

Latvia SIG

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President's Report

Shalom Chaverim!

This is going to be the shortest president's message in the history of the Latvia SIG! I am very busy working on the organization of the International Conference of Jewish Genealogy to take place in Jerusalem this summer, which precludes me from writing at length.

I would like to encourage as many of you as possible to attend our meetings at the conference. Business at hand will be: by-laws, elections, projects, and your very valuable input. Our member Barbara Siegel complained that the meetings are always too rushed, so I requested back-to-back sessions, which hopefully will give us the time we need! The meeting of our SIG will take place on Sunday between 13:40 and 15:20. Our SIG luncheon will be on Monday [after we are all well acquainted from the meeting the day before!] at 12:30, so we can continue to schmooze.

Professor Dov Levin, editor of the *Pinkas Hakehillot Latvia*, will join us and he has told me that he is looking forward to the interaction with us Latvian descendents. Professor Levin is also giving one of the several lectures of particular interest to Jews of the Baltic states.

Please think of nominations for officers of our SIG. I would like to step down as president and I know that Mike Getz, our erstwhile treasurer, is also interested in stepping down. If you are interested in proposing someone, including yourself, to run for office of the SIG, kindly send your nominations by email to me at the email address below, or to Mike Getz <mgetz@erols.com>. Be sure to include the reasons why you think your nominee would be fitting for the job!

This year in Jerusalem!

Martha Levinson Lev-Zion, President

SIG Latvia

martha@bgumail.bgu.ac.il

Editor's Comments

With this final edition of the Latvia SIG newsletter before the IAGJS International Conference on

Jewish Genealogy coming up in Jerusalem in July, I'd like to thank all the contributors who have provided material for this publication over the past year. I can only hope that they and others continue to provide such interesting material in the coming membership year.

Personal stories of genealogy research and associated travel to Latvia continue to provide much of the material covered by this publication, and I hope that those of you who are planning such trips in the future take the time to document and report on those trips. As you can see from the articles in this issue, common threads in terms of historical events and places continually arise from the independent and personalized accounts of the authors.

In this issue I am happy to include an article by, I believe, the youngest-ever contributor to this newsletter. Natalie Schuck, fortunate that her great-grandmother immigrated to the United States from Riga prior to the Holocaust, presents a brief history of the events that led to the annihilation of the rest of the family in Latvia.

Eric Benjaminson also tells of the lives of two branches of his family; Jankel's, which immigrated to South Africa and then the United States, and Hirsch's, which stayed in Latvia. His is a moving story that unfolded after learning that his g-g-g-grandparents came from Goldingen and not Libau.

I am happy to include the second installment of Lavi Soloway's account of his trip to Latvia. In this issue Lavi chronicles his trip to Ribinishki, the shtetl of his great grandparents Sora and Zussman Soloway. An especially moving piece is his conversation with an elderly beekeeper in Ribinishki who actually witnessed the local fascists rounding up Jews and others who were later killed.

Dave Howard was fascinated by his great-aunt Bessie's story of how her twin sister Florence was saved from drowning in the Rezekne River when they were eight years old. Twenty-five years after he was told this story, Dave began a quest that led him to the spot where Florence almost drowned. I am happy to include his account

of that quest. While I have included a few photos provided by Dave, I strongly encourage you to go to the Horwitz family Web-site at: <http://horwitz.org> to see a remarkable site that could be a model for anyone interested in developing a family genealogy Web site.

Barry Shay, editor
barry.shay@ieee.org

Pesach in Latvia

Chabad Latvia always sends us news of holiday celebrations. Here is the one received for Pesach 2004 and submitted by Arlene Beare.

I would like to share with you a glimpse of the Pesach experience in Latvia this year. Lectures and private lessons started weeks before to help people prepare properly for the Holiday. Cafe L'chaim turned Pesachdik a few days earlier, to enable people to order Kosher for Passover food for their homes.

The kindergarten children made a model Seder for their families including poems, dance and song to make it all the more interesting. Hundreds of children had the chance to bake their own Matzos at the Model Matzah Bakery and learned much about the Holiday from a slide show and a Pesach computer game.

We arranged the purchase and shipping of five tons of Matzos which were sold by the community. We distributed another three tons, along with other Pesach necessities to the poor. Over 800 people were helped in Riga alone. Of course the needy in other towns were not forgotten either.

There were five public Sedarim in Riga this year. Three took place at the Chabad Center on Lacplesa; one of them, a special Seder for the Ohel Menachem Day School and their families. The students led the Seder to the delight and interest of the guests. We koshered the kitchen in the Synagogue and led the Seder there for another 130 persons. One more was done at home for 30 people who enjoyed a more meaningful, more intimate and especially inspiring Seder.

Six Yeshiva students arrived from the USA to

bring the Yom Tov spirit to neighboring cities of Latvia. The Jews of Yurmala and Daugavpils enjoyed the Sedarim and the chance to converse with and question knowledgeable people. A Sefer Torah was brought to Liepaja for the week and Minyanim and Shabbos meals were organized in addition to the Sedarim, to the delight of the community. The Holiday ended with a huge Moshiach Seuda which was joyously celebrated and lasted late into the night. People expressed their deep thanks as together they sang, "L'shana Habaa B'yerushalayim!"

Holocaust in Riga

by

Natalie Schuck

This report was written by Natalie Schuck for Ms. Bobbick's 8th-grade English class and was submitted by Natalie's grandfather Boris Rice, a member of the Latvia SIG.

Latvia is located in Eastern Europe next to Lithuania and Estonia. Riga is the capital of Latvia. It had been an independent country until the USSR annexed it in 1940. Riga was the center of Jewish life in Latvia.

My great-grandmother was from Riga. Her relatives had been in Latvia since at least the 1700's. The Jews had done well in Latvia even though there were some restrictions. Some of the Jews, who had a trade, could live in town. The others lived in the "Pale of the Settlement." These areas were away from the Gentiles. Many of the Latvians were Germanic and hated the Jews. When Germany invaded Latvia, they got to express their hatred of the Jews by killing them.

Before WWII, about 94,000 Jews lived in territories of Latvia (Press 25). The Jews had it good before WWII. Even though they lived in the bad part of the city, they still had opportunities. Riga was the capital of Latvia. Riga held 44,000 Jews that made up 11% of the city's population. (Steinmanis 179) They had Hebrew schools and Jews even were in the City council of Riga. In July 1941, the Germans took over.

My great-grandmother lived in the Jewish quarter of Riga. She married an American and moved to

Houston in the 1920's. However her sisters and brothers and other relatives lived on Maskavas Street on the edge of the Jewish Quarter at the time of the German invasion.

In 1941 the Germans came to Latvia. After six months in Latvia, the Germans had killed around 91,000 Jews. Latvian police registered and counted the Jews. They started killing the Jews before the Germans even asked them to. They would go into an apartment building and kill the people. Sometimes they would drag them into the Rumbula Forest and shoot them. Only two people who went to the Rumbula Forest escaped.

