My return to a Lithuanian shtetl
BY MENDEL KAPLAN

The return to a Lithuanian shtetl by a South African Jew, born in South Africa of first generation parents of Lithuanian descent, was inconceivable over most of my lifetime. Firstly because there was no relationship between South Africa and most East European countries and secondly because of the long distance in time, culture and history between Lithuanian shtetls of my great grandfather and today's industrial environment.

Jewish communal commitments on behalf of World Jewish Congress and the Jewish Agency had enabled me and my family to visit Eastern Europe on a regular basis over the last five years. World Jewish Congress was able to organize the first Jewish meeting in Eastern Europe in Budapest in 1987, followed in 1989 by the opening of its offices for Eastern Europe in the same city.

The changes in Hungary together with Glasnost in the USSR allowed Edgar Bronfman, Simcha Dinitz and myself to pay an official visit to Moscow in November 1988. This, together with other initiatives, resulted in greater involvement of Israel and the diaspora Jewry with the Jews of the Soviet Union, creating a massive opportunity for operation redemption.

However, apart from communal opportunities, the new era also allowed my wife, my elder son and myself to visit Lithuania during July 1989. After receiving our visas in Budapest, we flew directly to Riga for a programme of four days in that city and four days in Vilna, with an opportunity to visit the shtetls meaningful to our family. Our journey could be described chronologically or geographically in terms of the places we visited, but I would like to describe it in terms of the time span that we were trying to peer through and the time machine that our journey became.

My father was born in Johannesburg in 1906, but lost both his parents at a very early age. His mother, who was Rose, née Karabelnik from KRAKINOVO, had died in 1913 when my father was six years old and his father Menachem Mendel (Max), who was born in SHADOVE, died in 1923. My mother's father, Isaac Bloch, died in 1919 and only my mother's mother, Rachel, née Groll, born in RITEVE in 1882 survived to become the link between her grandchildren and her shtetl Riteve. So whilst we knew vaguely of Shadove through cousins of my grandfather and even more vaguely of Krakino, we had learnt a great deal about Riteve. My grandmother had spoken of the 'blote' or mud streets and the "Poritz" in whose fields she used to collect chestnuts, and the Beth Hamedrash to which she could not go because only males studied and she paid her own brother to teach her his lessons. She told the story of the Poritz Aginsky, the father of the Poritz she knew. Once offended by some Jews, he had removed all the Holy objects from the Beth Hamedrash and had ordered pigs to be driven in, afterwards turning it into a dwelling for his tenants. Years later, in 1869, he had fomented rebellion against the Russian government, and knowing he was going to be arrested, he committed suicide. It so happened that this event took place on the eve of Purim. The Jews regarded this as G-d's will and thereafter celebrated not only the death of Hamman at Purim, but also that of the Poritz Aginsky. My grandmother did point out, however, that his son permitted the building of a new Beth Hamedrash on a different site from the one his father had desecrated.

Thus, Riteve was part of our memory and my grandmother's large family all came to South Africa and all lived in the little village of Parow. My grandmother's father, Israel Groll, after whom I have my middle name, was born outside Riteve on a farm in PASTRAVINSKA around the 1850's; he died in Cape Town in 1922.

The question was now, to what extent could we come across the Lithuania of the shtetl, the footsteps of our ancestors and the lifestyle which they had experienced? To reach this world, we had to penetrate three levels of time which keep interposing themselves between the shtetl of the late 19th century and the world of the present 20th century. I therefore feel that a true understanding of our experiences is best captured by looking at our journey as an attempt to work through the layers between today and the world of the shtetl in order to find the way of life of that time. The layers through which we had to descend were firstly, the Lithuania and Latvia of today. Secondly, the Holocaust, which still overwhelms any Jewish experience, and thirdly, the high point of Baltic history which came between the two World Wars with the brief independence of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. And only then would one grasp the life of the shtetl, - if indeed there was anything to grasp.

[contin'd. on page 5]
At our meetings

On March 28th a most interesting presentation was given by Mr. Norman Amato, who delighted the audience at a well attended meeting with a tale of his Sephardic ancestry, going back to the 12th century. It is hoped that an extensive report on his presentation will be published in SHEM TOV in the near future.

Ms. Gail Sussman was the guest speaker at the meeting on April 25th. As the educational advisor in the Architectural Conservation Branch of the Ontario Ministry of Culture and Communication, Ms. Sussman was eminently suited to give an educating slide presentation on cemeteries in general and on the preservation of gravestones in particular.

