



**"I BELIEVE IN THE SUN EVEN WHEN IT IS NOT SHINING..."**

**A SAFE AND RESTORATIVE ROSH-HA-SHANAH TO ALL OUR MEMBERS**



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# The Latvian Jewish Courier

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## MEMORIAL MEETING: JULY 3, 2015



On July 3, a few hundred people gathered on the grounds near the monument of the former Choral Synagogue on Gogol Street in Riga to commemorate the Jewish people in Latvia who were victims of genocide. The ceremony was attended by the senior officials of Latvia: President Andris Berzins, the prime minister Laimdota Straujuma, Speaker of Saeima Inara Murniece, Riga's vice-mayor Andris Ameriks, as well as the chairman of the Council of Jewish communities Arkady Suharenko, Vice-chairman Dmitrijs Krupnikovs, and the head of religious society David Kagan. Representatives of most embassies also participated, among whom were the Ambassador Hagit Ben-Yaakov of Israel and Ambassador Alexander Veshnyakov of the Russian Federation. The memorial ceremony was conducted by Professor Ruven Ferber. President Andris Berzins stated in his speech that "the Nazi regime committed many crimes against humanity in Latvia, and one of the first was the burning of a Riga Choral synagogue. Our common

objective is to prevent a recurrence of such crimes." Mr. Krupnikovs drew attention to the fact that the burning of a synagogue occurred in Latvia, a country that had never had pogroms and which had always been a multinational state. "It is a challenge to do everything to rally Latvian society, ... in order to not have more of such sad days in the Latvian calendar." Deputy of the European Parliament A. Pabriks urged those in attendance to always remember this day — a day when genocide began to be directed against a very large part of the Latvian society: the Jewish community. "If you compare a nation with a human body, then during the Holocaust part of the body was amputated."

After the presentations, Rabbi Shmuel Cote and Rabbi Kalev Krelin read the prayers, "El mole Rakhmim" and "Kadish."

This year the ceremony was moved to July 3 (the anniversary of the burning of synagogue is July 4) because July 4 fell on a Saturday.

## ANNOUNCEMENT

Our current Memorial/ Yizcor will take place on November 22, 2015, at 12:00 Noon in Park East Synagogue, 163 East 67th Street, New York.

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## ONCE AGAIN ABOUT RESTITUTION OF JEWISH COMMUNAL PROPERTIES

Let's take a look at the latest developments in the very painful and undesirable (to some people) question about whether to return Jewish communal properties to their rightful owners (descendants). If yes, then what, when and how much?



Currently, five properties are being processed through the Saeima. As of January 29, these have been discussed and the corresponding drafts of bills have been referred to the appropriate commissions of Saeima: a Commission of Foreign Affairs (responsible) and a Commission of Justice.

In June 2015, the U.S. Special Representative for Holocaust Affairs Nicolas Dean met again with Latvian government representatives, Saeima members, and Latvian Jewish organizations to discuss restitution and/or return of Jewish communal properties. According to Mr. Dean, the Saeima Commissions view those draft bills as a big step forward — the beginning of an expanded process that would allow a much greater number of

communal properties to be considered. These properties number slightly less than three hundred; this expanded process may help with the return of those properties to the Jewish community. Return of the five currently under consideration would be a wonderful first step, but only a first step toward restitution or return of all prewar properties owned by the Jewish community.

Mr. Dean noted that the return of these properties would constitute an emendation and remedy of a historical injustice.

Even before Mr. Dean's first visit, the chairman of the Saeima Commission on Foreign Affairs, Ojar Kalnīnsh, told press representatives that because there are so many unanswered questions, the restitution of Jewish communal properties will be slow. "It should be done justly and in a way that Latvian people would understand, slowly and meticulously passing through all instances that remain unclear."



How much longer will the political elite of our former motherland continue to drag their feet is anyone's guess.

