

INTELLQFAX 16

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

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SECURITY INFORMATION

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Railroad Lines

1. All the important railroad lines and centers were rebuilt immediately after the war, but lines of secondary importance have been reconstructed only during the last few years. For example, the Riga - Mergli line was restored only last year (1951). The Riga - Rujiena line has as yet been restored only as far as Saulkrasti. In the latter case the main obstacle is believed to be the destroyed bridge across the river Salaca. The narrow-gauge lines from Valka to Rujiena and Ape have not yet been repaired. All other railroad lines are the same as in 1940. No new lines have been built.

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Stations

2. Many railroad station buildings in Vidzeme and Latgale were destroyed by the Germans. New stations have been built in Daugavpils, Jelgava, Sigulda, Cesis, Valmiera, and Rzekne. Most of the other stations are housed, for the time being, in auxiliary buildings.

Bridges

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3. All railroad bridges in Vidzeme and Latgale were destroyed during the war. Major railroad bridges have been built across the rivers Ogre, Rauna, Amata, Rzekne, Gauja near Carnikava, Daugava near Daugavpils, Lielupe near Jelgava and the Strand, Milgravis in North Riga, and the double-track bridge across the river Daugava Riga.

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Traffic

4. Trains from Riga go to all Latvian railroad terminals, except Rujiena. Local trains from Riga run several times daily to Stende, Valmiera, Saulkrasti, and Krustpils. The pride of the Soviet authorities is the new electric line from

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Riga to Kemerī, which was completed in 1951. Electric trains built by the Riga Railroad Car Factory are used on this line. The line is double-tracked as far as Dubulti, and the train takes 32 - 34 minutes, stopping at every station on the way, but from there to Kemerī it takes approximately one hour. It is undeniable that the electric train to the Strand is a great improvement, and Latvians can only be glad that one day the Soviets will leave them such a capital development.

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5. Passenger traffic to Tallinn and Lvov is by comfortable diesel train. On other lines, the coaches have seen better days. On short-distance trains there are no soft seats, but on long distance trains soft seats are available, though expensive and difficult to obtain. The travelling speed of passenger trains is comparatively slow, and the journey from Riga to Lepaya, Daugavpils, or Rēzekne takes some 6 - 7 hours, doubtless due to the shortness of the rail sectors and the frequent stops.
6. Tickets for all railroad lines in Latvia can be obtained easily, the only exception being Lepaya, in which case the applicant's passport must be produced, or a permit to show that entry into Lepaya is permitted, before the ticket can be obtained. During the summer months, tickets for Moscow, Leningrad, and Orël are difficult to obtain and must be ordered several days in advance. Tickets for local trains from Riga are comparatively cheap, costing: to Riga Strand 2-3 rubles, Sigulda 5 rubles, Orge 4 rubles, Cēsis 10 rubles, and Yelgava 4 rubles. The journey from Riga to Ventspils costs 30 rubles and to Daugavpils or Lepaya 35 rubles.
7. Heavy freight traffic on the Riga railroad system has been considerably extended. The Riga and Cēkurkalns-Zemitāns freight stations have been greatly enlarged, especially the latter, since this is close to the industrial center of Riga. The railroad yards at Skirotava in Riga have been enlarged, and new depots and workshops have been built. This is also the depot for cars for the Riga passenger station.
8. Between 1 January 1952 and 1 August 1952, the Latvian railroads moved 3,400 heavy trains, a total weight of approximately 3,800,000 tons. Dispatchers and shunters assembled 23,000 sets of rolling-stock, most of which had Riga as terminus.
9. The second largest railroad junction is Daugavpils, which has lately been officially awarded big premiums and the title of "the best railway station in the Latvian Republic". This is probably because the much-publicized Soviet "wizard" Baranovska, who proposed that financial plans should be worked out for every locomotive brigade, is employed there. The brigades, in turn, were enabled to save a few rubles in order to lower prices and make more propaganda. This craze for economy has swept the railroads exactly as it has industry. Besides Baranovska methods, the "500 movement" is also in use. This means that a locomotive should accomplish 500 kms in 24 hours and increase its load. To further the drive for economy, a mixture of coal and oil shale is now used as fuel for locomotives. Unfortunately, no figures are available for the total number of locomotives or other rolling stock. It is only known that 15 depots have been restored by the railroad authorities since the war, and, with the possible exception of passenger coaches, the whole system is much larger than in 1940.
10. According to estimates, the number of passengers carried reaches 25,000,000 a year. Each passenger car now has its own conductor, most of whom are women. Since the Latvian railroad administration is now directly subordinate to Moscow, there are many Soviets in the administration; but, as a whole, the former Latvian railroad employees are still in their old positions.

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Railroad Personnel

11. New personnel is trained in the technical schools in Riga and Daugavpils. Amongst them are many members of the Komsomol. The so-called "Komsomol brigades" are very popular on the railroads. The schools prepare experts on locomotive economy, train movements, and loading. Railroadmen have the possibility of earning 1,000 rubles and more per month; especially well paid are locomotive crews (who do not receive accident bonuses), loaders, and unloaders. Stationmasters, guards, dispatchers, and other administrative personnel are also quite well paid, but conductors, spotters, and crossing guards are badly paid. As elsewhere in the Soviet Union, the railroadmen are encouraged by the award of decorations. In the years since the war, Latvian railroadmen have received 600 orders and some 3,500 medals. They also received free travel tickets to sanatoriums within the Soviet Union. There are many sanatoriums and camps for children in Riga Strand, but Latvian railroadmen see little of these, while many Soviets stay there.
12. The Latvian railroad has a special political section which represents the Party and produces the inevitable Communist propaganda. This section issues its own newspaper which, by praising the workers on the railroad, tries to stimulate work and to introduce new working methods. So far, the Latvian railroadmen, with their old working methods, are accounted the best in the Soviet Union.
13. The Latvian railroad has a complete army system, with uniforms and ranks. Railroad bridges are guarded by Cheka troops, and it is only recently that it has been permitted to open carriage windows when crossing a bridge.¹
14. According to Latvian railroadmen, the railroads are managed in a more or less orderly manner, with few accidents and lively traffic. An adequate stimulus is to be found in the railroad "book of punishments", which brings an offender up before a tribunal for carelessness or the slightest infringement of discipline. The penalties are severe, and sometimes stern in the extreme.

Railroad Works and Factories

15. One of the largest railroad undertakings is the Daugavpils Locomotive and Car Repair Works, which employs approximately 2,000 workers. This formerly constantly-praised factory has recently fallen into disfavor for not fulfilling its plan. Riga railroadmen too are incurring reproaches for faulty work, disregard of discipline, lack of care, and frequent drunkenness.
16. The next largest is the Riga Mechanical Repair Works, which is directly subordinate to Moscow. In addition to running repairs, this factory also produces turret-shaped structures for railroad stations. These constructions are also sent to other Soviet Republics, including Siberia. This year (1952) the factory started to produce machinery for mechanical tracklaying, according to the design of a Soviet engineer.

Railroad Projects

17. A decree was recently issued in Moscow, directing the complete reconstruction of the Baltic railroads. Details of the project are not known, but it is believed to envisage the reconstruction of the two Riga passenger stations, making the main tracks into double-track lines, and possibly also the construction of new lines from Tukums to Kuldiga, and from Lepaya to Ventspils. That this has been planned in the Soviet Union, however, does not guarantee that it will be fulfilled, and it is felt that this is a problem of the distant future.

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1. Comment. To the ordinary Latvian, the term "Cheka" denotes the security organs, irrespective of whether they are MGB or MVD.

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