



The Latvian Jewish Courier

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ANNOUNCEMENT

Our current Memorial/ Yizkor will take place on November 20, 2016, at 12:00 Noon in Park East Synagogue, 163 East 67th Street, New York

Guest Speaker:

Ms. Gita Umanovska, Executive Director of the Council of Jewish Communities of Latvia

Guest Cantor:

Joseph Malovany, Fifth Avenue Synagogue

LATVIAN JEWISH COMMUNITY RESTITUTION FUND HAS BEEN REGISTERED

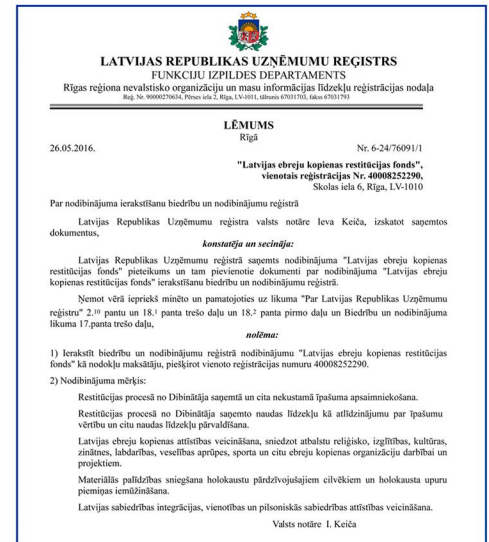
On May 26, 2016, the Latvian Jewish Community Restitution Fund was officially registered (LV40008252290). The Fund was created by the Council of Jewish Communities of Latvia (CJCL) at its general meeting earlier this year.

The Fund will receive property that the Council was granted during the first stage of restitution of Jewish religious and communal property in accordance with laws passed by the Saeima of Latvia on February 25, 2016. The plan is for the Fund to receive any future restitution property or funds.

The Fund will act on behalf of the entire Jewish community to achieve the following goals:

1. Management of restituted property.
2. Managing funds received in the process of restitution.
3. Assisting the Latvian Jewish community by supporting religious, educational, cultural, scientific, charitable, health care, sport and other Jewish organizations and projects.
4. Providing material assistance to Latvian Holocaust survivors and to commemorate Holocaust victims.
5. Integration of Latvian society, its unification, and development of civic society in Latvia.

To act on behalf of the whole Jewish community and to attract international Jewish organizations to the activities of the Fund,



The resolution of registration of the restitution fund a 12-person Fund Management Council will be created; it will be the main governing body of the Fund. The Council will consist of 6 representatives of the Latvian Jewish community, 5 representatives of international Jewish organizations, and an observer from the government of Latvia.

The Council sets the strategy and activities of the Fund and approves the budget. Any monies to be distributed by the Fund are defined by the Council.

In accordance with laws passed by the Saeima on February 25, 2016, five properties that before World War II belonged to the community were returned to the Jewish community — the first religious and communal property. Of the five properties, three are in Riga: a former Jewish school building at Abrenes 2, a former

Continued on next page

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Jewish religious school building at Birznieka Upisha 12, a former Jewish hospital Linas Hatsedek building at Ludzas 25, and former synagogue buildings at Kliavu 13 in Jurmala and Liela 31 in Kandava.

The laws passed by the Saeima state that the buildings are being returned to the Council to lessen the historic injustice done to the Jewish communities and organizations as a result of the Holocaust carried out by the Nazi totalitarian regime and the activities of the communist totalitarian regime in Latvia.

On August 1st, the Restitution Fund inherited the following from CJCL: the building of the former Jewish religious school on Birznieka Upisha 12, and the building of the former Jewish hospital Linas Hatsedek on 25 Ludzas Street. The Fund's ownership of the deed to the buildings is officially documented.

At the end of 2017, the Fund plans to begin to accept applications from persons interested in receiving monies that the Fund will distribute in accordance with the Fund's Statutes.

Article based on CJCL's information

OUR STONE IN THE HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL PARK

In the summer of last year, the JSL Committee decided to sponsor the making of an aide-memoire granite plate in the memory of those who perished in the Holocaust in Latvia and its installation in The Holocaust Memorial Park in Brooklyn. The plate's text must be approved by the Parks Department of the New York City — obtaining such approval has proved difficult. The text has been approved and our stone has now been set among other similar in the Holocaust Memorial Park.

The text reads:

**IN MEMORY OF
 THE HOLOCAUST IN LATVIA
 BETWEEN 1941 AND 1945 MORE THAN 90,000 JEWS
 WERE MURDERED MOSTLY ON LATVIAN
 SOIL BY THE NAZIS AND THEIR LATVIAN
 COLLABORATORS. THIS INCLUDED 70,000
 LATVIAN JEWS AND 20,000 JEWS WHO WERE
 DEPORTED FROM GERMANY AND OTHER
 GERMAN-OCCUPIED COUNTRIES.**



A brief history of the park: Since 1985, thousands have gathered each year at The Holocaust Memorial Park to share memories, hope, and prayer. The park, located in Brooklyn at the foot of Sheepshead Bay between Shore Boulevard and Emmons Avenue, was created in 1985 through the efforts of the Holocaust Memorial Committee with the support of community leaders and legislators. During these years, the Holocaust Memorial Committee campaigned to have a permanent memorial to the victims of the Shoah erected at the park. The permanent Holocaust Memorial was officially completed and dedicated in 1997 by Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and dozens of texts have already been inscribed on granite markers in the park. As New York's first public memorial to the Holocaust, this unique memorial will stand for all time as a somber reminder of the millions of lives lost and the rich culture destroyed. An eternal light will shine in lasting memory of those who perished and as a beacon of hope for the future. A field of granite markers inscribed with places and important historical events related to the Holocaust will educate and inspire future generations to remember.

