

Our Trip to Riga and Moscow -1991

Monday, July 15 (El Al Flight No. LY6365)

9 p.m. Well, here we are actually on the plane to Moscow. Alex is going to visit Riga after 60 years' absence. After the tension and rush of the last few days, a bit of an anti-climax. We are really on the way, so everything is set in motion. Plane is leaving almost on time.

We thought the plane would be full, but there are not more than 60 or 70 passengers. Some look like *olim*, some with young children, going back to visit, some yeshiva boys, some Israelis and a few who don't look Jewish at all.

3:30 a.m. Finally, we got to our hotel! The plane landed on time, 1 a.m., luggage delivery was reasonable, but the small bag with the food was missing! Also big luggage of many other people. We waited another hour, nothing came — probably went to Nairobi instead with the safari group, with all the mess we had at Tel Aviv. We were too tired to make a formal complaint, especially as several others were ahead of us, and then we had to wait 45 minutes for the Intourist car. The Intourist people spoke no English, and were not helpful with the missing bag — the young man left after an hour, while the lady waited until we wanted to leave. Then we had a bumpy ride of 45 minutes to this hotel, the Cosmos. First impression is terrible but the room seems clean and comfortable, even has a mini-fridge (empty) and a heated towel rail in the bathroom.

We had time to have a conversation with the Intourist driver, who asked how the immigrants are getting on in Israel — “everybody would like to leave if they could, but they don't have

the possibility.” First impression as we arrived at the hotel — blonde streetwalker, with a very short and very tight mini, haggling with a customer (3:30 a.m.).

Can’t keep our eyes open. We are both exhausted and deflated. It is already dawning and we’re just going to bed — probably too tired tomorrow to do anything. Good night! If only the kids could see us now!

Tuesday, July 16

Slept intermittently and got up about 8:30 a.m. Outside, it is raining and foggy, but not cold. I have a terrible headache and shoulder cramps.

Finally, we got to breakfast about 9:30. There are many tourists and at least a better impression than at 3:30 a.m., but the hotel has about 1,600 rooms, so we don’t know if what we see is a good proportion or not. Breakfast table is set with jam, bread, butter, milk (powdered), some kind of watery juice, hard-boiled eggs, sandwich with red caviar, tea/coffee.

Crummy service. Phone calls after breakfast, mainly about the lost bag, took up lots of time. Alex refused to make the trip out to the airport in order to sign a paper. I realize that all of the second half of the food is in the lost bag, including the soap, Nivea cream, etc. I discover that the immersion heater is not usable because it has a three-point plug, and local use is a two-point plug. I thought the floor superintendent would surely have an adapter, but she shook her head. When I asked if I could find one in the shops, she gave a loud cynical laugh, and said, “There is nothing in the shops.” I also spent time making enquiries unsuccessfully at the various shops in the hotel. We spoke with Sonia Berman’s son (she lives in Jerusalem) and

made an appointment for 3:30. By twelve, still raining and we feel a bit fed up. We decide to take a taxi ride and do a bit of sightseeing. Heavy traffic, but we get to the Kremlin, St. Basil's, then walk on the Arbat a few minutes. This is a nice residential street, now a mall, full of little stands, all trying to sell dolls, lacquerware, and amber. Having read *Children of the Arbat*, it has more meaning.

Back to the hotel for a light lunch (with caviar), which costs us \$16.50, but terrible service. At one stage, after a 20-minute wait, Alex goes back to look for the waiter, who pulls out tins of caviar from his pocket, offering at one for \$10 or two for \$15! Everyone's trying to make something on the side.

Dr. Berman appears, after having trouble getting into the hotel, but he has managed to persuade them to give him a pass. Locals are not allowed to enter. After chatting an hour or so, he offers to take us sightseeing, in spite of the rain. He is a very serious, nice-looking fellow and tells us he makes the equivalent of \$10 a month, but of course, the cost of living is correspondingly low. Strangely enough to us, he belongs to a Latvian Society, and wears an identifying badge. He is very nationalistic for Latvia, although he has lived over 20 years in Moscow.

He takes us to a small synagogue, Mariana Rosha (Marian-in-the-Forest), tucked away somewhere in a forest! Imagine a wooden synagogue still in use in Moscow, but it is not so old, and was built in 1927. They say it has always remained open; it is very dark, neglected and untidy inside, but apparently they have a very active program, and many charity boxes. We talk with the young Russian rabbi who sported a very bushy beard, and a few young yeshiva boys from the U.S. and Israel, affiliated with Lubavitcher. There are two *Aronot*

Kodesh, one apparently quite old, from another town. A round stained glass window is situated over the *aron*.

The general impression of Moscow is of lovely wide avenues, some parks, and lots of trees, but the buildings look dilapidated and many are in need of rebuilding — is this still World War II damage? “There is no *ba’al bayit*,” we are told. “People don’t own their apartments, so they don’t care for them. Everything belongs to the State, and the State is responsible.”

Little queues here and there where some vegetables are for sale, but one fruit stall has no customers although offering apricots, plums, tiny pears, etc. I suppose he’s too expensive. Odd to see little booths or kiosks all over, selling ice cream, sausages, clothes, or newspapers. The big shops seem empty, but are also hard to identify. Saw one big shoe store, otherwise, many *producten*, or groceries, and pharmacies. Metro stations, circular pseudo-classic in style, but we haven’t investigated that yet. People seem reasonably well-dressed and no one looks hungry.

Hotel Cosmos. The room is clean, towels are changed everyday, but the carpet is very stained. Every time we explore we find another restaurant, another little bar, or shop, or lounge. There are lots of people in the lobby, many groups from all over. Music with dinner, a night club with floor show starting at 8–9:30 p.m. (didn’t go in). Service is poor. Lots of people standing around at the entrance. Although the locals are not supposed to come in except by invitation, the dining rooms seem full of Russians. The TV news is given with additional sign language for the deaf. But, in spite of its comforts, the hotel is too far away from the centre, and rather inconvenient.

Fortunately, this hotel has a bank and also a business service, so perhaps we'll send a fax [to where?] tomorrow, but we discovered we didn't have our number. Tomorrow we hope to see the Kremlin and arrange the flight to Riga, etc. Berman will pick us up in the morning.

9:45 p.m. Going to sleep, to make up for yesterday. Today has convinced me that organized tours are more efficient than going individually!

Wednesday, July 17

Alex Berman comes about 9:15 to pick us up. First, he fixes the cord of the immersion heater so we can use it. Then he insists we drive out to Sheremetyevo Airport to see about the lost bag. His older son Victor also comes along. We think it a waste of time, but need a piece of paper for the insurance, and he can't understand that we would allow a bag of food to get lost without making a fuss.

An hour's trip there and of course back, and an hour-and-a-half there. The officials are impossible; either they don't know what it's all about, or seem to be deaf. One girl complains (in Russian) that she is tired, please leave her alone. Eventually we're taken to two storerooms, but didn't find the bag. At least we get some piece of paper from Lost and Found. When we leave the parking lot, it takes five minutes to pay one ruble, and two people to write the receipt and car number.

Alex B. points out many sites — the Riga railway station (pale blue and white like Wedgwood china), the Border of Moscow, with a memorial to the defenders of Moscow (i.e., an old anti-tank fence). Sheremetyevo Kolkhoz used to be a village belonging to the Count Sheremetyevo.

