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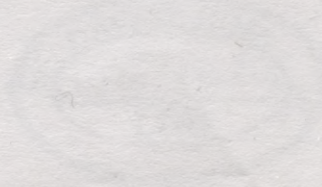
**THE  
LATVIAN  
LEGION  
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DOCUMENTS**

BY  
MIRDZA KATE BALTAIS

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MIRZA KATE SALIAT



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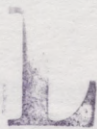


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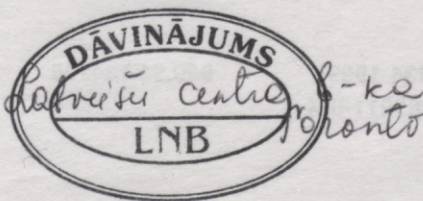


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# THE LATVIAN LEGION IN DOCUMENTS

BY  
MIRDZA KĀTE BALTAIS



1999

Latvijas Nacionālā  
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For information: Amber Printers and Publishers Ltd., 125 Broadview Ave., Toronto, Ontario, Canada M4M 2E9.

D757.85.B34 1999  
ISBN 0-9685211-0-X

940.54'134796

C99-900401-8

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Toronto, Canada 1999  
Printed in Canada

In gratitude to Diane Shaver Clemens, professor of American diplomatic history, University of California at Berkeley, for changing my life forever by suggesting that displaced persons was an underresearched field worth pursuing.

REPORT OF THE  
COMMISSIONER

The Commission has the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 10th inst. in relation to the proposed amendment to the charter of the City of New York, and to advise you that the same has been referred to the appropriate committees of the Board of Estimate and Apportionment for their consideration.

Very respectfully,  
Your obedient servant,  
[Signature]

THE COMMISSIONER OF THE BOARD OF ESTIMATE AND APPOINTMENT  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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## Acknowledgments

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This little book represents quite a cooperative effort. My special thanks go to Frances Mundy, now of the University of Toronto Press, for all her work, support, and advice, without which this book would not exist. The cover design is a much appreciated gift to me from Patrick Dowling. I thank Harold Otto and Donald Powell for the documents that they provided or brought to my attention, in particular German documents in the National Archives in Washington, DC, and documents from the Pēteris Vītols case. The team of Russell Block and Harold Otto, both of the Millard Fillmore Society, took on the design and typesetting, and I thank them for their impressive work. Betty and Hank Otto very kindly did the proofreading. For their critical comments as historians I am particularly grateful to Bernd Wegner, Kārlis Kangeris, Andrievs Ezergailis, and Jānis Mežaks.

Finally, I thank the Daugavas Vanagi, who have funded the production costs of this book, and who, in doing so, at no time put any constraints on me regarding its contents.

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## Foreword

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In reading Mirdza Kate Baltais's book, one can't help but be struck by the fact that, more than fifty years after the conclusion of the Second World War, controversy still lingers and ambiguity persists in the saga of the Latvian Legion. Remarkably enough, there is suspense and excitement to be found in the collected dry documents which shed light on a little-known chapter of military and political history. The documents present a number of points of view, with argument from opposing sides of the issues, thus enabling readers to reach their own conclusions. Indeed, the complexity of the issues may induce the reader to abandon altogether any attempt to come up with simplistic answers to the recurring questions of guilt or innocence, or the quicksands that lie in the areas between those extremes. Personally, I found it impossible to contemplate sitting in judgment on the young and not-so-young men who joined the Latvian Legion.

The records led me to wonder what I would have done had I been a teenaged boy living in danger in Latvia during the war years, instead of a little girl, living in safety in Canada? What would anyone have done in similar circumstances? Is it possible for even the most imaginative and empathetic among us to create a mental picture of life in a small country initially under Soviet occupation, then transformed into a battleground when the German armies invaded in 1941, and finally, as the war drew to a close, once again overrun by the triumphant Red Army? Day in, day out, year in, year out, uncertainty, fear, hunger compounded by the threat of deportation, torture or death at the hands of the invaders; forced to watch in silence as neighbors, friends and family disappeared, never to be seen or heard from again.

By 1943, a man in reasonable health was faced with several alternatives: join the Waffen-SS, opt to be sent to Germany as slave labour, hide in the forest and possibly join the partisans, or face torture and death for refusing military service. No doubt, at the age of seventeen or eighteen, many young men would have preferred to fight the Russians on the Eastern Front where they might have the chance to avenge the brutal invasion of 1940.

This book primarily addresses the fate of the Latvian Legion as the war ended – a fate which hung in the balance endlessly debated by soldiers of the victorious armies, bureaucrats, an assortment of civilians including a duchess, the Americans, the British Foreign Office, the Soviets, the United Nations. What was to become of the men now classified as Prisoners of War? Would they be re-classified as Displaced Persons? It seemed as though officials of one stripe or another were playing God, even discussing how many calories per day and how much, or how little, food they should be allowed compared with POWs of other nationalities all caught in the maelstrom of the postwar crises and chaos.

Perhaps I should point out that I am neither of Latvian descent, nor do I know any more or less about the three Baltic states than any other general reader or student of Second World War history. My hope is that this book may serve to open eyes, hearts and minds to a further inquiry into the documents pertaining to the wartime and postwar experiences in this corner of Europe, as well as the varying judgments passed at the time, and right up to the present, upon the Latvians who served in the Legion.

Jo Hutchings  
Toronto  
September 1998

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## Introduction

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On 10 February 1943, German Führer Adolf Hitler ordered the formation of a Latvian SS-Volunteer Legion: "Ich befehle die Aufstellung einer Lettischen SS-Freiwilligen-Legion."<sup>1</sup> Until that date there was no legion of Latvians in the Second World War.

Hitler ordered that the legion be formed under the SS, and even before it came into existence Hitler called it a volunteer legion. An SS legion was a Waffen-SS legion, since that is what the armed units of the SS were called, that is, Waffen means armed. Latvians have never called their legion an SS or Waffen-SS legion. Latvians refer to what the Germans named and others have called the "Latvian Voluntary Waffen-SS Legion" as the "Latvian Legion" or even the "Latvian Army."

Since the end of the Second World War there has been controversy over the Lettische Freiwillige Waffen-SS. The practical consequences of this controversy have occurred in three areas. In the immediate postwar period opinions on the legion determined where and if its veterans would live out their postwar lives. In the Western zones of Germany, these opinions determined whether, after their discharge as prisoners of war, they would be admitted into displaced persons camps administered by the United Nations. This UNDP status, in turn, was required by most countries later admitting the former legionnaires for resettlement. The resettlement countries included Belgium, England, the United States, Canada, and Australia, among others.

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<sup>1</sup>A facsimile reproduction of this order can be found in Arthur Silgailis, *Latvian Legion* (San Jose, California: R. James Bender Publishing, 1986), Appendix 1, p. 238.

The second practical consequence arose years later, starting in the 1970s, when in some of the resettlement countries, for example, the United States, some Latvian veterans were accused of war crimes. Depending on the political and judicial conditions applying in the particular country, these accused were brought to trial or, in the case of Canada more recently, before a judge of the Federal Court in a denaturalization reference.

The third practical consequence directly involves present-day Latvia itself. The legion veterans in Latvia want in some way publicly to remember their legion. They have chosen as their anniversary day March 16, in commemoration of the only time that soldiers of both the 19th and the 15th divisions fought together, shoulder to shoulder, as they put it, taking a hill near Lake Velikaya on that day in 1944.<sup>2</sup> This commemoration has led to comments, such as in March 1998, for example, and from people as influential as former German Chancellor Helmuth Kohl, that Latvia's chances of ever gaining entry into the European Union might be jeopardized by this sort of activity – namely, publicly remembering the Latvian Legion.

The legion that Hitler called into being in February 1943 initially comprised units that had been formed before this date, and were thus reformed and renamed. These existing units included police battalions and other paramilitary units. “Paramilitary” means the men in the units were armed, while the units were not actually part of any army. These units had initially been formed in the early days of the German occupation of Latvia, which began in July 1941, at a time when the Latvian army had been disbanded (by the Soviet Union after it occupied Latvia in 1940) and no new army of Latvians existed.

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<sup>2</sup>Visvaldis Mandulis, *Latvia in the Wars of the 20th Century* (Princeton Junction, NJ, 1983), p. 122.

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The preponderant majority of the soldiers in the Latvian Legion were new recruits who started their service as of March 1943 or later. This book is about the units raised by the Germans as the so-called Latvian Volunteer SS-Legion and the tens of thousands of men who served in it; it is not about the paramilitary units that the Germans raised in 1941 and 1942.<sup>3</sup>

Two divisions were formed, the 15th (1st Latvian) and 19th (2nd Latvian). Both were created for fighting against the Soviets on the eastern front. Both suffered heavy losses in combat. The 19th Division survived to fight its fellow countrymen, that is, fellow Latvians who were in Soviet units formed during the first Soviet occupation of Latvia and now back from the Soviet Union with the second occupation. This fighting took place largely in Latvia, in Kurland (Kurzeme), right up to the last days of the war in Europe. Meanwhile, the reassembled 15th Division had been sent to fight the Soviets in the border areas between Poland and Germany. Briefly stated, the surviving members of the 19th Division were taken by the Soviets, and they met with a variety of punishments ranging from sentences of exile in Siberia to death. After serving their sentences, surviving legionnaires could and did return from Siberia to Latvia to live out their days.

Combat for the soldiers in the 15th Division ended when the German-controlled areas that they were in were overrun by the allies. The Latvian legionnaires surrendered to them, sometimes even before the fighting in their area had ended. These soldiers then became prisoners of war. The Western Allies had discharged almost all of their Latvian prisoners of war by May 1946.

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<sup>3</sup> In particular, this book does not pretend to address the actions of the several hundred members of the Arajs Kommando – the Latvian Auxiliary Security Police commanded by Viktors Arajs; for that topic, see Andrew Ezergailis's *The Holocaust in Latvia: The Missing Center* (Washington, DC, and Riga: U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum and the Historical Institute of Latvia, 1996).

In the early aftermath of the war the big question about the Latvian Legion and its veterans was what was to be done with these Latvian prisoners of war. This question has two portions: what to do with them as prisoners of war? and what to do with them after they were discharged from prisoner-of-war camps? Discussion throughout this book is about Latvian prisoners of war only in the Western zones. What happened to those who surrendered to or were captured by the Soviets is not at issue here; it is also not a controversial topic in terms of international relations because the Soviets did not have to consult on this matter with any other countries.

In the Western zones Latvian men found in German uniform were taken as prisoners of war, but segregated as Latvians. This was possible under the terms of the Yalta Agreement on Repatriation (see Chapter 4), as interpreted by the Americans and the British. The Soviets, although they had signed the agreement, of course, did not concur with their counter signatories' interpretation of it. In the Yalta agreement, "Soviet citizen" was never defined. The practical consequence of this was that the Soviet Union maintained that Latvians (and Estonians and Lithuanians) were part of the Soviet Union, as of the summer of 1940, while the United States and Britain – later, when the issue came openly into dispute – defined Soviet citizen to mean a person who had been a citizen of the Soviet Union when the war started on 1 September 1939. On May 27, 1945 (less than three weeks after the war ended) a directive went out to British and U.S. forces in Europe, both commanded by Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF), pointing out that the governments of Britain and of the United States "had not recognized any territorial changes brought about by the war and that all persons from such areas will not be returned to their home districts nor treated as Soviet

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citizens unless they affirmatively claim Soviet citizenship.”<sup>4</sup>

Any Latvians in the Western zones at war's end, or any time thereafter, who declared themselves to be Soviet citizens were repatriated – by force if necessary, although there is no discussion of the use of the force in the Yalta agreement itself. Those maintaining that they were Latvians (and not Soviet citizens, nor had they ever been Soviet citizens), were not forcibly repatriated. They were, however, throughout the early postwar period encouraged to repatriate, most strongly by the Soviet Union and, in 1946–47, by the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA), which considered the Soviet Union to be the “government concerned” with Latvians.

The Soviet Union claimed the veterans of the Latvian Legion specifically on grounds that they were its citizens, collaborators, traitors, and even war criminals.

The Yalta agreement permitted the Soviet Union to have repatriation liaison officers in any areas in the allied zones that they deemed held their citizens. The Western Allies honoured this condition of the agreement throughout the displaced persons period, which ended with the expiration of the mandate of the International Refugee Organization (IRO), at the end of 1951. In reply to charges by both the Soviet Union and UNRRA, numerous screenings of displaced persons were held to ascertain that there were no Soviet citizens (under the American and British definition), collaborators, traitors, or war criminals among them.

By May 1946 the Latvian POWs had by and large been discharged. Now what to do with them? There were three options: repatriation to Latvia; displaced persons status, and later (from 1947) resettlement to third countries; or, for those unable to secure DP status, or having done so, unable to secure a visa to a

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<sup>4</sup>Malcolm J. Proudfoor, *European Refugees, 1939–1952: A Study in Forced Population Movement* (London: Faber and Faber, 1957), p. 215.

third country (in the majority of cases, this was for reasons of poor health), permanent residence in Germany.

As long as Latvia remained part of the Soviet Union, the preferred choice was DP status. The fear was repatriation. The third option, permanent residence in Germany, at least gave the legionnaires safety from Siberia or death and, as time went on and conditions in Germany improved by leaps and bounds, a chance for a new, viable life.

Until the autumn of 1949, the U.S. Army was the government in the U.S. zone of what then became the Federal Republic of Germany (an amalgam of the three Western zones). The army was directly responsible for prisoners of war and displaced persons, as well as the entire German population in its zone. The British and French had similar responsibilities in their zones, as did the Soviets in theirs. Until the disbandment of SHAEF, which was commanded by General Dwight D. Eisenhower, in July 1945, procedures in all of the Western Allies' zones were identical with regard to POWs and DPs, though after that some differences developed.

The U.S. Army's files show that the Latvian Legion was an issue in the field. The army was receiving information, instructions, pleas, arguments, and criticism from a number of sides as to what to do with these men. The criticism increased in pitch when these men were released from POW status and as they attempted upon discharge to gain UNDP status, and thus entry into DP facilities and access to the amenities had by DPs.

A vociferous critic of how the army handled this process was UNRRA. At first, in its work with refugees and displaced persons, UNRRA acted largely in the capacity of an international welfare agency. Beginning in 1946, however, UNRRA took on more and more the position that it was the proper arbiter of the fate of the remaining DPs, called the "hard core." Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians were part of the hard core. There are documents in this collection from the UNRRA files showing how UNRRA was

critical of the U.S. Army in its treatment of released Baltic legionnaires (see Chapter 7).

For the most part, when the Baltic POWs were released, they were able to take their discharge papers to DP camps, administered by UNRRA, and qualify for UNRRA assistance. Later UNRRA was succeeded by IRO, and the DPs were eventually resettled to third countries. After the disbandment of IRO, the remaining DPs became charges of the West German government. Many more would have remained in Germany had they not been able to acquire UN DP status, the which status became a kind of character clearance for admission into receiving countries.

UNRRA and the U.S. Army did not share the same opinion concerning Baltic ex-POWs. UNRRA made the case that because they had served the Germans, they were ex-enemy and should not be cared for by the United Nations. The U.S. Army made the case that they were not regular Waffen-SS, or regular German army, and had not volunteered to serve, and therefore, barring individual criminality, they were to be accepted into DP camps.

It would seem that the U.S. Army, and the ex-POWs won in the short run, for they did get UN DP status and did emigrate to third countries – instead of being repatriated, as the Soviets demanded and as UNRRA would have preferred, or remaining in a totally defeated and destroyed postwar Germany. However, it would also seem that in the long run the UNRRA views have prevailed. Without particularly having to present documentary or even witness statement evidence, the scuttlebutt continues that these legionnaires were war criminals and so should be found, wherever they may be living, and brought before the courts, or their representatives, even today.

Those in the British zone were confronted with the same problem that the Americans experienced. Foreign Office documents from the Public Records Office (Chapter 6) show the efforts on behalf of the Latvian legionnaires that were made by Latvians and non-Latvians alike.

Kārlis Zariņš was the Latvian ambassador to London at the time during the war that Latvia had ceased to exist. The events of September 1939 had caused the government of Latvia to fear and, indeed, anticipate the Soviet occupation. In case of this eventuality it had designated Zariņš as representative of the Latvian state. In this capacity, Zariņš had many communications in British circles with anyone who would listen. Particularly, he regularly sent letters and reports to the Foreign Office.

Two British organizations also were in frequent touch with the Foreign Office on the issue of the Baltic legionnaires, and they also sent letters and briefs to members of Parliament petitioning on their behalf. These were the British League for European Freedom, chaired by Katherine, Duchess Atholl, and the European Refugees Defence Committee, of which Sir Clifford E. Heathcote-Smith was the vice-chairman and honorary secretary.

The controversy over the Latvian Legion can be understood as four interlocking problems: whether it was a legion of volunteers; whether its members were members of the SS (Schutzstaffel); whether the Latvian Legion committed war crimes, that is, atrocities; and whether its members were Nazis.

*Problem 1: Was the Latvian Legion a legion of volunteers?*

On the face of it, the very fact that these men fought in German units made them a disgrace. Was this not an open-and-shut case of collaboration with the great Second World War enemy of civilized peoples everywhere – Nazi Germany? Yet, if it so obviously was collaboration, wherein lies the possibility for disagreement on this point? Perhaps the collaboration was not voluntary.

What weight should be given the two potentially mitigating circumstances of, one, being coerced into German uniform and, two, of there being a number two enemy, the Soviet Union?

By the end of the “phony war,” to some people, like the Finns, Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians, the Soviet Union had become indeed the number one enemy. The one action that all members of the Latvian Legion were engaged in, and there is no dispute about this – no matter who you ask – is fighting the Soviets.

This raises the first problem: Was the Latvian Legion a legion of volunteers? Is it possible to order conscription under threat of reprisals and retain the ordinary meaning of the word “voluntary”?

As the war went on Waffen-SS divisions were formed in various of the Nazi-occupied countries, such as Norway, the Netherlands, and the Baltic countries of Estonia and Latvia. The Waffen-SS was an element of the SS. It was the armed SS, and to some extent a second army, parallel to the regular army, the Wehrmacht. Originally both SS and Waffen-SS, being the standardbearers of the ideology of the Nazi regime, were by definition voluntary.<sup>5</sup> In other words, one had to volunteer to be considered for possible membership. There was no necessity to put the word “voluntary” before either SS or Waffen-SS. In fact, it would have been conspicuously redundant to do so.

With time, and as the necessity for additional manpower grew ever greater, however, the rules for membership in the SS changed to some extent, as did the screening for fitness, both physical and attitudinal, and the mandatory degree of ideological training offered. Originally, with the SS being the elite cadre, the “aristocracy,” so to speak, of the Nazi nation, only the purest of racially pure Germans could belong. This, too, changed.

The divisions in the occupied territories were formed under orders from Hitler to be carried out by Reichsführer of the SS and Chief of the German Police, Heinrich Himmler. In his dual capa-

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<sup>5</sup>See Bernd Wegner, *The Waffen-SS: Organization, Ideology and Function* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990).

city as head both of the police and the SS, Himmler formed divisions of inhabitants of some of the Nazi-occupied territories. This was against the international laws of war, as codified in the Hague Conventions of 1907, that is, it was illegal to make inhabitants of an occupied territory swear allegiance to the occupier.

Germany was a signatory to the Hague Conventions. In the event that the inhabitants of a territory occupied by Germany did swear such an oath, it could be argued that this pledge was not to be taken at face value but considered to be made under duress, unless evidence could prove the contrary.

Taking up arms on behalf of the occupying power involves swearing allegiance to that power and making the inhabitants do so is illegal. A possible way around this illegality would be the case where the inhabitants, in this case the Latvians, volunteered. But, did they volunteer, or could it be that the legionnaires were volunteers in name only – a name imposed upon them by someone else? The documents from the Reichsministerium für die besetzten Ostgebiete support the latter interpretation. They support the interpretation that the legionnaires were not volunteers because they describe how the legionnaires were called up by age groups and threatened with punishment under the wartime Courts Martial if they did not show up for the mustering.

*Problem 2: Did the Latvian Legion commit war crimes?*

One of the categories of offences that the Nuremberg Trial was about was Nazi war crimes. It is useful here to quote directly from a recent book by the historian Michael Marrus, who has made an extensive study of the prosecution, the issues, and the indicted at Nuremberg. This study, published in 1997, is entitled, *The Nuremberg War Crimes Trial, 1945–46: A Documentary History*.

Professor Marrus explains just how far reaching the concept of war crimes was at Nuremberg:

“Crimes against humanity,” which will be examined in the next chapter, were viewed as one of the original contributions of the trial to international law. But in 1945 and 1946 “war crimes” extended far into terrain commonly thought of as “crimes against humanity.” Contrary to a widespread sense that the latter [i.e., “crimes against humanity”] encompassed grave atrocities against civilians, for example, “war crimes” were understood at Nuremberg as illegal acts committed against civilian populations as well as military personnel. In the words of the [Nuremberg] charter, war crimes were “violations of the laws and customs of war,” including “murder, ill-treatment or deportation to slave labour or for any other purpose of civilian population of or in occupied territory, murder or ill-treatment of prisoners of war or persons on the seas, killing of hostages, plunder of public or private property, wanton destruction of cities, towns or villages, or devastation not justified by military necessity.”<sup>6</sup>

Quite a wide-ranging list came under “war crimes” as considered at Nuremberg. The list includes a number of charges involving harm done to civilians and destruction to places and things “not justified by military necessity.”

Who were the guilty? It must be remembered that Nuremberg only considered the wartime guilt of the losers: Nazi Germany. The same post-Second World War rules did not apply to any of the victors. Nowhere is Nuremberg about crimes committed by any of those fighting for the side that won, even if they were, on the face of it, identical categories of crimes, that is, “murder, ill-treatment or deportation to slave labour or for any other purpose of civilian population of or in occupied territory, murder or ill-

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<sup>6</sup>Michael R. Marrus, *The Nuremberg War Crimes Trial, 1945–46: A Documentary History* (Boston and New York: Bedford Books, 1997), p. 149.

treatment of prisoners of war or persons on the seas, killing of hostages, plunder of public or private property, wanton destruction of cities, towns or villages, or devastation not justified by military necessity.”

Crimes committed by the victors were not tried at Nuremberg, and they have not been tried to this day. Nuremberg did, however, pay some small attention to those caught in the cross-fire – those not particularly on the side of the Nazis, but mobilized by them. The judgment at Nuremberg did address the issue of “conscripts who had committed no crimes.”<sup>7</sup>

Confining ourselves to Nazi war crimes, then, who were the perpetrators? The prosecution at the Nuremberg War Crimes Trial indicted not only individuals who had high-ranking positions in the Nazi regime, but also organizations. The SS was one of the six accused organizations. However, the Nuremberg Military Tribunal decided in the fall of 1946 that it would not, after all, try groups, but only individuals. Some of these groups were judged to have individuals in them, above a certain rank, who on an individual basis had most likely committed indictable offences. Thus, almost all elements of the SS were considered to be criminal groups, “except conscripts who had committed no crimes.”

Based on the evaluation at Nuremberg, there were SS units that contained “conscripts who had committed no crimes,” and, these conscript units were not to be considered in the same way that most other elements of the SS were to be considered. This would mean that the Latvian Waffen-SS, should it consist of “conscripts who had committed no crimes” were not really SS, in the ordinary meaning of SS and – as an organization – was not to be considered as guilty of war crimes.

Thus, the Latvian Legion, being an organization of conscripts, was exempt, qua organization, from the opinion rendered at Nur-

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<sup>7</sup> Marrus, p. 236.

emberg in reference to the SS, or even the Waffen-SS.

Individual legionnaires, like any other individuals, could, if evidence was adequate, be indicted as war criminals.

*Problem 3: Was the Latvian Legion SS?*

Were these Latvian legionnaires members of the SS (Schutzstaffel) as is stated in the name Latvian Voluntary Waffen-SS? The Germans called the Latvian divisions Waffen-SS divisions. *Waffen* means weapons or arms, thus, the "Armed SS."

SS stands for Schutzstaffel, in English "Defence Units." Here is one definition of SS: "Originally the personal guard of Adolf Hitler which was transformed by Himmler into a state within a state, an army within an army."<sup>8</sup> A second definition of SS reads: "Protection squads formed in 1925, the black-shirted personal bodyguard of Hitler which grew into the most powerful organization within the Nazi Party and the Nazi State under the leadership of Heinrich Himmler."<sup>9</sup>

The Waffen-SS at its greatest numbers, in October 1944, had 38 SS divisions with a strength of 910,000 men.<sup>10</sup> This is a large number for an elite organization.

The SS had many functions and many suborganizations. The reader is referred to several standard works on the SS and Waffen-SS for further details and clarification, for example, the

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<sup>8</sup>James Taylor and Warren Shaw, *A Dictionary of the Third Reich* (London, etc.: Grafton Books, 1988), p. 330.

<sup>9</sup>Robert Wistrich, *Who's Who in Nazi Germany* (New York: Bonanza Books, 1982), p. 351.

<sup>10</sup>Wistrich, p. 355.

studies by Wegner, Stein, Reitlinger, and others.<sup>11</sup> Here it is sufficient to say that the SS was a many-branched complexity, and that its rules and functions changed as time went on.

There is no doubt but that SS conjures up terrible things. How did Latvians get to be associated with the notorious SS?

"Waffen-SS" was part of the name given the Latvian divisions. Waffen-SS was a substructure of the SS, which was one of the six groups, in addition to the twenty-two individuals, indicted at Nuremberg. The other five groups were the leadership corps of the Nazi Party, the Gestapo and Sicherheitsdienst (SD), the Sturmabteilung (SA), the Reich Cabinet, and the German General Staff and High Command.<sup>12</sup> The International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg, in its decision on the organizations, concluded that "most elements" of the SS were criminal, with the notable exception of "conscripts who had committed no crimes."<sup>13</sup>

Only Germans could be in the German army (Wehrmacht),

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<sup>11</sup>The authoritative work on the Waffen-SS now is that by Wegner, *The Waffen-SS*. Other standard works in English on the Waffen SS: although first published in 1966 still considered an excellent work on the subject is that by George H. Stein, *The Waffen SS: Hitler's Elite Guard at War, 1939-1945* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1966; 4th printing, 1994); Gerald Reitlinger, *The SS: Alibi of a Nation, 1922-1945* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1957); Helmut Krausnick and Martin Broszat, *Anatomy of the SS State* (London: Paladin, 1970), translated by Dorothy Long and Marian Jackson; Roger James Bender and Hugh Page Taylor, *Uniforms, Organization and History of the Waffen SS*, vol. 2 (San Jose, Calif.: R. James Bender Publishing, 1971; 4th printing, 1986); Martin Windrow, *The Waffen-SS*, rev. ed. (London: Osprey Publishing, 1982; 7th printing, 1985); Peter Abbott and Nigel Thomas, *Germany's Eastern Front Allies, 1941-45* (London: Osprey Publishing, 1982).

<sup>12</sup> Marrus, p. 71.

<sup>13</sup> Marrus, p. 236.

properly so called. However, the Germans needed manpower, especially on the Eastern Front. They called into being divisions of non-Germans and gave these divisions the name Waffen-SS. The Latvians in these divisions did not have the ideological selection or training as required for members of the SS. Their members invariably did, however, have one ideological standpoint in common: they were virulently anti-Soviet and anti-communist. The Latvian legionnaires had their anti-Sovietism and anti-communism in common not only with each other, but with Nazi Germany. This was at a time when the Soviet Union was allied with the western powers: the United States and the United Kingdom.

*Problem 4: Were members of the Latvian Legion Nazis?*

Latvians could not be members of the Nazi party, not being of the "master race." What, therefore, does saying, as some do, that the Latvian Legion veterans were Nazis actually mean?

The U.S. Army, from captured German documents, reconstructed lists of the Nazi Party Membership in Latvia. The names on these lists are reproduced here in a combined list in the Appendix. There do not appear to be any Latvians among the Nazi party members in Latvia. The combined list of names only of the Nazi Party Membership in Latvia is included here so that the reader can search for any particular individuals who may of interest.

To get a "clean bill of health," then, the Latvian Legion had to have been comprised of "conscripts who had committed no crimes," and not of members of the SS or the Nazi party.

All of the legionnaires, however, had a common ideological standpoint: they were anti-communist. But was that a war crime, or any crime for that matter, at any time, anywhere but in the former Soviet Union and its satellites?

There are two additional problems, intertwined with the others throughout, that of historiography and that of politics. What

someone wrote about the Latvian Legion had inevitably to do with that someone's viewpoint on the world situation at that time and on the particular political situations involved. Thus, naturally, what the Latvians had to say about themselves differed, for example, from what the Soviet Union had to say about them. UNRRA, being the first United Nations organization, and perhaps encompassing so much of the idealism that the UN involved at war's end, by and large fell in step with the views of the Soviet Union on this subject.

The allied armies occupying Germany, and charged with making decisions about the fate of the Latvian legionnaires did not always hold the same views as UNRRA and the Soviet Union. They tried to react non-judgmentally to the entreaties brought to them by the Latvians, that is, neither for nor against. All sides, however, agreed that war criminals should be identified and punished.

Documents from the 1940s discuss these problems. Often the views are quite adamantly expressed. Also, often, they are unsubstantiated with evidence. What was written about the Latvian Legion depended on who was doing the writing. Differences of opinion as to the conduct and reputation of the Latvian Legion emerged already in the immediate postwar period, and these differences affected the very lives of these veterans.

This collection of documents is a step towards formulating answers to these accusations, which have not been satisfactorily and publicly resolved in over fifty years of rumour and argument.

The documents selected are representative of many that are available. The voices heard from represent a variety of standpoints. In addressing the subject of the Latvian Legion, the speakers reveal, among other things, their positions in and on the war, politics, ideology, the world situation after the war was over, and the Nuremberg Trial. Because the Soviet Union had an enduring, and understandable, interest in defaming the legion, many documents refer to Soviet views on the matter, including Soviet

allegations that the Western allies were harbouring war criminals who rightfully should be returned to the Soviet Union for trial.

The Soviet position is entirely understandable if one takes the view (of the Soviet Union) that Latvia as of summer 1940 was a legitimate part of the Soviet Union, that this portion (Latvia) of the Soviet Union was temporarily (from the summer of 1941 to the summer of 1944, but spring 1945 for the western portion) occupied by Nazi Germany, and that, therefore, as a citizen of the Soviet Union, anyone who served with the Germans was by definition a traitor to his country (the Soviet Union) and a war criminal. Not everyone, however, takes that view; some never did.

As a general rule, it is the task of the historian to endeavour to present a balanced view of the events being discussed. But the discussion as revealed in these documents is not actually about events. Therein lies the tragedy. The origins of this tragedy and how it unfolded are the central theme of this book. It is not evidence of events themselves, that is, of actions in which the Latvian Legion was actually involved, that have fuelled the fire about it. The controversy over the Latvian Volunteer Waffen-SS rests on the name given the organization by Hitler, a knowledge of who could and who could not be members of the Nazi party and of the SS, a history of how diluted the SS became in its "membership," and the meaning of the term "war criminals."

