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FUTURE SOVIET PARTICIPATION IN
LONG-RANGE INTERNATIONAL AIR TRANSPORT

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FUTURE SOVIET PARTICIPATION IN
LONG-RANGE INTERNATIONAL AIR TRANSPORT *

SUMMARY

Participation of the USSR in air transport operations of a world-wide nature is being impeded at present by (a) Soviet security measures which prohibit the granting of landing rights in the USSR to other nations in return for the use of foreign air bases, and (b) deficiencies in technical equipment and lack of long-range aircraft.

It is unlikely that in the immediate future the USSR will permit the scheduled landing of foreign aircraft within Soviet territory. Other concessions, however, may be offered to Western Powers in order to obtain technical and material assistance as well as aviation rights on international air routes.

In about two years the USSR will be able to make a determined bid for a place among the international air carriers and may be expected to do so for reasons of national prestige and in order to obtain rapid Soviet-controlled communications with other parts of the world.

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Factors Determining Soviet Air Policy.

The USSR probably desires to attain a strong position in international air transport. Underlying this desire would be the following aims: To increase national prestige, to obtain control of rapid communications with other parts of the world as an aid to political penetration, and to extend its foreign trade. Impediments to the realization of this objective are (a) the strict Soviet policy of guarding its political and military security against penetration by foreign commercial air interests; (b) serious technical deficiencies in the Civil Air Fleet, which lacks modern long-range aircraft; and (c) the imperative requirements of internal reconstruction, which include the development of a vast domestic air network essential to the industrial and agricultural programs of the current Five-Year Plan. The USSR, however, is not impelled to immediate participation in world-wide international air transport by commercial incentives as urgent as those that are driving the Western Powers to protect their overseas interests.

* The intelligence agencies of the State and Navy Departments and of the Army Air Forces have concurred in this report. Comments by the Intelligence Division of the War Department General Staff are contained in Enclosure B hereto.

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The Issue of Reciprocal Landing Rights.

The USSR gave notice as early as 1944 that foreign air carriers would not be permitted to land on Soviet territory and that all air traffic over the USSR would be limited to Soviet aircraft. This policy of exclusion has been rigidly maintained since that time. The USSR refused to participate in the establishment of the Provisional International Civil Aviation Organization, and has taken no part in any multilateral conferences affecting air matters. In the post-war application of this air policy the USSR has denied all other countries the right of access to Soviet territory while demanding freedom of air movement for Soviet aircraft outside the USSR. This policy has been successfully implemented only with the Soviet-dominated states of Finland, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, and Albania.

The US and UK have consistently fostered opposition by smaller nations to any form of air agreement with the USSR that jeopardized the principle of reciprocity. Italy and Denmark have been approached by the USSR for the right to land Soviet commercial aircraft at Rome and Copenhagen but without reciprocal rights to land in the USSR. Both countries under strong pressure from the US and UK have refused such an arrangement and, together with Norway, have proposed an "exchange point" agreement similar to that between Sweden and the USSR. The "exchange point" plan is a compromise type of agreement whereby a designated airport in a Soviet-dominated country is used by both parties for the exchange of air traffic while neither party may overfly the territory of the other. This arrangement preserves both the principle of reciprocity and the basic Soviet policy of excluding Western commercial aircraft from the USSR. Soviet efforts to obtain non-reciprocal air agreements with Egypt, Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan, have been unsuccessful.

The latest instance of Soviet interest in commercial air expansion into Western Europe is afforded by discussions recently initiated with France. No agreement has been reached, as the Soviet Government does not contemplate granting landing rights to the French in the USSR. Also, the French Air Mission in Moscow has taken the position that a bilateral agreement for a traffic exchange in a third country is a matter for agreement between the respective air lines rather than between governments.

It is most likely that the USSR, having failed to conclude non-reciprocal air agreements with Western Europe, will further Soviet air interests in this direction through control of airlines in satellite states. This is already evidenced by a request of the Soviet-controlled and operated Rumanian airline TARS for terminal landing rights at Paris for a projected air route from Bucharest through Zurich. Soviet control of the Hungarian airline MAZOVLET and indirect control

of the Polish airline LOT, afford additional opportunities for Soviet penetration through agreements which even though strictly reciprocal will permit Soviet air crews free access into Western Europe while Soviet territory remains inviolate.

Limitations of the Soviet Civil Air Fleet.

Marshal Astakhov, Director of the Civil Air Fleet, recently stated that the principal Soviet airlines are to be equipped for night flying and placed on a year-round operating basis. This statement reveals by implication the backwardness of Soviet civil aviation compared with that of other major air powers, and supports the evaluation of the US Military Attache in Moscow that the Soviet Union "is not prepared to compete in global aviation due to lack of suitable equipment and years of commercial aviation experience which other nations possess."

