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SECURITY INFORMATION

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# INFORMATION REPORT

REPORT

[Redacted]

CD NO.

50X1-HUM

COUNTRY USSR/Germany

DATE DISTR.

24 Oct. 1952

SUBJECT 1. Soviet Army Leave Procedure  
2. Observations made on Journey from Germany to the Soviet Far East

NO. OF PAGES

1

DATE OF INFO.

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

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PLACE ACQUIRED

SUPPLEMENT TO REPORT NO.

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INFORMATION ON LEAVE PROCEDURE

[Redacted]

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[Redacted]

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1. Leave entitlement

Every Soviet Army officer serving in Germany is entitled to leave in the USSR 6 months after his arrival at his station.

Technical personnel are entitled to a period of leave one year after arrival in Germany, and soldiers after 2 years service in Germany.

[Redacted]

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[Redacted] 2 leaves each year, e.g. 90 days plus travelling time, but this generous allowance was altered to one leave per year in June 1950 at the "demand" of units stationed in Germany as their share to help the economy of the USSR.

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[Redacted]

In 1951 an army order, issued by Marshal VASSILEVSKY, limited leave travelling time to 15 days.

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Flying personnel are an exception. They are given a guaranteed period of 60 days at home plus travelling time.

[Redacted] it would be better for the morale of the troops if the bait of home leave was not held out, but if they were given the promise that after a definite service of 2 years duration they would be returned to the USSR.

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/Leaves ...

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Leave entitlement for the first year of service in units stationed in the USSR is one month including travelling time. In the following years travelling time is allowed in addition to the month's leave.

However, troops are not always allowed to go on leave. Usually under some pretext of a training exercise, the leave is postponed indefinitely.

The higher ranks of HQ staff and the political officers were the only personnel to go on leave regularly.

The leave plan was drawn up in the unit within the first month of the year.

The essential signature on the permit to cross the USSR frontier was that of the Army Commander [redacted]

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The 12th and 25th of each month were "signing" days and documents had to be presented by the various units 6 days before these dates.

3 photographs had to be submitted for the permit to cross the USSR frontier (propusk cherez gosudarstvyennuyu granitsu). The photographs had to have the right bottom corner left blank (quarter circle space) to accommodate a part of the stamp. These photographs were taken by unit photographers (German) in the officers' club.

When the document had been signed, the unit was notified and an officer was sent specially to take them back to the unit.

2. Leave documentation

[redacted] when going on leave to the USSR [redacted] was issued with:-

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- (a) Identity Card
- (b) Permit to cross the USSR frontier (Propusk) with 2 photographs and a stamp and signature of Army Commander.
- (c) Leave Pass (otpusknoi bilet)
- (d) Travel Voucher (voyenskaye trebovaniye) POTSDAM - MOSCOW.

3. Outward journey

At the station WILDPARK/POTSDAM the railway station Military Comdt stamps the permit to cross the USSR frontier and enters the particulars in a register. He also reserves a seat on the leave train.

At the ticket office a POTSDAM - MOSCOW ticket is issued in exchange for the travel voucher.

The leave train ...

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S E C R E T

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The leave train leaves POTSDAM at 1100 hours. It is a luxury train consisting of 10 sleepers and 2 soft (upholstered) coaches. An extra charge of 75 roubles is made for the use of this train (courier train) from POTSDAM to BREST, and a charge of 20 Mk for the use of the sleeper.

The leave train proper (without extra charge) starts from FRANKFURT/ODER.

At 2300 hours the train passes WARSAW, and at 0600 hours the following morning arrives in BREST, where the change over into Russian trains takes place.

Shortly before POZNAN is the first document check by Polish military authorities, who stamp the leave pass. [redacted] the inspecting personnel were Soviet nationals though in Polish military uniforms. 50X1-HUM  
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Another document check took place before reaching BREST.

Shortly before reaching the river BUG, the train was stopped and military guards checked the carriage doors which were then locked.

