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PART I
Growing Up Jewish in Prewar Latvia



Forgetting is the Final Solution.
—THEO RICHMOND

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My Background



I was born in Riga, Latvia, in 1924, the second child in an upper-middle-class Jewish family. My sister, Sylvia, eight years my senior, was born in Moscow. My parents had delayed having a second child because of the disruption of World War I, the family's evacuation to Moscow and eventual return to Riga, as well as the political uncertainties of the period. By the early 1920s the situation in the now independent Latvia had stabilized, and my family resumed a comfortable existence in the large villa adjoining our plywood factory. The household was ruled by a matriarch, my paternal grandmother Emma, with the help of our Latvian cook. My father, Dietrich (David), was born in 1879 in Riga, the oldest of five children; my mother, Erna Griliches, was born in 1890 in Vilna and was also one of five siblings. Her family operated a tannery in Dvinsk.

I grew up in a Jewish atmosphere, albeit one where religion did not play a central role. Orthodox Judaism, the only religious expression available, occupied a secondary position in our lives. Even as we acknowledged it as our religion, we considered it archaic, not relevant or essential to life in the twentieth century. At the same time, although dismissing religion from our daily existence, we decisively identified ourselves as Jews. Being Jewish was perceived largely in cultural and ethnic terms, and it found expression in a strong sense of belonging to one people. This identification was to some extent dictated and reinforced by the outside community, which classified everyone in the population in terms of their ethnic origin. Jews found this identification reasonably congenial and were comfortable with this arrangement. Jews also thought of themselves as a separate people and had very limited social interaction with the general community.

The problem of Jewish survival in a hostile Diaspora was widely debated. For many, Zionism provided a secular messianic solution to the so-called Jewish question, how to normalize the situation of the Jews in Eastern

Europe. We lived in a society that took anti-Semitism for granted but discounted its potential for large-scale violence and mayhem. Even the dramatic rise of Hitler and his explicitly anti-Semitic rantings did not warn us of the imminent catastrophe. In the nation-states of Europe, the Jew was the other, the perennial outsider. In times of economic hardship and depression he became a ready scapegoat. Rather than find effective solutions that would address and resolve the crisis, governments fanned the prevalent anti-Semitism by blaming the Jews for their difficulties. Anti-Semitism persists to this day, although virtually no Jews are living in the newly independent Latvia. Latvians are also blaming the local ethnic Russians for their problems. The Russians have taken the place formerly occupied by the Jews as a convenient scapegoat.

To me as a child, Latvia seemed safe and secure. Although I was well aware of the persecutions of the Jews, I believed they were ancient history, that the pogroms had occurred long ago and far away. Yet the history of Jewish settlement in Latvia is one of exploitation, persecution, and uncertainty. The concession of the right of Jews to reside in Riga to the subsequent extermination of the city's Jewish community took place in a span of only 100 years, about four generations. And those years were hardly a golden age. My childish belief that twentieth-century civilization had brought an end to persecution of the Jews now seems hopelessly naive, yet this belief was shared by many of my elders. When we recognized the danger posed by endemic anti-Semitism, it was already too late.

My paternal grandparents came from the western Latvian province of Courland (Kurzeme in Latvian),* which had been conquered and colonized by the Germans in the thirteenth century. German culture remained dominant in the area even after its annexation by Russia, and the German language was widely used. Jews were not permitted to settle in significant numbers in Courland until the seventeenth century. There were repeated expulsions that, however, were not rigidly or consistently enforced. Frequently, the threat of expulsion was simply a pretext for mulcting the Jews. Jews came north to Courland from Lithuania and Poland, where they had lived for several centuries. To a lesser extent they also reached the Courland ports of Libau (Liepāja) and Windau (Ventspils) from the Netherlands by way of Germany, in the wake of the expanding German Hansa trade along the Baltic Sea.

Jews worked as tax farmers, vodka distillers, innkeepers, small merchants, and peddlers. Generally, the only source of credit available to peasants

*Place-names in Latvia are frequently different in Latvian, German, and Russian. I have generally used the German (or in some cases the Yiddish) names for locations referred to prior to World War I and the Latvian names for places after the establishment of an independent Latvia in 1918.

was from Jewish pawnbrokers. Useful to the dukes and the landowning gentry as both creators and sources of wealth, the Jews were to some extent both protected and exploited by them. Townspeople—burghers, merchants, and artisans—unwilling to tolerate Jewish business rivals clamored incessantly for onerous measures intended to restrict the Jews' economic and social activities or for their outright expulsion from the province—something the German barons were loath to do.

