



The Latvian Jewish Courier

JSL'S 2016 YIZKOR

On November 20, JSL held its annual Yizkor honoring the memory of Latvian Jews killed by the Nazis and their collaborators during World War II in the Park East Synagogue. This year we also marked the 75th anniversary of the mass slaughter in Rumbula, the place of our eternal grief, where more than 26,000 of our loved ones, our older brothers and sisters, were killed.



The meeting was opened by JSL Vice President J. Faerber

The memorial was opened by Joseph Faerber, Vice President of JSL. He proposed that we begin our meeting with the lighting of six commemorative candles in memory of the six million Jews killed during the years of the Holocaust.



The children who lit the memorial candles sat in the first row of the synagogue

The candles were lit by the members of the younger generation: Zackary and Eleonora, grandchildren of Professor George Schwab, Anna, granddaughter of Gerta Feigin, Sara,

graddaughter of Mara Vekhnis, Aviva, granddaughter of Ivar Brod, and Bez, grandson of Aelita Fitingof. A seventh candle, representing our solidarity with Israel and honoring the memory of our brothers and sisters who perished protecting the independence of the Jewish State, was lit by member of the board Mikhail Dumesh.

After the candle lighting, a letter from Steven Springfield, one of the founders of the JSL and its longtime president, was read by his son, Charles Springfield. Steven unfortunately could not attend due to health reasons. The letter appears in this issue.

Joseph Faerber then invited the audience to stand as he read out the names of the Latvian Jews, members of our organization, who had passed away during the past year: **Esther Krupkin, Tewel Kukla, Shalom Sorkin, Oleg Renkovski, Abraham Teitelbaum, Ida Skopets, and Dora Basner.** Cantor Shalom Kleinlerer sang the prayers "El Mole Rachamim" and "Kaddish."

Acting President David Silberman gave an update about the work of our organization over the past year, including relationships with the Jewish organizations in Latvia. In



The seventh candle was lit by Michael Dumesh

addition, he made a special note about the granite stone honoring the Jews massacred during World War II in Latvia that was recently installed in the Holocaust Memorial Park in Brooklyn.

Professor Schwab then introduced our guest from Riga, Gita Umanovska, Executive Director of the Council of Jewish Communities of Latvia. Ms. Umanovska gave a presentation about the activities of the Jewish community of Latvia, after which she responded to numerous questions from the audience.

At the end of the official part of the program, clips of the upcoming documentary *Unknown Holocaust* were shown. The film was created by the Israeli author Boris Matsfir, who originally hails from Latvia.

To conclude the day, members enjoyed a lively lunch and were delighted by the singing of the "Queen of Yiddish Cabaret" Aelita Fitingof. *by Bronya Shif*

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GREETINGS FROM STEVEN SPRINGFIELD

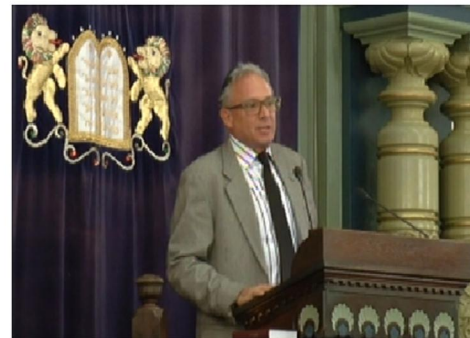
Dear Friends,

I am sorry I am unable to be with you today at the Memorial. My health does not allow me to travel anymore, but please know that I am with you in spirit. I am so pleased that the work of JSL continues under the new leadership to keep alive the memory of the murderous horror inflicted on us by the Germans and their local collaborators and to help our brethren rebuild the Jewish community in Latvia.

Charlie reminded me that you are remembering the 75th anniversary of the German invasion into Latvia. Ivar requested photos from the period before and after the events of 1941. Unfortunately, I do not have any that I have not already shared. My memory allows me to remember the vibrant Jewish community, wonderful schools, friends, my wonderful family, and a rich Jewish life. The destruction of all of that was more wretched than can be believed. The mass killings in November and December of 1941, the burning of the Choral synagogue and many more depravities, amongst so many others.



Steven Springfield, 1999



Charles Springfield speaking at the Yizkor

I was drawn back to Riga after the Baltic states were opened by Gorbachev. I returned with my brother Peter and sons Charles and Stewart. I, together with George, Gertrude, Leo, Jack, Peter, among others, formed our organization and began the work of setting the record straight: we demanded change in the history taught to students and children by acknowledging the complicity of Latvians and, at times, their joyous participation in the slaughter of Jews. There were few, if any, memorials and most remembered those events as fascism. We must continue righting those wrongs, and correcting the record and history.

