INTRODUCTION

1922 Arrival Pictures
(Sheindel, Jacob, Menya, Lena, Esther)

On an unknown day in the 1870s, Sheindel Bossie Mandiberg, a young Jewish girl in her 20s, having recently attended the funeral of her sister who died young leaving a husband and three little boys, ended her mourning. She married her brother-in-law, becoming her nephews' stepmother and caregiver. Those boys – Kayfman, Beryl and Pasey – had been living with their father, Yakov, in or around the nearby *shtetls* (the restricted Jewish sections of towns) of Makarov and Yekaterinaslav – about 30 miles from Kiev. Their father held a prominent position as the Clerk of Courts, an honor for a Jew at that time, but needed someone to take care of his children. Sheindel Bossie Mandiberg, now Radov, helped raise those children and bore him five more: Menya, Joseph, Ida, Cherna and Morris.

Life in the *shtetl*, never easy, was made more difficult by the events occurring everywhere in the Ukraine. The eldest son, Kayfman, left *shtetl* life in the most traumatic way to his family, entering the priesthood, and became the one not spoken of. Beryl, having sired four daughters by his wife, Hennyeh, died of appendicitis early in the new century. His widow and daughters found their way out of Russia in 1911, traveling to New York and eventually Boston. Before that, Joseph took his wife, Cirka, to join her relatives in Erie. He returned to Russia in 1911 to rescue more family, including his sister Ida (or, in the lyrical tone intended by her parents, Khana Khaia Radovskaia). Independently, Sheindel's brother brought more of his family to join Mandibergs already in New York and the deli business. WWI made it impossible for the family to continue their exodus, with the further horror and delay of the Russian Revolution. However, worse for the family were the Kiev Pogroms of 1919 (the pogroms were loosely organized savage mob attacks by Cossacks, soldiers or *ad hoc* gangs, sometimes government or church directed, sometimes spontaneous, on Eastern Europe Jewish communities) which took the life of one of Menya's daughters, saw the rape of another, Lena, and witnessed the stabbing and torture of Pasey.

Widowed in Russia
(Beryl and Hennyeh)

For centuries, Jews were restricted to certain parts of Russia (within, not beyond, The Pale), and rarely allowed in the larger cities, at least not legally. After the emancipation of the serfs in 1861 (The Peasant Reform of 1861) and the further relaxation of settlement rules by Tsar Alexander II, many came to Kiev. They had lived there off and on, between expulsions since at least 991, probably earlier. They had officially been allowed to trade in street fairs from 1797, composing more than half the fair participants. After the emancipation of the serfs, further urban migration was allowed, with about 1 in 8 in Kiev being Jews by the time of the 1881 Pogroms. All of this exacerbated tensions, with further pogroms in and around Kiev in 1905 and

1919, and the blood libel trial of 1911. As settlement in Kiev became more permanent, synagogues began to appear in the 1890s. (See, 19th Century Kiev Synagogues, A75-76). Nevertheless, most of the family likely lived in one of the small communities, or *shtetls,* which had traditionally accepted Jews.

1922 Arrival Pictures
(Peter, Wolf, Cherna, Muni, Bill)

As a result of the two Russian Revolutions, 1905 and 1917, and the reforms of Pyotr Stolypin in between, these restrictions gradually changed, and life became somewhat easier. Morris, and likely many in the family, moved to the once closed city, Fastov, the railroad capital of southern Russia, after the Revolution.

In 1922, through ingenuity and energy, while working for the Russian railroads in Fastov, Morris escaped with the remaining family from Fastov to Bucharest. There, with the help of the bootlegging monies made by Joseph, a successful entrepreneur in Erie, the remaining family traveled to the French port of Cherbourg and then aboard the *R.M.S. Olympic* [see, Cherbourg & the R.M.S. Olympic, A77-80], sister ship to the *Titanic*, across the Atlantic to the United States.

