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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

COUNTRY USSR  
SUBJECT The Port of Astrakhan

DATE DISTR. 3 July 1953

NO. OF PAGES 9

PLACE ACQUIRED

NO. OF ENCLS. 1  
(LISTED BELOW)

DATE ACQUIRED

SUPPLEMENT TO REPORT NO.

DATE OF INFO

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THE PORT OF ASTRAKHAN

1. The port of Astrakhan is located in the delta of the Volga River on the left bank in the vicinity of the town of Astrakhan. A large part of the port is located in the city limits and the remaining roadstead and repair yard (dockyard of the Ministry of the Merchant Fleet) are seven km from town, down along the river. The port consists of four parts separated from each other over a considerable distance, 9-10 km.
2. The approaches to the port are rather difficult and are made by the artificial waterway, the Volgo-Kaspiyskiy Channel. The usual approach by ships coming from the south is as follows: at a distance of approximately 158 sea miles from the port of Astrakhan, is the lightship "Astrakhanskiy Priyemny". It is a two-masted ship with a white stripe along the side and a red ball at the main mast. Following buoys, ships proceed to the landing stage "Donbass", a two-masted, black, two-stacked ship with a white superstructure, located about 113 sea miles from Astrakhan. From the "Donbass" ships proceed to the floating light "Volgo-Kaspiyskiy", a yellow single-masted ship situated in the entrance to the Volgo-Kaspiyskiy Channel about five-six sea miles from the "Donbass". After this, ships enter the channel, the sea part of which is marked with buoys (acetylene lamps after dark) and the river part of which is marked by beacons, signal stations and rotary ~~light~~ buoys. The beacons have kerosene lamps. Ships drawing up to 3.5 meters of water can use this channel.

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3. The port of Astrakhan is a frozen port because in winter not only the Volga freezes in the vicinity of the port, but the northern part of the Caspian Sea freezes also. In the period between 25 November and 10 December, the Volga freezes in the region between Astrakhan and the village of Olya, (the last inhabited point on the right bank of the river before it reaches the sea). The river is usually open in the period 25 March and 1 April. The maximum temperature of the water in July is 22-24 degrees centigrade. The freezing of the northern part of the Caspian Sea from the 14-foot roadstead to the coast between Kaspiyskiy (Lagan') and the village of Ganyushkino starts in the period between 10 and 20 December. The opening of the ice in this region begins in the period 15-20 March. The maximum temperature of the water in July is 25-27 degrees centigrade. The maximum thickness of ice on the Volga from Astrakhan to the village of Olya is usually reached in the month of January and is 450-500 mm. In the period of January, February and also part of December and March the river is open to land vehicles. Beginning in the month of February, the ice begins to decrease in thickness, not only because of the increasing warmth of the sun's rays, but also because of the appearance on the surface of the water under the ice sheet of the so-called "winter-field". This winter-field consists of a layer of dark-green growth which is found on the surface of the water and is very similar to the slime which is found in stagnant water. When this winter-field appears, the ice begins to melt rapidly from underneath. By the appearance of this scum the fishermen can determine the time and character of the approaching spring. Traffic on the ice across the Volga ceases when the accumulation of ice on the surface begins to melt and the ice takes on a spongy gray appearance. As a rule the opening of the ice from Astrakhan (in the region of pier No 4) to the northern part of the sea (to the 14-ft roadstead) is accomplished artificially by means of ice-breaking ships. There are no special ice-breakers on the Caspian Sea but there are ships which, on account of their construction can be termed ice-breakers. These ships are as follows:

(a) Belong to "Raydtanker":

- SS Sadko . . . . .800 hp.
- MS Bogatir . . . . .1100 hp.
- MS Gvardiyets . . . . .500 hp.
- MS Partisan. . . . .500 hp.

(b) Belonging to Volgo-Kaspiskiy Fishing Trust:

- SS Ordzhonikidze . . . . .400 hp.
- MS Silach . . . . .600 hp.
- MS Moguchiy . . . . .600 hp.