WE MUST NEVER FORGET WHAT HAPPENED TO US.

I am so pleased that the organization continues to move forward by attracting descendants of survivors and new members. The beginning of regaining Jewish properties for our community is particularly pleasing.

The work must continue.

I will be with you in spirit and in my heart today.

Shalom, *Steven Springfield*

RIGA, NOVEMBER 29 – 30, 2016



Meeting in Rumbula. Ilya Lensky, the director of the Jews in Latvia Museum, speaks.

At the memorial meeting in Rumbula, President Raimonds Vejonis reminded listeners not to forget the extraordinarily grave events of the past and to preserve the memory of the victims.

A gathering took place on Tuesday, November 29, at the Rumbula memorial in memory of the 25,000 Jews who had been brutally murdered by Nazis in the Rumbula forest on November 30 and December 8, 1941.

On the 75th anniversary of the slaughter of the prisoners of the Riga ghetto, the president recalled that crimes against humanity do not have the time limitation. "Today we pay tribute to the memory of the 25,000 Jews, who had been brutally murdered in the Rumbula forest on November 30 and December 8, 1941, organized by the Nazis. Unfortunately local units of the auxiliary police participated in its implementation," the president said.

Mr. Vejonis noted that for a long time these tragic parts of the history of Latvia were silenced and remained unknown to the general public. In the years of the Soviet occupation, activists of the Jewish community were able to have a stone placed here, with great difficulty, inscribed "In memory of the victims of fascism."

After the restoration of independence in Latvia, a memorial to the victims of the Holocaust was erected in Rumbula. The history of the Holocaust is now taught in schools in Latvia, the events that occurred in Rumbula are being studied by historians, and an exposition devoted to the "Jews in Latvia" is displayed in the Museum of the occupation of Latvia.

"Winter days in Latvia are short—only seven hours. It is incomprehensible that during this small time period, for two short winter days, as many of our fellow citizens were methodically and, in cold blood, murdered as how many now live in a Latvian town of

medium size," said Mr. Vejonis.

He stressed that despite the cruel repression and immeasurable loss, the Jewish community in Latvia has been and is being reborn. "I see the development and flourishing of its public, religious, and cultural life. Owing to this, Latvia also becomes stronger and richer," the president said.

This memorable gathering at the Rumbula memorial was also attended by the Speaker of the Saeima Inara Murniece, Minister of Defense Raymonds Bergmanis, Ambassador of Israel in Latvia Liron Bar-Sad, and other representatives of public organizations and of the Jewish community.

Rumbula is one of the largest places of the mass extermination of Jews in Europe. On November 30 and December 8, 1941, more than 25,000 inhabitants of the Riga ghetto were massacred in the Rumbula forest and approximately one thousand of these Jews had been shipped in from Germany.



Candles at the foot of the Freedom Monument

In the evening of Wednesday, November 30, hundreds of Riga residents gathered at the Freedom Monument to light candles in memory of the Jews

RIGA, NOVEMBER 29 – 30, 2016 (continued)

killed by the Nazis 75 years ago. Organizers of the rally spread out eight rows of foil from the monument in the direction of Old Riga, each almost 2 feet wide and more than 33 feet long. The candles, which outlined the rows of foil, represented the tragic and mournful path of Jews from the Riga ghetto to Rumbula.

The published appeal entitled “Rumbula-75. We remember. It hurts,” signed by more than 300 people, highlights the need to remember the tragedy in Rumbula, to pay tribute to the memories of those who perished, and to not again allow this kind of tragedy to happen. The appeal included: “That is not just a tragedy of Latvian Jews, because the people taken to be shot in the Rumbula forest were our fellow citizens. The Rumbula tragedy must be remembered to honor the memory of our fellows and to prevent the repetition of such events. Let us remember that those were foreign powers that divided the people of Latvia into ‘us’ and ‘them.’ It is our duty to stop this division: not only for the sake of ourselves, but for the sake of future generations.”

The appeal was written and the event was organized by the director of Zhanis Lipke Museum Lolita Tomsone and well-known historian Dr. Kaspars Zellis, and supported by many notable individuals, historians, literary people, scientists, as well as ordinary citizens.



Lolita Tomsone and Dr. Kaspars Zellis

As a distinctive response to this appeal, on November 30 was published the letter from a former prisoner of Riga ghetto M. Vestermanis:

“Dear friends,

I have lived through the horror of Rumbula and Bikernieki, where all my loved ones, all of my Jewish world perished. I have waited 75 years for the Latvian society to say—these are also our people. I am happy that at the end of my long life this wonderful moment is finally here.