Information based on the materials of the Holocaust Memorial Committee

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY IN RIGA



The President of Latvia Raimonds Vejonis and others place flowers at the memorial of the Choral Synagogue

On July 4, 2016, at noon, near the memorial of the Choral synagogue (burned by order of the Nazis along with several hundred human beings on the same date in 1941), the mourning rally was held in memory of the victims of the genocide of the Jewish people. This event was organized by the Council of Jewish Communities of Latvia and was attended by the President of Latvia Raimonds Vejonis, the Chairman of the Saeima Inara Murniece, Prime Minister Maris Janis Kuchinskis, Minister of Defense Raimonds Bergmanis, and other officials and members of the diplomatic corps. Prior to the rally, the following individuals gave speeches: Ambassador of Israel in Latvia Liron Bar-Sad; Eric Schwerin, member of the U.S. Commission for the Conservation of the American Heritage Abroad; Deputy Chairman of the Riga City Council Andris Ameriks; Deputy Chairman of the Council of Jewish Communities of Latvia Dmitry Krupnikov; and Leo Dribins, President of the Society of the Jews—Former Prisoners of the Ghetto and KZ. Ruvin Ferber, professor at the University of Latvia, conducted the ceremony. Residents of Latvia honored the memory of the victims of the genocide — commemorating the Jews killed during the Nazi occupation, 1941–1945. Before the war, 93,000 Jews had lived in Latvia; during the occupation and World War II, the Nazis killed more than 70,000 Latvian Jews and, by 1945, more than 20,000 Jews had been sent to Latvia from other European countries for extermination.

In his speech, President Vejonis highlighted that the Holocaust and the attempt of complete annihilation of Latvian and other Jews are part of the history of Latvia. Further on in his speech, he commemorated Riga's Choral synagogue and all fellow human beings who were persecuted and killed only because they were Jews. The president declared that this memorial site is a reminder to us to be vigilant and reflect today on what had happened. It is the place for our moral and ethical clarity. Understanding that is of utmost importance for us — who did not witness that time and were not even born yet.

On July 4, after participating in the commemorative rally at the memorial on Gogol Street, the President of Latvia Raimonds Vejonis visited the Jewish community. Mr. Vejonis was greeted by the President of the Council of Jewish Communities of Latvia Arkady Suharenko in the house of the community on 6 Skolas Street, as well as by Vice Presidents Dmitry Krupnikov and Benjamin Kajem, and the Executive Director Gita Umanovska.



In the museum "Jews of Latvia," the President of Latvia, Raimonds Vejonis, talks with leaders of the Jewish community

President Vejonis toured the building, around which the Jewish life of the city is concentrated, and visited the museum "Jews in Latvia." The director of the museum, Ilya Lensky, conducted a tour of the exhibitions and spoke about the life of Jews in Latvia, starting with the sixteenth century. At the end of the visit, the president wrote an entry in the visitor's book. The president also visited the memorial to Zhanis Lipke, the Savior of the Jews, where he made a record in the book of memory. The memorial is located on Kipsala island, on 8 Maza Balasta Dambis, where Zhanis Lipke hid Jews destined for the concentration camps during World War II.



"Steps for Life" in the streets of the former Riga ghetto

On Sunday, July 3, Steps for Life, a traditional procession, was held in Riga. It was organized by the association Shamir in memory of the victims of the Holocaust in Latvia. The marchers walked in the streets of the former Riga ghetto from the old Jewish cemetery on Ebreju Street to the corner of Dzirnavu Street and Gogol Street. Up until July 4, 1941, the Choral synagogue had stood at this intersection; on that day, the synagogue was set aflame, burning the hundreds of people inside. Despite bad weather, the rally had about 150 people. Among participants were Latvian politicians and representatives of the diplomatic corps.

RIGA JEWISH SCHOOL: 25 YEARS SINCE THE FIRST GRADUATION



The Dubnov Riga Jewish Secondary School

Lately it has become quite popular to show a picture of a flower that blooms through a pavement crack.

That flower has become a symbol of life prevailing despite all the adversities the world holds.

In my humble opinion, such flowers also represent the perseverance of Jewish people.

Twenty-seven years ago, when cracks began appearing in many spots of pavement called the Soviet "empire," a first flower called Riga Jewish School was in its early summer bloom.

It was certainly symbolic, because the school is now located on Miera street in close proximity to the special maternity hospital where most of us saw the first bloom of sunlight.

