



The Latvian Jewish Courier

THE DAY OF REMEMBRANCE OF VICTIMS OF GENOCIDE AGAINST THE JEWS IN LATVIA

A commemoration ceremony for the Latvian victims of the Holocaust was held in Riga on July 4th, on the site of Great Choral Synagogue, which was burned by the Nazis and their collaborators 76 years ago.

of Israel to Latvia Lironne Bar-Sadeh, former prisoner of the Riga ghetto and concentration camps, historian Margers Vestermanis, Chairman of the Council of Jewish Communities of Latvia Arkady Sukharenko, Deputy

Vestermanis, a historian and a former prisoner of Riga Ghetto and concentration camps, asked: How could it have happened that almost all Jews were killed during the Holocaust in Latvia? How could it have happened that the Jewish community of Latvia was the Jewish community most affected by the Holocaust of all communities in Europe? How can anybody answer such dreadful questions? In his view (he has devoted his life to studying the history of the Jews of Latvia), the answer can be found in the reality that during those years the society of Latvia did not treat Jews as its part or its people. Jews were *merely Jews*—just some outsiders.



M. Vestermanis speaks at a gathering on Gogol Street near the memorial

This year and for many prior years, the highest state officials, diplomats and members of the Jewish Community came to the memorial in the Gogol Street.

The commemoration was attended by the Speaker of the Saeima Inara Murniece, Prime Minister Maris Kuchinskis, Minister of Defense Raymonds Bergmanis, Minister of Foreign Affairs Edgars Rinkevics, Deputy Chairman of Riga City Council Andris Americs, Ambassador

Chairman Dmitry Krupnikov, and the head of Riga Jewish religious community David Kagan. Dmitry Krupnikov opened the ceremony.

In her statement, Speaker of the Saeima Inara Murniece pointed out that a terrible and unimaginable tragedy had happened in Latvia. She noted with regret that local accomplices of the Nazis had participated in the crimes and revealed that new information on Latvians who tried to save and did save Jews keeps coming to light. Speaker I. Murniece expressed the belief that the memory of the Holocaust and those who worked to save Jews will always linger in Latvia.

The Ambassador of Israel Lironne Bar-Sadeh noted the great importance of having the country's leaders attend the memorial ceremony every year. They and members of the Jewish community together commemorate the victims of the Holocaust.

In his address, Professor Margers



At the gathering, two former prisoners of the ghettos in Latvia met: Professor G. Schwab from the U.S. and Professor M. Vestermanis from Riga.

Given such attitudes, Vestermanis said that at the time he had little hope for change. But he reflected that he had lived to experience November 30, 2016, at the Freedom Monument—when Latvians and others came to honor the Jewish

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ANNOUNCEMENT

Our current Memorial/Yizkor will take place on November 12, 2017, at 12:00 Noon in Park East Synagogue, 163 East 67th Street, New York.

Following the main event, there will be a screening of the documentary *Operation Wedding*, about the famous airplane hijacking case of 1970.

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THE DAY OF REMEMBRANCE OF VICTIMS OF GENOCIDE AGAINST THE JEWS IN LATVIA

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victims as part of society.

In today's Latvia, much has changed. The country holds a national day of remembrance, with all residents bowing their heads in memory of the Latvians killed only because they were Jews.

In his address to the audience, Andris Ameriks said that everyone had to decide whether to remain a human being or not during the war. And, some had saved their neighbors—recognizing both that they were fellow Latvians and fellow human beings.



Wreaths of flowers near the memorial on Gogol Street



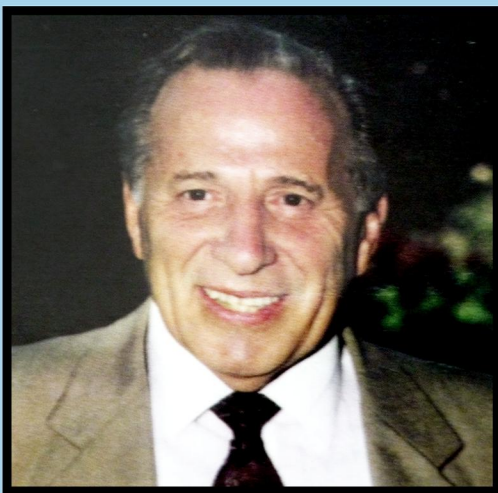
Laying flowers at the memorial in Bikernieki on July 4th

The ceremony of placing flowers was held at both the Great Choral Synagogue and the memorial in Bikernieki. In that forest, more than 20 thousand Jews deported to Riga from Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and other European countries were murdered.

Latvia has, in total, more than 200 sites of mass graves of Holocaust victims, the most significant are in Riga—in Rumbula and in Bikernieki, and in Liepaja's Shkede, in Daugavpils, and in Rezekne.

