A Word from the Co-ordinator’s Desk

We are entering the season of spring signaled, among other things by Pesach, our festival of freedom and redemption from slavery. We recall that event and its echoes as the Jewish people traverse history and time. All is enshrined in memory, a measured accompaniment to an ongoing journey. As genealogists we try to preserve and record what might otherwise be forgotten and lost. This goal seeks its fulfillment in the All Latvia Database. Here our composite identity will be created as name is added to name, tiers of the Jewish family bound by location and distinguished by a way of life. It characterizes identity and becomes its foundation.

The harvesting has begun with work on records long beyond our reach. This opportunity challenges the traditional role of SIG membership. The extent of what must be done calls for a significantly higher level of participation. Included in this issue is a request to register members’ willingness to assist in a number of areas. Please respond by making a modest commitment of your time and skills.

The Latvian Holocaust is also a component of our communal memory. That anguished martyrdom is best honored in confronting it and rejecting the specialized or contrived explanations often indistinguishable from justification. Latvia deserves better. The dreadful episodes of mass murder, desecration of synagogues and the pillaging that accompanied both, are beginning to exact awareness in to-day’s Latvia. Echoes of these events will surely be reflected in the history of those times and how it is taught. A recent statement from President Vaira Vike-Friberga, which is quoted on page 15, is a welcome acknowledgment of this reality. It is a timely initiative. In this context the efforts of the US Historical Commission as detailed by Sam Gruber in an earlier issue begin to present realistic challenges for us. We need to participate in the work of recording and identifying locations that reflect the Jewish experience in Latvia.

I had the pleasure during a brief visit to the UK to meet Constance Whippman who escorted me through a bustling London evening to a delightful dinner where our editor Sylvia McCallum and her husband David joined us. Constance regaled us with the sweep and quality of the Courland Groups’s efforts in compiling a comprehensive database for that province, so integral to Latvia’s history. Her dedication is an asset to us all. I was Saul Issroff’s guest for my brief stay and was fortunate to share his memorable insights born out of remarkable commitment and achievement.

Exemplary work has already been done with the Archives in Riga by Arlene Beare. It has been focussed on Riga itself but will cover other regions of Latvia as well. Arlene has also devoted herself to monitoring our online Discussion Group, providing guidance and facilitating the interests of members and others. Although incomplete, records relating to Daugavpils will be added to those of Livonia and Courland. We will still need to focus on the extensive records covering Latgale which are in the Minsk Archives. For an important period a majority of Latvia’s Jews lived in Latgale. This province lies east of the Dvina bordering Belarus with important cultural, economic and Jewish link to mainland Russia.

In essence much of what is now contemplated in these various projects is a reconstruction of the Jewish experience and presence in Latvia. We may not be able to emulate the scale of projects of this nature being considered in Israel and elsewhere, we should not be indifferent to this important concept. It is to be hoped that members with common interests will commit themselves to reconstructing a Jewish presence, featuring families, communal life and its components. It would appear that events and opportunity are in our favour. The information we have may not be totally comprehensive but it is enough to begin the task. Salt Lake will be the ideal occasion to review our achievements and resources.

Hopefully all members will be contacted before that event to ascertain the level of interest and commitment. This involvement will support and add strength to the efforts of these dedicated few who have brought us thus far.

Mike Getz
First of all I hope that all went well for you over Pesach. At that time we rejoice because we remember our ancestors who were freed from bondage, slavery and oppression all those centuries ago. We cannot help but think of our people in a much closer time scale, when they were put not only into prison but to death for being Jews. Now as genealogists we realise that we have lost so much of our heritage with the carnage of World War II. That is why we must try to salvage what we can and help with the various projects that are in progress and organised by our SIG researchers. We asked for help with these projects and I would like to thank those who have approached the organisers with offers to help.

I received many e-mails regarding issues such as Konrad Kajelis, Waffen SS March and other Nazi War Criminals items. I feel that this Newsletter is not the proper vehicle for these items, but I have included an article (first published in the Guardian Newspaper), by Ian Traynor who writes an account of these events in a most lucid manner. We are a genealogy group trying to trace our ancestry. We know how much damage has been caused in the past and that makes our task very difficult, even impossible at times, but we have to try and distance ourselves from the political side of these matters and concentrate on the tasks at hand, although we must not loose sight of our tragic and traumatic past.

Within Latvia SIG we have wonderful people all willing to share their knowledge and advice. We read about their experiences in our own Newsletter. All we have to do is ask them. Why not use the ‘Letters to the Editor’ page as a ‘questions and answers’ facility? Your enquiry may help others with their research, too.

I really would like to thank everyone who sent in their contributions for publication. I would like to receive other personal items for future issues.

From the UK, Arlene Beare has submitted a report on the Latvian SIGUK and that makes me wonder if any other city or country has a localised SIG of Latvia. Please write and tell me about it. I am sure we all would be interested.

In the January issue we put forward a voting ballot ‘hardcopy v online Newsletter’ and the result was a resounding YES for hard copy. Thank you all for taking the trouble to reply and for the time being hard copy it is.

May I remind you of the Conference in Salt Lake City (advert elsewhere). I believe it will be a very worthwhile and exciting event.

So till next time, keep searching.

Sylvia McCallum
Latvia SIG Newsletter is published by the Latvia Special Interest Group, an organisation formed to provide Jewish genealogical researchers of Latvian descent with a forum for the exchange of information.

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The Archives have made some changes to their billing arrangements. There has been a lot of correspondence on the newsgroup relating to these changes. However as a number of our Members are not on-line I will detail the changes here. If you have already requested research and received a letter from the Archives then your work is in Progress and you may await the results.

A deposit of $50 will be required to commence a search. If the result is negative there will not be a refund as the time and effort involved is the same even if there is not a positive result. The money may be paid by Postal Order.

If you pay by Check (cheque) then you will need to add $20 for Bank Charges. Unfortunately they are unable to accept Credit Cards. The Lithuanian Archives ask for a $70 deposit and we have been fortunate in that we have not had to pay a deposit up to now.

The Archives have also stated that requests may be made by Fax 371 7 612406. They do not have e-mail at the present time. I think that it is better to write snail mail as the fax may end up in the wrong department.

Arlene Beare, Archive Representative for Latvia SIG

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1.3.3.3 Vanishing text, difficult to read | 1 file | Ls | 1,38 |
1.3.3.4 Additional files examination | 1 file | Ls | 0,28 |
1.6 Genealogical research: | | |
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- one person (two entries) | Person | 4,12 |
- one person (one entry) | Person | 2,06 |
1.9.3 Negative answer | Report | 1,15 |
2.5 To take and return files to the depositories | | |
2.5.1 Files for the time period since 18 century | 1 file | Ls | 0,055 |
2.5.2 Unique & large format files time period to 18c. | 1 file | Ls | 0,09 |
2.6 Document copies: | | |
2.6.2 Unpublished | 1 document | Ls | | 2,05 |
2.6.3 Archives reports typing | 1 sheet | Ls | | 0,14 |

1 lat is about £1 or $0.62
Why Not Include Estonia?
by Len Yodaiken

It is to be presumed that the specialist readers of the Latvia SIG Newsletter are familiar with the history of the modern Latvian State and specifically its records. Nevertheless some of the more salient aspects of it will be reiterated in this short article in order to reinforce the argument to include the Small Estonian Community under the aegis of the Latvian SIG.

The Baltic States received their Independence in 1918, Latvia and Estonia for the first time - Lithuania had a very rich history and at one time was one of the largest states in Europe, if not the largest part of the time. In order to create states that could be economically viable the Gubernia of Livonia was carved up between Latvia and Estonia. One never hears what the people of Livonia thought about this or even if there was an ethnic Livonian people. These however are not questions that are relevant to our argument.

The modern Jewish community of Estonia began in around 1860-70 and so it is obvious that the Jews did not have deep roots in the country, but came from neighbouring provinces of the Russian Empire. The largest group came from Lithuania and after them came what would be later called the Latvians - at that time Kurlanders, Latgaliens and southern Livonians. Before the Second World War the community never exceeded 4,500 souls, covering some 8 or 9 towns. More than half of the Jewish community survived the war by escaping into Russia. Most of them returned to Estonia in the fifties despite Soviet attempts to prevent their return, especially those who had been settled in Siberia. It is interesting to note that after the War, in its attempt to Russify Estonia, the Soviet Union brought there amongst the other Russian settlers, many Russian Jews. The result was that by the eve of Perestroika and Estonia's second Independence there were 5,000 Jews there - the only country in Eastern Europe which had more Jews than before WW2. However this did not last long as most of them made Aliya to Israel. In Israel the immigrant society for Latvian Jews has co-opted the Estonians.

They hold their Archives jointly at Shefayim. In the series of Pinchas Kehilot or remembrance books to the Jewish communities of different countries. Latvia and Lithuania appear together in one book, both communities having been researched and edited by Pro. Dov Levin.

In many of the birth records of the pre-independence Estonian Jews, besides the standard information of father's name, mother's name and sometimes maiden name, there is also given the place of origin of the father and his trade. These include many people who originated in Latvian towns. These records also give the Julian birthday, the Hebrew birthday as well as the Hebrew and Julian dates of the brit in the cases of male children.

In the various Estonian National Archives in Tallinn and Tartu, one can find many records of present day Latvia. This is probably due, in large, to the fact that when Livonia Gubernia was divided, its records were not necessarily divided according to any logical key. So one finds records of the various Southern Livonian towns in Estonian Archives. What is a little bit more inexplicable is, while researching the Herzenberg family from Libau which was in Kurland, some of their records were found in Tartu. There is good reason to believe that the reverse situation is true and that there are Estonian records in the Riga Archives.