It was the *first* Jewish school in the entire Soviet Union and was named in honor of Dr. Simon Dubnov, a man who has done so much for our people, a man who, right before his execution, encouraged ghetto inhabitants: "*Yidn, shraybt un farshraybt!*" — "Jews, write and record!" And, if we believe that the name given to a man has a power to influence his destiny and his life, then it is true that this school's destiny is tightly intertwined with life of Simon Dubnov, whose goal was to educate Jewish people.

We know that without our history, there will be no future. We bow before those who perished, and we are beaming with happiness when we are with those who understand the utter importance of Jewish education; remember, we are called "People of the Book."

And, yes, it is symbolic that the street where the school is located is named the street of peace. The flower of Jewish education is blooming again on the street of peace and Jewish children have an opportunity to get an education that will empower them to live and to create a future Jewish history.

Since the school had its first lesson, we have had 25 graduations, each better than the previous — though the previous graduates may disagree...

By Yefim Shteynfeld

IN MEMORIAM: ELIE WIESEL

On July 2nd, 2016, **Elie Wiesel** passed away in New York at the age of 87. He was the winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, a humanist, educator, American and the French Jewish writer, journalist, public personality, and university professor. A former prisoner of the Nazi concentration camps, Elie Wiesel became a tireless and memorable witness, a real defender of the truth of the Holocaust. In 1985, Elie Wiesel was awarded the gold medal of the U.S. Congress. He was marked by many other awards of different countries for his literary, public, and educational activities. During his life he was given praise rarely accrued by other outstanding personalities: "the envoy of humanity," "legend of our time," "outstanding mind of the twentieth century," "the voice of justice." His contribution to humanity is truly invaluable.



A letter expressing our condolences was sent to Elie Wiesel's family:

"In Memoriam: The Jewish Survivors of Latvia in the United States deeply mourns the passing of Elie Wiesel — hero of survivors and of Jews everywhere."

LIBRARY ON SKOLAS STREET

A library named for Eleonora Schwab opened in a building of the Riga Jewish community after capital renovation in April of 2001. The renovation enlarged the library, giving it a reading hall, new shelves, new tables, and a desk for the librarian.

Prior to the renovation, the books on the shelves were those donated by library patrons and others: 4,000 volumes. Now, the library boasts 12,000 books in Latvian, Yiddish, Hebrew, Russian, English, and German. The library handles the preservation of and the circulation of literature to readers. As the library has a specific orientation, the greatest part of the collection consists of books on history, traditions of the Jewish nation, Judaism, the Holocaust in Europe and Latvia, Jewish veterans, Latvian Jews, books about contemporary Israel, and so on. Shelved separately are books about and in Yiddish, Hebrew, dictionaries, special teaching literature.

Fiction is richly represented: classics, foreign and modern literature, books by Jewish writers, science fiction and adventure, historical novels, etc. Lovers of poetry can enjoy poems by Latvian, Russian, and Jewish poets. Many writers donate their literary works. For lovers of books about artists, actors, the theater, we have a special collection that circulates in great numbers. Pre-school and younger schoolchildren have their own space, with books geared specifically to their age and developmental levels. Yiddish and Hebrew literature are accorded five shelves.

We are very fortunate to have a sponsor, Dr. George Schwab, who underwrites the acquisition of new books and periodicals; Dr. Schwab is a former resident of Liepaja, a Holocaust survivor, and now a citizen of the United States. He sends in and also brings in personally literature in English about the Holocaust, the history of the Jewish nation, and much else.



President of Latvia, V. Vike-Freiberga and Professor G. Schwab at the opening of the library following its renovation in June 2001

Our readers are heavy users of reference books, bibliographies, dictionaries, encyclopedias, and all manner of other reference works. For many of our volumes, we have only one copy, which we mark with the letter "L" (*Lasitava*: reading hall in Latvian). In the reading hall, you can peruse current newspapers and magazines published in Latvia and abroad. We have available the Latvian newspapers: *Vesti*, *Segodnia*, *Vesti-yezhenedelnik*, *MK Latvia*; our offerings from the United States include the Yiddish newspaper *Forverts* and magazines in Russian: *Lehaim*, *Lilit*, *Lyublyu*, and *Otkrytiy Gorod*. We also receive periodicals from Israel and Germany.

We also keep files with clippings from newspapers and magazines — articles dealing

with Jews in Latvia, the Holocaust, the Riga Jewish community, Jewish history, contemporary Israel, etc. At the request of our seniors, we started a file on kosher meals and recipes.

We organize topical exhibitions months — often tied to the anniversary year of a book's publication or an author's birth. Our readers can get acquainted with new books in the exhibition and place a request to borrow a specific book. Our permanent exhibitions include: "Six Million Accuse," "From Dream to Reality" (the history of Israel), "Jewish Holidays, Customs, and Traditions," "Rituals, Legacy, Fates," and more. Students of the former police school and of the Latvian University's Theological school often consult our books on Judaism. Other themes explored in our collection are: customs and traditions of family life, Anti-Semitism in modern times, Jewish clothing, Jewish life in Riga before the 20th century, life of the Jews before the Second Temple, schools in Latvia before 1940, and others.