*Based on news coverage from jews.lv
Translated by Liuba Rakhman*

In memory of JACK (ISAAK) RATZ OCTOBER 26, 1925 - JULY 2, 2017



Born in Riga, Jack Ratz was a boy of fifteen when his city fell to the Nazi hordes. Jack, together with his family, became an inmate of Riga ghetto, where his mother and three brothers were murdered in the Rumbula forest on December 8, 1941. He and his father found themselves among the small group of surviving Jews of Latvia. After liberation, Jack studied radio engineering in a German Displaced Persons camp and, in November 1947, he emigrated to the United States.

Soon after his arrival, he met and married the love of his life, Doris Whittenberg, and together they laid down roots in Brooklyn, NY. Jack was a successful television repairman, later he became an engineer and foreman for the New York City Transit System. He also became an active member of Jewish Survivors of Latvia in the USA and for many years he was a member of Board of our society.

Jack and Doris instilled in all of their children the love for Yiddishkeit and the responsibility of community involvement.

Jack Ratz also served several terms as the Chairman of Board of his Synagogue, Flatbush Park Jewish Center. He also wrote his autobiography, *Endless Miracles*, which has sold thousands of copies. Jack Ratz and his story of survival circled the world spreading not only a message of the terrors of the Shoah, but more importantly a message of hope and inspiration. Jack Ratz is survived by his three children: Tevy Ratz, Judy Fine, and Jeffrey Ratz, 10 grandchildren, and 11 great-grandchildren. May his memory be blessed.

MATTERS OF RESTITUTION ARE BEING DISCUSSED IN BRUSSELS AND RIGA

On April 26, 2017, the international conference “Unfinished Justice: Restitution and Memory” was held in the European Parliament in Brussels. The event was organized by the European Shoah Legacy Institute, which was established after the adoption of the Terezin Declaration and tasked with finding solutions to the restitution of real estate, art objects, and other valuables stolen by the Nazis from Jews during World War II.

The purpose of the conference was to discuss restitution protocols in different countries, share positive experiences, and find ways to overcome difficult situations.

The conference brought together a large number of high-ranking political figures and representatives of major Jewish organizations. The discussion was moderated by Yoel Lyon, a special envoy of the State of Israel on restitution of Holocaust property; Nathan Sharansky, head of the Jewish Agency of Israel, delivered a report on the impact of restitution on the lives of the survivors of the Holocaust.



D. Krupnikov speaks in Brussels

A panel discussion was held on the difficulties faced by European Jewish communities in the course of restitution. Representing the Latvian Jewish community was Dmitry Krupnikov, head of the Restitution Fund of the Jewish Community of Latvia and deputy chairman of the Council of the Jewish Communities of Latvia. The report on Latvia described the history

of Jews in Latvia from the 16th century up to the present day, but focused on specifics of the restitution process in Latvia (originally, the property of the Jews was confiscated by the Soviet authorities and only then taken by the Nazis, after which it again became Soviet property). Mr. Krupnikov described today’s situation: Five objects have already been returned to the community, with 270 others for which no decision has yet been made.

The day after the conference, a delegation led by Thomas Yazherdi, a special representative of the U.S. State Department on the Holocaust, Mark Levin, representative of the World Jewish Restitution Organization, and Eli Valk, president of the Association of Latvian and Estonian Jews in Israel, came to Riga. There, they discussed restitution of Jewish communal property with the heads of the Jewish community and with members of the Saeima, the chancelleries of the President, and the Prime Minister.

Cautious optimism was expressed, since Latvia has the lowest level of anti-Semitism of all European countries (as stated by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights), and government officials are ready to negotiate the matters of restitution.

On June 26, 2017, some members of the European Parliament signed the Declaration Supporting Holocaust-era Property Restitution:

“We, members of the European Parliament, affirm the moral responsibility of European Union member states to advance Holocaust-era property restitution.”

Seventy-one members of the European Parliament from 20 EU member states have signed a pledge



The European Parliament discusses issues of restitution

to increase support for Holocaust survivors and their families seeking the return of looted property.

The president of the European Parliament, Antonio Tajani, described the return of Holocaust-era property as a “fundamental element to restore justice” in a speech at the aforementioned April conference.

(Unfortunately, there is no signature of the Latvian representative on this pledge.)

At the end of March, the delegation of the American Jewish Committee, led by David Harris, visited Latvia and met with the Latvian Prime Minister Maris Kucinskis. During the meeting, the representatives of the AJC touched upon the issue of restitution of Jewish property. Kucinskis recalled that last year six properties were returned to the Jewish community. The AJC delegation noted that the process of restitution should be continued and that Latvia should return what before the war belonged to the Jewish diaspora and what was built using the money of the Jewish community.

