



GEOGRAPHY

Soviet-Japanese War Theater Largest and Most Isolated

**Bulk of Outer Mongolia Arena is Barren
Desert Territory Only Thinly-Populated**

JAPAN and Russia are engaged in border fighting and skirmishing, which may lead to a full-scale conflict, in the world's largest, most isolated and most forbidding arena of war.

For more than 2,000 miles stretch the borders between Manchoukuo and Inner Mongolia, on the Japanese-dominated side, and Siberia and Outer Mongolia, tacit ally of the Soviets. And there's hardly a mile of it which is easy for the outsider to reach, from Lake Baikal in the west almost to Vladivostok.

Right now the Soviets are depending on their autonomously-based Special Red Banner Far Eastern Army entirely during the current air and border fighting. If it came to war, supplies and munitions from Russia proper would undoubtedly be needed. They would have to come distances ranging from two thousand miles, if they are from the Ural industrial district, to as much as four or five thousand miles. Japan's supplies do not have to be brought as far, but they too will have upwards of a thousand and two thousand miles of travel behind them by the time they are brought into play. Japan's railroad system is superior in operation and in mileage to the Russian.

Outer Mongolia, where the bulk of the trouble is brewing at the moment, is principally thinly-populated desert territory whose southern part ranges into the far-famed Gobi Desert sitting across both Inner and Outer Mongolia. Inner Mongolia is a province gradually becoming more absorbed into the Japanese-dominated area of northern China, while Outer Mongolia is a republic dominated by the U.S.S.R. Only the grasslands in the northern part of Outer Mongolia, bordering on Siberia, are productive.

The Great Khingan mountains separate Outer Mongolia from the central plain of Manchoukuo and is one of the chain of mountains generally separating Russian from Japanese-controlled territory.

Main delineator of the Japanese-Soviet frontier is the Argun River, which becomes the famous Amur after it is joined by the Shilka. The Amur runs toward the East through a series of tilted land blocks whose steep sides face the Japanese, finally turning north near the point where Korea, Manchuria and Siberia come together.

Hundreds of miles inland for the most part, and unprotected in many places from the Arctic's freezing blasts coming

down across the Siberian tundra, the climate is generally hot and dry in the summer, and bitterly cold in winter. Only the eastern portion of this huge Asiatic fighting theater has a moist and reasonably temperate climate.

The Japanese-dominated territory, except for the fertile central Manchurian plain, is far bleaker than the Soviet territory which, for all its forbidding character, has untold mineral, agricultural, forest and fishing wealth. Today Siberia is the scene of a boom reminiscent of America's own west half a century ago as cities spring up where tents were before and as factories, mines, stores, transportation systems and the other temples of industry are opened. As in our own west, Siberia's pioneering population is primarily young.

Little authentic or complete information is available as to the strength of the armed forces now in this vast area. But a year ago more than a million men faced each other across the Amur and the mountain chains to the east. Today that number, particularly on the Soviet side, is likely to have been increased. And the line of pillboxes, machine gun nests and other fortifications stretching from Lake Baikal to Vladivostok has unquestionably been strengthened not only to make life more difficult for Japanese attackers but also to strengthen the main Soviet railroad link, the Trans-Siberian Railroad, which runs for more than a thousand miles hard by the unfriendly frontier.

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● RADIO

Dr. Charles V. Akin, assistant surgeon general, U. S. Public Health Service, will be the guest scientist on "Adventures in Science" with Watson Davis, director of Science Service, over the coast to coast network of the Columbia Broadcasting System, Monday, July 24, 5:45 EDST, 4:45 EST, 3:45 CST, 2:45 MST, 1:45 PST. Listen in on your local station. Listen in each Monday.

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