

# PARIS TO SHANGHAI, 1903

# A TRANS-SIBERIAN JOURNEY TO CHINA



Philip E. Robinson &amp; Stephen P. S. Yen

## 50 -- 欧亚旅程 --- PB&C-H



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Based on the picture postcards sent home by  
C. E. Tanant to his mother in St. Die on  
a 1903 journey from Paris to Shanghai via  
the Trans-Siberian and the Chinese Eastern Railways,  
before the official inauguration of  
“Via Siberia” mail service in China in October 1903

AUGUST, 2011

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C.E. Tanant was a Frenchman employed by the Imperial Customs Service of the Da Qing Empire as a high-ranking official during the last decade of the nineteenth century. He was probably born around 1865 and according to dialogue between himself and Jiang Zhi Fang (姜治方), a famous Chinese philatelist who had many conversations with him, he started to collect stamps at the early age of ten and was an advanced philatelist long before he took up his job with the Chinese Customs in the late 1880's.

The journey began on 26 May 1903, perhaps after a holiday, and before departure on that day Monsieur Tanant sent a postcard back to his mother, Madame E. Tanant at 5 Place du Parc, St. Dié. The view is of the "Gare du Nord" railway station in Paris, where Tanant began his journey. The 5c French stamp was cancelled by two PARIS 26 / 8 R. DE DUNKERQUE postmarks dated 26-5 03. The Gare du Nord is situated in the Rue de Dunkerque, and the address of the station post office, even today, is 8 Rue de Dunkerque. The part of the station building facing the street, as shown on the card, also remains almost unchanged to this day. The postcard has a ST. DIE VOSGES arrival datestamp of 27-5 03 at the lower left. (Fig. 1)

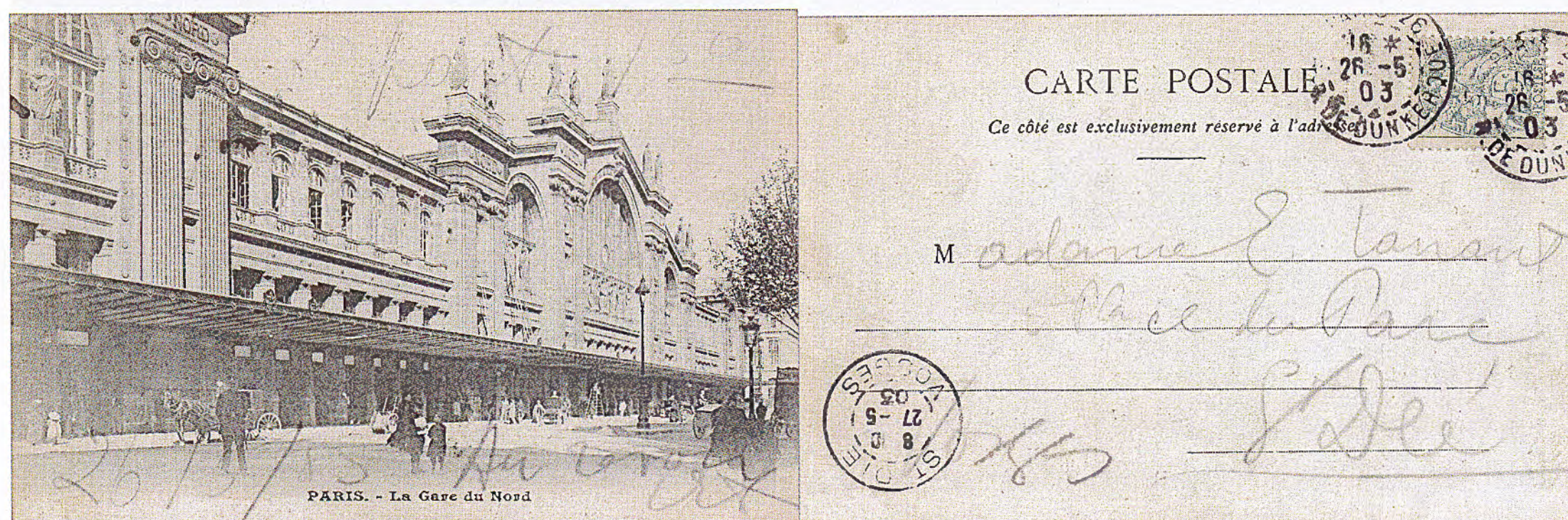


Fig. 1: Tanant wrote on the front of this card: "Depart 1<sup>50</sup>. 26/5/03. Au revoir".



Fig. 2





On the same day, the train crossed into Belgian territory and he sent another postcard with a view of Erquelines, to which he added a note (translation) *The Belgian frontier. Slight drowsiness between Paris and the frontier due to the warmth. 26/5/03.* This card was franked with a Belgian 10c stamp cancelled by a Verviers postmark, and with a ST. DIE VOSGES arrival datestamp of 27-5 03 (Fig. 2), i.e. the second card arrived on the same day as the first one.

The train arrived at Berlin on 27 May. Tanant sent 10 picture postcards back to his mother, four of them with messages, and in fact the message was continued on successive cards: *Barely had time to post at Verviers my card purchased at Erquelines. Entered Germany at Herbesthal at about 9 o'clock. At Cologne just enough time to change coaches and was not able to go to see Jean Marie Farina. Arrived (at Berlin) this morning at about 9 a.m. and crossed the city by car to go to the East Station, from where I will leave this evening at 7 p.m. Weather very warm yesterday, but fortunately cooler this morning. There are some beautiful monuments, but little activity. All the gardens and parks are superb, seen in springtime. I*



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

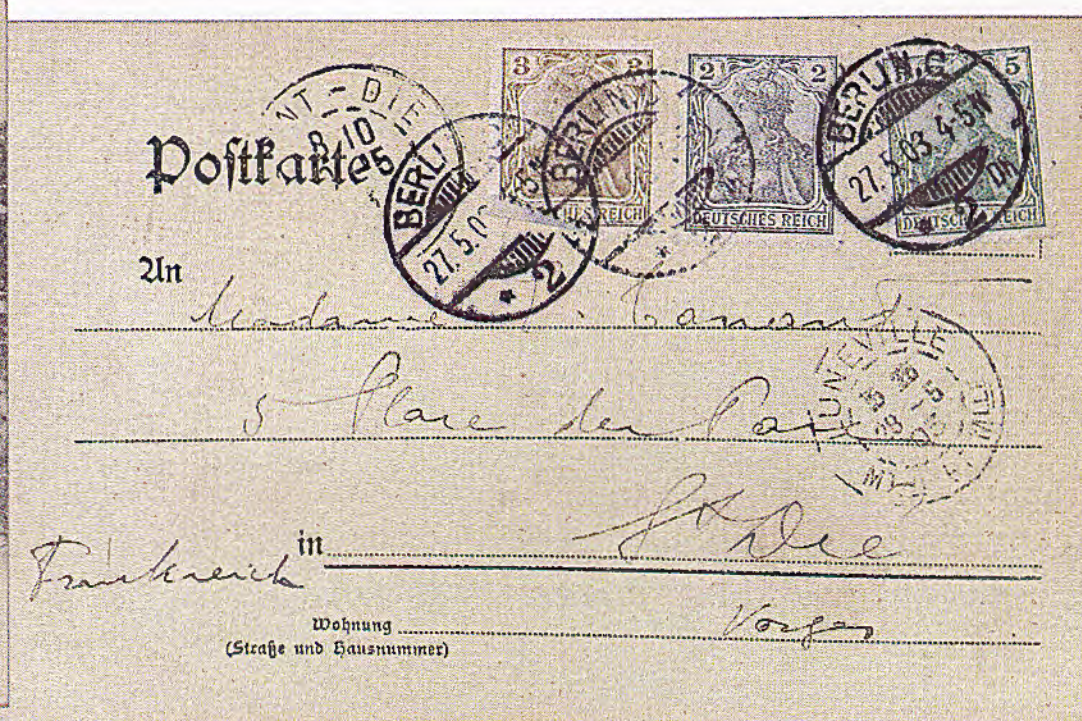
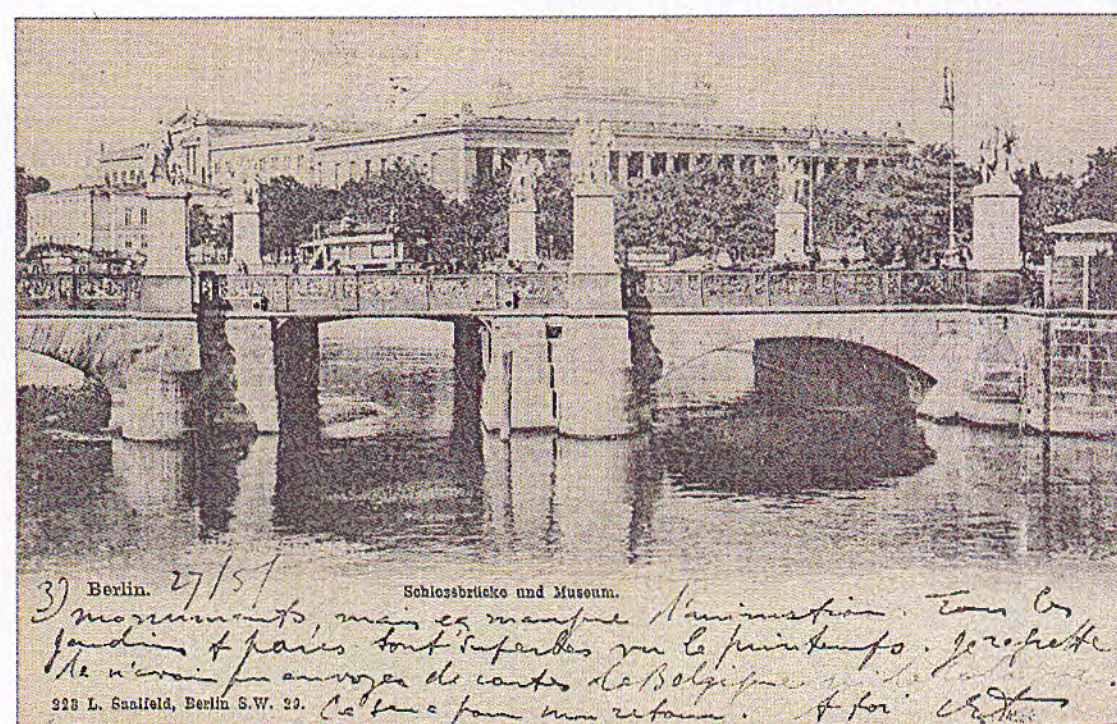


Fig. 5





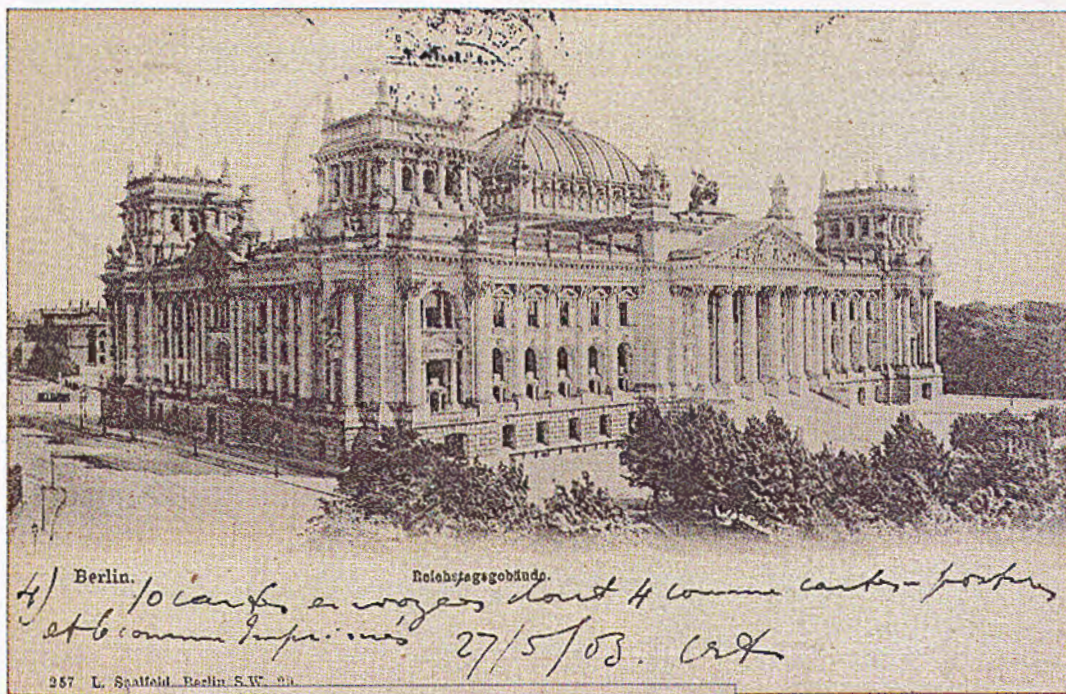


Fig. 6



Fig. 7



Fig. 8



Fig. 9

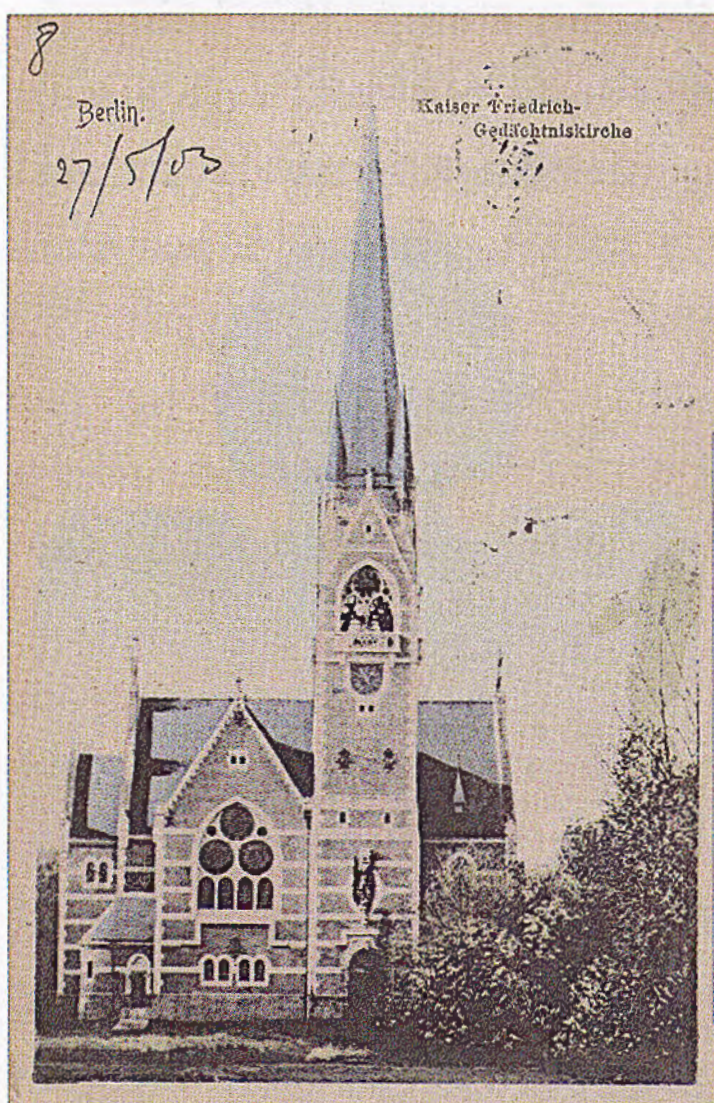


Fig. 10

regret that I could not send cards from Belgium or Cologne. I will do this on my return. 10 cards sent, 4 as postcards and 6 as printed matter. 27/5/03. In the case of the cards sent at the postcard rate he duly affixed three German stamps paying the 10 pf. international postcard rate. For the other six, he crossed out the German word for "POSTCARD" and wrote another German word "Drucksache" meaning "PRINTED MATTER" and only affixed two German stamps to each, paying the 5 pf. printed matter



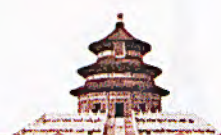


Fig. 11

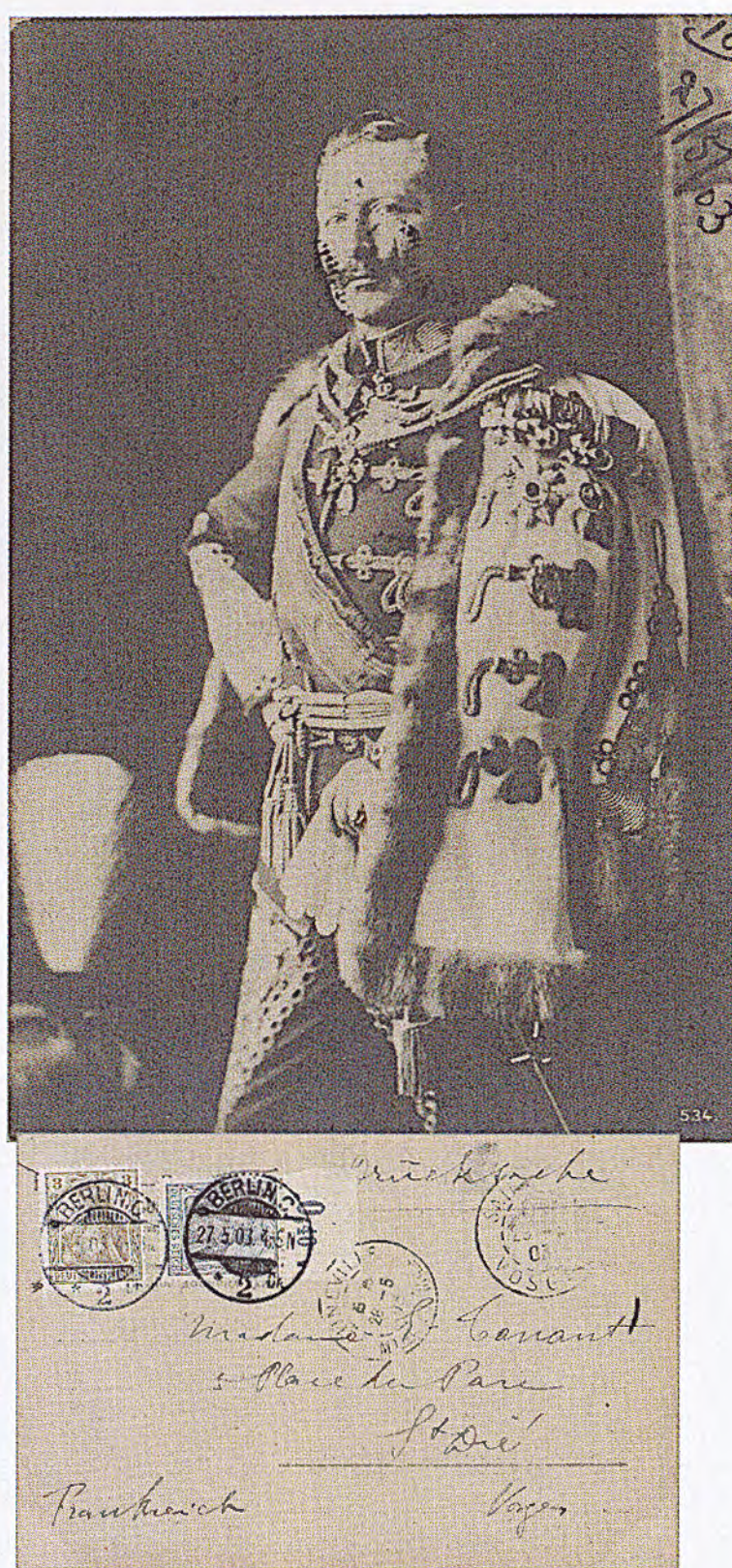


Fig. 12

rate, because as there was no message on them, this qualified them as “printed matter”. All these cards transited LUNEVILLE on 28-5 03 and arrived at ST DIE VOSGES 29-5 03. Two of the picture postcards depicted the German Emperor Wilhelm and Empress Viktoria, whilst seven of the others show scenes of famous buildings: one of these has a delicate embossed design in the centre. The tenth card gives an idea of the busy and crowded Berlin (Friedrichstrasse) railway station at that time, where Tanant would have arrived. Serial numbers from 1 to 10 were written on each

card to check against non-delivery. (Figs. 3-12)

On the third day, 28 May 1903, Tanant arrived at Warsaw; here he obtained four postcards



Fig. 13

to send back to France, writing a serial number on each of them. They were posted a few hours later at Brest on the Russian side of the border with Poland. Each card was franked with a 4-kopek Russian stamp, this being the appropriate international postcard rate at that time, cancelled by Russian-language postmarks of the Brest railway station office. The postmark was applied twice on each postcard; this complied with the rule in Russia to apply two impressions of a postmark to each item, in case either the stamp were to come off or the first impression were unclear. The postmark is of the standard Russian type of that time, with the month and day according to the Julian calendar, which in the 20th century was 13 days behind the Gregorian calendar, i.e. the date 1903 V 15 shown in the Brest datestamp was actually 28 May 1903. All four cards arrived at St Dié on 1