The Vice Chairman of the Jewish

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Community Council Dmitrijs Krupnikovs, who participated in the meetings of the Commission on Foreign Affairs, has a different point of view. He would like to resolve cases related to Jewish communal properties without prolonged delays. "It will be necessary to create a special fund, one similar to the Culture Fund. The Finance Ministry would supervise the process of disbursement of monies. During the course of ten years, the government could make deposits into this fund as reimbursement for properties lost and/or non-recoverable. That money could be used for different projects and former Latvian Jews who live in other countries could participate in those projects as well, if interested."

However, Egils Levits, the European Court judge and also former advisor to Latvia's president, believes that raising the issue of the return of the properties to Jews is unnecessary. He maintains that similar claims made in the early 1990s by other prewar property owners have been satisfied and, thus, this process has been completed. Without distinguishing between private and communal properties, Mr. Levits erroneously concludes that the issue of all Jewish properties had been resolved by the mid-1990s. (Mr. Levits was a candidate for the office of president of Latvia in the June 2015 elections.)

In my view, the entire discussion about the first five properties is just that — a discussion. It is simply a process — a U.S. representative goes to Riga, meets with the Jewish community, the Saeima, and government representatives, and

promises to come back in a couple of months to see if any progress has been made. This is not progress.

Another unpleasant reality: Latvia has more than one Jewish organization — in fact, it has quite a few of them. These groups do not seem to be able to find common ground on the properties' issue. And that is exactly what those against restitution are hoping and looking for: "If the Jews themselves cannot decide what they really want, then what do they expect from us?"

I personally believe that, despite what some Latvian politicians hope for, the various Jewish organizations in Latvia will not engage in serious argument or focus on different goals. Remember, the Council of Jewish Communities in Latvia represents more than 90% of Latvian Jews.

In my previous article, I used the word "loot" extensively. This was not by chance. It describes the very foundation of the entire issue: the Jewish properties in question are loot — "something that is stolen or taken by force." And any loot keeper is no less liable than the looter himself — making the keepers criminals.

I am greatly pained to see that after all these years and vows such as "Nie Wieder!" we're being again and again reduced to the position of a beggar.

It pains me that those who march every year on March 16 still have reason to smile. It pains me to acknowledge that such injustice still has a place in our former motherland.

But I have a place in my heart where a hope still lives, a hope that my pain will one day be completely alleviated.

*by Yefim Shteynfeld*

## NEWS FROM LATVIA



In March the speaker of Latvia's Saeima, Inara Murniece, met with Israel's ambassador, Hagit Ben-Yaakov. They discussed relations between the two states, in particular in the area of culture, as well as matters involving restitution and the preserving of the memory of the Holocaust. In discussing the issue of property restitution, Speaker I. Murniece stressed that the Saeima is working on several bills that detail the transfer of Jewish property to the Council of Jewish Communities. Speaker I. Murniece supports further consideration of these laws in the parliament, pointing out that these bills had been transferred to the Commission on Foreign Affairs. The Speaker of the Saeima stressed that the Jewish community has a long history in Latvia, is loyal to the Latvian state, and is an integral part of the society. In addressing the issue of the Holocaust memory, she stressed that both Latvians and Jews understand the tragic pages of history for both.

In April, the general meeting of the Riga Jewish community again elected Arkady Suharenko as chairman of the board, Ben Kajem and Dmitrijs Krupnikovs as

deputy chairmen, and Gita Umanovskaya as a member of the board.

On July 3, The Jews in Latvia Museum (6, Skolas Street) held the symposium on "Holocaust Commemoration in the Latvian and International Context." Memories of the Holocaust were related by scientists from Latvia: I. Lenskis, K. Zellis, and O. Aleksejeva. In addition, Israel's Yad-Vashem Museum sent memories; from France, memories were related by A. Shneyer and A. Zeltser and G. Bensoussan. The symposium had an attendance of 80 people, which included travelers — teachers, museum workers, and historians — from various places in Latvia.



Opening of the exhibition "Holocaust Commemoration"

On the same day, the museum hosted an unveiling of the exhibition "Holocaust Commemoration in Latvia in the Course of Time." The exhibition shows how the monuments to Holocaust victims appeared in Latvia during Soviet times and later. The exhibition recounts the search, accounting for, and arrangement of commemorative places during a time when acknowledging the Holocaust was taboo and in our time; it also tells of the active fight to keep the memory of those who perished alive. The exhibition included

materials from the museum The Jews in Latvia, the Latvian national archive, the Institute Yad-Vashem, records of state inspections of monuments of culture, the Latvian National Library, and private collections. The exhibit will remain open until October 15, 2015. It will then travel to other cities of Latvia as well as abroad.