Stopped for coffee at a most unlikely looking establishment. We invite them, but they insist on paying. Victor stands in one queue and gets sandwiches (I have red caviar, because the rest are only meat) and coffee and fruit drink, apple or grape. Alex stands in another queue and gets cakes (almond macaroons and éclairs) and some kind of mousse and fruit cocktail. We wait by a table until people finish eating (they hurried!); we have quite a spread, and the coffee wasn't bad (black). They insist on paying the bill, which amounted to 50–60 rubles (\$2–2.50).

They drop us at Intourist, where we order a private guide for the Kremlin, as we just can't be on time for the public tour; Thursday it's closed and Friday we want to go to Zagorsk. Then we decide to change our hotel for the last couple of days on our return from Riga in order to be in town, but for that we have to go round the corner to the head office, which has a very modest sign and almost don't locate it. We walk through the door and are stopped by a big commissionaire who spoke only Russian. We have to wait for him to call someone out, and then she takes us inside to a nice office. Of course, she doesn't know what to do, and calls in another young man, who promises to arrange it and please come back tomorrow.

We go back to wait for our guide, and are well entertained, when a fellow comes for the Diamond Tour and starts aggressively asking the clerk: where do diamonds come from in Russia? Are they still being mined? Etc., etc. Then the guide of that group comes and he begins to pester her — was she married? (yes) did she have children? (no) why not? (she didn't want), didn't her husband want? (no), did she like being in Moscow? (yes, it was the best place in the world and she wouldn't change for anything). She's very attractive, like a young blonde Ingrid Bergman, fortunately with a sense of humor. Finally, to rescue her, I

begin asking about the shows and museums and we have a nice conversation. The fellow is from Wales and has hair dyed a coppery red. I ask him why the special interest in diamonds but he doesn't explain.

Our guide Natasha is very pleasant and speaks very good English. We walk over to the Kremlin, through the grounds and to the Armory, for an exhibition of historical royal clothes, carriages, icons, vestments, Fabergé eggs, enormous silver dishes, incense burners shaped like castles, armor, etc., etc. It's really interesting, especially the internal views of the Kremlin, which we're unaware of. It's a beautiful sunny day, so I hope the photos come out. We see the largest imperial cannon, made in 1856, each ball weighing one ton, but it is purely ceremonial, and has never been used. Also, an enormous imperial bell, weighing a couple hundred tons, also never used, is partly broken. The Palace of Congresses is a beautiful building, simple and modern, built in 1960, and fits in very nicely; grayish-white in color, not the classical ochre.

It was a good idea to have a private guide, as we could select a convenient time and have a good conversation. For example, we asked who the Kremlin belongs to, and who pays the upkeep — municipality says government, and government says vice versa. Natasha thought the Communist Party had footed the bill till now. She also said that church weddings are coming back into vogue, after we saw crowns used by Pushkin and his wife at their wedding. Their use symbolizes that the husband is a king to his wife and she a queen to him. About the custom of women covering their hair — Natasha said it was to keep evil spirits from infiltrating into the body, specially as the wife has to deal with the outside world and mundane matters. It is also a sign of the wife's submission to her husband.

Getting a good look at Moscow...it is really very shabby. The town is dirty. Automatic drink dispensers on the street corners are often leaking, and there is nowhere to throw the cups. The same applies to little snack bars tucked away here and there. Unfinished ice cream cones litter the street. I ask Alex if he would like to feel like a Muscovite and walk along the street eating three ice cream cones, but he refused. Many dilapidated buildings, but here and there a little jewel, or well-kept new building. Enormous housing estates, 10 to 12 stories high. One can hardly distinguish one shop from another, especially if you can't read Russian — but mainly *producten* (food), *apothek* (pharmacy), and sport. Even a shop for curtaining has a queue outside it and the women are being let in one-by-one.

Back at the hotel, we go to the Intourist service department. Although there are four or five desks, one rarely sees any one sitting there; usually the clerks are inside chatting. We want to confirm our flight to Riga, but it seems there is some confusion about the voucher. Come back tomorrow! We are spending a lot of time on *siddurim*.

There is nothing at the Bolshoi, so maybe we'll go to the circus one night.

Scene in restaurant — waiters suddenly offering caviar at \$10 a tin, or two for \$15.

Alexander B. says he can get it for 40 rubles, which equals \$1.50; he gets it from connections or grateful patients. His wife is presently in Riga, so we haven't met her yet. He is very serious and old-fashioned, kisses my hand, and says things like "I am happy to be with someone who has seen my beloved mother/who has helped my mother, etc."

Hope we can just concentrate on sightseeing tomorrow.

Thursday, July 18

Today starts as a beautiful day and we decide to take the City Tour and visit the Pushkin Museum. By the time we get to the Intourist Office, I realize I would be in trouble with my tummy. Fortunately, the Intourist Hotel is right next to the tour office, so that saves me.

We go to town by taxi — Alex went to look at the Metro station in the morning and says it was a menace, and that there were not enough instructions. I don't know when I'll get to take at least one ride.

This taxi driver is quite pleasant, accepting \$5 at the outset (actually 140 rubles at official rate; the meter usually shows only 25 to 30 rubles). He takes us more through side streets, so we get other views of the city, much older, smaller buildings, many in near ruins. He asks where we came from, and says he has friends who have gone to Israel. We ask why his taxi carries no sign. He says taxis were in real danger from robbers, because of the cash, so he often took off his plastic sign. But I suspect he's a moonlighter, since other cabs have a light on the roof or a painted sign. When I tell Alex to fasten his seat belt (he sat in the front), the driver says it isn't necessary as he has a taxi license!

There're only about eight people on the tour — Red Square, a glance inside St. Basil's, views of the Kremlin (a perfect day for photos) — then a ride to Lenin Hills (so-called under the communists from 1935 to 1999; now called Sparrow Hills), to the University and a general view of town. Parts of the city begin to look familiar. Our guide refuses a tip at the end, and the bus driver accepts, after some hesitation. We go round to the Intourist Head office about changing the hotel; of course, the guy is not in. I sit down on the step, and there's much consternation at the sight of me. I'm invited to enter and sit in the little garden at the back,

but we leave right away. We walk over to the new Metropol Hotel, next to the Bolshoi Theater, as our friend Sylvia Hassenfeld, who had recently been in Moscow, said they had a “coffee shop” style of restaurant. But it isn’t so, so we settle for tea and canapés and a beautiful lobby. Cost 8.80 rubles, about \$5 at old exchange. We look at the restaurant menu, and decide we would *not* have dinner there.

We try to call Intourist — Mr. Pankratin is still not in. We take a taxi to the Pushkin Museum. It is a lovely building with lots of ancient art and archeology, and with many copies of Roman and other sculptures, as it was originally a didactic museum. Mainly we want to see the Impressionists, and it is really a beautiful collection, most of which we are not familiar with.

I have to get to a toilet again, and am told that the toilets were being repaired and I would have to go outside to the street! I have no choice but to go. I discover a mobile W.C. truck parked in the street, one part for men, one for women, which has about six toilets and a wash basin. I expected a chemical toilet, but this has running water, and afterwards I see that it’s connected to the sewerage system. I am not the only one to use it.