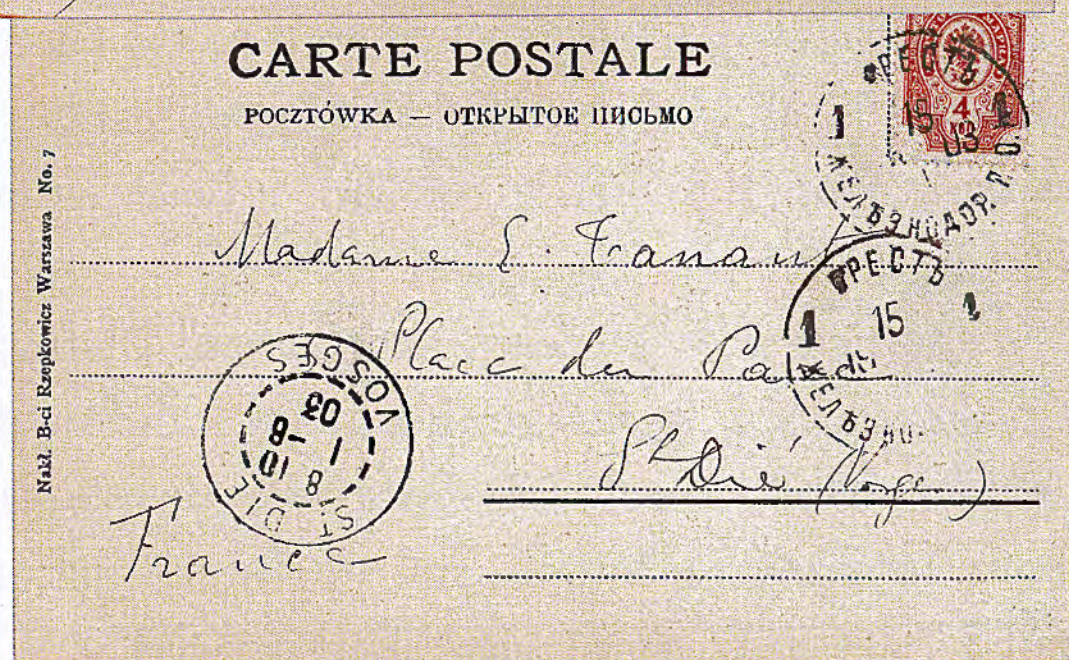


Fig. 14



Fig. 15

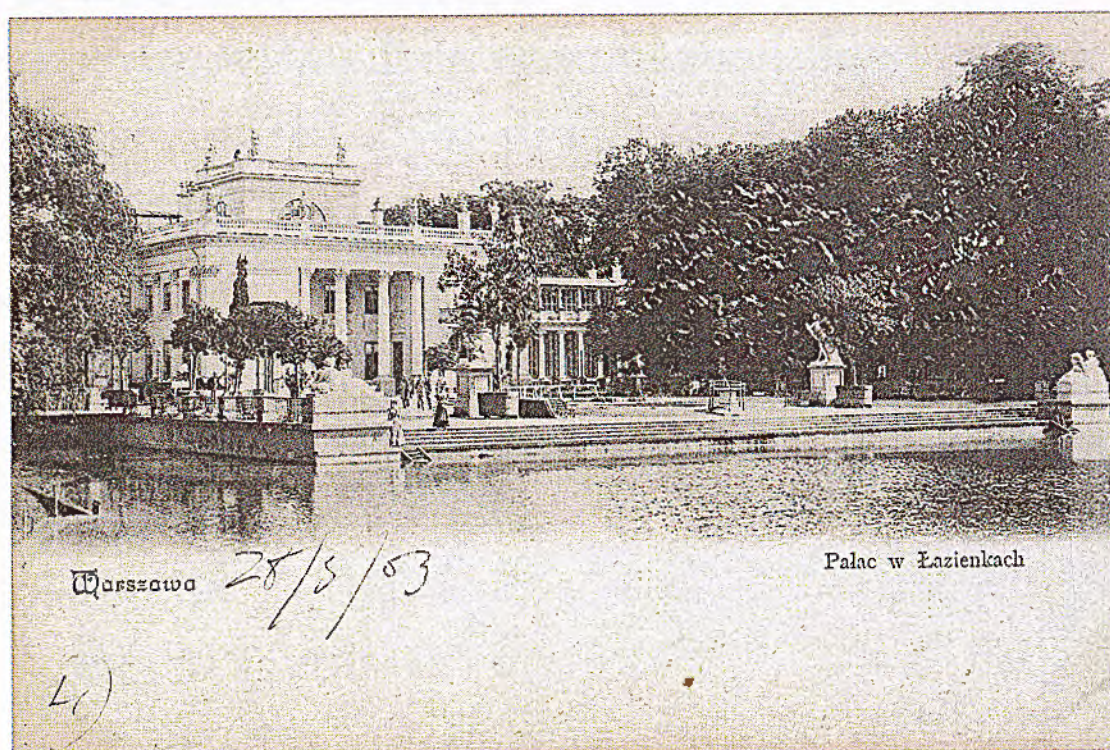


Fig. 16

June 1903. The brief message on the first card reads 28/5. Arrived this morning at 8 o'clock. Interminable journey around the city via a belt railway to the Moscow station, departure time 10 o'clock. (Figs. 13-16)



Fig. 17: 28/5 10-20 p.m. Will arrive Moscow tomorrow afternoon. Sent 4 cards from Warsaw.





Fig. 18: 29/5/03. Slept well, 10:30 in the morning

journey westwards. The front of the card, which has the publisher's imprint of the Moscow-Brest Railway Company, reproduces a painting showing the Battle of Vyazma in 1812. For the benefit of Russian postal officials, Tanant wrote the Russian word "ФРАНЦИЯ" meaning "FRANCE" in the upper left corner. (Fig. 18)



Fig. 19

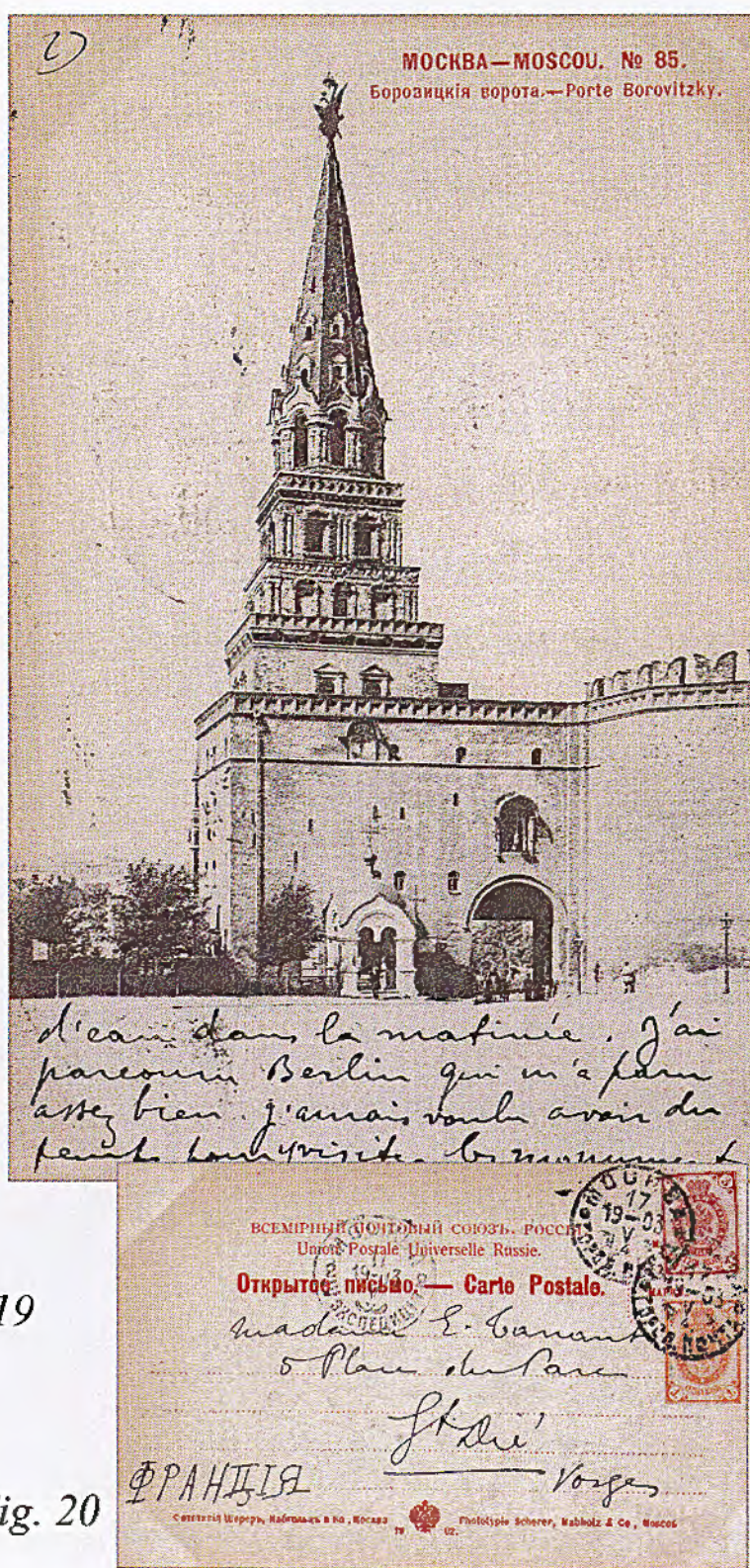


Fig. 20

If items of mail were posted on board a train, the appropriate Russian postage stamps were usually cancelled by circular Russian-language "POSTAL WAGON" datestamps with serial numbers, and the date given in Julian calendar reckoning. On the postcard sent to St. Die on 28 May, a Postal Wagon No 30 datestamp with serial No 2 cancelled the Russian stamps that totalled 4 kopeks, with a ST. DIE VOSGES arrival datestamp of 1-6 1903. The Postal Wagon No 30 circular datestamp was used on the section of the railway from Minsk to Warsaw. (Fig. 17)

The next day, 29 May, saw Tanant writing a postcard back to his mother from a different section of the railway, via Postal Wagon No 41 from Moscow to Minsk, the postmark being dated 1903 V 17 or 30 May. This arrived at ST DIE VOSGES on 2-6 1903, still only 3 days'

Tanant arrived in Moscow on 29 May, where he bought and wrote on 20 postcards which he posted the next day, 30 May, back to France; perhaps he was very impressed by the wonderful works of architecture and sights of Moscow. For the first six items he paid 4 kopeks postage each and numbered them 1 to 6, and for the others there was no message and he applied the "printed matter" rate and paid 2 kopeks each. He numbered the latter 1 to 14; all of them reached France without being penalised for insufficient





Fig. 21



Fig. 24

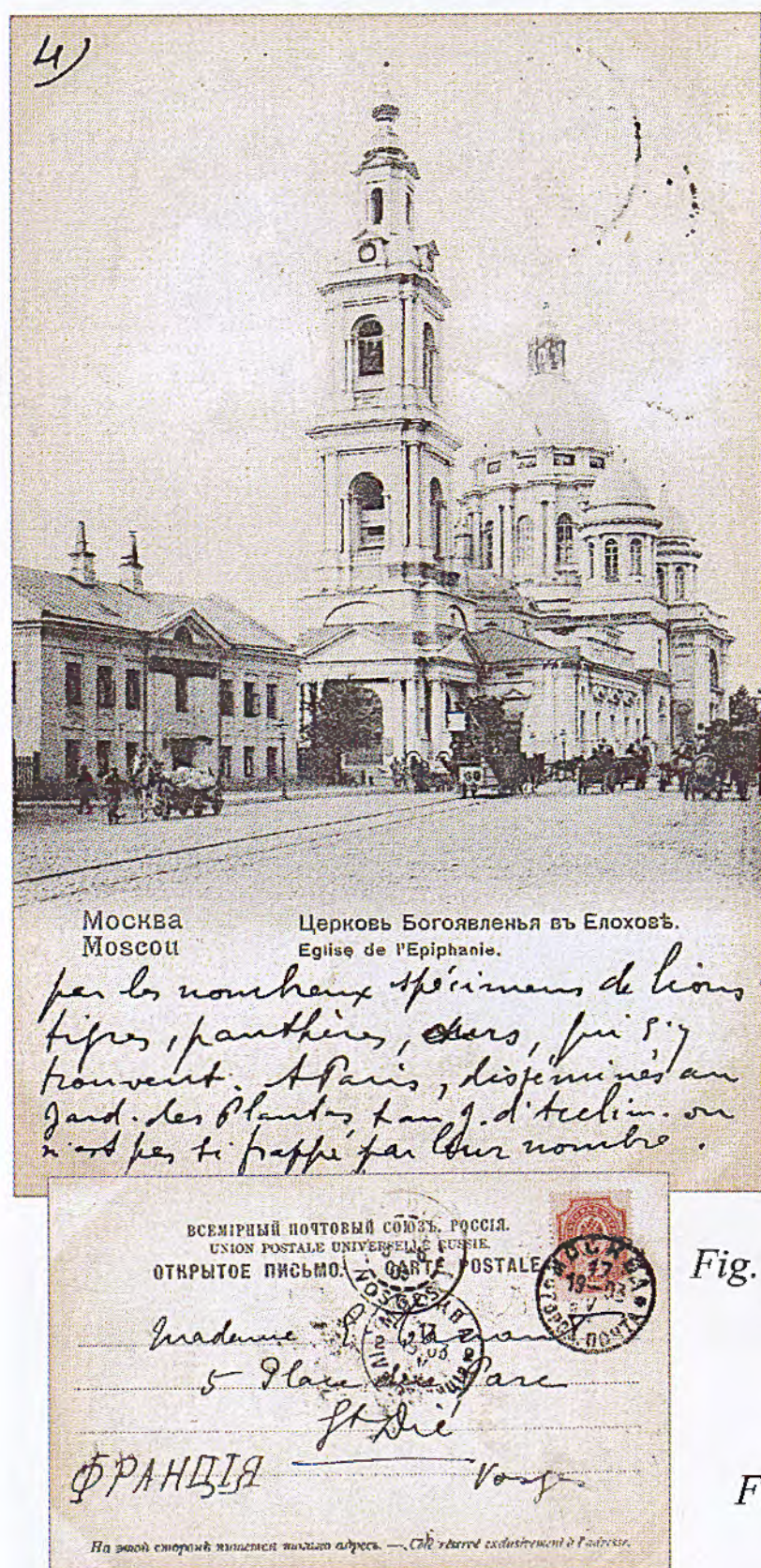


Fig. 22

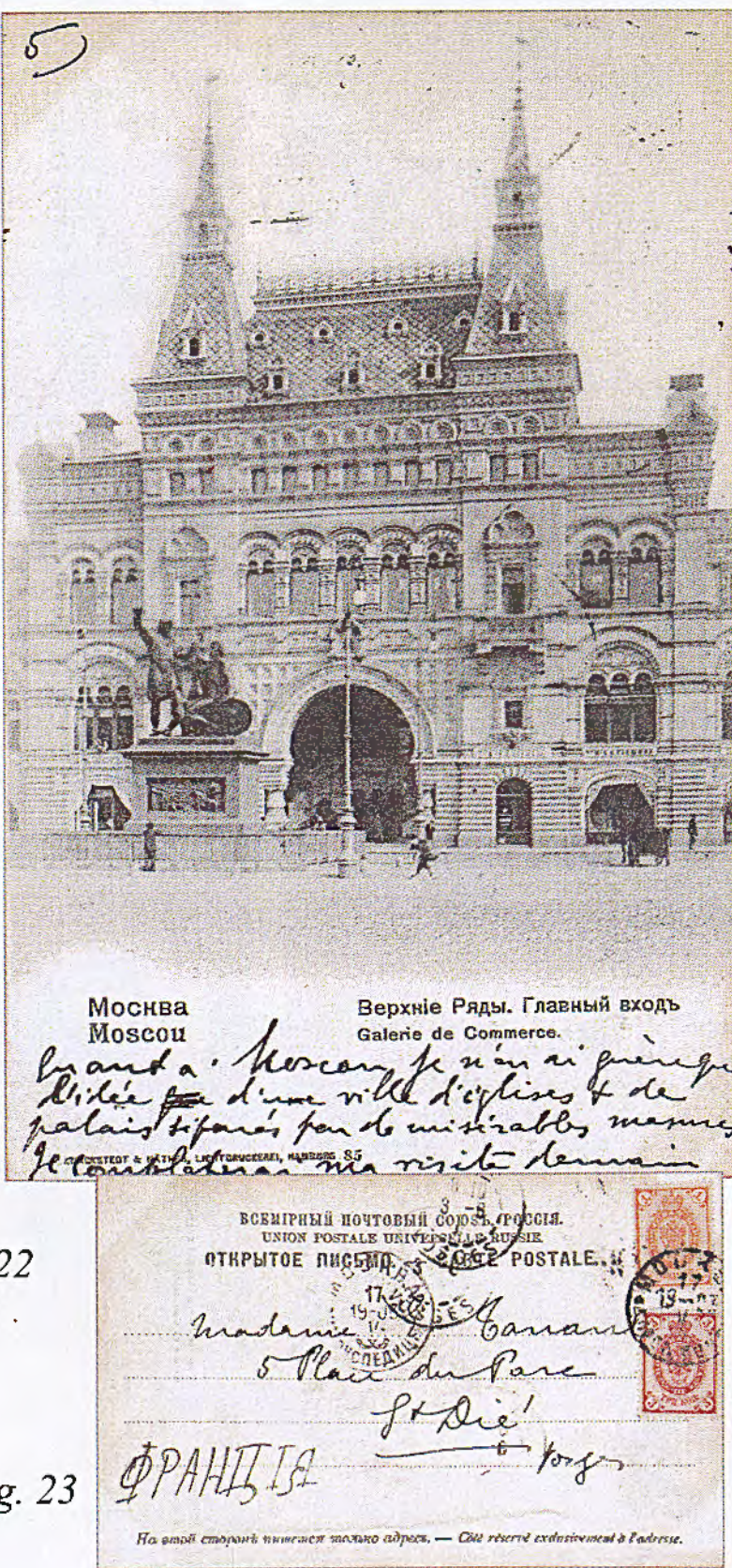


Fig. 23

postage. There was a prevailing rule for international mail that postcards without any message could qualify as printed matter but the minimum postage (for each bundle) was 10 kopeks. It seemed that the post office in Moscow accepted the 14 postcards as a single bundle because the total postage paid thereon was 28 kopeks. It would be interesting to know if Tanant himself was aware of the rule and posted all 14 cards as a single bundle even though the postage stamps had been affixed individually and

appropriately on each postcard.

