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ALFREDS BERZINS

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AGE 51

NASH: Today is June 18, 1974. I am visiting with Mr. Alfreds Berzins who lives here in Manhattan. Mr. Berzins is the last living minister living in the free world of Free Latvia. Mr. Berzins was born in Latvia in the year 1899. Many things happened to him before he came to the United States in 1950 and he is going to tell us the story of how it came to be that he came to live in the United States.

BERZINS: My name is Alfreds Berzins. I am born in Latvia, 1899. My father was at that time forest inspector in Latvia, and so I was grown up in wooden area and therefore I still very much like and love countryside certainly much better than cities. I was educated in a small city, north part of Latvia, in high school when was proclaimed Latvian independence in October, November 1918. started liberations

war and I left school and took part for two years in liberations war.

After I studied and later was elected in Latvian Parliament in 1931 from the list of Farmers Union and in 1934 I was appointed as a Minister for Public and Social Affairs. On June 17, 1940, Communists took over all the country and I went underground.

NASH: Do you remember that day? Of course you do. What was that day like?

BERZINS: Oh, it was a very sad day. At that day I met President in castle who was actually already prisoner of (?), and he suggested when possible to leave the country. It was July 1, 1917. On the same day I took farewell from my family and went to estonia. It is over north neighbor, and with false documents I crossed the bay and went to (?).

NASH: How did you travel?

BERZINS: I went by boat and it happens that this boat was not controlled by Soviets on the high sea, so on the start I came to Finland. I have in Finland many friends from Finnish Home Guard, while I was Chief of Latvian Home Guard.

NASH: Did you have to disguise yourself?

BERZINS: Not very much. I shortened my hairs, took glasses, didn't real g;asses, and I have a small mustache, and a little bit disguise, but not very much. And in Finland I spent only some twenty days or so, then I went to Sweden and so I have no means to live because when I left Latvia I have nothing more than what I have on me. And I worked for some three months as farmhand in one farm not far from Stockholm. and then I made connections with other ambassadors in free world, in Switzerland, England. and I got from Switzerland money and from ambassador, (?), and so we decided to meet how many we are from (?) was one, out and Latvian ambassadors in Europe. So we met in first day, so December 1940 in Switzerland.

NASH: What was that first meeting like? It must have been a very emotional moment for all of you.

BERZINS: Oh yes, I was the one who came out and the ambassador certainly was not in Latvia when Communists took over so I informed him about the situation in Latvia, how it is, and how helpless it looks, everything, and what we can do, being in free world. And in Germany we couldn't do that much because germans, like Russians, were interested to incorporate Baltic countries in Germany like Russians did it, incorporating in Soviet Union. And a small nation with two million, we were helpless to resist to one either to the other. And our hopes at that time was as it is now, (?) allied forces, this means England, France,

the States, and after the First World War my baby can again regain all the lost independence.

So we decided to work in certain directions to inform America, england, about our fate and what is going over country. And from Switzerland they went to Italy and on the way back to Sweden I met one gestapo man who was arrested in '38 in Latvia. It happens in Berlin, and the Gestapo man recognized me and on the day I was arrested.

NASH: What was that like? That meeting. Could you describe it?

BERZINS: No, it was very strange meeting. He actually was living in Polsen and he came to Berlin to Gestapo. He was a close friend to Heydrich, the head of the Gestapo. As you remember, Heydrich who was killed in Czechoslovakia. And I, on the way from Switzerland, stopped for a few days in Berlin to get might be more information what is going in my country, and because at that time came out the German, both the Germans from Latvia, and the man was both German too, by name of Kreuger. He recognized me and took revenge for he was arrested in our country, Nazi Party was underground as Communist Party. And so as he was a leader of Nazi Party in our country, he was arrested and expelled from Latvia. And so I was arrested, sent to police prison, Alexanderplatz, and after two months or so to concentration camp Sachsenhausen and also Berlin. And so I was put in solitary confinement.

NASH: Why were you put in solitary confinement?

