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Prepared by []
SEICIR
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ROUGH SUMMARY OF INFORMATION CONCERNING THE WARTIME ACTIVITIES
OF EDGARS LAIPENIEKS (201-179709) IN LATVIA

CIA first became operationally interested in L in the summer of 1957. Traces on him were requested from Germany (FROB FRAN MUNI STUT) and from [] (he resided in Chile at the time). The only derogatory information was received from Stuttgart (STUT 4331) in September 1957. Following is the complete text of that cable: "INFO MAY 46 INDICATES EDGARS LAIPENIEKS FORMERLY RIGA LATVIA DOB CIRCA 13, MAY MAY NOT BE IDEN IS DESCRIBED AS INTERROGATOR GESTAPO JAIL RIGA. SUBJ ALLEGEDLY SEEN KILLING FOUR PERSONS AT JAIL DURING INTERROGATIONS AND KNOWN TO BE A MOST CRUEL AND MEAN CHARACTER AND FOR MISTREATMENT OF PRISONERS (UNEVAL)."

At the same time, in connection with our operational interest, the Office of Security investigated L and came up with information from [] Fort Holabird records that, according to a "Summary of Information" from CIC, Munich Sub-Regional Office, dated 21 May 1946, one Edgars LAIPENIEKS was "allegedly an interrogator at the Gestapo jail in Riga, Latvia. He was actually seen killing four persons at said jail during interrogations. He was known to have been a most cruel and mean character, known for his mistreatment of prisoners. One Albert GESKE, residing at the Displaced Persons Camp, Neustadt, near Holstein, was a witness to the aforementioned information."

NOTE: The [] Fort Holabird information should not be construed as confirming the information in STUT 4331. Rather, given the similarity in wording between the two and the fact that they emanate from the same area at the same time, they should be considered as one piece of information reaching us via two separate channels.

Information in [] [] dispatch MSBA-1155, 24 September 1948, is of possible significance in the present case. The subject of this dispatch is Jacob LAIPNIEKS, and the first paragraph states:

DECLASSIFIED AND RELEASED BY
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
SOURCE METHODS EXEMPTION 3B2B
NAZI WAR CRIMES DISCLOSURE ACT
DATE 2004 2005

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"The Federation of Liberated Latvian Jews in Munich informed the Swiss Legation in London that a certain Jacob LAIPNIEKS, Latvian, was the hangman of the Central Prison in Riga, Latvia and is suspected of having committed crimes against humanity. The Federation stated that LAIPNIEKS is at present living in Switzerland." The Swiss Federal Police believed that this individual was identical with Jekabs Alberts LAIPNIEKS, son of Janis and Anna nee ROLE, born 9 October 1917 at Dunika, municipality of Libau, Latvia, student of chemistry. He entered Switzerland as a refugee on 8 April 1945, and stated in his curriculum vitae that he lived in 1944 with his uncle in Riga where he attended the university as a student of chemistry. In the beginning of September 1944 he was deported as a forced laborer to Germany, from where he fled to Switzerland. In Latvia he was a corporal in the Light Kurlandish Artillery Regiment. His intention was to emigrate to the Argentine. NOTE: Jekabs seems to be Edgars' cousin (see Edgars' statement below). It is possible that there is some sort of mistaken identity here; one also wonders whether the cousins physically resemble each other.

In July 1962 Hqs. case officer [] spent some time with L. According to [] memo, L said the following about himself: "Directly after the Germans took over Latvia there had been a radio announcement, asking for volunteers to exhume and identify the bodies of the victims of Soviet atrocities. In view of the fact that many of Subject's athletes had been unceremoniously shot by the Soviets, Subject volunteered for this job.... This work continued for approximately two months, after which the volunteers were asked to continue on the Government payroll working for the Latvian Police Force. Subject agreed to this and continued in the police force activity from the summer of 41 to the summer of 42. Basically his police work involved the investigating of Communists. In the summer of 42 Subject was nominated for the

