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NAZI WAR CRIMES DISCLOSURE ACT
DATE 2003 2008COORDINATION WITH DoJ/OSI

DOR-02765

MEMORANDUM FOR: [redacted] Chief, IMS/LSS

ATTENTION: [redacted] IMS/LSS

FROM: [redacted] (C) Chief, External Inquiries Branch

SUBJECT: OGC Trace Request
(A) Viktors Arajs aka Abele, aka Viktor Zeibots
(B) Herberts Cukurs (S)

REFERENCE: OGC-88-51906 dated 22 June 1988 via
LSS 2-Way Memo dated 28 June 1988

1. An extensive search of the files and indices of the Directorate of Operations surfaced the following information on Subjects. (C)
2. According to SX-161 dated 14 February 1950, found in [redacted] from No. 15 Schleswig-Holstein Intelligence Staff whose source was a member of the Riga Kripo until 1944 when he fled to Germany, one fnu Arajs aka Abols (Subject of [redacted]) was a Latvian and was about 40 years of age at the date of this report. He studied "Jurisprudence" at the University at Riga until 1938 or 1939, and he had a reputation of being a brilliant student (NFI). He spoke Latvian, Russian and German very fluently, and probably spoke a little of other languages (NFI). Upon leaving the University, he joined the Latvian Police in a junior administrative position. His reputation inside the Police Service was that of an energetic and promising young man who was extremely anti-Russian and anti-Communist. When the Germans occupied Latvia (a constituent republic of the U.S.S.R.), Arajs at once joined the German Security Police (Sicherheitsdienst); he quickly attained the rank of major and was given command of a special task force of about 150 to 200 individuals. The task force operated against the partisan bands resisting in the forests, and several times they were ordered over the Latvian border into Russia. While the task force duties on these occasions were ostensibly the combatting of partisan resistance, it was generally understood that the task force took part in pogroms ordered by the Germans against Russian Jews. In

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October/November 1944, Arajs was seen in uniform in Lihau, Latvia. When the Germans retreated from Latvia, Arajs came to Germany with them. His wife also came to Germany and lived in the southern part of Bavaria. When the war ended, Arajs adopted the name Abols (a common Latvian name) in order to conceal his true identity. He appeared in Lubeck, West Germany, in 1945 under the latter name. In late 1945 or early 1946, he was arrested by the British under the name of Abols and interned in a camp near Hamburg, Germany, until late 1948 (NFI). After an investigation by the British War Crimes Commission, he was released around Christmas in 1948. (S)

3. According to information dated 25 August 1952 found in [] and from an undetermined source, early in 1942, one fnu Arajs appeared with his so-called "Kommando." The only information that the source knew concerning Arajs was that he was a corporal in the former Latvian Army and he was about 28-30 years of age. The source did not know the size of Arajs' command, but he was sure that it was no more than a thousand men. The command consisted principally of Riga gutter-snipes (NFI). (S)

4. According to [] information, one V. Arajs, 2783 G(erneville Rd. (letter not legible), Santa Rosa, California, U.S.A., sent an air mail letter to one M. Paberzis, St. Plavinas, Ivanos, U.S.S.R., Latvijas P.S.R. (NFI). The date of the letter is unknown. (S)

5. According to an SR/2 document (page 126) dated 28 May 1954, found in [] and from an undetermined source, one fnu Arajs was the head of the Swastika League "Sondergruppe A" during the German occupation. He was assigned to executions of Jews and Communists. Arajs was described as always being drunk (NFI). (S)

6. According to XARZ-28350 dated 10 July 1946 and the attachment TX-369 dated 27 March 1945, one fnu Arajs was a member of the Latvian Nazi organization, "Perkonkrusts." He was the leader of the Gestapo's special execution commando, the so-called "Sondergruppe A." With his commando he attended to the notorious executions of the Jewish people in Latvia, and Minsk, U.S.S.R. Herberts Cukurs (Subject of []) was also listed in the above mentioned documents and according to the information, he was a captain in the Latvian Army. Subject (B) was also a member of the Latvian Nazi organization, "Perkonkrusts," and the "Sondergruppe A" and was active in the killing of Jewish people. FYI: The actual date of the information recorded in TX-369 was approximately the summer of 1944 and was from a source (A-335) whose reliability can no longer be established. At the time the information was received it was believed to be true, but no claim was made to the fact that the report was complete. (S)

7. A request for security information was surfaced in [] from the Department of State's Visa Office/Security Section, which was received by the CIA on 9 February 1955 regarding Herberts Cukurs aka Cukors, aka Herberts Zukurs, aka

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Herberts Tsukurs. His occupation was listed on the request as an aircraft repair technician and his address was listed as Latvia, France, and Brazil. The Department of State's request was responded to in CSDB-32869 dated 24 March 1955. According to this information, on 19 July 1950 the "Imprensa Popular," a Communist daily newspaper in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, published an article stating that Herbert Cukurs was supposedly number 17 on the Nuremberg list of war criminals and was living in Rio de Janeiro at Avenida Epitacio Pessoa No. 574. According to information from a usually reliable source received in a report dated 5 October 1950, Subject (B) was accused by various Jewish groups in Rio de Janeiro of having been responsible for the liquidation of 30,000 Jews in Nazi-dominated Europe during World War II. Source stated that several of these Jewish organizations had been involved in pro-Communist activities and that many of the individuals connected with the Cukurs affair were known Communists. (According to CSDB-32869, for additional information concerning Cukurs, you are referred to SO-54077 dated 5 January 1951, subject: Communist Activities in Sao Paulo; however, according to Central Files Branch all SO documents have been destroyed.) (S)

