

# INFORMATION REPORT

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SUBJECT USIA Order for Winches

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**Comment:** In the past two months, fragmentary reports have been received from sources of varying degrees of reliability indicating that the USSR has placed large orders for winches with USIA machine construction firms, and that this machinery, although ostensibly for lumbering or mining operations, would be suitable for military use. Information in the following report, while it does not agree exactly with previous reports as to total number of winches ordered and firms with which orders were placed, serves to establish the fact that large numbers of winches have been ordered by the USSR from USIA-controlled firms, and that these winches are suitable for military as well as industrial use. Source of the following is new and untested; however, the reliability of his information is enhanced by the fact that he has studied engineering drawings being used in the construction of the winches he describes, and has discussed the plans with engineers working on the project.)

1. On or about 1 May 1948, the Heavy Industry Section of USIA placed orders with six USIA-controlled firms for a total of 4,000 power-driven winches (Winden). Plans and specifications came from the USSR and complete uniformity was demanded.
2. The specifications call for an electric power-driven winch weighing three metric tons, which operates on ball bearings set in metal runners, and is capable of bringing a stationary weight of 60 tons into motion by pulling. For testing purposes, the winch was bolted to a cement foundation and was required to pull a box containing 60 tons of metal parts along a track.
3. Orders were placed as follows:

a. Winches  
Firm

Waagner-Biro A.G., Vienna

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Rax-Werk G.m.b.H., Wiener Neustadt  
 Leobersdorfer Maschinenfabrik A.G.)  
 Nibelungenwerk St. Valentin D. Steyr-Daimler-Puch A.G.) 2,150

- b. Electric motors (20 KW, 220/280 V) from Siemens-Schuckert A.G., Vienna XX, Engerthstrasse; number unspecified.
4. Despite heavy pressure by USIA for completion of the winches, progress has been slow. Delaying factors are poor plans, and shortage of materials, parts, and capital. So far, Wiener Brueckenbau has produced nine finished winches, and the other factories have finished not more than three samples. Large numbers of winches, however, are partially assembled, lacking only one or two parts. This unfinished machinery clogs factory space and hinders other production. Chief production difficulties have been:
- a. The original plans sent from the USSR contained many structural defects. These defects were pointed out by Austrian engineers working on the winch construction, and the plans have been sent back to Russia on several occasions. Soviet authorities in Vienna have not been willing to assume responsibility for making any changes in the plans.
  - b. Specifications call for ball bearings which cannot be made in Austria. After much argument, USIA agreed to order 500 ball bearing assemblies from Switzerland. The purchase is being negotiated on behalf of USIA by the purchasing agent of one of the Austrian firms working on the winches, but the full amount of foreign currency required has not yet been provided. Meanwhile, the responsible authorities in Russia have been requested to agree that 3,500 winches be constructed with bushings (Büchsenpackung).
  - c. USIA refuses to advance any money until the winches have been delivered, and as a result, the plants filling the order are in financial difficulties.
5. USIA officials claim that the winches are needed for transporting lumber, but the Austrian engineers believe the winches are to serve a military purpose. The requirement that the winch pull a 60 ton weight, the relative compactness of the unit, a specification that all winches be painted the same shade of field grey, and insistence that specifications be followed in minute detail are cited as indications of probable military use.
6. The Austrian engineers predict that because of technical faults inherent in the Soviet plans, the winch, as it is now being constructed, will not stand up under long usage.

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Comment: Another independent source, has reported that on 24 October 1948, Juschweschtrans, Soviet-controlled transportation firm in Vienna, received an order to pick up 20 crates of lifting apparatus (Hebwerke) from Wiener Brueckenbau A.G., Vienna, and from Waegner-Biro for rail shipment to the USSR via Mukachevo, and that these are the first winch shipments handled by Juschweschtrans in many months. Source comments that receipt of the loading order by Juschweschtrans does not necessarily mean that the winches are ready. He claims that USIA frequently sends loading notices in order to be able to indicate on its books that the order has been completed on time, thus placing possible blame for delay on Juschweschtrans. Source added that according to invoice, each crate contains machinery weighing 1,800 kgs. It is noted that this weight does not coincide with the figure of three tons for each winch, given in the above report; however, if these are the same winches, it is possible that they are being sent in two parts for easier handling.)

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