Most of the stories, a number of the names, and much of what happened has been lost. In the following pages, a few of those stories and some of those names, are recounted. For those who are related to this group – the Radovs, Kernesses, Halperins, Blaus, Basses, Carls, Carols, Thompsons, Levins, Smiths, Sakols, Landaus, Falkensteins, Mays, Trabolds, Cohens, Goldmans, Radins, Rogers', Dryers, Bergidas, Hermans, Kreiss', Mandibergs, Davaris', Notarius', Murrays, Kings, Rabelskys, Theils, Harris' and many others – these are the stories of those who got us out of Russia and made a life here. My real appreciation, on a personal note, for how lucky we were – not only to escape pogroms, wars, and the Shoah – but the earlier life in general – came when I returned to Russia through the State Department to live there in 1995 and again in 2002, and witnessed a country that everywhere was morose, bleak, spiritless, fragmented, impoverished and unmitigatingly tragic (and had miserable food).

This project was inspired by questions of children and grandchildren who have little memory of any of this. Perhaps more surprisingly, many of us who grew up with and knew the Russian immigrants, and ought to have known better, also know very little. The best storyteller left, without question, is Bertha Blau (Ida's daughter) and none of this recollection could have occurred without her. The others who spoke, my cousins, also gave their memories, sometimes imperfect, and other times surprising themselves by what they remembered. I have taken liberties as an editor, correcting some factual miscues, limiting the repetition, and editing out most negative things said about people (although perhaps not everything). There is, then, something of a whitewashed veneer in the process. I justify this in that, while many involved

1911 Arrival
(Chana Chaya, Ida)

had a few weaknesses – some braggadocio, some roughness, some tight-fistedness, and the occasional wandering eye – the strengths and humor are what I was looking for and found. All of the rest – the imperfect marriages, onerous in-laws, financial disputes, and a few brushes with the law – can be left to someone else's pen.

1922 Arrival Pictures
(Barney Bass)

The Radovs, then, arrived here speaking Yiddish, learning English, davening in Hebrew, and forgetting Russian. Almost to a person, they were tradesmen, peddlers or bakers, often hawking whatever wares were at hand, whether fruits and vegetables, furniture, baked goods, clothing or scrap. They entered into partnerships and businesses on handshakes with each other, and with others who were related, almost related, or at least spoke Yiddish. Over time, the bootlegging and gambling businesses which had sustained the family during Prohibition turned to more reputable businesses, and eventually through their children, to the trades of the college educated. That said, family gatherings had the air of Yiddish and broken Yiddish, card playing and elaborate Eastern European food – from *kneydlelch*, *kreplach* and *borscht* soups, to endless *kugels*, *farfels*, and *challahs* accompanying the cholesterol-accumulating and cardiac-choking array of salamis, briskets, chopped liver, cooked meats and smoked fish, followed by *mandelbrot*, *schneken*, and cakes, not to mention various arrays of *blintzes*, *latkas*, *lox* and *gefilte* fish. These, along with the ubiquitous smoking and constantly replenished glasses of tea, sweet wine and scotch, contributed to early cardiac arrest for so many Radovs. For reluctant young eaters, even in the 1950s, that food was accompanied by the insistent and constant injunction: "Eat everything on your plate, because people are starving in Europe." Europe clearly meant Russia, but the cause and effect between our gluttony and others' starvation remains murky.

Once here, Russia was almost never mentioned. Pogroms were forgotten and family life in America, abandoning the riff of the Russian language and *shtetl* fears, became the norm. Almost to a person, everyone born here, or young when they came, somehow, despite the Depression, made it through college, and went off to start various new businesses and practice professions, from Brooklyn and Boston to Erie, Detroit and Chicago, to Los Angeles, San Diego and Portland.

That said, the arrival of most of the family in 1922 was filled with drama: the Russian Revolution closing the borders and stopping the mail, a letter managing to get out, a ruse to gain access to rail passage, smuggled family negotiating to bribe officials, surreptitious water crossings at nights to escape the Soviet regime, ending in a long trudge only to be marooned in Bucharest. The matter began with a lone letter and single conversation. Barney B. Radov, then a nine year old boy in America, describes what happened in the kitchen between his father, Joe or Zusie, and his mother, Sarah or Cirka, when his never-seen uncle's letter from Russia arrived

Morris and Luba Radov – 1922

Morris wrote, “If you ever want to see us alive, you can only do it now when I am in a position to gather the family together.” My father read the letter to my mother. He said, "What do you think?" She said to him, "What do you mean, what do I think? It's your family. It's your father, your mother, your brothers, your sisters. Go. Go.”

