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A WINTER JOURNEY THROUGH SIBERIA TO CHINA, 1910

**A 14-day train journey made by an Englishman
from Warsaw to Dairen, China, in the winter of 1910–11**

by Philip E. Robinson & Stephen P. S. Yen



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THE GREAT SIBERIAN ROUTE AND THE CHINESE EASTERN RAILWAY

By an anonymous writer during “The Winter—1910–11”

The idea of the construction of the Great Siberian route and its continuation, the Chinese Eastern Railway, was to establish a cheap and profitable transit route between the countries of Western Europe and the Far East with an exit to the Pacific Ocean.

In order to facilitate the scheme being put into practice a passenger route for through traffic between the Far East and Western Europe has been established since November 1908, superficial acquaintance with which is sufficient to show that the new route appears to be not only the fastest, but the cheapest as well.

A first class passage from London to Shanghai, by rail via Siberia, including all additional charges for special accommodation, does not amount to more than 550 Roubles and the duration of the entire journey does not exceed 19 days, whereas the usual sea voyage via Brindisi would cost about 770 Roubles and last about 37 days.



The newly-built Trans-Siberian railway was publicised at the international Exhibition held in Paris in 1900. This is one of many postcards published in Paris at this time.

It is true that meals on board the steamer are included in the above fare by sea. But if one adds the price of a coupon–book, available by the Siberian route, the expenses for meals in the train at the rate of 6 Roubles per day (during 15 days, the passage from

Vladivostok occupying 4 days), even then the trip via Siberia will be by 130–140 Roubles cheaper than the circuitous voyage by steamer.





The journey by land has other advantages in comparison with that by sea. Without mentioning the sufferings caused by seasickness which are thus avoided, we may point out that the passenger has the privilege of stop-over at any of the towns en route, the through tickets being valid during 3 months, either in order to take a rest or to attend his business affairs. There is also the advantage of being in constant telegraphic touch with the outer world.

In order to secure further comfort to passengers travelling through Russia considerable facilities with regard to passport and Customs regulations have been arranged for persons arriving from abroad, namely such travellers are permitted to remain in Russia within the limits of the Consular visa of their passports and the luggage of such passengers, destined in transit for a foreign port, is being exempt from Customs examination if a due declaration to that effect has been made at the Russian frontier Customs station.

Finally, on the part of the carriers all possible measures have been taken in order to secure the greatest comfort to the traveller, in railway cars as well as on board the steamers. The Siberian express trains consist of Pullman cars especially adapted for a long railway journey and the communication by sea is effected by means of special swift steamers provided with comfortable spacious cabins and luxuriously outfitted dining rooms and saloons.

In regard to the original aim of the Guide-book, namely to the description of the route followed by the trains engaged in the through traffic to the Far East, it is necessary to remark that the Trans-Siberian express trains have two starting points--St. Petersburg and Moscow. The fast trains which arrive via Wirballen, including the "Nord-Express", connect with the Expresses from St Petersburg, and the fast trains entering Russia via Alexandrovo or Granitsa connect with those from Moscow.

The tourist who arrives via Wirballen has the opportunity of spending several days at St. Petersburg which at any rate we may safely recommend as this capital possesses many monuments of architecture and art which are of great significance not only for Russian art but also the art of the whole world. Of course, it is not our intention to enumerate here the sights of St. Petersburg or to speak of the peculiarities of life in that town, we only call the attention of the traveller to avail himself of the chance of making himself acquainted with this metropolis en route to the Far East which will be well worth the attention.

From St. Petersburg the route runs eastwards with a slight inclination to the South, through a scenery typical to Northern Russia. As far as Vologda where are no large towns en route. In the district of the Government of Vologda the forests begin to grow higher and denser, the country gets drier and gradually the train enters the mountainous district of the Urals, which, properly speaking, begins at Perm. Here the railroad between Perm and



Ekaterinburg has a typical mountainous aspect. The station Evropeiskaya is the last one of the continent of Europe. Seven versts past that station on both sides of the railway track two pillars of grilled iron have been posted to mark the geographical boundary between Europe and Asia. The following station is Aziatskaia. Before reaching it we notice to our left the well-known mountain Blagodatie entirely consisting of iron ore.

The most important town on that section of the line is Ekaterinburg---the centre of a large iron producing district. There are many factories there, where precious as well as stones of minor value are cut. Among others the famous alexandrites may be obtained here. These precious stones are of green colour during daylight and blood red (the better qualities) or purple by artificial light.

Having passed Ekaterinburg, Kishtim and Esaulskaia the railway dashes down the rocky slopes of the Ural mountains and arrives on the third day after the departure from St. Petersburg at Cheliabinsk; where the Siberian Railway begins and the two routes via St. Petersburg and Moscow meet.

When travelling via Alexandrovo and Granitsa passengers change cars only at Warsaw because as far as that town they travel by the train coming from abroad the line being a narrow gauge one.

Warsaw is a town fully deserving the tourist's attention. It is the ancient capital of the Polish kingdom and although it has not been a capital for more than a hundred years has retained the elegance and the liveliness of a capital.



A postcard featuring a map of the "Great Siberian Way" with railway lines shown in red.

A WINTER JOURNEY THROUGH SIBERIA TO CHINA, 1910

A 14-day train journey made by an Englishman
from Warsaw to Dairen, China, in the winter of 1910-11

Introduction

In December 1910 an English gentleman, Mr John H. Stewart, boarded a train at Warsaw, Poland. His destination was Dairen, China, to where he travelled via the Trans-Siberian, Chinese Eastern and South Manchurian railways. At the request of his friend George G. Patterson he sent postcards throughout the entire 14-day train journey to a lady in England, "Miss B.A. Bristow". This was Beatrice Annie Bristow, the daughter of Frederick Bristow, a prosperous Surrey grocer and draper. George Patterson was the brother of Thomas Patterson, whom Miss Bristow was to marry a few months later, in the summer of 1911. The postcards and the messages written on them reveal interesting aspects of this journey.