After it came under Russian rule, Courland remained outside the Pale of Settlement—those provinces of Russia where the Tsarist authorities suffered Jews to reside. The Pale was intended to keep the newly acquired, large Jewish population out of the provinces of Russia proper. The Pale of Settlement was first established after 1772, the first partition of Poland. Following the liberalization under Tsar Alexander II, Jews belonging to several categories were permitted to live outside the Pale of Settlement. Among these were merchants of the First Guild, persons with higher educations, and, in some cases, artisans. In 1881, however, new limitations were again imposed on Jewish settlement outside the Pale. At the time, such restrictions were imposed not just on Jews but on all inhabitants of Russia.

Courland was briefly included in the Pale after 1795. Then, under Tsar Nicholas I the province was again removed from the Pale, although Jews who had previously been registered there were permitted to stay.¹ The prohibition on Jewish settlement was not stringently enforced, and significant numbers of Jewish residents always resided there. By 1850 the number of Jews in Courland had risen to 22,000, and by 1897 it had more than doubled to 51,000.²

In April 1915, during World War I, the Tsarist government ordered the expulsion of all Jews from the province of Courland. The government and the military leadership accused the Jews of treachery and scapegoated Jews for disastrous reverses suffered by the Russian army. The expulsion was brutally enforced. Almost 40,000 Jews were given one week to leave and were permitted to take only a few possessions. Most of the exiles did not return to their homes after the war, which effectively destroyed the thriving Jewish communities of Courland.³

Although the expulsion must have affected my paternal grandparents' families, I do not recall any discussion of these events in our home. The Jewish community of Riga had mounted a concerted relief effort, and our family must have been fully involved. My family avoided freely discussing unpleasant issues, and disturbing information was withheld from the children.

The expulsion decree did not apply to the Jews of Riga, as Riga was not part of Courland. As the German armies advanced toward Riga, however, my family also escaped to Moscow in the late fall of 1915.

Grandmother Emma

My paternal grandmother Emma—I called her *Omama* (the German intimate appellation for grandmother), or *Oma* for short—was the head of our household. Only in the early 1930s, when her health began to fail, did she relinquish her position. My bedroom was next to my grandmother's, and we spent many afternoons together there. It was a quiet and comfortable place, an escape from my outdoor games and sandlot soccer matches. I enjoyed being with her. I watched her play solitaire and cheat whenever an impasse occurred. *Oma* would teach me the game and let me help her play, or she would tell me stories of her childhood. She treated me to candies and chocolates, which I recall being particularly delicious.

Emma was born into a large well-to-do family in Frauenburg (Saldus in Latvian), on an estate leased and managed by her father. The estate, *Sessilen*, was owned by a Baltic German absentee landlord. According to my grandmother, her family enjoyed a grand manorial lifestyle; they often went on outings or visits to neighboring estates in a stately horse-drawn carriage. Emma was very proud of her father. She described him as an imposing, handsome man, and she held many fond memories of growing up on the estate he managed.

Emma's father, my great-grandfather Noah (Nikolai) Hirschfeld, was one of three brothers, all merchants, from Grobin, a small town near the Baltic port of Libau (Liepāja) in western Courland. Noah had twelve children, five sons and seven daughters, from two marriages. All of his children grew to adulthood, and all of them married. My grandmother told me that Noah's first wife, Emma's mother, Taube, had come from Holland. Emma was the next to last of her nine children. Taube died when Emma was about four.

Oma talked often about her sisters, four of whom were close to her in age. These sisters must have been very close as children. Emma was very fond of them, was in frequent correspondence and contact with them, and



The five youngest Hirschfeld sisters, ca. 1895. Left to right: Lina Herzberg, Emma Michelson, Minna Kretzer, Johanna Levensohn, Rosa Braude.

always referred to them as Tante Rosa, Tante Lina, Tante Johanna, and Tante Minna. My grandmother's stories gave me the impression that I knew them well, although they were scattered all over Europe, and Rosa was the only one I had actually met.

Emma mentioned her brothers less frequently. Four of them were considerably older than she, and all her brothers had died before World War I. They had all been merchants; two owned grocery stores in Frauenburg. The others also lived in the immediate area. They had raised large families, and the Hirschfeld clan was large and close-knit. My father, aunts, and uncles maintained intimate friendships with a number of the many cousins who were frequent visitors to our house. I addressed many of them as "uncle" or "aunt" but had difficulty understanding their exact relationship to us.