Sarah (Cirka) Radov
(1925)

Barney B. Radov
(1925)

Joseph (Zusie) Radov
(1925)

This, then, is a fragment of the story of those in the arrival picture (see, 1922 Family Picture A1-2), a photograph that gave basic black new meaning in New York. They and those who had arrived earlier worked incredible hours, but spent virtually every free moment with family and greater family, enjoying that family, if also trying to improve, chastise, impress and educate individually recalcitrant family members. Other of their activities gave rise to the greater mailing list at the end of these pages.

* *

The value of this project might not appear obvious. We live in an era diffuse, rootless and self-absorbed, bereft of extended family and shorn of history. To a great extent, this is an age we find fulfilling, believing electronic entertainment and personal attainment goals at once satisfactory and sufficient. Extended family history has an anachronistic feel, particularly a family collected from Russian shtetls and Orthodox *shuls*, Yiddish peddlers who made their way without encountering the important or attaining fame and fortune. Moreover, the family has scattered and forgotten, perhaps with a sigh of relief, the original ties that bind.

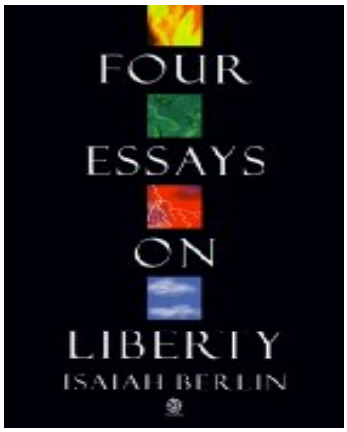
Rosh Hashanah greeting card from Russian Jews to their American relatives, with recognition of the open invitation to immigrate.

Such a rejection of our past is too quick, too facile. This history shaped who we are because we are the product of such history. Not only location, station and actual memories are involved, there is a more subtle transmission of character, belief, personality and humor. We (regretfully or celebratorily) turn into our parents, as they turned into theirs. The old and traditional culture may seem alien, even paradoxical, but it was borne of deeper beliefs and survival instincts necessary then, and not to be entirely discounted now. The family was entrepreneurial, if not always successfully, and committed to large dinners and card-playing, if not always prudently, ever contemplating the larger meaning of existence, but not always in terms of traditional Judaism, and eternally willing to find humor and engage in ridicule about themselves and others, if not always without historic pain.

We should not, however, be ready to push aside the Russian-Jewish culture that once was ours. Jews settled in Russia in late Roman times, and certainly, by 800-900 A.D., were thriving in the Kiev area. Those 1200 years are very much in our bones and in our souls. Moreover, it is part of a legacy unsurpassed (if equaled in miniature elsewhere in Eastern and Central Europe by the Ashkenazi community) in achievement throughout recorded history. Despite poverty, adversity, pogroms, church and state sponsored hatred and discrimination, what the Russian Jews accomplished is both startling and overwhelming. In the last 100 years, that record — by those in Russia, those who left Russia and those who were children of Russian Jews — includes a dazzling assembly of Nobel Prize winners, authors, artists, statesmen and scientists no other indigenous minority has come close to possessing.

The list of luminaries is almost endless, and growing. For example, Irving Berlin, Richard Rodgers, Aaron Copeland and George Gershwin reinvented American music, while Ayn Rand, Lionel Trilling, Isaiah Berlin and Robert Nozick (in different ways) reconfigured Western thought.

Israel Isidore Baline's (of Tyumen Russia), Irving Berlin's, *God Bless America* sung at Pentagon Memorial Dedication, September 11, 2008.



Isaiah Berlin's book on liberty and his plaque in Riga, likely the only such official honor of a Jewish thinker in the former Russian Empire.

Isaiah Berlin, one of the leading liberal theorists of the 20th Century, emigrated from Russia as a child. On a personal note, when I entered Oxford, he had long been the chair of political philosophy. His take on the Russian passage west was typically Jewish.