This exhibition was assisted by the International Union for Memory of the Holocaust (IHRA), the Embassy of Germany, and the Claims Conference.

The Riga Ghetto Museum hosted an exhibition from May 26–June 29 devoted to the artist Joseph Kuzkovski. He was born in Mogilev, Belarus, in 1902; died in Israel in 1970. He studied in the cheder, worked as a painter, was in service in World War I, and volunteered in the Red Army.



Joseph Kuzkovski & David Garber (also see page 9)

In 1927, he began studying at the Kiev Art Institute; in 1929, he began with the Kiev Dovzhenko Studios. His first paintings were done here — all were burned at the beginning of World War II. During the evacuation in Uzbekistan, he made several paintings, including one related to the tragedy of the Jewish people. In 1945, he moved to Riga, where he painted "Babi Yar." In the years following, he took

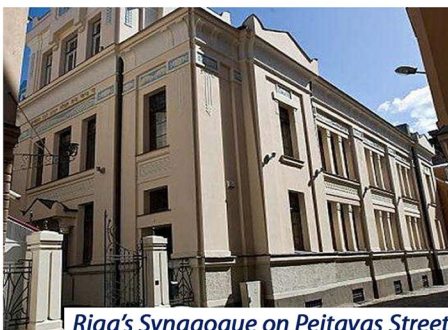
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Kuzkovski's painting **Led to Slaughter: Babi Yar**



painting commissions from museums and the Artists' Union. In the 1960s, Kuzkovski was part of the fight of Riga Jews with Soviet authorities for the right to perpetuate the memory of Jews slaughtered in Rumbula forest and continued to paint pictures with Jewish themes: "We Will Live," portraits of Janis (Zhanis) and Johanna Lipke, "Shulamith," "David and Goliath," and many others. At the end of 1969, he immigrated to Israel where he drew a pastel, "Simhat-Tora in Kfar-Habad" and a popular poster "Let my people go." His painting "Led to Slaughter — Babi Yar" hangs in the Israeli Knesset.

The exhibition "Seven Ways: Rainis' Trips Abroad" from the Rainis and Aspazija Summerhouse Museum was at the The Jews in Latvia Museum from May 16 through July 1, 2015. The exhibition told of seven trips that the great writer made abroad. The last trip Rainis made was to Palestine in 1929.



**Riga's Synagogue on Peitavas Street**

The Riga Art Nouveau Museum (Jugendstil Museum of Riga, which opened in April 2009 and is

at the end of Alberta Street) hosted an exhibit, "Pearl of Jugendstil — Riga's Synagogue," from March 4 through May 24. Riga's synagogue is considered to be one of the most beautiful examples of Jugendstil architecture of the early 20th century. It is also a cultural landmark. The synagogue was built in 1905 — it is practically the only place of worship built in the Jugendstil style. To be found on Peitavas Street, the synagogue at the beginning of the 20th century was the place of worship for a large number of Jews. They donated money to purchase the land and to build the synagogue. In July, 1941, after the Nazi invasion of Riga, all synagogues except the synagogue on Peitavas Street were destroyed. The exhibit was organized and sponsored by the Board of Jewish Communities in the conjunction with the Jews in Latvia Museum, Riga's Jewish religious community, and the Israeli Embassy.

The compendium of materials of the 8th conference "Jews in a Changing World" was published by the Center for Judaic Studies at the University of Latvia. This conference, held in Riga in the summer of 2011, was devoted to commemorating 450 years of the Jewish community in Latvia and marking the 70th anniversary of the Holocaust in the country. More than 25 scientists from Latvia, the United States, Israel, Russia, Great Britain, Ukraine, Belarus, Canada, and Germany were in attendance. Conference reports should be of interest to readers — two sessions focused on the history of Latvian Jewry,

one in 19th century, another in the 20th century.