Emma and my grandfather Max (Mordechai) were married in Frauenburg in 1878. My grandfather Max, after whom I am named, died long before I was born. He was a manufacturer whose family originally came from Bauska in Courland. Max was born and educated in Mitau (Jelgava in Latvian), the provincial capital of Courland, 30 miles southwest of Riga. Like Grandmother Emma, Max also came from a large family; his father Solomon Michelsohn, a merchant, had nineteen children by two wives. Max was the fourth child and only son of the first wife, who died when he was very young. In 1856 Solomon married his second wife, Esther Hinda



My grandfather Max Michelson, ca. 1906.

Gordon, a woman age nineteen who bore him six boys and nine girls, two of whom died in infancy. It is perhaps not surprising that in the official rabbinic records Esther Hinda's cause of death at age seventy-four is listed as "exhaustion."

Solomon's sons attended the secular Mitau Realschule (high school), a German-language boys' school. In 1878 Solomon moved his family to Riga to participate in and benefit from the new economic opportunities there. Riga was at that time the largest and fastest-growing city in the Baltic area. Solomon's two youngest sons were the first members of the family to attend college, the Riga Polytechnic Institute.

I do not recall my grandmother Emma ever talking about her father-in-law, my great-grandfather Solomon. At home in our library hung pictures of a man and a woman dressed in the old-fashioned black garments traditionally worn by observant Jews of that era. I was told they were my great-grandparents, but I do not know whether they were on my grandfather's or my grandmother's side.

One of my granduncles, David, my grandfather Max's half-brother, was a dentist who ran an old-fashioned practice in Riga. I went to him until my early teens. He used an ancient foot-pedal-driven drill and generally took a very relaxed attitude toward dental problems. He was only ten years older than my father, but I thought of him as an old man, partly because of



My grandparents' family at home in Riga, ca. 1902. Left to right: Dietrich, Eduard, Clara, Tora, Max, Thea, Emma, Leo.

his antique office and partly because of his appearance. Other members of my family may also have been his patients, but to my knowledge we never met socially. Later, when I required orthodontic work, my parents blamed it on his neglect, and I started to see a more modern dentist.

My grandparents had five children; my father Dietrich (David) was the oldest, followed by Clara, Eduard, Leo, and Thea. The five siblings were very close and were genuinely devoted to each other, particularly Eduard, Clara, and Leo. My father, although supportive and concerned, remained more distant. My grandfather Max died unexpectedly at age fifty-seven in 1908; the cause of his death is unknown to me. After his father's death, Dietrich assumed the role of head of the family. As for Thea, the siblings loved and cared for her but treated her more like a child than an equal. Her mother Emma, in letters to her older daughter Clara, also referred to the adult Thea as "the dear child." Throughout her life Aunt Thea did retain a childlike quality, which made people want to take care of her.

The sheer volume of her surviving letters to Clara and Leo testifies to Emma's concern about the health and well-being of her offspring. Emma's children were polite, kind, considerate, and respectful to their mother, but except for Thea, they generally disregarded her suggestions and arranged their lives as they saw fit. Although her children's independent natures were trying, Emma nevertheless loved to be surrounded by her family. She viewed her children and grandchildren with great pride. My aunts and uncles visited Riga frequently, particularly during the summers when the family would rent a villa at Riga Beach (Jurmala), a favorite vacation spot. I remember her excited anticipation of seeing her children and her obvious joy when everybody had arrived. Emma also maintained close ties with her extended family; I remember frequent family gatherings with a large number of cousins in attendance. As might be expected, Emma was less close to her in-laws. We met socially with just a few of the relatives from my grandfather's side of the family.

Emma considered herself a Jewish aristocrat and felt her family held an exalted station in the community. She was a strong-willed person with an imperious manner. Genya Balson, the daughter of my mother's uncle Abram, told me she lived in Riga for six years in the early 1930s but never visited her cousin, my mother Erna, because she found my grandmother intimidating. In conversations Emma would refer to people as "he" or "she" or "that person," and we were expected to understand immediately to whom she was referring. If one failed to meet her expectations, she would become indignant and remonstrate: "Him. You know who I am talking about. You know him."