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"highest job" of discovering and fighting of Russian paratroops and underground agents. Subject states he had under him about 15 to 20 men whom he said he had picked himself. Basically, the job was counterespionage for the military and when asked to identify his unit directly Subject agreed that he worked for the OKW/Abwehr II/Latvian Political "Abteilung"/Investigation Group. Subject did not remember his superior officer, but stated that this individual had been a Latvian Colonel. When asked whether this was Gestapo or the military, Subject insisted it was military counter-intelligence. When asked about his rank, Subject stated that he had no rank but that he was a civilian. In discussing this period... Subject talked with great animation and pride about his accomplishments. Among others, he stated that he had good sources of information and was, from time to time, able to intercept parachuted agents into Latvia. One of these had been a fairly high level Communist who knew a great number of espionage schools in the Soviet Union and whom Subject broke very easily and got information on Latvian operations which was extremely highly thought of by the German military....Subject states that in August 43 he asked for release from the investigation group...in order to take over his father-in-law's bakery...he had all kinds of trouble when he asked for his release, that he was investigated by the Gestapo, and was for a short period arrested. In view of the fact, however, that baking was an enterprise which supported the German armies (among others) and was by the same token a "defense industry", Subject was finally released to manage the business." At the end of the war L was in Innsbruck. According to memo, "When the French arrived Subject was arrested by them because he had been accused of working for the Germans. During the interrogation, by a certain Lieutenant fnu MARTEN of the French Army, Subject stated that he was an athlete...In view of the fact that MARTEN had also been a sportsman..., M. released Subject,...and thereafter took him to Paris, where Subject was recruited by the French

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military as head coach for the Bi-Athlon of the French Army... in 1947...Subj was about to leave for Chile...he was picked up by the French Security Police at the behest of some Russians and was interrogated by the French Security in the presence of a Soviet observer. Apparently Subj had been accused by Soviets as having been the 'Chief of Gestapo' in Riga during the war. Subj states he began talking about his background and also regarding the Soviet atrocities in Latvia; at this point the French asked the Russian observer to leave the room. After the Sov left the room, Subj stated that he had been employed with the French Army for the past couple of years and he had received commendations...the security people accompanied him and family to the ship where Subj showed them his commendation...he was treated by the French Security to a good steak dinner, and good wine, and was released." At the end of the memo, () states: "In discussing his participation in intelligence activities, during WW II, Subj stated that when he applied for his visa to the U.S. from Chile, he did not mention this participation on any of the forms and he asked me whether he should have had. I told him that of course he should have had, because otherwise there was the chance that he might get into trouble about it. He further asked me whether when he applies for his citizenship whether he should admit to his former intelligence connections. I told him that I couldn't advise him on this matter, and that he should leave it to his conscience whether he should or should not report these facts. I did tell him, however, that we would take no steps to compromise him with the Immigration Service."

In September 1962 L came to Washington DC and was subjected to various kinds of assessments. In this connection, he wrote out an autobiographical statement. Because of its length and pertinence, the translation of it is attached herewith instead

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of summarized. (The original handwritten - in German - version is in L's 201.) L was also debriefed about numerous individuals he had known in Riga during the war years. What he said about each one, and what our own traces reveal, is all in Volume II of L's 201. Some of them were police officials with various organizational affiliations, including the Gestapo and Abwehr. Determining how these individuals fit in with one another and with L would be a major task, and not necessarily a rewarding one.

As part of his processing in September 62, L was given a polygraph examination. The "RESULTS" section of the memorandum prepared after this examination reads as follows:

"Upon conclusion of technical interrogation, it is felt that Subject was still attempting deception to the following questions:

"Have you ever committed war atrocities? No.

"Have you ever executed a prisoner? No.

"Have you ever tortured a prisoner during an interrogation? No.

"Are you deliberately hiding from us any mission which you have accomplished on behalf of the Abwehr? No.

"(Note: Subject claims, in contradiction to information in file, that he does not know what numerical sub-division of German counterintelligence he was connected with during World War II.) The writer does not believe Subject was even connected with the Abwehr.

"Did you work together with the Abwehr during the second World War? Yes.

"It is not felt that Subject attempted deliberate deception to the other relevant questions asked during technical interrogation."

Following are pertinent items from the "DETAILS" section of this same polygraph examination report:

"1. Subject stated that he was present during an interrogation in World War II conducted by his colleague, first name unknown, SALUS, of a Communist. Subject added that the Communist who was

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being interrogated realized Subject and SALUS knew everything and for this reason alone jumped through a closed fourth or fifth floor window to his death. Subject claimed that this unknown Communist had not been beaten at all prior to his jump.

