

M. Heltzer (1928-2010)

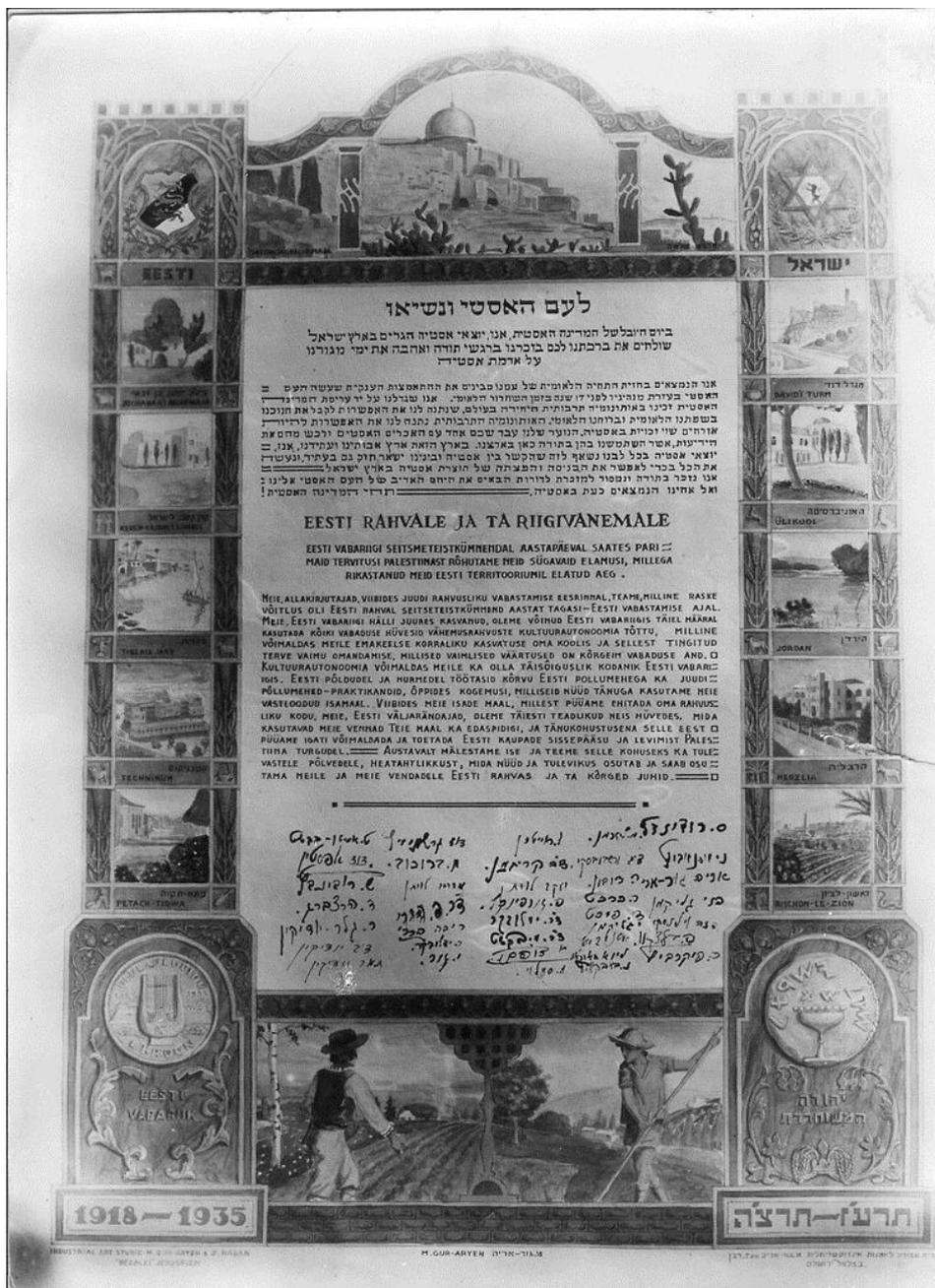
On the Relations of the Republic of Estonia and the Jewish Yishuv in the Land of Israel between Two World Wars.

(Documentary essays)

Archives of the Association of Latvian and Estonian Jews in Israel - Hof Hasharon Shefayim

Following is just one chapter from this (unpublished?) work. Prof. Heltzer also held a lecture with the same title in the Tartu University in 1993.

III Year 1935



Our next document is a photograph from the Central Zionist Archive KH4a/1¹, but it was made from an originally printed text of the usual type of the honouring diplomas of the Keren Hayessod . The frame of the text consists of ornaments and photographs showing various settlements and sites of the Land of Israel. Below two symbolic figures of an Estonian and Palestine Jewish farmer are given. The date of the XVII anniversary of the Estonian Republic 24.11.1935 is also marked. Inside the frame are two identical texts in Hebrew and Estonian.

"To the Estonian People and its Elder of State on the Seventeenth Anniversary of the Estonian Republic, sending the Best Greetings from Palestine We Underline the Deep Feelings, which Enriched Us at the Time when We Lived on Estonian Soil.

