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SUBJECT Details on the Turkmenski Canal

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1. [redacted] canal

route along the prehistoric course of the Amu Darya River to the Caspian Sea. This old course runs in a southwesterly direction from the present river. At that time, the project was named the Kara-Kumski (Black Sands) Canal. During the next ten or fifteen years, the idea was expanded into a project for a great canal system through the USSR's Central Asian Republics (Turkmen, Uzbek, and Tadzhik), which would complete the water transportation route from Moscow to the borders of India. The overall project came to be called the Turkmenski Canal.

Articles

and books appeared on the new canal, which reported preparations for its construction occurred in 1949. Actual work began in 1950.

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2. [redacted]

3. The Turkmenski Canal is one of the main construction projects at present in the USSR. In size, it is as large as the Stalin White Sea-Baltic Canal. From the viewpoint of earthworks required, it will be even larger. Workers (both free and slave) from all over the USSR will be used. Following standard Soviet practise, concentration camps will probably be set up along the route to provide slave labor. Technicians from all over the country will be utilized to supervise the work. [redacted] it will take a minimum of 10 years to complete the canal, providing that from 200,000 to 300,000 laborers are used. [redacted] the climate in the area, and as a result of its severity many workers will die on the project. There are no rains from May to mid-September. Temperature in the sun reaches 76° Centigrade, while in the shade it goes up to 46° Centigrade. The human body dries out from the heat and the sand is too hot to touch. In winter, the region is cold -- temperatures go down to -15° or -20° Centigrade -- and windy.

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4. The Turkmenski Canal will begin at Krasnovodski Zaliv, run in a single channel built for both transport and irrigation in an easterly direction to the ancient junction of the now dry Uzboi and Unguz Rivers. The canal will divide at this location. One branch will run north along the dry Uzboi River to Kunya Urgench, near the Amu Darya River, which flows into the Aral Sea. This branch will be primarily an irrigation canal, although it will also be used for transport. The southern branch will roughly follow the old course of the dry Unguz River to Chardzhui on the Amu Darya River. That part of the canal, then, which runs from the Caspian to Chardzhui and beyond, will take vessels up to three meters displacement as far, at least, as 40 kilometers south of Chardzhui.
5. The Amu Darya River at Chardzhui passes through sands, is shallow and shifting, although it is from one to 1½ kilometers wide at this point. The river there takes only vessels of 50 to 75 centimeter displacement. The canal, therefore, will have to be built parallel to the river, about 20 to 25 kilometers south of it. The canal will be used for both irrigation and transportation and will run southeast to Kelif on the Afghanistan border. This stretch on the river was called Kelifski Zbros (rapids). A canal branch will extend from the Amu Darya to Bukhara, thereby making the Zaravshan River suitable for transport.
6. Running due west from Kelif is an old dry river route to Merv. The Murgab River flows north from Afghanistan to Merv, where it ends in the desert. A branch of the new canal system will connect Kelif with the Murgab River at Merv. The canal will end at Kelif, where the desert, in general, stops. The Amu Darya thereafter assumes the character of a mountain river, especially after Termez.
7. It is planned to build four dams at Termez in order to provide electricity and to regulate the flow of the river. The dams are expected to provide a total of approximately 150,000 KW. The dams will also serve to improve the transport possibilities of the Amu Darya. The river's name, incidentally, changes to Pyandzh, and it begins in the Pamir Plateau, which has an average elevation of about 3500 meters. The river's transport potentialities end about 100 kilometers east of Stalinabad.
8. The priority of construction will be to build first the stretch from Krasnovodski Zaliv to Kunya Urgench, as it will, by means of irrigation, greatly increase the cotton crop in that area. The second step will be to construct the branch southerly beyond the junction of the dry Uzboi and Unguz Rivers. Priority will also be given to the link between Kelif and Merv, as this is a very good cotton region.
9. There were three main reasons for building the Turkmenski Canal:
 - a) Economic -- The irrigation benefits derived from the canal will double the cotton production of the Soviet Central Asian Republics. In 1943, [redacted] the Turkmen Uzbek, and Tadzhik SSRs produced 3,000,000 tons of 50X1-HUM raw cotton yearly. This will permit the USSR to better meet the great demand for textiles of its civilian economy, its armed forces, and its satellite countries. It may also be able to throw large quantities of cotton on the world market;
 - b) Transportation -- The canal network will improve the facilities available for moving cotton. The few railroads in that area were "overloaded" with cotton. The Central Asian transportation network would be improved in general and the canal route would be safer, in event of hostilities, than the railroad bordering Iran; and
 - c) Political Prestige -- The reputation of the USSR would be enhanced in such strategic countries as Afghanistan, India, and China, by its ability to carry out a construction project of such scope.

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