

SECURITY INFORMATION

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SUBJECT Construction Plans for the USSR Merchant Fleet

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- At present the Soviets have a mercantile fleet of around three million gross register tons, which is to be raised to 4,250,000 gross register tons by the end of 1950, according to the terms of the Five-Year Plan. All the east German shipyards are employed at full capacity by Derutra for this construction project. The Soviet shipyards are working almost exclusively for the Soviet Navy; therefore, the Soviets have given contracts for mercantile fleet construction to their satellite countries.
- Around 400,000 gross register tons of the mercantile fleet are to be equipped with light armour plates eight to ten centimeters (presumably, thick), and these ships are to be stationed primarily in the Baltic.
- The Leningrad shipyards have two large battleships* under construction, whose keels were laid only a year ago. These ships are to be 35,000 tons apiece. [REDACTED] about the artillery equipment or the eventual armour. The Soviets are to christen these ships as passenger ships for the benefit of the outside world. In reality they are to be revolutionary battleships made according to German plans.
- The high point of Soviet interests, which formerly lay in the Baltic and in the Black Sea, has been transferred to the Arctic Ocean and the Far East since Christmas 1949. The fact is confirmed by the transfer of all the Soviet destroyers and cruisers into this area (sic). This regrouping of naval forces continues, and the operation is facilitated by the relatively mild weather.
- There are two new shipyards at Vladivostok (43-08N, 131-54E) and Komsomolsk (50-35N, 137-02E).
- The Soviet Army (Navy ?) has recently been assigned the commission of getting 1000 (sic) submarines by the end of 1950.

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7. The former German steamers Der Deutsche (now the Asia) and the Oceana (now the Sibir) have already been transformed into troop transports and for several weeks have been lying at anchor in Vladivostok, their home port.
8. The Soviets received from the Germans a total of 287 ships with a total gross register tonnage of 700,000. Sweden formerly delivered 50 small fishing vessels to the Soviets (sic).
9. Finland has to deliver 120 ships by the end of 1950. All Finnish shipyards are working at full speed for the Soviets. All told, the Finns are to build around 600 ships for the Soviets.
10. The Soviets are to place at the disposal of the Chinese around one million tons (sic) of commercial shipping in 1950. Formerly, the Soviets gave the Chinese around 300,000 tons of commercial shipping.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ COMMENT:

* ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ as of May 1949, the USSR merchant fleet (including all vessels over 1000 gross registered tons) consisted of 522 vessels with an aggregate of 1,846,887 gross tons and a total dead-weight tonnage of 2,526,600. This includes 83 U S loaned vessels not yet returned and 155 vessels received as reparations or seizures from Estonia, Latvia, Finland, and Germany.

** Possibly referring to the reported construction of the 35,000 ton Sovetakaya Belorussia and the Strana Sovetov.

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