We are in constant touch with the teachers and students of the Simon Dubnov Jewish High School in Riga. With our help, they choose materials to consult for school compositions and to write articles about the culture and history of the Jewish nation. Not long ago, the students of the Latvian College of Culture asked us about the integration of the Jewish community into the Latvian media.

The library is accessible to all of
Continued on next page

LIBRARY ON SKOLAS STREET (CONTINUED)

any age. When the library opened after renovation, we had 300 members; in 2016, that figure has risen to 863. However, student use of our modern information and communication technologies (computers, Internet) dropped.

The library has opened a “Hasefer” (books) literary center where lovers of poetry and prose come together — readers who write and publish poems and those who write solely for themselves. The first meeting was in 2003, with 19 people in attendance. To get acquainted, every member had to read aloud a favorite author. Although the lit-

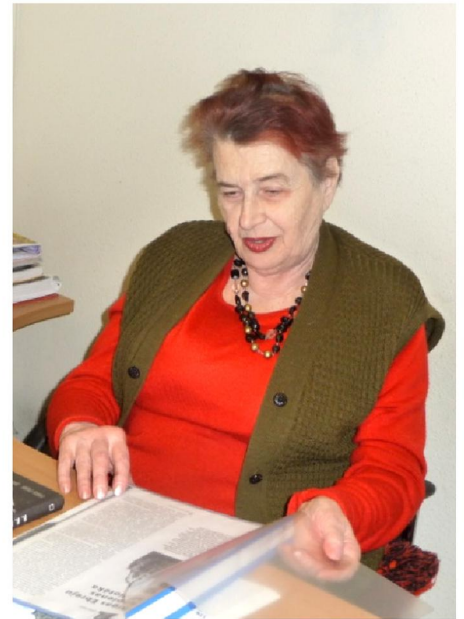
erature hall members once met monthly, they now meet every quarter. At one such meeting, Ella Slivkina from Israel attended; she is a member of the editorial board for the *Short Jewish Encyclopedia*, published by the Jewish University of Jerusalem.

Our events are very popular — meetings with writers, presentations of books, literature parties, poetry celebrations.

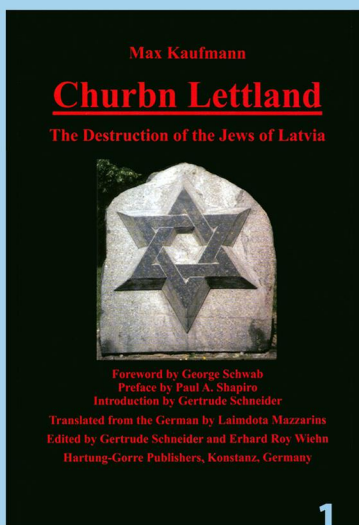
Our readers make use of our library for a variety of activities — reading, research, book discussion, socializing, and respite.

By Tsilia Raines

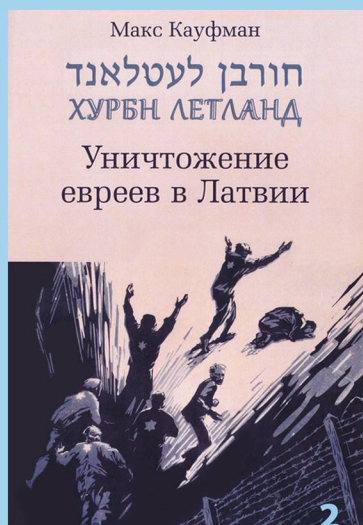
Translated from Russian by Liuba Rakhman



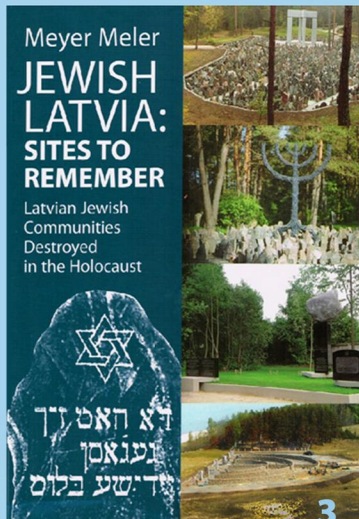
Managing Librarian Tsilia Raines



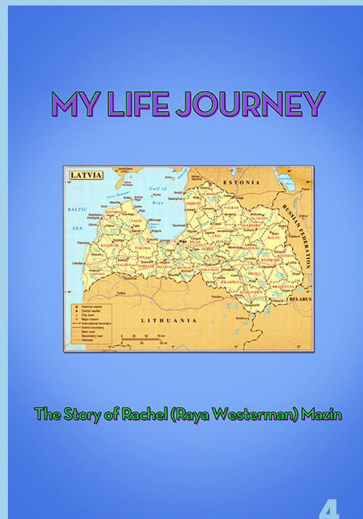
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DEAR FRIENDS,

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.
4. Raya Mazin's *My Life Journey: The Story of Rachel (Raya Westerman) Mazin*, published in English, with color photos. This book was originally published in Hebrew and was translated and published last year by JSL.

