization the ideals of a national home in Palestine, we recognize with sincere devotion the ideals of the Lettish people to develop their national life and to strengthen their own state.

My request of all our Kurlander friends in America and especially all those who originate from those territories which constitute the Latvia of today, that they may continue to nurse the delicate threads that bind them to the old homeland.

Our friends in America are bound to the present Lettland by the dearest and sweeter reminiscences of childhood, and their first awakening to the serious problems of life. In the old homeland they also left the dearest treasures of human love and sentiment: the graves of parents and dear departed relatives.

On entry upon your second half century of your Society's usefulness, I wish from the deepest recesses of my soul, that the feeling of the close bonds with the old homeland may be inculcated in the new generation. I wish that when the next generation celebrates the centennial of the glorious work of your Society, the Jews may have realized the ideals of your and our lifetime; the establishment of the National homeland in Eretz Israel, in which cause the Jews of the entire world owe your free America, everlasting love and appreciation.

*Translated from German by Harry B. Kabu
Daugavpils

by Sophia Meyerova

The Jews appeared in Daugavpils in the 18 century. They were the first manufacturers and artisans. The town became to develop when the railway "Petersbourgh/Warshava" was built.

The Jews got permission to build on some central quarters. The synagogues, Jewish hospital, different sport clubs, schools, yeshiva and hevra kadisha appeared. About 40 synagogues were built in Dvinsk. The Jewish population consisted of 58 thousand (among 100 thousand) before World War 2. During the War a lot of people evacuated in Russia, on the West but many of them struggled for independence of Latvia. In 20–30 years 12 thousand of Jewish people lived in the town. The majority were the artisans, but also there were a lot of rich people. Every Jewish person kept to the traditions. Shabbat, holidays, went to synagogue, spoke Yiddish. Rich people helped to the poor to prepare to the firewoods on winter, the doctors treated freely. All Rigas Street (the central in Dvinsk) was the street of Jewish shops. Everything was sold there: clothes, footwear, products.

A lot of political groups existed: from sionistic to social-democratic. These groups had different clubs, the youth participated actively in this life.

The War destroyed people and Jewish lifes. The Jews from Belarussia, Ukrainia and Russia went to Dvinsk, because Latvia had some differences from Russia. Almost all local inhabitants were destroyed, except those, who had the time to evacuate. Before 1990, 3 thousand of Jewish people lived in Dvinsk. But the way of Jewish life was destroyed: no schools, no theatre and also a fear that you can be arrested. This life started to re-establish only from 1989. The Jewish Community was made, the cultural life established. A lot of concerts and performances (from Vilnius, Moscow and other places). People were crying when they heard the Jewish speech from the stage. And at the same time ajija began. Nowadays only 700-800 Jews are living here. Most of them are old people. The Daugavpils Jewish Community could restore the main way of Jewish life. There is a Synagogue here (minjan is every day (in the evening)). Our Community helps to the needers with products, money and medicines. A lot of people study Hebrew and the history of their people. We celebrate all holidays in our community. And also we take care of Jewish cemeteries.

A lot of children from the mixed families come in our community and they understand themselves as the Jews and reveal an interest to the Jewish traditions and life.

Sophia Meyerova 8.11.96

[Ed: The original article had been faxed too many times and was too difficult to read. It was retyped without editing.]
History of Dankere
by Asuma Drulle
(translated from Latvian & Russian)

A nice good day to You!
Excuse me that I have not written to You long ago. I needed
time to get to know that Dancer was the first name of Gostipil.
It came from the count Dancer to whom belonged the estate which was
in the second half of nineteenth's century called Danker estate. Near
this estate - on the way to the railway bridge was the first small Je-

ewish home - huts, where Jewish merchants sold goods of first need, most
of all sweets. The man who told me it was three years old, when by the
band of his mother went there to buy sweets - he remembered it well.
Later on the Jew Band arranged a shop in his house, which was built of
red bricks. Bands had five children. In 1905 the Russian soldiers al-
most destroyed Gostipil, also the house of Band, who later with his fa-
mily went to the United States. Till 1935 there was a Jewish school in
Gostipil. The school was near the Sport ground of nowadays. The house is
in a good state, there is now the forest office. Manager of the school
was madame Shmukle, the school was named the house of Beser. In Gostipil
there was also a Jewish primary school - in a wooden house of two flats.
Teachers - in 1922-23 the manager of the school was Sandler, teachers -
Dushevitz, Katz. I don't know precisely in which year the teachers
worked. The second - the primary school is now arranged into flats.
This is all about schools.

So "Dankers" was the first name of Gostipil, which was arranged in
the 19. century - on the earth which belonged to Danker, Korf, Mened.
Here began the building of Gostipil. My grand-grandfather Janis Slite-
ren - buried earth for 1 kopek for an axis in square. In the notes of
by my father about his childhood I can imagine the Jews there built
earth and built homes. In 1897 Gosteni, which is also the name of Gost-
ipi, had 2328 inhabitants, but in 1920 - only 378, of them 314 latvi-
ans and 544 Jews. In the world Gostipil was destroyed. The Russian sol-
diers searched it - from 192 houses 152 were destroyed. In 1927 Gosti-
pi was united with Flavigas and the place was called "Glasmanka" - her
the Jews blowing glasses arranged a centre, worked themselves and took
workers, arranging glasses and thing of glass - was a good centre for trade - a gate between Latgale, Vidzeme and north Kurzeme.
This town officially was not named Trenčín, but although here were occupied with buying animals and meat-trade, there was also a little cattle-fight on the end of Aiviekste and there were always garbages. Therefor the people who gave merchants going through the place called it Trenčín – the place intestains. This name is also explained by professor Stanisław – "turned out of paradise". Here I must again my

the remembrances of my fathers childhood – "Here in Gostipě

Jews were allowed to buy houses and build them – it was in the time of zar Nikolai II – nineteenth century, but farther in Vidzeme Jews were allowed to stay only 12 hours, in the evening they had to go back. In our house there lived 28 years a Jew Abram and his wife Zara. They had 12 children. My father related about them in the second part of the 19. century. The family name of Abram was Shreiber, there were mentioned all the names of the children. In one letter I cannot tell all this, I can also tell how terrible it was for them in the time of the zar – for poor Jews. My father told that as a boy of 12 years he went with Abram like a driver to Vidzeme, because Abram was not allowed to stay more than 24 hours. The papers were formed on the name of my mother and mine. After 28 years living in our house they went to US (in the second part of the 19. cent.), but did not write to us.

You are interested in sinagogues. The largest and most beautiful sinagogue was on Vidzemes street, not far from the Long street.

I remember wonderful coloured big window-glasses, stony base.

I was about 5-7 years old when I took breakfast to my father in the factory of Miller. I was standing and admiring the most beautiful house of Gostipě, when I had to pass it. In the war time the sinagogue was destroyed. The second sinagogue which I remember was on the end of Aiviekste near the factory Miller-Westerman. Near it was the fish-pond, which was arranged by the owners. The workmen fished there with nets, there were little fish. You can see on the foto the worker of the hide-factory, in the front the bright one is my father – Valentin. In Gostipě there is a sinagogue. You asked about the graves of Jews. Yes, there are some, I think they are not destroyed, there are big stones. People do not go there gladly, the place is called Aispurvė, it is a long strip of earth, swampy, there are small swampy pink-trees. Aispurvė are till Danker, now the trees are cut out, the swamp is dried. Through A spurvi is the highway to Madona and Daugavpils.
It is very difficult for me to speak about the war and 1941. It is
difficult to understand the poor, and also rich men—in all the war,
also in Gostipë, were subordinated to cruelty, but I must tell that
the Germans, as well as the people who served them—destroyed al-
so the lets—the cousin of my father—Marija Zariča and her son
were taken by the "Black Berta"—so was called the car which went
to the houses, destroyed also gipsy people—they went to the forests
and many of them stayed alive.

When I

was a small girl, I had friends Hana and Bluma. Hana was the
daughter of Merke, they lived near us. We—children—ran in the
mornings to the meadow near the Long pine-tree, where the stark
had made its nest. We asked the stark—everyone in his language—
stark, give me a little sister, the gipsy child Dadulis also asked—
give me a brother, but Hana, asked in a thin voice—stark, give me
a brother and a sister.