The Civil Air Fleet has no advanced types of long-range aircraft, and is restricted to shorthaul transport operations with PS-84's. The PS-84 is a Soviet version of the pre-war American DC-3 built under Douglas license.* The Soviet lack of modern electronic equipment, essential for navigation and safety over extended air routes, is a serious deficiency. Hardly less serious as a delaying factor is the necessity for prolonged training of ground personnel and air crews to overcome the present lack of experience in the practical use of such equipment.

Ability to Overcome Present Limitations.

Soviet civil aviation will overcome its present limitations and eventually attain standards comparable to those of the Western air powers. The rate of improvement, however, will be accelerated in direct ratio to the extent of foreign assistance obtained. During the war the USSR developed an aircraft manufacturing industry of considerable proportions and although reconversion to peace-time economy has greatly reduced production, the industry must be considered adequate for the requirements of civil aviation. International air transport operations, furthermore, may be carried on with a surprisingly small number of aircraft. For example, Pan American World Airways, the largest commercial carrier, utilizes a total of only 90 aircraft for all its overseas services.

The lack of advanced types of long-range aircraft may be remedied by acquiring foreign-built aircraft or through development of new Soviet types. The US is the only country today from which the USSR can obtain long-range transport aircraft. This fact places the

* See Enclosure A hereto, showing characteristics of Soviet transport aircraft and comparable US aircraft.

US in a stronger position to insist on a bilateral air agreement with the USSR including fully reciprocal landing rights as the price of such assistance.

New Soviet types include the twin-engine IL-12 which is a marked improvement over the PS-84, and is now going into production. It is essentially, however, an aircraft designed for lifting heavy cargoes over short distances. Another new type is a four-engine transport, expected to be in quantity production by 1949, said to resemble the DC-4 in appearance though its carrying capacity is believed to be somewhat less. While this aircraft will be superior to present Soviet types, it will not be comparable, either in range or capacity, to the aircraft which are now under development by the leading international air carriers. This new four-engine transport must be considered nevertheless as capable of initiating Soviet long-distance operations in the international field, although not on competitive terms with other carriers. Within two years this aircraft will be available in sufficient numbers for this purpose.

Marked improvement in technical equipment and facilities for the Civil Air Fleet will be made through the acquisition of (a) electrical goods from Sweden under the existing 5-year trade treaty; (b) modern navigational aids and electronic devices from German industries taken as reparations; (c) skilled services from German personnel resettled in Soviet territory; and (d) German scientists and research specialists willing to work in the Soviet aircraft industry. The flight training curriculum for personnel of the Civil Air Fleet was completely revised and modernized as early as 1945 and now includes courses in instrument flying and night flying.

Entrance of USSR in World Air Transport.

In about two years, when technical deficiencies have been overcome, the USSR will probably attempt to initiate limited air operations on a world-wide basis. The handicap of late arrival in this highly competitive field will not deter the Soviet service, which is in reality an arm of the State and not under compulsion to show profits.

In order to achieve complete coverage in world-wide air transport the USSR must have landing rights in areas controlled by the US and UK. As a consequence, if the US and UK continue to insist on full reciprocity in any air agreements with the USSR, it is probable that the USSR, without relaxing the safeguards to its political and military security, will eventually modify its present policy to the extent of granting rights to land at points on the perimeter of Soviet territory.*

* See comment in Enclosure B.

ENCLOSURE ACOMPARISON OF US AND SOVIET TRANSPORT AIRCRAFT

	<u>Type of Aircraft</u>	<u>No. of Engines</u>	<u>No. of Passengers</u>	<u>No. of Crew</u>	<u>Range</u>	<u>Speed approx.</u>
US:	DC-3*	2/1200	27	3	1600 mi.	156 MPH**
	DC-4	4/1290	49	6	2200 mi.	182 MPH**
	DC-6	4/2100	52	5	3000 mi.	245 MPH
	C-69	4/2200	60	5	4500 mi.	200 MPH
	C-97	4/3500	80	6	5000 mi.	222 MPH
USSR:	PS-84	2/960	21	3	1600 mi.	130 MPH
	IL-12	2/?	27	5	1250 mi.	220 MPH
	Uniden- tified	4/?	42	?	?	248 MPH

* Performance and characteristics quoted are those of the DC-3 developed during the war as the C-47

** Cruising speed at 5,000 feet (60% power).

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ENCLOSURE B

COMMENTS BY THE
INTELLIGENCE DIVISION,
WAR DEPARTMENT GENERAL STAFF

It is believed that in the foreseeable future overriding considerations of Soviet political policy, will continue to regard the factor of internal security as more important than the introduction of International Civil Aviation to the U.S.S.R. on a reciprocal basis. Granted, the U.S.S.R. will be in a position within two years to compete in the field of international civil aviation, but it is believed that Moscow will continue to prefer to operate through dummy companies and agreements with satellite countries.

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