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A report on anti-Soviet regime activities in the Latvian SSR and the Ukrainian SSR

The report deals with general attitudes of Latvians toward Soviet rule, partisan activity, and Soviet attempts to suppress partisan activity in the area of Smiltene (N 57-26, E 25-54). The report also deals with the attitudes of the population in the western Ukraine toward Soviet troops and incidents of individual attacks against Soviet soldiers in the area around Nesterov (N 49-41, E 25-23).

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54

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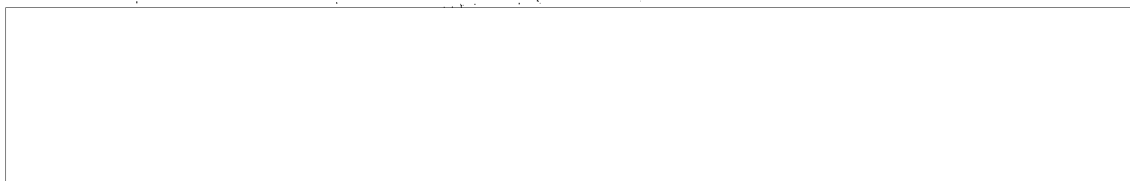
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-2-

ANTI-REGIME ACTIVITIES IN LATVIA AND THE UKRAINE

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Introduction



The following geographical locations are mentioned in this report:

- BILSK (Coordinates not available; about 15 km northeast of SMILTENE)
- IVANA FRANKO (N49-45, E23-44)
- MAGEROV (N50-08; E23-42)
- MUKACHEVO (N48,27; E22-43)
- NESTEROV (N49-42, E25-23)
- PALSMANIS (approximately N57-28, E26-10)
- PSKOV (N57-50; E28-20)
- RANKA (N57-10; E26-09)
- SMILTENE (N57-26, E25-54)

A. LATVIA

1. Attitudes of Population

a. Causes of dissatisfaction

[redacted] the Soviet occupation of Latvia was never accepted as final by most Latvians; they looked back on the years of independence prior to World War II as a period in which national development was fitted to the characteristics of the country; that is, of a small agricultural state which could live very well by trading its products with the more industrially advanced nations of the West in exchange for the machinery, luxury goods, and consumer items which the Latvians could not economically produce. At the same time, the disposition of their own production could be handled in their own best interests; they were not required to gear their activities to the requirements of a great central state. 25X1

The forcible orientation of Latvia toward MOSCOW, the destruction of every vestige of independence, and the brutal deportation of thousands of Latvian citizens left a mark which no succeeding Soviet regime could erase. [redacted] 25X1

[redacted] throughout his residence in Latvia he and all non-Latvian residents were living under a temporary and precarious military occupation which suppressed the hatred and resentment of all Latvians toward everything Russian.<sup>1</sup> Most Latvians believed sincerely that, given an independent course, they could achieve a higher standard of living than the Russians, that their country, though small, had always been economically, intellectually, and morally superior to the Soviet Union, and that 25X1

S-E-C-R-E-T



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the policies of forced collectivization of agriculture and the confiscation of private property together with the imposition of an alien Communist bureaucracy had reduced them to the level of the poorest Russian peasant. The adult Latvian, one who remembered his country in the days before WW II and the Soviet annexation, recalled that almost any householder could buy and keep a bicycle and radio of Latvian manufacture whereas after the sovietization of the country it appeared to him that he had to work much harder than before merely to feed himself and his family.

[redacted] after the initial successes of the Soviet regime in Latvia, accomplished by deportation of dissident and possibly dissident groups, collectivization, and confiscation of private property, the Communist party influence in Latvia was declining. Although most Latvians realize that resistance is hopeless without a revolution or a third world war, they continue to manifest passive resistance. Anti-Soviet slogans in Latvian chalked on walls, caricatures of Communist leaders scrawled in public places, a slowdown and lack of enthusiasm in fulfilling Communist party orders were still common in 1953 [redacted]

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b. Churchgoing among Latvians

In SMILTENE [redacted] there were three churches, a Latvian Catholic and a Baptist church attended by Latvians, and a Russian Orthodox (pravoslavnaya) church. [redacted] attendance at the Latvian Catholic church was much larger percentagewise than in other parts of the Soviet Union; the Russian Orthodox church was attended by a few older people among the Russian residents; the Baptist church was an insignificant factor. [redacted]

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c. Attitude of Population toward Regime

[redacted] the vast majority of Latvians were anti-Soviet in sentiment. [redacted] divided [redacted] as follows:

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(1) Opposed to regime strongly, to the point where they would participate in either open or guerrilla sabotage operations if supported by the western powers 50 percent.

(2) Opposed to regime but would not participate in actions against it of the type suggested under (1). Would, however, strongly support an anti-Communist government when once established in power 20 percent.

(3) Neutral and/or indifferent to regime 15 percent.

(4) Support regime mildly and/or belong to Communist party or party-controlled mass organizations, however, would not fight to defend it 10 percent.