Lastly very many Jews studied in the University of Tartu, one of the oldest universities in the Russian Empire. The University administration produced a book called the "Album Academicum" which is a complete listing of all the University students, including their patronyms, dates of birth and academic achievements. A list of over 800 Jewish students who are amongst this listing has been extracted from the three volumes, amongst them a fairly high percentage of Latvian Jews. So in conclusion, it can be said that the Latvian SIG can only gain by including Estonia under its aegis.

_Len Yodaiken is a professional researcher._
This following is the part of the first chapter of 'The Jews of Dinaburg' published in 1993 by the Jewish Community of Daugavpils and translated through friends in Chicago to publicize it.

The book is the first account of the Daugavpils community, its history and experience from a perspective in the 1990's. Some copies in the original Russian have been sold at $25 in the US and the funds remitted to the Jewish Community in Daugavpils. There are a few copies available. Hopefully we can have further chapters translated.

JEWS IN DINABURG / DVINSK / DAUGAVPILS
by Z.I. Yakub

Dedicated to the blessed memo of Etta Yakovlevna, the dearest companion of my life

The Jewish inhabitants of the City ......

Continued from previous issue January 2000

In the beginning of the XIX century Dinaburg began to develop faster than in any previous time, because Napoleon's army victoriously moved through Europe towards Russia and Russia, which had to reinforce its Western borders, began to build its fortifications there.

In March 1810, Russian military minister Barklay-de-Tolly, wrote to Tzar Alexander 1st a note 'About the Defence of the Western Border of Russia' where he emphasized the necessity of creating a defence line along the river Zapadnaya Dvina, including Dinaburg. According to the chief engineer-builder, Colonel Gekkel who was immediately sent there, Dinaburg was a small Jewish township, where not more than one battalion of soldiers could be quartered. On May 17, 1810, the military minister informed Colonel Gekkel: ‘His Sovereign Emperor approved your suggestion about building a fortress in Dinaburg’. Even according to our current standards the rate of the building was very impressive: two shifts of 5000 to 15000 soldiers in each, worked hard every day and managed to accomplish their work before Napoleon crossed the borders of Russia. The battles for the city between French and Russian troops in 1812 destroyed it to a large extent.

After 1812 the city was not attacked by anybody during the entire century. It developed and its population grew, including the Jewish population. The Jews of Dinaburg took a big part in the development of trade and industry of the city. In 1825 there were 2,885 citizens, and by 1840 the number had reached 11,361. Beginning with 1826 the city began to be built according to the governmental plan. That is why the first synagogue which was built there in 1828 (57 Lachplesh St., corner of Viestura St.) was named by the people Planovermyen. In the part of the city named Novy Forshtadt (the current centre of Daugavpils) a new small living space was founded by the name Esplanade (or Espanet in Yiddish). It was a Jewish micro-region. Its borders went along the Khlebnaya St. (today it is Maises St.), Podolskaya St. (today it is Statsiyas St.) and up to the end of Bolotnaya St. (today it is Aleyas St.).

Due to the political and economic reasons which will be described below, the XIX century was very fruitful for the city and it resulted in a very noticeable growth in the Jewish population in the city. According to the official data of 1839, 4,313 people lived in the city, of which 2,111 were Jews, i.e. 49% of the general population. In 1848, Jewish people constituted 37.4%, and in 1912 -30.7% of the general city population. What was unusual was that, according to the statistics of that time, the number of Jewish men was equal to the number of Jewish women, while among the non-Jews the difference was very big. For instance, in 1825 there lived 2439 non-Jewish men and only 442 women, and in 1902, 18,867 men and 8,140 women.

In the second half of the previous century the composition of the populace changed very much, because after serfdom was abolished in 1861
thousands of peasants rushed to cities searching for a better life. Thus, in 1862 there were 25,000 citizens in Dinaburg, and 22% of them were Jews. By 1879 there were already 50,000 citizens and 41.7% of them were Jews. In townships of the Dinaburg region (uyezd in Russian) Jews constituted 83.7% of the populace.

According to the census of 1897 more than 32,000 Jews lived in the city (46.5%). In 1902 the Jewish population had diminished to 10,000. Why?

After Jewish pogroms in Russia at the beginning of the 1880's, Jews began to emigrate to the USA, Canada, Palestine, Argentina and other countries. The emigration was very intensive and it continued up to the First World War. Emigration was facilitated by the European Colonizing Society (ECS), founded in London in 1891. The branches and the committees of the Society were located in different cities of Russia. According to the ECS Dvinsk committee data, 623 Jews applied to them with a request for exit visas in 1907, in 1909 - 754, but in 1913 for the 9 months only, 44,515 people, most of whom were Jews, had emigrated through the Libava port. According to the data of the guide ‘Dvinchanin’ (1914), by July 1, 1913, 112,848 people lived in Dvinsk, among them 55,686 Jews (49%), the highest number during all the time of the city's existence since the Jews' arrival in the city centuries before.

During the First World War, especially in 1915, a mass evacuation of citizens to the depth of Russia had began, when German troops reached the front line Vilno-Dvinsk, trying to cut the railway and to occupy Dvinsk. The equipment of the biggest industrial enterprises was also evacuated to Russia. The city had become deserted; in 1918 less than 20,000 people lived there.

After the First World War many of the evacuated people did not return but remained in Russia. A lot of industrial equipment evacuated from Dvinsk was left in Russia as well. For that reason, not all pre-war plants and enterprises were restored in Dvinsk, which influenced negatively the economic development of the city in the post-war years.

Four censuses were done in the Latvian Republic during the time of its existence (1918-1940), which show that in 1920. 29,000 citizens lived in Daugavpils, 40.8% of whom were Jews (11,838 people), although in Latvia at that time Jews constituted 18.2% of the general population. Later on, the Jewish percentage diminished: on average, Jews constituted 5.1% of the Latvia Republic population.

In 1935, 11,106 Jews lived in Daugavpils, 24.6% of the city's population. There were several reasons for Jewish population decline in Daugavpils – many left for Riga where living conditions were better and it was easier to find a job and many Jews left for other countries.

During the German occupation of the city, 1941-1944, the ‘Jewish Question’ was finally resolved. Jewish people were killed, without respect to gender or age. In the Latvian Republic's Supreme Soviet Declaration of September 19, 1990 it was written that more than 80,000 Jews of Latvia and at least 200,000 Jews of other European countries, were killed on the territory of Latvia during Fascist terror. Later in this book is an essay about the bloody terror of Fascists in Daugavpils.

Only those who had managed to evacuate into the depths of the Soviet Union survived, and also those who returned from the front and from the German Camps. After the war the population of the city, including Jews increased because people from other Soviet Republics moved to Latvia. In September 1944 in Daugavpils there were 14,832 citizens, and in 1946 - 22,587 (judging by the number of the bread coupons given to people). According to the census of 1959, 2235 Jews lived in Daugavpils (3.4% of the city population). In 1970 - 2,101 Jews remained in the city. Many Jews were leaving for Israel, the USA and other countries. In January 1991, 1,373 Jews lived in Daugavpils – 1.1% of the population. The number continued to decrease. By the end of 1992, 600 to 700 Jews live in Daugavpils.

*The dynamic of the changes of the Jewish population in Daugavpils for the last two centuries were shown in the previous issue.*
JEWS IN CITY GOVERNMENT

The legal state of Jews in Russia and in the territories that were added to it in 1772 (including Dinaburg) were regulated by Tsarina Yekaterina the 2nd’s Manifesto of August 11, 1772, where Jews were not given rights equal to other citizens. They were given only the right to practice their religion and to own their property.

Back in 1762 Yekaterina the 2nd had permitted foreigners to settle in Russia, but Jews were not included in that number. Meanwhile there is some evidence that Yekaterina realized the trade and industrial usefulness of the Jews for Russia. In 1780 some of the Jews got permission to join the merchant class, the remaining Jews were added to the middle classes. They had become a dominant element in the city government – magistrate (administration). As a result, the Jews for the first time got the right to participate in the leadership of the city. Once in a while they even became burgomasters, ratmans (councilors, or advisers) and judges. At that time, the magistrate consisted of two burgomasters (major) and four ratmans.

According to the City Regulation of 1785 Christians and Jews could be elected to City Halls, Dumas and Town Councils in accordance with their number, but in some regions of the Jewish Pale the rule was ignored and Jews were deprived of their voting rights and the right to be elected. Later the rule was established that elected Jew's had to wear Polish or German dress and to know one of three languages: Russian, Polish or German. It was established also that Jewish representatives had to be elected by the Jews and Christians representatives by the Christians.

It can be learned from the protocols of the Dinaburg City magistrate, stored now in the Central Historic Archives of Latvia, that, for instance, in 1800 one of the city's burgomasters was Sholom Movshovich, and one of the ratmans was Iosef Leizerovich; in 1826 one of the burgomasters was Naftoly Koblets, and one of the ratmans - Berke Goveelson; in 1836 Meer Malkiel was elected as a burgomaster, and David Bereznevskiy and Vulf Ginzburg were elected ratmans. Up to now we do not know the biographies of these Jewish city activists, but probably they belonged to the merchant class owning substantial property, being wealthy people enjoying respect and authority among the Jewish public. Besides, because they were elected by Jews one can assume that they were also the leaders of the Jewish city self-governing Kahalal, which had a sort of autonomy.

In the countries of West Europe, the Kahalas had already appeared in the XIII century as a Jewish self-governing body monitoring legal, religious, school, social and charity issues. In our region, including Dinaburg, the Kahalas appeared at the end of XVIII century, after the Byelorussian counties were added to Russia. At that time the Kahalah government served as a means of supervising Jews. When Jews received the right to participate in city self-government and to be members of the trade and industrial class, the functions of Kahalas changed. These functions were defined by the Senate of Russia in 1804 and 1835. In 1844 the Kahalas were liquidated in Russia in order to subject the Jews to the general state government. Only in Riga and Kurlyandia did the Kahalas survive up to 1893.

