

Latvia SIG

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President's Report



Our members have often asked me whether there is any way that they can get involved in the work of the Latvia SIG?

The answer is a resounding yes! Every member who has done research into his or her shtetl background can make a valuable contribution by providing information that would help to either update or create a shtetl website. The websites referred to are part of the Latvia SIG site found on JewishGen.

I have marveled at the wonderful work done by researchers into the shtetls and into their family origins. The valuable knowledge they have collected will, however, be lost if not passed on; one of the best ways of doing that is to contribute and help build or update a shtetl site that gives focus to research. There are already a few of sites referred to in Shtetl Focus on the Latvia SIG website and on JewishGen Shtetl Links but there remain many shtetls in Latvia that require sites to be developed.

Shtetl Web Sites

Valuable sites have been created for Riebini, Subate, Varaklani on Latvia SIG links and for Jekabpils, Liepaja, Ludza, Riga, Dagda, Kuldiga and Viski on the JewishGen Shtetl links. In addition, sites such as Talsen, Tuckum and Valdemarpils can all be accessed on the Latvia SIG site on JewishGen by going to Shtetl Focus.

In looking at JewishGen Shtetl Focus we can see that Liepaja was one of the first sites constructed. Paul Berkay compiled the site but it was last worked on in November 1998. This site, like so many others, needs updating with additional information that has come to light in the last ten years.

Arlene Beare, a past president of the Latvia SIG, compiled another early site in January 1999 of Jekabpils. Here she provides history, photos,

links, and also family histories with lists of names. This site also reflects the visit organized by Mike Getz to Latvia and Jekabpils in July 1997 and was enriched by the fact that he made arrangements to conduct family interviews and histories taken from 30 families living in Jekabpils in July and August 1997.

Also, about at the same time Elsebeth Paikin created the Dagda site. The importance of creating this is encapsulated in her entry: "it is my sincere hope to get in contact with others who also have research interests in Dagda." She asks, "If you have information about Dagda that you want to share with other researchers interested in Dagda - any kind of information e.g. about persons, who have lived in Dagda - please send it to me, and I will put it on this ShtetLink. In that way we might be able to make a "reconstruction" of the population in Dagda. And if you have information, stories, pictures and the like of people from Dagda (or from Dagda itself), we might be able to "reconstruct" the life of our ancestors in Dagda." While Elsebeth Paikin was obviously referring to the Dagda site nevertheless the sentiments she expressed are relevant to all the Shtetl sites. These sites facilitate contact between researchers and may avoid research duplication.

There are also other sites referred to in Shtetl Focus, such as the Riebini and Subate sites. Marion Werle compiled the Riebini site and a page is dedicated to the memory of the Skutelski and Getz families of Riebini. Mike Getz, a past president of the Latvia SIG and our present treasurer contributed the material for the Subate site.

With the passage of time a number of other sites have appeared on the Internet and some researchers with great web skills have created amazing presentations of their research.

In this regard I refer to the wonderful Viski shtetlink, created by Bruce Dumes the Webmaster for the Latvia SIG and the designer of our new website. On the Viski shtetlink, there is a documents section, a section on families from Viski with photos as well as an interesting video clip of Viski produced by Christine Usdin and Bruce.

The shtetl sites I have referred to relating to Lat-

via are only a few of the numerous sites that provide a glimpse and insight into the time and life of our ancestors. These sites can serve to focus research by drawing together the descendants of families that lived in those shtetls.

Family Web Sites

In addition to the shtetl sites in the JewishGen Family Links many researchers have prepared web pages of their families. For example, there is a fascinating site of the Dumes family also created by Bruce. It is a site linked to the Viski site and is found at www.dumes.net. The site not only provides historical background, photos, documents, and travel information but also a large number of archival film clips of family scenes.

While there are many other great family sites, too numerous to mention, I was particularly interested in the site created by Betsy Thal Gephart of the Thal and Gephart and related families, including Blumberg, found at <http://home.comcast.net/~bgephart/blumberg.html>. This site provides information not only of particular interest to the families researched, but to all of us who pursue genealogy research.

Through creating shtetl sites we find other researchers of like interest and often come across living descendants that enable us to bridge the gap between the present and the archival material of the past.

JewishGen Family Finder

In looking at the JewishGen Family Finder, by way of example, I find that there are 14 researchers interested in Grobina. For Aizpute there are 34 researchers mentioned and for Jelgava there are 125 researchers. For Liepaja there are 295 researchers mentioned yet the site was last updated 14 November 1998 despite the large number of researchers.

All these researchers of the family websites and the many thousands referred to in the JewishGen Family Finder have amassed valuable data and it would be wonderful if most of that could be shared with other researchers.

Your Involvement

If you want to help advance Latvian genealogy, one valuable project is through creating or updating the shtetl site of your ancestors. In this way you could share your research material with many, avoid unnecessary duplication and allow others to benefit and move forward quicker with their research.

If you are interested in creating a shtetl site please contact me. Our Webmaster and web editor will also be very happy to assist you in creating a site or updating an existing one where appropriate.

Henry Blumberg
henry@blumbergs.ca

Editor's Comments

It feels as though the IAJGS conference in Salt Lake City just ended and now we are preparing for the next conference in Chicago. I expect that we'll see a large turnout, so please let us know if you have specific interests, concerns or ideas that you'd like to see addressed at one of the Latvia SIG venues.

As many of you know, genealogy is becoming high tech with sophisticated search engines able to access a growing number of online databases and DNA analysis becoming available to each of us. Personally, I have taken the plunge and sent a sample to FamilyTreeDNA.com for analysis and so I am happy that Dave Howard has contributed an article that is both a tutorial and a personal account of his experience with DNA testing and its results. Dave tells me that he leads a project called Jewish_Q at FamilyTreeDNA and also heads the Horowitz family project. He also hosts a Yahoo discussion group named Ashkenazi where they talk about specific anomalies associated with members of the Haplogroup Q. Luckily for the SIG, Dave has agreed to be the Latvia SIG DNA representative for SIG DNA projects.

With the advent of search engines and online databases I have been quite successful in identifying ancestors who have long since passed away and

so I was extremely happy to be contacted by a fairly close relative who landed on the Latvia SIG website. Using the site search capability that Bruce Dumes incorporated, Peter Icklow found his family name Ichlov/Icklow associated with my name in the March 2005 (Vol. 5, Issue 2) newsletter that included the SIG family finder. I have included an article highlighting the results of Peter's initial inquiry.

The article by Art Shay started as an email that he sent to his brothers, children and grand children after I sent him a copy of my father's draft registration card for WWI. I happened across the card on the ancestry.com website while searching for an uncle I knew had been in the army during WWI. I found his card, so I thought I'd enter my father's name, even though he was about 35 years old during the war years and no one ever mentioned that he registered for the draft. After trying a few different spellings, I got a hit on SHY. I was so surprised that I immediately sent copies of the card to my three brothers, and Art's response is the basis for the article.

You can find more about Art Shay at: <http://indianhillmediaworks.typepad.com/artshay/> His latest book is, *Chicago's Nelson Algren*, published by Seven Stories Press, 2007.

Mike Getz and his wife Hilda took a short trip to Israel and Mike was kind enough to include his thoughts for us to enjoy.

I have included the English translation of another survivor interview conducted by Ayna Antane at the Center for Jewish Studies, University of Latvia in 2001. Lea Dimenshtein talks about conflicted feelings of staying in Latvia to face almost certain death and obeying her father to leave the country with him. She talks about family life in Latvia before and after the war.

In the last issue of this newsletter, when discussing the wonderful contribution to the success of the IAJGS conference in Salt Lake City by Rochelle Kaplan, a member of the SIG and the JGS of Salt Lake, I inadvertently used the name Rachel. I apologize for the error.

Barry Shay
bbshay@starpower.net

IAJGS Conference in Chicago

The IAJGS Conference has been formally announced and you can get updated information by going to: <http://www.chicago2008.org/>. Specifically, abstracts for proposed presentations are now being accepted and I suggest that each of you consider submitting something that you think will be useful and beneficial to other genealogy researchers. Suggested items of particular interest for this conference include:

- Canadian Research
- Computer Training Workshops (Hands-On)
- Eastern European and Central European Research
- Eretz Israel, pre and post 1948
- Genetics and DNA Research
- Holocaust Research
- Jewish History/Sociology
- Latin American Research
- Methodology
- Migration and Naturalization
- Mizrahi Research
- Research in Other Locales (Australia, Africa, Asia, etc.)
- Photographic and Document Preservation
- Rabbinic Research
- Repositories
- Sephardi Research
- Technology and Internet Resources
- United States Research
- Western European research
- Yiddish theater/Jewish Music

Go to: https://www.chicago2008.org/call_for_papers.cfm for detailed information concerning the submission process.

In addition to formal presentations at the general sessions, you should consider presenting something of particular interest to the Latvia SIG. As usual, the SIG will provide up to three venues for such presentations. At this time scheduling has not been completed, but the SIG plans to host a luncheon, our annual meeting, and possibly an

venue for SIG-specific presentations. Please contact Henry Blumberg at henry@blumbergs.ca with your suggestions and ideas for presentations and for details concerning SIG activities.

**Using a DNA Brush to Sweep up Jewish Relatives:
Expected, Actual and Unexpected Results
by**

David Howard, nee Horwitz
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I couldn't wait for my results to come in. I had just mailed back my test kit from FamilyTreeDNA.com. I had so many expectations.

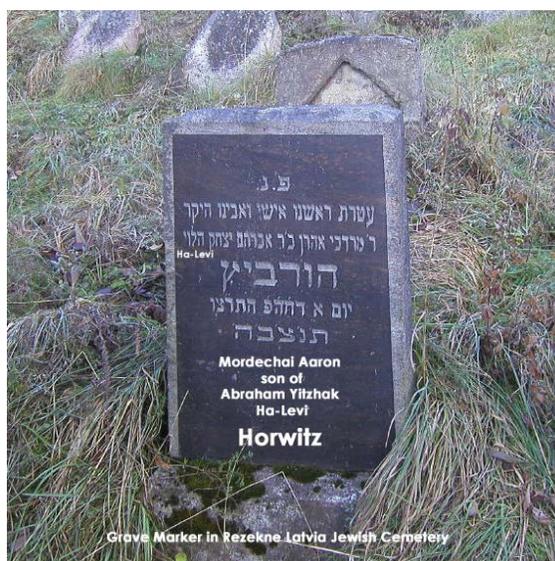
We learned in biology, that the Y-chromosome (referred to as "yDNA") is the only one that that does not get mixed with the mother's during the reproduction process. The mother only contributes an X-chromosome. The yDNA is handed down in tact from father to son generation after generation. The yDNA would appear to be very useful to the Jewish family historian. We track important ecclesiastical designations from father to son. The Cohanim, the Levites, the rabbinical lines, naming conventions, and personal identity are all passed by the father to his natural male heirs.