***Based on the information from the Latvian press, as well as from jews.lv
Translated by Eva Minkin***

“JEWS IN A CHANGING WORLD” CONFERENCE

“The history and cultural heritage of Latvian Jews is an integral part of the history of Latvia.” This was the motto of the 10th international conference “Jews in a Changing World” held in Riga, timed to the centenary of the Republic of Latvia, and dedicated to the contribution of Jews to the formation and development of the country.



The audience in the conference hall

This year the conference became a truly significant event for historians and ethnographers, as well as for future specialists, first-year university students, and high school students interested in history. The conference was attended by researchers from nine countries: Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Israel, United States, Canada, Germany, Russia, and Finland.



Professor A. Stranga delivers his report

Participants in the three-day conference covered a huge range of Jewish topics and discussed the time from the beginning of the 19th century to the present day. The program was divided into seven sessions devoted to the varied destinies of Latvian Jews, the life of Jews in the Republic of Latvia (1918–1940), the Jews of Latgale, etc. Following are just a few of the topics



The registration of participants was carried out by Karina Barkane (standing on the left), Executive Director of the Center for Judaic Studies at the University of Latvia

and names of the conference presenters: “The Economic Policy of the Authoritarian Regime of Karlis Ulmanis and the Jews: 1939–1940” by Aivars Stranga, “Jews: Peddlers in Latgale in the Late 19th Century to Early 20th Century” by Joseph Rochko, “Outstanding Latvian Jews in the United States: Several Half-Forgotten Biographies” by Ivar Brod, “The Migration of Josef H. Hirschhorn from Mitau to the USA: Becoming an Outstanding Patron of the Arts” by Henry Blumberg. Dozens of other presentations and presenters were on offer.

This year for the first time high school and college students were invited to participate; the conference sponsored an essay competition on the topic: “Multifaceted Latvia: the Jewish Community in the History and Modernity of Latvia.” Svetlana Pogodina, project coordinator at the Jews in Latvia Museum and associate professor of the faculty of humanities at the University of Latvia, said “A great surprise for us was the large number of high school students who took part in the essay contest. Most of the letters were received from pupils of non-Jewish and Latvian regional schools.” Adds Karina Barkane, “Many high school students admitted that they were learning about the Jewish community of Latvia, preparing for the essay.” The 14 best works were selected, with first place being shared

by several participants, (the first two places among students of grades 8 and 9, the first three places, grades 10 through 12).



I. Lensky, director of the Jews in Latvia Museum, awards the contest winners

Interest in the history of the Jews of Latvia from high school and college students, especially non-Jews, is undoubtedly very important and is the crucible within which an understanding of Jewish history and culture as part of Latvian history is formed.

The conference was organized by the Center for Judaica Studies of the University of Latvia, the Council of Jewish Communities of Latvia, and the Jews in Latvia Museum, with the support of the Latvian Ministry of Culture, the State Cultural Capital Foundation, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in Latvia, Arlene Beare (Great Britain), Henry Blumberg (Canada), American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee – JDC, and the Foundation “Remembrance, Responsibility and Future” – EVZ (Germany).

HOW THESE CONFERENCES BEGAN...



Professor R. Ferber, Head of the Center for Judaic Studies at the University of Latvia

In 1994, a year before the first conference, I heard a speech by the social and religious activist Professor Herman Branover at a seminar; he told of the Lybavicher Rebbe, whom he knew personally. His inspiring speech ranged over the Torah and science. Afterwards, I approached Professor Branover (our rebbe, Natan Barkan, was standing next to him) and asked if it would be worth it for us to organize some kind of seminar or conference about his story. Branover immediately began to sketch possible contours of such a project; he then invited me to come to Israel to discuss the details for such a possible conference. So, I traveled to Israel and we continued our discussion. Later, in Riga, we met with Abram Kletskin, Zalman Kats, Grisha Krupnikov, and others to make detailed plans. We were enthusiastic as we felt a conference like this could bring together Jewish and non-Jewish academics and others from countries that had been part of the former Soviet Union and relate some of our experiences to those attending from Israel, America, Germany—forming an intellectual bridge. The conference aim would be to bring to light and discuss some of the most important problems of contemporary Jewishness. Topics would include but not be limited to: religion, philosophy, Torah, living history. One hoped-for outcome would be for Riga to become a center of Jewish thought. So, what should this conference be called? Abram Kletskin offered “Jews in the changing world.”