BERZINS: It was a very small cell, five steps by three steps. And the people there were some, about three blocks, and it was inside big laager. and this laager was approximately twenty-six thousand inmates. And in Cellinbough it was laager prison, it was called the german Cellinbough. Might be was some hundred fifty cells or so, and I was put in cell 44 and I had no more name. I was owner of that cell 44.

NASH: Was there some special reason that you were put in solitary confinement?

BERZINS: Oh, yes. The reason in my opinion was that the Germans didn't like that somebody in Latvia know that I am arrested, and because I was one of the government and the Latvians when the Nazis occupied Latvia, naturally with us what happens to such a person, what happens to and then when it came out in Latvia that I am arrested, and I am concentration camp, then they invited the story that I smuggled billions of diamonds and gold and so on, and told them that I am arrested because of smuggling and such things. And they myself, they only interrogated only once. And then I was accused as English and American spy, and I am coming to the Germany because of orders by

American or England.

NASH: Did you have a trial?

BERZINS: No, there was no such thing as trials. (?) and (?) Gestapo, there is no such things. It's simply accuse that I am dangerous for nazi interests and there fore I am kept in concentration camp, so.

NASH: Did they treat you cruelly?

BERZINS: And it was pretty humiliating and the first eleven months I have nothing to read, nothing to do. It was terrible and from four o'clock in the morning till eight o'clock I couldn't even lay down on a a bed, I couldn't walk or sit on small chair and nothing to do. (?) oh, the five steps. And food was very bad. It was some two hundred fifty grams bad, bread, some vegetable soup once a day, and at evening again, some soup, vegetable. No potatoes or such, but it was carrot soup or something light, and vegetable greens during the summer and little bit salt, no fat at all. no sugar at all. And so it was not an easy life, but it was--we have no right to speak to each other even not to say good morning or so when we went out of that cells. And there was a (?) for example, Austrian prime minister. There was some Stalin (?) who was captured by Brionsks in the Cellinbough, there was

a Polish bishop from Lutsk, there was Horace Seamer the chairman of (?) from Rumania, and the man who organized (?) out of Hitler in Munich in Beerskeller so-called, and there was some pretty interesting people.

NASH: And you saw all these people or did you just know that they were there?

BERZINS: No, I just know that they are. I saw almost all of them.

We have fifteen minutes everyday for walk in this Cellinbough, it was a courtyard and only one at that time, and it happened sometimes that I was brought over somewhere for something to do or so, then I saw those people and in corridors the workers who clean the corridors was, in Germans they call people (?) and here you call Jehovah Witnesses, it is so, it seems in English they are called. They were very decent and good people. They rejected to go to army and therefore they ere put in concentration camp. So they were the cleaners of the corridors in laager prison and then they told in that cell is this and that, so we were kept informed pretty well who is who with the help of those religious people who were in prison.

NASH: Did you know who Stalin's son was?

BERZINS: (?)

NASH: Stalin's son, did you meet him or see him?

BERZINS: Son?

NASH: Stalin.

BERZINS: Stalin's son, oh yes.

NASH: What did he look like?

BERZINS: He was medium size, dark, like caucasian should be and he was pretty depressed at that time. And it is later was told stories that Stalin's son jumped on the fence and was killed. It was one sure way to have suicide because the guards on the (?) was ordered to shoot everybody who is coming close to the fence. And I read here being in New York, in New York Times that somebody told the story that he was killed by guards in such way, it is not true. When I came out, shortly before the end of war, I was released Stalin's son was still in his cell 73. I was in cell 44 and Stalin's son was in cell 73, and he never came out in the big laager so he could approach the fence. He was kept very, very, closely guarded in his cell. In my opinion

he's killed by Soviets because Soviets when they occupied Berlin, at the Sachsenhausen where I was thirty kilometers, some twenty miles from North Berlin. So that Sachsenhausen was captured by the Reds. In my deepest opinion, he was liquidated by Stalin himself.

NASH: Well, obviously they wanted to keep you alive. Is that not true?