Anyone involved in family research realizes from the outset that cemeteries have an important heritage and cultural value; headstones and markers tell a tale of artistic expression of the time of the burial.

Preservation

To preserve and maintain is our duty to the departed as much as to future generations. Sadly, good intentions to preserve are only too often expressed in ill-chosen efforts, and Ms. Sussman's presentation centred to a large extend on methods that should be avoided by any means.

- The use of inappropriate materials for headstones; marble is too soft and is susceptible to deterioration due to acid rain.
- Lead lettering, which is not durable and falls off.
- Concrete used for foundations is so rigid that it does not allow marble markers to move; the concrete absorbs salt which migrates into the stone.
- Painting or other coatings, as they are not porous they prevent moisture from passing through, are well intended attempts to preserve the information on the stone but only hasten the deterioration process.

Identification

As genealogists we often tend to resort to drastic methods in order to help us identify the inscriptions on the gravestones, and here Ms. Sussman sounded a serious warning that under no circumstances should any kind of chemicals ever be used, such as shaving foam, (as had been suggested in several genealogical publications in the past!) instead creative use of light sources, such as mirrors or flash lights should be made.

Maintenance

Finally the subject of the new Act for all Ontario cemeteries was discussed. Following the 1987 death of a child as a result of a falling tombstone, the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations had notified all municipalities in Ontario that they would be liable for the consequences in similar incidents in cemeteries not maintained or abandoned. The proposed legislation, which has received third reading and Royal Ascent, gives municipalities the right to take over (and bulldoze!) cemeteries which have not been maintained, in order to avoid potential liability. In Paris and Port Hope, Ontario, markers have been removed throughout two cemeteries and some were relocated to a corner of the property were they have been set into concrete or brick walls. Incredibly, there is no obligation to record information destroyed, and discarded markers may even be sold by the municipality! As there are many small Jewish cemeteries in Ontario to which this new Act will apply it was expressed that the nearby Jewish communities should be notified of the impending loss, and funds should be sought to keep these cemeteries in good repair.

Ms. Sussman ended the presentation applauding the attempt of the JGS of Toronto to inventory Jewish cemeteries by photographing and recording markers, and expressed the hope that this project would be extended to all of Ontario in time. On May 23rd, the guest speaker was Mr. Michael Rosenstock, Head of Acquisitions Dept., Robarts Library, University of Toronto. The focus of the presentation was on "Resources on Jewish Genealogy that exist at Robarts Library", and in the short span of time at his disposal Mr. Rosenstock enlightened the audience of the well attended meeting on Robarts' sizable holdings in terms of genealogical interest. The library possesses one of the top fifteen Judaica collections in North America, with publications in Hebrew and most European languages, including the vintage "Mitteilungen der Gesellschaft für jüdische Familienforschung" (Jewish Family Research - Berlin, 1924-1938) and the now defunct "Toledot". To mention only a few, the collection contains Passenger Immigration Lists, Census records, Registers of Jewish names (i.e. for Alsace 1784, Posen and Berlin), the Gedenkbuch, Guides to Jewish Archives, Directory of Jewish Archives and the world's fourth largest collection of Yiskor books.

Mr. Rosenstock explained that access to the stacks is strictly for members of the student body or by paid annual membership, but he assured those in the audience not yet familiar with this excellent institution that this is certainly worthwhile.

New Members

We are pleased to welcome the following new members to our society:
Ms. Jeannette Nestel, Mr. Ian Sone, Mr. Michael Rosenstock, Mr. Donald Bierstock and Mr. Howard Markus.

Mazal Tov!

Rayzel Robinson and her husband Simcha became happy parents of a son in January of this year. Rayzel is one of the founding members of the JGS of Toronto and now lives with her family in Philadelphia.

Mazal Tov to Kaila Cramer and Richard on the birth of their daughter Sivan on May 19.

Obituary

It was with great regret that we learned of the passing of Mrs. Doris Newman. We wish to extend our sincere condolences to her family. Mrs. Newman enjoyed many of our meetings. Our society has donated a book in her memory to the Jewish Public Library.

Miscellaneous

Dr. Rolf Lederer will be our delegate to the Ninth Annual International Seminar on Jewish Genealogy, sponsored by the JGS of Los Angeles, to be held in that city from June 24 – 29.

June is the last month before the summer recess; the next meeting of the JGS of Toronto will be on September 26th, at which time elections for new officers of the Society will be held. We wish all our members a relaxing summer in the long awaited sun, – perhaps combined with visits to long lost relatives...
The cemetery project of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Toronto — a review.