All the postcards were cancelled with a Russian-language Moscow datestamp of 1903 V 17 or



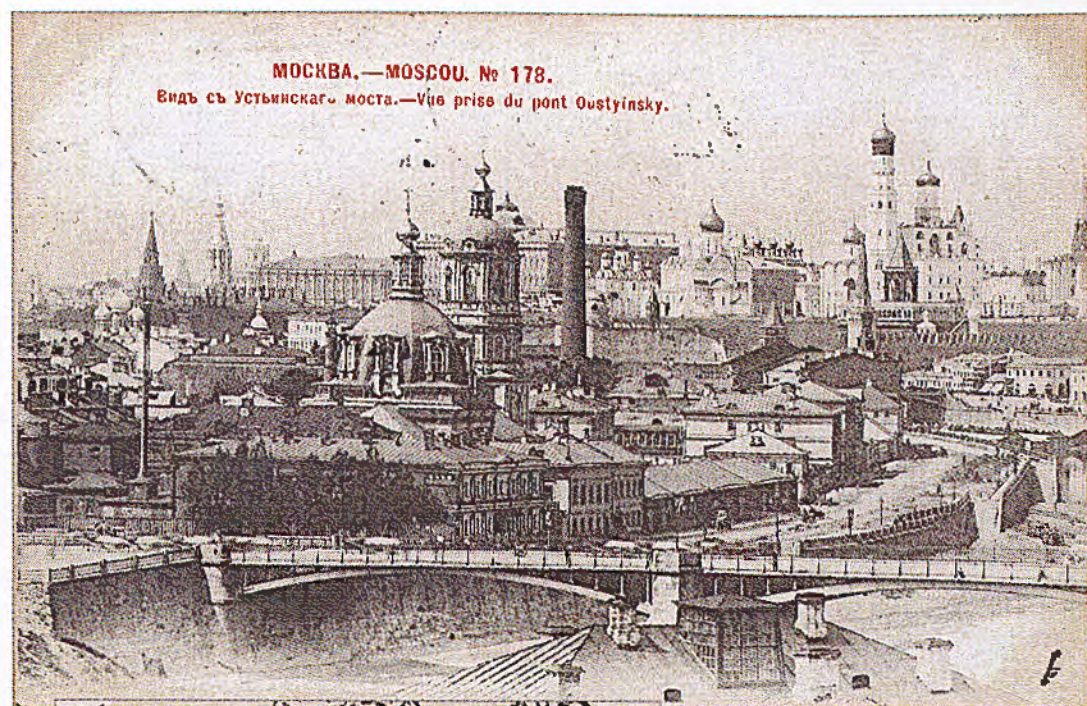


Fig. 25



Fig. 26

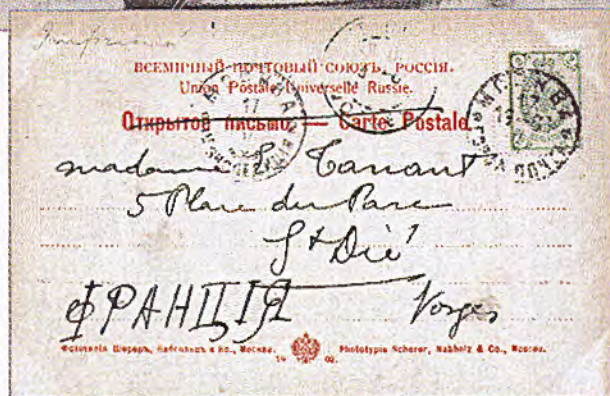
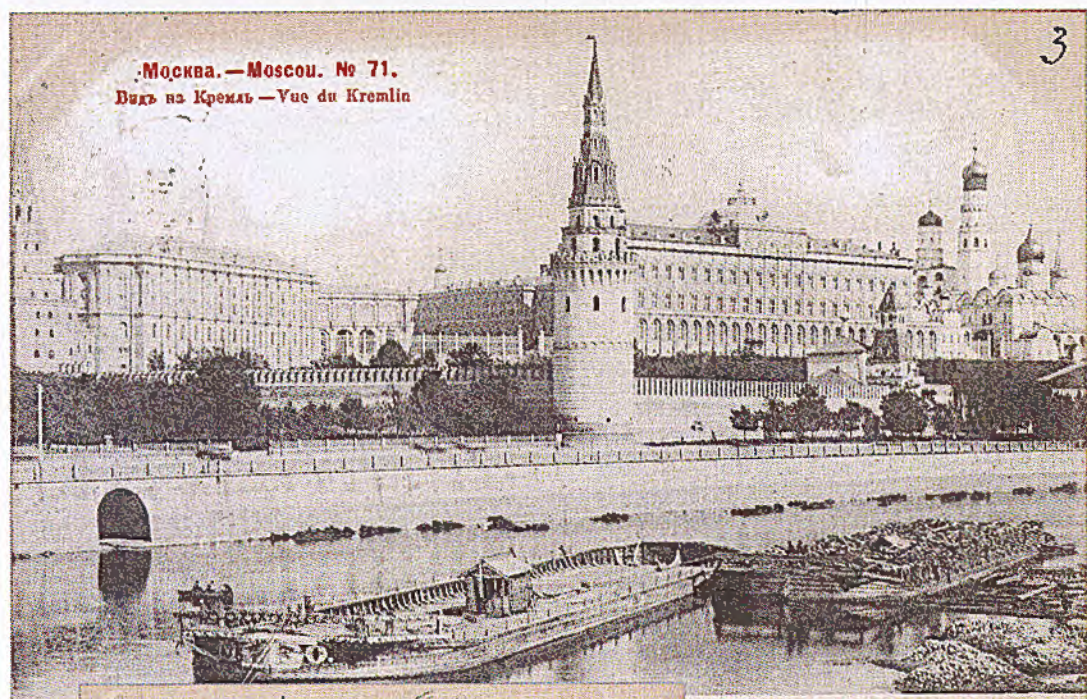


Fig. 27

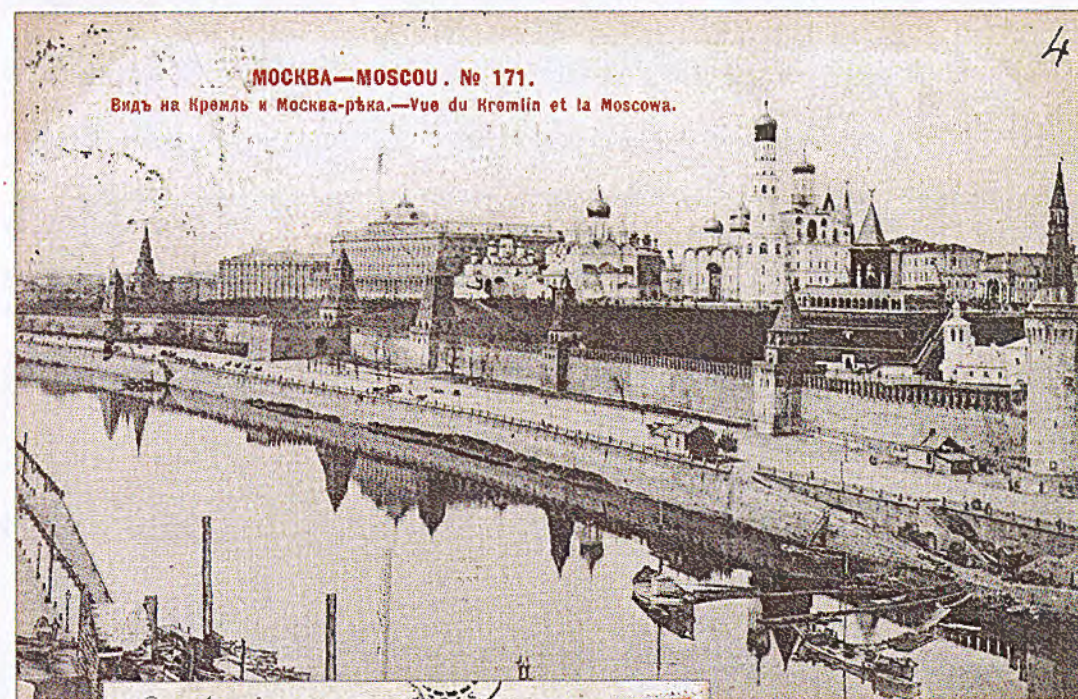


Fig. 28



Fig. 29

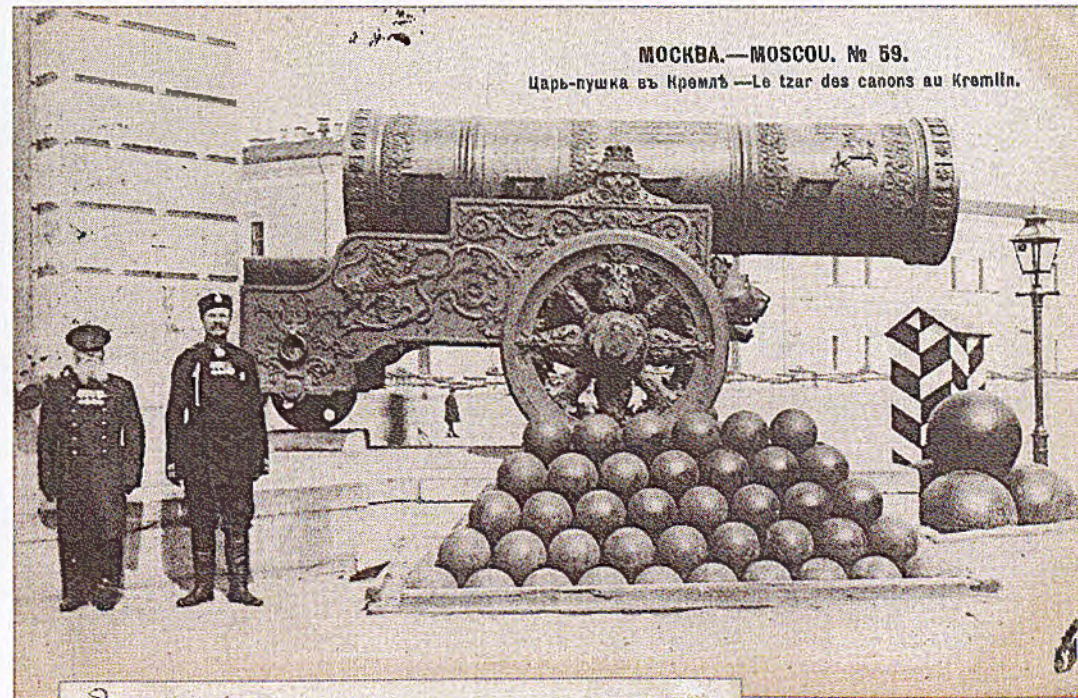


Fig. 30



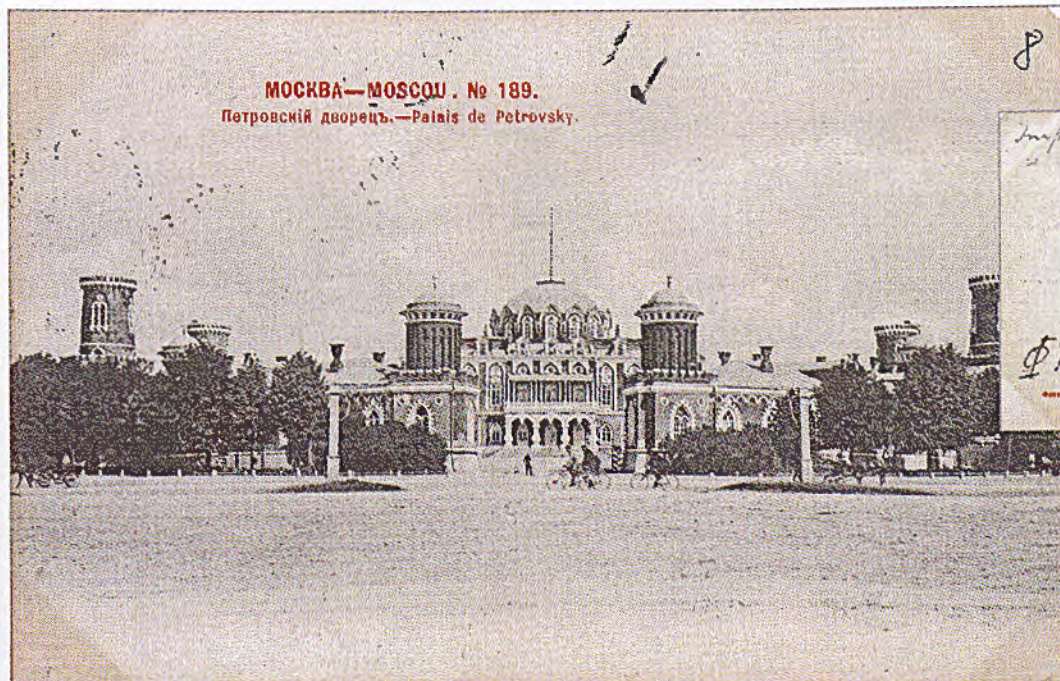
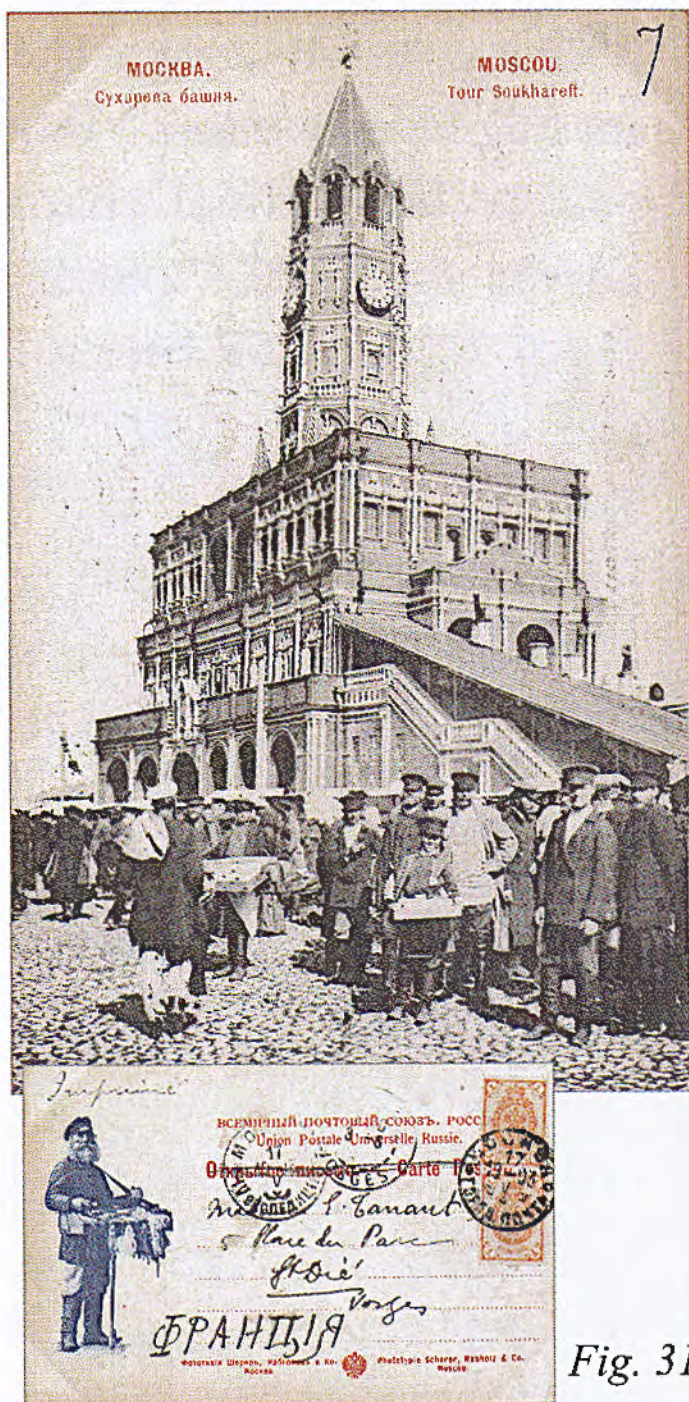


Fig. 32



Fig. 33



Fig. 34

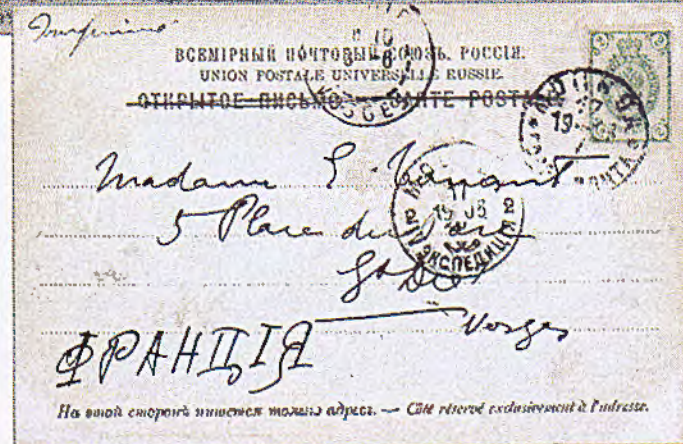


Fig. 35



Fig. 36





Figs. 37-38



Fig. 39: Pentecost 31 May. Left Moscow yesterday evening after a very interesting day. A good night - another 8 days and I will be in Irkutsk.

30 May, even though the message was written a day earlier, and all of them arrived at ST DIE VOSGES on 3-6 1903. Additional Moscow transit marks appear on some cards, whilst other cards do not have a ST DIE VOSGES arrival datestamp. For those cards benefiting from the printed matter rate, Tanant crossed out "CARTE POSTALE" and wrote "Imprimé" above so as to indicate printed matter. Again the Russian word "ФРАНЦИЯ" meaning "FRANCE" was written in the lower left corner of each card as an aid to sorting. The availability of 1 kopek stamps was also

fully utilised when Tanant affixed two 1 kopek stamps instead of a single 2 kopek stamp on six items to make them different and aesthetically more beautiful. The message, which continues on successive cards, translates as: 29/5/03. Arrived safely this afternoon around 4 o'clock. It has been very warm all the time since Paris except Berlin where a few drops of rain fell in the morning. I looked around Berlin which seemed very nice to me. I wanted to have had the time to visit the monuments but in one day one can hardly get to know the general appearance of a place. The animal garden (this is perhaps the famous Berlin Tiergarten) = acclimatising garden seemed to me better than our acclimatising garden and botanical garden in regard to the many specimens of lions, tigers, panthers, bears that are there. In Paris at the botanical garden and acclimatising garden one is not so impressed by the numbers that are there. When in Moscow I had the general





impression of a city of churches and palaces separated by miserable hovels. I will complete my visit tomorrow. For the moment, apart from these six cards I am sending fourteen as printed matter. Love to the family. (Also written on the last card: Cathedral of St Basil the Blessed, and Spassky Gate) (Figs. 19-38)



Fig. 40: 31 May evening. It seems that I have been travelling for an eternity and the journey via Berlin and Moscow was only 5 days - still another 16. It is real Pentecost weather today, very warm. Good evening.

Another picture postcard of Moscow, with a short message written on 31 May, was posted on Postal Wagon No 64 (SAMARA to RYAZHISK) the next day as evidenced by the Julian date 1903 V 19 (1 June). The postage paid on this card was 4 kopeks and Tanant again wrote the Russian word for "FRANCE" in the lower left corner. He perhaps posted this card when the train with the Samara-Ryazhsk postal wagon was between Ryazhsk and Penza, perhaps thinking that a westbound train would be preferable to that on which he was travelling. This time the transit datestamp of St. Petersburg appears on the card: 21 MAY (Julian calendar, corresponding to 3 June) and three days later on 6-6 1903 it reached ST DIE VOSGES. (Fig. 39)

Also on 31 May Tanant sent a postcard from the railway station post office at PENZA, the capital city of Penza region. The card transited St. Petersburg on 21 May (Julian calendar), arriving at ST DIE VOSGES 6-6 1903. (Fig. 40)

Tanant posted another postcard on the same section of the railway on the same day, 1903 V 19 and this card shows a clear strike of the Postal Wagon No 64 datestamp with serial No 6, hitherto unrecorded in "Russian Railway Postmarks" by A. V. Kiryushkin and P. E. Robinson. This time the St. Petersburg transit datestamp was absent and the card reached ST DIE VOSGES on 7-6 1903, a day later than the previous one. (Fig. 41)

On 2 June 1903 Tanant's train was running along another section of the railway and he sent two postcards by Postal Wagon No 124 (CHELYABINSK TO SAMARA). He numbered the postcards 1 and 2, and each was franked with 3k and 1k stamps. These were cancelled by a Postal Wagon No 124 datestamp



Fig. 41: 4 in the morning, 1 June. Penza (passed yesterday evening), a station where we stopped for a quarter of an hour. I got up very early to see the bridge over the Volga which we crossed.





Fig. 42: 2 June - a pleasant, cool night. I have been in the Ural Mountains region since yesterday evening. The plains that had not ceased since Berlin have given way to mountains and the coolness has returned with the mountains. Some of the mountain tops are covered in snow. The rivers are high with the melting snow. Theatre at Ufa (shown in the view).

with serial No 1 dated 20 May (Julian calendar, or 2 June by the Gregorian calendar). They reached ST DIE VOSGES on 10-6 1903. Perhaps a clear strike of the serial No 1 datestamp was unavailable so that an early date of its usage was not recorded in "Russian Railway Postmarks" and this example of 20 MAY 1903 is a pleasant surprise. (Figs. 42-43)

A third postcard was also posted the same day but received a Postal Wagon No 124 datestamp with serial No 2; the postcard was unnumbered and was franked with four 1 kopek stamps. (Fig. 44)

Tanant sent a total of 5 postcards to his mother during the period 21 to 24 May (or 3 to 6 June), all of them franked with 4 kopeks postage and with messages in French on them; one translates as:

2 June evening. Now in Asia. Passed Chelyabinsk on the Asian side of the Ural Mountains. Good evening. A Moscow



Fig. 43: It is here where a governor of the province was recently assassinated (N.M. Bogdanovich, Governor of Ufa Province, was assassinated at Ufa in May 1903). A very pleasant, picturesque landscape, wilder than our Vosges.

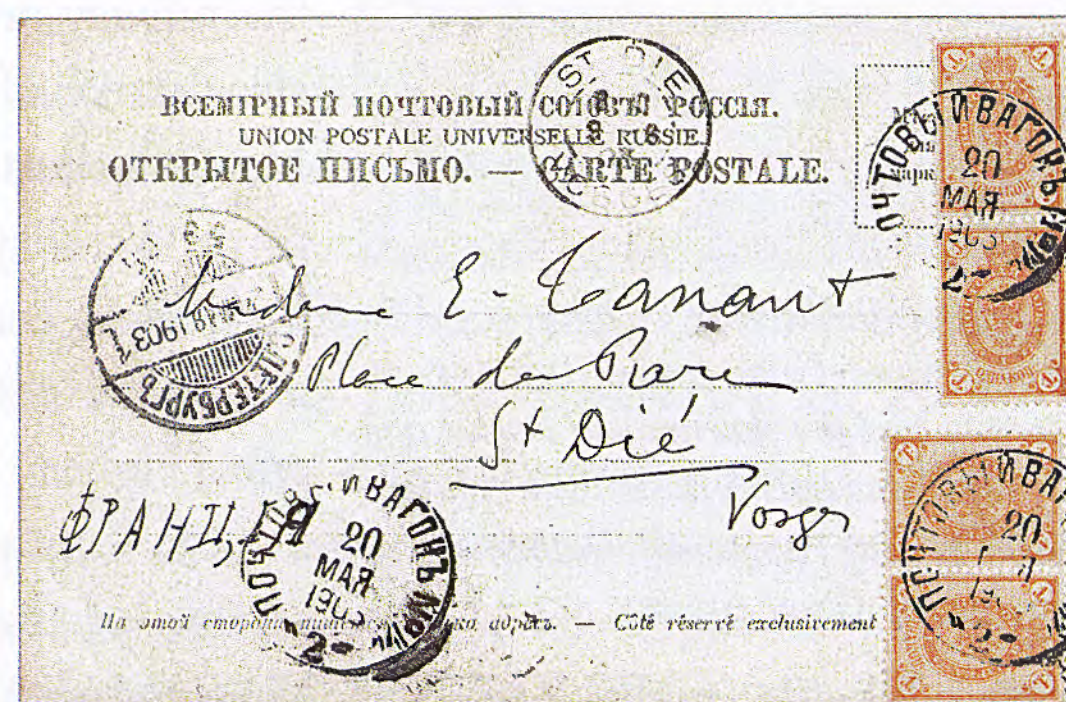


Fig. 44: 1 June evening. One of the most pleasant days. This morning after crossing the Volga I again slept well but missed Samara, a large city. Cool weather, then warmer.



