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MAR 14 1955

Doc. # 1 File # 1686

CUKURS, Herberts

He was born on May 17, 1900 in Liepaja as a son of Janis CUKURS, an artisan; his mother's name is Anna nee SKULRA. Herberts Cukurs is married, his wife's name is Milda nee KERZUPIS; he has two children (the age and number not certain). He participated in the Liberation Wars of Latvia 1918/1920, commissioned due to valor; attended Aviation school (military) and served in the Latvian Air Force as officer, last rank known a captain (among Latvians known as "kapteinis Cukurs"). Worked on plane construction, known as good mechanic, drove "hot rods". Quit the Air Force in 'thirties, acquired his own plane, made famous flights in 1933/34 to Africa to the former Latvian colony Gambia, crossed the desert of Sahara; earned his living by publishing his experiences and became famous because popularized the ancient Latvian history by visiting the former colonies; wanted to visit also Tobago (another former Latvian colony in the 17th century), but was refused permission by British. Visited by plane also several European states and was a person known to every kid in Latvia. How did he manage to escape during the first Soviet occupation is not known, it might be learned from former captain of Latvian air force from BLAUS who is in US (address might be obtained from Mr. Aleksandrs UDRIS, employee of the Library of Congress), and from Juris KERNANINS at 218 Young Ave., Toronto, Ont., Canada, who associated with H.C.

During the German occupation H.C. was with the Cerjan SD, in the ill-fated BRAJIS group, believed to have participated in the persecution of Jews. After the war fled to Sweden and eventually settled down in Brazil, presumably Sao Paulo. During the time when the bulk of the former Latvian Legion was in the POW Camp Zedelghem, Belgium (under British administration), the British intelligence looked for H.C. and detained a second lieutenant from CUKURS; the latter was able to prove that he is not identical with H.C. by showing the picture of H.C. in the book "My flight to Gambia"; also the a/m capt. BLAUS was able to state that H.C. is in Sweden because there appeared an add in the Latvian newspaper in Sweden, inviting a woman and two kids to join father in Sweden, and though only the christian names were mentioned in the ad, BLAUS identified the woman and kids as the wife and children of H.C. (names used were the ones used by H.C. in his family, not the real names, some aliases). Due to this investigation it was indicated that H.C. was caught because of his activities under the German occupation (his superior, major BRAJIS, was arrested in the a/m POW Camp, where he had hidden himself under a false name ALBIS). Later it became known that H.C. is in Brazil where he operates a coat-for-rent station at a lake; he had difficulties because the local Jewish population tried to achieve his expulsion from Brazil and even destroyed his enterprise; H.C. wrote a letter to the Latvian Veterans' Organization "Daugavas Vanagi" in Germany ab. 1950 asking for assistance in his struggle against the Brazilian Jews, viz. he wanted a letter of recommendation showing that he has not committed any atrocities during the German occupation; such a certificate was refused. Recently there was an article in a Latvian newspaper describing Cukurs' present life in Brazil, so it seems he has overcome the opposition against him and probably is running his enterprise in some place. He can be described as a very venturesome person with a touch of adventurer and good business man with little scruples. (B)

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