Several members of our society felt that it was well within their field of endeavor to research and index the burial records of the two oldest cemeteries in Toronto, Jones Ave. and Pape Ave. Overwhelmed by the sheer size of the project, a sub committee was subsequently formed with a two-fold aim: in the short term to preserve the records of the oldest Jewish cemeteries; in the long term, to create a central repository of all available burial records in the province of Ontario. One central register for families of future generations, historians and genealogists.

Initially it was expected that a physical inspection of every section might have to be undertaken, involving the reading and translation of every tombstone, but after a field trip to Roselawn cemetery it was decided first to obtain a comprehensive list of all cemeteries in Toronto and later on in Ontario in general. Team work then established the number of sections in each cemetery, the organization responsible for their upkeep and whether any sections were amalgamated. Surprisingly, it came to light that such amalgamated groups as Dawes Road, Pardes Shalom and Sinai already have computerized lists with over 20,000 records. Letters and questionnaires were sent to nearly one hundred other groups. The response was good; phone calls, offers of help and records began to come in. Gert Rogers and Bill Gladstone were invited to speak to the Dawes Road cemetery group, while Bill Gladstone’s timely article on the cemetery committee, published in the Canadian Jewish News, added recognition to this endeavor.

The encouragements of Dr. Steven Speisman and Dr. Lipsetts, both of Canadian Jewish Congress, have lent well needed support to this cause. Copies of our current holdings of records are now being kept at their archives.

Timing for this project seems absolutely right; there is now a great awareness of the value of this kind of information, as evidenced by similar efforts by JGS’s in the USA with whom we share our experiences.

Several premature requests for information from researchers in other parts of Canada and from the USA are constantly being received. Regrettably it has to be stated here that they are just that: premature; our JGS is not yet in a position to search any burial records. In the early years of Toronto, 1850-1860, some Jewish burials may well have been performed in Buffalo, NY; sources for these are now urgently being sought. In the long term it is also expected to obtain records of Jewish war dead in Europe during World War I and II.

FUNDS

Apart from the logistics outlined so far there remains one of the chief problems: obtaining the necessary funds. Non-profit status for the JGS of Toronto has been applied for, thus opening the way to wider recognition and more successful solicitation of funds from a wider area.

It also hoped that more volunteers will come forward to help in the increase in work, in administering the increasing paperwork.

Any inquiries on the above project should be directed to Ms. Gert Rogers, JGS of Toronto, or tel. 585-2318.

Records of the below listed of cemeteries have been received:

**TORONTO:**
- Beth Hurst Lawn Memorial Park
  - Section: Beth Habonim
  - Section: Shidlover Young Men’s Society
  - Rose Lawn, with maps
  - Section: Beth Lida
- **NORTH YORK:**
  - Mount Sinai Memorial Park, with maps
  - Section: Beth Lida
  - Section: Jewish War Veterans
  - Section: Ozrover Mutual Benefit Society
- **SCARBOROUGH:**
  - Dawes Road, with maps
  - Section: Anshei Shidlov • Jones Ave.
  - Section: Chevra Kadisha Chesed Shel Emes
  - Pape Ave.
- **VAUGHAN:**
  - List compiled by JGS members
  - Pardes Shalom
- **ETOBICOKE:**
  - Lambton Mills (Royal York Rd.)
  - Section: Toronto Grand Order of Israel
  - Section: Grand Order of Israel
- **OUTSIDE TORONTO:**
  - Brant County, Brantford
  - Beth David Cemetery, with maps
  - Kitchener
  - Beth Jacob Cemetery, with maps
  - Section map shows plots.

**Suwalk-Lomza Interest Group**

An estimated one hundred Jewish genealogists and "landsmen" are expected to launch, what promises to be a precedent for Jewish genealogy in North America: a new interest group that will specialize, in addition to the old Suwalki Gubernia, in the N.E. section of the old Lomza Gubernia. These definitions reflect the political divisions in existence between 1866 and 1914. For Suwalki, it incorporates the Southern part of modern Lithuania, Suwalki and vicinity, and the Augustow region.

Four reports a year will be published, the first to appear in June with an estimated fifty pages, filled with material not disseminated elsewhere; ca. twenty pages will be reserved for "networking". It is hoped that much of the Jewish vital records from the holdings of the Mormon Church for the 1808-1825 period will be included, as well as a vast amount of information about families from towns not microfilmed, such as Marjampole, Kalvarja, Wierzbow, Raczki, to name just a few. Reports will also highlight other resources and new research developments, share experiences of members in obtaining documents from foreign archives, provide historical items, some genealogical charts, etc. It is also hoped that everyone will contribute something about their own families.