Coincidentally, in the winter of 1910, an anonymous writer wrote a booklet recording the sights and experiences of a similar journey, although this terminated at Vladivostok. We hope, by the interweaving of the 15 postcards written by Mr. Stewart and relevant descriptive passages from the anonymous writer's work, to try to give a vivid 1910 impression of a train journey across Europe and Asia. To supplement the narrative we have also added illustrations of contemporary postcards showing railway stations, bridges etc. and other views of the sort of scenery along the route that John H. Stewart would have seen from the train window.

Note that the Russian postmarks show the date according to the Julian calendar, which Russia used until 1918. John H. Stewart dated his postcards according to the Gregorian calendar which was used outside the Russian Empire. At that time this was 13 days ahead of the Gregorian calendar, and so for example Mr Stewart dated the first card 12 December, while the postmark is of 29 November.

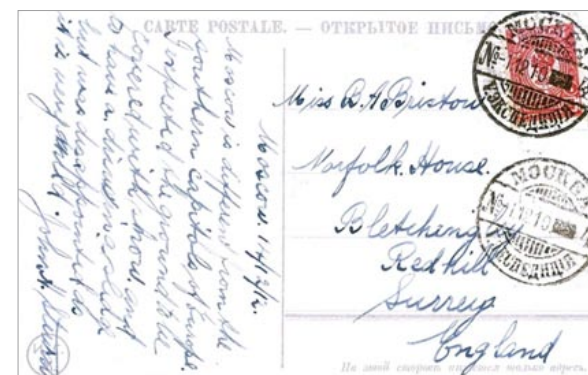
In this book we show each card, indicating where and when it was posted, giving a transcript of the message written on it, and adding a description of the view. We also give extracts from the text of the 1910 booklet.



Postcard 1, written and posted at Warsaw on Day 1, postmark 29.11.1910 (Julian date). View - The Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, Warsaw.

At request of Mr. G. G. Patterson, I am forwarding you a few P.P.C. from towns on the Trans Siberian Railway. John H. Stewart

The anonymous writer of 1910 writes:
"From Warsaw the route continues to Moscow where express trains arrive at the Kursk Station and connect directly with the Siberian train composed of coaches of the International Sleeping Car Company. One has only to transfer from one train to the other across the platform. For those who are not in a hurry and



Postcard 2, written and posted at Moscow on Day 3, postmark 1.12.10. View - St Basil's Cathedral, Moscow.

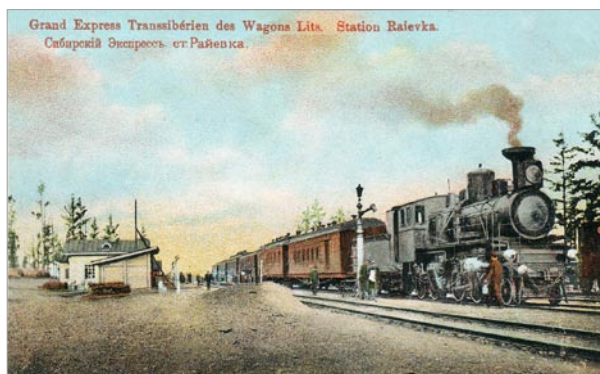
Moscow is different from the southern capitals of Europe. I expected the ground to be covered with snow and to have a drive in a sledge but was disappointed as it is very mild. John H. Stewart





who have not yet visited Russia, a stop-over at Moscow may be recommended. The best specimens of pure Russian art are assembled there. Here are the most important Russian historical monuments. Finally, in Moscow one has the opportunity of visiting the richest private collections of Russian paintings and sculpture, in the Tretyakov Gallery and at the Rumyantsev Museum, which have now become the property of the town.

From Moscow the train passes through clean and neat towns and beside small but busy rivers. The traveller prepares to go to rest and awakes in the morning already in agricultural Russia, a country which is but a vast plain. Immense fields, villages, windmills in the vicinity of them, white churches with green domes, black highroads, small woods



The Siberian express passing through Raevka station, west of Ufa

and again endless wide yellowing fields with black patches of earth dug up for winter crops. Meadows are few, no mountains and the rivers are shallow. Deep ravines, here and there, cut into the plain either by their steep, nearly perpendicular banks or in the form of soft terraces covered with young oaks.

Further the line passes through very monotonous country where the

Government of Tambov does not differ from the aspect of the Government of Penza, and this is gradually superseded by that of Samara. Hills begin only at the Volga where the train crosses the Alexander bridge, the pride of Russian railway engineering.

Higher on the hills of the Urals there lives a Tartar population. Instead of bell towers of the villages, minarets of the Mohammedan mosques can be seen. The train now enters one of the most picturesque sections of the whole



Postcard 3, posted at Sosedka on Day 4, postmark 2.12.10. View - Public alms-house and cathedral, Morshansk.

Left Moscow 11.25 P.M. 14 Dec. Arr. Morshansk 11.30 A.M. 15 Dec. The locomotives are burning petrol. The scenery from Moscow to here is nothing but snow covered plains with a few villages on the line. John H. Stewart



route, skirting the beautiful Ural Mountains through the valleys of the Sima and Urusan rivers. The banks are covered with thick growth over which tower birch woods which are particularly attractive during autumn, when in their glorious attire of golden foliage. Over these woods tower round rocks, grey and bare, either singly or in the shape of chains of round hills. A little further the river Ai widens into a broad lake, the waters of which reflect as in a mirror the town of Zlatoust. A white church, looking like a child's toy, stands in the valley between the hills, surrounded by small houses and factory buildings. The railway bends sharply and approaches the station of Zlatoust where articles of iron wrought and unwrought made at the Ural factories are sold.

Near Urzhumka, a little distance past Zlatoust, we notice to our right a marble column. This is the highest point of the route and the boundary of Europe and Asia. Down rushes the train leaving the mountains gradually behind. They become lower and lower, at last the pines disappear and only the birches remain. Still some hills are visible with lakes among them. The train arrives at Chelyabinsk in the morning of the third day after leaving Moscow.

The Siberian Railway proper begins at Chelyabinsk. The country is the same as on yonder side of the Urals. The train now crosses the endless Barabinsky steppe, only



Postcard 4, written and posted at "Oufa" (Ufa) on Day 6, postmark 4.12.10. View - a painting of peasants gathering wood on a horse-drawn sleigh.