The Museum was opened in 1912, but I am surprised to see a glass roof for natural light. I thought this was a modern concept. Entrance was 1.50 rubles each. The tour probably charges \$10 to 15. The most amazing thing about the Museum is that there is only a very simple catalogue for sale, no cards or posters or books. They really don’t understand about making money here, and how President Bush and James Baker expect the Russians to adopt an American mentality and economy overnight is beyond me. I think it will take 50 years.

The guide in the morning asks Alex what he thinks of Moscow. He says that it's very interesting but that he can't understand such neglect and dilapidation next to beautiful historical buildings. "You must understand we are going through difficult times and have no money, but in a few years it will be better." On another occasion we're told, "Even if people want to work, they feel there is nothing to work for. They cannot aspire to a better apartment, cannot buy better food or clothes, so they just scrape along on whatever they have."

We take a taxi back and pay \$5 instead of the \$10 the driver asks for. I'm beginning to feel a bit weak, and anxious to take some Sedistal for my stomach... We went first to a bookstore to get some writing paper — none. Envelopes — 50¢ each, \$1 with the stamps. Saw a nice book on the Pushkin Museum — \$45. I asked the girl if she would mail it for me — she looked shocked, and said she didn't know where the Post Office is. I said what about paper to wrap the book — she had no paper, but offered a plastic bag! For paper, I should go down to the other newsagent — two sheets of paper for 50¢!

In the room Alex gets through to the boss of Mr. Pankratin, who looks up our file, and says it would be OK to change the hotel. He would give instructions to the Intourist guide at the hotel. Victory! But nothing in hand. The first time an official was polite and helpful. Then Alex goes down to the service office about the flight to Riga. The woman we talked to before wasn't there, but the matter was arranged. We had paid for the tickets in Jerusalem — come back on Saturday to pick them up. Alex also negotiates a few sheets of typing paper, after expressing surprise that such a hotel has no stationery.

OK. Now we can write home, and start sending postcards, which we bought in the street. It is a problem to telephone.

Now waiting for Alexander B. to come for dinner, I'm not planning to eat.

Friday, July 18

Last night ended quite dramatically. Alexander and Victor were supposed to come at 7:00, and so we went down to the lobby to wait for them. After 20 minutes, we went down to the lower entrance in case they couldn't get in. I was beginning to feel faint and began perspiring, but didn't want to go and drink something. Finally, after 8:00 they appeared, having had problems getting petrol because Alexander had forgotten to fill the car. We went into the Galaxie [*sic*] Restaurant, waited for a waiter about 15 minutes. Only after Alex B. went off to complain did a waiter appear. I was beginning to feel really awful. I ordered chicken soup and toast, the others had a full meal. By 8:45, I felt nauseous and left the table, got to the toilet in time to throw up, sweating terribly. Alex B., a doctor, came into the restroom and started applying acupressure on my thumbs, and after a few minutes I began to feel better. We returned to the table, but still no food. I drank some mineral water and then felt sick again, grabbed a glass and used that. I felt that I had better go to bed and left, taking that awful glass with me to the cloakroom. I was happy to get into bed, and after a few minutes both Alexes came up. B. brought tonic water and bitter lemon, which he said was the best drink for this condition. They came again after they had eaten, and brought some soup, but I didn't eat it; I only wanted to sleep. Berman did some more acupressure. I said I thought he was an urologist, and he said, "When there are no medicines one must try everything."

I wake up in the morning refreshed, but decide that it would be better not to go to Zagorsk. Instead, we go to the Soviet Art Museum, which has been recommended to us, and Alex B.

comes to fetch us as he had to meet his wife at the nearby Riga Station, and the Museum was on his way.

His wife, Ann, or Anya, is very pretty and petite, green eyes, a doctor. She makes a “bob” to me when we’re introduced — also to Alex. I don’t think I look old enough for such a sign of respect. I can’t make it out. I have to speak German (my Yiddish) with her as she doesn’t know English too well.

The Soviet Art Museum is an enormous three-storey building, with vast halls. We had to go to the second floor, and the attendant offered to take us up in the lift. One section is Soviet Art of the 1920s and ’30s, the other part a selection from the Tetryakov Gallery, which is now closed. Lots of social realism, portraits, still lifes and street scenes. Many Jewish artists, and the Oriental (Armenian) or Eastern Russia is well represented. But 80 percent of the works are heavy and dark.

I remembered a conversation I had with Victor at the airport. I complained that the terminal was so dark inside — a dark copper ceiling, dark grey floor, black chairs and little electric light. I told him how cheerful Ben Gurion (Lod) Airport looked, but Victor said he felt very well in that atmosphere. I often had occasion to recall this conversation, and was happy at the end of the trip to see that the departure hall was more pleasant. Those painters who use more color seem not at ease in that medium.

Bonus. We found an English book at the art museum on the Pushkin Museum, a small one, at \$10. Funny that it is not stocked at the Pushkin.

After we leave the museum it begins to rain and then pour; there are no taxis and we don't know which bus to take. We wait for over an hour for a taxi (some are full, some don't stop) and get really wet. We finally get back to the hotel at about 3:30. We have tea and sandwiches in the room and a good sleep.

We send a birthday cable today to Varda and hope it arrives before Shabbat. Also write a letter, but who knows when that will arrive!

We have dinner in the hotel — terrible service. I ask for a cooked vegetable plate, and get a plate of cold rice, sauerkraut, sliced onion, a tomato, chopped parsley stalks. So I also ask for chicken broth — he says there's only chicken noodle soup. It is tasty, but they could have strained the soup. I am not eating meat, and according to Alex's experience, am not missing anything.

We discover that the little newspaper shop sells stamps and envelopes for rubles — one envelope 50 kopeks. One has to take a good look around this hotel to find whatever amenities they have. Alex gets angry in the bookshop. He wants the *Herald Tribune*, and instead of change, the girl gives him a postcard — he refuses and doesn't take the paper.

Saturday night, July 19

Not a normal Shabbat for me, as it meant traveling, but couldn't resist the circumstances.

Alex B. took us to the main synagogue in Archipova Street. Classical pillars outside, a main hall inside — very nice — a handsome, nicely carved wooden balcony and the front row is separated into “boxes” for 3 to 4 persons. Huge circular chandeliers, and the Ark is set into a semi-niche going the full height of the building, and ending in a dome painted blue with gold

There were quite a number of men, between 50 and 60, and about 30 women, mostly tourists. Everyone seemed to be carrying a plastic bag. One character, apparently from a kibbutz, and looking as if she had arrived with the Aliyah Bet, kept going around telling everyone she was from Palestine. I don't know what she expected them to do, but as there were no *siddurim* (prayer books) upstairs, there was much chatter, making it even more difficult to hear the prayers.

They took out three *Sifrei Torah*, which they carried right around the synagogue, then there was "*leinen*" in three different spots. A real *balagan*.

The woman sitting next to me asked if I was a tourist. When I told her I was from Jerusalem, she got very emotional, and told me a long story in French, of which I understood little. She said she was coming to Jerusalem in August, and had an introduction to Rabbi Pinkhas. She said she was alone, since her parents had died (no longer young herself) and apparently had some problem, coughing a lot — TB? Anyway, I gave her my phone number and advised her to go to a religious kibbutz, but that idea didn't appeal to her.

We next went to send a birthday cable to our daughter-in-law Nurit, and then looked for the house of Alex's aunt Sonia, which we eventually found. Strangely enough, Alex has remembered the address since childhood, not even having it written down.