BERZINS: Yes, there was probably no reason to liquidate or as we say or to kill because it seems to me that they kept me isolated so long as the war will be to end, and the (?) Baltic countries, firm in the hands of Nazis and probably then I will be released, if I will be still alive at that time.

NASH: Well, how did you occupy yourself between the hours four and eight when you had nothing to read? How did you keep your, did you keep your sanity?

BERZINS: Oh, it is, the first trick is six months are very difficult, very hard. We are absolutely isolated and nothing to do. And some of those people really lost their minds, and sometimes when it happens often when came evening, and when we heard somebody's shouting and someone very wild voice, it was like animals, it is not like human voice more. And is demolition of that cell, there is nothing to demolish it

was iron bed and one small chair and that was all, but with a small wooden chair they are beating the doors or windows or what they can do. And when they didn't stop this shouting and so they was ten o'clock, eleven o'clock in the evening brought to the crematory, killed and that was the end. But, how I managed I built in my fantasy, fantasy (?) outside concentration camp, and I thought about my youth, about my farm, I had a farm in Latvia, when I will come out what I will do there in this farm, and about my family because I didn't know at that time that my family was deported to Siberia. And so I am always and always, I live just in this fantasy, not to say that I am here arrested or so, and that helped a great deal.

NASH: Was it satisfying many times?

BERZINS: Yes, it was because I do not feel, sometimes I was so, in my fantasy so deep that I say, oh, now I have to go and do this and this, and I step some few steps the iron doors, and then was reality and very sad reality. And after in later months, months they give me first education literature, it was Nazi literature like (?) written by Rosenberg, one foolish book.

NASH: What is the name of that in English? Can you translate it?

BERZINS: In English it would be Meters of the Twentieth Century. And before I read one book was written by Austen Chamberlain and this was a very fundamental book, and Rosenebrg wrote in the art as he,

Chamberlain. It was Chamberlain lived in Germany and an Englishman, but in Nineteenth Century Hero. And he was anti-Jewish Chamberlain and anti-Catholic, and Rosenberg wrote the same book in the same way, but it was written be Chamberlain with sense, you can accept or not accept, it's another question, but it was with some logic written. But with Nazi, Rosenberg (?) it was a foolish book, was no sense to read, I mean, only when you are in jail you can read such a book, not when you are free. So and then later I got, even history of the United States I read.

NASH: Written by who?

BERZINS: I don't remember by whom written, Constitution and history.

It was a pretty heavy book, might be some three or four hundred thousand pages. It was my first knowledge about the United States. It was in German because at that time I couldn't speak English, not one single word. And it was by some German historian or probably translated from English, but that was this book. Then was about philosophy, adventure books and such. That was in Sachsenhausen, I was told there was a pretty large library, some twenty, thirty thousand books probably because every people who were arrested that a lot of them was intelligent people. There were professors, lawyers, doctors and so they took with them some books when they were arrested.

And when they came to the laager, the camp, the books was taken away and put, if they was not anti-Nazi books certainly, they was in the laager library. So every week I could read one book, but later when I was already some two years or so in laager they were more generous and gave me some two or three books per week to read. And when one had a book to read then you are already mentally balanced. There is no more trouble to lose the sense because then you have to argue with yourself right or agree and to learn, and then it was every thing okay already, but before this eleven months it was very, very, very unpleasant. And I remember it was the most unpleasant feeling this time. And so it was. And then when Germany was close to collapse I was released.

NASH: When was the first time that you heard from anybody? Were you ever able to receive any correspondence while you were in prison? Correspondence?

BERZINS: From my country?

NASH: From anywhere.

