

SECURITY INFORMATION  
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

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SUBJECT: Sea Approaches to and Port of Mezen

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1. The warning against mined areas off the Murman Coast has been canceled. Only off the Kanin Coast (Kanin peninsula) in the northern part of the White Sea is there still a prohibited area.
2. On the route from the Varanger fiord as far as Mezen (65°50' N, 44°16' E) no control by Soviet naval forces or coast-guard stations was observed; even when the three-mile limit was occasionally crossed no patrol vessels appeared.
3. Off Kharlovka the ship was challenged by flash signal from a Soviet coast signal station; however, as the inquiry in Russian was not understood no exchange of signals was brought about. As a result the signal station desisted from further signalling.
4. No wrecks were observed during the voyage; they have probably been all removed.
5. A new radio beacon has been erected on Cape Voronov. The radio beacon works on the 303.6 kc (968 meters) wave; the call signal is: D F (-.. ..-). The radio beacon is near Voronov light house.

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8. The bar south of Wilmsner light buoy must only be crossed by large vessels at high water as the sand bars south of the passage and extending as far as the vicinity of the coast are neither surveyed nor charted.
9. Near the Semzha light buoy, vessels must anchor until the pilot comes on board. As the Soviet pilot stated, the pilot station does not always have pilots available, as in most cases they must be phoned for from Zezen. Thus it is necessary to order the pilot 24 hours before he is needed.
10. The fairway to Zezen is narrow and winding and difficult to navigate due to the strong current. It is marked by leading beacons, buoys and buoys. Anchoring is only possible in certain places as the fairway is too narrow for swinging at low water.
11. The Soviet pilot works reliably, prudently and with remarkably good knowledge of seamanship.
12. For berthing there are only two landing pontoons in Zezen, viz at the sawmill near Kamenska. All other berths are silted up and cannot be used. Three medium-sized ships can simultaneously lie alongside. Other ships must anchor and wait one or two miles south of the sawmill of Kamenska.
13. During the lay period of the German steamer nine ships of different nations were lying there and had to wait up to a week or so.
14. The holding ground is bad and there is also a current running up to 7 knots per hour. The depth ranges from 7 to 12 meters. The water contains sand particles which easily cause the clogging of pumps and valves.
15. The cargo-handling bridges at the sawmill work well and there was no trouble with them.
16. Work in the harbour is done exclusively by children and youths from 12 to 17 years of age. Only the foreman is a specialist. Work in the hold must often be suspended and, therefore, proceeds slowly. Work is done day and night. Pontoons floodlighted at night.
17. The ship's certificates are prepared under the control of the political police. If there are any complaints on the part of the ship's officers, the ship is not allowed to clear port. The captain must sign an obligation not to enter any protest afterwards.

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19. In Zezen and on the Zezen River no military people were seen except a few soldiers belonging to a guard detail. No aircraft were observed during the fortnight of the lay period. Sawmills or any other building operations ashore were not observed. The signal stations are old style and did not show any alterations characteristic of modern installations.

Comment:

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Zezen seems to be gaining in importance as a lumber port.

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The development of Mezen as a large commercial port is seriously  
hindered by the unfavorable navigational conditions and its loca-  
tion for traffic connections. Mezen has only one main road  
connecting the town with Arkhangel via Yuroma and Pinega. In  
1927 Mezen had about 3,500 inhabitants.