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REPORTS EXPANSION OF USSR RAILROADS, ROADS

[An asterisk after locations indicates that the place could not be identified and the German spelling was retained.]

Not the least cause of the first defeats of the Soviet Union in the war with Germany was to be found in an insufficient railroad network. On the other side, the German advance in the Soviet Union collapsed largely because of the difficulties of maintaining any regular German supply on the Russian railroads. The question of gauge was unimportant. The Germans effected the conversion from Russian wide gauge to European standard gauge very quickly, and during the German retreat the old gauge was likewise restored by the Russian in a short time.

During muddy periods Russian roads are little or no substitute for missing railroad lines. During World War II this condition constituted not only a disadvantage for the Germans, but it also hindered Soviet defense considerably. A good roadnet favors the aggressor, but the Soviet roadnet proved to be so poor that it failed to be an advantage even for the Soviets.

Immediately after the expulsion of the German troops the Soviet Union resolved not only to reconstruct its railroad and roadnet, but to expand it and to render it efficient for future warfare. More emphasis was placed on the construction of new and the strengthening of old railroad lines than on road construction, obviously because railroad construction is faster and cheaper on the Russian plains than road construction.

The most important railroad lines are being expanded to four tracks. The Moscow-Leningrad railroad line is thus being expanded to four tracks over a period of 6 years, with German and US construction machinery being used preponderantly. One hundred ninety kilometers of this line were completed in 1947; at the end of 1948 this figure was said to have reached 320 kilometers.

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The Koslov*-Saratov railroad line has been quadruple-tracked since 1946. The Stavropol' [station Voroshilovsk]-Kavkazskaya-Krasnodar railroad line in the North Caucasus has also been expanded from two to four tracks. Similar expansions are also in progress in southern and southwestern Russia. The Kiev-L'vov railroad line has three tracks, two of which are wide gauge and one European standard gauge.

All war-damaged railroad lines have been repaired and many of these have been expanded from single track to double track. Some examples are the Rostov-Voronezh (with change of route) line, the Stalingrad-Saratov-Moscow (at present being further expanded to four tracks) line, the Serdobsk (44 E, 52 N)-Rtishchevo-Kirsanov-Tambov line, the Tbilisi-Baku line, the Tambov-Koslov* line, all lines around Pskov, the Poltava-Kiev, the railroad bridge across the Volga River at Yaroslavl', the Kirovabad (46 E, 41 N)-Shusha line, the Kharkov-Dnepropetrovsk line, etc.

Besides reconstruction of damaged lines and multiple-track expansion of existing ones, a very large number of new railroad lines has been constructed. These new construction projects progressed most rapidly between 1946 and 1948, due mainly to the presence of German prisoners of war, among whom were many railroad engineers.

The normal expansion of the railroad net through new construction will also be quite considerable during the following years, as illustrated by the annual increase of 7,000 kilometers of new railroad lines in Siberia and Turkestan alone.

Several examples may serve to explain this phase: an entirely new connecting railroad net, for freight traffic exclusively, has been created in and around Kiev (e.g., Kiev-Radomyshl', Kiev-Dymer, Kiev-Tripol'yc). A new railroad net was also constructed north of the Caucasus, where large oil fields are to be exploited (e.g., the new double-track line from Ust'-Labinskaya to Maykop, the Mozdok-Makhach line, the Mozdok-Moskala* line, the Mineral'nyye Vody-Pyatigorsk line, and the Medveschinsk*-Terizhbejskaya line). In this region, however, various old railroad installations are quite obsolete and the expansion may be expected to take some time.

Many new railroad projects are in progress in the Donets Basin (e.g., the Konstantinovka project, where numerous double-track lines have been constructed), eastern Galicia (L'vov), and around Molotov. The latter now has a population of 300,000 and possesses marshalling yard for the Siberian railroad. This yard is the largest marshalling yard in the USSR. Much new railroad construction (not yet been noted on any map) results from the expansion of large Siberian industrial centers such as Basgaja* (Central Asia), Chelyabinsk, Troitsk (280 kilometers south of Chelyabinsk), Alapayevsk (62 E, 58 N), Karaganda (200 kilometers south of Omsk), Kuznetsk, and Stalinsk.

