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# REPORTS OF CURRENT SOVIET MILITARY ACTIVITY IN CHINA

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## REPORTS OF CURRENT SOVIET MILITARY ACTIVITY IN CHINA

### SUMMARY

It seems reasonable to infer from reports available, particularly from those received since 1 January 1950, that the USSR is now giving open military advice and some material assistance to the Chinese Communists. The full extent of Soviet military activity in China cannot be determined at this time.

In particular, the USSR is believed to be: (1) helping the Chinese Communists, both with advice and material aid, to build a small tactical air force which will appear in the

spring of 1950; and (2) providing advisory and technical as well as material assistance in limited categories to ground and naval forces. It is believed that such aid will be continued to the extent of assisting the Chinese Communists in the "liberation" of Hainan, Taiwan, and Tibet.

The USSR may also, by virtue of secret agreements, utilize certain air and naval base rights in China in addition to those at Port Arthur-Dairen.

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Note: The intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, Army, Navy, and the Air Force have concurred in this report. It contains information available to CIA as of 20 March 1950. Developments subsequent to 20 March tend to confirm the general conclusions of this estimate.

## REPORTS OF CURRENT SOVIET MILITARY ACTIVITY IN CHINA

Reports of substantial Soviet military aid to the Chinese Communists received before the latter part of 1949 were largely unconfirmed and indicated little beyond the probability that any sort of Soviet support was extremely cautious. Reports since that time, taken separately, are generally of low credibility. However, they have increased considerably in volume, number, variety, and variety of source, tend to confirm each other in particular details, and collectively indicate that the Soviets are now giving open advice and material assistance. Such a development is regarded as a logical consequence of Soviet recognition of the "People's Republic of China" in October 1949 and the signing of the Sino-Soviet treaty in February 1950.

## Nature of the Reports.

While the volume of reports indicating widespread Soviet military activity in China has increased since 1 January 1950, most of them, individually, do not carry a high degree of credibility. Most are obviously composed of a mixture of information and misinformation; some are inspired by propaganda motives; others are sheer rumor or suspect as deliberate "plants." Many contain gross exaggerations. Because US field agencies cannot investigate them, it has been impossible to make a sound factual evaluation of any given report except in the case of those few where US observers were eye-witnesses. It is still notable, however, not only that many more reports have come in and that they tend to be concentrated on plausible Soviet activity but also that they come from non-Nationalist as well as Nationalist sources.

Reports of Soviet military assistance to the Chinese Communists must, in any case, be viewed against a background of growing general Soviet activity in China (Appendix B). There is no question whatever of Soviet aid in the form of advisers and technicians in

such primarily civilian activities as reconstruction of damaged facilities, the rehabilitation of industry, the preservation of health, and in many other fields, some of which are on the borderline between purely civilian and quasi-military. It is thus always possible that activity reported as military may actually be civilian.

## Meaning of the Reports.

In very general terms, the reports indicate that Soviet technicians and advisers are placed in all branches of the Chinese Communist armed forces but that Soviet personnel have not directly participated in combat operations.\*

It is believed that the main Soviet emphasis is on the Chinese Communist Air Force. Reports indicate that an undetermined number of Soviet air advisers and technicians are assisting in the rehabilitation of airfields near major Chinese cities, and it is believed probable that the USSR is also assisting in the training and equipping of a small tactical air force. This organization will probably make its appearance in operation in the spring of 1950 and will consist principally of fighter aircraft, partly made up of planes captured from the Nationalists, and partly supplied from Soviet aircraft surpluses available in the Port Arthur Naval Base area and elsewhere in the Far East. While obsolete by present-day US and Soviet standards, these aircraft are believed to be as modern as those employed by the Nationalists. Such a force would presumably be used, in the first instance, in the defense of Shanghai where it should have considerable success against hitherto unopposed Nationalist raiders. The next target should be the blockade of Shanghai, which might be considerably disrupted by air activity. Subsequently, Chinese Communist air operations

\* A few isolated instances, involving Russian individuals, have been reported, but confirmation is lacking.

logically would be expanded to cover Taiwan and South China areas. It is not believed that Soviet personnel will participate directly in combat.

It is expected, in addition, that Soviet advisory and technical assistance will continue to be provided for ground and naval activities and that material assistance to the ground forces in limited categories will also be continued. Such Soviet aid, in the short term, will continue to the extent of assisting the Chinese Communists in the "liberation" of Hainan, Taiwan, and Tibet.

Over and above assistance to the Chinese Communists, it is possible that the USSR, by virtue of secret agreements, will: (1) employ certain Chinese Communist air bases in its own interest for surveillance missions and in the western Pacific within the next few months and will prepare such bases for future Soviet operations in the event of war; and (2) acquire special rights for naval bases at Tsingtao and other Chinese ports, supplementary to its present position at Dairen and Port Arthur.

## APPENDIX A

RECENTLY REPORTED INSTANCES OF SOVIET MILITARY ACTIVITY IN CHINA  
(BY AREA)

## Manchuria.

Aside from activity directly related to the legal Soviet occupation of the Port Arthur-Dairen area, Soviet military activity in Manchuria has been reported intermittently since 1945. A number of recent reports from various sources indicate that the USSR is providing the Chinese Communist forces with some logistical support and with technical and advisory personnel. Moreover, this activity is expanding, and becoming more evident.