The grave at Rumbula forest had 25,000 Jews from the Latvian Ghetto. (Steinmanis 129) After they wiped out the population of the Ghetto they brought 16,000 Jews from the surrounding countries. They were mostly all killed or worked to death in the Salapils Concentration Camp. The Latvian Jews felt they were being killed to give special treatment to the German Jews being resettled into the Ghetto. However, they were all killed. (Michelson 110)

The Germans wanted to establish a ghetto in Latvia because they didn't want to kill everyone right away. Most of the skilled jobs were done by Jews. (Steinmanis 189) The Germans wanted to take all their possessions and get free labor. The people in the Riga Ghetto tried to help each other. There was the "big" ghetto where German Jews lived, and there was a "small" ghetto where the Latvians lived. Everyone lost their rights and had to work as slaves. Latvians and Germans would hit and throw stuff at the Jews whenever they felt like it. Twenty-nine thousand people were squeezed into sixteen blocks of the Maskavas suburb where only 13,000 had lived before. Some Latvians were sent to concentration camps. The women were not allowed to have babies in the ghettos. The Germans killed the babies and in the Riga Ghetto they poisoned them. (Steinmanis 137)

There was some resistance in Riga by the Jews. The Jewish men smuggled in weapons from outside of the Ghetto and practiced shooting, in hopes that some day they could take on the Germans. Many of their families had already been

killed and they felt like they had nothing to lose. They wanted to stand up and take some Germans with them when they died. Most of them were killed but they took some Germans with them.

In 1944 the Germans knew they were going to lose the war. They tried to cover up the evidence of mass murder. In the Rumbula Forest, they opened the graves and burned the bodies. They then killed thousands of Jews that were in the concentration camps. (Steinmanis 135) On October 13, 1944, the Soviet Army liberated Riga. Almost all of Riga's Jews had been murdered by the Nazis. About one thousand Latvian Jews survived the concentration camps. Most of them did not want to go back to Latvia; instead they went to Israel. There were several hundred Jews that managed to survive in Riga. There were several Latvians who risked their lives to save the Jews. Jan Lipke helped save several dozen Jews by helping them hide. Hiding and saving Jews during World War II required great bravery and intelligence. (Steinmanis 138)

Bruno Rozentals hid thirty-six Jews beneath a barn with stairs concealed under a stove. He even built beds in the hideaway. The State of Israel has decorated about twenty-five Latvians and Lithuanians for saving Jews, designating them as Righteous Among Nations (Steinmanis 140), Israel's highest honor for non-Jews.

In 1944, my great-grandmother received a censored letter saying that her whole family had been killed in Riga. The family had been killed by the Latvians as soon as the Germans arrived. My relatives in other parts of Latvia were killed by the Latvians and Germans. However, the Germans didn't win, because my family and I are still here today.

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Unexpected Family Avenues from Latvia by **Eric Benjaminson**

Like so many others, over the last few years, I have with a certain level of obsessiveness been chasing down our family roots. My paternal side are Benjaminsohns from Courland in Latvia, where we originated in Goldingen (present-day Kuldiga), at least as far back as I can trace. My family search has led me to a number of fascinating archival sources, trips to a number of our familial ancestral locations, and meetings with hitherto unknown relatives. Mike Getz suggested that some of what I had uncovered might be of wider interest to this group that has been of so much help to me over the years, and thus this short article.

As a second-generation American, I knew by heart some of the family legends: my g-grandfather Bernhard had been a violinist and bandleader who had moved from Courland to South Africa; his wife was named Betty; my grandfather Morris, a plumber not without musical talents, had been born there; and my father Albert was the first Benjaminson to be born in the U.S. I knew little more than that in the beginning. I also made the wildly erroneous assumption that no records would be available in Europe because of the destruction of the Shoah. As my research progressed, I found that in some of these beliefs I was quite close to "truth," and in others I was completely mistaken. In the course of this research, I also discovered a few unique sub-histories that may be worth sharing.

My research began most profitably by moving from recent times to the past. Interviews with relatives and immigration records from the Na-

tional Archives yielded the fact that my grandfather and his parents had come to New York in 1907 from South Africa, and that the parents had originated in Libau, Courland, Latvia. My father has my g-grandfather's diaries from his days as the leader of the Police Band in Port Elizabeth in the Cape Province of South Africa, and I



The house on Ventspils iela in Goldingen where my g-grandfather was born.

recalled my grandfather talking about the long ocean voyage from South Africa via England to New York. Yet further back than my g-grandfather in time, the tracks became much more difficult to follow. No record could I find of any Benjaminsohn in Libau in any of the standard databases or books. The first breakthrough came from the work of Aleksandrs Feigmanis, a Jewish genealogist and researcher working in Riga, Latvia who I hired to help me through this brick wall. He was skilled enough to discover, in the 1871 Jewish family lists from Goldingen in Courland, a list of Benjaminsohns who turned out to be my g-g-g-grandparents, Benjamin and Feige Benjaminsohn. Their son Moses, born in 1846, was Bernhard's father. From that hole in the dike (Goldingen rather than Libau being our shtetl), a flood of information was released.

Over a period of about two years, I've corresponded with the very helpful archivists at the Latvian Historical Archives in Riga (especially Rita Bogdanova, Jelena Polovceva and Irina Veinberga); traveled to the Family History Center at Salt Lake City; was able to travel to Riga, Kuldiga (present-day Goldingen) and Aizpute (present-day Hasenpoth); and did a number of

miscellaneous other bits of research which has yielded what to me is a fascinating bit of the past both of my family and in general. For the purposes of this brief article, allow me to touch on a couple of stories which may have wider interest.

The Sad Fate of Those Left Behind

A lucky find in Salt Lake City, in the 1811 Jewish census from Goldingen, showed that Benjamin's father Jankel had a brother named Hirsch. (In fact, Jankel born in 1777 and his brother Hirsch born a few years earlier are the earliest members of the family that I've been able to identify, given the lack of surnames in the previous generation.) For reasons impossible to explain, most of the "emigrants" in our family came from Jankel's line and most of Hirsch's descendants stayed in Latvia, with tragic results. As far as I



My g-grandfather (seated in middle with trombone) and my grandfather (the little boy on the left) with the Police Band in Port Elizabeth, South Africa, circa 1905.

can determine, all of Jankel's descendants had immigrated to South Africa or the U.S. by 1920 and thus avoided the Shoah; at least 27 of Hirsch's descendants were killed by the Nazis in massacres in Riga, Libau or Hasenpoth.