The train then pulls up at a platform on both sides of which are high nets to prevent anybody leaving or entering by the side. Here the train is boarded by MGB troops, who search the train thoroughly, probing every empty space. This search by a large number of troops lasts a good half an hour. After the search is completed, special guards board the train and it passes across the bridge over the BUG and travels within a screen made by netting on both sides and on the top.

Once across the bridge the train is stopped again and all documents except the leave pass are handed to the checking personnel, who also compare visually the identity of the person with the photograph on the document. These documents are collected later on at a given desk at BREST station. A party of customs officials then enters the compartments, noting on the leave pass how many pieces of luggage are in the possession of the traveller, and also the amount of German money carried.

At 0700 hours the train enters BREST station. All travellers leave the train with their luggage, which is weighed on the platform and the weight recorded on the leave ticket. The luggage is then presented for the customs inspection, which literally turns every article out.

No books or papers of any kind are allowed to be taken into the USSR, nor are any photographs or films. Films are extracted from all cameras. Clothes and 2 watches are allowed to be taken into the country, but all articles must have been purchased in the Soviet Zone of Germany. Receipts are given for articles confiscated.

In 1950 a Lt was asked to pay 150 Roubles duty for a doll, which he considered excessive. He promptly smashed the doll there and then.

The female train attendants asked some passengers to add some lingerie to their luggage in order to get it through the customs. In cases where the articles were just put on top of the personal belongings, the customs confiscated the articles as they were well versed with the ruses of the train staff. But in other cases the articles were passed without much difficulty. Almost all passengers had dresses and dress material for their wives in their luggage.

/After passing ...

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After passing the customs the luggage is handed, against a receipt, into the luggage room and the passenger joins the queue at the cash desk, where the personal documents are issued.

The MOSCOW train leaves at 1255 p.m. but the queue starts to form shortly after the arrival of the train at the station and at 0900 hours everyone already becomes impatient.

At 1000 hours the traveller's name is called out and he is given his documents after his leave pass has been compared and checked, and the part of the permit to cross the USSR frontier, with one photograph kept back.

He then joins the queue at the field cashier's desk where, however, priority is given according to rank.

The identity card, leave pass and pay book are handed in and he receives his leave pay and ration money. The latter amount is 296 Roubles for a month's leave.

He then moves to the next cash desk, where his German money is exchanged at the rate of one Rouble for one East Mark.

He next goes to the Military Station Commandant, where a queue waits for railway vouchers and seat reservations for the MOSCOW train.

Having obtained a voucher, [redacted] joined a queue at the ticket office, where he was finally issued with a ticket after paying 200 Roubles for a sleeper to MOSCOW, first-class travel and excess of luggage (50 Kg free limit).

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Now in possession of his ticket, he collects his luggage, has a snack (very expensive - approx 170 Roubles for 2 persons), gets into the train and hands his ticket to the train conductor.

Because of the queues, [redacted] it profitable to engage a porter, who obtains all that is necessary through back doors and then ensures that one does not miss the train.

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[redacted] The carriages are all metal, with apartments for 2 or 4 persons. Every luxury is provided for the passengers. There is a dining car, shower room, valet service, library and music by choice. A loudspeaker system instructs passengers how to behave on the train, gives the contents of the bill of fare, titles of books in the library and choice of music records, which are played over the loudspeaker system.

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Approx 100 Km short of MOSCOW, the steam engines are changed to electric traction and there are no further stops. Shortly before arrival the national anthem is played, then a short lecture glorifying the capital is given and, at the same time, the documents are returned by the train conductor.

At 2000 hours the train pulls in at the BYELORUSKIY Station, and as the Far East train leaves the YAROSLAVSKIY Station at the same time all passengers for the Far East miss the connection.