On June 22, 1839 Jews of Vitebsk Gubernia, including Dinaburg, were allowed to elect the city’s self-government equally with Christians. This event was of importance especially after 1844, when Kahalas were abolished and all decisions about exclusively Jewish problems were taken up by the city self-governments.

At that time Jewish participation in the work of the Dinaburg city Magistrate was significant. For instance, in 1847 three Counsellors out of four were Jews, David Bereznevsky, Izrail Kagan and Zusya Vulfson. In 1880, among the five members of the city Duma, only two - B. Imyanikov and Ya. Bogorad - were Jews, and among 59 members of the city Uprava/government 21 were Jews, mostly the merchants whose everyday activity in general qualified the trade/industrial image of Dinaburg. Among them were such hereditary

The new city regulation of June 11, 1892 not only deprived Jews of the rights they had by the regulation of 1870, but it canceled all the privileges they had during the entire XIX century. And they were deprived of all their rights without any reasons or explanation given. According to the regulation, ‘Jews are not permitted participate in voters meetings, in landlord’s meetings...may not be involved in the city public governing, can not be chief managers of the city industries or members of city government, ...’ and so on, and so forth. At the same time as being removed from the city administration, the Jews in some cities were given different responsibilities. The managerial staff in Dvinsk changed; in 1903 among the 27 Duma’s members only one was a Jew, a prominent industrialist Yakov Lvovich Movshenson, who was a member of the city building committee; among 32 members of the city government there were no Jews. In 1914, on the eve of the WWI, judging by the names, there were only one or two Jews among the 42 members of the Duma.

When in 1915 the front line came close to the city, a significant number of citizens had evacuated into the depth of Russia or to their relatives in villages and rural localities. Life in the city was frozen. On August 28, 1915 the last number of the local newspaper ‘Dvinsky Listok’ (‘Dvinsk Leaf’) had been issued.

There are no dates available about the national composition of the leadership of the city in 1916, 1917 and 1918. Some information exists about 1918 when the population of the city was 20,000 people. On February 18, 1918 the German troops occupied Dvinsk and proclaimed a state of siege there. Soon after, the new city administration (Uprava) was established. According to the data published on November 21, 1933 in the newspaper ‘Nash Dvinsky Golos’ (‘Our Dvinsk Voice’), there were several Jews in the staff of the city Duma. A pharmacist, F. Fain, who was in charge of the Health Department; a manufacturer, Gurvich, Dr. R. Gurevich, Samuel Ravdin (chief of the Firewood dept). An engineer and industrialist, Movshenson was appointed as a head of Uprava. But the independence of the Uprava was minimal. Every decision had to be approved by the ‘Stathauptman’ (Mayor of the city) Major Braun who along with the commandant of the city actually ‘owned’ the city of Dvinsk.

When the Latvian Republic was established, the elections were conducted on the multi-party basis. After the elections of 1931 there were seven members of the board of Duma: among them was F. Fain. In the city Duma there were 53 members, representing all main ethnic groups of the city - Latvians, Jews, Poles, Russians, Germans. 30% (16 people) of the Duma were Jews which corresponded with the Jewish population of the city. All council and business Jewish organizations were represented in Duma – Zionist organization ‘Histadrut’, Zionists/Socialists, unaffiliated Jews, Bund, religious organization Aguda, craftsmen, representatives of business circles, manufacturers and trade people. The Jews were in almost all commissions of the city Uprava - social security, financial, agrarian, sanitary, trade, residence and others; all together there were 20 commissions.

In 1940, after the Soviet Authority was established, a Temporary Executive Committee was created in Daugavpils by the verdict of the Republican Supreme Soviet; Jews were not represented on it. On the eve of the 2nd World War some of the departments of the City Executive Committee (CEC) were led by the Jews.

After the liberation of the city from the German occupation, in the summer of 1944, Jewish population constituted 2-3% of the general population. Two to three Jews were the chiefs of the CEC departments. Just a few Jewish individuals were among the City Soviet deputies.

To be continued.................
I was born in 1947 in the city of Riga, Latvia, USSR, to parents who met in Uzbekistan after a forced open land voyage with countless of unprepared others prompted by WWII.

Before WWII my parents lived in countries with no common borders. My father (originally from Hungary) resided (illegally) in Bessarabia (Romania), my mother lived in the town of Vil'ani, Latvia. They became residents of Soviet Russia, the old-fashioned way, i.e. via occupation, mother one year/father two weeks before Germany invaded Russia on June 22, 1941.

My father's evacuation started when his Torah reading during the Sabbath service was interrupted by a message from the local draft board that he had two hours to bid farewell to his wife and children before being drafted. After a prolonged march Eastward, his group was eventually disbanded due to desertions. Drifting with the refugee traffic Southward, father per chance got on the last ship leaving Odessa, Ukraine, and did not stop until he reached the region of ancient Bukhara, Uzbekistan. Lack of papers and language precluded him from joining the Army but not from starving. Father told me how he used to lean on the fence watching local boys shelling dried sunflower seeds and picking up ones he thought they missed.

My mother was able to escape doubly occupied Latvia because at the time of the German invasion she was in Abrene, a town a short distance closer to the Latvian-Russian border than her hometown of Vil'ani. She escaped with her sister to the Mari region in the Ural mountains. There were both farm work and food there but mother and her sister, dreading the winter cold, moved Southward to Uzbekistan where it turned out there was work, no food and a bitter cold winter. Mother was saved from starving to death by contracting hepatitis that resulted in intravenous infusions of a life force, glucose. (The tangible consequences of this forced linguistic diversification was mother teaching me to count to ten in Mari that I recently started teaching my kids, and resorting to Uzbek for private communications with father after both Yiddish and Hebrew, their other two common languages at the time, were decoded by us kids.)

Both of my parents suffered losses during WWII. My father lost his first family to Romanian fascists who did not recognize Bessarabia as Romania proper and hence local Jews were their "fair game:" his parents, several siblings and numerous other relatives were deported with other Hungarian Jews to the Auschwitz crematoria in 1944. My mother lost scores of her relatives when on August 4, 1941, a month after the Germans occupied Vil'ani, the entire Jewish population of some 680 was murdered.

My family (parents, sister and an identical twin brother) was always religious. We never considered Riga as a place of our permanent residence. In March 1969, after several years of applying for exit visas that dramatically intensified our cat'n' mouse games with the government, we won the almost "for Jews only" jackpot, i.e. permission to join my father's surviving siblings in the US. A Riga-Moscow train trip and a Moscow-Brussels-New York Sabena flight completed that miracle. In the new land, I became a child psychiatrist with a clinical interest in kids who have sustained considerable consequences of neglect and other traumas.

During my years in the US, I did not keep in touch with nor was I much interested in the (by now two) countries of my birth. In good measure this lack of interest was a reflection of too many painful conditions and disagreeable restrictions that I experienced while growing up. All along I felt that I did not belong to the place of my birth and that my origins were outside the world around me (e.g. no matter what sport, I always rooted for the foreign team except for figure-skating and female gymnastic floor exercises that were too beautiful to take sides). The acculturation to the life in the US fostered a new outlook on the world which together with subsequent dramatic changes in the CIS made the life left behind less and less recognizable and comprehensible to me.

It started changing gradually after my marriage to Olga whose family still resided in Moscow. It led to a renewed contact with the past, and a return trip to Moscow in August, 1998. Once there, I undertook with my then 10-year old daughter Leah a partially premeditated 16-hour 600-mile train trip to Riga, schedule and train cars unchanged since we traveled in the other direction some 29.5 years earlier.
Although I remembered quite well the city plan, names of streets and people and phone numbers, at first I was quite shocked that I could not recognize Riga. It was as if I was looking at a childhood friend many years later and not recognizing the kid I knew. Furthermore, the majority of the people I knew emigrated or rested at the Jewish cemetery; among the living, anybody on the street under age 30 was unknown to me, and anybody older was unrecognizable. It felt so helpless! I started rushing to escape this intolerable predicament. Two hours later after unloading the luggage, we were at our former apartment and neighbors. Gloom added to doom as half of the neighbors were dead of alcohol-related causes while the others (and their quarters, and even the trees in the backyard I used climb) were ravished by time and tear. When we left it, I turned to Leah and said, "I returned too late, it was a mistake to come here." I felt there was no other place to go. Not knowing where to turn, we just walked down the street, along the hospital where I worked as a nursing aid at 14 and 15, by the primary school I attended, turning left at the corner then right on the main Brivibas iela, or Freedom street (formerly Lenin, formerly Hitlerstrasse, formerly Brivibas) pointing out to Leah a site or mentioning a memory in this man's land of sorts. We stopped at the magnificent Tevzemel un Brivibas (For Fatherland and Freedom) monument. I recalled that my grandfather made a contribution towards its construction more than 67 years earlier. The first day in Riga ended with me forgetting the address of the apartment where we were to stay (I remembered only that it was on the sixth floor and on the right side of the staircase). We had to search frantically among several apartment building clones with no resident's listings or elevators, racing to get there safely before dark as instructed by our security-minded hosts. We did succeed on our fourth try. As I locked the door, I felt a wave of relief knowing that Riga once again was on the outside.