Alex B. then took us to lunch at the Slaviansky Bazaar, the Slavic Bazaar exotic restaurant existing over a 100 years. There were large portraits of famous people in the foyer who used to patronize it, such as Chaliapin and Chekhov. Again very dark, all curtains drawn. A.B. ordered in Russian style — many hors d'oeuvres, soup, then chicken for Alex, sturgeon for himself and blini for me. This was supposed to be a fish restaurant, but besides sturgeon there is no fish — anywhere. Red caviar OK, black caviar, herring very salty, as is the sturgeon, hard-boiled eggs, tomato, cucumber, etc! Soup (fish) OK — Alex's chicken very tough. I asked for some jam instead of caviar for the blini, but there wasn't any. Alex tried to eat the chicken with his hands as he couldn't cut it and at least they brought him a fingerbowl. There was live music, which cost an extra three rubles. The bill came to 150 rubles (\$5). Crowded, mainly with Russians, and there was a large queue at entrance as we left.

We went to the main Berioska shop, which sells local arts and crafts, to look around, but it was just closing for lunch. We went to another branch in the suburbs, but discovered they use the old exchange rate of 1.60 rubles to \$1, making it very expensive. This rate they call the Golden Ruble. We went to the Arbat, which was very crowded. Dolls, dolls, dolls, dolls. Then we went to the cemetery near the Convent of the Virgins to see the grave of Khrushchev and other monuments. Very elaborate with photos set in tombstones, sculptures, etc. We came back exhausted about 4:30 and slept for a couple of hours.

We go to the Galaxie Restaurant for dinner. It's very crowded, and no one to show us to our places. So we go down to the other restaurant where Vitaly, our very first waiter, receives us with great enthusiasm, but soon after the place fills up, mainly with young Russians, and what looks like a sports team, the service becomes very slow. Vitaly brought me some fish (I think a small perch) which is impossible to eat. Alex had a good steak, but the chips though

brown were raw. It cost 165 rubles. Live music and dancing. All kinds of girls and clothes. Where do they get the money? All smoke incessantly. We get tired of waiting for the bill, so get up and walk out, trying to explain to the head waiter what's happened. Vitaly comes running and apologizes that he's very busy.

Sunday, July 20

Hopefully to Zagorsk with Bermans.

This morning at breakfast, we scarcely have sat down when the waitress whips out a doll (*matroshka*) and a scarf for sale. We protest that we haven't eaten yet, and she's very contrite and brings our food. Then she offers the caviar. We have realized that it is not each waiter trying to make something on the side, but the hotel is behind this business. The caviar is kept at the serving station, and everyone has a go selling it!

The Bermans pick us up at 10:30 and we have a lovely drive out through the country — miles of birch (*berioska*) forests, bad roads, garden allotments, dacha estates. It seems the modern dacha is a tiny cottage with a sloping roof and a couple of meters of land. They cost about \$2,000 to 3,000, and are used on weekends. Lush and very picturesque from the road and we see much building on new sites. The drive is about a 75-kilometer journey.

Zagorsk is the seat of the Russian Orthodox Church and is very picturesque, especially in the summer weather when the gold domes shine against the blue sky. Thousands of visitors and pilgrims come here; we see little scenes of old ladies asking priests to bless them; picnics; queues in the chapel for buying tapers; kissing icons and effigies. There's beautiful singing, *a capella*, in the chapel with people joining in; many are writing *pitkaot*, or notes, giving names

of dead relatives to the priests, to be prayed for — there must have been thousands. I wonder if they really pray for them. There are magnificent chandeliers some with red and green lights, and two fountains with holy water and people queuing up, to fill their kettles, plastic bottles, mugs, etc. Old peasant types. The postcards give a better description than I can do.

We spend a couple of hours there and then go for lunch. In the outer square of the monastery, there are about 40 tables selling dolls, etc. — really incredible. We can't get a table for lunch, as we have not reserved and they tell us to come back at 4:00! So we eat some almonds and crackers I have brought, and drink water. It's Sunday, so all the kiosks are closed.

Drove to the Abramzevo Museum, which is in a big forest park. We find a log cabin café there which is open, and finally get some food and drinks — tomato and onion salad, red caviar, tea, juice; the men have awful *shashlik*. The kitchen is a sight and I want to photograph it but Alex won't let me. As one has to wait at the service window to take the food, it is possible to have a good look at the inner workings. It is enough to put you off the food. Even here, the restaurant is dark. Beautiful drapes and net curtains, quite out of character, cover the windows, instead of leaving them open to the view.

The museum is quite interesting: a wooden house, old furniture, church, etc. in beautiful forest setting. This used to be the home of a well-known writer, Sergei Aksakov, during the years 1843–1859, although it was actually built in the 1770s. After his death, the home became a meeting place and refuge for artists and writers, and is now maintained as a museum.

There's a tremendous traffic jam on the way home and we finally get back about 6:30, happy the car didn't break down! We saw four accidents during the day.

A really nice and enjoyable outing. Ann asks a lot of questions about Israel, but he doesn't seem to be particularly interested. They seem to have good jobs, work five days a week and she is a laboratory doctor, her own boss. She has just been to the seaside in Riga for three weeks, where her mother, also a doctor, takes a summer job at a *Beit Havra'ah* (sanatorium).

Alex's eye is bothering him very much today. Perhaps we should go to an eye doctor in Riga.

Monday morning, July 21

I feel quite tense about our trip to Riga, but Alex seems to be OK. We've had a good breakfast, red caviar and boiled eggs, as on the menu, and I had porridge as well — really excellent porridge with a pat of butter on top! With this, I won't get too hungry during the day. Packed and attended to details, and while cleaning up the bits of papers I happen to read the pamphlet about the Business Centre; it says they have a line for direct international phone calls, a complete contradiction to what the overseas operator downstairs had told us. I send Alex down to investigate, and sure enough, he came back after an hour, all smiles. Within half an hour, he has gotten through to the office in Jerusalem and spoke to Asi and Lonny. They were excited to hear from us, as they've been trying unsuccessfully to call us for four days and were getting worried. They said all is well, and they have received our cables. Alex told them I was subsisting on porridge and caviar, so I can imagine how that story will get round! Anyway, I feel really happy about the call — even though I didn't speak to them directly — the best I've felt all week. All attempts to get through to Lost and Found about the

food bag have been unsuccessful. It's such a shame that we'll have so little to bring as gifts to Riga.

Intourist took us out to the domestic airport, which at least is more cheerful and pleasanter than the other one. About 10 of us were taken by the bus to the plane, and we thought, a whole plane for 10 people! But after we boarded, the plane filled up completely with some large group at the back. Some of the seats were broken and it was not very comfortable. The flight was delayed about 25 minutes, because of the number of planes leaving, so we were sitting almost an hour before take off. Similarly, at the end, we got off last and had to go through passport control. The flight took one hour and 15 minutes. No trolleys and few porters, but we finally managed to find one and went off to the hotel. Alex said he didn't need a tranquilizer, but I did. I was so tense and worried about Alex.

Riga. First impression is of an attractive, clean city in good condition. The Hotel Latvia looks and feels like a real hotel (e.g., fresh flowers in the lobby), but the room was not very comfortable. We try to change, but the hotel is full. Apparently, many Latvians are coming to declare solidarity with the country, as well as other holidaymakers. So I suggest shifting the beds round and that makes more room, and we were more comfortable. We unpack and Alex makes phone calls.

