



MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF LATVIA

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LATVIA's JEWISH COMMUNITY: HISTORY, TRAGEDY, REVIVAL

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Opening Address by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia Indulis Bērziņš

Latvia has resolved to support the research of history and an assessment of the past. Equally important are the teaching of history and encouraging tolerance among fellow human beings.

This book is devoted to the history of the Jewish community. It covers the more distant past of the Jewish community in Latvia, its best days in the 1920s and 1930s of independent Latvia, the tragic period of the Holocaust, and finally, the work being done in contemporary Latvia in the field of Holocaust education and research.

Research is still needed on the destinies of individuals, countries and nations. Several times the last century has contradicted the majority opinion that economic development and respect for the individual increase along with the development of humanity. In the middle of the 20th century, economic and technological progress that could have been used towards the development of the State and society were instead misused for the achievement of ideological aims.

Education and culture are essential in order to overcome prejudice, for learning the lessons of history and for eradicating extremism. Tolerance has been a current topic throughout time, as people have been prepared to defend their personal well-being even at the expense of others. Thus, those who rescued the Jews in Latvia during World War II deserve yet another mention: Žanis Lipke, Bruno Rozentāls and many others. The government of Latvia is determined to develop co-operation with the Special Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research to continue public education on these themes. The Ministry of Education and Science plays a special role in this work by co-ordinating the activities of public and non-governmental organisations.

Under the auspices of the Latvian Commission of Historians, researchers in Latvia have initiated successful co-operation with colleagues in the United States, Israel, Germany, Sweden and other countries, thereby proving that they are an active part of the international scientific dialogue. The work and plans of the Centre for Judaic Studies of the University of Latvia, the Institute of the History of Latvia, the museum *Jews in Latvia*, the Association of Latvian History Teachers and the Museum of the Occupation of Latvia give evidence of extensive educational work in Latvia.

In our country we are learning to understand how important it is to know that language, culture, territory and administration alone do not determine the strength of a nation. We believe that collective responsibility for the preservation of past experience and teaching it to new generations are also crucial factors.

I support the idea and spirit of this book. I am pleased that the group of authors from Latvia, supported by the U.S. Embassy Democracy Commission, has succeeded in creating a book of lasting social significance.



Indulis Bērziņš

Minister of Foreign Affairs
of the Republic of Latvia

Leo Dribins

THE HISTORY OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IN LATVIA A BRIEF CHRONOLOGICAL SURVEY

The Ban of the Crusaders

The ancient Latvian peoples had no contacts with Jews. A Jewish community might have arisen (as it did in the 14th-century Lithuania), had the invading crusaders allowed this. They did not want representatives of Judaism to appear in lands under their rule. In 1306 (according to other sources in 1309), Sigfried von Feuchtwangen, Master of the German Order, issued a special decree that prohibited their immigration and stay in Livonia. Offenders were threatened with severe punishments. The Hanseatic League, too, did not want the Jews present in the Baltic lands, as they considered them dangerous rivals. However, historical sources show that individual Jewish merchants came to the Land of Māra, as the spiritual rulers, the bishops, were not so hostile towards the Jews. A 14th-century tombstone found near Jelgava and records on deals with a Jewish merchant Jacob in Riga in 1536 give evidence of the arrival of the Jews. It is likely that certain privileged Jews or those who had been granted special authority by the rulers of German lands arrived here from time to time, as the Federation of Livonia was a constituent part of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation (*Heiliger Römisches Reich deutscher Nation*).

The Ban of the Kings

In the 16th century after Livonia had lost the war with Ivan the Terrible of Russia, the laws of the German Order lost their validity. In 1561, by signing the capitulation treaty with Poland and Lithuania, the Order also managed to secure a promise from King Sigismundus II Augustus. The German aristocracy was promised that the legal regulations that were favourable to the Jews of Poland and Lithuania would not be valid on the territory of former Livonia. The King proclaimed that Jews would not be allowed to trade, collect taxes or customs duties (which they did in Poland and Lithuania) in Vidzeme and Latgale (the Duchy of Pārdaugava), and Kurzeme (Courland). On January 14, 1582, by surrendering to King Stephan Bathory, the German city council of the free city of Riga gained the right to make decisions concerning the arrival of Jews in the city and the length of their stay there. The above regulations retained their validity after 1621 when Riga surrendered to Swedish King Gustav Adolph. As a part of the privileges that were bestowed to the city, King Gustav Adolph endorsed the former rights of the council. However, by the end of the 16th century, some Jews who were intermediaries for Lithuanian and Polish merchants stayed in Riga for longer periods. They were protégés of Georg Radziwil, ruler of the Duchy of Pārdaugava. For several years the famous Jewish doctor K. Fiedler attended to the health care of Riga aristocrats. Upon leaving Riga for Moscow to attend Boris Godunov, he received a reference letter from the City Council, which said that during three years of therapeutic practice in Riga he had done no harm to anybody.

The Gate of Piltene

Upon the disintegration of Livonia, Johann von Münchhausen, bishop of Kurzeme, started to invite Jewish merchants to his lands in Piltene and Aizpute. He needed rich and active people. The bishop planned to sell his estate to foreign lands, and the areas that were inhabited by Jews could be sold at a higher price. In Central Europe the Jews were considered better taxpayers and initiators of business activity. Upon the division of Livonia, the territory of Piltene was given over to the jurisdiction of Danish Prince and Duke Magnus. Denmark was rather tolerant towards the Jews, and in 1570 they received the right to free entrance in the territory of Piltene to engage in trade and craft, to possess real estate, and to practise their religious rituals. The first Jewish community on the territory of Latvia was developed in Piltene. When Denmark sold Piltene to Poland for 30,000 thalers in 1585, Stephan Bathory granted extensive rights to the Jews in the area and took them under his protection. In 1611, the territory of Piltene within Poland was granted autonomy, and the Jews preserved their privileges until 1717. A strong Judaic religious congregation also developed there.

After 1585 Jews began to arrive from Prussia to Lower Kurzeme. In order to pay back the foreign debt, Poland had temporarily given Lower Kurzeme and Piltene over to the jurisdiction of the Prince of Brandenburg. The Jewish community of Aizpute developed in Lower Kurzeme.

Already in the late 16th century Jewish merchants from Prussia were frequent guests around Liepāja. The amber that they bought from the peasants in that area was highly valued in the markets of Memel and Königsberg.

The Jews who came from Germany spoke German and German Yiddish. They were well-educated and cultural people for the time.

The Jews Settle throughout Kurzeme and Zemgale

In the 17th century the Jews who came from Germany gradually settled in different areas of Kurzeme and Zemgale. They became the inhabitants of the German Duchy of Kurzeme the feudal territory of Poland. The Duchy often saw Jewish merchants from Poland and Lithuania. After the subjugation of Riga to Sweden, the Jews became the main mediators in trade with Poland-Lithuania. The dukes of Kurzeme were interested in the immigration of Jews, as they needed Jewish loans to carry out their business undertakings and Jewish skill in dealing with financial matters.

Jewish immigration was particularly favoured by Duke Jacob, who entrusted the Jews with collecting customs and taxes. Zachary Daniel, a

Jew, was even appointed as governor of the Liepāja coastline zone and was entitled to deal with all matters pertaining to the sales of the Duke's property. In this way the Jews, who were directly subordinated to the ruler, appeared in the Duke's court. Duke Friedrich Kasimir, Jacob's successor, permitted the local Jews to perform large-scale financial operations for his treasury, and to organise alcohol production and currency exchange in Jelgava, a city that was frequented by many merchants from different countries. Customs were almost completely entrusted to Jewish customs officers. In this way the Duke's revenues experienced a notable increase and one portion was invested in the construction of factories, ports and shipyards, and in polishing the splendour of the court. The aforementioned undertakings provoked sharp protests and counteraction from the side of the conservative opposition of landowners. In 1648, 1688 and 1698, the parliament of landowners, the *Landtag*, asked to stop patronizing Jews and even to banish them. Dukes partially restricted Jews by allowing them to reside only on one street (Judengasse, later Dobeles iela) of Jelgava. The construction of synagogues and arrangement of Jewish cemeteries was forbidden in Kurzeme. When a Jew died the body had to be taken to Lithuania to be buried there. The dukes, however, precluded the banishment of Jews. In the early 18th century the Jews of Jelgava were granted the right to build a synagogue and to establish their own cemetery.

Jewish Refugees Settle in Latgale

The first Jewish families arrived in Latgale in the 16th century as they fled the repressions of Ivan the Terrible's troops. The families settled in the present-day Krāslava District. A considerable number of Jews immigrated to Latgale in the middle of the 17th century. They were refugees from the Ukraine and Belarus, where bloody massacres of Jews took place during the uprising headed by Bogdan Hmelniysky. Polish authorities allowed the persecuted Jews to settle permanently in Latgale and to occupy themselves with craftsmanship, trade and money lending, and to become their tenants. According to approximate estimations, in the late 17th century Latgale might have had about 2000 permanent Jewish residents. Daugavpils and Krāslava experienced the development of Jewish communities.

In comparison to the Jews of Kurzeme, those who came to Latgale were less educated people. They strictly observed religion in their traditional life and spoke Polish Hebrew. The cultural centre of these Jews was in Vilnius. The rabbis of Vilnius conducted the religious matters of Latgale.

The dukes of Kurzeme did not allow Jewish refugees to settle in the Duchy, and those who came to Jaunsubate were even banished.

Judenherberge

In the 17th century, as international trade relations expanded and the Hanseatic League disintegrated, Jewish merchants from Holland often came to Riga by ship. Jews from Prussia, Brandenburg, Poland and Lithuania were also regularly involved in trade there. In 1638, the Riga City Council appointed these guests a special place in the city suburbs, behind the wall and ramparts of the city the *Judenherberge* (now the intersection of Maskavas and Lāčplēša Streets). In that same year the City Council granted permission to Heinrich Rosen, a Christian, to build several Jewish buildings hotels. Rosen was also entrusted to look after the lodgers and punish them with a stick if they disobeyed the regulations of the City Council. The Council simultaneously warned the citizens that they were not allowed to provide night lodging to Jews. A serious fine was imposed for violation of this prohibition. The *Judenherberge* was actually a mini-ghetto controlled by the City Council. Its buildings burnt down during the Northern War.

18th-century Banishments

As it altered Latvia's destiny the Northern War also introduced considerable changes into the lives of Jews there. The influence of Poland noticeably declined. In 1721 Riga and Vidzeme were incorporated into the Russian Empire. The Duchy of Kurzeme increasingly felt the will of Petersburg's rulers and in 1795 it voluntarily surrendered to Russia. However, the empire of Peter I hated Jews.

With the loss of Polish patronage, the Jews of Kurzeme were the first to suffer. In 1714, as he surrendered to the pressure of Judophobic land-owners, Duke Ferdinand ordered the Jews to be expelled from Kurzeme. A big fine, a thaler per day, was imposed on those who disobeyed the order. Richer Jews stayed by paying 400 thalers for the whole year. Those who were not so rich kept moving around, or paid off the local authorities with a bribe. Many landowners owed money to Jews and could not pay it back. This hampered the banishment of the Jews. The Duchy of Kurzeme, however, was subject to the rule of law, and the unpaid lender could not be banished. The Duke's court found a way out: the landowners who were indebted to the Jews were forced to gradually repay the debt to the State, and these payments served as a fine for the stay of the Jews. Thus, the campaign that was intended for the banishment of the Jews became a procedure for paying residence tax. Payments were made by both Jews and Germans.

It was harder for the Jews during the 1740s, when the emissaries sent by Russian Tsarina Elizabeth Petrovna achieved their banishment from Jelgava. The disobedient ones were whipped.

The destiny of several Riga Jews was even harsher. After surviving the bombing of the city, famine and plague, they were banished on the order of the Russian Commandant. The City Council soon allowed them to return, and these people took an active part in the reconstruction of Riga. In 1727 Catherine I issued a decree on their banishment. The City Council, however, using the autonomy granted by Peter I, banished only immigrants from Poland, but German Jews were allowed to stay. They were advised to adopt Christianity and to Germanise themselves. And this happened. Elisabeth Petrovna also forbade Jewish merchants from Western Europe to enter Riga. Trade in Riga suffered from this. Only four very successful Jewish merchants remained in Riga, and they paid big taxes. The governor of Vidzeme granted them the status of **Protected Jews** (*Schutzjuden*).

The Benevolence of Catherine II and Ernst Biron

In 1764 Catherine II partly revoked prohibitions against the Jews that were issued by previous tsars. She also stated that from then on the Russian word *zhid* had to be replaced by the word *yevrei* in public documents, but in German the word *hebräer* or *ebräer* had to be used. In 1766 Baltic Governor General Brown (who was of Irish origin) issued special regulations that contained 14 clauses on Jews in the city of Riga. Jews were allowed to arrive and stay six weeks in Riga for commercial purpose in a specially appointed area of the city suburbs. The newly built Jewish guest house was opened on the current intersection of Maskavas and Dzirnau Streets. This was a small city block situated near the bank of the River Daugava. Johann Benken, a Jew, was appointed administrator of the city block on contractual basis. In 1767 it was allowed to build a synagogue in the same location. Some Jews were permitted to live at Karl Ravelin (now the territory of the Riga Bus Terminal). Its inmate Abraham Kuntze created a wonderful beverage, which was later named Riga Balsam.

Duke Ernst Biron, who sought to modernize his State by conforming to the absolutism of European Enlightenment, introduced a new attitude towards Jews in the Duchy of Kurzeme. The Duke chose the financier Levy Lipman, a Jew, to be his chief advisor. Lipman provided Kurzeme with foreign credits, and promoted the immigration of German businessmen and craftsmen from German lands. Tinsmiths, carpenters, glaziers, roofers, furniture makers and decorators, and jewellers came there. These craftsmen and master craftsmen also took part in the construction of the Jelgava and Rundāle castles, and during the rule of Peter Biron in the construction of *Academia Petrina*. In the 18th century many educated Jews came to the Duchy of Kurzeme they included teachers, doctors, lawyers, etc., who had studied in the gymnasiums and universities of Germany. They had integrated themselves into German society, yet they preserved their religious beliefs and Judaic traditions. In the late 18th century Jelgava was the home of Markus Heres, Doctor of Medicine and Philosophy, a fellow of the remarkable philosopher Moses Mendelssohn who was an emancipator of German Jews. There was a Jewish school in Jelgava where the language of instruction was German. The children there were taught in the spirit of Jewish Enlightenment and the *haskala* ideas.

At the end of the 18th century about 9000 Jews permanently resided in Kurzeme and Zemgale. A tenth of Jelgava's inhabitants were Jews.

In 1785 Catherine II issued an important decree that granted the Jews of Kurzeme the right to reside in the town of Sloka of the Vidzeme province. As citizens of Sloka they had the right to regular trade in Riga. That was how about 400 Jewish merchants came to Riga. They obtained temporary resident status in the city. Wealthier Jews were also allowed to reside outside the Jewish block.

The Kahali of Latgale

In the 18th century Jews remained segregated in Latgale. They had their own rather secluded and isolated community, the life of which was mainly determined by religious prescriptions. Jewish communities were called *kahali*. In Poland and Lithuania *kahali* had the right of autonomy. *Kahali* collected public and reparative taxes from their fellowmen, ensured public order, tried Jews both in cases of disputes and offences (except serious crimes against the State), ensured the enlistment of recruits, and also took care of the sick and old people.

Of the 3000 Jews who resided in Latgale in 1766 the majority were craftsmen and petty traders pedlars. More enterprising Jews ran inns and pubs, produced alcohol and made beer. There were Jews, who rented the estates of Polish noblemen. These renters tried to run the estates rationally in order to earn good money. Peasants, therefore, were more exploited in these estates. This caused dissatisfaction with Jews and hatred against them. The same reputation was inherited by money-lenders or creditors. After the incorporation of Latgale into the Russian Empire (1772), to a certain extent, the situation of the local Jews was determined by their legal division into two classes: merchants and middle-class people. The former obtained the right to take part in the elections of city councils. In the late 18th century about one half of the urban residents in Latgale were Jews. In Daugavpils, 1373 persons or more than 60% of the city's 2200 residents were Jews. The decree issued by Catherine II in 1791 that restricted the settlement of Jews to certain zones affected Latgale in a peculiar way. The movement of Jews from rural areas to towns and villages was forcibly stimulated. Jews also had restricted leasing rights. This worsened their social situation. The life of town-dwellers was particularly difficult.

In the late 18th century there were about 5000 Jews in Latgale.

The Jews and the Latvian Peasants

In the 18th century direct public contacts between Jews and Latvian peasants or serfs developed in the Duchy of Kurzeme. Farms were regularly visited by Jewish peddlers who sold the necessities of life, or who would trade them for agricultural products. In many places travelling Jewish peddlers were the only link between peasants and the towns. They tried to master Latvian and, though their pronunciation was not always very good, they could communicate with their customers. These travelling Jews brought news of the vicinity to peasants and offered them valuable advice for their everyday life and farming. Latvian folk songs and stories of the time describe the Jew as a stranger who differs in his appearance, clothing and traditions, but who is needed, is a Jewish neighbour, and is good for making deals. Jewish peddlers often stayed overnight at farmsteads and sometimes even spent several weeks there. It is noteworthy that in *The ABC Book of Pictures (Bildu ābice)* by Old Stender the Latvian letter *Ž* is associated with the word *žīds* (Jew). In the book Jews are characterised positively as tidy and scrupulous observers of their religious holidays and feasts, and as people whose religious behaviour could very well serve as a sample for many a Christian.

It should be noted that the word *žīds* came to Latvia from Poland, and had no contemptuous colouring as it had in Russia. The word was also used by Polish Jews themselves.

Contrasts between Transformation and Emancipation

During the rule of tsars Alexander I and Nicholas I (1801-1855) the Russian government sought to implement the so-called transformation of Jews, i.e. measures that would force them to give up their traditional way of life and religion and turn them into Russian citizens. Attempts were made to implement the idea in 25 provinces that were part of the Jewish settlement zone. The measures severely affected Latgale, a part of the Vitebsk province. Higher taxes were imposed on *kahali*, Jews were allowed to change their place of residence only with the permission of the authorities, and many Jewish boys under 12 were enlisted in preparatory military battalions or cantons where attempts were made to convert them to Orthodoxy.

From 1844 Jews had to pay a tax for wearing their special traditional clothing. The same year a decree was issued on the abolishment of the autonomous *kahali*, as they had not joined the transformation process. Jews were directly placed under general administration and Nicholas I alone, during thirty years of his reign, passed 600 laws and decrees that regulated the life of Jews.

The Jews of Kurzeme were less affected by the policy of transformation. However, their emigration to Southern Russia was favoured in order to turn them to agriculture. About 2500 people left. Tempted by the government, several hundreds of Jews set out for Western Siberia, although the majority of them perished from cold and starvation.

The local Russian administration simultaneously tried to attract rich Jewish merchants and involve them in local governments, thereby securing better funding for the local governments. The Jews made use of the situation to make life easier for their kinsmen.

The activity and influence of Judaic religious parishes grew; they rendered help to poor families. Jews usually had 3-4 children, but in the first half of the 19th century the number of Jews in Latgale doubled, reaching 11,000 in 1850.

In 1835 a regulation was enforced in the province of Kurzeme that granted Jews passports (often giving them a new surname), and permanent residents were allowed to practise freely chosen professions. Still, immigration from Poland and Lithuania was forbidden, and those who evaded taxes were banished. In the middle of the 19th century 23,000 Jews lived in the province.

On December 17, 1841, the Riga Jews, who were temporary inhabitants, succeeded in getting the Russian Senate to issue regulations concerning their transition permanent resident status, albeit without the right to citizenship. The German rulers of the city were forced to allow this, although they insisted that on the streets the Jews had to behave like citizens and had to be dressed according to German fashion. The opening of a State-funded Jewish secular school in 1840 was a great achievement for the Russian Empire. The school was headed by Max Lilientahl, an active propagator of Jewish secular education.

In 1851 the construction of a synagogue was permitted in Riga for the first time.

In the first half of the 19th century many Jewish associations were founded. The most important one was *Bikur Holim*, a society for health care and care of the sick that was founded in Riga in 1829.

The Good Years under the Rule of Alexander II

After suffering defeat in the Crimean War, Russia was forced to introduce reforms and to modernize itself. New liberal legislation also essentially changed the legal status of the Jews. The battalions or cantons were liquidated, and restrictions concerning the settlement

and education of Jews were repealed. When the extensive construction of railways and ports began, thousands of Jews from Poland, Lithuania and Belarus moved to Kurzeme, Zemgale and Riga. In 1867 there were 5254 permanent Jewish residents in Riga, or 5.1% of the city's population. In 1881 the Jews already reached 14,222 or 8.4% of the city's population. The bulk of the Riga Jews used German in social life, but about 6000 also spoke German at home.

In 1881 there were 47,671 Jews in the province of Courland, or 8.2% of the total population. In 1881 they comprised 32% of the province's town-dwellers, but in Tukums 46.5%, Bauska 59.4%, and Jaunjelgava 69.55% of the total population. The new Jewish immigrants mainly spoke Yiddish and Polish there. In Jelgava and Liepāja Jews continued to use German. After the suppression of the Polish uprising of 1863-65, the Jews of Latgale gradually started to use Russian. However, at home and among themselves they continued using Yiddish, thereby also preserving their Yiddish culture.