Thank you to all of you, good people. It feels so good to know that we are all together.

Dr. hist. Margers Vestermanis, one of the few Holocaust survivors.”



Margers Vestermanis at his desk

DAVID SILBERMAN'S ADDRESS AT THE YIZKOR MEMORIAL SERVICE ON NOVEMBER 20, 2016

*Survivors of the Holocaust,
Members of our Jewish Survivors of
Latvia Organization,
Honored Guest Speaker Gita Umanovska,
Cantor Kleinlerer,
Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

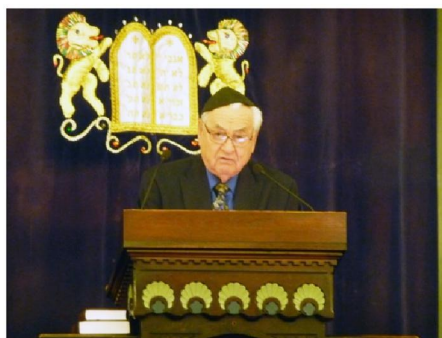
On behalf of the Board of our Organization the Jewish Survivors of Latvia in the United States, it is my privilege and honor to welcome all of you to our traditional gathering to commemorate the tragic Holocaust events in Latvia.

This is the 75th anniversary of the beginning of the Holocaust in Latvia, the catastrophic mass murders of Jews by the German Nazis and their local assistants, collaborators in the Hitlerian-occupied Latvia in 1941.

As you know, our Organization was established 32 years ago, in 1984 by Max Kaufman, Steven Springfield, Professors Howard Adelson, George Schwab, Gertrude Schneider, Mr. Leo Kram and other outstanding personalities who miraculously survived the Holocaust and devoted their remaining years to memorialize the events and keep them for future generations.

We embraced this tradition and continue to follow the main guidelines—conducting annual mourning Holocaust Memorial meetings to honor the victims murdered in Holocaust, fighting all forms of anti-Semitism, defending the interests of Holocaust survivors of Latvia and representing them at international organizations and to the public at large.

Unfortunately we lost a



number of our organization's members during this past year and today in our list are only 199 total members of whom we can consider approximately 100 active members who pay dues and participate in our Organization activities. Nevertheless, our Organization was successful in several areas of activity. Our last Memorial meeting, held on November 22, 2015, attracted a visible number of young people, mostly descendants of Holocaust survivors.

Since the last Memorial meeting we published three *Courier* issues—December 2015, April 2016 and September 2016—that covered a wide spectrum of historical information and news concerning Jews of Latvia, with special recognition to Ivar Brod and Yefim Steinfeld for their valuable contribution of search and updated news from Latvia.

In our last *Courier*, we informed you about positive trends in Latvian Government policies concerning Holocaust matters. Since Latvia regained her independence in 1991, the highest-ranking government officials for the first time participated in the mourning ceremony on November 29, 2015. They included President Raimonds Vejonis, Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkevics, and the

Speaker of the Saema, Inara Murniece.

In his address, wherein he touched upon the participation of numerous Latvians in the Nazi Holocaust extermination machine, President Vejonis admitted "...Regrettably, there were those among us who turned to evil. What they did is deplorable and must be condemned."

Further positive news out of Latvia was that the government restituted the first 5 of some 300 communal Jewish properties. The 5 need major repairs before they can be used. Negotiations continue about the rest of the properties.

Some members of our Board traveled to Latvia to participate in the annual commemoration of the victims of the Holocaust in Latvia. Professor George Schwab took part in the worldwide reunion of Libau's Holocaust survivors, which coincided with the commemoration. Participants included descendants of survivors. I, for one, participated in commemorating the Holocaust in Preili. Memorial services were also held in Rezekne and Ludza; and on January 27, 2016, some of us took part at the United Nations International Holocaust Remembrance Day.

An article in the September 2016 issue of the "*Courier*" by the Librarian of the Eleonora Schwab Library in Riga's Jewish Center, Tsilia Raines, noted that the Library contains some 14,000 publications relating to Judaica and Holocaust studies. The Library, we learn, serves not only the Jewish community but also

DAVID SILBERMAN'S ADDRESS AT THE YIZKOR MEMORIAL SERVICE (CONTINUED)

the Latvian public, including university students and members of the faculty.

