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MICROFILMED
MAR 11 1964
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DATE 2008

ABSTRACT INDEX

DATE 1 March 1952

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MICROFILMED

MAR 11 1964

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DOC. MICRO. SER.

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Subject: REDSOX/ABUOR - Biographical Information on CAMUSO 1

MMAA-268/01

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per CSN 43-28

1. The following is a translation of CAMUSO 1's biography

I am now 38 years old, and was born in the Matkule township of the Tukums district. My father was a machine mechanic, and worked in the sawmill. He also worked with the threshing, and other steam operated machines.

At the outbreak of the first World War, my mother, my uncle, and his parents and I went to Vidzeme with the stream of refugees that moved eastward from Kurzeme. During the war years we lived in the neighborhoods of Gatarta. My mother died during this period. When hostilities ceased, I returned to Kurzeme (where my uncle had a farm), along with my brother, and my uncle's parents. My brother was my elder by 1½ years, and my sister, who was the eldest of us three, had died before my birth. My father, who now also returned, married for the second time, and resumed his position as manager of the sawmill and manager and regulator of the threshing machine. My father, my brother, and myself stayed with our grandmother and uncle.

In the ages between 9 and 15, I attended, and completed the local elementary school.

Then I went for two years to the intermediate school in Talsi. I was not able to complete this school, because my uncle had acquired a family of several children in the meantime, and was unable to provide me with the necessary material backing any more. I also did not want to accept such support from my father, since my childhood had not been part of his life after his second marriage. For this reason I earned my own living from then on working on farms in the vicinity of the city. I also worked as a raftsmen. Later, at my father's recommendation, I worked at the sawmill at the Lici station; in the beginning as regulator's assistant, later (when the work began to be done in two shifts) as regulator, with pay of Ls 5.50 per shift (the workers earned from Ls 3 to 5.50). In my free time I read, to fill out and refresh my interrupted schooling.

From the time I went to school, I remember the following friends best: Maksis and Janis Mikelsons, who had a farm in the Tukums district and who were airplane mechanics in the Latvian airforce and in the home defense; and my friend Otto Erdmanis's sister, who was later a teacher of the Latvian language and history in the elementary school. Otto Erdmanis was a scout in a Latvian unit during the war.

In my free time, and particularly in the summer, I took part in the city's sport organizations: the Home Defense Force sport events and Vanagi (a national, semi-military youth organization), participating in the light athletic prize-fights of the neighboring area and of the whole district.

I spent my compulsory military service in the machine-gun company of the 7th Siguldas infantry regiment in Gulbene. My life following this, has been perhaps greatly influenced by the spirit of true patriotism that prevailed at this time in the Latvian army. I did not finish at non-commissioned officer's company (a training unit for non-commissioned officers). During my period of service, I spent four and a half months in a military hospital with paralysis of the left eye and cheek (as a result of an insect bite in the Gulbene park). After my period of service, I returned to my hometown and once again participated in the home defense sport organization, and in the local theater group.

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When the Russian army set up bases in Latvia (in the fall of 1939), I was in reserve training, in the machine-gun company of the 2nd Ventspils infantry regiment in Kuldiga, which was transferred from Liepaja to Gut Virva near Kuldiga. The reserves training period lasted one month.

Then once more I returned to my hometown.

As the Bolsheviks were pulling in, I worked on farms, mostly on that of my uncle or those of former schoolmates, in the Talsi or Tukums districts, since, as a former member of the Home Defense Force, I had to be careful of the Communists.

In the winter of 1940-41 I worked in the woods in the Chief Forestry in Redna and Tukums. Therefore I obtained the new Russian passport without difficulty. I did not have any other certificates or documents.

After the first mass deportation (in June, 1941) in which the Bolsheviks sent off several families from the neighborhood (among them the former section-commander in the Home Defense Force, Otto Dupurs, and several families of the members of this organization-Drubazs and others), I spent the last week of the Bolshevik occupation outside the house; several nights even in the woods, together with a former Home Defense member, Dumbris (now dead) and a police inspector. I had been warned by a schoolmate, Zorgis, who is now working in the military, to be careful because the militia knew that I had shown contempt for the Bolshevik authorities; later, when I was active in a special defense unit, it could be seen from the documents that were discovered that the secretary of the township, Gulevskis, from the neighboring township Valgale, had entered my name among 12 others who were scheduled to be shot.