The cities of Latgale were also Jewish in character: in the late 19th century the Jews comprised 46% of the population in Daugavpils, 54% in Rēzekne, and 54.5% in Ludza.

In the 19th century many Jews fostered the development of large-scale trade and industry. The Schlit and Berlin families dominated in the wood industry and wood trade. Schleime Schlit of Riga also established the flax processing company Emolips. Manufacturer Jacob Gindin played a leading role in alcohol production. In Daugavpils, Schleime Saks, a merchant of the First Guild who had immigrated from Poland, built and ran the largest match factory in Russia. In Zemgale and Latgale Jewish merchants took in their hands the buying and selling of grain. At the end of the 19th century the Jews owned ten banks in Riga.

Jewish secular education witnessed rapid development. In the early 20th century in Riga alone there were 32 Jewish schools with 5000 pupils and 270 teachers. The Riga Polytechnic Institute had 200 Jewish students, or 10% of total students. In the province of Kurzeme in 1897 there were 29 secular and 142 religious Jewish schools.

Attitudes towards Jews had changed on July 10, 1861, during a trip to the Baltic provinces, Alexander II received a Jewish delegation in Jelgava, and on July 28, he even visited the town's synagogue together with the royal family. In 1867, too, the Tsar met with representatives of Kurzeme's Jews during his visit to Riga.

Local Baltic German administrators also changed their attitudes. In 1861, for instance, Abraham Neuman, a Riga rabbi and director of the first Jewish school, was granted the title of the Honorary Citizen of Riga. However, the period of tolerance and understanding was rather short.

Opposition to the Pogrom Policy

After the murder of Alexander II in the spring of 1881, Russia experienced the outburst of political and economic anti-Semitism. Pogroms of Jews took place in the southern provinces. On May 3, 1882, Alexander III announced new provisional regulations on Jewish life, which were in force until February 1917. These regulations demanded that the Jews of Riga, Jelgava and Liepāja who did not work in officially registered professions had to leave the cities.

As elsewhere in Europe, Jews reacted to this hostility by founding Zionist groups. Zionists urged Jews to prepare themselves for emigration to Palestine and to the USA. In the middle of the 1880s the group *Hovevei Zion* (the Zealous Ones of Zion) was formed in Riga and consisted of Jewish students. The participants studied Jewish history and dreamt about the revival of the Jewish State. In 1880 a Zionist organisation was established in Daugavpils. The Jewish community of Riga founded its own group of Zionists. Its leading representatives included Leibe Schlit, Wolf Lunz and Wolf Kaplan. In the 1890s the emigration of Latvian Jews to Palestine began. It is true that in the beginning there were few enthusiasts, but their hardiness and heroism made next generations return to the nation's main source of power, the fatherland. Repatriates from Latvia took part in arranging the large Hadera settlement (camp) in Palestine. Many Jews actively joined the revolutionary struggle against the Russian monarchy. On the eve of the 20th century the local organisations of the Bund, a social democratic union of Jews that was founded in Vilnius, were formed in Daugavpils and Riga. For a certain period the centre of the Bund was located in Daugavpils.

Latvian Attitudes

In the 1880s about 20,000 Jewish refugees from the Ukraine, Belarus and Poland arrived in Latvia to escape the pogroms. The majority of Latvians and Baltic Germans were tolerant towards refugees. However, for the first time a part of the inhabitants also demonstrated a negative attitude, which was rooted both in religiously motivated prejudices and resentment of business competition.

The Latvian public was not of uniform opinion regarding the Jewish question. The New Latvians (people who belonged to a social movement in Latvia in the 1860s-1880s) and their followers acknowledged Jews as useful and necessary fellow human beings. Krišjānis Valdemārs urged Latvians to learn from Jews about how to reach prosperity and how to adopt their capacity for work and skill in finding the new and useful. On October 14, 1886, the newspaper *Dienas Lapa* underlined that Jews clearly show us

how a small and despised people can become strong. Their example overtly shows what people can achieve through care, patience and a strong community.❖❖❖

The growing Latvian conservative bourgeoisie, in turn, which was headed by Friedrich Weinberg, pressed for a boycott of Jewish goods, demanded a limit on their rights (particularly in Riga), and urged to refuse them equality. This was the beginning of local economic anti-Semitism.

Latvian writers also had different opinions. In their literary compositions, Ādolfs Alunāns (❖❖❖*Iciks Mozus*❖❖❖), Augusts Deglavs (❖❖❖*Židu meitiņa*❖❖❖), and Rūdolfs Blaumanis (❖❖❖*Skroderdienas Silmačos*❖❖❖ etc.) show a likeable and sincere image of the Jew. Andrievs Niedra (❖❖❖*Kad mēness dilst*❖❖❖) and Poruks (❖❖❖*Mūžīgais žīds*❖❖❖), however, see the Jews as evil characters that are cursed by destiny. There was a collision of tolerance and xenophobia, and the victim was the different one, the one who is often misunderstood.

Jews During the Revolution of 1905

At the end of the 19th century there were 142,315 Jews living in Latvia, or 7.4% of the total population. The 1897 census counted 63,851 permanent Jewish residents in Latgale, 51,169 in Kurzeme and Zemgale, and 27,295 in Riga and Vidzeme. From a social viewpoint they were a diverse group. The majority were modest and poor. The Jewish business elite owned sawmills, tobacco and textile manufactories, factories of leather articles and large shops that sold ready-made clothes. The ideas of socialism gathered support among the poor Jews.

In the autumn of 1904, the Riga Committee of the Latvian Social Democratic Workers ❖❖❖ Party (LSDWP) and the Riga Committee of the Bund signed a co-operation agreement and founded the coordinating Riga Federative Committee. The main liaisons were the engineer Jānis Ozols (❖❖❖*Zars*❖❖❖) and the railwayman Samuel Klevansky (❖❖❖*Maksim*❖❖❖).

On January 13 (26), 1905, the LSDWP and the Bund organised a general strike in Riga and a mass demonstration on the bank of the River Daugava. The activists of the Federative Committee were in the first ranks. Among the 73 demonstrators that were killed by the Tsar❖❖❖s soldiers there were five members of the Bund.

At the beginning of 1905 the Bund had more than a thousand members in Daugavpils. Its leaders were Mendel Shkutelsky, Mendel Deutsch and Leibe Berman. Strikes and demonstrations gathered about 11,000 workers and craftsmen who were mostly Jews. As in Riga, there were fatalities in Daugavpils, too (a monument dedicated to them was unveiled in 1925).

In 1905, the Coordination Committee of the LSDWP and Bund was also founded in Liepāja. A strong Jewish fighters❖❖❖ group, headed by Semion Nakhimson, was established there.

In Riga the fighters of the Bund attacked the Riga Central Prison together with Latvian armed revolutionaries and liberated their arrested comrades in September of 1905.

In Riga and Daugavpils, Latvian, Russian and Jewish revolutionary fighters joined forces to keep back the gangs of the Black Hundred, which tried to provoke Jewish pogroms. In Riga, the Black Hundred was also repelled by armed self-defence groups that were organised by Socialist Zionists.

The days of the 1905 Revolution marked the beginning of co-operation between the first Latvian and Jewish civic political parties and groups. The Latvian Democratic Party supported full equality for the Jews. During the elections to the First State Duma of Russia, the Jews of Kurzeme supported the nomination of Jānis Čakste, but Latvians ❖❖❖ that of Nison Kaznelson, a doctor and Zionist. Both were elected. This co-operation continued during the Third and Fourth Duma elections. The Latvian Jews that were elected to the Dumas included Lasar Niselovich, Jacob Shapiro and Ezekiel Gurevich.

Only five or six Jewish representatives were elected to the Dumas from all of Russia.

The Baltic German and Latvian conservative parties also sharply opposed political co-operation between Latvians and Jews. F. Weinberg❖❖❖s ❖❖❖Latvian People❖❖❖s Party,❖❖❖ which manifestly rendered full support to the anti-Semitism of the Black Hundred, stood in the first ranks in this respect.

Thus, the socialistic, liberal and conservative parties of Latvia had developed distinctly different views in regard to the Jewish question.

The Deportation of 1915

From 1907 to 1914, owing to the rapid industrial development, once again many Jewish workers from Lithuania and Poland arrived in Latvia. In 1914 the total number of Jews reached 190,000. 20,000 of them were considered short-term immigrants, or resided there

without the relevant permit from the authorities.

Different Jewish cultural societies were active in Latvia, and new ones were also established. In 1910 a Jewish hospital, *Linat hacedek*, was opened in Riga. The hospital specialised in the treatment of elderly people. The Riga Jewish Educational Society played an important role in the upbringing of Jewish youth. The propaganda of Zionism grew stronger. It particularly stemmed from Zionist youth, its party *Poalei Cion*, and the organisation of Zionist socialists. In 1907 the Jewish newspaper in Yiddish *National-Zeitung* appeared in Riga, and in 1910 the newspaper *Die jidische Stimme*. Jews increasingly announced themselves as an independent political force and tried to achieve the same rights for Jews as those that were enjoyed by the other citizens of the Russian Empire. Anti-Semitic circles sharply opposed these attempts.

Latvian Marxist and democratic parties and organisations supported the struggle of the Jews for more extensive rights. This solidarity also manifested itself in 1911–1914, when the Jew Mendel Beilis was tried without any evidence. He was falsely accused of a ritual murder. Nearly the entire Latvian press condemned the falsified and obscure trial. Only the Jelgava newspaper *Latviešu Avīze* supported the accusation and the outburst of anti-Semitism in this connection. The newspaper was bought by the large-scale merchant J. Bisenieks, who made efforts to strengthen his position in the Latgale grain market by pushing out large-scale Jewish merchants.

In principle, Latvian democratic forces condemned J. Bisenieks and the involvement of his company in the anti-Semitic campaign that was provoked by Russian chauvinists.

Chauvinistic anti-Semitism most severely affected Latvia's Jews during the World War I. In 1915, when the German army invaded Lithuania, Russian generals declared Jews as the main reason of their failures. They were accused of collaboration with the command of the German army and of espionage for Germany. A false story was spread that in Kuži (Lithuania) Jews had hidden a German secret unit in the rear of the Russian army and had helped it to carry out an operation. On April 17 (30), 1915, on the eve of the Jewish *Shmot* feast, Grand Duke Nikolay Nikolayevich, Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Army, issued an order for the deportation of Jews residing in Lithuania and Kurzeme. They were to be deported to Inner Russia within a 24-hour with only ten days notice. About 40,000 Jews were taken away from Kurzeme and Zemgale in railroad cattle cars. The railroad cars bore the sign *shpioni* (spies). Many people died on the way. The deportees were settled to the provinces of Poltava, Yekaterinoslav (now Dnepropetrovsk), Vladimir and Voronyezh, where they were met coldly and with hostility.

The Jews of Liepāja and Aizpute escaped deportation, as no railroad cars were found for their hasty transportation. On April 19 the German army already crossed the railway line and on April 24 (May 7) they invaded Liepāja. The Jews greeted the German soldiers as their rescuers and liberators.

The Latvian people did not support the violent action against the Jews. However, Latvians saw their greatest enemy in the German army and formed their riflemen battalions that guarded Riga and stopped the Germans from moving towards the north. For the first time in history the political opinions of Latvians and Jews radically differed. Each had their own approach and hope. This was determined by conditions that were created by foreign powers and by the World War.

In Exile

As the Latvians, from 1915 to 1916 thousands of Jews fled from Riga, Vidzeme and southern Latgale, forced out by war. About 75,000 Jewish refugees found shelter in Western and Central Russia. As the Latvians, the Jews founded their national committees for the care and protection of refugees there. The Jewish Social Committee for the Protection of Refugees functioned in Petrograd. It was headed by the scholar of law and lawyer Paul Mintz who was born in Daugavpils. His closest assistants were Mordekhai (Markus) Nurok, a rabbi of Jelgava, Eleazar Ettingen, Wolf Lunz and Max Laserson, associate professor at the Faculty of Law of the Petrograd University. This was the first creation of a representative unit of Latvian Jews.

After the February Revolution of 1917, the Jews who had stayed in Riga founded the Democratic Party of Jews and National Democratic Union, which collaborated with Baltic German and Latvian civic democrats. Their aim was to achieve the return of refugees and deportees. However, this intention was counteracted by the German invasion of Riga in August 1917 and the Bolshevik October coup. Soviet power politically split the Latvian Jews who were then in Russia. Some began to return home after the Brest Peace Treaty, while others joined the Bolsheviks and decided to join their madcap experiment. Still others decided to wait and see which power would gain the upper hand in Latvia.

The Citizens of Independent Latvia

The Republic of Latvia was proclaimed on November 18, 1918, and was founded as a national Latvian State. However, its goal was to create a nation that would unite all of its citizens of all nationalities. As early as November 17, 1918, the Latvian People's Council

(LPC) acknowledged the communities of non-nationals as national minorities. They were granted the right to delegate their representatives to legislative and executive bodies, and they were guaranteed the right to their culture and the preservation of their identity.

The Law on Education, issued on December 8, 1919, provided minorities with the right to organise their national schools and run them, i.e. they could maintain educational autonomy.

For the first time Latvian Jews became equal to other nationalities.

The laws of the LPC also laid the foundation for the Latvian Jewish national minority and its cultural autonomy. This stimulated the growth of Jews' loyalty towards independent Latvia. Such an attitude, however, developed gradually. In the beginning, the majority of Jews kept their distance from the Republic of Latvia, as they did not believe that the Latvians would be able to rationally run and safeguard their State. In December 1918 the small Jewish National Democratic Party delegated three representatives to attend the LPC meetings. There were some Jews within the faction of the LSDWP. They (Isac Rabinovich and others) submitted a draft law on the protection of minority rights. However, the draft law was never discussed.

When the Latvian Red Riflemen arrived and the Soviet government that was headed by Pēteris Stučka seized power, many Jews supported it. In Riga there were several Jewish clubs that were headed by communists. Four Jewish primary schools were opened, and the newspaper *Der Roiter Eimes* (The Red Banner) was published. Soon, however, Jews were seriously affected by the prohibitions on free trade and the severe punishments for private initiative. The Red Terror put an end to the life of many Jews. Zionist organisations were banned and their members were persecuted in Latgale. Jews who worked in the local authorities were dismissed.

The Jews who initially backed the Baltic German National Committee (about 100 Jews fought in the *Landeswehr*) were also disappointed. When the German Army invaded Riga many Jews were killed by the White Terror.

This severe experience convinced the Jews that the Latvian provisional government headed by Kārlis Ulmanis represented the only democratic and legitimate power in the country. In July 1919, the Jewish National Democratic Party nominated its leader Paul Mintz to represent it in the government. He was appointed State Comptroller.

Beginning with August 1919, there were already 14 representatives of Jewish parties and organisations in the People's Council: Mordekhay Dubin, Leibe Fischman, Judel Marx, Philip Latsky, Samuel Henkin, Jacob Landaus, etc. They took active part in the discussion on the citizenship law. The law allowed about 77% of Latvia's Jews who had been permanent residents of Latvia since August 1, 1914, to become citizens of the Republic of Latvia. However, the Jewish deputies together with Baltic German representatives sharply opposed the principle of a Latvian national State. At a LPC meeting Ph. Latsky declared: "The building of a State is not a profitable enterprise or a privilege of the national majority, but rather the matter of all inhabitants of Latvia." Conflicts of opinion were resolved through discussion and some sharp polemics. This was a multinational democracy.

Jews in the Latvian War of Independence

During the latter half of 1919, particularly during the attack by the army of Bermont and von der Golz, about one thousand Latvian Jews were enlisted in the Latvian army. About 200 Jews volunteered, and they were also among the ranks of the Kalpaks battalion. There were 31 Jewish officers. Four Latvian Jews were awarded the Lāčplēsis Order for heroism: Joseph Hop, Robert Maletsky and Max Gringut for participation in daring reconnaissance operations at the rear of the Red Army in 1920. Samuel Hop, brother of Joseph Hop, was awarded for removing two seriously wounded Latvian officers from the battlefield in the fights against Bermont's troops. The heroic deed of the famous Latvian Captain Hugo Helmanis was repeated by Lieutenant Beines Berman of the Cēsis infantry regiment. Prisoners-of-war and trophies were taken on June 12-13, 1920, while he was commanding a raid that was carried out by 25 reconnoiterers in Russia, in the direction of Ostrov. For these deeds B. Berman was awarded the Order of Three Stars. Courage in battle was also shown by the soldiers Hirsch Berkovich, Eliah Richter, Philip Farbman, Joseph Binder, Moses Shpungin, Leo Blumberg and others. The Lāčplēsis Order was also awarded to Captain of *Landeswehr* cavalry Otto Goldfeld, a German-born Jew who went over to the Latvian national army and later took a Latvian surname Zeltiņš.

More than 50 Jews died or were wounded in the Latvian battles for independence. The Jewish community had the moral right to consider itself a participant of the Latvian War of Independence.

A Jewish society that united liberators of Latvia began operations in 1928. The society had more than 700 members. It educated Jewish youth in the spirit of Latvian patriotism and propagated military traditions of the Jewish people. Monuments to Jewish officers and soldiers who perished during the war were erected in Riga and Liepāja.

In 1925 during peacetime the Latvian Army had about 1390 Jews who served actively or who were in service on re-engagement. This number corresponded to 1.65% of Latvia's citizens of Jewish origin. Unfortunately, very few were in the officer corps: they were only in medical service. Jews did not enter Latvian Military School and were not invited to come there. The rank of officer was not conferred on them. This was a prejudice inherited from the Russian monarchy. Jews were considered unsuitable for the rank of officer. This was

an erroneous and xenophobic approach.

The Demographic and Sociological Picture of the Latvian Jewish Community

From 1920 to 1921 deported and evacuated Jews continued to return to Latvia. Once again the number of Jews in Latvia grew. An increasing number of Jews were granted Latvian citizenship.

Table 1

The Number of Jews and Their Proportion in Latvia's Population, 1920-1935

Year	Number of Jews in Latvia	Proportion of Jews among Latvia's population (%)	Proportion of Latvian citizens among Jews (%)
1920	79,644	4.99	77.31
1925	95,675	5.19	83.36
1930	94,388	4.97	89.46
1935	93,479	4.79	92.46

In Latvia, the demographic dynamics of Jews were positive. In the period from 1925 to 1935 their natural growth amounted to more than 4000 people. The decrease in the number of Jews can be explained by the emigration of 4500 Jews to Palestine. Between 1923 and 1936, 2207 Jews emigrated to the USA. Several hundred moved to other countries, including the Soviet Union, to take part in the formation of the Jewish autonomous region in the Far East.

In the latter half of the 1930s, while trying to escape Nazi terror, more than a thousand Jews from Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia came to Latvia. A part of them became permanent residents of the country. This increased the Jewish population to more than 95,000.

An amendment to the citizenship law that was passed by the Saeima (Latvian Parliament) in 1927 increased the proportion of Jews among citizens. This amendment granted Latvian citizenship to persons who had resided in Latvia for at least 6 months prior to August 1, 1914 and who could provide proof of this (even if they had not acquired permanent residency). A referendum against the above amendment was proposed by the right-wing nationalistic forces and failed, as the majority of voters boycotted it. On December 17-18, 1927, only a little more than 20% of the voters went to the poll-boxes; their percentage in Riga was 18.8%.

The freedom of independent Latvia also spurred a rather active internal migration of Jews mainly from Latgale to the western part of the country, including to Riga. Some of the Jews from the towns and villages of Kurzeme also moved to the capital city. In the period from 1920 to 1935 the number of Jews in Riga increased from 24,000 to 44,000 and formed 11% of the city's population. The employment structure of Jews also changed. In comparison to the period before 1918, the number of petty craftsmen and traders decreased. The proportion of Jews employed in industries, large-scale trade and intellectual work became relatively larger. In 1930, 48.8% of Latvian Jews worked in trade, 27.7% in industry, 5.9% were engaged in free professions, 3.4% in health care, 2.9% in transport, 0.9% in agriculture, and 0.8% in administrative work. Very few worked in the State apparatus; this is one of the negative policy traits of that time. Nationalistic forces opposed the inclusion of minorities in the government and its agencies. However, about 6% of Jews were managers of business enterprises, shop managers, accountants and other significant employees in the public and private sectors. According to the 1925 census Jews comprised 36.27% of all private owners and 8.64% of the entrepreneurs in Latvia. In 1935 the proportion of Jews among the employers of Riga was 25.9% (Latvians were 51.6%).

In 1935 the proportion of Jews in the employment structure of Latvia was as follows: 26.0% in trade, 9.8% in health care, 8.2% in free professions, education and art, 8% in industry, 2.8% in transport, 2.2% in public administration and the security service, 2.2% worked as domestic servants, and 0.1% worked in agriculture. Around 10% of Jewish families could not cover the most essential expenses. They received assistance from Jewish religious congregations and sometimes from the treasuries of secular communities. Still, this aid was not able to save many families from total impoverishment that particularly affected the villages and towns of Latgale.