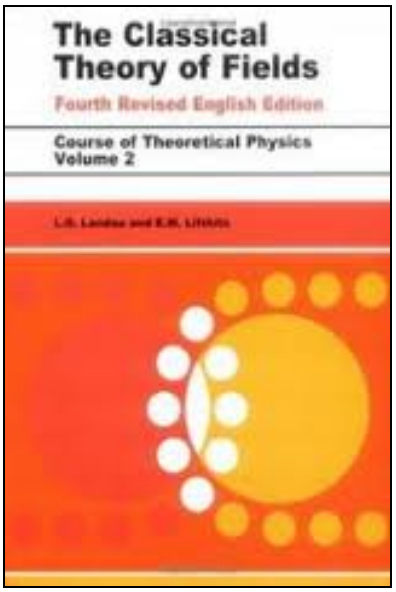
He would ask American Jews who wandered into his view, typically graduate students, why it was that the American Jews were so rich and famous, the British Jews so poor and obscure, when all began on the same ships leaving Europe. The student stumped, Berlin would answer his own question. "Simple. The ship would take supplies and patrons in Southampton, England, but the Captain, to make room for new passengers, would announce it was New York." Then, laughing, Berlin would say, "The dumb ones, like us, believed him and got off".

In a different vein, Sholem Aleichem (creator of Tevya), Boris Pasternak and Saul Bellow recast the modern narrative, interspersing chaotic inner monologue with social events to create new terms for the 20th Century novel, the last two picking up Nobels along the way. Sholem Aleichem captured the outlook of those in the Russian *shtetl* when he wrote: *Life is a dream for the wise, a game for the fool, a comedy for the rich, a tragedy for the poor.*

Boris Pasternak's First Russian Edition of *Dr. Zhivago*

1959 Soviet Union Postage Stamp in Honor of Sholem Aleichem's Centennial

Working in theoretical physics were Lev Landau and Ilya Frank, who each (again in very different contents) won the Nobel. Three years ago, during an hour long interview for Azerbaijan television, AzTV, I mentioned that Lev Landau, one of the great scientists of the 20th Century, was from Baku, Azerbaijan's capital now, Russian once – and might well be the best known Azerbaijani. Receiving doctorates in both mathematics and physics at 19 – the discoverer of the density matrix in quantum mechanics, the Ginsburg-Landau Theory of Superconductivity, the Landau Damping in plasma physics and almost all the basic math of super fluidity – and the Nobel Prize, Landau is an easy person to claim as your own. Nevertheless, the reply was rejection. "Landau was Jewish, not Azerbaijani." I suggested that, at least in the U.S., Pres. Kennedy could be both Catholic and Irish, yet still be American. Not true, apparently, in Baku, even on the state television network. This attitude matched one I saw 14 years earlier when living in Volgograd. I learned there that Russians read Russian writers, and thus no one buys *Dr. Zhivago* by Boris Pasternak, as Pasternak was not Russian (despite living there except for 5 years during college), but a Jew. All of this is the merest shadow of the attitude that permeated family life 100 years earlier.



Later edition of Landau's the *Classical Theory of Fields*

The tradition of educating Jewish women in Russia, as Morris J. Radov discusses, was, if not always strong, nevertheless, episodically evident. The result includes Golda Meir, Debbie Wasserman Schultz, Annie Lebovitz, and Justices Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Elena Kagan. In a different arena, Marc Chagall reshaped modern art, merging Cubist *shtetl*

images with spectacular colors of Russian peasant life. He described that life, as his father lived it, in his *Autobiography.*

Chagall's *Parents*

Day after day, winter and summer, at six o'clock in the morning, my father got up and went to the synagogue. There he said the usual prayers for some dead man or the other. On his return he made ready the samovar, drank some tea and went to work. Hellish work, the work of a galley-slave. Why try to hide it? How tell about it? No word will ever easy my father's lot. . . There was always plenty of butter and cheese on our table. Buttered bread, like an eternal symbol, was never out of my childish hands.

