Table of Contents

President’s Report 2
Editor’s Comments 3
A Website List of Latvian Jewry Prior to World War II 4
NAMES PROJECT: The Fate of the Latvian Jewish Community 7
FEITELBERG: A Mission To Preserve Their Memory 7
Advanced Googling for Genealogists by Rochelle Kaplan 11
Jews and Anti-Semitism in the Baltic States by Dov Levin 13
An Interview with Hanna Ferber (Part 3) 18
An Interview with Simon Gutman (Part 2) 21
Membership Fees Are Past Due 27
Latvia SIG Membership Questionnaire 28
This year’s International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies meets for its 29th International Conference in Philadelphia. It is from August 2-7, 2009 at the Sheraton Philadelphia City Centre Hotel and should be the most exciting event in the Jewish genealogical calendar. Details can be found at: http://www.philly2009.org.

It is expected that more than 1,000 professional and amateur genealogists from around the world will attend. There will hundreds of programs and of extensive resources to help families discover their roots. As those who have attended conferences in the past know, informative programs for both the beginner and experienced genealogists are presented.

We plan to have a SIG luncheon and conduct our annual meeting at the conference. Please contact me with ideas you may have for issues you might like discussed at our annual meeting.

We are fortunate that Constance Whippman will be a speaker at the Latvia SIG meeting. She is the co-founder of the All Latvia Database (now called the JewishGen Latvia Database) and has served as the project coordinator for the database and for the Latvia SIG UK. She was a co-founder of the Courland Research Group and a founder and member of the steering committee of the Latvian Holocaust Names Project based at the Centre for Judaic Studies, University of Latvia where she supports and contributes to various projects and conferences based at the University. She has given presentations at genealogical conferences and meetings on database issues and the history of Courland and its documentation. She researches the Whippman/Israelson families who have connections with Riga and Bauska.

The topic that she will address at the Latvia SIG meeting is: My life as a Project Manager: Past, Present and Future of Latvian Genealogical Research.

Her talk is intended to be a celebration of the Latvia SIG and of its premier achievement, the All Latvia Database. She’ll discuss its origins, early challenges, and its development with a focus on how documents and records are identified, chosen, translated, extracted, and then converted into a consistent database format. Constance will emphasize the way in which this resource can be used to help you write your family history and preserve material for future generations.

It is with profound sadness that I mention that Bella Blumberg, mother of Rita Bogdonova, died tragically in Riga in a car accident. She was truly an inspiration to all who knew her and for me and my family she and Rita represent the last living family link with anyone in Latvia. I went to Riga for the funeral and the large number of people who attended attests to the extent to which she was beloved. In Shtetl Memories (http://www.jewishgen.org/latvia/SIG_Shtetl_Memories.html) on the Latvia SIG website, Rita, in Reminiscences of Liepaja, movingly tells of a three day trip to Bella’s native town of Liepaja.
than five years’ worth of newsletters that can all be searched for content.

All the best and with SIG’s greetings.

Henry Blumberg, henry@blumbergs.ca

Editor’s Comments

The *Latvian Names Project*, directed by Professor Ruvin Ferber, was featured at the IAJGS conference in Chicago this past summer and was highlighted in the last issue of this newsletter. Since then, it has attracted much interest and I am very happy to include three articles related to that project in this issue. The first article, *A Website List of Latvian Jewry Prior to World War II* by Rita Bagdanova and Ruvin Ferber, appears in the current issue of the widely distributed journal, *Avotaynu*, and Gary Mokotoff, its editor, was kind enough to give me permission to publish the article in this newsletter.

Gary Feitelberg learned about the Names Project in Chicago and was able to use the searchable database on the Names website to abstract information about his family in Latvia. After a brief review of the project in one article, Gary goes on to describe how he used the Names Project database in conjunction with the *Pages of Testimony* at Yad Vashem, to fill in gaps and to discover alternate spellings, missing given names, professions and other information. Gary encourages all of us to explore these databases and to contribute information to them if at all possible.

Rochelle Kaplan has in the past reported on events and presentations she thought would be of interest to the SIG and, in this issue, she has contributed another article that should help us in searching the Web for genealogical information. The article shows the myriad ways in which Google can be used for genealogical searches many of which, I am sure, we have yet to try.

Dov Levin, a professor at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem sent me his article that had been published in the *Encyclopedia of the Jewish Diaspora*. With permission of the editor and publisher of the encyclopedia, I am honored to re-publish the article in this issue of the newsletter.

Professor Levin was born in Lithuania, escaped from the Kaunas ghetto and fought with the partisans until the liberation of Lithuania by the Red Army. He immigrated to Palestine in 1945 and has published extensively about the Holocaust in the Baltic states as well as life under Soviet rule both before and after the Holocaust. His prize-winning book, “The Lesser of Two Evils: Eastern European Jewry Under Soviet Rule, 1939-1941,” was published in 1995.

Professor Levin was recently in the Israeli news for returning an award given to him in 1993 by the Lithuanian government for his courage in facing the Nazi menace during the Holocaust. See: http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1207486207665&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FPrinter for the complete story.

In what is a first for the Latvia SIG newsletter, with the concluding part of Hanna Ferber’s testimony along with the article about the Names project by her son Ruvin, we have contributions from both a mother and son in the same issue.

In this concluding part of Hanna’s testimony, we learn how she escaped from Latvia to Kirov, how she met her husband and that her first child, Ruvin, was born on December 13, 1946 in Riga. And, so I’d like to wish Ruvin a belated Happy Birthday from the Latvia SIG.

The testimony of Simon Gutman is one of the most interesting we have published and it is further enhanced by the editorial comments of the translator, Sofia Kagna. Simon was an actor, a cartoonist, and a humorist who lived a long and fruitful life. Like most survivors of the Holocaust in Latvia, Simon witnessed atrocities and brutality that defy description.

While Hanna Ferber and Simon Gutman led distinct and separate lives, they lived through and experienced similar events that changed their lives. In particular, both were forced to leave Riga ending up in Pskov while witnessing the brutal fighting on the front lines. Hanna arrived by train and Simon by car, and both describe the horror they saw.

Barry Shay, bbshay@starpower.net
A Website List of Latvian Jewry Prior to World War II
by Rita Bogdanova and Ruvin Ferber

The purpose of the Latvian Holocaust Jewish Names Project is to recover the names and the identities of Latvian Jews who perished during World War II and to ensure that their memory is preserved. The first stage of the project has been completed, and the list of all Jews who lived in Latvia on the eve of World War II is now available on the Internet; free of charge at <http://names.lu.lv>. This article discusses that project, the methodology employed and its current status.

Latvian Jewry and the Holocaust

The 1935 Latvian census identified 93,479 Jews living in Latvia, 4.8 percent of the total population, most of whom were of Latvian nationality. The Jews lived in 200 communities and worshiped in more than 140 synagogues and prayer houses; 71 Jewish schools taught more than 60 percent of the Jewish children, and Jews accounted for 13 percent of the students at the University of Latvia. Most Jews spoke three or four languages fluently, including Latvian.

In June 1940, Soviet troops entered and occupied Latvia, ending national independence by incorporating Latvia into the Soviet Union, dismantling organized Jewish communities, and arresting and deporting their leaders. On June 14, 1941, about 15,000 from Latvia were deported to Siberia. Among them were 1,771 Jews.

Germany declared war on the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941. The first Jewish victims fell on June 23, the next day. At the beginning of July, the first mass killings of Jews took place. The Nazis torched the famous Gogol Synagogue in Riga on July 4, and by July 8, German troops occupied the entire country. In August 1941, the Nazis murdered Jews in small towns and established ghettos in Riga, Daugavpils, Liepaja and Riga. The mass killings of Riga ghetto inmates took place on November 30 and December 8, 1941, when the Nazis murdered more than 27,800 Jews in the Rumbula Forest only 12 kilometers from the center of the city.

In November 1943, the Riga ghetto was closed and the remaining inmates were transferred to the Kaiserswald concentration camp where they stayed until August 1944, when the first transport to Stutthof concentration camp was organized. The last war residence for many of them became concentration camps such as Buchenwald, Dachau and Stutthof. The Soviet army freed Latvia of all German troops in May 1945, and Latvia once more was annexed into the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR).

An estimated 70,000 Latvian Jews perished in the Holocaust. The magnitude and speed of this mass murder meant that many families disappeared completely, leaving no one to inquire about the dead. As a result, the names of only about 25 percent of the victims appear on Yad Vashem’s Pages of Testimony or in its database of victims’ names.

About the Project

The names project was described and presented to Latvia’s then-president, Vaira Vike-Freiberga, the Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and several international organizations in 2001. It was launched in 2002 as an independent research project of the Centre for Judaic Studies of the University of Latvia under the leadership of Professor Ruvin Ferber, chairman of the board of the Centre.

Called “Jews of Latvia: Names and Fates, 1941–1945,” the project aims to investigate, identify and record the fate of Latvian Jewry in the Holocaust and in Holocaust-related events. The main stages of the project are as follows:

• Create as completely and accurately as possible the memorial list of the Jews of Latvia on the eve of World War II using archival sources.

• Define the fate of each member of the Jewish community during that time period by checking data with the materials of the Extraordinary Commission; Yad Vashem Database; documents of the Buchenwald, Kaiserswald and other concentration camps; materials of the Museum of Jews in Latvia; and a variety of other available sources, including personal testimonies, memoirs and similar materials.

1935 Census

The 1935 Latvian census, created on individual cards that indicate each respondent’s religion, still exists. It was the basic source of data. During the 15 years from 1920 to 1935, the number of Jews living in cities increased from 24,000 to 44,000, but by 1935, the total had begun to decline, probably as a result of emigration. Less complete, but still important, census records exist for 1941, but only some—primarily from the Liepaja region—include information about the Jewish population. The 1935 enumeration was the national census closest to World War II, but be-
Sample document from 1935 Latvian census

cause the war did not begin until five years later, other additional sources were needed for data about that interim period. Supplementing the census information is a variety of additional pre-war material, such as:

- House register books
- Birth, marriage and death records for the period 1935 to 1941. This source permitted adding babies born after the census was taken and excluding those who died during this period.
- Telephone, address and business directories
- Various other sources such as police lists, ghetto and execution lists available at Latvian State Historical Archives

Sample 1935 Census Card. Census information collected included address, family name and given name, gender, nationality, status (married, unmarried, etc.), religion, ethnicity, ability to read and write, school attendance (those younger than 20), knowledge of the state language, other languages, language spoken at home and occupation.