In her own way my grandmother was a religious woman. Even as she picked and chose what Jewish customs and traditions to follow, she identified herself strongly as a Jew. Shabbat candles were a Friday night fixture in our household; for many years I took them for granted without understanding that it was a religious ritual. Shabbat candles flickering in the early darkness of winter evenings evoke for me the peaceful and secure atmosphere of my childhood home. On Yom Kippur Emma spent the entire day at the synagogue, but if she ever set foot there at any other time I never knew of it. She did not keep kosher except during Pesach (Passover). Pork or shellfish was never served. Nonetheless, boiled ham or Canadian bacon occasionally appeared on our table, invariably accompanied by humorous but defensive comments referring to them as veal or turkey. My grandfather Max had probably been more observant than his wife, but I doubt that the household observed *kashruth* (Jewish dietary laws) during his lifetime. The only other religious symbol in our house was a *mezuzah* (a small case containing a prayer inscribed on parchment) on all doorposts. The *mezuzah* must have been attached when my grandparents first moved in but had not been looked after and had long since been painted over.

Like many Jews of Courland, my grandmother was influenced by German culture and was very outspoken in her admiration of everything German. Emma was well acquainted with German literature, poetry, and music. A family legend has it that during his stay in Riga, Richard Wagner was once a visitor in her home. Cultural alignment with Germany (as opposed to Russia) was typical of the Jews who were connected through service to the Baltic German gentry, often going back several generations. For Emma, as for many Jews, Germany represented emancipation—a window on Western culture and the modern world. The attitude of Latvians toward Germany was rather different; for them it denoted oppression, subjugation, and exploitation.

Emma was partial to blond hair and non-Semitic features. She described a child whose looks she found attractive by saying that he or she “does not look Jewish.” My father and mother did not use that expression. Although Emma admired non-Jewish looks, she viewed conversion to Christianity with scorn. This attitude was shared by my family, including myself. Conversions were more prevalent in nineteenth-century Russia, where economic opportunities and advancement for Jews were severely circumscribed. When talking about Jews who had converted, my father would invariably mention that fact, using the derogatory Yiddish *geshmad* rather than the more neutral German *getauft* (baptized). Apostasy was a treacherous step, reflecting unscrupulous opportunism or extreme self-hatred; viewed with suspicion, converts were despised and often ostracized from Jewish society.

Although my mother came from a Russian-speaking family and my father and grandmother were both fluent in Russian, at home we spoke German. Except for communicating with our Latvian cook, Anna, who knew little Russian and no German, Latvian was not spoken in our home. Until the twentieth century Latvian was the language of peasants, not used by educated people. This attitude continued in Jewish circles even after 1918, when Latvia became an independent state. During my father’s student years, Latvian was not taught at his high school or at Riga Polytechnic Institute. Nonetheless, both my father and Uncle Eduard had a good command of the language, because it was essential for dealing with workers at the factory and with the authorities. My mother’s first language was Russian; in her native Dvinsk not only Jews but most of the non-Jewish population spoke Russian. My mother’s Latvian was rudimentary, barely adequate for making purchases in shops and at the market.

The majority of the Jewish population of Courland and Riga spoke Yiddish, but my family did not consider Yiddish a language in its own right. They called it *Jargon*, implying that it was a corrupted German spoken by uncultured people who did not know “proper” German (i.e., Hochdeutsch, or High German). In our social circle its use was disparaged. It was not spoken in our home or by any of our relatives or friends.

Nevertheless, I suspect that most of my family members understood Yiddish and were more or less fluent in it. I do not believe Yiddish was spoken in my grandmother's home; all my grandmother's sisters whom I met spoke German. On the other hand, judging by the traditional Yiddish names of my paternal great-grandfather Solomon Michelson's children, Yiddish was likely spoken in his home. For Emma, Yiddish must have been an unwelcome reminder of the oppressive religiosity of her youth, from which she and her family had managed to escape, and was undoubtedly perceived as a threat of a return to an earlier, narrow-minded, and stifling society. Nonetheless, some Yiddish words found their way into even our home.

Unlike my family, I think of Yiddish as a beautiful and interesting language. I learned Yiddish in the ghetto and camps, where it was the lingua franca among Jewish inmates. There I met Jews from many different countries and heard a variety of Yiddish accents. In particular, it was a pleasure to hear the sounds of a pure Vilna Yiddish, a graceful and mellifluous language. To my amazement I also encountered Jews from parts of Hungary and from Greece who did not speak Yiddish. We were not able to communicate with each other. Although I am far from proficient, after the war I taught myself to read Yiddish. Based on an archaic German with a heavy admixture of words from Hebrew, Russian, and other origins, it is a separate language in its own right, not a corruption of present-day standard German. There has been a revival of interest in Yiddish in the United States in recent years. I am supporting the National Yiddish Book Center, which is preserving and distributing Yiddish books here.