No sooner have they entered the station, when the doors are flung open and a horde of porters descends on the travellers, grabbing suitcases indiscriminately and making towards the taxi-stand, where the taxi-drivers wrestle with the porters for possession of the suitcases. The struggle is only settled when the passenger has seated himself in a taxi-cab and his luggage has finally been restored to him.

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For carrying 2 suitcases about 100 m. these porters demand 50 Roubles, and in order to avoid a quarrel this exorbitant sum is paid. 50X1-HUM  
From the BYELORUSKIY Station to the KASANSKIY Station, [redacted]

[redacted] paid 76 Roubles taxi fare, according to the meter reading, which registers each fare stage by 2 Roubles. On arrival at the station, the driver grabs the suitcases and deposits them in the luggage room. For this service he demands 10 Roubles. 50X1-HUM

The traveller then goes to the military comdt (equivalent to RTO), who bluntly tells him that all tickets have been sold; he should, however, try at the booking office. There he is told again that no tickets are available, but it is suggested that it might be worth while to wait. The traveller hands him a bribe of 50 Roubles, which he reluctantly takes, and advises the traveller to wait for 20 minutes in the waiting room. Now a farce of pretence is enacted between the booking office and the military commander's office and, in due time, the ticket is forthcoming from the military comdt's office.

For depositing the suitcase in the luggage room for one hour a charge of 15 Roubles is made.

Having seen his colleague off to KUIBISHEV, [redacted] returned to the station and put his name on the waiting list for tickets, which were to be issued at 1000 hours the following morning, at the military comdt's office. He then wandered around the station neighbourhood until 2400. 50X1-HUM

When trying to obtain a room at an hotel nearby, he was refused admission unless he could produce a health certificate, which he had to obtain from the "meditsinskiy punkt" (First-aid Station). Informant tried unsuccessfully for a whole hour to locate this "medpunkt", then gave up the idea of taking a room in an hotel. He tried to sleep on a bench at the PUSHKIN memorial, but was soon wakened by a militia patrol and told that sleeping on the bench was not allowed.

With first light he went to the station restaurant, had a snack, a wash and brush up (2 Roubles) and went at 0830 to the booking office. By 0945 there was already a long queue. At 1130 hours they were told to queue according to army ranks and when, at 1400 hours, it was [redacted] turn, he was told that there were no tickets left but he should apply again at 1700 hours. At 1730 there was still nobody at the booking office so he went to the military comdt and made a scene. He was told to wait again at the booking office, where he finally obtained his ticket at 1900 hours. 50X1-HUM

He paid 275 Roubles for travelling in a soft-seat coupé, 75 Roubles for travelling on an express train [redacted], 20 Roubles for the sleeper and 80 Roubles for excess luggage. He had to pay 50 Roubles for depositing his luggage. At 1940 he got into the train, again handing in all his tickets, and to the tune of martial music the train left at 2000 hours. 50X1-HUM

This train was also luxuriously fitted out, with dining service, valet service, bath, barber, laundry, library, newspapers, loudspeaker system giving a travel commentary on places of interest on route, etc.

The majority of passengers were military personnel and their families, going on or returning from leave, as well as party officials.

The train was made up of 10 carriages (sleepers), of which 2 were luxury coaches, one dining-car, and 2 luggage vans. There were 56 seats per carriage.

/The train ...

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S E C R E T

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The train covered 1,000 Km in 24 hours. The first 112 Kms out of MOSCOW were electrified. Approx every 500 Km the locomotive was changed. Halts were only made at main stations, usually for only 10 minutes, unless the locomotive was changed, which meant a 45 minute stop. Locomotives were changed at the following stations:-

ALEKSANDROVSK (change of locomotive from electric to steam)

YARCSLAVL

BUY

KIRCV

MOLCTOV

SVEEDLOVSK

TYUMEN

OMSK

NOVOSIBIRSK

KRASNOYARSK

NIZENE UDINSK

CHEHEMKHOVO

IRKUTSK I

SELYDYANKA

ULAN-UDE

CHITA (on east - west runs train receives two locomotives)

SKOVORDINO

KUYHISHEVKA VOSTOCHNAYA

BIROBIDZHAN

KHABAROVSK

GUBEROVO

There are 3 types of Trans-Siberian train in operation:-

One consisting of 10 sleeper-carriages, 2 of which are super luxury sleepers. They complete the journey MOSCOW - VLADIVOSTOK in 9 days. The fare is 1,025 Roubles and 275 Roubles for the sleeper. The fare for the luxury coach is 1,500 Roubles.