My Horowitz family of Rezekne, Latvia was part of a large family that had spread through the region to conduct business. My great-aunt Bessie who was born in Rezekne told me that her father was part of a large family in the timber business with relatives in Daugavpils who put the timber in the Daugava River and floated it towards the Baltic. There were other Horowitz relatives who wrangled the timber in Riga and sold it to the exporters. Our family also supplied a rabbi here and there to a few of the shtetles throughout the region.

The Latvian Horowitz family was also part of a much larger Horowitz Rabbinical Levite family. Variations of this name include: Horwitz, Hurwitz, Gurvitz, Gurevich, Gurewitsch, Gurovitch, etc.) The remnants of the Rabbinical Ha-Levi family had left Girona, Spain in the fifteenth century and briefly settled in a little town near Prague named Horovice in the Czech language.

When one wealthy rabbi from this family built a synagogue in Prague to honor his righteous brother and rabbi, Pincus, they both were known as the rabbis of Horovice and that city name became their family name. In Yiddish and German the name is spelled Horowitz. The Pincus synagogue built cir. 1505 stands today in Prague near the Jewish cemetery and is now a Holocaust memorial.

Here is a photo I took in the Rezekne Jewish Cemetery of a grave marker for a Horwitz who passed away in 1936. I have provided a translation and the notation he was a Levite.



Horowitz Grave Marker in the Rezekne Jewish Cemetery

I have traced my Horowitz family in Rezekne back to circa 1750. But I cannot bridge the gap to link up with the sixteenth century Prague - Girona family. (I have both the worldwide Horowitz Family database as well as all the Rezekne Horowitz family members at my website <http://horwitzfam.org>.)

When I first heard about using yDNA testing for genealogy I thought it would be a perfect test to see if I could link my Latvian Horowitz family to the Prague - Girona family.

I was very excited when I received an email from FamilyTreeDNA.com to say my results were

posted. I expected I would match with other members of the Horowitz families in Latvia and then link to Prague and Spain.

My actual results were completely unexpected.

I found myself closely matched yDNA-wise with about 80 other men. However none were from the Horowitz family when I first tested about a year and a half ago. The number grows as more men are tested. We now number 85.

Some of us have done the full megillah and had 67 markers tested. Three of our people are exact matches on all 67. Yet they have not been able to come up with a definite family connection. As far as I know none of us has been able to do that as yet.

A couple of members of our group have done an excellent job running down a brief biography of each cousin and the most distant male relative and where they lived in Europe.

Here is what we have in common. We are all Ashkenazi Jewish men except for a couple of surprised men who had always considered themselves to be Scottish. The members of our group are highly educated with many medical doctors, college professors, lawyers, accountants, journalists, and even a rocket scientist. Clearly yDNA testing is not yet mainstream.

But here comes the shocker. In addition to the genealogically useful information there is significant anthropological information. There was a human family DNA bottleneck about 60,000 to 80,000 years ago in Africa. Apparently there were only about 5,000 humans. All living humans on earth today are related to this small group.

Over time as humans branched out and filled the world, small mutations would appear on the more stable areas of the yDNA. These are mutations that might take place every 5,000 to 10,000 years and are called SNPs. By taking a look at the SNPs scientists link us all together based on the SNPs we have and don't have. There are several large projects to collect SNP information from indigenous peoples in order to tie SNPs to locations and to identify migrations. IBM and the National Geographic Society jointly sponsor one of

the largest of such projects <https://www3.nationalgeographic.com/genographic/atlas.html>

The shocker is that my close matches and I have two distinctive SNPs that put us into Haplogroup Q*. This family group originated in Siberia some 15,000 years ago. The Native Americans branched off from our group some 12,000 years ago when they left Siberia and came to the Americas.

As it turns out, some 4% of Ashkenazi Jews are Haplogroup Q* and we all got that way about 1,000 years ago.

There is a special project for Haplogroup Q and the leader is Rebekah Canada. She has an excellent website <http://www.qydna.org/>. I have started a Jewish-Q subgroup as well as a Yahoo discussion group, <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Ashkenazi-Q/>. We also have a site for Jewish Q's at <http://www.familytreedna.com/public/jewish%5FQ/>.

The Huns were from Siberia. Did one fellow wander into camp and become the grandfather to us all? Or do we have something to do with the Khazars? The DNA researchers say they may have found a SNP just for us. We need to do more testing. Are the "real" Horowitz's from Haplogroup Q? What interesting questions!

Here are my conclusions and observations.

The yDNA is a wonderful tool to help us with our family history. But we need a much larger database. FamilyTreeDNA now has 100,000 yDNA samples. There needs to be a lot more. Please participate so we can make this a more useful tool.

Of the 40,000 Horowitz's in the world only about 7 have been tested. Three of us are Q's and four are Europeans. I need to round up a lot more and get them to test. We have a site at <http://www.familytreedna.com/public/horowitz/>.

Since the yDNA represents only a tiny percentage of a man's total DNA and zero percent of any female's, one must not get carried away with fantastic implications. In the future scientists may be able to look at all our chromosomes and tell us about our various components, but for now we

are just getting little but valuable clues.

So far I have been able to make a paper trail link to only one person involved in this DNA project. She is Rebekah Canada who saw my pedigree chart and spotted our common family name. She is my eighth cousin on my mother's side.

Feel free to contact me if you want more information.

How I Found a Cousin Down Under
by
Barry Shay

About a year ago I received the following email from Peter Icklow:

Dear Barry,

In researching my family tree I came across your website - Latvia SIG. As you can see my name is Icklow and it surprised me to see my name in your list (page 33). I had always been told that my father made up the name Icklow to anglicize our real name Ichlov.

Therefore you can imagine my surprise to see our name (Icklow) in print in this way. Furthermore my mother always said that my great grandmother's name was Shay. Since I see that you have researched these names, can you throw any light on them for me? Are there many Icklows and are they all related? Have you heard about the Icklows who lived in London and my father - Sidney Icklow, who was born in London and migrated to South Africa and then Australia? Is there a relationship between Shay and Icklow (Ichlov) that you know about? If you are able to direct me to any other sites for research it would be appreciated.

Thank you and best regards,

Peter Icklow

It is difficult to describe how excited I was to receive that e-mail. Not only did I know about the Ichlov/Icklow family, but Peter's grandfather, Haim Ichlov, was indeed married to my father's sister Esther Schaya. So Peter was my first cousin once removed and his father, Sidney, was my

first cousin. Pretty close as far as genealogy is concerned. What Peter didn't know was that I had been researching the Shay/Ichlov connection since late 2001, soon after I received a package from the Latvian Historical Archives in Riga.

I had gone to Riga and Daugavpils the previous summer and, while there, I ordered a research report from the Archives. The genealogical table of the Schaya family from Dvinsk was included in the report, and there, in black and white, was the Ichlov-Schaya connection. My father's sister Esther Elka Schaya, b. 1867, was the wife of Haim Leiser Ichlov, b. 1869. Also listed were four of their children, all born in Dvinsk between 1892 and 1896. From other sources, I later learned that another child was born in Dvinsk in 1901, and in 1906 this Ichlov family immigrated to London. Two more children were born in London: Sidney Ichlov in 1906 and Alf Ichlov in 1909. Sidney was Peter Icklow's father.

A couple of years ago, while visiting my son and his family in London, I went to the National Archives in Kew to research the Ichlov family. I found that in 1935 Israel and Nathan Ichlov, two of the children born in Dvinsk, had both applied for British citizenship and their petitions were on file at the Archives. Unfortunately, both files were closed until 2037. (The Brits feel that most files should be closed for at least 100 years, so, as you may know, the 1911 census will be available for viewing in 2011.) I learned that this requirement could be waived if I had good reason to view the files. I guess the authorities thought that since Israel and Nathan were my first cousins and both were born in the 1890s, no harm would come if I were allowed to see the files, so I was allowed to order them. They arrived at my home in the United States about a month later. Each file was about 20 pages long and contained a great deal of interesting information, such as employment history, residences, names of spouses and children, personal references, credit worthiness, police altercations, and more—a far cry from the minimal amount of information found on petitions for U.S. citizenship at about the same time.

Since Peter's first e-mail to me, he and I have exchanged family information quite often. After the war, when Peter was a child, Sidney moved the

family from London to Cape Town. In 1955, when Peter was about eight years old, the family moved to Sydney, where Peter still lives, as do his three grown children and one grandchild. His sister Hilary returned to Cape Town, where she still lives. Hilary has six children, who now live in Cape Town, Melbourne, London, and Washington, D.C. Recently, Peter discovered that he has a first cousin in London, Ronnie Icklow, who was Alf Ichlov's only child, and Peter met with him in London this past summer. Ronnie is also my first cousin, once removed, and I plan to meet with him on my next trip to London.

My wife and I had discussed visiting Australia for a number of years but kept putting off the decision to go. Last month we celebrated our 40th wedding anniversary and we decided that that would be a good excuse to finally make the trip. Knowing that we had family in Sydney made the decision even easier. We joined a formal tour that included stops in Fiji, New Zealand, and Australia, including Tasmania. Peter was happy to hear that the tour included three days in Sydney, and he invited us to share Shabbat dinner with him and his family. The day after we arrived in Sydney from New Zealand, Peter met us at our hotel and drove us to the family's beautiful home just outside of Sydney. How thrilling it was to meet Peter and his family! We had much to discuss and to share and to learn about our common ancestors.



Visiting the Icklow Family in Sydney

In the few years that I have been doing genealogical research, I have discovered that my father, more than any of his siblings, had close connections to Peter's family. Haim Ichlov, Peter's grandfather and also my aunt Esther's husband,

was a cabinetmaker in Dvinsk, and he and his good friend Haim Ospowat, also a cabinetmaker in Dvinsk, traveled to Cape Town to look for work. Both men arrived in Cape Town via London in 1900 and for a time lived together there on Caledon Street. Esther Ichlov and her five children emigrated from Dvinsk and joined Haim in London in 1906. With the family now in London, Haim "commuted" to Cape Town, where he and Haim Ospowat started a small furniture manufacturing business. Peter informed me that in 1909 Haim Ichlov left Cape Town for London, with plans to bring Esther and their now seven children back to Cape Town. On his trip back to London, Haim became extremely ill and Peter was told that Haim died of appendicitis before the ship reached London, leaving Esther a widow. Alf, the youngest, was born in 1909! (Just recently, using findmypast.com I obtained a copy of the official death certificate from the General Register Office in London, which states that Haim Ichlov died at London Hospital of carcinoma ventriculi, a form of stomach cancer prevalent about 100 years ago but almost unheard of today.)