We, the signatories, who are at the frontline of the Jewish national liberation know what heavy struggle the Estonian people had before seventeen years - at the time of the liberation of Estonia. We, who were grown at the cradle of the Estonian Republic, had the opportunity thanks to the cultural autonomy for minorities to use in the Estonian Republic in full measure all the benefits of freedom, which enabled us to receive regular education in our mother-tongue in our own school. Therefore we had also the possibility to acquire a healthy spirit and the spiritual values, which are the highest gift of freedom. The cultural autonomy gave us also the opportunity to be citizens with full rights in the Estonian Republic.

The Jewish farmers-practicants worked in the field and plains of Estonia besides the Estonian farmer, learning from his experience, which we use now with deep thanks in our recently created country. Living in the land of our fathers, which we try to build as our national home, we, the immigrants from Estonia, are fully aware about these rights, which enjoy our brothers in your land now and in the future and our honourable obligation is to give the opportunity to the Estonian goods to penetrate for distribution on the markets of Palestine. We remember with appreciation the good attitude, which gives now and will give in the future the Estonian people and its high leaders to our brothers, and we will oblige to remember it also the future generations.

This greeting has 38 signatures, not all of them are legible.² The signatures appear in five columns³

- I 1. S. Rudindel (?)
2. Natan Asnovitch (Yesodi)
3. Aryeh Gur-Arie
4. Fanny Glickman (nee Jakobson)
5. Henia Vilensky (Solomonika)
6. Fanny Beltshikov (Kaulback)
7. Dr Riva Pekarevitsh (Gradnauer)

- II 1 Moshe Lerenmann
2. Dov Vershvuvsky
3. Rafail Dubin
4. Riva Harchat

¹ Supplement No. 7.

² Mrs. Michal Aharon from the University of Haifa, by herself a daughter of an immigrant from Estonia who arrived in Palestine before World War II identified some of the signatories and I have to express my thanks to her for giving me the opportunity to contact some of the people who are still alive.

³ The list is corrected and completed by Mark Rybak. In parentheses - name in Israel (changed or by marriage).

5. D. Ficht
6. Yerachmiel Glikman
- 7-8 (illegible)
9. Nachum Bobkovitch

III 1. Lev Haitin

2. Dov Krigman
3. Jacob Levitan
4. Paja Gurfinkel (Pinski)
5. Dr. Kalman Jadlovker
6. Dr. Moshe Baksht
7. Dobkin (?)
8. Meier Smeloi

IV 1. David Gershanovitsh

2. Misha Borochov
3. Abram Levitan
4. Dr. Pasha Harary (nee Oyzerman)
5. Riva Harary
6. Riva Jadlovker
7. Jechoshua Gor

V 1. Tasja Amitan-Baksht

2. David Epshtein
3. Shmuel Rabinovitsch
4. Dora Herzberg
5. Haja Geller (nee Judeikin)
6. Dov Judeikin
7. Tamar Judeikin⁴

In my conversation with Mrs. Tamar Judeikin (V, 7 - now Uzhvanski) I learned that the reason for signing the greeting was according to her memory that she received her high school education in full conditions of freedom of Jewish national culture. Especially these, who remembered the preceding period of Tsarist Russia, had a high esteem for the Estonian Republic. In December 1934 the Estonian authorities succeeded also to intercept at the last moment a pro-nazi coup, which had outspoken antisemitic aims. Therefore, these immigrants, who all had relatives in Estonia, felt themselves indebted to the government of the Republic.⁵

Mr. Jacob Levitan (III, 3) explained, that the years erased from his memory all the reasons for the signing of the greeting, but he remembers that the cultural autonomy and the possibility to receive Jewish national education, made him a supporter of the Estonian Republic.⁶

⁴ The figures before the names are not in the original text.

⁵ The "vapsid" (Vabadus-sõjalased i.e., 'Warriors of the Independence War') a paramilitary fascist pro-nazi organization with antisemitic ideology. Leaders Sirk and Larka.

⁶ Mrs. T. Judeikin (Uzhvanski) lives in Petah-Tikva and Mr. J. Levitan in Jerusalem.

Conclusions

This greeting is in a certain measure a standard greeting to an official state holiday. But it is written in an especially solemn style and in a certain measure it reflects real circumstances.

It is true, that the Jews of Estonia enjoyed at this time in full measure the National-Cultural Autonomy, granted by the government. They had the opportunity to absolve the Gymnasium in Hebrew or Yiddish, not paying for education more than the absolvents of Estonian gymnasiums. Their matriculation certificate was valid for to accepted to the university, where no numerus clausus existed. As compared with the situation of Jews in the Tzarist period, the difference was a complete one. As compared with the other East-European countries (except Finland) the general material situation of Jews was not bad and together with their legal situation it can be said, that Jews had more rights than at the same time in the neighbouring Latvia and Lithuania. And the situation of the Jews of Estonia was incomparably better than in Poland, Romania or Hungary. Otherwise, the pioneers of Estonian origin in Palestine felt at that time an easier feeling, for the pro-nazi coup of the "vapsid" was liquidated before it started. But from the whole eloquence of the greeting we also feel a certain measure of deeper concern. There existed quite a necessity to make also some overtures to the Estonian Republic. Such overtures were the promise to promote the Estonian products on Palestine markets and to educate the children of the immigrants in Palestine in the spirit of thanks and love to Estonia.

Really, the European situation began to become unpleasant to Jews and we see here the first reminiscences on Estonian Jewry.