The Permanence of Violins

Music has been an historical constant in the Benjaminson family. Benjamin Jankel was a musician and a violinist in Goldingen. His son Moses, my g-g-grandfather, was the leader of one of the Russian military bands in Libau; Moses' nephew Abraham Jacob was a violinist, and Moses' son Bernhard, my g-grandfather, was a professional bandleader and violinist who led the Port Elizabeth Police Band in South Africa and later led a small musical group in New York City that occa-

sionally played in Central Park's bandstand. Bernhard's son Morris was not a professional, but played the piano and had a wonderful bass singing voice, and was very proud of having once cut a vocal track on a record. The musical genes seem to have skipped my father and myself, but I've been intrigued to find that my daughter Molly, now aged 10, on her own volition several years ago asked to learn the violin and has been a self-disciplined student of that instrument ever since.

Military Service for An Unappreciative Nation

During the course of research, a particularly interesting story from Latvia came to light. Hirsch's g-g-grandson was Joseph Benjaminsohn, who was born in Hasenpoth (present-day Aizpute) in Courland in 1900. Because of the rapid German advance into the Hasenpoth area during the First World War, Jews of Hasenpoth were not forced to join the Russian-ordered evacuation of Courland, which was itself based on suspicion that Latvian Jews (with their German and Yiddish-language backgrounds and sympathies) would form a fifth column for the German Army. This evacuation forcibly removed about 40,000 Latvian Jews (of a total Jewish population of approx. 170,000) deep into Russia proper. After the Armistice, Latvia was declared an independent Republic on November 18, 1918. Between 1919 and 1920, the newly formed Latvian Army fought its War of Independence against both the Bolshevik Red Army and the White Guards Army led by Bermont-Avalov and von der Goltz. More than 1000 Jewish citizens fought for Latvia. One of them was Joseph, who was recruited into the 10th Aizpute Infantry Regiment on October 7, 1919 and participated in the battles for the defense of Libau against the White Guards of General Bermont-Avalov from November 4-14 of that year. Joseph remained in the Army until January 1922, and was awarded the Medal of the Liberation of Latvia.

After the war, Joseph moved to Libau and in 1931 married Esfir-Lea Stein in the Synagogue in Libau. In 1932, their daughter Ruth was born and in 1933 they moved to Riga where Joseph became an interior designer and decorator with his own business and joined the "Society of Jewish Liberators of Latvia."



Joseph's Archived Passport Photo from 1927
(Courtesy of Latvian Historical Archives)

His military service in the end was not enough to gain the assistance of any of his non-Jewish former colleagues during the Nazi occupation. In September 1941, he and his family were “struck off the Riga house registers” and moved to the Riga Ghetto. Neither he nor Esfir-Lea nor Ruth ever re-emerged.

A Separate South African Branch

I was lucky enough to travel for work reasons to South Africa recently, and I made a point of spending a weekend in Port Elizabeth to look up my family connections. At the shul in PE, there is a lovely little Museum commemorating the Jewish history of that city, including photos of my grandfather's band and the name of several of my great aunts on the synagogue's contributors lists. I also was able to say kaddish at the grave of Bernhard's mother, my g-g-grandmother Beila Benjaminsohn, buried in PE. Bernhard and his sisters, all of whom had immigrated to South Africa, brought Beila down from Latvia to help with their children and businesses after Beila's husband Moses had died in Libau.

Bernhard and his wife Betty (nee Nurick) were among the only Benjaminsohns to leave South Africa for the U.S. Most of the family had left Libau between 1893 and 1899, but after having been in South Africa for 13 years, Bernhard went on to New York in 1907. I've often wondered what compelled him to pick up and make a diffi-

cult and risky move a second time, but that answer will remain hidden (unless it was as simple as that he got tired of his siblings and in-laws!).



The Synagogue in Port Elizabeth, South Africa dating from 1900

I've found it fascinating to gradually discover all of my many relatives who have spent their lives in South Africa. For a variety of reasons, my American-raised relatives were largely unaware of their South African cousins, and it is a comforting feeling to be playing a part in reacquainting some of the two continental sides of the family to each other.

This “essay” aims to give all of you some stories of my research and family that may resonate with other researchers of Latvian Jews. It is a small thing for me to do for many of you who have written similar articles that I've found of great interest, and especially those of you (Mike, Constance, Martha, Betsy, Rita and more – you know who you are!) who have helped me so much to find what has been found. I would welcome hearing from anyone who would like more information and/or who would like more details of my research methods.

Eric Benjaminson is currently the Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy in Burkina Faso, West Africa. He has been in the U.S. Diplomatic service for 22 years and has been researching his family history for some time less than that. He is specifically looking for information on the Benjaminsohn family of Hasenpoth, Goldingen, and Libau,; the Nurick family of Sabile, Tukums and

Libau; the Mintus family of Warta, Poland; and the Galinson family of Slutsk, Belarus. Eric can be reached by e-mail at: oregon81@yahoo.com

Looking for Nightingales

by
Lavi Soloway

On a frigid, damp October day I found myself in Ribinishki surrounded by ghosts.

Leaving the warmth of my hired car, I crossed a paved two-lane road, empty except for evidence that a horse had recently passed by, and stepped onto the uneven ground of a farmer's property. Snow drifted down from the sky and swirled around us. A light dusting remaining on the frozen ground. The wind gusted.

I followed my Latvian guide and interpreter, Aleksander Feigmanis, as he made his way alongside a wooden house. I expected to hear the voice of a bewildered or angry homeowner at any second. Instead I found myself staring into a well. "Look, it is a *gooose*," Aleksander said, satisfied that he had found the correct English word. He pointed to the primitive contraption suspended above the well. A metal bucket dangled from a twenty-foot long wooden pole which was counterweighted at the other end. Demonstrating its function, Aleksander slowly lowered the bucket. A thud echoed up each time the bucket bumped into the stone wall on its way down. Aleksander filled the bucket and raised it effortlessly as the weighted end of the goose's neck sank. When the bucket re-appeared it was filled with ice-cold water.

Predictably, my arrival in Ribinishki ("Riebini" as it is known to its current inhabitants) was an emotional one. Thus far, this visit to Latvia had taken me to nearby Rezekne and Varaklani, but it was Ribinishki on which my sights had been set for more than a decade.

One hundred years ago and a world away, my grandfather Benjamin Soloway¹ was born in this shtetl. One of thirteen children, he was part of a large extended family that comprised a significant proportion of the 400 Jews of Ribinishki in the first decades of the twentieth century. The world

my grandfather left behind was destroyed forever in August 1941, when the Nazis and their Latvian collaborators killed the remaining Jews of Ribinishki.

By the time he died ten years ago at the age of ninety-two, my grandfather had spent seventy years in Canada. Although he rarely spoke about the "old country," it seemed to me that the shtetl never left him. It was my curiosity about his origins that had brought me here.