The other side is a fair sample of the scenery I have seen since leaving Moscow, and it is getting rather tiresome. I passed over the Volga between 12 & 2 A.M. today. The train shakes so much that it is difficult to write. John H. Stewart

occasionally intersected by ravines or by the large Siberian rivers. The first of these is the Tobol, at the crossing of which is the town of Kurgan, the centre of butter production in Siberia.

On the crossing of the Ishim river lies Petropavlovsk, the centre of the cattle trade. Further still we pass the famous Irtysh river where the conqueror of Siberia, the legendary Don Cossack Yermak, was drowned. Beside the Irtysh is the city of Omsk, with a large cathedral, the guardian of a sacred relic of Siberia, namely Yermak's standard. The next

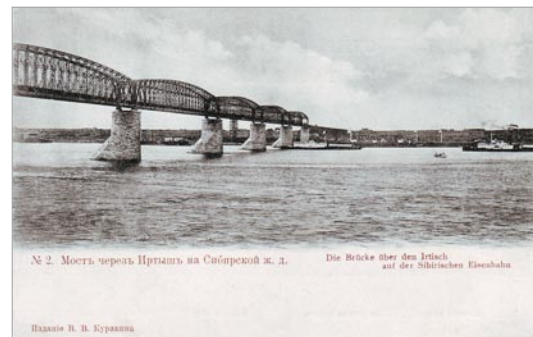


large river is the Ob, from where a surfaced road runs into Southern Siberia towards Barnaul, Zmeinogorsk and the Altai Mountains, the richest, most fertile and ore-abounding



Postcard 5, written and posted at "Tcheliabinks" (Chelyabinsk) on Day 6, postmark 4.12.10. View – The "Red Gate", Moscow.

10 ° below zero but lovely sunshine. John H. Stewart



The bridge over the Irtysh at Omsk



An express train near the city of Omsk



Postcard 6, written at "Tchouline" (Chulim) and posted at Novonikolaevsk on Day 8, postmark 6.12.10. View - Chelyabinsk railway station.

20 ° below zero but inside the car is comfortable. The train vibrates so much it is impossible to write. John H. Stewart

districts of Siberia.

About a day's journey from Chelyabinsk, having left Ob behind, the steppe comes to an end and the Siberian "taiga" begins. At its beginning the taiga consists only of small pine and fir woods which grow larger, spreading here and there, only interrupted by large



Passengers awaiting their train on the platform at Tatarskaya station

swamps. In the forest there is plenty of dead wood and withered trees, these stick out in every direction and everywhere enormous trunks of birches are decaying. The hillocks of the marshes are covered with high grass. Occasionally among the low growth of young birches are scattered burnt trunks of giant birches, pines and larches. We may suppose that in former times the



Postcard 7, written at Kainsk and posted on Postal Wagon 187 on Day 9, postmark 7.12.10. View - Cherniy Anuy village, Altai region.

Getting colder every day. John H. Stewart



The fine station building at Kainsk



This postcard shows the bridge over the River Ob, not the Yenisei as wrongly stated in the caption.

taiga was an immense virgin forest, now partly destroyed by the Siberian forest fires, which are practised here on purpose in order to prepare the soil for cultivation. Nowadays along the line of the railway one may still perceive, scattered here and there in the shape of islands, the remainders of the original taiga, where the pines, intermingled with cedars and larches, present to the eye scenes of indescribable beauty.



A view of Ob station, situated where the railway crossed the river of that name



A goods train near Achinsk in Central Siberia



A view of the railway station at Krasnoyarsk

important and interesting.

Before Irkutsk the nature changes its aspect once more. Small hills appear soon after Krasnoyarsk, the vegetation becomes more varied, and the field and wild flowers near Irkutsk in the summer are positively beautiful. At present at Irkutsk passengers must change trains and take the Chinese Eastern Railway train, though there is still the huge length of the Transbaikalian Railway to be travelled.

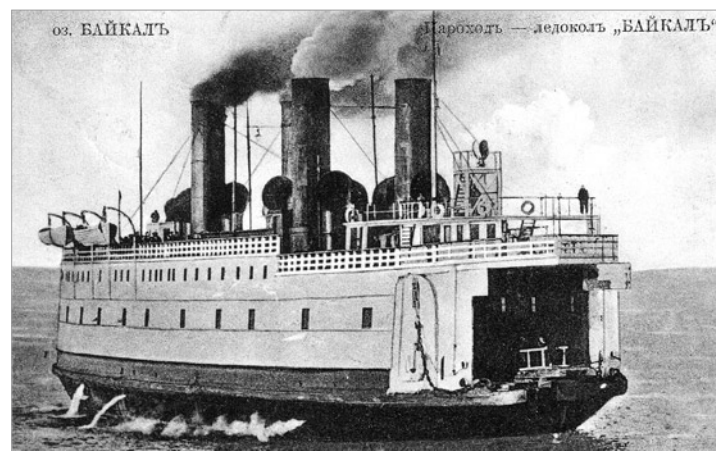


Postcard 8, written at Irkutsk and posted at Irkutsk station on Day 10, postmark 8.12.10. View - Bogotol railway station.

Yesterday we passed through miles & miles of forest on both sides, mostly pine trees a little larger than at home. It is quite a relief to get out at the stations now the atmosphere inside is so bad. We change trains here and continue our journey to Harbine. John H. Stewart



A view of the Siberian city of Irkutsk



The train ferry "Baikal" which was in service on Lake Baikal



A post-boat on the River Lena carrying mail to Yakutsk

and of Asia in general.

From Irkutsk along the river Lena, which flows into the Arctic Ocean, a post-road leads into the district of Yakutsk where many gold mines are concentrated. Immediately



A fast train near Irkutsk

At Irkutsk, one feels oneself already in Asia. The broad river Angara flows through the town, surrounded by hills. On the horizon one can perceive high mountains though not snow-mountains.