And yet we stayed on, in part because I did not feel that I had reached a destination yet, in part because I refused to accept my sister's predication that I would be bored there, in part because we did not have a choice, i.e. we needed new visas to get back to Moscow for a return trip home. (American citizens require visas to visit Russia but not for short trips to Latvia. The

parting of Latvia and Russia apparently did not percolate deep enough into our psyches when we contemplated our journey, and, as a result, at the Russian-Latvian border Leah and I discovered that our Russian visas were only one-time. Getting visas turned out to be a bit of an adventure and a pale but a tingling reminder of the struggles my father waged against much greater odds 30 years earlier). Meanwhile, I felt freed not to have to decide on the length of our stay in Riga because I knew not what I came there for. I just had a familiar vague curiosity about the matters that were to settle, unsettle or resettle during this journey.

Among my other lasting experiences of that trip was an unrelenting and pervasive low-grade tension and fear (a counterpart of my past numbness), lost appetite (I never felt hungry and ate mostly once a day), and an unsettling uncertainty of how I fit into the new scheme of things (e.g. as a Russian-speaking Jewish-American, was I now a triple alien?), an experience I did not have in any other place I traveled to before. A visit to the Synagogue in the Old City evoked familiar numbness and a sense that it was a special and forbidden island no more but a well-functioning society institution. A faint scent of Orwell's "Animal Farm" ascended my mind and lingered on for a while. To my surprise I partially recovered some fluency in Latvian, and gradually came to recognize Riga as a precious place where even the unknown seemed familiar to me, where I could observe the beauty and some decay and also myself beholding both. The formerly grave offense of currency dealing, Leah and I turned into a lighthearted competition of who would spy the best currency exchange rate among the sprinkle of shops.

Save for the initial shock, my most dissonant experience in Riga had to do with the monolingual monotony of the streets whose names reverted to the pre-WWII ones. All the street, store and business signs were in Latvian only, reflecting government-imposed Lettonization of its non-Latvian residents. It was an odd sight for a resident of a multicultural city in the US. It reminded me of the distant time when I did not want to belong to a place where both unfairness and repression were alive and legal. I identified with the ethnic Russian minority, about a third of the country's population, and joked darkly to myself "it is now your turn to be Jews".

Gabriel Goldberger
Writes on his trips with his daughter
Leah, to Latvia and later with his
Mother to her home village of Vil'ani.
While I shared many negative feelings that Latvians (comprising 55% of the total population) might have towards the former Soviet Government and its repressive colonization policies, I thought of Latvia as a small country with a government of a disproportionately petite mind and of an even smaller heart in pursuit of the ancient cruel two-wrongs-make-a-right policy. I felt that for all the differences, Riga had not changed, and that this was a place to visit and leave behind again.

Similar to my life in Riga when I had a rather limited contact with the Latvians, I talked to only several of them during this trip. I did notice that in public places some young people alternated freely between Russian and Latvian, and unlike before, I could not tell who was Russian and who was Latvian. [I recalled my past and recent curiosity of what Latvians thought about the Jews. I remember wondering whether they recognized that the crucifix before all else is a representation of a Jewish man tormented to death by body piercing and exhaustion. Or that turned downside up, the crucifix looked like a huge and scary sword. I remembered my mother mentioning that some of her neighbors used to ironically refer to them as "the chosen ones." I recalled the play "Jazeps un vin'a bral'i" ("Joseph and his brothers") by Janis Rainis, the father of modern Latvian literature, that used to be performed at the Drama theater where the stage turned?. Though intrigued, I did not see that play because I did not want to admit to myself that sometimes my world and that of the Latvians overlapped. I also remembered how odd hearing Jews speak fluent Latvian sounded as if Latvian was not a "Jewish" language to me while Russian was. I also remembered that this me-not-me interphase was mixed up a bit as soon as we arrived at JFK when after a life of being Jewish only, we heard our Chassidic relatives (and later on everybody else) refer to us as Russians. The world again was deciding for us who we were! This time however it was a signal that our Americanizing was on, a process that for me started with a discovery on the third day when I venture out in the Chassidic Williamsburg section of Brooklyn where we were staying and realized (as I would many times in many other places in the US) that I did not feel a stranger in/that I did not not belong to this new land. It ended many years later after I discovered and then somewhat mastered the integrating wonder of hyphens that replaced repressive and fragmenting false dichotomies of my past with bridges to all of my origins and later tributaries. Yet I did not anticipate that I would be considered American during my trip to Japan some eight years later. Or that being introduced as a Latvian-Irish tenor before singing "O Danny Boy" in a musical restaurant would be the most wonderful of my hyphenated experiences. Or that still much later I would get to love Christmas carols, and I feel happy and at ease wishing somebody Merry Christmas.]

During the last few days in Riga we went to visit the grave of my mother's father Silim (whose rare name my brother bears). He died in 1932 from liver cancer after being operated in Riga at the German Hospital and was buried at the New Jewish Cemetery. Although we stayed one short street car stop away and passed it twice daily and I wanted to visit it very much, I hesitated for security reasons from visiting it with Leah on our own until a 70-year-old Kira dispelled my fears by saying, "It's OK, let's go." The cemetery seemed quite familiar except that on the left of the sanctuary there were new tombstones commemorating Jews from abroad murdered in Riga, and to the right of it there was a large unsigned mausoleum for a recently killed local tycoon. Going diagonally to the right between the sanctuary and the mausoleum towards my grandfather's grave, we saw a stone monument dedicated to Jan Lipke, a Latvian man who saved 59 Jews during the War. I knew one man he saved. Leah and I took turns reciting Kaddish in our tribute to him. We moved on then, but despite my best efforts and certainty that I was looking in the right segment of the cemetery, I could not find my grandfather's grave. (It was a sad irony: in the city I did not recognize at first, I could orient myself easily, yet here where all seemed so familiar, I could not find the most important landmark!)

I grew acutely desperate until Ilga appeared miraculously. [She was not home the day before when we came by and instead of seeing her, we were treated by her husband Harald to a very spiritual music-color theory of teaching piano playing to kids. I knew Ilga since my early childhood as one of two spiritual daughters of Emiliya Yakovleva, a saintly woman who had a clear and forceful sense of God, right and wrong that I and other kids discerned easily, and who treated us kids with a rare respect and a sense of importance, experience that uniquely nurtured my budding self-
Esteem. Yet it was only several years ago that I came to terms with two scenes from the gallery of my childhood that I consciously stored for later when unable to understand something to my satisfaction and refusing to decide what it was. Scene one. Friday night. Father just recited Kiddush but we remain standing. Emilia Yakovlevna, Ilga and Ainin (the other daughter) kneel by the Sabbath table. Emilia Yakovlevna prays loudly and clearly; from her heart, in Latvian, sometimes in Russian; it is easily understood; about my family, our home, about the Jews who are the Chosen People. She prays to God but I can not escape her prayer’s touch which is too moving and unsettling for me. Scene two. Emilia Yakovlevna comes with Ainin without Ilga. In response to my mother’s inquiry about Ilga, she calmly responds that Ilga did not come because “her heart was not in the right place.” I feel quietly bewildered and only many years later learn that it was my first lesson in the anatomy of human soul, and that people who live before God are not easily embarrassed by others. Ilga led us to my grandfather’s grave where she lit a candle and Leah and I took turns reciting the Kaddish. Remembering the right segment is sometimes not enough, I thought, and realized that the main meaning for my trip was to show Leah the path to the only existing grave of her great grandparent. In the process, I learned it better myself.

Overall, Leah and I spent nine days together, a unique experience in our lives up to that point. It was in many ways so wonderful for Leah that remembering our first day, she pronounced “Our next trip we will start with the second day.” Meanwhile, I was wondering and musing whether my visit to Riga might be not just a trip.

We flew to Moscow the next evening to arrive one hour before our Russian visas were active (the closest I ever came to an illegal border crossing). By then I made two decisions: to get involved in regaining my mother’s family’s property in Vi’l’ani, a process that was stalled since 1991 because the property information could not be obtained, and to return with my mother (it would be her first trip back) and Leah the next summer to visit Vi’l’ani, my mother’s hometown.

Eleven months passed quickly. A four-hour Brookline-Brooklyn drive to pick up mother, then a JFK-Frankfurt-Riga Lufthansa flight, and we were in Riga. Of the three of us, Leah was definitely returning. I was only partially so because I did not feel I reached the elusive destination of my first trip yet. My mother’s experience I could neither fathom nor elicit from her. The first surprise happened at the Riga airport while we were waiting for our luggage. My mother cried but not as I thought for Riga where she lived for 23 years, but for Vi’l’ani, a place that I fully realized only later gave her so much and took away almost everything. After we rested, we started on our long daily walks throughout Riga, recalling the old and discovering the new. visiting our former apartment and neighbors, the coast of Jurmala, even the Zoo. We came face to face with my mother’s childhood friend Zlata who still lives in Riga; they glanced at each other while passing by on the street, turned around some 20 paces later, my mother waved her to come back. Always expecting the unexpected, I videotaped their encounter. We visited my mother’s father’s grave (Leah, needing some guidance, and I, able to provide it, did remember the path to it), then traveled to Vi’l’ani some 220 miles East. Throughout our visit in Riga mother was her usual silent self about her experiences, e.g. after our visiting our apartment and the neighbors, in response to my curious inquiries, she just said “It is a nice apartment.” And would not add anything despite my further prodding.

As we were nearing our destination, we drove through the land where my mother’s relatives used to live in different towns. In Vi’l’ani, we had just several minutes to look around before being introduced to the lawyer with whom I corresponded about mother’s family’s property. She informed us that we will be joined by a Town representative and then visit a few old-timers for the purpose of identifying my mother because her Latvian, Russian, Uzbek and American documents contained different versions of her names. (Another irony: my mom’s hometown is the only place where her identity needed further verification). We talked briefly and then moved through the town. My mother could not stop recalling and recognizing, the
former sometimes easier than the latter. Meeting the old-timers had a routine of its own: whenever we were to meet an old-timer lady, we would be told to wait as she was combing her hair, meanwhile my mother would be busy doing the same. Once my mother and the other person would start reminiscing, they would, after a short exchange of memory-passwords enter their Višani, a common ground that belonged to them and they belonged to regardless of whether they knew each other or not.