The Role of Jews in the Renewal and Development of the National Economy

Jewish capitalists and entrepreneurs played a significant role in the renewal and development of Latvia's national economy. Having just returned from exile, Jewish entrepreneurs started establishing banks, and crediting companies and co-operatives. The Riga International Bank, the Liepāja Traders Bank, the Private Joint-Stock Bank of Latvia, the Riga Traders Bank and the Northern Bank were particularly successful. They were the beginning of the development of Latvia's banking system. In 1924 six banks that were founded by Jews held 60% of all capital deposited in Latvia's banks. Jewish bankers used their wide international contacts with capitalists in the USA, Germany, England, Sweden and other countries to attract foreign investments to Latvia's economy. The Private Bank of Latvia became the depository for gold that Czech soldiers had obtained from the Russian government, and which they had brought from Siberia. The Latvian-Jewish Association of Credit Unions was established, an organisation that united 21 savings and loan banks. In the early 1920s, over the course of two years, Latvian-Jewish financiers, manufacturers and traders received 30 million lats in currency grants sent from the USA. This made it possible to invest big capital in the establishment of new manufacturing companies and in the modernisation of the existing plants, particularly in the timber industry, rubber, textiles and paper production. The Jews of Latvia were also assisted by the American-Jewish charity association Joint Jewish entrepreneurs and financiers who significantly contributed to the establishment and successful management of Latvia's banks included the brothers Daniel and Jacob Hoff (of Jelgava), S. J. Saks, I. Friedman, F. Davson, F. Landau, N. Ginzburg, G. Frank, A. Kahn, N. Soloveichik, S. Gurevich, A. Rabinovich and others. S. J. Saks, I. Friedman and Doctor of Economics Benjamin Ziv were also financial advisors to the Latvian government and took part in the introduction of Latvia's currency, the lats.

Jews also had a significant impact on the development of Latvia's credit system. In 1935 Jews comprised 10.2% of the people employed in credit institutions and 15.4% of those employed in insurance companies. According to the noteworthy Latvian economist A. Ceihners, in 1933 20.2% of Latvia's industrial enterprises, 28.5% of all shops, and 48.6% of 1st- and 2nd-class trade facilities belonged to Jews. In 1935 Jews held 36% of the share capital of joint-stock companies, and the proportion of Jews public taxpayers (with an income of more than 2000 lats per year) was: 32.2% in industry, 47.9% in trade, and 22.5% in housing management. Jews owned 7% of the real estate in Riga. The business activities of the Jews helped to overcome the consequences of World War I and provided jobs to thousands of people. Of course, the income of Jewish financiers, industrialists and traders was rapidly growing. According to estimates by A. Ceihners, the average income of a Jew exceeded that of a Latvian approximately 1.8 times. The situation could be explained by the fact that most Latvians were employed in agriculture where the profit rate was low 2-4% per year. The profit rate in trade was 10-15%, and in industry 8-10%. Thus, the Jewish citizens were earning more. Rich Jews invested large sums of money in the modernisation and enlargement of their enterprises, and provided assistance to the poor people of their community.

The Structure of Jewish Political Life

Having become citizens of Latvia, Jews showed considerable political activity. By May 15, 1934, there were several Jewish political parties in the Republic of Latvia.

The most influential was the conservative religious association *Agudat Israel*, which was founded in 1920 and headed by Mordekhai Dubin. The association propagated Jewish religious traditions and in domestic politics the organisation collaborated with the Latvian Farmers Union and its leader Kārlis Ulmanis. M. Dubin was also a personal friend of K. Ulmanis. At the end of 1929 M. Dubin travelled to the USA to obtain a loan for overcoming the domestic crisis in Latvia. His mission was a success.

Mizrachi, a second religious party, which was also Zionistic, was formed in 1922 and propagated repatriation to Israel (Palestine). The party was headed by Mordekhai Nurok. The party maintained close contacts with the World Congress of Jews, in which M. Nurok played an important role. In the Saeima *Mizrachi* supported Latvian right-wing centrist politicians. In December of 1926 President of Latvia J. Čakste mentioned M. Nurok among potential candidates for the post of Prime Minister.

The Jewish National Democratic Party, which was founded in 1920 (headed by Leibe Fischman), was distinctly civic and centrist in character. It represented the interests of rich entrepreneurs and traders. Around the year 1924 the party lost its influence as it poorly looked after common Jewish interests.

The left-wing political spectrum included the influential party of left-wing Zionists *Ceire Cion* (The Youth of Zion), which sought to combine the ideas of Zionism and the concept of democratic socialism. The left-wing Zionists wanted to develop a national and socially fair Jewish State in Palestine. The party was headed by the well-known scholar of law Max Laserson, who was also active in the League of Nations Minorities Commission. In 1931 *Ceire Cion* joined the Latvian Organisation of Zionist Socialists to form the Zionist Socialist Party.

The Jewish-Latvian Marxist workers party *Bund* was headed by the physician Noah Maisel, and worked together closely with the left-wing Latvian Social Democratic Workers Party. The left-wing Jewish youth organisation *Perecklub* and the students union *Zukunft* (The Future) operated under the wing of *Bund*. The *Bund* organisation in Latvia actively opposed both the right-wing Latvian parties and the communists.

In spite of their differing views, all of these Jewish political parties of Jews often joined forces in the Constitutional Assembly and the Saeima to express and defend a common viewpoint. This was particularly true when the question concerned common interests of Latvian

Jews.

It is noteworthy that Jews, who comprised 4.8% of Latvia's citizens, elected 56 deputies to the 1st, 2nd and the 3rd Saeimas. This meant that the majority of Jews voted for the parties of their own community.

In 1931 many Jews voted for the candidates of the LSDWP. This was the result of the economic crisis and due to heightened activities of anti-Semitic forces. Thus, support was sought from a Marxist party.

Various Jewish political parties and groups nominated their candidates in local government elections, and the nominations were often successful. In 1922, 67 of the 726 city councillors in Latvia were Jews. In 1920 there were three Jewish councillors in the Riga City Council (out of 90). In Liepāja, Jelgava, Ventspils, Kuldīga, Tukums and Talsi Jews comprised 6% of the total number of councillors: four deputies (out of 20) in the Bauska Town Council, five (out of 20) in Aizpute, 14 (out of 30) in Rēzekne, and 10 (out of 20) in Ludza. Between 1928 and 1931 Jews held about one third of the seats in the Daugavpils City Council.

Table 2

Jewish Deputies in the First Four Saeimas

Parties	The 1st Saeima, 1922	The 2nd Saeima, 1925	The 3rd Saeima, 1928	The 4th Saeima, 1931
Agudat Israel	2	2	1	2
National Democrats	1	1	2	1
Mizrahi	1	1	1	-
Ceire Cion	1	1	1	-
Bund				
Total	6	5	5	3

The Revisionist Socialist Party was active outside of the Saeima. It was founded in 1923 by Vladimir Zhabotinsky, a leader of the radical wing of international Zionism. He contributed to the foundation of the radical Jewish youth organisation *Betar* in Riga, which was later centered in Poland. *Betar* was preparing youth for armed struggle to recover the land of Israel and to establish a Jewish national State, and for further work in the re-established fatherland. There were about 2000 young people in *Betar* of Latvia.

The youth organisation *Necah* also cultivated Jewish national traditions. It ran the Jewish scouts, and at different times had from 1800 to 3000 members.

The illegal Communist Party of Latvia (CPL) was popular among and attractive to poorer Jewish young people. The chief leadership of the party was located in Moscow. The legal Jewish workers' centre for culture and education *Arbeterheim* (The House of Workers) became a support organisation for the CPL. It supervised the activities of about 3000 members in Riga and branches in Daugavpils, Liepāja and Rēzekne. In 1922 Vladimir Mayakovsky visited and performed at the *Arbeterheim* of Riga.

In 1920 Jewish communists also formed the illegal organisation *Kamp Bund* (The Bund of Struggle), which functioned as the Jewish section of the Communist Party of Latvia. Its leading members included Mark Donskoy, Iosif Lensky and Abraham Gurevich.

The above organisations of communists carried out destructive and subversive activities, and maintained contacts with the USSR. However, they failed to influence the majority of Jewish youth. They were the representatives of the extreme minority that voiced totalitarian ideas. The Jewish Zionists and *Betar* fought against the communists and were often successful.

Jewish Schools

There was a broad network of Jewish minority schools during Latvia's period of independence all the way till June 1940. Primary schools were mostly maintained or subsidised by the State and local governments. The majority of Jewish secondary schools belonged to private individuals or public organisations.

Jewish Schools in Latvia, 1919-1940

School year	Primary schools	Secondary schools	
		State-owned and municipal schools	Total
1919/20	21	4	4
1922/23	66	4	9
1924/25	67	5	15
1933/34	88	5	18
1939/40	60	4	11

The network of schools ensured the education of Jewish youth in the spirit of their national identity. While 22% of children from Jewish families attended Jewish schools in 1922, in 1929 the number had reached 82%. Until 1934, many Jews also sent their children to German and Russian schools.

In the beginning instruction in Jewish schools was mainly in Russian, but beginning with the latter half of the 1920s in Yiddish and Latvian. Other languages were also taught at the schools, including Hebrew, German, English and Russian. In 1930, 45.82% of the pupils in Jewish schools studied in Yiddish, 36.05% in Hebrew, 13.077% in German and 5.05% in Russian. In the 1930s there was an increase in the number of schools with Hebrew as the language of instruction. In Jewish schools much attention was devoted to teaching patriotism and loyalty to the state of Latvia. At the end of 1929 the Department of Jewish Schools in the Ministry of Education formed a commission to collect funds for the construction of the Freedom Monument in the centre of Riga. The commission issued an appeal to the parents of Jewish pupils, which ended with the following words: "Let the Freedom Monument built by the people testify to the harmony among the population."

There were also many Jewish students.

Table 4

Jewish Students in Latvia

Academic year	Number of students	% of all students
1919/20	265	19.57
1924/25	564	8.84
1931/32	769	8.77
1936/37	463	6.83

The fall in the number of Jewish students was partly caused by non-democratic restrictions (enrollment regulations) or nationality quotas at several faculties, e.g. in law, medicine, etc., where from 1934 Jewish young people were enrolled according to a fixed quota. In the period from 1920 to 1937, 738 Jews had graduated from the University of Latvia. They made up 12.76% of all graduates.

The intellect of Latvia's Jews also manifested itself in their language abilities. In 1936 more than a half of Latvia's Jews knew three or four languages and 6.5% knew five or more languages. In 1930, 62.46% of the Jews spoke fluent Latvian in Riga 68.92%, in Liepāja 88.4%, in Jelgava 90.52%, but in Daugavpils only 18.6%. Many elderly people and those who resided in Latgale and who did not live in a Latvian environment did not know Latvian. It has been estimated that in 1940 about 80% of Latvia's Jews could communicate in Latvian.

In his last interview, which the poet Rainis gave to the newspaper *Segodnya*, he highly praised the eagerness of Jewish youth to master the Latvian language and to take part at the events of Latvian social life. Rainis considered this a feature of the emerging

common nation of Latvia, which served as a model for the young generations of other minorities.

Jews in Latvia's Cultural Life

Jews also significantly contributed to Latvia's culture life. At 3 Jēzusbaznīcas Street in Riga, the amateur Jewish Workers Theatre held performances from 1922 to 1934. The professional Jewish Minority Theatre (The New Jewish Theatre) began performances in the building of the Riga Jewish Club at 6 Skolas Street in 1926. It was headed by famous stage directors of that time: M. Morevsky, A. Schtein, Yuly Adler, Yefim Weisbein, Menachim Rubin, Rudolph Zaslavsky, etc. Its repertoire mainly included plays in Yiddish by Sholom Aleiheim, Sholom Asha, Adam Goldfahden and other Jewish writers.

The talented artist Mikhail Yo (Meier Ioffe) made scenery for the theatre. The playhouse often hosted Jewish theatre companies from New York, Warsaw, Vilnius, and Tel-Aviv.

The participation of Jews in Latvia's musical life was particularly expressive. Three seasons between 1926 and 1929, Emil Kuper was appointed the chief conductor of the National Opera. The music historian Vija Briede concludes: E. Kuper was tremendously important for the development of Latvian opera. He actually raised our theatre to the European level.

In the season of 1937/38, the orchestra of the National Opera was conducted by the famous conductor Leo Blech, who had been the chief conductor of the German State Opera in Berlin for the previous 20 years. After 1945, he was again conductor at the State Opera in West Berlin.

From 1936, young Leonid Zakhodnik was among the opera soloists. For many years the violin faculty at the Latvian Conservatory was headed by Professor Adolph Mez. The child prodigy Sarah Rashin was among his most talented students. In 1937, at the age of 17, she won the international competition in Brussels and was awarded the Prize of the Latvian Government.

In 1931 music for the first Latvian feature film *The Nation's Son* was composed by Marx Lavri, who was the conductor of the Palestinian National Opera in 1941-1947, and later worked for the Radio of Israel.

In the 1920s there was a Jewish Conservatory in Riga, which was located at 11 Pauluchi (Merķeļa) Street. The famous singer Mikhail Aleksandrovich, an inimitable performer of Jewish folk songs, was among its students.

The King of Tango Oscar Strook was No. 1 in popular music. His song *Black Eyes* was performed all over Eastern Europe and elsewhere. His songs *Blue Eyes*, *My Last Tango* and other melodies were also long remembered.

Riga architecture included outstanding accomplishments of several Jews, including Paul Mandelstam, a classic Art Nouveau architect. In the Republic of Latvia many buildings were built according to his projects. They include the Jewish Club and a theatre building at 6 Skolas Street, a multiple-story department store at 5 Kalēju Street, the Trade Bank of Riga at 1 Smilšu Street, the office and apartment building at 57 Elizabetes Street, buildings at 17 Stabu Street, 40 Bruņinieku Street, 97 Brīvības Street, etc.

Participation of Jews in sports also deserves mention. Particularly important were the clubs *Hakoah* and *Makkabi*. The football team of *Hakoah* played in the higher league and supplied three soccer players to the Latvian National Team. The forward Westerman was the most famous among them. He scored 12 goals during the national games.

In the period between 1919 and 1940, 40 Jewish newspapers and magazines were published in Latvia. The following newspapers existed the longest: *Das Folk* (The People), which voiced Zionistic views (1920-1927), the newspaper of left-wing Zionists *Frimorgn* (In the morning) (1926-1934), and the conservative newspaper *Haint* (Today), which was published by *Agudat Israel* (1934-1940). Jewish journalists also ran the newspaper *Segodnya*, one of the most popular newspapers in Latvia, which was published in Russian.

Religious Life

The majority of Latvian Jews were religious people. There were about 200 Judaic congregations. Daugavpils alone had 40 synagogues and oratories, Riga had 30 (including 14 synagogues, of which 4 were choral), Rēzekne had 10, etc. The Jewish community in all of Europe knew the rabbis of Bauska Izhak Kohen and Mordekhai Eliasberg, the Riga rabbi Mendel Saks, as well as the outstanding theoreticians of Judaism and rabbis of Daugavpils Iosif Rosin and Meier Simhe, and the Jelgava rabbi Levy Ovchinsky. In Latvia the *Hassidim* movement had rather large influence. It was prominently represented by the aforementioned I. Rosin, GAON of Rogacheva. The party *Agudat Israel* (later an organisation) was also oriented towards *Hassidim* and its national religious conservatism. In 1927 when the KGB arrested and sentenced to death Lubavich Rebe Iosif Isak Shneerson, head of hassidic *Habada* movement, M. Dubin went to the capital of the USSR. Through the leading authorities he achieved the liberation of Shneerson and obtained a permit for his

departure for Latvia. The Government of Latvia supported the humane mission of M. Dubin, gave shelter to I. I. Shneerson, and granted him Latvian citizenship. Riga became the world centre of *Hassidim* for a short period. From there Shneerson went to Poland, but in 1939 the Embassy of Latvia helped him to leave Warsaw, which was occupied by Germans, and to emigrate to the United States of America, where the strongest centre of *Hassidim* was developed in New York.

The Attack of Anti-Semitism

After World War I Europe saw a flare-up of anti-Semitism that had not been seen since the Middle Ages. However, the 20th century witnessed not only the expansion of religiously motivated anti-Semitism, but also racial anti-Semitism. Jews were hated and persecuted as a hostile race. This type of racism spread in a particularly dangerous manner in Germany, where it became the basic element of the ideology of the National Socialist Party, which was headed by the political madcap Adolf Hitler.

In Latvia anti-Semitism never became widespread. No government or Saeima encouraged it. Zigfrīds Anna Meierovics, the son of a Jew and a Latvian, was the first Foreign Minister of Latvia and twice its Prime Minister (from 1921 to 1924). He was respected by both Latvians and Jews. However, among nationalistic political circles, who wished to develop Latvia into a country of pure Latvian ethnicity, there were rather many people who hated Jews. They motivated their xenophobia with the supposedly excessive influence of Jewish entrepreneurs and bankers in the economy, and the detachment of Jews in their religious and secular national life. Thus, they considered that the interests of the Jews were contrary to national aims. The arguments of the above anti-Semites ignored the historical reality of Latvia. Latvians were in need of capital for the development of industry and trade not because of Jews. Rather, the savings of more than 60 years of hard work had to be used to buy out land that was owned by the Baltic German landed gentry. The segregation of the Jews arose due to their discrimination in the Russian Empire. It could be overcome by encouraging their integration in the society of independent Latvia. Anti-Semites denied such an opportunity.

Judophobic propaganda was effective. In June 1920 hooligan groups brutally insulted and robbed people of Jewish nationality in Riga, Rēzekne and Daugavpils. The authorities stopped the excesses. On June 26 the governmental bulletin *Valdības Vēstnesis* published the appeal *Latvians and Jews*, which pointed out the historically peaceful and friendly co-existence of Latvians and Jews and also stressed that it was important to safeguard this tradition. The appeal said that all Latvian citizens who honestly fulfilled their obligations and were loyal to the State would enjoy equal rights and security.

In the early 1920s, however, the right-wing radical nationalistic Latvian press the newspapers *Latvijas Sargs*, *Zemgaliētis*, *Vienots Spēks*, *Vairogs* etc. often wrote about the danger of Jews and their bad habits. The publication of the Christian National Union *Tautas Balss* particularly stood out. The editors G. Reinhardts and J. Dāvis published their own anti-Semitic articles in the newspaper. In this way they hoped to attract a larger number of voters to their party from the poorly educated and socially dissatisfied social strata. During the election to the 1st Saeima in 1922, the CNU got four seats, but in the 2nd Saeima, which was elected in 1925, they obtained only two seats. It turned out that the anti-Semitic slogans were effective only during post-war economic hardships, when culprits for the situation were sought among non-Latvians. As the economic situation in Latvia grew more stable, ethnic relations became more tolerant.

However, the anti-Semites did not calm down even then. The head of the National Union Arveds Bergs became the leader of economic anti-Semitism. In 1921 he started publishing the newspaper *Latvis* and in 1922 he founded the National Club of Latvians. Members of the club were particularly active among the student population and provoked an attack against Jewish students at the University of Latvia in the autumn of 1922. In this connection, during the meeting of December 9, 1922, the Cabinet of Ministers discussed the question of anti-Semitism in Latvia and condemned the political hooliganism of the extreme nationalists.

However, the democracy of Latvia did not forbid the propaganda of anti-Semitism. Thus, the National Club continued its destructive activities and on January 23, 1925, a group of its terrorists threw a hand grenade into the synagogue at 124 Dzirnau Street. In February of 1925 a bottle with poisonous substances was tossed into the premises of the Jewish Social Democratic Organisation *Perec* at 96 Dzirnau Street. In 1925 the club was shut down for promoting political violence, although it continued to function for two more years under a different name. Anti-Semitism was cultivated also by far right organisations, such as *Tēvijas sargi*, *Latvijas sargi*, *Latviešu aktīvo nacionālistu savienība*, etc.

Anti-Semitic prejudices and views grew stronger starting with 1930 when Latvia was affected by the world economic crisis. The financial situation of many Latvians worsened, their small businesses went bankrupt, and the country witnessed mass unemployment. The Jewish population also suffered from the crisis, although the businessmen of Jewish origin displayed more stability. They were saved by better opportunities to receive foreign credits, and their capital reserves were also larger. On the whole, Latvia's national economy benefited from this. However, anti-Semitic propagandists declared that contrary to Latvians, the Jews themselves benefited from the crisis and were thus deepening it by bringing about misery and poverty.

The pro-fascist xenophobic and anti-Semitic organisation *Ugunskrusts* was founded (with about 2000 members) in 1931. In 1932

it was renamed *Pērkonkrusts*. The core of the organisation was formed by the former members of the National Club and anti-

Semitically disposed staff members and students of the University of Latvia. Gustavs Celmiņš, a fanatic adherent of nationalistic totalitarian order and an anti-Semite, became the leader of the organisation. The programme of Pērkonkrusts foresaw the forcing out of Jews from Latvia by creating an atmosphere and conditions that would pressure them to emigrate. From 1933 Pērkonkrusts was also affected by A. Hitler's anti-Semitic policy in Germany.

On January 30, 1934, the Riga Regional Court found Pērkonkrusts guilty of conspiracy, criminal propaganda and other breaches of law, and outlawed the organisation. Its activists, however, continued their activities illegally.

