

SECRET

11 February 1955

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Meeting with Rev. Arnolds ERNSTSONS

1. In accordance with instructions the undersigned proceeded to San Francisco (from Los Angeles) on 31 January for the purpose of contacting the Rev. Arnolds ERNSTSONS and briefing him on spotting activities. ERNSTSONS had known the undersigned in Germany by his true name--consequently no alias was used. The interview was conducted in Latvian. Initially the undersigned was driven out to see ERNSTSONS at his home by [] of the OO office in San Francisco. [] had already had contact with ERNSTSONS whom he was using as a source for the purpose of providing him with leads of other Latvians who might possess positive intelligence. [] initially identified himself as CIA and used his true name.

2. ERNSTSONS indicated great pleasure at seeing the undersigned again whom he had not seen for the past 5 years. During all discussions with him (from 1200 to 2130 on 31 January and from 1300 to 2030 on 1 February) many mutual Latvian and other acquaintances were mentioned and a number of old cases in which ERNSTSONS and the undersigned had at one time had an interest (during 1949 and 1950 in the DP Processing Center at Wentorf) were discussed. Also many of the current problems of Latvians in the U.S. were brought out, with ERNSTSONS particularly stressing the difficulty he is experiencing in ministering to the spiritual needs of Latvians dispersed over many communities within approximately 50 miles of San Francisco. The Reverend's congregation includes most all Latvians in San Francisco, Los Gatos, Sacramento and Palo Alto, California. There are approximately five hundred Latvian families in these areas. Because it would be very difficult for the Latvians not residing in San Francisco to come to San Francisco for services, ERNSTSONS travels from one community to the other holding services on Saturdays and Sundays in alternating communities. He informed the undersigned that since he became the pastor for this area the congregation has been able to amass \$10,000, with which it is intended to purchase a church in San Francisco. Although here again it will be difficult for those not living in San Francisco to attend services in this church, it is felt that such a centrally located seat of the Latvian community would serve to united further the Latvians from a nationalistic as well as spiritual point of view. ERNSTSONS, however, is currently running into a comparatively minor obstacle in his efforts to gain the support of his congregation for the purchase of a church he has located: a few Latvians feel that they would much rather spend this sum in building a social hall in which they could consume alcoholic beverages and play cards, activities which they could not conduct even in the social hall of the church.

3. ERNSTSONS also mentioned that the aforementioned \$10,000 were not amassed by contributions alone. He had brought with him from Germany tape recordings of Latvian folk songs recorded by an excellent Latvian male choir

NAZI WAR CRIMES DISCLOSURE ACT

EXEMPTIONS Section 3(b)
(2)(A) Privacy
(2)(B) Methods/Sources
(2)(G) Foreign Relations

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and choral group. With a great deal of difficulty ERNSTSONS had master records cut and has since then sold a great number of these records to many Latvians throughout the world. His chief distributor in this enterprise is H. RUDZITIS, the publisher of the Latvian newspaper LAIKS in New York. All profits from this undertaking go to the aforementioned fund of the congregation.

4. When ERNSTSONS was initially attempting to unite all Latvians in that area into one congregation he found that it would be rather difficult for such congregation to pay him a salary on which he could exist. During those days of early trials and tribulations he was offered support from the Missouri Lutheran Synod; however he turned this offer down because he had heard that when this Synod begins supporting a congregation and its pastor there is no end to the contributions that it expects. He felt that it would be unfair to burden the Latvians with constant requests for contributions, the benefits of which they would not derive.

5. In the intervening years ERNSTSONS has been apparently able to save enough money to be able to make a down payment on a house for which he hopes to pay by drawing upon his own salary as well as that of his wife who is employed in the kitchen by United Airlines where she prepares the food served aboard the various flights. His present ambition is to purchase an automobile with which he would be able to travel to all of the aforementioned surrounding areas with greater ease than by utilizing public transportation as he is doing now.

6. Knowing that the undersigned is connected with the U.S. Government--although he does not know what part of the Government and did not ask for a specific identification of an agency--ERNSTSONS asked the undersigned whether there was any truth behind a recent article in LAIKS which stated that Radio Moscow had reported the capture of two Estonian spies. He produced the newspaper in question for the undersigned who read the details as they had appeared in the U.S. press. The undersigned informed ERNSTSONS that he had no knowledge of any Estonian activities.

7. On the second day of his visit (1 February 1955) the undersigned had lunch with ERNSTSONS at Fisherman's Wharf, San Francisco. It was during this lunch that the undersigned began to brief the Reverend on how he is to conduct spotting of potential REDSOX agents. The briefing then continued when both returned to ERNSTSONS' home. The idea of the three groups into which Latvian males should be divided was outlined to him and a request for complete and unequivocal secrecy was made. ERNSTSONS promised to comply with this request and signed a secrecy agreement in Latvian which is attached hereto. He was requested to forward the information on any prospective agents to whom he knows well and who he knows is acquainted with the undersigned.

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8. A number of photographs were taken of ERNSTSONS which are attached hereto. The items attached are: 5 negatives and 10 prints (2 prints of each negative). The pictures were taken under the pretext of getting a photograph of him for the undersigned's personal use and consequently the undersigned promised to send him a copy. Eight copies will be transmitted to him by the undersigned personally.

9. During the aforementioned discussion of former acquaintances and other Latvian personalities ERNSTSONS informed the undersigned that his successor at the Displaced Persons Transit Center, Wentorf, Janis CILNIS, now resides in Portland, Oregon, where he is the minister of the local community. The undersigned obtained CILNIS' address from ERNSTSONS.

10. Claiming that he is desirous of corresponding with some old acquaintances and for this purpose would like their addresses, the undersigned procured from ERNSTSONS a copy of all Latvians in the aforementioned 4 communities. On this list the undersigned noticed the name of Marga SVELLIS and her address and asked ERNSTSONS if he knew this person. He produced a picture of Marga SVELLIS taken at a momentous occasion when the Mayor of San Francisco officially proclaimed the 14th of July "Baltic Day". This picture is attached hereto with Marga SVELLIS on the right. The other persons in the picture are an Estonian and Lithuanian representative and the Mayor of San Francisco. The date of the photograph is 1954.

11. Upon departing ERNSTSONS indicated that he would do his utmost to help the U.S. Government in its fight against Communism and seemed to be most sincere in all respects. He stated that such a task would require a good deal of time lest he become too conspicuous, but nevertheless promised to do his best.



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