Yelena Antimonova, a famous graphic artist, made a logo from a Dürer drawing with an hourglass and letters of the Jewish alphabet. Thus, the very first conference was “alef.” We got support from the memorial fund of Jewish culture from New York; Professor Branover invited ten Jewish intellectuals to speak, including Norman Lam, the dean of New York’s Yeshiva University. Dean Lam spoke about the medical ethics of the Torah and how Jewish tradition addressed euthanasia. Other speakers spoke on philosophy, the history of Russian Judaism, and the history of the European Jews. Following the first conference, we published a collection of materials in Russian and English. We then decided to have a conference every two years, so the second conference was signified by the letter “bet.”



Professor Herman Branover, who conceived international conferences on Jewish issues in Riga

We have continued to hold conferences every two years. Our conferences gave the most attention to the Latvian Jewry, but remained international. The conference devoted to the Riga synagogue, held in 2009, was unique. We have just finished our tenth conference, which was not only our tenth but also marked the hundredth anniversary of Latvian state. Therefore, the conference focused on the part that Jews played in the formation of independent Latvia and its development. Although few have specialized in the history solely of Latvia, the conference had reports from Israel, Finland, Lithuania, Russia, and Ukraine. Latvia itself was represented by contributions from scientists, teachers, workers in city services and museums, students and school-children (who presented reports about

the Jews of Latvia before and after the war). The staff of the museum “Jews in Latvia” contributed information, as did the Judaic studies area of the Latvian University. University researchers engaged in small projects that concentrated on investigating such places as Bauska, Kuldiga, Rezekne, Daugavpils. Professor Aivar Stranga and Ilya Lensky spoke over two days about the history of the Jews in Latvia: about the reconstruction of the synagogues in Ludza and Rezekne and how many came to pray there. The non-Jewish guides were enthusiastic in their telling of Jewish history—they feel like it is a part of their own history.

Jewish Latvia is an important part of Latvia—and I am glad to see how it is accepted by everybody. At the tenth conference we recognized the best of the student essays on the history of Jews in Latvia by awarding certificates to their authors. We did this in the presence of consuls, representatives of ministries and Saeima deputies. We also read the President’s letter to conference attendees. Thanks to the support of the Latvian Ministry of Culture, we were able to cover all the expenses involved in organizing the essay competition. The conference’s budget was underwritten in part by the Latvian State Culture Fund, the American Joint Committee, and other organizations. The simultaneous translation was made possible by Arlene Beare of London and Henry Blumberg of Toronto. In addition, the Association of Jews from Latvia in Israel and its leader Elie Valk contribute by coming here every summer and doing upkeep on all the places where Holocaust victims are buried. We also want to mention the interesting report about the Jewish Organization of America that we heard at the conference. This diaspora faithfully keeps its connection with Latvia—crucial for transmitting our history to the next generation.

**by Ruvin Ferber, Professor
Co-Chairman of the Conference**

NEWS FROM LATVIA



The memorial in Bauska as it will be seen from the side of the square

In Bauska, at the crossing of Pasta and Rigas streets where at present there is a small square, a synagogue stood before the war. On that site, the Latvian Jewish community planned to build a memorial, which the sculptor Girt Burvis gave the symbolic name: Park Synagogue. On March 29, Gita Umanovskaya, the executive director of the Jewish community, and Mr. Burvis set up construction headquarters. We expect all construction work to be completed this year, with both sculpture and construction financed by the Jewish community and the Bauska administration. "Such a memorial at the place of the demolished synagogue as it will be in Bauska cannot be found anywhere in Europe." The head of the society "Old Bauska," Jeva Bronko-Pastore, supports it: "This is not a memorial to death, but to life." The sculptures don't intrude, but have inserted themselves among the houses of the old town and the nearby the river Memele.



Ilya Rips (left) in Israel

On April 27 at 6, Skolas Street at the conference "Jews in a

Changing World," there was a screening of *The Burning*, a movie by the producer Janis Putninsh. The film showed the attempt at self-immolation by Ilya (Elias) Rips, a 20-year-old Latvian University mathematics student. This April 1969 protest in the center of Riga was made against the 1968 Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia. Rips, now a world-renowned mathematician, has lived in Israel for more than four decades.



G. Beilin's poetry recited by Russian theater actor Yakov Rafeelson

On March 5 in Riga, a concert was given devoted to the memory of the poet-song writer Grigory Beilin. The big hall of the Riga Jewish community house was packed. Beilin's life was difficult but full of distinction. He graduated from the famous Jewish gymnasium Ezra in Riga and studied at Jerusalem University; in the summer of 1940 he was in Riga on vacation when the city was taken over by Russian tanks. On June 14, 1941, he was deported to Siberia. He returned to Riga at the end of the 1950s and eventually became a famous poet-song writer. His poems formed the lyrics of compositions by R. Pauls, O. Strok, Y. Frenkel, and V. Khvoinitsky. These songs were sung by M. Magomayev, E. Gorovets, Y. Kobzon, O. Voronets, A. Vedish-

cheva, L. Mondrus, V. Mulerman, and others. Beilin wrote the famous song "Nocturne—The Narrow Streets of Riga." As soon as it became possible, he left for Israel. Participants at this memorial concert included Anatoly Khvoinitsky, son of composer V. Khvoinitsky; Boris Beilin, G. Beilin's son and a professor in Israel; Yakov Rafeelson, an actor of the Russian theater, recited Beilin's poems.