(c) Belonging to "Kaspiflot":

Motorships of the "Burniy" type developing 500 hp each, and built at the ship building and repair yard imeni Vazh Stalina in Baku.

The large ships for ice-breaking are the SS Sadko, MS Bogatir, MS Gilyak, and the MS Moguchiy. These ships, especially the Sadko and Bogatir, are capable of breaking ice up to 400 mm thick.

4. The ice breaking work is usually organized in the following manner: in the second half of March the Sadko breaks ice from the factory imeni Tenth Anniversary of the October Revolution to Verkhnio-Solyanskiy Island. This section is six km long and the ice is broken in the entire navigation channel. This allows ship traffic from the city to Trusov, and also "river streetcar" (passenger boats) traffic from pier No 11 down along the river to the factories imeni Lenin, Artem Sergeev, 10th Anniversary of the October Revolution and Stalin. Then the Sadko breaks a trail up along the river to pier No 4, thus opening a path to the piers of the sea and river ports. Almost simultaneously with the work of the Sadko, the motorships Bogatir, Gvardiyets, and Partisan break a channel from Zayachiy Island (factory imeni 10th Anniversary of the October Revolution) to the sea. These ice-breakers make a trail from the Volga to the sea and further to the 14-ft roadstead. As a preliminary, for these ships, the Volga-Caspian Channel Section of Routes and Bays of the "Raydtanker Co" puts out the so-called winter markers. Following the "Raydtanker" ships in the already cleared channel come the ice-breakers of the Federal Fishing

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Trust which will clear routes in places where the fishing boats will have to go and where the floating fish processing plants will be stationed. The work of the ice-breakers speeds up considerably the opening of navigation on the Volga from Astrakhan to the sea.

5. The water temperature in the river has a tendency to get from two to five degrees warmer as the river approaches the sea. The average speed of the river current is 2-2.5 km per hour. In a few very narrow places the current gets faster. The prevailing winds in Astrakhan are as follows: Winter-northeast, hard and cold; Summer-northeast and dry. In summer there are also often southwest winds or as they are called locally, Moryana. These winds are damp and soft and don't reach any intensity. The maximum wind strength is from 8-11 points and is reached in the period March, April, May and the second half of September, October and November. Calm weather with wind strength at about one-two points exists in June and August. As a rule, storm force is attained by winds coming from the northeast. In Astrakhan about 75% of the days in the year are windy. Working and living conditions in Astrakhan are rather difficult. First of all, it is necessary to take into account the bad climatic conditions. Up until 1951 the city was infested with all forms of malaria and there was no effective method known to combat the disease. There was insufficient cultural activity in the town. Supplies and widely-used commodities were always short, especially in the last quarters of the months and in the months of March, April and often May. During these periods there were long lines of people waiting for everything, even black bread. Pay for laborers was quite low as it fell into the first tariff category (the lowest in the USSR). Communication between the town and the industrial section was very inadequate. The town and its working sections are spread out on both sides of the river for a distance of 25-30 km. In spite of this fact the transportation facilities are very bad. The "river streetcars" which are operated by the Astrakhan Region Directorate of the Volga Freight and Passenger River Steamship Company were in very bad technical condition (they go out of order frequently and are long being repaired) and they are few in number. In the winter people usually have to walk for several kilometers to and from work on the ice on the Volga. If any of the organizations affected by this transportation shortage organize their own transportation, it is not for use by the workers, but only for the administrative personnel.
6. The cargo turnover of the port of Astrakhan includes the total amount of cargo leaving the port and the total amount of cargo coming into the port. The cargo turnover quota for the year 1951 was 2.1 million tons; 1.0 million tons carried out to sea from the port and 1.1 million tons carried into the port from the sea. Actually, however, the cargo turnover was quite a bit higher due to the "working coefficient" which was supposed to reach 1.95 to 2.00 in Astrakhan. This working coefficient arises on account of the following loading-unloading variants which are characteristic of the port of Astrakhan:

Railroad-truck-pier-ship;  
Ship-pier-ship;  
Ship-pier-truck-railroad.

