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## POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, AND MILITARY CONDITIONS IN CHINA: REPORTS AND CORRESPONDENCE OF THE U.S. MILITARY INTELLIGENCE DIVISION, 1918-1941



This collection reproduces the six principal MID files relating exclusively to China for the period 1918 to 1941 (general conditions, political conditions, economic conditions, army, navy, and aeronautics). Also includes documents created by other U.S. Government agencies and foreign governments from the records of the Military Intelligence Division.

**Date Range:** 1918-1941

**Content:** 17,601 images

**Source Library:** National Archives (U.S.)

### **Detailed Description:**

This Archives Unbound publication reproduces the six principal MID files relating exclusively to China for the period 1918 to 1941 (general conditions, political conditions, economic conditions, army, navy, and aeronautics); it does not reproduce all MID files relevant to China. The Military Intelligence Division filed correspondence in accordance with the "record card system," utilized widely in the late 19th and early 20th century by the War Department. On each incoming and outgoing communication and on each enclosure, a record clerk placed in the upper-right corner of the first page a file designation consisting of a master number representing the main subject of the communication. Following the master number, the record clerk sometimes entered an alphabetical or numerical suffix representing a sub-file under the subject of the master number, and an additional number representing the sequential order under the sub-file (e.g., MID 2657-1-1 or 2657-1-276/55 or 2055-622/178). In other instances, when no sub-file was involved, the clerk simply added a numerical suffix to the master number to indicate the next sequential transaction (e.g., 2055-606).

In its filing scheme the MID used letters to designate particular countries; 1 represented China. Therefore, under the master number for economic conditions (2655), the designation 2655-1 relates to economic conditions in China. Individual documents under that designation were numbered generally in chronological order. However, within this and the other file designations, other sets of numbers are sometimes used as sub-files for more specific

subject categories. For instance, reports on- China's "National Economic Council," 1933-36, are filed under 2655-1-165, with individual documents on the subject numbered 1 to 7. Thus a typical file number containing all these elements would be 2655-1-165/6.

There are gaps in the sequential numbers following master numbers. The gaps have two principal explanations. First, during the late 1920's the War Department destroyed a large number of individual documents as "useless papers," an action authorized by an act of Congress dated February 16, 1889 (25 State. 672). Second, on August 7, 1941, the MID abandoned its numeric file system and adopted the War Department decimal file scheme. At that time, the numeric file was closed and many documents were transferred from it to the new G-2 decimal file. Neither these documents nor those received during the last half of 1941 are reproduced in this publication. For most communications transferred to the G-2 decimal file, a clerk prepared a card and inserted it in the old numeric file where the communication had been. Each card cites the decimal file designation to which the communication was transferred. Correspondence in the G-2 decimal file is now part of Records of the Army Staff, RG 319.

The contents of the records filed under the six master numbers of the MID correspondence reproduced in this publication are described below. The master numbers pertaining to more general subjects have been scanned (general, political, and economic conditions), followed by those relating to more specific topics (army, navy, and aeronautics). Some of the reports include oversize enclosures, particularly maps.

*Descriptions of the six files relating to China, 1918-1941, included in this collection*

**"General Conditions in China" (MID 2055)**—Includes records pertaining to current political, economic, and social events and general trends in the military services. Most are periodic reports submitted weekly or monthly, each report covering several—sometimes diverse—subjects in an abbreviated format. Much of the information was drawn from newspapers or periodicals. The most frequently recurring reports are those dealing with current military, political, and related foreign events, January 1918-May 1941 (MID 2055-622). Other documents include a 1921 report detailing Japanese atrocities in Manchuria (MID 2055-395); reports on the increase in the size of the Japanese population in Manchuria, December 1925-January 1940 (MID 2055-635); and a province-by-province census of the population of China, October 1930-March 1937 (MID 2055-685). Also included is a 1921 report, with photographs, of a trip through Yunnan, Szechwan, and eastern Tibet by Maj. John Magruder, assistant military attaché. The purpose of the trip was to observe conditions in the provinces of Yunnan and Szechwan, both of which border on Burma and Tibet. Major Magruder was the first representative of the U.S. Government to visit these areas in an official capacity (MID 2055-486).

**"Political Conditions, China" (MID 2657-1)**—Includes records complementing the information on general conditions in MID 2055. This file contains attaché reports that give more detail concerning Chinese politics and foreign relations. Reports on lawlessness in the Chinese countryside, 1922-24, are covered in MID 2657-1-251. The policy, ideology, and formation of the Kuomintang, 1926-39, are reported in MID 2657-1-321. Chinese personalities, including

Chiang Kai-shek and T. V. Soong, are profiled in MID 2657-1-362. Soviet activities within China are reported in MID 2657-1-281. The use of American publicity and foreign influence to combat Soviet activities is covered in MID 2657-1-282. Reports on border clashes between Soviet and Chinese troops are detailed in MID 2657-1-382. There are numerous "Situation Reports" relating to the military situation within China, 1924-41 (MID 2657-1-276). Subjects covered include civil battles between warlords, the civil war between north and south China, the campaigns against the Communists, intra-Kuomintang struggles, and military actions against the Japanese in the Second Sino-Japanese War.