BERZINS: Well, yes. The same after one year or so, I could exchange one letter per month with somebody. So my relatives or my family was not, but some relatives and friends. They would send some letters and

they informed what happened in countries, and even one day I was called to what they call in German, it was Polish optilong, it is political division, and it was all this bad when they was called to this political division and it was bad. I was interrogated and beaten and so, and then suddenly they brought in two people, and I looked at them, I couldn't recognize. It was two friends from Latvia, and I was so tired that I really looked at them and the asked, "Would you not recognize me?" And then I said, "Yes, certainly, how you are here." And so then one day came, one man from Gestapo and offered me the way out. And he say, "Well, you can be free tomorrow, but then you have to go Latvia," and at that time Hitler organized Latvian legion, Latvian young people would serve in the German army, and I have to take all the propaganda work and naturally I could not accept this. And why, more is one reason, one, I thought they asked me were officer in Latvian Army, I say, "Yes, I was. In Liberations Army I was an officer." And now you will be again officer. and I say, "Yes, in Latvian uniform?" "No, in SS uniform." I say, "No, I would only put on the Latvian officer's uniform or not at all, and secondly, what I cannot accept, it was I could not tell the young Latvians go to German war and to die, not for Latvia, but to die for Nazi regime. Maybe I will be free, maybe I will stay alive, but that all my life I will live with consciousness that I for my freedom I saved maybe hundreds and hundreds of lives of young Latvians. And therefore I say, no.

And it was one man, pretty honest I mean, and he say, "But, this is the only way to come out of this hell." And I ask him, "Well, it seems to me that you are thinking good about me, but I would ask you a very straight question, would you change this horror and this prison dress for an SS uniform?" After a short while he say, very slowly, "No." And say, "not me too." So was possibility to come out. I didn't use this possibility. And then in at that time after, might be some five or six months, he came again and offered me to work in Goebel's ministry. and I say, "Well, why not, if I will be a doorman I will do it, but not other job." And then it was kept again.

NASH: Tell me, after each time they would come to you and you would give them your decision, how did you feel afterwards, after you had given them that decision?

BERZINS: I was unhappy because I have a feeling that when I have to reject this Nazi offers they could be more cruel to me or to take the books away or something to repress me for rejecting. It didn't happen I have to tell you, but it could happen. And therefore I told this man, his name was Volensky, and he was one of Baltic German family from my native country, and he could speak Latvian even. And so I say I am very unhappy that I have to reject your proposals, but I can tell you that I will never accept no one work which will be against the interest of my people, never in Secret Service I will work, and never

I would put on other uniform as Latvian uniform. (?) if you have to offer me some job which is connected with one or other of that then the problem, I will reject already in advance. I will not do it. And then they didn't come to me more. And only on the end when Berlin was already heavy bombarded and then came the same, told me well, no we will release you, but you have to stay in Berlin and you cannot go to Latvia. And every week you have to come to police commissariat and in person show that you are in Berlin. I say, "Okay." And then they gave me work in one insurance company for two hundred fifty German Marks, two hundred German Marks you can buy food, nothing more.

NASH: Why did they release you at that time?

BERZINS: At that time? When I was in, I rented my small room, of a former ambassador who was in Berlin before the Communists took over, it was in Berlin too. And he helped me a little bit, relieved to get mein small room and so, and a little bit more food. and so I managed, but it was not a longtime. Then the Gestapo was bombarded, bombarded by Americans.

NASH: What year was this that you were released from the camp?

BERZINS: It was '44. It was short before the end. And then Gestapo

fled from Berlin to somewhere to South Germany. And when it was over I left Berlin too because the Red Army, their tanks might be already some thirty, fort miles from Berlin on order. And then I left Berlin and went to with, from my ministry there was people in one village not far from Vienna, and then they brought me there my people and I lived in this village when the Americans came in April.

NASH: Can you describe how it was when you first saw your people in the, was it in the village?

BERZINS: Oh, yes. That was from Riga film. There was in my ministry was one division of film, and there was some might be forty, fifty people with the families was therein this village and in next village. And so they accumulated, they got some papers so I could leave Berlin and then it was good. They took care about me and about food, about everything.

NASH: Did they really welcome you when yo first got there?

BERZINS: Yes, and then came the Americans in April, and life changed.

NASH: How was it to see all these Latvians again?

BERZINS: (?)

NASH: How was it to see the Latvians again?