In 1951 the working coefficient was planned to reach 1.95-2.00 but [redacted] it reached something more like 2.2-2.4. The cargo turnover plan for 1951 was as follows:

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Type of Cargo	Total Incoming Cargo in Millions of Tons	Total Outgoing Cargo in Millions of Tons	Increase in the Volume of Freight Handling According to the Following Variants:		
			Railroad-Truck-Pier-Ship	Ship-Pier-Ship	Ship-Pier-Truck-Railroad
Cotton	0.4	—	—	—	—
Machines & Equipment	0.4	0.1	0.2	0.4	—
Timber	—	0.5	—	—	0.6-0.8
Minerals	0.1	—	—	—	—
Salt	—	0.4	—	—	0.2
Grain	—	—	—	0.4	—
Provisions (Food)	0.2	—	—	—	0.2
TOTAL	1.1	1.0	0.2	0.8	1.0-1.2

Thus, the gross volume of freight handled at Astrakhan in 1951 was 4.1-4.3 million tons. Again, however, one must keep in mind that the work in the port took place under the condition that the working coefficient not exceed 1.95-2.00. However, in the presence of the very difficult working variants "railroad-truck-pier-ship" and "ship-pier-truck-railroad" and in the presence of the eternally poor work organization in the port, the working coefficient might well have reached 2.4.

7. The work in the port of Astrakhan, as in other ports of the USSR, is organized in accordance with the directorates of the Ministry of the Merchant Fleet. It includes the organization of loading-unloading work in the port, the establishment of a norm for the amount of time to be spent by ships in port and the organization and paying of the stevedores and machine operators.
8. Astrakhan has connections mostly with Baku and Krasnovodsk. Its connections with Makhachkala consist mostly of passenger trade. The sea port of Astrakhan has its own piers but also makes frequent use of the piers of the river port. Altogether the sea port has three freight piers, one passenger pier and a river roadstead which lies on the left bank of the Volga across from the factory imeni Stalin. Cargo pier No 5 and passenger pier No 17 are used jointly by the river port administration.
9. The seaport has two production districts. The first district includes: (a) Pier No 4 located along the river at the north limits of the city. This pier specializes in the breaking down of river log rafts and the formation of sea-going rafts. These rafts are then towed by Diesel tugs to Krasnovodsk, Baku and Makhachkala. Pier No 4 can be called the timber pier. There are no railroad connections to this pier so all the cargo that is carried away is transported by motor truck. In 1951 it was not the policy to form more than one log raft at a time. However, in case of emergency it was possible to form two rafts. In the case of ship processing at this pier, it is not possible for more than two ships of 2000 tons each to stand at the pier. Pier No 4 is built in such a way that a ship must be moved to it only with the log to the shore. (b) Pier No 5 is situated in the region of Dzerzhinskiy street close to the center of town. This pier specializes in handling all kinds of cargo except timber, salt, and cotton. The Directorate of the seaport of Astrakhan is also located in this district. There are no railway tracks to the pier and the only means of transport to and from the pier is by motor truck. It is possible to handle two or at the most three 2000-ton ships at this pier at the same time. This pier is built in such a way that a ship can moor to it only with the log to shore. Only half the piers are located in the sea port. The other half are located in the river port.

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(c) Passenger pier No 17 is located near the center of town in the vicinity of the directorate of the "Volgotanker" steamship company. This pier is used exclusively for the handling of passengers. There are no railroad tracks to this pier and the only transport is by automobile vehicle. This pier is used jointly by the sea and river port administrations. No more than two 2000-ton ships can be moored to this pier at the same time. Ships can be moored to this pier only with the log to shore. (d) Cargo pier No 17 is situated next to the passenger pier, but down stream. This pier specializes in the handling of salt and is called "the salt pier". There is no railway track to this pier so all transportation is by motor truck. Practically speaking, however, there is almost no use for the motor transport as all salt is brought by river boats and loaded directly to the ships or to the pier from which it is later loaded onto ships. Pier No 17 is directly under the administration of the seaport. It is so built that ships can be moored only with the log to shore.