I actually fell asleep and woke about 9:45 p.m. Alex wanted to go out and find his parents' home and feel the city. He obviously wanted to be alone, so I had a cup of tea (the immersion heater is a godsend) and a sandwich, and made this entry, while listening to an opera on TV. I don't know what it is, but Perlman is conducting, and I think its Leontine Price — it sounds very nice. I hope Alex will not get too upset revisiting his childhood.

Looking out from the window on the 15th floor, the city doesn't appear to be very well lit. I see two or three neon signs. Actually, the brochure says there are about 600,000 people in the city, and 2.5 million in all Latvia, so it's not a large country or city, but others told us later that Riga is home to a million people.

Alex comes back after an hour, deeply moved. He went out to find the house where his parents lived just before the war, somewhere close by. Suddenly, purely by instinct, he found himself right in front of the house where he had grown up. It was a real shock for him. He got the impression that it was now an office with a locked entrance. On the way back to the hotel he passed the little synagogue where he used to go with his father, still intact, and that too brought back many memories.

I wanted to give him a tranquilizer, but he refused and seemed to sleep well till about 6 a.m.

Tuesday morning, July 22

Sara, the daughter of our friends in Beer Sheba, has apparently just had an operation, so there is some doubt whether we'll see her, but her husband is coming this morning to take us to Rumboli, and the cemetery. Her parents, Prof. Zelia Cerfass, a top cardiologist and his wife Leah, a professor of classic languages, had been part of Alex' circle of friends at high school, and came to Israel around 1990 to be with their younger daughter Ilana ,who had made *aliyah* shortly before the 1973 Yom Kippur war. She settled in Beer Sheba and found a position at Ben Gurion University, teaching German, while her husband Dr. Nahum Yavetz, a dentist, went into the army and subsequently opened a clinic. Ilana had a cousin Bluma, daughter of Leah's sister Sonya Itkin, who had come with her husband Ben-Zion Sandler, an engineer,

and child early in 1973, and also settled in Beer Sheva. Her mother joined her in 1978. Sonya spoke excellent English, and teaching it was her profession. She brought me a copy of Galsworthy's *Man of Property*!

It's very chilly this morning, and looks like rain. Perhaps I'll even get to wear the sweater I brought!

Breakfast is on the table, sausage and cheese and butter, a small Danish pastry and blini with smetana as the hot dish. Nice glassware, same white dishes with the gold rims as we saw in Moscow. This hotel is really a bit strange. Although it was built in 1978 and gave a first impression of being very fresh and nice, it's rather uncomfortable. The four small elevators are barely big enough to accommodate the hotel's luggage trolleys. The room numbers are on a small metal triangle at the top corner of the door, almost invisible. All woodwork is painted black. A second glass door inside the room conflicts with the wardrobe, which has three sliding doors, and the bathroom door opens outwards. There's a little step also, and no shelf space for toiletries in the bathroom. Bathmats are unknown in Russia, it seems. Still there are fresh flowers and plants in the public rooms, and flowers for sale. We couldn't get an English paper; the *Wall Street Journal* they had was over a week old.

Tuesday evening, July 23

Today has been the peak of our Russian/Riga experience, the main reason for this trip. Sara and her husband came to pick us up about 11 a.m. They came with beautiful large carnations for me, very long-stemmed, and a small bouquet of cornflowers for Alex. However, Sara did not join us on the trip as she is just two weeks after an operation and a month away from their emigration to the U.S. We dropped her off at home, and continued to the Jewish cemetery at

Shmerli, where Ettie, a cousin of Zelia Cerfass, was waiting for us. She has been looking after Alex's father's grave and putting flowers on it regularly. This is very important in Riga, as apparently those graves, which remain long neglected and unvisited, are replaced by new burials.

As you come in the gate, there is a very large dark building with a dome and a large yellow Magen David affixed to it. This is the *beit taharah* and/or synagogue. On the right-hand side is a monument to a Latvian family that rescued about 50 Jews. I think the person was invited to Jerusalem as a Righteous Gentile.

The immediate impression as one walks in is of a large beautiful forest with lots of fresh flowers amongst the graves. There are some elaborate tombstones, some in Hebrew, some in Russian, some with Jewish symbols and some with photos or sculptures, in the Russian tradition. Little benches for sitting near the graves, which is a beautiful thought, are very practical. The grave of Alex's father has a small simple stone in Hebrew. He died in June 1940 after a massive stroke, some months before the Germans arrived. On the grave were two roses, probably put there by Ettie, and Alex places a bunch of carnations. He is very moved, and I too shed a tear. Alex says a few words, *Kaddish*, then *El Maleh Rahamin*, and finally scatters some soil on the grave, which he has brought from Jerusalem. It is really something, to come after 50 years, to say *Kaddish* at one's father's grave. There is something cathartic about this culmination of years of guilt and anxiety and longing.

This, of course, applies also to our visit to Rumboli, which is even more affecting, since his mother was murdered or died during the infamous Death March in November 1941, and so did not die a natural death. At the entrance to the Rumboli forest is a large stone memorial,

with a Magen David, to those who died there. But when you go into the woods, there isn't a single sign or direction. We park in a little clearing, and a worker there directs us into the forest. We go some 30 meters along this little path, then come out to an area where there is a large rectangular mound, about 6 x 12 meters.

Another stone with an inscription in Russian and Latvian pays tribute to those who were murdered in a "bestial way" by the Nazis. Alex places the roses (his mother's name was Rosa) and scatters the rest of the Jerusalem earth, and says *Kaddish* and *El Maleh Rahamim*. He is really terribly upset, recalling the possible circumstances of her death. Perhaps she was lucky and died early on in the march, and didn't have to walk 15 kilometers in the snow, in order to be shot. But we shall never know.

As he walk around the mound, Alex suddenly becomes aware of the words "יד ושם" — Yad Vashem, in the bare earth in the grass, right at the edge. Probably a stencil had been put down when the grass was planted, and so the letters showed up, but I'm sure that not everybody would see it. It is the only Hebrew inscription there.

After these two ceremonies, I really feel I could use a drink! And the professor agrees with me. He tells us that Jews have a memorial day each autumn when they visit the site, but our companion isn't sure whether the Latvians do so. As we left Rumboli, I happen to think that I haven't seen any water taps at the cemetery. Then I remember that I had a bottle of water in my hand bag, so we use that to wash our hands.

We return to the hotel quite exhausted, and decide to try the buffet lunch, but there is no such thing, in spite of the announcements. We go to the breakfast room, and are given quite a

comprehensive menu, but scarcely anything is available except pork and beef! For vegetarians, hardly anything. Finally, I got some tomato and cucumber salad, green onions, smoked fish, hard-boiled egg in mustard sauce, and caramel ice cream to follow. No fish, as in Russia (what do they do with it?) and no fruit. I do seem to eat more bread than usual!

We both sleep about two hours, and then go out to visit Alex's home, school, father's office, etc. The last turns out to be a peculiar experience. We find the building in Reines Street, one of the main streets quite easily. Alex has the urge to go upstairs, so we climb three high flights of dark stairs and ring at the door. After a few minutes, a young fellow comes out, eating an ice cream cone.