In early June, director Simon Davis's feature film *The Boy with a Dog* began shooting its summer scenes. The movie began shooting in January 2017 in Riga; now it is filming in Kauguri, Jelgava, Tukums, Jaunjelgava, and in several places in Riga. The film tells the life of Rigan Zhanis Lipke and the events of the German occupation of Riga and the Kipsala Lipke house.



A scene from the upcoming film about Z. Lipke

Among those Latvians who rescued others from death, Zhanis Lipke is the most striking—a passionate, fearless adventurer, who, thanks to his natural humanity, saved more than fifty Jews. These tragedies of Latvian history have not yet been reflected in Latvian film; *Boy* will be the first vivid testament to these events. Artūrs

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NEWS FROM LATVIA (CONTINUED)

Skrastiņš plays Zhanis Lipke; Johannas Lipke is played by Ilze Blauberga. The film's release is planned for autumn 2018.



A scene from the upcoming film about Z. Lipke



Exhibition of paintings by Latvian Jewish artists

During this entire summer, the Jews in Latvia museum featured an exhibition of Latvian artists of Jewish origin. Works on display included those by Mikhail Io (Meyer Joffe), Sandra Vestermāne, Adolf Mittel, Semyon Shegelman, Rakhmiel Yakrin, Alla Preobrazhenskaya, Solomon Fleishman, and Naftoliya Gutman.



The STEPS OF LIFE commemorative march

On July 4 in Riga the annual commemorative march STEPS OF LIFE was held. More than 150 people participated. A memorial prayer was sung by Cantor Telman Guzhevsky. The participants then marched quietly along the streets of the former ghetto, which had changed little in 76 years. One thing is different, however: March participants could choose where to go—those who were forced to walk along these streets during the Holocaust had no such choice. The event ended at the Great Choral Synagogue memorial, where the marchers joined the meeting with the country's officials.



Advertisement for the charity concert by the Eilat collective

On April 23, the Jewish community enjoyed a charity concert, "Shir Tikva," organized by Eilat, the Israeli dance collective. The concert featured many talented musicians and dancers—children

as well as adults. The audience gave some of its loudest applause to the dance of the youngest performers—those no more than six years of age. Eilat, led by Yelena Gorelik, has now put on four concerts for charity. This one benefited the children whose families are being supported by the Social Center of the Riga Jewish Community. This concert resulted in 654 euros being donated.



A train car used to deport people on June 14, 1941 is permanently installed at the Torņakalna railway station

On June 14, many places in Riga held events devoted to the memory of the victims of the communist genocide:

- A conference dedicated to the memory of the Riga castle
 - A march from the museum of occupation (Town Hall Square) to the Monument of Freedom, solemn changing of guards and the placing of flowers
 - Meetings at the Shkirotava and Torņakalna train stations
 - Concerts in the big hall of the Latvian Society, in the Small Guild, and at the churches: Saint Peter's, Saint Ioann's, Saint Gertrude's
- The number of people deported from Latvia on June 14, 1941, totalled 15,425, of which 1,789 were Jews.

Compiled by Ivar Brod
Translated from Russian by Liuba Rakhman

RECOMMENDED: *BEYOND THE REALM OF THE PAST* BY SERGEI BRAUN



Professor Sergei Braun

During one of the sessions of the “Jews in a Changing World” conference, participants were presented with a book of memoirs, *Beyond the Realm of the Past*, by Sergei Braun, a former Riga resident, now a professor at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Sergei Braun was born in Riga in April 1941; two months later, on June 14, a terrible day for Latvia, he and his parents were arrested by the NKVD and sent to Siberian exile. The reason? Sergei’s father and grandfather were active Bundists—a grave crime in the eyes of the Soviet regime. In 1956, Braun was allowed to return to Riga, where he graduated from Riga’s Secondary School #15, and, following the example of his father who had died in the gulag, decided to devote himself to chemistry. He matriculated at the Riga Polytechnic Institute. Later, he transferred to another institute, this one in Russia. However, after receiving his degree in chemical engineering, he returned to Latvia and, in a few years, became one of the leaders of a unique enterprise in Olaine. This enterprise was developing technologies for the production of

complex chemical reagents. When immigrating to Israel became more feasible in the early 1970s, he applied for an exit visa. After two years, he was finally permitted to leave for Israel. Professor Braun is now a world authority in bioorganic chemistry, whose techniques are being used in Israel, the United States, France, and Germany; in 2005, he was recognized as one of the 100 most influential Israelis. He is conversant in many areas of world culture and academic and biblical history.