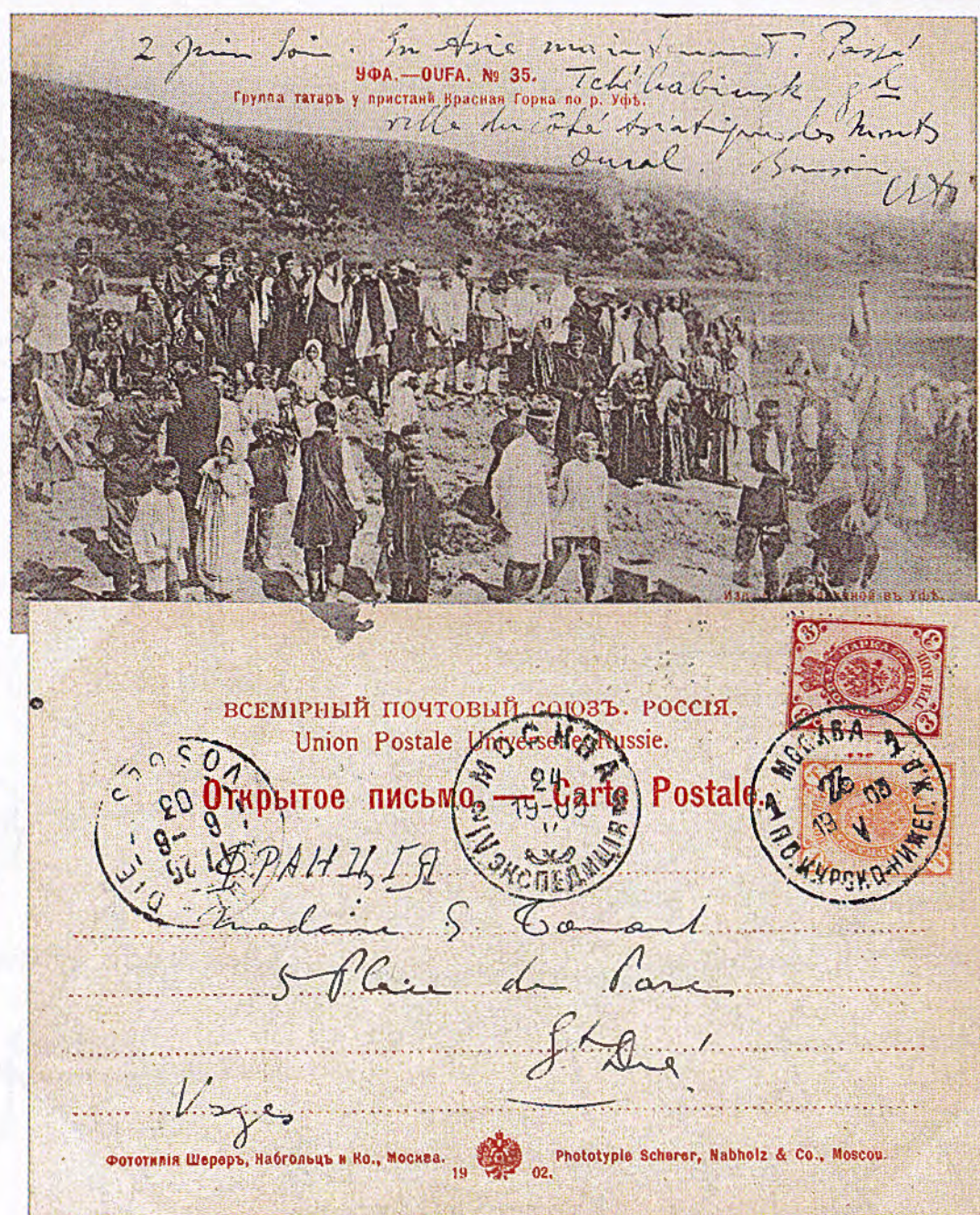


Fig. 45



Fig. 46



Fig. 47

postmark of the Kursk - Nizhny-Novgorod railway station cancelled the stamps on this card - perhaps because it had been overlooked and not cancelled by the clerk in the postal wagon. (Fig. 45)

3 June mid-day. I got up very late this morning; what else is there to do? Since we left the Urals the countryside has a dreadful monotony. Vast plains with little changing, small wooden houses and birch woods. It seems I have seen millions of birch trees! The inhabitants, the Kirghiz, are a type of Mongol but are unlike the Chinese type. The stamps on this card are cancelled with the Postal Wagon No. 168 (OMSK to CHELYABINSK) postmark. (Fig. 46)

3 June. Good evening from Tatarskaya. The stamps on this card were cancelled with a postal wagon datestamp but the number is illegible. (Fig. 47)

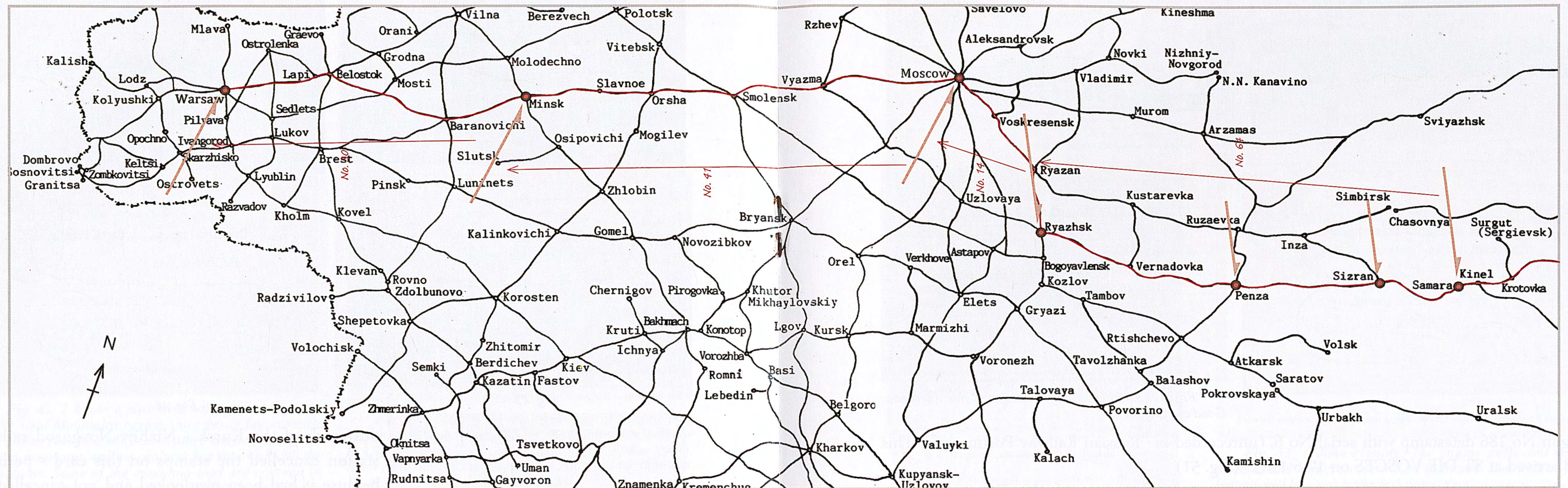
4 June. Good evening. Another totally illegible postal wagon postmark cancelled the stamps. (Fig. 48)

On 7 June (Julian calendar 25 May) Tanant found himself in Novonikolaevsk and before leaving the train he posted the following two cards, the first of which has Postal Wagon No 186 datestamps but the serial number cannot be identified. This card reached ST DIE VOSGES on 15 June. (Fig. 50)

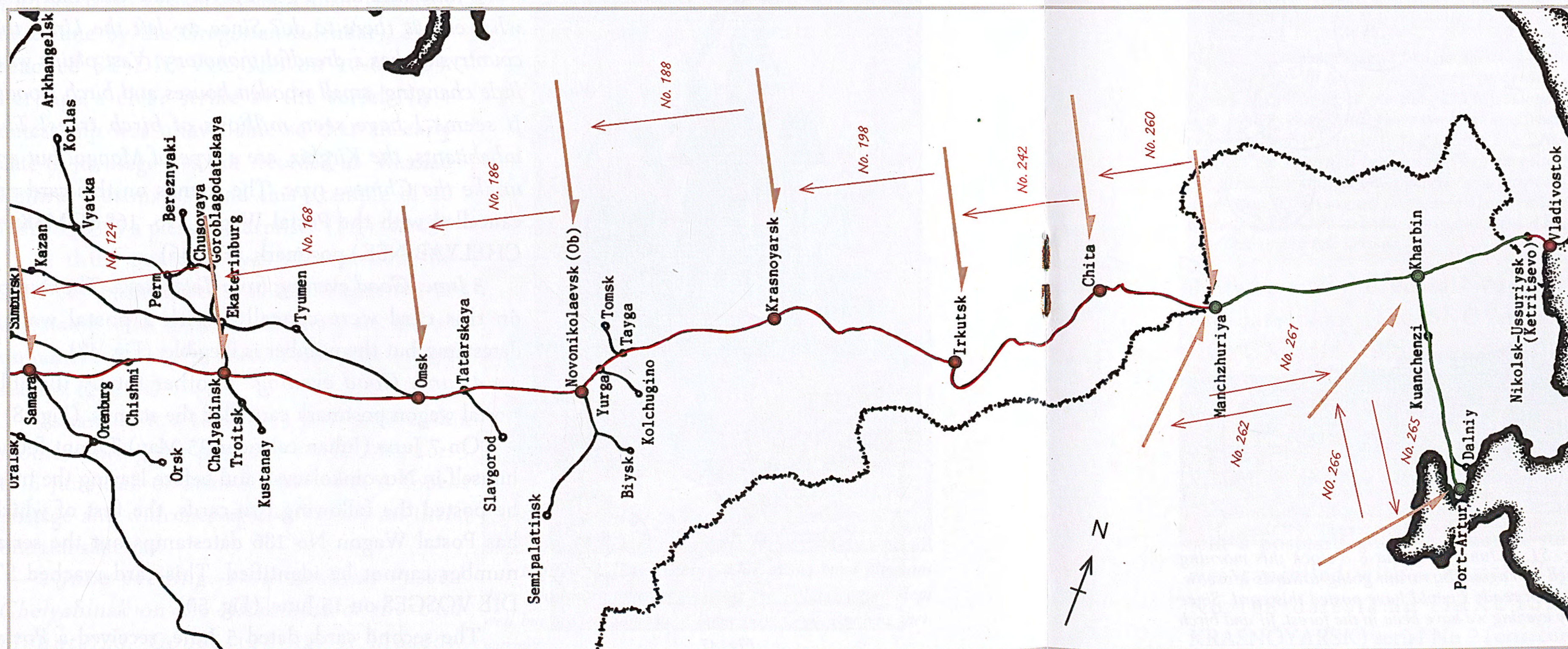
The second card, dated 5 June, received a Postal



## The Trans-Siberian Railway From Warsaw To Samara



## The Trans-Siberian Railway From Samara To Vladivostok & The Chinese Eastern Railway From Manchouli To Port Arthur Via Harbin



### Postal Wagons Numbering Guide

The Trans-Siberian Railway	Between	East bound	West bound
01. Warsaw	01---02	29	30
02. Minsk	02---03	42	41
03. Moscow	03---04	13	14
04. Ryazhsk	04---05	63	64
05. Samara	05---06	123	124
06. Chelyabinsk	06---07	167	168
07. Omsk	07---08	185	186
08. Novonikolaevsk	08---09	187	188
09. Krasnoyarsk	09---10	197	198
10. Irkutsk	10---11	241	242
11. Chita	11---12	259	260
12. Manchouli (China)			
The Chinese Eastern Railway	Between	East bound	West bound
12. Manchouli	12---13	261	262
13. Harbin			
		South bound	North bound
13. Harbin	13---14	265	266
14. Port Arthur			



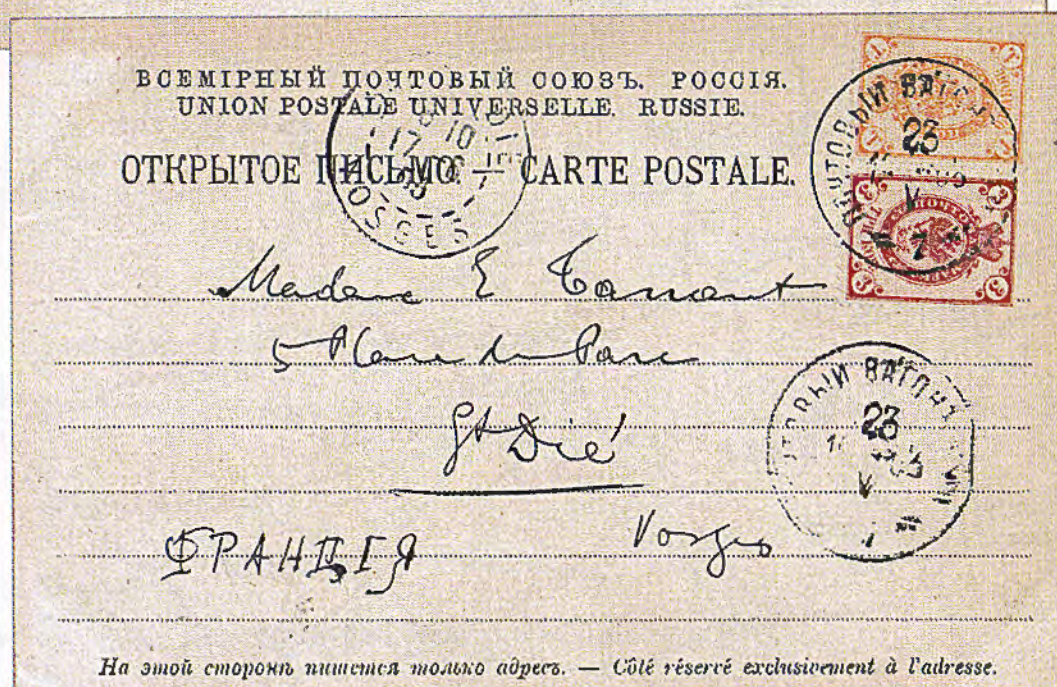
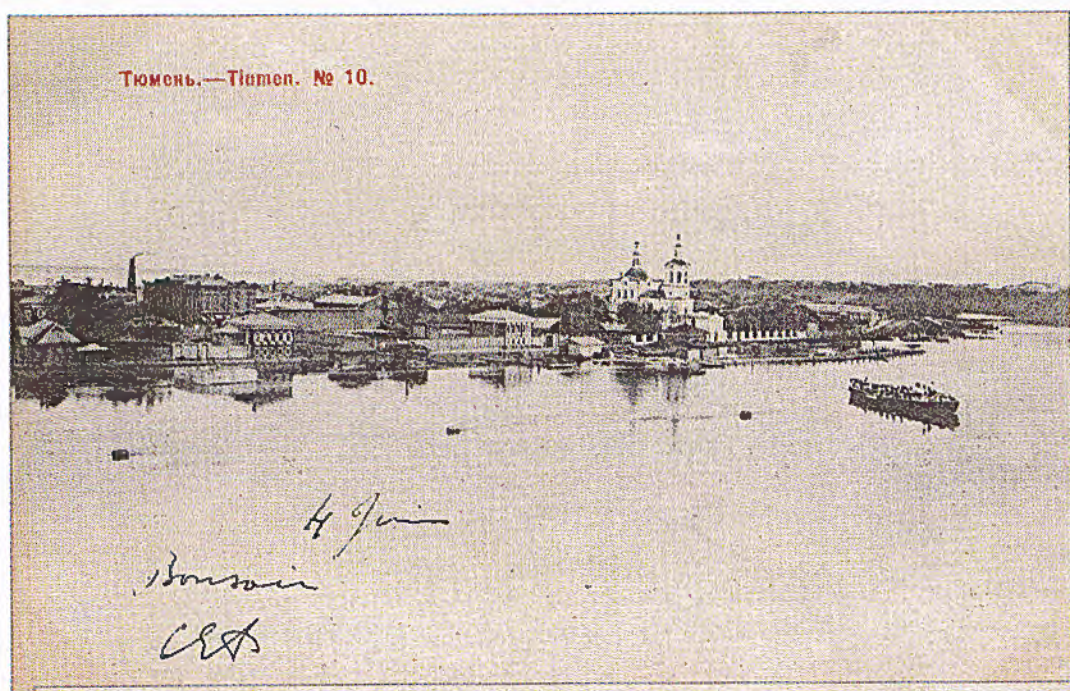


Fig. 48

Fig. 49: 5 June. Passed Krasnoyarsk this afternoon. Good evening.

Wagon No 186 datestamp with serial No 6, (unrecorded in "Russian Railway Postmarks"). This card arrived at ST DIE VOSGES on 17-6 1903. (Fig. 51)

On 6 June, the train was running on another section of the Trans-Siberian

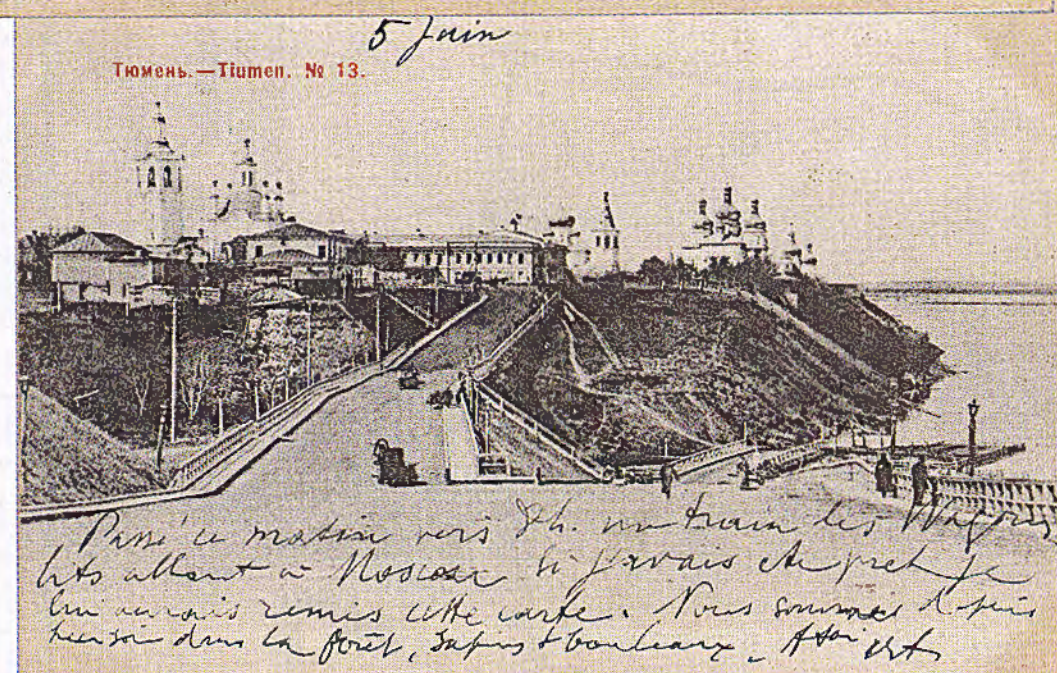
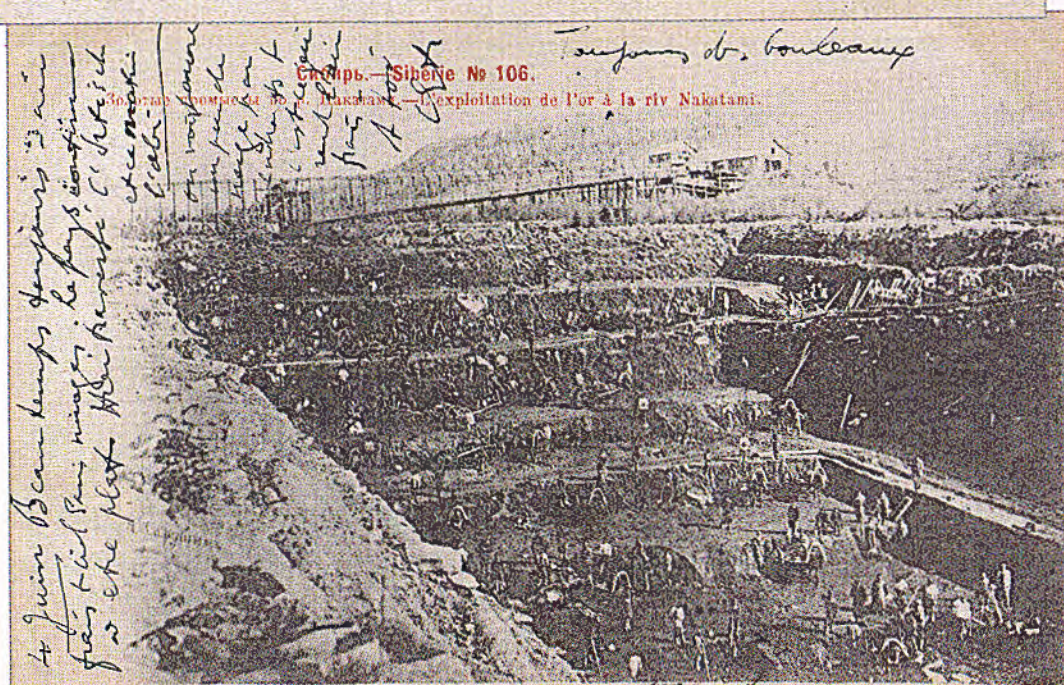


Fig. 50: 4 June. Still good weather - cool air and sky without clouds. The countryside continues to be flat. Yesterday crossed the Irtysh and today the Ob. One still sees a little snow in places and it is this that makes the air cool. Always birch trees.