My great-grandparents, Chaya Sora (Orlean) and Chaim Zussman Soloway lived in this unforgiving part of the Pale of Settlement where the modern day borders of Belarus, Lithuania and Latvia meet. Today it is located in the Latgale region of Latvia, a pastoral setting known for its many lakes. Like it was a century ago, this area is still very poor.

Zussman or Zuska, as he was familiarly known, lived from 1855 until the 1920s. He worked as a shoemaker, and probably as a peddler. His wife, Sora belonged to the large Orlean family, and was blessed with long life and fertility. Born in 1862, Sora is known to have given birth to 13 children between 1881 and 1904. Until her death in the 1930s, Sora lived with her son Avrum and was cared for by relatives, including her sister-in-law, Beile, and her niece, Nechama, who lived nearby.

With a small piece of land next to their straw-covered wooden house and a few milk cows, Zussman and Sora sustained their growing family. They were devoutly religious and lived in this insular world with dozens of cousins, aunts and uncles as neighbors. There were frequent rumblings of anti-Semitism and no protection from the abusive authorities, whether Russian or Latvian. Conditions were so difficult that the Soloway children, like so many others of their generation, looked elsewhere to find a means of support almost as soon as they could.

Sora and Zuska's first born was a determined daughter named Eerlah. She married a man from a neighboring shtetl around 1900 and they soon joined the great wave of immigration, first to London's crowded East End and then to Toronto. Slowly, as they settled in they sent money to

bring over their siblings. Over the next twenty years, three other Soloway siblings would join them in Toronto, including my grandfather, and two of his sisters, Basya and Esther. (In a story that is doubtless familiar to many readers, my grandfather emigrated using the identity documents of his older brother Avrum to escape mandatory military service. His sister Basya traveled to Liverpool, where she remained for several months until an eye infection healed. This infection kept her from boarding the ship she was originally expected to travel on, The Titanic.) The remaining nine children of Sora and Zuska Soloway did not leave Latvia. All of them were killed along with their families².

As Aleksander and I stepped away from the well, I noticed that an older man with a stocky build had emerged from the adjacent house. Wearing a fur hat and gray coat that appeared to have been donned in a hurry, he looked like a man accustomed to hard manual labor and not prepared to greet guests. As he drew nearer I could see his face clearly. He wore large plastic framed glasses, a style reminiscent of the 1970s. The lenses were thick and smudged. He looked at us curiously and intently. A conversation ensued in Russian. Aleksander explained to him who I was and why we had come. I studied his face for a change of attitude. I knew Aleksander was telling him that my grandfather was from this place and that my family had been killed here. I knew he was asking him to point out where the houses of the Jews are located. The man's expression changed. He looked interested and eager to help us in our quest.

Standing on the road he began to explain where the Jews had lived, gesturing in all directions. "This was the main road from Rezekne to Dvinsk and then on to Vilna, in those days...." He said proudly, pointing south. "The Jews built this road." He recalled that the road was once cobbled and the wooden wheels of the wagons would make an awful noise, bouncing up and down as the horses pulled them over the uneven surface. He became more animated as he approximated the sound of wooden wheels banging on the stones, his grin revealing missing teeth.

He pointed at tin roofed houses and explained

that before the war the houses were covered with straw, but in the Soviet time that changed. He told us that he was a child in the 1930s but he remembered the Jews of Ribinishki and what happened to them. It quickly became apparent that he was relishing this chance encounter. He wanted to tell us what he remembered and needed only a little coaxing. He seemed instinctively suspicious of us, strangers asking questions, but concluded for some reason that he could trust us. He told us back in those days that the Latvians hated the Jews and that the Russians were afraid that they would be their next targets. He told us that those were horrible times that he cannot forget. I handed him my electronic "Palm Pilot" and showed him a digital photo of my great grandparents, which he gazed at for a long time. Then, pointing at my video camera, he asked Aleksander, "What is that?"

Somehow, we managed to move the conversation to the specific issue of the murder of the Jews in 1941. "Do you know where the Jews were killed?" we asked him. As we waited for him to respond, we were momentarily distracted by an approaching sound coming from behind us. As though on cue from the 19th century, a horse-drawn wagon noisily rolled past us. Precariously seated atop a pile of logs, a man and his son, warmly bundled up in wool coats, stared down at us. Awkwardly, I juggled my cameras to photograph them.

While I tried to do the impossible, to document the past and the present simultaneously, the conversation continued. The man began to explain that after the German invasion the Jews were taken to the forest and killed there, pointing beyond the town limits. We asked him if he would take us to that place and he considered a request for moment and then agreed. He came with us in our car for a ride of only several minutes, going northbound on the road in the direction that we had come. Soon he instructed the driver to turn left into the forest where a barely visible parting of the trees a path wide enough for cars to enter became apparent. No marker signified the importance of the location, though the farmer explained that one had once stood but it was no longer. This is the way things happen here, he offered.

As the path wound for a few hundred meters away from the road, a clearing came into view. There among the hundred-foot tall pine trees was a black monument inscribed in Russian memorializing the killing of the Jews of Ribinishki. The monument stood alone in the forest at the end of a long rectangular mass grave. I had arrived at last at the place where my grandfather's beloved brothers and sisters and their husbands and wives and young children lived their last frightening moments. Although I had always known their fate, I felt an overwhelming obligation to stare it right in the eye, to understand and feel its meaning. I had brought myself to this place to put an end to the abstraction, to understand such words as extermination, murder, genocide. I looked up to the top of the pine trees and imagined what horror they had witnessed.³



Mass Grave in Forest

Here I stood in the place where sixty-two years before my grandfather's brother Avrum, his wife, Bluma, and their children, Sara, Zelda, Noema, and Zussman, and my grandfather's sister Krayne and her husband Yechezkel and their children, Ester, Tuvya, and Zussman had been murdered by gunshot. No one from my family had ever come to this place since. I said Kaddish.⁴

Standing on the side of the grave, I asked Aleksander to ask the man what had happened in 1941. I tried to videotape his answer, but as he contemplated his words his eyes misted up and he walked away from the camera's gaze. I recorded what he said focusing on the trees in the distance. He described the coming Nazi fascism as giving cover to those Latvians that harbored hatred of

the Jews. Once the Nazis indicated their desire to rid their conquered territories of Jews certain Latvians including local inhabitants sprung into action willingly. "The Jews were brought here and shot like dogs," he said with a mixture of disgust and sadness. He confirmed what I knew, that the killers were local Latvians. He told us that Jewish families were his neighbors and his parents would bring a sheep for sale to a Jewish family or even borrow money in case of a tragedy like a fire burning down a house. The relations were good, he emphasized, despite what followed.

We departed to return our impromptu guide to his house. We thanked him profusely for his help and continued on our way to find the Jewish homes of Ribinishki.