All four 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 books, check for \$40.00 for Meler's book, and check for \$10.00 for Mazin'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.

NEWS FROM LATVIA

On April 19, 2016, a general meeting of the Council of Jewish Communities of Latvia (the Council) took place. Delegates of Jewish communities from all regions of Latvia participated.

The general meeting approved changes in the Council's statutes and also accepted the decision about establishing the Restitution Fund of the Latvian Jewish Community (see page 1). During the general meeting, the nine-member Council Board was elected unanimously. Arkady Suharenko was elected Chairman of the Board.

Currently, the Council of Jewish Communities consists of 13 communities from nine different cities, together with more than 20 Jewish organizations of Latvia that closely cooperate with the Council. The Council represents more than 8,000 Jews of Latvia.

Krupnikov made a presentation on the life of the Jewish community in Latvia, referring to the historical aspects and the prospects for Latvian Jewry. At the forum, the Latvian delegation met with the Ambassador of Latvia in the United States Andris Razans. During the forum, particular attention was given to perpetuating the memory of the victims of the Holocaust. The delegation also met with the Special Envoy of the United States on the Question of the Holocaust Nicolas Dean.



Chairman of CJCL Arkady Suharenko and Riga Mayor Nil Ushakov

On June 6, 2016, the *Wall Street Journal* published a joint appeal of mayors of European and American cities against anti-Semitism. One hundred eighty-eight European mayors (including mayors of London, Paris, and Vienna) and 319 U.S. mayors (including mayors of New York and Boston) signed the statement. These city leaders condemned anti-Jewish hatred in all its forms and recognized the need to confront the growing threat of anti-Semitism. Among the signatories is Riga Mayor Nil Ushakov. We thank the mayor for his involvement and willingness to fight any expressions of anti-Semitism!



Delegation of CJCL on the AJC Global Forum

From June 5–7, 2016, the delegation of the Latvian Jewish community took part in the World Forum of the American Jewish Committee held in Washington, D.C. The Latvian Jewish community was represented by three delegates: Chairman of the Council of Jewish Communities in Latvia Arkady Suharenko, Deputy Chairman Dmitry Krupnikov, and project leader Diana Lapkis. Mr.



Advertisement about the Jews in Latvia Museum exhibition

On July 21, at the museum "Jews in Latvia" was unveiled the joint exhibition by the Museum of History of Medicine and Liepāja Museum "The Fate of Liepāja Jewish Medics During WWII." The exhibition used information on Jews – physicians, dentists, pharmacists, obstetricians and other medical workers who had worked in Liepāja, Paviloste, Aizpute, Vainode, as well as in Liepāja and Aizpute counties. It is reported that in 1939, in Liepāja, worked 85 doctors, of whom 29 (33%) were Jews. The greatest attention is given to the professional work of these people before WWII and their fate in time of war.



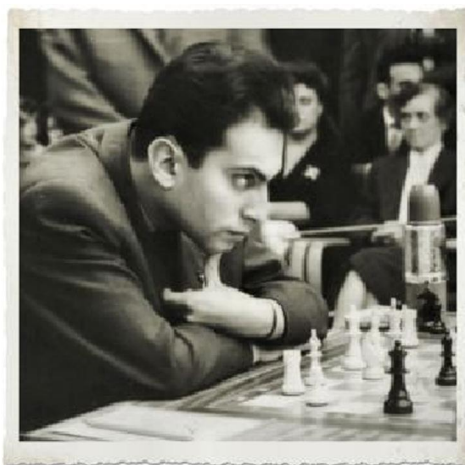
Opening of the Great Synagogue in Ludza

On August 11, the Great Synagogue in Ludza was solemnly opened after its restoration, which will be used as a branch of the Museum of Local Lore. In the building of the synagogue are

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NEWS FROM LATVIA (CONTINUED)

accommodated the exhibitions on the history of the synagogue, about the history of the Jews of Ludza, as well as about the natives of Ludza — photographer Vulf Frank and his son, world-renowned film director Gerts Frank.



M. Tal at the chessboard

At the end of March, the film, *Mikhail Tal: From a Distance*, by Latvian director Stanislav Tokalov, was screened at the Splendid-Palace cinema in Riga. The film recounts the life and times of Riga resident and eighth World Chess Champion Mikhail Tal; this year is his 80th jubilee.

Mikhail Tal: From a Distance, an Ego Media production, was made with the support of the National Center for Cinema, the State Fund of the Cultural Capital, and the Riga City Council.

At the March 31 premiere, the Tal's Fund and Latvian Chess Federation organized a session of simultaneous games, which was hosted by Latvian grand-master Alexey Shirov.