The documents in this selection cover the period from the formation of the Latvian Legion, early 1943, during the German occupation of Latvia, to 1950, by which time the Cold War was on and the postwar dynamics of the international system had settled into their long-term form. Thus, the documents cover two periods: the first during the Second World War itself, and the second the early years of its aftermath.

Most of the documents reproduced here were found in the United States National Archives II, in College Park, Maryland, the United Nations Archives, in New York City, and the Public

Record Office (PRO) in London. A small number are from other, miscellaneous sources. No Russian sources are represented here.

The documents reproduced here were found and collected primarily in the course of my research for my doctoral dissertation entitled "United States Foreign Policy in the Field: The U.S. Army and the Balts, 1944–1947."

Chapter 1 of this collection is entitled "The Narrative as Presented to the Allies by the Latvians." Two narratives are reproduced, the first is dated 4 June 1945, and it can be found in U.S. Army files; the second, dated February 1949, is in the files of the British Foreign Office. These two documents present the story of the Latvian Legion as seen from the Latvians' point of view at two somewhat different times. They frame the period presented here, and are put first to give the reader a narrative overview and summary of the issues that are then discussed in many of the documents that follow.

In Chapter 2 we learn how the Germans formed the Latvian Legion. The documents are from microfilmed German "Records of the Reichskommissioner for the Baltic States, 1941–45 (Reichskommissar für das Ostland)." They can be found in a collection of reports that bears the heading "Folder of Reichskommissar für das Ostland, Abteilung II E 5, entitled 'Bildung einer lett. SS-Legion. Erfassung und Musterung der Jahrgaenge [Formation of a Latvian SS Legion. Call-up and registration of the drafted for age groups born] 1909–1916, 1919–1921,' and containing directives and statistics." German documents from other folders, for example, the Reich Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Regions [Reichsministerium für die besetzten Ostgebiete], describe the success of the operation. The microcopies of these German wartime records are in the National Archives in College Park, Maryland; the originals have been returned to Germany.

The majority of the documents in this collection are from U.S. military holdings, especially military intelligence and counter-intelligence material, as well as other documents of the American

occupation army in Germany. For the wartime period (Chapter 3), these show what the U.S. Army, War Department, and/or State Department were hearing about Latvia. Of special interest here is the Investigative Records Repository. This is a collection of U.S. Army intelligence materials that have been kept secret under the fifty-year rule. Some of these have still not been declassified.

The Yalta Agreement on Repatriation is the subject of Chapter 4. Argonaut 150 was the code name of the "Agreement Relating to Prisoners of War and Civilians Liberated by Forces Operating under Soviet Command and Forces Operating under British Command." In short, Argonaut 150 was an agreement that called for the mutual repatriation of each other's citizens found on each other's territory in the course of the Second World War. Two identical documents were signed with the same heading; one between the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union, the other between the United States and the Soviet Union. The only difference between the two versions was "United Kingdom" or "British" where the other document had "United States" or "American," and "subject" for the British in the places where the American version had "citizen." For Soviets, always the word used was "citizen."

The documents in Chapter 5 are about the Latvian Legion as discussed in U.S. Army documents from 1945 to 1950. The documents in Chapter 6 are from the archives of the British Foreign Office, located at the Public Record Office in London. Those in Chapter 7 are from the UNRRA and IRO archives. The UNRRA documents that appear here are for the postwar period only; IRO was formed in mid-1947 as one of the agencies replacing UNRRA. In the Appendix is a list of all members of the Nazi party in Latvia.

What kind of balance can one hope to find in the collection, with commentary, presented here? Perhaps none. The collection ex-

poses various voices. The statements made, for the most part, say more about the position of the speaker than about the Latvian Legion. Nevertheless, then as now, some speakers carry more weight than others, some speakers are more informed than others. On the basis of my research to date, I would submit that the most informed sources on the Latvian Legion were the German Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Territories (Reichsministerium für die besetzten Ostgebiete), the Reichscommissariat Ostland, and Reichsführer SS and Chef der deutschen Polizei, Heinrich Himmler – responsible for the formation of the Latvian Legion; the allied armies, who confiscated German wartime documents and who also throughout the war maintained an extensive intelligence network on what was going on in these areas of Europe; the Soviet Union; and those who themselves served in the legion or witnessed how it was formed. This is not to say that each of the aforementioned groups revealed all its information to the others, or that they all evaluated the information that they did have in the same way. Certainly the speakers did not carry equal weight, in anybody's eyes, and certainly after the war, the veterans themselves had no say in what happened to them. The fate of the veterans was decided by whoever had authority over them – on the basis of the perceived reputation of the legion.

To some extent the battles that the Latvian legionnaires faced in the 1940s have not ended even yet. It is my hope that the materials in this book can be of value in coming to understand their story.

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# 1

## **The Narrative as Presented by Latvians, 1945 and 1949**

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The Latvians started to tell the story of the Latvian Legion to the Western Allies from the time the 15th Division surrendered in May 1945. By 1950 most legionnaires had resettled to third countries, and the Cold War had been on for several years. This chapter contains two such narratives, one prepared by the Latvian Red Cross in 1945 and one by Colonel Vilis Janums forwarded to the British Foreign Office by Latvian Ambassador Kārlis Zariņš in 1949.

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### **“Concerning the Organization of the Latvian Legion” Latvian Red Cross Memorandum**

4 June 1945

Latvian Red Cross

#### Memorandum

Concerning the Organization of the Latvian Legion

In 1941 during the war with Soviet Russia, Germany occupied Latvia. From the first day the German occupation authorities began to adjust the Latvian admi-

nistration to the aims and needs of Germany. Thousands of German employees and clerks were sent from different ministries to Latvia. They were headed by the Reichskommissar, former Gauleiter, Hinrik Lohse who enjoyed the total confidence of the Führer. He was confided [entrusted?] with the government of Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania and neighbouring district of the Soviet Russia. Each of the three Baltic states separately was governed by so called "Generalkommissar." They all had high ranks of SA or SS Elite Guards. The real power in Latvia, however, as well as in Germany practically was in the hands of Himmler and his confidants. SS Obergruppenführer Jeckeln, a relative of Himmler, was appointed the highest chief of the SS and Police in Latvia.

The Germans proceeded with the reorganisation of the local Latvian civil police. Special militarized units had been created instead of it. They got the name of "Schutzmannschaften." Only later when Germans began to use these units outside their usual local districts the Latvians understood the real aims of the reorganisation. These units were engaged in the struggle against the bandits beyond the Latvian frontiers. Later on, in connection with the great losses suffered by German army during the winter 1941/42 the battalions of Latvian "Schutzmannschaften" had been gradually sent to the front.

All these imposed changes had been carried out under the sign of "voluntarism." In order to prevent the Latvian policemen to leave the service the occupation power on December 19, 1941, introduced the duty of obligatory labour (Arbeitspflicht). By this order the German occupation power obtained the total liberty of action as to the disposal with inhabitants and they used this right as they liked. Especially they were eager to engage the Latvian people in the military defence of the land. Originally Latvian policemen were engaged by signed agreements only for one year's service. But by the order of the "Arbeitspflicht" they were forced to remain in the service for an unlimited time.

The "Schutzmänner" although grouped into military units-battalions did not enjoy a previous military drilling. Many of them had never been soldiers and did not possess any knowledge of military abilities. They were obliged to learn the military art directly on the battle fields. It is evident that at such circumstances the losses suffered by these battalions had been very heavy. In order to compensate these losses the men of older conscription years and the aid-policemen were sent to the front. As to the aid-policemen this category of police force according to the Latvian law was charged with some restrictive administrative duties in the counties or parishes of their residence.

With the increase of the need of German army for fresh reinforcements the occupation power in Latvia referring to the same "Arbeitspflicht" began to mobilise, contrary to the International law, Latvian citizens born on determined conscription years. They began with younger years. The mobilized young men received from the "SS- und Polizeiführer Lettland" personal written orders to

appear before special health control committees (Musterungsstabe). (See Annex 1.) Those who had been found healthy were sent without any military drilling directly to the front. There were occasions where on front line with a livelier military activity already during the first weeks the major part of those mobilized young men were killed, wounded or had deserted.

Having mobilized greater contingents of Latvians Germans began to transform the existing battalions into greater units – police regiments and, lately, police brigades. These drastic German measures created a live discontent in Latvia. It increased especially after the heavy losses of the Latvian units. In order to make the matter for Latvians more acceptable from the national point of view Germans issued an official announcement stating that the Fuhrer in answer to the Latvian request (?) had given his permission to form Latvian “voluntary” legion.

The forming of the Latvian legion was confided [entrusted?] to the German “SS- und Polizeiführer Lettland.” Practically, however, these Latvian units, except their highest German “SS” commanders, had nothing in common with German “Waffen SS” units.

Having founded the legion the German occupation power enlarged the contingents of conscription years. They mobilized all the Latvians born from 1906 to 1926, i.e., 21 conscription years, and officers up to the age of 60. The Latvian territory was divided into “SS” military districts headed by special chiefs. The latter were charged with the carrying out of the mobilization. Now the mobilization was not any longer hidden but was carried out quite undisguised by orders of the chiefs of the “SS” Military districts. (See Annexes 2 and 3).

Persons who withdrew from the mobilization [i.e., refused to be mobilized], as it may be seen from a judgement of the Court Martial published in the newspaper “Tevija” (edited by Germans), were severely condemned by the Court-Martial. (See Annex 4.)

With the diminution of the occupied Latvian territory [i.e., the victorious return of the Red Army, from the east, in the summer of 1944] the recruits and the remaining soldiers of the defeated Latvian military units were sent over to Germany for a new reorganization and equipment. But instead of this the great majority of them were forced from the very beginning to do heavy digging work in the district of Thorn. And that in the most primitive circumstances of living. The misuse of the Latvian soldiers for the mentioned task may be explained with [by?] the lack of arms and munition which existed already then. Latvian soldiers were obliged still in November [1944] to work without warm clothes and shoes and to sleep outdoors. Even those few who had been placed in the barracks had neither beds nor light. They did not get to eat sufficiently too. When the clamours of the unlucky reached Berlin, an “SS” general was commanded to examine the state of things. It is not known what he reported to those who had sent him, only after his visit nothing was changed and if the digging work had not been inter-

rupted by the winter frost the sufferings of the unlucky soldiers would have not taken their end until the collapse of Germany. It is quite natural that in such circumstances the desertion spread out on a large scale. In order to stop it Latvian officers were gradually replaced by German ones. Latvian officers were tried or even without any trial or investigation imprisoned in the concentration camp of Stutthof at Danzig there were a large amount of Latvian soldiers.

In order to facilitate the control of persons who had withdrawn from mobilization or had deserted the Staff of the Inspector General of the legion [Latvian General Rudolfs Bangerskis] published a statement as to those who were not to be considered as deserters. (See Annex 5.)

This short sketch on the history of the Latvian Legion shows that this legion had nothing in common with the German "Waffen SS" units as only the subordination to the German commanding of the higher officers of German "Waffen SS," which is due as already indicated to the fact that the legion was formed by the German "SS- und Polizeiführer Lettland." The German "Waffen SS" units were special units and they consisted at the beginning of volunteers only. The Latvian Legion is a mobilized military unit created only for the struggle on the eastern front as it is seen from the text of the oath the Latvian soldiers were obliged to swear. (See Annex 6.)

The Latvian Legion contrary to the German "Waffen SS" units and especially "SS Elite Guards" had never had to fulfil any political obligations. The difference between the German "Waffen SS" and Latvian Legion is further to be seen from the denominations of the service ranks. A German service rank is preceded by the letters "SS," as for instance, "SS-Standartenführer," the respective denomination introduced in the Latvian Legion was "Legions Standartenführer" and so on. Beginning with 1945 the Latvian soldiers obtained the right to wear on their uniforms instead of the sign "SS" the national emblem of Latvian soldiers – the emblem of the sun. If at the beginning of the Allied occupation there were also Latvian soldiers wearing former signs on their uniform it is due to the fact that they all having been ill or wounded did not get the opportunity to procure the new emblem.

All these above changes are due to the fact that Latvian soldiers had been always wearing the "SS" uniform against their will. Their objections ever existing got louder and stronger especially when German "SS" units in Latvia began to show their real face, ill-treating and pillaging civil inhabitants of the country in their usual most brutal manner.

Besides, as a considerable number of Latvian soldiers were evacuated to Germany the German "SS" men did not like to suffer in their vicinity Latvian soldiers who were poorly clad and were speaking a foreign language. They quoted Hitler's words from his "Mein Kampf" that "Waffenrock" is an "Ehrenrock" and that in Germany only the Germans would have the right to wear it.

Resuming the aforesaid we arrive at the following conclusions:

1 The Latvian Legion is a pure military unit mobilized illegally by the German occupation power. If the Germans call the Legion "voluntary" then it is done with the purpose to hide the flagrant transgression of the International Law which forbids to mobilize the inhabitants of an occupied country.

2 The Latvian Legion as it is seen from the text of the oath was founded only for the struggle against the bolshevism and had never participated in the war against the western Allies.

3 The Latvian Legion from the ideological and political point of view has nothing in common with the German "Waffen SS" units. If at the beginning the Latvian soldiers were obliged to wear the signs of "SS" then, as already explained, it is due to the fact that at the moment of the organization of the Legion it was enforced to them by their commanders "SS- und Polizeiführer Lettland." Lastly, the Latvian soldiers obtained the right to change the "SS" signs as not corresponding to their military tasks to Latvian emblems.

Heidenheim - Brens, June 4, 1945

### *Annex 1*

Translation  
Postcard. Registered  
Date of the postal stamp

Der SS und Polizeiführer Lettland

To ...

According to the order concerning the introduction of the obligatory labour (Arbeitspflicht) dated December 19, 1941, and to the alterations and execution supplement to this order on ... (date) at ... o'clock, in ... (address), it will be proceeded by the Control Committee No. ... with the registration of all the persons born in your conscription year.

You must come to the registration in a clean state. Nonobservation of this summon [*sic*] will be most severely punished. The employer is obliged to accord the necessary leave, continue to pay the wages and to fill out the annexed cer-

tificate of employment. This summon [*sic*] is valid as certification of rights to use public means of communications.

(Seal)

By order ... (signature)

For the conformity of the translation with the original

(K. Kalnins)

Secretary General of the Latvian Red Cross

### *Annex 2*

Translation

“Ventas Balss” [The Voice of Venta – a river in western Latvia]

September 15, 1944

Order

concerning the second health control and mobilisation of Latvian citizens born from 1906 to 1924, who had been recognized as not valid for the military service accordingly [*sic*] to the former list of diseases Lit. A.

Accordingly to the Order of August 16, 1944, of the Inspector General of the Latvian Voluntary SS Legion and the Commander of the Latvian Office of Supplements, General Bangerskis, I summon herewith all the Latvian citizens residing in the district of Ventspils and those having arrived there from the other districts of Latvia who by the conscription committees had been recognized as not valid for the military service accordingly to the former list of diseases Lit. A., to appear before the SS Conscription Committee of the Military district of Liepaja for the second health control, as indicated below:

In the town of Ventspils, Vadona street 18:

..... [in original translation]

In order to adopt this decision as to the status of nonsubstitution the persons born from 1906 to 1909 have to present to the Conscription Committee the following documents:

1 Those of the State or other public service – the certificates issued by the chiefs of their Offices stating that the conscribed persons accordingly to their service post are to be freed from mobilisation in virtue of the list of professions adopted by the Director-General on the meeting of April 18, 1944;

2 Those working in industry, commerce and artisanship – the “UK” cards (Unabkommlichkeitskarten) bearing respective decisions of local “Arbeitsamt” and “Arbeitsverwaltung des Gebietskommissars”;

3 Those working in agriculture – the certificates issued by parish administrators containing at least the dated [*sic*] on the total area of the farm and especially that of the ploughing land, the list of family members the residence of family members and their occupation, the number of agricultural labourers or refugees dwelling or labouring in the farm, the number of horses and cattle, the state of the obligatory delivery of products and imposed labours.

Persons found valid for the active or inactive military service or for manual work will be sent on the same day to their military units.

The passport, the certificate of military service, the booklet of provision together with food and other purchasing cards, the necessary personal articles of a soldier, food for 3 days and wrapping material for sending home private clothes, must be taken with.

September 11, 1944

Commander of the SS Military District of Liepaja

Col. Lt. Berzins

For the conformity of the translation with the original:

(K. Kalnins)

Secretary General of the Latvian Red Cross

### *Annex 3*

Translation

“Venta Balss”

Sept. 15, 1944

Order

Herewith I summon all Latvian citizens of masculine sex residing in the district of Ventspils or having arrived there from other districts of Latvia, born in 1925 and 1926, who for any reasons whatsoever have not till yet appeared before the conscription committees, to come for medical examination in Ventspils, Vadona Street 18, on September 26, 1944, at 8 o'clock.

Persons found valid for the active or inactive military service or for manual work will be sent on the same day to their military units. The passport, the certificate of military service, the booklet of provision together with food and other purchasing cards, the necessary personal articles of soldier, food for 3 days and wrapping material for sending home private clothes must be taken with.

Withdrawing [not responding] will be condemned accordingly to the laws of the wartime.

September 13, 1944

By order of the chief of the SS Military District of Liepaja

Col. Lt. Ankevics

For the conformity of the translation with the original:

(K. Kalnins)

Secretary General of the Latvian Red Cross

#### *Annex 4*

Translation

"Tevija" [Fatherland]

September 20, 1944

#### Severe Condemnation for the Withdrawing from the Military Service

A new warning to the Latvian youths which is not willing to follow to [heed] the appeal of their native country.

At a time when all true Latvians who are able to wear the arms are defending the native country three sturdy young men had chosen to follow another way, arriving at the end on the bench of trial. The Court Martial of the Inspector General of the Latvian Voluntary SS Legion has announced its judgement in a case against Edgars Vīlčins, Osvalds Strelkis, and Janis Vilcins. All of them under mutual understanding have withdrawn from the obligatory military service and have lived from 1943 in hiding place till they were arrested on August 22nd.

The Court Martial condemned Edgars Vilcins, aged 22, and Osvalds Stelkis, age 23, both to 15 years of forced labours [*sic*] with all the consequences provided by the law, but Janis Vilcins, aged under 18, to one year of imprisonment. Announcing the judgement the President of the Court Martial underlined that the accused had committed a heavy crime against their native country and that only taking in consideration their faultless past and free confession they have been condemned so lightly.

In the heavy hours of the native country the young men who do not fulfil their duties and do not respect the honour of Latvians must be severely warned. The war laws will be applied in the future to such persons with the utmost severity.

For the conformity of the translation with the original:

(K. Kalnins)

Secretary General of the Latvian Red Cross

*Annex 5*

Translation

"Tevija

January 9, 1945

Who Do Not Withdraw [Refuse] Mobilisation

The Staff of the Inspector General of the Latvian "SS" Voluntary Legion states that are not considered as having withdrawn [refused] mobilisation:

Persons born from 1906 to 1926, who possess

- a certificates issued by military units as to their discharge of military service because of illness,
- b certificates issued by chiefs of Military districts after July 20, 1944, or who have inscriptions in their passports as to their invalidity for military service (WU),
- c certificates issued from December 1943 to November 20, 1944, by Conscription committees of Chiefs of military districts or who have inscriptions in their passports as to their freeing from military service for a certain time in view of improvement of health, not expired before November 10, 1944.

Persons born from 1900 to 1909 who possess certificates issued from December 1943 to November 20, 1944, by Conscription committees or chiefs of Military districts, or who have inscriptions in their passports as to their freeing from Military service for economical or labour purposes (UK).

Certificates or inscriptions in passports issued before October 6, 1944, as to the discharge of the military service for labour or economical purposes are valid only for citizens of the districts of Tukums and Jelgava.

For the conformity of the translation with the original:

(K. Kalnins)

Secretary General of the Latvian Red Cross

*Annex 6*

Translation

In the name of God I promise solemnly in the struggle against bolshevism an unlimited obedience to the supreme Commander of the German military forces

Adolf Hitler and as a brave soldier I will always be ready to give my life for this oath.

For the conformity of the translation with the original:

(K. Kalnins)

Secretary General of the Latvian Red Cross

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*Location:* National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland (NA II), RG 319, Investigative Reports Repository (IRR), Entry 76, Box 15

### **Letter from Kārlis Zariņš to J.Y. Mackenzie, Foreign Office**

1 March 1949

*Comment:* The British Foreign Office was also being petitioned by Latvians on behalf of their legionnaires.

In March 1949, Zariņš presented the Foreign Office with a Memorandum which he himself had translated into English, written by Colonel Vilis Janums – one of the heroes of the legionnaires. In his covering letter accompanying Janums's brief on the Latvian Legion, Zariņš introduces the Colonel to the reader.

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Latvian Legation

No. 1418

London, 1st March, 1949.

Dear Mr. Mackenzie,

Referring to our personal conversation in the Foreign Office, I have herewith to submit to you a Memorandum which Colonel Janums, before going to the country, left with me for my knowledge. As he is away, I have taken the liberty of translating it and am sending it for your information. When Colonel Janums comes back I will tell him what I have done.

Colonel Janums is symbolic of the leadership, not only of the soldiers but of the Latvian nationally-minded youth. He is also an example of the fight that existed between the Latvian soldiers and the German General Staff. Like other Latvian officers, he was called up and became a member of the Legion. He was commanding a regiment, part of the 15th Division – a Division of fairly late origin which was still in a state of organisation and training. In January 1945 the German High Command decided to throw it into action against the Russians in East Prussia. The Latvian officers felt that they had a great responsibility to bear, and when it was no longer a question of trying to drive the eastern invader from their homeland, they had no wish to waste Latvian blood by whole-heartedly following the orders given by the German High Command. To guard Latvian manpower, they engaged only in defensive tactics in retreat. In April, 1945, the Division found itself, after a harassing march in retreat of about 1000 miles, in the neighbourhood of Neubrandenburg, northeast of Berlin in the province of Mecklenburg. Colonel Janums received orders to proceed with his regiment to Berlin. But he had no desire to protect the German capital with Latvian soldiers or that they should all fall prisoners of the Russians. Therefore, he took the risk of disobeying the orders and, dividing up his regiment into small groups, giving them day-to-day instructions, brought them all by devious routes past the east side of Berlin as far as the Elbe, where they surrendered to the Americans.

After Colonel Janums's return to London on about the 5th March, I should be very pleased if some of the specialists in his branch would give him an interview. He would very much appreciate a contact of this kind which would help him in guiding the minds of the young men of our country and their future.

Believe me  
Yours sincerely,  
Karlis Zarine

J.Y. Mackenzie, Esq.  
Foreign Office, S.W.1

**Memorandum from Colonel Vilis Janums:  
What Was the Latvian Legion and  
How Did It Arise?**

February 1949

*Comment:* In his Memorandum of February 1949, Colonel Vilis Janums gave a brief summary of the war in Latvia in order to explain how it was that more than 200,000 Baltic citizens found themselves in the Western zones of Germany after the war was over.

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Memorandum

At the end of the Second World War there were over 200,000 Baltic citizens in the Western part of Germany, in the British, U.S. and French Zones of Occupation. They were refugees and about 120,000 of them were Latvians. When UNRRA began its work these refugees found a home and maintenance in the DP camps.

Why were the Latvians in the Western Zones of Germany?

In June 1940 Soviet forces invaded the Baltic States of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Thus, the Soviet Union made use of the opportunities offered by the situation of the world at the time, when Hitlerite Germany was in the ascendant and Great Britain alone was resisting the German onslaught. The Russians were putting into reality the conditions offered to them by the Soviet-German Pact (so-called Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact) of August 23rd, 1939, and according to the secret clauses of which the Baltic States came into their sphere of influence – and the independence of the Baltic States was smashed.

Immediately after the Soviet forces entered Latvia the first arrests began, and it can be said with certainty that there was no night when in some place or another in Latvia, in the country or in the towns, NKVD agents were not knocking at the doors of peaceful citizens, who subsequently vanished without trace. Large numbers of Latvian men, women and youths thus started on the road of untold suffering. Many of the people then arrested were found in the second half

of 1941, in mass graves, murdered and frequently mutilated. About most there is no news to this day. Data have been collected concerning 34,250 deported or murdered during the first year of Russian occupation, but these are by no means all. During one night alone, 13th/14th June, 1941, 14,693 Latvian citizens were arrested and taken away by the NKVD. In the archives of the Russian secret political police which were left behind after the Russian retreat in 1941, a plan was found according to which it was intended in a comparatively short time to arrest and deport to remote regions of Soviet Russia, for forced labour, 800,000 inhabitants of Latvia. However, the Russians had not the time to carry this out, and luckily the plan remained unfulfilled, because of the German attack on Russia of June 22nd 1941. As is well known, the initial successes of the German army were considerable, and in a very brief while Latvia was occupied by Hitler's armies.

It is quite understandable that the Latvian people sighed with relief when the Russians left the country, and for a few days even received the new occupier with enthusiasm. That enthusiasm, however, was very short-lived because Nazi Germany showed its true intentions very soon. Heavy economic and moral pressure began, and the Latvians everywhere were treated as a second-class people. (*Einheimische* – "natives" was always used in reference to them.) Arrests, the introduction of concentration camps and deporting to forced labour in Germany were introduced. In other words, the NKVD was replaced by the Gestapo; otherwise things were roughly the same.

The summer of 1944 arrived and the Eastern front of Hitler's Germany was crumbling; for the second time war was touching the Baltic regions. The German occupying authorities ordered civilians to be evacuated to the West and a large number of Latvians found temporary refuge in the South-western part of Latvia; the province of Kurzeme, where the front line held on right until the capitulation of Germany on 8th May, 1945. A large number of Latvians, however, were evacuated in ships to Germany for work. Once more, the Latvian nation was put before alternatives, it had to choose between two evils; there was no third possibility. The Latvians chose what they thought the smaller evil and followed the orders for evacuation to the West, because, however difficult was the Nazi occupation, however heavy the sacrifices that it demanded, the inhuman terror of 1940/41 of the Soviets was fresh in everybody's memory.

In spite of the Baltic coast being heavily guarded, several thousand Latvians managed to cross the Baltic Sea and reach the shores of Sweden in small fishing boats and other little craft; though at the same time many thousands of others were caught in flight and taken to concentration camps by the Germans patrolling the Baltic. (Later, when the Russians were in control, they too caught many of those attempting flight across the Baltic and their fate is unknown.) Many also perished in the sea. In this respect the Northern neighbours, the Estonians, were

in a more fortunate position, because owing to their islands and the nearness of friendly Finland, about 30,000 Estonians reached Sweden. But the majority of Latvians went, and had to go, to Germany.

This is the largest contingent of the Latvian refugees in Germany; in addition to them, there are several thousand former Latvian soldiers. Beginning with 1943 the German occupying authorities started systematic mobilisation of Latvian men, and they were formed into the so-called Latvian SS Volunteer Legion. When the military operations on the Eastern front were coming to an end, the Latvian soldiers tried to use every opportunity to get into British or American hands as war prisoners. But even before the final phase of military operations on the Eastern front, Latvian units, including even fairly large units, surrendered to the Western Allies wherever an opportunity arose.

After release from war prison camps these former Latvian soldiers in the German army who were in the British Zone were added to the DP camps, under the care and administration of the Control Commission for Germany.

What was the Latvian Legion and how did it arise?

As the war on the Eastern front was becoming a lengthy one, Nazi Germany felt more and more the need for fresh reserves of human material. And as the Hague Convention of 1907 forbids an occupying power to carry out mobilisation in occupied territory, the German authorities created a fiction; by order of Hitler of 10th February, 1943, was created the so-called Latvian SS Volunteer Legion. The mobilisation or drafting for this Legion was carried out through the drafting or so-called examination committees, summons to appear before whom was compulsory and under the threat of punishment, according to wartime criminal laws. The orders for appearance before these committees were published in the newspapers; whole age-groups were thus summoned. Parallel to these general summonses, individual summonses were also issued and enforced through labour exchanges - all these facts can be proved by documents. After a shorter or longer interval following examination for medical fitness etc. before these drafting committees, the respective man received his calling-up papers with instructions to appear at his unit. Even more, to get the maximum number of men, by order of the General Commissar for Riga of 15th January 1943, the tuition period in secondary schools was curtailed, and this order was explained by the recruitment needs of the Latvian Legion and the German army. It is interesting to quote in this connection a letter which figured in the documents of the Nuremberg trial, written by a high German officer, SS Obergruppenführer G. Berger, which says:

“Dear Comrade...

... My personal opinion is that it would be a crime in the present time not to utilise all available forces that we can muster for the fight. For every foreign national who falls, no German mother is weeping..."

This is an excellent illustration of the attitude, expressed with cynical frankness, prevailing among the leading German officers and officials, and it was carried into practice with verve in Latvia.

All the above shows quite clearly that there is no question of there having been voluntary enlistment.

Of course, at the beginning of the German occupation in 1941 and early 1942 a few thousand Latvian boys and men entered the German forces of their own accord. These were detailed to the police battalions and they fought on the Eastern front. They consisted mainly – one would like to say entirely – of people whose relatives and people near to them had been brutally murdered or deported by the Communists, and their action was prompted by a desire to fight actively against this regime which was holding their kinsfolk in bondage, and thus perhaps cut their shackles and ultimately free their own families. But these men, almost all, are lying in the graves of the Eastern front, because the police battalions that they belonged to suffered very severe losses.

In such circumstances the question arose, whether to obey or to sabotage the mobilisation orders. To disobey them would mean a flight into the woods and a joining with the few hundred communist partisans who were being supplied by the Soviet Union. From the Western Democracies, towards whom the policy of the Baltic States has always been directed, no help was coming, and, in the circumstances of those times, could not come. At the same time from the East the 1940/41 occupier of Latvia, held in such frightful memory by the population, was approaching nearer and nearer. In order to defend their homeland and help in delaying the Russian entry into Latvia as long as possible, perhaps even in stopping it, the Latvian men and youths accepted the mobilisation orders and obeyed them. There was no other way. Latvian soldiers did not fight for any plan of Hitlerite Germany for a New Europe, etc., but they were defending their homeland and fought only against the Soviet Union and Bolshevism and only on the Eastern front. As, in accordance with the Hague Convention of 1907, Latvian soldiers could not be enlisted into the German armed forces, the Latvian Legion was subordinated to the Waffen SS, although except for the supply service and supervision of organisation, they had nothing in common with the Waffen SS. No Latvian was or could be a member of the NSDAP. No special political education was carried out in the units of the Latvian Legion. The uniform was also distinctive; the Latvian legionaries wore the traditional Latvian symbol of the rising sun on the collar and the Latvian shield on the left arm. That the Latvian and Estonian soldiers were not volunteers or members of the SS or Waffen SS,

was established already in 1945 by the authorities of the British army after careful investigation and sifting of evidence, when the Baltic soldiers were released from British imprisonment as members of the German Wehrmacht.