Among the other more important railroad lines which were completed between 1946 and 1948 and which either connect large industrial areas or are of strategic importance, the following may be mentioned: Lugansk-Dnepropetrovsk, Roven'ki-Perwoso* (Perwoswanowka*), and Krjepkaja*-Novocherkassk in the Donets Basin, Bobruysk-Mozyr', Kurgan-Shadrinsk (as feeder line to the Trans Siberian Railroad), Schucha*-Nukha (Transcaucasus, single track), Mezen'-Pinega-Pineschgaja* (Arctic Ocean), Orsk-Uralursprung* (ore region), Orsk-Irendyk* (ore region), Balashov (43 E, 52 N)-Balanda-Atkarsk (45 E, 52 N), Ronotop-Kremenchug (double track, under construction), Mariupol'-Stalino-Fokschani* (double track), Chelyabinsk-Skalnow* (West Siberia), Sary Tschegansk* (northern shore of Lake Aral)-Akdschulpas*-Sapak*, Orenburg-Akdschulpas*-Tashkent, Berezniki-Vyatka (Urals, with six new freight lines), Berdichev (near Zhitomir)-Starokonstantinov, Podol'sk-Borovsk (Western Ukraine), Pskov-Sokolniki*, Vyatka-Kazan' (with connections to the Siberian railroad), Bugul'ma

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(on the Kama River)-Chistopol', Yaroslavl'-Mologa* (single track), Izhevsk-Northern Ural (new freight line), Nikolayev-Kherson (double track), Kuybyshev-Mamadysh, etc.

There are rumors about railroads which have been newly constructed or are under construction in the Arctic regions and in northern Siberia, but it is not possible to give exact data. The new large industrial towns in those regions, some with a population of over 100,000, are frequently kept cut off from the rest of the world and bear only numerical designations.

It is interesting to note that the Soviet railroads are being increasingly electrified. Thus, the entire stretch from Bakal, near Chelyabinsk, to Moscow has already been electrified. The Moscow-Petrozavodsk double-track line has likewise been electrified. Further railroad electrification is planned, particularly in the Asiatic regions between Novosibirsk and Irkutsk. However, lack of electric locomotives is hindering these plans.

In spite of extensive railroad construction projects, the USSR will for a long time remain one of the countries least opened up by railroads. At present emphasis is placed on greater capacity of the existing important lines. The roadbed is also being renewed. Of interest is the construction of an entirely subterranean railroad line, the Moscow-Tula-Kharkov-Odessa line. Sixty thousand forced laborers and prisoners of war were working on the Tula-Odessa sector in 1947. Austrian prisoners of war, who worked there and have returned since, were informed in lectures about "democratic education" that in the future atom war such railroads would be invulnerable. The railroads would, however, remain the most important medium of mass transportation.

Besides these railroad projects, measures for improvement of the most important road connections are noteworthy. These projects progress considerably slower because expensive foundations are used on USSR roads, therefore making road building more difficult and more expensive than railroad construction. The USSR roadbed is still very poor everywhere. Almost all bridges east of the Urals are wooden. However, several large highways on the order of the French Routes Nationales and the German Autobahnen have been constructed or are under construction, including the not-yet-completed Sverdlovsk-Molotov highway across the Urals, which is being built by political prisoners; the modern, 14-meter-wide Kiev-Kharkov-Poltava concrete road, of which 130 kilometers have been completed; the 5-meter-wide Moscow-Kirovo (Ural) asphalt road, which will be continued to Basgaja* (Central Asia); the Ivanovo-Moscow highway, with two separate concrete lanes; the Bendery-Tiraspol' (Dnestr highway; the Gandzha-Baku-Kirovabad [sic. Gandzha is former name of Kirovabad] highway (asphalted, bridge over Kura River for 60-ton load); the Kiev-Zhitomir highway (two concrete lanes, each 5 meters wide); the Moscow-Tzhev highway (reconstructed); the Kirsanov-Tambov-Koslow* highway (under construction); the Mogilev-Bykhov highway (5 meters wide, asphalted); the Mogilev-Minsk and Mogilev-Vil'nyus highways (planned; river bridge to Chauzy with a 30-ton load capacity completed); the Kazan'-Tzhevsk highway (part of the new 14-meter wide dual highway from Moscow to Sverdlovsk, which was begun in May 1945 by German highway engineers); the Leningrad-Riga road (narrow, stone road), the Rostov-Kislovodsk highway (8 meters wide); the Orel-Moscow highway (route changed; 7 meters wide); the Podol'sk-Moscow highway (expanded to 10 meters width); the Uglich-Rybinsk road (12-meters-wide stone road; completed in 1946); the Odessa-Tiraspol' highway (modern highway); the Odessa-Ovidiopol' highway (parallel to a new railroad line), the Mogilev-Zhlobin highway (grading begun), the Chistopol'-Kazan' highway (with a 40-ton bridge across the Kama River), etc.

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Many new construction projects will only gradually become known. The above data has been compiled from thousands of statements of returned Austrian and German prisoners of war and of numerous deserted Russian soldiers from the occupation armies in Germany and Austria. This data has been carefully checked and verified.

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