Announcement for I. Berlin's memorial event

On June 9, 2016, the Splendid-Palace cinema in Riga held an event in memory of the Riga-born (later a citizen of the UK) Sir Isaiah Berlin. Isaiah Berlin is one of the most famous contemporary philosophers and is author of many works on the freedom of the individual. A documentary film *The Jay Interview: In Quest of Our Civilization* was shown; the film featured an interview with Isaiah Berlin, where he spoke about relations of and rights inherent to the State and the individual. He also touched on the diversity of views and cultures and their significance and influence. After the film screening, Russian poet and writer Anatoly Naiman, former literary secretary of Anna Akhmatova and author of a book on Isaiah Berlin titled *Sir*, delivered a lecture titled, "The Russian theme in the life and creativity of Isaiah Berlin."

Street) exhibited the artworks of famous Latvian Jewish graphic artists. On exhibition was a line of great portraits by the father of the Latvian silkscreen artist Joseph Elgurt; the finest color etchings by Naftoly Gutman; prints made using various techniques by Semen Shegelman; and several works of one of the most popular and favorite teachers of graphics at the Latvian Academy of Arts Alexander Dembo. This very successful exhibition was made possible by grants from private collectors.



Kosher wine on Latvijas Balzams' conveyor belt

Enterprise Latvijas Balzams has begun the production of kosher sparkling wine — Cosmopolitan Diva; the distiller has also been producing kosher vodka for some time. The company hopes this product will please those seeking kosher products and will open new markets. All stages of production are controlled by a rabbi. Cosmopolitan Diva is intended for the Israeli market, but Latvijas Balzams is confident that the wine could also be a success in the United States and South America.



Invitation to the Jewish Graphic Artists exhibit

From June 3–27, the gallery Art studio No.1 in Riga (32, Avotu

Compiled by Ivar Brod

Translated from Russian by Alan Solovey

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE REUNION OF LIEPAJA (LIBAU) JEWS: JULY 5–JULY 8



Diana Petrova places flowers at the monument on the Alley of the Righteous Gentiles in Liepaja during the rally. She is the great-granddaughter of David and Henna Zivtson, who were rescued by the Sedols.

To commemorate those we loved and lost during the Holocaust, the Liepaja Jewish Heritage Foundation with the help of the Liepaja Jewish community hosted the latest reunion. Survivors and/or their descendants hailed from far and near, including Israel, the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Russia, and, of course, Jews residing in Latvia. Thanks to the inimitable director of the Foundation, Ilana Ivanova, the 3-day event was flawless.

It began with a festive dinner at which, among others, the new Israeli ambassador, Lironne Bersadeh, addressed guests. On the following day, we visited the Hauptwachplatz — where Jews were compelled to gather in the mornings to be assigned to work in German military establishments. From there, we marched to the former

women's prison where thousands of Jews were tortured by Germans and their local collaborators and then sent to their death. A visit to the SD headquarters followed, and, from there, we proceeded to the lighthouse where Jews were shot — including my father — at the end of July 1941. Prior to reaching Skede, we passed the Ghetto and the Rainis Park where the first Jews were shot. At all the places where Jews were slaughtered, we recited the Kaddish.

At Shkede, we reminisced about what had transpired on the unusually cold December days when most of Libau's Jews were murdered just yards from the Baltic Sea. At the Alley of the Righteous Gentiles, we honored those who, despite tremendous danger to their lives, helped hide Jews.

As Jews believe in the sanctity of life, we reaffirmed it the following evening with a festive dinner. It featured a quartet of Liepaja's symphony orchestra, which was followed by Ilana and her sister, Miriam Pavlenko, a member of the quartet, playing the piano and guests singing familiar songs in Yiddish, Hebrew, and Russian.

By George Schwab

THIS SUMMER MARKED A SAD ANNIVERSARY — 75 YEARS SINCE THE MASS SHOOTINGS OF JEWS IN LATVIA BEGAN



David Silberman speaks at the rally

Three of these mass murders took place in Preili on July 11, July 27 and on August 9, 1941, when some 800 people were killed. Honoring the memory of the victims is a memorial that was unveiled on August 8, 2004, at the killing site near the town's Jewish cemetery; this memorial was sponsored by Preili native David Silberman and the Latvian Jewish community. Since then, commemorative events are held annually at the memorial; participating are officials of the Preili municipality, the schools, and the town's residents. The event is traditionally organized and led by the director of the Preili Museum Ms. Tekla Bekeša. The most recent ceremony was held on August 7, 2016, and was attended by some 50 people, among them the American descendants of Preili Jews, including David Silberman, president of JSL.

In continuation of the event on the terrace of the House of Culture was given a concert where Vlad Shulman performed Jewish folk songs and songs of the Riga ghetto.

LIPMAN BERS: SCIENTIST, MATHEMATICIAN, HUMAN RIGHTS 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.

Lipman Bers (Lipa) (22/05/1914, Riga – 29/10/1993, New York) — outstanding scientist, mathematician, and human rights activist. He was born into a family of famous teachers — Isaac Berz, the director of the Jewish high school and Berta Berz-Weinberg, director of the Jewish primary school in Riga. During his years of primary and secondary education, he manifested his outstanding mathematical abilities.