Irkutsk as compared with the rest of Siberian towns is a well organised one. It has many beautiful buildings, the mental and commercial life pulsate here with great vigour for they were brought over by political exiles. Irkutsk ranks among the first towns with regard to the number of scientific societies, which have published many works on the geography of Siberia



after Irkutsk begins a new picturesque section of the line – the Transbaikal Railway and Lake Baikal. The railway runs through a row of tunnels and galleries along the steep borders of Lake Baikal with fantastic cliffs and magnificent panoramas of the lake.

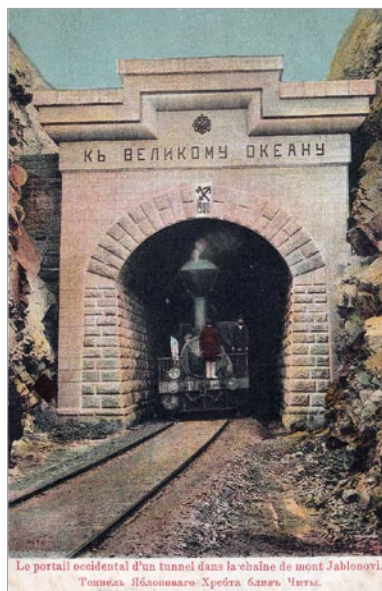
Formerly the crossing of Lake Baikal was effected on special boats, a combination of steam–ferry and icebreaker which, in summer as well as in winter, used to carry to and fro whole passenger and freight trains. Such means of transport, however, proved too expensive and very often to a considerable extent hampered by the storms which frequently occur on the lake. The ferries therefore had to be replaced by the line running around the lake.



Postcard 9, posted on Postal Wagon 260 on Day 11, postmark 9.12.10. View - A winter view of the Circumbaikal Railway near Misovaya.

This view gives you a good idea of the railway running alongside Lake Baikal. John H. Stewart

From Baikal it is only a thirty–hour run by fast train to Manchouli, with only one more or less important town – Chita. At Chita, more correctly at the station Karimskaya, the line branches off; one branch runs east to Sretensk, at present the terminal station of the



Transbaikial Railway. The projected and partly constructed Amur Railway will run from a junction near Sretensk and connect at Khabarovsk with the Ussuri Railway.

At present the section between Sretensk and Khabarovsk can be passed on the Shilka and Amur rivers in steamers of the Amur Steamship and Trading Company. The other branch runs in a south–easterly direction entering the Chinese Empire shortly before Manchuria

In the Yablonovoi Mountains near the city of Chita, a deep cutting was roofed over for a length of 280 feet, to protect the line from falling rocks. Over the western portal, seen here, were inscribed the words "КЪ ВЕЛИКОМУ ОКЕАНУ" or "TO THE GREAT (i.e. Pacific) OCEAN", this being the ultimate destination of the railway route. Over the eastern portal were the words "TO THE ATLANTIC OCEAN".



station.

At Manchouli, which is at a distance of about 8,000 versts (5,300 miles) from



Postcard 10, posted on Postal Wagon 260 on Day 11, postmark 9.12.10.

View - The stone pillar at the highest point of the line in the Ural Mountains, marking the boundary of Europe and Asia.

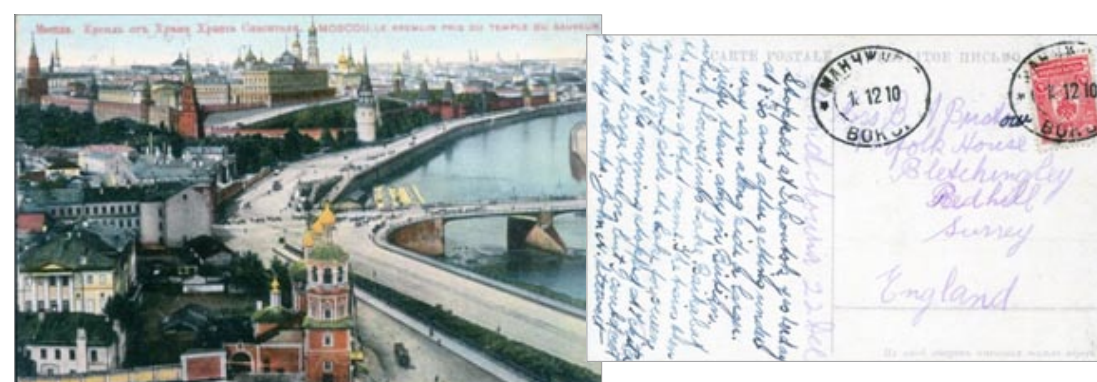
In this view, the stone indicates the boundary between Russia and Siberia. John H. Stewart



Manchouli station



The 1910 description of Manchouli refers to the local architecture. This postcard shows the temple of the "Dun-Myao" dragon.

