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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY Manchuria - USSR

SUBJECT Observations on Train Trip from Mukden to Moscow

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1. We witnessed a tremendous celebration in that city. We were afforded comfortable accommodations while in the city, and after a conversation with an English speaking Chinese we were told we would leave Mukden on 2 May. In the late evening we were escorted to the railroad station where we boarded a very modern air-conditioned streamlined train. The engine was a diesel-type oil burner which pulled the train from Mukden to a point about 50 miles from Moscow where it was replaced by an electric locomotive, which brought the train into the Soviet capital. The train consisted of several modern streamlined sleeping cars made of steel, one diner also of the same construction, and the wooden Pullman-type sleeper on which our party traveled. The cars were divided into compartments for accommodation of two or four persons with each section having a lavatory and a toilet. The windows were double glass and the sanitary condition of the train was equal to that of any modern US streamliner. The dining car was well stocked with superb food and beverages of all kinds including vodka, beer, soda pop, and other drinks. I recall that my three meals averaged about 40 to 45 rubles per day, and I paid for them from the 60 rubles per day given us by the Intourist Agent in Mukden. I recall that a very generous portion of roast beef with fresh peas and potatoes cost five rubles 90 kopeks, coffee 90 kopeks, a small helping of cheese three rubles, a pat of butter 85 kopeks and three slices of black bread 90 kopeks. Some of these prices seemed quite high to me, but they are quite moderate when I learned I had to pay 22 rubles for a normal size chocolate bar. The dining car attendants were constantly trying to get us to order more food for they wished us to spend all of the 60 rubles per day allotted to us for food. I also noted that there was a woman dietician on the train and she seemed quite surprised when in response to her question I told her that every hospital and public institution in the US had at least one dietician. The food on the train was of very

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-2-

fine quality, excellently prepared, but most expensive in terms of the official exchange rate of four rubles to the dollar.

2. I am unable to recall the route of my train ride from Mukden to Moscow, and the only positive landmarks I recall are the city of Manchouli and the area around Lake Baikal. I do know that on the entire first day after our late evening departure from Mukden, the train traveled through desert and vast areas of waste land. I do not recall observing any industrial plants along the railroad, and we passed through no cities of any size. I did note that oftentimes I saw what appeared to be large cities off in the distance but these inhabited areas were at least five to 10 miles from the railroad.
3. The railroad was single track most of the way but occasionally it would be double track for perhaps a half hour, but I do not remember the location of the double track. I saw many railroad crews throughout the journey performing maintenance work on the ties, ballast, and rails and the workers were always women. The only men I saw employed were station attendants of one sort or another, and these were always older men since every young man is a member of the armed forces. The train made frequent stops and we were permitted to get off the train and walk around the stations. On these occasions I saw women work crews and some of them were employed as signal operators directing the traffic on the railroad by use of hand signals. I did not count the number of trains we passed in a specific period, but one member of our party said that he observed 30 trains going in the opposite direction in one day. The great majority of these 30 were freight trains carrying war material such as one tank to a flat car, jeeps, larger trucks, guns, and other items which I could not identify. A few of the freight trains consisted entirely of huge tank cars, some painted black while others were camouflaged and these particular cars seemed larger than any I have ever seen before. Each car has a serial number and specific identification written on it in Russian, but I do not recall any of the markings or numbers. The passenger trains were the most curious for they usually consisted of poorly maintained box cars with a large window in each end and a small one on the side near the top. These trains were usually so crowded that people were hanging on the sides and tops with the interior so packed with humans that it looked like "standing room only". The rolling stock on the passenger trains was in very poor condition while the freight trains appeared to be quite well maintained. The locomotives on the trains I saw were the coal burning variety with an occasional diesel engine hauling one of the freight trains.
4. During the trip through the Soviet Union I saw three specific instances of the citizens' reaction to the deluxe train on which I traveled. At one small station where the train did not stop I saw a man standing with tightly clenched fists shaking them at the train's occupants and apparently cursing quite violently. The second incident occurred while our train was stopped at a small station alongside a filthy civilian box car passenger train. A Soviet man, very poorly dressed, forced his way into the diner on our train and demanded to buy some food. He was immediately thrown off the train and apparently engaged in a long and bitter denunciation of the railroad personnel. On another occasion while the train was proceeding slowly someone threw a rock which broke the outer of our double windows, obviously because the unknown thrower was displeased at the irregularities. I also noted that the railroad bridges, tunnels, and similar vital installations were heavily guarded by armed sentries with poised bayonets.
5. I did note that at many of the larger railroad stations there are novelty counters well stocked with trinkets and what I am sure are regarded as luxury items by the impoverished Soviet people. At one of these stations not far from Moscow I purchased a fountain pen for 33 rubles, a small pocket knife for five rubles, a larger single blade pocket knife for seven rubles 50 kopeks, and a quarter size plastic pencil sharpener for two rubles 50 kopeks. At all the stations on the Trans-Siberian railroad I

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-3-

noted that the houses for civilian occupants are very small, never painted, and poorly maintained. The most striking thing about the entire Soviet visit was the vast difference in the economic status of the Soviet population. The Communist officials and party members who were traveling on the deluxe train were outfitted in gorgeously tailored clothes and consumed enormous quantities of the finest food and liquors. Yet the multitudes of the Soviet common people were most shabbily dressed, almost begging for food, and with an apparent outlook of complete frustration. The differential in the Soviet social structure was most pronounced as we approached Moscow where I saw improved housing, large numbers of television antennas, modern highways, and other indications of a prosperous community. In Moscow itself I saw a large number of automobiles while on the entire journey from Mukden to Moscow I had only seen a handful of cars.

6. The train trip from Mukden began in the early night of 2 May and we arrived at the Moscow railroad terminal in the late morning of 11 May. I was never issued a ticket for the train trip and I have no idea of the cost of this journey. I returned 300 rubles to the US embassy in Moscow from the funds advanced by the Chinese Intourist official at Mukden. For a distance of about 25 kilometers outside Moscow I observed paved highways, but beyond that limit the roads which I had seen were rudimentary to say the least, not one being graded, bridged or paved.

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