The Attitude of the Authoritarian Government of Kārlis Ulmanis Towards the Jews

The organisers of the coup of May 15, 1934 were not anti-Semites. Neither was their leader Kārlis Ulmanis, chairman of the Farmers Union, who became the head of the authoritarian government. K. Ulmanis was influenced by the totalitarian ideas of Europe and the model of B. Mussolini, but he never liked Hitlerism or Nazism. At a government meeting K. Ulmanis stressed that Latvia would never have anti-Jewish laws.

Of course, the aim of the authoritarian government's economic policy the development of State capitalism by concentrating bank capital and large-scale production in the hands of the Latvian State affected the interests of many Jewish financiers and businessmen. For instance, on January 18, 1938, the State took possession of Latvia's seven largest textile enterprises, which belonged to Jews. Many Jewish owners were refused import licences. After 1934 Jewish capital started flowing away from Latvia to the USA, Great Britain and other Western countries, and many specialists also emigrated. This weakened the economic prospects of Latvia.

The measures of K. Ulmanis' authoritarian power in the field of education and culture also affected the life of Jews. Autonomy in the administration of their schools was liquidated. It was decided that their children could study only at Jewish schools where lessons would be held in Latvian and Jewish, but the children of mixed Latvian-Jewish families could study only at Latvian schools. The teachers of democratic and left-wing propensity were dismissed. In November 1934 strikes of protest took place at several Jewish schools in Riga. This led to the expulsion of more than 40 secondary school students. Institutions of higher education restricted the enrollment of Jews and limited their career opportunities in business, law and even medicine.

On the whole, the deviation from the *Satversme* (Constitution) of Latvia, which declared that the power of the State belongs to the body of its citizens, weakened the ability of the Jewish community to preserve its ethnic and cultural identity. However, K. Ulmanis' government did not put obstacles in the way of Jewish schools and cultural societies. In school year of 1939/40 there were 60 Jewish primary schools and 11 secondary schools 8 of the latter were private. (In the school year of 1933/34 there were 100 Jewish primary schools and 14 secondary schools.) A considerable portion of Jewish children started to attend Latvian schools. Their parents made this decision due to the necessity to adapt themselves to the national policy of the authoritarian power.

After the coup of May 15, the activities of all Jewish political parties were brought to a halt. M. Dubin's conservative *Agudat Israel*, however, was allowed as an organisation. K. Ulmanis and M. Dubin maintained friendly private relations. This was affirmed by the fact that in 1937 K. Ulmanis and J. Balodis, Minister of War, greeted M. Dubin's son and his new wife, the daughter of the Vienna chief rabbi, with flowers at the Riga Railway Terminal. However, these relations had no effect on the regime's ethno-policy.

The government of K. Ulmanis also allowed the activities of several Zionist-influenced organisations and groups, including *Betar*, and showed approval of their aims and tasks. On September 27, 1937, Ludvigs Sēja, Latvian representative to the League of Nations, officially confirmed in Geneva that the Jewish question did not exist in Latvia and that Latvian people sympathised with the aspirations of the Jewish people to return to their historical fatherland, Palestine. This could be interpreted as Latvia's support of Zionism.

The government of K. Ulmanis took several measures to stop the propaganda of anti-Semitism. Already in 1934 nearly all anti-Semitic publications were listed as undesirable newspapers and magazines and therefore closed down. The publication *Latvis*, headed by A. Bergs, was also closed down. On September 16, 1935, the last bastion of the anti-Semitic press, the magazine *Tautas Vairogs*, was eliminated. It was closed by the Minister of the Interior for the propagation of ethnic hatred. K. Ulmanis personally forbade the dissemination of J. Dāvis' anti-Semitic brochures, and at the meeting of the Riga Society of Proprietors he declared to all the members that he would not allow the continuation of Dāvis' anti-Jewish activities and would burn his brochures. The police confiscated J. Dāvis' new editions.

However, during the years of K. Ulmanis' authoritarian power, propagators of anti-Semitic ideas continued their activities under restricted conditions. Underground groups of Pērkonkrusts continued to protest the presence of Jews in Latvia's public life. In 1938 G. Celmiņš wrote to his companions from Helsinki: [...] with the establishment of a new age, the fate of the Jews will be decided in a final and radical manner, and not a single Jew will be left in the European countries.

From 1935 the national socialistic organisation *Kustība* (*Bewegung*), which had developed within the community of

Latvia's Baltic Germans, also spread anti-Semitic views. Its leaders had direct contacts with H. Himmler and R. Heydrich. It also organised the dissemination of anti-Semitic literature published in Germany. The Baltic German magazine *Baltische Monatshefte* became the megaphone of anti-Semitism in Riga. The press censorship of the government did not respond to the facts. Presumably, this was caused by an unwillingness to provoke the dissatisfaction of Germany.

By autumn of 1938, the government of K. Ulmanis accepted many Jewish refugees from Germany. A certain part of them stayed in Latvia, including Shimon Dubnov, an outstanding Jewish historian and author of the 10-volume *World History of Jews*, who continued his studies in Riga.

However, after the incorporation of Sudetenland into Germany the sheltering of refugees was stopped. On October 13, 1938, 77 Jews from Vienna who had come to Riga on the steamship *Regina* were not admitted to Latvia. In 1939 German Jews from German-occupied Klaipeda were also not let in.

Beginning with autumn of 1938 the persecution of Jews intensified in Germany and Hitler threatened to settle accounts with the Jewry of all Europe. The Jewish community of Latvia discussed their situation with concern and alarm. After the seizure of Czechoslovakia and Klaipeda in the spring of 1939 many Jews foresaw that Germany would attack the Baltic States, which were not able to defend themselves. The reserved position of Great Britain and France led to the conclusion that the Stalinist Soviet Union alone was the superpower that would be capable of saving Baltic Jews from extinction. This illusory idea was actively spread by Jews who were members or supporters of the illegal Communist Party of Latvia, and who were also active in the pro-communistic Latvian Union of Working Youth.

September through October of 1939 Latvian Jews were very upset by the news of persecution that had been carried out by Nazi occupants against Jews in German-occupied Poland. They were horrified at news of mass evictions of Jews, confiscation of their property, and the killing of their intellectuals. The inhabitants of Latvia had no information about the Molotov-Ribbentrop (Stalin-Hitler) Pact, and many people, therefore, considered military co-operation with the USSR desirable in order to prevent the possible aggression of Germany against Latvia. Jewish left-wing strata happily welcomed the Mutual Assistance Pact and the stationing of Soviet troops in the territory of Latvia, which was forced upon the country in October of 1939. Many Jews, who had not much liking for communism at all, considered it a favourable temporary solution. There was still hope that the fate of Latvia would finally be decided by the victory of the Allies on the Western Front. 1940 was met in this atmosphere.

Under the Hammer and Sickle

The fast military victory of Nazi Germany over Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, and Belgium, the fall of Paris and the capitulation of France in June 1940 caused alarm and fear among all inhabitants of Latvia. Jews were particularly worried. Thus, on the morning of June 17, 1940, many felt relieved upon hearing the news on the Riga radio that Latvia had accepted the proposal of the USSR to let into its territory additional contingents of the Red Army. Young people of a left-wing disposition went out on the streets to welcome the army as friends and rescuers. Many of them were still not aware that the occupation of Latvia and the loss of its independence had begun.

The conservative and Zionistic Jewish strata understood the situation, yet they cherished the hope that Stalinism would not be so merciless in the Baltic countries as in the USSR and that democracy, which was forbidden after May 15, would at least partially be renewed. The illusion rapidly disappeared when the occupants openly forced the incorporation of Latvia into the Soviet Empire. Yet, even under these conditions the Jewish citizens chose to obey the new power. They considered it better to lose property under Soviet occupation than to become doomed death inmates of the ghetto under the yoke of Nazi occupation.

The activists of *Agudat Israel* and *Mizrahi* behaved with reserve toward Soviet occupants. They regretted the lost presidency of Kārlis Ulmanis and trusted neither A. Kirhenšteins nor V. Lācis, seeing them as mere puppets. The Jewish youth organisation *Betar* immediately developed its underground network and sought to continue the propagation of Zionism.

The shutdown of Zionist and Jewish conservative and religious societies, clubs and educational institutions started as early as July 1940. The destruction of the Jewish community was taking place. This destruction was completed in the spring of 1941, when the Society of Jewish Culture in Latvia was closed on March 23, and the society *Bikur Holim* was closed on April 14. The agricultural farm *Jaunklinči*, where people who wished to emigrate to Palestine were trained, was also liquidated. The fact that Jewish communists and Komsomol members also took part in the liquidation commissions does not change the essence of the matter. Jews were deprived of the main supports for their national identity.

In 1940 the left-wing Jews actively participated in the formation of the administrative apparatus. They were appointed as employees of commissariats, managers of nationalized enterprises, functionaries of the Party and Soviet bodies and political workers. However, there were few Jews among the leading staff of the occupation regime. Out of the 100 members of the so-called People's Saeima, which voted for the incorporation of Latvia into the USSR, there were only two Jews. Out of the 35 members in the Central Committee of the CPL there was only one Jew, but there were no Jews among the puppet People's Commissars of Soviet Latvia.

Among top officials was the Jew Semion Shustin, Deputy Commissar of Internal Affairs of the Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic (LSSR), and Commissar of the State Security of the LSSR since April 1941, who was sent to Latvia from the USSR to head persecutions. This odious person had no connection with the Latvian Jews. He was a cynical careerist, who had turned his back to his nationality and advanced himself in 1937.

The arrests of Latvian Jewish political figures started in August 1940. David Warhaftig and Mahanud Alperin, leaders of Zionist-revisionists, were arrested first. The leadership of *Betar* was persecuted thereafter, and in the winter and spring of 1941 the arrests took place of M. Nurok, M. Dubin and other leaders of Jews, Zionists, the conservatives and right-wing socialists. The lists that contained the names of the persons to be arrested were approved by S. Shustin. However, the Jews suffered the most during the wave of reprisals on June 14, 1941, when 553 Jewish-Latvian public figures were also arrested (about 13% of all arrestees). There are records about the deportation of 1212 Latvian citizens of Jewish nationality (12.5% of the people who were deported to the remote territories of the USSR). In reality the number of deported Jews was larger.

The deported persons included I. Rabinovich and I. Bērzs, members of the Constitutional Assembly of Latvia, N. Maisel, member of the first three Saeimas and head of the *Bund*, P. Mintz, etc.

Men were sent to the camps of Solikamsk, Vyatka and Vorkuta, while their wives and children to Novosibirsk, Krasnoyarsk and other places. Around half of the Jews who were repressed died. Among them were also P. Mintz, N. Maisel, I. Rabinovich and M. Dubin (during the second deportation in 1956).

Almost the entire leading elite of the Latvian-Jewish community was arrested and deported. There were no people left who could organise the Jews to fight for their rights.

The Holocaust in Latvia

The term *Holocaust* comes from Greek words *holos* (all, without no remains) and *cantos* (burnt to ashes, incinerated). It thus denotes total annihilation. The contemporary interpretation of the word *Holocaust* means the physical annihilation of all people belonging to a certain nation, where no one is spared or given mercy, in order to eradicate the nation's existence and to prevent its possible revival. From the early 1920s the German National Socialist Party set the following goal: to expel all Jews from Germany and to promote the disappearance of Jewry in all Europe. The Nazis considered that by having Jews present they would fail to prevent the influence of the ideas of democracy, liberalism, the free market and socialism, and they would fail to erect a clean Aryan Germany and Europe, clad in barbarian traditions.

On March 1941, in preparing the attack against the USSR, Hitler had commissioned Heinrich Himmler, Chief (*Reichsführer*) of the SS, and Reinhard Heydrich, head of the German Security Service, to organise the immediate and complete annihilation of the Jews who reside in the German-invaded territory of the USSR. For this purpose five special mobile units of the German police and security service (*Einsatzgruppen der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD* or in abbreviated form *Einsatzgruppen*) were formed.

The Nazi leadership decided to involve local anti-Semites of the invaded territories in the extermination activities. This particularly concerned the Baltic countries and Western Ukraine. In June 1941 R. Heydrich, who headed all the *Einsatzgruppen*, gave a secret instruction and asked to create the impression that the actions were a spontaneous expression of anti-Jewish hatred carried out by Lithuanians, Ukrainians, Latvians, Estonians and Belorussians themselves. The instruction said: "No obstacles shall be put in the way of the wishes of self-purification shown by anti-communists and anti-Jews in the newly-invaded lands. On the contrary, these actions should be intensified, leaving behind no evidence and, if necessary, they should be correctly channelled, giving the self-defence groups no possibility of later reference to any orders or political promises."

It was planned to film and photograph the criminal actions of local anti-Semites and of other Nazi-henchmen in order to make a stock of evidence. The intention was to falsify history and to compromise the conquered nations.

Latvia witnessed the arrival of *Einsatzgruppe A*, which was commanded by Brigadenführer SS (Major-General) W. Stahleker, Doctor of Law. It consisted of 990 men from the German police, Gestapo and the SS of Weapons (*Waffen SS*). The group was divided into special killing units (*Einsatz* and *Sonderkommando*), with 150 murderers prepared for mass executions in each.

People who were familiar with local conditions, who from 1939 to 1941 had either emigrated or fled from Latvia and were well-known for their anti-Semitic disposition, followed the *Einsatzgruppe* from Germany. They were quick to establish contacts with several anti-Soviet groups of resistance and individual members of the *Pērkonkrusts* organisation in Soviet-occupied Latvia. These people were given a hint to become involved in the extermination of Jews and the supporters of the Soviet power without trial.

The First Stage of the Greatest Criminal Offence

The attack of the German army was very successful and by July 8, 1941, the entire territory of Latvia was under its rule. Only about 15,000 Latvian Jews managed to evacuate themselves to the east. More than 75,000 of them were left at the mercy of the Nazis. That was how the illusion ended that the USSR would protect and save the Jews.

In Latvia the Holocaust started on the night from June 23 to 24, 1941, when in the Grobiņa cemetery SD murderers killed six local Jews, including the town chemist. On the following days 35 Jews were exterminated in Durbe, Priekule and Asīte. On June 29 the Nazi invaders started forming the first Latvian SD auxiliary unit in Jelgava. Mārtiņš Vagulāns, member of the *Pērkonkrusts* organisation, was chosen to head it. In the summer of 1941, 200-300 men in the unit took part in the extermination of about 2000 Jews in Jelgava and other places in Zemgale. The killing was supervised by the officers of the German SD Rudolf Batz and Alfred Becu, who involved the SS people of the *Einsatzgruppe* in the action. The main synagogue of Jelgava was burnt down through their joint effort.

After the invasion of Riga W. Stahlecker, assisted by the members of *Pērkonkrusts* and other local collaborationists, organised the pogrom of Jews in the capital of Latvia. Viktors Arājs, aged 31 at the time, former member of *Pērkonkrusts* and a member of a student fraternity, was appointed direct executor of the action. He was an idle eternal student who was supported by his wife, a rich shop owner, who was ten years older than him. Arājs had worked in the police for a certain period of time. He stood out with his power-hungry and extreme thinking. The man was well fed, well dressed, and with his student's hat proudly cocked on one ear.

On July 2 V. Arājs started to form his armed unit of men who were responding to the appeal of *Pērkonkrusts* to take arms and to clear Latvia of Jews and communists. In the beginning the unit mainly included members of different student fraternities, while later on many degraded and degenerated individuals also joined. In 1941 altogether about 300 men had applied. The closest assistants of V. Arājs included Konstantīns Kaķis, Alfrēds Dikmanis, Boris Kinsler, and Herberts Cukurs. On the night of July 3, Arājs' Commando started arresting, beating and robbing the Riga Jews. On July 4, the choral synagogue at Gogoļa Street was burnt, and thereafter, the synagogues at Maskavas and Stabu Streets. Many Jews were killed during those days, including the refugees from Lithuania. In carts and blue buses the murderers of Arājs' Commando went to different places in Kurzeme, Zemgale and Vidzeme, killing thousands of Jews there. These killings were supposed to serve as an example to other anti-Semitic supporters of the Nazi invaders.

Individual Latvian self-defence units were also involved in the extermination of Jews. In the district of Ilūkste, for instance, Jews were killed by the self-defence death unit of commander Oskars Baltmanis, which consisted of 20 cold-blooded murderers.

All killings were supervised by the officers of the German SS and SD. In July 1941 the mass killing of Riga Jews took place in the Biķernieku Forest. About 4000 people died there. The executions were headed by *Sturmbannführers* (majors) H. Barth, R. Batz, and the newly-appointed chief of the Riga SD Rudolf Lange.

In Liepāja the first mass killing of Jews took place on July 3 and 4, when about 400 people were shot dead, and on July 8 when 300 Jews were killed. The German group of SD and policemen did the shooting, while the members of Latvian self-defence convoyed victims to the killing site. On July 13 the destroying of the large choral synagogue of Liepāja began. The rolls of the Scripture were spread on the Ugunsdzēsēju Square, and the Jews were forced to march across their sacred things, with watchers merrily laughing at the amusing scene.

The above operations took place under the direct leadership of Erhard Grauel, commander of the *Einsatzgruppe's Sonderkommando*. Thereafter he went to Ventspils. The killings were jointly carried out by German policemen and the men of the local self-defence. On July 16-18, 300 people were shot dead in the Kažiņu Forest. In July-August the remaining 700 Jews of the town were shot dead, while the Jews of the region were killed in the autumn. The shooting was carried out by German, Latvian and Estonian SD men who had arrived by ship.

Soon a poster appeared on the Kuldīga-Ventspils highway, which said that Ventspils was *Judenfrei* (free of Jews).

In Daugavpils the extermination of Jews was initially commanded by Erich Ehrlinger, chief of *Ensatzkommando 1b*. By July 11 they had killed about 1150 people. Ehrlinger's work was continued by Joachim Hamann, who was liable for the killing of 9012 Jews in the city and in southern Latgale. The chief of the local auxiliary police Roberts Blūzmanis had rendered active assistance by ensuring the moving of the Jews to the Grīva ghetto and transporting them to the killing places. In Rēzekne killings were carried out by a German SD group, which was helped by self-defence men and Arājs' murderers. About 2500 people were exterminated.

By October 1941, altogether about 35,000 Latvian Jews were killed. As stated by the outstanding Latvian historian Andrievs Ezergailis, this was the beginning of the greatest criminal act in the history of Latvia.

From July 1941 the Jews of Latvia were also humiliated in different ways and deprived of the rights that were enjoyed by the other citizens of Latvia. Jews were strictly forbidden to leave their homes in the evening, at night and in the morning. They were allotted lower food rations, they could only shop in some special stores, and they had to wear the mark of recognition the yellow Star of David on their clothes. It was forbidden for them to attend places where public events took place, including cinemas, athletic fields and parks. They were not allowed to use trains and trams, to go to bath-houses, use pavements, attend libraries and museums or to go to schools, and they

had to hand over bicycles and radios.

Jewish doctors were only allowed to advise and treat Jews, and they were forbidden to run pharmacies. Maximum norms for furniture, clothes and linen were also soon introduced for Jews. All articles above the norm were subject to confiscation for the needs of the *Reich*. All jewelry, securities, gold and silver coins had to be handed over without delay.

Many things were usurped by German officials and their local servants. Anti-Semitism became the source of their enrichment. The above misers were directly interested in the extermination of Jews. This guaranteed that nobody would demand back the stolen items.

The Ghetto

On July 27, 1941, State Commissar (*Reichskommissar*) Hinrich Lohse (earlier *Gauleiter* of Schleswig-Holstein), ruler of the Baltic lands and Belarus or Ostland as the territory was called by the invaders made his guidelines on Jewish question public. Jews, in his opinion, had to be used as a cheap labour force by paying them minimum wages or by providing them with a minimum food ration with whatever may be left over after supplying the indigenous Aryan population. In order to govern the Jews they had to be moved to special areas where ghettos would be arranged and they would be forbidden to leave the area.

W. Stahlecker protested against the idea of H. Lohse and demanded that the extermination of the Jews be continued. Berlin, however, passed the power to the civil administration of occupation force and it did things its own way. The area of the Latgale Suburbs in Riga was chosen for the Riga Ghetto. It was mainly inhabited by poor people: Jews, Russians and Belorussians. The ghetto bordered on Maskavas, Vītebskas, Ebreju (Jewish), Līksnas, Lauvas, Lazdonas, Lielā Kalnu, Katoļu, Jēkabpils and Lāčplēša Streets. About 7000 non-Jews were moved from there to other flats in Riga. More than 23,000 Riga Jews were ordered to move to the territory of the ghetto. There now were more than 29,000 inmates in the ghetto, including those who had already previously resided there.

The Jewish Council was formed within the ghetto, which was assigned the task of regulating social life. The Jewish police force for the maintenance of order formed there. It consisted of 80 men armed with sticks and rubber truncheons. The ghetto was enclosed by a barbed-wire fence. Wooden barriers (logs) were placed on the main streets at the entrance, and the Latvian police were stationed as guards there. Jews were allowed to leave the ghetto only in work columns and in the accompaniment of guards. Individual Jewish specialists could come and go by displaying a special yellow ID. Leaving independently was severely punished.

Moving to the ghetto ended on October 25, 1941.

