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Baltic

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AIR

Chief of Station, Karlsruhe
Attn: MOB

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Chief, Foreign Division S
Chief, Foreign Division M

Operational/Redbird

Current Estimate of the AECOB Situation/The Emigrant
Political Factions

1. In formulating our plans for the exploitation of AECOB operational potential, headquarters is preparing a series of three memorandums on the general subject of Current Estimate of the AECOB Situation. This is the first of the series and is intended to review, in a summary form, the current AECOB Emigrant Political Factions. Part II of this series will deal with a review of the AECOB operations and Part III will present a joint OGIVE-BGRHYTHM plan for the exploitation of AECOB operational potential.

2. For a number of years the following AECOB factions have been vying for supremacy of AECOB politics with little success:

a. The Parliamentarians

(1) The last legal election in Latvia was held in 1933 in accordance with the provisions as established by the Latvian constitution of 1918. On May 15, 1934, the Latvian dictator, Karlis ULMANIS dissolved the legally elected Latvian government of 1934, furloughed all members of this government with the exception of Alberts KVIESIS, the president, and created a cabinet of his own which ruled the country without any parliamentary body or procedure, and subsequently became an extremely popular dictator. Although the former members of parliament objected to this coup d'etat, they were unable to voice any views because of existing proclamations outlawing such utterances. The above-mentioned constitution provided that the line of succession for the office of the presidency, in case of the president's death would be as follows: the president of the parliament (or speaker), the vice president of the parliament (or first deputy speaker). In the elections of 1933, Pauls KALNINS and Bishop RANCANS were elected to these offices respectively. Having served his term, Alberts KVIESIS, was eliminated from the dictator's government and lived a secluded life; it is believed that

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he has since then died. Pauls KALNINS has also died, leaving Bishop RANGANS the pretender to the Latvian presidency.

(2) During the Russian and German occupations of Latvia, its political life was virtually at a standstill. However, after the cessation of hostilities the parliamentarians began their bid for power among the emigration. Although they do not seem to have an organized body, most of their activity stems from Sweden where a great number of them have settled. Bishop RANGANS, however, settled in Germany where he, being a very able and humanitarian person, attempted to unite all factions and thereby became the head of the Latvian Central Council (Latvijas Centrala Padome). Due to the fact that the parliamentarians consist of a very small minority, the Bishop met a great amount of opposition and has also created some animosity among many Latvian leaders.

(3) The radical parliamentarian is Bruno KALNINS at present head of the Swedish Socialists. In pre-war Latvia, KALNINS had been elected as a representative of the Social Democrats, was the founder and head of the SSS (Stardnieku Sports un Sarge) (Workers Sport and Protector), and was suspected of pro-Communist activities. In 1934 ULMANIS outlawed the SSS and all its leaders. As a result KALNINS was forced to flee Latvia. When the Russian forces occupied Latvia, Kalnins returned as the Political Advisor (Politruk) of the Latvian army (Territorial Corps).

(4) Because of this assignment KALNINS is shunned and disliked by the majority of Latvians, both in and out of the homeland. In order to dispell this dislike as well as to discredit his major opponents, KALNINS has engaged in vicious public attacks against the last regime and its major leaders. Some of these attacks have been manifested in the Latvian newspaper "Latvijas Zinas" (Latvian News) published in Sweden by Janis GRINS who is under KALNINS' domination as it was KALNINS who procured him his present position in the Swedish government and who by the same token can cause his discharge. Although the number of KALNINS followers and supporters is small, it is still a significant group as it uses all means - fair or foul - in its attempt to discredit the opposition.

b. The Ulmanists

(1) In reality there is no such organization in existence. It may rather be termed as a movement by the majority of Latvians who point out that the ULMANIS regime was the most productive in the history of Latvia, a regime which saved Latvia from financial bankruptcy and political chaos. There is no true and real leader of this movement, although a number of important Latvians are followers thereof. In disputes between the Parliamentarians and the Ulmanists, the latter are quick to point out that even the Parliamentarians themselves have openly admitted that the Ulmanis regime had accomplished just what it set out to do, i.e., create a better Latvia.