House Registers. House registers were the most important sources of detailed data after the census. They provide additional data and may allow the database to be more detailed. House registers provided information on maiden name; complete birth date and place; occupation; relationship (young children are recorded with their mothers); dates of death for those who died naturally; former addresses—and most important, a note about being sent to a ghetto. The ghetto information (and sometimes other information from which inferences may be drawn) may provide direct evidence about the fate of individuals.

In time, a search of all house registers—a time-consuming endeavor—may provide the most complete and detailed picture of the pre-war Jewish population. For example, the registers reveal that 46 percent of the houses in central Riga with more than 20 tenants belonged to Jews; Germans and Latvians accounted for 24 and 20 percent, respectively. A house register shows year and place of birth, previous address, passport data, when reported to the police, when and to which place left (in this case to the ghetto), and when signed out by the police.

Vital Records. Sometimes more than one individual had the same surname and given name. In such a case, the vital records were used to check the place and date of birth and, in rare cases, the names of parents. In addition, birth records from the Record Office archives were accessed to ensure that children born between 1935 and 1941 are entered into the database. By the same token, Jews whose deaths were recorded in the typical way were removed from the database.

Passports. A large internal passport collection is available for individuals who lived in Riga before 1940. In the few cases where other documents provided contradictory information about nationality or date and place of birth, passports resolved discrepancies. The first Latvian Republic passports, issued in the 1920s, are the most complete. They also include father’s name, occupation and addresses. Approximately 700,000 such passports exist for Riga residents, but fewer than 100,000 exist for the rest of Latvia. Books of passport records also have survived, but only through 1927. Approximately 500,000 foreign passports were issued during the period 1939-40. The foreign passports were issued to persons who traveled abroad and were valid for one year.

Search “Fate” in the Database <http://names.lu.lv/>

The database <http://names.lu.lv/> includes data on the fate of about 43,000 Latvian Jews in the years 1941 to 1945. The following indicators and criteria were used:

- Deported: On June 14, 1941
- Killed: If the confirming documentary source is available
- Committed suicide: Recorded, although the method is not disclosed
- Fled: To the USSR after the start of the war
- Ghetto: Interned in a ghetto
- Hidden: Went into hiding or was hidden by someone
- Soviet Army: Fought in the Soviet Army
- Concentration camp (Buchenwald, Kaiserwald, Stutthof or others): Was interned in one or more of these camps
- Survived: If documentary or personal evidence is available

- Topfwerk (peat bog): Worked at peat factory and was alive in 1942-43
- (.....) Evidence is not strong. The fate of individuals was determined from the following sources:
  - The Soviet Extraordinary Commission for ascertaining and investigating crimes committed by the German-Fascist invaders and their accomplices. Original records are kept in the Moscow State Archives; microfilm copies are held by the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) and by Yad Vashem.
  - Yad Vashem’s Central Database of Shoah Victims’
Names
- Documents from Buchenwald, Kaiserwald and other concentration camps
- Materials in the Museum of Jews in Latvia
- Lists of June 14, 1941, deportees issued by the Latvian State Archives
- Lists of families evacuated to the USSR. A portion of these lists is accessible at USHMM (www.USHMM.org).
- Holocaust history research data in Latvian (volumes issued 2003-08 by the Commission of Historians, local researchers); lists of Jews who perished in the Holocaust in some small villages
- Memoirs of Shoah survivors published during the past several years

In addition, Edward Anders created a list of Liepaja Jewish victims by subtracting the survivors from a prewar list of the Jews of that city. This list is found on a separate site maintained by Anders at <www.liepajajews.org/db.htm>.

Extraordinary Commission Reports. Documents on the Riga ghetto and those from the Soviet Extraordinary Commission for the Investigation of Fascist Crimes for the years 1945–46 help us trace the fate of many Latvian Jews, although this information is not complete. It must be supplemented with data available in the archives of Germany, Israel, Russia and the United States. Typically, the Extraordinary Commission lists are not complete for most places. More or less complete lists of names exist for Aizpute, Daga and Viesite, but only 2,000 names are given for Riga. No names at all are given for most locations, only the total number of individuals killed.

Testimonies are the basis of most Extraordinary Commission documents and, thus, often are inaccurate. Many errors occur in names, dates of birth, ages and more. Some lists give 1944 as the year of death, but this likely is wrong, because the mass murders of Latvian Jews occurred in 1941; by 1944 only a few Jews still lived in Kaiserrvald and in the Central Prison of Riga. In addition, some individuals found in the Extraordinary Commission lists also appear on lists of deportees. These discrepancies remain to be clarified.

Fate: Fled to the USSR. In this category, the primary source is the house registers that show individuals being struck off in June 1941. The registers are not 100 percent accurate, however, since sometimes the same people appear later in lists of residents of the Riga ghetto. Another main source of information is the USHMM’s searchable database of individuals who fled to Uzbekistan. The notation “fled” followed by a question mark means that the individual probably fled to the USSR.

Fate: Ghetto. If an individual’s residence during the war was Riga and the word “ghetto” appears in the column headed “fate,” the person in question was in the Riga ghetto. If the war residence was Daugavpils and “ghetto” appears in the fate column, it means that the individual was in the Daugavpils ghetto. If the war residence did not coincide with the place of the ghetto, the ghetto in which the individual was interned is given. For example, the person’s prewar and war residence was Kraslava, but the person was in the Daugavpils ghetto.

House registers which indicate that a person was taken off the register, because he or she had moved to a ghetto is a primary source of this information. Less informative is the Extraordinary Commission data, since it lists only about 190 individuals as inmates of ghettos. In unclear cases, the list must be double-checked with other sources.

Fate: “Hidden.” Information that someone went into hiding or was hidden is based upon testimonies of survivors, memoirs and published books.

Fate: “KZ” (from German Konzentrationslager [Concentration Camp]). The notation “KZ” indicates that the person was interned in one or more of the camps: Buchenwald, Kaiserwald or Stutthof. One list records prisoners sent from Stutthof to Buchenwald.

Fate: “Tortwerk.” The notation Tortwerk is based upon lists of peat factory workers for the year 1942–43. It signifies persons imprisoned in the Riga ghetto and still alive at that time.

Fate: “Survived.” Individuals are listed as having survived if documentary or personal evidence is available. Most often the information comes from testimonies of survivors and their relatives. A question mark following the word “survived” indicates that the individual in question probably survived, but the information is contradictory and not proven with documents.

Additional Contributions

Since the project appeared online and was announced in Israel during a meeting of the Association of Latvian and Estonian Jews in November/December 2007, the project has received approximately 400 letters with information about the fate of relatives. About 140 letters came after the presentation of the project at the Latvian University on June 2, 2008.

Appeal from the Project Team

The project is not yet finished. Many columns of the personal cards still remain empty, and the fate of many Latvian Jews remains to be established. Project leaders welcome anyone who can help with the work by sharing information about the fate of their relatives and friends. Contact them by e-mail at <names@latnet.lv>.

Notes


Raviv Ferber is a professor of physics at the University of Latvia as well as head of the board of the Center for Judaic Studies that he founded there in 1998. Ferber is head of the project “Jews in Latvia: Names and Fate, 1941–1945.” Rila Bogdanova is an archivist at the Latvian State Historical Archives.
NAMES PROJECT
The Fate of the Latvian Jewish Community
by
Gary Feitelberg

At the International Conference on Jewish Genealogy held in Chicago in August 2008, Professor Ruvin Ferber of the University of Latvia, presented two talks on the Latvian Holocaust Jewish Names Project, an ambitious and monumental undertaking documenting the names and fates of all Jews living in Latvia on the eve of the Nazi occupation in June 1941. When completed, it will be a memorial for our vanished community and a gravestone for our martyrs and victims.

The Names Project is sponsored by several Latvian, Israeli and American organizations and individuals, including the University of Latvia, Yad Vashem, the Conference of Jewish Material Claims against Germany, and the U.S. Embassy in Latvia.

The information is based on the 1935 Census list of approximately 93,500 names. This source is corroborated and supplemented by various prewar materials such as house registers, birth and death records, passports, business directories, etc. Perhaps other resources and sources will be discovered and utilized to insure an accurate, complete, detailed accounting for each and every individual.

Jewish family historians and genealogists may be instrumental in providing important missing information with respect to their relatives. Many columns of the personal data cards are empty or incomplete. The fate of many Latvian Jews has yet to be established as of now. You may be the missing link to document and preserve the fate, memory and testimony of survivors and victims.

The project team would be most grateful to anyone who can help this project by sharing together information with respect to family and friends who lived in Latvia or of Latvian origin who perished in the Shoah or miraculously survived this terrible tragedy.

One can contact the project leader by email at names@latnet.lv.

Available in English, Latvian, Russian, and Hebrew, the lists can be searched by family surname and place of residence at http://names.lu.lv.

Presently, there is no simple way to search surnames and places.

One can search either by city or region. Cities include Abrene, Aluksne, Ape, Auce, Balvi, Bauska, Cesis, Daugavpils, Dobele, Durbe, Gostini, Griva, Grobina, Gulbene, Illukste, Jaunelava, Jekabpils, Jelgava, Jurmala, Kandava, Karsava, Kermani, Kraslava, Krustpils, Kuldiga, Liepaja, Limbazi, Livani, Ludza, Madona, Ogre, Piltene, Plavinas, Priekule, Rezekne, Riga, Rujiena, Sabile, Saldus, Sigulda, Sloka, Smiltene, Strenči, Subate, Telsi, Tukums, Valdemarpils, Valka, Valmiera, Varaklaine, Ventspils, Viesite, Vilani and Zilupe.

At present it is the best choice to check each and every city for surnames as you will receive different and varying results. A much more robust searchable capability is encouraged which can search all of the cities at one time.

Although there are four regions, you cannot just enter the surname and search option without entering a city. The regions are Kurzeme, Latgale, Vidzeme, and Zemgale. A much more robust searchable capability is encouraged which can search all of the regions at one time.

Once the list appears, one can see details about an individual on their personal card.