Initially, Braun’s memories were not intended for publication. These were stories for friends about his life in Siberia and in Latvia, sketches of psychological portraits of historical personalities, philosophical essays on the burning problems of life. His friends persuaded him to publish his memories in the form of a book. Early in 2017, his book was published in Israel and, in June, a Latvian translation was published in Riga. A second edition in Russian is currently being worked on. At the



S. Braun and Lolita Thomsons, the director of the Lipke Memorial Museum, after the presentation.

present time, the book is being translated into Hebrew and English.



The Russian language Israel edition (left), Latvian language edition (center), and Russian language Riga edition (right) of S. Braun’s *Beyond the Realm of the Past*

The presentation of the Latvian edition of the book was held on June 14, 2017 (the anniversary of the family’s deportation) at the Lipke Museum, where the author was welcomed by former classmates and the staff of the Israeli Embassy headed by Ambassador Lironne Bar-Sadeh, among others. In a letter published in the book, academician Janis Stradinsh wrote: “Dear Professor Sergei Braun, I sincerely thank you for the book of memoirs in Russian. I really enjoyed it because it is written in a brilliant literary language, with a deep philosophy, and reflects the dramatic, but unusually rich history of your life... I read your book with as much interest as the book by Valentina Freimane, which reflects on the vicissitudes of history from a different angle.”

In October, the book will be presented at the international book fair in Frankfurt, Germany.

JSL is planning to have Sergei Braun’s book *Beyond the Realm of the Past* available for purchase at the annual meeting on November 12 of this year.

By Bronya Shif
Translated from Russian by Maria Taukule

100TH ANNIVERSARY OF HIS BIRTH: MAX GOLDIN, JEWISH COMPOSER



Max Goldin

I remember my uncle Max Goldin—my mother's younger brother—from the time of war, when he was a doctoral candidate at the Moscow Conservatory. He was born on August 10, 1917, into a large family; he was the youngest of six children. He attended the well-known Riga Berz-shule, but was excluded from the second term (8th grade) in 1933 for taking part in a riot against clerical tendencies in education at the time of Ulmanis. Later, he attended the Sabiedriskā school.

The entire Goldin family was musically talented, but Moska was the best of them. In 1939, he graduated from the Latvian music academy, with concentrations in music theory and piano. Then came the Soviets and then the war.

He was conscripted into the Red Army and unfortunately (in reality it was luck) was wounded in his right hand. In the Ivanovo town hospital, he met Fanya Vilenskaya, a young doctor, who subsequently became his wife. With his wounded hand, the career in piano was lost. Now residing in Moscow, he studied composition with Anatoly Alexandrov. In 1948, back in Riga, he began teaching music theory in the Latvian State Conservatory. At the same time, he continued his lifelong interest in folklore, but had no opportunity to give much attention to Jewish folk music. However, he did his doctoral dissertation on the connection of the Latvian folk song with neighboring peoples and their folk songs.

Stalin had ordered to destroy the massive collection (located in Moscow) of thousands of Jewish songs. Although Max had the support of Tikhon Khrennikov, at that time chairman of the Composers Union, he could not save the collection.

When times became a bit more liberal, Max began more active study of and participation in Jewish music. He arranged for voice and piano about 80 folk songs and 40 arrangements for choirs. In the 1980s, singer Ada Svetlova and pianist Natalia Schroeder made a record of Jewish songs and gave concerts in Moscow, Leningrad, Birobidzhan, Donetsk, Lviv, Kiev, and Chernivtsi.

I remember such a concert in Moscow, when the management of Moscow Composer House did not want a production with a Jewish theme to succeed—so they did not let the public into the hall until the very last minute. Those who were finally admitted had to dash to the balcony while Max was already finishing his introductory remarks, ending with words: "because Moscow is Moscow!"

Later Max's music entered the repertoire of Inessa Galante (soprano), Janis Sprogis (tenor), and Vladimir Khokhlov (piano).

Goldin's original works based on Jewish musical folklore gave rise to instrumental and vocal music and the mystery "Esther and King Ahashverosh." This Purimshpil was first performed in 1993 in Riga Wagner Hall and this year on April 2 in the Museum of Zhanis Lipke.



A program for M. Goldin's May 16, 1981 concert

I have preserved several programs of concerts held in Riga. In 1981, "Suite for Chamber Orchestra" was performed; the program had comments by Liga Yakovetska. She wrote: "It is a suite of national character with bright colors of Jewish and Slavic folklore. Enriching the sound of the chamber orchestra, the composer added a piano timbre to the orchestral score, thereby creating an impression of concertina—the

moment of creative competition between the soloist and the orchestra."