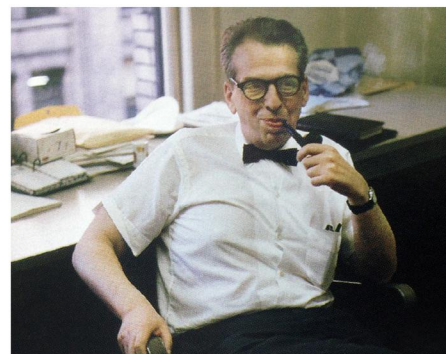


Lipman Bers studying in Riga, early 1930s

Later, he studied at the mathematics department of the University of Zurich, continuing his studies at the University of Latvia in Riga. After the establishment of the Ulmanis authoritarian regime in Latvia, the police received an order to arrest Lipman Bers as an active promoter of democracy. He fortunately managed to escape to Estonia, then to make his way to Denmark, and thence to Prague. He continued his research and studies at Prague University and received a doctoral degree in mathematics there in 1938. In the same year, living in Czechoslovakia became impossible for Jews, and, after nearly two years stay in Paris and then in the South of France, Lipman Bers arrived in the United States with his family in 1940. As with many other immigrants, he was unemployed in the first years of his stay in New York and did his own mathematical research. It was during these two

years that, at the request of the Institute for Jewish studies (YIVO), he wrote an article (in Yiddish) for the *YIVO Bleter* "Arithmetic Books in Yiddish, 1699–1834." In 1942, he took a position as a research instructor of applied mathematics at Brown University in Rhode Island, where, as part of work done for the U.S. Army, he also studied the subsonic flow of air around wings. In 1945–1949, he worked as an assistant professor, then associate professor at Syracuse University. There, he began to study singular, nonlinear elliptic equations. He reported the main results of these studies to the International Congress of Mathematicians in 1950; soon thereafter, his findings were published in the *Annals of Mathematics*. In 1951, he became a full professor at New York University and worked there for 13 years. From 1964 until he retired in 1984, Lipman Bers was a professor of mathematics at Columbia University; between 1972 and 1975 he was the chairman of the department of mathematics.

When Lipman Bers was first in the United States, his research was linked with the research of pseudo-analytical functions. He published a large number of works, in particular, *Theory of Pseudo-Analytic Functions*, in 1953. This volume provided evidence for and generalizations of his previously declared results. Subsequently, he conducted the classic study of differential equations and their application in the dynamics of gases. The most important was his contribution to the theory of quasi-conformal mappings and their applications to the theory of spaces of Riemann surfaces and Kleinian groups. He summarized the previous work in this classic area and formulated proof of the Teichmüller theorem, which characterizes extreme quasi-conformal mappings. Later, he became the recognized leader in this area, making it into one of the most useful practices of modern mathematics. Altogether, he published more than 100 scientific works in mathematics journals and was a universally recognized authority in mathematical analysis and geometry. Many of his most significant works were published in the collection *Selected Works of Lipman Bers. Parts 1*



Lipman Bers in his NYU office, 1964

and 2. Edited by I. Kra, B. Maskit (A.M.S.: Providence, RI), 1998.

In addition to his scientific and instructional work, Lipman Bers was dedicated to human rights and regularly advocated for these rights and organized rallies supporting protection of human rights. In 1974, he organized a widely publicized appeal of the participants at the Vancouver Mathematical Conference to the Soviet government that requested the liberation of the mathematician Leonid Plushch; in the same year, he penned a letter from a group of American mathematicians to the president of the Latvian Academy of Sciences for the protection of mathematician Lev Ladyzhensky. He initiated several other similar requests.



Lipman Bers and Andrei Sakharov, 1989

Lipman Bers was a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Sciences. He was a member of the Finnish Academy of Sciences and the American Philosophical Society. He was vice president (1963–65) and later president of the American Mathematical Society (1975–77); he also served as the chairman of the US National Committee for Mathematics (1977–1981). He was awarded the Mathematical Society's Leroy P. Steel Prize in 1975, as well as the New York Academy of Sciences' Heinz Pagels Human Rights of Scientists Award in 1986. *By Ivar Brod*

HERMINOCHKA

concluding from the previous issue

Editor's Note:

As a young girl, Ljalja Javorkovskaya developed a wonderful and warm relationship with an older lady, Herminochka (née Hermine Jacobson, born in Jelgava in 1900), forged within the framework of two Latvian Jewish families — the Javorkovskys and the Schers — in deep Russia during World War II. The friendship continued in postwar Riga. Her moving story briefly illuminates a slice of life in Soviet Russia and Ljalja's admiration and love for Herminochka, who had been married to the Chinese ambassador to Germany until his death in 1935.



This article's author and Herminochka, late 1970s.