FEITELBERG
A Mission To Preserve Their Memory
Combining Arolsen, the Jewish Latvian Names Project & Yad Vashem’s Pages of Testimony
by
Gary Feitelberg

The best way to pay special tribute to the Shoah victims is to document their existence to the fullest extent possible. Secondly, to submit this information to the Jewish Latvian Names Project and complete “Pages of Testimony” for each individual for Yad Vashem. All of these resources and sources can be combined for an accurate, complete and detailed accounting for both survivors
and victims of the Shoah.

**Jewish Latvian Names Project:**

A search of the FEITELBERG family in the capital city of Riga yielded 27 results. A search for the city of Kuldiga yielded 19 results. A search for Aizpute yielded 2 results. Liepaja, although listed in city choice options, is separate and has not been integrated into the computer database as of this date. Members of the FEITELBERG family were known to have lived in other cities such as Tukums, Valdemarpils, etc. and it is not quite clear why none appear.

This computer database can include on each personal card a family name or surname, maiden name, given names, other family names, date of birth (month, day, year), date of death (month, day, year), place of death, prewar residences, war residences, fate in 1941-1945, occupation, gender, family status, spouse, sources and comments.

**Yad Vashem Pages of Testimony:**

One can clearly see the Litvak pronunciation of the original Jewish German Surname FEITELBERG utilized in this computer database. A search yielded 44 FEITELBERG family members.

Online at the website is a brief summary of the background of the individual. You can also then access an extract of the original Page of Testimony and often there are more than one completed for the same individual. This is where corroboration and detective work can provide a much more accurate assessment and analysis. Aside from a brief biography and history one can contact the submitter for additional details which is most likely family or friends of the subject individual. Family historians and genealogists can also construct family tree charts based on the data. From the very important additional benefit of maiden names one can link to other family possibilities.

Each individual’s profile may include last name (surname), maiden name, father’s first name, mother’s first name, mother’s maiden name, sex, date of birth, place of birth, marital status, permanent residence, place during the war, submitter’s first name, submitter’s last name.

I would like to take this opportunity to focus on those maiden and married names or other surnames of FEITELBERG family individuals and compare the information from the Jewish Latvian Names Project with the information obtained from Yad Vashem’s Pages of Testimony.

These names include BERSTEIN, CHERNIN/TSCHERNA, GRUSIN/GRUZEN/GRUZIN, HIRSCHFELD, KOTLIAR/KOTLER, LEMCHEN/LEMSHEN, LIPSCHITZ, MINTZ/MINZ, POSS, SHARSHEVSKI/SCHERESCHEWSKY/SHERESHEVSKAYA, and SEGAL.

Let’s start with CHERNIN/TSCHERNA. This is her entry in the Jewish Latvian Names Project (See Table 1). It utilizes one unique spelling of the surname with which I was unfamiliar. The dates and places appear to be accurate and detailed.

From Yad Vashem’s Page of Testimony (see Table 2) we clearly see a different reality offered by the victim’s sister Genya Kuper aka Cooper. From this testimony we can add the alternative spellings of the surname CERNIN/CHERNIN, the alternative spellings of her given name Rachel/Rakhel, the name of her father Aba Leib, the name of her mother Bela and occupation/profession as shop owner for a much more accurate, complete, detailed accounting and brief bio.

Another daughter and example of the above is for GRUSIN/GRUZEN/GRUZIN. The Latvian Names Project (see Table 3) yields the following data:

This time the name of the father and mother and occupation appear. Her Hebrew name is given. In the Yad Vashem Page of Testimony (see Table 4) is the more familiar family affectionate name version Mahlie. This time we see a more specific occupation/profession and the name of her spouse.

Another daughter and example of the above is for MOLLIE GRUZIN. Last, but not least, is another Page of Testimony (see Table 5) submitted by a relative Ezra Beker aka Baker. Here we learn yet another maiden name. This time of Mollie Gruzin’s mother: SCHLACHTER.
One can supplement these computer databases with information from the Arolsen ITS records, and complete missing information in these brief biographies and personal profiles to preserve their memories. Each family member and friend has a duty to do so. One can submit this information to the Latvian Names Project and Pages of Testimony at Yad Vashem as a special tribute.

Family historians and genealogists may pay an instrumental role in reconstructing the past and terrible tragedy of the Shoah. Learning and piecing together the puzzle, which has eluded us for over sixty years because we thought these records did not exist is certainly worth the effort.

Table 1
Names Project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family name</th>
<th>TSCHERNA</th>
<th>Maiden name</th>
<th>FEITELBERG</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other family name</td>
<td></td>
<td>Given name</td>
<td>Rachil Lea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date of birth</td>
<td>1903 20 08</td>
<td>Place of birth</td>
<td>Goldingen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date of death</td>
<td>1941</td>
<td>Place of death</td>
<td>Riga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prewar residence</td>
<td>Kuldiga, Riga</td>
<td>War residence</td>
<td>Riga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family status</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Spouse</td>
<td>Leiser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fate in 1941-1945</td>
<td>Ghetto, killed</td>
<td>Source</td>
<td>[1] [2] [9]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2
Page of Testimony

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Last Name</th>
<th>CERNIN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Last Name</td>
<td>CHERNIN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Name</td>
<td>RACHEL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Name</td>
<td>RAKHEL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maiden Name</td>
<td>FEITELBERG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father’s First Name</td>
<td>ABA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father’s First Name</td>
<td>LEIB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother’s First Name*</td>
<td>BELA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date of Birth</td>
<td>1905</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place of Birth</td>
<td>KULDIGA, KULDIGAS, KURZEME, LATVIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td>MARRIED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent residence</td>
<td>KULDIGA, KULDIGAS, KURZEME, LATVIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profession</td>
<td>SHOP OWNER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place of Death</td>
<td>RIGA,RIGAS, VIDZEME, LATVIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date of Death</td>
<td>1941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of material</td>
<td>Page of Testimony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submitter’s Last Name</td>
<td>KUPER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submitter’s First Name</td>
<td>GENYA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship to victim</td>
<td>SISTER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the Submitter a Survivor?</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MAKE A MITZVAH!!! THERE IS NO TIME LIKE THE PRESENT!!! RIGHT NOW!!!
### Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Names Project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family name</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Maiden name</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other family name</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Given name</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Father</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mother</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Date of birth</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Place of birth</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Date of death</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Place of death</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prewar residence</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>War residence</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Occupation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family status</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spouse</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fate in 1941-1945</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Source</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Comments</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pages of Testimony</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Last Name</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Last Name</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>First Name</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Maiden Name</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Father's First Name</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Father's First Name</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mother's First Name</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sex</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Date of Birth</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Place of Birth</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marital Status</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spouse's First Name</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spouse's First Name</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Permanent residence</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Profession</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Place during the war</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Place of Death</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of material</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Submitter's Last Name</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Submitter's First Name</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship to victim</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Advanced Googling for Genealogists
by
Rochelle Kaplan

Matthew H. Marx, mhmarx@alum.mit.edu, presented this useful lecture. Marx, active in the Boston Jewish Genealogical Society, noted that there is a ten word limit on searches. The order of words matters! Putting genealogy Jewish yields different results than Jewish genealogy. And singular differs from plural. Google uses no punctuation. It has filters so there is no need to put AND, but you do need OR.

Marx gave a demonstration. Typing “Michael Marx” genealogy yielded 218 results. Adding the word Lexington yielded 32 results. Adding Kentucky yielded 3 results.

Here are his suggestions regarding basic searches:

- **Jewish genealogy** returns results with the words Jewish and genealogy.
- “Jewish genealogy” returns results with this exact phrase.
- Archives France OR Germany returns results about archives in either country
- Archives Germany-Berlin returns results which leave out archives in Berlin
- Stop words: such as and, in, of, the, for, from, about, etc. are ignored by Google (so omit these in search terms)
- Using a + sign before a word forces Google to include the word in the search.

He also discussed syntax, the key to focused searches:

- **Inurl:** JewishGen finds ONLY results with JewishGen in the URL
- **Intitle:** JRI-Poland finds ONLY results with JRI-Poland as part of title
- Related: www.JewishGen.org finds ONLY results with content similar to JewishGen
- **Site:** www.Familytreemagazine.com finds ONLY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Last Name</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Last Name</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>First Name</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>First Name</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Maiden Name</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Father's First Name</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Father's First Name</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mother's First Name</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mother's First Name</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mother's Maiden Name</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mother's Maiden Name</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sex</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Date of Birth</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Place of Birth</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marital Status</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spouse's First Name</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spouse's First Name</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Permanent residence</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Place during the war</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of material</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Submitter's Last Name</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Submitter's First Name</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship to victim</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>results within specified site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Site:</strong> domain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Filetype:</strong> PDF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Link:</strong> <a href="http://www.jgsgb.org">www.jgsgb.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(This is useful to find out what other sites are trying to link to that site)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Date:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#...#:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Safesearch:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intext:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inanchor:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Info:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Similar symbol ~</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A*B</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Syntax for Google Groups:**

**Group:** finds ONLY results for specified group  
**Author:** finds ONLY results for group messages from specified author  
**Inssubject:** finds ONLY results with specified term in message subject

**Specialized Information Operators:**

**Define:** term will return variety of sources defining term  
**Phonebook** will return phone # for named search

---

*Phonebook will return only residential phone #s
*Bphonebook will return only business listings

**Weather:** type in weather and you will see box to put in city or zip code. Hitting enter will give 5 day weather forecast.

**For more info:**

www.google.com/help/cheatsheet.html Google’s own help page  
www.googleguide.com Interactive website with more Google tips


Marx also said one can set individual preferences. Go to preference box. Select language English and you can exclude foreign languages. You can set results per page. Right now the default is 10. Marx sets his at 20. Save your preferences.

You can ask a question. If you type, *Germany has federal states*, Google treats * as a question. You can use translation tools. On the left hand Google tool bar, click more. Then go to Communicate, Show and Share, click link to Translate. Insert in URL, the words you wish to translate, then click language from list of languages. Yiddish is not available; Hebrew is.