**Peter's Great-grandparents
My Grandparents
Our Common Ancestors
(circa 1910 Dvinsk)**

About three years ago, I discovered that my father, Haim Schaya, arrived in the United States via Montreal, Quebec on the HMS Royal Edward, which left London (Bristol) on August 26, 1914 and arrived on September 3. On the ship's manifest it states that his last permanent residence

was London, England, 16 Bacon Street, Bethnal Green, and that Esther Ichlov at that address was his nearest relative. I believe that my father, a 30-year-old bachelor at the time, came to live with his widowed sister around 1911 or 1912 to help her and the family. By 1914, Esther's oldest children were 22 and 20 years old and, I presume, were old enough to help care for the family. While my father lived with Esther and the children, Sidney Ichlov would have gone from 5 to 8 years old. As Peter reminded me in Sydney, the Shabbat dinner we shared was almost 100 years from when my father and his father also shared a Shabbat dinner.

Shortly after we returned from Australia and having been energized by meeting an Ichlov family for the first time, I set out to complete the Ichlov family tree. Using the JewishGen Latvia Database, other information I had gathered at the Archives in London, and email correspondence with Ichlovs I had never met, I developed a rather complete tree, which I then e-mailed to Ichlovs in Australia, South Africa, England, and the United States. And just yesterday I received the following email from Wolfie Ginsburg in London:

Hi Barry,

I must share a most incredible story.

Our son Danny has just returned home from university in Birmingham for Xmas and I showed him the family tree. Danny spent last summer in Sidney, Australia, and one day in a skate park in Bondi Beach he met a chap on holiday from Perth and they struck up a friendship.

Earlier this week Danny bumped into him in a crowd in Birmingham where he was visiting a mutual friend. This chap, whose name is Daniel Parsons, (also known as Danny) appears in the middle of the Ichlov family tree, is due to be visiting us in London on Monday where we will be able to show him how we are related.

Wow!!!!!!!!!!

Please give us a ring when you are in London. Best regards,

Wolfie

It turns out that the two Dannys are 3rd cousins, once removed. Danny Ginsburg and I are distantly related by marriage, but Danny Parsons is my 1st cousin, three times removed, i.e. his great grandmother, Fay Ichlov Goldfine, was my first cousin, who I met in 1947 in New York. Danny's grandmother, Edna Fisher, who accompanied her mother and father to New York, now lives in Perth, not far from Danny's family. So we now know that the Parsons in Perth and the Icklows in Sydney are cousins. In fact, Edna Fisher in Perth and Peter Icklow in Sydney are first cousins. Wow!!!

Life on East 94th Street by Art Shay

On some Internet site, Uncle Barry unearthed our father Herman (Hyman) Shay's (at one time Shy) draft registration. Our father, 60 when Barry and Stu (*my twin brother, ed.*) were born, often lied about his age because our mother, Mollie, teased him about being so much older than she (20 years). In this case, Barry thinks he changed his birth date to 1881 from 1882 to make him a year older and less likely to be drafted. Interestingly, his draft registration was dated a mere two months before the November 11, 1918 Armistice.



Hyman Shy's Draft Registration Card for WWI

He lived at 335 E. 94th Street in Manhattan, just west of First or York Avenue and also just west of the East River. He lived there with his sister Tillie and her husband Isaac for many years. Their neighbors in the same building? The Schestens, including Mollie, whom he wrested from her disapproving family (he was too old) to

marry. Lucky for all of us whose DNA started out in that shabby but historic-to-us building.

I remember the three-room apartment very well, including the fluffy goose down pillows brought from Russia and the upright piano splattered with sheet music in the dining room. Aunt Hannah used to play briskly from these mysterious little dots whenever we gathered there, which was often. On Sunday mornings German oompah bands (up from German Yorkville eight blocks away around 86th Street) often played loudly and brassily and we'd sometimes wrap a penny in newspaper and throw it down to the big-bellied Huns. Across the street lived the first Christian we all knew, Carmella from sunny Italy. One day Hannah played "Marie From Sunny Italy" for Carmella, who wouldn't enter a Jewish apartment but listened blissfully through the open door and added to her pleasant dumpiness by munching on a Pesadika macaroon. My favorite solo from that period was also redolent of Italy: "Pleeza Josephina Don'ta Leana on de Bell." It was a warning to a hot Neapolitan beauty to watch her back when being kissed goodnight.

I used to drive past 335 in the late forties when I was a reporter for Life and rented cars to check on the Mafia from Harlem down to Little Italy around Mulberry Street. The building, fortress stoop and all, was as I remembered it from the twenties and thirties, but I'll bet that now, if any of you 335-ers pass that address you'll probably be looking up at a congeries of condos renting for \$4,000 a month.

When looking out at the oompah bands on Sunday mornings it was possible to see, a few doors up from Carmella's building, the garage of Otto Kahn, a fabled Jewish banker from Germany who lived way west near Central Park on Riverside Drive. In clement weather his chauffeurs, while waiting for the call to proceed west, would loll around smoking Murads or polishing Otto's two Packards and one circa 1913 Rolls Royce, a green beauty with straw panels here and there. My grandpa Sam also smoked Murads, a Turkish brand. He would save for me the three-inch slide-cover cardboard boxes. He showed me, at age 8, how to separate the half-inch cardboard strips that supported the boxes, fold them carefully, then re-

insert them into the empty box. Then you could slide the top of the box forward and, when you released it, watch the cover slide back, mysteriously closing the box. This would mystify my friends back in the Bronx and add to the myth we all eventually learned was true, that Manhattan was the true repository of New York's darkest secrets.

A Visit to Israel by Mike Getz

Hilda and I traveled to Israel for a two-week stay recently. It was not a planned genealogy mission but rather intended to explore marginally, bonds with past friends, some family and an update on the country itself. Obviously, I had been in touch with Martha Lev- Zion, our deeply versed colleague and friend on matters Latvian and Jewish with plans to meet.

The first surprise after landing was Ben Gurion airport itself. The new airport was an astonishing testament to the modern traveling world both in concept and design. Its effective contemporary spirit was even more obvious on departure. It seemed to convey more than a spirit of "move along", but offered a stylish and brisk environment, which hinted at goals of both welcome and comfort.

We had been guests at the same hotel on Tel-Aviv's Yarkon strip some years ago. Security, although everywhere, seemed even lower keyed. The extent to which English has become broadly and effectively used in providing service was a surprise. Professionalism in general seemed to have moved a notch higher and was supported by good service offered in a spirit of welcome.

I spoke with Martha and we made provisional plans to meet. A change in our itinerary and a family Brit in Jerusalem made a meeting impossible but we agreed to talk on the phone a day or two later.

We moved to Herzlia and spent five days at a very comfortable "apartment" hotel – this meant no dining facilities but otherwise very comfortable and well maintained. I called Martha and we talked about Chicago, developments in Kuldiga,

memorializing the Holocaust victims in Latvia and, of course, the great work that is being done in Israel itself. This obviously not only relates to Latvia but to Jewish genealogy as a whole. I was sorry to miss two interesting meetings, which Martha mentioned, one occurring just prior to our arrival and the other following soon after our departure.

While in Herzlia, Issie Schochat, formerly from Worcester and Cape Town in South Africa, suggested I contact Michel Moger, originally from Preili and well acquainted with that community. I spoke to Michel in Yiddish and he agreed to respond to requests routed through Issie. Issie would pass on our emails to Michel in Yiddish and respond to us in English.

The Brit in Jerusalem was at 8:15 in the morning. Issie Rosenthal, my first cousin, was the zeide and his son Jonathan, the father. The family and guests were Orthodox and English speaking in an observant environment. I suddenly found myself holding the child being named after Avrom Leib, the grandfather Issie and I share. It was an overwhelming and moving experience to see my grandfather so remembered in Jerusalem. Speaking to the guests during the meal that followed, Issie and his son referred to Avrom Leib's familiarity with Dvinsk and his devotion to its Rabbi, Meier Simcha.

It was a wonderful trip.

An Interview with Lea Diminshtein



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A.A.: Tell me please about your family. What did your parents do, how did you grow up, where did you go to school? How was your life during the childhood?

L.D.: My mother, was born in Ligatne. She was married to Khirshon, her maiden name was Weinstein. My father was a forester in Rujiena. My mother did not work, but they had a vegetable garden, they had their own sheep, I remember that. In Rujiena my mother had a brother, Weinstein too, who was not married.

A.A.: What did your mother's brother do?

L.D.: He had his own shop; he had some people who were working for him.

A.A.: What was the name of your father's brother – her husband's name?

L.D.: What was the name of father's brother? I forgot.

A.A.: There is nothing wrong with it.

L.D.: Mother's sister, Frida, they had their own shop too. All of it was private.

A.A.: And they were living...

L.D.: All of them were living in Rujiena. Then, well, there was one more father's brother; he had his own house in Limbazi. So, now let's speak about school. My brother attended a German school in Limbazi. I was attending a Latvian school. We were using only German at home. So was all my family, because I was attending a Latvian school, they did not use any Russian. Then what else... Then...

A.A.: Did all your relatives use German; I mean all your brothers and sisters?

L.D.: Father and mother were using German. But Weinstein, who was not married, he was very kind, he made a present to us – a bicycle, it was for my brother, for me, for my sister and brother and me. And he had a girlfriend, she was Latvian. You know, how she was, she was kosher.

But he was not married. And because of it on Saturdays, when mother was asking father to go the

Synagogue. And mother, was trying to force father. And she was saying to him: "Let's go to the Synagogue." He was saying to her, "What do you want from me?" There were altogether sixteen Jewish families. "It will be a shame if you will not go there," mother was saying. But this Weinstein, he was going there because he had a beautiful voice. Yes, such a voice. Yes, she was so kosher too; she also had a friend there, and then, this is how it was. Then what else...

A.A.: Then, in general at home... was your father not really a religious person?

L.D.: No, I don't think so.

A.A.: Your parents were not religious people? But what about the traditions, did they follow them?

L.D.: Yes, they followed traditions. Yes, my mother said to me that her father was a rabbi. But he passed away many years ago; I did not meet him at all. Neither mother's, neither father's, nor my grandfathers and grandmothers, I have never seen them. Then what else?

A.A.: He was a rabbi but where was it?

L.D.: I do not know, maybe I used to know, but now I forgot, where it was, I no longer remember it. What else can I tell you? Well, about mother's relatives, so, in Limbazi, there was my father's brother Khirshon, they had several houses. In Limbazi and somewhere else, I do not remember. He was very rich; he was such an aristocratic person. When he was visiting us in Rujiena, he was giving everybody a present – 10 Lats for everybody. It was big money at that time.

A.A.: Tell me please what do you remember about life of those sixteen Jewish families in Rujiena, what language did they speak? Did they speak Yiddish or Hebrew?