Down the road we found "Bolshaya Dakarskaya" which according to my research was the address of several homes of the Orlean and Soloway families. There they were, seemingly untouched for a hundred years, small weather beaten single storey wooden houses. I stood next to clump of birch trees and photographed the houses. I noticed behind me one or two simple brick buildings, obviously constructed in recent decades. To say that they seemed out of place was an understatement. One appeared to be an apartment house that was three stories tall.

I decided to make my way over to a man and his son who were plowing the land behind their house about 200 feet from where I stood. More accurately, a tired and very discouraged looking nag was pulling a heavy iron plow through damp earth that resembled clay more than soil. Barely visible, a light snow lay like a frosting on the part of the land they had not yet turned. A teenage boy dressed in a bright blue nylon jacket, tugged on the reins from the front, while his father held the handles of this plow and guided it through the muck wearing rubber boots. They looked exhausted and willing to take a break to answer some questions. I photographed them as they paused momentarily.

The father pointed in the direction of the spot where I had just stood near the birch trees. He smiled as he told us that until the 1970s the building that was once a synagogue had stood there. I

concluded that this cluster of little wooden houses near the spot where the synagogue was located were most likely the houses of my ancestors. The father, son and horse continued their hard work even as we still stood there watching. I wondered if I was standing on the ground from which my great-grandparents once grew cabbage and flax?



Possible Home of My Ancestors in Ribinishki

We left our new friends to their plowing and continued onward. After wandering casually onto a few other properties in the hopes of befriending other residents, we hit pay dirt. A man who appeared to be in his late sixties or perhaps seventy came out to see why his German Sheppard was barking with such urgency. He found us looking around his property. Tall haystacks loomed precariously above the ground on small wooden stands. Several large wooden structures surrounded his modest home. One was clearly a barn, but the other seemed to be another house. Next to it was a small structure, similar to a clubhouse that young boys might have built in an American suburban backyard. I learned that this small structure was a bathhouse, but that it had been abandoned for a deluxe “modern” successor that was wired for electricity, had an antechamber where the bathers could sit and relax and read. The interior was simple: hot coals heated large vats or buckets of water, which allowed individuals to bathe and keep warm doing it. There was certainly no plumbing or heated water in these houses.

I learned a lot about this bathhouse from its owner who was extremely proud of it. Like the first man we met that day, he too was Russian and happy to have visitors. He explained that his two sons had helped him build this impressive

structure. He showed me a photograph of them as young men dressed in Soviet Air Force uniforms. The man’s face had deep lines and his hair was gray. He dressed in messy clothes as though he had been working all day on the farm. His head was covered by an ill-fitting hat. He had striking light blue eyes and a face that betrayed deep sadness. I got the sense that this man was lonely and widowed. As we talked, standing in the yard next to his still barking dog, he pointed to the many small reddish wooden structures that circled the area and explained that they were bee hives that he kept for honey. Roosters and hens noisily strutted around, as he offered to show us the barn. I couldn’t resist. As soon as the barn door opened the smell of cow manure, animal sweat and damp hay filled my nostrils. Three exceptionally large and fat cows stood amidst a hay-covered floor. Their warmth immediately fogged my camera lens. It was like a scene from *Fiddler on the Roof*.

We asked the beekeeper about the Jews of Ribinishki and he explained eagerly that when he was a young boy he lived not far from the village and his parents would have Jews as guests in their home. He grew quiet as he answered our tentative questions about the war. He said that he was too young to remember anyone specifically but, shaking his head, he offered that he did remember when all the Jews were killed. He recalled hearing the story that one family---a mother, father and daughter---had tried to escape but were caught and killed. He then told us that when the Nazis came the local fascists started rounding people up, and they did not only target Jews. He said anyone who had the “wrong” look about them could be arrested as Soviet sympathizers, even if they had no political involvement. Growing sad, he told that his father was taken to the jail in Rezekne where he was burned with the other prisoners. He looked down at the ground as he stated matter-of-factly that his mother was left alone and small children had to grow up “without a father.”

The beekeeper beckoned us to follow him into his home. Inside, the structure was damp, dark and in bad shape. The furniture and décor was old. A large radio that looked several decades old rested on a table next to a sofa in the front room. Without missing a beat, he showed off two pelts of

animals I couldn't identify that he said he had killed while hunting deer. I was glad when he put them away. In the small kitchen there was a gas stove and a lot of old tin pots. Here the honey was made. Our host offered us some and I gladly accepted. With his large, misshapen hand he scooped out spoonfuls of honey from a pot and filled a jar for me. Honey from Ribinishki, I thought to myself. I offered to pay him for it, but he refused.

Aleksander and I bid farewell to the beekeeper. We had been with him for what seemed like an hour, and we did not want to overstay our welcome. Besides, we wanted to visit the Ribinishki cemetery and then on to Preili before it got dark.

Located in the woods on the southwest edge of the shtetl, the cemetery is hard to see from the road and thus is easy to miss. A crumbling gray brick arch that was once part of the gate is now the only clue to its location. Venturing in from the arch and stepping on soft mounds of earth that sink under foot, I could see hundreds of headstones that fill the space between the trees. These stones contained on them the last, best evidence that a living, breathing Jewish community was once here. Most were partially submerged in the ground, while others leaned as if in repose. Sadly, many have eroded to the point where no words were legible. But others were clear, and I was surprised to find familiar names, Sklar, Zaltokrilov and Zangwill. The years on the stones that I could read spanned about forty years before the Holocaust.



Ribinishki Jewish Cemetery

I thought to myself, "Did the trees know these graves were here?" Some of them have surely

grown to maturity long after the last burial took place. I noticed one headstone wedged tightly between the trunks of two trees.

Excited to have found generations of Ribinishki's inhabitants, I felt for a moment as though they were with me. I raced to read the messages left behind, dear mothers, daughters, wives, sons, husbands, fathers.... There was not enough time to read every tombstone and it was growing dark. I started to photograph them, but many were buried by dirt and brush. I imagined a group of the mourners passing through these trees to lay a loved one to rest, saying their prayers at graveside. Here the generations were dutifully laid side by side and then abandoned forever.

I knew my great-grandparents Sora and Zussman Soloway were buried here, but I could not find their graves. I said Kaddish, mostly to console myself. I wanted to believe they would be remembered, but looking out at the *matzevot*, the hundreds of names I could not even read, I felt overwhelmed by the sense of what was lost.

A few hours after arriving in Ribinishki, it was time for me to leave. We got into the car and drove on a short distance to Preili. There we visited the cemetery and saw a small store that occupied the building that had once been a synagogue.



Sora and Zussman Soloway

We ate a late lunch with our driver, Igors, and talked about our plan to visit Daugavpils (Dvinsk) the next day. I felt exhausted and ready to take a break from touring. I needed time to digest everything I had seen. I looked forward to returning to my hotel in Rezekne for a good night's sleep.