Fig. 51: 5 June. At about 8 o'clock this morning we passed a Wagons-Lits train going towards Moscow. If I had been ready I could have posted this card. Since yesterday evening we have been in the forest, fir and birch trees.



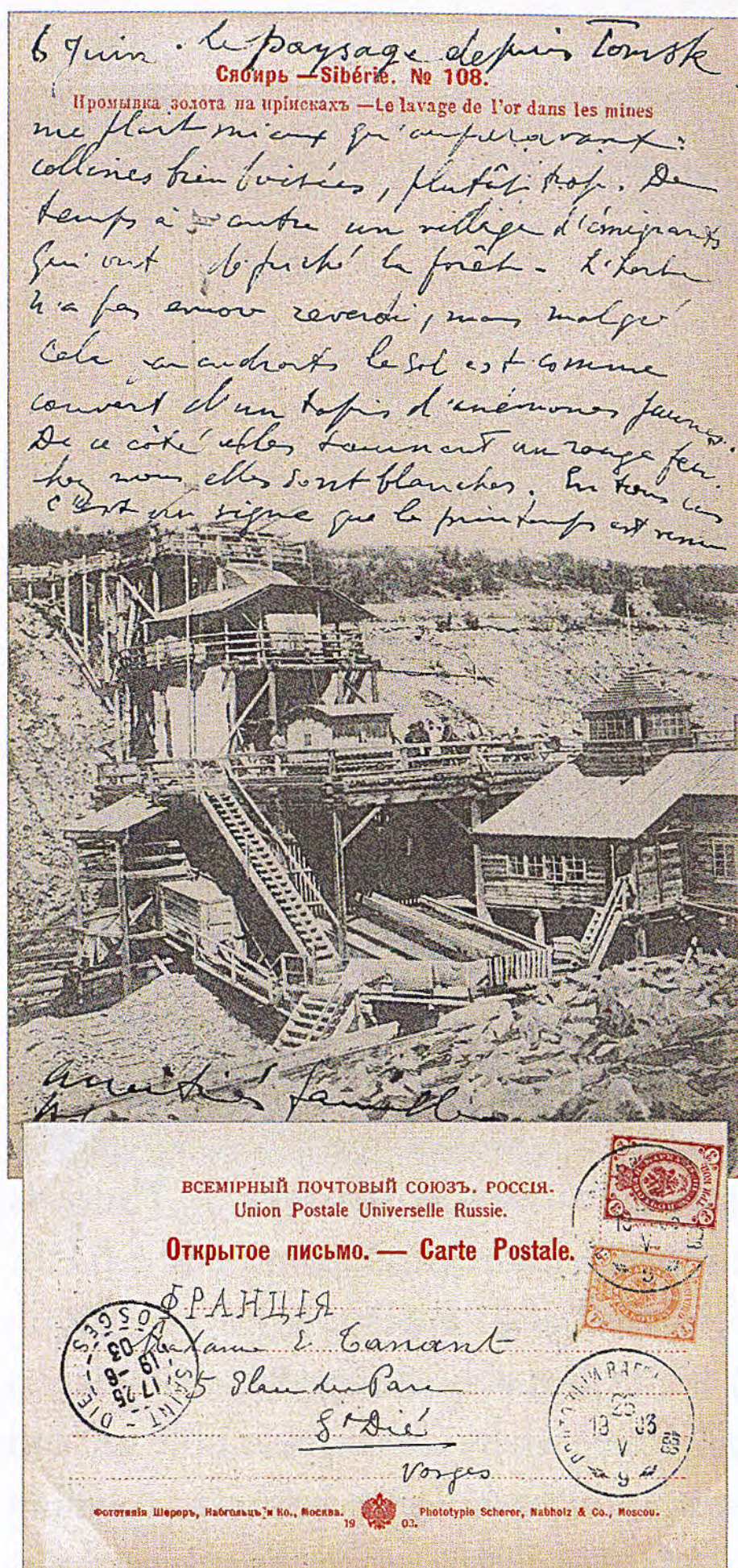


Fig. 52: 6 June. The countryside since Tomsk has been more pleasing than previously, with well-wooded hills; we saw a village where emigrants have settled in the forest. The grass has not yet returned but despite this in places the ground seems to be covered by a carpet of anemones. In this regard they resemble a red fire, while ours at home are white - in any case it is a sign that spring has arrived.

Railway and the Postal Wagon No 188 datestamp (KRASNOYARSK to NOVONIKOLAEVSK) with serial No 9 (unrecorded in "Russian Railway Postmarks") cancelled the Russian stamps on the card sent by Tanant. It arrived at ST DIE VOSGES 19-6. (Fig. 52)

Also on 24 May (6 June) Tanant sent a postcard and the 4 kopek stamp was cancelled with a Postal Wagon No 198 datestamp (IRKUTSK to KRASNOYARSK) serial No 2 (unrecorded



Fig. 53: 6 June evening. The engine puffs and moves onwards and tomorrow we will be in Irkutsk. The whole of this journey will be much faster in 5 years' time.



Fig. 54: 7 June. Arrived here safely; will continue the journey.





Fig. 55: 7 June. The Baikal is not a very fast ship, about 20 km per hour but is very powerful for breaking ice. Splendid weather on the lake, a light breeze refreshes the air; temperature 25°C in the sun. The mountains on the eastern side of the lake are all covered with snow and on the other side are so grandiose; at the same time the breeze passing over the mountains is so refreshing. Here we are in midsummer and it seems like the beginning of spring, but how cold it must be in winter!

Fig. 56

a picture postcard with a local view back to his mother, and the three Russian stamps totalling 4 kopeks were cancelled by an Irkutsk Station datestamp of 1903 V 25, with a Moscow transit mark of 1903 VI 2 and a ST DIE VOSGES arrival datestamp 18-6. (Fig. 54)

Also on 7 June Tanant sent a postcard with a view of the British-built icebreaking ferry "Baikal" which carried trains across Lake Baikal until the completion of the Circumbaikal Railway in 1905. (Fig. 55)

On this section of the Trans-Siberian Railway, Tanant tried to explore yet again the "printed matter" rate; he sent one postcard paying the correct 4 kopeks postage and another two franked only 2 kopeks paying the printed matter rate for postcards. The stamps on the first card were cancelled with Postal Wagon No. 242 datestamps (CHITA to IRKUTSK) serial No 2 (unrecorded in "Russian Railway Postmarks") with a Moscow transit mark and a ST DIE VOSGES arrival datestamp 22-6.

The two postcards each franked 2 kopeks (printed matter rate) were probably dropped into the letter box of the postal wagon at the same time as the above one, or the clerk on board would not accept such items with insufficient postage. Tanant was a philatelist himself and he succeeded in Moscow (14 cards individually franked 2 kopeks which met the minimum requirement of 10 kopeks for printed matter bundles) and would try the same technique again here in Irkutsk but this time, the result is amazing. Since these two postcards were not numbered by Tanant, no one knows how many such identical cards had actually been dropped into the box; suffice it to say that a thick pack would probably attract the attention of the clerk on board. (Figs. 56-57)



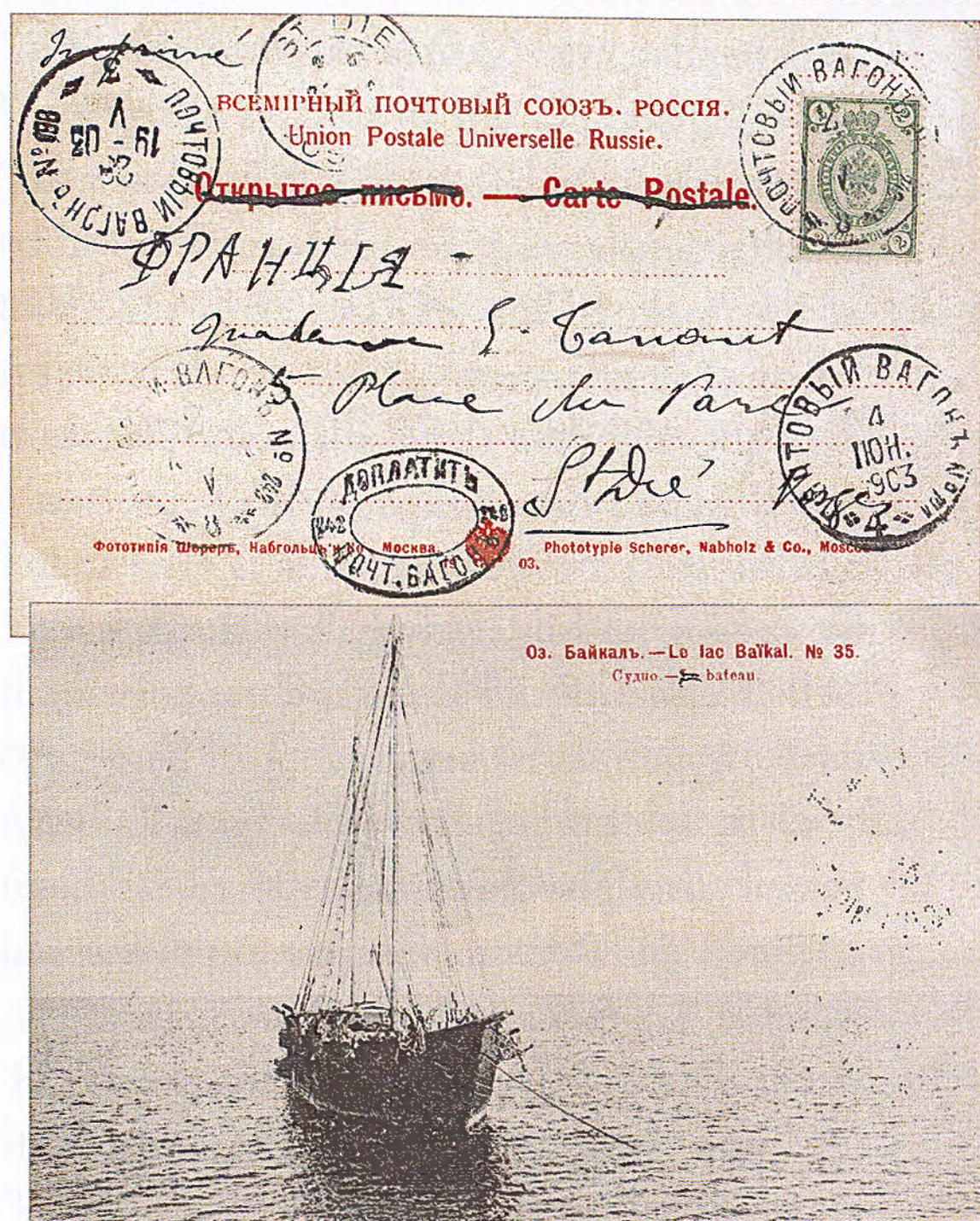


Fig. 57

The 2-kopek stamps on the two cards were cancelled with the Postal Wagon No 242 datestamp (CHITA to IRKUTSK) serial No 8 (earlier than the 24.05.04 date recorded in "Russian Railway Postmarks") and an oval postage due handstamp was struck but the clerk wasn't able to fill in the amount of postage due in the space at the centre of the oval handstamp. If two items had actually been sent, the total postage paid was 4 kopeks and (if they were to qualify for the printed matter rate) the amount payable would have been 10 kopeks, giving a deficiency here of 6 kopeks, and hence a total penalty of 12 kopeks. Was this amount to be levied on one item or split evenly among the two? This problem was not dealt with on Postal Wagon No 242, but was left to the discretion of the other postal wagons on the westward journey back to Warsaw, but Postal Wagon No 198 (IRKUTSK to KRANNOYARSK) and No 124 (CHELYABINSK to SAMARA) only applied their datestamps as a gesture of due diligence, and the two cards reached ST DIE VOSGES 24-6 without any postage due being charged.

The gap of seven days between the Postal Wagon No 198 and No 124 datestamps needs some explanation, as trains on both these sections travelled on a daily basis and the seven-day delay is impossible. Perhaps these two postcards had been detained by a higher-ranking postal official at an office near one of these stations, and the latter might have needed time to sort the matter out, that is, whether to forward the cards without a postage due penalty or to demand postage due by writing the amount to be collected from the recipient in the central space of the

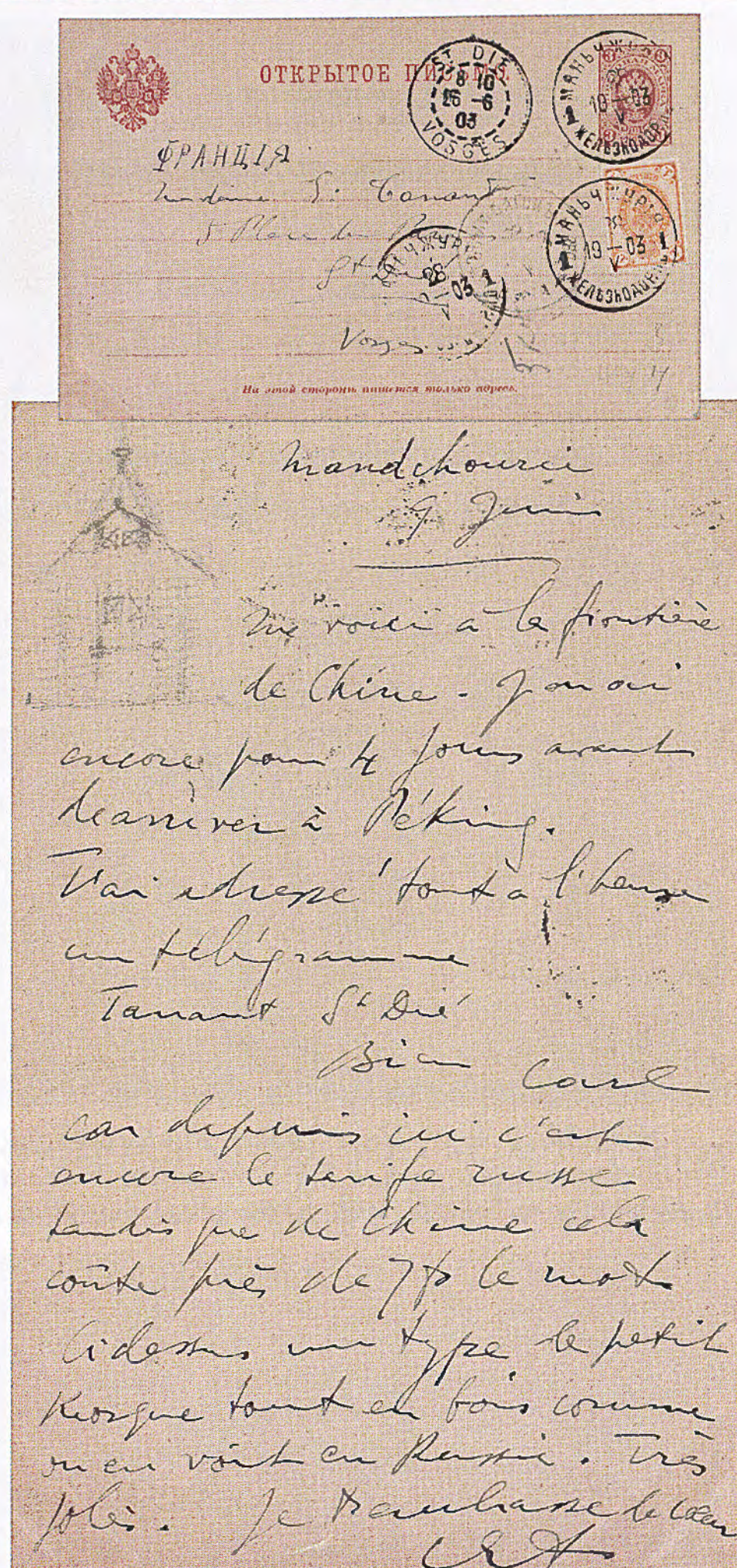


Fig. 58: Mandchourie (i.e. Manchouli) 9 June. Here I am on the frontier with China. I will only have 4 more days before arriving in Peking. I have just sent a telegram "Tanant St Dié. All well" because here it is still Russian territory while in China the cost is 7 times as much per word. Above is a type of small kiosk all made of wood, as one sees in Russia - very nice. I embrace you from my heart.





Fig. 59: 9 June. Here I am in the land of the Mongols. Yesterday evening passed the Yablonovoi Mountains which separate the watershed area of the polar seas from that of the Pacific.



Fig. 60: 10 June. We have been stuck here since this morning; it seems that a goods train in front of us has had an accident, otherwise all is well. Manchuria so far isn't very nice. The hills are quite bare everywhere that the Chinese have been.

oval handstamp. Clearly the first approach was adopted.

It was a philatelist like Tanant, unwittingly trying to explore the ambit of the "printed matter" rate with the "Via Siberia" mail service, that in each case brought together three different Russian postal wagon datestamps on the same card, but the story behind the cards is even more interesting and intriguing than the fine and well-struck array of three different Russian postal wagon datestamps!

The eastbound Trans-Siberian Railway passed through Chita and entered Chinese territory, and Tanant was able to purchase a Russian 3 kopek postal stationery card. He wrote this on 9 June and posted it on V 28 (10 June) with an additional franking of 1 kopek; it was cancelled by the postmark of the Russian post office at Manchouli. As the card travelled westwards, it received a Postal Wagon No. 260 datestamp (MANCHOULI to CHITA), serial No 1 and arrived at ST DIE VOSGES 28-6. (Fig. 58)

Tanant's next postcard is dated 9 June, and the 3k and 1k stamps are cancelled with Postal Wagon No. 260 (Manchouli-Chita) postmarks with the Julian date 1903 V 29 (11 June) and serial No. 1. There is also a transit mark of another postal wagon with the same date, but the route number cannot be discerned. The card reached ST DIE VOSGES on 28 June. (Fig. 59)

The next postcard is dated 10 June, the 3k and 1k stamps being cancelled by Postal Wagon No. 262 datestamps with serial No. 6 (unrecorded in "Russian Railway Postmarks"). These are dated 1903 V 28 (10 June), suggesting that the card that Tanant dated 9 June was somehow delayed before being forwarded by the Postal Wagon No. 260 two days later. There is also a transit mark of Postal Wagon No. 242 dated 1903 V 30. This card also reached ST DIE





VOSGES on 28 June. (Fig. 60)

On the section of the Chinese Eastern Railway between Harbin and Port Arthur, Tanant sent two Russian 3k postal stationery cards back to France on V 30 or 12 June, each with an additional franking of 1 kopek, cancelled by a Postal Wagon No 265 datestamp (HARBIN to PORT ARTHUR) serial No 4 and No 266 (PORT ARTHUR to HARBIN) serial No 5 respectively; both of these cancellations are unrecorded in "Russian Railway Postmarks". The cards arrived at ST DIE VOSGES 2-7 and this gives a good indication that it needed 20 days for a postcard to complete its entire journey along the railway network to its destination in Eastern France. After being posted on the train, either at Port Arthur or at some location between Port Arthur and Harbin, the card would first have been carried by this train to Harbin, and then westwards via the C.E.R main line. After crossing the border at Manchouli it would have continued its journey via Chita and the Trans-Siberian line to Moscow. At Moscow, bags of mail destined for France would have been transferred to a Moscow-Warsaw-Berlin-Paris train, and finally at Paris the card would have entered the ordinary French internal postal service for the last part of its journey to St Dié. Quite a journey for 4 kopeks!