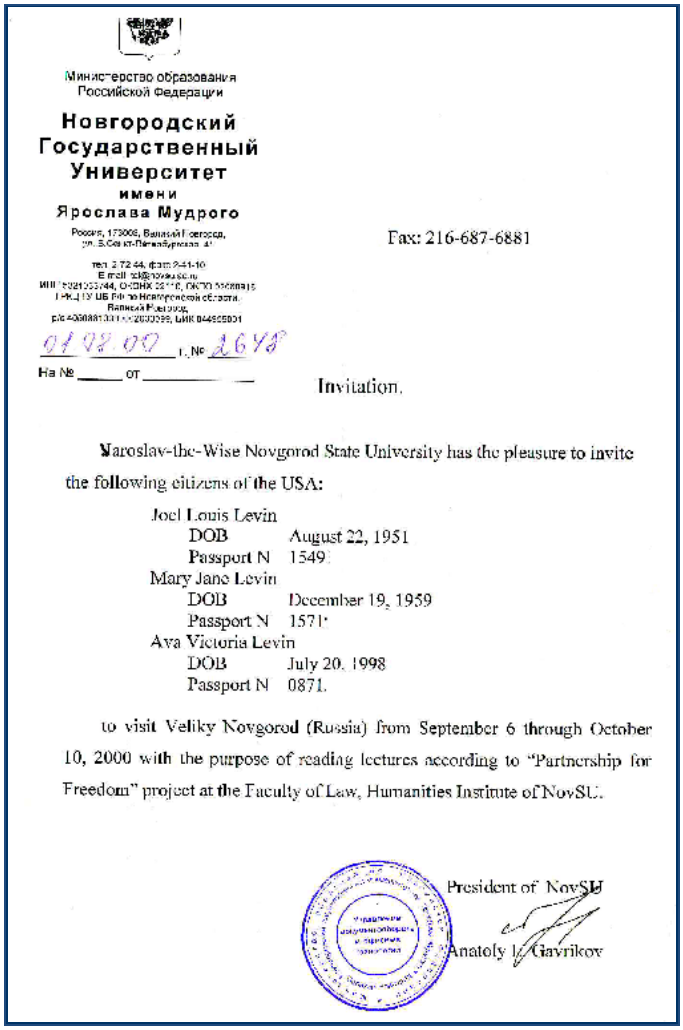
This list doesn't even mention Menachem Begin, Bob Dylan, Leonard Bernstein, Chaim Weizmann, Jascha Heifetz, Jonas Salk, Menachem Mendel Schneerman, Joseph Brodsky, Anna Pavlova, Joseph Heller, Milton Friedman, Isaac Asimov, Gabrielle Giffords, Richard Feynman, Charles Schumer, Jerome Robbins, virtually every world-class chess master, a high percentage of the renown mathematicians (including a number of Fields Medalists), many of Hollywood's producers and directors (Sam Goldwyn, Jack Warner, Mel Brooks and Steven Spielberg), countless actors and actresses (Winona Ryder, Robert Downey Jr., Alan Arkin, Natalie Portman, Harrison Ford, Seth Green, Sarah Jessica Parker, Peter Coyote, Gwyneth Paltrow), and dozens of Nobel Prize winners. To put it in Yiddish terms, there were worse places to be from.

Fields Prize, given once every 4 years, recently refused by the Russian – Jewish mathematician Grigori Perelman, without comment. Likely the greatest mathematician of our age, Perelman later rejected the Millennium Prize on the grounds he didn't deserve it.

It might immodestly be added that the list is undoubtedly longer. Unlike the Radovs, many American Jews today have little idea of not only family history, but even family location. History has been erased. As Susan Sontag, writer, critic and feminist, admitted:

I once asked my father's mother, who died when I was seven, where she came from. She said 'Europe'. . . And so to this day, I don't know from what country my paternal grandparents came.

The particular immigrant experience of moving from Russian *shtetl* to American city is increasingly lost, the fragment of fading memory. Memory routinely slides from finely drawn to stereo-typed caricature and here, not unnaturally, has been overwhelmed by the brutality of the Holocaust. That said, no single story or small set of stories of the Russians and their children born in America captures all of this. They can only scratch the surface. Hence, the goal to set out a number of conversations – with their mosaic of selflessness and self-consumption, of religious devotion and devotion to card-playing, of every sacrifice for family and family squabbles. Often, though, to an extent we hardly consciously understand, this heritage affects, even shapes, us daily. As Faulkner said, "The past is never dead. It's not even past."