I knew from before that my mother could recall her hometown vividly, walk me through the main streets, house by house, telling who lived there and the details of people's lives/relationships then and later. (In reference to one house, mother said "That house will last for a thousand years. If you only knew how many building materials the lady owner purchased from us.") But these meetings were much more than cases of shared memory. I realized at last that I myself never had a hometown, that my mother always did, and that as a son I could not have done more for my mom than bringing her here. I felt somewhat blissful as I learned these two meanings of my second trip.

We then went through the town. We saw the shed my grandfather built some 85 years earlier next to the house where mother grew up and that burned down after the war. We saw a military cemetery for the Soviet soldiers at the place where my grandfather's store of building materials once was and where my mother's youngest brother Yasha murdered by the Nazis was said to have been reburied. We visited the Jewish cemetery where my mother's grandmother's tombstone was not to be found anymore, but where we did see the tombstone of her aunt's husband Itzik Hazan who once together with mom's uncle Hirsha Sher visited the US and who died before the War, and one of a distinguished Višani resident who died at the age of 90 in 1929, and in whose funeral procession my mother then age 14 walked along with all other pupils of her school. The cemetery seemed an uncarred for witness to the history of the Jewish community of Višani. Nearby there was a much better attended site where that history was brought to a horrible end on August 4, 1941, when about 680 Jewish residents of Višani where shot to death. We prayed at both places; both Leah and I were curious about the cemetery but we did not tolerate well the mass murder site. Going back to town, we stopped at different places where my mother remembered people she knew some 60+ years earlier. At one, we chanced upon a grandma from Riga visiting with her two grandchildren. She was the granddaughter of a man my mother remembered vividly for his neat garden. This lady instantly became rejuvenated with the excitement, thrill, total body goose bumps and all of a 15-year-old by my mother's recollection of "the most beautiful man in the world" (she kept repeating) whose memory did not permit her to sell his two-room house as all of her neighbors had done years before. It was plainly amazing! I looked at the grandchildren who seem rather nonchalant about their grandma's transformation into a granddaughter.

I was very proud of my 84-year-old mom walking for hours (by the time the trip was over she did not make much of walking up three flights of stairs carrying some stuff), chattering in Latvian and Latgalian that she had not spoken in 30 years, and bringing back the world that was hers to the place that was hers. Yet my proudest moment came when we went back to visit the military cemetery. There were rows of graves totaling several scores. We passed them reading the inscriptions and then returned to the car except for Leah who lagged behind. It was already past 9pm, still light, but we needed to visit other places before dark. Looking at Leah I was perplexed by her behavior. She was moving sideways squatting at each step as if she was trying to catch a frog I pointed out to her earlier. Yet I knew she was not on touching terms with amphibians. I shouted to her to hurry. She did not respond as if she did not hear me. I shouted again. Same effect. Embarrassed and annoyed, I apologized to everybody in the car for the inconvenience Leah was causing us and went to fetch her. When I came close, I was stunned realizing how different the actual was from the anticipated. There was no frog in sight. In accordance with Jewish custom, Leah was putting a pebble on every soldier's grave. I went back to the car, mumbled something about my pride in Leah's inconveniencing us, then went back to help her finish her chosen task. As we walked to the car, I bowed slightly towards her and said "You were brought up well." It was the greatest joy and satisfaction (aka nakhpes) that Leah has ever brought me. Only for that, coming to Višani was worth it!

I found people we met in Višani sincere and happy to see us. With the exception of one person who shared his memories of burying mass-murdered
Gypsies, I felt comfortable among them. From them I learned that my favorite word in Latvian is what they bid us 'laimigi' or 'fare propitiously.' At last I accepted that my mother's "distortions" of Latvian she sometimes indulged when joking to us, turned out to be none other than the local Latgalian dialect. (I suspected that as a child but decided it sounded too cute to be true).

Before leaving Riga I decided to return to Vil'ani the next summer, perhaps with more family, for my mother to spend there more than the two days we did this time and maybe share with me more of her impressions, for Leah to come along on our summer special, for me to try to see whether an American child psychiatrist might do some good in the Latgalian countryside.

There was of course also a deeper less personal side to it all. I felt a stark contrast between Leah's unambiguous sense of fallen Soviet soldiers as vanquishers of her ancestors' murderers with my perceived sense that most of the Latvians felt the Germans were the liberators not the Soviets. While the differences in perspective are easy to conceptualize and explain away, I was troubled by the very familiar kind of silence, the silence about the obvious, that seemed to envelop the war-related matters (e.g. why are the former SS members celebrities?), and a sense that this silence related to the government-sponsored cultural cleansing and disenfranchising policies towards the Russian-speaking people (e.g. what is alien to Latvia about the children, grandchildren, or great-grandchildren who were born and lived all their lives in Riga except that their ancestors are Russian who have lived in Riga since WWII?). No place in the world is free of conflicted heritages, claims, points of views, I thought, but why choose revenge and not healing to build a long-term harmonious future? Is the compassion of the Dalai Lama or the reconciliation of Mandela an alternative? On a personal note, I wondered, is there anyone I could ask about my father's imprisonment when he was the president of the Jewish congregation in Riga? Or how my family was not let out to emigrate for so long, or how finally it was? How was it decided that my brother and I would be expelled from the Latvian University? Who were those people who were deciding my fate? What happened to them? Could I meet them? Is my curiosity politically correct?
HUNTING FOR HIMMELHOCHS
by Martha Levinson Lev-Zion

I have the great good fortune always to have been interested in the history of my origins. From the earliest times that I can remember, my voice rose above those of my boisterous siblings, always asking, Why? Who? How? What's their relationship to us?

My mother's father, Samuel Rothschild who was orphaned when he was ten, could not give me the information that I sought about his family. I knew my father, Selvyn Levinson, had only one childless sister, who lived in Canada and who rarely paid us a visit. I figured that was because she wasn't used to large families. I was quite sure that my paternal grandparents were both only children.

I was busy pursuing every thread I could locate, concentrating mostly on my mother's family who came to the United States prior to the Civil War. Out of the blue, I got a call from a cousin on my father's mother's side who wanted to confirm the information that she had on our branch of the Himmelhoch family and to share whatever information that I could offer her. Jean began by telling me - by insisting over my protestations - that 'my grandmother, Rae Himmel, was one of four siblings. I told her she must be quite mistaken and called up my oldest sister in California to ask her what she knew. It turned out that none of us knew anything! In those conversations with Jean, she planted a valuable seed. She asked me if I hadn't been told that all Himmelhochs are related. Being an historian and knowing not to trust hearsay, I looked up the name Himmelhoch in Alexander Beider's A Dictionary of Jewish Surnames in the Russian Empire.* Beider's entry (p. 239) reads:

"Gimel'gokh (common in Courland) N: Himmelhoch [German] extremely tall {Gimel'gof}"

N means a surname based on personal characteristics; Gimel'gof is a related surname.

Now I can add a footnote to Dr. Beider's book: Himmelhoch is indeed a common name in Courland, but all Himmelhochs belong to the same family!

Our predecessors obviously took the command to "be fruitful and multiply" quite seriously!

My cousin Jean and I began to pool our resources. She worked in the States and I worked in Israel. According to Jean, the Himmelhoch family was originally from Latvia, from a place called Sassmacken. I remember that I tended to doubt even that information, for two reasons: the culture and language of my grandparents was German, not Russian; and I could not find Sassmacken on any map. It turned out that there was indeed such a place, whose name had been changed to Valdemarps. As I studied the history of the area the Him[m]elhochs came from, Kurland or Courland, I understood the German background and realized that I would have to open my horizons if I was going to do a serious job on finding all the Him[m]elhochs that I could.

Coincidentally with my discovery of the reality of Sassmacken, I was invited to Beit Hatefutzo [the Diaspora Museum] in Tel Aviv. There is a small, independent section there, the Goldman Center, devoted to genealogy. You put in your money: type in a name and up pops a tree, if you are lucky. I typed in Himmelhoch and up popped a tree with people in it who were right here in Israel! The people who work at the Center quite willingly looked up the name and address of the submitter of the tree. Alas, when I called, no one knew anyone by that name at that address. Back to square one.

It pays to use the Internet and to be a subscriber to JewishGen. I would sign my postings with a signature containing the names of the people I was researching. On one occasion, a few months after my visit to Beit Hatefutzo, I received an email from someone who asked me if I could possibly be searching for the family of Wulf Himmelhoch. I wrote back that all Himmelhochs were related and that I was searching for every one of the Himmelhochs I could find. "Well," he wrote from England, "these Himmelhochs are cousins of mine and they live right there in Israel!" I am sure that he heard my whoop all the way to London! Without wasting anymore time, I immediately called up and spoke with my newfound cousins. I encountered suspicion at first, but I persevered.

Their story was as fascinating as it was sad. Meri Himmelhoch had left Latvia in 1936 when she went to Kovno, Lithuania to marry Abraham Hochenberg. [The incredible family story of the fate of the Hochenbergs will have to be for another article.]