(5) Support regime strongly and would fight to defend it 5 percent.

d. Nationalist Expression



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S-E-C-R-E-T

-4-

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The deep and ever-present current of nationalism among Latvians was either suppressed by the Soviets or turned to their own ends. The former president of Latvia, Karlis ULMANIS, was revered by his countrymen as a latter-day Peter the Great who worked at menial jobs among his people in order to understand their everyday problems. By the Soviets he was always referred to as a small bourgeois or a Fascist usurper because of his energetic action in pre-war political crises. [redacted] Those national figures whose activities bespoke little or no political activity were honored, such as the national poet RAINIS and the novelist VILIS LACIS. Celebration of the Latvian national holiday on 24 June or 24 July [redacted] 25X1 the "holiday of song (dziesmu svetki)" was greatly encouraged. Afterwards, statements were made by party leaders, that only under Soviet rule would such expressions of national spirit be permitted. Latvian national songs were permitted as long as they did not contain any anti-Soviet sentiments. [redacted] some type of national flag with a hammer and sickle superimposed was permitted at gatherings [redacted] 25X1

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### 3. Russian Families in Latvia

[redacted] Russians of two types came to Latvia in the post-war period, those who were poor and who were seeking an opportunity to better themselves economically and those who were dedicated to Communist Party principles and were crusading for the complete integration of Latvia into the Communist state. They looked upon Latvia as a new frontier, an area where their talents of organization and propaganda could be put to best use and they in turn could achieve a stature in party circles impossible to obtain in the older sections of the USSR. [redacted] 25X1

[redacted] family were sympathetic toward the national aspirations of the Latvian people for independence; at the same time, they felt themselves to be an alien element, mistrusted, hated, and suspected, living an uneasy existence under a regime maintained only by Soviet armed force. [redacted] 25X1

### 4. Active Armed Resistance

#### a. General

[redacted] armed resistance had existed in Latvia from WW II up to 1953 [redacted] 25X1 In the rural and forested areas around SMILTENE armed partisan bands lived by forage and looting, raiding collective farms, and waging a campaign of terror against both Russian and Latvian Communists. It was rumored that these men were armed with WW II German weapons hidden at the time of the German surrender and also that arms were smuggled in from Finland. Up to 1953 rumors were common of armed skirmishes between these partisans and the local police and security organs. In SMILTENE the Latvians repeated the rumors of these skirmishes gleefully as an example that the independent spirit of their little

S-E-C-R-E-T

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S-E-C-R-E-T

-5-

country had not been completely snuffed out; the anti-Soviet Russians [redacted] also repeated these rumors but with somewhat mixed feelings, since they believed that in case of a mass revolt their own lives would be in danger. The pro-Soviet Russians either refused to believe the rumors or, if the evidence of partisan activity was such that they could not ignore it, angrily dismissed it as the work of foreign agents.

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#### b. Incidents

[redacted] the following incidents [redacted] recounted many times [redacted] 25X1

(1) In PALSAMANIS an unrecalled number of both Russian and Latvian Communist Party members were killed in 1949 and 1950. Attempts to find the killers resulted in an unknown number of deaths among the police and security troops.

(2) In BILSK, a small village about 15 kilometers northeast of SMILTENE, an unidentified senior lieutenant of the MVD and the director of the Smiltene MTS, JANSSON (fnu) were both killed by unknown armed men in 1949. The local police and MVD unit attempted to track the killers with dogs but the road through the forest near BILSK was mined and the attempt was given up after one of the police was injured. The killers were never captured.

(3) In 1951 an unidentified elderly Russian who was employed by the security police in SMILTENE was seized by three unidentified men armed with PPSH SMGs in RANKA. After lecturing the Russian on the undesirability of working for the state security organs, they shot him through both legs and left him to crawl back to the village for help. This man subsequently recovered [redacted]

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(4) In the summer of 1951 a mysterious fire broke out in a sawmill in SMILTENE. The local fire brigade, police, and security troops were called and succeeded in putting out the fire. While they were so engaged, a small barn adjacent to the MVD garrison headquarters was seen to go up in flames and ignite the MVD building. This fire was put out but the coincidental nature of the fires made everyone certain that the fire in the sawmill had been set in order to draw the garrison out of barracks and set fire to the MVD building.

(5) In 1953 several cases of what was apparently arson, attempted arson, or the malicious burning of Communist Party property occurred. [redacted] the mysterious burning of the local party secretary's house (VITINA, fnu), the burning of a knitting mill about 27 kilometers east of SMILTENE, and the burning of a tehnikum in SMILTENE.