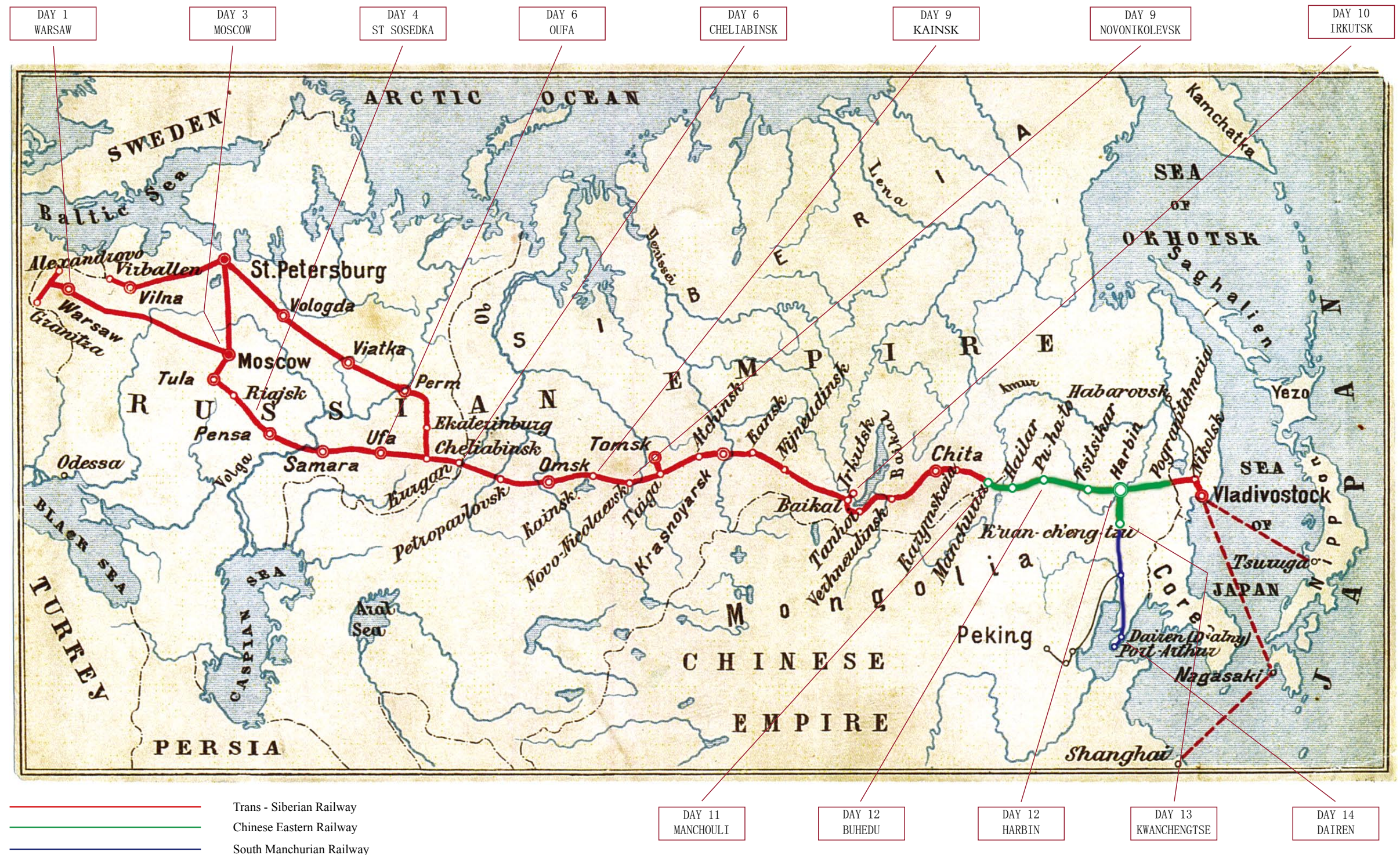


Postcard 11, posted at Manchouli station on Day 12, postmark 10.12.10.

View - A view of the Moscow Kremlin taken from the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour.

Stopped at Irkutsk yesterday at 8.30 and after getting under way ran alongside a larger river than any in Britain which flowed into Lake Baikal at the town of that name. The train then ran alongside the lake for seven hours. This morning stopped at Tchita, a very large town but I could not get any stamps. John H. Stewart

Itinerary Map Of James H. Stewart's 14 Day Journey



STATIONS AND BRIDGES ALONG THE TRANS-SIBERIAN RAILWAY (from west to east)



PC1: A view of the railway station building at Chelyabinsk in Western Siberia.



PC2: A view of the station platform at Tatarskaya station in Central Siberia.



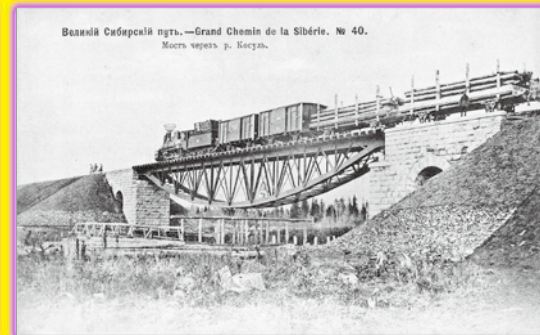
PC3: A busy time at Taiga station. The junction for the Tomsk branch line.



PC4: The wooden railway station building at Mariynsk.



PC5: The bridge over the River Kiya, near Mariynsk.



PC6: A goods train on the bridge over the River Kosul.

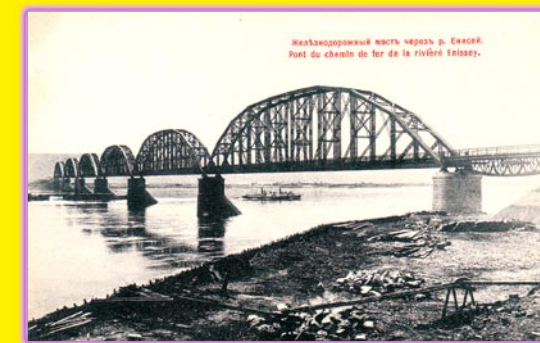


PC7: The small station at Kemchug, with the station staff posing for the photograph.



PC8: An early-1900s view of the original station building at Krasnoyarsk. It soon proved too small for this rapidly-growing city and was enlarged and extended towards the right-hand side of this view.

STATIONS AND BRIDGES ALONG THE TRANS-SIBERIAN RAILWAY (from west to east)



PC9: The bridge over the River Yenisei at Krasnoyarsk.



PC10: A view of the station platform at Irkutsk.



PC11: The station building at Irkutsk.



PC12: A view of the large station building at Chita.



PC13: The station at Manchouli, with goods trains in the foreground and the main buildings behind.



PC14: Pogranichnaya station



PC15: The original railway station building at Vladivostok



PC16: A view of a platform at Vladivostok station. The sign translates as VLADIVOSTOK FROM ST PETERSBURG 9877 VERSTS (10,536 km.)



the Western European frontier, the Chinese Eastern Railway begins. With the first steps on this railway the tourist falls into quite new surroundings: employees of the Chinese customs administration examine your luggage, which is carried away by Chinese coolies. The station is crowded with hawkers, the switch-men are Chinese, and the station buildings bear the typical features of Chinese architecture with fantastically shaped tile roofs gorgeously ornamented with dragons and lions etc. This is the real Asia of the Far East.