Alex tells him about his father once having had an office there, etc., and the young man says it's now a communal apartment. In the meantime a young woman also comes to the door, and when Alex asks whether he could come in and look around they say, somewhat surprised, yes come in. But it's absolutely pitch dark, we can't see a thing. Alex asks if there isn't any electricity, and the fellow says the bulb has burnt out. We say thank you and leave. I'm really astonished at Alex, as he is usually very cautious. After all, they could have been drug addicts or whatever. Afterwards, I wondered if the young fellow had been very clever in inviting us in such a way. Whatever, it was a very strange experience. All the buildings we have peeked into have these gloomy, miserable stairways; I'm beginning to think the *olim* in Israel must suffer some kind of shock at the exposure to our light!

We walk slowly back to the hotel. We see many old two-storey wooden buildings painted in various colors, but I have finished my film. We also visit Alex's Hebrew Gymnasia, which is now a technical college. It is obvious that the population is not Russian, but looks more

Scandinavian, European. One also sees many oriental-looking people, probably from farther parts of Russia (at the airport there had been a young black man going to Murmansk — Alex thought he was perhaps a sailor). Also, the architecture has a more Gothic character, as well as a regular European style. There is a strong anti-Russian feeling now, so the Latvians speak their own language a great deal, and there is talk of a law, which will discriminate in employment against those who can't speak Russian. They will have to take a written exam.

Alex wants some laundry done today. The floor lady says she has a friend upstairs who'll do it in a day (four shirts, underwear, pressing a suit). We speculate how much it would be. I figure \$10, but in the end it costs 15 rubles, and when Alex gives her 50 rubles, she protests that it's too much but takes it. People here are not so dollar-conscious as in Moscow, and few taxi drivers demand foreign currency.

Many tourist groups coming and going; today a large group from Germany. No English paper anywhere.

Tomorrow, we see friends of the late Nina Thol, and visit the Old City. Nina had also been a school friend of Alex's and was one of the first to come to Israel, about a year after the 1967 Six Day War, with her daughter Vered. Nina's husband had been a victim of Stalin's purge of the doctors in 1953, and she told horrifying stories about the isolation she had endured. Even her friends were afraid of being seen with her, such was the fear then of the authorities.

We have supper in the room. It is 10:30 p.m., but not quite yet dark.

Wednesday, July 24

Had a quiet morning today, while Alex had an appointment with a friend of Nina Thol's daughter, and I wrote many postcards. I had salad and sprats for lunch (Alex had chicken, which was tough), and fresh strawberries for dessert. First fresh fruit we've had since we left home.

About 3:30 Sara's daughter, Tamara, came with her husband, to show us the Old Town. She doesn't know English too well yet, and seemed a bit ill at ease, so it wasn't too comfortable. She thought I wanted to go shopping for clothes, but we just walked about. At one stage, we found ourselves again at the apartment of Murra's family (Alex's cousin in N.Y.), but still no answer to the bell.

We wanted to see the synagogue, but when we got near, the road was taken up; Tamara's husband (another Alex) told us some story about the road work being a permanent feature, to make life more difficult for the Jews. He took us round the back, but there was no access. I thought I'd try to get round the front again to take a picture when I suddenly saw the synagogue in the side street, quite sound and undisturbed. On closer inspection, we saw the door was open and walked in.

There was one *gabbai* inside. The place is much nicer and better kept than the synagogue in Moscow, though not quite so large. Apparently, Rabbi Goren, head chaplain of the Israeli army, had visited here a couple of weeks ago. There is a *mikveh*, but no rabbi; the *shochet* acts as the rabbi, or *ba'al tefillah* (cantor, prayer leader). It seems that 50 to 60 worshippers is a good attendance on Festivals. This is the only active synagogue left out of 63 before the war. The front outside wall is to be renovated soon, with the help of a donation from Israel. I

wondered if this was Rabbi Moshe's synagogue (the son of my great-grandfather) who had been Chief Rabbi of Riga from 1882 until his death in 1911.

After a couple of hours, we took a taxi to Sara and Misha's place. Tamara was horrified at the extravagance of 25 rubles, but it seemed silly to phone her father to come and fetch us. They live in an old house with a decent stairway lit by windows, but no elevator and they are on the fourth floor. It is a spacious three-room apartment, but a big mess because they are leaving for New York City in about a month. Actually, they have already sent their stuff, but are not sending furniture because of the freight charges. Misha told us that an Odessa mafia has taken over the haulage at the docks and charges a \$ per 1.5 kilograms when half the weight is the container itself. Sara put on lovely food, gravlax, which she makes herself, red caviar, sprats, and Hungarian wine. Much later she served a cake covered with cream, tea and *varenya*, (strawberry preserves). There was another lady, a cousin, and the in-laws of the daughter.

In the end, this afternoon tea turned out to be rather depressing, and I felt we were witnessing the second destruction of the Riga community. These families were going to the States, except for the cousin who remains alone, and hopes to get to Israel, where she also has no one. The in-laws have a son who's been in the U.S. about a year, and is more or less getting organized. Sara's family is going because her husband's brother has been there ten years and is taking them over.

Misha, Sara's husband, is not interested in Israel. Sara doesn't want to go to the States, and is anxious about her parents in Israel, but she has no choice. At one stage, she got quite upset. There are about 5,000 Jews now in Riga, although others give higher figures, perhaps with

the mixed marriages. Everyone except the old is planning to leave. Who will look after them, who will look after the cemetery, the synagogue? In a few years there won't be any Jews left.

On the other hand, there is a Jewish day school with an enrollment of five hundred. Tamara told me a strange story. She has been recently divorced (there is a little girl of 6), but since their exit application was made in the name of her ex-husband, she must leave the country together with him.

I asked Misha what he plans to do in New York. He said he was 56 years old, a professor of gastro-whatever it is. He thought he could pass the American exams, but that no one would take him for a residency (three years) at his age, or that he was even physically capable of doing the job. Sara's knowledge of English is very poor, so there's no possibility of her getting a license. He said their prime aim is to see their son, a young doctor, settled, and then perhaps they could run a private clinic for the Russian community.

We sat around and chatted till 8 p.m. On the way back, Misha showed us the memorial, which had been place in the park where the Gogol Street Synagogue once stood and which on July 4, 1940, was filled with Jews and set alight. Today, Latvians sit in the park in the company of this grey boulder with the Magen David. Withered flowers lay there, and I was sorry we had no fresh ones to add. There is an inscription in Yiddish, Latvian and Russian commemorating the victims of the Nazis, but no mention of the synagogue fire. Had this been Rabbi Moshe's synagogue? We then drove back to the old ghetto area, behind the railway station, and Ms. Feige, who was with us, pointed out the sites of the various Jewish institutions and hospitals which had once stood there. She had been a nurse and worked there. Much of this area is still full of small old wooden houses, run down, but picturesque.

Got back to the hotel quite exhausted, after 9 p.m., and really sad and depressed about what's going on here. Many phone calls during the evening; Alex has gotten quite involved.

Thursday, July 25

Sarah's husband Misha came to take us to Jurmaleh (the "seaside") — a 20 kilometer stretch of nice sandy beaches and *dacha* resorts, but the water looks brown and uninviting. Misha says people are warned not to swim, but they do anyway.

However, the little resorts are lovely — individual houses, some grand, some small, some big hotels and pensions for organized unions or professions — set among the trees, lawns and flowers. The apartments rent at about 500 rubles a month and families come to stay for two or three months. The parents take turns, one works and the other takes time off. It is only about a 20–25-minute drive from town. School holidays last for three months.