In 1941 Abraham bought blank Polish passports in Kovno, which were then obtainable from some Jewish woman who was having an affair with someone important in the Polish Passport Office. Abraham chose the name Kagan, which he thought would be easy for his son, Moshe who...
was then four years old, to remember. Meri thought that Abraham had obtained from the Japanese consul transit visas to Russia/Siberia Vladistock to Kobe, Japan. Later when I was trying to verify the facts and I wrote to various people [Sugihara's historians, the Dutch consul's son from that time, etc.] it turned out that those Japanese visas had been forged! Needless to say, the trip to Japan was wrought with anxiety and close calls. The family stayed for three and a half months in Japan. Finally they received a visa to Santa Dominica in 1941. They also obtained transit visas to India and South Africa. But they really wanted to go to the Homeland in what was then called Palestine. While in Bombay, Abraham sent Meri with her one-year-old infant daughter, Nina, in arms, to ask the British for a visa. They were so sure that when the British saw Nina and how desperate the family was, they would, of course, grant them a pass to their protectorate Palestine. The British flat out refused. The Hochenbergs were in Bombay for eight and a half months and stayed there in a boarding house owned by Jews. Finally they were fed up. They found a boat going to South Africa, which they boarded since they had transit visas for there. The family arrived in Capetown in May 1942. They greased palms to be able to stay for an additional month and every month they greased more palms. They were told weekly that they were being deported, and weekly they obtained medical certificates stating that one of them was too sick to travel. Legally, they were not allowed to work. After five years and still more money, they paid to get permanent status in South Africa. Only after Abraham died at the end of 1964, did Meri and her daughter Nina come to Israel. Moshe went to London.

While the Hochenbergs were using all their ingenuity and money to stay alive, the fate of the Himmelhoch family in Latvia was quite the contrary. In Meri's immediate family, there remained in Latvia her two older sisters, Susa [Sara] and Lena [Hannah], her older brother Boris [Boruch], and her parents Wulf and Etta née Berhman Himmelhoch, as well as an enormous number of cousins. Along with 2,166 other Jews, Boris Boruch was drafted into the [20th] Division of the Latvian Riflemen. During 1942, nearly the entire division was killed near Staraja Russa in Russia. Meri did not learn until much later that her brother Boris Boruch fell on 16 February 1942, and was buried in a mass grave along with the some of the other 1,600 - 1,700 Jewish soldiers who fell in the area: Meri's oldest sister Susa was married to Sacha Sachs and had two young daughters, Heini and Harriet. The entire family was murdered in 1941 with the elimination of the Riga ghetto.

If one goes to the Jewish Museum in Riga, one sees a photograph of a lovely statue by the artist H. Himmelhoch. It turned out that "H. Himmelhoch" was Meri's sister Lena [Hannah], the sculptress. In her own words, Meri described her talented sister: "Lena Himmelhoch (born 1903 in Tuckm, Russia [Latvia of today]). We lived from 1914 to 1920 in St. Petersburg [after Russia expelled the Jews to the interior]. This was coincidentally during the period of the Russian Revolution. We returned to Latvia, to Riga. "Lena, as a girl, was very good at drawing. She entered the Academy of Art in Riga and there studied drawing and sculpture. Sculpture was her favorite subject. "At one of the exhibitions in the Academy, her professor (Professor Ronchevsky) told our mother, 'Your daughter is my best and most talented and gifted pupil, but I don't think she will succeed very well. There are two things against her: she is a woman and she is Jewish.'

"In 1918, that part of Russia became a republic and was named Latvia (Lettland). Lena spent about seven years studying in the Academy. When she finished she was well known. One of her big orders was for a sculpture to be placed in the garden of the owner of the main Latvian newspaper Jaunakas Zinās. It was like a fountain, depicting a mother holding her little child over her shoulder and the water coursed down over the mother and child. It was very beautiful and well accepted. [This is, in fact, the photograph one sees in the Jewish Museum in Riga, ML-Z]. Many people would stop by the gate to admire it. To earn herself some extra money, Lena did quite a lot of all sorts of leather art work (leather book covers, notebooks and so forth). "Lena was killed by the German Nazis together with our entire family. She was extremely talented and kind and helpful. She could have saved herself - she had an opportunity to leave the country, but she would not leave her parents behind. Wulf was by this time quite ill with a heart condition and could not possibly travel. ML-Z] "As a young teenager, I was taken by Lena to all the concerts (she was also very musical) and she always encouraged me to go to operas, theatres and art exhibitions. She inherited her musical talents from our father, Wulf Himmelhoch, who had a very good singing voice."

Today, Meri Himmelhoch Hochenberg is a charming, and lovely 90 year old, the sole survivor of her immediate family, which was brutally murdered by the Nazis. I have been able to trace the family back 300 years in Courland where they were successful merchants and manufacturers. Now not a trace of them remains in Latvia, except for a sad little picture of a magnificent fountain sculpted by Lena. Even the fountain itself has disappeared.

The Jewish Genealogical Society of Great Britain (JGSGB) decided to form a number of different SIGs in 1999. The Latvian SIGUK was convened with Arlene Beare as Chairman and at the first meeting Sylvia McCallum was appointed the Secretary. There were only a handful of attendees at the first meeting. Constance Whippman was appointed as the Projects Manager at the second meeting. Sylvia and Arlene produced a Newsletter for our Group, which was well received. As Sylvia is now the Editor of the main Newsletter for Latvia SIG we will probably not continue to have our own local newsletter.

The SIG has a small core of faithful attendees. Meetings are held regularly every 3 months. We are constantly exploring ideas for projects and have decided to attempt entering into a Database the names of applicants for Naturalisation giving Russia as their Country of Origin. The period we will cover initially is 1890-1900. We hope to extend the Project to other members of the JGSGB, as it will require many helpers. We hope to report back on this database in future issues. We have also enlisted Dr Saul Issroff as an adviser on this Project.

Work has begun on a Yizkor book from the Riga Ghetto written by Kaufman. Sheila Hallmark one of our members is co-ordinating this Project. The book written in German does not have an index. We hope to create an index so that if a name of interest to a Researcher appears in the Book then the Index will provide details of the page where the name occurs. The researcher could then have that paragraph or page translated. Members participating in this Project are given photocopied pages and asked to underline names that appear on the pages and record the details for entry into the Index.

The Education Committee of JGSGB has produced a Beginner’s Guide to Jewish Genealogy in Great Britain. We have been asked to submit the data for a corresponding Beginner’s Guide to Jewish Genealogy in Latvia. I have started collating the data. All the SIGs will have Introductory Guides. They may be very useful for other Latvian researchers. I shall bring some to Salt Lake City if they are ready by then.

Our next meetings are arranged for the 25th June and the 24th September.

Arlene Beare, Chairman – Latvian SIGUK
The following records show part of a list of the birth records for Voru (Werro) and Tartu (Yuriev), sent from Israel by Len Yodaiken who hopes that it will be of some use to researchers.

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<th>Date and month of birth and circumcision</th>
<th>Place of birth</th>
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<td>Resnik Kadyshchev</td>
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Where Nazis are heroes - An anti-fascist partisan in Latvia made legal history when he was sentenced for war crimes - while pro-German soldiers who murdered thousands of Jews go free. Ian Traynor on the case that is focusing world attention on Latvia's disturbing legacy of collaboration.

War crimes trials of old Nazis, Bosnian butchers, Chilean dictators and African warlords are now a fixture of the international human rights agenda. But in January, the anti-Nazi partisan 'hero' Vasily Kononov, 77, made legal history when he was sentenced to six years in prison in Latvia for war crimes committed in the cause of anti-fascism. Riga court's guilty verdict against Kononov was the first time in the former Soviet Union, and perhaps anywhere in Europe, that a second world war combatant who fought on the winning side against the Nazis had been convicted for war crimes. "It's a unique case in Latvia, certainly, and perhaps not only here," admits Andris Gulans, head of Latvia's supreme court.

On May 27 1944, Kononov, then a 22-year-old former Red Army soldier who had been parachuted by the Russians behind German lines to command a unit of 18 guerrillas, moved with his men into the eastern village of Mazie Bati in the densely wooded countryside of Nazi-occupied Latvia.

It was a mild Saturday evening and the men of the village were relaxing over a customary drink after their weekly scrub in the communal bathhouse. Kononov and his men wore stolen German uniforms and fraternised with the locals, many of whom were familiar to the young anti-Nazi commander, who had been born in another hamlet nearby. Then the partisans, led by Kononov, unleashed their machine guns on several of the villagers. Six men and three women, one heavily pregnant, were killed. A few months later the Russians displaced the Nazis as Latvia's occupying power. Kononov was on the winning side. A year after the incident, the second world war ended. Kononov went on to make a career in the police through the years of Soviet rule of Latvia.

Since 1945 there have been attempts to prosecute anti-fascist fighters for war crimes in Austria and Italy. But the attempts failed, says Winfried Garscha, a war crimes historian at Vienna's Wartime Resistance Documentation Centre. "I don't know of any cases like this one in Latvia," he adds. The Latvian justice minister, Valdis Birkavs, bluntly insists it matters not a jot who won the war or who perpetrated the crimes. "War criminals have to be prosecuted. Innocent men and women were killed. Justice is justice." But Villis Samsons, a historian and wartime commander of 3,000 Latvian partisans, is outraged at the Kononov verdict, which he sees as a deliberate attempt by the new Latvian state to rewrite history and condemn and discredit the entire partisan movement that fought against Hitler. Why don't they do something about the real war criminals who organised the Holocaust in Latvia?

Samsons is not alone in his outrage. Russia is incensed and is seeking international support against the verdict, demanding that the Council of Europe and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe lean on the Latvians to release Kononov. But, says Birkavs, 'the OSCE has no mandate to mediate in this.' Boris Yeltsin, Russia's former president, refused to accept Latvia's highest state award in protest at the Kononov verdict. The acting president, Vladimir Putin, offered Kononov and his family political asylum. The case, Putin warned, could herald 'mass prosecution of fighters against fascism'. Last week, the Latvian embassy in Moscow was daubed in paint and its windows smashed.