When the terrible car "Black Berta" took away Merke and Hana, I wept
near the pine-tree and asked: stark, have you seen were Hana is?
The stark told me something in his bird-voice and was astonished
about the persons who had no right to do it. God allowed to rise
him and to humiliate others. Birds and animals were righter than men.

From 1941 the town Gostipëc, Leibko Binder, Kiti, who were my school
friends, call it "The death town". Well, many persons of Latgale we-
re shot, many were sent away. Persons, who lived all their life
in Gostipëc, are only some, from other places there came many Jews,
who stayed alive, went to Riga, to Israel and other towns. As
there is the house—old, built by my grandfather, I live here in
summer and autumns, in the early spring—I love the house.

In this letter I cannot tell more. I work at a small work—"The
sun-years of Atchék in Gostipëc", but it goes slowly. I have bad
spectacles, many problems. My health is not very good, and I do not
know how to print the book—it is a story related by a child. I am
curious, I visited many persons, and in my book it is related about
many nice persons, also Jews—everyone to whom it belongs my
childhood.

In this world I was brought in by the phisician Kameniec, and he
told: the air breaks in and Ausma is born. He called me Ausma, but
my mother thought about another name.
ADDENDUM—Subscription Lists' Database [Volume 1, Number 3, September, 1996]:

Mike, You might want to forward this list to all those who received the disk. I've gotten a lot of questions and this should solve them.

---------- Forwarded message ----------
Date: Mon, 7 Oct 1996 20:39:22 -0400
From: BFONOROF <bfonorof@emh3.arl.mil>
To: hrhode@capaccess.org
Cc: BFONOROF <bfonorof@emh3.arl.mil>
Subject: Using Latvia Data Base

Harold,

[START of message text]

Harold,

The trick to reading the file that was sent with the latest Latvia SIG Newsletter is to figure out how to import a file of the form <filename>.dbf into whatever database management system is being used.

In my case, I was using Microsoft Access. Using the search command (under dbf) in the Help file I found the instructions for importing a dbf file into Access:

To import or attach a FoxPro or dBASE file

1. Open a database, or switch to the Database window for the open data base.

2. Click the Import button or Attach Table button on the toolbar, or choose Import... from the File menu.

3. In the Data Source box, select FoxPro 2.5, FoxPro 2.0, dBASEIII, or dBASE IV and choose OK. (I guessed at dBASEIII and it worked fine.)

4. In the Select File dialog box, select the .dbf file you want and then click the Import or Attach button.

(Further instructions are contained in the help file.)

I hope this helps. And thanks for the data (although I was disappointed that my family name was not present, nor were there any entries from Reshbitsa, which is where I think my family is from).

I'm not an expert, but if anybody wants help I can be reached on (301) 279-6737.

Regards,

PINE 3.91-PP MESSAGE TEXT Folder: INBOX Message 61 of 103 END

Regards,
Reprint sent from Israel . . .

In his article, Dov Levin provides a historic insight into the experience of the Jewish community in Latvia when that country fell under Soviet rule in 1940. Claims that Latvian savagery during the Holocaust was the result of the Red Army arriving at "the invitation of the Jews," are put into context. In fact, the deterioration of Jewish rights in Latvia preceded the Soviet arrival by several years.

Also mentioned is the banishment by the Russians of thousands of Latvian Jews. Some were imprisoned for their Zionist affiliation or simply because of their standing in the community. Many died in the prison camps of Siberia and elsewhere in Soviet Russia.

Professor Levin is a survivor and former partisan who fought in the forest of Lithuania, and he is a distinguished authority on the Jews of Latvia.

[Mike Getz]

The Jews and the Sovietisation of Latvia, 1940-41

by Dov Levin

Latvia, one of the independent states which emerged in Europe in the wake of the First World War, was included in the Soviet sphere of influence by the Ribbentrop-Molotov agreement of 1939 and later fell under direct Soviet domination. Following a Soviet ultimatum on 18 June 1940, Red Army units were stationed in Latvia and a pro-Soviet government was set up. In the elections to the Sejm on 14-15 July of that year the Communist-backed Bloc of Tailors of the Latvian People emerged victorious with 97.8% of the votes. On 21 July the Sejm proclaimed the establishment of a Soviet regime in Latvia and requested to be allowed to join the USSR, which was granted by the USSR Supreme Soviet on 5 August. A swift process of Sovietisation was carried out, with the extensive participation of Soviet functionaries and security men. This period of Soviet rule lasted until Latvia was occupied by the Nazis in the first weeks after the invasion of the USSR.

The Jewish community in Latvia numbered about 50,000 in 1920 (out of a population of 1.5 million) and about 160,000, including a few thousand refugees, in 1940. Jewish cultural autonomy, with an extensive Jewish school network, was established in independent Latvia. But after the 1934 fascist coup of K. Ulmanis Jewish autonomy was abolished and the Jewish schools were put under the control of the orthodox Agudas Israel. All other Jewish organisations and parties were compelled to conduct their activities either semi-legally or clandestinely.

[Ed: The following article was sent by Professor Dov Levin who granted permission to reprint in Latvia SIG.]
The growth of antisemitism

The inimical attitude of the Letts towards the Jews increased during the first few days after the entry of the Red Army into Latvia. One of the causes of this was the abundant enthusiasm and sympathy with which the Red Army was welcomed by Jews in many areas — principally by Communists and left-wing youths but also by "ordinary Jews". There were instances where Jews took part in the looting and the razing of enemy units and the prevention of hostile acts against them by Lettish military organisations.1 Rumours were circulated in the army, the police force and right-wing Lettish groups, such as the "Alzarga" and the "Perkonkrusta", that the Red Army's invasion was a result of antisemitic sentiments among the officers of the Latvian army, who were also known to constitute a centre of fanatical opposition to Sovietisation. The justification for the attack, therefore, lay as much in its general political, as in its antisemitic, context since, in the paper's own words, "there is no stop at this alone, but also conduct agitation against the Red Army". These contexts stand out clearly in certain instances reported by the paper, for example:

Ega, the commander of the motorcycle troop of the 5th Brigade, told his soldiers that, on the day when the Red Army arrived, a zidovuks [Jewess] waved a red rag welcoming the Soviet soldiers.

The commander of a Soviet tank dashed forward, grabbed a baton from the hand of a Latvian policeman and beat the Jewess senseless with it.

A further example: "Corporal Neiks of the same troop told his men that the Jews wanted to capture the Town Hall, but Soviet tanks came quickly on the scene and fired upon them".

The article ended with a warning:

The time has come for officers to realise that there is no place for national and racial hatred in the Red Army, and that the ideas of Mr. Ega will find no approval there. The Red Army will not tolerate any form of arrogant chauvinism.

Even the attacks made by the Jewish daily Kunf against antisemitic incidents were restricted within narrow confines and never went beyond the Latvian army in which "hotbeds of obscurantist reaction still exist". Antisemitism was presented as one of the expressions of opposition to the new order and the progressive spirit. Thus, for example, a report on the 4th Battery of the 3rd Latgalian Artillery Brigade stated that "Communist literature can be read only in secret" and that even listening to the radio was forbidden. "In this concentration camp atmosphere, the reporter quoted the soldiers, "the antisemitism towards Jewish servicemen is open and intolerable." Here, the names of the responsible officers were given: the Commanding Officer of the Brigade, Brigadier Žirze; the Battery Commander, Captain Blotsis; and second-in-command, First Lieutenant Lusis.