Soviet air assistance to the Chinese Communists in Manchuria appears to be considerable. Typical reports of such activity include: (1) the presence of Soviet instructors in Chinese Communist aviation schools at Chiamussu and Dairen; (2) the recent arrival of upwards of 200 Soviet aircraft in Manchuria for use of the Chinese Communist Air Force; and (3) the presence of 100 Soviet aircraft including bombers, YAK 9's and YAK 15's of which some are to be turned over to the Chinese Communist Air Force. Although generally of low individual evaluation, these reports indicate a probability of considerable Soviet military air activity in Manchuria.

There are also reports indicating Soviet assistance in the form of training and material assistance to the Chinese Communists in the development of a navy. However, reports that the USSR has turned over destroyers to the Chinese Communists are not believed to be true.

Reports of Soviet ground forces in Manchuria (in some cases as many as 300,000 have been reported) are generally unconfirmed and of doubtful reliability. There is no reliable evidence of Soviet troops in Manchuria, other than those stationed in the Port Arthur Naval Base area.

## North China.

A considerable volume of reports points to rather widespread Soviet military activity in North China as well as effective Soviet penetration of both the high command and the tactical units of the Chinese Communist forces. Continuing reports of Soviet air activity in and around Peiping and Tientsin, as well as the reliably reported presence of some Soviet military aircraft, technicians, and fliers at North China fields, indicate the probable presence of a small group of Soviet air personnel and equipment in Peiping and Tientsin. Reports of large shipments of Soviet materiel, aviation gasoline, and spare parts passing south through Tientsin, although generally considered to be exaggerated, indicate that a limited amount of Soviet military equipment is arriving in North China.

Of possible, though unknown, credibility is a report that twenty Soviet intelligence specialists have been assigned to the Department of Public Security—the internal security organ of the Peiping regime, believed to be semi-military.

## East China.

By far the largest volume of reports regarding Soviet military activity in China since the end of 1949 deal with East China. The large number of dispatches received since January 1950 concerning Soviet military activity indicate considerable Soviet penetration of East China. During February and March as many as 10,000 Soviet military personnel (the majority being connected with the air force) and large shipments of materiel were reported in Tsinan, Tsingtao, Nanking, Shanghai, Wusih, Hangchow, Ningpo, and elsewhere in Che-

kiang Province adjacent to the Chou Shan Islands. In view of possible duplication, exaggeration, and other inaccuracies, a more realistic estimate of the number of Soviet military personnel involved in East China is probably much nearer one thousand.

Reports tending to confirm the presence or expected arrival of Soviet military personnel and materiel related to aviation and air defenses in East China are: (1) feverish requisitioning of foreign houses in the Hungjao sector of Shanghai reportedly for Soviet Air Force personnel; (2) reconditioning of barracks for Soviet "guests" at Hangchow, Yushan, and Chuhsien; (3) the presence of Soviet advisers with newly arrived anti-aircraft units in Shanghai, Nanking, Ningpo, and along the Chekiang coast; (4) construction and other activity at the major airfields in Shanghai, Nanking, Tsinan, Tsingtao, Hangchow, and Chuhsien; (5) the arrival of thirty Soviet engineers in Shanghai to establish a radar warning net in East and South China; and (6) the continued arrival since mid-February at Shanghai's Tachang airfield of crated planes, spare parts, and aviation gasoline. Confirmation of some aspects of the reported Soviet activity at Shanghai comes from the US Naval Attaché who has: (1) personally observed two foreign civilians attending an inoperative Soviet radar unit at Hungjao airfield; (2) reported an area near that airfield to be occupied by Soviet advisers; and (3)

positively identified an anti-aircraft shell fragment as being of Soviet manufacture. Two doubtful reports indicate the arrival of several YAK aircraft with Soviet-trained Chinese Communist pilots at Tsinan.

Possible Soviet assistance to other branches of the Chinese Communist forces is indicated by reports that: (1) Soviet advisers and instructors have made inspection trips and given amphibious training and operational advice to elements of the People's Liberation Army in Chekiang Province; and (2) some 200 Soviet advisers have assisted the Third Field Army of the People's Liberation Army in the construction of wooden landing craft. Possible Soviet naval assistance or encroachment is indicated by reports of a visit to Shanghai by a Soviet admiral.

Although nearly all of the foregoing reports are of low evaluation *per se*, the large volume from diversified sources indicates considerable Soviet military air activity in East China, and lesser Soviet ground and naval activity.

#### South China and Other Areas.

Although there are a few reports of Soviet military activity in South and northwest China, they are generally of low credibility. Reports of Soviet military activity in Sinkiang, Kansu, Shensi, and Kwangtung, are believed to be either based on unfounded Chinese rumors or to be related to Soviet civil aviation.