(2) A number of prominent Latvians are supporters of the former Ulmanis regime, the most important one being Janis CELMS who could even be considered as the unofficial head of the Ulmanis movement. CELMS has been very active in the refugee (DP) circles, having been one of the founders of the Latvian Central Council, serving on the executive body of that council, the Latvian Central Committee, and having been one of the founders of the Latvian National Council, the organization he hoped would eventually become the Latvian government-in-exile.

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c. The Daugavas Vanagi (Eagles of the River Daugava)

(1) This organization was formed in 1946 for the purpose of assisting needy Latvians Legionnaires (Members of the 15th and 19th Latvian Waffen SS Divisions) and their families. Its actual leader is the former Latvian Col. JANUMS, at present residing in Germany, an extremely able, energetic, and outspoken man. His daring World War II exploits have endeared him to many Latvians, especially former legionnaires. (JANUMS, as Regimental Commander, had led his regiment out of 22 encirclements by the Russian forces.

(2) The DV at present has representatives in all countries where Latvians are residing. These representatives are basically concerned with the collection of donations for the above-mentioned charity purposes. In several countries this organization is also known as the Daugavas Vanagu Fonds or simply Fonds.

(3) For the past two years, John A. VALDMANIS, financial adviser to the Canadian government, has attempted and been successful in worming into the DV. At the present time he is the Canadian representative. However, he has repeatedly attempted to assume the entire leadership of the DV, yet has only managed to become the unrecognized leader of the Western Hemisphere DV. VALDMANIS is described as a restless individual, given to entangling and intriguing activities. His chief desire - due to the fact that he cannot enter the US because of suspected Communist activities, although a substantial amount of pressure has been exerted upon the State Department by many influential Americans - is to center the Latvian emigre activities in Canada and to become the leading spirit and influence of such activities.

(4) An extremely unpopular group in the DV is a group of former members of the "Perkonkrusts" (Swastika League). Up to 1934 this group was an overt Nazi organization in Latvia, consisted of approximately 3000 members, and had the same ideology and political aims and ambitions as those of the NSDAP, yet was not an affiliated organization thereof. The leader of this group, Gustavs CELMINS, at present in the US and against whom deportation proceedings are being formulated, was forced to flee Latvia in 1934 because of ULMANIS' persecution of all fascists. CELMINS returned to Latvia in 1941 and assisted the occupying Germans in establishing their Sicherheitsdienst (SD) office in Riga. Under the able leadership of Dr. LANGE, chief of the SD, CELMINS installed a great number of his former "Perkonkrusts" members in the SD. However, in the latter part of 1941, he lost his influence and good will of the German authorities and was displaced by a former Latvian corporal ARAJS, who was given the rank of Major of the SS and installed as Latvian chief of that organization. ARAJS has been tried and sentenced as a war criminal and is at present residing somewhere in the US Zone of Germany. Subsequent to his removal from the SD, CELMINS and all his followers were installed in the Central SD records office in Riga (Zentralkartei). Next to Bruno KALNINS the two most hated men among Latvian patriots are ARAJS and CELMINS.

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d. The Latvian Peoples Central Council (Latviesu Centrala Padome) (LCP)

(1) This organization was begun in 1946 in Germany for the purpose of aiding the displaced persons. This organization is not to be confused with the Latvian Central Council (Latvijas Centrala Padome), which is a national rather than a displaced persons organization. The Latvian Peoples Central Council consists of approximately 30 elected representatives, each of which represent from two to four thousand Latvian DP's. The executive body of this council is known as the Latvian Central Committee. The head of the Latvian Peoples Central Council is Haralds KLARKS and the head of the Latvian Central Committee is Janis CELMS.

(2) CELMS is the most active and most popular of all leading personalities in either the Latvian Peoples Central Committee or its executive body, having risen from the ranks and having held a non-political, very productive job in pre-war Latvia.

e. The Latvian National Council

(1) This organization which was created in Germany subsequent to cessation of hostilities and whose predecessor was the Latvian Central Council which originated in Latvia in 1943 and which later was incorporated into the Latvian National Council, was created for the purpose of uniting all existing Latvian political factions and organizations. Due to the fact that this council was headed by Bishop RANCANS and included the unpopular parliamentarians of which Bruno KALNINS is a member, the council never achieved its aim of uniting the Latvian people.