Latvia's troubled wartime past and its current dilemmas in dealing with that past suddenly leapt on to Britain's front pages at the beginning of this year. Konrad Kalejs, 88, a former Nazi collaborator and a member of Latvia's vicious
Arajs militia which butchered tens of thousands, mainly Jews was discovered living in Britain, in a Midlands nursing home. Then last month, Kalejs, an Australian citizen, fled to Melbourne to avoid deportation from Britain. The home secretary, Jack Straw, had ruled that there was insufficient evidence against him to warrant prosecution in the UK. Latvia, too, says it is unable to mount a case against Kalejs. The contrast between the Kononov and Kalejs cases is striking. “The Latvians have never asked for anyone's extradition for war crimes,” says Efraim Zuroff, the Nazi war crimes researcher who heads the Simon Wiesenthal Centre in Jerusalem and who has been lobbying heavily in the Kalejs case. “Not once of their own volition have the Latvians prosecuted anyone for the murder of the Jews, in great contrast to the energy with which they are trying to bring communists to trial.” Three days after the Nazis arrived in Riga in July 1941, Latvian anti-semites torched Riga's main synagogue. Within six months, 60,000 of Latvia's pre-war Jewish community of 80,000, one of the most prosperous communities in eastern Europe, had been massacred. Latvians played a prominent role in the mass killings. Kalejs's Arajs militia rounded up Jews, took them to the Rumbula forest and Salaspils concentration camp outside Riga and shot them. The Riga ghetto was emptied to accommodate Jews who had been deported by the Nazis from Germany and Austria.

The Holocaust historian Professor Raul Hilberg writes that 'on a per capita basis, the Latvians were represented as heavily as any nation in the destruction of the Jews'. By 1943 there were two Latvian SS divisions and around 100,000 Latvians were in German uniform, either in auxiliary police units or in the SS legion. Unusually, the Nazis dispatched their Latvian collaborators way beyond their native territory, to Byelorussia, Ukraine and Warsaw.

The SS legionnaires are now feted in Latvia as freedom fighters. This Thursday, March 16, the SS veterans will march to the soaring art deco Freedom and Fatherland monument in central Riga as they have for the past seven years. Last year, the government decreed the day a national holiday. This year, however, because of international protest, it will be an unofficial holiday only. Ausma Rubene, one of the prosecutors in the Kononov case, cites the Allies' charter for the postwar Nuremberg tribunal as one of the legal foundations for putting Kononov on trial, although the first words of the charter specify that the tribunal is to try 'major war criminals of the European Axis'.

"The Red partisans were stealing food and clothes and torching houses," says Mrs Rubene. "Kononov committed war crimes against peaceful civilians. When questioned further, she admits that the male villagers, in a region that was close to the frontline in 1944, were armed. "They had rifles, but they were not a fascist armed formation. They were given rifles to defend themselves and their homes." Three months earlier, in the same village of Mazie Bati, there was a day-long battle between German troops and a Red Army reconnaissance unit in which 14 Russians were herded into the village bathhouse and burnt alive. That, at least, is the partisan version. The deaths aren't contested, but Rubene says the bathhouse was set ablaze accidentally by tracer fire. "We know there were three women killed (on May 27)," says former partisan leader Samson. "That was unfortunate, but there was a war on and it was very cruel. And the armed men in the village were auxiliary police for the German occupiers. They would round up deserters and turn them over to the Germans."

The bitterness triggered by the Kononov trial and Latvia's ambivalence towards its wartime past is fuelled by its hostility towards the Russians. "Latvia sees the war as two occupations, one bad, one good and the good one is the German," says a western observer in Riga. It was Stalin, not Hitler, who ended Latvia's independence and occupied the Baltic state in 1940, ushering in a year-long reign of terror that saw tens of thousands of Latvians killed or sent to Siberia. When the Nazis drove out the Red Army in 1941, the Germans were seen by many as liberators.
"It's the Soviet occupiers who have to be blamed first for the Holocaust here," says Professor Aivars Stranga, a Riga historian heading a national commission on the war years. "Not every Latvian was a fascist and not every Latvian wanted to kill Jews. Stalin created the second world war when he divided Poland and Europe into spheres of influence." Kononov's crimes against civilians, he adds, "were terrible, the same level of barbarity as sending people to Auschwitz".

While Latvia has not sought to try Kalejs or mounted any other prosecutions of pro-Nazi war criminals, the authorities point out that the Soviet powers did a thorough job in the postwar years, putting more than 2,000 Latvians on trial for war crimes. "We want to put Nazis on trial but it was all done during Soviet times," says the justice minister, Birkavs. But rather than seeking to put ageing Nazis on trial, Latvia, says Zuroff, of the Wiesenthal Centre, is quietly rehabilitating dozens of convicted Nazi war criminals while prosecuting the likes of Kononov. Zuroff says 41 war criminals have been pardoned since Latvia achieved independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. That means they qualify for pensions and perks denied to old anti-Nazi fighters. A week after Kononov got six years, president Vaira Vike-Freiberga of Latvia told the Holocaust Remembrance conference in Stockholm that the 'precise number' of Latvians who participated in the mass murder of Jews was 'not known but was estimated to exceed 1,000'.

Nazi-hunters and historians say that that figure is risibly low. But while Latvia is not preparing any Nazi war crimes trials. Aleksandrs Ogurcovs, Kononov's lawyer, says that he expects another six prosecutions of anti-Nazi fighters. "Only in Latvia," he says. "I've never heard of anyone who fought the Germans being jailed for war crimes."

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Latvia President Praises Work of International Commission of Historians

**Contributed by Glenn Richter**

President Vaira Vike-Freiberga evaluates as highly efficient the work of the international commission of historians, and believes there are enormous prospects for its activities.

The head of state told the press about this following a meeting with the members of the commission that dealt with a conference of historians that took place at the end of last week in the town Ligatne.

The president stressed that "the commission performs an important mission in studying the two occupational regimes in Latvia, and attaches particular significance to the Holocaust and teaching at schools the history of the genocide of the Jewish people."

The conference also took a look at establishing in Latvia a museum of the Holocaust and Jewish cultural heritage in the republic, as well as immortalizing the memory of Janis Lipke, who saved Jewish lives during the World War II. The president said. The head of state takes the view that a public park in Riga should be named after Lipke adding "This would serve as a reminder to all the Latvian people about this man who saved many Jewish people's lives."

However, she views the main goal for the commission of historians as studying "the first and the second Soviet occupations, as well as the period of the German occupation of Latvia. "The commission was established in 1998 on former Latvian president Guntis Ulmanis' initiative."

The work will take several years, as it requires the study of many new archive materials. The commission's task in the more distant future is to promote teaching of history at schools and prepare a basis for creating new textbooks.

The commission has inked contracts with 25 historians to will study these issues.
As I write this article (April 14th) the testing of the new All Latvia Database is underway. I wrote my last article in October '99 in a cyber café in Riga when the dream of what could be done was just taking shape. I hope that by the time you receive this newsletter you will be using the new database facility regularly to trace family ties. That is a long way to have come in less than 7 months. We owe a great debt to Michael Tobias, our long-suffering webmaster, and Warren Blatt who has kept a watchful eye on our efforts.

The database now has about 12,000-14,000 entries. None of this could have been done without the volunteers that have come forward. The energy and goodwill with which Kathy Wolfson, Iris Sitkin and Max Michelson (USA) Stanislav Gorbulev, (Germany), Robert Heyman (Australia) and Martha Lev Zion (Israel) completed the transliteration, extraction and databasing of the lists of eligible voters for the 1907 Duma elections set a cracking pace for the whole project. Thanks to them the Voters lists for Bausk, Doblen, Durben, Frauenburg, Friedrichstadt, Goldingen, Griwa, Hasenpoth, Illuxt, Jacobstadt, Kandau, Mitau, Pilten Polangan (now in Lithuania but then in Courland) Sabeln, Sasmacken, Subbat, Talsen, Tukums and Windau are now complete and on line.

Effectively people on 4 continents co-operated in obtaining these Lists from Riga, ensuring that they were scanned and transmitted by e-mail attachment, appropriate templates were designed and then the data extracted and put into excel files. All of this was from sources in printed Cyrillic. Our one disappointment was not being able to locate a copy of the 1907 List for Libau. Needless to say the search continues.

These voter's lists provide names, patronymics [the entrant's father's name] and the basis on which they qualified to vote so that it is possible to know at least something of an individual's economic circumstances and social standing.

In addition to the voter's lists there are family lists for Bauska, Pilten, Goldingen, Jacobstadt, Grobin [all 1871] and Libau for 1868; Finally there is a list of over 880 Jews extracted from the Vedomosti, the official Russian Government Gazetteer, who were subject to arrest on the basis they were 'without permit'. [Passlossen]. These are just the highlights. Charles Nam, Kathy Wolfson and Maria Krane turned the Passlossen list round in record time to make the first edition of the database. In doing a quick eyeball guestimate from the SIG Newsletter membership lists, about 65% of the names listed as being searched will be found in the first phase of the database. Do check this database even if your best information is that your family came from Livonia or Latgale. Generally speaking immigration into these areas was from the South through Courland as well as Lithuania and Belorus. It is also worth remembering that 60% of the Jews in late 19th Century Riga had their roots a generation back in Courland. You may be surprised at what you find.

Cemetery Records and Photographs

We are tackling Cemetery records next and I will write more about this in the next Newsletter. Meanwhile if you have any cemetery records including photographs and I have not been in touch please contact me. In this context it is very pleasing to be able to announce that Arlene Beare is sponsoring the photographing and transcription of all headstones in the Jekabpils cemetery so that they can be made available on line and in the database. Paul Cheifitz has kindly donated his data and others who have allowed their lists to be used in the Newsletter have agreed to all the material to be searched on line. Few of the Jewish cemeteries have survived in Latvia. We hope that it will be possible to have a memorial which includes photographs plus transcriptions of existing stones that can be accessed shared by all of us on line. This site must be done with particular sensitivity so if any of you have design experience you are willing to share to work on this project please do contact me.