My grandmother managed the household personally. With the help of our live-in cook, Anna Ulpe, she decided on the daily menu and, on important occasions and celebrations, helped with the cooking. Anna was a Latvian peasant girl who had an out-of-wedlock son. She had come to the city after her son was born. Anna had been with us for as long as I could remember and did not leave until 1940. Our house, together with the factory, was nationalized by the new communist regime, and we were no longer in a position to have servants.

Anna, a warm, earthy person in her middle thirties, had the plump appearance of a typical Latvian peasant: a round face, with full cheeks and a slightly bulbous nose. She wore her long, light brown hair in a tightly coiled bun at the back of her head and usually covered it with a kerchief. Anna could be relied upon to have definite, if not always rational, opinions about anything and anyone, which she was never shy about expressing. With time she became and acted almost like a member of our family. She had her favorites and not-so-favorites among our relatives and visitors and regularly commented to me about them. Particular targets of her resentment were occasional overnight guests who insisted on taking daily baths.

Anna declared that it was not healthy to bathe so often, that they risked scrubbing off their skin. She was probably more annoyed at having to make a fire in the wood-burning water heater in the bathroom and clean the bathtub after them.

Anna's domain was the kitchen and her bedroom, located directly off the kitchen. The kitchen was spacious and got plenty of sunlight, which made it very pleasant and bright during the day. After dark, however, it was dimly lit by a single bare lightbulb. Even by the standards of the day, it lacked modern conveniences. There was no running hot water, but squeezed into a corner was a small cold-water sink. Dishes had to be washed in a basin filled with hot water from the stove and then dried by hand.

The stove, a built-in, glazed brick wood-burning range, was the focal point of the kitchen. The stove had a small basin that provided a limited reserve of hot water, a roasting and baking oven, and a large warming oven used only for storage of pots and pans. The range top, a heavy cast-iron plate, had several openings whose size could be adjusted up or down by the addition of concentric, tight-fitting cast-iron rings. The rings could be removed to expose the pot to the desired level of heat from the flames and embers of the fire inside. Pots could also be heated indirectly on the hot cast-iron plate. The roasting and baking oven was built into the body of the range. The oven temperature could not be set but only coarsely controlled by changing the intensity of the fire inside the range.

The old musty-smelling icebox was almost never used. Perishable foods were kept on the windowsill in the pantry. When the weather was warm, Anna would shop daily in the market for whatever was needed. In the 1930s the markets in Latvia overflowed with dairy products, meats, fish, and poultry. The market in Riga was large. It was housed in four former airship hangars, one each devoted exclusively to meats, dairy, fish, and vegetables, respectively. There were also outside stalls for more vegetables, as well as many booths selling household goods and clothing. I revisited the market during my 1997 trip to Riga. Food is again plentiful, and everything is displayed openly and without refrigeration. In the meat pavilion, the sight of endless cuts of beef and pork, all uncovered, is enough to turn one into a vegetarian.

In my grandmother's considered and often pronounced judgment, her family's physical and spiritual health could best be sustained by good, plentiful, and nutritious food. She always saw to it that we had the best the rich Latvian Jewish cuisine had to offer. Butter, eggs, cream, and meats, the bountiful products of our local agriculture, were staples. Then as now, the ubiquitous ingredient in Latvian kitchens was sour cream, called *Schmand* in the Baltic German dialect. It is an especially rich and delicious product, hardly comparable to any sour cream available elsewhere. *Schmand* was justly famous throughout Europe, especially in Germany. It is the essential

ingredient of many recipes. During my recent visit to an authentic Latvian restaurant in Riga, it was impossible to find a dish on the lengthy menu that did not use at least a dollop of *Schmand*.

Under my grandmother's tutelage, Anna had learned to cook the rich Jewish cuisine. After my grandmother's death, when Anna became the uncontested mistress of the kitchen, she continued in the same tradition. Not only was the food rich, Emma saw to it that everyone received generous portions as well as multiple helpings—seconds were obligatory, and it gave her special pleasure if we consented to a third helping. Large, multicourse meals were the focal point of our social gatherings; even informal afternoon teas never lacked a rich torte or pastry. Emma ran an open, hospitable house, and last-minute guests frequently joined us at our meals.