The blind Jewish Communist leader, M. Schatz-Anin, whose rights and status as a lawyer had been officially restored in early July (he had been deprived of them after the fascist revolt of 1934), writing in the Trades Union organ on antisemitism, expressed himself in a most moderate and apologetic tone:

How cynical it is to ascribe responsibility and blame for the historic revolt upon a minority of 4 per cent! ... Every Latvian citizen, and even the bourgeois Lett, is well aware that, in the great revolution which Latvia is at present undergoing, Jews, as a national minority, have played and continue to play only the smallest role.1

One of the strongest attacks made by the new regime against antisemitism was published in Cima, the organ of the Latvian Communist Party: "Agitation against the Jewish population, which frequently develops into a pogrom," declared the paper, "is not new to the history of social movements. This was perpetrated by, among others, the "Black Hundreds" and the reactionary Latvian regime."
Referring to incidents subsequent to the arrival of the Red Army in Latvia, the paper asserted:

Relying on the irresponsibility of ignorant citizens, they told them that it was not the thousands of Riga workers who had welcomed the Red Army on the outskirts of the city and had covered them with flowers, but a small handful of Jewish youths . . . , and that allegedly the Jews wanted to make themselves masters of the Latvian people, etc. Very quickly, fabricated news-sheets began to appear with antisemitic slogans. In certain places, physical assaults were made upon Jewish citizens. The indications are that certain circles will continue to conduct antisemitic agitation in the future as well.º

The Zionist organ, Unzer Vort, which printed a translation of the Cina attack in one of its last issues, declared that “among the heretics which the former Government bequeathed to us is one which cannot be abolished by laws and decrees — namely, antisemitism”. Therefore, “amongst the most urgent tasks of the new régime” must be an extensive and systematic programme of education and information. “We note with satisfaction that a beginning, and indeed a serious beginning” — the paper hinted in reference to the contents of the Cina article — “has already been made.”¹⁹

During the short period of the elections, the Jewish Communist paper continued to warn, from time to time, against antisemitic incidents, which had not ceased and in which policemen were frequently involved; its primary intention, however, was to establish a calmer atmosphere.º¹ When, for example, elements “without any class consciousness” increased the assaults upon us, and through the song of revolutionary songs for the sake of appearance whilst attacking Jewish youths, this newspaper called upon Jewish workers not to let themselves be provoked into retaliation, for “their enemy needs these conflicts in order to create an atmosphere of hostility and insecurity, especially was this period of the elections”¹⁵.

On the eve of the elections, the elimination of antisemitism became one of the central slogans of the Communist Party in the Jewish community. The paper Kampf appeared on voting day with a giant banner headline, “For Equality and the Elimination of Antisemitism”,¹º Max Schatz-Amin, who had been one of the principal speakers at the public election meetings in the Jewish quarters, made this his topic also in his last speech on the eve of the elections. He said that the suppression of antisemitism required widespread propaganda.

If this did not succeed, then stern measures must be taken to eliminate antisemitism, in the same manner in which it had been eliminated in the Soviet Union.¹¹

Once the elections were over, the authorities and their propaganda organs found no further need for this topic, and it almost disappeared from the headlines. One should not, however, conclude from this that antisemitism had come to an end.

Ambivalent attitude towards Jewish organisations

Although it is true that only a small proportion of the Jewish community took part in the excited and joyful demonstrations which welcomed the Red Army into Latvia, there were very many Jews who shared a feeling of relief and concord with that Army, because of their fear that, in the international political constellation of those days, the only other alternative was the Nazi domination of Latvia.

There were older people who remembered the Soviet rule in Latvia during the early part of 1919, with its stringent economic policies, but who now entertained the hope that, this time, the Soviet Union would be more liberal, although not pro-Soviet, régime for, initially the authorities appeared unenterprising to make Latvia a Soviet republic and had promised democratic elections. It was against this background that Jewish communal leaders held a conference in Riga at which they discussed the possibility of submitting a list of Jewish candidates. In furtherance of this discussion, the Aguda leader Dubin, at his own request, obtained an audience with A. Vysinsky in order to clarify the situation. During the conference, the essential nature of the forthcoming elections was made clear to Dubin,¹² but he was given the assurance that the Jewish community would be able to continue its activities even after the elections and would also be able to publish its own weekly paper.

The non-religious intelligentsia in the Jewish community — Zionist and non-Zionist — tended to view the fall of the Unmanis régime as the end of the almost exclusive domination by Agudas Israēl of the Jewish state education system, which they had always bitterly opposed. The Latvian Zionist organ Unzer Vort, which had been allowed to resume publication some weeks after the arrival of the Red Army, welcomed the new Government’s “democratic-progressive spirit”, which was in contrast to the former “oppressive Government” which had “leased a Jewish population of some 30,000 to a handful of clericals”.¹³

The style of the article, which exposed the former régime in the Jewish schools, implied the hidden hope that these would continue to function under the new order.¹⁴ During the period preceding the elections, the authorities allowed the Jews to gain a large majority of Jewish votes, did not adopt any rigorous measures against the Jewish nationalists, and especially not against the Zionist Socialist organisations. As has been said, the Zionist organ Unzer Vort continued to appear as formerly, including its series articles and information about the Palestinian movement. As routine notices, for example, the chief cantor’s officiating at the services in the Great Synagogue, etc. However, the authorities had adopted a hostile attitude towards Agudas Israēl from the very beginning. Their daily paper, Haynt, was closed down, and its place was taken by their daily Kampf, in both morning and evening editions, as the Yiddish organ of the Latvian Communist Party. Although the paper’s first declaration, “to liberate our youth from the mists of chauvinism”,¹⁵ embraced both Agudas Israēl and the Zionists, its main attacks, which were couched in extremist and sarcastic form and included caricatures and feuilletons, were aimed at Agudas Israēl and its leader, Dubin, as well as their religious-education establishments.¹⁶ In comparison with Agudas Israēl, the Zionists suffered few attacks. Nevertheless, there could have been little doubt that these organisations were also due for dissolution. The fundamental question, in their case, was how this would be accomplished and to what extent their members would integrate into the new order.

One of the first pointers to this may be seen in the speech given by B. Berkovits, a member of the Central Committee of the Union of Latvian Working Youth (LDJS), at the major congress of Jewish youth which had been convened nine days after the entry of the Red Army into Latvia:

Prior to the liberation, the Zionist Socialists and the “Olim” had not agreed to participate in a common front with the Union of Working Youth in Latvia. Now, however, that the Palestinian dream is no more than a dream, let us free ourselves of Zionist romanticism. Let us build a new life for ourselves here — not in
the sandy wastes of Palestine. The "Left Poale Zion" have already formed a link with the Union of Latvian Working Youth and have remained faithful to the united front. We appeal to them to join our ranks.

Referring to the organisations of Betar and the Revisionists, B. Berkovits emphasised that their intention to operate as an underground movement was well-known, and that "the organisation of revolutionary youth will not yet exist without the existence of a counter-revolutionary youth organisation". There can be no doubt that, when delivering these words, the speaker was aware of the agreement which had been made between LDJS and Left Poale Zion. The basic terms of this agreement, devised to absorb Left Poale Zion, were the following: 1. The Central Committee of the Union (LDJS) agrees to receive the Left Poale Zion as a separate district organisation within the Union. 2. The administration of this district organisation will include three members of the Union. The conduct of propagandist activities will be the exclusive responsibility of the Union. 3. Left Poale Zion recognises the programme and statutes of the Union and undertakes to carry out the decisions of the Union leadership. 4. Left Poale Zion will not perform any 'independent educational activities'.

The distinction which B. Berkovits made between the several Zionist streams, was intended to encourage at least some of the Zionist Socialists and Ha-Shomer Ha-Tsair (Olim) to overcome their reservations concerning close co-operation with the new régime: although some of them considered themselves Marxists and had already shown a "certain sympathy towards all things Soviet" and looked upon the Komsomol and the Pioneers as "something of an example" from an educational point of view, they nevertheless felt that "though the liberation may have seemed to the people of this land, it has brought with it the dissolution of our movement".