**"Economic Conditions, China" (MID 2655-1)**—Includes reports compiled in the office of the military attaché from published government statistics, interviews with foreign industrialists, and articles appearing in newspapers and periodicals; also reports prepared in the office of the U.S. commercial attaché. Characteristic of the reports on economic conditions, 1919-38, is a report on the coal resources in Honan Province (MID 2655-1-50). The report details the uses of the mined coal, the location of the mines, the history of the coal mines in Honan Province, and the operation of the coal mines. Other reports describe the development of hydroelectric power in Shansi Province, December 1934 (MID 2655-1-166). Additional reports relate to iron and steel production (MID 2655-1-114); foreign loans to Chinese companies (MID 2655-1-123); the oil shale industry in Manchuria (MID 2655-1-129); the British Committee of Information in Tientsin, which provided information on Chinese affairs for British businessmen (MID 2655-1-132); and opium traffic in China (MID 2655-1-146). Also included are U.S. Department of Commerce reports on iron and gold resources (MID 2655-1-77).

**"Army, China" (MID 2009)**—Includes reports pertaining to general conditions in the military services (including information on military organizations, personalities, national defense and preparedness, training, and maneuvers) and to observation of Chinese Army units. The reports relate to military engagements between warlords, clashes between Chiang Kai-shek and his fellow Nationalists, the campaigns against the Communists, and the efforts of the Nationalists against the Japanese. There are also detailed biographies of Chinese Army officers, including Chiang Kai-shek (MID 2009-244). Records relating to the Chinese military also include a 1926 study of the Chinese National Revolutionary Army, which was compiled by the entire staff attached to the office of the military attaché in Peking. The report presents a general picture of the Chinese Army, its organization, strength, equipment, morale, pay, and training (MID 2009-176). Also included is a 1927 report listing 1,200 military terms, alphabetically arranged and compiled in two parts, Part I in English and Part II in Romanized Chinese, according to the Wade system (MID 2009-182). Other reports relate to the composition of the Mongolian Army (MID 2009-156); the use of Soviet troops in China (MID 2009-163); The Red Spear Societies, groups of farmers and shopkeepers that banded together to maintain law and order (MID 2009-170); the Soviet military mission in China (MID 2009-181); tables of organization for the National Revolutionary Army (MID 2009-198); and the effectiveness of German military instructors in China (MID 2009-255).

**"Navy, China" (MID 2733)**—Includes records chiefly pertaining to the training of Chinese naval officers, appointment of officers, and the purchase of new gunboats. The U.S. military

attaché devoted some attention to Chinese naval affairs even though the Navy was not strictly within his sphere of responsibility. Specific reports cover such subjects as the employment of British naval officers in the training and development of the Chinese Navy (MID 2732-7) and the launching of two new gunboats for coastal defense (MID 2732-12).

**"Aeronautics, China" (MID 2078)**—Includes reports prepared by the assistant military attaché for air, mostly relating to military aviation, but some relating to civil aeronautics. These reports reflect an effort by the assistant attaché for air to systematically collect intelligence on the Chinese Air Corps. Included are annual "Aviation Intelligence" reports on appropriations, production, bases, organization, and training, 1924-39 (MID 2078-70); "Current Aviation Activity" reports on the use of commercial and military aircraft and the number of foreign pilots and instructors employed, 1929-34 (MID 2078-95); and reports with diagrams of airfields throughout China, 1927-41 (MID 2078-87). There are also reports with diagrams of possible emergency landing fields and seaplane bases, 1928-30 (MID 2078-88). Additional reports relate to the first commercial aviation enterprise in China, 1920 (MID 2078-18); foreign personnel with the Manchurian Air Force, 1925 (MID 2078-74); activities of French armaments representative Count de Boigne, 1926-27 (MID 2078-85); the establishment of air routes, 1929-35 (MID 2078-97); the purchase of German military aircraft, 1931-32 (MID 2078-110); the Central Aviation School in Hangchow, 1932-34 (MID 2078-125); plans for air defense, 1932-38 (MID 2078-142); and the delivery of Soviet aircraft and supplies to the Chinese, 1939 (MID 20768-158).

*N.B.: The MID correspondence and reports from which the six files reproduced in this publication were extracted is a part of Records of the War Department General and Special Staffs, Record Group (RG) 165.*