End Notes:

1. Soloway translates in Russian as a singing bird, a Nightingale.
2. Or so I believed last October. After communicating with distant "Orlean" cousins around the world, the culmination of a ten-year genealogical quest brought me to a family reunion in Israel in December. There I met Nechama, who as a young girl had cared for her elderly aunt Sora, my great-grandmother. I also learned for the first time of the identity of a younger sister of my grandfather who had been previously unknown to me. While she and her husband were killed in Rezekne, I learned that one of her sons had somehow survived the Riga Ghetto and Nazi concentration camps. In extremely poor health he managed miraculously to survive liberation (he told me that the few alive with him at liberation died soon after of disease) and eventually managed to gain passage to Israel. In January of this year I made telephone contact with him, the only member of the Soloway family of Ribinishki to have survived the war. It was a conversation I shall never forget. I had found a Nightingale.
3. Most of the information I discovered from the transcripts of war crimes trials held in 1965 in Riga by the Soviet government. According to the witnesses, the men responsible were Latvian police and members of the fascist Aizargi who rounded up 381 Jews in Ribinishki, crammed them into a synagogue and then brought them to this place to be shot.
4. One of those sentenced to death in absentia for war crimes in Ribinishki was a Latvian police chief named Haralds Puntulis. He escaped prosecution by moving to Canada after the war. I was saddened to learn that Puntulis, the man apparently responsible for the murder of the Jews of Ribinishki, lived in Toronto until his death in the 1980s not far from the house in which I grew up.

A Photo Leads to a Visit to Latvia

by
Dave Howard (Nee Horwitz)

(You can see the photos of all the places mentioned at: <http://horwitzfam.org>)

Splash! An old man who had lost his footing had just pushed eight year-old Florence into the

Rēzekne River. The ice-cold water was about to sweep her away.

Terrified, Florence's twin sister Bessie called out, "Save her, save her!"

A man jumped in and pulled out a half-frozen Florence. They were all part of a group of people washing their clothing. Someone from the group quickly removed Florence's wet things and tried to dry her. They asked Bessie to take off her warm dry clothing and give it to Florence. Bessie was sure she would freeze to death herself before she reached home up the street from the river.

Eighty three year-old Bessie was reflecting on memories of her "home town," the city that is today Rēzekne, Latvia; the city she had left forever when she was about thirteen. Nearly losing her twin sister and then nearly freezing to death was something she would never forget.



Notte Horwitz in Russian Army Uniform

Two of Bessie's older brothers, Abe and Notte, were identical twins. They had both served in the Russian Army. Abe had returned safely, but Notte had been sent off to fight Japan. Her father would look grievously at the red sky in the evening and say it was Notte's blood that had been spilled.

On another cold day Bessie went out to the backyard towards the "barn;" she thought she saw Abe and called out, "Abe."

The reply was, "No I'm Notte."

There were changes in Bessie's family as well. She was so surprised! She thought she was talking to a dead man. She passed out in the snow.

In 1905 unsettling political events were boiling up to the surface in this region of the world. Even an otherwise sleepy country village and safe haven for Jews was facing big changes.

Her mother was her father's second wife to die. Henech Hirsh Horwitz was getting to be an old man with thirteen children. He married again. This third wife had children of her own. Bessie's new mother was focused on caring for her children more than the family that came with her new husband.

By 1908 the younger children, left behind with their aging father and stepmother, were anxious to join their older brothers who had already decided to go to America.

By 1910, eleven of Henech Hirsh's children, including Bessie, were in Chicago. They never again saw the members of their family that stayed in Europe including their father, their sister Sara, or Notte, their war hero. Later in life Bessie could barely remember her father. She remembered that he had been in the timber business and that at one time he and his brothers lived in Moscow. Sara married and raised her family in Europe. Notte, moved to Riga, Latvia, married, had a son and owned a pharmacy.

Bessie's brother and Notte's twin, Abe, was my grandfather. He died in 1946, when I was just three years old. His son Harry, my father, died in 1974. By 1979 Bessie was the only surviving family member of my grandfather's generation. Her brothers and sisters were dead; her nieces and nephews, once part of a large extended family, were living all over the country.

I visited with my great-aunt Bessie in the spring of 1979 at her home in Los Angeles. She shared these and other stories with me. She "loaned" me photos of Henech Hirsch and Notte in his Russian Army uniform. She passed away in her sleep just a few weeks after our visit. She was the last connection our family had with a city that had be-

come a fuzzy memory even for her.

In 1979 her stories were like the transmissions from the Mars Lander now, very interesting but about a place I would never be able to visit in my life. I typed up my notes and filed them with the photos.

Bessie's stories and her photos were lost in my files for years. About a year ago I happened to find my file on Aunt Bessie. I found the photos and remembered the "loan." I had not talked to anyone in my father's family for years. I decided to call Bessie's daughters to see if they wanted the pictures I borrowed nearly twenty-five years before. Bessie's daughters were hard to find alive. It was clear a family that was very close knit was now unraveled. We did not know where they were and we no longer knew each other.

That call started a family effort to find all the living descendants of Henech Hirsh Horwitz. As we have worked to find each other here in America, it became clear that we should find out what happened to our family in Europe and what is our connection to others who lived in the same village.

My third cousin, Gail, had a photo copy of a note Bessie had written saying that the family hometown was Rhezetsa (sic), Latvia in the Wittebski Gubyierna (sic) and the street they lived on was named Devaronsky (sic). After studying some old maps it became clear that she was saying Rezhitsa in Vitebsk Gubernia.

I am fortunate to be a partner in one of the multi-national CPA firms (Deloitte) and my friends in the Riga office were very helpful. They explained that the cities in Latvia have had many different names over the years not to mention political districts and even countries. Additionally, the names of the streets have changed. The city of Rezhitsa of the Vitebsk Gubernia is today the city of Rēzekne, Latvia. Our family street is now Barona iela.

Armed with this information I set off on my trip to Latvia. My friends in Riga booked me into the beautiful and elegant Grand Palace Hotel in the old walking district of Riga. In connection with

one of my business trips to London, I used twenty thousand frequent flier miles and took the three-hour British Airlines flight from London to Riga.

Now it is 2003 and I am in Latvia – the land of my father’s father – the country where Florence went splash. To get here was the easy part; the real challenge is: How do I, after more than 100 years, raised in a land thousands of miles away, make a moment that was real to Bessie real for me? How do I leap back in time and distance, bring back another’s memory, make it mine and then share it with my living family?

My first stop was the Deloitte office in Riga. My friend, Igor, was very kind and helpful. He arranged for a driver to take me to Rēzekne the next day. This is a three and a half hour drive and about 300 miles round trip.