There is loads more. Ways to track a tracking number, to view maps, do calculations, track a flight. Google Images has a myriad of images. Typing in “German Jewish Genealogy” yields 1740 results. If you instead type in bookintitle: “German Jewish Genealogy” yields 22 results. But if you type in range of years, 2002…2007, you get only one result.
Jews and Anti-Semitism in the Baltic States
by
Dov Levin

This article is reprinted from the Encyclopedia of the Jewish Diaspora (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2008, Entry 263), Avrum Ehrlich (Editor) and is used with permission of the publisher and editor. It is available online at: http://ebooks.abc-clio.com

The Baltic states of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia attained political independence immediately after World War I and from then on their history had many similarities. A fortiori one may speak of cultural and economic similarities and the similar fate that greeted the Jewish population of these countries. Of the 350,000 Jews in these countries at the beginning of World War II, fewer than 5 percent lived to witness the end of the war. The remainder were slaughtered during the Nazi occupation, in various and sundry ways, as a result of the occupier’s policies and the enthusiastic implementation of these policies by the Jews’ local neighbors, among whom they had lived for centuries.

In the 1910s and 1930s, several bloody eruptions by peasants against their Jewish neighbors were prompted by religious prejudices, such as accusations of blood libel. On the other hand, avenues of cooperation and solidarity between Jews and non-Jews came into being as in joint lists of candidates for the Russian Duma. The Jewish, Lithuanian, and Latvian delegates elected to this institution represented the interests of the population at large in their localities. In the wake of this precedent, the sides were in contact even during and after the German occupation in World War I. Consequently, Jewish public figures were appointed to the first governments of the Baltic countries when they proclaimed their independence in 1918. The Jewish citizens of these countries were promised sweeping cultural and educational rights, and local Jewish personalities and others abroad acted to strengthen these countries’ political and economic status. Furthermore, thousands of Jewish volunteers took part in the wars against various forces, including the Bolsheviks, who attempted to annex these countries to Soviet Russia. Lithuanian soldiers inflicted grave abuse on the Jewish population on the pretext that the Jews were Bolshevik sympathizers. Even the Jews of Vilnius, only a few of whom were accused of pro-Soviet sympathies and most of whom had a pro-Lithuanian orientation, paid a heavy price.

By the second half of the 1920s, the Jews’ autonomous rights were eroding badly. Although the Jews still had an acute need for these rights, they continued to display loyalty to the state and faithfully discharged their civic duties, including military service. As quasi-military organizations were ill inclined to admit Jewish veterans into their ranks, the Jews established the Association of Jewish Front-Line Soldiers, under the command of Jewish officers who had taken part in the wars of independence. Young Jews also volunteered for service in fire brigades in various cities and towns, including some brigades that were totally Jewish.

The only political setting that brought Jews and non-Jews together was the tiny Communist Party, which operated underground and attracted support from only a fraction of the Jewish community. In contrast, the Zionists, who accounted for a majority of the Jewish population, remained loyal to the state and its government, but their ideological political orientation focused on events outside their countries of residence. Their practical aim was to systematically mobilize the Jewish masses to immigrate to Palestine. Therefore, Zionist organizations with a strong ideological bond to the Soviet Union, such as Ha-shomer ha-Tsa’ir and Po’alei Tsyyyon Left, were allowed to engage in overt political activity because the establishment defined them as “carriers of Communism for export” to Palestine.

Anti-Semitism increased in the 1930s, with increased economic distress and the political radicalization of right-wing militant organizations throughout the Baltics. One may infer something about the ideological nature of these organizations and the extent of their identification with the Nazi regime from the fact that their leaders held very high-ranking positions in their countries during the Nazi occupation. The German minority played a considerable role in disseminating the racial doctrine and anti-Semitic propaganda in the
Baltic countries. “Our anti-Semitism is of an especially bad type,” wrote the oppositionist daily newspaper *Lietuvos Zinios* on June 13, 1933, “because it is imported from outside and has a special goal. Hitlerism has discovered the Lithuanians and has tailored special anti-Semitic methods to them.” Indeed, proposals were expressed in Baltic establishment newspapers, such as *Lietuvos Aidas* and *Verslas* in Lithuania, *Ogunkrust* in Latvia, and *Meie voi Juudid* in Estonia, to take pronouncedly racial measures against the Jews. The recommended actions included revoking the Jews’ electoral franchise, not allowing Jews to have non-Jewish servants, forbidding Jewish doctors to treat Christian patients, and banishing Jews from resort areas.

The economic rivalry between Jews and their neighbors also took on an increasingly anti-Semitic hue in the form of a boycott against Jewish merchants and craftspeople and public slogans such as “Lithuania for the Lithuanians” and “Latvia for the Latvians.” Economic organizations produced a crescendo of demands to limit the Jews’ domination of traditional occupations that they had practiced for generations—such as domestic and cross-border sales of farm produce, crafts, and light industry, especially in clothing, food, and printing. The anti-Jewish economic propaganda was accompanied by anti-Semitic incidents, such as desecrating cemeteries; defacing Yiddish and Hebrew signs; smashing windows of Jewish homes and public institutions, including synagogues; and violently assaulting Jews, individually and in groups. Verbal and physical attacks also took place at the University of Kaunas after Gentile students demanded that their Jewish counterparts be seated on special benches. As a result, relations between Jews and non-Jews in academia were seriously harmed. The few attempts by leftists, intellectuals, and Democrats to foster cultural and social relations between Jews and non-Jews also failed.

After Lithuania was forced to relinquish its historical capital, Vilnius, and the port city of Klaipeda (Memel) in 1938–1939, organizations on the Right found it easy to turn the masses’ rage against the Jews. One organization with a pronounced National-Socialist orientation contacted the German authorities and asked them for assistance, in the form of money and weapons, for the express purpose of organizing pogroms against the Jews. As the authorities displayed indifference to these manifestations, several Jewish personalities who had been active in establishing the Baltic countries and strengthening them politically now geared up to summon world public opinion, following the tradition from the time of the czarist persecutions. Militant organizations such as the Jewish Front-Line Soldiers and Betar, to name only two, were already planning to form a self-defense system of sorts.

**Inclusion of the Baltic Countries in the Soviet Sphere of Influence**

In the middle of June 1940, amid concern about a Nazi German takeover of the region, the Red Army occupied the three Baltic countries and within seven weeks transformed them into Soviet republics with everything this implied. Although much has been written about this, several relevant facts deserve special note.

From the standpoint of the Jews, the Soviet takeover of the Baltic countries, in October 1939, and their annexation to the Soviet Union, from July 1940 to June 1941, was the lesser of two evils. Even so, no representative Jewish organization in these countries congratulated the Soviets for revoking the political independence of the Baltic countries.

At this stage, the majority peoples, who were mourning the loss of their independence, accused the Jews of treason. This tendency gathered strength as a result of systematic incitement by ultra-nationalist organizations such as the Lithuanian Activist Front (LAF) in Lithuania, which derived its inspiration and support from Nazi Germany. The Soviet regime allowed civilians to “let off steam” by grumbling and expressing counter threats of the “just-wait” variety. Leaflets circulated by underground nationalist groups spoke of a “reckoning” that would be conducted against those who had brought Sovietization upon them, including three groups: imported functionaries from Moscow, local collaborators, and the Jews. Shortly before the Nazis invaded Lithuania in the summer of 1941, members of the LAF distributed leaflets promising their political rivals clemency
if they could clearly prove that they had wiped out at least one Jew. The leaflets also contained instructions on how to treat Jews, including the following:

All Jews are excluded from Lithuania forever. Should any one of them dare to expect any refuge in new Lithuania, let him know the irrevocable sentence passed on them: “Not a single Jew shall have any citizenship rights nor any means of sustenance in Lithuania reborn.”

**Nazi Occupation (1941–1944)**

In the first hours of the Wehrmacht invasion, many local inhabitants began to abuse almost any Jew whom they encountered. As time passed, the assaults escalated in momentum, extent, and brutality, and in every city Jews were being slaughtered en masse. Some of the perpetrators of this crime hunted down the victims, abused them, and led them to the death pits. Others participated in putting them to death and, afterward, divided up the victims’ clothing and jewelry. The physical obliteration of most Jews in the Baltic countries was perpetrated by local inhabitants, with the blessings of the German authorities. It was done not in gas chambers but with guns, knives, axes, and metal poles; Jews were beheaded, their skulls were smashed against walls, and they were buried alive; women were murdered after being raped as their families looked on. In dozens of localities, many assaults on the Jewish neighbors took place hours or even several days before the arrival of the first German soldier.

All types of attacks were initiated and perpetrated by men, women, and teenagers from all population groups, including teachers, students, members of the clergy, army and police officers, mayors, and journalists. Masses of people cheered in town squares at the sight of wanton brutalities against women and rabbis, burning of Torah scrolls, and the like. During the months of the mass slaughter, June–October 1941, contacts between Jews and non-Jews were almost totally severed, except for official orders that the civil administration and the local militia presented to the Jews on behalf of the Nazi occupation authorities. Disclosures from recently opened archives, along with other information that has accumulated on the attitude of the Baltic peoples toward the Jews, bring the following schematic picture to light: Of approximately 6 million non-Jewish inhabitants, nearly 40,000 physically assaulted or harmed Jews and about 1,000 saved Jews in various ways; only a few thousand provided assistance of any kind to individual Jews. Because they feared collective punishment, the victims rarely offered physical resistance to their murderers. In the last year of the Nazi occupation, Jews who had resolved to defend their lives with dignity, by taking up arms, and could do so by joining up with pro-Soviet partisans. This fact reinforced the old myth about all Jews being Communists, with all the implications this implied. Diaries left behind by victims, as well as folk songs and other kinds of folklore from those horrific days, often bring grave accusations against the local murderers, mixed with profound disappointment. A song in several stanzas, written by Jewish children in the ghetto of Kaunas as a parody on the Lithuanian national anthem, was recently found and published by the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC. An excerpt follows: “Oh, Lithuania, blood soaked land, be cursed forever, Let your towns, villages, and fields burn. You will be murdered, as you murdered us. Forever and ever.” Even Jews who escaped from a ghetto or a labor camp were still in considerable danger of being denounced to the Germans by local inhabitants. In view of this description, the acts should not be hidden behind such terms as genocide, catastrophe, tragedy, and execution. Instead, what occurred was a barbaric mass homicide, coupled with protracted torture—physical abuse, humiliation, and rape. In a word: a cruel and continual lynching.