This ambivalent attitude among the members of Ha-Shomer Ha-Tsair in Riga and the provincial towns, is described by one of the activists of the movement in the town of Krassava:

The Secretary of the Communist Party convened delegations from all parties and movements, and told them that the Party wanted to set up a democratic régime, and wanted to know whether we would support it or against it . . . I was in a dilemma, knowing what answer to give . . . I sought advice on what to do. The Zionist Socialists were more willing to compromise than we were (clearly so: they were older and had families). They urged us to take part in all the demonstrations alongside the Communists. We were young, without families dependent on us — we had nothing to fear . . . I contacted Lyova Golany (a member of the centre in Riga) for guidance, but received none. He told me to act on my own judgment according to the situation on the spot . . . I recall that there was, at the time, a tough struggle with the Communists who wanted us to co-operate and act together with them. We resisted this, but did take part in one demonstration as an independent group. We presented ourselves as the Ha-Shomer Ha-Tsair movement . . . The demonstrations daily became more and more communist, and we took no part in them despite the heavy pressure brought to bear upon us. Z.S. did take some part in them, but we did not . . . We used to go away, outside the city for the entire day so that we might neither hear nor see. . .

A letter sent to Israel at the time by a member of a hashushara group of the Ha-Shomer Ha-Tsair Nethah movement expressed the confusion and the dilemmas which he and his friends experienced under the reality of the new conditions:

The mind comprehends but the heart cannot believe. It is clear to us that this is the beginning of the end for us . . . We are weary from the many years of waiting in kibbutzim without any hope of immigrating to Israel. Now, at once, so many avenues have opened up before us, for study and for work. The tragedy is that many of our members have resigned themselves to the idea of the dissolution in Latvia . . . We still live in the hope that a different attitude may be taken here from that in Russia and the other territories it has conquered . . . In greater Russia, nothing has changed for the past 22 years, so what can we hope for? There was a meeting of the youth in the city. One of their leaders told us: We are aware that there is a movement among the Jews known as "Ha-Olim" (our movement), and that most of its members are workers like ourselves. We would welcome them with open arms if only they would abandon their Zionist dreams. Pungent words. We would willingly forsake this place for some other land until the storm blows over. But, where? The frontiers are closed. It seems we have to remain and wait! At the height of the election campaign, an "Appeal" was published in Kamin by the Zionist Socialists to their members, sympathisers, and all Jewish citizens who valued freedom and the fraternal friendship of all the nationalities in Latvia, "to take part in the elections to the Sejm on the 14 and 15 July, and to give their vote to the only list which, in the present situation, facilitates the independence and equality for all citizens of the State — the Latvian Tollers bloc". The reason for this stand derived from the belief that "the fate of the Jewish masses has always been linked with that of the working-people's democracy". In addition, the appeal was signed by the same person that issued a letter claiming to be a member of the Zionist Socialists in which he explained that he had joined the Union of Latvian Working Youth because "the various theories concerning a national home in Palestine have crumbled to pieces and the movement built on illusion alone is bound to disintegrate and forfeits any right to exist".

M. Schatz-Ainn, in his concluding speech in his election campaign among the Jewish community, noted with satisfaction that the "Zionist Socialists . . . have raised the problem of the Jewish question in the Latvian Parliament to our own people's interest in the Jewish question. They have enlightened the Communist Party that they are disbanding and will join them. The bourgeois Zionists have also come to the correct conclusions, and we welcome it as a natural development!" He also mentioned that "there still remains among the Jews a handful of 'Agudah' and 'Trumpeter' reactionaries"; he warned them, in the name of the Jewish masses in general, to abandon their ideas, otherwise they would be classified as enemies of the people with all that implied. On the eve of the elections, Kamin came out with an article bearing the significant headline "We Warn Them". The article demanded that the members of Agudas Israel "cease their hostile agitation against the régime". In order to isolate them from the other religious people, the paper made the point that they were not fighting on behalf of Judaism and God, as they claimed, as "the new régime is not conducting any kind of campaign against any religion whatsoever".

"An action group of Zionist Revisionists" published a proclamation in Kamin on 14 July, vowing, "to all Zionist Revisionists and all Jews who value free and friendly co-operation between all Latvian nationalities under the protection of the mighty and invincible Soviet
in comparative quiet: "It was not accompanied by arrests or violence or even by moral browbeating". The Haishiha groups held out longer than anyone else, but even they were eventually forced to disband.

Despite the ambiguity of the official attitude towards the Zionist Societies, before its dissolution, members grew increasingly apprehensive, particularly in the provincial towns. Such was the feeling, for example, of the members in the town of Krasiva: "We saw how matters were developing, and realised that sooner or later, we would suffer persecution in this town for we were well-known and no one would give us work. We decided to disperse, and we all left for Riga".

This move from the provincial towns to Riga resulted in an accelerated increase in the Jewish population of the capital, which rose to more than 50,000. However, even in such a large city, they were not able to enjoy their anonymity for long, as "if you were registered as a former member of Ha-Shomer Ha-Tsaar you would never obtain a good post".

The only solution, in such a case, was to forgo the better position and to work in a factory where the "political sieve" did not operate so stringently. An active member of Ha-Shomer Ha-Tsaar who had gone to Riga with his friends, described this as follows:

In those days the members of the movement kept together. We were depressed ...; although our friends had not changed, I was told that if, for example, I were to meet Isaac Gordon (a member of the movement's Secretariat) in the street I must not stop to speak with him ...; and that for the time being we had to desist from any activity. However, the day would come when we would need to become active once more.

This circle of members, which included both Ha-Shomer Ha-Tsaar and Gordonia, formulated a secret code, for the purpose of informing each other of any official activity within a framework of "groups of three" — in other words, underground. However, up to the outbreak of war with Germany, these organisations did not manage to initiate any activities of substance. Their activity was expressed primarily in the social sphere, in meetings.

We used to meet in private, sing the movement's songs, and talk about Erets Israel ... We talked of Zionism. But this was, for us, an extension of our daily lives: we lived our own lives outside the organisational mould.

Meetings of this kind, as well as study-evenings on topics such as Hebrew literature, the history of the Jews in Palestine, the labour movement, the kibbutz movement — involved not only Ha-Shomer Ha-Tsaar groups but also Borochov Youth, Gordonia, and even some of the members of Betar.
Although the leaders warned the members of the above groups "to cease entirely from meeting other members so that they will forget us", many continued to meet each other up to 22 June, 1941, the day of the German invasion. On that day, one of them related, "we went out to the woods, to sing our Zionist songs and simply to live our own life". This pseudo-underground activity, and especially the meetings, played no small role in the later deeds of these members under war conditions, whether they were imprisoned, sent to the ghettos or managed to escape to the Soviet Union and serve in its army.

**Difficulties of integration into the new order**

It would be a mistake to infer from all that has been written above that this type of activity was characteristic of the majority of the former members of the Zionist movements and the former pupils of the Hebrew schools, or Jewish youth in general. Almost certainly, the opposite was the truth. Against the background of the general excitement of the Jewish population at the abolition of the old régime, and the anticipation that the new régime would grant national and social equality, some of the youth sought to benefit themselves from the new opportunities. Jews began "to swarm" to the universities, and similarly those "who had not finished high school endeavoured to do so, so that they could continue their studies at a higher level". Social origin and past political activity did, indeed, constitute important, if not decisive, criteria for the admission of young people into academic institutions, and to responsible civil and governmental positions. It was, however, possible to overcome these obstacles, to some extent, by integrating oneself actively into the existing political framework — that is, the Communist Youth Komsomol and, for the younger ones, the Pioneers. Besides those who joined the organisations for the sake of the benefits they could confer, there were also not a few who were compelled to do so under pressure and threat. A former pupil of the Jewish school in Dvinsk, a girl whose mother had been a teacher there, related:

"They forced us to join the Young Communist movement and the Pioneers. We resisted and refused, until one of the teachers (a Communist) called me aside, one day, and said: "If you do not join the movement, we shall dismiss your mother". Whether through pressure or through their own free will, many Jewish youths, among them former members of Zionist movements of all shades, from right to left, became members or candidates for membership of the Komsomol and the Pioneers. Therefore, those Jewish youths who secretly hoped for a continuation of their former activity retreated even further into themselves. Henceforth, they had to be doubly cautious, even with their friends, and their pupils and teachers of yesterday, who had shared their ideas. What was worse, in not a few instances, the newcomers to the Communist organisations were required to eavesdrop, to investigate and to report on the activities of their former comrades. The feeling became widespread among the Jewish community that these people were carrying out the régime's instructions against their fellow-Jews with greater dedication than were the Lellish Communist against their own people.