#### Screening

Soon after the displaced persons were gathered and housed in the camps established by UNRRA, the examination and checking up of these people began. This action is known under the name of "screening." The purpose was to eliminate from the midst of the DP's persons who were not entitled to the status of DP's. Those screened out were made part and parcel of the German economy and had to fend for themselves. When UNRRA ceased in the second half of 1947, all DP camps in the British Zone were taken over by the recently formed International Refugee Organisation, and simultaneously with that new screenings began. These continue even now and in the British Zone they are directed mainly against former Baltic soldiers. In various IRO districts all those former soldiers who have blood-group markings tattooed under their arm have been screened out. Lately, even the fact that a DP has been a soldier at all has been sufficient in many cases for a negative screening decision. The question of these screenings and the status of the Baltic soldiers has been several times raised with the higher authorities at IRO in Geneva. IRO eligibility instructions themselves foresee:

(PC IRO Provisional Order Nr. 42, the Appendix V, par. 4 Balts).

- 4 (b) Baltic nationals who started military service before the first compulsory conscription in January 1943 should be regarded as volunteers, ineligible, unless they give proof to the contrary. Others should be regarded as draftees, and are not excluded by clause 2 (b) of Part II.
- 4(c) Persons who were recruited by conscription in Baltic Waffen SS units should not be confused with volunteers who served in the German Waffen SS. Tattooing under the armpit is sometimes an indication ... but all tattooings under the armpit do not mean that the men belonged to the SS.

In spite of this, however, some of the screening officers do not follow these instructions. The efforts of the Baltic Welfare, Education and Employment Organisation Central Advisory Council have also remained without success in respect of these cases, although representations with IRO and CCG authorities have been made from this quarter.

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Four years will soon have passed since the war ended, and while at United Nations conferences and meetings so much is said of the rights and freedom of humanity, in the DP camps one screening is still following another, and is keeping the victims of the terrible Second World War, people who have lost their country and all, in an atmosphere of psychological terror.

As an example might be quoted the activities of one of the screening officers, Mr L. de Herdt, IRO Area Team 905 Eligibility Officer. On the 15th July 1948 he said at the Dedelsdorf DP Camp to the Latvian Pastor N. Ozols, who was present at the screening of the Latvians: "It is a shame that the Latvians are not sentenced to 25 years penal servitude or rather repatriated, as the Russians would welcome them."

A former Baltic soldier who, for reasons not of his own making, has gone through the deepest tragedies, has lost not only homeland and family, but in many cases also health and limbs, hopes only for the chance to live again a life of human dignity, and these screenings are taking this hope away from him; because the loss of DP status involves not only the comparatively small material assistance, but more than that, it involves the possibility of emigration; only those who possess the DP status are eligible for emigration to other countries, and the shattered and hostile Germany offers no hope.

February, 1949

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*Location:* PRO, FO 371/77245

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## 2

### German Documents about the Latvian Legion

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The pivotal question in determining the postwar fate of Latvian legionnaires was and remains: Was service in the Latvian Legion voluntary? Did my father, brother, husband, or neighbour, as the case may be, serve voluntarily? The Nazi German answer to this question, in public, was yes. The Soviet answer to this question, from the beginning and until the Soviet Union itself collapsed, was yes. The Latvian answer to this question depends on who you ask and when it is that you are talking about. Many of the fathers, brothers, and husbands have insisted that they had entirely no choice about the matter, that they were called in, or even hauled in to serve – on behalf of the German war effort.

Already in the early postwar years, the United States Army took the view of the soldiers themselves, that is, that their service was not voluntary, unless in any individually named cases it could be proved otherwise.

In the early days of Operation Barbarossa, Latvia was occupied by the forces of the German Reich. From July 1941 all institutions in Latvia immediately fell under German authority. Prior to the German occupation, in 1940–41, Latvia had been occupied by the Soviet Union. The first Soviet occupation was provided for in the secret clauses of the Hitler–Stalin pact of 23 August 1939. Until the Soviet occupation, in July 1940, Latvia was an independent country and internationally recognized as such, having become a member of the League of Nations in 1920. From the eighteenth century until the end of the First World War, Latvia was part of the Russian empire.

The documents in this chapter are from two sources: The 1907 Hague Convention (IV) Respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land, Annex to the Convention, specifically Article 45,<sup>1</sup> and German documents, from 1942 to 1944, on how the Latvian Legion was formed. These German documents were captured by the Americans and are available on microfilm at the National Archives II in College Park, Maryland; the originals have been returned to Germany and are accessible in Freiburg.

The Hague Convention of 1907 predates the formation of the Latvian Legion by more than thirty years. This convention stipulates that it is against the Laws and Customs of War on Land to force the inhabitants of an occupied country to serve the occupier. The precise words of the relevant portion of the Hague Convention of 1907, under the heading "Military Authority over the Territory of the Hostile State," are:

Article 45: It is forbidden to compel the inhabitants of occupied territory to swear allegiance to the hostile Power.

Thus, if the inhabitants (Latvians) of an occupied country do serve in the occupier's (Nazi Germany's) forces, they (the Latvians) are doing so because either the occupier (Germany) is acting in flagrant disregard of the Laws and Customs of War on Land, as spelled out in the Hague Convention of 1907, or some other mechanism has enabled them (the Latvians) to so serve. Some other mechanism could be that they (the Latvians) volunteered to serve.

The two divisions of Latvian soldiers, formed by the occupying German power, in 1943, were collectively named, by the Germans, the Lettische Freiwillige Waffen-SS. In English this

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<sup>1</sup> W. Michael Reisman and Chris T. Antoniou, editors, *The Laws of War: A Comprehensive Collection of Primary Documents on International Laws Governing Armed Conflict* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), p. 232.

translates to the Latvian Voluntary Waffen-SS. This German name has caused the soldiers who served in these divisions a lot of grief to this day. Therefore, it is important to analyse just what exactly this name means, starting with the term "voluntary," for there is no dispute that we are talking about Latvians.

German wartime documents discuss the formation of these legions. These are internal, German documents. They were not written for external propaganda purposes. Presumably the Germans did not intend to lose the Second World War and thus the individual authors of these documents were not seeking to justify themselves at Nuremberg and later.

The German documents speak of mustering, conscription, call up – giving progressively more inclusive call-up years. They also speak of inhabitants in the relevant call-up years being brought before the *Sonderkriegsgericht* (special court martial) for punishment (not for trial) if they failed to report for service.

The irony is that the Germans may even have obtained a legion of volunteers had they been able to give the Latvian self-administration some political bait.<sup>2</sup> The Latvian self-administration, under the directorship of General Oskars Dankers, was in fact in the process of trying to negotiate terms for the formation of a voluntary legion when the German conscription orders, of late February – early March 1943, pre-empted any further discussions.

The Latvians wanted two things: to see that the Soviets were defeated and to once again have an independent country. The self-administration would support fighting to this end, even by taking the intermediate step of fighting on the side of Nazi Germany. They asked that the new legion be commanded by a Latvian. They

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<sup>2</sup> See Arthur Silgailis, *Latvian Legion* (San Jose, California: James R. Bender Publishing) pages 23 ff on formation of the legion, as well as Appendix 2, General O. Dankers letter of 23 February 1943, to the Reichskommissar East Land (Reichskommissar Ostland), on "Latvian Minimal Demands When Drawing Up the Latvian Legion," p. 239.

did not get this. For a few days in March 1943, the Latvians were led to believe that the to-be-formed legion would be commanded by one of their own, former Latvian Minister for War, General Rudolfs Bangerskis. But orders came from Germany that this was to be denied because the commander of a division had the status of a judge in a court of law, and in German law a judge had to be a German citizen.<sup>3</sup>

The call-up was ordered by the Germans. The Latvian self-administration – rightly or wrongly – took the position of supporting the call-up, especially as of late 1943. They defended this position by insisting that the men were called to arms in defence of their country, Latvia.

No one has tried, in all these years, to argue that the Soviet Union would have restored Latvia to independence at the end of the war. But, perhaps after Germany had defeated the Soviet Union, it would help Latvia become independent again. Perhaps both the Soviet Union and Germany would be defeated and then the western allies would help the Latvian situation. The experience of the aftermath of the First World War, apparently, gave many Latvians the hope or even belief that history, as experienced by them in their own lifetime, would repeat itself: that the western allies would once again come to the aid of the Baltic countries and help them (re)gain their independence.

Completely disregarding this rationalization, the fact remains that the German authorities ordered, repeatedly, call-ups by age group of Latvians to serve in the German war effort. At first these were somewhat disguised as orders to report for work for the German Labour Office (Reichsarbeitsamt), after which the men were put in units of the legion.

To the man being drafted, this was not volunteering. He could either accept the draft or not. In not accepting, he could either

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<sup>3</sup>See Silgailis, p. 12.

disappear, for example, by hiding in the forests of Latvia (and people did) or face the consequences legally, before the – German – court martial. Not fighting a draft notice, even one over the signature of one of your own countryman, does not constitute volunteering for service.

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### A German Official Complains

8 October 1943

*Comment:* On 8 October 1943, the district commissar of the Labour Administration (Arbeitsverwaltung) of the city of Riga, Schmutzler, wrote to Bangerskis, as General-Inspector of the Latvian SS Volunteer Legion. He wished to discuss the matter of “Procurement of Manpower for the Latvian Legion.” As senior councillor for the district (Bezirksoberrat), Schmutzler wanted to provide “a detailed overview of how the procedure for exemption from military service is supposed to work at present.” His communication made special reference throughout to the age groups of men born 1919 to 1924, for he had been having special difficulties with them.

Schmutzler gave a detailed description of the selection committee and the procedures it followed in the spring 1943 draft. Of 20,117 “subject to the draft,” 6,827 were selected for service “in the SS legion and the Wehrmacht.” Accordingly, Schmutzler calculated, “This means that among the male population of Latvia born in those six years, in my Region, not quite 34 per cent were selected for service in the Armed Forces [Wehrmacht].” Schmutzler apparently lumps Wehrmacht and SS legion together at this point.

Soon after selection for service, however, Schmutzler's office "was deluged by young men from among the 6,827" petitioning for exemption from the decision made that they should serve in military units. Schmutzler was of the opinion that the "deluge" was well orchestrated, perhaps "specifically by university students," to cause difficulties for the Germans: "I have become convinced that this is a more or less organized measure with the aim of systematically paralyzing the responsible work of a German office [Behoerde]."

Schmutzler went on at some length explaining the havoc caused his office by having to deal with "more than 1,450 written petitions" together with "more than 4,300 cases" petitioned "in person, either the young men themselves, or their parents, or their aunts or other representations" – of the 6,827. With many of the men being from rural areas, and because Schmutzler personally because of "[his] upbringing" was sympathetic to the exigencies of farming life, these men had been given a six-month deferment, until the harvest had been taken in. But that was the best he felt he could do and that they should be grateful for the six months.

Schmutzler was not very happy with the overall situation that his Labour Office was finding itself in concerning recruiting: "Of the approximately 18,000 young men who were drafted into the legion in March/April of this year in Latvia, more than 4,000 have so far simply ignored the draft order. Another large number is said to have already deserted."

For all his efforts on behalf of the Latvians and in trying to understand their special circumstances, Schmutzler felt that he was not getting much appreciation from the Latvian people. Indeed, Schmutzler's office had been become a front line of popular attack on the Germans.

In closing this appeal to Bangerskis, Schmutzler pointed out that what Bangerskis did about the situation would have an effect: "In terms of dealing with the already submitted petitions and those

still expected, I will await your comments because I intend to base my future decisions in this regard on your fundamental attitude.”

The District Commissar,  
City of Riga  
-Labour Administration  
Schm./K.

Riga, 8 October 1943

To the General Inspection  
of the Latvian SS Volunteer Legion  
-Chief of Staff-

Military Matter

Riga,

Re: Procurement of manpower for the Latvian Legion

Recently, I have been told by an increasing number of young men born between 1919 and 1924, which is the age group selected for military service in the Legion this spring, that your agency would be willing to exempt them from military service, and that the refusal of such exemptions is due only to the attitude of my office. With regard to some petitions filed by such young men you have already expressed respective recommendations.

This fact is motivating me to provide you with a detailed overview of how the procedure for the exemption from military service is supposed to work at present.

The selection [Musterung] was carried out in March/April of this year at considerable expense and with many people from all kinds of authorities involved.

Each Selection Staff [Musterungsstab] consisted of the following:

a medical commission [Arztkommission] consisting of 3–4 physicians,

a staff officer [Stabsoffizier] of the German Armed Forces [Wehrmacht] (20 of these gentlemen, each with 2–3 non-commissioned officers, mostly from the Reich, were working here for months),

a staff officer [Stabsoffizier] of the Latvian Legion,

a police officer [Polizeioffizier],

a representative of the German Labour Service Board [Arbeitseinsatzbehörde]

a representative of the Latvian Labour Service Board [Arbeitseinsatzbehörde],  
4–6 clerical employees.

In the country, the respective District and Municipal Councillor [Kreis- und Gemeindealtester] were involved as well, plus the District Agriculturist [Kreisagronom] and the local police authorities [Polizeidienststellen].

This selection staff, which had been assembled at such great expense, gave each prospective draftee [Musterungspflichtiger] an opportunity to express himself freely and to explain his personal situation in detail. The chairman of the selection commission made his decision based on these statements, on the medical findings, on comments by the draftee's employer presented in writing on a printed form, and in the country on the personal assessment of the Municipal Councillor and other influential persons.

According to the selection guidelines [Musterungsrichtlinien] by the Reich Commissar [Reichskommissar], this decision was to be final. The prospective draftees were told this in a detailed briefing prior to the selection as well as during the selection process.

In my Region, i.e. the city of Riga [Riga-Stadt], the rural District of Riga [Riga-Land] and the District of Modohn, the following were subject to the draft: 20,117, of whom the following appeared for selection: 17,279. Of these, the following were deferred for service in armament factories: 6,340.

The following were also deferred because they were employed in key areas, such as agriculture, hospitals, as fire fighters, in administration, etc.: 1,251. The following were deferred because of illness or unsuitability: 1,611. The following were selected for service in factories vital to the war economy: 1,250. The following were selected for service in the Armed Forces [Wehrmacht]: 6,827.

This means that among the male population of Latvia born in those six years in my Region, not quite 34% were selected for service in the Armed Forces.

However, immediately after selection, in spite of the briefing provided by the Selection Staff, my office was deluged by young men from among the 6,827, i.e. those who had been selected for service in the Armed Forces, who wanted a reversal by bureaucratic means of the decision, which had been reached by the unusually well-staffed Selection Commission, and who now presented a huge amount of papers as evidence. Most of these were medical certificates, which for the most part had obviously been issued only as a matter of courtesy.

On the first day alone, my office was stormed by no less than about 270 such men, who now suddenly wanted to present their objections in person, while they had apparently been unable to open their mouths in front of the Selection Commission.

At the time, during those first few days, my Deputy and I were only able to say a few short sentences to these intruders in the hallway of the Labour Office [Arbeitsamt] to tell them that their behaviour was nonsensical, and I had to simply have the people removed from the Labour Office building.

From the way in which these young people behaved, and in this case specifically university students [akademische Jugend] who should know better than all others what is at stake and that they cannot expect to subsequently correct such a major official act, I have become convinced that this is a more or less organized measure with the aim of systematically paralyzing the responsible work of a German authority.

In the period that followed, we were literally overwhelmed by mail containing incredibly varied written petitions. In some of these, it was tried to use the good offices of other German and Latvian agencies as well as members of the Armed Forces. All these persons were, of course, not aware about the actual situation and had not been informed about it by the petitioners. On the contrary, if these persons ready to intervene were told anything at all, it was almost always completely distorted information that was contrary to the facts.

To date, the overall result of the objections raised by men of these youngest age groups is as follows:

More than 1450 written petitions have been submitted; in more than 4300 cases, petitioners have come to us in person, either the young men themselves, or their parents or aunts or other representatives. This means that of the 6,827 men selected for military service, who represented only 34% of all potential draftees, about 70% have tried to use bureaucratic means to overturn the decision by the Selection Commission, which was assembled at great financial expense and consisted of highly qualified personnel.

Had my agency and I given in, the Legion and the Armed Forces would certainly now have less than 1,500 men from among the 6,827 who were selected for military service in my Region.

At present, a large number of the young men reporting to me come from farms. They have been found suitable to serve in the Armed Forces and in the Legion and have been selected for such service, but had been deferred until the end of the harvest. Instead of being grateful for this deferment by 6 months and instead of regarding it as a privilege in comparison with others of their age group who have already been at the front for months, they now demand a total exemption from military service.

Having been working in Latvia for more than 2 years, I know exactly how extremely stressed the situation in agriculture is. I am also very close to the farming community as the result of my upbringing. I know about the worries and hardships of farmers. In spite of this, I am of the opinion that we must remain firm with regard to farmers as well, when it comes to the young men born in those 6 years.

It is impossible that we in Riga, who are far away from the communities and municipalities, are better able to judge the situation based on a huge number of papers presented to us than the Selection Commission was at the time when it worked right on site in the respective areas.

Only when a particularly difficult event has occurred in the meantime, such as a death in the family, etc., which has completely altered the situation since the selection process took place 6 months ago, can I decide to reverse a decision that was made by the Selection Committee at the time. But such cases are very rare.

Hardships which no doubt occur in agriculture must be compensated for in such a way that the Municipal and District Councillors in conjunction with the Municipal or District Labour Committees [Gemeinde- bzw. Kreisarbeitsausschüsse] and the local authorities of the Labour Service Boards [Arbeits-einsatzbehörden] organize a form of "neighbourhood assistance" program, as has been done for years very successfully in the German Reich. In the organization of these neighbourhood assistance programs, the evacuees now arriving from Russia must play an important role and must be utilized to a major degree, if need be by combining them in groups supervised by local people.

In consideration of the situation which I have explained in some detail, I must ask you to take the same line that I take with regard to the treatment of the submitted and perhaps still to be submitted petitions by men of this particular age group. It is more in your own interest than in mine that the required manpower is made available to the Legion.

My agency and I will no longer participate in the "merry-go-round" that has now developed, namely to select men at great financial cost and by employing highly-qualified civilian and military personnel, then to exempt the men again, to select again, to exempt them again, etc.

I also want to defend myself quite firmly against the circumstance that men working for the authorities of the German as well as the Latvian Labour Service are more and more painted as villains by the population.

Of the approximately 18,000 young men who were drafted into the Legion in March/April of this year in all of Latvia, more than 4,000 have so far simply ignored the draft order. Another large number is said to have already deserted.

Should you nevertheless hold the opinion that as far as petitions for exemption are concerned, a more lenient attitude should have been applied in the past and could be applied in the future, I could, of course, proceed with such leniency in

our office as well. The population would then no longer have the impression that such "bad and unreasonable" men are sitting only in the Labour Service authorities, and that it is only necessary to contact other authorities, which are staffed by much more "reasonable" people, as the result of whose intervention the people at the Labour Service offices must always give in as well.

This is the form in which especially my administrative assistant, Senior District Secretary [Gebietsobersikretar] Benckendorf, is being attacked by the moderates. Due to the extreme staff shortage in my office, he is the only one to deal with all these petitions in accordance with my basic instructions, and as the only Reich German, he is the first line of defence against the visitors.

There are many others here who feel that they can act in a manner that cannot be described in simple words. In the end, this usually degenerates into bad-mouthing the entire office.

I will now close my extensive report about this actually unpleasant affair. It was necessary to make these statements in the interest of general understanding.

In terms of dealing with the already submitted petitions and those still expected, I will await your comments because I intend to base my future decisions in this regard on your fundamental attitude.

By order:  
signed Schmutzler.  
Senior District Councillor  
[Berzirksoberrat]

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*Location:* Bundesarchiv Koblenz, R92/12, Report from Schmutzler to Bangerskis, "Beschaffung des Mannschaftsbestandes fuer die lettische Legion," Riga, 8 October 1943. I thank Donald Powell for kindly bringing this document to my attention.

## Call-up in the Baltic General Districts

13 November 1943

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Section [Abt.] III Aso  
– Labour Operations [Arbeitseinsatz]

Riga, 13 November 1943

Subject: Call-up in the Baltic General districts

I. (March to August 1943)

The first call-up in the Baltic general districts – legal basis decree on labour obligation – was originally thought of only for labour service, but then with regard to the armed consumers [of manpower] – Wehrmacht, Legion, Police – was extended to them. It took up the age groups 1919/24/25 in Estonia and Latvia, in Lithuania also the age groups 1912/18, and brought forth 59,026 assignments for the armed units. The satisfaction of needs lay on average about 30%. The portion of the unsuitable amounted to 6.2% in Estonia, 15% in Latvia, 30.3% in Lithuania, in all districts 18% of those called up. The age group 1925 was called up only for labour service in this call-up and apparently in Estonia and Latvia only in the cities for operations in agriculture; in Lithuania in the whole country for operations in the peat industry. The total result throughout Estonia and Latvia was satisfactory, whereas in Lithuania only about half appeared and of the called up nearly a half produced no result.

II (Oct./Nov. 1943)

The second call-up was entirely different. It restricted itself to Estonia and Latvia, and had as its only goal to effect the replenishment of the SS-Legion in Latvia with 8,000 and in Estonia with 5,000 men that was required by the Reichsführer-SS [Heinrich Himmler].

In contrast to the first call-up, with the previously recorded lists provided by the police, according to which those called up were summoned, on this occasion the summons followed only through an announcement [Aufrufe; can also mean call-up, but seems even more redundant than the rest of memo]. The implementation lay in Latvia with the SS-Ersatzkommando [alternate command] Ostland. No legal basis existed here.

In Estonia the call-up was carried out, on the basis of the old Estonian Military Service Act, by the Land Self-Administration, who in agreement with the SS-Ersatzkommando Ostland, appointed the General Inspector of the Estonian Legion, Oberführer Sodla, as the one in charge of the project. Thirteen native [einheimische] conscription staffs supervised the call-up.

In Latvia in the period 4.10–29.10, were [examined] those in the 1919/24 age group who had been, in the first call up, in reserved occupations under the protection of production important to the war effort. Never the less, after the suspension of exemptions following 16.10.1943 the exempted were conscripted

without any further reserved occupations. From 1.11.43, then, the members of the age group 1923/24 were without exception mustered and conscripted. The result totals 9.11.1943 – 6,390 men. It could be supposed that the demand of the Latvian Legion [for conscripts] will be supplied.

In Estonia the second call-up began 3.11.1943. Here it was a question of the total mobilisation of the age group 1925. Up to 9.11.1943, 3,040 men were mustered and conscripted here. There it was foreseen that the reporting of 5,000 men would not happen, and it was ordered by teletype that the age group 1924, and if necessary also 1923 would be included. Hence, here also it can be foreseen that the demand [for conscripts] will be supplied

Those unfit for service in this purely military call-up amount to 25% in both Latvia and Estonia.

[Signature]

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*Location:* NA II. German Records Microfilmed at Alexandria, Virginia, No. 31. Records of the Office of the Reich Commissioner for the Baltic States, 1941–45. (Reichskommissar fuer das Ostland.). Microcopy T-454, Roll 16, Frames 481–2

## **Decree on the Induction of Men Born in 1915 and 1916**

1 February 1944

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Official Notice

Decree on the Induction of men born in 1915 and 1916  
into the Latvian Legion

Pursuant to the Decree of 25 November 1943 on the induction of Latvian citizens into active military service, I hereby instruct the city prefects and district police chiefs to call up for active military service in the Latvian Legion all men born in the years 1915 and 1916 who were Latvian subjects until 17 June 1940.

I hereby fix 7 February 1944 as the first day of induction for the City of Riga and for the cities of Libau [Liepāja] and Dünaburg [Daugavpils] and the administrative districts of Latvia, 9 February 1944.

Riga, 1 February 1944

signed R. Bangerskis  
General Inspector of the Latvian Legion [only in Latvian  
version]  
SS-Gruppenführer and Lieutenant General of Waffen-SS

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*Location: Tēvija* 2 February 1944 (in Latvian); *Deutsche Zeitung in Ostland* 2 February 1944 (in German); NA II microcopy T-459, Roll 25, Frames 246, 248, 250

## Further Conscription in the Riga Area

3 February 1944

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### Decree

On the basis of the decree of 25 November 1943 on the induction of Latvian citizens into active military service and in execution of the decree of 1 February (this year) No. 1616 on the induction of men born in 1915 and 1916 into the Latvian Legion issued by the general inspector of the Latvian SS-Volunteer Legion, I hereby mandate that:

Men with the above-noted years of birth who were Latvian citizens until 17 June 1940 and reside within the district Riga are to appear for examination at my administration Riga, Carl Ernst von Baerstr. /Skolas/ 30 as follows:

on 9 February (this year) 8:00 am

Cities: Riga-Strand [Rīgas Jūrmala], Schlock and Kemmern, municipality Holmhof

on 10 February (this year) 8:00 am

Cities: Oger [Ogre], municipalities Uexkuell, Ogermünde, Kirchholm, Stopiushof, Dreylingsbüsch, Magnushof, Neuermühlen and Rodenpois,

on 11 February (this year) 8:00 am

Municipalities Pinenhof, Baldohn, Dahlen, Katlekaln, Olai, Thomsdorff, Brambergsho\*[?]<sup>1</sup> and Lindenruh,

on 12 February (this year) 8:00 am

City Segeworld, Municipality Segewold, Allasch, Koltzen, Hinzenberg, Kremon, Loddiger, Ligat, Moritzberg, Pabbasch, Zögenhof, Adiamünde, Treyden, Nurmis und Widdrisch,

on 14 February (this year) 8:00 am

City: Stockmannshof, Ascheraden, Bewershof, Birsgallen, Jungfernhof, Kroppenhof, Ringmundshof, Kokenhusen, Ledemannshof, Lennewarden, Römershof, Ramdan, and Stockmannhof,

on 15 February (this year) 8:00 am

all of those men residing within the administrative borders of the district of Riga who have already appeared before the commission and whose induction into the Legion was postponed until 15 February (this year).

On the above mentioned days, the men living in the cities and municipalities in question – including those born in the years 1917, 1918, 1922, 1923, 1924 – who have already been inducted, but who for any reason have not yet appeared – are to appear before the military commission for a medical examination.

As those who are found suitable for military service will be deployed to Wehrmacht units [Wehrdienst is corrected by hand to Wehrmacht] all those persons to be inducted are to bring the following articles with them: passport, military service record, rations for 2 days, underwear, if possible high boots, blanket, kettle or clay bowl, spoon, knife, fork, cup, shaving gear, toothbrush, comb, mirror, and the like, as well as packing material for returning civilian clothing.

Compensation will be paid for the use of private boots and underwear.

All public offices, businesses and private persons are to release the inductees from their jobs and hand over their tallies to them by the day of their induction.

Persons who do not appear before the examination boards and avoid induction into the Latvian Voluntary SS Legion will be turned over to a special court martial for punishment.

Riga, 3 February 1944

Riga Alderman and Chairman of the Military Service Commission 16

Jānis Veide

[Added later by hand:]

13 February (this year) 8:00

Municipalities: Kastran, Kaipeis, Laubern, Sissegall, Altenwoga, Weissensee, Sunzel, Fistehlen, Jürgensburg, Siggund, Fossenberg, Nitan and Lemburg.

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*Location:* NA II microcopy T-459, Roll 25, Frames 269-71

## March 1944 Results in the Riga Area

6 March 1944

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Area Commissar - Labour Administration in Riga

Riga, 6 March 1944

Conscription Results from the birth years 1906 to 1914,  
plus 1919 to 1921, plus 1915 and 1916

The following abbreviations are used:

- |                                      |              |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|
| A - conscription by business concern | City of Riga |
| B - from newspaper announcements     | City of Riga |
| C - District Riga-Land               |              |

## D – District Modohn

		Districts:				
		A	B	C	D	Total
1.	called-up for conscription	21,972	14,255	<del>8,027</del>	4,783	48,859
2.	appeared for conscription	18,849	4,517	<del>6,380</del>	4,166	33,916
3.	suitable	10,447	1,742	<del>3,675</del>	2,932	18,807
4.	inducted immediately	4,088	982	<del>1,677</del>	630	7,375
5.	inducted for later	230	206	<del>45</del>	629	1,082
6.	in a reserved occupation until further notice	6,093	474	<del>1,832</del>	553	8,961
7.	in a reserved occupation temporarily	36	78	<del>155</del>	1,120	1,389
8.	unfit for service A	1,852	898	<del>676</del>	325	3,699
9.	unfit for service B	1,240	530	<del>374</del>	579	2,723
10.	unfit for service C	2,270	886	<del>1,128</del>	321	5,302
11.	unfit for service D	2,340	461	<del>577</del>	9	3,385

## Note:

The number of conscripts in B,1 appears to be smaller than the number in the daily telephone reports because in the latter those persons from the pool of conscripts who did not appear at the conscription in their workplaces, but appeared later at the conscription according to alphabetical order were included in the count.

z.d.a. 21:5/7d.

[Note: The figures in column C were amended by hand and then crossed out with a vertical line through the column. Some of the figures are not completely legible. MKB]

Location: NA II microcopy T-459, Roll 25, Frame 521

## A Legion Member Receives the Wound Badge

18 January 1945

*Comment:* Jēkabs Ruskis was only one of many soldiers of the Legion who were wounded or killed. Ruskis, born in 1906 and conscripted 1 April 1944, lost his right hand. German Military Hospital 2/608 issued him two certificates. One replaced his paybook, which had been destroyed by enemy action; the other entitled him to a wound badge, in silver. Both show his rank as "Leg.-Gren. [Legions-Grenadier]" not SS-Grenadier or Waffen-SS-Grenadier. See the affidavits of Albert Ekkehard and Ernst Rode, below, for the significance of this.

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### Certificate of Possession

Leg. Gren. Jekabs Ruskis  
(Name, Rank)

has been awarded, on the ground of his single wound/injury suffered 31.12.1944,  
The Wound Badge  
in Silver

18 Jan. 1945

[signature; P. Zimmer?]

Oberfeldarzt [Medical Lieutenant Colonel] and Chief Physician

Military Hospital 2/608

[seal]

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*Location:* Materials of Guntis Liepiņš, Toronto

### Affidavit of Albert Ekkehard

24 March 1948

*Comment:* There seem to have been cases of Latvians interned in SS camps after the war. The following is a translation of an affidavit by a General Staff Officer of the Waffen-SS on behalf of a Latvian interned with him in the Darmstadt internment camp. I have changed the Latvian's name to X.

SS officer Albert Ekkehard wished to supply testimony to clarify the Latvian's wartime status: "All foreign volunteers in the war against Bolshevism, who were *obliged* [emphasis in original] to serve in the Waffen-SS were not taken into the SS and were therefore never members of the SS, as the German volunteers were." The "rank designation for foreigners differed," as did their insignia.

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Ekkehard, Albert  
Darmstadt, 24 March 1948

#### Affidavit

I declare, advised of the character of an affidavit and that there are criminal consequences to a false affidavit:

I, Ekkehard Albert, born 3. 7. 1914 in Komotau (CSR), former Waffen-SS-Obersturmbannführer [=Lieutenant-Colonel], resident in Laupheim by Ulm a.d.D. [an der Donau], Grube 14, at the moment Darmstadt Internment Camp, am neither related to Mr X, born 14. 5. 17, nor related to him by marriage.