Annual membership will be $20.00; as this is a new venture, a one-time trial membership is offered for $5.50 for the first report, with the option of cancelling or paying the balance of $15.50.

For further information write: Marlene Silverman, Ph.D.
3701 Connecticut Ave., NW #228, Washington, D.C. 20008

There are only two lasting bequests we can hope to give to our children. One of these is roots. The other is wings.

Hodding Carter, Sr.

SHEMTOV Volume VI - No.2 June 1980
**Sephard 1992**

The year 1492 was for the Sephardic branch of Judaism the year of destiny. It meant exile in exile - an exile in the diaspora: the flourishing Jewish communities of Barcelona, Toledo, Madrid or Valencia were, by Royal Edict of Ferdinand II of Aragon and Isabella of Castille, forced to leave the country - or be killed. This Edict was in essence the consequence of Spanish Expansionism of the Royal house with the help of the Grand Inquisition. This process meant essentially the extensive and even wider dispersion of the Sephardim and their amalgamation with the cultures of the Turkish Empire, of Italy, Marocco and other North African states.

New centres of Sephardic tradition and culture then developed in Constantinopel and especially in Salonika, whose community lasted until the destruction by the Germans in 1943.

When, in Toledo and Madrid in the year 1992, the organizing committee of SEPHARAD 92 and numerous Jewish representatives and visitors commemorate the events of the past, - King Carlos I of Spain together with his wife Queen Sofia will be guests of honour. - representatives of one of the last parliamentary monarchies.

Only in 1909 did Spain again allow the building of Synagogues (417 years after the expulsion!); in 1931 the government lifted the expulsion order of Ferdinand and Isabella, and only in 1968 - on the occasion of the inauguration of the Synagogue of Madrid - was the expulsion order officially annulled. A new law, affording Jews and Protestants the same rights as Roman Catholics, was passed on February 23, 1990. Kosher food, religious instruction and the Sabbath can again be a way of life for the few Jews in Spain.

These reforms do not necessarily signify enormous changes, but they were long overdue and mark the historic end of half a millennium of antisemitism. - a symbolic recognition of the ethnic togetherness of the Sephardim with the land. Headquarters of SEPHARAD 92 is New York City. The goal is to disseminate knowledge about the achievements of the Sephardim in Spain of the "golden age", when Christians, Jews and Muslims were able to live together in peace, and to give the Jewish population of the Spain of the 20th century a fair place. When asked by the president of SEPHARAD 92, Mauricio Hatchwell Toledano, if his majesty would, in addition to Spain's hosting the World Fair and the Olympic Games, in reverence to the Jews be present at the main service in the Synagogue in Madrid in 1992, Juan Carlos I is said to have replied:"If I am alive, I shall be there."

**AUFBAU, May 11, 1990**

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**Names of Auschwitz prisoners**

The Auschwitz ID cards, containing the names of 74,000 prisoners who perished at the Auschwitz concentration camp and the names of 130,000 detainees put to work in German enterprises as forced laborers, are now in the hands of the International Red Cross in Geneva who recently received them from the USSR; the records had been captured by the advancing Red Army in 1945. Because of their frail condition, these cards have been microfiched. We were informed on April 5, 1990 that the processing of information requests is now possible through the Red Cross' Tracing and Documentation Centre in West Germany. This collection of ID cards is known as the "Auschwitz Death Book." Because of the massive volume of information requests, one should expect a delay of up to 12 months for a response to an inquiry.

To initiate an inquiry, the following local Red Cross can be contacted: 1181 Finch Ave. W., Unit 24, Downsview, Ont., M3J 2V8. Tel.736-0902 Attention: Ms. Edwards

**FORUM**

In this column members are encouraged to air their experiences, their successes and their problems, - to communicate with others of our society. Questions and answers - a forum for all. Replies to this column are invited, c/o JGS of Toronto.