In the ghetto the Jews were very crowded: 3-4 square metres were allotted per person. There was also great poverty, as food rations were given only to those who worked, i.e. to about a half of the ghetto inmates. They had to maintain their 5652 children and 8300 elderly and disabled people. The ghetto only had 16 groceries, a pharmacy and a laundry, and a hospital was arranged, which was headed by Professor Vladimir Mintz, a surgeon.

The Council of the ghetto was situated in the former Jewish school building at 141 Lāčplēša Street. The historian Marģers Vestermanis writes: The members of the Jewish Council, including the lawyers D. Elyashev, M. Mintz and I. Yevelson, and their volunteer assistants did all they could to somehow relieve general suffering. (*Ves termanis M. Juden in Riga. Ein historischer Wegweiser. Bremen, 1996, S. 29.*)

Jewish policemen, too, tried to somehow protect their fellowmen. The inmates strived to preserve themselves, and there was even an illusion of survival. A resistance group was formed that bought weapons.

The Daugavpils Ghetto was set up in Grīva at the end of July, 1941, when all surviving Jews in the city were moved there. Jews from other towns and villages of Latgale and even Vidzeme were also brought there. Altogether the ghetto had about 15,000 prisoners. The engineer M. Movshenson ran the Council of the ghetto. His father had headed the city of Daugavpils in 1918 during the previous period of German occupation.

Zaube, the German commandant of the Daugavpils Ghetto, stood out for his extreme cruelty. He practised the killing of offenders, especially of those who had brought in food, on the inner square of the ghetto in front of all inmates to frighten and to humiliate them. It was in Daugavpils that the liquidation of ghetto inmates started. On November 8-10, 1941, 3000 people were killed in Mežciems. The operation was headed by *Obersturmbannführer* (Lieutenant-Colonel) Günter Tabbert, who was then 25.

The Liepāja Ghetto was only founded in June 1942 when the majority of Jews had already been killed. It occupied a small block in the central part of the city. Israelit and Kagunsky, the leaders of the ghetto's Council, arranged for a synagogue, a medical centre and a library. Professor Iosif Steiman writes: The ghetto of Liepāja had slightly better conditions if compared to those in the ghettos of Riga and Daugavpils. This was mainly due to the German commandant Kershner, whose behaviour towards the Jews, unlike the majority of the Nazis, was humane. (*Steimanis J. Latvijas ebreju vēsture. Daugavpils, 1995. 116. lpp.*)

Rumbula and Šķēde Hitler s Will

A. Hitler was well informed about the killing of Jews in Latvia and had more than once expressed his satisfaction about the course of events. The ghetto situation, however, did not satisfy him and H. Himmler. In late October of 1941 they came to the idea of creating special extermination grounds on the territory of occupied Latvia for the extermination of the Jews from Central Europe, and, first and foremost, those from Germany. For this purpose nearly all Latvian Jews had to be killed (leaving alive only several thousand of the able-bodied   for later killing) to free room for the deported German Jews in the ghetto and the starvation camps of Riga. To ensure proper action, Himmler appointed Friedrich Jeckeln as the new *Obergruppenführer* (General). He was chief of the SS, SD and the Police in Ostland, and an experienced chief of the Prussian Police and organiser of mass killings in the occupied Ukraine. He arrived in Riga on November 10. The administrators of Ostland were immediately instructed to carry out consistently Hitler   s will concerning the total extermination of Jews in the Baltic countries and the territory of the USSR. On November 12, H. Himmler gave F. Jeckeln orders and a mandate to act in accordance with his methods. R. Lange, in turn, received an order from Himmler to build a large concentration camp in Salaspils.

The Nazis chose the Rumbula Forest to be the extermination site of the Riga Jews. Six deep pits were dug up by 300 Soviet prisoners-of-war, each being the size of a small house. F. Jeckeln himself supervised the work.

On November 29, the sorting of the Riga ghetto inmates took place; 4000 more able-bodied people were partitioned off and moved to the so-called   Small Ghetto.  On the following day (Sunday), at 4 o'clock in the morning, units of the German SD, the Latvian SD, and the Police for the Maintenance of Order (*Ordnungspolizei*) arrived in the Big Ghetto and started to drive, with curses and beating, the frightened people to Rumbula. Those who refused to go or who were not able to go were killed on the spot. At noon hundreds of bodies (up to a thousand) lay on the streets of the ghetto. The SD men of Arājs took an active part in the operation; they were commanded by H. Cukurs. Dressed in a smart black leather coat with a revolver in his raised hand, he had made the unhappy people arrange themselves in columns, which started for the pits of death. The famous historian Shimon Dubnov was among those who were shot dead in the very beginning of the march. During the last moments of his life S. Dubnov asked the Jews who were present: If you survive, never forget what is happening here, give evidence,   write and re-write,   keep alive each word and each gesture, each cry and each tear!   People killed on the way were collected by guards and thrown into a common pit in the Old Jewish Cemetery at Ludzas Street. Jews were forbidden to visit this cemetery.

The mass killing of Jews in a forest field, which was located 100 metres from a railway line, was the final stage of the Rumbula atrocities. The execution took place during two days: on November 30 and on December 8. The same people did the shooting: 12 German SD men and local assistants who operated according to the technique worked out by Jeckeln himself. High-ranking functionaries of the SD and of the Riga Police for the Maintenance of Order assisted him. R. Lange was one of them. In his report to the SD he mentioned the number of victims   27,800. Among them were 942 German Jews who were brought to Riga by railway in the early morning of November 30 to be placed in the buildings of the ghetto. As they were not   free  yet, Jeckeln had ordered to   transport  the arrivals to Rumbula immediately. They were the first victims in Rumbula.

The remaining part of the Liepāja Jews were murdered in Šķēde, in the dunes near the Baltic Sea, on December 15   17, 1941. This was done according to the personal instructions of O. Drechsler, General Commissioner of Latvia. Nearly all Police for the Maintenance of Order in the city were involved in transporting the Jews to the killing site. The platoon of the German SD and the Latvian SD carried out the shooting. The killing was executed in horrible ways. The mothers were made to hold their babies high above their shoulders for one of the shots to aim at the mother, and the other   at the child. Altogether 2731 Jews were murdered in Šķēde during three days.

Culprits and Accomplices

At the end of 1941 W. Stahlecker and F. Jeckeln could report to Berlin that the Jewish question on the territory of Latvia had almost been solved. With H. Himmler   s personal permission only about 6000 Jews were   temporarily  left alive, mainly able-bodied men. Hitler and Himmler were satisfied. Having learned of the murder, many officers and soldiers of *Wehrmacht* in Riga condemned what had happened. Captain Otto Schultz-Dibua, who had seen the scene of killing, was upset and sent a report to Berlin to the army commanders. Admiral Wilhelm Kannaris, chief of the German Secret Service, made use of this, and at the meeting of the supreme command, he criticised the Rumbula incident and indicated that if similar executions will become known they would negatively affect the soldiers   morale. Hitler had given an immediate answer:   You, Sir, would prefer to be soft-hearted.   I had to act this way, as nobody after me would act the same way.  (Knopp G. *Holokaust*.  München, 2000.  S. 133.) That was how Hitler had emphasized his role as the initiator of the extermination of the Jews in Europe and in Latvia.

The majority of Latvia   s population condemned the killing of Jews, although they could not openly express their sorrow. The empire of Nazism was too powerful and cruel, and it severely punished anyone who dared to protest.

The bizarre behaviour of the members of   *Pērkonkrusts*  and other odious collaborationists, and the participation of the Latvian SD Commando and police in the extermination of the Jews negatively influenced the atmosphere.

According to estimations by A. Ezergailis, it is possible that the number of Latvians who had directly shot at Jews in 1941   1942 did

not reach 500. However, the Rumbula incident alone required about 1500 men who guarded the victims and transported them to the killing sites. Of them 800 were Riga policemen, and about 200 Latvian SD men.

In other places in Latvia, there were about 1000 local policemen directly involved in the killing operations. (See: *Ezergailis A. Holokausta vācu okupētajā Latvijā: 1941-1944. Rīga, 1999. P. 39, 40*)

Arājs Commando of Jew killers did particular harm to all of Latvia. In 1942-1943 the Latvian SD units already had about 1200 men and they served Nazism not only in Latvia, but also in Belarus.

Anti-Semitic journalists also brought ill fame to the country. Their publications in Latvian and Russian spread lies and hatred against the Jewish people, called upon readers to support the extermination of the Jews, and praised the cruelty of Nazism. Another creation of Nazi anti-Semitic propaganda was a tendentious collection of photo-illustrations entitled *The Year of Terror*. Its task was to justify the extermination of Jews, placing unsubstantiated blame on them for the Soviet terror of 1940/1941. It really was a horrible year, but the years of Nazi occupation were even more horrible. More than 70,000 Latvian Jews, 18,000 Latvians and 2000 Gypsies were killed in Latvia during the Nazi occupation. 7000 Latvians were put into concentration camps, and 35,000 were driven to Germany to do forced labour.

About 22,000 Jews from Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia were deported to Latvia for extermination. A part of them were placed in the Big Ghetto of Riga, in the last lodgings of the murdered Latvian Jews, another part in a concentration camp in Jumpravmuiža, and later in other places. The bulk of those people perished through hard work, cold, starvation and diseases.

However, the large killing site intended by the Nazis for the European Jews was not made in Latvia. As the war dragged on the former area of the USSR became unsafe and the main killing site, therefore, was arranged in the territory of Poland. Auschwitz became the largest death mill of the Holocaust.

In 1943 Latvian Jews who had survived mass killings were moved from ghettos to concentration camps. The largest camp was arranged in Mežaparks (*KZ Kaiserwald*) in Riga. The commandant of the camp was *Sturmbannführer* SS Georg W. Sauer. Upon entering the camp all Jews were deprived of their personal belongings, their hair was shaved off (including women), and they were dressed in prisoner's clothing which bore the bright inscriptions *Jude* on the breast and back.

There were also concentration camps in Strazdumuiža, Salaspils and Dundaga.

In 1944, with Soviet army approaching, the prisoners of the concentration camps were moved from Latvia to the camps in Germany and Poland, and the able-bodied were transported to the Stutthof camp. The conditions were particularly hard there, the death rate was high, and many perished during the last stage of the war when in cold and snow they were transported to Central Germany. Between 1943 and 1945 many Latvian Jews were gassed and burned in Auschwitz. The camps of Buchenwald and Treblinka all took their share. Only a little more than a thousand Latvian Jews who were sent to Germany survived there.

In this way Latvia lost four percent of its citizens. It lost very many skilful and competent industrialists, merchants and financiers. Their business initiative and their skill could not be replaced. Latvia lost thousands of qualified craftsmen, its best shoemakers, tailors and jewellers. Latvia lost hundreds of doctors, pedagogues, artists, and lawyers. The Professor of the Conservatory Adolph Metz, a talented pupil of Jāzeps Vītols and the teacher of many Latvian musicians, was shot dead. The famous violinist Sarah Rashin was shot dead. The whole Mintz family came to a tragic end. Professor Paul Mintz died in the Gulag, his brother Vladimir Mintz, a famous surgeon, finished his life in torment in the Buchenwald concentration camp in Germany, and his son Moritz Mintz, Doctor of Law, was killed in Rumbula. The victims included about a thousand people who took part in the Latvian War of Independence, as well as bearers of the Lāčplēsis Order and the Order of Three Stars. These were people, who through their life and work had proved their loyalty towards the State of Latvia and the Latvian nation, and love towards their only homeland, Latvia.

Nothing will ever justify the Nazi crimes.

Under the Second Soviet Occupation

After the end of World War II Jews who had evacuated to the USSR returned to Latvia. About 5000 of them had fought in the Soviet Army against Nazi Germany, and about 2000 had been killed in the war. Several thousands survived the Nazi concentration camps in Germany and returned to Latvia. Later Latvia saw the homecoming of some of the Jews who had been subject to Soviet persecution and deportations. It could be estimated that altogether 14,000 Jews, the citizens of Latvia and their successors, returned to Latvia. It was a difficult homecoming. Their relatives had been killed, their belongings robbed, and their former flats and houses were occupied by other people. Many men had lost their parents, wives and children, and women their husbands. The victims often decided to marry, as their common destinies united them. New families of Latvian Jews were established. There were not many.

Beginning with the summer of 1945 many Jews from Russia, the Ukraine, and even from Central Asia started arriving in Latvia. There were different reasons for this migration. Some were appointed for work here in connection to the industrial sites that the USSR had decided to build in the Baltic region. Others were escaping famine and total collapse that existed in many parts of the USSR. Still others came because the anti-Semitic atmosphere was increasingly growing in the places of their former residence. This atmosphere was encouraged by Stalin's intent to restore Russian chauvinism with a new Bolshevik mask. The inhabitants of Latvia were more tolerant, and the majority of them had negative feelings towards the ideology of Great Russians. The number of Jews in Latvia started to grow again. In 1959 there were already about 36,600 permanently residing Jews, i. e. 1.75% of the total population of the LSSR. 29,836 Jews, or about 80% of their total number, resided in Riga where they comprised 5% of the whole population. Of these Jews only 10,000 were born in independent Latvia. Only 48% considered Yiddish their native tongue, and 50% Russian.

The majority of Latvian Jews, including those who migrated there later, were well-educated people. There were quite a few highly-qualified engineers with diplomas, technicians, employees of the social services, many doctors, pedagogues, artists and scientists. As of January 1, 1983, 5.5% of the scientists in Latvia were Jews, while their percentage among the candidates of science was 6.6, and among the doctors of science 12. Some enjoyed a high level of authority in their fields, including Solomon Hiller, the chemist who founded the Institute of Organic Synthesis of the Latvian Academy of Sciences, and the doctors Jūlijs Anshelevich, Zelik Cherfas, Anatoly Blyuger, Max Belyenky, and Eugenia Krupnikova. Still other included the historians Joel Weinberg and Peter Krupnikov, the film producer Hertz Frank, the stage directors Arkady Katz and Adolph Shapiro, and the pianist and music pedagogue Herman Braun. There was also Catherine Bunchuk, an actress of the Russian Drama Theatre, the famous chess-player Mikhail Thal, world champion 1960-1961, and many other outstanding figures.

On the whole, the Jews in Latvia witnessed increasing discrimination. They were ousted from the administration, they were deprived of the opportunity to restore their community and to preserve their ethno-cultural and religious identity. Following instructions from Moscow, the agencies of the Communist Party and public agencies of the LSSR categorically forbade the renewal of Jewish schools. Nearly all Jewish children were forced to learn at schools where the language of instruction was Russian, and where their partial Russification took place. Many families, however, marked Jewish feasts, observed traditions and told their children about the history of their people.

The leaders of the LSSR also put obstacles in the way of Jewish cultural societies and artistic groups. They supported the Stalinist opinion that Jewish organisations in the field of culture and education could lead to the development of anti-Soviet nests of nationalism. The functionaries of the CPL flatly declined several applications asking to renew the Jewish Theatre of Riga, and to return it to the former building of the Jewish cultural centre at 6 Skolas Street. The Centre for the Propaganda of Marxism-Leninism was arranged there. Eduards Smiļģis, a famous Latvian stage director, and Lilita Bērziņa, a distinguished Latvian actress, supported the renewal of the Jewish Theatre, but to no avail. Just after the war it was allowed to form the Jewish brigade of music-hall artists, yet it was also dismissed in 1949. In the late 1950s the conductors Israel Abramis and Mendel Bash managed to receive a permit for an amateur choir of Riga Jews. The choir had great success. It was enough for the Soviet authorities to see the danger of the revival of the Jewish community. In May of 1962 orders were issued to stop the activities of the choir. Only in Daugavpils there was a Jewish drama group that was active among the amateur groups of the city's cultural centre from 1946 to 1967. The group was headed by the actor Leibe Medalje. It was officially closed because of the international situation, i.e. Israel's victory in the Six Days War.

In 1949, Jews were affected by one more wave of reprisals in the USSR, which then was turned against cosmopolitanism and its propagators. In this way the Kremlin took revenge on the Jews, who had not ensured that Israel would join the Soviet block by secretly manifesting a liking for Western culture and ideology. During the campaign Riga saw the arrests of Mark Razumny, a writer, Mikhail Yo (Meier Ioffe), an artist, Gertz Movshovich, a journalist and lecturer at the University of Latvia, Jāzeps Eiduss, a physicist, Samuil Levitan, a teacher of history, etc. The investigators of the KGB tried to prove that studies of Yiddish history and culture, and even collecting information about the Riga Ghetto were very dangerous varieties of ideological sabotage.

The persecution of Zionists, Jewish religious servants and Jewish intellectuals was particularly intensified in the beginning of 1953 because of the case of the Moscow Jewish physicians that was fabricated by KGB officials. In January 1953 the Central Committee of the LCP instructed the party committees of regions, cities and districts to actively unmask the destructive activity of Zionism and to organise the meetings of workers on this question. The press was continuously re-publishing the anti-Zionistic articles of the Moscow newspapers and the fabrications of local authors. The district newspapers had to publish a leading article that was prepared by the Central Committee of the CPL, which contained threats that Zionists would be eliminated as enemies [...] of the past and in the future.

In February 1953 Latvian-Jewish intellectuals witnessed a new wave of arrests. Professor Max Shatz-Anin, a well-known Jewish cultural figure, writer and journalist (who was seriously ill and had lost his eyesight), and his spouse Ferha were the first to be imprisoned. The list of the sins of the Shatz family included contacts with the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, Jewish literary meetings held in Yiddish in their flat, and other dangerous crimes. The pedagogues and cultural figures J. Pisetsky, J. Etman, A. Eines, I. Ziser, I. Gasel, H. Pevzner, L. Teitelbaum and B. Peker, S. Mogilnitsky, who was head of the Ophthalmological Ward of the Riga 1st Hospital, his wife H. Mogilnitsky, and other people were also soon arrested. Following instructions from Moscow, personnel files of the leading physicians in hospitals and health centres were inspected and Jews were dismissed from their positions. In Latvia there was also rumour that a general deportation of Jews to the eastern territories of the USSR was under way. It was planned to motivate the ope-

ration with the workers demand to clear border territories of imperialist-supported Zionists.

After the death of I. Stalin the persecution of Jews was stopped in April 1953 and the arrested people were freed. The observation of and distrust towards Jewish intellectuals, however, was still in force, and the promotion of Jews to leading positions was limited in different fields, including medicine, science and the universities.

Soviet authorities prevented paying homage to the victims of the Holocaust. Singling out only one nation's suffering was condemned as offensive and insulting to other nations and nationalities, which had suffered as well. Jewish young people founded illegal organisations, and in 1961 they began the investigation of the events in Rumbula. They arranged an unsanctioned commemoration meeting in the Bīķernieki Forest in 1962, and then the officials of the LSSR were forced to allow the erection of a memorial plaque in Rumbula with an inscription in Latvian, Russian and Yiddish, "To the Victims of Fascism 1941-1944." No mention was made of the nationality of the victims. In late November of 1972, in the presence of Soviet officials, the first official commemoration meeting of victims took place in Rumbula. Although the event was coloured with Soviet ideology, it nevertheless marked a significant victory in the struggle for the commemoration of the victims of the Holocaust in Latvia.

The Beginning of the Jewish National Awakening in Latvia

Right after the end of World War II, a part of the Latvian Jews who had survived the Holocaust wanted to repatriate to the land of Israel to take part in the struggle of the Jews for the establishment of their national State. Samuel Ioffe and Jacob Yankelevich, former leaders of the Riga branch of the left-wing Zionist organisation "Hashomir Hacair", became the initiators of the illegal emigration. In July 1945 S. Ioffe managed to leave Latvia secretly for Poland and to establish contacts with the representatives of the organisation "Brih", which organised the emigration of Polish Jews to Palestine. A secret co-operation network was set up, which helped more than 400 Latvian Jews, including those who had fought against Nazism, to reach their historical fatherland. In September 1946 S. Ioffe and J. Yankelevich were arrested, and Latvia's "Brih" group was forced to end its activities.

Activists of the Riga Jewish congregation who assembled at the synagogue on Marijas Street, on the territory of the Berg Bazaar, worked against Soviet ideology. In 1950 the KGB requested the closure of the synagogue. Thereafter the activists of Judaism formed an illegal "Habada" group, which assembled in different flats and in the basement of the synagogue on Peitavas Street. Nathan Barkan, Shimon Gutman and Sholom Ber-Friedman became the leaders of the group.

After the victory of Israel in the Six Days War in June 1967, the Jewish national consciousness experienced a strong rise, which was characterised by an awareness of historical ethnic and religious roots, and an understanding of the necessity to renew the Jewish ethno-cultural identity. The awakening affected both the Jews born in independent Latvia and their children, and the immigrants from the USSR. The anti-Zionistic propaganda of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) that had already turned into open anti-Semitism, as well as further restrictions of Jewish rights and intensified Russification, indirectly increased the wish of Jews to repatriate to Israel or to Western democracies. According to the 1970 census 46% of Jews in Latvia acknowledged Yiddish as their family language, but in 1989 only 22.5%! It became completely clear that under the rule of the USSR Jews would not be able to preserve themselves as a nationality, and as a part of Jewish world. A spontaneous movement started, which later became organised, and which had two main fields of activity: 1) the national education of Jews, and their preparation for repatriation or emigration; 2) sending protests and appeals to the agencies of the USSR that prevented or forbade emigration.

