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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

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SUBJECT Description of Valsts Elektrotechniska Fabrika (VEF) Factory

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THIS IS UNEVALUATED INFORMATION

1. The Valsts Elektrotechniska Fabrika (VEF) /Government Electrotechnical Factory/ was established in 1919 as a small workshop belonging to the Post and Telegraph Departments of the Ministry of Communications. Initial purpose of this factory was the repairing and maintenance of telephone apparatus. By 1930 this plant had expanded and had 1200 employees. This expansion program continued and just prior to World War II there were 3500 employees and the value of the factory was 10 million lats (equivalent to US$ two million). VEF was then considered the largest factory in Riga and in all of the Baltic countries.

2. The factory got its name VEF in 1932 (and to this day still bears that name). It was an autonomous institution of the Ministry of Transportation and Communications. As a growing and expanding factory which needed new equipment and machinery, it could purchase this only from its profit because it no longer received government subsidy or other help from the "Yearly Plans".

3. VEF was called upon to bolster Latvia's small foreign market; from 1938 to 1939; and it began producing many articles in small quantites. Among the articles produced was a patented small camera called the "Minox". The company also produced radio receivers and transmitters, telephone apparatus, automatic telephone central stations, electric bulbs, electric current meters, transformers, flat irons, wires and cables, flashlights, batteries, accumulators, photographic paper, and cameras.

4. VEF was subordinated directly to the Ministry of Industry in Moscow during the first Soviet occupation in 1940 and did not answer to the local Commissariat representative in Riga.

5. VEF was subordinated to the Terptow Feinmechanische Fabriken in Berlin under the German occupation of Riga and was renamed the AEG-Ostlandwerke. During this period the number of employees rose to five thousand. Under the AEG German supervision, VEF produced an apparatus for airplanes, called "Antenne Fest and Schlepp", and a transmitter-receiver radio for tanks, called the "Kiel".

6. The Germans evacuated most of the machine tools to Berlin and to Thuringia, Germany in July of the year 1944. The engineers who had not left the factory were also evacuated to Germany.

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7. The second occupation by the Soviets took place in 1944. They found the buildings, several large machines in the cable department, and the bakelite and metals stamping presses in good condition; but most important they inherited a large group of skilled technicians and workers with the know-how for electrical production. The Soviets brought with them 20 to 30 screw machines, jig borers, tool and die makers, micrometers, and a few other pieces of equipment and began operating the factory. Any person who could operate machinery with a precision of .0004 tolerance was put to work. Despite the lack of engineers for research and designing, the VEF factory can and has re-established operations and is in full production. VEF is also producing radar equipment.

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8. During 1930 - 1947 VEF contained the following departments: radio, telephone, electrotechnical, electrochemical, photographic paper, mechanical machine shop, plant engineering, maintenance, tool and die room, mechanical workshops, laboratories.

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9. Almost all machine tools were from Germany, Switzerland, and the UK. Material was obtained from Germany, the UK, and the US (such as radio tubes and deep drawing sheet metal). received radio tubes from Phillips of the Netherlands. VEF cooperated with a US firm "Auriema".

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10. The factory had an artisan school with a four-year course in technical training. VEF now has also a technical high school which prepares skilled workers for the fine mechanics department, tool and die room, machine tool building, and machine tool operators.

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11. From 1930 to 1944, VEF consisted of the following workshops:

W1 -- Tool and Die Room (about 100 men)

W2 -- Locksmith Workshop (consisted of drill presses, welding, riveting, and new machine building)

W3 -- Lathe Room (had lathes, milling machines, and grinding machines)

W4 -- Wood Workshop -- (Radio receiver cabinet)

W5 -- Telephone Workshop (Assembly of telephone apparatus and telephone automatic centrals)

W6--- Radio Receiver Assembly Shop

W7 -- Paint Spray Workshop (lacquering and painting)

W8 -- Automatic Screw Machine Workshop (25 screw machines worked three shifts daily)

W9 -- Photographic Paper Workshop

W10-- Galvanizing

W12-- Flashlight Battery Shop

W13-- Wire Workshop (Cable Department)

W15-- Stamping Press Shop

W16-- Blacksmith Shop

W17-- Foundry

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W18-- Cable Workshop

W19-- Electrical Wires Lacquered

W20-- Electric Bulbs and Neon Tubes

W25-- Transformer Building

W26)--Electrotechnical workshops -
W27) Bakelite presses and assembly lines for electric current meters,
W28) flat irons, plugs, etc.
W29)

W30-- Radio Transmitter Shop

W31-- Optical Workshop (Grinding of lens for the "Minox")

W32-- Camera Workshop ("Minox" parts production and assembly)

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