The second type is made up of 10 carriages, of which 2 are luxury sleepers, 2 ordinary sleepers and the rest upholstered carriages. The journey on these trains takes 10 days. Fares for the luxury coach - 1,400 Roubles. Ordinary fare - 950 Roubles and 120 Roubles for the sleeper. These trains are usually used for shorter journeys.

The third has 10 carriages of upholstered compartments (polumyagkiye). The compartments seat 12 people. For 20 Roubles a mattress and blanket is provided, while for shorter journeys the charge is 10 Roubles. These trains make the journey in 12 days and are mostly used by soldiers, or for shorter journeys. The fare from MOSCOW to VLADIVOSTOK is 750 Roubles on these trains.

the journey to VLADIVOSTOK from MOSCOW costs 2,500 Roubles, as about 100 Roubles per day is spent on food and drink.

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Every convenience and comfort is provided such as baths, showers, laundry, barber, valet service, library and music. The carriages are well sprung and there is hardly any noise. There is a table in every compartment, ventilators and sufficient lockers to lock everything up.

/Windows ...

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S E C R E T

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Windows can only be opened on the corridor side. The doors cannot be locked but must remain ajar for at least 10 cm. This [redacted] is to prevent any immorality. Even married couples are forbidden by the train rules to cohabit, and the fine for doing so is 150 Roubles. 50X1-HUM

In 1950 [redacted] was able to buy a guide book for the entire journey at the station in MOSCOW. None of these were available in 1951. Although one copy was available on the train, one was not allowed to keep it for any length of time, nor to copy out any station or information concerning the route and landscape. 50X1-HUM

The lavatories were a constant source of discord. There were many women who had not seen a toilet before and did not know how to manipulate it. In consequence the lavatory was always very dirty - Informant described it as "like a pigsty" - after women had used it. But many families, especially with small children, also did their utmost to make the use of the lavatories most repulsive to any subsequent user.

Meals in the dining-car were expensive and the majority of the passengers planned their meals to coincide with a longer stop at one of the larger stations, where a cheaper hot meal (10 Roubles) was provided by the station restaurant. Plenty of foodstuffs were also offered by local hawkers and peasants at all smaller stations.

The train staff was efficient and helpful. They completed a journey to VLADIVOSTOK and back and then had 20 days rest.

In 1950 the train staff still tolerated the swarms of children and cripples who invaded the coaches at most stations in order to beg, but all that had changed in 1951 when none were seen.

The first check of documents by MGB troops took place before reaching CHITA, though MGB troops were aboard the train throughout the journey, watching the passengers.

Most of the train journey is spent reading or playing cards or chess.

4. Return journey

Not much difference was experienced on the return journey. Fellow passengers from MOSCOW were mostly military personnel returning from leave [redacted] 50X1-HUM

On arrival in BREST the same procedure is adopted as on the outward journey. All documents are surrendered, the second part and photograph of the permit to cross the USSR frontier is kept back, and all travellers pass through the customs shed, where all books, letters and papers are confiscated.

Once on the train, one is not allowed to leave it until arrival in Germany. While on the train, all documents are once more checked and stamped by Polish officials, and at 1600 hours the journey ends in POTSDAM. 50X1-HUM

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S E C R E T

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5.

[redacted]

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European Russia impressed [redacted] very little. [redacted] a great deal more progress must be made to rebuild the war-damaged towns; a beginning has only been made with the rebuilding of the railway stations such as MINSK and SMOLENSK.

