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Security Information

DCE 8587.

Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Chief, Staff G, FI

DATE: 24 April 1953

Attn:

FROM: Chief, Contact Division

SUBJECT: Interview with Alfred BERZINS - Information Received by
Latvian Consultative Panel (Latvian Freedom Committee of
NCFE)

Reference: Our memorandum dated 30 January 1953; subject: Alleged
Partisan Activity in the Baltic States. DCE-8195

1. In response to interest expressed orally by of your office, this division undertook to determine whether the information contained in referenced memorandum had any basis in fact. Attached hereto is the report of an interview which a representative of this division had with Mr. Alfred Berzins, former Minister of Information in Latvia. You will note that Mr. Berzins' information contradicts the information furnished by the source of referenced memorandum.

2. It is requested that the fact that Mr. Berzins is a contact of this division not be divulged outside of this Agency.

3. A copy of this memorandum is being transmitted to Cover Division, FI, and Intelligence Audit Branch, FI.

4. Any inquiry concerning this memorandum should be directed to extension 2775.

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Attachment

DECLASSIFIED AND RELEASED BY
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
SOURCE METHOD'S EXEMPTION 3B2B
NAZI WAR CRIMES DISCLOSURE ACT
DATE 2004-2005

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200-7-2-1018

Enclosure A"Center of Free Partisans" in Europe

1. Alfred Berzins was formerly Minister of Information in Latvia. Subsequently, he spent some time in a German concentration camp with Yaroslav Stetsko, head of the Anti-Bolshevist Bloc of Nations (ABN) and became a leading member of ABN. For the past two years, Berzins has not been active with ABN; instead, he has worked for the Latvian Consultative Panel--recently named, Latvian Freedom Committee--of the National Committee for a Free Europe (NCFE).

2. Berzins does not believe that a "Center of Free Partisans" or any other organization or group exists in Western Europe which systematically gathers firsthand information on conditions in the Baltic states and Poland. He flatly asserts that the Latvian Freedom Committee does not receive material of this sort from such a center or from any other source.

3. In 1946-47, a Latvian contact group was active in Sweden which managed to obtain data on conditions in Latvia through controlled sources. The last person working with this group arrived in Sweden from Latvia in 1948. Since then, Baltic nationals in Sweden devoting themselves to gathering information on conditions in their home countries--both those organized privately and others in contact with Swedish Intelligence--have been limited to radio monitoring, interviews of escapees (e.g. some recently escaped fishermen), study of Soviet newspapers and magazines. Although Sweden is an excellent location for such efforts, it no longer affords a base for active intelligence operations directed against the Baltic states.

4. Until approximately December 1952, a small newspaper, Latvia, was published near Munich with modest contributions (DM 3,000 to 3,500 monthly) from Radio Free Europe. This paper collected some information on Latvia by interviewing escaped Germans. It has been defunct since Radio Free Europe withdrew its financial support.

5. ABN in Munich might be described as a "Center of Free Partisans" by a person not very familiar with the emigre picture. It does, in fact, claim to maintain contact with Galicia (the former Polish Ukraine), but has never pretended to have access to information on the Baltic states and Poland.

6. Former members of "Thundercross" (translated from Latvian), an extreme rightist Latvian group, have built up an organization which calls itself "ABN", but which is in no way connected with Stetsko's outfit. This rival Latvian "ABN" is headed by Julius Brac, who was a contact man for the Nazi SD (Security Service) in Riga and who now lives at Camp Stoecken near Hanover. Actually, according to Berzins,

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Brac's group occasionally receives a letter from Latvia via Berlin, but news from behind the Iron Curtain allegedly gathered by it are fabricated. The purpose of this activity is primarily to obtain funds from US sources, and some members of the Brac Group are known to have been in touch with the Counter-Intelligence Corps, U.S. Army.

7. One of the best informed Latvians in Germany now is (Major) Vilis Hasners, who resides at Augustdorf near Detmold (British Zone). He is a leader of Dobgavas Kapagi (Latvian Combatants Organization) in which many security guards used by the U.S. and British Occupation Forces in Germany are organized. Plans are currently underway to bring Major Hasners to the U.S. under the auspices of NCFE and to return him to Europe after a period of briefing on the policies of NCFE. Major Hasners would be one of those persons most likely to be in contact with a free partisan center in Western Europe, if such a center actually existed. Berzins feels certain, however, that Major Hasners would corroborate his own statements on that subject.

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