**Memorial model of pre-war Liepaja Synagogue**

In Liepaja, near the building on 11/13 Kurshu Street, where stood before World War II the Great Liepaja Synagogue that was destroyed during the years of occupation, a newly opened memorial scale model of the synagogue was unveiled on July 13. The memorial was solemnly opened for the first time a year ago, on July 9, 2014, during the reunion of Liepaja Jewry. However, on January 1, 2015, the model was stolen but found in a few days by the police. The Liepaja Jewish Heritage Foundation has confirmed a new draft installation; the model is installed as close as possible to homes and does not interfere with pedestrians and cyclists. Updated text was added to the pedestal and the surroundings were also landscaped — the paved area around the sign and the green spaces around the site. The Foundation is also responsible for security — it is under constant surveillance. In the next edition of the *Courier*, we plan to publish a major piece on the work of the aforementioned fund.

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Gateway arch at Preili Jewish cemetery



On August 9, a new gateway arch, which will also become a monument in memory of the local Jewish community, was opened at the entrance to the Preili Jewish cemetery. The designer of this monument is architect Sergey Ryzh, who created the Holocaust Victims Memorial in Preili as well as Bikernieki in 2001.

The rally in honor of the event was attended by the residents of Preili, city leaders, guests from other cities, and representatives of various international organizations. Among the speakers at the event were: Chairman of the Preili Duma Maruta Plivda, former Preili resident and head of JSL David Silberman, Deputy Ambassador of Israel Tsvi Markin, Executive Director of the Jewish Community of Latvia Gita Umanovskaya, director of The Jews in Latvia Museum Ilya Lensky, and the architect Sergey Ryzh. The welcoming letter from the U.S. Embassy in Latvia was read. After the rally, participants visited the Holocaust Memorial, placing flowers. The victims of the Holocaust are remembered every year on August 9 in Preili; on this day in 1941, the majority of Preili Jews were executed. In conclusion, Vlad Shulman read the prayer "El mole Rakhmim."

Compiled by Ivar Brod

## In Memoriam MEYER MELER

(June 6, 1929–April 25, 2015)

With great sorrow we inform you of the recent passing of the great expert in Jewish life in Latvia and a wonderful person, Meyer (Misha) Meler at age 85. For many years Meyer Meler was a coworker of the Jews in Latvia Museum. Although not a historian by training or profession, he spent the last 15 years of his life researching Latvian Jewish history and culture.



He did important research on Latvian Jewish cemeteries and Holocaust killing sites. He personally explored each and every one of these sites and dedicated enormous effort to assuring that the cemeteries were kept up and that Holocaust mass graves were properly marked. He also did detailed descriptions of all the Jewish cemeteries in Latvia (2006). The result of

these multi-year studies was the fundamental work, *Places of Our Memory* (2010), which relates the origins and destruction of 73 Jewish communities in Latvia. It was published in Riga in Russian and Latvian. It was released in English in Israel in 2014. In recognition of his emotionally challenging and selfless work, Latvia decorated him with its highest civil award — The Order of Three Stars — in 2014. In his work on these projects, Mr. Meler was in touch with many individuals throughout Latvia; they recall his vast knowledge, his dedication and persistence, and, most of all, his great cordiality and sincere fondness for all he encountered.

May his memory be blessed.



## A. MARYASIN: VEF VICE-DIRECTOR & JEWISH ACTIVIST- REFUSENIK

*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.*

Maryasin, Alexander (January 23, 1924, Orenburg region–April 1, 2006, Toronto, Canada) Engineer, business manager, Jewish activist for the immigration movement. Up until 1943, with the exception of a small break, he lived, studied, and worked in the Akbulak village in the Orenburg region. He graduated from Bonch-Brujevich Institute for Telecommunication Services in St. Petersburg in 1970. In 1943, he was recruited into the Soviet army, serving in the artillery as a commander of the unit. Demobilized in 1947, he moved to a permanent residence in Riga in 1948. Until mid-1949, he worked as a train brigadier on the railway; in August of that year, he also began work at the VEF plant in Riga. He worked there for more than 20 years in various positions — business contact manager, the master, chief of the unit, and head of the shop. Exceptional organizational ability and a thorough understanding of production made him able to eliminate the backlogs at several leading sites in a short time and dramatically increase shop production. In 1968, Mr. A. Maryasin was nominated and approved by the first deputy as