I was a General Staff Officer of the Waffen-SS and as such 3/4 Jah [?] Liaison Officer in the Armed Forces General Staff (1943).

I certify the following:

All foreign volunteers in the war against Bolshevism, who were *obliged* [emphasis in original] to serve in the Waffen-SS, were not taken into the SS and were therefore never members of the SS, as the German volunteers were. To distinguish [them], the rank designations for foreigners differed.

They [rank titles] read for them at first

“Legions-.....(Rank without the addition of “SS” )

for example, for X: “Legions-Hauptscharführer [Sergeant-Major]”

Later these designations were changed to

“Waffen-.....(Rank without the addition of “SS”)

for example, for X: “Waffen-Untersturmführer [Second Lieutenant].”

This made it clear, as far as the question of foreigners in the foreign Waffen-SS formations went, as the German volunteers such as SS-Untersturmführer [Second Lieutenants] etc. (rank with the addition of SS-....) were by this recognizable as members of the SS.

In addition to that, these foreign formations retained other collar patches, instead of SS collar patches, and the coat of arms of their homelands as sleeve badges.

[signed] Ekkehard Albert

The signature above was executed in my presence.

Darmstadt, 24 March 1948.

The Chairman [Vorsitzende] of the Main Court of the Camp  
[signature]

[stamp]German Internment Camp Darmstadt  
Camp Self-administration  
Main Court of the Camp

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*Location:* Materials of Professor Andrew Ezergailis, Ithaca College, Ithaca, New York

### Affidavit of Ernst Rode

25 March 1948

*Comment:* Another SS man at the Darmstadt internment camp wrote on behalf of this same Latvian, in an effort to help the Latvian out of the SS classification. Major General Ernst Rode described how the Latvian “so-called Waffen divisions of the SS” were formed: “The members of both these divisions themselves never became members of the SS,” if for no other reason than “according to the relevant decisions it was not even possible for him to be one [gar nicht sein konnte].”

---

#### Affidavit

I, Ernst Rode, born 9. 8. 1894 in Wuestewaltersdorf, former Major General of the Order Police, equivalent in rank to Major General of the Waffen-SS, in last appointment Chief of the Command Staff of the Reich Leader SS and Chief of the German Police [R.F.SS und Chef der deutschen Polizei; Heinrich Himmler], declare, in the awareness that giving a false affidavit is a criminal offence, the following:

I am neither related nor related by marriage to Mr X.

I certify the following:

The Latvian Voluntary Units – originally auxiliary police – were in the course of the war assembled into so-called Waffen-Divisions of the SS. The members of both these divisions themselves never became members of the SS, wore other collar patches, and bore other rank titles (for example, Legions-Obersturmführer [Lieutenant], later Waffen-Obersturmführer).

As towards the end of 1942 not enough voluntary enlistments arrived, recruiting appeared in the form of forced conscription. To my knowledge,

downright universal military conscription for Latvians was introduced in the beginning of 1943. The conscription lay in the hands of the Latvian General Bangerskis.

Mr X does not belong to the membership of the so-called criminal organisations according to the judgment of the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg, because he:

- 1 Never was a member of the SS and according to the relevant decisions it was not even possible for him to be one.
- 2 Was conscripted into the 15th Waffen-Division of the SS.

I can give this information because I myself for a short time in 1943 commanded a Latvian Brigade and know the circumstances there.

Darmstadt, 25 March 1948 [Signature]

The signature of Mr Erst [sic] Rode was executed before me.

Darmstadt, 25 March 1948

Chairman of the Main Camp Court  
[Signature]

[stamp] German Internment Camp Darmstadt  
Camp Self-administration  
Main Court of the Camp

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*Location:* Materials of Professor Andrew Ezergailis, Ithaca College, Ithaca, New York

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# 3

## American Intelligence Reports on Latvia during the Second World War

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Throughout the Second World War the U.S. Army, Office of Strategic Services (OSS), and Department of State were gathering intelligence reports on various places, including Latvia. The American legation in Sweden, for example, received information from exiled Latvians about conditions in the home country and transmitted it to the Secretary of State.

All of the documents on this chapter were found in U.S. Army Intelligence files.

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### “Baltic News”

30 October 1942

*Comment:* The report for 30 October 1942 follows. The report talks about volunteering – or else. It speaks of 18 to 20 000 Latvians fighting on the eastern front. Latvians captured by the Soviets are shot as traitors. There is mention of talk of “independence after the war.”

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Confidential  
War Department

Classified Message Center  
Incoming Message  
Airgram

From Stockholm

Dated: October 30, 1942

Rec'd: 2 p.m., Nov. 12th

Secretary of State  
Washington

A-53, October 30, 1942, 12 noon, Baltic News

From confidential Latvian source in Stockholm:

Informant who is former Latvian army officer asserted that there are 20 Latvian battalions, of 800 to 1,000 men in each, fighting against Russia on the Eastern front. They are stationed in areas where the fighting is heavy and have therefore suffered severe losses.

Latvian youths must either volunteer for service in the German army or sign a statement saying they do not desire to do so. In the latter case they and their families run the risk of being ejected from their land and homes. This German action is based on the principle that all Latvian property was nationalized by the Russian government and as a consequence of the occupation it becomes the property of the German government; those who refuse to assist Germany in her struggle against Russia must therefore not expect to live in German homes.

On the other hand, Latvian soldiers captured by the Soviets are shot as traitors because the Russians say they are fighting against the Red Latvian government which is functioning in exile in Russia. Informant commented that this was a tragic situation, which for the present could not be solved.

Minor Nazi officials in Latvia urge Latvian citizens to assist Germany in her present struggle and speak of independence after the war. Most Latvians realize, however, that real German intent is to make Latvia a colony for German soldiers who fought at the front and to enslave the Latvian people.

The food situation in Riga is unsatisfactory, but it is better in the country. It is reported that the Germans are carting everything they can to the front and to Germany.

A large number of German soldiers have been murdered in the province of Latgale and a few have been killed in the city of Riga. There is further evidence of opposition to the Germans in Latvia in statements frequently made by German officials warning the population against committing acts of sabotage. A certain number of Latvian citizens have been shot, but not anywhere near as many as during the Bolshevik occupation. Letters from Latvia to Sweden arrive irregularly. The tone of some of the recent ones has been: "Dear Friend - So little is happening here that it is best for me not to write."

Local Latvian circles have heard nothing about the fate of their compatriots who were evacuated to Russia. Informant stated that he hoped for Allied intervention to prevent another Russian massacre when the Germans are forced to withdraw from Latvia. He said that the decreases in Latvian population to date has been great and that further losses would seriously endanger the future of the country.

Greene

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*Location:* National Archives II, College Park, Maryland (NA II). RG 319, Records of the Army Staff, 1939-. Army Intelligence Project, Decimal Files, 1941-1945, Box 850, File 350.05, Latvia.

## Conditions in Latvia

30 October 1942

*Comment:* The War Department, too, collected data on eastern European countries, with a dossier on Latvia. It received a message similar to the one from Greene, as well as the following airgram from Stockholm, dated 30 October 1942, on problems the Germans were having with Baltic units.

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(Airgram from Stockholm, Oct. 30, 1942)

There are indications that the Germans were reluctant to permit the Baltic legions or auxiliary troops directly to participate in the defense of their countries for the apparent reasons, first, that the Baltic legions could not be fully trusted not to turn against the Germans if given a chance to do so, and, second, that they would be disinclined to cooperate effectively in the anticipated scorched-earth policy to be followed by the Germans if it should be necessary to withdraw beyond the Narva—Peipus—Pskov—Polotsk Line.

Source: Information Series No. 105A, 14 December 1943.

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*Location:* NA II. RG 319, Records of the Army Staff, 1939—. Army Intelligence Project, Decimal Files, 1941—1945, Box 850, File 350.05, Latvia.

### **“Latvia's Sufferings”**

27 June 1943

*Comment:* An article entitled “Latvia's Sufferings” appeared in the Swedish newspaper *Nya Dagligt Allehanda* on 27 June 1943. It was based on information communicated by Nils Bohman. The article was translated into English and transmitted by the American Legation in Stockholm to the United States.

A “so-called volunteer legion” is described and the difficulties in forming it: “Many Latvians fled into the forests and jumped off the railway trains.” Penalties for evading mobilization included concentration camps, compulsory labour, or death.

Enclosure no. 1 to despatch no. 1968, dated July 20, 1943, entitled: Transmitting Swedish Press Article Entitled "Latvia's Sufferings", from the American Legation at Stockholm, Sweden.

Source: Stockholm daily newspaper, *Nya Dagligt Allehanda*, June 27, 1943

Full Translation from Swedish

Title: Latvia's Sufferings

Sub-title: Information communicated by Nils Bohman

#### *Under the German Occupation*

The Germans utilized the hostile attitude of the people toward the Russians, among other things, for the establishment of a so-called volunteer legion. Six regiments were permitted, i.e. were ordered. All other persons who were compulsorily mobilized were sent to various units within the German Wehrmacht. Auxiliary troops for the Wehrmacht have also been organized – equipped with spades and rifles. War workers of this kind have frequently been sent to the front lines. A few of the mobilized persons have also been permitted to choose work at sea.

It is self-evident that the Latvians fought unwillingly for the Germans under German officers. The Latvian soldiers were sent to the most dangerous sectors of the front. The consequence was that in order to get soldiers in Latvia the Germans finally had to undertake raids and arrest or mobilize persons with the assistance of the police. Many Latvians fled into the forests and jumped off the railway trains. If possible they chose work at sea in order in this way to be able to flee. It should be pointed out in this connection that the influx of volunteers in the summer of 1940 [Note by Legation: Should be 1941], before the Latvians had come to know the Germans, was great; with the experience of the Russians still vivid in their memories the Latvians were not opposed to fighting the U.S.S.R.

Anti-German patriots and persons who evade mobilization are sentenced to severe penalties – concentration camps, compulsory labor (without sufficient food) or execution. There is one concentration camp in Salaspils and another in Riga. Many people are sent to Germany. In the concentration camps they are exposed to torture.

Every "anti-German" (even in the ironical sense of the word) is subject to punishment. In February, for example, three ballad singers sang comic-satiric songs during one of the radio entertainment programs of the Wehrmacht. One of the singers berated the Latvian girls who associated with German soldiers; he simply disappeared.

The farmers are obliged to make large deliveries to the occupation power. Every owner of a large farm must give 6 cows (or oxen) annually to the German Wehrmacht. Instead of a cow, two pigs may be given. A thorough control of all cattle is exercised: every calf, pig and lamb must be reported. After shearing of the sheep  $\frac{1}{2}$  kilogram of wool per sheep must be surrendered to the German authorities. All milk must be delivered to the authority dealing with this product. The milk separators have been confiscated.

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*Location:* NA II. RG 165, War Department. Records of the Eastern European Branch, Intelligence Data re Eastern European Countries, 1935-1944. Entry 77, Dossier Latvia.

## Radio Monitor's Report, June 1943

15 July 1943

*Comment:* The Latvian Radio Monitor's Report from Stockholm, for June 1943 reports that officers, non-commissioned officers and cadets have been ordered to register with the police not later than June 5, or face punishment. The order is said to come from General Dankers.

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Enclosure no. 1 to despatch no. 1959, dated July 15, 1943, from the American Legation, Stockholm, Sweden, entitled: "Latvian Radio Monitor's Report for June 1943."

## Memorandum

...  
Finally, Latvian officers, who have evidently not been joining up as freely as had been expected, non-commissioned officers and cadets, have now been ordered by General Dankers to register with the police not later than on June 5. Should they fail to do so, they will become liable to punishment according to war-time laws. Mention of this order was not made over the air. [Note by Legation: See Legation's telegram no. 1928 of June 22, 1943.]

The above measures added to all those taken formerly on the labor front – such as the registration of young men in the various districts, the dispatch of thousands of students and school children to do farm work, and the rule that clerks and officials of the public services whose presence is not indispensable must serve a six weeks' term on the land – would, to the onlooker, seem fairly comprehensive. But the Germans seem to hope that they may still find somebody somewhere whom they can press into service. Thus, in the *Deutsche Zeitung im Ostland* the public is being reminded by the police that every person over 15 years of age should carry an identity document and a card stating where he or she is employed – for purposes of control. Anyone who is unable to prove that he is working somewhere can presumably easily be converted into some kind of “volunteer.”

...

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*Location:* NA II. RG 165, War Department. Records of the Eastern European Branch, Intelligence Data re Eastern European Countries, 1935–1944. Entry 77, Dossier Latvia.

**“Labor Mobilization,” “Resistance,” “Sabotage”**

21 August 1943

*Comment:* A report of 21 August 1943 spoke of how the Latvians were trying to avoid being mobilized. There is discussion of resistance to mobilization in Estonia and Lithuania, as well as

sabotage against the Germans believed to be by communists, as well as by Latvian nationalists.

---

Secret

2320 (Sab.) Latvia

*Labor Mobilization.* Despite their other troubles it appears that the chief preoccupation of the Baltic peoples has continued to be how to avoid being mobilized. A Stockholm observer indicated that on the strength of numerous conflicting reports received, it was difficult to provide any reliable figures of the extent of the German success in the labor mobilization campaign but that it appeared that all the available youth of the country that had not fled or were in hiding were gradually being inducted.

Methods used in compelling the people to join the various legions or the auxiliary services of the armed forces, or to work in factories in the Baltic States or in Germany appeared to vary but there was reliable evidence that these methods included rough treatment and starvation. It was said, however, that they were beginning to be effective since, whereas a few months ago it had been reported that contingents of only several hundred were being sent to Germany for training, farewell ceremonies had recently mentioned the sending of "thousands" at a time.

*Resistance.* Resistance to the general mobilization decrees appeared to be most marked in Estonia and Lithuania. In the former country there was an increase of stories indicating that numerous able-bodied men were joining the so-called Brethren of the Woods and had become virtual outlaws. It was said that the punitive expeditions sent against these groups were only half-hearted and that some of the Estonian police, charged with rounding up, preferred to join them rather than fight them. On the other hand, it was claimed that Russian parachutists who sought to bring aid to the Brethren were quickly liquidated by them.

*Sabotage.* It was believed that Communists rather than the foregoing groups, however, were responsible for most of the sabotage against the Germans. Nevertheless, a particularly successful instance of sabotage was seen in the report of the destruction in late June of several trains bearing artillery and tanks in the vicinity of Saigalin in central Latvia. This act was attributed to Latvian nationalists, apparently operating independently of the Partisans, Communists

and certain other groups, who had taken to the woods solely to avoid the German mobilization program.

Source: Information Series No. 101A, Section II, issued for month of June, 21 August 1943. Filed as listed.

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*Location:* NA II. RG 165, War Department. Records of the Eastern European Branch, Intelligence Data re Eastern European Countries, 1935-1944. Entry 77, Dossier Latvia, File 2320.

### **“General Political and Economic Conditions”**

21 August 1943

*Comment:* Guerilla bands of communists have been returning to Latvia, as reported in the Stockholm press during June 1943 and summarized for the U.S. War Department.

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Secret  
2400 Latvia

*General Political and Economic Conditions.* The following represents a kaleidoscope of numerous reports carried in the Stockholm press during June on the general situation in the Baltic States: Agitation among all classes appears to be approaching a crisis. Communists, particularly in Latvia, who traveled east with the Russians in 1941 have returned to head guerilla bands which, according to the Moscow radio, are continually receiving reinforcements by air. The shortage of foodstuffs is becoming increasingly serious and is responsible for the outbreak of widespread epidemics. The general health situation is furthermore affected by the fact that troops returning from the front are not deloused except on their departure for Germany, with the result that typhus and other diseases are spreading and, because of the shortage of physicians, have gotten out of hand. Despite new German efforts to intimidate the farmers, as seen in a decree stipulating that recalcitrants will lose their farms, Baltic farmers continue

to fail to deliver their quotas on farm products and an ever greater number are being punished by forfeiture of their cattle and even dispossession of their farms and other property. The labor shortage is becoming increasingly acute as a result of demobilization. Reports in Tallin and Riga indicate that children who had formerly been compelled to work on the local farms are now being sent to work in camps in Germany.

Source: Information Series No. 101A, Section II, issued 21 August 1943 for month of June.

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*Location:* NA II. RG 165, War Department. Records of the Eastern European Branch, Intelligence Data re Eastern European Countries, 1935-1944. Entry 77, Dossier Latvia, File 2400.

### **“Political Mobilization in the German-Occupied Baltic Countries”**

25 February 1944

*Comment:* The political aspirations of the Baltic countries and statements by Germany to fulfil them were reported: “Foreign nations taking part in the fight against communism do this exclusively for their own interest and in a wider sense for the interests of Europe. They do not fight for Germany.”

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Secret

Political Mobilization in the German-Occupied  
Baltic Countries

*Political Measures.* The Germans are casting these administrative measures in the political mold of the struggle of the Baltic peoples for national liberation, representing them as the Baltic answer to the recent Soviet federalization decrees. Thus a spokesman of the Wilhelmstrasse emphasized the independence of the

Estonian administration in decreeing the mobilizations and stated concerning them: "Foreign nations taking part in the fight against communism do this exclusively for their own interest and in a wider sense for the interests of Europe. They do not fight for Germany."<sup>1</sup>

While announcing that the Estonian armed units are receiving German equipment,<sup>2</sup> the Nazis promised that the military training would take place in Estonia.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the Finnish press announced that Estonia and Latvia had received assurances of their future political existence.<sup>4</sup> Nor have minority groups been neglected by the Germans. A recent decree by the German General Commissar for Estonia created self-administrative organs for the Russian and Swedish minorities in that country,<sup>5</sup> while a decree of the Reich Commissar for the Ostland abolishes the status of Eastern Worker (*Ostarbeiter*) for Russians and Ukrainians in the Baltic General Districts and equates them with the local Baltic workers.<sup>6</sup>

The relationship, however, between the political concessions and the military necessity is established by the fact that Estonians are replacing Germans in the civil and military administrations<sup>7</sup> only now when the German civil administration is preparing to evacuate and the Wehrmacht is concerning itself with operational problems. Moreover, while those guilty of desertion and other infractions of German military regulations among Baltic soldiers have been reprieved or given probationary relief, this has been definitely linked to "the seriousness of the situation, which is such that the defense of the Baltic States requires every man."<sup>8</sup> But the Germans have not gone beyond this marginal sphere and have not made any formal grants of independence.

While holding out vague promises, they show clearly their intention to maintain ultimate control and to grant even the forms of sovereignty only after they have drained every possible contribution in return for it. Thus the German-controlled Estonian radio reminded its listeners that "the Baltic states had opposed Germany for twenty years and disregarded all German warnings" and that, as concerns present cooperation, "it would be wrong to assume everything is in perfect order"; "many important problems must be postponed until the end of the war," but "Adolf Hitler has decided that in case the Latvians, Estonians, and Lithuanians prove their determination to cooperate in the present struggle, they shall receive their share of the fruits of victory and be permitted to round out their own future."<sup>9</sup>

Hence it has been reported that their propaganda overtures have not convinced the native populations: the mobilizations have had to take a somewhat indirect

form – new conscripts go into the military administration or into para-military organizations like the self-defense units, and protective police, and the RAD, while these units furnish more reliable men for actual front fighting.<sup>10</sup>

Moreover, the representative leaders outside the framework of the puppet administrations are not responding: officials of the former independent Estonian government have intimated that they have control of several regiments of the Estonian armed forces and that these have been instructed to resist the Germans if they attempt a total evacuation of the Estonian population and to put up a token resistance to the Red Army. They hope for a few days' grace between the end of the German and the beginning of the Russian control to proclaim Estonian independence and set up a provisional government. By means of this gesture they hope to mobilize world opinion which will force concessions from the Russians.<sup>11</sup> This gamble of everything upon a few hours of actual independence shows that the Baltic leaders see through German offers of a limited sovereignty tainted by conditions of defeat which prompt them.

Source: OSS, Research & Analysis No. 1905, 25 February 1944.

<sup>1</sup> FCC Central European Analysis, No. 57, 10 Feb. 1944

<sup>2</sup> Helsinki wire 102, 7 Feb. 1944

<sup>3</sup> Stockholm wire 362, 4 Feb. 1944

<sup>4</sup> Helsinki wire 102, 7 Feb. 1944

<sup>5</sup> *Revaler Zeitung* (News Digest 1349)

<sup>6</sup> *Revaler Zeitung*, 24 December 1943 (News Digest 1353); 100,000 Russians are reported to have been evacuated to Latvia alone, and these remain strongly Communist (OSS 28437). The improvement in their labor status is evidently designed as a sop to a group which has become dangerous through its size and its attitude.

<sup>7</sup> Stockholm wire 374, 5 Feb. 1944.

<sup>8</sup> *Daughavas Vanagi* (German-controlled Latvian front paper), via *Afiontidningen* 15 Jan. 1944 (News Digest 1345)

<sup>9</sup> FCC, Eastern European Analysis, No. 17, 26 Jan. 1944

<sup>10</sup> OSS Daily Intelligence Summary, 7 Feb. 1944

<sup>11</sup> OSS 28415. At least one prominent Estonian leader, however – Uluots, former Premier and Speaker of the National Assembly in independent Estonia – who has previously refused to collaborate with the Germans, has now spoken out in favor of the mobilization and has publicly advocated that settlement of German–Estonian relations wait until the end of the war. This appears to be an isolated case, however, since the negotiations of Dr. Mae with Estonian political

leaders looking to their inclusion in his government have been reported as a failure. Stockholm wire 425, 9 Feb. 1944.

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*Location:* NA II. RG 165, War Department. Records of the Eastern European Branch, Intelligence Data re Eastern European Countries, 1935–1944. Entry 77, Dossier Latvia, File 6900.

### **“Military and Political Mobilization in the German-Occupied East”**

25 February 1944

*Comment:* In February 1944 a report was received by U.S. intelligence that mobilization orders had been issued in Estonia and Latvia for the age classes 1904 to 1925 (November 1943). The informant is apparently quoting the leaders of “the three native Baltic administrations as having proclaimed: ‘the long cherished wish of the Baltic patriots to defend their countries near their own frontiers – the legionaries original task has been realized.’”

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Secret

#### Military and Political Mobilization in the German-Occupied East

With the penetration of the Red Army into Estonia, the Germans have gone into frenzied activity to prepare the entire area of the Baltic countries as a combat zone.<sup>1</sup> This activity is both military and political, and consequently involves both the German authorities and the Baltic puppet administrations.

*Military Measures.* In Jan. the semi-official German press in the Ostland declared that in the Baltic war zone “there is no longer any limits for military operations. The whole territory is practically one battlefield...”<sup>2</sup>

On this basis the heads of the three Baltic native administrations declared, in proclamations issued at that time that the military situation in the Baltic war zone was such that "the long cherished wish of the Baltic patriots to defend their countries near their own frontiers – the legionaries' original task – has now been realized."<sup>3</sup> In the first days of Feb. these puppet leaders proclaimed a state of emergency in their respective countries and have mobilized the whole able-bodied population for military or para-military service.<sup>4</sup>

This has been the most extensive in Estonia and Latvia, which have received, in the realm of promise, the most favorable political treatment from Germany. In Estonia the First National Director, Dr. Mae, has proclaimed the mobilization of all Estonian males, aged 17–60 into a "Protective Corps" for "self-defense."<sup>5</sup> Within this general order, military mobilization proper has been decreed for the age-classes 1904–1923 and for all former members of the army of independent Estonia as well as for physicians, veterinaries, pharmacists, and medical personnel of all kinds. The induction of the 1914–1918 classes was reported as completed by 5 Feb. and the accomplishment of the entire military mobilization was expected by 19 Feb.<sup>6</sup>

The older men in these groups, who are presumed to have already had military experience are being sent into immediate active service, the younger are sent to training camps.<sup>7</sup> The 1924 and 1925 year-classes were called up in Nov. and Dec., and at that time Mae ordered the cancellation of all deferments. In Latvia where the mobilization of the 1915–25 classes for the Latvian SS Legion was decreed in Nov., the 1918–21 classes are now being called up and the conscription of the 1906–1914 age-groups has been announced by Gen. Dankers, head of the native administration, in a proclamation calling on "The Latvian soldier once more" to "defend the freedom of his country – against the tyranny of Moscow."<sup>8</sup>

In Lithuania, where the opposition of the native population has prevented the formation of a Waffen SS legion, the Germans have been driven to concede the principle and are agreeing to the formation of a Lithuanian command which would be employed only for the defense of the country in the event of a Russian invasion. The Germans have already proposed three candidates, former officers of the army of independent Lithuania, for the command, with the hope that they will be acceptable to the Lithuanian people.<sup>9</sup>

This concession of a separate military unit, the first to be made by the Germans to an occupied country, is motivated by the fact that only thus can the Germans hope to achieve military mobilization in Lith. The actual formation of the unit,

however, is being held up by the German demand that a petition for its establishment be submitted by prominent Lithuanians. Thus far the Lithuanians have refused to save the Germans' face, generally on the grounds that there are no accredited representatives of the people to act in this capacity.

The Germans have contented themselves with conscripting twenty year-classes for para-military labor service.<sup>10</sup> They have announced that the entire population of the Baltic area is subject to mobilization for work on fortifications.<sup>11</sup>

This mobilization of the Baltic peoples by the Germans is to prepare not only for defense but also for defeat. Hence it is related not only to military and para-military service but also serves to prepare arrangements for total evacuation of the Baltic area. East Prussia is being prepared for the reception of a million and a half evacuees from the Baltic area, and the General Government.<sup>12</sup>

The function of this evacuation is two-fold: it is part of the scorched-earth policy the Germans intend to pursue, and as the shipment of a large number of Lithuanian construction workers to East Prussia reveals, the refugees are to form a labor force to work on the fortifications of the Reich's inner security wall. Many ships in Copenhagen, the harbors of Norway, and in Stettin have already been ordered to Riga to evacuate refugees.<sup>13</sup> The Estonian border areas, including the city of Narva, are being completely evacuated, and the removal from Tallinn is being prepared. It is reported that the evacuation of German civilians from Tallinn was scheduled for 15 Feb. at the latest.

The German civil administration in Estonia is already packing its archives and is preparing to turn over its authority to the German Wehrmacht.<sup>14</sup>

Other measures in military preparation of the Baltic area as a combat zone include the provision of the death penalty in Estonia and Latvia for all who fail to report enemy agents, parachutists, and communists,<sup>15</sup> the execution of thirteen persons by order of a court martial for war crimes,<sup>16</sup> the prohibition of the sale of intoxicating beverages throughout the whole of the Baltic area,<sup>17</sup> and in Estonia the blocking of all roads, the prohibition of all civilian railway traffic, and the cancellation of all travel permits,<sup>18</sup> the drive by the authorities to secure the delivery of agricultural quotas while transportation for civil commercial purposes remains open, the requisitioning by the Wehrmacht of foodstuffs in the rural areas, their taking over of foodshops in the towns, the registration of all vehicles, horses, and skis.<sup>19</sup>

Source: OSS, R&A No. 1905, 25 Feb. 1944.

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*Progress of Recruiting Campaign.* According to a fairly reliable source in Bern the Germans as of early January had contrived to obtain 4,200 volunteers for the SS in Lithuania, 3,700 in Latvia and 2,100 in Estonia.

Source: Inf. Series, No. 110A, 28 Jan. 1944.

<sup>1</sup> See R & A 1756, "Development of the German Pattern of Occupation."

<sup>2</sup> *Deutsche Zeitung im Ostland* and *Revaler Zeitung* via *Aftontidningen*, 15 Jan. 1944 (News Digest 1345)

<sup>3</sup> *Aftontidningen*, 15 Jan. 1944 (News Digest 1345)

<sup>4</sup> Stockholm wire 374, 5 Feb. 1944

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* 348, 3 Feb. 1944

<sup>6</sup> Stockholm wire 395, 7 Feb. 1944

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* 348, 3 Feb. 1944

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* 406, 6 Feb. 1944; Riga, Latvian Home Service, 4 Feb. 1944 (FCC daily).

<sup>9</sup> OSS Daily Intelligence Summary, 4 Feb. 1944; Stockholm wire A-99, 27 Jan. 1944

<sup>10</sup> Stockholm wire 395, 7 Feb. 1944

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* 406, 8 Feb. 1944

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* 374, 5 Feb. 1944

<sup>13</sup> Stockholm wire 397, 7 Feb. 1944

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* 374, 5 Feb. 1944. The Estonian order on this subject was issued by the German Commander in Chief in Estonia in a proclamation to the population: "Many persons connected with enemy agents have already been executed. Agents and parachutists repeatedly try to infiltrate among the population in order to procure information useful to the enemy. They also try to procure foodstuffs and offer their parachutes and other equipment as payment. Any support given to these agents is supporting the enemy and will, in accordance with the war laws, be punished by death." The Latvian order was issued as part of the proclamation of the state of emergency by the head of the native administration.

<sup>16</sup> *Svenska Dagbladet*, 22 Jan. 1944 (News Digest 1351)

<sup>17</sup> Stockholm wire, 374, 5 Feb. 1944

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* 362, 4 Feb. 1944

*Location:* NA II. RG 165, War Department. Records of the Eastern European Branch, Intelligence Data re Eastern European Countries, 1935–1944. Entry 77, Dossier Latvia.

## “Reprisals”

1 May 1944

*Comment:* By May 1944 preparations were in full swing for the expected return of the Soviets. This included mass evacuations to Germany as well as reprisals against any who sheltered deserters.

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Extract  
Latvia  
3020/G. Reprisals

Stockholm, via London, 27 April. Johnson (Minister).

The “Latvian free radio” says that mass arrests and mass deportations on a hitherto unknown scale have been carried out by the German authorities in Latvia. The country has been combed for all unreliable elements who could endanger the country’s defense against the expected Russian offensive. All Latvian officers, soldiers, and civilians with relatives in the Soviet Union, or persons whose relatives fled the country, have been dismissed from posts and mass evacuated to Germany. The same source declares that hundreds of families who sheltered deserters have been arrested and transferred to unknown destinations.

Source: Information from State Department Cables, 1 May 1944.

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*Location:* NA II. RG 165, War Department. Records of the Eastern European Branch, Intelligence Data re Eastern European Countries, 1935–1944. Entry 77, Dossier Latvia, File 3020.

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## 4

# Yalta and the Origins of the Repatriation Question

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The most important wartime agreement between the Soviets and the Americans, as far as concerns Latvians, was the one signed at Yalta.<sup>1</sup> Code-named Argonaut 150, the official name of this document is "Agreement Relating to Prisoners of War and Civilians Liberated by Forces Operating under Soviet Command and Forces Operating under United States Command." It was signed by military representatives for each side, Major General John R. Deane, for the United States, and Lieutenant General Gryzlov, for the Soviet Union; an identical agreement was signed the same day at Yalta by the Soviets and the British, however, with the Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden signing for the British, and Foreign Commissar V. Molotov signing for the Soviet Union.