On the night between the first and second of July, when the German units were fighting near Liepaja and the local Communists were already in trucks ready to flee to Russia, I went again to my hometown. Together with the former hunger-meister Arturs Purins and other friends from the Home Defense Force I helped to found a self defense unit to preserve order in the city and to defend it from the remains of the Red Army that were fighting around there. As the situation became quieter and the unit smaller, I joined the local police force. The colleagues I remember best from the time of the defense unit are: company commander of the Home Defense Force in the Tukums district, Zanis Baltins, the aforementioned Purins and Mierins (according to the latest news, taken prisoner by the Bolsheviks in Pomerania, taken to the Talsi district, and, together with other colleagues from the defense unit, hanged).

As the Latvian volunteer units to fight against Bolshevism were being founded, I joined the 24th volunteer battalion of Talsi on March 2, 1942, and after three months of training in Liepaja went to Belorussia to fight the partisans. After 6 months of this fighting, at Kaidanova, Baranovich, and Lido, our battalion was sent to the front near Leningrad (in November 1942). There I was the commander of the machine-gun unit. In March, 1943, we left the Leningrad front and were transferred to the Volkova area. There, on April 12th, (this date was the day on which the Latvian Legion was founded, and the date was entered in the soldier's pay book) we were made the original section of the Latvian Legion. From the Volkova front, I was sent (middle of June) to what was at that time a weapons school of the northern army group in Kingisepp, Estonia, which I completed in 6 weeks with the rank of corporal. I returned to my unit in Volkova and 2 or 3 weeks I

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became an MG section commander, I took part in all the battles of the battalion. During the retreat from Volkhova, I was wounded for the first time, leading a shock unit in the blowing up of a Russian bunker. I was sent to a military hospital in Jelgava. When I had recovered, I was sent to the MG company in Bauska, to help in training. Then I returned with the trained soldiers to the Opockha front. When Latvian territory had been reached during the retreat and the special storm troop battalion of the 19th division, under the command of Maj. Laumanis, was being formed, I joined it and took part in all of its campaigns. During Christmas of 1944, I was supposed to go to Vienna, with other non-commissioned officers of this battalion, to start officer's school on January 1, 1945. But due to general strong Russian offensive, and since there was a lack of experienced cadres, I had to remain in the unit. Since I had completed school in 1943 in Kingisep and had had more than one and a year's experience as section commander (and in the sixth major battle as company commander), and since I had taken part in training (at Bauska, I was advanced to the rank of lieutenant with the reformation of the battalion after the battles at Cesvaine along with 5 others. Cesvaine was where I had trained future officers in the elementary school of Cirsti.

During the complete period of battling, I was wounded twice seriously, twice lightly, and suffered a concussion once. I was awarded a silver medal for being wounded, an assault battle medal, a close combat medal, a Courland ribbon first and second class, as well as the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross.

Toward the end of the war, in the middle of April, I was in Dundaga in the German weapons school, and later in Pavilosta. From there, the whole school-1600 men, of whom 23 were Latvians-went to Sweden on the evening of the capitulation, May 8, 1945. With 3 Dessentfähren, when we had left Pavilosta and were already at sea, we were discovered by 10 Russian planes. They machine-gunned and bombed us. On the three boats, 15 were killed and 75 wounded. On the next morning we reached Gotland, put the wounded ashore, and were escorted further by a Swedish warship to the Swedish mainland.

We arrived in Kalmar, where a guards unit of the Swedish army was waiting for us. At the same time two larger groups of Latvian civilian refugees also reached this port. Some of us were able to speak with the Swedish officers and to tell them that there were 22 Latvians on the landing craft. On the same evening we were separated from the others and joined to the Latvian refugees.

Three days later I arrived with a Latvian group at a PW transit camp, Löckeby, which I left 6 weeks later, to go to Stockholm. From the camp there, (Kymmene) I went with 9 other legionnaires to work in the forests in central Sweden (Värmland Filipstad), where I worked 4 years as woodsman and road worker and raftsmen, earning 400 to 500 kronas a month. Then I went to Hallstahammar where I worked in the metal works there as screwsetter. About sixty Latvians worked in this town, mostly former officers in the Latvian army and the Legion, who industriously took part in Latvian national and social work. I participated too, and heard several reports of the battles of the Latvian Legion there and in the neighboring city Östing. I also took part in the activities of the Latvian welfare organization Daugvies Vanagi.

