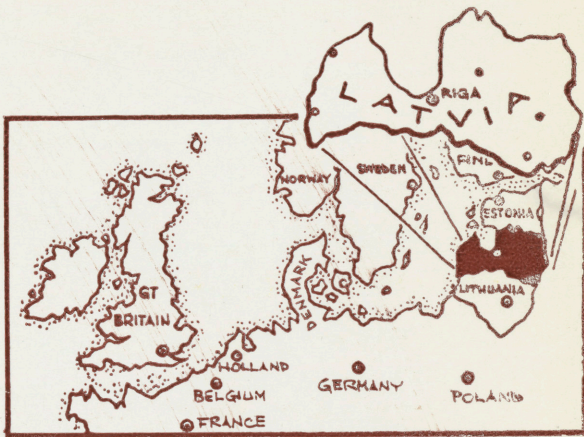




# LATVIAN SONG FESTIVAL IN GREAT BRITAIN

LEICESTER, 30.7. - 1.8. 1971



## LATVIA

For thousands of years Latvians have inhabited the eastern shore of the Baltic sea. Deeply rooted in their traditions and customs, the Latvian people have strongly maintained their European heritage; indeed their language is one of the most ancient in Europe. They treasure their land and their culture, and have struggled and fought for their freedom throughout the centuries of their turbulent history.

Independent Latvia was finally established in 1918. An agricultural country as large as Denmark, over the decades, she achieved remarkable economical, social and cultural progress. The Baltic republics — Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania, had the highest standard of living in Eastern Europe, a welfare system equivalent to that of New Zealand, and they shared the first place in Europe for the highest percentage of academically educated people.

In 1939, after the notorious Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, in which the two dictators — Hitler and Stalin divided Eastern Europe, Poland was overrun by Germany and Soviet Russia. The occupation of Latvia and the two other Baltic states followed in June, 1940. During the first year of the Soviet occupation 33,000 of Latvian people perished in prisons and deportation camps, and later the same fate befell 15% of the entire Latvian population. At the end of the war 100,000 Latvians fled into exile.

Today, more than 30 years after the beginning of the Second World War, Latvia is still an occupied country without independence or freedom. The Soviet regime has destroyed the Latvian peasantry by deportation. In recent years by artificially forced urbanisation and industrialisation the Soviets are inlating the country with enormous masses of Russian workers.

Of the Latvians in the free world, approximately 9000 live in Great Britain, contributing to the economy and culture of this country in all walks of life. They are living examples of the never ending struggle for individual freedom and the democratic rights of national self-determination.



## THE FESTIVAL CALENDAR

### Friday, 30th July

- 11.30 OPENING of the Festival  
Reception and Press Conference  
Leicester University, College Hall
- 15.15 EXHIBITION of paintings by A. Mazitis  
University
- 16.00 THEATRE  
"Mrs. Omarty", a play by A. Eglitis  
University  
Tickets at £1, 75p and 50p
- 20.00 CONCERT of contemporary Latvian  
music  
University  
Tickets at £1, 75p and 50p

### Saturday, 31st July

- 10.30 LATVIAN FOLK DANCES and SONGS  
featuring young Latvian dancers and  
singers and Estonian and Lithuanian  
guest groups  
De Montfort Hall  
Tickets at 50p
- 17.00 THEATRE  
"Mrs. Omarty", a play by A. Eglitis  
University  
Tickets at £1, 75p and 50p
- 20.00 SONG FESTIVAL BALL  
De Montfort Hall  
Tickets at £1

### Sunday, 1st August

- 10.00 POETRY READING with musical  
interludes  
University  
Tickets at 25p
- 14.00 CHURCH SERVICES
- 16.00 THE GRAND CONCERT  
Massed choirs  
De Montfort Hall  
Tickets at £1.50, £1, 75p and 50p

Advance booking (including the payment and self-addressed stamped envelope) from the Honorary Treasurer Mr. Vergis, 33 Heyworth Rd, Leicester, England.



Latvian Song Festival in Hanover, 1968.

## LATVIAN SONG FESTIVALS

An important part of the Latvian cultural heritage is the Latvian folksong (957,000) with its melody (20,000). The figures surpass those of many larger nations. Folksongs and folk dances in national costumes integrate every Latvian gathering or festive occasion, so strengthening the historical continuity of an old European nation. This can be seen, more than anywhere else in a Latvian Song Festival.

These festivals in Latvia were always colourful and expressive cultural conventions on a wide national scale. The first Latvian Song Festival was celebrated in 1873 — nearly a century ago. Many more festivals of the same kind were to follow. The last one in independent Latvia was held in the capital city of Riga in 1938 with 16,000 singers before an audience of 100,000 for 3 days.

The tradition of a Song Festival has strong roots in the mind of every Latvian. Festivals are held in USA, Canada, Australia, Europe. In Great Britain alone there have been 8 festivals:— London (The Royal Albert Hall), Leicester, Leeds, Manchester, Bradford. The 9th Latvian Song Festival in Great Britain will take place in Leicester at the De Montfort Hall from 30th July — 1st August, 1971. Among the participants in the massed choirs will also be Latvian guest choirs from Sweden and W. Germany.

The display of Latvian songs, dances, arts and crafts will give a fair insight into the cultural heritage of the people of Latvia — a country on the amber shore of the Baltic sea. Once more the Latvians will have been united in the fervent prayer of their National Anthem:—

GOD, BLESS LATVIA!