The Database Phase 2 & 3, June/July 2000. Further Coverage Growth: approximately 25-30,000 entries

Arlene Beare, the President of the Latvia SIGUK has continued to pursue her contacts in Riga. The wonderful result is that the final instalment of the Riga Jewish Families Lists from the late 19th Century have arrived. They are a wonderful Pesach gift to all of us. Arlene could never have completed this without help from both Malcolm Singer and Carmen Wiseman who have been unfailingly generous in giving their time to provide technical help getting these lists into shape for
the database. These lists will probably take about 4 weeks to process but we believe they will be available on line in late May or early June in plenty of time for the Conference in Salt Lake City. This is a mega list of approximately 12,000-15,000 names and is one that every member of the SIG has been longing to see. It will boost the database to 25-30,000 entries. That this has been accomplished in less than a year is truly remarkable. Can I also thank Charles Nam, Maria Krane and Kathy Wolfson for their contribution to transcribing the Vedomisti lists of those without lawful passes or permits.

Personal Lookups

I know it is frustrating to wait when possible important information about your families is so tantalisingly close but can we ask that you don't write with personal requests for look-ups from this material until we complete the compilation of the lists into the database. I calculate that something like 1,500 hours of volunteer labour has gone into creating the database to date. Frankly, there are just not any more spare hours in the day to deal with personal requests. The decision has been made to prioritise the database effort in the belief that that is the way to benefit the largest number of you in the quickest possible way. I know that you will understand and be patient just a little longer.

Dvinsk-Rezekne

Many of you have family ties to that great centre of Jewish learning and culture Dvinsk. The Dvinsk cemetery records are now being transcribed. This was a wonderful donation from the Dvinsk Jewish community to the SIG and Mike Getz has been the custodian of this material. The copies are now in Israel. We have hit a slight snag in that the size of the documents makes it difficult to scan or photocopy the originals so that the process of splitting the work has proved more complicated than we had anticipated. If any members live near the Omer Desert area, Israel and are able to assist in getting the documents to a larger town so that we can get more advanced technical support this will greatly assist in processing these precious records so that they will be available to us all.

We have begun to receive voter information from Dvinsk and Rezekne but there is more to come.

Finally, and this really is exciting - once the Riga lists are complete Arlene is turning her attention to family lists for Dvinsk. I know that everyone will join in thanking her for the time and personal effort.

Database? I don't have access to a Computer!

The opportunities opened up by the use of ever improving technology are just too important to be ignored. On the other hand we are sensitive to the fact that many of you do not have computers. We need feedback on these issues. My view is that the SIG is here to act as a focal point for preserving and sharing the Jewish heritage of Latvia. Some Jewishgen sponsored groups have gone over to being completely computer based. My own view is that we should try to keep to a middle ground. Those of you who do not have personal access to the Internet may be able to make arrangements for access from time to time via family or friends. More and more public libraries offer on line facilities for the Internet and there are also commercial ‘cyber cafes’. It may be that one aspect of our volunteer efforts could involve a ‘buddy system’ pairing those without internet capabilities with those who are prepared to assist. I don't have the answers to these questions but I do know that none of what we have achieved over the past 7 months would have been possible without using new technology. I hope that this is one of the things that can be explored at the conference in Salt Lake City where a new President of the Latvia SIG will be elected. We need to find a policy that will ensure that no one feels left out but also ensures that we are all able to share the gifts that only the computer and internet can bring. Your ideas please!

Volunteers

Several of you have come forward to volunteer and I have tried to contact each of you to say hello and to explain that we are trying to tackle the organisation of the various projects in a fairly structured way. The emphasis needs to be on completing things as well as starting them. The first projects we have tackled have required certain specific skills and we have started by organising projects with volunteers who expressed a willingness to work with particular types of data, for example the Voter’s Lists are in printed cyrillic script. The next phase will include some lists in ‘English’ and in the coming weeks I will be in touch with several more of you who have been waiting patiently. If for any reason you have not heard from me please accept my apologies and do try to reach me again. The scale of all
of this plus a major computer crash last December has caused a few glitches for which I hope will be forgiven.

It is an important part of our volunteer effort that everyone who volunteers feels supported in what they do. A number of offers have come in from individuals who would love to help but who do not have access to a computer or who have only very limited skills. No one could read these offers of help and not have been encouraged and touched by them. We are working hard to find a way for every single person to be involved and contribute in some way. That is part of the fun.

What we urgently require at the moment is more volunteers who have even limited computer skills and in particular language skills. By computer skills I mean being able to enter data into excel files. A template is provided and this is not difficult. We send material for extraction in the form of a scanned e-mail attachment. A volunteer then extracts the necessary information such as surnames, given names addresses, occupations and the like and enters the information in the appropriate fields in the template.

I am particularly keen to process the sort of material that you can read in Kathy Wolfson’s transcription from the Business and Town Directory for Courland 1912 [Friednickstadt] which hopefully will be published in the next issue. The originals are printed in Gothic German typeface. This looks a bit daunting at first but you do get used to it. You are not left on your own and we provide a ‘Skills’ package that includes samples to work on, an alphabet crib and other tips and tricks. A ‘donation’ of even a few hours of effort is worthwhile and makes a difference. Plus there is a wonderful feeling of doing something together that no single one of us alone could achieve.

I give my details at the end of the newsletter and please contact me if, as we say in England, you are prepared to have a go. We have over 600 pages of this material providing a town by town portrait of each of the communities of Courland crying out for databasing and I hope that Kathy’s efforts will inspire you as to what can be done.

When you start to combine information from 1912 Directory with the voters lists from 1907, the family lists from 1868 and 1871 and the material from the Russian Gazette (The Vedomosti), you begin to see the extraordinary contribution to the life of Latvia that the Jewish community made prior to its eventual destruction in 1941.

Report on the Herder/LDS film project

The Courland Resources Group have now received the films from the Herder Institute. These are the microfilms made in the Riga archives by the Baltic Germans in 1940/41 which were later copied by the Mormon Church and are available, in part, through their network of Family History Centres. Those of you who followed the debate about the purchase of these films will know that they involved a financial risk and that their purchase was controversial. The judgement of those who were prepared to take this risk has been fully vindicated. These films are a treasure chest of information. What is lacking is the map of how to use the material. Seven of the rolls are known to have identified Jewish material. The big surprise is the amount of Jewish material ‘hidden’ by which I mean previously unrecorded and unidentified on the so called ‘non Jewish rolls’. So far a full inventory has been carried out in respect of 31 of the 80 rolls of film. These are the so called ‘non Jewish rolls’. In fact they have well over 1,000 pages of additional Jewish material. We all owe a debt of gratitude to the vision of Paul Berkay, Martha Lev Zion, Abraham Lennhoff and all those who contributed financially to the acquisition of these films. They had the courage to back a hunch and it has paid off handsomely for all of us. I believe that these films have the potential to be one of the most important single resources for the Jewish history of Latvia. At the moment the painstaking work of making a master inventory of all Jewish material is now being carried out by the Courland Steering Committee. I estimate that over 1,000 hours of volunteer time have gone into the work on the Herder project and it continues. The Courland Study Group deserves our wholehearted and enthusiastic support for what they are doing with these films.

Herder Volunteers

For those of you interested in working on the Herder films we are about to reach the stage where volunteers can usefully take part. You will need access to an LDS family history centre for a few hours a week and be prepared to work on microfilms of fascinating documents that have not been worked with before. In other words to be involved with doing ‘real history’. These films are not for the faint hearted but if you like a challenge and are patient and accurate please contact me or Martha Lev Zion.
The Max Kaufmann Yizkor Book Project

I was very fortunate to be loaned a copy of Max Kaufmann’s book ‘Der Vernichtung Der Juden Lettlands’. This book contains over 1,000 names of individuals he remembers from the Riga Ghetto, or from life in the towns of Latvia prior to the Holocaust. The book consists of some 350 pages in German which is untranslated and unindexed. Maria Krane (USA) and Lorraine Bertelsen (Australia) have now databased the names in this book. Members of the Latvia SIG UK are now visually scanning the book to find each name and place entry with a view to marrying the name list database with the relevant page numbers so that the book can be searched. The long-term intention is that the index will be donated to the Yizkor project on Jewishgen and will eventually be translated. I am grateful for the loan of this book by Saul Issroff here in London. I would also like to mention all the members of our Latvia SIG UK who have taken on the scanning of these materials and their real ‘can do’ approach.

Much Much More

Believe me there is more, much, much more but I have far exceeded my space allowance in this newsletter. Mike Getz has asked me to do an update in each newsletter so that you can have a ‘blow by blow’ commentary on the various projects that are now moving forward. I hope you will be able to meet Bramie Lenhoff from the Courland Group in July in Salt Lake City when he will be speaking at the conference. Unfortunately I will not be able to be there but hope to meet you all in 2001 when London will be the venue.

Contact Details:
If you are able to help with any of the volunteer projects please contact me: Constance Whippman, 33 Dunmore Road, London SW20 8TN:
email CWhippman@aol.com
or Martha Lev Zion - martha@bgumail.bgu.ac.il
We would love to welcome you on board.

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20th International Conference on Jewish Genealogy
July 9-14, 2000
Salt Lake City, Utah
Home of the Family History Library.

The International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies (IAJGS) is putting on this conference.

If you have never done research at the Family History Library in SLC, you are in for a real treat. The Library has more Jewish records on microfilm that any other place in the world.

For information about the conference, visit our web site at http://iajgs.org/slcy2k visit it often as it is being updated every week.

Howard Margol, President, IAJGS HOMARGOL@aol.com