L.D.: No, there was no Hebrew. Most people were uneducated in Jewish traditions... Uneducated, the whole lot of them. But when my brother turned thirteen, at that time he came of age. Here is his picture. My son told me: "Mother, show me this picture." I do not remember, I think my father showed it to him first. He

was thirteen, and I was four years younger, I was nine years old at the time. Here are all of us on this picture. Now we will talk about the most difficult part, when the war started.

A.A.: Can we talk a little more about the time before the war. This community, was it big? Did your family, I mean the adults, communicate with other Jews?

L.D.: No, when they gathered as families, they were playing cards. There were those Rozes, Weinrocks, my father, and four people were playing cards. A game called Kunken. And I have a picture of it.

A.A.: And all of these people – were they religious, or some of them were, and some of them were not?

L.D.: Let me tell you about one of them. His name was Shield; take a look, two brothers on the photograph. One of them, Shield, he was very rich, he had a store, he had workers who worked for him. I believe he owned a store and a half. But they did not have any children. They had only nephews. But another Shield, he was poor, and he had children. He was a manufacturing worker, and he was poor. They had two children, Robert and Leo. But the poor brother had a very educated wife. Her maiden name was Tsivyan. This Robert had a very famous brother. And the son, this Robert, he used to teach German in the Musical Institute, the Conservatory. He was very educated.

A.A.: In Riga's Conservatory?

L.D.: Yes, yes, yes, yes. German language. And then that uncle never supported them, never helped his poor relatives, you understand. Robert's younger brother Leo was killed in the war. The youngest... yes. Then this Robert Shield, he left and then married a Jewish girl from Georgia (*former Soviet Republic, now an independent country*). She was out of this world, kind of strange. She asked me once, "Can you not work?" "How can I not work, I must work," I replied. You understand, she was this kind of person. She said, "In Georgia, our women do not work." This is how she was. Then they went to

Israel.

A.A.: Did you and your family communicate with other Jews? What language did you use?

L.D.: Yiddish. They were speaking Yiddish among themselves, yes.

A.A.: What can you say about the relationship during prewar time in Rujiena between the Jewish community and native Latvians?

L.D.: We had a very good relationship. You know, I attended a Latvian school. And all of my friends were Latvians. I just recently met one of them, you saw her, and we were classmates in Rujiena. I remember my English teacher. Once we visited Cirulisi with my husband, and he was a philatelist, he collected postage stamps. And there he met another philatelist who invited us to his home. And he said that his wife told him about her being from Rujiena, and she remembered a teacher whose name was Upiels. She taught English. He said that she was a remarkable teacher. This I remember clearly. There was a big respect for the teachers, a lot of respect. We were wearing uniforms, it was obligatory, you know. We were wearing white dresses on holydays, we had white aprons, the way it was required. And in general Latvians treated us very well.

My brother Grysha, he was married to a Russian girl. And when he visited Limbazi, he had a different accent. He was almost like any Latvian; he attended a Latvian school too. And his wife, Ira, she was from Leningrad. She worked at a post office as a switchboard operator. And she forgot the Russian language. She spoke only Latvian with her husband.

And my Ilyusha (*the son*), after finishing the University he was required to work for three years, I think he worked in Limbazi in Latvian school and taught Russian language to 10-12 graders. He is a soccer fan, a huge fan. And you see, Ilyusha with his students visited Daugava Stadium. We use to live near there on the Lienes Street. My granddaughter lives there now. And I visited him by myself. There my brother's grandson studies at a University, but I do not know what University. And his second grandson has a son, so my brother

has a great-grandson already. My brother's son passed away. My brother also passed away, I think it was five years ago. My brother's son passed away too, he was only forty nine years old. My mother was buried in Limbazi too, as well as my father, then my brother and my brother's son. Four graves are there.

And I went to Limbazi; I recall I went to Limbazi. I lived in Limbazi before the war and attended school for four years there, and then I learned Russian.

A.A.: Did you live in Limbazi or Rujiena?

L.D.: We went to Rujiena, my father and mother stayed in Namangan (*the interviewee is talking about her family evacuation during WWII to Namangan, the second largest city in Uzbekistan and the capital of Namangan province that is located in the east of Uzbekistan, in the northern part of Fergana Valley*), later father went to Tashkent. They were creating special groups from people who were evacuated from Latvia. And there were three groups. One was for technical specialists; a second group was for turners, and the last one for electricians. There were a lot of Latvians who evacuated with us. I have some photographs from there. Then all of us were working and studying, a lot of people were working at the factory. My father and mother left Namangan earlier.

A.A.: Let's speak now about the time before Namangan. How did you get there? Did you finish telling about your life before the war?

L.D.: My life before the war?

A.A.: You are saying that there were no conflicts between different national groups?

L.D.: No, none.

A.A.: Were the children called names on the street?

L.D.: No, never. Germans were so overly polite. They were so, how to say it, educated, well mannered. We were communicating. At home all of us spoke German. My brother attended German school. I finished Latvian school. I mean I went

there for four years. Then later I went to technical college (*similar to US community college combined with some senior high school courses like GED*).

A.A.: Did you know both Latvian and German?

L.D.: Yes, but you know, I forgot German. My brother went to German school. And I went to Latvian school.

A.A.: Did you understand German in your childhood?

L.D.: Yes, we spoke German at home. Yes, yes, and they were playing cards. We were speaking German at home.

A.A.: So the adults also knew Yiddish. Did you know Yiddish?

L.D.: I don't think so.

A.A.: So you became more Germanized?

L.D.: Yes, yes.

A.A.: What about your mother?

L.D.: My mother, yes. There were three children, three of us.

A.A.: Can you describe a typical day in your family? You woke up in morning... What did you usually do, how did your ordinary day go, what did you eat, what did your mother do? Before the war, on a typical prewar day.

L.D.: My mother, yes... Usually I went to get us milk, that's how our day started. We did not eat a lot. We had whatever was there for breakfast. Milk. We did not have tea. We did not have a habit of drinking tea. Milk, and then I went to school. We did not have three courses for dinner - first, then second, and third. Mother was cooking some meat soup and something simple with it. We did not have any special meals. We did not have a culture of eating. We were eating simple meals.

There was a beautiful river where we lived. Our neighbor was Roze, she died a long time ago. You probably heard about Leo Roze, we came

from the same town. He was very talented; he used to play with Raymond Pauls (*famous Latvian composer*). He had a really good ear for music, he was playing music by ear, you understand. Sometimes I was playing with him, me and his sister Noima. She was married to Weinberg, they had twins, and altogether they had three children. Noima, she was thirty-three. She got pregnant; I do not remember if it was allowed to make an abortion during those times. Or it was a private illegal abortion... There was a whole tragedy surrounding it.

Well, now... one or two years ago he visited us (*Leo Roze?*). He has some relative who lives right across Hailezers. He calls me "Lenochka"... They went to the wedding of my daughter, you know. And Weinberg's daughter, she was at the wedding of my daughter... She remembers our daughter. And when Weinberg had his seventy years anniversary he still was in Riga. That was when we got together, all of us, and I was invited too. My husband already passed away and I went there with my daughter. And Weinberg's daughter who lives now in Germany came there too. She said to me, "Auntie Lena, I will never forget your daughter." We had an international wedding. Because my son-in-law is Golubev (*Russian last name*). Ilyusha's wife - she is from Tyumen (*Russia's Far North Region*).

Our food was really simple. Only during the big holydays, when it was Passover, yes. Yes, it was another holiday (*in Russian Easter and Passover are both called "Paskha"*). We did not eat any bread. We had only matzoth, matzoth at the time. I think that somebody brought it for us from Riga. We went to the Synagogue and we were eating matzoth, I remember... And we had different china and dishes, and tableware.

A.A.: Did you light candles on Saturdays for Sabbath? Did your mother light the candles?

L.D.: Ah, yes, I believe so. Yes, my mother was following the tradition. But my father told us that there is no God. And during the war, he said to us, I already told you, that there is no God. When the war begun. Then, then everybody was left behind...

A.A.: Tell me, please, what else you remember about the time before the war. Did the people of your circle, the adults, know that the war was coming, did they talk about it? Did they know something about the Germans, about Hitler? Did you have a radio? What was the general mood?

L.D.: All our relatives told my mother, that they would not go anywhere. But my father told us that we have to leave. Oh, every time when I remember it, I'm always crying. How we were all standing there...

A.A.: I understand that it is hard for you... But why didn't they want to leave, what were their arguments?

L.D.: They did not want to leave their businesses, their shops. Only Robert (*Shield*), the one I was telling you about, evacuated with his parents. But that rich Shield (*Robert's uncle*), who owned a lot, he was sent to Siberia but he returned from there. Got back alive and in good health. That was after the war, yes. It was when they were sending to Siberia (*When Soviets occupied Latvia in 1940 they were sending affluent people and some of the Latvian intelligentsia either to Siberian exile or to the concentration camps there*).

A.A.: June 14th? (*Date in Latvia of the departure of one of the biggest trains of exiles*).

L.D.: Yes, this is it. And later they returned.

A.A.: Were they taken before your evacuation or earlier in 1940?

L.D.: Earlier, earlier, in 1940.

My husband knew one pianist, I think he used to live on Suvorov Street; there they had a big house. And he was exiled too. Yes, it was that year. When he returned, my husband met with him. My husband was a philatelist (*stamp collector*); he was a very educated man. He was a member of Society "Znaniye" (*Knowledge*), he was a philatelist, and my son was a postcard collector. He writes about this, you know. His favorite city, what year it was, he knows everything. He knows the names of all streets. You know what I'm saying... Now, what else?

A.A.: Can you tell me again, what was it like right before the war, what was your feeling? And now let us start slowly; let's talk about the beginning of the war. I understand that this is the most difficult part of your memories, but later we will move on.

L.D.: I can tell a little bit about Ulmanis (*Karlis Ulmanis (1877-1942) first Prime Minister of Latvia, in 1936 he became the sole authoritarian ruler of Latvia - "Tautas Vadonis" (Leader of the Nation)*). He visited Rujiena. He visited all the stores, you know, stores that Jews owned. And he was shaking hands with them and always lifted his hat. He was very well mannered. They were saying that he was a bad person, but I cannot judge, because I remember him as a very educated and practical person. He was very good-natured. So this is how it was before the war.

Usually when boys finished school, they became "ganos", it means, herdsmen, yes. Our life was simple, but our teachers, they earned more than one hundred lat per month. I remember it. But now a teacher earns 60 or 70 lat. At that time it was 120 or 130 lat. That was different money, you understand. Then, what else can I tell you about our life before the war?

