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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY USSR

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Former Soviet Army Sergeant

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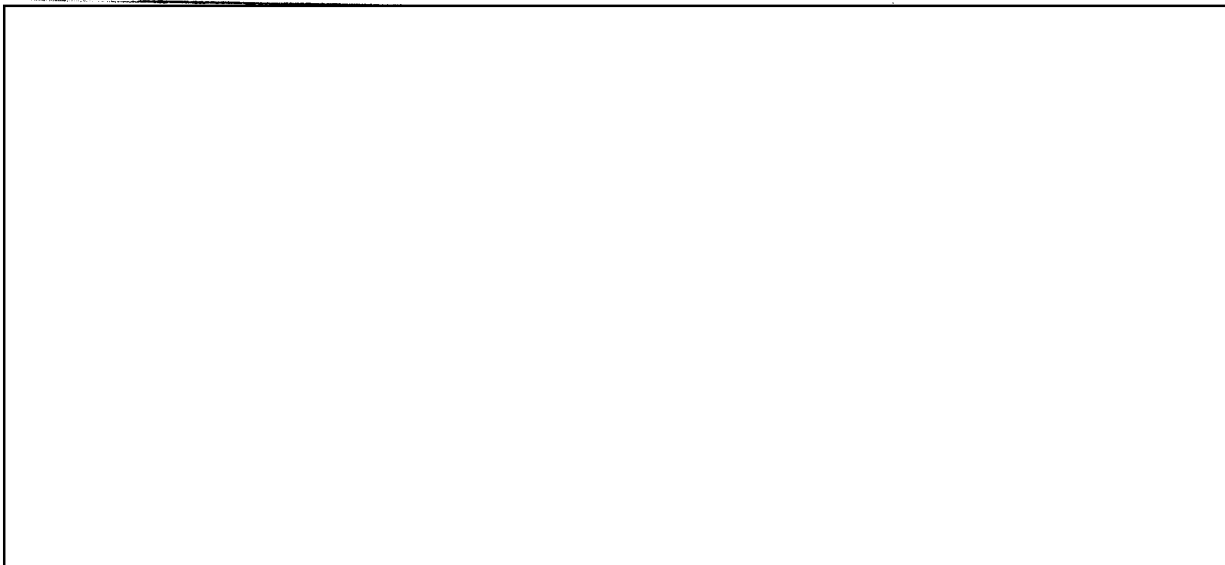
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SUPPLEMENT TO REPORT NO. 25X1X



Soviet Army Units in the Soviet Far East

- 33 Topographic Detachment: In the fall of 1940 this unit, of approximately battalion strength, was stationed in Volochaevsk [Volochaevka, 134-42, 48-35]. The unit operated out of the city, making topographic surveys of the area and preparing relief maps in some detail. The purpose of the surveys, often repeated for particular areas at periodic intervals, was to establish artillery landmarks.
- 12 Automobile Regiment: In March 1942 the personnel complement of this regiment [location unstated] was much larger than that of the normal Soviet Army regiment. There were ten battalions, rather than the usual three or four, in this regiment.
- 203 Independent Tank Brigade: In early May 1942 the headquarters of this unit, which had been recently formed, was located about sixty kilometers south of Khabarovsk. For a time, the unit was billeted under severe field conditions; later, it was transferred to permanent barracks. The initial period of hardship was a testing period, during which the most severe critics and persistent complainers were removed from the unit as potentially disloyal elements. The brigade was well equipped with British and "KV" tanks. It contained a high percentage of Communist Party and Komsomol personnel, which fact indicated that the brigade was intended eventually to become an NKVD unit.
- 204 Independent Tank Brigade: At the same time as the 203 was being established, the 204 Independent Tank Brigade was being formed at Bira [133-14, 48-10], in Birobidzhan.