BERZINS: Oh, Latvians when I went to this village--then I was again--

and then I started when Americans came in, then I started active work again in Latvian communities because at that time in Germany was Latvian refugees, in West Germany might be some eighty, ninety thousand Latvians who fled from Communism. They were in West Germany and (?) camps, and there was thousands of Latvians who were in Latvian religion who fled over to American and to English Army and was captured with them and later released. And there was thousands and thousand of people, young people, who were brought from Latvia to work in German factories. And now they all were free. And then we were put there by American Army and English Army in refugee camps. And we got some food to eat and in some, it was in German Army barracks or somewhere else in, we were some accommodated in small rooms, three, four, five, and people. It was again, a bad life, but it was not prison life more, we were free and we can move out. We organized our schools for young people, we even managed to organized our university in most part of Hamburg.

NASH: How long did this community last?

BERZINS: The community lasted from 1945 to '49. Almost four years.

And then was started immigration. First to Australia and then to Canada, England, and at last here to the States. And their greatest group came to the States around forty, right thousand. To Australia some twenty thousand, and in England there are some fourteen thousand, and in West Germany the old people who could not immigrate were not accepted because of, or they have too bad clothes or something like, they are still in or mostly died out in those years, but they were let back in Germany. And so I came in by ship, I came here to the United States in August, 1950.

NASH: What kind of boat was it that brought you?

BERZINS: It was General Taylor. You know, during the war was built these transport ships and they were named by general, like General Black, General Taylor and so on and so, and General (?) and it happens that I came with General Taylor here to this country. And again, I am starting to work here.

NASH: Let's go back a little bit, when you got off the boat, what was the trip like.

BERZINS: Oh, it was pretty nice. The first evening it was oh, it was dinner. On the ship it was chicken, it was some oranges and a little bit water, and so for a long time we have no chickens. But, on the high sea I am not sailor, I was sick so I was more in bed when the sea was high, and I was in bed. The first evening and the first meal I remember, it was very tasty and it was white bread not as we used to eat, but the soft bread. In Europe we do not know this soft bread which is here (?). But, anyway, it was nice. We came over and then I was for a short time worked somewhere in Summit in Jersey.

NASH: What was your first day in the United States like? When you got off the boat what happened to you?

BERZINS: Oh, then came my friends who was my foreign sponsor, who was already one year her. He left '49, and was working he was an engineer. And he some chemistry factory in Summit, in Jersey have job, and already bought small house during this one year. And the Latvians are very diligent people, it might be it this joke, but if it is joke that is a good one. When you have to swear the citizenship before the judge, the judge you ask him some questions about American history, and the judge asked the Latvian how many houses are, he say, "Well it is Senate, it is Congress, and he could not the third one remember, and he said, the third house is my own." And the judge

said, "So, in short time you get whatever your house, then you are a good citizen. Everything is okay." And then I started to work in Radio Free Europe, it was '51 already.

NASH: Where were you living?

BERZINS: In Radio Free Europe it is one American organization to help at that time, in 1950, to help liberate oppressed countries of the Soviets. And this was organized in many divisions, it was radio broadcastings for five countries, to five countries and then was exile division where we had nine countries were united. First were organized national committee like Latvia and Estonian, Lithuanian, Baltic countries, and Polish, Hungarian, Rumanian, Bulgarian, and not Yugoslavia, but--

NASH: (?)

BERZINS: Yes, nine countries, Albanians, small friends. And later these all nine national committees were united in one organization assembly of captive European Nations. And we got support from American organizations, so we could rent small rooms for our committees, and we could even publish in our native languages some magazines. So we published Baltic Review, all through Baltic

countries by support of Americans and it was many years we worked with and to inform American society and American. And even in Spanish we publish the same, the (?) Baltic of the Baltic Review for South American countries, so we were pretty active, and myself too. And now we all got older and many passed away of my colleagues in Latvian committee. And actually, on the beginning we were seven and now we are from the seven still two alive. Seven during those years died. And now since some two years Americans stopped help to the committee.