**Soviet Rule in the Baltic Countries (July 1944–May 1945)**

In this last phase of World War II, Red Army soldiers gradually returned to the Baltic countries. As the Soviet forces advanced to the west and the Wehrmacht and its local allies retreated toward Germany, a few Jews came to the surface almost every day—Jews who had managed to survive in all sorts of ways, including concealment with non-Jews. These survivors were joined by several hundred Jews, including former soldiers in the Red Army, who had fled to the Soviet interior in
the summer of 1941. At the end of the war, both groups together added up to no more than 3,000 persons—only 0.05 percent of the population. Because many murderers of Jews, known as “Jewshooters,” had fled to Germany, the fugitives from the slaughter had reason to hope they would be treated decently, at the very least. However, this did not happen.

Although the surviving Jews construed the Soviets’ arrival as a deliverance from extinction, much of the population at large considered it an act of national re-enslavement. Similarly, a series of contrasting interests in daily life overshadowed the few interactions that by necessity took place between the sides. By the nature of things, the Jewish survivors were filled with desire to avenge the murder of their families and considered the recovery of their looted property the minimum that should be done to correct the horrific injustice caused to them. For local inhabitants who had guilty consciences, and for those who possessed the property of murdered people, almost every surviving Jew was a source of trouble who should be removed in any way possible.

It is no wonder that encounters between the sides were often fraught with severe tension and sometimes ended in verbal clashes and physical attack. One of the serious points of friction at the time concerned the return of Jewish children who had been placed in hiding with Christian families or in convents for the duration. Only a few priests mustered the courage to encourage those who sheltered children to return them to their relatives. In most cases, the relatives had to use force or ask the authorities to intervene.

However, support from the authorities was not always guaranteed, because the official goal was to create relative calm as long as the war continued among the hostile population or only dozens of kilometers away. In terms of domestic policy, the Jews, with their complicated problems, were often a stumbling block of sorts. This policy was also associated with the Soviets’ hopes of soft-pedaling the role of the Baltic peoples in murdering the Jews. This intent was expressed in part by the use of vague and general terms: The murderers were termed “fascists,” “nationalists,” and so on, whereas the Jewish victims were called “Soviet citizens,” without further differentiation.

The local population interpreted these and other signals as an indication that the authorities took exception to the Jews. Consequently, they reverted to their previous custom of settling scores at the personal level. In several localities, especially in peripheral towns, Lithuanian or Polish inhabitants murdered their surviving Jewish neighbors, children and all, and threatened to subject all Jews who remained alive to the same fate.

Jews occasionally heard sincere expressions of commiseration and consolation, however, a crescendo of voices among the Jews argued that there was no further point in living among graves and murderers, let alone in conducting a dialogue with the latter; hundreds of survivors began to abandon their places of residence and, with or without permission, to stream out of the Baltic countries. Most joined the organized clandestine escape movement to Palestine, the Beriha. The nucleus of the Beriha movement was composed of former members of Zionist youth movements who for months had fought in partisan units in Lithuania. Eventually, the Beriha spread to Latvia and Estonia as well. Although they lacked adequate information, appropriate documents, and financial and logistical resources, the movement leaders refused to avail themselves of local nationalist elements who, as they carried on their armed struggle against the Soviet regime, did not conceal their hostility toward the Jews but were glad to be rid of them one way or another.

Postwar Era

There exists general and partial denial of the Holocaust in the three Baltic countries, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, which includes components of disinformation and distortion. All of them frequently interrelate with the new forms of anti-Semitism. In 1944–1945, when the Soviets reoccupied the Baltic countries, a small proportion of Jewish survivors returned to live in areas that were filled with the graves of most of their relatives, recently slaughtered by the Germans and their non-Jewish neighbors. Quite a few of these murderers emigrated under false names and/or went to the forests to join the armed gangs that, for nearly 10 years, fought against the Soviet re-
gime to make their countries independent again.

Before withdrawing, the Germans strived prodigiously to cover up their crimes by incinerating the bodies of murdered Jews. The Soviet authorities adopted a different kind of deception: although Soviet authorities punished collaborators with the Nazi occupation authorities, including murderers of Jews, from the late 1940s and in the 1950s they were careful to make the least possible mention of the Holocaust. From the mid-1960s it became increasingly the trend in Soviet-Lithuanian historiography to “prove,” by stressing the existence of several hundred Lithuanians honored as “Righteous among the Nations,” that the Jewish-Lithuanian fraternity of peoples endured even during the Nazi occupation. The only non-participants in this fraternity were “a minority of lowly murderers,” nearly all of whom were “fascist nationalists” and “kulaks.” Denial of the wartime murderers followed Baltic émigrés who fled to the West after the war and concealed from the immigration authorities their activity in murdering Jews in their countries of origin. Denial of the Holocaust has continued even since the Baltic states gained independence in 1991, drawing wide condemnation.

Selected Bibliography


Supplementary Bibliography

Lithuania:
Shimon Dubnow, ed. “Chronicles of the Lithuanian Jewish Council, or Chronicles of the Major Communities in Lithuania from 1623 to 1761,” [Hebrew] (Berlin 1925)
Mendel Sudarsky, ed. “Lite” (Lithuania) Vol 1, [Yiddish] (New York 1951)
Hirsh Abramowicz, “Vanished Persons” [Yiddish ] (Buenos Aires, 1958)


Abba Gomer, “Beitraege, zu Kultur - und Sozialgeschichte des litauischen,” Judentums im 17, u. 18 Jahrhundert (Bochum 1930)


Memorial Book for the Jewish Community of Jurburg (New York ,2003), pp. 570-607

Latvia:

An Interview with Hanna Ferber, Part 3
Recorded December 18, 2001
Interviewed by Svetlana Kovalchuk
Translated from Russian to English by Inga Long

In 1941 he (brother – in – law, ed.) was already working in Riga in “State Grain” and my sister was already working in the pharmacy. They couldn’t afford all four rooms therefore they were renting out two rooms. We came to celebrate Atida’s seventh birthday and gave her a light knapsack as a present. They all died in the Jelgava’s ghetto in 1941.

On June 14, 1941 when the deportation took place (on that day from all across Latvia, by a decision of the Soviet government, people were taken regardless of their nationality and deported to Russian “labor” camps – ed.). They took my brother Izak to the workers guard. On June 15th or 14th he came and said, “Listen! They will deport Gita for sure. I saw that horror. We came to the people at night and gave them 20 minutes to get ready. Just because they were wealthy people, they were taken out of their beds – children and old people. If we had helped them to get ready we would be yelled at. You go immediately to Jelgava, pack all your belongings and wait. It is important that all things are packed!”

The head of the family was separated to a carriage for the cattle, but the rest of the family were put in another carriage. That’s how they were deported in 1941. All of them! It wasn’t just one nation – Latvians! All the wealthy people. I went to Jelgava, we packed the bags and waited. I waited one night. Who was sleeping? There were four of us in one bed. We were waiting. We heard the horse. No, it passed by. There was a car. No it went by. I spent two nights over there. As it appeared, the wealthy Jews of Jelgava paid somebody the money. That’s why they weren’t deported. But in return, when the Germans came, they put out the sign that said “Juden frei.” That’s when my sister, her husband and the baby died. I didn’t go to search for their belongings. Many years later when I was working in the Government auto industry, which had two branches in Jelgava, I just couldn’t go there on business trips. I simply couldn’t.

Whom haven’t I talked about yet? Izak! He studied in the Jewish school, graduated and went to work as an apprentice at the manufacturing store. He was short, and one couldn’t see him behind the counter. Later, he grew up bigger – a big handsome man! He was very good natured. When Friday came, my mother said to me, “Go to the store and ask the owner for two Lats on behalf of Izak’s salary for the Sabbath.” Then mother went to the market. My father was a traveling salesman and came home on Fridays for the Sabbath. Izak, like Boris, went to the club “Brit – Trumpeldor.” He also wanted to go to Israel. When I got older my father forbid me from going to that organization. He was afraid I would want to leave. Later Izak started to work as a cashier in the store.

In 1934 Izak was serving in the Latvian Army. He was a traveling salesman and came home on Fridays for the Sabbath. Izak, like Boris, went to the club “Brit – Trumpeldor.” He also wanted to go to Israel. When I got older my father forbid me from going to that organization. He was afraid I would want to leave. Later Izak started to work as a cashier in the store.
Sarah). He was carrying the bags for his brother-in-law (Moric Rozenberg). At 4 – 5 o’clock in the morning, summer or winter, the brother-in-law got dressed and went to work. Farmers from villages brought bags with the grain on horses. Farmers didn’t bring the grain all at once, but only when they needed the money. His brother-in-law was a specialist. He tasted it himself and could tell the percentage of the flour contained and took that grain to the elevator. By the way, in the book of geography of Latvia it said that the biggest grain elevator in Jelgava belonged to M. Rozenberg. I don’t know whether he owned it or just rented it. Izak was carrying the grain to the elevator and the farmers were paying him.

In 1938 he married Sarah Sorkina. She is still alive and is 87 years old. Last time we saw him was on John’s Day (June 24th – edit.) in 1941. The war had already started. He came to our house. Sarah was there and he said to her, “If everybody is going to leave, leave.” She told him, “I am not leaving without you.” I’ll tell you how we left. Sarah had a sister Riva Sorkina. Her last name was Paikina since she was already married. She lived in one apartment with my friend Luba across the Daugava (the river divides Riga – edit.). Sarah was renting a room from her. Luba was Sonya’s brother’s fiancée. But he was a Zionist activist. In 1940 he was immediately deported to Vorkuta (Gulag camp – edit.) She received a large insurance payment from the company named “Lloyds” for her father who died in 1936. Luba could receive that money either when she turned 21 or when she got married. When she received that money she renovated and furnished that apartment, but since her fiancée was deported she took in his sister as a tenant.

They were crossing the Daugava with suitcases. There was shooting and they dropped the suitcases in the Daugava, and ran across the bridge. They came to the train station and saw the train. Riva sent a messenger and she gave him 100 rubles for the sister who was at our home at Lachplesha Street. He said, “Your sister Riva is calling you to the train station.” Sonya went to the station and said that without the parents and me she won’t go anywhere. Sister Riva gave another 100 rubles and the messenger came. I had packed my suitcases. The messenger took my two suitcases. We had two 2 kg of loaves of rye bread with us, some butter and an enamel teapot tied to the basket. Mother said, “We will drink kipyatok (boiled water – edit.) I didn’t know such a word. In Russia everywhere there was written the word “kipyatok” - people were approaching and taking the water in whatever bowl they had. That’s how we left - we took the basket with food and everybody took a winter coat. Sonya didn’t take anything, only a purse.