One of the frustrations imposed on the Jewish community came as a direct result of the abolition of the Sabbath and the holy days as days of rest. Whereas the Sunday, the Christian holy day of rest, remains as a general day of rest for everyone. Many Jews, including those who had ceased practising their religion, although they abstained from working on the Sabbath, found it "very difficult to leave their homes on the Sabbath". In the course of time, it became increasingly difficult even to obtain kosher meat. One of the testimonies gives the following report:

I remember that, one day, my mother came home in tears. She was grieved by the discrimination, and said: "If only everyone was treated alike, I could understand it. But the Letts are allowed to celebrate their Christmas whereas we are not permitted even to eat kosher meat". This affected her deeply.

On the other hand, this feeling of deprivation, whether real or imaginary, could not obscure the many benefits which substantial members derived from the new order, both directly and indirectly. In addition to the potentialities for study which had been made available to Jewish youth, wage-earners in various branches of the economy also derived a lot of benefit from the new conditions. "This had been a good year for us", a leather worker declared, referring to the rate in his standard of living. "Until now, we had to exist on seasonal work, but when the Bolsheviks came, work became available at all times and there was plenty of money. We had everything." It is therefore not surprising that labourers and workers were sympathetic towards the new order. During those days, a number of Jewish Communist activists and sympathisers who had been driven out by the Ulmanis régime, or had fled from it, now began to make their way back. In addition, scores of Spanish Civil War veterans also returned. Jewish who had taken an active part in the Communist Party, in the Komsomol and in similar organisations during the underground period (some of them only recently freed from prison), were appointed to responsible positions in the Party, in the trades unions and other organisations, especially in Riga. Particularly noticeable were the numbers who had been active in the spheres of information and journalism.

A well-known Riga physician, Dr. M. Joffe, was appointed to the senior position of People's Commissar for Health. J. Blumental was appointed Director of the State Bank. Other Jews filled other high civic positions in Riga and the provincial cities.

There was a conspicuous increase in the number of Jews serving on governmental, municipal and industrial councils, where, previously, "there was no entry for a Jewish employee at all". Even more impressive "for the self-esteem of the Jewish community" was the comparatively large number of Jews serving in the police force, including the senior ranks. The Jews, in the armed forces was that Jewish soldiers who were promoted, were given duties in the political apparatus. A number of young Jews were admitted to the officers' academy which, at the time, was known as the Riga Infantry School. Almost unlimited opportunities were offered to Jewish young men and women to participate in security and military activities upon the establishment of the militant formation "Workers' Guard".

The "Guard", set up by a decision of the Central Committee of the Latvian Communist Party on 2 July 1940, was initially intended to serve as a kind of police auxiliary and support force for the Government "in its struggle against counter-revolutionary groups". This organisation, stationed in Riga and other large cities, was constituted on a military basis and comprised about 16,000 men and women. Some of them were armed with light weapons which had been taken from the Aizsargi, and wore a special uniform. Its members included not only Jewish Communists and Komsomol members but also former members of the Bund, the Left Poale Zion, and former members of the Zionist Socialist hakhsharot. The organisation's clubs and centres...
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served also to promote ideological activities and social events. In some areas, most of the members were Jews, so their activities were con-
ducted in Yiddish, at least for part of the time. Membership of the
"Guard" also helped to solve the problem of those youths whose former
organisations had been closed down. "Since we had nowhere to go or
spend our time," relates a female member of a "hakhshara" in Riga, "we
joined the Workers' Guard".

Later during the Russian-German war many of the Jewish members
of the "Guard", as well as those Jews who held responsible posts in
the army, in security and in the Party filled important positions in
the armed struggle against the Nazis, either in the regular army or in
other formations.

The removal of Jewish subjects — religion, Jewish history, Hebrew
language and literature — from educational curricula caused much
sadness, anger and protest amongst various sections of the Jewish
population. However, the vigorous activity of Yiddishists in the field
of education, supported by the authorities and the Communist Party,
held out a hope for a resurgence of Jewish culture, albeit within a
socialistic context, when the Jewish language "would attain its rightful
place in the life of the mass of the Jewish people". Many of the
Jewish intelligentsia, Zionists and others, who dissociated themselves
from the Communist camp, did not participate in the cultural activities.
The famous historian, Simon Dubnow, whose 60th birthday had been
celebrated throughout the world at the time, pursued his academic
work at home, in almost total isolation.

A Council for Culture (Kultur-Rat) was set up in charge of the
general cultural, educational and spiritual life of the Jewish community
in Soviet Latvia. Its chairman was the veteran Communist, Sh. Anin,
who was assisted by several other Communists and sympathisers.
Influenced by this Council, a political-cultural campaign was waged
among the Jewish population in the pages of the two Jewish papers
Kamf and the fortnightly Oyboy. In charge of Jewish education in the
Ministry (Commissariat) of Education was S. Konovalov, a former
member of the central committee of the Central Yiddish School
Organisation (TySNO). Left-wing teachers, who had been forced to
leave their posts during the Ulmanis régime, were brought back to
take an active part in teaching and given responsible jobs in school
administration.

In spite of the activity of Jewish educationalists and the support of
central and local authorities, a considerable number of problems arose
in connection with the orderly management of the schools. These
problems stemmed, to a large extent, both from the shortage of
books and the fact that students are losing a lot of their time by having
to copy out the lectures. Apparently, neither the cultural workers
nor the students had a sufficient command of the language. There was
a drop in the average mark of students in the Jewish high school in Dvinsk during the second half of 1940/41 because of a shortage of some books and the fact that students are losing a lot of their time by having to copy out the lectures. Apparently, neither the cultural activities arranged specially for teachers over a period of several weeks nor the import of Yiddish books from other Soviet republics were able to make any appreciable improvement in the situation.

These problems were aired publicly in the local Jewish papers, and
various suggestions were put forward to improve the situation and
restore the prestige of the Yiddish language. The articles made the
point that it was necessary to formulate "a unified orthography and
to give instruction in the syntax of a simple Yiddish sentence, in its
correct sequence of words, and also to teach the literary language".

In place of the old Jewish theatre in Riga, which was described
as the "vulgar theatre", a State Jewish theatre was set up, one of its aims being "to mirror both the joy and the sadness of the Jewish masses during their progress towards a life of honour". During its existence — it lasted approximately one year — the theatre presented about 10 plays, written by Soviet Jewish playwrights (P. Markish, D. Bergelson, A. Kushnerov) and later by non-Jews as well (A. Markuzov, Zakharis). Jewish cultural circles also
considered the possibility of opening an additional Jewish theatre in
Dvinsk with the special support of the actor S. Mikhoels, who had been
born in that city.

A number of works by Yiddish writers from other Soviet republics,
including those recently incorporated (such as Lithuania and Moldavia),
were first published in the daily Kamf and especially in the literary-
philosophical fortnightly Oyboy. These papers also published a fair
amount of information on the cultural life and productivisation of the
Jews.

Many Jewish communities endeavoured to fill the vacuum created
by the closure of Hebrew libraries by establishing new Yiddish libraries
or improving existing ones, after of course first cleansing them of any
anti-Soviet literature.

Bundists and Folkists were allowed to participate in Yiddish cultural
activities, but the Communist leaders in this field pointed out, time
and again, the superiority of cultural workers equipped with liberal-
Leninist ideas and condemned the Folkist and Bundist ideas which,
said, encouraged the Jewish people to preserve the ghetto atmosphere.

Immediately after the elections, a number of Jewish institutions
were closed down — those "national ghettos" which operated
independently within the political structure of the new order. Thus,
for example, the Jewish district organisation in the LDJS was
abolished (as were the Russian and Polish district organisations), although
"those incapable of progressing in the common language will be permitted
to carry on their activities within the framework of special groups
using their own language". Thus, one cannot be certain whether the
cultural-educational activity in the Jewish sector was developed for
basically temporary political objectives or was intended as a foundation
for a Jewish culture which would exist, for a long period, alongside
the Latvian culture. In any event, the vast majority of Jewish cultural
workers, some of whom looked upon their work as a "sacred task",
the realisation of their life's ambitions, did not and could not know
the future attitude of the central authorities of the Soviet Union towards
Jewish culture in the "old" and the new republics (including Latvia).