You may also be pleased to know that New York City authorities granted us permission to install a memorial stone at the Brooklyn Memorial Park. At that site, some of us took part in commemorating the 75th anniversary of the Babi Yar tragedy, where Jews of Kiev were mercilessly slaughtered.

The latest issue of the *Courier* reported that our organization is active in commemorating and celebrating the righteous gentiles of Latvia, especially the legendary exploits of Zhanis Lipke in rescuing Riga Jews. Former Prime Minister of Latvia Maris Gailis is the chairman of the Zhanis Lipke Memorial Association. Under the direction of a Ph.D. in history, the museum is now in the midst of preparing a scholarly study about this unusual individual. That work, which is anticipated to be completed in about 15 months, will surely leave a mark on the Latvian public.

As in the past, the Jewish Survivors of Latvia in the United States has promoted and supported translations of publications into English dealing with the Holocaust in Latvia. They include, among others, Max Kaufmann's 1947 classic *Churban Lettland: The Destruction of the Jews of Latvia*; Rachel (Raya Westerman) Mazin's *My Life Journey*; Meyer Meler's *Jewish Latvia: Sites to Remember*; Frida Michelson's *I Survived Rumbula*, and Gertrude Schneider's *Muted Voices* and *The Unfinished Road*—both originally published in English in the United States.

I am pleased to inform you that thanks to the initiative of Professor George Schwab and Sheila Johnson Robbins, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington is beginning to

undertake an exhaustive study of the Holocaust in Latvia.

This project is also being supported by our organization, by the head of the Latvian Jewish community in Riga, Mr. Arkadi Suharenko, and the Haas family in the United Kingdom.

The Jewish Survivors of Latvia in the United States is also supporting a major documentary that has been filmed and is now being edited under the directorship by our board member Mitchell Lieber titled *Rumbula's Echo*—parts of which were shown at our memorial last year. In addition, at the initiative of Yad-va-Shem, we are cooperating with a documentary being filmed by Boris Maftsir titled *Searching for the Unknown Holocaust*, which is part of the larger project that includes Latvia and also Nazi-occupied territories of Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and the Baltic States. I was filmed in the part dealing with Preili. Today we are privileged to show you an excerpt from the film taken in Latvia last summer.

Last but not least, I would like to express my gratitude to Aelita Fitingof, well-known singer, and her life-partner Jack Neihausen, for joining our memorial service and for bringing to our audience the spirit of *Yidishkeit*, the Jewish soul, and *Mame-loshn*—the tongue that was nearly wiped out by the Holocaust.

Thank you all for attending today's memorial service. By doing so, we keep the memory of those tragic events forever alive.

I wish you all many years of good health and happiness.

Enjoy Thanksgiving.

Thank you.

David Silberman

Dear JSL members and friends,

Your membership fee and donations are vital source of funds for our organization, including publication of the *Courier* and organizing meetings. Your membership keeps you informed of our various activities and events in Latvia.

In the future, the *Courier* will be sent only to those whose membership dues are up-to-date. Annual dues are \$25.00.

Please write your checks to the order of JSL and mail them to:
c/o David Silberman, 64-14 137th Street, Flushing, NY 11367

JEWISH COMMUNITY OF LATVIA TODAY

(Extracts from the presentation on the JSL Memorial meeting)

By Gita Umanovska



Gita Umanovska

A bit of history

- Jewish life started in Latvia in 16th century
- Before World War II, there were 93,000 Jews in Latvia
- 73,000 Latvian Jews perished in the Holocaust
- Today's Jewish community in Latvia consists of more than 10,000 Jews

Jewish community of Latvia today.

- The largest Jewish community in the Baltic states
- The second largest community in North Europe
- About 40 Jewish communities and organizations in 9 cities (Riga, Liepaja, Ventspils, Jelgava, Daugavpils, Rezekne, Ludza, Jekabpils, and Jurmala)
- 8,000 actively participating in community life
- The Board of Trustees was set up to lead Jewish life in Latvia

Welfare center "Hesed"

- More than 2,000 elderly people (approximately 900 Holocaust survivors among them)
- More than 300 families in need, with more than 370 kids
- All activities are supported by Latvian Jewish community partners: JDS, Claims Conference, and Baltic Jewish Forum

Jewish Community center in partnership with JDC

- Provides activities for community members of all ages
- Programs for preschoolers, kids, and teenagers
- Programs for students, youth, and young families
- Programs for those in midlife
- Camps, seminars, festivals, educational programs
- Programs for strengthening Jewish identity, Shabbatons, Jewish holidays

ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE LATVIAN COUNCIL OF JEWISH COMMUNITIES BETWEEN 2003 AND 2016: Commemoration of the Holocaust



Map of mass killing sites in Latvia

- There are more than 200 mass killing sites in Latvia
- Since 2004, the Council has located and marked more than 60 previously unknown mass graves all over Latvia
- Placing of monuments is still in progress



Memorial in Bikernieki

Largest Memorials:

Rumbula forest in Riga: 25,000 Jews killed
Bikernieki forest in Riga: 20,000 Jews killed
Shkede by Liepaja: 2,750 Jews killed

Monument to rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust in Latvia unveiled in 2007

- It is the first such monument to rescuers in Europe
- Names of 270 Latvian residents etched on stone columns to commemorate those who risked their lives to save 400 Jews. Total budget: 213,430 EUR

Memorial on the site of the Great Synagogue in Riga

- The Great Synagogue with people inside was burned by the local auxiliary police unit on July 4, 1941, on the order of the Nazis. Reconstructed in 2016 by the Council of Jewish Communities of Latvia with the support of the U.S. Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad. Total budget: 24,800 EUR

Riga Synagogue Peitav-Shul renovated in 2007-2009

- During the Holocaust, it escaped the tragic fate of other Riga synagogues
- It was one of very few active synagogues in the U.S.S.R.
- Total budget: 1,949,644 EUR. ES ERAF: 48%, Latvian Government: 16%, Community: 36%

Museum "Jews in Latvia"



Hall in the Jews in Latvia Museum

- Founded in 1989 by Holocaust survivor and historian Mārgers Vestermanis; he is currently the curator of the museum
- The mission of the museum is to preserve the rich cultural heritage of the Latvian Jewish community from its origin in the 16th century to the present day
- More than 10,000 visitors per year

Museum “Jews in Riga” new building

- The new building for the museum was dedicated to the community by the Ministry of Culture in 2005. It is located in Old Town next to the Riga Synagogue. The budget for reconstruction is 1,500,000 EUR.

Synagogue in Rezekne and Synagogue in Ludza — renovated in 2015–2016

(please see specific information in the previous issues of Courier)

Jewish Education in Latvia

- Shimon Dubnov Jewish secondary school, first Jewish school in the former U.S.S.R., was opened in Riga in 1989
- For many years, the school didn't have appropriate premises and was housed in two separate buildings
- As a result of successful negotiation with the Riga City Council, the Riga Jewish school received a new building in 2010; after a capital repair, the school now has more than 300 pupils
- The school still needs more room because of the great number of pupils; total budget needed: 50,000 EUR

Jewish kindergarten “Motek” housed in the same building welcomed pupils in 2013

- More than 30 pupils now and a long waiting list
- Needs a new building

Restitution

- Of the total of 320 Jewish religious and communal properties in 1940, only 35 have been restituted under the 1993 law
- After a long struggle, five properties were restituted in February 2016



Room of the restituted hospital in disrepair

- Long neglected by the former owners, they all need substantial investment to be restored and renovated, from day one they will all require maintenance and payment of taxes

NEWS FROM LATVIA



The International Festival of Jewish Music, dedicated to Mikhail Alexandrovich, started in Riga. The main themes of the third festival were youth, tolerance, and mutual understanding between people, which is why there are many young musicians among the event participants. First and foremost were the winners of the 2015 Young Vocalist Contest. They will take part in concerts throughout the festival and will be accompanied by the experienced musicians of the Riga Klezmer Band. The festival opened with a concert, “Shalom, Rosh Hashanah,” held at the Riga Jewish Community House. At the start of the festival, the works of Jewish composers of Latvia were played, including songs of V. Khvoinitsky—lyrical song “Mames Oign”—and a full-of-life jazz composition “A Najer Yor.” The Riga Jewish Community Center choir performed “Shofar” under direction of

Joseph Tsiser; the audience responded warmly. The festival was organized by the Max Goldin Society of the Jewish Cultural Heritage with the support of the Council of Jewish Communities of Latvia, the Israeli Embassy in Latvia, as well as other organizations.



On October 12, the Chapter of the Order decided to award the Order of Three Stars of IV Degree to Ruvín Ferber, Professor of the University of Latvia. Professor Ferber is the head of the University's Laser Center, Chairman of the Board of the Center for Judaica Studies, and the Academician of the Latvian Academy of Sciences. President R. Vejonis presented Professor Ferber with the Order on November 18, Latvian Independence Day.