At the end of November 1950, I left Hallstahammar and went to Göteborg, where I worked in a textile, and later an oil, factory.

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After April, 1950, when I arrived in Halmstadhammar, I became acquainted with the woman who was later my common-law wife, with whom I lived until August, 1951.

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The friends and acquaintances whom I remember best from the time I lived in Sweden are a good number of comrades from the war. Further: my aforementioned second half, whom I was no longer able to marry, and several "suspicious brothers", with one of whom I used to play football in my youth.

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~~Attachment "A"~~

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2. The following are supplementary questions asked of CAMUSO I. Section A.

1. I was brought up strictly religiously. My belief in God was strengthened during the 2nd World War, during which I was only lightly wounded despite having been in serious battles. During my youth and later in free Latvia I went to church once a month or at least every other month. I went to evening mass Christmas and Easter. I have been baptized and confirmed in the evangelist-lutheran church, to which my parents and relatives belonged. Since the occupation and later during emigration I have gone to church less often. The last time that I attended a Latvian service was in July 1951, in Goteborg.

2. I have lived through a great deal and I have learned that one should not fear poverty: I have learned to overcome this with work and will.

When I enlisted in the fight against Bolshevism at the beginning of the 2nd World War, I no longer feared becoming an invalid or the Cheka or death.

I am mostly afraid of the contempt of my fellow man: that I could be misused by someone for his own purposes, and that through ignorance and lack of understanding I could involve people who trust me in a matter that I myself was not clear about.

3. I have enemies from the earlier time when I was fighting for the freedom of Latvia. When Bolshevik power in Latvia crumbled in July 1941, I arrested a member of the Cheka (when I was a member of the special defense unit in my city) who had not been able to flee and turned him over to the authorities. His father (Valcis) was aware of this and he has threatened me several times since then. He may still be in Latvia (he was a Communist even early during the occupation), perhaps in Sabile.

I don't recall any enemies from any other time in my life.

4. When I was looking for co-workers among fellow-soldiers for the present assignment (it was necessary at first to try to find some) I spoke with K. Miske and H. Burkhard (questionnaires have been turned in by both of them) but these conversations were only at the beginning. These two can also guess something from what they read in the newspapers and from my disappearance.

5. The entrance of the Communist into Latvia evoked great indignation in me, since I treasured Latvian culture and the prosperity we had achieved on our own.

Therefore I stayed with relatives or friends in the Tukums and Talsi districts during the occupation, and worked on farms. That winter I worked in the chief forestry in Renda and Tukums.

The only document I received was the Russian passport, which was issued on the basis of the former passport of the Latvian republic (a small book with a picture and printed stamp). I had no other certificates or documents, other than the work receipts issued by the forestry service for the amount of work done, to be presented when wages were paid. This was a simple receipt, so far as I can remember, with a printed notation of the forestry district on the left side. first and last.

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names of the workers, and the amount to be paid. Under that, the signature of the forestry official.

I was not a member of the organizations existing at the time (MOPR, Osoaviack

When the Bolshevik power fell and I was working in the special defense unit, of the executive committee of the township was found, in which my name was listed person who was to be shot.

6. I know the Tukums and Talsi districts best. I also know well the neighborhood of the Usma and Lici stations, where I have worked. From the time that the reserves were being trained, I know the Kuldiga area quite well. I know the Kuldiga-Renda-Kabile stretch comparatively well, as far as Tukums, since I travelled there when I was boxing. I was in Liepaja for three months when the first volunteer battalion was being formed, and later in Dundaga and Pavilosta as Latvian legionnaire.

I went through Latgale (Goliseva-Karsava-Tilza) and Vidzeme during the second World War, when I was in the assault battalion in the Latvian Legion.

7. I should like to work in Courland (south and north), since I know the country better. I think I could most easily find comrades from the Latvian Legion there, since many of them came from Courland.

8. So far as I have been able to gather from the news coming out of Latvia in Soviet newspapers and on the radio, I thought it would be a good idea, at least at first, to assume the occupation of an agent of the ministry of agriculture, whose job it is to oversee the cooperation between the Machine-Tractor Stations and other workers' brigades. The local authorities of the ministry of agriculture are complaining that the plans are not being fulfilled and that the harvest is so small, because there is insufficient cooperation and competition between the workers' brigades and the MTS. Furthermore, one has the advantage of not being bound to stay in one place when one has such a certificate (if it is also valid at travel control points). The controllers are despatched from above (by the ministry of agriculture or some similar authority) and the local authorities or kolkhozes are not notified in advance.