It seems to me that now when the policy is on decline is the good war, and might be they feel that could be some disturbance in policy between Russia and the United States, but Nixon was very generous. And when this no help for our organization stopped and here they made a fund available, one million eight hundred thousand dollars for annuity payment. So all who were in ACN, in Assembly of Captive European Nations, all received besides social security--the members of this Assembly of Captive European Nations from this fund are receiving monthly three hundred and fifty dollars support.

NASH: How many people is that?

BERZINS: It was in my--if I can remember it was approximately at that time some fifty-eight.

NASH: At what year did this start?

BERZINS: This annuity payment before two years. It is now seventy-four to seventy-two. But still, we by our own means we are keeping the committee alive and in much, much smaller work we can do, we cannot publish our magazines but still we have, we are renting one room, we have a secretary general for ACN, one Pole, Mr. Gradomsky an experience man. He is coming a few days a week. And we are gathering money, some Americans are helping us, all of our own organizations are helping us, so we are keeping still as alive and well. Writing memos to Congressmen, to Senators, visiting them who are friendly. We are presenting our views concerning coexistence with Soviets. I can tell not only myself, when I (?) the two faces of coexistence it means that I am writing that Soviets have two faces. One is the smiling face and the other is a brutal face, and I do not believe that the Soviets can be honest and would be honest ever keeping promise or--because I know Communism from 1917 when Communists came to power, I was school boy, I was arrested first time by Communists because I was a leader at that time in National Youth Organization in this Volka in small town where I was in high school. And I know all brutality and there is nothing is changed. And the aims have not changed, and only the tactic changed. And Lenin (?) was a diabolical man, but was a very shrewd man, and he knows the nature of capitalists very well. He started not

only being in exile some fifteen or more years when he escaped from Czarist Russia, then he spend the time in France, in Switzerland, England, in West Europe, in Germany. and he started very carefully capitalists, and when Communists come took over, then he very openly told to his comrades that we cannot with our knowledge and with our means to build the Communism in our country, but the capitalists will help us to do it, with their money, with their knowledge because they would, we will promise big gain, big money, for the help and they through this money will do what we need to be done. and all this time as you know, all these fifty years as Communists (?) exactly in the way that Lenin, it was at that time predicted it is the capitalists are doing. And now is the same. The Communists are asking Brezhnev, and asking to help with American or German or some knowledge the complicated computers which (?) themselves cannot do. (?) sold to Soviets and then when the Soviets have few of those very complicated machinery for which Americans wasted years and money and millions and millions, the Soviets are buying for token and building now themself.

And so it is done and it will be continued as long as Soviets will collapse or capitalists will collapse. I don't know which side, but the world does not look sweet today. Not because there is no war. It is hot war is one and sometimes maybe not so dangerous as this underground war which is carrying out every day by Soviets against America, but it you have to speakings, smiling with Nixon and his

agents are working here in the United States to destroy America. This is the way the Soviets are operating. And personally, they have in that respect great experience, and I believe that Nixon do not trust Soviets because when he came before, what is a year back from the Soviet Union when he first visited, he gave interview in World Report, in this magazine, and then he say very clearly the Soviets didn't change in heart. They changed only in mind because they need some kind of cooperation with the Western World to improve the living standard in the Soviet Union and therefore they are looking the help and trying to probably to give some concessions to the Western World, and it is good that the President does not believe to the partners whom he will bargain in very short time now, in 27 June, he will go to Moscow again, and I mean the same Kissinger. I read some of his books and he is still warned, he was not at that time here in as I believe their foreign policy, but he was at that time professor at Harvard. And he wrote in his books that the greater danger still is the Soviet Union, and I do not think that by experience he has now being the head of Department of State, that he has changed his mind. I am sure he has a much deeper look in Soviet's methods than he has at that time, but this world is not very big and this very destructive forces which is atom bombs, it is dangerous for every country and it will be suicide if they would not try to find, and enemy knowing, knowing that is an enemy, to find some accommodation to, if not to avoid, to

prevent this destruction of the world. And politically it should be done in that way. We don't like any step which is coming closer between America because now in Finland, as you remember, and the Soviets insist that to come, that (?) five nations together and security conference and cooperations conference, that what Soviets would have to achieve to recognize the existing borders which was by Soviets made by force with their army and included all (?) countries, three Baltic countries, and the so-called Satellite countries, some hundred million, and then it is accepted by the United States that this--we lose the hopes of liberation. Therefore, we are not happy, but we cannot change American policies, (?). And if we were maybe in here as leaders of America, we would do the same way. So we have it on that stand and to accept things which are for us dangerous, but which we cannot change.