On September 1, Jurmala's Duma (City Council) transferred the building of the former Jurmala synagogue, located at 13 Kliavu Street, to the Latvian Jewish Community Restitution Fund. The fund's rights to the building were secured in the Land Book on September 21. The property in Jurmala was the third building returned to the Jewish community.



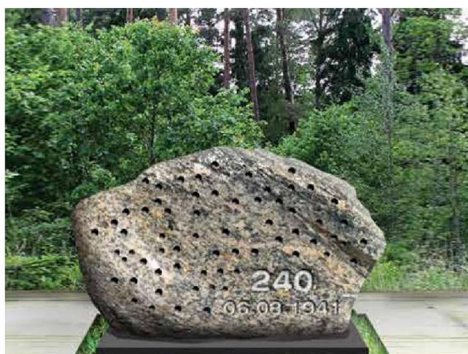
The opening ceremony of the renewed permanent exhibition “Holocaust in Nazi-Occupied Latvia 1941-1945” was held in the Jews in Latvia Museum on November 29. The organizers of the exhibition are Doctor Mārgers Vestermanis, the founder and curator of the museum, and Ilya Lensky, the museum's director.

continued on next page

NEWS FROM LATVIA (CONTINUED)

An interesting meeting with a guest from Germany took place on October 2 in the Riga Jewish Community Center. The guest of honor was Doctor Yevgeny Berkovitch, physicist and computer specialist, as well as the editor-in-chief of the Internet magazine "Notes on Jewish History" (www.berkovich-zametki.com), the anthology *Jewish Antiquity*, and the magazines *Seven Arts* and *Workshop*. Dr. Berkovich gave a lecture, "Albert Einstein at the Crossroads," and answered such questions as: Why Einstein did not go to Jerusalem, where the Jewish University was being founded? What was his attitude toward Zionism? Why scientists were treated differently by the totalitarian regimes in Germany and the U.S.S.R.? What things are in common between the Jewish emancipation and the revolution in physics? The audience greatly enjoyed the lecture and the answers to these and other questions.

On October 20, in the Riga Ghetto and Latvian Holocaust Museum held an event "Each Child Has a Name"; the names of thousands of victims of the tragedy of World War II were read out loud. In Latvia, during the Holocaust, nearly 16,000 children were killed, 6,000 of whom were prisoners in the ghetto. According to Jewish tradition, if the name of the deceased is said out loud, the memory of this person will live on. The names were read by those in attendance, including the staff of the embassies of the United States, Germany, Spain, and Poland, as well as students of one of the Latvian schools—in all, a group of 30 people. This was the seventh consecutive year that this event took place. Initially held on the stage in Verman Park, it has been moved to the Museum in recent years.



The Memorial Stone

In 1941, in the small towns of Kurland, Jews did not understand the need to escape from the Germans or were not able to do so. As was the case in many other localities in Kurzeme, the Jewish community of Sabile was almost completely destroyed. Nearly all of the Jews were shot dead on August 6 in the forest near the Vega settlement. A plain plaque installed during the Soviet times simply noted that this is where 240 victims of fascism were buried. This year, a group decided to erect a more fitting memorial at the spot where 240 local Jews were killed. The Memorial Stone will become the central element of the Sventes forest; the Memorial Stone will be located on the side of the road about 5 km outside the village. The Memorial Stone, a polished boulder with 240 holes that symbolize the wounds of those massacred, was designed by architect Ojars Arvids Feldbergs. An informational stand describing the events of August 6, 1941, will be placed near the memorial.

On October 20, the exhibition "Who Were Kuldiga's Jews?" opened in the Kuldiga District Museum. The objects on exhibit include posters of the Jewish Theater performances and lectures and countless photos telling about the pre-war long-established Kuldiga Jewish community and its impact on the economic and cultural life of the city. The first Jews appeared in Goldingen (as Kuldiga was

formerly known) at the end of the 17th century; in 1797 there were 26 registered Jews in the city. As of 1835, 2,330 Jews lived in Kuldiga (about 57% of the population), but by 1935 only 646 Jews remained (9% of the population). Just a few were able to escape before the Nazis entered the town; by the beginning of 1942, not a single Jew was left in Kuldiga—all of them had been killed by Arais and volunteers from his squad. A handful of Jews were saved by local farmers who hid them from the Nazis.



Ruth Schatz-Mariash, 89, of Latvia passed away on November 29, 2016. A Latvian University graduate, Ruth Schatz-Mariash practiced law from 1950 till 1988. In 1988, she was one of the founders of Latvian Society of Jewish Culture and also the Association of Latvian National Cultural Societies.