The oldest daughter of my mother's sister was married to the guy named Kotsius. He had a sausage factory. And his wife was very beautiful. She was the oldest daughter, and there was the younger daughter and the middle daughter who was married in Kandava. I remember when my mother went to the wedding. I was crying so much – my mother was leaving. And then the other sisters went to the same place. They were still not married. But my Gita was married. And they remained in Kandava, and they were killed together. All of them were killed except for the older sister. In those times people had many children. So my father had two sisters and a brother, my mother also had a brother. So now let's talk about my father's sister. I do not remember when she left Limbazi and went to Russia to get her education.

A.A.: What was her name?

L.D.: Olga. And, yes, she graduated from teach-

ers' training institute, no, I got it wrong, she finished dental school, she was a dentist, she was the head of a dental clinic.

A.A.: Where it was, in Russia?

L.D.: Yes, it was there. But I do not really remember where. When we went back to Limbazi after the war and I asked my father, why this chair is so strange? He answered, that it belonged to his sister who was a dentist. She went to Russia to get her education there because here, in Latvia, you had to pay for your education. You know, there was free education system in the Soviet Union at that time. And her husband was some kind of doctor there too. And when we returned and some time after it was one more person there, Zina, she was father's relative.

A.A.: Was Zina another sister of your father?

L.D.: Yes, she was. Zina was his sister. And Olga, she was his sister too. And her daughter's name was Gita. And when we returned and already moved to Limbazi, Gita was trying to find us. I did not know her before. I was already married at that time and we were visiting my family in Limbazi. And Gita found us. Do you understand me? And we, me and my husband, went to Kalinin, it is renamed Tver again now. And Gita was a surgeon too. She sent us a letter where she said that her mother died during the war. And her father died too. Only her cousin is left, she is a surgeon too. She (*Gita*) has a daughter, Olga. And she (*Gita*) wrote, that her daughter is a medical doctor too. She is writing her doctoral thesis. Do you follow me? What I am trying to say is... And this daughter Olga got married, and Gita's daughter... No, that is not it...

Aha, I got it. It was this way. Gita got married and her husband was the head of some department at a university, but I don't remember where. But she (*the daughter Olga*) got married to one student; he was such an insolent person. He thought that her parents were very rich and that everything should be provided for him. Olen'ka (*Olga, Olya, Olen'ka are the variations of the same name*) gave birth to a son, Sashen'ka. And after some time she got divorced. And her husband moved to Israel. I mean Sasha's (*Sasha and*

Sashen'ka are the variations of the name Alexander) father.

Then, what is next? The next is what Gita wrote to me. First, her brother passed away. And when my husband and I went to find her I had never met her before that. She said, "Lenochka, my God! My brother, Nika looks so much like your brother. I know, because they visited us here." Do you understand? All of them have already passed away. That husband of Gita's passed away, her brother passed away too; I do not remember where he used to live in Russia. So now listen to the Jewish stuff. So, everything should be only for him (*Gita daughter Olga's husband*), that's what Gita wrote me in her letter. And Olya decided to leave him. That is how they got divorced. Now this is Sashen'ka's (*their son*) story.

You remember that his father went to Israel. But Sashen'ka was studying in Moscow, in a high school there. So, it was about 14 kilometers away from Moscow. And he went to Israel to continue his education. He was 13 years old when she sent me a photograph. This is it, right here. Sashen'ka is the only joy in Gita's life. And when he went to (*Israel*), he (*his father*) introduced him to the grandmother, to his mother. Then Sashen'ka started to call him "father"... So what is next...?

So, Gita could not live without him (*Sashen'ka*). And finally he returned (*from Israel*). So, now he is in 10th grade. He is considerably behind his classmates because they did not study the same subjects. And he said that he will never go back there. Never, he said. Yes. That is why they hired a tutor for him.

A.A.: Did Gita's grandson, Sashen'ka, say that he will never go back there?

L.D.: Yes, he did. And now she wrote to me that he is 16 now. And he is supposed to be in 11th grade, but he is still in 10th grade. They hired a tutor because we have here some subjects that they did not get there. He needed to catch up. And he said, "Mommy, I will never go back there." So that's how it was.

A.A.: But his father is there.

L.D.: Yes. But he did not really live with his fa-

ther. He was sent to Israel, to this program (*probably Na'ale program where high school students from the Former Soviet Union countries go to Israel by themselves and live in the dorms*), how to say it...

A.A.: To get an education there?

L.D.: To get an education, yes. But they did not live with their parents. It was a boarding school. What do they call it there? I have pictures from when he was 13. And now he is 16. And he said, never again. He said, when I will graduate from high school I will go to the medical school. I will follow my family tradition.

A.A.: Tell me if you remember, when, what year, your father and your mother were born?

L.D.: I do not remember. I only know that my mother passed away in 1980. And she was 78 years old.

A.A.: And your father?

L.D.: My father passed away before my mother. He was 11 years older than mother. I do not remember.

I took my mother to live with me; it was when I already was living with my daughter-in-law. Yes. So what are we talking about now?

A.A.: Now, unfortunately, let's talk about the saddest topic, about the war.

You told me before that there was some general opinion that people should not go anywhere, and that they already lived under German rule, and it was good.

L.D.: No, no, it was not this way. It was not anybody's opinion. It was just that my father said that we should leave. Latvians were moving; everything was very well organized. First we were traveling by horse carts. There were two transports and ours was the last one. We left a couple of days earlier, and I do not remember the people who left with us. We were moving through Estonia. We were directed to the road through the woods and there were gangs of bandits out there, so we went back. After that we traveled together

in a very organized fashion. There were a lot of Latvians and a lot of us, Jews. There was Robert Shield, our family, Weinberg.

A.A.: You mean – there were you, your father, mother and children?

L.D.: Yes, there was all my family. But all the rest, they stayed. And my sister passed away during the war when she was 16 years old.

A.A.: You went away, then got back and finally went on the 28th for good?

L.D.: Yes, we did. We went as we were. Only my father took some photographs with him. But my sister Sima did not want to go. She was studying at gymnasia (*high school*). She had a friend, the daughter of that Uzgals (*Uzkalns, the photographer mentioned on page 1?*) “How can you not go, Sima? It is absolutely necessary!” So we went, and she was working at some factory in Mangan (*probably she means Namangan*), and she died from typhus there. She was only 16 years old. I had typhus too, but it happened because I was sick a lot when I was a child. And we also did not know where my brother was. He was in a Latvian division.

A.A.: How did it happen that you were separated from your brother?

L.D.: Yes, we got separated, yes. I don't remember how. He had joined the Latvian division.

A.A.: Maybe from Tashkent? I know that the other Latvians went from there.

L.D.: Yes, probably. Or maybe from Namangan. We did not hear from him for a long time. And then my brother found us. Maybe he went from Tashkent, I don't remember now. He said, “There were a lot of us, soldiers on that field. And there was a bombing. And only three of us were left alive after it.” My brother had lost half of his leg. My brother passed away already. It happened four, no, five years ago.

A.A.: At that time, during the evacuation, you were saying that you were studying and working. What did your mother and father do?

L.D.: Well. My mother was working somewhere; I do not remember what she was doing. My father had a second profession – a tinsmith. And he was working as a tinsmith in Namangan. When the war started, Weinbergs, it was this Meyer Weinrok (*Weinberg?*); he had his love, this Noima. And now about my mother's parents, her father went to Riga to visit some relative there, and her mother went to Liepaja. And then the war started. So they took Leo and Noima with them, but the younger sister was with her mother. So this is it. All of them were killed. That is all I can tell about the times before the war. That is all. Nobody called us names. Nobody called us "zhid", nobody. All of us were friends. Latvians were our friends.

A.A.: How difficult was it for you during evacuation to Russia without knowing the Russian language?

L.D.: I did not need Russian because I was in a Latvian group. There were Latvian groups. I did not speak Russian.

A.A.: But when you went to Russia, did you encounter any problems with it at the beginning?

L.D.: No, not really. I only remember that when we were going there, we were traveling by train in a freight car for the whole month. There was a bombing right on the border with Russia. We were getting out of the train cars and lying down. And then when we went back to the train there were women who came to us, to our freight cars and begged for a piece of bread. They were saying that they were hungry for many years... Yes.

A.A.: It was already in Russia?

L.D.: Yes, it was. And my father said ... a peace for us...

A.A.: When you settled down, when you were working there, did you have any problems with the language?

L.D.: We used Latvian.

A.A.: During the evacuation you were mainly communicating within your own circle?

L.D.: Yes, it was within our own circle. We were with the other Latvians.

A.A.: When did you get back (*from evacuation*)?

L.D.: In 1945, when the war ended we returned; and father and mother went back earlier.

A.A.: People started to return in 1944?

L.D.: Probably, yes. We posted a big parcel from Namangan. I do not remember what was inside. Probably fruits, you know, because it was supposed to go to Siberia. But they never got it. Do you understand?

A.A.: Where did they go when they returned – to Riga?

L.D.: No, no, they did not live in Riga. At first they went to Rujiena. The whole street was ruined, no houses left. Only one house was left there, it was standing there alone, this very beautiful brick house. That is all. And then they went to Limbazi to that house where my father's brother used to live before. So there, well, it was like that: it was a two-story house. There were two one-bedroom and one three-bedroom apartments downstairs. There were some people already living in that three-bedroom apartment, and later they gradually left one by one. So, all of us were living in this three-bedroom apartment on Merkel Street in Limbazi, yes.

A.A.: Do you remember the number of the house?

L.D.: On Merkel Street, yes, I do not remember the number there. And my brother lived in Limbazi too. He bought a house there.

A.A.: You mean after the war?

L.D.: Yes, after the war. Well... Yes, it happened later. At first he lived in Rujiena, he had a girlfriend there, and later he moved to Limbazi. He got married then and because he was a war veteran and was injured and disabled, he was given (*by the government*) an apartment in a really good building on Skolas Street, I think it was number 10, a very good studio apartment. It was so big. Right across the stadium. Limbazi is a very beau-

tiful city. There are lakes there. Well, and there in Limbazi his family still lives now.

A.A.: Did he live all his life there?

L.D.: Yes, after the war.

He was working as a forwarding agent. He was traveling to Riga all the time, you know. It was a very hard work. And later he had surgery on his pancreas. Uh, we can not live for a hundred years, what we can do...

A.A.: Tell me, please, when you had returned to Riga with your group of evacuees, you studied at the technical school there, and then where did you work?

L.D.: Nobody was trying to find me. I continued to study. Well, at first I went to a Russian school.

A.A.: Everything was there in Limbazi?

L.D.: I do not remember... But later it was a Latvian school; it was how it was supposed to be. And then...

A.A.: You went to Riga to a technical school.

L.D.: Yes, I did.

A.A.: Then after the technical school your independent life started.

L.D.: Yes, my life. After the technical school, well..., I was in technical school and... Uh, when I was studying there I lived in a dormitory, you know, on Audeju Street. There were my friends Dzidra and Velta, and I do not remember who else. And Kulachkovskiy was there, and Denisov too. There were more guys than girls. And we had an assistant principal Metelev. The technical school principal was from Estonia. She said it like this: (*probably imitating Estonian accent*) "So, Girl, you know, when you are going to a restroom, you should be very careful." She was this kind of person.