Persecutions

Nationalisation affected, to a large extent, both the big merchants and
the small shopkeepers. In not a few cases, the owners of large stores
and factories were allowed to remain, albeit temporarily, in their
establishments to assist the new management with their skill and advice.
A number of manufacturers succeeded in transferring their wealth
abroad and in selling some of their movable property; smaller merchants
and craftsmen, who had no property other than their business, profited
from the spreading demand for goods. There was very little demand
for money because of its continual depreciation, and therefore it was
quickly exchanged for valuables. Meanwhile, the Jewish population of Riga continued to increase in number. In addition to the influx of youth who had returned from the provinces, shopkeepers and middle-class citizens also came, of whom some had been in fear of the local authorities in their former places of residence. Moreover, a number of Jews who had been amongst the returning political exiles also went to live in Riga.

The tension between the ruling power and a considerable portion of the population increased with widespread reports of approaching war between Russia and Germany. Nevertheless, for reasons which are not clear, some of the units of the “Workers’ Guard” were dispersed in May 1917. On the night of 13/14 June 1917, there began in Soviet Latvia a mass deportation of undesirable elements. From that night on, thousands of Jews, whose attitude to the new régime was considered to be hostile or, at least, reserved, were arrested and herded into goods trains bound for the Soviet interior. The basic criteria for this segregation were, according to all indications: (1) past membership of banned organisations, institutions and parties, particular attention being paid to the leaders and activists of those organisations; (2) former membership of a wealthy social class.

Within the first category came almost all the leaders of the Zionist movement, including almost all of the Betar leadership, the leaders of Ha-Mizrachi, General Zionists and the Zionist Socialists — although not the members of the Zionist Socialist youth groups. Among the deportees were also members of the Bund leadership and former Bundist activists.

The second category, which by all accounts, should have comprised mainly big merchants and bankers, also included — particularly in the small towns — “people who had never had sufficient income to maintain a large family”. In contrast to this, many of the extremely wealthy and more prominent manufacturers, such as Mirzis and Semulian and others, were left alone. An investigation into the Identities of a considerable number of people included in this stage of the deportation leaves very little doubt that there were errors of various kinds in the lists, such as the confusion of names, and that there was no shortage of incidents of denunciation and personal “squaring of accounts” by those who were responsible for making out the lists.

Among those who had been made to take part in the deportation operation were members of the “Workers’ Guard” who had been specifically tasked with it. Some of the women, particular workers from institutions and establishments. These helped, in some cases, to supply the deportees with food and carry greetings between members of the deported families who had been separated from each other.

The day after the outbreak of the war (23 June 1941), some 250 Jewish refugees from Germany and Austria, some of them Communists, were arrested and deported from Riga to Siberia. Some of them were accompanied by their Latvian-born wives. Many of the deportees were sent to the Solikamsk, Vyatk and Vorkuta camps. Some of the women, children and other relatives who had been deported with them from Latvia, were taken to Narym and Novosibirsk.

Despite the experience of 1918-1919, and notwithstanding the proximity of the Soviet frontier, the Jews of Latvia, even after the entry of the Red Army in 1940, did not realise that complete Sovietisation of the country would follow with all this entailed for their private and national lives. The suddenness of the events, and the swift intensive measures

...
Soviets of Latvia

D. Levin


24. Two days previously, an announcement appeared in the Riga Jihis, indicating the establishment of a Riga Jewish Nationalist Party, with a political party, "Jewish Nationalist Party," in the same town the following day. An announcement was issued the same evening in the club of the Latvian Nationalists in Riga, indicating the establishment of a Riga Jewish Nationalist Party, with a political party, "Jewish Nationalist Party," in the same town the following day. An announcement was issued the same evening in the club of the Latvian Nationalists in Riga, indicating the establishment of a Riga Jewish Nationalist Party, with a political party, "Jewish Nationalist Party," in the same town the following day.


New—Latvia SIG web site

by Marion Werle

I don't know if anybody is still on this mailing list, but I wanted to direct you to the new Latvia SIG web site at:

http://www1.jewishgen.org/latvia

This is just a beginning, and we hope it will become a repository for all sorts of useful information. JewishGen is generously providing us with the web server, but the Latvia SIG is entirely responsible for the content and format of the web pages.

Please direct any comments, suggestions, or corrections to me at my personal E-mail address:

werle@pacificnet.net

[Ed: This E-mail message (sent online) was typed verbatim except the E-mail addresses were spaced for ease of using.]
Latvia Online . . .

by Marion Werle

Last month this column provided an introduction to the World Wide Web, and gave some suggestions of sites of interest to Jewish genealogists. I hope you were able to put the information to use and start 'web surfing'. I just came across another site the other day that may be useful in your research. There are a number of people locator sites that have online phonebooks, and others that list e-mail addresses. I found a directory of Israeli e-mail addresses—it is called 'IBM Israel's Electronic Phonebook', and it's not limited to IBM employees (in it, I found a listing for SIG member Martha Lev-Zion). Its URL is: http://www.ibm.net.il/WebPh?DB=csnet-nsn&server=www.ibm.net.il

I looked up the surname 'Skutelsky', and found a listing for an Ehud Skutelsky. I sent him an e-mail, and he is going to ask his Latvian parents for information about their town of origin. Maybe they'll turn out to be related!

On another subject, I received a number of queries on the diskette that was distributed with the last newsletter. I, too, had some problems with it, and wanted to make some suggestions for other members who have data to distribute to SIG members, and wish to consider putting the data on diskette. I would like to propose the following standards for data that is to be distributed on diskettes, to ensure that all members have a clear understanding of both what the data is, and how to use it.

- PROVIDE CLEAR DOCUMENTATION ON THE CONTENTS AND USAGE OF THE DISKETTE.

Most personal computer products are distributed with a file called 'readme', which contains instructions to users. SIG diskettes should contain a readme file with instructions that are clear and precise, aimed for the novice computer user. There should be a description of the files on the diskette—a narrative describing the number of files on the diskette, and the format of each file (see below, standard file formats). There should also be a description of the data itself, namely, where it was obtained and how each record is laid out, i.e., a description of each data field (name, town date, etc.). If the author wishes to get fancy with compressed files, s/he should provide the decompression utility or a setup/install script with explicit instructions as to how to use it (e.g., the commands to make a new directory, how to run the utility, a description of the files that will be created).

- USE STANDARD FILE FORMATS WITH DESCRIPTIVE FILE EXTENSIONS.

There are certain conventions in file naming that reflect both DOS naming limitations and common usage. For example, file names are limited to eight characters and extensions to three (e.g., readme.txt). While it is perfectly acceptable to have a file named readme.abc, the extension 'txt' is more descriptive, and understood to be an ascii plain text file. All data that is distributed to members, should, at the very minimum, be distributed as a text file, with a file name of xxxxxx.txt (where xxxxxx is a descriptive name). This file should be readable by a basic text editor, e.g., DOS edit, Windows Notepad, or the Mac equivalents. This means that the data should not contain any special, unprintable, formatting characters common to applications such as word processors, spreadsheets, and database programs. If the author of the diskette wishes to provide data in additional formats, the file names should have appropriate extensions. For example, an Excel spreadsheet would have the extension.xls, a Microsoft Access database would be .mdb, and a Word document would be .doc. These files should be described as such in the readme document included on the diskette.

- DATA LAYOUTS SHOULD FOLLOW A STANDARD FORMAT.

This section refers to the distribution of data in the form of lists of various types, not to graphical data such as maps or photos. When the Grodno SIG did its voter list translation project, a standard format was chosen for the data, namely that the fields would be laid out in a certain order, and delimited by commas. Delimiting by commas allows the data to be imported into tables, spreadsheets, databases, or whatever program the user wishes. It is very flexible, and supported by a number of common formatting applications. A sample record for the Latvia Family Finder would look as follows:

surname, town

Please let me know if you have any further comments or suggestions.

Marion Werle
werle@pacificnet.net
October 28, 1996.  