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### 5. Soviet Methods of Countering Resistance

#### a. MVD Unit in SMILTENE

[redacted] an unidentified MVD unit composed of about 60 enlisted men and commanded by an unidentified Captain or Senior Lieutenant was stationed in SMILTENE continuously until 1955. [redacted]

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#### b. Destroyer Battalions (Istrebitelniye batalyoni)

##### (1) Composition and Mission

In order to combat the activities of the partisan bands, there was stationed in SMILTENE a special "destroyer squad" or "extermination battalion"

S-E-C-R-E-T

S-E-C-R-E-T

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(istrebiteľnyy batalyon). The total strength of this unit was unknown [redacted] 25X1  
 [redacted] there was never a strength of more than 15 men in SMILTENE at any 25X1  
 one time; nevertheless, this unit was always referred to by the local populace as  
 a "battalion". [redacted] the members were contract troops (nayemniye 25X1  
 voiska), hired for one year or less, at considerably higher than military pay, under  
 quasi-military discipline, and with some form of military organization and rank  
 structure. Their sole mission was to fight the Latvian partisan bands around  
 SMILTENE. They did no reconnaissance but were only called upon when a known armed  
 band was in the vicinity. They were subordinate to the local MVD unit in all re-  
 spects but were not garrisoned with the MVD troops, utilizing rather what had been  
 at one time a large private residence.

(2) Uniforms

[redacted] the uniforms worn by these men [redacted] of a faded 25X1  
 blue or blue-black cotton material, two piece with blouse and breeches (gimna-  
 styerka i bryuki). The material was similar in texture to that of a work coverall  
 (kombinezon). The breeches were not of a flaring military type but were more like  
 trousers which were tucked into military boots. A military-type service cap (fura- 25X1  
 zhka) bearing a red star with a hammer and sickle was worn. They wore no shoulder-  
 boards or insignia of any kind and from a distance could be taken for a plant guard  
 or a student in an FZO (fabrichno-zavodskoye obucheniye).

(3) Arms

Destroyer battalions were armed with unidentified German WW II small arms, PPSH SMGs, or 1891/30 Mossin-Nagant rifles.

(4) Vehicles

The group of approximately 15 of these men stationed in SMILTENE had at their disposal two vehicles, a ZIS-150 and GAZ-51.

(5) Employment

[redacted] these special units were necessary in this 25X1  
 area [redacted]  
 these men would do anything for money, [redacted] routing out and killing the partisans  
 in the woods and swamps near SMILTENE was a job which even the MVD troops balked  
 at [redacted] these were mercenaries (nayemniye voyska) who would go where a regular 25X1  
 soldier would refuse to go. [redacted]  
 [redacted] these destroyer "battalions" were stationed in other parts of Latvia and the Ukraine,  
 [redacted]  
 [redacted] the units were made up of non-Latvians but [redacted]  
 [redacted] did contain some Latvians and [redacted] these men were espe- 25X1  
 cially hated and feared.

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6. Elimination of Latvian Partisans

[redacted] the Latvian partisans were eliminated by 1953 25X1  
 when he left for military service. [redacted] secret members of an organized 25X1  
 resistance group will continue to exist but that the futility of open armed in-  
 surrection is obvious to all Latvians at present.

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-7-

B. UKRAINE

1. General

NESTEROV. Ukrainian SSR

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This area of the Western Ukraine formed a part of Poland in the period between the two world wars and prior to 1918 had been under the administration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

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in 1956 the population of NESTEROV and surrounding areas was distributed ethnically as follows:

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Russian	5 to 6 percent
Ukrainian	65 percent (included Ruthenian) <sup>2</sup>
Polish	24 to 25 percent
Jews and others	5 percent

2. Attitudes of Population

a. General

the large percentage of Ukrainians did not wish to be joined to the Ukraine in a separate state.

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the local inhabitants were surly, evasive, difficult to know and to understand, and often actually hostile. This was partly because the Soviet Army was not looked upon favorably by the civilian population. it was axiomatic that wherever large numbers of troops were stationed in area and outnumbered the civilian population they would not be admired or respected. the Carpathian Military District contained more Soviet troops than any other area within the European USSR, either because of the border location of the district or because of the unpredictable sentiments of the population.<sup>3</sup>

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b. Attacks against Soviet Soldiers

one specific example of physical harm which befell a Soviet soldier at the hands of the civilian population in the Western Ukraine. This occurred in the summer of 1955 when a PFC Vassiliy SUDOVIIY was returning to the unit after a dance in NESTEROV and was attacked by two unknown men with knives. Subject was severely wounded but managed to return to his unit where the guards on post assisted him to the 3d Brigade Dispensary which served the NESTEROV garrison. The incident was investigated by unidentified officers from Military District (okrug) but the attackers were never found.<sup>4</sup>

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an unidentified lieutenant colonel told that the Russian president of a local collective farm had been killed under mysterious circumstances. He warned the members not to go out alone after dark.

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[Redacted]

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most local people refused to speak to Soviet soldiers.

c. Active armed Resistance

[Redacted] no examples of active, armed resistance in this area. the destroyer battalions [Redacted] were also active in the Western Ukraine in the immediate postwar period.

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[Redacted] sentiment for the Hungarian insurgents was particularly strong in MUKACHEVO in December 1956 because of the large Hungarian population in that city.

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Comments:

[Redacted]

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2. [Redacted] never heard the term "Ruthenian" in English or any similar sounding word in Russian and lumped all of the native Slavic population which was neither Russian nor Ukrainian under the term "Ukrainian". [Redacted] all Polish nationalism had been uprooted in the immediate postwar period and a standard saying among the Russian members [Redacted] was that it had been driven underground so that the local population spoke a Ukrainian dialect by day and Polish at night.

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[Redacted]

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