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01.02.00 г. № 2643

На № _____ от _____

Invitation.

Yaroslav-the-Wise Novgorod State University has the pleasure to invite the following citizens of the USA:

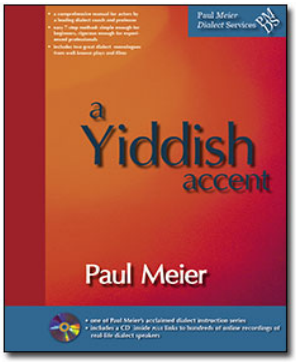
Joel Louis Levin
DOB August 22, 1951
Passport N 1549.
Mary Jane Levin
DOB December 19, 1959
Passport N 1571.
Ava Victoria Levin
DOB July 20, 1998
Passport N 0871.

to visit Veliky Novgorod (Russia) from September 6 through October 10, 2000 with the purpose of reading lectures according to "Partnership for Freedom" project at the Faculty of Law, Humanities Institute of NovSU.

President of NovSU
Anatoly I. Gavrikov

Once chased out, Radov descendants have (perhaps begrudgingly) finally been invited back to Russia, even a 2 year old. The invitation from Yaroslav-the-Wise Novgorod State University is ironic, as Yaroslav was not only the Grand Prince of Novgorod, but also of Kiev. Ruling Kiev from 1019 to 1054, he was responsible for its Golden Age, for its peaceful enlightenment, and for *Russkaya Pradva* (Russian Justice or Truth), the law code in operation when Russia had a rule of law. It is difficult to find a good moment after Yaroslav-the-Wise left the scene, certainly not any during the reign of his successor, (and murderer), Svyatopolk the Accursed.

In that spirit, let me give two of my own, personal snapshots of this generation, or at least my take on it. First my take: when I was very young and trying to make sense of the world, I was in the company of family members regularly, family with varying degrees of Ukrainian-Yiddish (different than the harsher intonations of my Litvak father's side) accents. The older the relative, the hardier the accent. To my early way of seeing things, and ignorant of Russian immigration complexities, a truth struck me: the older you got, the more likely you took on a Yiddish accent. I assumed I might have a small one in my 20s, and by retirement, be almost incomprehensible. The analysis of a young Radov empiricist.



A Yiddish Accent, by Paul Meier, for those lacking an *Ashkenazi* immigrant legacy.

Second, my non-Radov grandfather, Julius Levin, was born in Lithuania of generations of impoverished Rabbis, but sent to America, alone, at 13, to join cousins as a peddler in the clothing (*schmata*) business. His life revolved around family, synagogue and work, with little time for much else and of modest means always. Special for him, always, despite working on the road for days at a time, were Jewish holidays, birthdays and *Shabbat*. Yet there was one additional, special day: January 2. That day, at 8:30 in the morning, regardless of how cold the temperature or deep the snow, would find him at the Old Customs House, waiting for the doors to open. Then, cash in hand, Julius performed a task of honor, thanks and pleasure , but not to his mind a duty: he went up the stairs to pay the United States Government – a U.S. which took him in from the horrors of Russian life – pay it back with his taxes at the earliest moment he could possibly do so. This simple act represented the silent, but unmistakable, recognition of that generation of the profound and beneficial changes for their safety, freedom and very existence.


Old Customs House in Erie, PA

The senses of community, belonging, tradition and origin are strong ones. In understanding who we are, it matters who our family is, who they were, and what they went through. This is not an invitation to tribalism, an exclusive and excluding identity by one group to the detriment of others. It is rather an opportunity to cast the net with sufficient vigor to capture our own past. We can draw strength, solace and comfort from our family – their struggles, lives, losses, weaknesses, travel, celebrations and triumphs – and make use of that experience in our own lives. That said, some joy, *naches*, even laughter, *lakhn*, might be in order. For the Russians who made the odyssey to America, though, we can only agree with Albany in *King Lear*:

The oldest hath borne most: we that are young
Shall never see so much, nor live so long.