We stopped for coffee at a café, which provided only coffee and ice cream served with chopped peanuts. Quite tasty. This place, Dzinare, has a long shopping mall, but there's hardly anything to buy.

Two culinary surprises today — for breakfast, white cheese with smetana (thick sour cream) and at lunch tomato, cucumber and dill salad, also with smetana. My vegetable plate consisted of boiled potatoes, more salad and sauerkraut. Dessert was a square of gelatin in a pink watery liquid, and there was a plate of lemon slices and granulated sugar, apparently for eating. First lemon we've seen. The weather was lovely, not too hot with a pleasant breeze. The elevators broke down twice today and we had to walk up 15 floors.

Afternoon. Alex had an appointment, so I decided to go “shopping.” We had seen one department store with very nice windows, real window dressing, and I wanted to see what was inside. It was very disappointing. I finished the store in 10 minutes! There was only one floor, and all the departments were arranged like stalls, with one central aisle. There were men’s shirts and sweaters, women’s blouses and sweaters, scarves and gloves, men’s socks, toiletries, household linens, some jewelry and very little amber. It was quite crowded but there were no interesting souvenirs.

Afterwards, I went with Alex to the old home on Strelnicku Street again. We tried to locate the *shtiebel*, but Alex couldn’t identify it exactly. Then with great difficulty, we got a taxi to the house in Matveyevskaya Street, which he finally found. Apparently, the Rafaelowitch family lived here just after arriving from Drissa (near Dvinsk) in 1919, which they left because of the Communist revolution. They first had a tiny apartment, and after a year or so took a larger one on the next floor. In 1922 the Latvians declared independence, and with their improved economic situation, the family moved to the house in Strelnicku Street, where Alex lived for six or seven years, until he left for Heidelberg. The house, in a second interior courtyard has been renovated and looks very nice from the outside. Someone tinkering with his car asked if we had once lived there. The Latvians seem to be used to people coming around with cameras, but are also a bit anxious about property claims.

In 1935, the parents and Asi moved to the office in Reines Street, and after the father’s death in June 1940, the mother and Asi moved to other living quarters up to the time of the Death March in winter, and Asi’s running away to join partisans, after which both were killed.

Supper. Actually fried fish — some large sardines, or perhaps rouget — with a mixed salad of tomato, cucumber and shallots with a sour cream dressing, then ice cream cake and coffee. Almost a normal meal.

P.M. Trying to call Varda tonight, but seems like an impossible undertaking.

Friday, July 26

The call to Varda came through about 11:50 p.m. last night, and it was nice talking to her and to Karni, who happened to be there. Everything seems to be OK, but her little boy Avishai hadn't had his medical tests yet. After about 15 minutes later, Karni called us back and we had a longer conversation. Only incidentally, she told us that she has had a good offer of a job in Tel Aviv, that she has cut her hair short, etc.

Didn't sleep well, for thinking about everything.

At 9:45 a.m. Ettie came to join us, and we finally persuaded her to take the package (fruit and coffee, soup and milk). We went to see Westerman, whose office is in the building of the Jewish Club, previously the Yiddish Theater, which the Jewish community had built. He'd been recommended as the community historian, after I began making my enquiries about Rabbi Moshe Shapiro. Now everyone considers me at least partly a native of Riga. I think they are quite astonished that I do not eat meat and do not ride on Shabbat. They are sure I am starving.

He was not too helpful, but gave us some addresses, and told us the town archives were now closed, but that I should write. He seems more interested in the history of the present century,

and not in Judaism. But he had a long conversation with Alex about partisan fighting and his wartime activities. He assured us there was a Riga phone book, but when we asked at the hotel, they only had one for organizations. We went again to Shmerli with Ettie. I thought I might be able to track down Rabbi Moshe's grave, but the office of the Hevrah Kadishah was closed.

Many people were visiting the cemetery, but none of the men wore *kippot*.

Sara took us for lunch/dinner at 2:45. We went to a nice restaurant in a hotel called the Ridzene, a hotel for Party guests and other favored visitors, where there were still bullet holes from recent shooting. The hors d'oeuvres were two kinds of cold meat, gravlax, jellied eel, tomatoes, cucumbers and olives. For the main dish, I had a fried salmon steak with potatoes and cabbage, which was delicious; then came ice cream with fruit, something that was supposed to be a peach but was about the size of a small plum. Coffee. It was very nice and we finished after 5:00 (we did have to wait quite a bit). Apparently, this is a normal eating pattern here. Then I managed to get my hair done (seven rubles), and we're having "an evening at home." Maybe the kids will phone. Varda and Lonny did; they got a big kick talking to us in Riga.

Alex was very upset this morning when he heard a driver ask our taxi driver where Rumboli was. Neither of them knew.

The approaching move to the U.S. weighs heavily on Sara and Misha. She regrets now that they didn't move to Israel ten years ago, and both see the end of their professional life, and any kind of a productive life. What can one say to them?

Saturday night, July 27

Another busy day. In the morning we went to the synagogue in Piltavas Street, which is not far away. About 40 oldsters and 2 or 3 tourists. An excellent *chazzan*, whom we could hear already outside, and something of a choir, or at least vocal accompaniment. The man we spoke to a couple of days ago is actually the *ba'al koreh*, and offered Alex an *aliyah*. My stomach turned over from emotion, so I can imagine how Alex felt; he was third, and said the *brachot* in such a loud clear voice, everyone turned to see who it was. I could have kicked myself that I didn't have the tape recorder, but I decided at least to take pictures. However, I did so from outside the door, and it wasn't too far away because the *bimah* was large, as well as the *amud* in front of the ark. Hoped they succeeded. Someone asked me to photograph him, and was prepared to do so in the synagogue, but I took him outside. During the *leinen*, which was conducted in a quiet way (and they do all the *misheberach* blessings at the end), everyone chatted and walked about, paying little attention. A woman who saw me from the other side came over and started talking to me in Hebrew. She had learnt as a child and still remembered. But she is not planning to make *aliyah*, because all her family is here and there are "problems," so I presume they've all married out. I had great difficulty getting in a few minutes of prayer. During all this, a group of tourists came in the side door and stayed about 15 minutes. Some of them looked Japanese, but afterwards outside we heard the guide explaining in Russian, so they may have been visitors from Eastern Russia.

It was a very moving moment for Alex. I must say that though the synagogue is done quite tastefully in classical décor, there is an awful green neon Magen David over the *aron*, which I found very disturbing.

We met Sara's son Isandre as planned, and he went with us to the library, another grand building with fantastic flights of stairs (maybe 30–40 steps in each flight) and the stair well was about 50 meters high. Of course, we had to go to the third floor. To be brief, we looked at yearbooks of 1896, 1900 and 1907, and in all of them found M. Schapiro, Rabbi, at the same address, 141 Romanov Street, but no one could tell us what that street was called now. Also, we found Rabbi Shalom Avin, the son-in-law, listed at the same address. There was no listing of synagogues in order to identify Adath Yeshurun, since synagogues are known here mainly by the street name. It seems to me that best references must be at Hebrew University or Yad Vashem, since they say everything here was destroyed.

Isandre took us to a nice restaurant, behind an anonymous door (he was our guest of course), and I had “trout” — quite nice, except it was fried like a schnitzel in egg and flour. He seemed a nice young man and is prepared to work hard to pass his exams in the States in order to get started there. I think he's about 28 or so, married with a child, with another on the way. His wife's sister and her husband have been there about two years, and he has passed his exams and is working in a N.Y. hospital. Isandre hopes he will be helpful in guiding him through the U.S. demands.