Igor took me to lunch and explained that Riga is an important sea port and is located on the banks of the Daugava River just before it enters the Baltic Sea. For centuries the Latvians would cut the inland timber and float it down the Daugava where it would be put on British ships and carried to England and France. The old Jewish district in Riga is named Moscow. Moscow is right along the bank of the river. It was where the Jewish lumberjacks would marshal the floating logs and prepare them for export to England and France.

Apparently this was the Moscow that Bessie’s father had been to and not to the capital of Russia.

After my friend bought me lunch in Riga he sent me off to the “Jews in Latvia Museum” and to met Aleksander Feigmanis. Aleksander is a frequent contributor to the Latvia SIG and is a charming young man with great enthusiasm for his work. He gave me a private tour of the museum. He speaks fine English and told me what I was looking at. They had a very nice publication on the history of the Jews in Latvia, in English, that I purchased for about five dollars.

The fact that Aleks can deal with Latvian, Russian, Hebrew, German, Yiddish, English and who knows how many other languages was a tremendous advantage. Furthermore, he is born and raised in Latvia and is Jewish. He is quite familiar

with genealogical research for the entire region including what is now Lithuania and Belarus.

I told him I was going to visit Rēzekne the next day. In exchange for a very fair fee he offered to go with me as a guide for the long day trip. We left the next day at about eight in the morning and returned to Riga that evening at about ten o’clock. Aleksander really made the trip worthwhile for me. (Aleksander can be reached by email at: aleksngen@lycos.com or aleksngen@mailcity.com)

We drove through miles and miles of open countryside passing an occasional little town until we arrived at Rēzekne. Except for the ruins of an old 13th century castle, Rēzekne is like a midwestern town in the United States fifty to seventy years ago. It has wide streets with housing and farming interspersed and a lazy river running through the middle of town. The bigger old buildings have been destroyed in this war-ravaged area. The few older brick buildings show the healed wounds from war damage. There are Soviet-era box shaped buildings.

What is most striking about the old Jewish residential area is the number of wooden houses along unpaved roads. The homes are on good-sized lots. At the back of the lot it is common to see a large shed (barn), a sauna and, for sure a hundred years ago, the outhouse.

When Aunt Bessie told me the story about Notte and the barn I wondered. I did not think that Jewish families lived on farms. I also wondered why Notte would go to the barn before coming in the house. He probably was visiting the outhouse before he came in.

Thanks to Aleks we found Barona iela. I didn’t know which house might have been there. The homes all looked like they had been built or rebuilt no more than 50 years ago. But the photos from one hundred years ago show wood houses that look pretty much the same.

They had raised concrete foundations and looked snug and had fireplaces. Surely they would burn wood for heat in this area known for its timber.

Right at the end of the street and over the main

cross street was the Rēzekne River. I could imagine the people along the shore doing their laundry. It was not hard to imagine Florence falling in and a neighbor pulling her out. It would be about a two-hundred yard very chilly walk up the steep riverbank and back up Barona iela before they reached their warm home.

I did not know which house might be theirs so I took a picture of every house on Barona iela within reasonable walking distance to the river.

I did engage Aleks to do research on my Horwitz family and he found them in the *1897 All Russia Census* to be living in what is now Barona iela 9. I am not sure if they renumbered the street when they renamed it but I do have a picture of what might be the house.

Barona iela 9



Aleks took me to the old Jewish cemetery. It is very large. It is very neglected. This cemetery is two-hundred fifty years old and has hundreds of grave markers many of which have fallen over or even if they are standing the surface has been etched off due to the cold winters. I know Aleks and others have made an effort to record the valuable information on the tombstones but I am sure that much important information is lost every year.

We visited the local Rēzekne historical museum. They had old photos of the main street. The information in the museum was in Latvian. Aleks told me what it said. He showed me an old photo of a street scene and pointed out that a store with a sign in Russian was a haberdashery store run by Horwitz.

The 1897 census indicated that members of my family were in the haberdashery business and that my great-grandfather was in the timber business.

Aleks found the families of my great-grandfather's brothers. They all were born in Rēzekne. They may have gone to live in Moscow for a while but my guess is that their Moscow was the Jewish district of Riga and not the capital of Russia.

A visitor to Rēzekne has to be impressed with the number of old churches. There is a prominent Roman Catholic cathedral that dates back to the time when the city was part of Poland. There is the beautiful old Russian Eastern Orthodox church from the Russian Empire era. There are the Lutheran churches that remind you that this used to be a German city.

But where are the synagogues? Rēzekne is a city where a majority of its population one hundred years ago was Jewish. There were eight synagogues. While the churches were spared from the ravages of war the synagogues were destroyed. There is one little green wooden synagogue left. It is across the street, behind another building and off an alley-like street named Israel. I understand it survived because it was used as a collection point for Jews during the Holocaust.

David Michaelson [mole333@hotmail.com] is leading an effort to raise funds for the restoration of this last remaining symbol of active Jewish faith in the city of so many of us.

Rēzekne is known today as the capital of the Latgale (Lake District) of Latvia and is famous for its ceramics. I bought some cute items in a local store. They did not cost much even with our deflated dollars.

Before I left Latvia I did engage Aleks to do research on my Horwitz family. He was very successful. It took him ninety days as he had promised. His fee was very reasonable. He sent me copies of all the sources for the information he provided. Now I want him to find out about Basheva Jaffe, daughter of Morduch, my grandfather's mother. Aleks will have to go to the archives in Minsk, Belarus. While he is there I am

asking him to check out another one of my grandparents from Belarus.

Aleks did find out what happened to Notte and his family. They had moved to Riga where he did have a drugstore. He found the location of the Riga home where he lived with his wife Raisa and his son Haime for over twenty years before they had to move to the Moscow Ghetto in Riga in September 1941. From there they were taken to the Rumbula forest near Riga and on either November 30 or December 8, 1941 they were executed with the other residents of the Ghetto.



Notte, Raisa, and Haime Horwitz in 1929

Yad Vashem has the information on Notte and Raisa. They don't yet have the information on Haime.

The trip was a wonderful success. I found the river where Florence splashed, the family home, the street where my family had a store, the cemetery where my family members were buried, and the synagogue where they may have worshiped.

I am planning a return trip this coming summer. I want to bring some of my relatives with me. I want to spend some time in Riga and see where Notte lived, I want to visit the Moscow area and go to the Rumbula forest and see where he and his family perished. I want to go back to Rēzekne and spend some days walking up and down the streets, visiting the inside of the one little syna-

gogue, and spend more time at the cemetery.

To me Latvia was a dream world. Now it is a reality. It is an easy place to visit. On a very personal level I have found that searching out my family history helps to connect me to my living relatives. It also gives me an appreciation for the freedom Jewish people have now and how fragile it is.

If I can be of any help to anyone planning a trip to Latvia please send a note to me at: dshoward@usa.net.