director of VEF and head of production. For a few years, he presided over the work of the Soviet Union's largest electrical engineering enterprises. In January 1972, he was removed from his work and fired from the factory because his daughter had decided to move to Israel and had submitted an appropriate application to a government agency. For a few months, he worked for a construction company and later became the head of production at the Yauda factory. In September 1974, he was fired because he had also submitted an application to move to Israel. He was a "refusenik" until January 1987, when he received permission to leave.



*Zhanis Lipke and Alexander Maryasin*

In the almost 13 years of his life in the "refuse," he became one of the leaders of the illegal refusenik movement in Latvia. He met at private homes and in other places, giving seminars on the history of



*At the demonstration in New York.*



*Alexander Maryasin*

Jews, the Hebrew language, issues of national revival, and other events (the celebration of Jewish holidays, fasts, Yom Yerushalaim, evening meetings of the participants of the "airplane case," etc.). When Riga city authorities rejected the requests of Zhanis Lipke, savior of Jews during the years of the Holocaust, for the renovation of his house, Mr. A. Maryasin organized a construction brigade from among the group of refuseniks, who used their own funds to purchase materials and repair Lipke's house. For several years, along with the other refuseniks, he published a magazine *Din u-metsiut* (*The Law and the Reality*). By this time, repeated petitions for an exit visa for him and his family had been submitted to the authorities; these were signed by representatives of the U.S. and Canada, including the well-known letter signed by 94 U.S. congressmen in August 1983. During the time that Mr. A. Maryasin worked for the VEF, he was awarded the Order of Labor Red Banner, as well as medals and certificates of achievement. In 1960, he was awarded the State Prize of the Latvian SSR.

*By Ivar Brod*

## REMEMBERING THE GREAT LATVIAN JEWISH VIOLINIST SARA RASHINA



This is the story about a young violin virtuoso who was killed in the Rumbula forest outside of Riga, Latvia, on November 30, 1941. I only know about her because she was my father's first wife. My father, Gregor Shelkan, survived the Riga Ghetto. My father's first marriage was no secret; both he and my American-born mother spoke of her during my childhood. Unconnected words floated in my mind: Sara, Brussels Competition, Amati, Oistrach, and Ysaye.



*Sara Rashina*

Decades later, a friend and Holocaust survivor from Riga shared with me a pamphlet from the Jewish Museum in Riga; this

publication highlighted the permanent exhibit of Jewish intelligentsia and artists who were murdered during the Holocaust. Sara Rashina was one of the featured artists. I now possess a black-and-white photograph of Sara in downward pose, her sculpted chin lovingly embracing her Amati violin as her fingers caress the strings. During my life, I have gathered numerous documents, photos, and archives that provide breath and sustenance to her life. This past June, I finally made my maiden voyage to Latvia to visit the places in Riga where my father lived — he was a leading tenor of the Riga National Opera. My footsteps commingled with his as I walked down tree-lined Brivibas Street to Baznicas *ielā* where my father and Sara lived. I walked the streets of the Riga Ghetto, visited the Old Jewish cemetery, the memorials at Kaiserwald, and the Great Choral Synagogue on Gogol Street that was burned to the ground. Words from my childhood now have context and meaning.

It became evident to me that a more meaningful way to impart her history was through music. I am thrilled to announce that a violin concert is scheduled for **Sunday, October 18, 2015, at 3:00 p.m. at Shalin Liu Performance Center in Rockport, Massachusetts** (37 Main Street, [rockportmusic.org](http://rockportmusic.org) or call the box office 978-546-7391).



*Nikolai Bogdanov-Belsky's  
Portrait of a Lady  
(probably violinist Sara Rashina)*

The afternoon performance by Diana Cohen, violin soloist, chamber musician and concertmaster at the Calgary Symphony Orchestra accompanied by Roman Rabinovich, an Israeli pianist and winner of the 2008 Arthur Rubenstein International Piano Master Competition, will highlight Sara's story through the music she played.

