

1. GENERAL

Area and Geography

China, with an area of approximately 3.7 million square miles, is the third largest country in the world (after the USSR with more than 8.5 million square miles and Canada with 3.8 million). Within this enormous country may be found every extreme of geographical feature. Western China is dominated by the high plateau of Tibet and Tsinghai, the "rooftop of the world", Mt. Everest, highest mountain in the world, is on the border of China with Nepal. To the north lie the desert and semi-desert areas of Sinkiang and Inner Mongolia. Moving to the northeast the dry steppe-lands give way to heavily forested mountains. Between these great natural barriers and the sea lie the major areas of China's settlement and civilization.

The land frontiers of China are over 9,000 miles long, from Viet-Nam in the south by Laos, Burma, India, Bhutan, Nepal, Pakistan and Afghanistan, to the USSR in the west and north and Korea in the northeast. Politically China seems predominantly a land power, but her coastline is more than three thousand miles long, and the provinces of the south and southeast have a long tradition of seamanship, trade, and overseas settlement.

Climate

Wide variations in climate characterize China. The Gulf of Liaotung and the Bay of Korea in the north are blocked by ice during the winter months each year. To the south, the island Hainan is within 20 degrees of the equator, and the ports of Canton, Hong Kong and the coast of the southern provinces are lashed by tropical typhoons in the summer. Traditionally, an imaginary east-west line some 150 miles north of Shanghai divides the sub-tropical south from the temperate north. The north and west of China tend to