8. According to document #1, file #1686 dated 14 March 1955 and located in [redacted] from Alfreds Z. Launags (refer to paragraph 17 for additional information regarding Launags), Herberts Cukurs was born on 17 May 1900 in Liepaja, Latvian. His mother was Anna nee Skudra and his father was Janis Cukurs, an artisan. Herberts Cukurs was married to Milda nee Berzupe. He had children but it was not certain how many. He participated in the Liberation Wars of Latvia 1918/1920, and was commissioned due to valor (NFI). He attended a military aviation school (NFI) and served in the Latvian Air Force as an officer. Cukurs' last known rank was that of a captain and he was known among Latvians as "kapteinis Cukurs." He worked on plane construction and was known as a good mechanic. Cukurs quit the Air Force in the 1930s. He ~~acquired his own airplane~~ and made flights in 1933 and 1934 to the former Latvian colony of Gambia in Africa; he crossed the Sahara Desert and made his living by publishing his experiences. He became famous because he popularized the ancient Latvian history by visiting the former colonies. He wanted to visit Tobago, another former Latvian colony in the 17th century, but was refused permission by the British (NFI). Cukurs also visited several European states by plane and was known to every child in Latvia (NFI). It is not known how he managed to escape during the first Soviet occupation. During the German occupation, Cukurs was with the German SD in the ill-famed Araj's group. The SD was the German Security Police (Sicherheitsdienst), a section of the Security Service (SS) formed in 1932 and intended to provide intelligence for the Nazi party. (FYI: Information concerning the SD is German area desk information). Cukurs was believed to have participated in the persecution of Jews. After the war he fled to Sweden and eventually settled in Brazil, presumably Sao Paulo. During the time when the bulk of the former Latvian Legion was in the Prisoner of War (POW) camp in, Zedelghem, Belgium (under

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British administration), British intelligence looked for Cukurs and detained a Second Lieutenant fnu Cukurs. The latter was able to prove that he was not identical with Subject (B) by showing the picture of Cukurs in the book, "My Flight to Gambia." Also, a Captain Blaus of the Latvian Air Force, stated that Cukurs was in Sweden because an ad appeared in the Latvian newspaper in Sweden inviting a woman and two children to join their father in Sweden, and although only the christian names were mentioned in the ad, Blaus identified the woman and children as the wife and children of Subject (B). The names used were not the real names but the ones used by Cukurs in his family (NFI). Due to this investigation it was indicated that Cukurs was sought because of his activities under the German occupation. His superior, Major Arajs was arrested in the a/m (term unknown-according to the German and the USSR area desks, a/m could have many meanings) POW camp where he had hidden himself under the false name of Abele. Later it became known that Cukurs was in Brazil where he operated a boats-for-rent station at a lake. He had difficulties because the local Jewish population tried to achieve his expulsion from Brazil and even destroyed his enterprise. In circa 1950, Cukurs wrote a letter to the Latvian Veterans' Organization, "Daugavas Vanagi," in Germany asking for assistance in his struggle against the Brazilian Jews, viz he wanted a letter of recommendation showing that he had not committed any atrocities during the German occupation; such a certificate was refused (NFI). There was an article in a Latvian newspaper (date unknown) describing Cukurs life in Brazil, so it appeared he had overcome the opposition against him and probably was running his enterprise in the same place. He was described as a very venturesome person and a good businessman with few scruples. (S)

9. According to document #2, file #1686 dated 4 March 1955 from Launags and located in [] during the German occupation Cukurs joined the "Arajs Group" or "Sondergruppe Arajs" as it was called officially. In the fall of 1941, this group was billeted in an apartment house at the corner of Valdemara and Elizabētes Street and later it was moved somewhere in the eastern part of Riga (NFI). It was reported that Cukurs was a very robust and inhuman member of this group and it was known that he was the driving power of many orgies among the group members at this time. He was cynical, liked to drink in excess and have love affairs. (S)

10. According to DST-113009 (a letter sent to the CIA from Mr. Johnson at the Department of State) dated 8 December 1949 and found in [] Mr. Visson, a correspondent in Washington, D.C. from Time magazine, had called Mr. Johnson inquiring about background information regarding one Herbert Cukors. Mr. Visson was told the name was not familiar and the Department did not appear to have any information regarding him. Mr. Visson explained that one of Time's correspondents in Brazil had informed him that Mr. Cukors was an unpunished war criminal who was living and operating a small business in Brazil. Mr. Cukors was reported to be a Latvian who, during the German occupation of Riga, acted