**The trail ends in Cordoba...**

By Sheryl Erenberg

The most often told story in my family folklore is the one about "the will". My great-grandfather, Isaac Lappitt, left Vilna, Lithuania for Great Britain prior to 1909. He later made his way to Brooklyn, New York and raised a family of six children. Isaac was the youngest child of what was believed to be a family of five sisters. One sister, Anne Lappitt, had married Barnett Slavin who was in the mining business in Johannesburg, South Africa, and whom she survived. She knew that she had lost touch with a brother in America but named him in her will and trusted that her executor solicitor would be able to trace him in time. For a few years the war prevented funds from being sent out of the country, and the lawyer, (the slowest sleuth in the world) proceeded to take another four years of tracing the bequeathed, draining the estate for expenses as each year passed.

Thus went the story of the dwindled inheritance, usually followed by the lament: "... how different things might have been..."

This year a new mystery has surfaced in the Lappitt family and it touches on my great-grandfather's other sisters, about whom very little is known. Although time and again have I spent questioning the descendants of Isaac in order to fill in as many members of the family tree as possible, it was only recently, and quite by accident that we translated the inscription on a photograph, dated 1931, of whom my great-aunt thought was Isaac's sister from Cordoba: "Gitel Lapide sends regards to the uncle and sends him a photograph;" - to the uncle, of course!

Now I realized that Gitel could only be a niece of Isaac, considering that he was the youngest child in the family. The puzzle before me was: why Lapide (instead of Lappitt), if indeed she was the daughter of one of Isaac's sisters...?

I was hoping to make Spain the new arena for my research, but letters to two rabbis in Madrid for assistance to trace the descendants of Gitel Lapide have yielded no answers at all. Is it in Spain with very few Jewish communities that the trail ends? Or did the photograph originate in Cordoba/Argentina, or Cordoba/Columbia, or Cordoba/Mexico...?
LITHUANIA AND LATVIA OF TODAY

Any newspaper of today is evidence of the major changes facing Eastern Europe. Those of us who have visited over the last year are amazed by the changes taking place and this is reflected particularly in the openness of the Society, their questioning of their political and economic principles and a desire for immediate change and independence. One symbol of change is the alteration in street names to those that were current before 1939 and in Vilna one now has Gaon Street and Jow Street as one used to have before the Soviet takeover. This is an issue of continuous discussion by every guide and has influenced the Jewish Communities that remain. The approximately 25,000 Jews in Latvia and 12,000 in Lithuania have recently been allowed to officially open a Latvian and Lithuanian Jewish Cultural Society with its own Board of Directors and authority over Jewish affairs.

In Riga I was met by three leaders of their Cultural Society, who acted as our guides and hosts during my visit. I attended a meeting of their Board in the reclaimed Jewish Community Centre Building, built in 1913 by the Jewish Community and recently given back to them to use as offices and meeting places. One of my hosts explained that the changing conditions had allowed him to re-identify with his Jewish past: "I cannot say why I, an electrical engineer, have spent the last year entirely devoted to aspects of Jewish cultural heritage from which I was estranged for nearly two generations. It certainly gave me a lot of satisfaction to work with my own people and feel their response to our efforts for a deeper and more meaningful Jewish way of life."

The Board Meeting I attended dealt in depth with the establishment of a Jewish Day School under the aegis of the State, the first to be allowed in the Soviet Union. The arguments about who should control the school, whether Hebrew and Yiddish should be taught, and how it should be financed, were long and loud. I informed the meeting that I had read the minutes of a similar discussion in Johannesburg in the 1890's and things had not changed... However, it was a miracle that such a discussion should be taking place in the Soviet Union and that we should be privileged to participate. After the meeting I was pleased to meet with a Mr. Deft, who was not only born in Rive, but who was also related to Gabriel Sacks, a distant member of our family in Cape Town. Mr. Deft is the oldest living Hebrew teacher in the Soviet Union and he is not happy at all that Yiddish should be taught in the new schools. He wants them to teach Hebrew, as schools did between the World Wars, and he already has 300 people learning Hebrew with 14 teachers, most of whom have been taught by him. The Latvian Society has published a Jewish Magazine in Russian with a circulation of 50,000. It is also doing research on the history of Latvian Jewry. It has established a Memorial Committee for a suitable commemoration of the Riga synagogue destroyed in 1941 and will be involved in Jewish tours to the Baltic States. This is a very active organization under the leadership of my hosts and I was privileged to participate in some of the problems of their organization.

A week later in Vilna, the leaders of their Society invited members of the community to an evening to meet me. With only one day's notice over 200 people appeared and our discussion focussed mainly on the problems of aliya. Many people wanted invitations to obtain exit visas, others complained of the lack of employment opportunities and absorption facilities; again I was pleased to see that such a meeting could take place here. Many people in the audience gave us names and addresses of families they had in South Africa or with whom they had lost contact and we resolved to attempt to make the connection. Exit visas have now been eased and I met many families on their way to Israel, some even with dates of departure and some who were planning their aliya over the next year.