Here are words of Dm. Yakirevich, a composer and poet from Jerusalem: "For the first time I was lucky enough to hear the Sholom-Aleikhem version of 'Lullaby' in June 1987 performed by the Latvian State Academic Choir, which gave Muscovites in the Great Hall of the Conservatory samples of the real Jewish vocal-choral culture in the arrangement of the remarkable folklorist Max Goldin."



An anthology of Jewish folk songs compiled by Max Goldin

In 1994 for the first time in Russia, Goldin's Anthology of nearly 300 Jewish folk songs was published. Another contribution to the Jewish musical culture and the source for the album of Jewish liturgical music performed by Vlad Shulman with the choir in 2009 was the music collections of Josef Zeba, the cantor from Tukums—preserved in the library of the Conservatory by the efforts of Max Goldin.

Composer Max Goldin passed away on January 21, 2009, at the age of 92.

Despite the tragic events of the 20th century, we can say that the creative and physical life of Max Goldin was fortunate. Unlike his parents David and Matla, his sister Haya, and his eight-year-old niece Temma, who all perished in the Riga ghetto, Max survived and was able to build a creative life. His contribution to Jewish music is a real memorial to him, his relatives, and all victims of the Holocaust. For his living relations, it is a great honor that the Max Goldin Jewish Cultural Heritage Society bears his name.

By Dolores Itkina

On August 10, the day of the 100th anniversary of Max Goldin's birth, in the Riga Jewish society's music hall, a concert took place in which Ada Svetlova once again sang Jewish songs in Max Goldin's arrangement.

JAN LEONARD MITCHELL: RESTAURATEUR & PHILANTHROPIST

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.



J. Mitchell

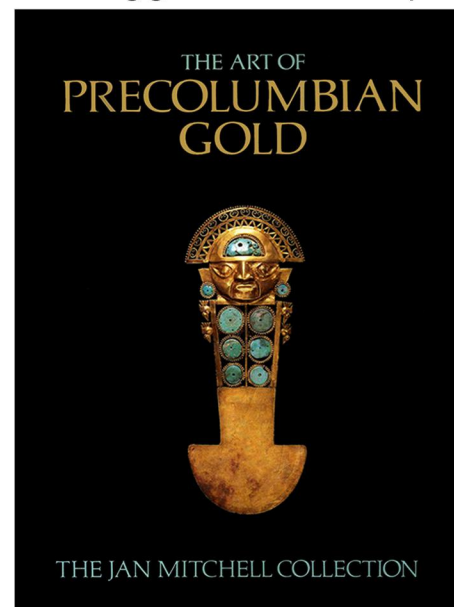
Mitchell, Jan Leonard (born Leo Michelson) (4/22/1913, Liepaja – 11/28/2009, New York)—restaurateur and philanthropist. He was raised in a family of timber merchants. After graduating from German high school, he studied jurisprudence for several semesters and restaurant and hotel management at the universities of Prague and Zurich. He completed his education at the Latvian University, graduating with a law degree in 1936. During the second half of the 1930s, he had to visit Germany a few times on business and had a chance to see the growing persecution of Jews. In November of 1938, he was in Berlin during the so-called Kristallnacht, after which he decided to make all possible efforts to immigrate to America. In August of 1939, he became employed as a sailor on a ship going from Riga to the United States; after the first stop in Balti-

more, he stayed and ultimately settled in New York. All his relatives who remained in Latvia were killed during the Holocaust. Not knowing English, Mitchell worked for several years as a waiter. In 1942, he borrowed money and bought a small restaurant called "Olmstead" in Washington, D.C., and, in 1950, he bought a long-established restaurant called, "Luchow's," located on 14th Street in Manhattan. Here, Mitchell reinstated the excellent preparation of classic German dishes, was able to recreate a festive atmosphere, and turned Luchow's into one of the most prestigious restaurants in New York. Leonard Bernstein, Arthur Rubinstein, Audrey Hepburn, Marlene Dietrich, Alfred Hitchcock, the Kennedy brothers, and other celebrities started to spend their evenings at the restaurant. He later acquired a few more restaurants and hotels, as well as a chain of restaurants called "Longchamps." He wrote two books, *Luchow's German Cookbook* (1952), which went to seven editions, and *Cooking à la Longchamps* (1964).



J. Mitchell meets Margaret Thatcher

to philanthropy. Since the 1950s, he had been acquiring paintings by Mane, Picasso, Monet, Kandinsky, Degas, as well as Chagall, with whom he became close friends. Later he became very interested in collecting gold items and antiques.