Returned to the hotel for a rest. Afterwards, Alex went to look for the relative that Murra had mentioned to him. He found the address, but the man was not in, and according to the state of the letterbox, is out of town. We have not been lucky with that side of the family. Meantime, I went for a walk and saw the start of the First International Marathon. The atmosphere today, (another beautiful day) was real *shabbasdik* — shops closed, little traffic, people out walking with babies and children. Apparently, they have a five-day week here. I am surprised by little things — the popularity of spike-heeled shoes, the high proportion of tall girls, very strong

Scandinavian types, the heavy smoking, no souvenirs worth buying, and quite a sprinkling of Orientals, or are they Eastern Russians?

In the evening the Rosenthals (friends of Vered, the daughter of Nina Thol)) came to visit and we had a pleasant chat. One son is a top kidney transplant man and has been invited twice this year to Israel. His two children are now there, a married daughter, and a son who is to marry an Israeli girl at the end of the year. They would like at least to visit, but say that the over 70s cannot get health insurance. They told us that Romanov Street is now Lachplesha Street, as Alex had thought, and in the course of the conversation they told us that they had been married by Rabbi Shalom Avin, Rabbi Moshe's son-in-law, in 1934! Apparently he was a very good looking and impressive personality, and much in demand for weddings and celebrations. On his way back from Murra's relative, Alex stopped at 141 Lachplesha Street, and found a large handsome building in expansive grounds.

Sunday, July 28

Mr. Friedman took us out. We thought we were going to the seaside, but instead he took us to his laboratories (testing of hydroelectric valves) and then to the aircraft testing center. Mostly over my understanding. Apparently involved in some kind of joint venture with Germany's aeronautical industry. He took us to lunch at a nice little restaurant (the first one, the Lido was full) where we had pineapple juice (delicious) and fresh, grilled salmon. Came back to hotel to rest, then Ettie came for an hour. Alex discussed with her the question of putting up a new tombstone with names of his mother and brother. Very hard to say goodbye.

In the evening Sara and Misha came, with Tamara and her husband. Again, they brought flowers. I wanted to put them in the room, but they said to have them on the table in the

restaurant. Indeed the waiters provided a vase, and other parties also had flowers on their tables. But what shall I do with the flowers tomorrow?

Had dinner upstairs on the 26th floor. A marvelous view. I had gravlax and vegetables. There was no wine, only champagne — they all had meat and what I see is the usual hors d'oeuvres selection, enough for a meal in Israel. Dinner for six cost us \$16. When it was time to say goodbye, they insisted on taking us to the airport tomorrow, so another postponed goodbye.

I forgot to mention that on the way home, Friedman took us to see 141 Lachplesha Street. A really great house on a big corner lot — about 45 meters frontage by 60 meters. If this is the right place, the synagogue must have also been in this building and the family probably lived upstairs. However, we could see no obvious signs that this had once been a synagogue, although there are some arched windows on the second floor. Today it is a school. The area is called Moscow Forstadt, because the road to Moscow passes through here. And it is the beginning of the Jewish suburbs.

So our trip to Riga draws to its close, but our friends and many others are just at the beginning of an unknown adventure!

Monday morning, 9:15 a.m., July 29

We have finished packing and are getting ready to leave. What seemed to be a “mission impossible” has been accomplished, and I think we leave with mixed feelings. Thankful that we have done what we’ve talked about for years — a bit sad to leave the nice and also sad people who are staying behind — concerned for our friends who are going unhappily to the New World — and above all, happy to be on the last lap of the journey and on the way home.

I doubt if we shall come here again. Anything else for me personally, regarding Rabbi Moshe, could probably be done by mail. So, goodbye to Riga!

The flight, uneventful.

There was nothing like coming back to Moscow to break the spell of Riga. Loud, dirty, not charming. We stayed at the Intourist Hotel, which is very central but like a bazaar, and terrible service. This evening we couldn't find anywhere to eat in the neighborhood; people sent us from one place to another. Finally, we came back to the hotel to have a cup of soup in the room, but an Australian couple we met in the elevator told us they'd finally found something on the 16th floor. It was just a little snack bar, but at least we had a cheese sandwich and a Danish. Couldn't even have two cheese sandwiches because these were the last.

Street scene not very appealing — officials unpleasant, queues outside every café or ice cream parlor — crowds congregating around anyone who has something to sell (e.g., perfumes) — lots of men about and lots of girls available. Many nationalities. We saw a group of Tartars today, and other types from the East (Uzbekistan, I think, or similar). The run around one gets (e.g., to change money today Alex had to go halfway across town) makes one tired and fed-up. Moscow certainly has no glamour and is far from a world capital. No shows to see.

Tuesday morning, July 30

Phoned Ann and she invited us to dinner. We took a tour of the Metro. Although it was off-peak, still crowded. The stations are really very luxurious, each one in a different style —

sculptures representing Russian types, stained glass panels, mosaic pictures of Russian history, colored marble and semi-precious stones, etc., etc. The trains are very fast covering long distances, but at the last stop (we saw seven stations on different lines) the escalators had broken down and crowds of people backed up, so we had to go to another station to get to our destination. Our guide was not Jewish, but married to a Jew, and told us many of their friends had gone to Israel. Soon, there will be tours to Israel and Egypt. Went to the children's department store — what a horror! Crowds outside selling odds and ends, and inside hardly a thing. Had lunch at the Slaviansky Bazaar, which we eventually found; again caviar and blini. Afternoon at the Arbat, where we managed to do most of our shopping.

At 7 p.m. Victor came to fetch us with Ann and it was a 45-minute drive to their home. Later, when she insisted on driving back with us; it transpired that as she is the official owner of the car, and the son's permission to drive it has lapsed, so she has to accompany him on his drives. Small apartment (tiny bedroom and toilet, as at Sara's), building in poor state. She served the usual *zakuski* (appetizers): nice borsht, pancakes, water melon and cake. We watched President Bush and James Baker on TV at the historic meeting in Moscow.

Drove back along embankment, which gave us lovely views of Moscow. Good that I brought her some coffee, tissues, etc. as she had gifts for me and the grandchildren. One never knows when the Russians will give gifts. They would not allow us to go alone in a taxi at night, even if we could have found one.

Wednesday, July 30

Appointments with the art people and visits to their studios. Living accommodation impossible to describe! What dilapidation and what dirt! The only really interesting painting

was not for sale (a girl combing her hair), and the second fellow had some interesting work (delicate colors, religious themes) but very expensive. But the procedure of buying and getting a picture out is incredible, and I'm sure not many bother with it.

One of the painters has a studio in the Imperial Barracks. This once handsome building has been re-adapted and is now made up of one-room apartments, with a communal kitchen and bathroom on each floor. These facilities have big padlocks on them, and when I asked if I could see the kitchen, the painter said he didn't have a key; because he did not actually live there, he had no kitchen rights. Although there were some renovations going on in one or two apartments, the building remains a tenement, and negotiating the staircase comprises a real risk.

We thought we might still get to the Crown Jewels, but it got too late, so instead we packed and rested in preparation for the night flight. Now there is no tension and anxiety as at the beginning. We have been away about two and a half weeks, and it seems like an age. We have been to another planet, and we are very happy to be going home!