(2) It is significant to note that an attempt to unite such major groups as the Latvian churches, the Latvian press, the Union of Former State Employees, the Latvian Peoples National Council, the veterans organization Daugavas Vanagi, the Association of Latvian Students, and the Latvian Red Cross has been made. The lack of success stems from the fact that most of these groups are remnants of the ULMANIS regime and as such are opposed to the parliamentarians whose representative was the leader and chief organizer of this council and who hoped that the council would serve to reestablish the old Latvian parliamentary government.

f. The American Latvian Association (Amerikas Latviesu Apvieniba)

Having been formed in the latter part of 1950, this organization chose as its head an old Latvian immigrant, Professor Peter LEJINS, at present on the staff of the University of Maryland. The aims of this organization seem to be more social than political, even though this appears to be an attempt to unite all Latvians in the USA regardless of their political affiliation. At present the ALA has created an Information Center through which it endeavors to propound its aims and thereby enlist a greater number of Latvians in America. The chief of this information center is Alfreds BERZINS, former Latvian Minister of Public Affairs.

g. The Latvian Information Center

(1) This Information Center is not to be confused with the Information Center of the ALA, although both have the same person as the head.

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(2) In April 1951 Alfreds BERZINS took it upon himself for no apparent personal or political gain to organize a Latvian Information Center in New York City. This Center aims to collect information regarding the Latvian homeland by any overt and legal means at its disposal. Such means would include publications from Latvia, personal letters, broadcasts, personal observations of recent refugees. The Center hopes to exist from voluntary contributions, the sale of a bulletin wherein this above-mentioned information will be published, and from voluntary services of interested individuals. The Center intends to adopt non-political lines.

3. With the advent of the Displaced Persons Act of 1948 as amended, the Latvian refugee groups were obliged to view the Latvian refugee problem from a world point of view rather than from a local German and Swedish point of view as has been the case prior to that time. Since the beginning of the DP Act, the majority of Latvians have left Germany and emigrated to the US; many others have also emigrated to other countries. As a result the following categories of Latvians are now remaining in Germany and Austria:

- a. Those undesirable because of old age and/or physical handicaps.
- b. Those rejected for security and/or moral turpitude reasons.
- c. Those not eligible to qualify under immigration schemes.
- d. Those not desiring to leave Germany or Austria.

It is anticipated that those not within the above-mentioned categories who have not as yet left Germany or Austria, will do so before the end of 1951.

4. The resulting political vacuum in Germany has already and will in the future cause a great deal of anxiety to the remaining Latvians. It could be presumed that some political organization will manifest itself there and seek recognition by occupying powers. It would be advisable to be very cautious when dealing with a new political organization, lest we endanger our position with the established groups. There are at present two major Latvian political figures still in Germany: Vilis JANUMS, former Latvian Colonel and present leader of the DV, and Janis CELMS, the head of the Latvian Central Committee. It is doubtful that the former will ever gain admission to the US as he has held the rank of Colonel in the Latvian Legion (15th Volunteer Waffen SS Division) and because of this is termed as a collaborator. The latter, however, will probably be admitted as his was simply a case of being "smeared" by the aforementioned Swedish newspaper; as far as is known the allegations against CELMS to the effect that he is of pro-Communist leadings have been cleared.

5. Realizing that support of one or more of the western powers would not only furnish them the necessary prestige, but also aid them in reestablishing the former parliamentary type of government if and when Latvia is again free, the leading parliamentarians began to approach the western powers as early as 1946. These approaches consisted of proposals to send various people to Latvia and establish contacts with underground members. Many of these proposals were and still are ruses to gain western sympathy, as contact

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with the underground is and has been virtually non-existent. In some cases outright fraud has been committed by furnishing the intelligence services of western powers information procured from Soviet publications, broadcasts and personal letters from Latvia.

6. Any comments which the field may choose to make on the above will be welcomed.

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