The messenger took us to the train station. We had to climb through the train window it was so full. Our suitcases somehow fit in. It was a passenger car. As I remember, we spent ten days getting to Sigulda (city in Latvia, located 50 km from Riga – edit.). In Sigulda our car was shot at. They said there were three young man standing on the top of our cars and giving the signals so our cars were bombed. When we moved on they were laying dead there. Some said that in the last car there were deserters who were guarding our car. All the time we were stopping and moving. People were hungry and they were willing to give anything, I don’t know what, for a piece of bread. In the beginning my mother got some of that bread and put some butter on it. There were certain young people who came at that time with jar openers. We were eating twice a day. But later only once a day. During the day we were taking turns sitting. During the night we slept on the floor – there were old magazines we put under ourselves. It was impossible to get to the toilet – people were sitting there, too. We were waiting for the train to stop so we could get under the car and do our business.

We got into the echelon only when we got to Pskov. We saw Pskov – we saw the front. In Yaroslav, or somewhere else we got onto the cattle cars, where we could sleep at least. That’s how we fled – three of us and Luba with Sergey and Riva with her husband, and Sonya. There was an idea – may be it was a good one – to put the evacuees in the villages – in the place of those farmers who left for the front. We were settlers to one farmer lady, who gave us one big room. Immediately we started to search for Izak. We visited the evacuee center and local authorities. Sonya spoke a little Russian, but nobody had heard of the last name Hercenberg. Later we
learned that he died near Stara Russ in 1941. We have the papers. But his wife Sonya stayed with us for the rest of her life.

My father had some yellow document, which said that Adolf Hercenberg and his wife Feige Hercenberg and their children were released from the Vyatsk region and were allowed to return to Jelgava. This document was issued in 1917. My father kept it until 1941 and that helped us get to Kirov (Vyatka.) My father said, “They used to deport me to Vyatka, now I want to go and live there.” The previous deportation helped. I showed this document in 1941 and then gave it away and didn’t keep a copy since they didn’t want to register us in our apartment in Riga.

My husband Shimon, in the papers he is Simon Antonovich Ferber, was born on May 17th, 1917 in Tukums. He graduated from the Russian High School. Shimon was attracted to me since I was 13 years old. He had an aunt living in Jelgava – his mother’s sister – frau Klass. He visited her during school holidays. Klass had a little two level house – on the first level lived his aunt with her husband, but on the second level there lived another family Klass – my classmate. At that time there was a beautiful park in Jelgava – castle park, next to the castle which was destroyed during WWI. Children were playing there and Luba Klass came there with her relative Shimon. And when we got older, he fell in love with me. He started to write letters to me. I was so little at that time, I wasn’t allowed to receive letters. Luba Klass had a housekeeper and so Shimon wrote letters addressed to her. Those were letters for me.

During the war when we fled to Kirov, there were also his parents, too. He was a son – there was no one else like him. Shimon was from Tukums, he was an active member of “Brit – Trumpeldor.” His brother was a communist. He had three brothers. His father, Aaron Ferber had two brothers. All together those three brothers had 15 sons and 2 daughters. After WWII seven of them were no longer alive. Today the whole family lives in Israel and only the son of Haim Ferber lives in Riga. My husband had two brothers – the oldest was Max Mendel, who was a communist. He died on the front on December 31, 1942. He was fighting in the Latvian division. He died in the hands of my husband – they fought together. My husband fought in the Latvian division.

The youngest was Emmanuel. Today he lives in Haifa. He was a pharmacist. When the war started, his parents left Tukums, because his brother was the first secretary of the Komsomol. He sent his pregnant wife and mother and father to Riga by car. But my husband and Emmanuel took the bicycles and went to Riga. On the way to Riga they went to the front, because they were Komsomols. His parents were evacuated to separate cities. He united the family in Kirov. He visited my mother – I was at the work at that time – and sent me the greetings. We didn’t meet.

In 1945 my mother and I went to Riga through Leningrad. I restarted my studies at the English Institute. Luba Klass told him where I lived. I was lonely. He visited me. My mother was very ill at that time – she was holding on until they liberated Jelgava. We wrote Gita in Jelgava – she wasn’t there. My mother started to fade. She died on December 25, 1945. Shimon Ferber came to me, my mother was ill, we were in somebody’s apartment and had no money. He was so sweet – exchanged all his food stamps. We went to the movies, circus, and theater. On November 7, 1945 he proposed to me. Shimon got the carrier – my mother couldn’t walk, and we went to his parents. On November 9th, we registered our marriage. I told him, “I will go to the registrar only once, if you don’t have the papers and they won’t register us – I will not go for the second time.” I married him based on common sense.

We went to the registrar, but she said, “I don’t register anymore today. I have a stamp (for buying some products, things – edit.) for galoshes. I need some footwear.” But Shimon answered, “I am in the military, and I can get you the galoshes without standing in line. If you will register us I will go with you to get some footwear.” Only my husband could say something like that. We registered and got the paper where it said that we were legally married. Afterwards we went to the shoe store, but on that day they didn’t sell any shoes. Then we went to his house – all the Ferbers gathered there. Then we went to my mother and told her that I got married. My mother asked his
mother to come by. “Children are living without Chuppa!” said my mother. On November 17, 1945 Shimon and I went to the Rabbi and made Chuppa. I took a little gold from home and we made a wedding ring for each of us.

My husband got discharged and started to work at the Ministry of Trade as an inspector of the department of organization. He worked in the system of the Ministry of the Trade until he retired in 1994. My husband died in 1996 and worked hard all his life, usually coming home around 11 pm. My little daughter once called him an “uncle.” Yes, in our family we spoke in Russian.

Yes, I married based on common sense. On December 13, 1946 I gave birth to my son. It was the happiest day of my life. Number 13 is lucky for me. I can thank God many times a day for such a son. My son was looked after by housekeepers who all were Russians. I didn’t teach my son English because I didn’t have time for that. And, based on principles, I didn’t speak German to him even though in my school all the subjects, except Hebrew, were in German. I had bad memories about that school so I do not speak German. My son graduated from the University of Latvia, faculty of Physics and Mathematics. He is now a professor at the University of Latvia.

My son has a son Arye and a daughter Lina. I have a daughter whom I named Fira, she was born on December 28th, 1952. I was very happy – I wanted a girl. When the head of the child came out my doctor told me, “Well, the Ferbers have another son!” When I saw the bracelet on the child’s arm, the word “boy” was crossed out and the word “girl” was written. From the very first days Fira was nursed by our housekeeper, who lived with us for 13 years. My daughter graduated from the University of Latvia, faculty of Arts, Department of Russian Philology. Now she has her own business. Fira has a daughter Ada. My daughter married a wonderful Russian man who died of cancer at the age of 47. When Ada got her passport, she registered herself as a Jew.

My husband made a condition – his parents lived hard enough and won’t nurse the grandchildren, even though they lived nearby. I agreed to that, but said, “Keep in mind, I won’t nurse my grandchildren either!” And I didn’t. I kept my word.

I kept Jewish traditions in our family in the same way my parents did – my children knew when Peisach is, went to the synagogue, baked Matzo and on the Jewish New Year, I kept the same traditions as my husband’s parents did.

In 1945 a relative of mine got me a job in the Department of Planning and I worked there until 1948. Then I started to work at the taxi-motor park since the head of the Department of Planning knew my capabilities to learn new things. They put me in the position of the chief economist of Riga’s taxi-motor park. Now I had a career and I became a head of the planning department. I indoctrinated them in teamwork for car maintenance, so that cars wouldn’t be in disrepair most of the time. In 1959 I started to work as a head of the department of research under the department of construction which was the first in the USSR to build a diagnostic station for cars. I worked there until my retirement at the age of 55.

An Interview with Simon Gutman
Part 2

Recorded 7 February 2002
Interviewed by Ayna Antane
Translated from Russian to English by Sofia Kagna

We even published a newspaper! We used to collect money for the construction of military planes, when Curzon issued the ultimatum to Red Russia (George Nathaniel Curzon (1859-1925) was British Foreign Secretary in 1919–24. He is famous for his ultimatum note to the Soviet government that he issued on July 11th, 1921 at the time of Russian-Polish war). We were very excited when my mother brought our money to Moscow, and in the newspaper "Izvestiya" (A high-circulation daily paper in the Soviet Union. It was the second biggest newspaper after “Pravda” – the official newspaper of the Communist Party) they printed the list of donors and there was the editorial board of our newspaper.

Then, when I went to live in Riga my sister helped me and arranged for me to work in the Jewish theatre. It was in 1928, and the theatre was located on 6 Shkol'naya Street. I can still remember every wall and every brick there. I am the last surviving employee of the Jewish theatre. No-
body else is still alive now! The Art Director of the theatre was Mikhail Io. There were various actors whom I made sketches of. We met so many interesting people from America, Poland, and many different parts of the world! The first season I worked at the sets department. I thought, let them there, in Dvinsk, think: «Oh, Simka is working at the theatre!» But actually it was like that: take a mop and do the painting! The first year I worked at the sets department, the next year they offered me a position of a prop master. Who do you think a prop master is? You could never imagine what I did! I was required to prepare everything that is used for killing and shooting. When the actors ate on stage, I cut their bread. I diluted wine with water so it would be clearly visible for the audience. An American director Adler visited us at one time. (Either Jay Adler or Luther Adler - both of them were young performing actors and probably producers on Broadway at that time. They were children of a famous Jacob Adler, a Russian-Jewish actor who was born in Odessa in 1855 and became a star of Yiddish theatre first in Russia and later in London and New York where he died in 1926 leaving a big family. All of his 6 children were connected to performing arts in one way or another) and actress Clara Young (Clara Kimball Young (1890-1960) – a very popular silent movie actress and also a modern vintage postcard icon, was born in Chicago and spent most of her life in Hollywood, California. At the time that Mr. Gutman describes she was not in her seventies, but in her forties, so either for him at that time she seemed to be very old, or he is mistaking her with another popular actress) She was in her seventies and carried herself on a stage like a young girl. There were local actors too - Aynas, Shapiro, Peter Surits. All you would not be able to recollect. I lived in an apartment that belonged to Surits, on the Mariyas Street, between Blaumanya and Lachplesha (Riga's downtown arts district near the historic “Old City”) Surits's wife was an actress of an easy genre (variety show or cabaret). I remember her; she liked to eat, and often carried her child with her, the girl. He [Surits] often spoke about their child as a ‘fruit of love’. They were not very young people and the daughter was a late child. All of them were killed, likely in the Riga ghetto. Surits did not leave Riga during World War I. He always liked to recall that time and stressed that Germans behaved very decently. Likely, in the summer of 1941 he had decided to repeat his experience. Ronich was a star of Russian theatre. He used to say, “Jew or no Jew – you’ve got to eat.” One day he showed up in Riga and was working in our theatre. Then he went to Romania where local police arrested him.