A volume detailing J. Mitchell's collection of pre-Columbian gold

Mitchell was a founding member of the Israeli Museum, donating more than 100 paintings and unique items to the museum as well as making large cash donations. A park in Jerusalem was named in his honor as a sign of gratitude and appreciation for his generosity. A student center in the University of Tel Aviv and the Jewish center, "Chabad" in Southampton, New York, were built using his donations. He also sponsored many other charitable organizations in the United States and Israel. For many years he worked on acquiring what became the largest collection of art made from gold of the pre-Columbian era and he donated the entire collection, more than 170 pieces, to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. This collection is located in the wing named, "The Jan Mitchell Collection" of the South American Gallery.

By Ivar Brod

Translated from Russian by Alan Solovey

SHOFAR CHOIR, RIGA



The Shofar choir performs, with conductor Joseph Tsiser in front

Shofar, the choir of the Riga Jewish Community (RJC), is the only Jewish choir in the Baltic countries; its main objective is the preservation and promotion of Jewish song culture.

Composer Joseph Tsiser is the head of the choir and a professional choir conductor; he graduated from the Latvian Music Academy in 1980 and is the son of Itshok Tsiser—known in Latvia as an excellent Jewish actor and theater director. The choir was established in September of 2001 on the initiative Carmella Skorik, the deputy chairman of the RJC and head at that time of the cultural activities of the community. At inception, the

concerts in many cities of Latvia, introducing listeners to Jewish song culture. It has also traveled to perform in Estonia at the invitation

of the Jewish community of Tartu. The choir has also regularly performed at various official celebrations in Riga. Shofar has also performed at meetings in Riga for delegations of the Jewish communities from Israel,

France, and other countries. It is frequently invited to perform at resorts and hotels in Jurmala and other cities. Recently, the choir was invited to Norway (www.jkfest.no) to participate in the annual festival of Jewish culture in the city of Trondheim, where it will be one of many musical groups from Great Britain, Sweden, Denmark, and Norway. Norway has offered to cover all admission expenses for

the choir. Shofar is currently rehearsing for this September trip.

For its successful concerts in 2010, the choir was awarded a Honorary Diploma of the Ministry of Culture of Latvia. The choir's rotating repertoire of about 40 works includes songs in Hebrew, Yiddish, even Ladino (the language of Spanish Jews), and, of course, in Russian and Latvian, arranged (sometimes even composed) by Joseph Tsiser. At concerts, the choir usually performs 12–15 songs; Shofar often performs classic Jewish songs such as "Avenu Sholem

Alechem," "Ismehu hashamaim," "Ale brider," "Unzer nigndl," and internationally recognized audience favorites "Hava Nagila" and "Tumbalalaika." Tsiser has composed specifically for the choir "Silence on the Golan Heights," the humorous songs "Chiri-bim-bom," "Hey, grandfather gracious!," and many others.

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The choir during their rehearsal



Conductor Joseph Tsiser

SHOFAR CHOIR, RIGA

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Choir soloist Bella Zakharenko

The audience at the concerts enthusiastically greets performances by alto Bella Zakharenko, the choir's featured soloist. She speaks perfect Yiddish and skillfully uses her voice in her favorite songs: "A Simhe" (by the Latvian Jewish composer V. Khvoinitsky and lyricist L. Koval) and the folk song "Itzik hot shein chasseneh gehat."

With great gusto, she also sings "Gefilte fish" (music by I. Lubinsky, lyrics by M. Tanich):

*The secret is:
First, prepare the fish;
only then are guests invited!*

Bella remembers with pleasure one of the choir's first visits to Estonia. News of a Jewish choir quickly reached places outside of Latvia. The famous soloist of Riga's operetta theater Leonid Rimar took part in that concert.

The choir's performances are often accompanied by the one of

best concert-masters in Riga, Yuri Casper.

The Shofar choir currently has 29 members. Nationalities of members include Jewish, Russian, Latvian, Polish, etc., with each member connected to "Jewishness" to some degree. Over the years, choir members have developed their own traditions, for example, singing the song "Lomir ale ineinem, ineinem" at birthday parties. Among the choir are artists, poets, musicians, housewives, and many others from various walks of life.



After the award ceremony: President R. Vējonis and J. Tsiser, with his wife Olga

The choir is open to new participants. Rehearsals are held twice a week in the hall of Latvian Jews in the museum of the Riga Jewish Society. Recently Joseph Tsiser was awarded the Honorary Order of the Republic of Latvia—the "cross of recognition." The presentation was held in the Riga Castle, the residence of the President of the Republic of Latvia. This award is a great honor for Mr. Tsiser, all members of Shofar, and the entire Riga Jewish community.

***By Oleg Shapovalov,
participant of the choir
Translated by Michelle Minkina***