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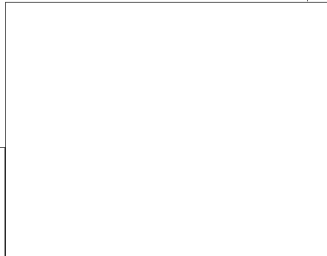
SECURITY INFORMATION

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

**INFORMATION REPORT**

COUNTRY **USSR**

SUBJECT **Train and Automotive Facilities in the Latvia SSR/  
Tartu-Tallinn Highway/Impressions of Latvia vs  
Estonia**



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DATE DISTR. 7 Aug 1953

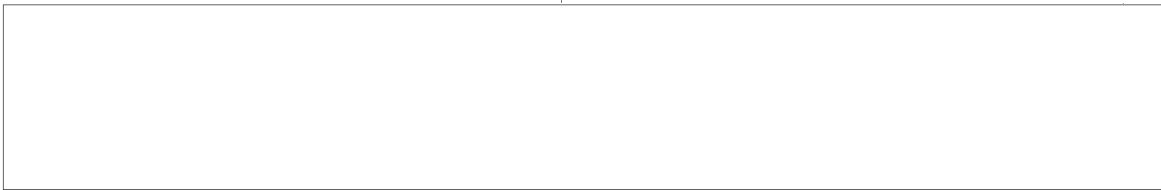
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1. "The following comments on Latvian transportation date through mid-January 1953.

Train Service

2. "The Latvian railways function satisfactorily. Trains run on schedule as discipline is very strict; an engine driver almost goes to prison if his train is five minutes late. The railway carriages are very old and very dirty - there are bugs in many of them. There are no first class carriages, only second and third class. The second class is really a sleeper; it has upholstered seats and for the night the passenger is issued a blanket and a pillow which are quite clean and decent. The third class has hard wooden benches; their backs can be lifted to form sleeping shelves by night. It costs 64 rubles to travel from Riga to Liepaja second class. The trip takes eight hours.

3. [redacted] no recent railway accidents as the authorities pay great attention to maintaining the flow of traffic. All the roadbeds are in good order. During Latvia's independence everything was cleaner, of course, the carriages much more comfortable, and the fare much cheaper. Now, in spite of the comparatively high fares, people travel a lot, especially soldiers, and the trains are always full.

4. "The railwaymen are pretty badly paid. A ticket collector's salary, for example, is 450 rubles per month. Furthermore, the railwaymen are subject to strict military discipline, with very much heavier penalties for minor offences than those applied to ordinary workers. Therefore no person who can get another job works on the railway. It recruits its personnel mainly from the kolkhozes. Life is so hard there that the kolkhoz members are prepared to take any job if only it takes them away from the kolkhoz.

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5. "Railway tickets are not difficult to get. There is a queue, of course, but you do not need to line up the night before - as for many articles of food and clothing. If you have a travel order there is no need to line up - you go to the booking office ahead of all others.
6. "There is no travel prohibition. One may go anywhere in the Soviet Union. But it is not advisable to go to Moscow or Leningrad if you have no friends there who are prepared to put you up. All the hotels are always full and you may have to sleep in the open.
7. "Liepaja is a forbidden zone. You may leave it without a permit but for re-entry a permit is required. 

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Automotive Service

8. "The buses in Latvia are in good condition. They come from Czechoslovakia and Austria. Long distance lines exist. Thus, one may go from Liepaja to Riga, Ventspils and Klaipeda by bus.
9. "In Liepaja there are 32 taxis, all of them of the Pobleda make. The fare is 1.50 rubles per kilometre in town and 2 rubles out of town. If you travel to the country and back by the same taxi the fare per km is 1.75 rubles. If a taxi has to wait for you, every five minutes of waiting costs 2 rubles. All the taxis run on petrol.
10. "Private cars are exceedingly rare - there are perhaps only ten in the whole of Liepaja. Officially no petrol is sold to private car owners, they buy it on the black market. On the other hand, no questions are ever asked about where the car owner gets his petrol. Usually it is obtained from a sailor who steals it from his ship. The Moskvich - the most usual private car - is pretty economical - to drive 100 km costs about 9 rubles at black market prices. Officially petrol costs 2 rubles per litre; bought black, the price is roughly half. The thieving sailors dare not ask much for fear of being denounced.

Impressions of Latvia vs Estonia

11. 
12. "The road between Tartu and Tallinn is now covered with asphalt. This was not the case earlier.  In Tallinn there were less Soviets in the streets than in Liepaja and Riga. Few new buildings could be seen, certainly less than in Riga where building activities are very slack. Very little is built in Liepaja. In January 1953 the foundation was laid for a Culture Palace on Roza Laukums (Rose Square). The Oblast Committee is also to be housed in this building. The construction is a source of additional income to many workers in Liepaja; especially the fire brigade men who work there whenever possible.
13. "Bread in Tallinn was of better quality than in Riga; buns cost 80 kopeks - 1 ruble apiece. Goods in the shops were also more plentiful than in Latvia: kitchen utensils could be bought though the Latvian shops were empty; some women's handiwork was displayed in the shopwindows for sale; one could buy spokes for bicycle wheels - unobtainable in Latvia. Raincoats were in a much larger supply - in Latvia they are imported from Estonia and are very scarce. Another thing not obtainable in Liepaja were tennis shoes manufactured in Riga which could be had freely in Tallinn. The Tallinn women appeared nicely dressed.
14. "Conditions in the Estonian countryside seemed to be inferior to those in Latvia. The crops seemed poorer - probably because the soil in Estonia is inferior. Fruit was also more scarce and more expensive, apples cost 10-12 rubles the kilogram instead of 4 rubles as in Latvia in August, 1951."

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