Mr. Mike Getz  
Apt. 901  
5450 Whitley Park Terrace  
Bethesda MD 20814

Dear Mr. Getz,

Thank you very much for kind letter and check. I phone to Ilana Getz. She told her grand-mother is c. 80 old, native of Subate and lived in Israel. She sent your letter to her g.-mother and father, so, they don't answered to you. She told she try to obtain information for you again. I cannot to send any liste.

Situation with research in archives still difficult for me. Archives try to keep his monopoly by any means and forbidden the acces to vit. stat. and, since last times they try to do it with another sources, to private researchers. So, if somebody would like vit. stat. he must to write: Latv. State hist. archives, Slokas str. 16, LV-1007, Riga Latvia.

Because private researchers are unlike by archiv's administration I dont want to found something like "Jewish gen. society of Latvia", I dont need publicity there. If somebody in USA would like to find relatives in Riga he or she might to give announce in "Gesharim"- magazine published by Riga's sinagogue and distributed for free among Jews. For information about announces please write to English-speaking rabbi Mordechai Glazman, FOB 96, LV-1047, Riga, Latvia, tel. (371) 7334147, fax (371) 78330454, email glazman@chabad. Riga, LV.

I also have a lot of information about Jews lived in Riga now because I have at home archive of declarations of membership to Latvian society of Jewish culture written in 1988-1989 when many Jews feel their national identity and support with enthusiasm the start of activity of Jewish organisations.

As already during five years I still available for producing of genealogic research in Latvia. I try to spread research also on some areas in Lithuania and Bielorus using printed sources and research on cemeteries.

Last half years after my returning from France I start to photograph all remained tombstones on cemeteries in Latvia and Lithuania. I already photographed in toto cemeteries in Dagda, Vegeriai, Klikolai, Varas-
klyany, Aizpute. I also registered all tombstones in Libau and Goldingen.
All such trips were sponsored by my clients from England and USA.
Completing photographing is very important, because, paradoxically, stones
are more fragile than documents – so many cemeteries were completely
destroyed during last 50 years and, alas, I am sure that in next 50
years wind, water and vandals will make their destructive deal as
before. Photographing is profitable as for me as for my sponsor – my
sponsor receive pictures of all remained tombstones or pictures of tomb-
stones of his ancestors and decodation of inscriptions (name, father's
name, family name if mentioned, year of death), I receive the same
and also do pictures for Museum and Documentation center “Jews in
Latvia” where I work as volunteer.

The permanent exhibition of Museum had been open May 6 of this year.
I am happy and proud to invite all members of Latvia SIG group to
visit our Museum, where 400-years history of Jews in Latvia reflected
in pictures and documents. Visitors might to see 11-minutes film by
M.Vestermanis and S.Ricards entitled "Kadish". The film dedicated mostly
to Holocaust times. In film used German and Soviet w w E chronic films
from Libau and Riga.

This film is not for sale and might to be seen in Museum only, but I
have another film to propose. The 45-minutes video film entitled
"My Jewish grandfather from Riga: a portrait of a journey". Film is
in English, but filmed by Danish professional cinematographers
Casper Hoyberg and Fredrik Vogel in 1993. This is a story of Danish
boy who search his roots – make research in Jewish documentation center
and in cinematographic archives, visit appartements in Riga where his
grandfather's family lived, talk with relatives in Israel. Used rare
old films of Riga in the start of XX century, in 1920-thies and in
1941. This film was decorated by special prize in 1993 on festival of
scandinavian documentary films. I can send this tape to all interested
people in exchange of check for $ 70. Important – film is in PAL video
system.

In c. 2-3 months I would like to send to you for publication in Latvia
SIG magazine my article "The chronic of the Jewry of Courland", part I.
If this article likes to readers I will write "The chronic of Riga's
Jewry" and "The chronic of Latvgaile's Jewry". I need some delay for
translate part I of my article in English.
Enclosed please find picture of Museum's exhibition for publication.
Let me wish many success to Latvia SIG group and happiness to all
members in 5757 !

yours very (truly)

Alekandrs Feigmanis
Fifth International Jewish Genealogy Seminar
Paris, France — July 13-17, 1997

When the Cercle de Genealogie Juive convenes the Fifth International Summer Seminar on Jewish Genealogy, it will be a first in several ways:

- First time the official language of the seminars will not be solely English. This will be a bilingual seminar with simultaneous translations in French and English.
- First time a seminar will be in a Holocaust location.
- First time participants will be able to continue their research by traveling the week of July 18-24, 1997 with outstanding, expert Jewish genealogists or archivists to Eastern Europe destinations (Belarus, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, eastern Rumania and Ukraine so far).

Paris '97 and Beyond is being made possible by the cooperative efforts of:

- Cercle de Genealogie Juive
- Sallyann Amdur Sack
- Susan E. King
- UNIGLOBE Dynamic Travel

A web site has been established which contains all available information about the Paris Seminar and the Paris '97 and Beyond . . . Mini-Seminars:

<http://www.uniglobe-dynamic.com/paris97/Paris_master.html>

It is also available off the JewishGen home page:

<http://www.jewishgen.org>

Seminar begins: Sunday, July 13, 1997
Seminar ends: Thursday, July 17 (closing dinner)
Registration fee: 650F for entire seminar.
One or two-day enrollments will also be possible (price to be determined).

Hotel: Sofitel Paris Forum Rive Gauche

For details, contact: Philip Abensur, President
Cercle de Genealogie Juive
14 rue Saint Lazare
75009 Paris France

Tele./FAX: 01 40 23 04 90
minitel: 3615 GENEALOJ
E-mail: Andre Conuers
<100766.2212@compuserve.com>
Plenary lectures will be held every afternoon and evening. Simultaneous translations will be offered from French [F] into English [E] and from English into French.

The following lectures may be of particular interest to members of the Latvia SIG:

Alexander Beider: "Waves of Migration in Eastern Europe in the 18th and 19th Centuries" [F]

Aleksandrs Feigmanis: "The Jews of Latvia" [E]

Michel Louis Levy: "The Jewish Calendar and the Julian and Gregorian Calendars: Problematic" [F]

Batya Unterschatz: "Resources for Reuniting Separated Families" [E]

Robert Weiss: "Research in Eastern European Archives" [E]

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1997 Paris and Beyond . . . Mini Seminars

Immediately following the seminar in Paris, July 13-17, 1997, Latvia SIG members will have the opportunity to participate in a week-long research mini-seminar to Latvia. Aleksandrs Feigmanis will be the group leader for Latvia. He will act as liaison between researchers and local archives.

Additional genealogical research services offered include a packet of specific research information sent at the time of final payment, orientation workshops during the Paris seminar, prior coordination with archival and other officials in each country, on-site consultation with expert group leaders, visits to selected sites of Jewish genealogical interest and special presentations by local archival and other leaders.

The Mini-Seminar Groups will depart from Paris for Riga by air on Friday, July 18 and return to Paris on Thursday, July 24, 1997. Since the seminar will be held during "high season" in Paris, arrangements should be made as early as possible.

Requests for applications and information: UNIGLOBE Dynamic Travel
11 Greenway Plaza, Suite 530
Houston TX 77046
(713)621-3833 - Tele.
(713)621-3280 - FAX
(800)787-7457 - (USA & Canada only)
paris97@uniglobe.dynamic.com - E-mail

[Ed: Seminar information was gleaned from an extensive report released on E-mail by Robert Weiss, AJGS President.]
SIG members going to Paris

by Mike Getz

It's not too early to establish which SIG members intend going to Paris and would subsequently like to travel to Latvia. Please notify me by if you are interested. It would be helpful to have this information for approaching Paris organizers to feature topics and speakers relevant to us. It will certainly be possible to travel on to Latvia, pursue various aspects of research and visit various locations there.

The success of such a visit will depend to a large extent on planning and preparation. Requirements and plans need to be shared and discussed with appropriate contacts in Latvia. These would include accommodations, transportation, access to archives and other research resources, as well as meeting members of the various Jewish communities.