An inveterate manager of other people's lives, Emma tried to find rich matches for her poorer nieces. She was instrumental in arranging several marriages, but despite her tireless efforts the results tended to be unsatisfactory: the husbands were not young, they lost their fortunes during the war and the revolution, and they died, leaving destitute widows.

One of Emma's earliest and more successful matchmaking ventures involved her niece Charlotte (Lotte) Kretzer, the oldest child of Emma's older sister Minna. The two sisters had married within a year of each other, and both lived in Riga. Minna's husband, Elias Kretzer, died at forty-three, leaving Minna penniless, a widow of thirty-three with three small children: Lotte, age nine; Viktoria (Tora), eight; and Theodor (Fedyka), three. My grandparents helped support her and treated her children like their own. Tora, a contemporary of my aunt Clara, came to live in my grandparents' home. Tante Minna died in the 1910s. Tora married a man from Odessa, and we lost contact with her in the early 1930s when she moved from Odessa to Moscow.

Minna's older daughter, Lotte, was thirty when Emma arranged a match between her and a prosperous Riga entrepreneur, Jakob Hirsch Kaplan, the owner of a flourishing cardboard factory. Kaplan, like my grandfather Max, was a merchant of the Second Guild. Under the Tsarist regime, Jews were not permitted to change their names from their original given Jewish ones. Accordingly, he is listed in the 1914 Riga City Directory as Yankel Hirsch Kaplan. The father of two teenage children from his first marriage, he was a self-made man from an impoverished background who had built up a substantial business. Jakob Kaplan was a renaissance man with wide-ranging eclectic interests—a brilliant but difficult and self-centered person. Lacking a formal education, he had read widely and had acquired an easy facility with German and an impressive knowledge of German culture. He wrote in German—philosophical essays, poetry, and whimsical rhymes—which he published and presented to friends and relatives.



Jakob and Charlotte Kaplan's Silver Anniversary, 1933. My sister, Sylvia, is at bottom right.

Kaplan, though short of stature, had an imposing presence and spoke forcefully and with great authority. He was nine years older than my father and played the role of elder sage in our social circle. Kaplan loved to be asked his opinion and made weighty pronouncements on issues of the day. At festive family affairs he recited verses he composed in honor of the occasion while Lotte beamed with pride and admiration. She was fiercely protective of her husband. Their marriage, though childless, appeared to be a good one. It lasted until Kaplan's death from a stroke in 1940, during the Soviet occupation of Latvia. Lotte was killed the following year in the liquidation of the Riga Ghetto.

In 1918 Emma sat for a portrait by my uncle Leo. The painting, now at the Michelson Museum of Art in Marshall, Texas, shows a vibrant woman in her prime. By the early 1930s Emma was ailing. She sat for another portrait in 1933, which is still in my possession. The decline in her health was evident. She grew progressively weaker and died peacefully at home in January 1935. She was laid out in our large sitting room, and the funeral was postponed for several days to allow all her children to arrive from Western Europe. According to Jewish custom, the coffin had no lid but was covered with a dark blue cloth with an embroidered Magen David. Our entire family sat with her, and I felt a sense of peace and serenity in her



My grandmother Emma, ca. 1925.

presence. Our family observed the Jewish customs of mourning: *keriah*, cutting the mourner's garment at the cemetery, symbolizing the mourner tearing his or her clothing; and sitting shivah, seven days of mourning for the dead. During shivah the family again gathered in the large parlor and, sitting on the traditional low mourners' bench, received relatives and friends who came to pay their respects.

Emma was buried next to her husband, Max, in the Old Jewish Cemetery, which otherwise was no longer in use. During the German occupation of Riga, the cemetery became part of the Riga Ghetto and was desecrated and vandalized by the

nazis.* Ultimately, after the war the Soviets removed the surrounding brick wall and what remained of the monuments and gravestones, and leveled the area. During my trip to Riga in 1996, I visited there and found that a small marker recalling the site of the former cemetery has been installed. Otherwise, there is no vestige of the Old Jewish Cemetery. It is just a neglected, overgrown wooded lot in an impoverished neighborhood.

*I lowercase "nazis" throughout because I do not feel they merit the respect of having their name capitalized.