In Jurmala, a seaside resort near Riga, we visited 30 people who had come from all over the Soviet Union to spend the summer vacation to learn Hebrew and study our religious sources. Eliyahu Ginsberg was their spiritual leader and again we spent an hour debating in detail their desire for Jewish knowledge and the needs of their communities. One young lady travelled for over eight hours from Tashkent to spend her summer vacation learning Hebrew. Another man came from a city completely closed to visitors and asked for books, and there was a couple from Kharkov, a city with 60,000 Jews.

A young man had come from Vilna and was to be my guide through my journey into the world of the shtetl. Everybody at the 'diboor', which they called this gathering, was enthused with a thirst for learning Hebrew and religion. This in a world where one cannot get kosher food and where religious practice was almost impossible. Whilst they were right next to the beautiful beach in Latvia, they spent their days in study with limited material in their possession.

This was the Lithuania and Latvia of today, bubbling with a new-found nationalism, demanding independence from Soviet control and with the ability of the Jewish Community to culturally rebuild some form of community experience to re-establish a Jewish school system and to openly learn Hebrew, practice Judaism and plan aliya.

LITHUANIA OF THE HOLOCAUST

Should one leave the issues of the moment and pierce the veil? There was very little interest in what had occurred before because there was no point in rekindling memories of a world that had disappeared altogether; in order to get to that world, one first had to go through the process of the events that had overtaken the Jewish Community so tragically in June 1941 and which led to its almost complete destruction. We had started our trip to the world of the shtetl from Riga and were making our journey towards Shavel with a Lithuanian driver in a minibus, accompanied by two Latvian Jews - a father and a son - the father a reasonably well-off scientist and the son a first year law student, and a student from Vilna who had been studying at JURMALA with a man from Rostock. As we proceeded from Riga to Shavel the driver told us that he was a Lithuanian and that he was born and brought up in JONISKIS. We were travelling through a town when he indicated that he wanted to show us something. Turning off into a forest road, he stopped after a few hundred metres and took us to a memorial which had inscribed on it, "Here perished 493 Soviet Citizens - victims of fascism." He then said, "When I was 8 years old, I was playing in a tree and I noticed Lithuanians who had been fed a lot of vodka by the Germans who then..."
drove hundreds of Jews from our village into this forest. The Germans had arranged for loud music to be played and then they instructed the Lithuanians to shoot the Jews, and I saw all being shot and then buried right on the spot." As he paused and we absorbed this horrific event, the young man from Vilna who was eighteen said, "My family was amongst those who lie buried here."

There was not a moment in which we were not made aware of the events of the Holocaust. On one occasion we were taken by my host to the side of the Choral Synagogue in Riga where he informed us that the Germans had burnt the synagogue with hundreds of Jews inside on July 4, 1941. From the Synagogue he took us into the forest at RUMBULA where the Jews of the Riga Ghetto had been slaughtered.

A Mrs. Erpstein, a leader of the Vilna Community, was born in Kovno and during the war had been sent to Siberia with her parents and a sister. Her parents died of hunger and when she returned to Kovno she found the Jews had been herded into a ghetto and then marched or sent by train to a Russian fort outside Kovno where they were slaughtered. In Vilna we were taken to the Forest Ponery where in the foundations of oil tanks, 100,000 Lithuanians had been killed by the Germans of which 80,000 were Jews and their remains were set on fire in order to cover up the atrocity. There was no case where a victim of fascism was recognized as anything other than as a Soviet citizen.

With Mr. Moshe Aaronson, a member of the Lithuanian Jewish Cultural Society, I visited the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania, and I expressed that the anti-semitism of Soviet Society shown by the lack of understanding for Jewish suffering in the Holocaust through omission of any Jewish link on the memorials, was unacceptable. He promised that memorials will be set up in Yiddish and Hebrew and that appropriate references to the Jewish victims would be made.

In Telz I was especially conscious of the total lack of attention to the events of the Holocaust. There I visited the forests in which 80,000 Jews were killed - the men on one site and the women and children on another and only recently was there a small stone tablet placed to record this horror. I was conscious of this because it was to the forest of Telz that our family from Riteve had been taken and it was in the forest of Telz that Lithuanian remnants gather on the 4th of September every year to remember the communities destroyed.