The document in its entirety is reproduced here so that the reader can see what it says. The more interesting point, however, is what it does not say. On the face of it, this is an entirely reciprocal agreement, entailing the same procedures for each side. It did not work out that way. For example, the United States had serious problems in trying to reach and retrieve its soldiers in U.S. zones at the end of the war.

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<sup>1</sup>These comments are worked out in more detailed form in my paper, "How Yalta Saved the Balts," given at the 16th Conference of the Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies (AABS), 19–21 June 1998, in Bloomington, Indiana. See also the chapter on Yalta in my doctoral dissertation (in progress), "U.S. Foreign Policy in the Field: The Army and the Balts, 1944–1947" (University of Toronto).

The Yalta Repatriation Agreement sent millions of Russians and other Soviet citizens back to their homelands.<sup>2</sup> Under the terms of the agreement, Balts could have been sent back to the countries that they came from. The repatriation agreement signed at Yalta contains the word "citizen" fifteen times. The agreement does not, however, ever define "citizen," and, what is more important, there is utterly no discussion of the meaning of the term "Soviet citizen." This, I submit, was not – certainly for the Western allies – simply an oversight.

Latvians did not consider themselves to be Soviet citizens. In the summer of 1940, when it took over the Baltic countries, the Soviet Union was neither an enemy nor an ally of the United States. That July, Sumner Welles, for the United States Department of State, issued an announcement condemning the Soviet annexations of the Baltic States.<sup>3</sup> The United States never changed its position on this, although the British would have happily done so, particularly in their treaty with the Soviets of May 1942.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>We know from the work on repatriation by Mark Elliott (see *Pawns of Yalta*, 1982), and others (for example, Nicolai Tolstoy's controversial, *Victims of Yalta*, 1978, Julius Epstein's *Operation Keelhaul*, 1973, and Nicholas Bethell's *The Last Secret*, 1974) that many, many people were repatriated, often forcibly, at the request of the Soviet Union. The question arises, How is it that the Balts were not repatriated? How did "Baltic Exceptionalism," as I have come to call it, happen?

<sup>3</sup>See I Grava-Kreituse, I. Feldmanis, D.A. Loeber, J. Goldmanis, and A. Stranga, *The Occupation and Annexation of Latvia: 1939–1940. Documents and Material* (Riga, 1995), p. 322, Document 143, A Declaration Signed by the Deputy Secretary of State of the United States of America, S. Welles, Washington, 23 July 1940.

<sup>4</sup>Sir Llewellyn Woodward, *British Foreign Policy in the Second World War* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1971), vol. 2, p. 245ff.

President Roosevelt was aware of the predicament of the Baltic countries. He discussed this in a personal interview with Stalin at Tehran in late 1943.<sup>5</sup> Roosevelt told Stalin then that he was not prepared to go to war over the Baltic countries. Roosevelt also told Stalin then that, with an election year coming up, he could not publicly speak out in favour of the annexations. In addition, it was a principle for Roosevelt, and those instructed by him, that while the war was still on there was to be no recognition of territorial changes created by or during the war.

The Soviet Union wanted those Baltic legionnaires that they had not captured themselves, that is, those who had surrendered to the other Allies, to be repatriated to the Soviet Union. They claimed this, throughout the early postwar period, on the basis of the Yalta Agreement on Repatriation. At Halle, however, on 23 May 1945 the Americans and the British had declared that they did not consider that the Balts fell into the category of Soviet citizens, who were defined by the Americans and British as people who had been Soviet citizens at the outbreak of the the war on 1 September 1939.<sup>6</sup> The Baltic countries were not part of the Soviet Union when the war started (unfortunately for the Ukrainians, Ukraine was). Thus, after the war ended, the Balts who then found themselves in DP or prisoner of war camps were not forcibly repatriated to the Soviet Union.

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<sup>5</sup>*Foreign Relations of the United States. Diplomatic Papers. The Conferences at Cairo and Tehran, 1943* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961), pp. 594–5.

<sup>6</sup>See Adolfs Sprudz, *The Baltic States and American Policy, 1940–1953* (Louvain, 1954), p. 87–8, and Malcolm J. Prudfoot, *European Refugees, 1939–1952: A Study in Forced Population Movement* (London: Faber and Faber, 1957), pp. 207ff.

## Argonaut 150 – the Yalta Agreement on Repatriation

11 February 1945

*Comment:* This is the British–Soviet version of the infamous Yalta Agreement on Repatriation. As already stated, the American–Soviet version is identical except for the substitution of “United States” for “United Kingdom” and “citizen” for “subject.”

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Confidential

Agreement Relating to Prisoners of War and Civilians Liberated by Forces  
Operating under Soviet Command and Forces Operating under British  
Command

The Governments of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, of Canada, of Australia, of New Zealand, of the Union of South Africa and of India on the one hand and the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the other hand, wishing to make arrangements for the care and repatriation of Soviet citizens freed by forces operating under British command and for British subjects freed by forces operating under Soviet command, have agreed as follows:

### Article 1

All Soviet citizens liberated by the forces operating under British command and all British subjects liberated by the forces operating under Soviet command will, without delay after their liberation, be separated from enemy prisoners of war and will be maintained separately from them in camps or points of concentration until they have been handed over to the Soviet or British authorities, as the case may be, at places agreed upon between those authorities.

British and Soviet military authorities will respectively take the necessary measures for protection of camps and points of concentration from enemy bombing, artillery fire, &c.

## Article 2

The contracting parties shall ensure that their military authorities shall without delay inform the competent authorities of the other party regarding citizens or subjects of the other contracting party found by them, and will at the same time take the necessary steps to implement the provisions of this agreement. Soviet and British repatriation representatives will have the right of immediate access into the camps and points of concentration where their citizens or subjects are located and they will have the right to appoint the internal administration and set up the internal discipline and management in accordance with military procedure and laws of their country.

Facilities will be given for the despatch [sic.] or transfer of officers of their own nationality to camps or points of concentration where liberated members of the respective forces are located and there are insufficient officers. The outside protection of and access to and from the camps or points of concentration will be established in accordance with the instructions of the military commander in whose zone they are located, and the military commander shall also appoint a commandant, who shall have the final responsibility for the overall administration and discipline of the camp or point concerned.

The removal of camps as well as the transfer from one camp to another of liberated citizens or subjects will be effected by agreement with the competent Soviet or British authorities. Removal of camps and transfer of liberated citizens or subjects may, in exceptional circumstances, also be effected without preliminary agreement, provided the competent authorities are immediately notified of such removal or transfer with a statement of the reasons. Hostile propaganda directed against the contracting parties or against any of the United Nations will not be permitted.

## Article 3

The competent British and Soviet authorities will supply liberated citizens or subjects of the contracting parties with adequate food, clothing, housing and medical attention both in camps or at points of concentration and en route, and with transport until they are handed over to the Soviet or British authorities at places agreed upon between those authorities. The standards of such food, clothing, housing and medical attention shall, subject to the provisions of Article 8, be fixed on a basis for privates, noncommissioned officers and officers. The basis fixed for civilians shall as far as possible be the same as that fixed for privates.

The contracting parties will not demand compensation for these or other similar services which their authorities may supply respectively to liberated citizens or subjects of the other contracting party.

#### Article 4

Each of the contracting parties shall be at liberty to use in agreement with the other party such of its own means of transport as may be available for the repatriation of its citizens or subjects held by the other contracting party. Similarly each of the contracting parties shall be at liberty to use in agreement with the other party its own facilities for the delivery of supplies to its citizens or subjects held by the other contracting party.

#### Article 5

Soviet and British military authorities shall make such advances on behalf of their respective Governments to liberated citizens and subjects of the other contracting party as the competent Soviet and British authorities shall agree upon beforehand.

Advances made in currency of any enemy territory or in currency of their occupation authorities shall not be liable to compensation.

In the case of advances made in currency of liberated non-enemy territory, the Soviet and British Governments will effect, each for advances made to their citizens or subjects, necessary settlements with the Governments of the territory concerned, who will be informed of the amount of their currency paid out for this purpose.

#### Article 6

Ex-prisoners of war and civilians of each of the contracting parties may, until their repatriation, be employed in the management, maintenance and administration of the camps or billets in which they are situated. They may also be employed on a voluntary basis on other work in the vicinity of their camps in furtherance of the common war effort in accordance with agreements to be reached between the competent Soviet and British authorities. The question of payment and other conditions of labour shall be determined by agreement between these authorities. It is understood that liberated members of the respective forces will be employed in accordance with military standards and procedure and under the supervision of their own officers.

Article 7

The contracting parties shall wherever necessary, use all practicable means to ensure the evacuation to the rear of these liberated citizens or subjects. They also undertake to use all practicable means to transport liberated citizens or subjects to places to be agreed upon where they can be handed over to the Soviet or British authorities respectively. The handing over of these liberated citizens or subjects shall in no way be delayed or impeded by the requirements of their temporary employment.

Article 8

The contracting parties will give the fullest possible effect to the foregoing provisions of this Agreement, subject only to the limitations in detail and from time to time of operational, supply and transport conditions in the several theatres.

Article 9

This Agreement shall come into force on Signature.

Done at the Crimea in duplicate and in the English and Russian languages, both being equally authentic, this eleventh day of February, 1945.

For the Government of the United Kingdom: A. Eden

For the Government of Canada: A. Eden

For the Government of Australia: A. Eden

For the Government of New Zealand: A. Eden

For the Government of Union of South Africa: A. Eden

For the Government of India: A. Eden

For the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics: V. Molotov

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*Location:* National Archives II, College Park, Maryland, RG 331, Entry 6, Box 5.

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## 5

### U.S. Army Documents 1945-1950

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Latvian prisoners of war became a problem for the Western Allies. The Soviets claimed they were Soviet citizens caught in German uniforms and wanted them back under the terms of the Yalta Agreement. As the story unfolded, everyone involved – the military governments of the zones of Germany, Allied governments, and many other official and non-official agencies – considered the questions regarding the legionnaires: were they United Nations nationals (and if so, were they Soviet citizens?) or neutrals, were they war criminals (as the Soviets insisted after their initial efforts to claim them as Soviet citizens failed), were they SS members, and, perhaps most important of all, were they volunteers?

#### **“Disposal of Allied and Neutral Nationals Captured when Serving in Enemy Forces”**

10 July 1945

*Comment:* Concerning what was to be done with “Allied and Neutral Nationals captured when serving in enemy forces” all, other than war criminals and security suspects, were to be repatriated – “except nationals of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland.”

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From: AGWAR from the Combined Chiefs of Staff

To for action: AFHQ to Alexander

For Info: SHAEF MAIN for Eienhower, AMSSO for British Chiefs of Staff

Ref No: WX-29481, 10 July 1945

Book Message

FAN 588

SCAF-436 and FACS-248 will be referred to in FAN-589 which immediately follows. Text of these messages follows:

SCAF 436

"Subject: Disposal of Allied and Neutral Nationals Captured when Serving in Enemy Forces.

"Present instructions for Allied nationals are based upon FACS-53 amended by FACS-94 in accordance with our SCAF-84. Present cable supersedes SCAF-191 which requested modification of present instructions. Unconditional surrender and occupation of GERMANY have removed possibility of reprisals against Allied prisoners of war.

"It is urgently necessary to reduce the number of prisoners of war at earliest opportunity by discharging all classes of prisoners not likely to be required by Allies. All nationals of BELGIUM, FRANCE, LUXEMBOURG, and NETHERLANDS are now being handed over to their national authorities, subject to the following exceptions:

"A. War criminals whose crimes were committed against nations other than their own.

"B. Security suspects and other persons wanted by United Nations other than their own.

"It is now proposed:

"1. To similarly deliver citizens of all other United Nations (except nationals of ESTONIA, LATVIA, LITHUANIA, and POLAND) to their national authorities, with the same exceptions as above, as soon as necessary arrangements can be effected.

"2. To deliver all neutrals to their own governments, less same exceptions as above. In this connection instructions are requested as to whether any special treatment should be accorded to those with ardent nazi tendencies but who cannot be classified as war criminals or security suspects.

"Disposal of Soviet categories is covered by CRIMEA Agreement. Disposal of nationals of POLAND and other BALTIC countries is awaiting clarification of policy.

"Authority for above action urgently required. Presume you will consult both British and US Governments, which may entail some delay. If decisions regarding disposal of any party of the above are likely to cause delay, request immediate authority be given for any portion that you can now approve."

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*Location:* National Archives II, CollegePark, Maryland (NA II). RG 331, Records of Allied Operational and Occupation Headquarters, World War II, 1943-1946. Entry 6, Box 24.

### **"Disposal of 6500 Ex-members of the Waffen SS, Who Are of Other than German Nationality"**

13 November 1945

*Comment:* Ex-members of the Waffen-SS should be released to their governments "under the same policies covering turnover of Wehrmacht members."

From Commander in Chief, United States Forces European Theater, Main, Frankfurt, Germany, to War Department.

From: CG. USFET Main Frankfurt, Germany

To: War Department

Nr: S 31313

13 November 1945

S 31313 to AGUAR for action and to Office of Military Government Germany (US) signed \*atton \*\*to ETGAP

Now held are 6500 ex-members of the Waffen SS, who are of other than German nationality. Providing there is no objection on the part of the War Department, it is our intention to release these individuals to their governments, under the same policies covering turn over of Wehrmacht members. This decision has been based on the following reasons:

A. Release of this category is being pressed by Allied Nations, and it is believed their nationals will be appropriately dealt with.

B. The release of nationals of other than Allied Nations is believed not to be detrimental to the security of Germany.

C. The retention of this group adds to the burden on overtaxed installations.

D. Mr Justice Jackson has indicated that he has no objection to release of non-German SS members to their native countries. No war criminals or persons wanted by nations other than their own will be released by this action. It was agreed to initiate releases of this category on 25th November 1945, providing an indication of disapproval by you has not been received by that date.

End

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*Location:* NA II. RG 165, War Department. Entry 418, Box 1303-C, File OPD 383.6, Case 496.

## **“Baltic and Polish Nationals Captured while Serving in the Wehrmacht”**

9 March 1946

*Comment:* Baltic and Polish nationals captured while serving in the Wehrmacht should be released from prisoner of war status and given DP status, with exceptions. In the case of Balts the exception were war criminals and those who volunteered to serve “of their own free will.”

---

9 March 1946

OMGUS, Berlin, Germany

COMGENUSFET Main, Frankfurt, Germany

COMGENMED, Caserta, Italy

CG, USF of Occupation Austria, Vienna, Austria

Number: WARX 80088

Book Message to Clay, McNamey, Lee and Clark from the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The following, received from the State, War and Navy Departments in reply to memorandum sent to you in WARX 79190, is forwarded for your information and guidance:

“1. All Baltic and Polish nationals captured while serving in the Wehrmacht should be released from Prisoner of War status and given the status of Displaced Persons, except:

a. Those against whom there is satisfactory evidence that they are war criminals.

b. Those Polish citizens against whom the Polish authorities present satisfactory evidence to show that the individuals concerned should be considered to be traitors to their country because of their own free will they volunteered for enlistment in the German Armed Forces. These persons should be turned over to the Polish authorities by force if necessary.

c. Those nationals of the Baltic States who, on the basis of satisfactory evidence, appear to have of their own free will volunteered for service in the German Army. Because of the peculiar situation pertaining to the Baltic States these persons cannot be turned over to any governmental authority we recognize and therefore they should be treated in the same manner as other German Prisoners of War.

"2. In order to clarify which persons should be considered nationals of the Baltic countries and who should, therefore, be accorded treatment outlined in paragraph 1 above, the following definition should be applied:

"All persons, except for persons specified below, who were nationals of and domiciled in one of the Baltic States on or before July 15, 1940, as well as all persons who can establish satisfactorily that they affirmatively maintained their citizenship in one of the Baltic States although they did not reside in one of these states on the above mentioned date, shall be considered to be nationals of one of the Baltic States. On the other hand, those persons of German nationality, members of the German minority, or persons who claimed to belong to the German community, formerly resident in the Baltic States, who accepted transfer in 1939, 1940 or 1941 to Germany or German-occupied territory pursuant to German agreements to this end concluded on October 15, 1939 with Estonia, on October 30, 1939 with Latvia, and on January 10, 1941 with the Soviet Union, then occupying Latvia and Lithuania, should be considered as German nationals and treated as such."

End

ORIGINATOR: JC/S

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*Location:* NA II. RG 165, War Department. Civil Affairs Division, Information Branch, Security-classified War Refugee Board (WRB) & Other Messages Related to the International Refugee Organization Program & the Activities of the International Refugee Organization, July 1944-June 1948. Entry 475, Box 853.

## G2 interview with Latvian DP re Latvian Legion

21 March 1946.

*Comment:* A Latvian DP discussed the wartime mobilization of Latvians with a civilian in the U.S. Army intelligence branch (G-2).

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21 March 1946

Notes on informal interview of Mr. Kirston, US civilian, G-2, Third Army, with Latvian displaced person Norine Dzidrs, employed at UNRRA US Zone headquarters, Munich-Passing, Team 555: The Germans made much propaganda for the Latvian Legion after 1941, stating that it would be used only to fight Russia, and never employed in the West. As a result, many Latvians who hated Russia joined voluntarily. Others joined later because they had a choice of going to work in Germany, working for the German Reichsbahn or joining the Legion. Many students joined the Reichsbahn to avoid service in the Reich or in the Legion. But many of them were transferred later to the Legion.

21 March 46

Note from Capt Craven A group of high-grade Baltics are living at Wuerzburg They are former officials of the Baltic states and may furnish reliable factual information.

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*Location:* NA II. RG 165 IRR, File ZF011653, Latvian Central Committee.

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## Circular No. 28, to All Latvian National Leaders

24 August 1946

*Comment:* A Latvian DP circular dated 24 August 1946 made reference to the reclassification of Latvian POWs on their discharge papers, stating that the classification should now read "Latvian Legion-Army." This is allegedly on the authority of the (U.S.) Headquarters Section G-2 (intelligence).

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Translation  
Latvian Committee Munich  
of Bavaria  
Munich

24th August 1946

Circular No. 28

To All Latvian National Leaders:

In Headquarters Section G-2, it is declared that it should be written "Latvian Legion-Army", in the discharge papers, in the future.

Those discharged soldiers (Latvian PWs) who have other signs in their papers, have the right and the possibility to have their papers corrected at the usual Baltic Discharge Commission.

Those former soldiers, who do not possess any papers, should apply for discharge papers to the Baltic Commission, which will soon take place at Dachau. It is advisable to apply first to the Latvian Committee of Bavaria.

A. Reins  
Leader of Latvian Committee for Bavaria.

A. Avotins  
Administration leader.

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*Location:* NA II. RG 319, Records of the Army Staff, 1939—. Investigative Reports Repository (IRR), United States Army, Entry 76, Dossier ZFO11655, Latvian Legion.

### **Circular No. 29**

2 September 1946

*Comment:* Another Latvian DP circular, this one dated 2 September 1946, stated that the U.S. occupation army has declared that Latvians and Estonians “forced by Germans to fight against Russia” are not to be considered “members of Wehrmacht or German SS, although they had been under the command of Waffen SS.” They are thus not to be considered in the automatic arrest categories.

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Translation

Latvian Committee of Bavaria  
Munich

2nd Sept. 1946

Circular No. 29

To All Latvian National Leaders

1 3rd U.S. Army Headquarters, Heidelberg, Section G-5, Mr NIELSEN, in the presence of Captain WINDMILLER, have declared the following:

(a) According to the records received from USFET, which will be announced to all Division Staff, Sections and CIC Detachments, Latvians and Estonians have had their national groups (Latvian Legion) which were forced by Germans to fight against Russia. Therefore the members of these groups should not be considered

as the members of Wehrmacht or German SS, although they had been under the command of Waffen SS. The members of these groups, even with the name of Unterscharführer, should not be subjected to the regulations of automatic arrests.

J. Antranis  
Section Leader  
Latvian Committee of Bavaria

I certify that this is a true copy of the translation.

.....  
John F. Brintz  
Special Agent CIC  
Commanding

Location: NA II. RG 319, Records of the Army Staff, 1939-. Investigative Reports Repository (IRR), United States Army, Entry 76, Dossier ZFO11655, Latvian Legion.

## United States Forces Austria Reply to Soviet Accusations

29 September 1947

*Comment:* The U.S. Army in Austria summarized the accusations being made by the Soviets concerning repatriation of DPs. The message also gave a reply to the accusations. To some extent they are not taken seriously "because it is apparent here that even specific charges naming persons, dates, places, are utterly false and conjured up to form part of a nuisance campaign to embarrass the United States." But where there is evidence the "cases are judged by an extradition board." Mention is made of

the Yalta agreement (on repatriation), and trouble with Soviet liaison officers.

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From: COMGENUSFA Vienna Austria sgd Keyes cite PAACA/V

To: Dept of the Army for CSCAD cite reports control symbol WDSCA-17

Info: EUCOM

Nr: P 7843

25 September 1947

1 Charges outlined in paragraph one urad [*sic*] WX 85658 constitute complete list repeated here by Soviets in Allied Council, Soviet controlled newspapers, and in letters addressed to this headquarters. Yugoslavia has made similar representations to Allied Council and this headquarters by letter. In contrast, Polish political and repatriation missions have been cooperative in their dealings along DP lines. Same replies to allegations in urad [*sic*] are applicable to both Soviet and Yugoslav representations, because it is apparent here that even specific charges naming persons, dates, places, are utterly false and conjured up to form part of a nuisance campaign to embarrass the United States. Regardless of specific nature of charge, general replies below are applicable.

a. United States harbors war criminals, etc: in keeping with the Yalta agreement, United States does not forcibly repatriate any displaced person unless specific and detailed charges are lodged against him which appear to be reasonably sound. Policy outlined in WARX 89544, December 45 refers. Since 1945 Soviets and Yugoslavs through their agents operating in our zone have acquired names of DPs and subsequently demanded persons periodically on grounds of being traitors or war criminals without submitting any substantiating evidence. However, cases of those DPs charged with specific acts constituting war crimes reasonably supported

by evidence are judged by an extradition board which weighs all available evidence and makes recommendations to the high commissioner who in turn personally reviews each case on which recommendation of forced repatriation has been made.

b. United States tolerates anti-repatriation activities: see our P/6289, December 46. General charges of anti-repatriation activity and intimidation are constantly made by Soviet and Yugoslav authorities, but are seldom supported by evidence. Those charges sufficiently specific have been investigated and determined to be groundless.

c. United States has discontinued efforts to repatriate DPs: refer to our P/6240, November 46. All efforts have been made to encourage and facilitate repatriation. Sixty days rations were given to each voluntary UN DP repatriate between April and June 47 and to each Polish UN DP repatriate from October to December 46. This spring, maximum publicity was given departing repatriation trains including radio and newspaper coverage and band concerts at point of departures. Over 760,000 displaced persons have been repatriated from United States Zone, Austria, since May 45. Those remaining are hard core DPs who will not or cannot return to their homelands, and are not subject to forced repatriation. One of the major obstacles to repatriation aside from the desire to escape Soviet domination, is the military repatriation mission whose bungling efforts to coerce the displaced person to return to his homeland have aggravated the situation to such an extent that in one case when the Yugo mission visited Camp Markt Pongau they were seized and beaten, bodily thrown out of the camp, and stoned by the displaced persons therein.

d. Liaison officers are not given free access to their nationals: liaison officers have been offered every opportunity and facility to contact their nationals and have been encouraged in every way to sell repatriation to our displaced persons. Nevertheless, liaison officers have been a major cause of unrest among DPs, and of trouble to the United States Forces in Austria. See our P/2046, July 46, and P/6545, January 47.

e. Recruitment of DPs for slaves: see our P/6424, December 46. This is aimed at IRO resettlement projects in Europe and South America. This

charge is so obviously false and so universally known to be false that no reply is usually made.

2 Paragraph two (B) urad [*sic*] refers: there are no repatriation missions of USSR or Yugoslavia now operating in United States Zone, Austria. See our P/7448, June 47. A Polish mission from 1 September to 20 September which consisted of one officer and interpreter, shipped Polish DPs to Poland who indicated their desire to repatriate.

3 Paragraph two urad [*sic*]. Refer our P/7655 and your WX 85989.

End

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*Location:* NA II. RG 165, War Department. Civil Affairs Division, Information Branch, Security-classified War Refugee Board (WRB) & Other Messages Related to the International Refugee Organization Program & the Activities of the International Refugee Organization, July 1944–June 1948. Entry 475, Box 859.

### **“Re Charging of Valdmanis as High-level Wartime Collaborator”**

18 September 1947

*Comment:* Alfreds Bilmanis did not have a high opinion of the “Latvian Self-Administration” during the German occupation. He did not consider them the legitimate successors to or representatives of the former Latvian government. The Latvian government, in face of the impending (first) Soviet occupation, had given this role to Kārlis Zariņš (who sometimes called himself Charles Zarine), the Latvian ambassador to the United Kingdom,

and, as second-in-command, Bilmanis, the Latvian ambassador to the United States.

Bilmanis discussed the forcible mobilization of "all Latvian men and women between the ages of 21 and 29." He pointed out that Latvian Soviet Government was an illegitimate government.

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Excerpt from Latvia 1939-1942 [ellipses in original]

...I wish to state unconditionally - regardless of the delusions that the Nazi-appointed General Directors may have about their motives - all of their actions are so ipso illegal and in violation of the fundamental rights and interests of the Latvian Nation, amounting in effect, to the sacrifice of and treason to the Sovereign State and people of Latvia.

In ruthless violation of international law and with contemptuous disregard of human rights, all Latvian men and young women between the ages of 21 and 29 were forcibly mobilized and sent to Germany for "Labor Service" soon after the installation of the "General-Directorium", since the volunteer plan of the Nazis had failed completely.

I should also like to state again that the so-called "Latvian-Soviet Government in Exile", which was formed by Soviet Russia in complete violation of Latvian sovereign rights after Soviet Russia's unprovoked military aggression against Latvia, continues to be maintained by Soviet Russia in violation of the Atlantic Charter and Soviet Russia's treaty obligations.

According to recent press dispatches, delegates of this Soviet-controlled "Latvian Soviet Government" have participated in the recent Soviet Congress and this action of the Soviet usurpers is distorted and maliciously misrepresented by the official Soviet press as proof that Latvians consider themselves as belonging to Soviet Russia. The above Soviet-organized and Soviet-controlled illegal and usurpatory group in Kuibishev does not and cannot in any way and sense represent the Latvian State and the Latvian Nation, and all of its acts are also illegal, null and void.

In conclusion, I should like to state, that as the legal representative of the Government of Latvia, I am voicing the true interests and lawful rights of the Republic of Latvia in denouncing all attempts of Nazi-Germany and Soviet Russia to impose enslavement, oppression and exploitation upon the Latvian Nation, whether under direct threats and application of ruthless force, or under the guise of conspiracy, fraud and deceit.

Latvia remains unshaken in her belief that the dictatorships of the Axis powers will be inevitably and most conclusively defeated and that independence and democracy will be restored to all nations of the world.

Dr. Alfred Bilmanis,  
Latvian Minister

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*Location:* NA II. RG 165, War Department, Civil Affairs Division, Information Branch, Security-classified War Refugee Board (WRB) & Other Messages Related to the International Refugee Organization Program & the Activities of the International Refugee Organization, July 1944–June 1948. Entry 475, Box 859.

**“Considering Question whether Baltic DP’s  
Who Were Former Members Baltic Legions  
(under Germans) or Waffen SS during Years  
1941–1944 May Qualify for Visas under U.S. DP  
Act”**

1 April 1950

*Comment:* U.S. Secretary of State Dean Acheson, in April 1950, requested information from the U.S. Army in Germany on “Baltic DPs who were former members of the Baltic Legions (under the Germans) or Waffen SS.” Acheson wanted to know whether these organizations were “purely military” or were they “movements” – and thus ineligible for immigration under the U.S. DP Act. The

document states that "Information available to [State] Department indicates that the organizations in Baltic countries ... were exclusively military in character and purpose."

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From: Secretary of State sgd Acheson

To: HICOG Frankfurt Germany

Nr: 2223

1 April 1950

Dept urgently considering question whether Baltic DP's who were former members Baltic Legions (under GERs) or Waffen SS during yrs 1941-1944 may qualify for visas under US DP Act. Specific question is whether these organizations in Baltic countries shld be considered as having been "movements" as the term is used in Sec. 13, DP Act.

In interpreting Sec. 13 with respect other Ger or Ger-sponsored organizations Dept has construed that organizations purely military in character should not be considered as "movements" within meaning Sec. 13, and that therefore persons who were members such organizations, whether voluntarily or through compulsion, shld not ipso facto be declared ineligible under DP Act. Info available to Dept indicates that organizations in Baltic countries cited para 1 above were exclusively military in character and purpose.

Dept informed by Latvian sources in US that in past EUCOM, on basis eligibility investigations re DP's without respect US DP Act, reached conclusions re subj organizations which confirm info cited last sentence para 2 above.

HICOG requested contact EUCOM soonest this subj and transmit to Dept by April 5 at least preliminary summary past EUCOM findings this respect, particularly as they relate to military or non-military nature such organization.

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*Location:* NA II. RG 165, War Department. Civil Affairs Division, Information Branch. Security-classified War Refugee Board (WRB) & Other Messages Related to the International Refugee Organization Program & the Activities of the Preparatory Commission of the International Refugee Organization, July 1944–June 1948. Subject files of Colonel D.H. Frost [U.S. Army Liaison to UNRRA and IRO], 1944–1952. File Baltic Displaced Persons.

### **“Concerning Former Members Baltic Legions (under Germans)”**

4 April 1950.

*Comment:* The following is an April 1950 document from the U.S. Commander-in Chief in Germany, signed McCloy, to the State Department concerning the formation of the Baltic legions, by country, as well as the incorporation of Balts in other divisions (Viking and Nordland) and, in the case of Lithuania (in error) in “quote Baltic SS divisions of the German army.”

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From: HICOG Frankfurt Germany sgd McCloy

To: Secretary of State

Nr: 2836

4 April 1950

Rec'd by State 4 Apr 1950

Sent Department 2836 repeated EUCOM 246

Re DEPTTEL 2223 April 1, 1950 concerning former members Baltic Legions (under Germans). The following information has been received from EUCOM:

"A. Estonia. In 1940 Soviet armies entered Estonia. In a subsequent election, a Communist majority was elected and upon the new government's request, Estonia was accepted as a Soviet Socialist Republic in August 1940. The Soviets immediately purged all non-Communists and ravaged the country. When the German armies entered Estonia in 1941, the people naturally looked to them for leadership in revenging the Soviet action, and a puppet government headed by Mae was created by the Germans, who also designated the 20th SS Infantry Division as the first Estonian Division and used it against the Russians in the Baltic area. The country was retaken by the Soviets in 1944, and anti-Communists were forced to flee. Many of those people as well as members of the SS Division settled in the Western zones of Germany.