Contact me at: Mike Getz
Latvia SIG President
5401 Whitley Park Terrace #901
Bethesda MD 20814
(301)493-5179 – Home
(301)493-9081 – FAX
mgetz@capaccess.com – E-mail

COMMON, from page 1

Jewish communities who would become members of our SIG. By courtesy of an old friend, Harry Hurwitz of Jerusalem, we can now build a relationship with the Association of Latvian and Estonian Jews in Israel which has done so much, so well.

We also have a particularly distinguished contributor in Dov Levin, an authority in all that relates to Latvian Jewry, characterized by his devotion to their memory. His account of that community's experience under Soviet rule is definitive. We are grateful for his support and encouragement.

A few major projects need to be completed and one or two followed through. Material from State Department records is available but needs to be prepared for publication. We need volunteers to put these and other records on disk for circulation to our members. Friends in the New York area could perhaps help with ascertaining the nature and extent of YIVO records relating to Latvian families.

Membership dues for 1997 will continue to be $20 for the USA and Canada. Dues for overseas members will be $30 to accommodate the additional cost of postage. I also decided all new members may receive 1996 newsletters for $15 or $5 per issue.

In conclusion, I want to particularly thank Debby, our editor, who prepared this issue at a time of heavy personal commitments. I am most grateful to her.
Beginner's Corner . . .

by Deborah Levine Herman

Are you new to genealogy? More rules to live by:

- **DO NOT** ignore query letters when they include an SASE or International Reply Coupons. Researchers are anxious to know if you are related to them.
- **DO NOT** ask to see an entire family tree in your first letter.
- **DO NOT** send *handwritten* letters with handwritten genealogy information. Just because you can read your handwriting doesn't mean the recipient can read it. (What's neat to you is scribble to someone else.) Use a typewriter or computer. (If you don't use either, ask a friend!)
- **DO** be polite if researchers telephone.
- **DO** respect people's right to privacy.
- (See page 3, "Letters to the Editor")

Glossary (continued) (Genealogists are big on acronyms?)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>APG</td>
<td>Association of Professional Genealogists</td>
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<tr>
<td>ASAP</td>
<td>As Soon As Possible</td>
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<tr>
<td>BBS</td>
<td>Bulletin Board System</td>
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<tr>
<td>BCG</td>
<td>Board of Certification of Genealogists</td>
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<tr>
<td>CJSI</td>
<td>Consolidated Jewish Surname Index (aka: Jewish Genealogical Consolidated Surname Index)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESL</td>
<td>English as a Second Language</td>
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<tr>
<td>FAST</td>
<td>Fast Archival Service &amp; Translations</td>
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<td>GEDCOM</td>
<td>Genealogical Data Communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>HIAS</td>
<td>Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society</td>
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<td>IGI</td>
<td>International Genealogical Index (Mormon)</td>
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<td>ITS</td>
<td>International Tracing Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>PAF</td>
<td><em>Personal Ancestral File</em></td>
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<td>Postage and Handling</td>
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<td>RAGAS</td>
<td>Russian-American Genealogical Archival Service</td>
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<td>SSDI</td>
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<td>United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Center</td>
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<td>Works Progress Administration</td>
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<td>YIVO</td>
<td><em>Yiddisher Visenshaftlicher Organizacye</em></td>
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Contributed since last issue by:

- *Gary Fitleberg*
- **Arlene Blank Rich** (JGS Cleveland President)

What hints, terms, abbreviations or acronyms would you like to pass on to new genealogists?
Dues are NOW due!

Enclosed with this newsletter is your 1997 Membership Application. Dues remain the same as last year:

- U.S. bank check, or
- U.S. Money Order, or
- official International Bank Draft, or
- official international equivalent in U.S. funds.

Please DO NOT send non-U.S.A. personal or bank checks.

MAIL \underline{CHECKS PAYABLE to:} LATVIA SIG
c/o DEBORAH LEVINE HERMAN, Treasurer
22449 Douglas Road
Shaker Heights OH 44122-2058
(216)831-2727

Please remit (in U.S. dollars) as soon as possible so we can plan an exciting 1997!

We will graciously accept donations above and beyond normal membership dues to help offset additional expenses. In addition to four newsletters, we plan to publish:

- an extensive bibliography,
- an expanded Latvia Family Finder (LFF),
- additional databases on disks,
- and whatever else comes along that's affordable!

Don't be left out of the next LFF. (The LFF form is in Volume 1, Number 2, May 1996.) Contact Debby if you have any questions.

Send us your Zip +4 digit code. Look at your newsletter mailing label. Does it include your Zip +4 digits (ex: 44122-2058)? These extra digits enable us to bar code your labels, and they also aid in speedier delivery to your mailbox. In the future, the +4 digits may help save us postage.

How do you find your Zip +4 digits? Look on your utility bills, magazine labels, or any presorted, business-bulk mail (aka, junk mail). These +4 digits always stay the same, and they are beginning to appear on more and more pieces of mail.

Your 1997 Membership Application includes space for the Zip +4 digits.
1997 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

(Type or Print neatly)

NAME _______________________________ MAIDEN _______________________________

ADDRESS ________________________________

CITY ______________________ STATE ____ ZIP (+4) _____ — ______ COUNTRY __________

TELEPHONE: HOME (____) _____ — ______ FAX # (____) _____ — ______

WORK (____) _____ — ______ E-mail __________________________

NEW MEMBERSHIP ______ RENEWAL ______

TODAY'S DATE __________________________

COMPUTER: MAC (800K) _____ MAC (1.4K) _____ PC _____ NONE _____

Membership is based on each calendar year (January 1 through December 31) and includes a subscription to the LATVIA SIG newsletter, plus inclusion in the Latvian Family Finder (LFF). [SIG = Special Interest Group.]

MAIL CHECKS PAYABLE to:
LATVIA SIG
c/o DEBORAH LEVINE HERMAN, Treasurer
22449 Douglas Road
Shaker Heights, OH 44122 USA
(216) 831-2727

$ 20.00 — (___) — USA & Canada

$ 30.00 — (___) — Overseas

___ ___ — (___) — Other

$ 5.00 — (___) — LATVIA SIG — Sample newsletter

$ 15.00 — (___) — LATVIA SIG — Back Issues—1996 = 4 issues

$ ______ — Membership Dues (in U.S. dollars—see above)

$ ______ — LATVIA SIG: @ $ 5.00 sample newsletter

$ ______ — LATVIA SIG: @ $ 15.00 (1996 = 4 issues)

$ ______ — TOTAL ENCLOSED

Thank you for your membership in the LATVIA SIG!
LATVIA SIG

(Type or Print neatly)

YOUR NAME

MAIDEN NAME

YOUR ADDRESS

YOUR CITY STATE ZIP (+4) COUNTRY

TELEPHONE: HOME (___) — — FAX # (___) — —

WORK (___) — — E-mail

NEW MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL TODAY'S DATE

WHOM ARE YOU RESEARCHING?

List cities** as they are known today. Refer to: WHERE ONCE WE WALKED.

**List only cities in Latvia.

One NAME and One SHTETL per line. Only paid members are listed in the Latvian Family Finder (LFF).

(Please Print... neatness counts!)

SURNAME

LATVIA SHTETL**

1 -

2 -

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4 -

5 -

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8 -

9 -

10 -

RETURN this page to LATVIA SIG Treasurer with your Membership Application and Dues!

(See other side.)

Rev-01-31-97-DH
# RESOURCE MATERIAL

## BIBLIOGRAPHY (Publications about Latvia in your possession.)

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## BIBLIOGRAPHY (Other publications about Latvia.)

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## ARCHIVAL & OTHER SOURCES (Including genealogists, e.g. Aleksandrs Feigmanis - Riga, Latvia)

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## LATVIAN TOWNS - Jewish Communities, Current Status; History of Jewish presence; Contacts; Cemeteries

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## YOUR TRANSLATION SKILLS:

- Hebrew
- Latvian
- Lithuanian
- Russian
- Yiddish
- Other

## SUGGESTED NEWSLETTER TOPICS:

- [List of suggested topics]

## We need volunteers:

- writers
- researchers
- editors
- officers
- and whatever else you have to offer!