The card with the Postal Wagon No. 266 postmark is shown below. (Fig. 61)

The other card sent on 12 June, with Postal Wagon No. 265 postmarks, was written in the evening. (Fig. 62)

It follows from the above that Tanant did not travel all the way to Port Arthur, but left the train at Ta Shih Chiao to take another train to Newchwang (Yingkow) and on to Peking. The next postcard that he sent to his mother on VI 1 or 14 June revealed that he stopped at

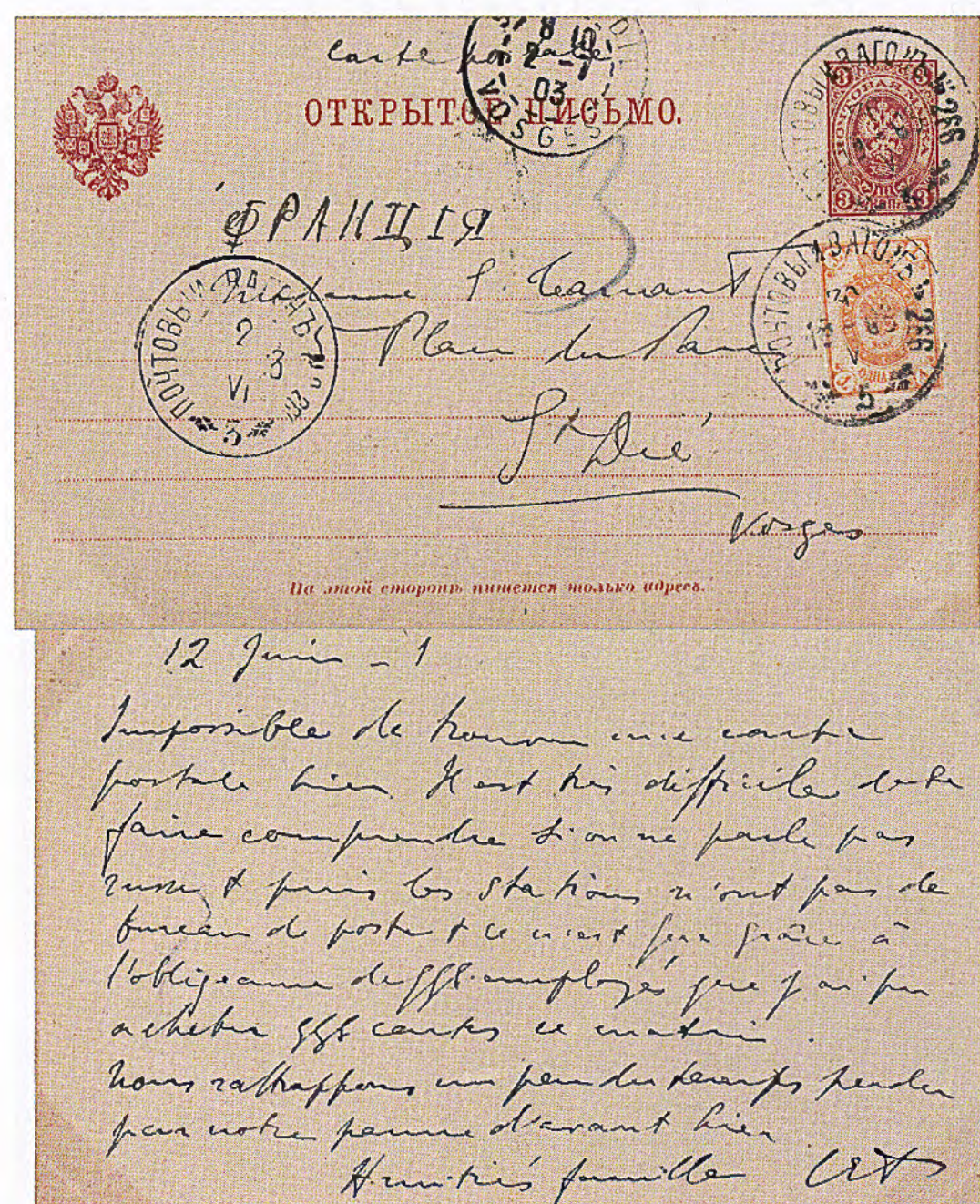


Fig. 61: 12 June. Impossible to find a postcard yesterday. It is very difficult to be understood if one does not speak Russian, also the stations do not have post offices, and it is only thanks to the obliging nature of some clerks that I have been able to buy some cards this morning. We are making up some of the time that we lost during the breakdown the day before yesterday. Regards to the family.

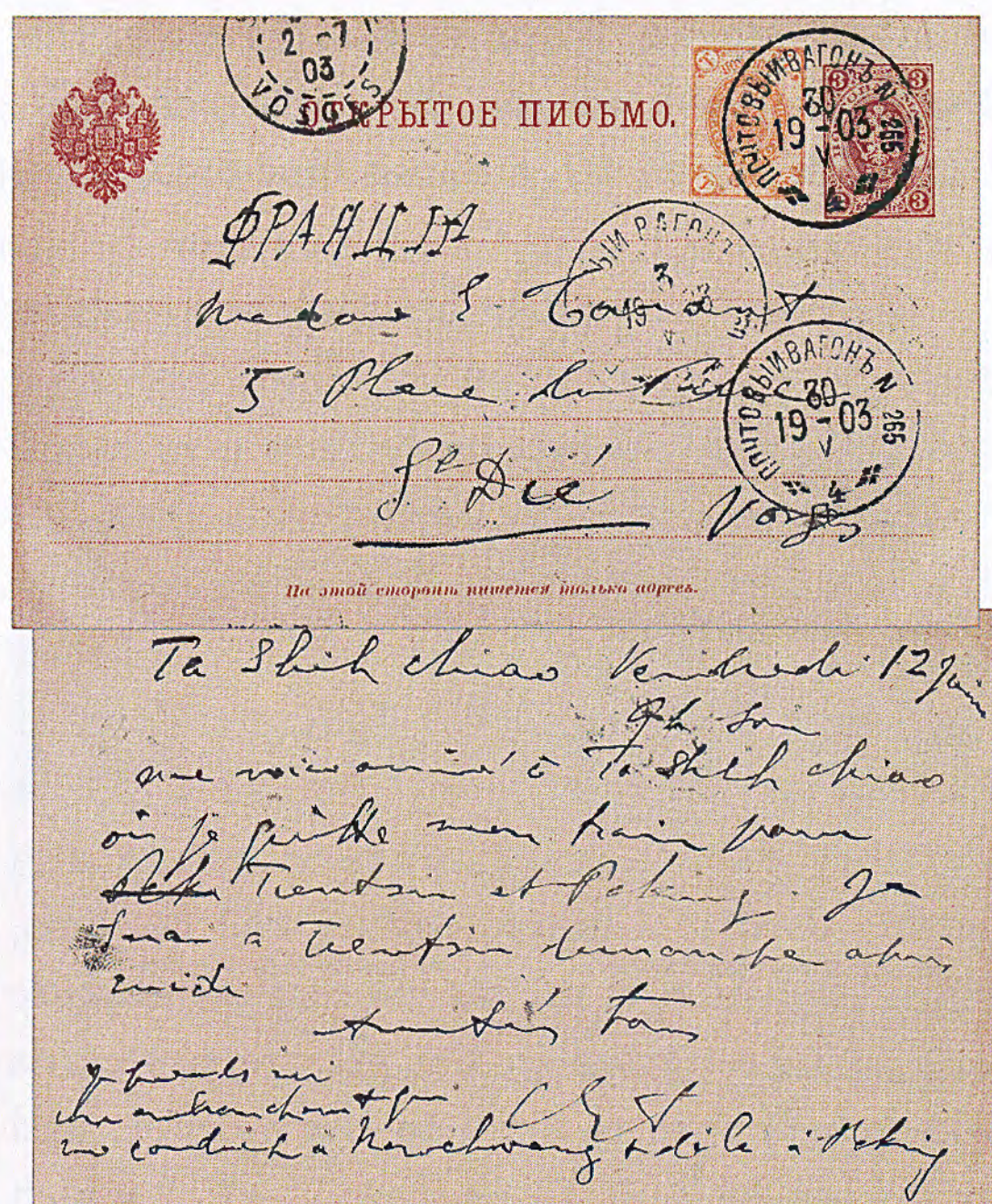


Fig. 62: Ta Shih Chiao. Friday 12 June, 9 p.m. Here I am having arrived at Ta Shih Chiao where I leave my train for Tientsin and Peking. I will be at Tientsin on Sunday afternoon. Regards to all. Here I take a branch line that will take me to Newchwang and from there to Peking.



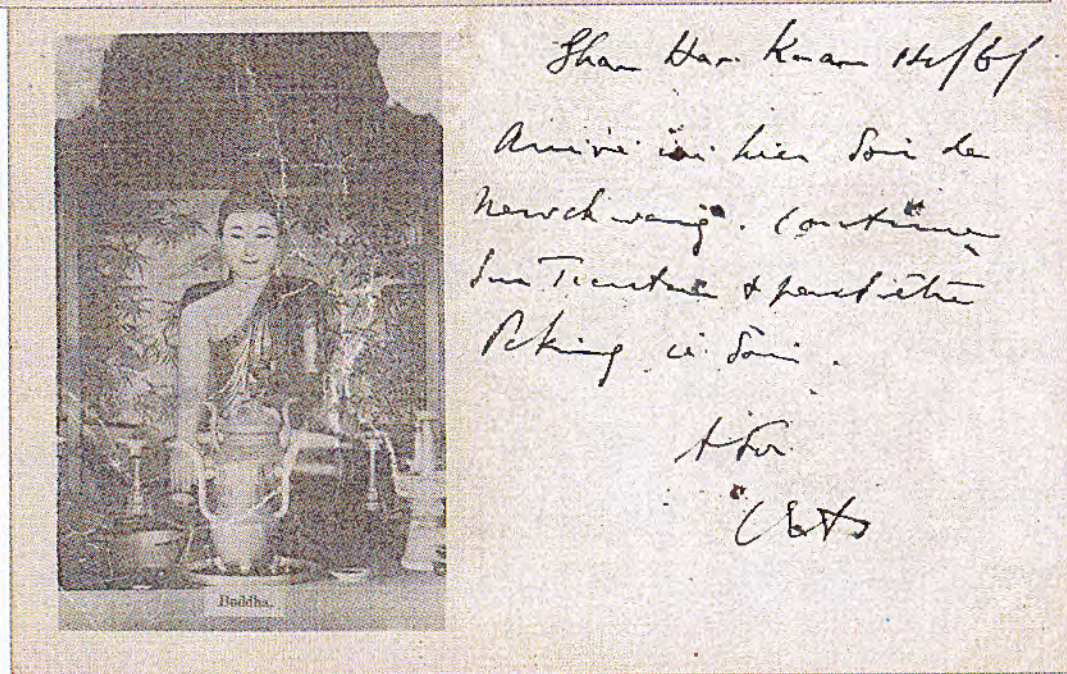


Fig. 63: Shan Hai Kuan 14/6. Arrived here yesterday evening from Newchwang. Continue on to Tientsin and perhaps Peking this evening.

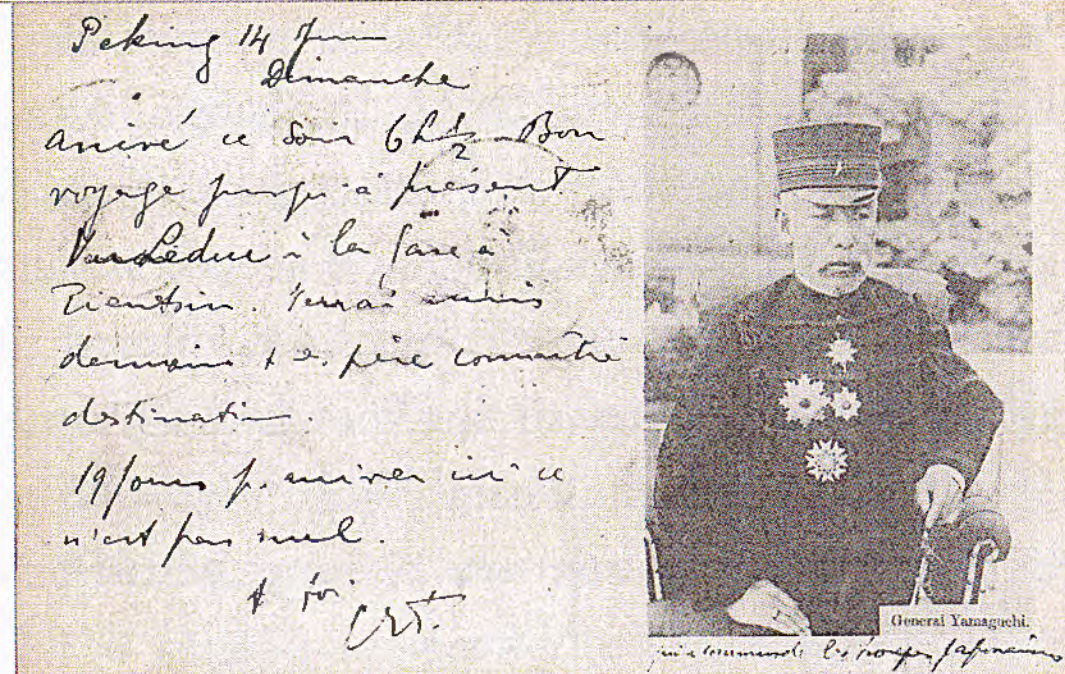


Fig. 64: Peking 14 June. Sunday. Arrived here this evening at 6-30; pleasant journey so far. Saw Leduc at the station in Tientsin. Will see friends tomorrow and hope to know my destination. 19 days to get here - it is not bad. (Photo of General Yamaguchi) who led the Japanese troops.

Shanhaikwan on the provincial border of the Northeast Provinces and the card reached ST DIE VOSGES on 4-7, a transit time of 20 days. (Fig. 63)

Madame Tanant kept her son's postcards in chronological order in an old album but three or four pages had previously been torn away, leaving a ten-day blank period with details of Tanant's trip recorded on eight or ten missing postcards. Fortunately these did not concern the Trans-Siberian or the Chinese Eastern Railway as Tanant was by then in Chinese territory experiencing, understanding and getting used to Chinese culture and customs. His appreciation of the magnificent architecture was again reflected in the picture postcards which he chose to send to his mother, and in Peking he sent 13 of them, two of which with messages on back were franked with 4 kopeks postage and the other 11 at the "printed matter" rate of 2 kopeks. The Russian Post Office at Peking accepted this "bundle" because the 11 items paid a total postage in excess of

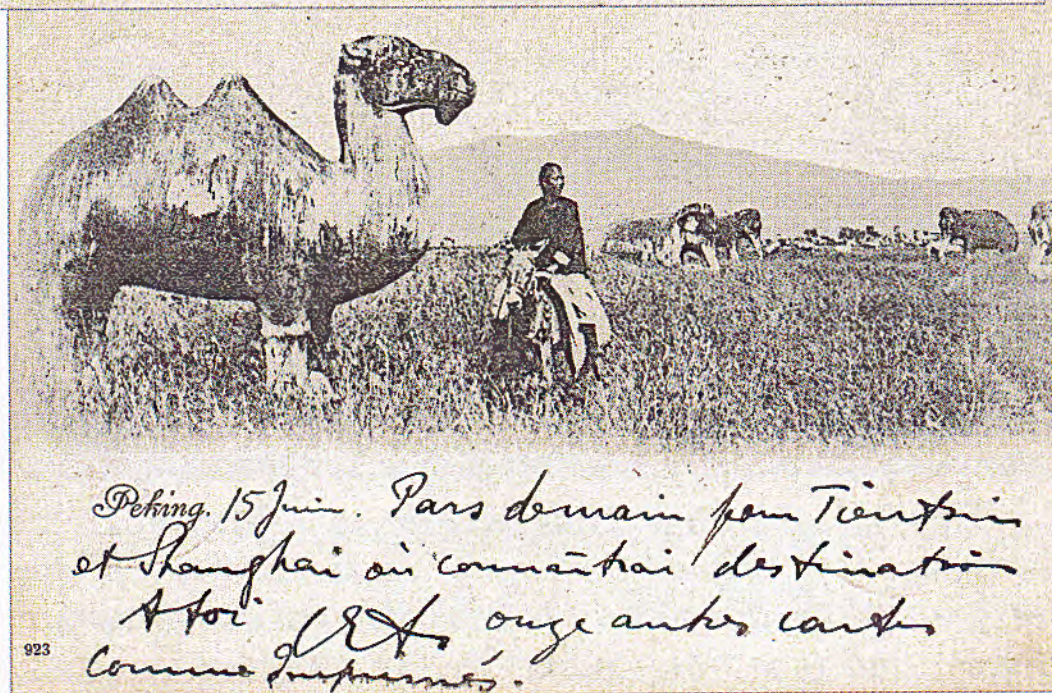


Fig. 65: 15 June. Leave tomorrow for Tientsin and Shanghai where I will know my destination. Eleven other cards as printed matter.



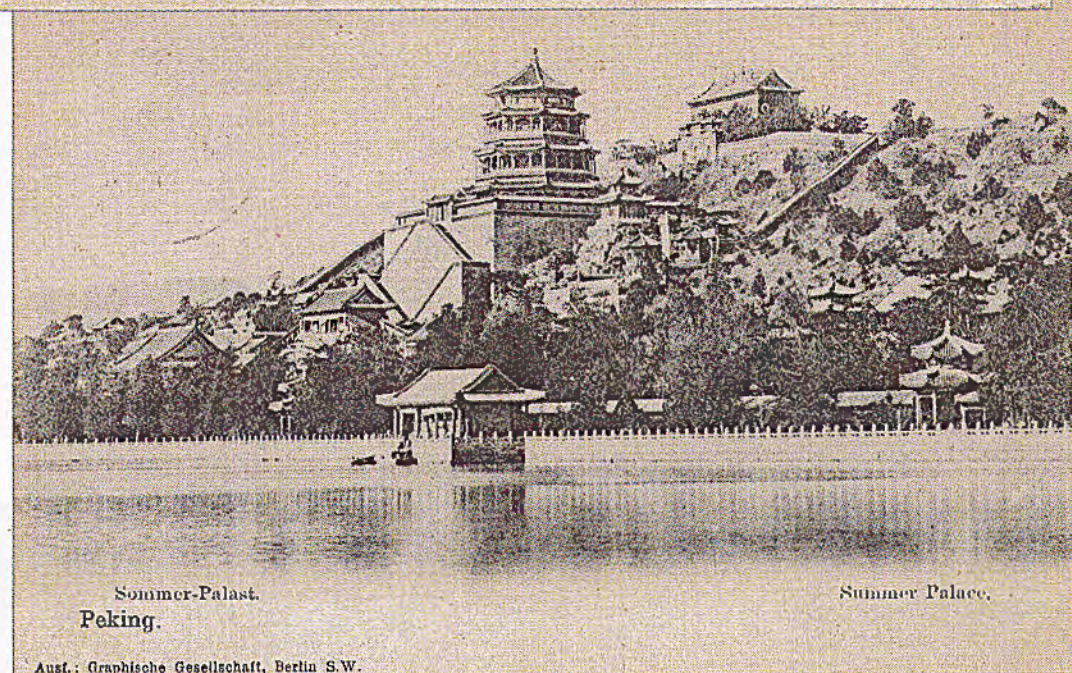


Fig. 66



Fig. 67

the minimum 10 kopeks. On the first of these cards, dated VI 10 or 23 June, Tanant wrote in manuscript "Via Shanhaikuan and Siberia" in the upper left corner. A great majority of these cards received Moscow transit datestamps, and all carried ST DIE VOSGES arrival datestamps of 17-7. Tanant did not number each card individually and no-one knows the actual number of cards which he sent on this day, 14 June 1903. (Figs. 64-65)

At Peking, Tanant was able to give a first-hand report to the Chinese Customs on the