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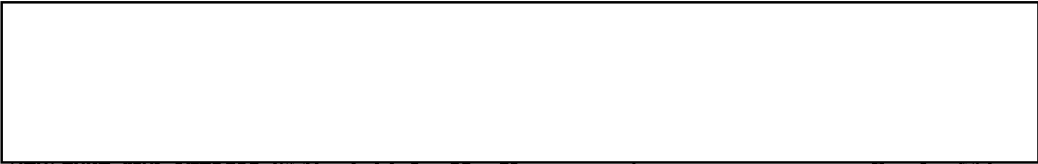
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5. Numbering of Soviet Units: Units of the Soviet Army were not numbered serially, but the numbers were assigned at random and frequently changed for security reasons.

Soviet Labor Camps in the Soviet Far East

6. The total population of all labor camps in the USSR in 1942 was approximately 14,000,000. At least seventy per cent of the population of the USSR at one time or another had been incarcerated in the camps. This condition was considered normal; for example, one of the standard questions asked of job applicants was "Under which article did you serve your hard labor?" The majority of relatives and friends had served terms ranging from three months to three years. 25X1X
7. Economic, rather than political, considerations were primarily responsible for the labor camp system. When a new project was announced, mass arrests might take place under artificially created charges. An example of a sentence to a labor camp on trumped-up charges for reasons of expediency was the case of an ex-staff sergeant of engineers who had been working on the construction of a river tunnel connecting the Ussuri and Amur Railways. The work was treacherous, and there were many casualties caused by the changes in air pressure, which was kept high in the tunnel. On completion of the project, the sergeant, whose personal work involved the notification of next of kin, was sentenced to eight years in the labor camps, apparently for no other reason than that he was an undesirable witness to the miserable working conditions of his unit. 25X1X
8. 
 sentence was imposed under Article 58, Clause 10 of the military criminal code, which covered "enemies of the people," conspirators against the state, and agents of foreign powers. In addition to receiving severe treatment in the labor camps and being automatically exempted from "privileged" technical jobs, prisoners sentenced under this article had their passports stamped with the letters "DK," which signified the permanent forfeiture of certain benefits.
9. The Soviet penal code considered persons from the age of twelve onward responsible for their actions; therefore, the age range in the labor camps was great. Prisoners were divided into two groups: ordinary criminals ("bytoviki") and political prisoners, with the first group receiving more lenient treatment. A non-political murderer might draw a sentence of as little as five years. Furthermore, ordinary criminals received preferential work assignments in the camps and were eligible for amnesties, from which political prisoners were exempted. Intellectuals received the hardest treatment and were bullied both by the guards and by the criminal prisoners.
10. Work output of the prisoners was carefully graded according to established "normal" standards, and only prisoners meeting those standards were granted the full food ration. Prisoners failing to meet the standard were dropped to a lower group with a smaller ration, and this change resulted in increased weakness and eventual death unless they were fortunate enough to be sent to special camps for recuperation.
11. The Khabarovsk #5 Camp furnished manual labor for the power plant at Khabarovsk. In 1942 it contained about five hundred prisoners and had a guard complement of three platoons, consisting of one officer and thirty-two men per platoon.
12. The usual ratio of guards to prisoners in inhabited areas or near the border was one to five. The number of guards decreased rapidly in proportion to the distance from populated zones and border areas.

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13. There were said to be many labor camps in the Yakutsk Province [? Yakut A.S.S.R.], some sixty of which were devoted exclusively to gold mining. Camps in the Indigirka [River, 142-06, 63-16] region contained large numbers of Chinese, who were former residents of the Maritime and Amur Provinces, and there were a few Chinese in the other camps. All had been incarcerated in 1937 and all were sentenced under the same article--"treason to the state." This sentence created a legal puzzle for the prisoners: which state had they betrayed?
14. At approximately the same time as the segregation of the Chinese in the Maritime Province, Koreans living there were resettled in Kazakhstan.