NASH:           What about young people whose parents were refugees, Latvians, what kind of politics do they have?

BERZINS:       Yes, it is how far I know, the greatest percentage of all Jews who are born or educated here from every refugee group, is Latvians, they are I mean already some seven, eight hundred professors, Latvians, in universities and high schools, in this relatively short time from '50 to '74, it is twenty-four years only

and well-educated people, some of them are scientists, don't think very much about politics, but there are very active groups who make his doctorates and so, Ph.D. as you call it. In Europe it is Doctor of Science, and here many of them make Ph.D. and still are active in Latvian community work. We have some national schools, the church schools, Sunday schools, for small children, and that church schools is by almost every community and there are not only the former school teachers from Latvia, but now who are graduated here and is working in american schools as school teachers they are working in Latvian school and teaching Latvian language and Latvian history and such things which the children couldn't learn just only for parents at home. So we are keeping our community very active and I am very proud that the Latvians probably are the only minority group here in this country which are united in one organization. We have American-Latvian Association, and in this American-Latvian Association are united all Latvians, churches and schools and various kinds of private organizations are members of this organization. And the same is Australia, in England, in Germany, there is local organizations. And all of those organizations in Free World are organized in one common organization so-called The Association of Free Latvians in the Free World.

NASH: Why do you think it is that the Latvian people have managed

to be so well-organized and to continue as a community or group?

BERZINS: It seems to me that the leaders, very much depends from leaders because the people in communities are not all active. There are a few active and those, when we came over to this country it was a lot of educated people. The lawyers and professors were working as janitors here in New York and other places because of lack of knowledge of English and the lawyer what he could do. He cannot be a lawyer here without graduation and license from American Bar Association. And therefore, the people worked in factories and were very intelligent people. Some doctors. For example, my wife from graduated in (?) and second time was graduated in NYU here in New York. Have to start three years more to simply get license and then to work. And this elite of Latvians who came to this country were not only well-educated people, but politically educated too, and they understood that if we would like to achieve something, we have to keep together, we have to support each other, and we have our political life to organize together, and so we organized not only in between us, but some of our active groups, younger people, now are in those parties in the Republican Party and Democratic Party, and our people are trying who are Republicans through the Republican Party impressed, and express through this party our interests, our national interests here in this country and our national interests in our native country.

NASH: Are there more Latvians in one party or Latvian-Americans in one party than the other?

BERZINS: American-Latvians, no, we are American-Latvians, and I say I

think there are very few. I am still Latvian citizen, I am not American citizen, but it is difficult to say, but it seems to me that Latvians are more Republicans, and that is very easy to understand. In Democrats are more liberals who are for understanding with the Soviets. We consider that Republicans are stronger against Communism and so we are all anti-Communism as is very understandable. So we are, our people are looking for those, or say the Congress and so, very often not so much who belongs to one or the other party, but who is against Communism. For example, my people like much more Jackson, Democrat, as some republicans, something like because Jackson is more anti-Communist.

NASH: Henry Jackson?

BERZINS: Yes, Senator Jackson. And so therefore we are for Jackson and if there will be elections that even republicans in his Oregon will vote for Jackson. That is my opinion.

NASH: Would it ever happen that one's interests would conflict where for your own daily life you might support let's say a Democrat for more liberal legislation, welfare legislation. On the other hand, for the people in Latvia you might want to support a Republican. I suppose that must be a problem.