There were many amusing episodes. I had an opportunity to closely observe some great stars as they played. Stars like Mozzhukhin (Ivan Mozzhukhin (1889 — 1939) was a very popular Russian and later French actor who mainly performed in silent movies. He started his career in Russia where he starred mainly in adaptations of Russian classics (Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, Pushkin). In 1919 he immigrated to France where he quickly became successful and mostly performed in adventure and romance films. For his powerful presence on screen he was dubbed the “European Rudolph Valentino.”).

The French in the mid 1920s made films with director Turjansky (Victor (born Vyacheslav) Turjansky (1891-1976) Russian and later French and German movie director. Originally he was a student of the MHAT Actors Studio in Moscow. Before the Revolution he became the owner of one of the biggest movie companies in Russia. He was filming till 1920 in Crimea throughout the Civil War and then escaped to Paris where he gathered Russian immigrant movie stars around him. During WWII he was working in Germany and after the War in some of his movies he was credited under the alias to avoid the stigma of Nazi collaborator.) - Russian emigrant, with Russian actors, Mozzhukhin, Kovanko (Natalie Kovanko was Victor Turjansky’s wife. She appeared in fourteen of his movies. Her career ended with her divorce and the arrival of sound). It was an adaptation of Jules Verne; the movie was called "The Imperial Courier" (Actually the name of the 1926 movie is “Michel Strogoff" adopted from Jules Verne novel "Michel Strogoff: The Courrier of the Tsar." The three hour long film is considered one of the silent masterpieces and its restored version was recently released). They filmed in Daugavpils, Dvinsk. They decided that there the nature would be “authentic” – Siberian! Nobody in the city was working at that time – everybody
went to watch the shooting! The Dvinsk’s garri-
son of the Latvian army, its cavalry regiment,
participated in these shootings – they played the
Russian army. I was there during the filming. I
was standing next to Mozzhukhin and had a close
look at him. For me to see the star of Russian cin-
ema was a historic event!

The cinema attracted my brother and me. In
Dvinsk our family was known as the family of
Gutman who was the owner of “Grand Electro.”
They let us go to the movies free of charge. The
mechanic at the movie theatre «Apollo» whose
older brother used to work for my father at
“Grand Electro” one time entrusted me to rotate
the handle of a film projector. Now you do not
need to rotate! Then an awkward thing happened:
it seemed to me that the movie was coming to an
end and I started to slow down on rotating: peo-
lude – I did not dare to go to the cinema any more!
I was ashamed!

When I started to work in Riga I was not con-
nected to Komsomol any more. However the lo-
cal police already knew me. I always was under
their surveillance.

At this time my brother remained in Dvinsk.
When he arrived to Riga he started to work as a
regular transport worker and carried the luggage.
Then he left for Czechoslovakia, to Brno. There
he studied for about two years. At that time not
many people remained in Riga to study, espe-
cially the Jews. The main destination was Europe,
primarily Prague, Berlin, Denmark, Belgium and
Holland. He studied to become a textile master:
he made tapestries and gobelins. After Brno he
worked in Dvinsk on a small textile manufacture
plant. The owners were Jews; they were small ex-
ploiters! And when the Soviet authority came
they appointed my brother to be a director of this
plant. Before that he served in the army in 1931,
first in the 11th and then in the 10th regiment. It
was obligatory to serve only 11 months in the
Dvinsk fortress. It was a total of 15 months of
service, but after 11 month the soldiers pulled the
straws: either to go home or to serve three more
months. These three months usually were in the
summer. There were instances when some sol-
diers committed suicide. My brother did serve
these three additional months.

In 1931 I met my future wife Ida Ruvimovna
Kvasnik (1917—1992). She was a very good and
very beautiful woman. She was younger than me.
She passed away and during the last years of her
life she was very ill. I married her in 1936. You
would ask me: was there a Chuppah? To tell you
the truth, I was not religious, and moreover even
now I am not religious. Her father was from
Lithuania and he was religious, the mother of my
future wife passed away of a breast cancer two or
three years before our wedding. Her father spoke
Russian as did all Lithuanians, with a heavy ac-
cent. Well, there was some kind of religious cere-
mony and I do not tell anybody about this shame!
The Chuppah took place at some relatives’ place,
in an apartment. I have conceded to avoid the
scandal. My wife was not very religious, she
spoke good Yiddish but she did not go to a syn-
agogue. They were poor, though they owned a
small grocery shop in the same house where they
lived. Their apartment was poor. Her younger sis-
ter Roza was chubby and healthy looking. There
was also a brother who was sickly.

We often went to a synagogue when our father
passed away. My brother and I ran there daily,
three times a day to read kaddish – a remem-
brance prayer. Our older brother did not go.
There were situations during the Civil War when
there was shooting, but we went there anyway.
My brother Solomon was fanatically religious at
that time. He even read a night prayer in bed. He
needed a kippah for that so he pulled on a blanket
on his head to perform a prayer. Our mother was
religious too. In her case it came from her family.
She spoke Yiddish extremely well. We did not
learn Yiddish, but my mother taught Hebrew to
all her sons. Wherever we used to live, the teach-
ers came to us; there was always a Hebrew
teacher. Even now I still remember many words.
When we were in Komsomol, one friend taught
us to read Yiddish, he was a noble guy and a
strong believer in the Communist idea. He taught
us and somehow it came easy to us. I still can
read Yiddish now.

We (my wife and I) did not have anything – we
rented an apartment with furniture on a monthly
basis, only one time we had reserved the apart-
ment for us for the whole summer. Usually we refused to rent an apartment for the summer; instead we rented a cheap summerhouse in Meluzi, in Jūrmala. (Jūrmala in Latvian means “beach” or “seaside.” It is a famous Latvian resort city near Riga. Jūrmala itself is a long (32 kilometers) narrow stretch of beaches and sanatoriums between Lielpe River and the Gulf of Riga of the Baltic Sea. The city itself is a string of small resorts and Meluzi is one of them. Since middle 1700s it was considered one of the best spa resorts in Europe. Jūrmala is famous for its wooden houses built in Art Nouveau style. When the direct railroad was built from Riga to Jūrmala many people from Riga moved to the seaside for the summer and every day they took the train to work. When Latvia was a part of the Soviet Union, Jūrmala became one of the most popular Soviet summer tourist spots.) You know, the Jews could not rent summer residences at the certain stations in Jūrmala. And earlier in general they were permitted only to live 50 kilometers away from Riga. By this time in 1938-1939 I had some money from my working in advertisement and I could afford to continue renting the rooms (in Riga) for the summer. We paid about 35-40 lats per month. At first my wife arrived in Riga to stay with me before we were even married. Then she found some kind of work, she worked in a shop somewhere. When we started to live together, she stopped working. We could not afford anything. The first time that we bought furniture, just a little bit for one room, was in 1940! During the Soviet times!

My brother became an artist. I studied in Riga at different school-studios and at public universities and the studio conducted by Roman Suta. (Roman Suta (1896-1944) was a famous Latvian graphic artist. The essence of Suta’s art was Latvian nation’s building. His signature style was art on china and porcelain surfaces and plaques. The themes of Latvian folklore and everyday life of its common people were prevalent in his art. After 1940 Suta evacuated to Tbilisi (at that time the capital of the Georgian Soviet Republic of the Soviet Union). There he was executed due to false accusations. In 1959 he was officially rehabilitated.) I studied there and participated in exhibitions. Since then one of my pictures is exhibited in a museum. Father’s obsession with movies stuck with me and I went into film advertising. They provided me with photographs and I made drawings for the ARS Company. This company distributed and showed on screen Soviet and American movies. I made posters for the Soviet films. The posters were without text and they made them for the whole Baltic regions. At the same time I earned some additional money as a cartoonist. I signed my name as Gutman.

I remember when the actor and director Rubin came from Moscow from Solomon Mikhoels Theatre (Solomon Mikhoels (1890-1948) was born in Dvinsk, now Daugavpils, Latvia. He was the most famous Soviet Jewish director and actor. He founded Moscow State Jewish Theatre that became world famous for modernist creative experimentation. During World War Two Mikhoels became the chairman of the World Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee and traveled all over the world to meet with Jewish leaders and organize resistance and humanitarian help to the Jews as well as expose anti-Jewish crimes of Nazi regime. In 1948 at the beginning of Stalin anti-Semitic purges Mikhoels was secretly murdered on the direct order from Stalin. His death was staged as a traffic accident). Rubin directed Sholem Aleichem’s “The Big Prize” (Probably 1916 play “Dos Groyse Gevins” (The Big Lottery/The Jackpot). What a charming magnificent performance it was! The modernist style!

By the way, I remember the night of Ulmanis coup in 1934; it happened in the middle of the night from May 15th to May 16th (Karlis Ulmanis who was the Prime Minister at that time dissolved the Parliament (Saeima in Latvian) on May 15th, 1934 and established the authoritarian rule by the top executive without the Parliament. He motivated his actions as the necessity to protect Latvia from right-wing extremists that were ready to execute their own coup). That night I was at the Jewish theatre; I just stopped there for a moment on my way home. When I was returning home I saw the trucks with Aizsargi (soldiers) and I had no idea that tomorrow there would be a coup. They had taken the House of Trade Unions and lowered down on the ropes the portraits of Janis Rainis (Janis Rainis (1865-1929) is considered the greatest Latvian poet, writer, playwright and
translator. He was also a politician, a great proponent of Latvia’s independent democratic state).