The propagators of repatriation (*Alija*) Mikhail Shepshelovich, Aron Maftir and Aron Spilberg did much to increase the national awareness of the Jews in Riga. Up to their arrest and sentencing (1970), they had helped many people to mentally prepare for life in a free society, in the national country of their own people.

There were groups that helped people to write complaints and appeals to the agencies of the USSR and international organisations on the illegal prohibition of repatriation. In the 1970s, out of all the complaints that were sent by Jews in the USSR, more than 40% came from Riga. In 1970 several Riga Jews also took part in a desperate yet unsuccessful attempt to take possession of an airplane in the aerodrome of Leningrad.

In 1968 the Jewish youngster Ilya Reps chose a tragic method of protest. He tried to burn himself at the Freedom Monument, thus showing his condemnation of the Soviet invasion in Czechoslovakia, the occupation of Latvia, and of the oppression of Jewish national aspirations.

Reprisals did not put an end to the Jewish national awakening in Latvia. In 1975 illegal readings in Judaism began in Riga, which were attended by religious activists and others who were interested. The readings were run by Dr. Herman Branover, a scientist of the Institute of Physics of the Academy of Sciences.

In the 1970s the Latvian-Jewish activists established close contacts with Zionist groups in Moscow, Leningrad and the Ukraine. In 1970 Riga saw the first two issues of the magazine "Iton", which was published by Jewish amateur publishers. From 1979 to 1985 10 issues of the illegal magazine "Haim" and 4 issues of the law journal "Din u-mecint" were also prepared and

printed there. Riga was home of one of the main national awakening centres of the Soviet Jews, and this is particularly true of organisational aspects. The centre had contacts with Israel and the Jewish diaspora in Western countries, and also in the USA. The moral and occasional financial support that was received from foreign countries helped Jews to maintain their struggle for repatriation. The Central Committee of the CPL and the KGB were unable to stop the process of repatriation. From 1968 to 1980, 13,153 Jews, or 35.8% of the Jews residing in the territory of the LSSR, emigrated from Latvia to Israel and Western countries. By 1989 more than 16,000 Jews emigrated from Latvia, and 70% of them settled for life in Israel. Out of these repatriates more than half were born in and had grown up in Latvia. In 1989 there were only 22,900 Jews in Latvia, or 0.9% of the total population.

The Revival of the Jewish Community

During the collapse of the USSR many Latvian Jews took an active part in the struggle of the Latvian national forces for democracy and the re-establishment of Latvia's independence. Mavrik Wulfson, a lecturer (later professor) at the Latvian Academy of Art, gave a speech of historical significance at the general meeting of the Latvian Writers' Union and other unions of the creative arts on June 1, 1988. M. Wulfson openly labelled the entrance of Soviet troops in Latvia in June 1940 as the violent occupation of Latvia. From 1988 to 1994 he was one of the leaders of the Popular Front of Latvia (PFL). M. Wulfson's work in the Supreme Council of the USSR during 1989-1990 also served the re-establishment of Latvia's independence.

Since its founding the PFL had many Jewish activists. Among them were Herbert Dubin, a historian of art, Ruta Maryash (the daughter of M. Shatz-Anin), a lawyer, Grigory Krupnikov, a physicist and businessman, Abram Kletskin (Klyotskin), a film critic, journalist, and lecturer (later associate professor) of the University of Latvia, Hone Bergman, a pedagogue, Mārgers Vestermanis, a historian, Boris Tsilevich, a physicist, Solomon Katz, a journalist, and Jacob Briskin, an economist (all from Riga). There was also Igor Movel, businessman (from Jelgava) and others.

A speech by Abram Kletskin, which he gave at the Latvian National Theatre on November 18, 1988, at the commemorative event of November 18, 1918, had important symbolic meaning. It manifested the solidarity of the Latvian Jews with the idea of independence and its history in Latvia. R. Maryash was among the founders of the Association of Cultural Societies of Latvia's Ethnic Minorities.

The revival of the Jewish community was a part of a process of great transformation. The first discussions (which were still illegal) on the foundation of a social centre for Latvian Jews took place during June-July 1988. They were initiated by Esfira Rapiņa and M. Wulfson. G. Krupnikov was involved in organisational work. The first semi-legal meeting of the initiators took place in the basement of the Ministry of Finance at 1 Smilšu Street. The first official meeting was held in the building of the Commerce Labour Union at 32 Valņu Street in August of 1988.

In October 1988 the First Congress of Latvian Jews took place in the former House of the Latvian-Jewish Community at 6 Skolas Street in Riga. The congress took place in the spirit of historical decisions that were made by the Popular Front of Latvia. The congress proclaimed itself a representative body of Jewish culture. At the end of November 1988 the Second Congress of Latvian Jews took place, which officially established the Jewish Cultural Society of Latvia (JCSL), adopted its charter and elected the board.

E. Rapiņa was elected chairman of the board of the JCSL, G. Krupnikov, M. Wulfson and V. Krichevsky were among the most active members of the board.

The work of the board covered three main fields:

1. Rendering legal and financial aid to Jews who will choose to live in Latvia, so that they can fully practise their rights, preserve their national and religious identity, and confirm their self-respect.
2. Easing the process to those who will choose repatriation to Israel or emigration to some other Western country.
3. Rendering active support to the Popular Front of Latvia.

In the beginning of 1990 the JCSL supported the candidates of the PFL to the Supreme Council of the Latvian SSR. Three representatives of the Jewish community were elected. They included M. Wulfson and I. Movel, candidates of the PFL, and R. Maryash who was the representative of the Association of National Cultural Societies. All of them voted for the Declaration On the Renewal of Independence of the Republic of Latvia on May 4, 1990, which was adopted by the Supreme Council.

Jews who were citizens of independent Latvia (until June 1940) and their descendants mostly supported the Popular Front of Latvia and the re-establishment of independence. They associated Latvia's revival with the renewal of their own minority, and with the recognition of their rights in the same degree that they had them during the democratic parliamentary Republic of Latvia until May 15, 1934. They asked to restore their cultural autonomy with its elementary school, art, and literature, the right to free religious expression, the right to observe their traditions and to celebrate their religious holidays. The movement was especially marked by attempts to establish direct contacts with Israel and to regain its place in the world Jewry.

The growing Jewish community of Latvia supported the democratic Government of Latvia, and the Council of Ministers, which was headed by Ivars Godmanis. One of the first decisions of the Government (on July 1, 1990) was concerning the complete transition of the building at 6 Skolas Street in Riga into the possession of the Jewish Cultural Society of Latvia. This was done in respect to the Latvian Jews who had significantly contributed to the development of the economy and culture of Latvia.

However, many Jews who had immigrated from the USSR did not understand the national bent of the community. This was the consequence of the continuous ideological influence of the Soviet period and fear of the domination of national interests and a national consciousness in society. These were also the consequences of Russification.

Many people did not know Latvian, and this was a deficiency. In 1989 only 27% of the Latvian Jews could speak Latvian. The opening of the Riga Jewish Secondary School on September 1, 1989, was a significant achievement. Hone Bergman, the first director of the school, deserves gratitude. The school soon had about 500 pupils. It was the first re-established Jewish national school in the territory of the USSR.

The Declaration **On the Condemnation and Inadmissibility of Genocide in Latvia** was adopted by the Supreme Council of the Republic of Latvia on September 19, 1990. This played a positive and important role in normalising relations and developing friendship between the Latvian nation and the Jewish minority. It strictly condemned the crimes of the Nazi occupants and their local servants, and the crimes of individual citizens of Latvia against the Jewish people. The declaration stressed that the bloody violence could never be justified and there would be no end to its condemnation. The Declaration said that the Republic of Latvia would take upon itself the care of keeping the memory of the victims of the Holocaust alive and of paying homage to the heroism of the rescuers of the Jews. The Supreme Council of the Republic of Latvia also announced that the State of Latvia will not tolerate any expressions of anti-Semitism and national discrimination in Latvia as they are incompatible with the traditions of our people.

The Decisive Days of 1991

During the days of January 1991 many Latvian Jews supported the barricade struggle. A group of informants from the JCSL spread truthful news and assessments about the events in the Baltics in the Soviet Union (particularly in Moscow) and Western countries. The USA radio station National Public Radio, for instance, gave commentaries by G. Krupnikov, the German press published M. Wulfson's articles, and A. Dozortsev addressed a Jewish congress in Moscow.

During the putsch of August 1991 the organising committee for the cultural festivals of Baltic Jews was functioning in Riga. Its members G. Krupnikov and A. Kletskin received information from Jewish representatives about the events in Moscow and handed this information over to the board of the PFL. On the morning of August 21 the organising committee had already concluded that the putsch was facing failure. They decided to begin the festival on August 23 in order to demonstrate the cultural and social activity of Jewish democratic forces in support of the re-establishment of independence in the Baltic States. The participants of the festival joined the people who had assembled in the centre of Riga to see the dismantling of the Lenin Monument. It was a historical moment.

Several Latvian Jews played an important role in liquidating the agencies of the communist regime. Ruta Maryash worked in the commission formed by the Supreme Council (SC) of the Republic of Latvia (RL) on August 22, 1991, to investigate the attempt of the illegal coup. Igor Movel was elected to the commission of the SC of the RL, which supervised taking possession of the property of the CPL, and he was also elected to the commission for stopping the work of the USSR state security agencies.

The Jewish Cultural Society of Latvia appealed to the Supreme Council of Latvia and asked it to express its attitude towards the state of Israel. The Society also asked for an assessment of Latvian Jewish relations in the new situation, when both nations enjoyed their own national and independent statehood. The Foreign Ministry of Latvia urged to do the same. On August 29, 1991, the Supreme Council of the RL had already taken a unanimous decision **On Relations with Israel**.

It said:

Whereas the state of Israel has been established in the period when Latvia was occupied and its people had no opportunity to express their free will, whereas Latvia has been home for a rather large Jewish diaspora since the 16th century, whereas close relations have developed between Latvians and Jews in Latvia, which also found their striking expression in their joint struggle for the liberation of Latvia from the yoke of communism, whereas the Latvian people have always respected the endurance and heroism that the people of Israel showed in defending the independence of their State, the Supreme Council of the Republic of Latvia resolves:

1. To recognise the independence of the State of Israel.
2. To ask the government of the Republic of Latvia to work to ensure that the diplomatic and other bilateral relations between the Republic of Latvia and Israel are established as soon as possible.

The above resolution initiated a new historical stage in the mutual relations between Latvians and Jews. It is mainly characterised by friendship and large-scale co-operation, including co-operation in international politics. Diplomatic relations between Latvia and Israel

were already established in January 1992.

Latvia Israel

In the independent Republic of Latvia Jews could freely choose their future place of residence. The state of Latvia respected their wish to repatriate and Israel s interest therein. According to the agency  *Sohnut* , between 1989 and 2000 12,624 Jews and non-Jewish family members had repatriated from Latvia to Israel. According to information from the Latvian Board of Statistics, the number of Jews in Latvia had decreased by 11,680 during this period due to repatriation to Israel and emigration to Western countries.

Upon emigration to Israel many Jews keep their Latvian citizenship (Israel allows this). Presently about 800 citizens of Latvia are residing in Israel. This number includes quite a few patriots of Latvia, who are making all attempts to strengthen friendly relations between the two countries.

A visit to Israel on February 27    28, 1994, by a delegation that was headed by Latvian Prime Minister Valdis Birkavs had significant importance for the development of relations between Latvia and Israel. During this visit the delegation had negotiations with Ichak Rabin, Prime Minister of Israel, and signed bilateral agreements on cultural, scientific and educational co-operation and on the promotion of investments and mutual defence.

An official visit to Israel on February 23-25, 1998 by Guntis Ulmanis, President of the Republic of Latvia, particularly contributed to the strengthening of contacts between the leaders of the two countries. During the visit an animated dialogue took place between Esra Weizman, President of Israel, and Guntis Ulmanis. Both sides underlined that the historical aspect of Latvian    Jewish relations needs assessment and that all facets should be revealed  including those that united both peoples and those that divided them. Special focus was placed on the necessity to study the history of the Holocaust. President G. Ulmanis declared:    I call on the public of Latvia to be aware of the whole truth of the past. There were Latvians who took part in the killing of the Jews, and there were also Latvians who rescued Jews.   In addressing E. Weizman, G. Ulmanis expressed his deep regret that there had been some Latvians who had taken part in the implementation of the Holocaust.

The Israeli side took the above announcement as a proof of Latvia   s course towards the development of a democratic and integrated society, where high value is placed on aspirations for humanism and mutual friendship, and where there would be no room for anti-Semitism or any kind of xenophobia. E. Weizman in his turn acknowledged:    An investigation of the past [...] should be a firm basis for further strengthening and developing relations between Israel and Latvia.   

Parliamentary relations between Latvia and Israel were established. Shevah Weiss, Speaker of the Knesset of Israel, paid a visit to the Saeima of Latvia from August 30 to September 1, 1994, while Dan Tichon, his successor, arrived in Riga on January 12, 1999.

In the spring of 1998 Latvia commemorated the 50th anniversary of the State of Israel. In honour of this occasion the Riga City Council renamed former Lazaretes Street as Jeruzalemes (Jerusalem) Street.

The congress of the World Memorial Foundation of Jewish Culture, which was held in Riga on June 14    16, 1994, also dissipated the distrust from the past, and acknowledged the capital city of Latvia as a significant spiritual centre of the Jewish community in Eastern Europe. The congresses of Latvian Jews who are presently residing in Western countries and in Israel (held in Riga in 1994, 1997 and 2001), the periodical international Riga conferences    Jews in the Changing World   and other events also served this purpose. All the above undertakings have positively affected the life of the Latvian-Jewish community.

The history of Latvia and Israel is linked through the participation of many Jews of Latvian descent in the development of the State of Israel, in its protection and strengthening. Mordekhai Nurok was the Minister of Communications of Israel, Aron Yariv    the Minister of Transport and Information, Bentsion Keshet    Vice Speaker of the Knesset, Shaul Avigur   Deputy Minister of Defence, and Iser Harel    chief of the secret service    *Mossad*.   Benjamin Eliava, a politician, Benjamin Aktsin, a scholar of law and politics, and others have also played significant roles in Israel.

The 1990s on the Road to Integration

According to provisional data of the 2000 census, there were 10,376 Jews in Latvia who comprised 0.3% of Latvia   s population. This figure is 45.2% of the Jews who lived in Latvia in 1989. In 2000 there were 8249 Jews in Riga, 680 in Daugavpils, 292 in Jūrmala, 214 in Liepāja, 142 in Jelgava, 107 in Rēzekne, and 54 in Ventspils. As to the number of Jews in rural districts, the Riga District ranks first with 215 Jews, and is followed by the Jēkabpils District with 79 Jews, the Ogre District with 51, and the Ludza District with 41 Jews.

The Population Register of the Department for Citizenship and Migration Affairs shows that in the beginning of 2001 there were 9992 Jews who were permanent residents of the Republic of Latvia (0.4% of the population). Of them 5770 were citizens, 3922 were non-citizens, and 300 were foreigners.

Jews in Latvia are a national group that has integrated itself rather deeply in the society of Latvia. Only 45% of Jews were acknowledged as citizens of Latvia in 1995 when the Latvian Law on Citizenship was adopted, but 61% of Jews already held citizenship in 2001. While only 43% of Jews knew Latvian in 1996, more than 68% could speak the language in 2000.

The re-established Republic of Latvia has shown a benevolent and friendly attitude towards Jews both through its legislation and governmental policy. This has been demonstrated by the restitution of many possessions to their previous Jewish owners or their successors, by respect paid to Jewish national traditions and history, and by the wish to objectively evaluate the nature of Latvian-Jewish relations of the distant and recent past. The Jewish community has responded with loyalty towards the national State of Latvia and has supported its attempts to develop. Jews participate rather actively in the political life of Latvia. They are not establishing their own parties, but they are joining the parties and political associations of Latvia's citizens. Ruta Maryash, for instance, was elected deputy to the 5th and 6th Saeima from the centrist party Latvia's Way, Boris Tsilevich and Yakov Pliner are deputies of the 7th Saeima from the left-wing centrist National Concordance Party. Aleksandr Gilman has been elected to the Riga City Council from the left-wing party Equality of Rights. Their political views were and will be different, yet this is not an obstacle to uniting their efforts concerning the interests of Jews in the fields of culture and social life.

Many Jews of Latvia have achieved success in the economic life of the country. They include Sol Buckingoltz, President of Inter Source International and Vice President of the USA Chamber of Commerce, who is also the advisor to the President of the Republic of Latvia; Kirov Lipman, President of the company Liepājas metalurģi and President of the Latvia Ice-Hockey Federation; Chaim Kogan, Baltic manager of Lukoil; Ilya Gerchikov, manager of the company Dzintars; Isac Morein, President of the Bank of Commerce, etc. The opera singer Inese Galante, the chief stage director of the Valmiera Theatre Felix Deutsch and the graphic artist Iosif Elgurt are shining stars in the cultural life of Latvia. Tribute is still being paid to Tovy Livshitz, the conductor, and Lia Krasinska, professor of the theory of music, who have been talented and enthusiastic teachers of the present generation of musicians. Abram Kletskin is considered the highest arbiter of ethics in Latvia's journalism. Chief Rabbi Nathan Barkan has become an influential moral authority in Latvia's democratic society.

Ruvim Ferber, a physicist, Peter Krupnikov, a historian, Lev Faitelson, founder of the Latvian school of rheology, Aleksandr Tsiman and Aleksandr Rappoport, the biologists, and Regina Zhuk, a chemist, have made Latvia's name known in the world.

Jewish physicians, who have greatly contributed to the development of medicine in Latvia are Jūlijs Anshelevich, Anatoly Blyuger, Raphael Rosental, Arkady Gandz, Mikhail Malkiel, and Viktor Vesterman.

The aforementioned people are patriots of the multi-national Latvian nation. Their talent and work is devoted to all the country's inhabitants.

The Jewish minority is one of the most integrated national minorities in Latvia. With public tolerance growing stronger, the process of integration is advancing more rapidly. Latvia no longer has anti-Semitic parties and organisations, and there are no campaigns of anti-Jewish propaganda. From time to time there appear individual relapses of anti-Semitism, which hamper the course of integration. In 1998 and 1999 people who remain unidentified arranged explosions at the Riga synagogue, and from time to time Jewish tombstones and the memorials to the victims of the Holocaust suffer from damages. The periodicals *Jaunais Laiks*, *Patriots*, *Latvietis Latvijā* and issue No. 8, 2000, of the magazine *Kapitāls* have contained anti-Semitic content.

The above facts cannot be ignored. The exposure and condemnation of anti-Semitism is still topical.

The Contemporary Jewish Community of Riga

In 1992 the Jewish Cultural Society of Latvia reorganised itself into the Riga Jewish Community.

The Riga Jewish Community is chaired by the businessman Grigory Krupnikov. His deputies are Karmela Skorik (the field of culture), Hana Finkelstein (social care) and Shaul Fels (business activities). The community has been transformed into the Federation of the Public Associations of the Riga Jews that resembles the Federation of Jewish Communities in the cities of the USA. Each association has a representative on the board of the community.

1. The association The Jewish Cultural Centre of Riga (headed by K. Skorik) works mainly in three fields: in artistic expression Jewish dance and music; the popularisation of Jewish cultural values and traditions in the community; and making Jewish culture known to all inhabitants of Latvia.

The folk ensemble *Kinnor*, which during 1991-1995 staged 16 performances, and gave concerts not only in Latvia, but also in 30 cities of the USA and in other countries, received global recognition and was the top achievement of the Centre. The entire ensemble moved to Israel. Today there are eight successful Jewish artistic groups in Latvia.

2. The Documentation Centre and Museum Jews in Latvia, headed by the historian Mārgers Vestermanis. The exhibits of the museum tell visitors about the history of Latvian Jews, focusing on the good and evil times of the 20th century, including the atrocities of

the Holocaust. The museum has collected more than 11,000 items and testimonies, and its exhibitions have also travelled across Germany.

3. Shimon Dubnov's Jewish Secondary School. Its present director is Meier Birk, a teacher and scientist.
4. The Social Care Centre of Latvian Jews, which renders assistance to about 2000 people. The centre is headed by H. Finkelstein.
5. The Latvian Society of the Former Prisoners of Jewish Ghettos and Concentration Camps, which is headed by the lawyer Aleksandr Bergman. The society has close contacts with associations in the USA and Germany, which are helping people who were persecuted by Nazism.
6. The Association of Jews Who Were Persecuted by the Soviet Regime, headed by Yakov Shatz.
7. The Association of Latvian-Jewish War Veterans, which unites Jews who fought in World War II. The Association has friendly relations with associations of war veterans in the USA and Israel. Semion Svetz is the chairman of the Association. The Association publishes the newspaper *Haveirim* (The Friend).
8. The *Bikur Holim* Hospital and Society, which was re-established in 1992 and has an affiliation with the charity association *Linas Hacedek*. The association is run by the professors Arkady Gandz and Anatoly Blyuger. The hospital has received significant aid from foreign Jews and Israel and can therefore effectively use the latest methods of treatment.
9. The public centre *Alef* which was founded in September 2000 with the support of the Jewish international aid organisation *Joint*. The centre is headed by the teacher Viktoria Gubatova. First and foremost, the programmes of the centre are meant for youth. They also seek to involve all Jews in the events that are aimed at the preservation of their national identity and to promote the formation of Jewish families.
10. The Latvian-Jewish Youth Centre. The chairman of the centre is Yurik Mashutin, a student in the Master's programme of the Baltic Russian Institute. The programmes of the centre help young people to find their place in social life and work.