BERZINS: That could be a problem, but we are trying to balance somehow, the balance that we are not only in one party, we are in, the young people are in both parties and we are not trying to antagonize one or the other or so. We dislike, for example, all captive people. Assembly of Captive people we visited every year tens of tens of senators, (?) but never we approach Fullbright because we know Fullbright is our enemy and they have nothing to do with this man. Fullbright is against us, against Radio Free Europe, against political activities which might be anti-Soviet, but it was not question of Democrat or Republican. It was a question of a person, Fullbright. And you can believe that many, many of our people received this news that Fullbright was no more candidate with great satisfaction. It is good or bad, that is other question. But the people, as you know, are living with some sentiment and sometimes maybe not so much logic, but with their own feelings. And we have, and we share (?) for twenty years, in ACN, assembly of Captive Nations. We know who our friends in Capitol and we know who are our enemies.

NASH: Did you hold a position in the Captive Nations?

BERZINS: I am still a member of General Committee. General Committee consists of one member, one delegate from each national committee, so

we are nine national committees united in Assembly of Captive European Nations and I am a delegate from Latvian National Committee, so I am still active and I hope for years to come I will be.

NASH: What are the other nations that sit on that committee?

BERZINS: Which countries you mean?

NASH: Yes.

BERZINS: It is still from Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, and Albania., so nine countries still are trying to keep us together and just now we prepared a (?) end of this month our people who are living in Washington will visit some group of senators to express out opinion concerning low approachment with the Soviets.

NASH: Is there still immigration from those countries?

BERZINS: No. As you know, there is still iron casting, and from Poland and from Hungary, so can come out, some people, but not from Russia proper, from Baltic countries, and they are, Baltic countries by Russians are considered as dangerous countries because we were free and we are not forgotten our freedom and we are doing everything to be free again, and the Jews in Latvia, disregarding the schooling and teaching of Communism and

so. The Jews in Latvia are very patriotic, and from Latvia came out very few, who jumped from ships and so, but so-called immigrants like from Italy and so, it doesn't exist. So it is our life here and the end I would like to express my thanks to American people and to government who in very, very difficult time when we were homeless and helpless and hopeless in Germany, in these camps, gave us opportunity to come here and I know all countries because I visited my people in Australia, New Zealand, England, Sweden, everywhere in this world that Latvians are living, I visited all of them. I know the life, the living standard, and the life and so, and it seems Latvians who are in the States can be considered the most happy because there is no discrimination, not nationality discrimination and not job discrimination. We are diligent people and are very well regarded. In fact, everywhere, everywhere where the Latvians are working. There is not more Latvians (?), like Italians who may be generations and generations are working as hand workers, some (?), there are no more Latvians who they started with janitors. There are no more Latvian janitors. They are all skilled workers in factories or they have already achieved what they are working in banks and financial institutions as clerks, but the Latvians are well-to-do people here in this country and that is because they have no discrimination here, and I am not expressing in that moment only my own feelings, but I can tell you generally about all Latvians who are living the United States, and we are more or less sixty thousand now Latvians. They came from other countries too, from England, come over, and from Germany, later years. And everybody have already established his life and his place here and very few Latvians you can read the names in criminal offenses. Very, very few young people, (?) doing some foolishness and very few Latvians you can find that (?) between extremists or right or left extremists, and there are not beatniks and peaceniks between Latvians, and if then very, very few. And they are no

more considered as Latvians. So even from families they are expelled. When they are, I know one very nice family, old friends, and his son fell in love with a girl who was once a kind of peacenik and she took part in demonstrations in Washington before years and he is expelled from all Latvian society, even parents don't like know about him. So we are pretty strong against such people who are disturbing the life here and our life as well. We are not soft with Communists or friendly to Communists with those people. We consider still it is a danger and do you don't know Communism, you don't know what does it mean. We know. We traveled thousands and thousands kilometers with bleeding hearts from our country and we would like to be back in our country and to live. It might be poorer life as here. We would start from beginning in our country, so deep we love our country. But we know America is the last place where to escape from Communism. There is no more other place and therefore we like that America, to see America strong, america healthy, America rich, and America happy because it is the last bastille for freedom against Communism. Thank you for coming to see me.

NASH:           You are welcome.