"B. Latvia. In June 1940, Latvia was occupied by Soviet troops and the following month became a Soviet Socialist Republic. Persecution of non-Communists started immediately. Anti-Soviet feeling reached a high peak, and the invasion by the Germans in 1941 was considered a welcome relief. The Latvians were anxious for revenge, and as soon as conditions became more settled, Germans formed the following Baltic units to fight against the Soviets:

- (1) 5th SS Division (Viking);
- (2) 11th Panzer SS Division (Nordland);
- (3) 15th SS Infantry Division (First Latvian Division);
- (4) 19th SS Infantry Division (Second Latvian Division). Latvians belonged to these divisions and were used by the Wehrmacht primarily in the Baltic area against the Soviets.

"C. Lithuania. In 1940, the Soviets occupied Lithuania and officially accepted the country as a Soviet Socialist Republic. In 1941, Germans occupied Lithuania and many Lithuanians were recruited in the Baltic SS Divisions of the German army. Soviet armies returned to Lithuania in 1944. A large number of Lithuanians escaped with the German armies in order to avoid persecution for their anti-Communist activities, social status or political convictions."

It is realized that the above-quoted information does not constitute an adequate answer to the fourth paragraph of the Department's cable; however, EUCOM has indicated that more information will be forthcoming within a few days. Apparently the information desired is in the hands of field organizations and is not immediately available at EUCOM headquarters.

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*Location:* NA II. RG 165, War Department. Civil Affairs Division, Information Branch. Security-classified War Refugee Board (WRB) & Other Messages

Related to the International Refugee Organization Program & the Activities of the Preparatory Commission of the International Refugee Organization, July 1944–June 1948. Subject files of Colonel D.H. Frost [U.S. Army Liaison to UNRRA and IRO], 1944–1952. File Baltic Displaced Persons.

### **HICOG's Position on the "Baltic Legions"**

13 April 1950

*Comment:* In an April 1950 message from the U.S. High Commission in Germany (HICOG), signed by General Frank McCloy, to the Secretary of State, the position on the "Baltic legions" (note use of this term) is explained: they were not to be seen as "movements," "volunteers," or "SS." Then it is explained why they were not to be considered SS: in short, they were not given the training, indoctrination, and induction normally given to SS members.

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From: HICOG Frankfurt Germany sgd McCloy

To: Secretary of State

Nr: 3108

Rec'd by State 13 Apr 50

Re DEPTTEL 2223 April 1, 1950 and OURTEL sent Department 2836, repeated EUCOM 246 April 4, 1950 concerning former members Baltic Legions.

Following additional information received from EUCOM:

"A. Baltic Legions should not be considered as being 'movements' as term is used in Section 13 of the Displaced Persons Act.

"(1) These organizations were not composed of volunteers since individuals were drafted by Germans and term 'volunteer' was used for propaganda purposes with intent of concealing from other nations fact that inhabitants of an occupied country were being drafted into military service in violation of International Law.

"(2) Members of Latvian and Estonian Legions were designated SS only by reason of being called into service and organized by Chief of the German SS for their occupied countries.

"(3) While there were undoubtedly members of these legions who would have volunteered for service as internal security troops (SS duties) within respective countries, it is believed that they are so few in number that they constitute the exception to the rule."

B. EUCOM further stated Latvian and Estonian SS should not be considered as German SS since

"(1) They received no Nazi political training;

"(2) They were not required to profess any Nazi doctrines;

"(3) They did not take the SS oath;

"(4) They did not enjoy SS privileges;

"(5) They did not wear the prescribed German SS uniform."

Note: 2223 not identified.

2836 not identified.

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*Location:* NA II. RG 165, War Department. Civil Affairs Division, Information Branch. Security-classified War Refugee Board (WRB) & Other Messages Related to the International Refugee Organization Program & the Activities of the Preparatory Commission of the International Refugee Organization, July 1944-June 1948. Subject files of Colonel D.H. Frost [U.S. Army Liaison to UNRRA and IRO], 1944-1952. File Baltic Displaced Persons.

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# 6

## British Foreign Office Documents 1946-1947

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Documents in the Foreign Office files at the Public Records Office in London, England, indicate that the British were quite aware of the controversy going on concerning the Latvian Legion and what to do about its veterans in the British zone.

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### **Cable to the Foreign Office from Sir W. Strang, Political Adviser to the Commander in Chief, Germany**

18 January 1946

*Comment:* Balts in "SS" formations were not automatically war criminals.

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Departmental No. 2  
From Political Adviser to the Commander-in-Chief  
Germany (Berlin) to Foreign Office

Sir W. Strang  
No. 84

18th January, 1946

Repeated to Office of the Political Adviser to the Commander-in-Chief Germany (Lubbecke) Saving.

[no par. no.] Political Division Lubbecke have been asked by Intelligence Bureau for guidance on the reply to be made to a request from the Russians to hand over certain named Baltic personalities who are alleged to have been concerned with the formation of Baltic SS units to fight on the Russian front. Intelligence Bureau point out that this request may be a preliminary to a demand for the handing over of all Baltic SS.

2 Since the persons concerned are neither war criminals nor renegades in the accepted sense, I should be grateful if you would instruct Political Division Lubbecke as to the reply they should return.

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*Location:* Public Records Office (PRO), London, England, FO 945/711.

### **Balts in SS Formations Not Automatically War Criminals**

5 February 1946

*Comment:* The Foreign Office advised Sir W. Strang, political adviser to the Commander in Chief Germany about Baltic nationals in "ex-SS formations." Strang's U.S. counterpart was Robert Murphy. Strang went on to write a number of books on British foreign policy. The Foreign Office declared: "We cannot regard Baltic nationals as war criminals or traitors when the only charge against them is that they fought against the Soviet armed forces."

The document goes on to say that war criminals are to be dealt with in each case upon receipt of satisfactory *prima facie* evidence that the person concerned has been guilty of a war crime "in the ordinary sense." It is to be noted that in speaking of the possible prosecution of war criminals the British document refers to individuals, and evidence of individual criminal wrongdoing.

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N.817/252/59

Departmental No. 2

From Foreign Office To The Political Adviser To Commander-Chief, Germany  
(Berlin)

No. 231

4th February, 1946

Repeated to Lubbecke No. 125

Your telegram No. 84 [of 18th January: Soviet requests to hand over Baltic nationals ex SS formations].

We cannot regard Baltic nationals as war criminals or traitors when the only charge against them is that they fought against the Soviet armed forces; but we have no wish to withhold them from justice if they are war criminals in the accepted sense.

2 You should therefore insist in each case on the production of satisfactory *prima facie* evidence that the person concerned has been guilty of a war crime in the ordinary sense, and in doubtful cases you should refer to this office for instructions.

OTP

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*Location:* PRO, FO 945/711.

## Voluntary Collaboration Means No DP Status

18 March 1946

*Comment:* In March 1946 the Foreign Office wrote twice to the War Department for clarification on policy regarding repatriation of Balts. The Foreign Office felt that they would like the British policy to resemble that of the Americans. Presumably this meant that those persons who had voluntarily aided the enemy were not to be allowed DP status. No Balts were to be forcibly repatriated except war criminals, traitors, or quislings. No definitions are given here of these three terms.

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Foreign Office, S.W.1

18th March, 1946

(N 3117/252/59)

Dear Hammer,

Please refer to your letter to Henderson 124/Germany/133 of the 1st March about the question whether Baltic collaborators should be deprived of Displaced Persons privileges.

We agree with the principle that Displaced Persons privileges should be denied to voluntary collaborators. We realise that it will be difficult to do the screening with certain fairness; but it should be done on general grounds of justice and also to forestall criticism from other governments.

We must, however, continue for the present to refuse to use compulsion in the repatriation of persons of whose guilt as War Criminals, Traitors or Quislings substantial prima facie evidence has not been supplied.

Yours sincerely,

Thomas Brimelow  
(T. Brimelow)

Lieutenant-Colonel  
V.M. Hammer  
C.A. (D.P.)  
War Office

Location: PRO, FO 945/711

### **War Criminals to Be Sent Back if Substantial Evidence**

18 March 1946

Foreign Office, SW 1

(N 3246/252/59)

18th March, 1946.

Dear Hammer,

Would you please refer to Sir William Strang's telegram No. 317 of the 9th March (copies of which were sent to you and to Norfolk House on the 11th March) about United States policy in the repatriation of Balts from Germany.

This, I hope, will enable you to give any further information you think fit to Mr. Pickthorn and Mr. Stokes in connexion with their questions in the House on the 4th March. As I said to you in my letter N 3117/252/59 of the 18th March, on the question of whether to give Displaced Persons privileges to persons who have collaborated willingly with the enemy, we approve of this United States policy and should be glad if Control Office for Germany and Austria saw their way to introducing a similar policy in the British zone. There is of course no question of repatriating these Balts compulsorily unless there is good evidence that they are War Criminals; but there seems no reason why there should be no intermediate course between forcible repatriation and privileged Displaced Persons status.

Yours sincerely,

Thomas Brimelow  
(T. Brimelow)

Lieutenant Colonel  
V.M. Hammer  
War Office

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*Location:* PRO, FO 945/711

## **British Army Asks for British Policy**

16 March 1946

*Comment:* In the spring of 1946, the United States decided to release Baltic POWs and suggested that they be given DP status. The wording in the following document is somewhat fuzzy, however, in using the word, "captured while serving in the

Wehrmacht." The Latvian legion was not Wehrmacht and by and large its units surrendered to – and were not captured by – the allies. However, the impression is that Wehrmacht here refers to all those Baltic nationals found in German uniform, for there is no obvious indication from the documents in this collection that discussion is of varieties of Baltic POWs.

Any subcategories mentioned are individual security suspects, volunteers, collaborators, traitors, and war criminals, without making distinctions between German units that they may have served in.

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From: A Branch GHQ CMF. D.T.O. 161321 A.

To: The War Office.

F 62917 cipher 16 Mar.

SECRET.

Further to our F51179 of 31 Oct. 45 to which no reply has been received and reference AGWAR Singal WX 80088 of 10 Mar 46 ARA one of which reads "All Baltic and Polish Nationals captured while serving in the Wehrmacht should be released from Prisoner of War status and agiven [sic] status of displaced persons". Request you state whether similar PW/SEP in British custody should be treated as stated in the A/Quletter Signal.

C.6. Telegrams.

Distribution by C.A. (D.P.).

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*Location:* PRO, FO 945/711

## The Latvian Legation Complains about UNRRA

29 April 1946

*Comment:* Apparently some Latvians in an UNRRA camp in Italy, in April 1946, were registered as Soviet citizens.

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Latvian Legation,  
87, Eaton Place,  
London, SW1

No. 901.

29th April, 1946

[Dear Sir George]

I have had a letter from a group of 31 Latvians who are gathered at Reggio Emilia in Northern Italy, and who have been made exceedingly anxious by the fact that the UNNRA officials who have been registering them have insisted on putting them down as Soviet citizens. I should be very grateful indeed, dear Sir George, if investigation could be made of this alleged departure from the policy and practice of all other British officials, who everywhere register our nationals as Latvian citizens. I should feel glad if this could be done as early as convenient in order to relieve these people of their anxiety. The full address is:

Campo Profughi It 43,  
Caserma Artiglieria,  
Reggio Emilia,  
Italy.

Believe me  
Dear Sir George  
Yours sincerely  
[Charles Zarine]

Sir George Rendel, K.C.M.G.  
United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration,  
11 Portland Place  
W1

---

*Location:* PRO, FO 945/711

### **The Foreign Office Asks UNRRA if the Latvian Minister Is Right**

1 May 1946

*Comment:* Dispute continued over whether Latvians in UNRRA camps should be described as Latvians or as Soviet citizens.

---

48, Lowndes Square,  
S.W.1.

1st May, 1946

Dear Miss Gibbons,

I enclose a copy of a letter from the ex-Latvian Minister here to me about some Latvians in an UNRRA camp in Italy, who have been described by the Administration as Soviet citizens.

As you know, there have been a good many complaints about UNRRA describing Latvians as Latvians since the Soviet Government regard Latvia as part of the Soviet Union. It may be, therefore, that something on the lines of what Monsieur Zarin says has in fact taken place.

I should, however, be very grateful if you could have the matter looked into and let me know what reply I ought to send him.

Your very sincerely,

G.W.Rendel

Miss Mary Gibbons,  
UNRRA  
11 Portland Place  
W1

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*Location:* PRO, FO 945/711

### The Foreign Office TempORIZES

1 May 1946

*Comment:* The head of the Latvian legation, Kārlis Zariņš (he sometimes called himself Charles Zarine in English) in London took up the Latvian legionnaires' cause with the Foreign Office undersecretary who dealt with UNRRA affairs, G.W. Rendel.

---

Foreign Office  
SW1

1st May, 1946

Dear Monsieur Zarin,

Your letter No. 901 of April 29th has just reached me, having erroneously been addressed to me at UNRRA. I ought to explain that I am not part of UNRRA, but am the Under-Secretary in the Foreign Office who deals among other things with UNRRA affairs.

I am taking up with UNRRA the question of the Latvians you speak of. The question is not, I am afraid, a very easy one, but I will try to let you hear further as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,

G.W.Rendel

His Excellency  
Monsieur C. Zarin  
Latvian Legation  
87 Eaton Place  
SW1

---

*Location:* PRO, FO 945/711

### **UNRRA Proposes to Recognize USSR as "Power Concerned" with Latvians**

21 May 1946

*Comment:* It was not always all that clear what British officials thought they could or should do about the recognition of the Soviet annexations of the Baltic states.

UNRRA, at least from 1946, took "the government concerned' with displaced persons from the Baltic states" to be the Soviet Union. As this document indicates to the Foreign Office, UNRRA's position "would seem rather difficult to dispute,"

inasmuch the USSR was in control of or "the 'authority' over the area from which the displaced persons originally came."

---

Departmental No.2  
From Washington to Foreign Office  
Mr. Balfour

No. 3335

20th May, 1946

Important

UNRRA are proposing to regard USSR as "the government concerned" with deplaced persons from the former Baltic States in connexion with the implementation of resolution 92 and will be giving them relevant information as to numbers, etc., very shortly. They will not (repeat not) inform them of the names of individual displaced persons.

2 Do you see objection? This information was given to us informally and UNRRA found justification for their proposal on the basis that USSR is the "authority" of the area from which the displaced persons originally came. This would seem rather difficult to dispute.

---

*Location:* PRO, FO 945/711

## **The War Office Denies Forcible Repatriation of Latvians**

25 June 1946

*Comment:* The British continued to repatriate under the terms of the Yalta Repatriation Agreement. But their definition of "Soviet

citizens" was "only persons who were Soviet Citizens and domiciled within Soviet boundaries on 1st September 1939."

---

The War Office  
Hotel Victoria,  
Northumberland Avenue,  
London, WC2.

25 June, 1946

Encl. 5 124/Italy/76 (C.A.1)

Dear [Henderson],

I refer to your letter WR 1460/23/48 dated 12th June enclosing a copy of a letter from the Duchess of Atholl published in the "Times" of 25th May.

We know of no forcible repatriation of any D.Ps except of course War Criminals, Quislings etc, and those claimed by U.S.S.R. The latter include only persons who were Soviet Citizens and domiciled within Soviet Boundaries on 1st September, 1939.

In MAT 1027 para 3(d), a number of dissident Balts are mentioned as being amongst the non repatriable [sic] D.Ps not acceptable to U.N.R.R.A. These are protected by the Potsdam Declaration.

In F67772 we received a denial from C.M.F. that there had been any "forcible repatriation" from Terni Camp at any time. We could perhaps confirm that this denial applies to all camps in Italy.

We/

I.L. Henderson, Esq.  
Refugee Department  
Foreign Office, SW1

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*Location:* PRO, FO 945/711

## Duchess Atholl Expresses Her Concern

30 July 1946

*Comment:* Duchess Atholl, of the British League for European Freedom, wrote to Member of Parliament Hynd – again – on the question of displaced persons. In her letter dated 30 July 1946 she expressed her concern about liaison officers, as well as screening. In her postscript she mentions Baltic ex-prisoners of war. She raises the problems these people are having, especially Latvians, “because the Latvian Legion, into which the Germans conscripted them, was described as part of the Waffen SS.”

It is noteworthy that historians who have written on the Waffen-SS barely mention the Latvians or Estonians. They do not mention the Latvian Legion at all.

---

British League for European Freedom  
Chairman  
Duchess of Atholl, DBE, Hon. DCL  
66 Elizabeth Street  
London, SW1  
Tel. SLOAN 9926-7

Vice-Chairman:  
Dean of Chichester, DD

30th July, 1946

Dear Mr. Hynd,

I am sorry to trouble you with another letter on the question of the Displaced Persons, as I had hoped that matters which my Committee wished to have brought before you would by now have been taken up by the new European Refugee

Defence Committee, but as this has so far not been done, and the matters are urgent, I feel I must trouble you with this letter.

First of all, I have just received from Professor Savory a letter from your Parliamentary Private Secretary referring to a letter I had sent him, expressing the anxiety of our Committee about liaison officers. When I wrote, I had not seen your answer on this subject on the 5th June. May I say that it seems to me that any officers engaged in the administration of the camp, as stated by you, must necessarily be brought into touch with the Displaced Persons, and I think the same can be said about welfare work. I quite understand that difficult situations may have arisen when two sets of Polish Officers were working in the camp, but I know my Committee are not of the opinion that matters will be improved by having none other than Warsaw-chosen men, particularly as it is evident from Mr. Skellington's letter that they will be there for the express purpose of inducing Poles who have already refused many appeals to go back to Poland, to opt for repatriation at last. We fear that these officers are likely to have a very disturbing influence in the camps.

My Committee, I am sure, will feel that the presence of none but Warsaw-chosen officers makes it more important than ever that Poles should be allowed to have the full information promised them by the UNO Assembly, and which so far as our information goes, they do not get. I attach a copy of a resolution passed by my Committee at its meeting last Thursday.

We are very distressed at the accounts we get about the depression and loss of morale in some camps, and we feel that nothing would do more to restore morale and to make the administration proceed smoothly than that Displaced Persons should have the information about the steps UNO has taken and is taking on their behalf.

We hear especially of depression in Yugoslav camps. The sister of an officer in one told me of a suicide that had happened in her brother's camp, and was afraid of occurrences of this kind, on account of the depression.

I enclose a statement about another camp which has reached me today.

We are also concerned about the food question. We know of course that the Government has many difficulties to face in this matter, but according to a statement made in the House on the 18th July, the Displaced Persons' rations in our zone have been reduced from 1,840 to 1,550 calories. This is not as much as, according to an article in the "Manchester Guardian" on the 24th June, was

being given to interned Nazis in Recklinghausen, who were getting one parcel a week of food. In spite of this, the writer of the article stated that the camp health was not good, over 10% suffering from hunger oedema.

The article also stated that in Paderborn Camp interned Nazis, until early in May, were getting 1,200 calories as a basic daily ration, but after they had been a month on this it had to be doubled to get the men back to health. Therefore it was said, in order to save food in the long run, the ration was increased to 1,800 calories by the simple method of classing as workers men who were only doing a few hours of light work daily.

1,550 calories therefore means less than interned Nazis in these camps have been getting as their ration; they do not receive parcels, and they have less to exchange if they wish to buy additional food than a German presumably has.

I do not wish any unnecessary penalisation of Nazis, but I do think that Displaced Persons are either our Allies or at least neutrals, should come first.

In our zone in Austria also, we learn that the rations are not larger than those of the Austrian citizens, which we have understood are a good deal lower than those I have mentioned.

We have also been made anxious by hearing reports of "screening" in the camps, in order to discover possible collaborators. We do earnestly hope that these enquiries are only carried out, or at least mainly carried out, by men who have experience in sifting evidence, and we do feel that the British tradition that a man is innocent until he be proved guilty should be maintained in our camps. I am sure you will agree that it might be extremely difficult for Displaced Persons far away from friends and papers, to prove that they entered the German Army or German organisations of their own free will.

Next, we have been distressed to hear of the dissolution of a Latvian Red Cross Committee and the freezing of its funds. At the same time, we have heard from a liaison officer who worked in several camps in Schleswig-Holstein, that there were limbless men from the Baltic States for whom liaison officers were trying to provide limbs from their own resources. Would it not be possible to see that these men are provided with limbs, as I believe has recently been done in the case of Yugoslav prisoners-of-war in Italy? If not, could not the British Red Cross, or even the Latvian Red Cross, be permitted to supply them?

Finally, I think I should send you the enclosed memorandum and addendum which has reached us from a very responsible worker in Belsen camp.

Yours sincerely,

Katharine Atholl

John Hynd, Esq., M.P.,  
House of Commons,  
SW1

P.S. I have just heard from 4 Baltic States representatives of the great shortage of laboratory equipment and books in the "university" courses of study they have organised at Hamburg. They are also very anxious that Baltic States professors from the American or French zones should be able to come to Hamburg to teach in these courses. Could anything be done in regard to these matters?

Baltic States ex-prisoners of war, who are now classed as Displaced Persons, would also greatly value opportunities to study at German universities which, I understand are open to other D.P.s Some of these men, Latvians more especially, may have been regarded with suspicion because the Latvian Legion, into which the Germans conscripted them, was described as part of the Waffen SS. But, according to my Latvian informant, a man of whom I have seen a great deal and of whom I have a high opinion, the Latvians loathed being considered as part of the SS and made themselves as disagreeable to the Germans as they could.

I need not say how delighted I was to hear that a thousand women from the Baltic States were to be allowed to come to this country to help in the hospitals. This seems to us official confirmation of the good name which I hear from many, the Baltic States D.P.s have earned for themselves.

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*Location:* PRO, FO 945/711

## Are Ex-PWs Regarded to Be Collaborators?

12 August 1946

*Comment:* R.S. Crawford of the Control Office for Germany and Austria wrote to the office of the (British) Deputy Military Governor in Germany requesting to know whether "members of the Latvian Legion are regarded as collaborators" by the authorities in the field. Note the use of the term "Latvian Legion."

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Office of the Deputy Military Governor, Control Commission for Germany (British Element) from R.S. Crawford, General Department, Control Office for Germany and Austria.

To: Office of the Deputy Military Governor, Zonal Executive Offices, Control Commission for Germany (British Element), Lübbecke, BAOR

Copy to: Office of the Deputy Military Governor, Headquarters, Control Commission for Germany (British Element), Berlin, BAOR

From: General Department, Control Office for Germany and Austria.

Date: 12th August 1946

I am directed to enclose an extract from a letter received by the Chancellor which raises two Questions:

- (a) Whether openings are given at German universities to Balt ex-prisoners of war who have now been converted into D.P.s.
- (b) Whether members of the Latvian Legion are regarded as collaborators.

2 It would be appreciated if you would provide comments on both of these questions.

(R.S. Crawford)

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*Location:* PRO, FO 945/711.

### **“Baltic Displaced Persons”**

30 August 1946.

*Comment:* A note was sent in answer to Crawford's request. The British in their zone did not automatically consider members of the Latvian Legion to be collaborators. Discharged Baltic POWs could be converted into DPs if they were racial Balts, that is, ethnic Estonians, Latvians, or Lithuanians, and not of other ethnic groups that at one time or another lived in the Baltic countries. In mind here were Germans, whether Reich Germans, Volksdeutsche (Germans living outside the Reich, sometimes for generations), or Baltic Germans (who had already in the thirteenth century conquered most of Estonia and Latvia).

With full knowledge of the Hitler–Stalin Pact's secret clauses, the Baltic Germans were “called back” to Germany, although most of them had never lived in the Reich. These Germans sometimes tried to pass themselves off as ethnic Balts in the straitened conditions of early postwar Germany. In the first postwar years DP status afforded one a better living in Germany than the Germans themselves had and the “Reichs” Germans were not very forthcoming to the “Vertriebene,” those ethnic Germans expelled from territories not part of Germany, for example, Poland or Czechoslovakia, at war's end. The reception of the Baltic Germans, although they preceded the Vertriebene, was probably

not much better after the war was over, and times were really tough in Germany.

Note the use of the term "Latvian Legion" in the document that follows.

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Ext. 312  
HQ/09222/Sec G  
Secretariat,  
Zonal Executive Offices  
Lubbecke  
60 HQ CCG  
BAOR

30 August 1946.

To: Control Office for Germany and Austria  
Norfolk House  
St. James's Square  
London, SW1

Subject: Baltic Displaced Persons

Reference your G.13/26 dated 12 August 1946, on the above subject.

1 Baltic ex-prisoners of war are converted into DPs if they satisfy the following conditions:

- (a) where it can be proved that they are pure racial-Balts, i.e. not Memelanders, Volksdeutsch, etc.
- (b) where no evidence can be produced to show that they were volunteers for the Wehrmacht.
- (c) where it can be proved that they did not come voluntarily to Germany before 1 Sept. 1939.

2 Those ex-prisoners of war who can not satisfy the above conditions are discharged into the German population, and forfeit all right to PW/DP status. Those granted DP status enjoy all the privileges of that status including the opportunity to attend German Universities.

3 Members of the Latvian Legion are required to fulfil the conditions as in para 1 (a, b, and c) above, and are consequently either granted full DP status or discharged into the German population. They are not therefore automatically regarded as collaborators.

(Sgd.) H. Lewis  
Lt. Col.  
For Lieutenant-General,  
Deputy Military Governor

ZECO, MAIN HQ  
PW and DP Division  
Your PWDP/58318/A  
Secretariat dated 24 Aug refers

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*Location:* PRO, FO 945/711.

## **UNRRA Regards Soviet Government as Recognized Government of the Baltic States**

5 September 1946

*Comment:* On 5 September 1946 UNRRA sent a note to the Control Office concerning "disposal of Baltic States displaced persons." Paragraph 4 of this note states that "the Administration [UNRRA] regards the Soviet government as the recognized government of the Baltic States." Nevertheless, if the Soviet authorities could not persuade the Balts to repatriate, "it is up to

the Administration to deal with those who have refused without further reference to the Soviet government.”

---

Mr. Wilberforce (through Mr. Crawford.)

You asked for a note on UNRRA's position in regard to the disposal of Baltic States displaced persons.

2 UNRRA Resolution No. 71 provides, *inter alia*, that “the Administration shall be authorised to carry out operations in enemy or ex-enemy areas for the care, and, in agreement with the Government of the country of which they are nationals, the repatriation or return of displaced persons”; further, that “the Administration will, from time to time and as the circumstances may require, discuss with the Government concerned the operations conducted pursuant to this Resolution”.

3 Resolution No. 92 reiterates that “in carrying out operations with respect to displaced persons, under Resolution No. 71, the Administration shall keep in touch with the Governments concerned with a view toward reaching agreement regarding such operations”, and adds that “the Council recommends to the Occupying Authorities, the Military Authorities and the Governments concerned, that only those persons who have been properly nominated by presently recognised Governments shall be accredited to the Occupying Authorities and Military Authorities and permitted to serve as Liaison Officers”.

4 UNRRA (ERC) informs me that, for the purposes of the foregoing Resolutions, the Administration regards the Soviet Government as the recognised Government of the Baltic States. They, however, add that if the Soviet Authorities have been given an opportunity of persuading Baltic States displaced persons to return to their respective countries of origin and have failed, it is up to the Administration to deal with those who have refused repatriation without further reference to the Soviet Government.

5 They feel in some difficulty in regard to minor orphans, who, presumably, cannot be expected to accept or refuse repatriation.

It is thought at present by UNRRA that the Soviet Liaison Officer might have to be informed of any proposed action, with possible objections on his part.

On the other hand, it may be that the proper guardian of the minor orphan displaced persons is the Occupying Authority – that is to say CCG (BE).

6 I suggested that, whatever course of action the Administration might decide upon, it would be open to HMG, acting through CCG (BE), to – at all events on paper – remove orphan children from UNRRA care and deal with them as thought fit. UNRRA agreed.

G1-PW/DP

Ext. 316

(Sgd.) V.M. Hammer

Lieut. Colonel

5 September, 1946

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*Location:* PRO, FO 945/711

## **Sir William Strang Reports on UNRRA Policy**

10 September 1946

*Comment:* UNRRA had issued an instruction to its staff in the field on 5 September 1946 that in effect recognized the Soviet annexations of the Baltic countries (see the previous document). UNRRA's stated goal, which it pursued ever more relentlessly as its mandate drew to a close, was repatriation of any remaining displaced persons, the "hard core." Under the terms of the Yalta repatriation agreement (reproduced in Chapter 4 of this collection) Soviet liaison officers could search for Soviet citizens in territory held by the Americans and British. These liaison officers are what

is meant in the following document by "accredited representatives of the U.S.S.R."

Sir William Strang, the political adviser to the British Commander-in-Chief in Germany is writing to express his concern to the Foreign Office about the statement issued by UNRRA.

SECRET

WR2552/23/48

Departmental No. 2

From Berlin to Foreign Office

(From Political Adviser to Commander-in-Chief Germany)

Sir

No

14th

Referred to: Washington, Moscow, Paris

My immediately following telegram contains text of an instruction dated 5th September, 1946, from UNRRA Headquarters, Arolsen, to UNRRA zonal Headquarters in the British, United States and French zones of Germany.

2 It looks as if the instruction may be the result of La Guardia's visit to Moscow, and be intended to propitiate the Soviet Government after the incident of General Morgan's press interview.

3 Being contrary to His Majesty's Government's policy of not regarding Balts as Soviet citizens, the instruction, if complied with would cause serious difficulties for authorities in the British zone. Soviet Liaison officers would be able to demand that UNRRA assistance should be withdrawn from all Balts who refuse repatriation, and to require the acceptance by UNRRA of the Soviet definition of traitors, collaborators, etc.

4 I suggest that this matter should be raised with the United States and French Governments and that if possible urgent steps should be taken in concert with them to have the instruction modified or, preferably, cancelled. Meanwhile, British zone Executive Officers are being instructed by Headquarters in Berlin to inform UNRRA that they do not (repeat not) recognise the competence of Soviet Repatriation Mission in matters affecting Baltic nationals.

5 United States in Berlin have not yet seen the instruction. When its purport was explained to them they agreed as to the difficulties it was likely to cause. I am sending them a copy which they will forward to the State Department with a request for guidance.

6 Please pass to Control Office.

Foreign Office please repeat to Washington, Moscow and Paris as my telegrams Nos. 55, 259 and 39 respectively.

[Repeated to Washington telegram No. 9006, Moscow No. 3029 and Paris No. 1744 (Saving). Copies sent to Control Office.]

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WR2553/23/\*8  
Departmental No. 2  
From Berlin to Foreign Office  
(From Political Adviser to Commander-in-Chief, Germany)

Sir W. Strang  
No. 1182

14th September, 1946

Repeated to: Washington, Moscow, Paris

My immediately preceding telegram.

Following is text.

[Begins]

Subject is consultation under Resolution 92.

1 Following instructions received from Washington headquarters and ERO "Where implementation of Resolution 92 requires consultation with representatives of Governments, such consultation in cases involving displaced persons of Latvian, Lithuanian or Estonian origin should be carried on with the accredited representatives of the USSR."

2 You are requested to proceed accordingly.

[Ends]

3 Please pass to Control Office.

Foreign Office please repeat to Washington, Moscow and Paris as my telegrams Nos. 56, 260 and 40 respectively.

[Repeated Washington, Moscow and Paris to Embassy, Paris, under Nos. 9007, 3030 and 1745.]

