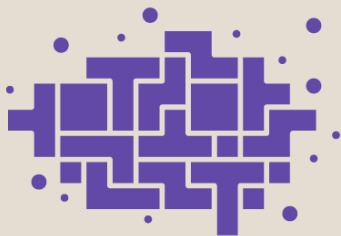


# **Narrative approach in refugee study: case of Latvian World War II refugees**

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**FLPP**

FUNDAMENTAL AND  
APPLIED RESEARCH  
PROJECTS

# Historical background

During the World War Two when the Soviet troops were invading Latvia for the second time, approximately 200 000 Latvians became refugees. After several years spent in DP camps in Germany they moved to the UK, the USA, Australia etc., where they formed exile Latvian community.



Latvian refugees and their carts leave Riga on their way to Kurzeme. September, 1944.

*Picture from the Virtual Museum "Occupation of Latvia"*  
<http://www.occupation.lv/#!/en/eksponats/05410>

# Latvian National Oral History (LNOH) Archive

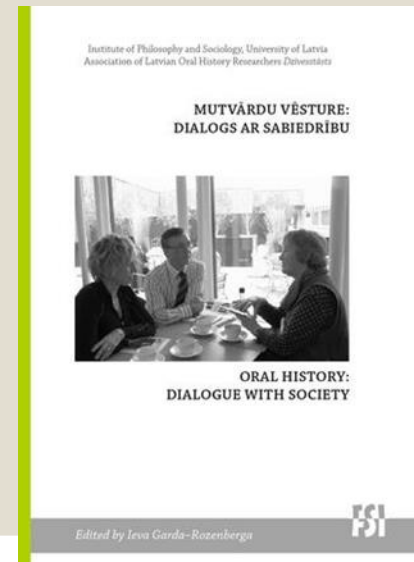
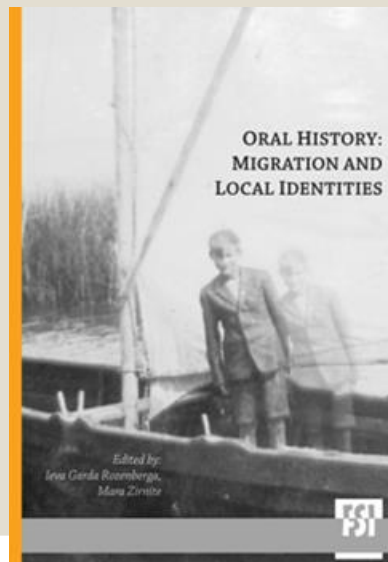
Life stories occupied an important place in the nation's social life after the actual renewal of Latvian independence in 1991. Latvian National Oral history project was established in 1992 within the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, University of Latvia. The aim of the LNOH project is to explore the lives of the Latvia's people in their real social and historical contexts.

More information:

[www.dzivesstasts.lv](http://www.dzivesstasts.lv)

Facebook page: Lifestory - Latvian Oral History Researchers Association

Published books (in English):



# Leaving Latvia

*“And I remember, how we were waiting for the ship and how we boarded. And then the ship started to slowly move along, and my father was running behind the ship and waving, and we were standing and looking at him.” (NOH-3401)*

*«And I remember - when we left the Gulf of Riga my grandmother called my little brother and me and said (the sun was setting in the sea as a big red ball): «Look back at Latvia now as we are getting out of the Gulf of Riga because maybe we will never come back.» And then we all started to cry. [crying] (NMV-3401)*

*“It was Sunday morning, and the road was all muddy. And there was a white church and trees behind a stone wall. And those woman in their gorgeous national costumes – colorful skirts, checked shawls. They were going to the service. And you know, this view has remained [in my memory] as the last beautiful view from the homeland.” (NOH-3420)*

*“All the fields were blooming – neighbor’s and ours. It was harvest time, when we left home. /.../ And as far as the eye could see, all the fields were wonderful. The crop was very good that year. We left in July. And, well, at that moment my heart was hurting terribly.” (NOH-280)*

# Stories of different generations

**For some of the youngest generation, leaving home and going abroad seemed more like an adventure.**

*“I left together with my parents. They had this one feeling, when leaving Latvia, and I had another. They left in Latvia everything that they possessed, everything they had worked for. I had not earned anything yet. /.../ So I was going with my eyes wide open – I had big joy on the ship and in Danzig [Gdansk] – first time in Danzig! I must say, my mother was crying, but not me, because it was all a big adventure for me.” (NMV-3425)*

*“No, actually this question of fear.. I think the fear of the child depended on how the parents behaved. And if there was a situation when I had to know if I should be fearful or not I usually looked either at my father or my mother and then I knew whether to be afraid or not. And they were quite cold-headed back then.” (NOH-190)*

Photo of brothers Rītiņi /youngest refugee generation

October, 1947. Schwarzenbeck bei Hamburg

Source: <http://www.dpalbums.lv/lat/comments.php?id=1700>