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on behalf of the Nazis as chief executioner in the Riga ghetto. Mr. Visson further stated that his "Latvian diplomatic friends in Washington" had shed no particular light on this aspect of Mr. Cukors' activities. They had identified him as a well known resident of pre-war Riga. They stated that his name was frequently in the news in connection with unusual events such as hand constructing and flying his own plane, etc. (NFI). Mr. Visson said he thought this would make an interesting story, but Mr. Johnson had the impression that the motive of the story would be to expose the escape from justice of an alleged war criminal. According to 10-4-3-240 dated 19 December 1951 (and referred to as State cable NR: A-1084, Control: 304, from the Department of State to Frankfurt dated 3 October 1951), the State Department had no firm information concerning Cukors and had not been able to verify that during the German occupation of Riga he acted on behalf of the Nazis as chief executioner in the Riga ghetto. The High Commissioner in Germany, at his discretion, was authorized to inform the Brazilian Embassy of these rumors concerning Cukors (NFI). (S)

11. According to EGFW-6251 dated 3 February 1958 and located in [] from [] (refer to paragraph 17 for additional information regarding []), Cukurs was a well-known Latvian flyer who allegedly commanded a Punitive 7 Formation in the German Army and later escaped to the West (NFI). (S)

12. According to EGFA-20830 dated 24 March 1958 and located in [] and file 074-006/137/05 from [] one Herbert Cukurs, DPOB: circa 1914, Valmiera, Latvia, who is probably identical with Subject, was a well known sports pilot in Latvia. He had made trips with his sports aircraft to France and Africa. In 1948, the Fourth Division of the Latvian Republic MGB (the Latvian KGB) had registry search files (uchetno-rozysknoye delo) concerning Herbert Cukurs on suspicion of having been an official employee of the SD. During the German occupation of the U.S.S.R., Cukurs' group engaged in destroying Soviet partisans (NFI). There were rumors that he later immigrated to the U.S. (NFI). (S)

~~13.~~ Included in [] the following information dated 14 March 1955 is listed on a file card: Herberts Cukurs; probably a war criminal. See "Who Are the Daugavas Vanagi," English translation, pages 17, 28, and 96. (S)

14. According to HBR-A-2752 dated 2 December 1955 and located in [] a report dated 5 October 1950 from a generally reliable source stated that during a recent police investigation of Herbert Cukurs, accused by various Jewish groups in Rio de Janeiro of having been responsible for the liquidation of 30,000 Jews in Nazi-dominated Europe during World War II, it developed that several of the Jewish organizations involved were engaged in pro-Communist activities and that many of the individuals connected with the Cukurs affair were known Communists. (S)

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15. The following is a summation (from [] of the information according to a New York Times newspaper article dated 10 March 1965 entitled "Israeli Envoy Linked to Killing Of Latvian Nazi in Montevideo."

Montevideo, Uruguay, March 9 (UPI) - The state police charged that an Israeli diplomat was involved in the murder of Herbert Albert Cukurs, a Nazi war criminal. The police said that the slaying of Cukurs, whose body was found at a beach house in Montevideo last Saturday was an act of "Jewish vengeance," apparently planned originally as a kidnapping. They reported that Cukurs had been slain while struggling with the Israeli diplomat and four professional criminals hired to kidnap him. His body was found stuffed into a trunk in a bedroom of the beach house. A group who called itself "Those Who Shall Never Forget" had announced the murder in West Germany and told where the body could be found. An autopsy disclosed that Cukurs was killed during the afternoon of February 24. Death was said to have been caused by repeated blows on the head. The autopsy also revealed that Cukurs was not shot. Earlier police reports had said he had been shot three times. Warrants were issued for the arrest of the diplomat, whose name was not disclosed, two Austrians known to have been living in the beach house prior to Cukurs' murder, and two Frenchmen. All five suspects had since left Montevideo.

In the same news article was an interview with Cukurs' son in Sao Paulo, Brazil, March 9. Gunnar Cukurs was quoted as having said that Soviet agents might have been involved in his father's death. The son said that Cukurs had been sought as much by the Russians as by the Jews. The Russians, it was said, were interested in him for his wartime activities against the Communists in Latvia. (C)

16. Additional news articles that are included in [] concerning Subject (B) are: a news article in Russian that is not dated, but is referred to by file #1686, doc. 3; an article in The Evening Star, Washington, D.C., dated 5 May 1961; and an article in The Washington Post "Parade" magazine by Jack Anderson dated 13 November 1960 which offers a large amount of reading concerning Cukurs. There are also pictures of Cukurs included in the "Parade" article, and Viktor Ajars, another name used by Subject (A), is mentioned. (C)

17. FYI: [] is the Subject of [] and Alfreds Z. Launags is the Subject of [] According to information surfaced in [] 29 July 1959, [] was a defector to the West Berlin Police in late 1957. Early interrogation of [] provided strong indication that he was not a bona fide defector, but had been dispatched to the West by the KGB. These suspicions were strongly reinforced during

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subsequent interrogations during which it was ascertained that from 1942 to 1946 [] served as a senior case officer in the Special Department (later renamed Counterintelligence - SMERSH) of the Soviet Army. He worked for the MGB in Riga, from January 1948 to May 1948.

Encl. - 1 Name Check
1 Attachment

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