10. The first production section of the port is the most important and handles up to 85% of all freight coming thru the port. The first section is about 70% mechanized. The work in the holds is badly mechanized, more correctly, not mechanized at all. This circumstance greatly cuts the productive capacity of the port, and while in the part of Krasnovodsk the role of the machine operator has increased in recent years, in Astrakhan the stevedore is still the main figure. Apropos of this, the stevedores in Astrakhan are called "carriers" or "balancers" in the local language, while in Baku or in Krasnovodsk they are called "pawls" or "munchbacks". The first production section is composed of 20-22 brigades of longshoremen numbering about 300-350 men in all. The working norm for stevedores is over-fulfilled 300% on the average, which means that according to the piece-work-progressive system, the stevedores earn from 900-1300 rubles a month. This same section has 30 crane operators. Their norm is over-fulfilled by 250% usually, which means they get up to 1300 rubles a month each.
11. The second production section of the port specializes in the handling of cotton exclusively. This section is located on the Volga in the vicinity of the ship repair yard Imeni Stalin and is officially called the roadstead section. It is served by four brigades numbering about 50 men in all. The stevedores fulfill their norm by 250-300% which in piece work-progressive system gives a wage of 1000-1200 per month. This section also has 24 crane operators. They exceed their norm by 300% giving them a monthly salary of 1000-1200 rubles per man. Work in the roadstead section is arranged in the following manner: a ship arriving from the sea with a cargo of cotton is unloaded either into a river boat or onto a floating transloading station of the Astrakhan seaport. In the majority of cases, however, the river ships and the sea ships are not there at the same time. Bales weighing 170-250 kg have to be loaded onto the transloading stage or other harbour facilities. Upon the arrival of the riverboats, the cotton is loaded into them. The moving of the cotton into the area under the hatchway, and the piling of the bales that have been moved by the crane, is all done by hand.
12. The cotton handling is badly organized and is often the reason for the port's norm not being fulfilled. The organization of safety measures in the working methods of the stevedores is especially badly handled with the result that there is a high accident rate. There are often tragic disasters, with high loss of life. The fire protection organization in the port is also badly handled. In the fall of 1945, there was a fire in the cotton roadstead, and as a result about 23,000,000 rubles worth of cotton was destroyed.
13. Mechanization in the port was increased significantly in the last years of World War II, from 1941-1945. The seaport of Astrakhan is equipped with three floating transloaders, two floating cranes, and four shore cranes. These cranes are distributed, usually, in the following manner:

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17. In the organization of the port are the following sectors:

Exploitation Section:

- Chief (also Acting Chief of the Port) - 1
- Senior Dispatchers - 4
- Dispatchers - 4
- Senior Engineer - 1
- Engineers - 2
- Clerk-typist - 1

Commercial-Cargo Section:

- Chief - 1
- Senior Economist - 1
- Economist - 1
- Senior Price Controller - 1
- Price Controllers - 2

Communications Section:

- Chief - 1
- Senior Engineer - 1
- Engineer - 1
- Senior Radio Technicians - 3
- Radio Technicians - 3
- Senior Radio Operators - 3
- Radio Operators - 3
- Punchers - 3

Machine-Ship Section:

- Chief - 1
- Senior Engineers - 2
- Engineers - 4
- Group Engineers - 2
- Technicians - 3

Mechanization Section:

- Chief - 1
- Senior Engineers - 2
- Engineers - 3
- Technicians - 2

Transportation Section in the Mechanization Section:

- Chief - 1
- Dispatcher - 1
- Truck Drivers, Carters, and Workers - 30

Planning Section:

- Chief - 1
- Senior Engineer - 1
- Engineer - 1
- Economist - 1

Labor and Wage Section:

- Chief - 1
- Senior Engineer - 1
- Engineers - 2
- Technicians - 2

Bookkeeping Section:

- Chief Bookkeeper - 1
- Senior Bookkeepers - 3
- Bookkeepers - 3
- Accountants - 3
- Cashier - 1

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Personnel Section:

- Chief Bookkeeper - 1
- Senior Bookkeepers - 3
- Bookkeepers - 3
- Accountants - 2
- Cashier - 1

Sea Inspection Section:

- Chief - 1
- Senior Inspector - 1
- Representatives - 2

Supply Section:

- Chief - 1
- Goods Economists - 2
- Agents - 2
- Senior Warehousemen - 2
- Warehousemen - 3
- Bookkeeper - 1

Administrative Economic Section:

- Chief - 1
- Supply Director - 1
- Executive - 1
- Typists - 2
- Janitors - 2
- Archivist - 1
- Curator - 1
- Chauffeurs for Light Vehicles - 2

Operation Production of Individual Production Sections of the Port.

3. The first production area has the following sections:

Loading-Unloading Section:

- Chief (Chief of the Area) - 1
- Dispatchers - 3
- Senior Stevedores - 6
- Stevedores - 12
- Senior Price Controllers - 3
- Price Controllers - 3
- Norm Engineer - 1
- Norm Technicians - 2

Freight Warehouses:

- warehouse Chief - 1
- Senior Warehouseman - 3
- Warehouseman - 3
- Senior Weighers - 3
- Weighers - 3
- Goods Clerks - 2

Mechanization Sections:

- Senior Engineer - 1
- Engineers - 2
- Senior Mechanics - 3
- Mechanics - 6
- Senior Crane Operators - 15
- Crane Operators - 13
- Senior Motor Mechanics - 9
- Motor Mechanics - 9
- Senior Electricians - 6
- Electricians - 6

The second production area (roadstead) has the following sections:

Loading-Unloading Section:

- Chief (also Area Chief) - 1
- Dispatchers - 3
- Senior Stevedores - 3
- Stevedores - 6
- Senior Price Controllers - 3

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Price Controllers -3  
 Technician-Norm Setters -2  
 Senior Weigher -1  
 Weighers -3

Mechanization Section:

Engineer - 1  
 Senior Mechanics - 3  
 Mechanics - 6  
 Senior Crane Operators - 12  
 Crane Operators - 12  
 Senior Motor Operator - 1  
 Motor Operators - 3

20. Militarized guard and Fire Protection for the port is handled by the Eighth Section of the VOKHR. Political work is directed by the political section of the Reydtanker Company. The port has a Port Party Committee, a Port Komsomol Committee, and a Port Trade Union Committee. Trade union work in the port is directed by the Coastal Committee of Seamen's Unions (Baskomor). All questions concerning secret correspondence in the port are decided by the Secret-Code Section of the Reydtanker Company. The port does not have its own telephone station. It uses the services of the telephone station More of the Reydtanker Company and the telephone station Reka of the Volgotanker Company. The port does not publish its own newspaper. Its collective uses the coastal newspaper Morskoyreyd, which is published by the Reydtanker Company. In general, it is necessary to note that in many situations the Astrakhan Seaport is not dependent on Reydtanker, as for example, in questions concerning communal living quarters, in questions of motor transport, of ship repair and repair of transloading machinery, of land transport and of material supply.

Questions concerning any kind of changes in the port structure of concerning its strengthening have not arisen either in the Ministry of the Merchant Fleet or in the government in 1951 and are not expected in the near future.