There was a dancing troop in this school. We were wearing national costumes. We were dancing; I used to like it a lot, these amateur performances. Everything was just how it should be. And I was studying there for four years.

And then I started to work at the "Pioneer" factory. I became a foreman there. Our practical part of studying was at the "Pirmays Mays" plant. Well, and then I went to the "Pioneer". What we were studying was kind of general. There was a big difference between what we studied at technical school and our practice. I was working at "Pioneer" as a foreman, then as a lead foreman for fourteen years.

Then "Pioneer" merged with "Pirmays Mays", and I was thinking what I should do. Our senior engineer went to "Rigas Apavi", where they repaired footwear. She said to me, "Lena, why don't you leave "Pirmays Mays" and start to work at "Rigas Apavi". And it was really good for me because we were living on Liyenes Street, and it was on Varnu Street. And I was able to pick up my son after school; I had time to do everything. And my mother-in-law was paralyzed for 6 years. Life was always very hard.

So I started to work at "Rigas Apavi" as a head of the department of technical control. And all dressmaking and tailoring establishments and all repair shops were under my supervision. Yes, it was like this. I was a very energetic person. When I was writing my reports, I usually called my daughter. "Darling, I was saying to her, should I put here a Russian letter "б" or not?" All my children completed their Masters programs. My daughter finished the Railroad Institute. And she was studying and working at the same time. It was hard to get there. Uh, and my son-in-law had graduated from a university or an institute, I do not remember. He had evening classes there, the Evening Study program, was it? He was working and studying too. Now he is a chief accountant at some business company.

A.A.: Tell me, please, where did you meet your husband?

L.D.: I am going to tell you right now. I had a lot of admirers. You know, it was like this: there was a head engineer, we had two shifts, and there were 80 workers in our department and I remembered everyone by name. And there was a head engineer. And once during the second shift he called me to his office. You know, I was very beautiful, dark-haired, and my face was so beauti-

ful. And I said, "Isaac Aronovitch, what do you want?" He said, "Lenochka, just sit here with me, I like you so much, I just love you!" and was trying to give me a hug. I said to him, "Shame on you – You have three children!" And his wife was working as a head engineer at "Somdaris". He said, if you would have any deficit in your work, I will cover for you. So that's how it was...

Then there was our chief accountant, so it was this kind of situation... And then at "Rigas Apavi..." So when I was working at "Pioneer", there was this tailor's cutter, his last name was Zilberman. So the sister of his wife was the relative of the mother of my future husband. And that Zilberman, he invited me to visit him at Lachplesh Street. So I went. And my Leva was there. Oh, I should say, by the way, that I did not like him that much at the first sight. But I was very interested because he knew a lot of things, he studied a lot. He educated me. We were going to the theaters. He had very gallant friends; all of them were trying to educate me. And they always were listening to my Leva. And when my husband was defending his Masters thesis I went to Leningrad and there we all were... He was very talented, very intelligent, and very sensible. But he was also nervous, because he was injured in the head during the war. And when my Pavlik (*grandson*), who is now fifteen, was one year old, first my daughter-in-law from Tyumen passed away, and then, no, it was before that when my husband passed away. Well, we lived all together with...

A.A.: With your son and daughter-in-law?

L.D.: Yes. My husband said that Ilyusha (*son*) was a very romantic person. Why couldn't he find some girl from Riga for himself? But she was good, well. And it was in December. My husband was carrying his briefcase, he was wearing his winter jacket and a hat, and he said, "I want to go to the Central Market to get some apples. "Antonovka" (*very popular apples in Russia available during winter, similar in taste to Granny Smith*) apples for Pavlik. And I thought that in three hours he should be back. But he was not. He went and he did not come back. I called my daughter, "Is your father at your place?" "No, he is not." Later I called all of his friends. Noth-

ing. At ten in the evening I tried to call all admission rooms in the hospitals – nothing there too. And at 10.30 I called the morgue. He already was there from one o'clock.

I was working after my retirement at "Alfa", where "Rimi" is now. Officially I was hired as an inspector of the market place, but in actuality I was working in the department of human resources. I was hiring people for full-time and part-time work. And I was also going to the City Trade Regulations department on Sverdlov Street, uh, it is not important... And one of my coworkers, I told her my story, this woman, she saw my husband during his last minutes, he was staying near the newspaper kiosk, yes, "Soyuzpechat" kiosk, and he was suddenly shaking all over. She thought that he was drunk, but he was shaking, and then he fell down. He was going to take a streetcar to get home. Uh, this is it...

Oh, it was a large funeral. More than 100 people came. He was 64 years old and I was 59 at the time. I thought I was going to go mad.

Later I returned to work, and then I was working at "Agroprom", doing something there... My children did not want me to work. "Mom, you are tired, you should not do it," so, it was like this... And then, after my husband died in December, on the 2nd, my daughter-in-law's mother passed away in February, she was 49, in Tyumen. She had a hypertensive crisis, a stroke. And while here we usually call a doctor when we have high fever, there with the high fever she was working. You know how they treated it there, in Tyumen...

And I thought I was going to go mad. My daughter said, "Mom, you should come to live with me with Pavlik". And my son-in-law brought me there, but I, how to say it..., it is all passed... So I can say that, of course, I had lived a hard life. It turned out that the cousin of my husband lives there, on the other side of Dvina River (*Dvina, or Daugava, as it is called in Latvia, is the river that divides Riga, the capital of Latvia into two parts*). Uh, yes, right next to the Agenskalnsky market. And he said that my husband's father passed away when he was 54. And his mother, she was helping us a lot, and she was very educated.

A.A.: They come from Leningrad, didn't they? And your husband studied in Leningrad?

L.D.: Yes, he did. He was studying there. But his mother told me that they were originally from somewhere near Smolensk. And my husband studied in Leningrad, and lived there in a dormitory; there were also some Polish people there. They were writing each other letters for a long time. There was one professor who wrote letters. And suddenly there were no letters – Leva had already passed away. One of them, then, got married in Minsk, this was a professor. And the second one, then, lived in Poland, I do not remember in what city, somewhere in the south. And suddenly this second one, who is from Poland, he was calling us on the phone. And I told him, you know, that Lev Isaakovich passed away. He traveled with his wife to Estonia, but first he went to Riga. My son was a tour guide for him, and showed him everything in Riga. And he invited him to Warsaw, to visit him there. But my son did visit him there.

This is my story. Well, and there was no difference of who you are in terms of national origin.

Membership Fees are Now Due

At the annual meeting of Latvia SIG held at the IAJGS conference in Salt Lake City, a vote of the attending members of the SIG indicated that most members preferred to receive the Latvia SIG newsletter via email as a PDF file. I sent an email to the membership asking for their preferences, and, as of now, about twice as many members prefer to receive the newsletter as a PDF file. This will be the second issue of the newsletter that will be distributed to many members as a PDF file. However, I have not heard from many members, so please contact me and let me know whether you prefer to receive the newsletter in hard copy or as a PDF file. Since the PDF version contains color photographs and usually runs about 20 to 30 pages, I would only recommend this version to those of you who have wide-band (cable, DSL, fiber, etc.) access to the Internet.

This is a reminder to kindly renew your subscrip-

tion to the Latvia SIG and Newsletter. Our subscription year runs from July 2007 through June 2008. As previously mentioned, dues may be paid for multiple years. Also, the yearly fees have been raised to 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 subsequent year. Please make your check payable to Latvia SIG and mail them to:

Latvia SIG
5450 Whitley Park Terrace, #901
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USA

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

To do this go to the PayPal web-site, **<http://www.paypal.com>**, and follow the directions provided to create an account. Once you have an account, log into your account and click the **Send Money** tab. Now enter the Latvia SIG email address, which is: **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 email explaining that it has received a payment from you through **PayPal**.

It is important that new members complete and mail the membership form on the following page — this form can also be found on the Latvia SIG web site — so that we can enter family names and locations on our **Family Finder**.

As in previous issues, I am including descriptions of cities and towns taken from the archives at Beth Hatefutsoth. Included in this issue are: Jaunjelgava, Jecava, and Jekabpils.

J A U N J E L G A V A

(IN JEWISH SOURCES: NAIRI; IN GERMAN: FRIEDRICHSTADT)

A TOWN IN THE JEKABPILS DISTRICT, ZEMGALE REGION (FORMERLY KURLAND), CENTRAL LATVIA, U.S.S.R.

IN THE 16TH CENTURY FRIEDRICH, THE DUKE OF KURLAND, FOUNDED A SETTLEMENT AND NAMED IT NEUSTATCHEN. IN 1642 IT WAS GRANTED CITY STATUS. IN 1646 THE NAME WAS CHANGED TO FRIEDRICHSTADT AND IN 1795 IT WAS ANNEXED, TOGETHER WITH KURLAND, BY RUSSIA. DURING THE YEARS 1920-40 IT WAS PART OF INDEPENDENT LATVIA. IN THE 1920S THERE WAS ANOTHER NAME CHANGE, TO JAUNJELGAVA.

THE FIRST JEWS CAME TO THE PLACE FROM THE SURROUNDING VILLAGES, AND OTHERS CAME LATER FROM WHITE RUSSIA AND LITHUANIA. AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 19TH CENTURY A COMMUNITY WAS ORGANIZED AND A CEMETERY WAS OPENED, AND IN 1803 THE HEVRA KADISHA WAS ESTABLISHED. THERE WAS A SHOCHET (RITUAL SLAUGHTERER) AND A RABBINICAL ESTABLISHMENT. A NEW JEWISH CEMETERY WAS CONSECRATED IN 1848.

IN THE COURSE OF TIME THE COMMUNITY BUILT A CENTRAL SYNAGOGUE, TWO BATEI MIDRASH (SEMINARY) AT ONE OF WHICH A YESHIVAH WAS OPENED, AND HOUSES OF PRAYERS FOR THE HASSIDIM AND MITNAGDIM.

IN 1935, THE COMMUNITY, INCLUDING NAIRI AND THE SURROUNDINGS, NUMBERED 1,286. THE NUMBER OF JEWS INCREASED FROM YEAR TO YEAR, AND BY 1881 THERE WERE 4,128 PEOPLE (70% OF THE POPULATION) THERE. FROM THAT YEAR THE COMMUNITY BEGAN TO GROW SMALLER.