(to be concluded in SHEM TOV, Sept. 1990)

Four members of a US/USSR Genealogical Exchange Advisory Board left on March 17 for an historic two-week visit to archives in the USSR which will include working tours of the Central State Archives in Moscow and the State Archives in Leningrad and Minsk, the latter is believed to be the repository for much Jewish data for Belorussia. Delegates are invited guests of the Main Archival Administration in Moscow; their primary task is to help Soviet archivists establish a service for responding to American genealogical information requests. Until recently no genealogical research was allowed in the USSR since the Bolshhevist Revolution, so that little is known of current research methods and interests.

MISHPACHA, Vol.X, No.1

Book Review.
"Le camp d'étrangers des Milles, 1939-1943"


The layout of this well structured book follows the historic development of this camp, a former brickyard, from its inception in 1939 until its closing in 1943, when all its inmates were deported.

The book begins with a description and a map, as well as an explanation of the camp's separation according to its different functions. The inmates were mainly Austrians, Czechoslovakians and Germans; later, other nationalities, overrun by the Nazis were interned there. The author, concentrating to a large extend on the "drôle de guerre" (1939-1940), describes the gradual development of 'Les Milles' from an internment camp to a concentration camp, whose inmates were eventually handed over to the Germans, thus to the 'final solution'. The author makes a clear distinction between the two phases of the history of this camp. The first phase saw many intellectuals, artists and émigrés held prisoners here; personalities such as Max Ernst, Walter Benjamin, Lion Feuchtwanger and Walter Hasenclever (who ended his own life there on June 6, 1940), Golo Mann, H.J. Steinitz and Peter Lippmann-Wulf. They were also instrumental in some of the performances of Cabaret and Theater in those early months. Much optimism, hope and anticipation of escape carried the inmates through this period.

Hundreds of interviews with witnesses of the times, the study of letters and documents, and reports by survivors, (one such had the fortune to be recruited into the French army by mistake, thus saving his life), enabled André Fontaine to compile an impressive and lively work.

In September 1942, the second phase, the final and most tragic episode of the history of 'Les Milles' begins. Numerous suicides and fatal attempts to escape heralded the beginning of a catastrophe. Valiant attempts, such as those by the clergyman Manes and his wife, the sentry Boyles (who was later found out, tortured and murdered), or the Varian Fry Commission, were not enough to save most of the inmates anymore. 'Les Milles' became the transit camp for Jews on their way to the east, when large scale round-ups, organized and executed by the French police brought in men, women and children.

This book is written in French, but contains next to numerous photographic material, English and German summaries. This work will not only serve as a contribution to a fresh look at the occupation of France, but also as an impressive memento of the suffering of the innocent and persecuted.

AUFBAU, Jan. 5, 1990

Who knows one...?

Four issues of SHEM TOV, part of a one-year membership in the Jewish Genealogical Society of Toronto, make a splendid gift to a friend!!
Fascinating reading and essential to Jewish genealogy...

This is another in a new series of columns, - retrieved, correlated and translated from this veritable mine of information: "Mitteilungen der Gesellschaft für Jüdische Familienforschung". Though more than six decades have passed since a group of dedicated scholars in Berlin, headed by Dr. A. Czeilik, began the study of genealogy in all earnest, - there is essentially nothing new in our quest - we still search for the origin and meaning of our names, the answers may only sometimes be forgotten...

Throughout the fourteen years of that quarterly publication, members were invited to submit questions and answers, and as we may see from time to time, - the published answers were enlightening, though occasionally confusing and not always totally satisfactory...

Question Nr. 45/ Vol. II. No.3, 1926.

Who knows anything about a family ZACUTO?
The wife of Joschua Piza, Benvenida, was a born Zacuto. Her sister, Ester Zacuto, sailed with Joschua Piza to Curacao.

Mrs. Arthur Gutterman
212 Madison Ave., New York City

Answer Nr. 1/ Vol.II. Nr.4, 1926

A Julio Zacuto from Tunis lived in Hamburg around 1898. Details about him are not found.

Dr. Nathan
Hamburg

Answer Nr. 2/ Vol.III. Nr.1, 1926

Giulio Sacuto, (this is how he spelled it, not Julio Zacuto) lived in Hamburg with a teacher of the Talmud Torah School. His father was named Benjamin Di Sacuto and lived as an owner of olive groves and oilmills in Monastir in Tunisia, (not to be confused with Monastir in Macedonia). He claimed to be a descendant of Sakkuto who undertook the sea voyage to East-India with Vasco de Gama. This, incidentally is an error. Abraham Sakkuto may have stimulated and aided Vasco and Columbus through his astronomical and geographic work, but never took part in this voyage; (see: Karpeles, History of Jewish Literature, II, 223). Abraham Sakkuto fled the persecution of Jews from Spain to North Africa. Even Giulio Sacuto left Hamburg approximately 26 years ago to return to Africa. More details may possibly be obtained from the Rabbi or Shammus of Monastir.