The religious congregation of the Riga Jews with its synagogue at Peitavas Street in Riga is an independent entity. Chief Rabbi of Latvia and Riga Nathan Barkan and his Deputy Arye Bekker run the spiritual life of the congregation. The Jewish Scientist Club, which is named after Naftaly Berg, an outstanding physicist of the USA, and the Shamir Foundation, which is funding many Latvian-Jewish events, have close relations with the congregation. The congregation publishes the newspaper *Gesharim* (The Bridges).

Jewish celebrations that are organised by the congregation are attended by many representatives from Latvian public and social organisations. This strengthens friendship and co-operation between Latvians and Jews.

In July 1998, the congregation supported the establishment of the Centre for Judaic Studies, headed by R. Ferber.

The Jewish hassidic congregation *Habad Lyubavich* is functioning outside the aforementioned congregation. Its rabbi is Mordekhai Glazman from the USA. The congregation is also supports the *Habad Lyubavich* primary school, which was established in 1995.

The Jewish Community of Latvia

Since 1988 Jewish communities began to develop outside of Riga in Daugavpils, Liepāja, Jūrmala, Ventspils, Jelgava, Jēkabpils, Rēzekne and Ludza.

The Jewish community of Daugavpils has been particularly active. Its group of historians (Y. Steiman, Z. Yakub, B. Volkovich, etc.) have done much to investigate the history of Latvian Jews, particularly those of Latgale. The community is headed by the teacher Sophia Meyerova.

The community of Liepāja has named itself the Liepāja Jewish Congregation, thereby placing emphasis on the restoration of the congregation that perished in the Holocaust. However, secular motifs actually prevail in its activities. Aside from Jews, the congregation also unites their non-Jewish family members and focuses on supporting young families and on rendering social assistance. The chairman of the congregation is Naum Vorobeichik, director of an athletic school.

In August 1996 all the above communities and congregations formed the consolidated Council of the Jewish Communities and Congregations of Latvia, which was co-chaired by Grigory Krupnikov and Ilana Ivanova, representative of the Liepāja congregation. This association is a member in the European Council of Jewish Communities. G. Krupnikov was elected to its board and executive committee.

This is how the Jews of Latvia are joining the European integration process.

The Jewish community of Latvia is presently the most organised and goal-oriented national minority in Latvia. It is not large, but it is extremely dynamic and active, focusing its work on the preservation of its national cultural values, the national upbringing of youth, the care of old people, and the investigation of the community's history.

Jews have been an integral part of Latvia's history for more than 400 years. The re-establishment of Latvia's independence simultaneously also renewed their participation in the development of the State. In view of repatriation to Israel, the number of Jews in Latvia is expected to fall. The community, however, will stay. It can be estimated that it will have around seven thousand people. They will play a significant role in our national life as the initiators of many undertakings and processes and as representatives of the Latvian intelligentsia. They will not be aliens they will be the sons and daughters of the Latvian nation in a united and democratic Europe.

Mārgers Vestermanis

OPPOSITION TO THE HOLOCAUST IN LATVIA

This report on the Holocaust in Latvia would be incomplete if we were to leave out the story of the people whose conscience did not allow them to become simple observers of the Jewish tragedy.

The Nazis carried out the extermination of the Jews with deliberate openness, and intentionally placed society before a choice. One possibility was to yield to the hypnotic magnetism of anti-Semitism, to submit to the Nazi means of ethnic cleansing and to participate. Another option was that of seeming neutrality one could pretend not to see the terrible calamity of one's fellow human beings. It was also possible to condemn the Holocaust, to sympathise with the persecuted Jews and to support them. The intensity of the aforementioned sentiments determined the number of people who decided not only to support the Jews, but also to undertake the dangerous work of their rescue.

Those who decided upon counteraction to the Holocaust were a minority everywhere, including in Latvia. Because of small number of people who were involved, opposition to the Holocaust did not turn into a movement. Instead, it manifested itself as the protest of several individuals against the inhuman acts of the Nazis against the Jews. Latvia found itself in a specific social and political situation that was the result of the occupation of two hostile powers. This situation contained no preconditions for the opposition to the Holocaust to become integrated into any of the resistance movements either the Soviet or the national-patriotic resistance movement. Therefore, it remains disputable what motivated the behaviour of the supporters and rescuers of the Jews. Some people found the explanation in political orientation, others in religious conviction. These were certainly significant factors that affected the choice of one's position. However, in all cases the decisive role was played by ethical motives human solidarity, deep compassion, and, as Kant put it the moral law within man.

After World War II, almost nothing was being written about the general public reaction to the Holocaust and especially about Jewish rescue. A tradition rooted in national ethics asks one to remember the good that other have done to you (*hakarat hatov*), and Jews alone did not forget the people who had made attempts to save them when the world had turned away from the Jews. As soon as the memorial complex, museum and institute of the Holocaust *Yad Vashem* was established in Jerusalem in 1945, it immediately started to collect information about the rescuers of Jews. In 1953 the Knesset of Israel established a special institution that researched rescue activities and awarded rescuers an honorary diploma and the title Righteous among the Nations. Rescuers were also given the right to plant a memorial tree in The Avenue of Rescuers in Jerusalem. In 1989 the award had already been given to 8000 people, and by the early 21st century to around 10,000 people. 65 inhabitants of Latvia were also awarded. Under the conditions of the Soviet regime it was dangerous for the rescued Jews to maintain contact with Israel and to provide information about their rescuers. Soviet security agencies openly distrusted the rescued Jews and often subjected them to repressions. The honorary title awarded by Israel could only cause trouble to the rescuers themselves. The identification of rescuers, therefore, started very late. This can explain the small number of awards given to the inhabitants of Latvia.

Over the last ten years the Riga Jewish community's museum Jews in Latvia has recorded 220 cases in which Jews were concealed, and which involved more than 400 rescuers. This record can also be considered incomplete, as the majority of the rescuers and those who were rescued have died without leaving behind any information. Often the rescuer is known, but the personal data of those who were rescued have disappeared. There are some 100 cases where only the name of the person who was rescued has been recorded.

Upon examining all presently available sources, it is possible to conclude that around 400-450 Jews were rescued in Latvia. The number of those who were concealed was much larger, however several dozens were discovered and shot dead. Those who concealed

them were arrested. Presently, the names of only 33 persons who rescued Jews and who were repressed have been identified. It is known for certain that nine of them perished in imprisonment. They include Anna Alma Pole of Riga, a street sweeper who worked at 15 Peldu Street, and who concealed seven Jews, and another Riga street sweeper, Andrejs Graubiņš, who concealed six Jews at 75 Avotu Street. Others include Dietrich Feinman, a student of the University of Latvia, who committed a crime against Nazi forces by concealing his Jewish wife, and the nanny Marija Čible of Daugavpils who was handed over to the police for taking part in the concealment of the small Jewish boy Saul Perelman. The boy was saved, but Marija Čible never returned from imprisonment. The nabbing of four Jews who had run away from the Aizpute peat bog was especially tragic. They were caught at 4 Pils Street in Aizpute, at the Pūķis and the Šusters families, who were immediately arrested after the discovery of the hiding-place of the Jews. The father Jānis Šusters, his son Gerhards, a driver, and the brothers Kārlis and Žanis Pūķis were all killed. They were honest working people known by everyone in Aizpute. Kārlis was a tailor, and Žanis worked as a clerk. Anna, the wife of Žanis Pūķis, Elza, the wife of Kārlis Pūķis, and their mother Ieva Dzene were also arrested. Anna was later released from prison because of her pregnancy, but Ieva Dzene died in a concentration camp. Out of the entire family only Elza returned from imprisonment in Germany, where her health had suffered serious damage...

The destinies of 16 other arrested rescuers have not been clarified. Police documents and testimonies have recorded their personal data, the fact of their arrest and even their social status. They were all representatives of the common class. Laugals, a forester in the Elšķene *pagasts* of Ventspils District concealed a Jew for seven months; Boļeslavs Zimkevics and Pēteris Lepiksons who worked for the Bulduri railway station were arrested on December 29, 1941, for hiding Leon Skuta, a Jew who had escaped from the Riga Central Prison; Žanis Alksnis and Malvīne Rozentāle, farmers of the Sabile *pagasts* of Kuldīga District; Grigory Zaichikov, a farmer from the area around Grīva, Ludza District; Selyimon Zaitsev, a farmer from the Mērdzene *pagasts*, etc. However, nothing is known about the agonising fates of the 16 arrestees in the places of their imprisonment, except that they never returned from the camps.

Eight rescuers have been identified who survived imprisonment. These are Edīte Dančberga, Zenta Jostsone, Milda Kaminska, Pauls Krūmiņš, Olga Krūzmane, Ella Luca, Zinaida Poņņikova, and Elza Pūķe. There were also some intellectuals among the survivors. Zenta Jostsone was a student of the University of Latvia, Zinaida Poņņikova a pianist, and Pauls Krūmiņš an assistant professor and well-known music teacher in Daugavpils. Of the eight survivors, Olga Krūzmane of Riga is still alive. In 1999 she was awarded the honorary title Righteous among the Nations in Israel, and in 2000, together with several other rescuers of Jews she was awarded The Order of Three Stars of Latvia.

The docker of the Riga Port Jānis Lipke, nicknamed Ķanis, has won legendary fame. Together with his friends and family he managed to rescue 55 Jews, hiding some twenty of them at several places in Riga, while the rest were concealed in specially-made shelters at certain farms in the Dobele District. Ķanis is sometimes called the Wallenberg of Latvia. The comparison to the world-renowned organiser of the rescue missions of the Budapest Jews is flattering, but inaccurate. Raoul Wallenberg, whose name now heads international organisations and foundations, was protected by his official status as a Swedish diplomat. He was also the representative of the US Presidential Committee for Refugees. He had considerable financial resources available to him and contacts in the international financial arena. Lipke, on the other hand, was totally unprotected. He had neither special status, nor resources, apart from a great desire to save people, and the big talent of an organiser. He knew how to assemble people whose help made his large-scale rescuing operations possible. The drivers Jānis Briedis and Kārlis Jankovskis, the workers Edgars Zande and Andrejs Graubiņš, and leather craftsman Bernets Rozenbergs were his closest assistants in Riga. More helpers were needed to arrange several secret shelters in the countryside, in the Dobele *pagasts*. Lipke managed to secure the help of Vilis Binenfelds, elder of the Dobele *pagasts*, Edgars Francmanis, chief doctor of the Dobele Hospital, and farmers of several farmsteads, who included Fricis Rozentāls and his sons Bruno and Edgars, Vilhelmīne Putriņa, Marija Kellers and her sons, Žanis Millers and his sisters Elza and Lidija, Fricis Rozentāls' brother Jānis, Kārlis Didrihsons, Jānis Undulis and several others.

Žanis Lipke was not the only one who managed to rescue a larger number of Jews. In Riga Sonia Schwartz rescued nine people. Elvīra Rone rescued eight, including the violinist Mark Kremer, whose son Gidon, who was born after the war, is famous among music-lovers across the world. The well-known athlete Artūrs Motmilers rescued seven Jews.

In Liepāja the sailor Roberts Seduls concealed a larger group of Jews, 11 people, all at one place. When on March 10, 1945, Roberts Seduls was killed during a Soviet air-raid on Liepāja, his family continued his rescue efforts. With the help of neighbours who, as it turned out, had already long known about his secret activities, the family continued to provide supplies to the Jews who were hidden in the cellar until the day they could leave their shelter. This day came only on May 9, 1945.

Several dozens of Jews were also rescued in Daugavpils. The largest group, 11 people, found shelter with the forester Arseny Kornilov in Rugeļi near Daugavpils.

The villages and small provincial towns of Latvia saw the killings of Jews in late July and August of 1941 during the largest German military operations when their victory seemed inevitable to many people. If anyone was willing to undertake rescue operations that summer, they had to act without delay, and it was hard to foresee how long the hiding would have to take place. This explains the comparative rare number of rescue attempts in Latvia's countryside. In the big cities, like Riga, Daugavpils and Liepāja, after the mass killings a part of the Jews had still survived in the ghetto camps, which existed until autumn of 1943. Thereafter, several thousands were placed in the Riga concentration camp until the summer of 1944. A longer period opened up for rescue efforts when the military and

political situation turned against the Nazis. The importance of this factor is illustrated by the fate of the Jews who escaped the Dundaga concentration camp and sought to survive the particularly hard conditions of the **Kurzeme Kettle** in 1944/45. During the last winter of the war the atmosphere in the countryside was much different from that in the summer of 1941: Jews were willingly supported everywhere and sometimes they were concealed. Therefore, several dozens were able to survive.

It took people with special courage to decide to provide similar support in the summer of 1941. **Madimirs Vuškāns** of **Preiļi** was one of these people. Right during the terrible days when the slaughter of the Jews he took in and hid eight people who were fleeing from death. Six of them survived.

Today in historical retrospect we are interested in another issue. Were there other acts of opposition to the Holocaust, aside from the rescue efforts, which can be measured according to the numbers that were saved? Under the terror of the occupation regime, and in an atmosphere of intimidation and extremely intense anti-Semitic instigations, there were rather limited possibilities for opposition. However, there is no doubt that when the extermination of the Jews started in the summer of 1941, a considerable part of society condemned it and tried to help the Jews however they could by rendering moral support and supplying them with food. This is recorded not only by police reports, but also by the pro-Nazi press of that time particularly in provincial publications. For instance, on July 11, 1941, the newspaper **Ventas Balss** published an article with the heading **There is no Place for Sympathy towards Jews** and threatened the sympathizers with prison. The newspaper returned to the topic now and again, and finally on August 22, 1941, it wrote: **more than one inhabitant of Ventspils feels somewhat silent, but in many cases even open compassion.** On July 29, 1941, **Tukuma Ziņas** also had to instruct its readers and tell them how bad it is that there are people among Latvians who try to pity Jews. They say Jews are not that guilty. **Talsu Vārds**, **Tālavietis**, **Daugavas Vēstnesis** and other publications voiced deep indignation that Jews were pitied, that they were being greeted on the street and that help was offered to them. The newspaper **Tēvija** also continued to intimidate those would not comply by including occasional information on the filing of reports and even arrests.

Not only the so-called **common folk** were ready to support and help their Jewish friends, but also some of the national intelligentsia. **Zenta Mauriņa** and the artist **Vidvuds Eglītis**, son of the writer **Viktors Eglītis**, are among those who tried to take practical action to help their Jewish acquaintances. Apart from these Latvian intellectuals who not only supported but also rescued Jews there were others: the family of Academician **Arturs Krūmiņš**, Professor of Architecture, the family of the Latvian officer **Edgars Ozols** and the teacher **Emīlija Ozola**, the family of actor **Jānis Osis**, and the Catholic priest **Kazimirs Vilnis**. Documents show that several priests of the Orthodox Church were also involved in different support activities, while the Evangelic Lutheran Church was represented only by the Riga pastor **Gustavs Šaurums** alone. Catholics, on the whole, were more active, particularly in **Latgale**. Many concrete cases have become known where priests have tried to rescue people by issuing documents that would certify belonging to a Christian parish. They also christened Jewish children, whom parents had managed to leave with compassionate women before they themselves were driven to the mass graves. Unfortunately, these actions of good intent saved almost no one...

The time has come to see not only the killers and the victims of the Holocaust, but also the rescuers. It takes just one man with a gun to kill dozens of people. However, in order to save just one persecuted individual, it requires the solidarity of many people and their readiness to decline from a normal life for years and to take risk everything that is dear to them. This is a page of past that will always have a place of honour in the history of Latvian Jewish relations.

Armands Gūtmanis

HOLOCAUST EDUCATION, RESEARCH AND REMEMBRANCE **LATVIAN PUBLIC POLICY AFTER THE RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF INDEPENDENCE IN 1991**

Latvian Public Policy

The re-establishment of independence in 1991 also brought an opportunity for the Latvian society and the State to turn its attention to the impartial investigation of the past. In Latvia, as in other countries of Europe, the sensitive issue of crimes against humanity has moved to the forefront, including the crimes of the Nazi and communist totalitarian regimes, and the participation of Latvia's inhabitants in the above crimes.

In the 1990s the Republic of Latvia gradually improved its support to the evaluation of history. The State encourages the research of history, educational programmes, as well as preserving the memory of the past. This work became more active and branched out in the latter half of the 1990s.

The Declaration of Latvia's Parliament in 1990

Several events moved the evaluation of the past and Holocaust education to the forefront in Latvia. The first event was connected with the re-establishment of independence. A declaration [On the Inadmissibility of Genocide and Anti-Semitism in Latvia](#), adopted by the Supreme Council of the Republic of Latvia on September 19, 1990, was one of the first documents of the re-established State.

Latvia and the Special Task Force for International Co-operation on Holocaust Education, Research and Remembrance

Another important aspect is Latvia's interest in working together with the Special Task Force for International Co-operation on Holocaust. The President of Latvia and the Minister of Education and Science took part in an international forum in Stockholm (in January 2000) that was dedicated to the Holocaust. The President confirmed Latvia's readiness to co-operate with this International Task Force on concrete projects.

In the middle of 2001, in order to foster further successful collaboration with the Special Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Research and Remembrance, the Government of Latvia appointed the State Secretary of the Ministry of Education and Science as its representative to the Task Force. His tasks include summarizing ideas and plans from all public and non-governmental institutions to develop Latvia's Plan of Action for Holocaust Education, Research and Remembrance. The co-ordinated Plan of Action will contribute to the more purposeful involvement of the International Task Force countries in the implementation of joint projects.

The Contribution of Latvia to the International Fund for Needy Victims of Nazi Persecution

Thirdly, in 1998, the Government of Latvia made the contribution of USD 25,000 to the International Fund for Needy Victims of Nazi Persecution. When the Fund asked which fields in Latvia would like to receive financing from the International Fund, the Government of Latvia defined Holocaust education as a priority field for funding. The funding was meant for three institutions in Latvia: the Museum and Documentation Centre [Jews in Latvia](#), the Centre for Judaic Studies of the University of Latvia and the Institute of the History of Latvia.

The Museum [Jews in Latvia](#)

The status of a State-accredited museum was conferred on the museum and documentation centre [Jews in Latvia](#) on February 7, 2001. The museum has won international acknowledgement. The State-accreditation of the museum demonstrates Latvia's political approach to research on the past, including Holocaust research and the research of the history of minorities.

After the accreditation the Government of Latvia allotted the centre [Jews in Latvia](#) targeted funding for the exposition on the history of the Jewish community in Latvia and on the history of the Holocaust in Latvia.

Local Government Initiatives

The activities of Latvia's local governments are supplementing the policy of the State. The restoration of a synagogue in Sabile, a town in the northwest of Latvia, is one of the priorities of the State's cultural heritage preservation efforts. The synagogue of Sabile is one of the historical monuments that Latvia wishes to restore. It was built in the 19th century and fulfilled spiritual needs until the World War II. In addition to the restoration of the synagogue, work is also being done at the Sabile Jewish Cemetery. The restoration of the synagogue is a joint project between Latvia and Sweden.

The preservation of the heritage of the local Jewish community is the concern of the Bauska Municipality. [Jews in Bauska](#) until World War II was among the themes discussed at a research conference that focused on the cultural heritage and history of Bauska. The conference was a joint initiative of the Latvian Academy of Sciences and the Bauska Town Council.

The Jewish community started developing in Bauska in the 18th century or even earlier. Since then a number of Jewish commerce and charity organisations and societies have sprouted there. During the 19th century the Jewish community in Bauska played a significant role in the economic life of the town. The conference in Bauska placed emphasis on the work of the religious figures Abraham Kook and Joseph Eliasberg both in Bauska and later in Palestine. Bauska almost entirely lost its Jewish population during the Holocaust of 1941. An exhibition on the Jews in Bauska was opened in the city.

Education

Holocaust Education at Schools

The public authorities in Latvia have supported education both at schools and at the university.

The subject of the Holocaust is included in the compulsory history curriculum as a component of general education. It is also an item of the approved final exams, and is included in the final exam of secondary schools. A class on cultural history also discusses the subject of the Holocaust (according to obtained data, the subject is taken by 62% of pupils). This topic is addressed indirectly by the 9th-grade class on civics. A class on politics in secondary schools deals with the Holocaust when discussing the theme of totalitarian regimes.

Several books, which discuss the subject of the Holocaust and the history of the Jewish community in Latvia, are presently available to pupils. These include: *History of Modern Times: the 20th Century* by J. Freibergs, published in 1998, *Jews in Latvia* by L. Dribin in 1996, and *The History of Jews in Latvia* by Dov Levin in 1999. A book by G. Kurlovičs and A. Tomašūns *The History of Latvia: the Years of Occupation*, published in 1998, contains a special chapter on the genocide of Jews. The above books (all in Latvian) are used during the course of studies at the schools.

The Association of Latvia's History Teachers has published a handbook for teachers entitled *The Controversial History*.