A STATE SCHOOL FOR JEWISH PUPILS WAS OPENED AT THE INITIATIVE OF THE COMMUNITY IN THE MIDDLE OF THE 19TH CENTURY. AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 20TH CENTURY THERE WAS A TALMUD TORAH OF THE MASORTI (CONSERVATIVES). MANY CHILDREN STUDIED AT GERMAN LANGUAGE ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS. STUDIES OF JEWISH SUBJECTS TOOK PLACE IN THE AFTERNOONS. THE TALMUD TORAH ASSOCIATION OPENED A "HEDER METUKAN" (MODERN HEDER) IN 1906 AT WHICH SECULAR SUBJECTS WERE ALSO STUDIED.

IN 1915, DURING WORLD WAR I, THREE LEADING MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY WERE ARRESTED BY THE AUTHORITIES AND HELD AS HOSTAGES TO ENSURE THE LOYALTY OF THE JEWS. FINALLY, THE COMMUNITY WAS EXILED, TOGETHER WITH THE OTHER JEWS OF KURLAND, TO THE INTERIOR OF RUSSIA.

AFTER THE WAR ONLY A FEW PEOPLE RETURNED SO THAT THE JEWS WERE NOW A MINORITY IN THE TOWN. DURING THIS PERIOD THE RABBI OF THE COMMUNITY WAS AARON BEZALEL PAUL. HE WAS ALSO THE HEAD OF THE COMMUNITY COUNCIL WHICH WAS ELECTED IN 1920. THE REHABILITATION OF THE REFUGEES WAS MADE POSSIBLE THROUGH THE FINANCIAL SUPPORT OF THE "JOINT" (A RELIEF AGENCY OF AMERICAN JEWRY). A WELFARE AND BENEVOLENT FUND WAS ESTABLISHED. IN ADDITION TO CHARITABLE INSTITUTIONS SUCH AS

"BIKKUR CHOLIM" (SICK VISITING) AND "LINAT ZEDEK" (HOSTEL). THE GERMAN LANGUAGE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, WHICH OPENED IN THE TOWN AFTER WORLD WAR I, AT THIS TIME CHANGED THE MEDIUM OF TEACHING, FIRST TO RUSSIAN AND LATER TO YIDDISH. IN 1927 THIS SCHOOL OPENED A COURSE OF HEBREW STUDIES. A FEW PUPILS ATTENDED THE VOCATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL IN THE TOWN.

AT FIRST MOST OF THE JEWS MADE A MEAGER LIVING FROM SMALL TIME BUSINESS, TRADES AND AS CARTERS. AS A RESULT OF THE CONFLAGRATIONS WHICH BROKE OUT IN THE TOWN IN THE SIXTIES AND SEVENTIES OF THE 19TH CENTURY, MANY FAMILIES WERE LEFT WITHOUT ANY POSSESSIONS.

WITH THE LAYING OF THE RIGA-DVINSK RAILWAY LINE IN THIS PERIOD, THE ECONOMY OF THE TOWN, WHICH WAS BASED ON NAVIGATION ON THE DVINA RIVER FOR ITS TRADE, WAS SERIOUSLY AFFECTED. THE JEWS BEGAN TO LEAVE THE PLACE.

AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 20TH CENTURY THERE WAS AN IMPROVEMENT IN THE ECONOMIC SITUATION OF THE JEWS AND THE NUMBER OF BIG MERCHANTS (MAINLY IN THE TIMBER TRADE) GREW. JEWS OWNED KNITTING MILLS, FACTORIES MANUFACTURING SOAP, NEEDLES AND CHOCOLATE, AND LEATHER TANNERIES. AMONG MEMBERS OF THE FREE PROFESSIONS WERE: PHARMACISTS, DOCTORS AND DENTISTS. A LOAN FUND WAS OPENED TO ASSIST ARTISANS AND TRADESMEN, WHILE A BANK SUPERVISED BY THE AUTHORITIES SERVED THE NEEDS OF JEWISH BUSINESSMEN.

THE JEWISH SOCIALIST PARTY, THE BUND, BECAME ACTIVE IN THE TOWN AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 20TH CENTURY.

ALTHOUGH THE MAJORITY OF THE JEWS WERE ZIONISTS, THE ZIONIST PARTIES WERE NOT ORGANIZED IN THE TOWN. 'TSE'IREI ZION' (YOUNG ZION) WAS ACTIVE IN THE TOWN IN 1905. IN 1925 THE JEWISH SCOUT MOVEMENT "BAR KOCHVA" WAS ESTABLISHED, WHICH WAS NOT POLITICALLY AFFILIATED AFTER A BREAK-UP OF THE ORGANIZATION, "HASHOMER HA'TSAIR-NETZACH" OPENED A BRANCH. ABOUT A DOZEN OF ITS MEMBERS WENT ON ALIYAH TO ERETZ ISRAEL. IN 1927 THE "MACCABI" SPORTS ORGANIZATION BEGAN OPERATIONS. RELATIONS BETWEEN THE INHABITANTS OF THE TOWN AND THE JEWS WERE GENERALLY NORMAL. DURING THE TIME THAT LATVIA WAS INDEPENDENT, RABBI PAUL WAS DEPUTY MAYOR OF THE TOWN. WITH THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE DICTATORSHIP IN LATVIA IN 1934, ANTI-SEMITISM BEGAN TO MANIFEST ITSELF.

IN 1935 THERE WERE 561 JEWS, AMONG A POPULATION OF 2,153, IN THE TOWN.

THE HOLOCAUST PERIOD

FOLLOWING THE RIBBENTROP-MOLOTOV ACCORD, SIGNED BY GERMANY AND THE U.S.S.R. IN AUGUST 1939, THE RED ARMY SET UP BASES IN LATVIA AND INSTALLED A SOVIET REGIME IN THE SUMMER OF 1940. BUSINESSES AND STORES WERE NATIONALIZED AND JEWISH INSTITUTIONS WERE DISBANDED.

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IN JUNE 1941 WEALTHY JEWS AND THEIR FAMILIES WERE BANISHED TO SIBERIA.

AS A RESULT OF THE GERMAN ATTACK ON THE U.S.S.R. ON JUNE 22, 1941, THE SOVIETS BEGAN TO EVACUATE THEIR CITIZENS ON JUNE 27. JEWS FLED, OF THEIR OWN ACCORD, TO THE INTERIOR OF RUSSIA WHERE SOME OF THEM WERE CONSCRIPTED INTO THE RED ARMY. MANY WERE KILLED IN ACTION.

IN THE ABSENCE OF A GOVERNMENT IN THE FIRST DAYS OF THE WAR, GANGS OF LATVIAN FASCISTS BEGAN TO BE ACTIVE IN THE TOWN. THE JEWS WERE CONCENTRATED IN THE SYNAGOGUE AND THEN TAKEN TO A PLACE ABOUT 3-4 KILOMETRES OUTSIDE THE TOWN, WHERE THEY WERE SHOT TO DEATH AND BURIED IN A MASS GRAVE. THE MAJORITY OF THE INHABITANTS OF THE TOWN HAD A HAND IN LOOTING THE PROPERTY OF THE JEWS. ACCORDING TO ONE VERSION THERE WERE ALREADY NO JEWS IN THE TOWN AT THIS TIME, AND WHEN THE GERMANS OCCUPIED THE TOWN AT THE BEGINNING OF JULY, THEY WERE MET BY A SIGN: 'FRIEDRICHSTADT JUDENREIN' (FRIEDRISHSTADT IS CLEANSED OF JEWS).

ACCORDING TO ANOTHER VERSION, THE GERMANS ASSEMBLED THOSE JEWS WHO WERE IN THE TOWN AFTER THE OCCUPATION, IN THE MITNAGDIM SYNAGOGUE. AT THE BEGINNING OF AUGUST A GROUP OF YOUNG MEN WAS TAKEN TO THE SERENE FOREST, A DISTANCE OF ABOUT 8 KMS. FROM THE TOWN AND THERE ORDERED TO DIG PITS. ON THE COMPLETION OF THE WORK THEY WERE ALL SHOT. THE REMAINING JEWS OF THE TOWN WERE MURDERED THERE A SHORT WHILE LATER.

AFTER THE WAR THE SURVIVORS BROUGHT THE REMAINS OF THOSE WHO HAD BEEN MURDERED, FOR BURIAL IN THE JEWISH CEMETERY. A MONUMENT WAS SET UP IN THEIR MEMORY.

J E C A V A
(IN GERMAN: ECKAU)

A SETTLEMENT IN THE DISTRICT OF BAUSKA, ZEMGALE REGION (FORMERLY KURLAND), SOUTHERN LATVIA, U.S.S.R. IN THE YEARS 1920-1940 IT WAS PART OF INDEPENDENT LATVIA.

IN THE YEAR 1935 46 JEWS LIVED THERE, COMPRISING 0.6% OF THE POPULATION. THEY HAD A HOUSE OF PRAYERS IN A PRIVATE HOME. SOME OF THE CHILDREN WENT TO THE LOCAL SCHOOL, OTHERS WERE SENT TO JEWISH SCHOOLS IN NEARBY TOWNS.

THE MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY WERE KNOWN FOR THEIR ATTACHMENT TO ZIONISM. THEY DONATED MONEY TO ERETZ-ISRAEL AND PARTICIPATED IN THE ELECTIONS TO THE 18TH ZIONIST CONGRESS OF 1933. MOST OF THEM VOTED FOR THE ZIONIST SOCIALIST PARTY.

THE HOLOCAUST PERIOD

FOLLOWING THE RIBBENTROP-MOLOTOV ACCORD SIGNED IN AUGUST 1939 BY GERMANY AND THE U.S.S.R., THE RED ARMY OCCUPIED LATVIA AND IN THE SUMMER OF 1940 A SOVIET REGIME WAS INSTALLED IN THE COUNTRY.

A FEW DAYS AFTER THE OUTBREAK OF WAR BETWEEN GERMANY AND THE U.S.S.R. (ON JUNE 22, 1941) THE GERMAN ARMY OCCUPIED THE TOWN. SOME JEWS SUCCEEDED IN ESCAPING TO THE EAST. THE YOUNG MEN AMONG THEM WERE CONSCRIPTED INTO THE RED ARMY.

THOSE MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY WHO REMAINED IN THE TOWN AND WHO WERE FIT, WERE SENT TO FORCED LABOR.

DURING JULY OF 1941 THEY WERE TAKEN TO BOSCA. A FEW DAYS LATER, TOGETHER WITH THE JEWS OF THIS TOWN, THEY WERE SENT TO THE OUTSKIRTS OF LIKBARTEN WHERE THEY WERE MURDERED. ONLY ONE JEW MANAGED TO ESCAPE.

J E K A B P I L S

(IN JEWISH SOURCES: YAKOVSTAT; IN GERMAN: JAKOBSTADT)

THE DISTRICT TOWN IN THE ZEMGALE REGION (FORMERLY KURLAND)
ON THE BANKS ON THE DVINA RIVER, CENTRAL LATVIA, U.S.S.R.