Retired headmaster Badrian,
Hamburg

Answer Nr. 3/ Vol.III. Nr.2, June 1927

My late father often mentioned the name Zacuto as a relative in connection with the name Benvenuto, but I have absolutely no recollection in what context, and I have no notes on the subject. I have in my possession a small leather-bound Sidur Tefilaus Haschabos, Florencia 1752, with my father's inscription: "Old family heirloom received from Bonaputo on the 11th of January 1901"; this is fitting with the above mentioned name Benvenuto, i.e. in that connection, as it must be the same relative. Incidentally, several notes about Abraham Zacuto (Cacuto) whose ancestors are said to have originated in the south of France, and who went to Tunis before the year 1502 and subsequently died in Smyrna in the year 1515, can be found in a work "Christopher Columbus and the participation of the Jews in the Spanish and Portuguese discoveries", by Dr. M. Kaiserling, Berlin 1894, published by Siegfried Cronbach.  

J. N. in N.

In search of...

SHEM TOV's search column in which readers may advertise their personal field of research in terms of names and localities of families they are seeking, thus discovering others in pursuit of similar or identical families.

A search ad in which one can list surnames, towns, geographic areas and other personal information may contain up to 25 words at a cost of $ 5.00, each additional word will be charged at $ 0.25; abbreviations will be counted as words. Your own name, address and Tel. No. are free of course.

Please submit your entry printed or typed, showing all SURNAMES underlined in CAPITAL LETTERS.

Cheques are payable to: Jewish Genealogical Society of Toronto. P.O. Box 446, Station "A", Willowdale/Ontario, M2N 5T1, Canada.

As a courtesy to others we strongly suggest to reply to any written inquiry, even if not able to assist.

R-1/su90
RILEY, Gayle E.
612 E. Live Oak, Apt A
San Gabriel, CA 91776
...Seeking JACOB LEVINE family, born 1867 Uslion USSR - sister Sarah Ticktin - Toronto, brother Louis, Arthur - sister and mother died Chicago.

B-1/su90
BERG, Lawrence
7511 Osakloosa Terrace
Rockville, MD. 20855
(301) 921-0543
...Seeking information on family name WEINBERG and RIBA from Ostrowiec, Poland.

ZECHUS AVOS

Dina Teitelbaum of ZECHUS AVOS, located in Ottawa, Ontario, is a professional researcher, experienced in searching through Polish and German registry records. The service is geared for those who do not have the time or the experience to do research themselves. For further information contact:

Dina Teitelbaum
ZECHUS AVOS
195 Marlborough Ave., Ottawa, Ontario, CANADA
K1N 8G3
(613) 238-3617
SHEM TOV, the quarterly newsletter, published by the Jewish Genealogical Society of Toronto, is free to members; single and back issues cost $4.00. Membership fees are $25.00 per calendar year. The Society was founded in 1985 and has currently over 60 members. Meetings are held September to June, usually on the last Wednesday of each month at 7:30 p.m. at Shaarei Shomayim Synagogue, 470 Glencairn Avenue, Toronto; notices of meetings are also announced in the Canadian Jewish News (Miriam Herman Column). Guests are always welcome.

The goals of the Society are to promote an awareness among the Jewish community of the possibility of tracing their ancestors, to foster an ongoing interest in our heritage, to encourage the sharing of research techniques and to disseminate information on Jewish genealogical research to family historians and professional genealogists alike.

SHEM TOV is dedicated to publish articles of personal research experiences, inform its members of new and tried pertinent research sources and act as part of a growing international network for experienced family historians and beginning genealogists.

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Contributors to this issue were:

Mendel Kaplan, Sheryl Erenberg, P. Cullman.

For subscriptions, membership or changes of address please contact the secretary, SELMA SACROB, P.O. Box 446, Station 'A', Willowdale/Ontario, M2N 5T1, Canada. (416) 964-2196.

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Jewish Genealogical Society of Toronto
P. O. Box 446, Station 'A'
Willowdale/Ontario
M2N 5T1 Canada