Economic Conditions in the Soviet Far East

15. For the bulk of the population of the Soviet Far East, living conditions improved gradually from an all-time low in the early 1920's. A peak in relative prosperity was reached in 1936, at which time all rationing and other restrictions were removed and the stores were amply supplied with consumer commodities. However, unrestricted trade was of brief duration, and rationing was soon reinstated. The stores of goods accumulated during unrestricted buying were confiscated by the government, and the larger hoarders were charged with speculation.
16. The peasants of the Soviet Far East had been fully collectivized, and private holdings were permitted only within the framework of the collective farms (kolkhozii). An individual collective farmer was permitted to have a small private plot, a cow and a few hens, and the only part of this private property which actually assured a minimum living was the ground itself, since it, if carefully cultivated, would yield some produce for home consumption and for sale on the open market. However, the farmer was required to pay the State Tractor Station for the use of tractors, and this payment usually was made in kind. Furthermore, the farmer was taxed on the cow and chickens he possessed, at the rate of three hundred liters of milk, thirty-six kilograms of meat, and one hide a year per cow, and thirty eggs per chicken with no exemption for young hens or roosters. These assessments obviously necessitated recourse to the black market in order to meet the taxes.
17. The annual rate of taxation on grain was determined each spring by a committee from the nearest city. The chairman of the collective farm took the members of the committee to a specimen field of good, of medium, and of poor productivity. The number of stalks of grain per given area in each category was counted, and the rate of taxation and compulsory sale was simply based on this figure.
18. If the chairman of the collective farm was a farmer himself [and not a Party member], he was careful never to exhibit the best examples, with the result that the estimate was below, rather than above, the actual anticipated yield. However, when a Party member was made chairman of the farm the results were disastrous for the individual farmers. A faithful Party member, mindful of the rewards for his own efficiency, saw to it that the estimate was made as high as possible, leaving little if any grain for the individual farmer.
19. Other potential enemies of the collective farmers were the secretary of the kolkhoz Party organization and the various non-member specialists (economic planners, agronomists, tractor drivers, etc.) brought in to assist in the management of the kolkhoz. The work of these specialists was estimated on the basis of the fictitious "work-day," and the liberal estimate greatly exceeded that of the ordinary farmer.
20. The difficult living conditions of the city dweller were chiefly caused by insufficient remuneration for work, heavy taxation, and lack of freedom within a job or of freedom to change jobs. The possibilities of being granted a request to change jobs were slight, and being repeatedly late to work, absent without permission, or below the established minimum in production made the worker liable to imprisonment in a labor camp.

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21. The one profession in the Soviet Far East which retained some elements of free enterprise was gold mining. There were a few families of private gold miners, whose experience was utilized by the government by allowing them to enter into contracts with the government. Illegal mining was prevented by prohibiting the surrender of raw gold in return for a gold certificate, redeemable in commodities, an arrangement which might be used for turning in finished gold products. However, the regulation was often evaded by melting raw gold into rude finished forms.

Minority Groups in the USSR

22. The Russian people, in particular the Great Russians, were more victimized by the Soviet system than were the other national minorities. In particular, the proportion of Yakuts, Buryats, etc., in the labor camps was quite small, even considering the respective ratios of their population.
23. There was great hatred among people of these minority groups toward the Soviet system and a tendency to identify the system with the Russian people. There was also considerable anti-Semitism both among minority groups and the Russian people themselves, and many Jews were compelled to conceal their origin and to adopt Russian names.

Public Opinion and Propaganda in the USSR

24. Stalin was neither loved nor hated, but was considered merely a puppet of the Communist Party. Lenin, on the other hand, was still much respected, and his death was considered a great blow. Trotsky, despite his great early popularity, was completely forgotten.
25. Propaganda alone would not be effective in altering the belief of the people in the Soviet system, because of their ignorance of the outside world, their general feeling that conditions abroad were worse than in the USSR, and the constant incitement to xenophobia. In discussing his own reaction to war propaganda, source said, "We realized that under the Soviet system we had very little, but this little we were prepared to defend to the last. We really believed that there was a capitalist conspiracy against our country."

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