JAKOBSTADT WAS FOUNDED IN THE 16TH CENTURY BY JAKOB, DUKE OF KURLAND, FOR A GROUP OF PEOPLE BANISHED FROM RUSSIA. IN 1670 THE SETTLEMENT WAS GRANTED TOWN STATUS AND WAS NAMED AFTER ITS FOUNDER. IN 1795 KURLAND WAS ANNEXED BY RUSSIA. FROM 1920-40 THE TOWN WAS PART OF INDEPENDENT LATVIA, AND ITS GERMAN NAME WAS CHANGED TO THE LATVIAN JEKABPILS. IN 1962 THE TOWN WAS UNITED WITH JAUNJELGAVA, A NEIGHBORING TOWN.

DURING THE TIME OF THE DUCHY THERE WERE ONLY A FEW "PROTECTED JEWS" IN THE TOWN (PROTECTED AGAINST PROVISION OF SERVICES OR PAYMENT). THE COMMUNITY WAS ORGANIZED AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 19TH CENTURY. THE MAJORITY OF JEWS CAME FROM LITHUANIA, WHILE SOME OF THEM WERE FROM THE SURROUNDING VILLAGES.

THE COMMUNITY REGISTER WAS KEPT FROM 1810, AND SOON AFTER THIS TIME A RABBI OFFICIATED HERE. IN THE 19TH CENTURY THE MAJORITY OF THE COMMUNITY WERE ORTHODOX, AND LATER THE FOLLOWING RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS WERE FOUNDED: A SYNAGOGUE, THREE HOUSES OF PRAYERS, A BETH MIDRASH, THE "POALEI TSEDEK" MINYAN. CHARITABLE AND BENEVOLENT INSTITUTIONS INCLUDED: "GEMILLUTH HESED" AND "BIKKUR HOLIM" (SICK VISITING). IN 1830 A YESHIVAH WAS OPENED.

IN 1835 THERE WERE 2,569 JEWS IN THE TOWN. 60 OF THEM EMIGRATED IN 1840 TO AGRICULTURAL AREAS IN SOUTHERN RUSSIA. FROM THE BEGINNING CONSERVATIVE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS WERE ACTIVE, SUCH AS "HADARIM" AND A TALMUD TORAH. IN 1850 AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL WAS OPENED FOR JEWISH BOYS AND IT FUNCTIONED UNTIL WORLD WAR I.

IN 1881 THE COMMUNITY, WHICH NUMBERED 2,254, COMPRISED 41% OF THE TOTAL POPULATION. MANY OF THEM RESIDED IN THE PLACE ILLEGALLY. IN 1893, THOSE WHO WERE NOT IN POSSESSION OF VALID DOCUMENTS, WERE SENTENCED TO BANISHMENT. AT THE SAME TIME THE EMIGRATION OF JEWS FROM THE TOWN TO THE U.S.A. BEGAN. THE COMMUNITY DECREASED IN SIZE, AND IN 1897 NUMBERED 2,087 (36% OF THE POPULATION).

IN 1901 A LIBRARY WITH A READING ROOM WAS OPENED.

IN 1915, DURING THE COURSE OF WORLD WAR I, THE AUTHORITIES EXILED THE JEWS OF KURLAND TO THE INTERIOR OF RUSSIA. THE JAKOBSTADT COMMUNITY WAS ABLE TO PREVENT THIS BANISHMENT ORDER, BUT THREE LEADING MEMBERS WERE MADE TO SIGN AS GUARANTORS FOR THE LOYALTY OF THE COMMUNITY. DURING THE WAR MANY JEWS LEFT THE PLACE OF THEIR OWN ACCORD. JEWISH PUBLIC BUILDINGS WERE DESTROYED IN THE FIGHTING AS WELL AS 166 PRIVATE HOMES. AFTER THE WAR ONLY A PART OF THE EXILES RETURNED AND IN 1920 THERE WERE 676 PEOPLE IN THE COMMUNITY.

A COMMUNITY COUNCIL WAS ELECTED AND A BEGINNING WAS MADE IN THE REHABILITATION OF THE REFUGEES. 'GEMILLUTH HESED' AND 'BIKKUR HOLIM' RENEWED THEIR ACTIVITIES AND A WOMEN'S SOCIETY WAS ESTABLISHED. WITH THE HELP OF THE 'JOINT' (A RELIEF AGENCY OF AMERICAN JEWRY) A CREDIT FUND WAS FOUNDED IN THE TOWN. IN INDEPENDENT LATVIA, THERE WAS A JEWISH SCHOOL IN THE TOWN IN WHICH YIDDISH WAS THE MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION. HEBREW WAS ALSO TAUGHT.

IN 1934, PARALLEL TO THE COMMUNITY COUNCIL, THE 'ASSOCIATION OF THE JEWS OF JEKABPILS' WAS ORGANIZED, WHICH REPRESENTED THE COMMUNITY VIS-A-VIS THE AUTHORITIES. THE FIRST JEWS IN THE PLACE BARELY EARNED A LIVING AS PEDDLERS OR FROM DIFFERENT TRADES. IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE 19TH CENTURY WHEN JEWS WERE ALLOWED TO ACQUIRE REAL ESTATE THE SITUATION IMPROVED. THE MAJORITY WERE BUSINESSMEN, MAINLY IN THE LUMBER, GRAINS AND FLAX TRADES. AMONG THE TRADESMEN THERE WERE TAILORS, SHOEMAKERS, TINSMITHS, BLACKSMITHS AND CARTERS. TWO FACTORIES PRODUCING MATCHES BEFORE WORLD WAR I WERE JEWISH OWNED. AMONG THOSE IN THE FREE PROFESSIONS, THERE WERE FIVE DOCTORS.

AFTER THE WAR THE JEWS PLAYED A GREATER ROLE IN THE ECONOMY THAN THEIR COMPARATIVE NUMBERS SUGGESTED. IN 1935 THEY COMPRISED 14% OF THE TOTAL POPULATION, BUT 60% OF THE BUSINESS HOUSES WERE IN JEWISH HANDS. THE AUTHORITIES PERMITTED THE JEWS TO OPEN THEIR SHOPS ON SUNDAY AFTERNOONS.

THE JEWISH SOCIALIST PARTY, THE BUND, BECAME ACTIVE IN THE TOWN FROM 1905. IN 1912, ONE OF THE HEADS OF THE COMMUNITY, DR. YEHEZKEL GUREVITZ, WAS ELECTED AS A REPRESENTATIVE OF KURLAND IN THE FOURTH DUMA (ADVISORY AND LAWMAKING BODIES IN RUSSIA).

IN 1922 RUMOURS ABOUT RITUAL MURDERS BY THE JEWS OF THE TOWN WERE SPREAD ABOUT. THE POGROM ATMOSPHERE WAS CALMED FOLLOWING THE INTERVENTION OF THE POLICE.

IN THE INDEPENDENT LATVIA THE 'BAR KOCHVA' SCOUT MOVEMENT WAS ACTIVE IN THE TOWN. LATER, BRANCHES OF VARIOUS ZIONIST YOUTH MOVEMENTS WERE OPENED - 'HASHOMER HA'ISAIR NETZACH', 'BETAR' 'GORDONIA' AND 'HERZLIYAH'. DURING THE THIRTIES THERE WAS A STRENGTHENING OF ZIONISM, AND IN THE ELECTIONS TO THE 18TH ZIONIST CONGRESS IN 1933, 324 MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY VOTED. THE ZIONIST SOCIALIST PARTY GAINED THE MAJORITY OF THE VOTES. THE ORTHODOX COMMUNITY WAS CENTERED AROUND RABBI YEHUDAH LEIB SHAUL GINSBURG FROM 1908 TO 1941. BRANCHES OF AGUDATH YISRAEL AND YOUNG AGUDATH YISRAEL WERE OPENED.

THE ANTI-ZIONIST YIDDISHISTS WERE ACTIVE IN THE WORKERS CLUB (ARBEITERHEIM). A PART OF THE PUBLIC AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES IN THE TOWN WAS UNDER THE MANAGEMENT OF TWO SPORTS ASSOCIATIONS, 'HAKOAH' AND 'MACCABI'. UNDER THE AUSPICES OF MACCABI, THERE WAS A DRAMA CIRCLE.

IN 1935 THE COMMUNITY NUMBERED 793 OUT OF A TOTAL POPULATION OF 5,826.

THE HOLOCAUST PERIOD

FOLLOWING THE RIBBENTROP-MOLOTOV ACCORD, SIGNED IN AUGUST 1939, BETWEEN GERMANY AND THE U.S.S.R., THE RED ARMY ENTERED LATVIA AND IN THE SUMMER OF 1940 INSTALLED A SOVIET GOVERNMENT. PRIVATELY OWNED BUSINESSES WERE NATIONALIZED, AND JEWISH PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS WERE WOUND UP. A NUMBER OF THE JEWS JOINED THE NEW REGIME.

FIVE DAYS AFTER THE OUTBREAK OF WAR BETWEEN GERMANY AND THE U.S.S.R. (JUNE 22, 1941) THE SOVIETS BEGAN TO EVACUATE THE AREA. OF THE JEWS WHO ATTEMPTED TO FLEE WITH THE DEPARTING ARMY, ONLY A FEW SUCCEEDED IN REACHING THE INTERIOR OF RUSSIA. THERE THE JEWISH MEN WERE CONSCRIPTED INTO THE RED ARMY. THE MAJORITY OF THE COMMUNITY REMAINED IN THE TOWN.

ON JUNE 29 THE GERMANS OCCUPIED THE TOWN. WITHIN A VERY SHORT PERIOD THE JEWS WERE ASSEMBLED IN THE SYNAGOGUES. THOSE FIT FOR WORK WERE SENT TO PERFORM FORCED LABOR.

ON ONE OF THE DAYS IN SEPTEMBER 1941 THE JEWS WERE SENT TO THE TOWN, KOKAS, WHERE THEY WERE MURDERED. THOSE WHO HAD DIFFICULTIES MARCHING WERE SHOT ON THE WAY.

IN THE SUMMER OF 1944 THE RED ARMY LIBERATED THE TOWN. MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY WHO SURVIVED BROUGHT THE REMAINS OF THE PEOPLE WHO HAD BEEN MURDERED FOR JEWISH BURIAL, AND IN THE FIFTIES ERECTED A MONUMENT IN THEIR MEMORY. ON IT THERE WAS THE MAGEN DAVID AND INSCRIPTIONS IN RUSSIAN AND YIDDISH. AFTER A FEW YEARS THE AUTHORITIES REMOVED FROM THE MONUMENT ALL TRACES OF JEWISH IDENTIFICATION.

IN 1970 THERE WERE ABOUT 30 JEWS IN JEKABPILS.

Latvia SIG Membership Questionnaire

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

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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)

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