I could also pass as a raftsman that has been sent by a kolkhoz or by a higher authority, who is supposed to ascertain which rivers are best suited for floating lumber. This could be done only in spring or early summer.

9. a. To establish contact with Latvian partisans who are from the former Latvian 19th division and who are located in Latvia or in the border area (Lithuanian-Polish border area, where I took part during the 2nd World War in the mopping-up operation against the Bolshevik partisans);

b. To establish contact with the members of the national underground movement, to help them with whatever support possible.

c. If possible: to organize bases or prepared positions (or to find them) where Latvians can find refuge when the 3rd World War begins, since, in such a case, the Bolsheviks will try to send the most valuable part of the Latvian population into the interior of Russia; at these bases they could await help from abroad.

d. If I could establish contact with resistance groups, there would perhaps be no need for the other assignments. Then I could perhaps help a member of the local

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attached

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Attachment "A"

resistance movement to reach the free world.

10. My weaknesses are books and movies. When there is nothing else to do, I like to play cards, but seldom.

11. If there were no further need for me in Latvia, I should like to return and to take part in the eventual preparation of Latvian units. In the meantime, I should like to recover for a few weeks.

12. I should like there to be true freedom for all oppressed people. I also wish that the world could understand the struggle of the Latvian legionnaires against the Communists.

Section B

1. I disapprove of the people who collaborated with the Russians, particularly Bruno Kalnins.

I think that when Latvia has been liberated he should not be allowed to return from Sweden, or, if he does go back, he should be brought to trial and have to defend his actions as politician under the Communists, and his present activities in the emigration (with his publications in the Latvian and Swedish press he has done a great deal to harm the joint effort to liberate Latvia.)

2. I am of the same opinion in regard to Latvians who collaborated with the Germans for selfish purposes. That they must render account of their activities before a court of law. But I cannot say with certainty who these collaborators were. Furthermore, I am of a different opinion regarding this period. The Latvian people have shown, in its fight for liberation (1918 to 1920) against the German invader that it is willing to work together. But the Bolsheviks aroused such hatred for themselves and did so much harm to the Latvian people, that they came to regard anyone willing to help them in ridding themselves of the Russians as a friend (one must not forget that the Germans propagandized for a free Latvia).

3. The Ulmanis administration was the most successful, in comparison to the earlier economic situation. As for Ulmanis himself, his merits during the establishment of the Latvian state can't be ignored, though in later times (1934 to 1940) he proved to have serious failings. But it is very difficult to judge this matter, because the international situation was very complicated.

4. I am not in agreement with some of our politicians, particularly with the assertion that only they should represent the Latvian emigration. Their insistence on their rights as members of parliament seems to me to contradict our law pertaining to parliament. The law says that the people elect their representative for a period of three years. This period has long since elapsed.

In judging their usefulness in the liberation of Latvia, one should consider only their willingness to sacrifice themselves for the people and the country, and not their efforts to obtain their old offices.

5. In many cases, the fault lies with our social democrats. One always comes across the slogan "For the party and the fatherland", although today all of our

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~~Attachment "A"~~

energy should be given to working for the latter, and only later should one think about the other.

6. Only those should be considered leading political figures who have shown by their past and present actions that they are not serving the Latvian cause for personal reasons and who appear to be true representatives of the Latvian people. In my opinion, Zarins is such a person, who was awarded special authority by the legal government of Latvia (since this government was also recognized by the other democratic states) and is still recognized by the English government. Also Feldman: who was recognized by the American government. Among the later politicians, Valdmanis has been very active on behalf of the Latvians.

7. Col. Janums and Col. Silgailis are among the leading military figures. In regard to the question, who should be such an authority in the future, one should take into consideration that at the beginning of the ~~third~~ world war there should be coordination between the partisans who stayed at home and the military leadership in the emigration. Only a person recognized by both parts could carry out such a task. I think that such a person could come from the ranks of the Latvian officers who stayed at home. For instance, Major Laumanis, or Capt. Spade to whom no one would have objection.

8. After the liberation, the Latvian political structure should have a firm basis: a) The president should be independent of the parties and elected directly by the people; b) From the beginning, there should be no more than 3 or 4 parties, which represent the professional activities of the population (farmer party and others).

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