From 1990 till 1997 she served as a deputy of the Supreme Council and later in the Saeima of Latvia representing parties "The Popular Front" and "Latvia's Way." She wrote several memories and several compilations of the poems had been published. In 1995 and 2000, she was awarded by the highest award of the Republic of Latvia—The Three Stars Order. Ruth Shatz-Mariash will remain in our memory primarily as one of the creators of the restored Jewish community of Latvia.

Compiled by Ivar Brod
Translated from Russian by Mariya Taukule

BERTHA TUMARIN: PSYCHOANALYST, EDUCATOR, PUBLIC ACTIVIST

In the fall of 2010 we began to compile articles about outstanding Jews native to Latvia to be included in the Latvian Jewish Encyclopedia, planned for printing by Shamir in Riga.

Tumarin, Bertha (Basya) (Bers during her first marriage, born Weinberg), (10/18/1889, Riga – 11/26/1976, New York)—psychoanalyst, educator, public activist. She was born and grew up in Riga in the rabbi's family. In 1909-14, she studied at the historical-philological department of Bestuzhev's college that was the Branch for Women of the Petersburg University. At the end of her study, she passed all her examinations with excellence and at the end of 1918 returned to Riga with her family.



Bertha (then Bers) in her student years

In 1919-1934, B. Tumarin was one of the leading organizers, leaders and teachers of the Jewish secular education in Riga. In 1919-25 and 1926-31, she was the director of and the teacher at school number 2, one of the largest Jewish schools in the city. In 1932-34, she was a teacher at the school for children with delayed

development and the mentally handicapped. For several years Ms. Tumarin was the director of the Educational courses for Yiddish teachers. In the summer semesters of 1925-26 and during the academic year of 1931-32, she participated in the seminars organized by Berlin's Institute of psychoanalysis, where during the second internship she was awarded a grant to study there. All those years she was a member of the Central Committee of Central Yiddish School Organization (CIShO), and in 1929-31 she was the chairman of this Organization. In 1927, in the CIShO she organized a new department called the Center of psychological support for children, teachers and parents and for a period of three years she was the chief psychologist of this Center. For many years she was also an active member of the Council of the Association of parents in Riga.

In 1939 B. Tumarin emigrated to the USA. Immediately after her arrival in New York, she started a psychoanalytical practice and, as an already qualified specialist, in most cases achieved the successful thera-



Bertha Bers with her son, the great mathematician-to-be, Lipman Bers



Bertha Tumarin

peutic results by solving the psychological problems of her patients. During her first years of living in the United States she was not fluent in English, but among her patients were a sufficient number of German-speaking people. In a few years, she acquired the reputation of the magnificent psychoanalyst with a high degree of intuition. Max Weinreich, the Director of the New York Institute for Jewish Research YIVO, invited Ms. Tumarin to lead the seminar on psychology there, which she did from 1941-43. This was similar to how she led the seminar on the youth problems in Vilnius YIVO in 1936. Starting in March 1957, she worked as a senior consultant on psychotherapy in Hunter College and gave lectures and conducted seminars for physicians.

Ms. Bertha Tumarin participated in the work of many International Psychoanalytical congresses. From 1935, she was a member of the German Society for psychoanalysts and from 1952 member (member-at-large) of the International Association of psychoanalysts.

*By Ivar Brod
Translated from Russian by Alan Solovey*

SAGA ABOUT THE SITE

Many of our apartments feature a collection of photographs. How was it possible to retain, I mean preserve, the pre-war photos? Many of those displaced after the war were careful about keeping them through moving, evacuation, exile. I and Riga resident Mark Ioffe realized this when speaking on the telephone in 2006. It turned out that our parents graduated from the Riga Berz gymnasium (see *Courier* December 2015 issue for an article about this school's founder). Mark's father Ioshua Ioffe and my mother were in the same class with former master Israel Brown. Mr. Brown gave his photo archive to Mark; my mother Lyolya Itkina kept the family archive with multiple school pictures.



Berz-shule's official seal stamp

This was a wonderful school, with students maintaining their friendships after graduating with their classmates and teachers for decades. Riga Berz was one of the first Yiddish gymnasiums, sending many graduates to university. Classes were taught in Yiddish, with most of the children coming from poor families where only Yiddish was spoken. Those schools that were dedicated to instruction in Yiddish united in a Yiddish school organization TSISHO. It included the elementary schools (*Grunt-school*) where, starting with 1918,



The 1924 gymnasium graduation class. At first, we had only the names of one student and two teachers; we can now identify almost all those teachers and approximately half of the graduates. In the middle is Principal Isaac Berz.

