







W. J. G. G. G.





CapeTown, 14.4.2009.

Dear Mrs. Shaldova,

Thank you for your e-mail to me via my son Terence and I shall try and answer your enquiry about Latvian Jewry there and now in South Africa. To start with, my parents on my mother's side came from Tuckum (Tukums) which before the 1st world war was a part of the Russian Empire. My father was born in Dzelgallen, and later the family moved to Libau. There my grandfather Zakss (Sacks) had a bakery in der Helenenstrasse in Libau for a number of years. My mother had her schooling in ~~Tuckum~~ and after finishing her education, she also came to the "metropolis" of Libau, where she had an older brother and his family living, whom she lived with and where she met my father, and where they got married in 1911, I think. I have here in my Flat some of the congratulatory letters to their wedding, in German, Russian and English, the telegrams are not in very good conditions, but perhaps I can find a few and make some copies for you? At the time of my parents wedding, two of my mother's brothers were already planning to go to South Africa, to make a better living and escape the law to serve for 25 years in the Tsar's army! So even that far back there was a kind of an interest to come to South Africa in the family in Libau and Tuckum.

A silly little jingle my mother used to tell us which went like this: "kas grib smukkums brauc uz Tuckums".... When the 1st world war broke out, my parents and my older sister, aged 5½, were frightened of the looming German occupation of Kurland (Kurzeme) & with my widowed Maternal grandmother Blumberg, they left for Russia and spent the war years in Voronizh, where they found temporary work to keep living there. As it turned out, they could stay during the war years in Libau, as at that time the Germans treated the population, and us Jews, very well indeed. In ~~1918~~ 1918 when the war ended, Latvia proclaimed itself an independent Republik, so when I was born on 1st February 1921, I became a Latvian citizen with a Latvian passport, I am not sure whether my parents also became Latvian citizen. My grandfather Blumberg's name was Joseph (Jossel) so my parents named me traditionally after him, so my real name is Josepha, to which my Blumberg grandmother objected as it was not a "nice" name for a little girl and she decided on calling me Dudi, from "Lcha dodi" in the Shabbat service and I have been known as "Dudi" all my long life, so in future I will be happy if you address me as Dudi and I shall call you "Vicky" if I may! Libau is in the province of Kurland (Kurzeme) in Latvia and had lots of Germans there, who owned land and had all sorts of titles, with lots of "von" and when we had to go to school, my parents sent us to the Reimersche Töughterschulē, as our home language was German at home and amongst our friends. All this changed of course when Hitler came to power and all the Jewish girls went to "Liepajas Židu gymnazija" and we joined also various Jewish organizations, like Betar and Schomer Hatzir. My father could not make a good living in the depression of the 1920 and decided to join his brothers in law in Cape Town, so we always lived with the idea that one day we would come to "sunny and rich South Africa" and after all sorts of difficulties we arrived in South Africa, Cape Town, on the 25th of November 1938, it was my mother, my younger sister, my mother's older sister and I. My older sister remained in Latvia, as she had got married a year before in Libau and lived with her husband in Riga, she survived the 2nd world war by having left Riga just before the German invasion, lost her 2 week old boy and her husband was in the Latvian Corps of the Russian army and got killed at the front "somewhere". My sister was sent off with a transport of refugees to the Russian province of Tadjikistan, to a city called Dushambe, (Stalinabad) where she worked as a nurse and she came out to South Africa in 1950, more details I can give you, if you think they are relevant.

The Jewish population here in South Africa mostly came from Lithuania, there were a few from Latvia, like our uncles, aunts and cousins, we did not fit in so well at first as we tended to keep in touch with the "Jekkes", that is the refugees from Germany, of which there were many and one of whom I eventually married! I kept in touch with my friends in Libau until the outbreak of war, and of the 30 odd of them, only one survived and went to Israel, and we

visited one another many times, she survived $3\frac{1}{2}$ years in various concentration camps and still lives in Tel Aviv, but her memory is gone and she is not a person anymore, most sad for her Family and me.

I don't know if you want to hear more of our lives here in South Africa and I have some photos, but I don't think they are of interest to you, it is mostly of people, Family and friends in Libau, which I shall ask my children to make copies of. I had of course lots of uncles, aunts and cousins in Libau, all of them were murdered by the Nazis. Do you want details of them and how they lived in Libau when we were still there?

I went back to Latvia in 1995 with my younger son, my older sister and her daughter, it was sad to see Libau shabby and neglected, also the building we left in November, it was in Ulichā Iela 15 dzīvoklis & and saw all the empty places that there bombed during the war and the "pieminekļis" to us Jews who were murdered there.

Except for one year, 1943/1944 when I lived in Johannesburg, I have been in Cape Town, an extraordinary beautiful city, it is no paradise and no doubt you know about our history and all the terrible injustices that were perpetrated here over many, many ... years. There was and always ~~will~~ will be anti-semitism, also we have quite a big Moslem population and lots of ~~crime~~, so many young people have left for Australia and England and America.

Dear Vicky, I hope what I told you will come useful for your project, if you want more information, please E-mail me via Connie. What other copies of photos would you like me to make copies of?

Looking forward to hearing from you,
and warm regards,

Duck

Crime X