2015-10-18



National library of Latvia (http://www.lnb.lv/en)

70 YEARS AGO
people from the Baltic States fled from the approaching Communist occupation.
Approx 200 000 Latvians felt forced to leave their country 1943-1945.
1945 in May approx 4760 Latvian refugees were registered in Stockholm but approx 11 000 refugees from the Baltic countries reached the coasts of Gotland and 3602 of them were Latvians, 242 were Lithuanians and the rest Estonians!



David Holmert has left a unique document of the reception of the refugees on Gotland. Where the refugees were and went there he was with his camera. His son Bengt Göran Holmert published a book in 1990 with all the materials of his father –"Gotland under beredskapsåren 1939-1945". It contains lots of photographs, life stories of the refugees and interviews with the

locals receiving the refugees. A few years later he visited Latvia and Estonia with an exhibition of his father photographs. Quite recently Ellen Holmert, widow of Bengt Göran, found some more negatives in her bookshelves. So in the latest exhibitions there were photographs never seen before.

In Sweden there have been several exhibitions of David Holmerts photos – in Visby, Stockholm, Gävle, Sundsvall (curator Peteris Ininbergs). This spring the exhibition could also be seen in Latvia (curator Peteris Ininbergs Mara Strautmane assisting) - Laudona, Livani, Valmiera, Liepaja and Jurkalne.



And finally the time had come for Riga to again exhibit the photographs! **On the 15th October in National Library of Latvia** the grand opening of the exhibition (curator Maija Krumina) took place with the presence of Lena Holmert, granddaughter of David Holmert, Margit Söderberg and Britt-Marie Klintström both very active friends of Latvia and Latvians. They all live on the island of Gotland where the memories of those times have stayed alive.



Present was also one of the at that time young and brave men Eriks Tomsons, now 97, who help many Latvian refugees reach the safety on Gotland.



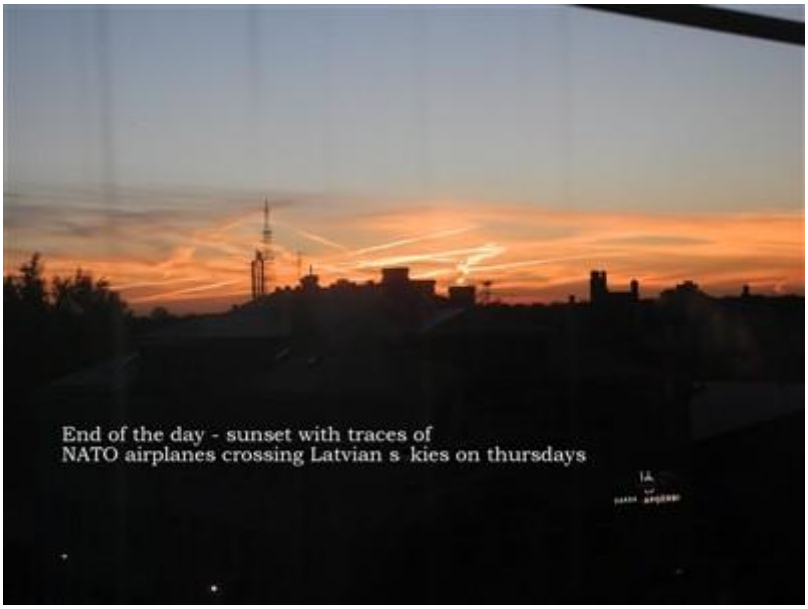
The executive director of the National Library of Latvia Dzintra Mukane opened the exhibition together with Carola Tham, counsellor of the Swedish Embassy. Great thanks to the Embassy of Sweden for the support!



In the ridge of the library with an astounding view of Riga behind Mara Zirnite presented the new album “Baltic refugees in Gotland in photographs by David Holmert” with texts in Latvian and English, compiled by herself and Aigars Lielbardis. Many were the thanks to many of the persons who stood by so the project could result in the album.



In the audience were also refugees and their children. Many emotional words were heard and memories were shared.



With a very beautiful sunset a rich day in a cordial atmosphere was put to an end.

Author and photograph Mara Strautmane