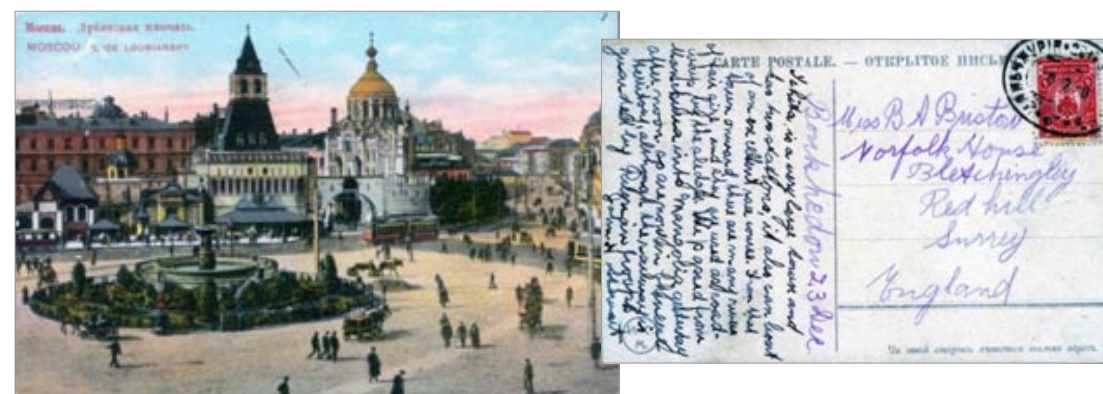
During the first six hours the train runs through the Mongolian desert, skirting the left bank of the Argun river. From the windows of the railway carriage herds of cattle and horses, guarded by Mongolians on horseback are seen; occasionally caravans of camels which follow the train with wondering eyes. The only more or less important station on this section is Chalaïnor, in the vicinity of which lie the collieries belonging to the Chinese Eastern Railway Company. Another important place is the town of Hailar, the centre of trade for the Mongolian cattle industry. About 120 versts (80 miles) from Hailar



Tsitsihar station

is the Ganchur lamasery, famous for its autumn cattle and horse fair. Ten thousand head of horses and cattle are brought to this fair from the remotest parts of Mongolia. In Hailar itself there are many wool-combing factories, slaughter-houses, tallow-boileries. From Irekte station the steppe scenery changes, the railway begins to climb the hills and before the traveller's eyes the panorama of the mountain ridge of the Great Hingan unfolds itself in its full splendour. These mountains run across Northern Manchuria in a southerly direction. At the highest part of the mountain the line passes through a tunnel three versts (two miles) in length and after reaching the highest point (460 fathoms) at the Hingan station begins to descend the mountain on a spiral line forming a complete loop so that the train passes the same place twice, only the second time about a hundred fathoms lower down. In the Hingan mountains the sportsman will find his promised land owing to the abundance of game and fowl from roe, wild boar and goat down to pheasants.

After Puhato station the line runs into the valley of the Yal river surrounded on two sides by high hills consisting of quaint rocks, but this scene is soon changed once more into the aspect of a steppe. Next comes Tsitsihar, the capital of Hei-lung-kiang province, one of the three eastern provinces of Manchuria. The town is surrounded by a double wall, one of mud and one of brick, has many beautiful temples of a quaint construction and contains the richest accumulation of furs: tiger, sable, fox skins, as the chieftains of the Tungus



Postcard 12, written at Buhedu, posted on Postal Wagon 261 on Day 12, postmark 10.12.10. View - Lubyanskiy Square, Moscow.

Tchita is a very large town and has two stations, it also can boast of an excellent race course. From that town onward there are many rivers of fair size, and they are used as roadways by the sledges. We passed from Manchuria into Mongolia yesterday afternoon so are now in Chinese territory, although the railway is guarded by Russian troops. John H. Stewart



Postcard 13, written and posted at Harbin on Day 12, postmark 10.12.10.

View - East Siberian types of people.

I am now nearing my railway journeys end. John H. Stewart

centre of the trading and industrial life of the town. The Chinese part of the town Fu-chia-chien adjoins Harbin Pristan.

Owing to its position in the centre of an

hunting tribes gather here together for the payment of their tribute and for exchange of their hunting booty for articles of first necessity. A six-hour journey separates Tsitsihar from Harbin, the centre of the railway administration and reclaimed by the Chinese Government for the needs of the Chinese Eastern Railway.

Harbin stands on the Sungari river and consists of three sections: Old Harbin – the residence of the first constructors of the railway, the New Town – erected by the railway administration for their employees and offices, and lastly Harbin-Pristan, the



Harbin station



agricultural district on a navigable river, Harbin may be regarded as the principal market for the export of Manchurian grain to Japan and Western Europe, attracting many business representatives of many foreign firms, which brought about the establishment of consulates by the principal European Countries, Japan and the United States of America. For the trade in Russian merchandise, at the initiative of merchants from Moscow, trading rows have been erected at Harbin. These rows of stalls are to serve as a depot for merchandise which may find buyers in Manchuria. The same building serves as the Russo–Chinese Trading and Industrial Museum containing samples of Russian merchandise, the acquaintance with which has the object of promoting trade relations between Russia and China.

With the same object of strengthening the ties of neighbourly relationship and mutual acquaintance, the administration of the Chinese Eastern Railway published three periodicals, in the Russian, Chinese and Mongolian languages, namely the "Harbinski Vestnik", the "Yuan–tung–pao" and the "Mongolum–Sonin–bitchik".

After Harbin the Chinese Eastern Railway branches off – the trunk line runs east to Vladivostok, and the branch line southwards to the station Kuang–cheng–tzu where it joins



Postcard 14, written at Kwanchengtze and posted on Postal Wagon 265 on Day 13, postmark 11.12.10. View - North-East Siberia. Types of Yukagir people.

This is my last change in the train as I reach Dalny or Dairen as the Japanese call it tomorrow where we join the steamer John H. Stewart

the South Manchurian Railway which leads to Dairen or via Yingkow to Peking.