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*Location:* PRO, FO 945/711

## **Members of the Latvian Legion Are Not Automatically Classed as Collaborators**

20 September 1946

*Comment:* The British League for European Freedom got an explanation from MP and Private Secretary R.J. Hynd on the classification status of the Latvian Legion: "members of the Latvian Legion are not automatically classed as collaborators, but only if there is evidence that their service was voluntary."

Note the use of the term "Latvian Legion" and the central role of the issue of whether they had volunteered.

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MP 887

Whitehall 4477  
Extension 357

20th September, 1946

Dear Madam,

In the absence of Mr. Skellington, I write to thank you for your letter of 10th September on the various matters about Displaced Persons in the British Zone about which he had written to you. We have now received information on several of the points which you mentioned in your earlier letters and on which we are making enquiries. I will tabulate these.

(a) *Latvian Legion*

Members of the Latvian Legion are not automatically classed as collaborators, but only if there is evidence that their service was voluntary.

(b) *Baltic ex-p.w.s at Universities*

Those Baltic prisoners of war who are converted into Displaced Persons are eligible for openings at German Universities in the same way as all other DPs. As you know, ten per cent of all vacancies have allotted to DPs.

(c) *Artificial Limbs for ex-Prisoners of War*

UNRRA, in conjunction with the British Red Cross, have established several hospitals at which artificial limbs are manufactured and fitted, the chief of which is at Bad Pyrmont. The output of these hospitals is allotted on the basis of 50 per cent to Displaced Persons of all nationalities, and 50 per cent for Germans. The Latvian and other ex-prisoners of war are dealt with according to whether they are Displaced Persons or not, and are supplied out of the DP or German

quota respectively. It is hoped that all DPs, including the Balts, who need artificial limbs will have been supplied by the end of this year.

(d) *Movement of the Sick from Hühne Camp on the evacuation of the non-Jewish DPs*

The separation of members of families was inevitable since Hühne contained a large hospital and the other hospitals in the neighbourhood are small and overcrowded so that some of the patients had to be sent far afield. Enquiries are now being made to see which members of families have been separated, and everything possible will be done to re-unite them either during or after hospitalisation, having regard to the acute accommodation problem.

(e) I enclose a note dealing with the various points concerning the education and vocational training of DPs raised on the enclosure to your letter of 2nd August.

In addition to the above points you may also be interested to hear that we are hoping to start weekly newspapers in the British Zone in the main DP languages to supplement those already produced for the Poles. These will fill a gap which has been badly felt. It will be necessary to exercise close supervision to ensure that the papers do not indulge in anti-Soviet propaganda, but we hope it will be possible to find trustworthy DPs to edit the papers in such a way as to avoid political trouble. It is, of course, the necessity for eliminating anti-Soviet propaganda which has caused us to limit the circulation of DP language papers produced outside Germany, a matter which was referred to in your Committee's resolution of 27th July. We do not, however, wish to make such a ban indiscriminate, and if you are able to indicate any papers which are really impartial and do not attack Soviet Russia or discourage repatriation, then we should certainly consider whether they could be permitted.

Yours faithfully,

R.J.H.  
Private Secretary.

The Rt. Hon. The Duchess of Atholl, DBE,  
British League for European Freedom

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*Location:* PRO, FO 945/711

## Misgivings about Repatriation Drive and Eligibility Tests

15 January 1947

*Comment:* The European Refugees Defence Committee in England took up the cause of the Baltic refugees in Germany and Austria. The following memorandum to His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, a copy of which was sent with a letter to J.B. Hynd, Member of Parliament, at the Control Office for Germany and Austria (COGA) expresses some of the defence committee's concerns about repatriation and renewed screenings: "each Baltic citizen who served in a German formation has, in order to retain his DP status, to prove that he joined under compulsion. The burden of proof is *on the accused* [original emphasis]; not on the prosecutor. And who in the chaotic conditions since 1941 would still carry proofs of his compulsory call-up?"

The committee offered some recommendations for revision of instructions regarding the eligibility tests. Historically, for all their good intentions, the recommendations indicate as much confusion on Balts who served as do just about any of the other institutions speaking on this subject.

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Refugees Defence Committee  
5, Victoria Street  
London, SW1

15th January, 1947

Dear Mr. Hynd,

I have been requested by our Committee to send you copy of their dispatch with Memorandum addressed to-day to the Foreign Office, regarding the Baltic Refugees in Germany and Austria, in which our Committee expresses its misgivings regarding the present Repatriation Drive and Eligibility Tests of which these Refugees are the object.

Our Committee trusts that its recommendations may find favour with the Control Commission, and that you will be able to send it a really reassuring reply.

Yours sincerely,

Clifford E. Heathcote-Smith  
Vice-Chairman and  
Joint Hon. Secretary

J.B. Hynd, Esq., MP  
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster  
Control Office for Germany and Austria  
Norfolk House  
St. James's Square  
London, SW1

Enc. 1

Refugees Defence Committee

Memorandum

To:  
HM Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Foreign Office London, SW1

Enclosure in communication of 15th January 1947 from Refugees Defence Committee

## Repatriation of the Baltic Citizens to the Soviet Socialist Baltic Republics

1 There is considerable danger to-day of Great Britain being party to a policy that will grievously conflict with her time honoured and universally acclaimed traditions of generosity and protection to the political refugees. Reference is made here to the plight of the Baltic Refugees in Germany and Austria. The policy adopted by UNRRA in respect of (a) The repatriation drive and (b) The Balt Eligibility Tests and the general attitude of the American and British Zone authorities causes widespread anxiety and unhappiness and in the minds of those proud of our great tradition, profound misgivings.

2 The three sturdy little Baltic Republics – Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania – born into freedom in 1918 had by 1939 become models of independence, real democracy, progress – material and cultural in all fields – and proud self reliance. They feared and mistrusted their Eastern neighbour, the USSR, the successor of their former masters. Except for a small racial minority of ‘Baltic Barons’ of German extraction, they feared and mistrusted the Nazis no less.

Deported in scores of thousands to Siberia during the Russian occupation and incorporation of the three Baltic Republics in 1940, what more natural than that they should look upon the Germans, when they invaded their countries and drove out the Russians in July 1941 as deliverers rather than enemies, all the more so as the Western Allies at that time were in no position to help them. Their reaction was: A plague on both your houses, but Germany was for them by far the lesser evil. It was a choice between two totalitarian regimes, neither of which respected the individual, or brooked opposition, refusal or a negative attitude.

3 *Eligibility Tests.* The Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian Refugees now in Germany have been screened and rescreened, growing increasingly nervous under each closer test. Now, January 1947, a further test is being carried out and all found wanting are to be deprived of DP Status and cast out into the German economy.

Each Baltic citizen who served in a German formation has, in order to retain his DP Status, to prove that he joined up under compulsion. The burden of proof is *on the accused*, not on the prosecutor. And who in the chaotic conditions since 1941 would still carry proofs of his compulsory call-up? Is not this procedure towards these luckless people unduly harsh? The point is the Baltic people were *victims* not collaborationists or criminals. The Germans in flagrant violation of International Law illegally conscripted the citizens of territory they occupied; those who did not report and enrol were to be tried by Courts Martial, no ration

cards would be issued to them and concentration camps awaited the recalcitrants. Now what are the misdemeanours imputed by the Allies to a considerable portion (30 to 40%) of the male Balts? Either (a) Joining the Wehrmacht or some para-military formation, or (b) Serving in the General SS or Waffen SS.

Our Committee urge an immediate revision of the instructions already issued in the matter of Eligibility Tests. Their recommendations are:

(a) *Balts who joined the Wehrmacht or some para-military organisation.* That the onus of proof that an individual did join up voluntarily shall lie on the Allied authorities, and that all not proved to have joined voluntarily and in addition, all who joined voluntarily in the Medical Services shall be allowed to retain their D.P. Status despite their service in German uniform. And this ruling to have retroactive validity.

(b) *Balts who served in the General SS and Waffen SS.* Each case to be reviewed again immediately by *Competent* Joint Boards comprising Army, UNRRA and representative DPs from the camps, and each case to be decided on its individual merits. Here again persons already evicted from camps to be given a second hearing.

4 *Repatriation Drive.* The repatriation drive for the Poles was carried out both by methods of encouragement to return and of *discouragement to remain.* Some described these as 'indirect coercive methods.' There were frequent changes of camps with uprooting and scattering of individuals, cessation of most living amenities (educational, cultural and occupational) and propaganda designed to show the blessings of return and the hopelessness of the DPs chance of settlement elsewhere. Under such stresses many, reluctant before, decided to return. The decision was in nearly every case an emotional decision. And who knows the destiny that will await these entrants into the realm of totalitarianism? But at least they were returning to a country with their compatriots avowedly determined to uphold a sovereign Polish state.

In the case of the Balts it is totally different. The USSR have taken over all power; independence has been liquidated; Communism directed from Moscow holds sway; ominous silence enshrouds the life of these three erstwhile vital and free Republics. In fairness to the truth it must be emphasised that the Soviets show no indication of allowing any Westerners or DPs, before repatriation, to obtain first hand knowledge of what conditions prevail in these now isolated States. By their incorporation act, the USSR no longer recognises these three countries. The Baltic Refugees in Germany fled before the renewed Russian

threat in 1944, they are the wards of the Occupation Authorities. They are 'de facto' Stateless, even if not yet 'de jure.' In any case they are *not* citizens of the Baltic Soviet Republics, not one in a thousand would return under present conditions unless his spirit be broken and in utter demoralisation at Allied indifference and under emotional stress, he faces the grim probabilities awaiting him on return, rather than the blank hopelessness of unending Refugee existence.

Can not the humane role of the Occupying Powers now be further exemplified by recognising the fact that these Balts have the right to determine their own future. Baltic Refugees are now Stateless and therefore *entitled*, no less than the Jewish infiltrates to the full right of asylum. They are not work shy, they are freedom loving, they are good elements.

Soon instead of the world being alarmed at the difficulty of resettling the good elements of the 3/4 to one million odd irrepatriables, there may well be a scramble to secure them. Many reports reach our committee of the growing ill feeling (their word is 'hatred') towards the Western Allies, particularly Great Britain, being engendered by our policy of harassing and humiliating treatment meted out to these erstwhile Allies and/or sympathisers, now left unwanted and stranded through their repugnance to totalitarianism and communism. Some assert that in sheer disgust many are thinking of 'facing the music' and sharing the absolutist regime of their fellow countrymen.

5 To Sum-up: our Committee urges that these excellent Baltic Refugees during their continued stay in Europe shall be subjected to no more stresses, whether by pressure of Soviet Russia or of those who regard the D.P. problem as an intolerable burden, that the repatriation drive cease and that only those who served in SS formations be still screened by Eligibility Tests, and that the status of 'de facto' statelessness be accorded to these D.P.s and that only those duly proved by a Joint Board to have *voluntarily* served with the enemy should be penalised under the Eligibility Tests.

A copy of this memorandum is being addressed to the Control Commission for Germany and Austria.

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*Location:* PRO, FO 945/711

**“Allegations Concerning Treatment of  
Baltic D.P.s in Germany”**

22 January 1947

*Comment:* The information at the Control Office in London held that “ex-Wehrmacht Baltic DPs are not judged to have been collaborators unless it can be shown by the Control Commission that they served voluntarily.”

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This message will not be distributed outside Britain or US Govt Depts or HQs or re-transmitted even in cipher without being paraphrased.

Control Office for Germany and Austria

From: CONFOLK (Control Office London) DTO: 222000Z

To: CONCOMB (Control Commission Lubbecke)

Info: BERCOMB (Control Commission Berlin)

CCLB/G/260

22 January 1947

Restricted

Memorandum received from the Refugee Defence Committee makes allegations concerning treatment of DPs in Germany.

1 It is said that when Baltic DPs are screened those who had been members of Wehrmacht or Nazi organisations are judged to have joined them voluntarily unless the individual can prove that this was not the case. Our information is that in the British Zone this is not the case and that ex-Wehrmacht Baltic DPs are not judged to have been collaborators unless it can be shown by the Control

Commission that they served voluntarily. Would be grateful if you would confirm. Would you also say whether UNRRA adopt a different attitude and whether any Baltic DPs are declared ineligible for UNRRA help but eligible for reception in British DP Camps. Since new screening machinery began working, have any Baltic DPs been declared ineligible for DP treatment either by UNRRA or by British authorities and if so approximately how many?

2 Memorandum asks that those Baltic DPs who served in German medical services shall be allowed to retain their DP status whether they had served voluntarily or not. Request your views.

3 It is alleged that efforts are still being made to persuade the Balts to accept repatriation to Russia. Is this the case and does the Soviet Repatriation Mission take any active steps to encourage repatriation of Balts?

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*Location:* PRO, FO 945/711

### **“Treatment of Baltic DPs in Germany”**

27 January 1947.

*Comment:* By the end of January 1947 the Control Commission for Germany (CCG) had decided that all “ex-Wehrmacht Balts are eligible for DP status” unless there was proof they served in the SS. UNRRA had declared that all “ex-Wehrmacht Balts” were ineligible for UNRRA help, (1) unless it could be proved that the person had been forced to join and (2) the onus was on the individual to prove that he had been forced to join.

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Control Office for Germany and Austria (2763)

From: PWDP LEMGO

CCLB/G/260

To: Control Office London 271720

Info: PWDP Berlin, Secretariat Lubbecke

PWDP/58318/2/G

27 January 1947

Subject is treatment of Baltic DPs in Germany

1 CCG rules that all ex-Wehrmacht Balts are eligible for DP status unless CCG has definite proof that they served in SS.

2 UNRRA declares all ex-Wehrmacht Balts as ineligible for UNRRA help unless forced to join Wehrmacht. Onus on individual to prove forcible recruitment.

3 Majority of Baltic DPs who have served in Wehrmacht are therefore not repeat not eligible for UNRRA care but eligible for reception in British Camps.

4 Up to date figures of those declared ineligible for (A) UNRRA care (B) CCG care follow soonest.

5 Ref your para 2. Those who served in German Medical Service. This appears covered by our paras 1 and 2 above.

6 Information contained in paras 1 to 5 above already confirmed to all concerned under our PWDP/58802 A serial dated 22 Jan 47 copies to you.

7 Ref your para 3. Every effort made by UNRRA and this division to encourage voluntary repatriation of all DPs.

(A) Steps by Soviet Repat Mission to encourage channels of Soviet newspapers books etc.

(B) Plan for showing of Soviet Films approved by us but not yet put into action by Soviet Mission.

(C) Visits by Soviet Liaison Officers to Baltic camps. This now severely restricted by order of C in C as result of previous incidents.

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*Location:* PRO, FO 945/711.

### UNRRA-ARMY Differences

25 February 1947

*Comment:* The permanent secretary of the Control Commission for Germany and Austria (COGA) replied to the Refugees Defence Committee on the subject of Baltic Displaced Persons. He mentioned screening and the policy on Balts "who joined the Wehrmacht." It, once again, is not clear if Wehrmacht properly so-called is meant here, or the Baltic legions, in the case of Latvia, the 15th and 19th Divisions. These divisions, of course, were not part of the Wehrmacht, but part of the Waffen-SS

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25th February, 1947

You wrote to the Chancellor on the 15th January on the subject of Baltic Displaced Persons.

As far as the British Zone is concerned, your fears about the present screening of Baltic Displaced Persons are not justified. The policy as set out in the memorandum you enclosed corresponds to that adopted by UNRRA; the policy of the Control Commission is more liberal. Balts who joined the Wehrmacht, although they are not accepted as Displaced Persons by UNRRA, are granted this status by the Control Commission and receive care in Military Government Camps, unless it is proved that they served in the S.S. The onus of proof is not on the individual, but on the Control Commission.

It is fully recognised that the vast majority of Baltic Displaced Persons do not wish to return to their countries. It is for this reason that the first important resettlement schemes, namely, those for bringing women to this country to work in hospitals and sanatoria, have been restricted to Displaced Persons of Baltic origin. Unfortunately, the number of opportunities for resettlement is still very small compared with the number of Displaced Persons remaining in Germany. On the other hand, repatriation is a better solution than resettlement wherever it can be accepted by the individual concerned, as he is not then compelled to build up a new life among strange people, speaking a strange language, whose customs and civilization are different from his own. You will recall also that the General Assembly of UNO passed on 12th February, 1946, a resolution recommending that "the main task concerning Displaced Persons is to encourage and assist in every way possible their early return to their countries of origin."

While all possible encouragement is, therefore, being given to repatriation, the fact is that, of over 80,000 Baltic Displaced Persons in the British Zone of Germany, only 43 have been repatriated, that is, about 0.05% of the total. The minuteness of this percentage must surely suggest that these people have not been subjected to any undue pressure.

It is not at all clear what advantage Baltic Displaced Persons would enjoy should they be reclassified as stateless. Neither their present position nor their prospects of resettlement would in any way be improved, and the prospect of repatriation for any individual who might conceivably wish later to return home would be hopelessly compromised. A unilateral declaration by this country would in any case be purposeless, if its validity were not recognized by other Powers, and it is unlikely that such recognition would be granted.

Perm. Sec.

[Permanent Secretary of the Control Office  
for Germany and Austria]

Sir Clifford Heathcote-Smith,  
Refugees Defence Committee,  
5 Victoria Street,  
SW1

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*Location:* PRO, FO 945/711

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## UNRRA and IRO Documents 1947 and 1949

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According to U.S. Army Captain Malcolm J. Proudfoot, at the end of September 1946 there were 185,000 Baltic displaced persons in the western zones of Germany.<sup>1</sup> This is up by 56,000 from the figure for the previous year (end of September 1945 – when the total given for Baltic DPs was 129,000). A large proportion of this increase represents men who had served in German military units and who had been held as Allied prisoners of war until they were discharged and released in the spring of 1946. Most of these men found their way into displaced persons camps. But their journey from POW status to United Nations DP status was not always simple and straightforward.

It is not really the business of an army to look after civilians. Another institution had the responsibility for the more direct, day-

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<sup>1</sup>See Malcom J. Proudfoot, entry “Displaced Persons,” in *10 Eventful Years: A Record of Events of the Years Preceding, Including and Following World War II, 1937 through 1946*, vol. 2, *Concentration Camps to Ley*, prepared under the editorial direction of Walter Yust, editor of Encyclopaedia Britannica (Chicago, London, Toronto: The University of Chicago, Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc., 1947), pp. 141 – 44.

The following comments are adapted from my paper, “Meinungsunterschiede zwischen UNRRA und amerikanischer Militärführung ueber den DP-Status baltischer Kriegsgefangener,” 51st Baltisches Historikertreffen, 7–9 June 1998, Goettingen, Germany.

to-day care, registration, and administration of DPs. That was UNRRA, which was signed into being in Washington by forty-four countries on 9 November 1943. The Soviet Union did not want any UNRRA help for DPs found in its zones (i.e., in Germany and Austria). Nevertheless, as a member of UNRRA, and under the terms of the Yalta Repatriation Agreement, the Soviet Union maintained an active role in POW and DP policy in the Western zones. In particular the Yalta agreement allowed Soviet liaison officers into DP camps to look for what it claimed were its citizens, so that these people could be repatriated – by force, if they would not go willingly.

Starting in 1944 UNRRA hired teams of employees to work in the Western zones to set up Assembly Centres. There DPs were to report and be outfitted with a UNDP registration card. From these Assembly Centres, DPs were moved to camps, set up by nationality. The administration of these camps was the responsibility of UNRRA. The administration of the entire zone was the responsibility of the respective army, that is, the army was the “government” in each zone until late 1949, when the German Federal Republic and the German Democratic Republic each came into being.

UNRRA and the United States Army did not see eye-to-eye with regard to the Baltic, that is, the Estonian and Latvian, legions. (There was no Lithuanian legion in the Second World War.) The practical effect of this was that UNRRA made it more difficult for released Latvian and Estonian POWs to acquire UNDP status. Fortunately, for them, however, DPs were wards of the army and not of the UNRRA. The army ensured that these people were screened on an individual, and not a group, basis – as would have been preferred by UNRRA.

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## The Price Report

### Appendix 7: "Documents on Baltic SS"

May 1947

*Comment:* Ralph B. Price was the chief UNRRA repatriation officer in the U.S. zone.<sup>2</sup> The "History Text," as it is entitled in the "Contents" of his report on repatriation, dated May 1947, is some twenty-seven pages in length, and it is supplemented by fifteen appendices that together total another 177 pages.<sup>3</sup> The text itself is a summary and analysis of how repatriation had been going, with the major obstacle being the attitude of the U.S. Army.

Price found it incomprehensible that the army could be so, to his mind, difficult concerning Balts, Ukrainians, and Yugoslavs (the subjects of most of the appendices). Appendix 7, "Documents on Baltic SS," consists of a letter written by the UNRRA director in the U.S. zone, and two attached statements — a letter to Robert Liepiņš of the Latvian Red Cross, by Major William C. Rowland, of the Civil Affairs staff, Third U.S. Army, and a letter from A.F. Woods, of the office of the Provost Marshal of the Third U.S. Army. The three documents form a single appendix because in fact the first document, written by the UNRRA officer, refers to the other two. The three-document appendix is referred to at face value in the Price Report on Repatriation.

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<sup>2</sup>Institut fuer Zeitgeschichte, Munich, Germany, Fi 01 files, vol. 93, pp. 293–320. Cover sheet: "U.N.R.R.A., U.S. Zone Germany, History Report No. 28, Repatriation, by Ralph Price, Chief of Repatriation, Zone H.Q., May 1947." The appendices do not appear to be attached to that copy of the report, though they are listed by number and title on the contents page (Fi 01, vol. 93, p. 294).

<sup>3</sup>Marilla Bliss Guptil, PhD, historian and Chief Archivist, UNRRA, kindly furnished me with this fact.

The material in Appendix 7 of the Price Report raises questions that have not been unequivocally answered to this day. It serves to illustrate the complexity of problems and topics that confronted personnel "handling" prisoners of war and displaced persons.

Edwards, on behalf of UNRRA, was opposed to accepting "ex-PWs of Baltic nationality" as displaced persons. Without revealing the source of his information, as zone UNRRA director, he summarized the history of the Baltic legions. There are five central points of controversy.

- 1 Did the men sign up voluntarily?
- 2 Did these units have the same status, and thus function, as German Waffen-SS units?
- 3 Is the discussion about the Baltic legions or about units formed before the existence of the legions, or both?
- 4 Who bears responsibility for wartime atrocities against civilians committed by the Germans (and those working with or for them)?
- 5 Is this responsibility of a group or an individual nature?

By the time of Major Woods's letter, of 3 October 1946, to Latvian Red Cross director, Roberts Liepiņš, these men had been discharged. However, since the time of their discharge as POWs there had been a "redocumentation" of them, on an individual basis, that is, their discharge papers had been looked at again by the army. On the original discharge certificate it was clearly noted that the individual was a former SS member. A redocumentation was taking place to provide the individuals with an opportunity to have this notation taken into account.

Woods explained to Liepiņš the necessity for this redocumentation. The U.S. Army was now of the opinion, based on information that "investigation revealed" that these Balts were not really SS, in the usual sense that one thought of the German SS. Nothing was mentioned about the source of the information, or whose investigation it was. Nevertheless, the "investigation" had enabled the United States Forces, European Theater (USFET) to conclude that these "Baltic army units" had, in fact, been "placed under the jurisdiction... of the German SS" without, however, being "made an integral part of" it – "to function as such."

Somewhere, someone had raised the issue of differentiating between the SS name and the SS "function." Woods's letter did not reveal where, how, and when this had occurred. On the basis of the army's awareness of this differentiation a decision had come down from USFET stipulating that "Baltics belonging to these units," that is, the Baltic (SS) Legions, "should be discharged as Wehrmacht." The latter was a far less incriminating designation. It was deemed that the "term 'SS' appearing on discharge certificates was placing a stigma upon individuals which was not justified."

The second army letter is from Major Rowland from the U.S. Army Provost Marshal's Office to other army units telling them what they are to do about redocumenting Baltic ex-POWs.

Unlike Edwards, who only referred to Balts in categories, both army statements pointed out they, the army, were dealing with individuals. In a letter of four paragraphs and 126 words, Rowland used the word "individual" four times. Woods, in his five-paragraph communication of 151 words, used "individual" twice. Edwards's letter, which has 761 words, never once used the word "individual." The army was hammering home the point that decisions on Baltic POWs were made on an individual basis, while UNRRA was passing judgment on them en masse.

Being a Latvian or Estonian ex-POW did not automatically mean that the person was to be excluded from DP status by the army. The person was individually screened and, if cleared, individually certified as eligible for UNRRA assistance. Clearance meant that the individual was able to convince the "screeners" that he had not been among "collaborators, quislings or Volksdeutsche." In addition the screening team had to be convinced that the person had "entered the German Army involuntarily and [had] been completely discharged from military status."

Once the screening board was convinced that the person did not fall into any of the undesirable or ineligible categories he was issued "a statement to the effect." The person apparently was to take this statement and go to an UNRRA camp.

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[Appendix '7' to "Price Report"]

UNRRA  
US Zone Headquarters  
Heidelberg

7 February 1947

Subject: USFET Eligibility Policy with reference to Baltic SS Legions  
To: Commanding General,  
Headquarters, USFET  
Att'n: A C of S., G-5  
Through: A C of S., G-5, TUSA

1 It has been called to our attention that the attached letter "A" dated 3 October 1946, signed by William C. ROWLAND, Major, GSC, Executive Officer, is being circulated in thousands of copies in the U.S. Zone by the "Latvian Red Cross" an unofficial organization.

2 If this letter is authentic it would appear that the third paragraph which states "The SS notation on the release statement of releases of ex-Latvian

soldiers [sic] who were in units designated as SS units will have no effect on their receiving UNRRA assistance since the mere fact of their clearance [sic] and release by screening boards indicate that the individual is not considered to be in any of the above mentioned categories" is in conflict with policy directives issued by USFET, TUSA and UNRRA concerning screening and eligibility of displaced persons. In TUSA letter AG 383.7 GNMCA-23 13 June 1946, subject "Evaluation of questionnaire for displaced persons for use on Displaced Persons Screening Boards" the answer to question 7 states: "If answer indicates any German or semi-German military organization..... [sic] it may be assumed that he was given German citizenship ultimately as specified in the ruling passed on foreign nationals serving with the German armed forces by the German Ministry of the Interior and the Reichssicherheitshauptamt and the person is *not* [original emphasis] a DP.

3 Certainly the SS, the German elite troops, fall into this category and USFET indicating that it adhered to this view of former SS personnel stated in a letter to TUSA dated 3 July 1946, reference No. S 6870, subject "Displaced Persons Status for ex-PWs of Baltic nationality" – "The above references define the policy for the acceptance or denial of D.P. care and treatment to those nationals of the Baltic nations who were members of the German army. The only exception are those Balts who were former members of the Waffen SS who will be denied admittance or any further care and treatment..." [ellipses in original]

4 This apparent confusion on the status of Balts in the SS would also appear possibly to be connected with the recent "re-documentation" of former discharged SS Balts reported to this Headquarters from UNRRA personnel in the field. In answer [sic] to UNRRA's query regarding this participle [sic], TUSA endorsed the attached statement "B" by the Provost Marshal TUSA. Such an explanation would appear to conflict with information this organization has concerning the Estonian and Latvian SS Legions.

5 Allegedly soon after the occupation of the Baltic countries, the Germans began organising the Estonian and Latvian SS Legions from among the younger [sic] men of the country with particular attention to those who had undergone previous military training, to members of the regular and reserve armies, and to draftees under mobilisation who were able to fulfil the standards of physical and ideological requirements and with emphasis on anti-Soviet tendencies. These soldiers became an integral part of the Waffen SS legions and divisions and were often used as shock troops within these two Baltic countries and on the Russian front. Many were later transferred to the Western front. The uniform of these soldiers was field-grey with black collar tabs and the national crest was worn on

the left arm. In some instances the runic SS emblem was painted on the left side on their steel helmets. SS servuce [sic] was a voluntary service.

6 There would appear to be considerable confusion in paragraph 1 and paragraph 2 of the TUSA statement. Paragraph 1 refers to "re-documentation of former members of the Baltic legions" while paragraph 2 states, "since investigation revealed that Baltic army units were placed under the jurisdiction but not made an integrap [sic] part of the German SS but functioned as such, a decision was received from USFET that Balts belonging to these units would be discharged as Wehrmacht." While there were "Baltic army units" who were under the command of the Waffen and Allgemeine SS, their position was quite different from that of the Baltic SS Legions themselves. These "Baltic army units" may have been involuntarily attached to the SS. Many times they were service or technical units and were not given the status of the SS.

7 Paragraph 4 indicates that USFET policy would permit the acceptance of such notorious enemy personnel as the SS for UNRRA care. The administration cannot accept this position with regard to SS personnel. The record of the Baltic SS Legions in Poland, in the Soviet Union, and as notorious guards of the concentration camps, has heretofore been well recognised and at this late date, there would appear to be no occasion for altering our eligibility policy or softening our official attitude towards former enemy armed forces.

Paul B. Edwards  
Zone Director.

cc. G-2, USFET  
UNRRA Liaison Office, USFET

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[Attachment "A" to UNRRA letter]

Headquarters  
Third United States Army  
Office of the A C of S G-5  
APO 403

3 Oct. 1946

Mr. R. Liepins  
Director of the Latvian Red Cross  
Esslingen/Neckar  
Uhlandstr.7

Dear Sir,

Reference is made to your letter of 22 July 1944, concerning displaced persons status for released ex-Latvian soldiers in the U.S. Zone, Germany.

As you know, displaced persons status, i.e. eligibility for UNRRA assistance, is accorded ex-Latvian prisoners of war who are individually certified to UNRRA that they have not been war criminals, traitors, collaborators, quislings or Volksdeutsche and that they entered the German Army involuntary [sic] and have been completely discharged from military status. To meet UNRRA requirements, each individual so cleared and who desired UNRRA care, is given a statement to the effect that he does not fall into one more of the above categories [sic]. This, and acceptance by the screening teams assigned to UNRRA camps, is sufficient to indicate eligibility for UNRRA care and is acceptable to UNRRA camp officials.

The SS notation on the release statement of released ex-Latvian soldiers who were in units designated as SS units will have no effect on their receiving UNRRA assistance since the mere fact of their clearance and release by Screening Board indicates that the individual is not considered to be in any of the above mentioned categories.

It is our desire to assist those who, under our present directives, are eligible for assistance, and to insure that individual cases are settled with promptness and justice.

Sincerely,  
William C. Rowland  
Maj GSC  
Executive Officer

[Attachment "B" to UNRRA letter]

Headquarters  
Third United States Army  
APO 403 US ARMY

30 Jan. 1947

Subject: PW (Ex-Wehrmacht & SS) Discharges.  
From: Provost Marshal, TUSA  
To: G-5

1 It is believed that alleged situation is based on the redocumentation of former members of the Baltic Legions who were originally discharged with certificates showing them as having belonged to the SS.

2 Since investigation revealed that Baltic army units were placed under the jurisdiction but not made an integral part of the German SS to function as such, a decision was received from USFET that Baltics belonging to these units would be discharged as Wehrmacht. The term "SS" appearing on discharge certificates was placing a stigma upon individuals which was not justified.