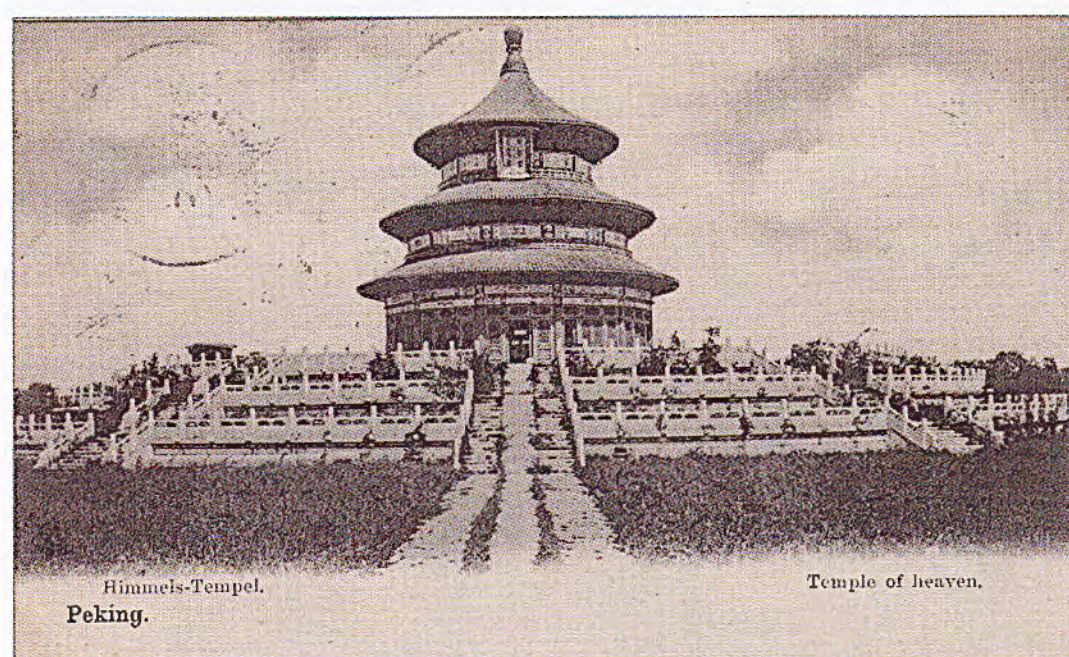


Fig. 68

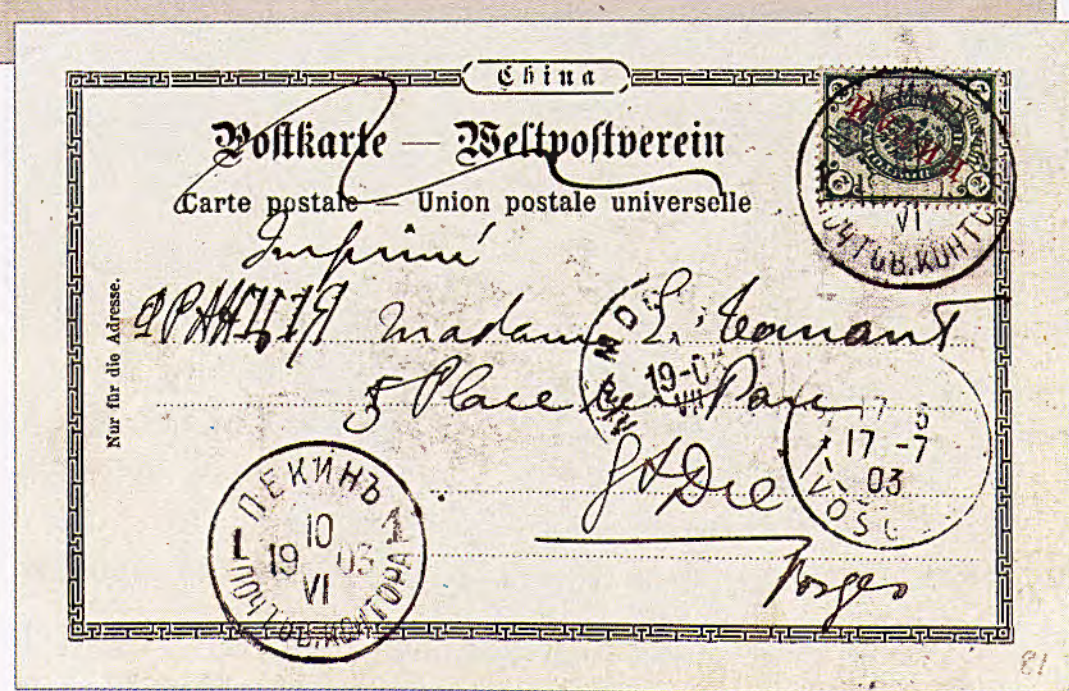
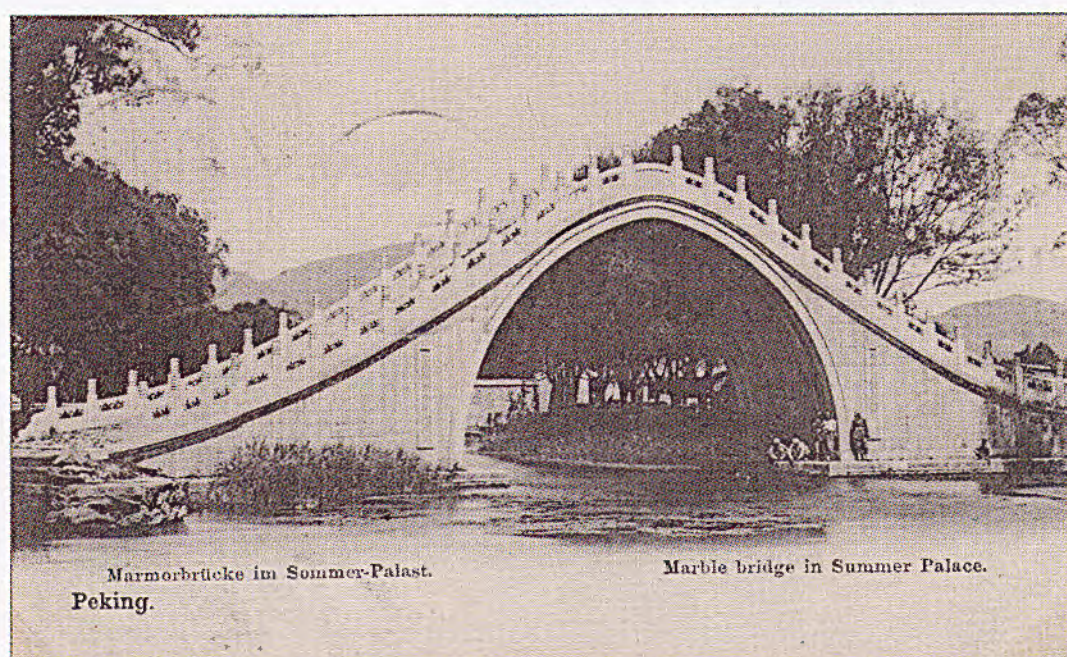


Fig. 70





Marmor-Schiff im Sommer Palast.  
Peking.

Marble boat in Summer Palace.



Kaisersstadt vom Kohlenhügel aus gesehen.

Ausf.: Graphische Gesellschaft, Berlin S.W.



Fig. 71



Fig. 72



Hatamen Thor.  
Peking.

Hatamen Gate.

Ausf.: Graphische Gesellschaft, Berlin S.W.



Fig. 69

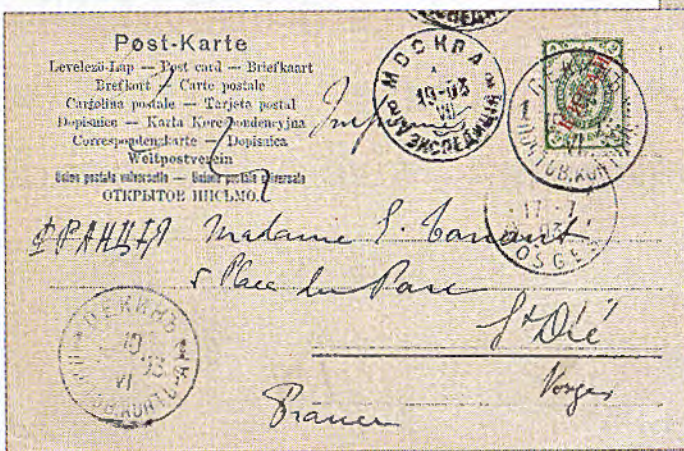
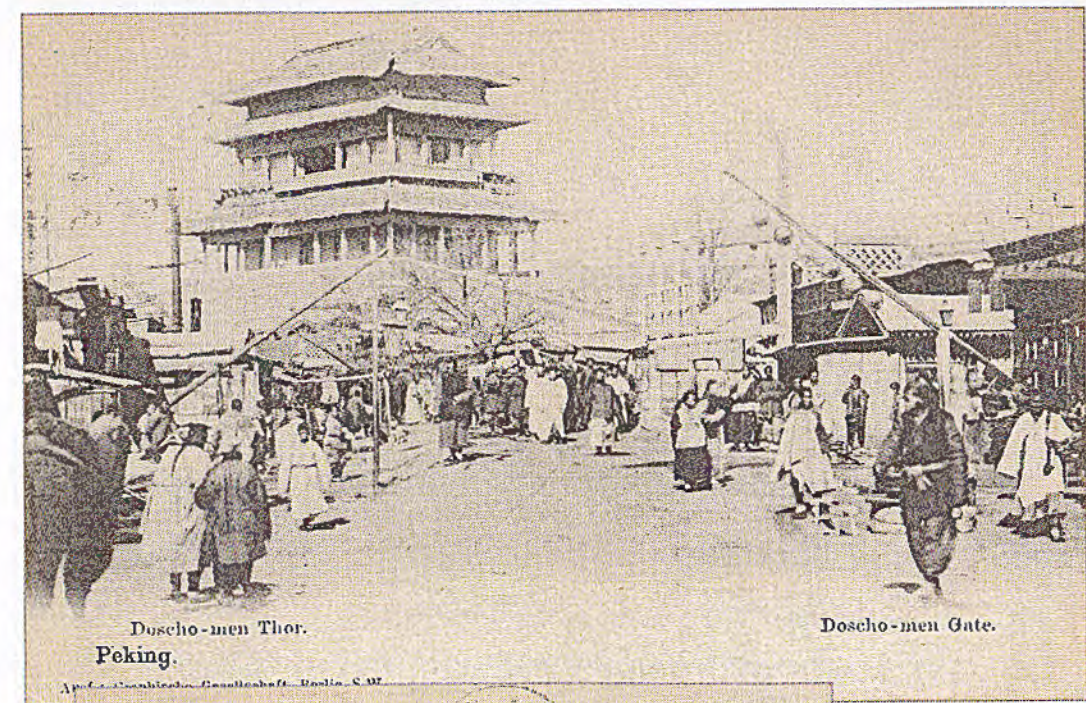


Fig. 73



Tien-ning-ssi Pagode.  
Peking.

Tien-ning-ssi Pagode.



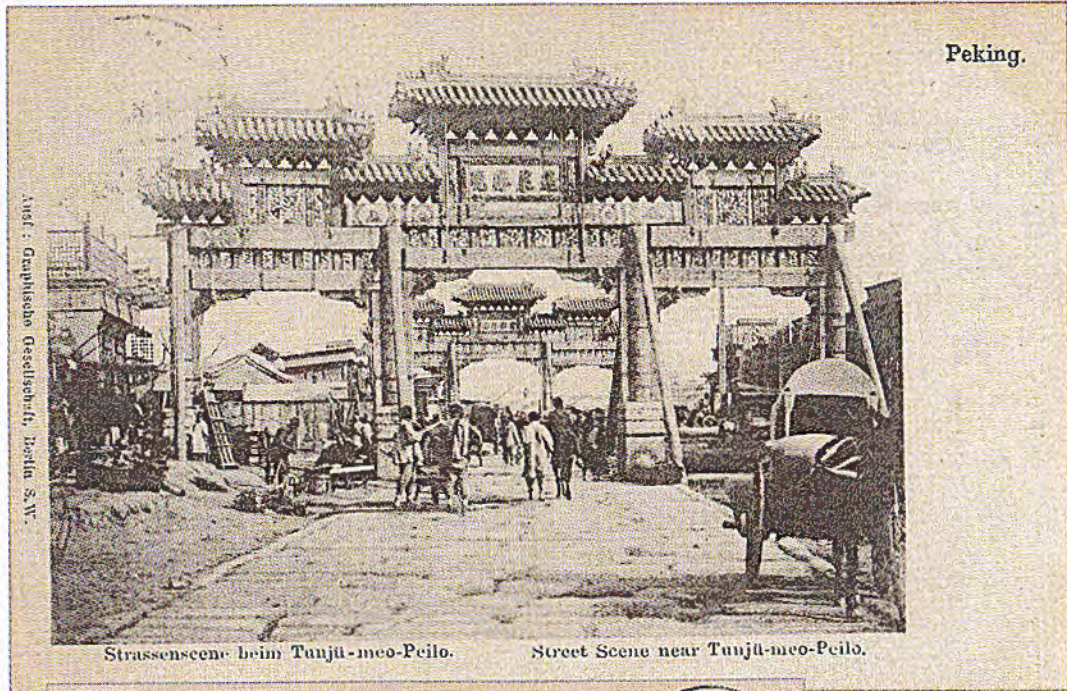
Doscho-men Thor.  
Peking.

Doscho-men Gate.

Ausf.: Graphische Gesellschaft, Berlin S.W.



Fig. 74



Strassenscene beim Tjanju-meo-Peilo.

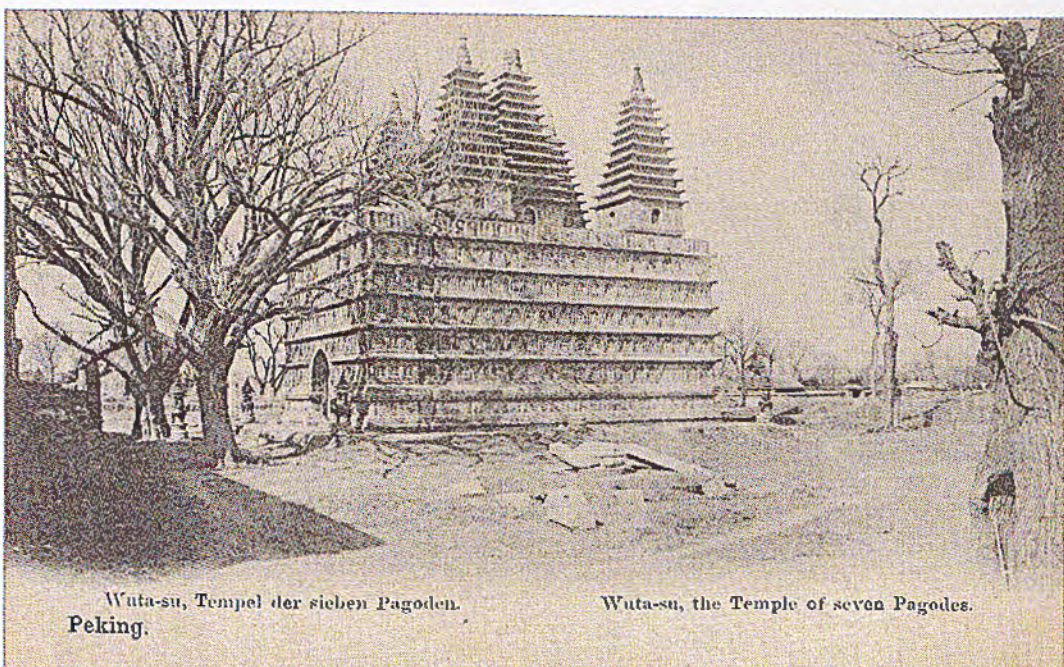
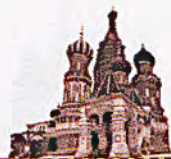
Street Scene near Tjanju-meo-Peilo.

Peking.



Fig. 75





Wuta-su, Tempel der sieben Pagoden.  
Peking.

Wuta-su, the Temple of seven Pagodes.

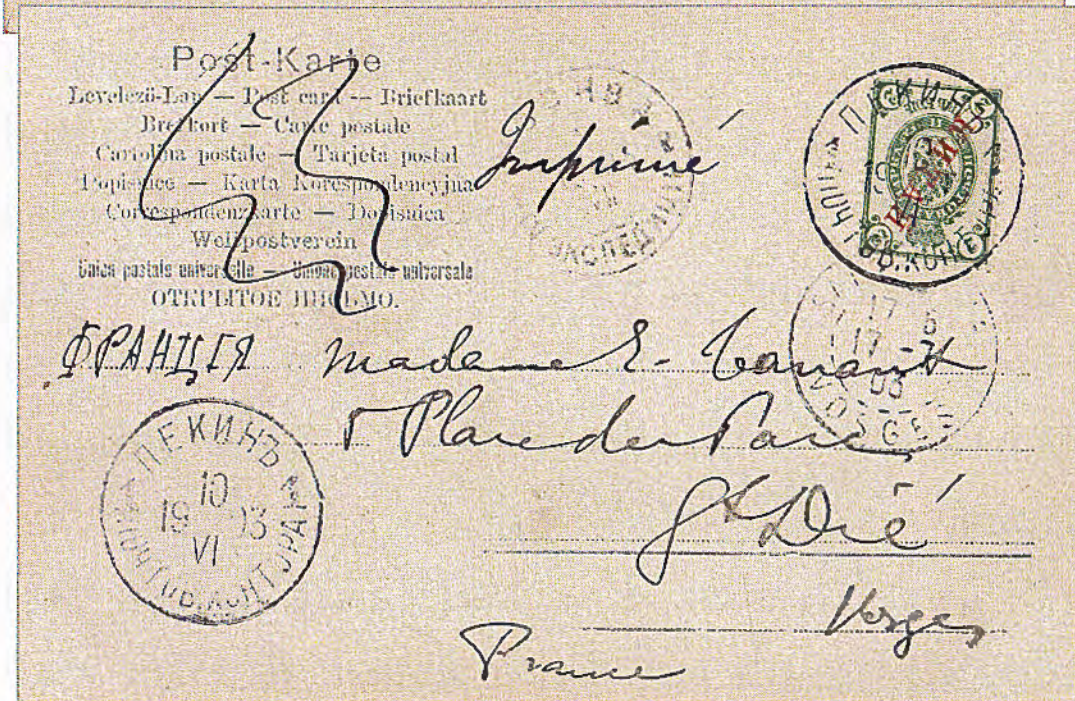


Fig. 76

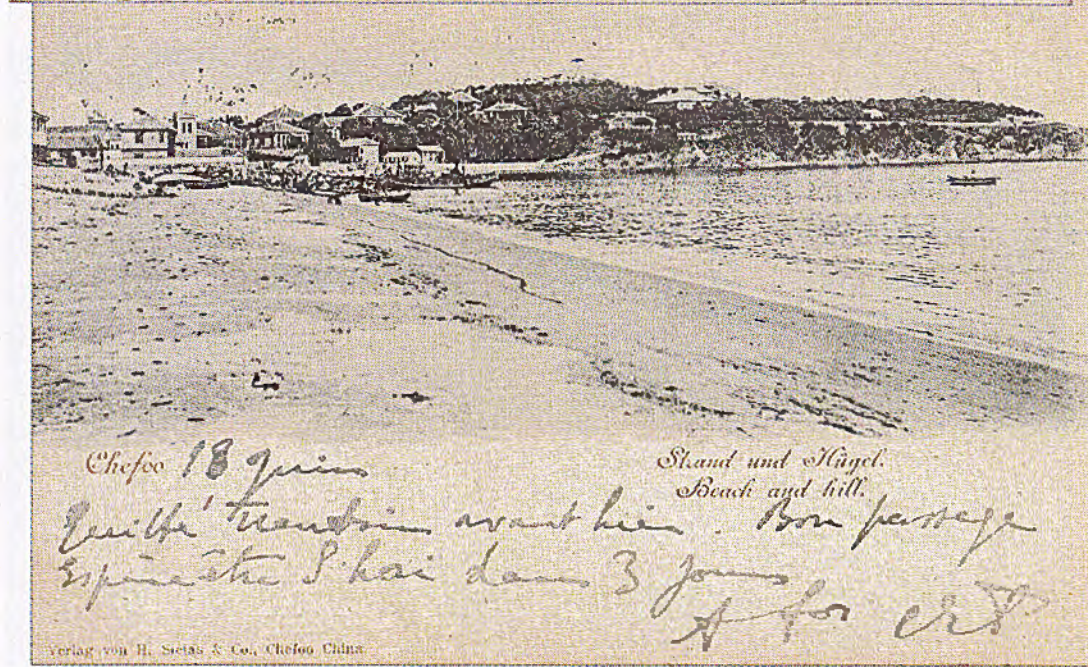


Fig. 77: 18 June. Left Tientsin the day before yesterday. Good journey, hope to be in Shanghai in 3 days.

operation and efficiency of the Trans-Siberian Railway and the "Via Siberia" mail service, both of which were about to exert enormous influence on the post and commerce between China and Europe. (Figs. 66-76)

After Tanant had reported for duty at the Imperial Maritime Customs in Peking, he was assigned to Chefoo, the most strategic station for mail between China and Europe because the time had come for the "Via Siberia" service to be extended to China and Europe, and during the initial stages the bulk of the mail was envisaged to converge upon Newchwang and Chefoo. Tanant only had time to send two postcards to his mother on 18 June (Gregorian date); both of them reached ST DIE VOSGES 12-7, i.e. a normal transit period of 24 days.

One card mentions Tientsin, perhaps Tanant left Peking for Tientsin on his way to Chefoo and he dutifully reported his itinerary to his mother back in France. (Figs. 77-78)

Having done his share of the work in Chefoo, Tanant was again assigned to Shanghai where he stayed for quite a long period from 27 June 1903 (Gregorian date) to 22 February 1904. During this eight-month stay, he only posted 13 picture postcards back to his mother; he yet again tested the efficiency of various

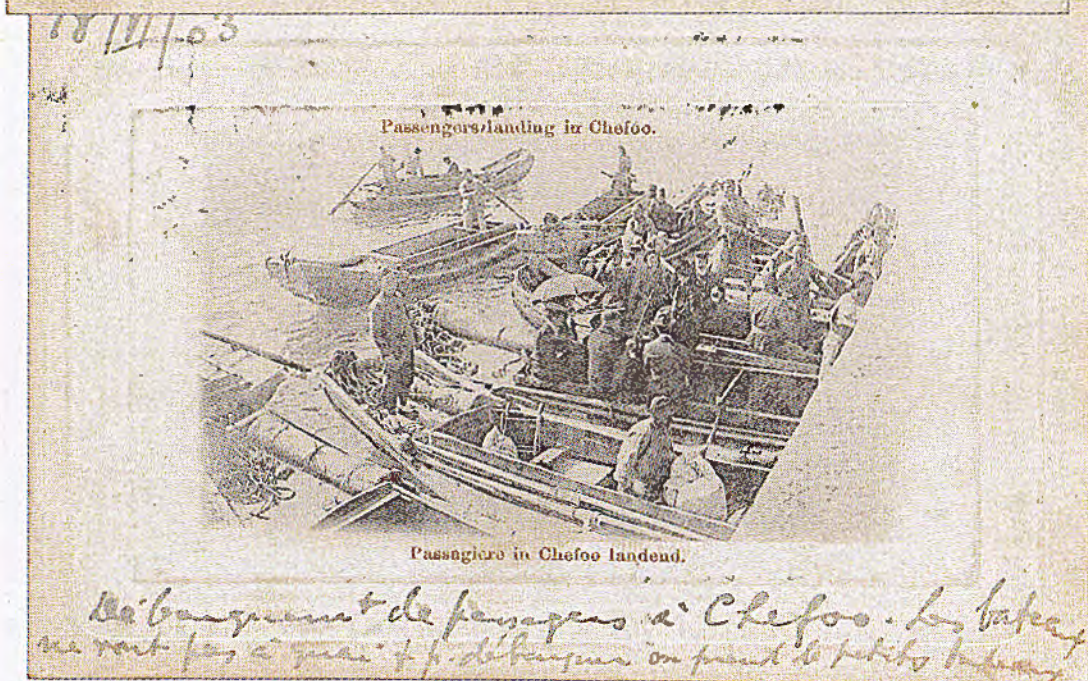


Fig. 78: 18/VI/03 Passengers disembarking at Chefoo. The ships do not go to the quay and one uses little boats to disembark.