Their house was my second home. From this house I went to school for the first time. Uncle Leon dropped me off at first grade. I have a photograph of me standing with some daffodils in front of the opera theater. Sometimes I'd spend the night with the Schers. In the morning, I'd wake up to Aunt Hermine's words: "Get ready faster, or all the top 'grades' will have been given to other students!" It was a very difficult time. Our families

supported each other and overcame many difficulties. Weekends and holidays were often spent together... I remember many walks in the parks of Riga, trips to museums, we went to the zoo. Uncle Leon, who was in charge of all the cultural activities, really loved the city of Riga, especially the old part of it. When guests or relatives came to visit us in Riga, we couldn't have asked for a better guide. At the same time, my mom began the search for Hermine's sister Klara. Hermine really wanted to find Klara Schwab and her son George. Mom sent letters to all kinds of institutions, but got no response. Finally, they were discovered in New York City, having been found because my mom inquired at the International Red Cross. Herminochka was overjoyed. The first letters and photographs were sent. When I saw the photograph of George, he looked to me like a prince from another world. Later, Klara and George offered significant help to Hermine and Leon, greatly easing their lives. Hermine really wanted to visit Klara, but she couldn't.

In 1955, my mom and I temporarily moved to the northern city of Inta where my dad was. Inta is in the Komi Republic of the U.S.S.R. by the Arctic Circle. I finished middle school in Inta; in the summer, mom and I traveled to Riga. During this entire time, we stayed in touch with the Schers. In 1960, I returned to Riga and was accepted to the Riga Institute of Medicine. I visited the Schers, who lived in Doctor Remigolsky's apartment, often. The Schers' home once again became my second home; Herminochka still

occupied herself with housework. She was always very happy when I visited — we celebrated all the Jewish holidays together. On fast days, Hermine would fast. Herminochka began to tell me about her life and her first husband. Her previous life in Berlin differed vastly from her life in Riga.

HERMINOCHKA'S MEMORIES OF BERLIN

Hermine came to Berlin in the beginning of the 1920s to consult with medical specialists. Her sister and her husband lived in the city. A Professor Bum, who was very highly regarded gynecologist, consulted with and eventually operated on young Herminochka. Many generations of doctors from all over the world have studied Professor Bum's textbooks. After the operation, Hermine had to undergo more radiotherapy. She told me that her memory had been deleteriously affected by those treatments. After the surgery, Hermine couldn't bear children. She never talked about it, but this was a huge tragedy for her. Part of what would have been her love for her own children, she gave to me.

Herminochka was very beautiful; this was evident until the last day of her life. In her youth, she was just stunning. Her eyes were two different colors, adding a dimension to her face that I can't even describe in words. Her beauty and her graciousness won the heart of a Chinese diplomat in Berlin. Hermine strongly resembled the actress Greta Garbo. The resemblance was so uncanny, that Hermine's parents were very upset.

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HERMINOCHKA

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They had seen a movie and thought they were seeing Herminochka; no one ever told them otherwise. In fact, a movie titled *The Woman with Different Eyes* was planned with Hermine as the main character but was never completed. At that time, Hermine met her future husband at a diplomatic reception; he quickly proposed and Hermine accepted, thus remaining in Berlin. His name was Xavier King Li; he came from a family of diplomats. His father was a well-known diplomat at the time of Bismarck, with whom he exchanged letters.

Hermine held on to these letters, but, after her husband's death, they were destroyed at Leon's insistence. Leon thought it was dangerous to keep these letters and they were thrown off the ship when Leon and Hermine were traveling on a river in the Tatar Republic. His behavior toward Hermine was especially touching. On every Jewish holiday, there would be a bouquet of roses on Hermine's pillow. From the first day, a multitude of tutors were hired for Hermine to help her learn diplomatic etiquette. She told me about a reception that she had to arrange, meant to be a "small" reception for 200 people but turned out to be more like 400 or 500. Herminochka talked in detail about the fabulous costumes she wore and how she could order as many clothes as she wished. Hermine also learned about Chinese traditions. They served a special tea at her house that had chrysanthemum petals in it. She herself gave dancing lessons to the Chinese ambassador.

Herminochka's husband was initially the Ambassador's Deputy, later becoming the Chinese Ambassador in Berlin. Their social circle was very inter-

esting. Amidst the diplomats there was a cleric who later became pope. Hermine wrote him a congratulatory letter and received a thank you letter from him in return.

Hermine's husband suffered from claustrophobia (fear of enclosed spaces). Therefore, he had problems traveling in a car and Hermine went everywhere with him. Later on, in addition to claustrophobia, he developed a serious kidney ailment. Herminochka called this sickness the "wrinkling of the kidneys." He died from this when still very young. So, Hermine was left alone in a strange country where the Nazis had already come to power. For her Chinese relatives, it was as if Hermine didn't exist because she didn't have any children. Senior government officials and other government members repeatedly came to Hermine and tried to persuade her to remain in Berlin. They assured her that she had nothing to fear, even though she was Jewish. I cannot explain in words the contemptuous gesture that Hermine showed through her refusal to stay. She just blew into her hand and said to one of the then ministers, "Here you are for me." And this was how the happiest and most carefree part of Herminochka's life ended.

She traveled with her belongings across borders in two diplomatically sealed freight cars that were attached to the train in which she was a passenger. Her journey took her first to Rome and from there to Vienna and Prague, ending finally in Riga. There she met Leon Scher whom she knew from Berlin. Together they escaped from Riga, ultimately ending up in Yelabuga.

*By Elena (Ljalja) Javorkovskaya
Translated from Russian by Eva Minkin*