I would be honored if members of JSL would participate in this memorial that highlights the life of one individual whose promise, potential and life were forever silenced in the dark forests outside of Riga.

*By Deborah Shelkan Remis*



## THE HISTORY OF *I SURVIVED RUMBULA* BY FRIDA MICHELSON

This book is like a living being: it has an inception, development, and an independent life.

The inception can be traced to 1958, the year of my move to Riga, where, after having graduated from the Tallinn Polytechnic Institute, I joined my parents. I was a newcomer to this city, knew virtually no one except a few relatives. However, I was already a determined anti-Soviet Zionist looking for an opportunity to break through the “Iron Curtain” and reach Israel. I cautiously tried finding like-minded people and, to that end, joined an amateur Jewish choir, the only organized Jewish group permitted by the anti-Semitic authorities. As I hoped, I found a few new friends there and became particularly close with lawyer David Garber and his wife Miriam (Mimi).

The choir was led by Israel Abramis and I enjoyed taking part in its activities. David Garber took me aside after one of the rehearsals and, in a whisper, disclosed that a few of the Riga Ghetto survivors planned to collect and record eyewitness stories. Besides the horrors, the survivors would like to emphasize the facts of Jewish resistance — both



*Frida Michelson in the 1960s*

active and passive. A few days later, a small group had our first clandestine meeting at the apartment of Motya (Max) Michelson on Artillerias St. Other than Motya, we were David Garber, Harry Levi, Benny Kaplan, and I, David Silberman. At this meeting I first met Frida Michelson (née Frid). Frida, Motya’s wife, and I didn’t talk much that night, but she told me briefly that she has miraculously escaped the mass execution of Riga Ghetto Jews in Rumbula forest on December 8, 1941, the second such action by Germans.

When we first met, I was preoccupied with documenting the story of Janis (Zhanis) Lipke, the Latvian who saved a number of Jews by helping them to escape the Riga

Ghetto. So, Frida and I just agreed to keep in touch.

A couple of years passed during which I constantly thought of Frida and her survival. When Frida and I finally got together and talked at length, I became totally in awe of her ordeal and courage. We spoke in Russian and Yiddish; I realized immediately that Frida’s story must be saved for posterity. The problem: we could not entrust the writing of her story to any Soviet journalist or professional writer; we knew such individuals would twist the story to conform to Soviet censorship. I had no writing experience whatsoever, but I felt compelled to document the story no matter what. I was the first one to whom Frida had opened her heart and poured out her tragic story — the eyewitness testimony of mass murder of Jews from infants through the elderly by the Nazis and the story of her own unbelievable survival. So, I decided to write her story myself as best I can.

Frida and I met a number of times. Her memories of the events remained vivid. Her recollections were so detailed and so extensive that they would fill a sizable book rather than a short article. I could not

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## THE HISTORY OF *I SURVIVED RUMBULA* BY FRIDA MICHELSON:

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cope with such a large volume of oral history though I tried to transcribe it in my own shorthand. Finally, I said to Frida: "Let's change our approach. Write your story in Yiddish in your own words step-by-step, day-by-day, and I will edit it and translate it into Russian."

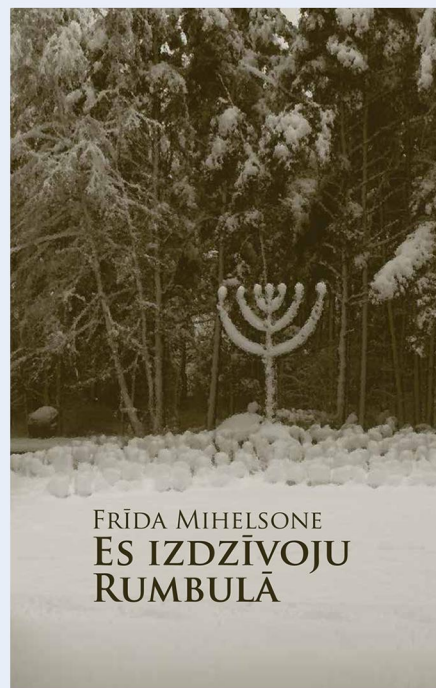
She could only write in the Yiddish that she has learned during her six years at a Jewish school. Yiddish was my mother tongue, spoken in my family, although my formal education was in Russian. Publishing the book in Russian was the only way to reach a wide audience since only very few remained after the Holocaust who could read Yiddish. Publishing in Russian proved to be the right way to go.