## APPENDIX B

## REPORTS OF SOVIET ACTIVITY OF A GENERAL OR NON-MILITARY NATURE

Because some of the reports of Soviet military activity in China may, in fact, be based on the growing influx of non-military advisers and technicians, there is presented here a brief survey of general and non-military Soviet activities in China. While Soviet advisory and technical personnel are reported in many of the larger cities in China and probably now total over 5,000 in all categories, more than half are believed to be engaged in primarily non-military activities.

There appears to be substantial employment of Soviet advisory and technical personnel in non-military categories, such as civil administration, police, railroad restoration and operation, civil aviation, factories, shipyards, power plants, iron and steel works, mining, and other enterprises. Soviet assistance through advisers and technicians appears to have been most liberally provided in Manchuria and North China. This activity, currently increasing and becoming more evident, now appears to be extending to East China and perhaps to other areas.

**Manchuria.**

Leaving aside consideration of Soviet personnel connected with the Port Arthur Naval Base, there are probably hundreds of Soviet advisers, several thousand railroad guards, and operating and administrative personnel elsewhere in Manchuria and Dairen. Reports of Soviet technicians sent from the USSR to reconstruct and improve the operation of Manchurian industries have cited:

(1) Soviet operation of large training schools in the Dairen area for the repair and operation of railroads and the training of locomotive engineers; Soviet bridge repair experts are also reported.

(2) Soviet advisers with the iron and steel industry at Anshan, engaged in speeding restoration of steel production.

(3) Soviet advisers—their number unknown—with the principal electric power plants in Manchuria. It seems likely that Soviet advice is needed in order to complete the Hsiao-fengmen hydroelectric project. Soviet aid in connection with the Harbin power plant is indicated in a report that the Soviet adviser to the Harbin power plant was recently reported to be negotiating in Shanghai for equipment unobtainable from the USSR.

(4) The assistance, acknowledged by the Chinese press, of Soviet forestry experts, plague-fighting teams, and technical experts attached to various industries in the Dairen area; e.g., electrical, glass, shipbuilding. Other sources report Soviet chemical engineers in Mukden; this is plausible in view of the reported resumption of oil production from the Fushun oil-shale deposits.

While Soviet advice has been provided in numerous economic fields, practical assistance has probably been concentrated on the railroads and on the iron and steel industry.

**North China.**

In North China as in Manchuria, Soviet advice and assistance in the economic field is concentrated in communications and heavy industry. A team of eight Soviet technicians has been attached to the Taiyuan iron and steel works since last October, and, according to Chinese Communist propaganda, has taught the Chinese to double steel production there. It is reported that Soviet engineers are responsible for the excellent job of repairing railroad bridges in North China. Numerous railroad advisers have appeared in Peiping and elsewhere, possibly stimulating reports of Soviet control over the Ministry of Communications. Soviet technicians are reported by several sources, including the Peiping press and radio, to be advising in many

other fields of economic activity in North China, such as the radio station at Tung-hsien, the film industry, the "city planning" of Peiping and Tientsin, the Ministry of Health, agriculture, the postal system, and the textile industry. Reconstruction materials of Soviet origin have apparently been sent to North China and have consisted almost entirely of motor vehicles and railroad equipment. Of 50,000 tons of oil products (kerosene, and motor and aviation gasoline) delivered to Dairen by tanker in the summer of 1949, the bulk has already been transferred to Tientsin and Tsingtao.

There have been few reports of a Soviet effort to extend control over the Party and governmental apparatus of the Peiping regime, and the USSR appears to be proceeding circumspectly in that effort. It is presumed, however, that the USSR will attempt to transform influence into control. In November 1949, the Chinese Communist press reported a Soviet jurist to be attached to the College of Political Science and Law in Peiping. In January, Soviet advisers were reported by Chinese sources to be in effective control of the Chinese Communist secret police, the Ministry of Justice, and the Ministry of Communications. It seems likely that Soviet advisers and observers are attached at least to the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Public Security, Justice, Heavy Industry, Railways, Communications, Labor, Culture, Education, and Propaganda. There is no evidence that the advice of such advisers is binding.

#### East China.

A group of from 200 to 300 Russians has been reported at Tsinan, and a few Soviet offi-

cials have been observed in the Tsingtao area. One source claims that four Soviet experts have been investigating the possibilities of restoring the old Japanese aluminum plant near Poshan.

Since mid-February, various sources have estimated that there are from 1,000 to 2,000 Soviet advisers, in all categories, in Shanghai. There have been several inspections, by small groups of Russians, of the Shanghai dockyards and the Shanghai Power Company. As long ago as November 1949, Soviet advisers were reported to be attached to the Shanghai police. There is no reliable information about the numbers of those mentioned in the above estimate who have been assigned economic or political tasks as distinguished from military.

Elsewhere in East China, Soviet missions, some presumably permanent and others perhaps on tour, have been reported at Nanking and Wusih, but no accurate information is available as to the nature of their activities.

#### South China.

With the exception of a railroad mission of one adviser and five technicians, the activity of Soviet non-military personnel in South China is not known.

#### Other Areas.

Although reports of Soviet non-military activity in other areas of China have been sketchy and limited in number, there have been reports of a Soviet mission at Hankow, and some indications that Soviet geologists, railroad planners, and civil airline personnel have been active in Sinkiang, Kansu, and Shensi.

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