3 All prisoners of war of Baltic Nationality were screened by boards of officers to determine their status prior to discharge.

4 On this basis all Baltic prisoners of war discharged with "SS" on their certificates are entitles [sic] to rescreening and redocumentation where appropriate.

5 There is no other existing authority or procedure whereby individual may be redocumented from SS to Wehrmacht.

A.E.Woods

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*Location:* Records of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, United Nations Archives, New York City, New York, unpublished records group PAG-4/4.2 Office of the Historian, DC-801, Report - Repatriation, DP US 19, "Appendix '7'"

## Eligibility of Certain Categories of Baltic Refugees

12 April 1949

*Comment:* In March 1949 the Executive Committee of the International Refugee Organization approved some new rulings concerning the "Eligibility of Certain Categories of Baltic Refugees." These replace any earlier eligibility rulings. Essentially, Balts who had served in German military or paramilitary units were to be considered "outside the mandate of IRO," unless they could prove that they did not serve voluntarily.

In the case of Latvians, the only exception was men who had been conscripted into the "Waffen SS Divisions" after April 1943. In the case of "members of the SS, Police Regiments, the Sicherheitsdienst (Security Service), the Einsatzgruppen, and the Schutzmannschaften," applicants for IRO eligibility would have to make the case both that they had been conscripted and that they "did not commit atrocities or otherwise persecute civilian populations."

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International Refugee Organization

Palais Wilson  
Geneva

12th April, 1949.

Attention: Chief Eligibility Officer.

Subject: Eligibility of Certain Categories of Baltic Refugees

1. The question of the eligibility of certain categories of Baltic refugees was considered by the Executive Committee at its 16th Meeting held on the 27th January, 1949. The Executive Committee requested the Director-General to

conduct an investigation into this problem and to submit a report at its next meeting. The investigation was conducted and the findings were presented to the Executive Committee on the 21st March, 1949.

2 As a result of the investigation and the discussions held by the Executive Committee at its meeting on the 21st March, 1949, the following rulings which were advocated by the Director-General, were approved by the Executive Committee:

(a) Members of the S.S. Police Regiments, the Sicherheitsdienst (Security Service), the Einsatzgruppen, and Schutzmannschaften are *prima facie* outside the mandate of IRO under the terms of paragraph 2 of Part II of the Constitution. In the case of the Schutzmannschaften this presumption may be rebutted if the applicant can produce evidence that he was conscripted and if it is made plausible that he did not commit atrocities or otherwise persecute civilian populations.

(b) Members of the Waffen S.S. Divisions who started military service before the first compulsory conscription in April 1943 will be regarded as volunteers and therefore outside the mandate of IRO unless they can give proof to the contrary.

(c) Members of the Waffen S.S. who had a prior choice of serving in the Reichsarbeitsdienst or the Wehrmacht and who volunteered for the Waffen S.S. are outside the mandate of IRO.

(d) All applicants who in the absence of documents present conflicting stories and make false statements should *prima facie* be regarded as not bona-fide displaced persons or refugees who fall within the mandate of IRO.

3 The Executive Committee stressed the fact that the Organisation [sic] is not a court of justice but a humanitarian organisation and that justice should be administered with charity. It emphasised [sic] further that the Eligibility Officers should bear in mind the dual principle of complete objectivity and initial presumption of innocence when dealing with refugees who are suspect of voluntary assistance.

4 The rulings set out in paragraph 2 above supplant the eligibility rulings given in paragraphs 1 and 2 of subsection H of page 81 of the draft Provisional Order No. 42.1, which are hereby cancelled. The conscription date mentioned in sub-paragraph (b) of paragraph 2 above applies to Latvians. Conscription

dates for Estonians as shown on page 78 (paragraph 3) of draft Provisional order No. 42.1 will be amended as follows:

(i) Men born between 1918-1924 were drafted for the RAD (Reichsarbeitsdienst) in April/May of 1943. They were later transferred to the armed forces.

(ii) Men born in 1925 were conscripted into the armed forces by an ordinance dated 26th October, 1943.

(iii) A general mobilisation (Ordinance No. 3) became effective on 30th January, 1944, of men born between the years 1904-1923 and officers up to the age of 60 and non-commissioned officers up to the age of 55.

(iv) Persons born in 1926 were conscripted into the armed forces by an ordinance (No. 17) dated 3rd August, 1944.

5 One group not mentioned in paragraph 2 are those Balts who served as auxiliaries in the Wehrmacht and the Luftwaffe. The majority of these persons were conscripted into these services. Those, however, who can be shown to have voluntarily enlisted will be treated in accordance with paragraph 2(b) of Part II of the Constitution.

6 The above rulings and comments will be incorporated in the final draft of Provisional Order No. 42.1 which will be issued as quickly as possible.

Sincerely,

[signed]

W. Hallam Tuck,

Director-General.

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*Location:* International Refugee Organization Archives, Paris, France. Papers of the Director General.

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## Conclusion

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The documents in this collection show what was being said about the Latvian Legion in the 1940s. They comprise materials for a case study in applied history, revealing as they do various aspects of a historical debate that even today is not yet resolved.

On the face of it, how can a Second World War formation called the Latvian Voluntary Waffen-SS Legion possibly constitute a subject for debate? This is the name Hitler gave the legion when he ordered it into being, and this is its designation in German wartime records. How can one do anything but condemn such an organization, and by extension anyone who served in it? Some years after the war was over, large numbers of these legionnaires emigrated from Germany and resettled in third countries including Belgium, Brazil, Venezuela, England, Australia, the United States, and Canada. Until then, from the time of their discharge from Allied prisoner-of-war camps, they had been living as displaced persons in camps financially supported by the Allied armies and administered by the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration. How could it happen that after the Second World War the United Nations accepted into its care Latvian legionnaires, that is, men who had fought with the Germans, and then these same UN countries, having sacrificed their own sons and daughters and capital resources to fight Nazi Germany to the death, accepted Latvian legionnaires as immigrants and future citizens?

Volunteering to serve in the *Schutzstaffel*, the SS, has to be seen as an abomination. In the case of the Latvian Legion this did not happen. The Latvian Legion was not a volunteer legion, and it was not SS.

Where there is conscription, the default assumption must be that people were conscripted. In this case, Latvian men were ordered into military service by the occupying German power, with the assistance of the so-called Latvian self-administration in the person of General Oskars Dankers and the prewar Latvian Minister of War General Rudolfs Bangerskis – over whose signatures the call-up orders were published in the German-controlled Latvian press. Should any individual in such a situation be accused of having volunteered, the onus of proof of such volunteering rests on the accuser.

Moreover, there can be no volunteers in any meaningful sense of the term in a situation where there is universal conscription. From March 1943, the German occupying power in Latvia ordered the call-up of Latvians, by age group, until all men born in the years 1906 to 1926 were drafted into service for the German Reich. Those who, on various grounds, were exempted from service had to carry on their person a statement authorizing such an exemption.

Latvian legionaires could only hope that they were serving for Latvia, and its future renewal, too. For them the number one enemy was Soviet Russia. This point has never been in dispute. Burned in the minds of many legionnaires were the atrocities that they had just experienced under the Soviet regime in the Year of Terror (in Latvian, *baigais gads*), the year of the first Soviet occupation of Latvia. Especially in vivid memory were the round-ups and deportations of family members and neighbours that had been witnessed throughout the country on the night of 13–14 June 1941. A similar purge was carried out on that same date in both Estonia and Lithuania. This was eight days before the start of Operation Barbarossa and two weeks before the Nazis took Riga. In any event, being profoundly, even virulently, anti-Soviet, together with not succeeding in dodging a Nazi-ordered military service draft does not constitute volunteering to serve.

As for the SS label, Latvians by definition could not be members of this organization. Indeed, membership in the SS was by definition voluntary. But who could volunteer? True aryan, members by blood of the master race. Certainly not foreign inferiors, on the Nazi racial scale, like Latvians.

Some comments by the historian Bernd Wegner of the Universität der Bundeswehr in Hamburg, Germany, might be of interest at this point. Professor Wegner is considered among historians the world expert on the Waffen-SS. On the manuscript for this book, he was consulted for comments, which he was very kind in providing. Wegner expressed astonishment that anyone would still claim that Latvian legionnaires were SS: "Some of the problems that you want to clarify in your documentation have to my mind long been cleared up in the research. For example, the introduction of conscription in Estonia and Latvia through Himmler has been thoroughly worked out." He mentioned as authoritative the studies by George H. Stein (*The Waffen-SS: Hitler's Elite Guard at War, 1939-1945*, Ithaca and London, 1966) and Seppo Myllyniemi (*Die Neuordnung der baltischen Länder, 1941-1944: Zum nationalsozialistischen Inhalt der deutschen Besatzungspolitik*, Helsinki, 1973). "The fact that members of the Latvian Legion were not members of the SS does not any longer require to be proven. The official designation of the Latvian divisions as Waffen divisions of the SS, alone, denotes them as – in Himmler's sense – 'foreign' auxiliary bands." On this issue Wegner pointed to his own book, *Hitlers politische Soldaten* (p. 315f) on its English edition, *The Waffen-SS: Organization, Ideology and Function* (Oxford, 1990, pp. 356f).

About the related question, Were Latvian legionnaires Nazis? Professor Wegner had this to say: "Since we know that only people of German ancestry were allowed to be members of the NSDAP, it is entirely self-evident that members of the Latvian Legion could not be members of the Party." In effect, then, what is the point of talking about this issue? Well, even in 1998 reports

in reputable newspapers worldwide – even in Germany – called the Latvian Legion both Nazi and SS. To make this point clear beyond a doubt, a list of names of Nazi party members in Latvia is appended to this collection for the interested reader to examine.

This leaves the issue of war crimes. The fundamental problem here is that it is a lot easier to produce accusations than evidence. On this point Professor Wegner said that the documents in this book do not prove whether the Latvian Legion was involved in war crimes or not. I agree. There is much accusation, particularly in the Price Report, but no proof. To my knowledge, no one has been prosecuted in any country outside the former Soviet Union for actions during his service in the legion qua legion. Indeed, in a recent case in Canada, the prosecution's expert witness, the historian Konrad Kwiet, made the following statement on cross-examination:

Q [Donald Powell, defendant's lawyer]. Certainly the German Waffen SS committed numerous atrocities?

A [Professor Kwiet]. Yes.

Q. It's well documented.

Professor Ezergailis says there is no documented case of any atrocity committed by any unit of the Latvian legion; do you agree?

A. Yes, I have not found any atrocity committed. At least there is no record which I have seen which documents that.<sup>1</sup>

This collection does not and cannot rest the case on this issue. However, it is the responsibility of the accuser to research and provide the details of accusations being made, and thus the evidence, of the alleged crimes. In more than fifty years since the

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<sup>1</sup>See transcript of *Minister of Citizenship and Immigration versus Peteris (Peter) Arvids Vitols*, Federal Court of Canada, Court File T-310-97, page 302, testimony of 20 January 1998.

end of the Second World War, those persisting in such allegations have still not come up with thorough supporting evidence for their accusations. A documentary study on this subject would be welcome, indeed.

Applied history is using history to acquire the understanding necessary to make decisions. To decide, for example, whether in the 1990s the action of former Latvian legionnaires in Riga, of commemorating on March 16 their common battle in the Second World War, is a manifestation of people perpetuating or, indeed, perpetrating support for Nazis and their regime, requires a greater command of historical information than merely knowing that the Germans called the legion the Latvian Voluntary Waffen-SS. Let us make an effort to understand what actually happened, and then decide.

# Appendix A

## Members of the Nazi Party in Latvia

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The following is an alphabetized combination of the names on five lists or supplementary lists prepared by the Documents Center of the Office for Military Government of Germany (U.S.) of members of the Nazi party in Latvia.

The complete lists include the membership number, name, date entered the party, date of birth, place of birth, last recorded address, and occupation for each individual. Only the names of the NSDAP members have been reproduced in this appendix.

These names are being published here in response to the question: Were the Latvian legionnaires Nazis?

An examination of this list will show that leading individuals in the Latvian so-called self-administration during the Nazi occupation period, for example, General Oskars Dankers (who was the director general of the directorate) and General Rudolfs Bangerskis (the inspector general of the legion) are not on this list. There do not appear to be any other Latvians either. Insofar as the definition of a Nazi involves membership in the NSDAP, and on the basis of my familiarity with the Latvian language and thus ability to recognize Latvian names, Latvian legionnaires cannot be said to have been Nazis.

*Location:* National Archives II, College Park, Maryland. RG 319, Records of the Army Staff, 1939-. Investigative Reports Repository (IRR), United States Army, Entry 76, Dossier ZFO11654, Nazi Party Membership Records, Latvia.

\* = illegible character on National Archives copy

Abshagen, Kurt  
Ackermann, Hermann  
Ander\*\*\*, \*urchar  
Anrep, Herbert von  
Anspach, Emma  
Anton, Katharina

Arbusow, Anni von (Aenny)  
Arlt, Helmut  
Armistead, Ada  
Armitstead, Helga von  
Arndt, Heinrich  
Arnold, Werner

- Baerberow, Eduard  
 Bagdahn, Alfred  
 Bahl, Adolf  
 Barsh, Johannes  
 Bartsch, Hermann  
 Barz, Wald\*mar  
 Bass\*, Rudolf  
 Bauer, Clemens  
 Becher, Robert  
 Belschner, Gustav  
 Berger, Erich  
 Bermack, Theodor  
 Bernitzki, Arthur  
 Bessler, Franz  
 Bessler, Martha  
 Beyer, Wilhelm  
 Beyermann, Alfred  
 Bi\*\*enstein, Karin  
 Bi\*\*stein, Mary  
 Bic\*enstein, Gerhard  
 Bl\*ck, Helmut  
 Bö\*c, Klara  
 Bo\*kemühl, Marga  
 Boettcher, Arnold  
 Boetticher, Anni von  
 Boetticher, Helene von  
 Born, Edgar  
 Born, Elfriede  
 Born, Fritz Erich  
 Born, Irmgard  
 Börner, Erich  
 Brandt, Friedrich  
 Braun, Eugen  
 Brecke\*, Herbert  
     Fr. August  
 Brecke\*, Wally  
 Breuer, Walter  
 Bruem\*\*r, Erwin von,  
 Brünen, Olga  
 Brummer, Helmut
- Burchard-Mauck, Lotty  
 Clement, Friedrich  
 Conrad, Wilhelm  
 Cornelius, Louis  
 Czeskleba, Richard  
 Deichhelz, Paul Hermann  
 Dempewolf, Anna  
 Deutsch, Dr Paul  
 Dierks, Hugo  
 Diewerge, Heinz  
 Doering, Dagmar  
 Doering, Otto  
 Doering, Werner  
 Dra\*\*, Lieselotte  
 Drabe, Georg  
 Drabe, Paul  
 Drachenfels, Friedrich von  
 Draeger, Heinrich  
 Draeger, Martha  
 Du\*ckeit, Bruno  
 Dultz, Walter  
 Dunz, Richard  
 Durs\*, Karl  
 Eberlein, Hans  
 Ehrenkraut, Otto Adolf  
 Ehrentra\*t, Herta  
 Eickert, Wilhelm  
 Elfert, Julius  
 Ellerbrock, Erika  
 Ellerbrock, Walter  
 Erdtmann, Waldemar  
 Fahl\*\*, Wilhelm Richard  
 Fasthuber, August  
 Fasthuber, Wally  
 Felsko, Mona  
 Fichtner, Eugen

- 
- |                                 |                             |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Filser, David                   | Grün, Kurt                  |
| Filser, Elise                   | Gutkewitach, Georg          |
| Finck von Finckenstein, Huberta | Gutkewitach, Vadim          |
| Gräfin                          | Gutmann, Friedrich          |
| Fischer, Franz                  | Gutschmidt, Alfred          |
| Fischer, Herta                  | Gutschmidt, Carola          |
| Fischl, Albert                  | Gutschmidt, Harry           |
| Foerster, Lydia                 | Gutzeit, Ida                |
| Frederking, Herbert             |                             |
| Frederking, Ernst               |                             |
| Frerichs, Heika                 | Hack, Kurt                  |
| Fricke, Willi                   | Hacker, Minna               |
| Frischmann, Charlotte           | Hacker, Willy               |
| Frischmann, Ernst               | Hagedorn, Antonie           |
| Froese, Harald                  | Hagedorn, Otto              |
|                                 | Hahn, Elisabeth Karenin von |
| Gangmis, Otto                   | Hahn, Erwin                 |
| Garten, Wilhelm                 | Hahn, Gerd Baron von        |
| Geiger, Albert                  | Hähn, Magnus                |
| Geisler, Dr Walter              | Hampeln, Arnold             |
| Germann, Armin                  | Hartisch, Joachin           |
| Gerndt, **o                     | Hass, Paul                  |
| Gerriets, Hans                  | Hausmann, Werner            |
| Giese, Gerhardt                 | Hayde, Josef                |
| Giess*er, Wilhelm               | Hebestreit, Helmut          |
| Goebel, Waldemar                | Heeg, Ar**d                 |
| Goebel Wilhelmine               | Henningse*, Hans Adolf      |
| Goegginge* Wolf                 | Henningse*, Ellen           |
| Goercke, Kurt Otto              | Hermann, Hertha             |
| Gogler, Max                     | Herrnberger, Julius         |
| Gotthard, Dr Herbert            | Hertz, Viktor               |
| Graichen, Arthur                | Hess, Hans Gisbert          |
| Graichen, Emilie                | Hinsche, Nikolai            |
| Grall, Leo                      | Hoffleidt, Gustav           |
| Graupner, Elmar                 | Hölger, Oskar               |
| Grebe, Alfred                   | Holscher, Wilhelm           |
| Grenzner, Franz                 | Horn, Carl                  |
| Grohmann, Johannes              | Horn, Ellen                 |
| Grosse, Dr Walter               | Hübner, Gerd                |
| Grosse-Weischede, Hermann       | Hübsch, Alize               |

Jacob, Kurt	Köhler, Leontine
Jacobowsky, Armin	Köhler, Lilly
Jedlitschka, Roderich	Kolbenschlag, Heinrich
Johnich, Hermann	Kotzan, Gustav
Juergenssen, Ralph	Kotze, Hans von
Jürgens, Dr phil Heinrich	Kremser, Vera
	Kraus, Dr Ernst
Kahlert, Heinrich	Kraus, Gertrude
Kahlert, Friedrich Erwin	Kraus, Hubert
Kampitz, Fritz	Kraus, Theodor
Kappeller, Ernst	Krauss, Hans
Kappeller, Sinaida Emma	Krerz, Hugo
Kappell*er, Johann	Kreyser, Friedrich
Karhoff, Berta	Kroepseh, Artur
Karhoff, Gottlieb	Kroepseh, Heinrich
Karhoff, Rudolf	Kroepseh, Nina
Karsten, Siegfried	Kun*, Heinrich
Katterfeld, Ludwig	Kunsmann, Friedrich
Kauffmann, Katharina	Kunzendorf, Ernst
Kayser-Bichberg, Dr Ulrich Keit, Ernst	Kuth*ing, Gerda
Kerwin, Franz	Kutscher, Dr Ernst
Kindermann, Oskar	Kymm**, Heinrich
Kindermann, Sophie	
Kinzer, Kläre	Lamez, Bernhard
Kirchner, Gertrud	Lange, Eugenie
Kirchner, Susi	Lange, Walter
Klauke, Erich	Langenfeldt, Alfred
Klaus, Marta	Langer, Prof Dr Gottfried
Kleist, Bernhard von	Langue-Querfeld von der Seadeck, Gerhard de
Kleu, Otto	Larentzen, Erwin
Klot, Annelise von	Laux, Alfred
Klot, Berndt von	Leckzyck, Dr Adolf
Klot, Burchard von	Leinweber, Walter
Klot, Robert von	Leinweber, A*el
Ko*ell, Ferdinand	Lilje, Alfred
Koch, Werner	Lindquist, Edgar
Kock, Valentine	Lohse, Helga
Köhler, Eduard Georg	Lubnau, Louis
Köhler, Harry	Lucas, Ernst Günter

- Lüder-Lühr, Dr Heinrich Ludwig,  
   Margarete  
 Lukies, Richard  
 Lüth, Vera  
 Luther, Hugen  
 Lutz, Bernhard
- Ma\*\*ng, Anna  
 Machalowski, Willy  
 Mackensen, Maria  
 Marienfeldt, Friedrich Arved  
 Markert, Adam  
 Martens, Josephine  
 Matthes, Rudolf  
 Mehlhorn, Hans  
 Mei\*sel, Eugen  
 Meier, Albertine  
 Meier, Heinrich  
 Melnikow, Mark  
 Mensching, Dr Gustav  
 Mentua, Otto  
 Merkal, Meta  
 Merkel, Adolf  
 Meurand, Brigitte Dorothea  
 Meyer, Kurt  
 Meyer, Ludmilla  
 Meyer, Waldemar  
 Mitte\*dorf, Wilhelm  
 Mitschke, Boris  
 Moeckel, Gustav Alfred  
 Mossbach, Gustav  
 Mühthaupt, Fritz  
 Müller, Constantin  
 Müller, Sylvia  
 Münzinger, Ernst  
 Münzinger, Senta
- Naschke, Erna Alice  
 Naujoks, Arved  
 Naumann, Walter
- Naumann, Hildegard  
 Neumann, Renate  
 Neyerinck, Hubert von  
 Niemeier, Georg  
 Nie\*erer, Margarete  
 Nit\*sche, Axel  
 Now\*k, Heinrich  
 Nuc\*, Otto
- Obsieger, Eduard  
 Oelzner, Karl  
 Oelzner, Clara  
 Oes\*\*rlein, Hermann  
 Oettingen, Elsa von  
 Orl\*\*sky, Waldemar  
 Orth, Dr ing Fritz  
 Otto, Arthur
- Pa\*der, Eberhard von  
 Pattberg, Gustav  
 Paustag, Julius  
 Petersen, Hermann Gerd  
 Petersen, Kurt  
 Philipp, Alexander  
 Philipps, Josef  
 Philip\*, Elisabeth  
 Pote\*\*a, Emil  
 Prahmer, Friedrich  
 Preuk, Harry  
 Prigge, August  
 Prokop, Manfred
- Quitzrau, Erich
- Raschert, Heinz  
 Raschke, Gert  
 Rathj\*n, Rudolf Arend  
 Raumer, Dr. Kurt von  
 Re\*lich, Else  
 Redlich, Barbara

Reich, Johann	Schirme*, Artur
Remmes, Bruno	Schmidt, Elfriede
Remst*dt, Hans	Schmidt, Emil
Richter, Werner	Schmidt, Erich
Rieck, Dr ing Kurt	Schmidt, Frida
Riedel, Ingeberg	Schmidt, Georg Wilhelm
Riedel, Hermine	Schmidt, Herbert
Riedel, Karl	Schmidt, Jutta
Riedel, Otto	Schmidt, Karl
Rijs, Richard	Schmidt, Otto
Rijs, Franz	Schmidt, Richard
Rist**, Kurt	Schmidt, Tilly
Ritti**, Rosalie	Schmiede, Waldemar
Rodegra, Heinrich	Schmitz, Herman
Rohwe****r, Helmut	Schneider, Josef
Rosen**ch, Heinrich	Schneider, Carl Herm Oskar
Rudolph, Lucie	Schröder-Ehrbeck, Heinrich
Rudolph, Waldemar	Schroeder, Wilhelm Alfred
Ruhte*berg, Kurt Ta*ias	Schröter, Alfred
Ruoff, Otto	Schubert, Alfons
Rysick, Eugen	Schulte, Hubert
	Schultz, Wilhelm
Safarik, Franz	Schultze, Hans
Saller, Alexander	Schulz, Friedrich
Saller, Hugo Karl	Schulz, Hildegard
Samson* Himmelstjerna,	Schulz*, Hans
Friedrich von	Schuster, Hermann
Samson* Himmelstjerna,	Schwalbe, Gerhard
Sonny von	Schwartz, Edgar
Sandmann, Ellinor	Schwartz, Rolf
Sauerstein, Johannes	Schwerd*ferer, Walter
Scair*w, Heinrich	Se**erlich, Frieda
Sch*n***dt, Paul	Seegrün, Alexander
Scharnagl, Kurt	Seeberg, Waldemar
Scheel, Elfriede	Seelemann, Heinrich
Scheel, Otto	Seeliger, Ernst
Scheid*reiter, Ewald	Seidler, Margarethe Marie
Schenkenberger, Max	Adelheid
Schiere*, Herta	Semmel, Alfred
Schiere*, Valerie	Semmel, Martha

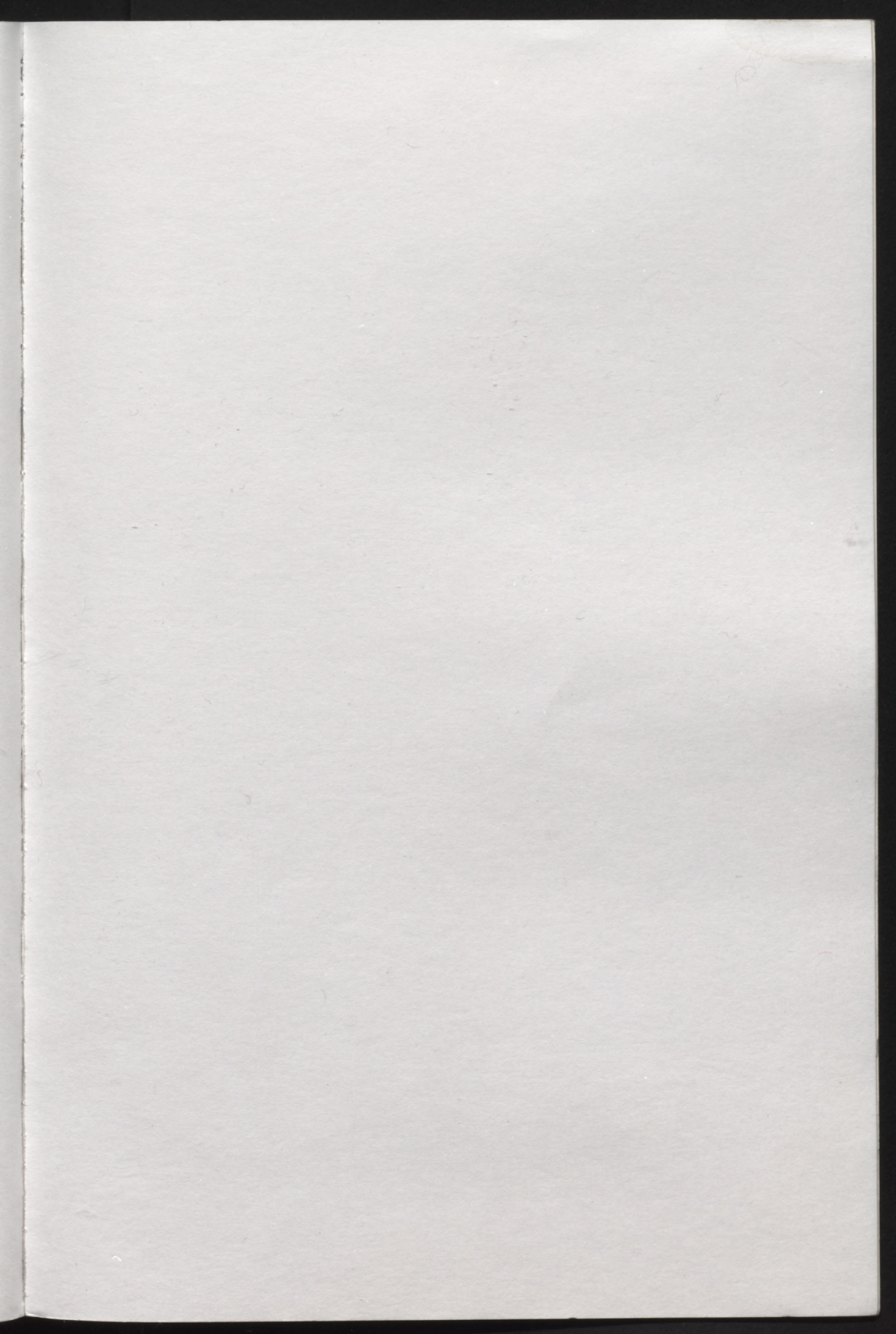
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 Seng\*use\*, Hellmuth von  
 Senf, Paul  
 Siedel, Carl  
 Sieberg, Wilhelm  
 Kreiner, Franz  
 Kreiner, Franz  
 Smit, Herbert  
 Spanier, Anna  
 Spanier, Gerhard  
 Specht, Justus  
 Spingler, Arvid  
 Spingler, Katharina  
 Staeger, Alfred  
 Stahl, James  
 Steimbrecher, Berta  
 Steiner, Irma  
 Steinhoff, Paul  
 Stel\*mann, Paulus von  
 Sti\*\*, Wolfgang  
 Stol\*erfoth, Hans  
 Str\*\*h, Lydia  
 Stre\*w, Richard  
 Streicher, Johannes  
 Stru\*h, Heinrich  
 Summ\*ndt, Dr Peter  
  
 To\*ien, Max  
 Tag, Walter  
 Tesc\*\*, Otto  
 Tesc\*\*er, Karl  
 Thel\*\*, Walter  
 Thil\*, Adolf  
 Thil\*, Johanna  
 Tietjen, Hinrich  
 Ton\*, Ludwig  
 Treu, Werner  
 Treu, Bit\*ar  
 Trach, Karl  
 Treuc\*th, Hedwig  
  
 Tschl\*ste, Liselotte  
  
 Ulmann, Rudolf  
 Ur\*schat, Albert  
 Ussl\*\*er, Hermann  
  
 Vogel, Karsten  
 Volkerer, Julius  
 Vch, Andreas von  
 Verlohr, Hans  
 Vierecke, Volker  
 Vierecke, Alexandra  
 Vierecke, Hilde  
 Vierecke, Roland  
 Vierecke, Werner  
  
 Wagner, Ilsa  
 Waleker, Veronika  
 Weber, Friedrich  
 Weber, Friederich Carl  
 Weber, Le\*  
 Wegelin, Adolf  
 Weidemann, Werner  
 Weise, Eberhard  
 Weiss, Erich  
 Weiss, Paul  
 Weissshuhn, Felix  
 Wendt, August  
 Weyrauch, Margot  
 Wilda\*, Johann  
 Willinsky, Harry  
 Winderlich, Paul  
 Windrath, Verner  
 Winkler, Paul Max  
 Winkler, Heinz  
 Wolf, Franz  
 Wölfel, Willy  
 Wolff, Edith von  
 Wulff, August  
 Würf\*\*, Franz

Würfel, Rudolf  
Wurlitzer, Max Hugo

Ziegler, August  
Ziegler, Otilie  
Zimmer, Gertrud

Zimmer, Ludwick  
Zimmer, Mally  
Zimmermann, Wolfgang  
Zinsesling-Sine, Herbert  
Zobel, Friedrich  
Zoch, Johann





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