Frida agreed to do so. While waiting for her notes, I searched for other Ghetto survivors and documented their stories.

Ultimately, Frida gave me several notebooks of her memoirs in Yiddish. Motya had added some comments and addenda. Only years later did I realize that these memoirs were based on the original that had been written immediately after the

war. Evidently, the original manuscript had been confiscated by the KGB along with other materials when the KGB arrested Motya in 1951. He was charged with "anti-Soviet activities" and sentenced to 10 years of hard labor in coal mines in Russia's far north. Released early thanks to Stalin's death, Motya's health was severely damaged. It is quite possible that the original of Frida's manuscript is still buried somewhere in KGB archives.

The Yiddish manuscript that she supplied was barely legible, so I redid it in longhand before starting work on it. Once I started translating, I became completely engrossed. Reading it was like being with Frida in the Ghetto or before the firing squad in Rumbula forest or during her wanderings from one place to another when she was desperate to avoid recapture by the Nazis and their local collaborators. I was in a trance while working on the Russian translation. I carried a notepad with me everywhere, and, if I came up with a good expression or a turn of a phrase, I would write it down immediately.



I organized the book in chapters with appropriate titles, wrote a Foreword and gave the book its title, *I Survived Rumbula*. Frida reviewed my work and approved it. I typed a few copies of the book and spread the copies around among my close trusted friends just as we did with other underground materials (called *samizdat*, self-publishing, this activity was strictly prohibited by the authorities). More copies were retyped and distributed in Moscow, Leningrad, and other cities. The book resonated strongly in the Jewish underground. However, it was totally unthinkable to publish it officially.

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## THE HISTORY OF *I SURVIVED RUMBULA* BY FRIDA MICHELSON:

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All the while, I was pressing on with my own struggle to immigrate to Israel by participating in many activities and actions related to this cause. The culmination of our struggle for Jewish emigration came on March 10–11, 1971, when, along with other Jewish activists, I took part in the daring sit-in demonstration at the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union in Moscow. Unprecedented, this action caused a complete consternation of the Soviet government, even more so because our action became widely known in the West. We'd been under enormous pressure but we stood fast — and the government relented. On the second day of our protest, Nikolai Shchelokov, the minister of internal affairs, promised our group that emigration policies would be relaxed. This was the turning point — afterward, tens of thousands of Jews have been able to make *alia*.

My family and I received permission to emigrate the next month — April of 1971. However, we had only nine days to pack and go. We were forbidden to fly from the Moscow airports, so we had to

travel out of the country by train. I hid the manuscript amid my other papers and books. Nevertheless, the border guards at Brest discovered it and interrogated me for a few hours trying to establish whether I was trying to smuggle some anti-Soviet propaganda to the West. Luckily, I was able to convince them that the manuscript was a strictly personal apolitical memoir of one of my relatives about her survival of the German occupation. The guard leafed through the manuscript and I was allowed to keep it. That's how the book was liberated and reached the free world. The first official publication of the book was undertaken by kibbutz Beth-Lokhamei-Hagetaot in Israel. The first edition sold out quickly, but the book did not have a second printing. The Russian version of the book was never published in Israel again.

The American journalist Wolf Goodman was a relative of Frida Michelson. During his 1977 visit to Israel, he met Frida and learned of her miraculous survival. He was so astounded that he commissioned the English translation of the book that

was published in the United States by Holocaust Library in 1979. That edition became very popular and could be found in the bookstores of every American Holocaust museum, in many other museums worldwide, and in Yad-Vashem Museum in Jerusalem.