[redacted]

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[redacted] the smart inhabitants of MOSCOW took advantage of the simple-minded provincial. Although the "Muscovite" is regarded as a privileged member of society, [redacted] much is just facade and [redacted] the man in the street is not much better off than the rest of the Soviet population. [redacted]

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What did impress [redacted] however was the town of NOVOSIBIRSK, which is called a 'second MOSCOW' (vtoraya MOSKVA). It had the most imposing and cleanest railway station, and it took the train 2 hours to traverse the built-up area of the town. Most of the streets had trees planted and the factory areas extended as far as the eye could see. At the same time much new building was actively going on. [redacted] estimated the population of NOVOSIBIRSK to total at least 2,000,000.

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SVYDLOVSK and KRASNOYARSK also made a favourable impression [redacted] due to their cleanliness, size and activity, and also due no doubt to the fact that the railway line passes through a large area of the town.

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Also worth noting was the industrialization of the area from OMSK to lake BAIKAL. On both sides of the railway line as far as one could see are factories, working or being built. The train went at great speed through these areas.

At KRASNOYARSK the train conductor pointed out [redacted] a large synthetic petrol plant, which had been removed from Germany and was now in full production.

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The most outstanding feature [redacted] was the progress made between 1950 and 1951 on the huge hydro-electric project [redacted] on the river ANGARA south of IRKUTSK. The railway follows the western river bank on the high mountain ridge. Approx  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour before reaching IRKUTSK the river makes a slight sweep to the east, leaving a plain between the mountain ridge and the river bank.

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In 1950 [redacted] three large parallel embankments had been built in this plain. The soil for these was dug from a hill close to the river bank. At that time thousands of forced labourers were employed, but no signs of its future shape were yet visible.

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In Sep 1951 part of the terrain between the three embankments was flooded and 3 huge pump-type excavators (Zemlesnaryady) were pumping mud from the flooded area and throwing soil mixed with water against a dam parallel to the railway embankment. To the north 3 huge concrete walls had been erected and were still being heightened. 2 giant self-propelled excavators and "thousands" of smaller excavators and trucks were moving earth from the higher ground. All this work was performed literally by thousands of forced labourers guarded by MVD troops.

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The railway line from MOSCOW to VLADIVOSTOK is double-tracked throughout, except between the stations BUY - KIROV, where it is single track.

From OMSK to NOVOSIBIRSK another two tracks are being laid.

All along the railway tracks masses of women are working, re-laying the tracks and changing the sleepers. He noticed that the sleepers from IRKUTSK eastwards were newly laid.

[redacted] the whole line from MOSCOW to VLADIVOSTOK is going to be electrified. Work on this project was in progress between SVERDLOVSK and OMSK. Between OMSK and NOVOSIBIRSK it was already completed. [redacted] the line from OMSK to PETROPAVLOVSK is also electrified, and will be completed as far as KUYBYSHEV. [redacted] all branch lines to the factory areas from NOVOSIBIRSK are electrified, and much work on further electrification is going on. All this work is being carried out by forced labour, as can be observed from the passing trains.

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The trans-Siberian Railway line is well utilized, and at each station there were goods trains waiting.

It takes 8 hours to skirt lake BAIKAL and even the tunnels are double-tracked.

While waiting at MOSCOW railway station to get [redacted] travel documents, [redacted] observed an elderly Soviet Army Colonel approaching his group of officers, telling them that his wallet had been stolen and asking them to help him out so that he could get to his destination. A collection was made [redacted]. Later on in the day [redacted] saw this Colonel telling the same story to another group of officers and, after having collected a considerable sum, being told by the station militia to go away again.

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50X1-HUM

Some [redacted] who passed through MOSCOW in Dec/Jan 51 had seen this Colonel still playing his game. It was known that he was always at the station at the times when leave trains were due, and also that he was working hand in hand with the railway militia.

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