The southern line passes through a densely populated agricultural region which may be considered the granary of Manchuria. At Chang–chun, the first station of the South Manchuria Railway, passengers going southwards have to change trains because owing to the narrower gauge of the Japanese line the trains of the Chinese



An artist-drawn postcard featuring a photograph of the South Manchurian Express

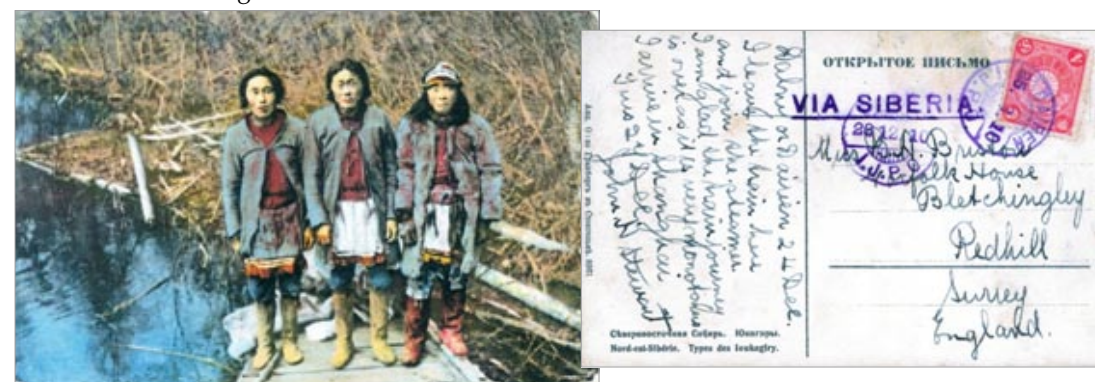


Eastern Railway cannot run any further.

The eastern section of the Chinese Eastern Railway, leading to Vladivostok, crosses a country entirely different from the western part of Manchuria. In striking contrast to the characteristic feature of a steppe which predominates in the West, the Eastern part of Manchuria appears to be a mass of hills and woodlands. Owing to this circumstance this



The main gate of Mukden



Postcard 15, written and posted at Dairen on Day 13, Gregorian dated postmark 25.12.10 View - North-East Siberia. Types of Yukagir people.

I leave the train here and join the steamer. I am glad the train journey is over as it is very monotonous. I arrive in Shanghai Tues. 27 Dec. John H. Stewart

section abounds in picturesque scenery, of which I–mien–po station, the summer resort of Harbin residents, as well the mountain passes between stations Tai–ma–kou and Tai–pin–lin, where the line twists itself through rocky gorges, deserve particular attention.

At Pogranichnaya the train enters once more upon Russian territory and therefore the hand baggage is here once more inspected by the Customs, after which the passenger continues his journey through the Ussuri District which bears here the same mountainous character as the Eastern section of the Chinese Eastern Railway.

Vladivostok, the terminal station, is situated upon a hilly promontory which is surrounded on two sides by water and forms here two large bays: the Amur and the Ussuri Bays. The third inner bay "Zolotoi Rog" or "Golden Horn" forms a natural port and an extensive naval station. Owing to its geographical position and to the physical conditions of the country, Vladivostok



Pogranichnaya station

appears simultaneously as the administration centre of that district, a first-class fortress and a large mercantile port. Here also is a high school, having the object of preparing students for future work in the Far East, theoretically and practically acquainting them with the language, the customs and the life of China, Korea and Japan.



A view of a platform at Vladivostok station. The sign translates as VLADIVOSTOK FROM ST PETERSBURG 9877 VERSTS (10,536 km.)

To passengers who continue their journey to ports in Japan or China, we may recommend to embark directly on board the steamers of the Russian Volunteer Fleet or the Osaka Shosen Kaisha Steam Shipping Company. These steamers always await the arrival of the express trains and being fitted with every up-to-date comfort, maintain a regular service between Vladivostok, Tsuruga, Nagasaki and Shanghai.



This postcard, with a French inscription translating as "Greetings from the Siberian railway" shows a map of the line between Ufa and Lake Baikal, and small views of places along the route.

Appendix: Postcards from a Russian soldier serving in the Russo–Japanese War of 1904–05

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, both Russia and Japan wanted to have full control of the Chinese Northeast Provinces, for territorial expansion and for the rich natural resources. The completion of the Chinese Eastern Railway by Russia within the Chinese Northeast Provinces in 1903, connecting Manchouli with Suifenhao and Vladivostok in the east–west direction, and Harbin with Port Arthur in the north–south direction, effectively hindered similar ambitions on the part of Japan.

Without prior warning, the Imperial Japanese Navy attacked the Russian fleet anchored at Port Arthur on 8 February 1904 and war was declared on 16 February. Russia also announced on February 16 that the Trans–Siberian Railway was to be temporarily closed.



Fig. 1

Picture postcards of the Russo–Japanese War were prepared, most of which depict war scenes, some with both Russian and Japanese stamps cancelled by postmarks of the relevant post offices. The card at left depicts the Russian fleet anchored at Port Arthur in flames with thick clouds of smoke. (Fig. 1)



Fig. 2

To ensure the prompt transfer of artillery and soldiers, the former were carried across Lake Baikal, on tracks laid on the thick ice. This artist's impression is rather imaginative, but tracks were certainly laid on the ice, on sleepers lengthened to spread the load, and although wagons were mostly pulled singly by horses, steam locomotives might also have been used. (Fig. 2)



The Russians crossing Lake Baikal (50 degrees below zero). The railway track laid on the frozen lake was only for trans-shipment of artillery and ammunition; the soldiers continued to cross on sledges, and the cold was severe. Such difficult conditions as befell



Fig. 3

the Russian soldiers are illustrated in this picture postcard entitled "Russo-Japanese War No 11 – Port Arthur 24th Feb. 1904" . (Fig. 3)

Even though the Tsar's navy was initially defeated, sailors returning from the war were warmly welcomed and congratulated on their arrival in St. Petersburg. On the war front, reinforcements in the form of Siberian riflemen arrived at Liao Yang where the land battles were fought in a desperate effort to regain supremacy over the Chinese Northeast Provinces. (Fig. 4)