Fig. 79: 27 June 1903. Assigned to the office in Shanghai. Write to me at the Customs in Shanghai....



Fig. 80: 18.7.03. How are things? Received mother's letters of 2 & 12 June. Very warm at present.

foreign post offices which handled mail to Europe "Via Siberia" and played around with the postage required to send a postcard back to St. Die. Though there was no relationship between this batch of postcards and the Trans-Siberian or Chinese Eastern Railways, the last item of this collection, posted at the British Post Office in Shanghai on 22 February 1904 was endorsed "Via Suez" because Tanant was fully aware that the Russo-Japanese War which broke out on 8 February 1904 had interrupted the "Via Siberia" mail service as far as China was concerned as mail items could not reach Harbin when the southern part of the Chinese Northeast Provinces fell into the hands of Japan.

The Russian Post Office at Shanghai adopted month and day notation in Gregorian date reckoning and Tanant's first card from Shanghai was dated 27 VI or 27 June; it arrived in Paris on 20-7 and ST DIE VOSGES 22-7. (Fig. 79)

Perhaps Tanant was so actively engaged in his work that it took him twenty days to send his second postcard from Shanghai; the Russian stamps have dropped off but a clear strike of the Russian Post Office Shanghai datestamp VII 18 matched the manuscript date 18.7.03. The postcard is, exceptionally, not addressed to Tanant's mother, the addressee being "Monsieur R. Tanant, Ministry of Agriculture, 78 Rue de Varenne, Paris 7ème". The card reached PARIS on 10-8. (Fig. 80)

Tanant then tried to post a third card from the Imperial Post Office at Shanghai, knowing full well that he had to pay 4c in Chinese postage and another 4 kopeks in Russian postage, and being a philatelist he was keen to record such special postal arrangements as

existed at that time. China was not a member of the Universal Postal Union and China and Russia entered into a Postal Agreement only in late 1909: prior to this, items from China to be carried "Via Siberia" had to carry additional Russian postage. The Chinese stamps were cancelled on 29 August but the Russian stamps two days later on 31 VIII; there is a postal wagon transit mark but the number cannot be ascertained. (Fig. 81)





Fig. 81: 29.VIII. 03 At last received your word of ... I hope this card will find you in good health on returning to St Dié. The "little orphan" - a rock in the middle of the river.

During the months August to December, he sent eight cards back home, two of which on 1 August were franked with a 4c Chinese Imperial Post stamp and pair of 2 kopek Russian stamps; both reached ST DIE VOSGES 2 Sept. and the fourth one on 8 October which transited Moscow and reached ST DIE VOSGES in November. (Figs. 82-83)

On 1 October 1903 the Russian Post Office announced the official inauguration of the "Via Siberia" mail service. Items of mail destined for European countries could be carried via Siberia on condition that the prescribed Russian postage had been paid and there was a specific instruction to send the item via Siberia. Initially the Imperial Chinese Post Office only allowed post offices north of Shanghai to accept items of mail for Europe to be sent via Siberia but in very rare cases, items of mail from southern provinces such as Fukien and Kwangtung are also found marked "Via Siberia" and dated 1903 and were also endorsed to be sent via Siberia according to the instructions. (Fig. 84)

The additional Russian postage payable on "via Siberia" items of mail could be circumvented



Fig. 82: Did not have time to write today. Also nothing of interest to tell you. Love to all. 1 August 1903. Indicated on the card are buildings - from left to right "The Customs", "Building of Maitland & Co", "German bank".



Fig. 83: Official architecture here is not more beautiful than in Turkey as you thought ....





Fig. 84: S'hai 4 Oct. 03. Received letters safely and glad to hear that the good weather has at last returned to you. Here the days pass quickly and until now I have not found the time to write. In future address letters 'Viâ Russia and Dalny'. I will also send an address by the next post.

by utilising the Universal Postal Union membership status. Since the French Post Office was on good terms with the Russian Post Office, it could ask the latter to deliver mail items to Europe free of charge. Tanant was aware of this fact and accordingly he sent the third card on 26 November with 10c French postage and he endorsed "Via Siberia" in the upper left corner. The card reached ST DIE VOSGES 26-11 without any postage due charged. It was a pity that he did not explore the "printed matter" rate by sending postcards franked with 5c postage. (Fig. 85)

Now that the first postal barrier had been broken, it was not difficult to break the second one. The Imperial Chinese Post Office had signed a Postal Agreement with the French Post Office to deliver each other's mail free of charge as from 1 January 1902. Based on this Agreement, the Imperial Chinese Post Office could hand over items of mail marked "Via Siberia" to the French Post Office for further handling and the latter could then request the Russian Post Office to do the work on its behalf, relying on the Universal Postal Union membership status. It could be expected that in the absence of a need for additional Russian postage to use the "Via Siberia" mail service, mail volumes would increase drastically, but this seemingly attractive benefit did not last long and 4 months later on 8 February 1904 the Russo-Japanese War broke out on Chinese soil. Japan was then in full control of Southern Manchuria and China was cut off from the Chinese Eastern Railway and the Trans-Siberian Railway because items of mail simply



Fig. 85: 3/10/03 Well. The races will be the day after tomorrow. I hope that this beggar will not go there....



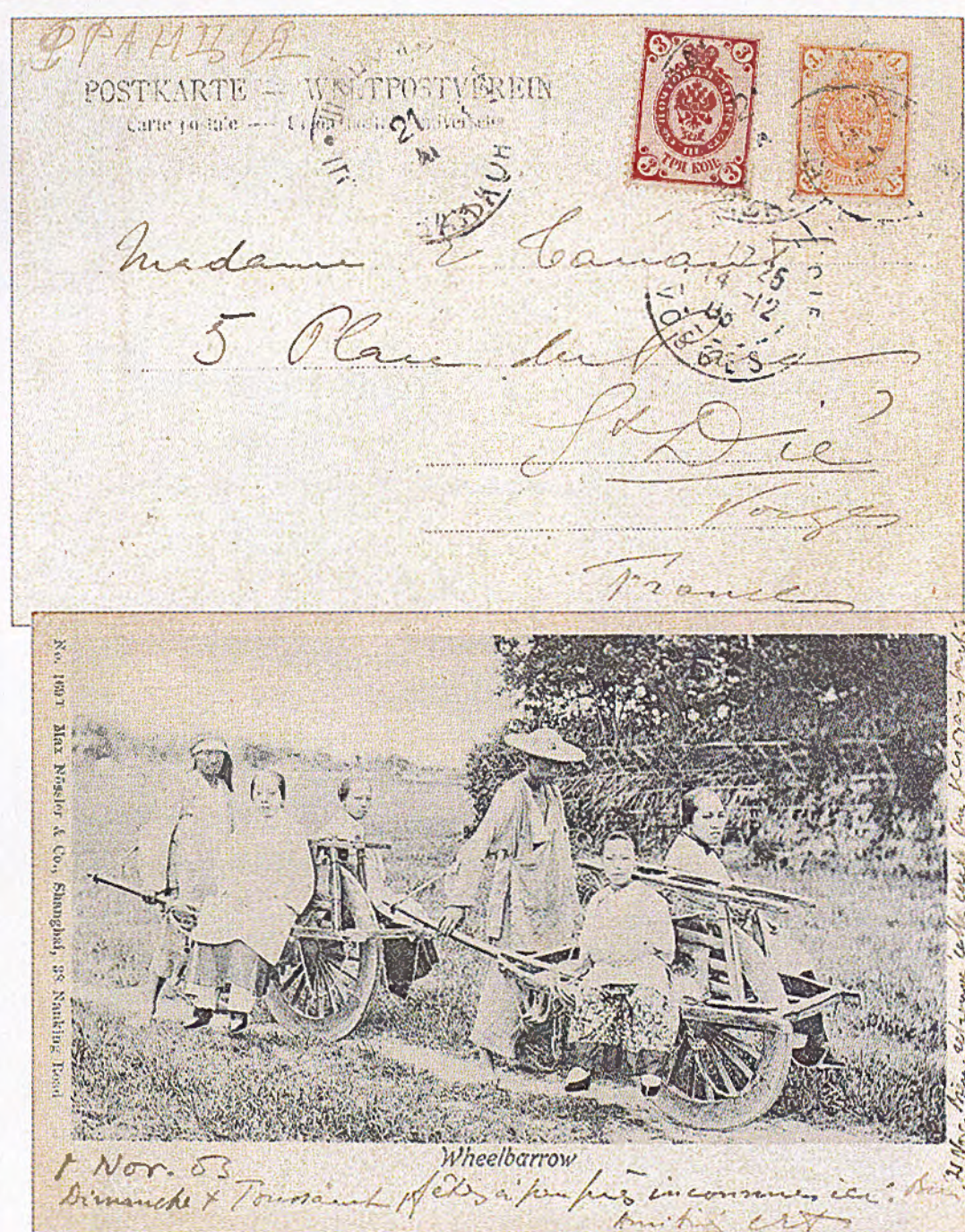


*Fig. 86: S'hai 7 Nov. This week passed quickly in view of the 3 race days which are almost like feast days. I will write next week.*

could not reach Harbin in the first instance.

Tenant's fifth postcard dated 7 NOV from Shanghai arrived at ST DIE VOSGES 1-12 and the transit time can be worked out to be 25 days. He suspected that mail exchange formalities between Chinese and French Post Offices and then between French and Russian Post Offices had resulted in inevitable delay and he posted this sixth card (with a message written on 1 NOV 03) on 21 XI at the Russian Post Office in Shanghai, paying 4 kopeks Russian postage. It arrived at ST DIE VOSGES 14-12 and the transit time taken was 23 days. (Figs. 86-87)

Germany was also a member of the Universal Postal Union and Tanant sent the seventh postcard through the German Post Office in Shanghai to test the efficiency of the mail service. Unfortunately the three German stamps have dropped off and the cancellation is illegible but the message on the back indicated that it was written on 3/12/03. Addressed to "Monsieur R. Tanant" in Paris it was redirected and reached ST DIE VOSGES 31-12, a transit time of 28 days. The card shows the French



*Fig. 87: 1 Nov. 03. Sunday and All Saints' Day, feasts are almost unknown here. Regards. 21 Nov. I found again this card that I tried to send. Regards to the family.*



Fig. 88: S'hai 3/12/04. I suppose that this will arrive around New Year. Do not forget little ...send as printed matter 5 booklets that you will take to mother. Regards to all. Very tired.



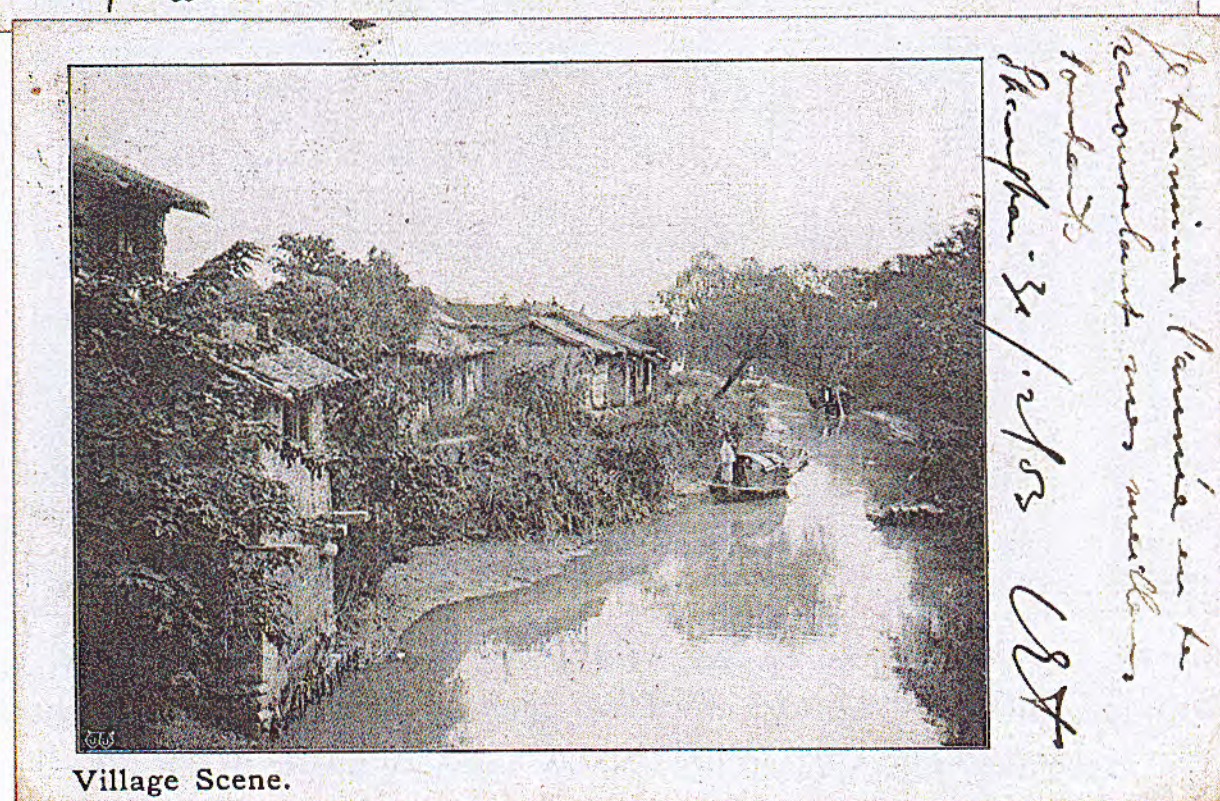
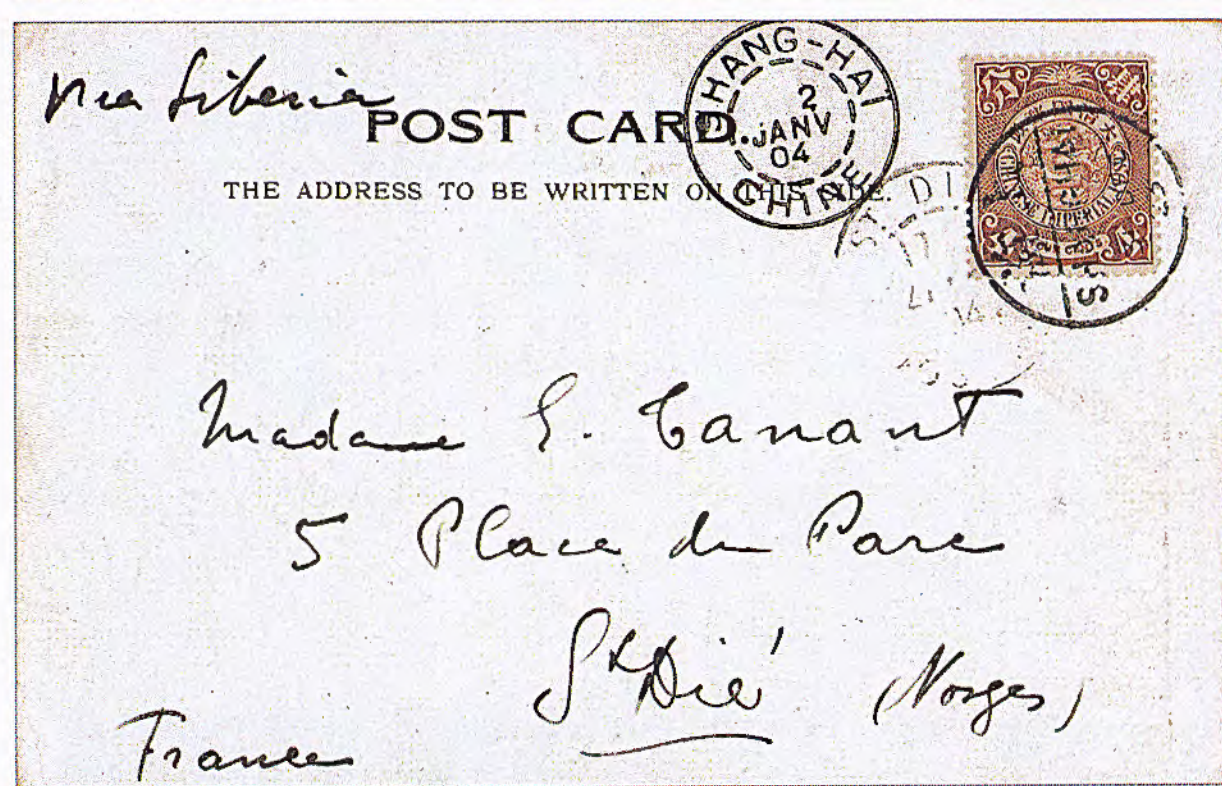


Fig. 89: Shanghai 31/12/03 I end the year by renewing my best wishes to you.

Consulate in Shanghai at that time. On the last day of 1903, Tanant sent the eighth greeting postcard from Shanghai to his mother, franked with Chinese Post Office 4 cents and endorsed "Via Siberia" in the top left corner. The stamp was cancelled with a 31 DEC 03 Shanghai datestamp, it transited the French Post Office at Shanghai on 2 JANV 04 and arrived St. Die Vosges 27 JANV 04. (Figs. 88-89)

The last item of this series was posted through the British Post Office in Shanghai on FE 22 and franked with a Hong Kong 4 cent stamp. By this time the Russo-Japanese War had broken out and the Chinese Northeast Provinces became a battlefield, effectively severing the mail link to Harbin with the link to the Chinese Eastern and then the Trans-Siberian railways. Tanant was aware of this situation and he wrote in the upper left "Via Suez"; the card reached his mother in France on 26-3, with a much longer transit time of 32 days. (Fig. 90)

Tanant's abilities were appreciated by his superiors and he was promoted to the Customs at Mengtsz in 1911 partly because his French background helped a lot. He married a Chinese girl from Chekiang Province; they lived in Wenchow in 1917 and had a daughter. In October 1923, he retired with a handsome pension and ended his 36-year career with the Chinese Customs.



Fig. 90: This pagoda gives a clear impression of China: grandeur and dilapidation. 22/02/04.



## Circular Russian Postal Wagon Datestamps appearing on C. E. Tanant's Postcards

### (a) The Trans-Siberian Railway



No.30-----serial 2  
Minsk-----Warsaw



No.41-----serial 7  
Moscow-----Minsk



No.64-----serial 6 (?)  
Sizran-----Ryazhsk



No.124-----serial 1  
Chelyabinsk-----Samara



No.124-----serial 2  
Chelyabinsk-----Samara



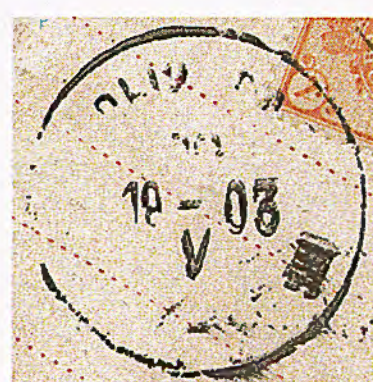
No.124-----serial 4  
Chelyabinsk-----Samara



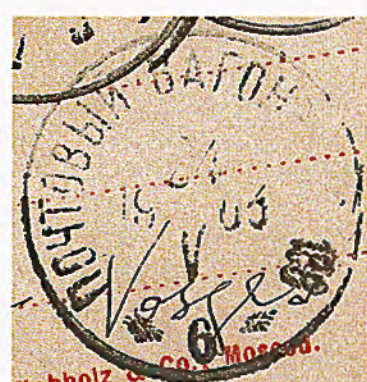
No.168-----serial 6  
Omsk-----Chelyabinsk



No.???-----serial 7



No.186-----serial ?/?/6  
Novonikolaevsk-----Omsk



No.198-----serial 2/9  
Irkutsk-----Krasnoyarsk



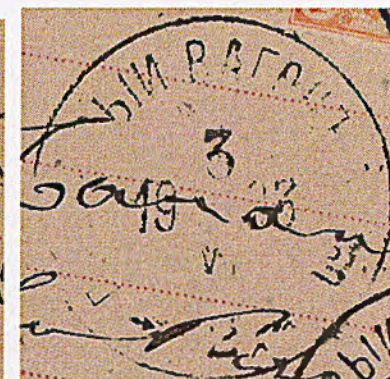
No.198-----serial 3  
Irkutsk-----Krasnoyarsk



No.242-----serial 4/8  
Chita-----Irkutsk



No.260-----serial 1/2  
Manchouli-----Chita



### (b) The Chinese Eastern Railway



No.262-----serial 6  
Harbin-----Manchouli



No.265-----serial 4  
Harbin-----Port Arthur



No.266-----serial 5  
Port Arthur-----Harbin



# Circular Russian Postal Wagon Datestamps Appearing On C. E. Tanant's Postcards

Used on the Trans-Siberian Railway



No. 242 (Chita to Irkutsk), No.198 (Irkutsk to Krasnoyarsk)  
No.124 (Chelyabinsk to Samara)

Used on the Chinese Eastern Railway



No. 265 (Harbin to Port Arthur), No.260 (Manchouli to Chita)

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