The International Society for Ghetto and Jewish Genocide History founded by the writer Leonid Koval republished this book in Latvia's capital, Riga, in 2005 as part of the series *Memory and Name*. The book was jointly published with the Latvian Jewish Communities Council and was timed to the 60th anniversary of the defeat of the Nazis. This edition was enhanced by commentary and photographs provided by historian Dr. Grigory Smirin. The entire print run sold out quickly at a single location — the Riga Jewish Community Center.

The most recent edition (in Russian) was published in 2011 by the Russian Scientific Educational Center "Holocaust" in Moscow. This edition features Frida Michelson's family photos, photos of people who helped her survive after the Rumbula

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## THE HISTORY OF *I SURVIVED RUMBULA* BY FRIDA MICHELSON:

*continued from last page*

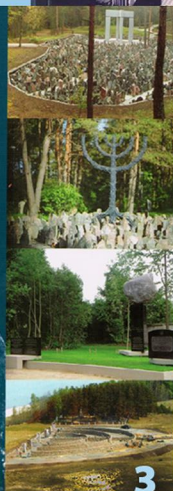
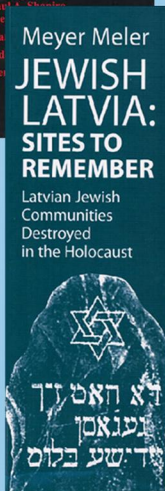
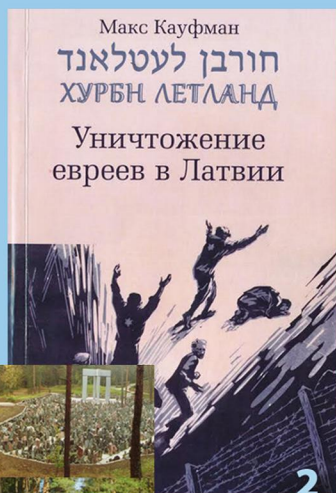
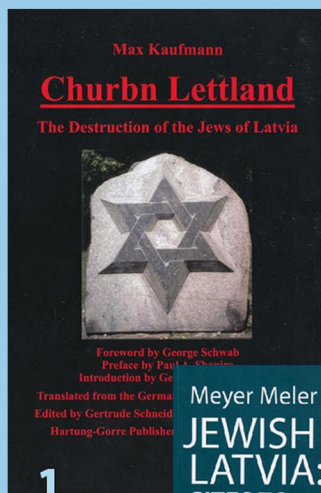
massacre, and photos from the Latvian Jewish Museum that showed prominent Latvian Jews who perished in the Holocaust. Dr. Smirin provided new commentaries and a few historic documents were reproduced in the book. All 2,000 copies were distributed to libraries, universities, schools, and Jewish cultural centers. A

proposal has been made for a new edition for Russian readers in Russia and the post-Soviet republics.

This book is a unique first-hand account by a victim of the Shoah/Holocaust that befell European Jewry. This book shall live in history forever.

*by David Silberman*

*Translated from Russian by Leon Pukshansky*



### DEAR FRIENDS,

As before, we suggest that you purchase one or more of these recently published books:

1. Max Kaufmann's *Churbn Lettland* — *The Destruction of the Jews of Latvia*, English translation, updated with commentaries and photos.
2. Max Kaufmann's *Churbn Lettland* — *The Destruction of the Jews of Latvia*, Russian translation, updated with commentaries and photos.
3. Meyer Meler's *Jewish Latvia: Sites to Remember*, published in English. This book describes hundreds of Latvian cities and shtetls where Jews lived prior to World War II and the more than 200 sites where they were murdered.

All three books are available (Meler's book is in short supply) by mail. If you are interested, please make out a check for \$20.00 for each of Kaufmann's book, and check for \$40.00 for Meler's book (includes handling and postage in the U.S.) payable to Jewish Survivors of Latvia, Inc., and mail it to the address listed on page 2. Please specify whether you would like English or Russian edition of M. Kaufmann's book.

### DEAR FRIENDS,

We thank all who have already sent in their membership dues who remain active members, and those who have made additional donations to support our ongoing work.