1918, most of the future students of the gymnasium studied.

A vast literature about Jewish education in Latvia is available; it includes statistics, names of school principals and teachers, and information on the relationship with the Latvian government. When Mark and I spoke, we thought that restoring the history of the school would be fairly straightforward because we had so much data and many collections of photos. But writing school's history? We knew how complicated a task writing a book could be; after five years of exchanging of photos and different kinds of information, we realized we had an ally in the Internet. In 2011, site "SKOLAS" was started; it styled its focus as the Riga Secular Jewish School—a comprehensive,



Yiddish teacher I. Rodak (center) with his family at the gathering in the woods of Dzintari with the gymnasium students in 1927, many of whom later became well-known in Latvia.

but not quite precise, category. The homepage makes clear that the site is concerned with the *Berz-shule* (gymnasia) and the public schools where our future gymnasium pupils studied.

The photos are placed at the site sections of the school history, the teachers, the students, during the war, meetings after the war, and others. The site also features documents giving lists of students and teachers. The examination protocols include compositions about Russian, Latvian, and English literature; math exams showing problems solved. We also have some of the teachers' signatures on the diplomas and their portraits and biographies. Most inspiring on the site have been the responses of readers. Mostly they are children, grandchildren, or relatives of those mentioned in the site. The photo of the 1930 school chorus was provided by the Museum "Jews in Latvia." The back of the photo has a handwritten list of chorus members, with one identifying herself as "it's me." On the site I express the hope that eventually we will know her name—although it could hardly happen. Suddenly we receive an angry letter from Israel: "Why hasn't the list of names included my sister Gita Elyashevich?" And so, the mystery was solved. Itshak Elyashevich sent in a wonderful picture of his family with not one but two Elyashevich sisters, both our students. Their father Iyeshua Elyashevich was a teacher of Hebrew and history of the religion 1921–1922. Math teacher Elina Falkenshtein, who lives in Riga, recognized her father Michael

continued on next page

SAGA ABOUT THE SITE

continued from the previous page

Falkov, who began as a student and was later a math teacher at the gymnasium.

For the photos of the elementary school #4, teacher Rosa Levenson's granddaughter Karina Perroud posted in the section "Jewish roots" a picture of her grandmother with the students and signed by Rosa Levenson, circa 1925. An Internet referral with a letter from Karina was sent by Israel resident Leonid Flyat. I recognized in the picture my father Moisey Itkin and sent a letter to Karina. The correspondence with her gave me the opportunity to find Rosa Levenson in some other pictures and later published in the reminiscences of my mother. I learned that *freilein* Levenson was the form mistress of herself and Moisey.

Our schools were both educational and cultural institutions. Enthusiastic teachers organized different circles, choruses, and theater productions. No wonder so many students became actors, musicians, composers. This is related in the section "And music, and word." Isaac Kofman owns a rare collection of advertisements and programs with names of our teachers and students active in the performances—he sent copies to the site. Many of them became professional actors: Boris Tumarin in the United States, in Australia Yasha Sher, in Riga Isaac Tsiser. There are also professional composers: Max Goldin, author of the *Anthology of Jewish Songs*, Nicolai Zolotonos, author of multiple songs and operettas. And the teachers! The great Naum Pereferkovich, the translator of the

Talmud into Russian; professor Max Lazerson; private-docent Mark Vaintrob.



From the collection of precious articles from Riga newspapers of the early 1920s, sent by Marina Pliyeva from Vladikavkaz. Here is the advertisement about the lecture "Moving forces of Jewish nation," the lecturers—teachers of gymnasium Lazerson, Pereferkovich, Vaintrob.

Children from the same families often studied at this school. We placed them under the German title *Geschwister* (brothers and sisters), just as the teachers' families were placed: Isaac and Fanya Rodak, the Berz couple, Zalman Shneur and Minna Kramer, brother and sister Vorobeychik, brother and sister Vulfson.

Liuba Eidus, Isaac Brod, Lyolya Itkina, and Rosa Brown were of great assistance with memories and identification; the diaries of Isaac Tsisser also provided a wealth of information; the teachers' grandchildren shared their memories and photos. Then there is the "Ad Memoriam" page with pictures of the teachers and students of our school killed during World War II. I'll be glad if *Courier* readers will go to the site skolas.jimdo.com, find familiar faces and names, and then share their memories and impressions at the Forum or at "News and Contacts" section.

By Dolores Itkina

Translated from Russian by Liuba Rakhman