The Centre for Judaic Studies, University of Latvia

While developing its academic programme, the University of Latvia formed the Centre for Judaic Studies in 1998. The Centre provides academic instruction to the students of the University of Latvia both on the history of the Jewish community in Latvia and issues of the Holocaust. Students, scientists and others who are interested have an opportunity to learn the history, philosophy, language, culture and religion of the Jews.

The Centre offers students several courses of lectures. These include a course on the history of the Jews in Latvia from the 16th century through modern times. The above courses are included in the study programmes for students of history and theology. The Centre has organized public lectures for wider audiences.

The Centre involves both Latvian and foreign scholars in research on selected topics. The Centre for Judaic Studies supported the third conference on *Jews in the Changing World*, which was held in Riga in 1999. The first conference took place in August 1995. The fourth conference will be held in Riga in November 2001. The Centre for Judaic Studies receives funding from the Government of Latvia, the Soros Foundation in Latvia, the Memorial Fund of Jewish Culture, the Embassy of the Netherlands in Riga, the Embassy of Israel in Riga, Rabbi Nathan Barkan and the SHAMIR Fund from Jerusalem.

Tell ye Your Children

The publication in Latvia of the book *Tell ye Your Children... A Book on the Holocaust in Europe 1933-1945* is the result of Latvia's co-operation with the Special Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Research and Remembrance. It was published in Latvian (7000 copies) and in Russian (3000 copies) and was sent out to schools in Latvia.

The book contains a 10-page chapter on Latvia written by P. Levin, the author of the book from Sweden. The issue has an introduction written by the President of the Republic of Latvia and the Prime Minister of Sweden. Vice-Prime Minister of Sweden L. Hjelm-Valen, who was commissioned by G. Persson, Prime Minister of Sweden, visited Latvia on February 12, 2001 and took part in the presentation of the book.

Seminars for History Teachers

International co-operation also resulted in seminars for teachers. In June and August 2001, seminars on Holocaust education for history teachers took place in Latvia. The Swedish Institute from Stockholm and the Embassy of the USA in Riga helped to organise the seminars. The Latvian Association of History Teachers made the seminars particularly effective by involving teachers from the largest cities of Latvia.

The Latvian Association of History Teachers has delegated teachers of history to the *Yad Vashem* International School of Holocaust Studies in Jerusalem. The teachers have taken part in a course on Holocaust education (December 27, 1999 to January 19, 2000).

The Latvian Association of History Teachers enjoys productive co-operation with the international Latvian Commission of Historians. On April 1st, 2000, the Latvian Commission of Historians and the Latvian Association of History Teachers held a joint seminar on the teaching of the history of the World War II at schools. Special emphasis was placed on methods for teaching the Holocaust. The seminar took place in Līgatne, a town in the north-east of Latvia, and was attended by 60 history teachers from all regions of Latvia.

In June 2001, history teachers from Latvia visited the states of Minnesota and New York in the USA to participate in a programme sup-

ported by the U. S. Information Centre which is aimed at acquainting teachers with methods of teaching history.

Anne Frank and Sheina Gram

In the spring of 2001 the exhibition "Anne Frank – a History for Today" was opened in Riga. This travelling exhibition was opened by V. Viķe-Freiberga, President of Latvia, in the House of the Riga Jewish Community on April 21. The National Board of Latvian Museums organized the exhibition in co-operation with the Amsterdam museum "Anne Frank House." The Diary of Anne Frank is being published in Latvian.

The Latvian side has added three stands to the exhibition. They tell about a Jewish girl Sheina Gram from Preiļi, a town in eastern Latvia. Sheina was writing a diary from the day the Nazis occupied Latvia until her death. She was killed at the age of 15.

New books in Latvian that tackle the subject of the Holocaust are attracting public attention. A book on the Holocaust "The Night" by Elie Wiesel, writer and winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, was translated into Latvian in early 2001. "The Night" is one of the books recently translated into Latvian that tells about the fate of the Jewish nation. "The Sunflower" by Simon Wiesenthal was published in 2000. Both books have an introduction written by V. Viķe-Freiberga, President of Latvia. These books were translated by the Lutheran pastor G. Dišlers.

Research

The Commission of the Historians of Latvia

In the autumn of 1998 Guntis Ulmanis, President of the Republic of Latvia, founded the Commission of the Historians of Latvia. Its aim is to encourage the research of the 20th-century Latvian history and provide its clarification to the Latvian and foreign community. The commission focuses its work on the two totalitarian regimes that replaced one another in Latvia and during which crimes against humanity were committed.

The commission is working on a report "Crimes against Humanity in Latvia During the Soviet and Nazi Occupations, 1940–1956." The first Progress Report and conclusions were prepared in the summer of 2001. The commission is an international body that has involved experts from the USA, Great Britain, Israel, Germany, Sweden, Russia, and France. The commission includes scientists from the University of Latvia, the State Archives of Latvia, the Museum "Jews in Latvia" and the Museum of the Occupation of Latvia.

State Financed Research

The Commission of Historians has received funding from the State budget. This has made new research possible. In the year 2000, 25 historians in Latvia conducted research on new topics for the commission. In 2001, new scholarly topics were defined for 20 scientists. Until now, the subject of the extermination of Jews in the small towns of Latvia and the topic of local collaborationists have been insufficiently studied. The performed research contributes to the public understanding of the Holocaust in Latvia and the understanding of crimes against humanity.

In October 2000, the Latvian Commission of Historians organised an international conference on the problems of Holocaust research in Latvia. The reports of the conference are published in a separate volume, thereby providing a wider audience with insight on the latest scientific studies.

In November 2001, the Commission of Historians will organize the 2nd conference on Holocaust research in Riga. Latvian historians, as well as foreign scholars and Latvian teachers, are invited to deliver reports at the conference. It is planned to open an exhibition, which will show materials on the history of the Jewish community in Latvia, the development of the community during independent Latvia between the two World Wars, and on the Holocaust and the rescuers of Jews in Latvia.

Remembrance

Paying Tribute to the Rescuers

The State officials of Latvia have paid tribute to the inhabitants who displayed personal courage and rescued Jews during the Holocaust.

In April 2000, Vaira Viķe-Freiberga, President of Latvia, unveiled a memorial plaque to the rescuer of Jews Žanis Lipke, who during the

World War II saved 55 Jews from death.

On July 4, 2000, on the Remembrance Day of the Genocide of the Jewish People, the President of Latvia awarded rescuers of Jews the Order of Three Stars. Those awarded included Bruno Rozentāls (who rescued 36 Jews), Jadviga Arcehovska, Olga Krūzmane, Juris Bērziņš, and Ilga Krūmiņa.

On July 4, 2001, a memorial meeting was held at the place in Riga, which had once been the site of a synagogue. The meeting was attended by the President of Latvia. She said: "Anyone who raises his hand against his brother has raised his hand against all of humanity. Anyone who continues to propagate intolerance, violence and evil, continues to sin against God and humanity. Today we have come together to remember the souls of those who have perished. The ruins of this house of prayers, this synagogue, have borne witness to tragic events. Let us do everything we can so that they remain a spectre and a reminder: evil may find home in man's soul, and it is the work of religion and the family, of upbringing and society, to raise men and not monsters."

In late September of 2000, B. Rozentāls, bearer of the Order of Three Stars, attended the meeting of the Human Rights Group of the USA Congress. B. Rozentāls was met by Tom Lantos, USA Congressman, and by USA legislators, foreign diplomats, and representatives from USA Jewish public organisations. On April 21, 2001, the USA Jewish community unveiled a memorial plaque to B. Rozentāls in Washington. The memorial plaque to B. Rozentāls is placed next to the plaque of R. Wallenberg and other rescuers of victims. Memories told by B. Rozentāls are recorded on an eight-hour video film that will be deposited in the Museum of the Holocaust in Washington.

On November 17, 2000, the President of Latvia awarded Nathan Barkan, Chief Rabbi of Riga and Latvia, the Order of Three Stars.

The awards and acknowledgement of Israel bear special importance in paying tribute to the rescuers of Jews. On February 27, 2001, the Embassy of Israel in Riga presented the award "Righteous among the Nations" to four citizens of Latvia and their descendants who had rescued Jews during World War II. On March 13, 2001, the Ambassador of Israel to Latvia presented this award to M. Eniņa and her sons and grandson in Liepāja.

The Restoration of Memorial Sites

The Committee of the Brethren Cemetery is responsible for the memorial sites of the perished Jews. This committee has a mandate from the Government of Latvia, and it has established co-operation with relevant organisations in Germany. Joint efforts have led to the restoration of the Biķernieki Memorial Site in Riga. A memorial event is to take place at the restored Biķernieki Memorial Complex on November 28, 2001. The event will commemorate 60 years since the annihilation of the Jewish community in Latvia.

Latvian officials are maintaining close dialogue with the representatives of the Latvian Jewish community who are presently residing abroad. The 3rd World Congress of Jews of Latvian Descent took place in Riga on June 1-8, 2001. It assembled Jews from all over the world, who were born in Latvia, had resided there, or whose relatives had relations with Latvia. The official opening of the congress took place in the House of the Jewish Community at 6 Skolas Street. The opening ceremony was attended by the President of Latvia and the Prime Minister of Latvia. These contacts are strengthening the link between the Latvian Jewish community and Latvia and demonstrate Latvia's State policy in terms of an honest assessment of the past. At the opening of the congress the President of Latvia said: "I wish to welcome all participants of the convention and to say: Latvia is also your home, home of the Latvian Jews. Whether it is your fatherland, or the land of your family's roots, Latvia is also your land, it is a part of your experience, and your ancestors have contributed to it. They have come here with their work, with their life and gifts. Latvia is proud of all of its sons and daughters, and there are many people among Latvian Jews that our State can be truly proud of: we have distinguished artists, we have the chess champion Mikhail Thal, the philosopher Isaiah Berlin, and a number of other celebrities. There are politicians who were present when Israel was founded, there are Statesmen, such as Mordechai Dubin, who was present at the founding of independent Latvia and who was elected to the first four Saeimas of Latvia."

In the beginning of June 2001 a special library was opened in the Jewish Community House during the days of the congress. It holds books on the Holocaust and on the history of the Jewish people. In her opening address, the President of Latvia pointed out that such a library would contribute to the public understanding of the history of the Jewish people: "It is my wish that this library will serve everyone who enters it and opens a book. May they gain a deeper understanding of Judaism, of both the tragic and the joyful history of the Jewish people, and a deeper understanding of the world cultural heritage. And through this knowledge may they themselves become more open, understanding, wiser and humane."



Latvijas Republikas
Augstākās Padomes
L Ē M U M S

Par Deklarāciju "Par genocīda un antisemitisma nosodījumu un nepieļaujamību Latvijā"

Latvijas Republikas Augstākā Padome n o l e m j a:
Pieņemt Latvijas Republikas Augstākās Padomes Deklarāciju "Par genocīda un antisemitisma nosodījumu un nepieļaujamību Latvijā".

Latvijas Republikas Augstākās
Padomes priekšsēdētājs

A. Gorbunovs

Latvijas Republikas Augstākās
Padomes sekretārs

I. Daudišs

Rīgā 1990. gada "19." septembrī

Resolution by the Supreme Council of the Republic of Latvia
on the Declaration



LATVIJAS REPUBLIKAS AUGSTĀKĀS PADOMES

D E K L A R Ā C I J A

Par genocīda un antisemitisma
nosodījumu un nepieļaujamību
Latvijā

Latvijas Republikas Augstākā Padome nosoda jebkurus mēģinājumus destabilizēt republikā politisko situāciju starptacionālo attiecību jomā. Augstākā Padome uzskata, ka korektas un stabilas starptacionālās attiecības var veidot, vienīgi taisnīgi izvērtējot pagātnes vēsturiskos notikumus. Kopš 1940.gada, kad tika likvidēta Latvijas valsts, pāri republikai ir vēlušies genocīda vilņi. Tā upuri bija visu republikā dzīvojošo tautību pārstāvji, bet it īpaši ebreji.

Latvijas tautas vārdā Latvijas Republikas Augstākā Padome pasludina, ka tā bez ierunām nosoda hitleriskās okupācijas gados Latvijā realizēto genocīdu pret ebreju tautu, kā rezultātā tika nogalināti vairāk nekā 80 tūkstoši Latvijas ebreju un ne mazāk kā 200 tūkstoši ebreju no citām Eiropas valstīm, to skaitā sievietes un bērni.

Ar dziļu nožēlu ir jāatzīst, ka to vidū, kas palīdzēja realizēt okupantu ierosināto teroru, ir bijuši arī Latvijas pilsoņi. Nav un nevar būt nedz attaisnojuma, nedz sodības noilguma asiņainajam genocīdam pret ebreju tautu kā noziegumam pret cilvēci.

Latvijas Republika uzņemas rūpes par ebreju - genocīda upuru-piemieņas ienužināšanu, kā arī par to Latvijas pilsoņu

piemēpas saglabāšanu, kuri mēģināja glābt un glāba nelainīgo fašisma upuru dzīvības, riskējot ar savējo.

Latvijas tauta ar gandarījumu seko ebreju tautas nacionālajai atdzimšanai tās vēsturiskajā dzimtenē Izraēlā un apsveic šīs valsts panākumus kultūrā, saimnieciskajā dzīvē, zinātnē. Izsakām cerību, ka mūsu bijušie novadnieki Izraēlā saglabās vispusīgus kontaktus ar Latviju.

Ebreji ir viena no senajām un tradicionālajām Latvijas minoritātēm. Vairāku gadsimtu gaitā viņi ir devuši savu ieguldījumu Latvijas saimniecībā, bagātinājuši tās kultūru, zinātni, medicīnu. Ebreju minoritāte ir viennozīmīgi atzīstama par Latvijas Republikas tautas pilntiesīgu sastāvdaļu.

Latvijas Republikas Augstākā Padome aicina visas valsts un pašvaldību iestādes, sabiedriskās organizācijas un pilsoņus radīt Latvijas ebrejiem, tāpat kā visām Latvijas Republikas nacionālajām minoritātēm, labvēlīgus apstākļus to nacionālās kultūras, izglītības, zinātnes un reliģisko institūtu atjaunošanai un attīstībai, to kultūrnacionālās autonomijas realizācijai.

Latvijas Republikas Augstākā Padome deklarē, ka Latvijas valsts būs neiecietīga pret jebkurām antisemitisma un nacionālās diskriminācijas izpausmēm Latvijā kā nesavienojamām ar mūsu tautas tradīcijām.

Latvijas Republikas Augstākās
Padomes priekšsēdētājs

A. Gorbunovs

Latvijas Republikas Augstākās
Padomes sekretārs

I. Daudišs

Rīgā 1990. gada "19." septembrī

The Declaration On Inadmissibility of Genocide and Anti-Semitism in Latvia , adopted by the Supreme Council of the Republic of Latvia on 19 September 1990, was one of the first documents of the re-established state

Leo Dribins

The History of Jews in Latvia in Brief

1560s 1570s	Jews arrive in Piltene district and establish a Jewish community there
17th century	Jews immigrate to Kurzeme Duchy from Germany and Lithuania. Jewish refugees from the Ukraine and Belarus settle in Latgale
17th early 18th centuries	Riga town council allots land by the town wall to Jewish merchants. In 1727 Catherine I issues a decree ordering the banishment of Jews
Mid- and late 18th century	The Duke of Kurzeme Ernst Biron and his councillor Lewy Lipman encourage the immigration of Jews from Germany. Jewish

entrepreneurs and craftsmen take part in the construction of Jelgava and Rundāle Palaces and *Academia Petrina*

1785	Catherine II issues a decree permitting Jews from Kurzeme to settle in Sloka and Sloka citizens to trade in Riga. About 400 Jews move to Riga
1799	Jews obtain the right to permanent settlement in Kurzeme province
1835	The Jews of Kurzeme are permitted to engage in trades of their choice
1840	The first state-financed secular Jewish school in Russia is opened in Riga
17th December 1841	The Senate of Russia issues regulations granting the Jews of Riga the status of permanent residents
1844	Nicholas I issues a decree by which Jewish <i>kahali</i> (local authorities) are abolished; in Latvia the decree hits Latgale Jewish communities
1851	The permission to start the construction of a synagogue in Riga is given for the first time
Second half of the 19th century	Mass-scale immigration of Jews to Kurzeme and Riga caused by the development of industry
1881-1882	Jewish refugees from the Ukraine and Poland come to Kurzeme
Mid- 1880s	Jewish students of Riga Politechnikum establish a group <i>Hovevei Cion</i> . Zionist movement begins in Latvia
1890s	Repatriation of Jews to Palestine begins
Late 19th - early 20th centuries	Affiliates of Jewish Social Democrat Union (Bund) are established in Daugavpils and Riga
1905	Jews take active part in the democratic revolution in Latvia
17th (30th) April 1915	The Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Army orders the deportation of all Jews from Kurzeme province. 40 000 Jews are exiled
18th November 1918	The Republic of Latvia is founded and equal rights of all ethnic groups are declared. The Jewish National Democrat Party delegates representatives to the People's Council of Latvia
1919	The majority of Jews residing in this country become the citizens of Latvia. Jews take part in the Independence War of Latvia
1920-1940	The Jewish ethnic minority which takes active part in the political, economic and cultural life in Latvia develops. The cultural autonomy of Jews is implemented in Latvia
1940-1941	The Soviet occupation splits the Latvian Jewish community on political grounds, the occupation authorities banish ethnic societies and schools of this ethnic minority and repress the staff and members of these organisations
1941-1944	The Holocaust in Latvia. The Nazi occupants and their local collaborators exterminate the largest part of the Latvian Jewish community
1945-1988	Jews who had managed to evacuate to the republics of the USSR, return to Latvia. Jewish immigrants from the Ukraine, Russia, Belarus move to Latvia. The Soviet regime forbids the restoration of Jewish schools and cultural societies and represses the initiators of the idea
1967	The ethnic awakening of Jews begins in Latvia. Exodus of Jews to Israel and the USA

1988-1991

The Jews of Latvia take part in the fight of the Latvian people for democracy and the restoration of the independent Republic of Latvia

1988-1992

Revival of the Jewish communities in Riga, Daugavpils, Liepāja and other cities and towns

1990s

Active participation of the Latvian Jewish community in the economic and cultural life of the independent Latvia. Integration of Jewish immigrants in the society of Latvia

Agreements between the Government of the Republic of Latvia and the Government of the State of Israel

Air Transport Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Latvia and the Government of the State of Israel

1. Concluded 03.11.93.
2. Ratified by Saeima 14.09.95.
3. Entered into force 14.04.96.
4. Indefinite
5. LH No. 149, 29.09.95.
6. Andris Gūtmanis Minister of Transport of the Republic of Latvia; Shimon Peres Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Israel

Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Latvia and the Government of the State of Israel **for the Promotion and Reciprocal Protection of Investments**

1. Concluded 27.02.94.
2. Ratified by Saeima 26.01.95.
3. Entered into force 09.05.95.
4. Indefinite
5. LH No. 30, 10.03.94 and LH No. 19, 07.02.95.
6. Valdis Birkavs Prime Minister of the Republic of Latvia; Ichak Rabin Prime Minister of the State of Israel

Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Latvia and the Government of the State of Israel **on Cooperation in the Fields of Education, Culture and Science**

1. Concluded 27.02.94.
2. Accepted by Cabinet of Ministers 08.02.94.
3. Entered into force 07.11.95.
4. Indefinite
5. LH No. 24, 24.02.94.
6. Valdis Birkavs Prime Minister of the Republic of Latvia; Ichak Rabin Prime Minister of the State of Israel

Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Latvia and the Government of the State of Israel **on the Waiver of the Visa Requirement for the Holders of Diplomatic or Service Passports**

1. Concluded 01.03.96.
2. Accepted by Cabinet of Ministers 09.08.95.
3. Entered into force 14.12.96.
4. Indefinite
5. LH No. 122, 16.08.95.
6. Valdis Birkavs Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia; Tova Hercl Ambassador of Israel in Latvia

Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Latvia and the Government of the State of Israel **concerning Cooperation in the Field of Telecommunication and Posts**

1. Concluded 14.05.97.
2. Accepted by Cabinet of Ministers 29.11.94.
3. Entered into force 02.12.97.
4. Indefinite
5. LH No. 34/35, 10.02.98.
6. Vilis Krištopāns Minister of Transport of the Republic of Latvia; Limor Livnat Minister of Communications of the State of Israel

Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Latvia and the Government of the State of Israel **on Cooperation in Combating Illicit Trafficking and Abuse of Narcotic Drugs, Psychotropic Substances and Precursors, Terrorism and other Serious Crimes**

Concluded 27.07.98.

2. Accepted by Cabinet of Ministers 22.07.98.

3. Entered into force 29.12.98.

4. Indefinite

5. LH No. 43/44, 16.02.99.

6. Andrejs Krastiņš Minister of Interior of the Republic of Latvia; Avigdor Kahalani Minister for Public Security of the State of Israel

Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Latvia and the Government of the State of Israel **on the Abolition of Visa Requirements for Holders of Regular National Passports**

1. Concluded 08.05.2000.

2. Accepted by Cabinet of Ministers 03.05.2000.

3. Entered into force 11.05.2001.

4. Indefinite

5. LH No. 43, 16.03.2001.

6. Māris Riekstiņš State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia; David Levi Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Israel