"2. During interrogation Subject admitted to the writer that Subject occasionally during interrogations would beat prisoners with his hands. Subject denied ever hitting a prisoner with any object other than his hands, although Subject did admit being present when Subject's colleague hit a prisoner with a sort of blackjack in an effort to make him talk. Subject admitted to the writer that he himself a few times hit "NKVD detachment leader, for Riga", name unknown, during interrogation. Subject added that this man did not talk and later was "probably shot to death," although Subject claimed to lack specific knowledge of such.

"3. Subject admitted that when he went out to surveil and sometimes arrest Communist "pidgeons", he "usually" carried a 7.62 mm. Walther pistol and a Belgian FN pistol which was of a larger calibre and had a longer barrel than the Walther. Subject added that sometimes he personally also carried a third pistol. Subject stated that he himself was sometimes allowed to decide when during surveillance to arrest the Communists whom he was surveilling. Subject added that he could pick up and interrogate them without any warrant of arrest.

"4. Subject claimed that his superior was a former Latvian secret policeman named Herberts TEDEMANNES whom Subject said would now be about 55 years old, 187-188 centimeters tall. For further data on TEDEMANNES, please see file. Subject added that from the spring or summer of 1942 until the summer of 1943, Subject often worked directly under an unknown "Abwehr Colonel" who gave Subject orders concerning Communists to surveil, etc. Subject claimed that he accomplished at least 10 or 15 tasks for this "Colonel" whose superior Subject said was "probably Canaris." Subject

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claimed that this Colonel always contacted Subject, but never vice versa and Subject further claimed that this person was from Abwehr's headquarters in Berlin." Out X

At an unknown date (probably in the 1950's) a book entitled KAS IR DAUGAVAS VANAGI (WHO ARE THE DAUGAVAS VANAGI) was printed (presumably somewhere in the USSR, since the pages in L's 201 are labelled "Soviet propaganda"). It isn't obvious from the file when we got hold of this book, but we gave it to L to read sometime in 1962. One section states: "In the killing of Jews...special dilligence was shown by...the well-known sprinter Edgars Liepenieks (presently in Chile, working as a coach).... "In Dec 62, L said in a letter: "I have also read the book Daugavas Vanagi, as well as also the little book concerning the Latvian priest (minister). It appears to me that the comrades have forgotten nothing and that those who in any manner fought against the Red bandits have suddenly become murderers."

In November 1962 L unsuccessfully tried to induce a Latvian athlete, who was visiting Denver, to defect. (This was not at CIA instigation.) L gave the Latvian a letter. This letter was eventually reprinted in the Riga press. There was also a Riga radio interview with the athlete on 24 March 1963. Inter alia, it is stated during the interview that "LAIPENIEKS, formerly a well known sportsman during the German occupation period, achieved ill repute as a murderer of peaceful people. When our editors sought information about him in the state archives, it appeared that they had a lot of material showing him as a "butcher of people" and it seems that his fingers are still itching as he is serving his new masters."

NOTES:

1. Albert GESKE, the original source of derogatory information (see p. 1), has never been identified. When asked (including during the polygraph examination), L said he did not know him.

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2. L's name does not appear in the KGB Watchlist brought out by [] in 1972.

3. Not all the material in L's 201 has been translated. Some of it is still in the original Latvian or (bad) German. It is unlikely that anything really significant has not been translated, but there could be a few minor bits and pieces.

4. The Jekabs LAIPNIEKS mentioned on page one of this summary, who is L's cousin and who may or may not be pertinent to this inquiry, was discussed by L in a letter written to his case officer in April 1963. "Last time I saw and talked with him in 1960 in Sao Paulo, Brasil, in March before coming to U.S. He is my cousin, my fathers brothers son and his name is JEKABS LAIPNIEKS (without E after P) and the picture below looks like he is in the Latvian legionaire uniform during the last world war. What I remember, he was called in the Latvian Army and was injured somewhere in the Russian front and in the last month's of the war he flew with his brothers family to Germany." L gives more details about his cousin, but nothing to indicate any police connection during the war.

ADDENDUM: On 16 October 1976, TASS broadcast an item entitled "Under the Patronage of CIA". The item is partially a replay of the US press revelations, but it includes the following:

"Edgar Laipieks, former collaborator of the Nazi police in the Nazi-occupied territory of Latvia, is guilty of committing at least 37 war crimes. Acting among a special punitive team, the executioner took an active part in killing 60,000 people of Jewish nationality. For fear of retribution, the war criminal fled to the West...."

~~As far as can be determined at this time, the above information is correct.~~

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