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ENCLOSURE (A): Plan of the Port of Astrakhan with Legend

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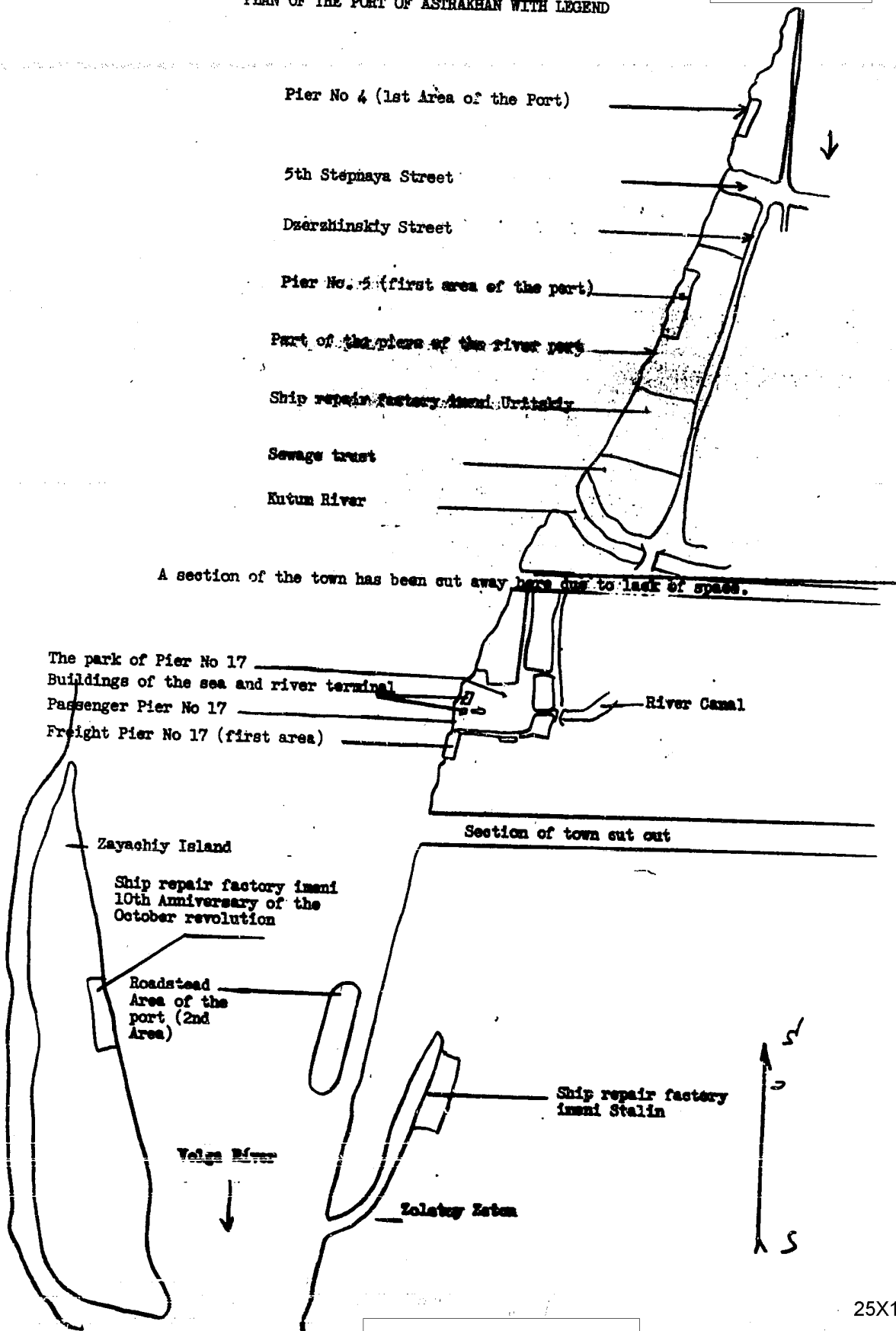
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ENCLOSURE (A)

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PLAN OF THE PORT OF ASTRAKHAN WITH LEGEND



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