Latvian Named Righteous Gentile by Israel **by** **Aaron Eglitis**

Submitted by Saul Issroff from The Baltic Times, Riga, Latvia

Latvian national Nikolai Zarenov was posthumously awarded the Title of "righteous among the nations" by the Israel-based Holocaust remembrance organization Yad Vashem on April 4 for risking his life and saving Jews in Latvia during World War II. Zarenov, who is credited with aiding a Jewish family that he had known since childhood, died in 1970. His daughter Vera Muraveynika was on hand at the ceremony to accept the award in his name. According to accounts, Zarenov's neighbor Ilya had been deported to the Stuthof concentration camp in northern Poland. At this time Zarenov and his friends, working through a request, rescued Ilya's wife Marija, daughter Gita, 11, and nine-year-old son Ismael from Riga's Jewish ghetto. Marija stayed in the Latvian countryside, while Ismael was left in the care of a Russian Orthodox church in the southeastern city of Daugavpils.

Gita stayed in secret with the Zarenov family until the end of the war. After the war, Ilya returned home, miraculously surviving the concentration camp, and Marija was also reunited with her family. Ismael, however, was never heard from again. Zarenov remained humble to the end. "He never spoke about it and never bragged, because he considered one person helping another person to be normal," Muraveynika said of her father in the newspaper Diena.

To be awarded the title of "righteous among the nations" a survivor's testimony must be given. If the survivor has already passed away before giving the testimony, the title cannot be bestowed. Since 1963 this particular honor has been given to "the righteous among the nations who risked their lives to save Jews," according to Yad Vashem's Web site.

In addition to a medal, the rescuer's name will be added to the Wall of Honor in the Garden of the Righteous at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem. Over 19,000 people have been honored by Yad Vashem, including over 100 from Latvia.

The race to honor those living for risking their lives to save Jews during the Holocaust is hampered by the age of the surviving rescuers. "Time is not on our side," Israeli Ambassador to Latvia Gary Koren told The Baltic Times, adding that there were still many cases like Zarenov's that required recognition. "These ceremonies started only after [Baltic] independence. They were not possible under the Soviets," the ambassador stressed. The honoring of Zarenov coincided with a visit of 200 Israeli soldiers who came to Latvia to participate in a project on Holocaust education. In previous years the Israeli defense force has sent soldiers mainly to Poland to learn about the Holocaust, but recently the countries have included Latvia and Lithuania. The Holocaust in Latvia took the lives of 95 percent of the local Jewish community or almost 80,000 people during the Nazi occupation of the country, which began in 1941 and lasted until 1944.

Tributes Paid to Latvian SS Legionaries

Submitted by Nikolai Butkevich, Research and Advocacy Director, Union of Councils for Jews in the Former Soviet Union, (UCSJ)

LESTENE. March 16 (Interfax/BNS) - About 500 people gathered on Wednesday at the Lestene cemetery 70 kilometers outside Riga to commemorate Latvian members of the SS Waffen legion who died in WWII. Participants in the ceremony included Latvian parliamentarians from the People's Party, Fatherland and the Freedom/LNNK parliamentary group, and also leader of the National Warriors Association Nikolajs Romanovskis, leader of the Latvian representation of

the Daugavas Vanagi (Daugava Hawks) organization Valdis Kursitis, and leader of the youth nationalist organization Visu Latvijai! (All for Latvia!) Raivis Dzintars. Chief of the local police department Vladimirs Sysarevs told BNS that 23 policemen monitored the rally at the cemetery, which passed without incident.

Public ceremonies that are conducted yearly on March 16 by Latvian SS veteran legionaries and their supporters, especially street processions and the laying of flowers to the Freedom Memorial in Riga, cause political controversy in Latvia and draw harsh, negative responses around the world.

IAJGS International Conference on Jewish Genealogy

For the first time in the history of an international conference on Jewish genealogy, participants will finally have the opportunity to explore the genealogy of Jews in Eretz Israel at the 24th Annual IAJGS International Conference on Jewish Genealogy in Jerusalem in July, through "Ask the Experts" program with Shmuel Shamir, a 16th generation Jerusalemite and one of the co-founders of the Israel Genealogical Society.

Shmuel Shamir has a unique background that lends itself to being such an expert: Aside from belonging to an ancient Jerusalem family, Mr. Shamir has been researching the roots of Jerusalem families of antiquity for many years and has written numerous articles in a variety of journals and periodicals. As an Attorney and notary, he has researched and ferreted out documents from various Israeli archives, using them to build family trees and to prove ownership of property, especially in the Old City of Jerusalem.

The opportunity of consulting with Mr. Shamir as an expert is unique and not to be missed!

For more details, questions and discussion simply go to:

<http://www.ortra.com/jgen2004/>

Membership Fees via PayPal

In an effort to simplify the process of submitting membership dues, especially for people who reside outside the United States and Canada, the Latvia SIG accepts payment via PayPal. PayPal is a web-based service that facilitates paying bills and fees via email.

With PayPal, you can send money to anyone with an email address by simply signing up for a PayPal account. To do this go to the PayPal web-site, <http://www.paypal.com>, and follow the directions provided to create an account. Once you have an account, log into your account and click the Send Money tab. Now enter the Latvia SIG email address, which is mgetz@erols.com, and enter the amount you would like to send. To fund the payment, add a credit card to your PayPal account by entering your credit card number as instructed.

After reviewing the details of your payment, click the Send Money button. The Latvia SIG will immediately receive an email explaining that it has received a payment from you through PayPal.

It is important that new members complete and mail the membership form on the following page — this form can also be found on the Latvia SIG web site — so that we can enter family names and locations on our Family Finder. Also, please include the other information requested on the form to help us make the Latvia SIG an even more effective resource for genealogical research.

Please note that the new membership year begins in July after the IAJGS meeting in Jerusalem.

Latvia SIG Membership Questionnaire

NAME:..... PHONE:.....
ADDRESS:..... FAX:.....
CITY:..... STATE/PROVINCE:.....
ZIP/POSTAL CODE:.....
COUNTRY (if other than U.S.):.....
email address:.....

Whom are you researching? (Latvian cities only) Please use location names/spellings as found in *Where Once We Walked*.

NAME:..... LOCATION:.....
NAME:..... LOCATION:.....
NAME:..... LOCATION:.....
NAME:..... LOCATION:.....
NAME:..... LOCATION:.....

Bibliographical or archival sources used in your Latvian genealogical research:

Information on Latvian Jewish communities, history of Jewish presence, current status, contacts:

Cemeteries, travel experiences, etc:

Suggested newsletter topics:

Translation skills: Hebrew, Latvian, Russian, Yiddish, Other (specify)

I would be willing to volunteer for the following activities:

Please return your completed questionnaire, along with a check for U.S. \$20 (U.S. and Canada, \$30 for overseas members) payable to Latvia SIG, to:

Latvia SIG
5450 Whitley Park Terrace, #901
Bethesda, MD 20814-2061