By 1940 many people knew how it all would turn out. In 1939 Moscow issued an ultimatum to Ulmanis and there already were Soviet military bases on the Baltic. The bases needed protection! Around us the war was blazing and the people’s mood was grim. They knew that nothing good would come out of this. On June 17th the Soviet troops entered Riga and on June 21st there was a gathering around Central prison: the communists were released on amnesty. That day I decided to return to Riga from our summer residence I saw an incredible show! The dark shape of people’s bodies was crossing the pontoon bridge, under a viaduct, downward, carrying red banners. It was really earthshaking! For a simple red cloth that was thrown over the street wires at night you could go to prison for several years. I crossed to prison over Matveyevskaya Street and there stood the crowd waiting while they sorted through all the protocols for the amnesty.

Communists probably had been gathered to be taken out of prison, most likely to be killed. The Soviets learned about it and ordered to return all the prisoners to their cells! There was a big gathering of people near the prison behind the railway: it was a real crowd! They carried trade-union banners. Most of them were Latvians. Suddenly Soviet planes flew above us. There was one elderly Latvian woman who exclaimed: “O, mūsu vanadziņi!” (Oh, here are our eagles flying!). When I tell Latvians about this now, they do not believe me! Later the communists came out from the prison gate and everybody welcomed them. Then everybody went to the presidential palace and there was the presidential standard hanging above us. The Latvians shouted: "Nost šo kabatlakatīnu!" (Take off this handkerchief!). There were several individuals who had tied the portrait of Ulmanis to a bicycle, thrown a prisoner’s uniform over it and then had a ride like that! All these historical events were tremendous! But I noticed that in many windows people’s faces were very angry. It should be remembered, should be known, because of everything that happened later!

In 1940 there were meetings with many well-known Soviet cultural workers. There came famous Grigoriy Aleksandrov (Grigoriy Alexandrov (1903-1983) was the most prominent and popular Soviet movie director in Stalin era. He is mostly known for his magnificent musicals in the 30s and 40s that showcased how great people’s life was in the Soviet Union) with Lyubov Orlova (Lyubov Orlova (1902-1975) was the biggest movie star in the Soviet Union in 30s and 40s. She was a gifted singer and mainly appeared on screen in musical comedies directed by her husband, Grigoriy Alexandrov) to visit the movie production studio. There was a meeting with writer Mikhail Zoshchenko (Mikhail Zoshchenko (1895-1958) was a prominent Soviet satirical writer and humorist during 20s and 30s. In 1946 he was severely criticized and subsequently ostracized for his satirical depictions of the Soviet lifestyle and bureaucracy by the main ideologist of Stalin era Zhdanov. After that Zoshchenko lived in utmost poverty and survived out of the kindness of his friends). Later I cooperated with Riga’s magazine "Krokodil" (“Krokodil” stays here for Russian "crocodile". It was the best-known soviet satirical magazine. Although to engage in political satire was perilous during most of the Soviet era, “Krokodil” was a relatively safe haven left on purpose by the government to mock and ridicule mostly foreign political figures and events. “Krokodil” was founded in 1922, then discontinued after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and reinstated in Russia in 2005). The editor was Grisha Krupnikov, later he has been killed in the territory of Estonia. I did not cooperate with the newspaper "Segodnya" ["Today"] in the 1930s. And during Soviet time all readers of "Sovetskaya Latviya" (daily newspaper "The Soviet Latvia" – the main newspaper of Latvia during the Soviet rule), especially readers of senior generation, knew me pretty well. My cartoons always had political content.

I did not care much about the nationalization (On June 17, 1940 the Red Army entered Latvia and occupied its territory, and on August 5 Latvia was declared to willingly enter the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics as another republic as an exercise of the free will of its people. The Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic and a new government were set up. The beginning of the nationalization...
in Latvia declared at the end of July 1940. That meant subsequent and total nationalization of industrial and commercial property. They did what they considered necessary, but it did not concern me! The New Year of 1941 came - it was very cheerful! We all celebrated it at the Jewish Community Center on Shkol'naya Street: there was a remarkable New Year's ball!

There was a Jewish newspaper, the communist newspaper in Yiddish, and I have created very good caricatures for this newspaper. President Ulmanis expected the events and consequently spoke that in each house there should be a pair of boots and a shirt, i.e. the reserves for the army. I remembered that speech! And I had made a caricature, a two-part cartoon about this famous declaration: the first part was the story with boots, when Ulmanis shows boots, and the second part, the boot of history, when boot of Soviet soldier kicks him out! That particular caricature did not survive, but apart from that I still have a lot of my works at my home! Especially the caricatures for "Sovetskaya Latviya" ["The Soviet Latvia"]!

The year of 1941 – the smell of the big thunder-storm was in the air! I remember that morning, Sunday, June 22nd; I was in our film service office, I remember the speech of Molotov (Vyacheslav Molotov (1890 – 1986) was prominent soviet politician and diplomat, one of the closest people to Stalin and subsequently one of the main figures in the government of USSR, in 1939 – 1949 he was a Minister of Foreign Affairs. Reportedly the sudden and totally unexpected (in spite of repeated and repeatedly ignored warnings from the intelligence) outbreak of war on June 22nd was a horrendous shock for Stalin and totally incapacitated him as a leader for several days. Thus the first “war speech” inspiring Soviet people to defend their motherland against Nazi Germany was delivered by Molotov). And then we were hidden in a cellar as the Germans began bombing our city. On Wednesday the 25th the firing of the fifth column (probably Mr. Gutman is referring here to the commonly used meaning of the “fifth column” as a group of people who support another nation, government or political movement then the one they officially live under, or belong to) has started! They fired from all roofs! It was just horrible! Everything was already prepared! We were sitting and, especially Jews, asking each other: «What do we do now?!» The panic everywhere around was enormous!

At that time our film company had its own transport base. In charge of that base was Gudkin, the Jew, who later had left for Israel. He has probably passed away by now. He was working as a film mechanic in «Grad Kino» at that time and he arranged to get the transport supervisor position for himself. So, there was the car approaching and my wife and I came out to get in it. They told us that all men were supposed to stay behind to defend Riga! But were there any rifles to do so?! And everyone kept looking at each other! The car stopped, my wife boarded this car with a bag and a pillow. Women and children were around her. I stayed behind. Then came Gudkin and he said to me: “The car is here, get in it, if you want to go.” We both wrote for each other some kind of passes that we were accompanying the group, otherwise we would not be able to go! That is how we followed after our women. On our way we passed the movie theatre "Grand Kino". There were crowds of people there! They stretched their hands to us! But it was just impossible to take more people with us! That was a really dramatic scene!

So we headed on the road in the direction to Pskov. We saw dead bodies lying on the road. Somewhere far away the planes were flying very low. All roads were full of people who were trying to escape. When the German bombers were right above us everyone started to scream and even the oldest women found strength to jump over the body of the truck in the grass near the road to hide. Bombs were dropped from above! Then we were trying to help the wounded that were stained with blood.

Our young driver, a Latvian boy, asked us: “Here nearby lives my mother, let me run to her just to say goodbye». And Gudkin, who had a gun, said to him, “No, you will not go!” Under a barrel of a gun the driver had stayed with us so we finally were able to reach Pskov. Let me go forward in our story and I will tell you what happened with this guy: he ended in Gorokhovetskiye camps and was enlisted to the Latvian division
Gorokhovetskiye camps were situated near the Russian city Gorky (now Nizhniy Novgorod). It was one of the main sites of the training, formation and regrouping of the different divisions of the Red Army. The renowned 201st Latvian Rifle Division was also formed there. By the end of 1941 the Latvian Rifle Division by the official account had 10,348 soldiers: 51% ethnic Latvians, 26% ethnic Russians, 17% Jews and 6% others. It is remarkable that about 70 Jewish soldiers who were enlisted in the division belonged to the Zionist "Beitar" organization which purpose was to train youth physically and militarily so they would go to then Palestine and defend Jewish settlements there. Beitar was considered to be a foreign spy organization by the Soviet government, and then he was killed. Later his mother came to Gudkin, who after the war was managing our advertising department; to receive a pension for her son.

(To be Continued)

Not only did Sofia Kagna do a wonderful job in translating the testimony from Russian to English, but she also provided historical context to many of the events that Simon Gutman experienced. Additionally, Sofia went out of her way to locate clips of the movie Michael Strogoff on YouTube to further illustrate Simon’s experiences with the theatrical stars he came in contact with. I strongly suggest that you access the following links provided by Sofia, which also provide views of Latvia where much of the filming took place.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Z_Pu7ZOLSs
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LsFZfAqwGuE
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rsUhfpJHF9U
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3bzojTbiRBY
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Z_Pu7ZOLSs
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LsFZfAqwGuE
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rsUhfpJHF9U
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3bzojTbiRBY

You can also find these clips, and others, by searching for Strogoff on the YouTube home page.

Also mentioned in the testimony is the famous Russian/Yiddish actor Solomon Mikhoels, who was born in Dvinsk, and Sofia was kind enough to provide the following link which highlights the life of Mr. Mikhoels.


A recent article about Mikhoels appears in the July 10, 2008 issue of Haaretz online at:
http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/998756.html

Membership Fees are Past Due

If you have not done so already, please renew your subscription to the Latvia SIG. Our subscription year runs from 1 July 2008 through 30 June 2009. Dues may be paid for multiple years. Yearly fees are US $25 for the US and Canada, and $35 (bankable in the US) from elsewhere. If you wish to renew your membership for multiple years, the first year will be $25 ($35 outside North America) and $20 ($30 outside North America) for each additional year. Please make your check payable to Latvia SIG and mail it to:

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

You can also remit your payment through PayPal to: MikeGetz005@comcast.net. Directions for using PayPal can be found on the Latvia SIG website or follow the directions below:

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: MikeGetz005@comcast.net, 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. Money can also be deducted from your bank account, if you choose to do so.

After reviewing the details of your payment, click the Send Money button. The Latvia SIG will immediately receive an e-mail 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) and include Family Finder information.
Latvia SIG Membership Questionnaire

NAME:............................................................ PHONE:..........................................
ADDRESS:............................................................ FAX:..........................................
CITY:...........................................................STATE/PROVINCE:..........................
ZIP/POSTAL CODE:........................ COUNTRY (if other than U.S.):...........................
E-mail 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 $25 (U.S. and Canada), $35 for overseas members payable to Latvia SIG, to:

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

Enter contact information in FF: Yes ____ No____
Please circle newsletter preference: PDF Hard Copy

Note: If you prefer to join or renew your membership for multiple years, please submit $25 ($35 overseas) for the first year, and $20 ($30 overseas) for each subsequent year.