Fig. 4

warehouse for supplying the troops with blankets and other necessities. The soldiers were expected to reply and thank the Empress for the gifts, and they were issued with postcards

for this purpose. Each card had a duplicated address pre-printed on it, which translates as "St. Petersburg, The Anichkov Palace, to the Head of the Warehouse of Her Highness the Sovereign



Fig. 5: The Russian soldier's postcards on his journey to China in 1904 and subsequent repatriation in 1905

Empress Marie Feodorovna". Such a card is shown here, sent from a military unit in Harbin. There is a free-frank cachet with the inscription Сводный Харбинский No



21 Г о с п и т а л ь of "Joint Hospital No 21" in Harbin, and the very rare double-ring postmark "Х А Р Б И Н. К О Р П У С Н. Г О Р О Д О К." or "HARBIN ARMY CORPS DISTRICT" as well as a St Petersburg receiving mark of 12 November 1905. The soldier's message translates as "I have the honour humbly to thank your Majesty for sending the warm clothes that I was given at the 21st Harbin Joint Hospital. Reservist A. Shtoiman". (Fig. 5)

As the Russian infantry troops were dispatched to Liao Yang, a Russian soldier from the 4th Battery, 23rd Artillery Brigade was sent to the war front. He boarded the Trans-Siberian train in August 1904 (or perhaps earlier) heading towards the theatre of war in the Chinese Northeast Provinces, and on the train he wrote and sent several postcards back to



Fig. 6

his family in St Petersburg. Here is his journey and his own little story among a sea of similar stories involving millions of civilians and military personnel who had been profoundly affected by this struggle to gain supremacy and the lion's share of the rich resources that the Chinese Northeast Provinces had to offer to the victor. (Fig. 6)

The first postcard shows a railway scene; it was probably bought on board the train and no stamp was affixed but a purple circular (free of postage) cachet of his military unit was applied, overstruck with the Russian-language Travelling Post Office circular datestamp for use on the section No 261 between Manchouli and Harbin, and with an indistinct St Petersburg arrival mark.

The message written by the soldier translates as: "...I write you these letters at all stations when I'm ready to put some items into the post (box of the) train if there is one or into the post box at the station..." Even though the date of the message cannot be ascertained, this



Fig. 7



card is still considered to be the first one of the series. (Fig. 7)

This message was dated the 28th and continues on the second card: “*On the 28th in the morning we crossed the Yablonovoi mountains. There is a great tunnel, on one side there is the inscription ‘To the Atlantic Ocean’ and on the other side ‘To the Great Ocean’...*” (Fig. 8)

(Please refer to the postcard shown on page 12)



Fig. 8

The train was probably delayed and the Russian troops had to make up lost time as the soldier's message continued: “*...with great delay. We had to arrive on the 29th in the morning but we arrived from 30th to 31st in the evening. Tomorrow morning or today at 10 o'clock...*”

Again he did not put down the date or the location he was heading for, but the picture side of the postcard may help to prove that he was still in Russia when he wrote this card.

(Fig. 9)



Fig. 9

The delay that occurred was all too common in the early years of the Trans-Siberian and Chinese Eastern railways. The enormous cost of the project meant that the work was done to a very tight budget. Although there were some remarkable feats of engineering, for example the bridges that were built over the mighty rivers of Northern Asia, in many other areas minimal ballast was used for supporting the track, and the rails themselves were generally lighter than what would have normally been regarded as necessary for the loads that were to be carried. As a result, accidents and derailments commonly occurred due to track



movement, leading to many delays.

After crossing the border and entering China via Manchouli, the Russian soldier continues his message: “*I have written the latest letters from Manchuria. We crossed the border and now we are at ‘Manchuria’ station. Now we go forward...*” (Fig. 10)



Fig. 10

The soldier's intention to let his family at home know his situation and whereabouts with these postcards was rather ineffective because the St Petersburg arrival mark of 15 IX 1905, compared with the Postal Wagon No 261 datestamp of 31 VIII 1904 tells the whole story. After Russian troops had entered China, soldiers' mail with messages was withheld until the end of the Russo-Japanese War in order not to affect the morale of the people back in Russia.

Russia was defeated in the Russo-Japanese War, and as part of the conditions of the Peace Treaty brokered by the Americans and signed at Portsmouth, Maine on 5 September 1905, Russia had to cede to Japan part of the railway from Port Arthur to Kwanchengtse as war compensation. This section of the Chinese Eastern Railway built by the Russians was henceforth to be called the South Manchurian Railway and controlled solely by Japan, which also gained ownership of a narrow strip of land on either side known as the South Manchurian Railway Zone and the right to station troops there for the security of the railway.

The soldier of the 4th Battery 23rd Artillery Brigade survived the war and continued to write postcards. In August 1905 he sent a postcard back home, and this time he put down the number (11) and the date 1/14 August 1905 (i.e. 1 August according to the Julian calendar and 14 August by the Gregorian calendar). The card has the postage-free military cachet of his unit and an oval No 262 Harbin-Manchouli Travelling Post Office datestamp of 3 8 05, but his second postcard No 19 dated 2/15 August received an earlier oval No 262 Harbin-Manchouli Travelling Post Office datestamp of 2 8 05. This indicates the disorder which persisted during the initial stages of repatriation.

The change in the Travelling Post Office No 262 datestamp from a circular to an oval



type symbolically marked a new lease of life for the repatriated Russian soldiers as they returned to their homeland to continue their normal life. Our soldier now revealed that he wrote more than one postcard a day as No 11 was written and sent on 1/14 August, while No 19 was written and sent on the following day. (Fig. 11)



Fig. 11

On this card No 19 he wrote about the conditions along the frontier: “2 August 1905 Hurbura station. Hello from the journey. Yesterday at Buhedu station, where there is a deviation, we were going for a long time on a frontier guards' train. It is quite unlikely that these trains carry civilian mail.” (Fig. 12)



Fig. 12

I have just sent you a letter by a convenient opportunity; a doctor left for St. Petersburg, but again I'm unhappy, several days ago I read in the newspapers... (Fig. 13)



Fig. 13



The overall amount of telegrams received from you-6. One addressed to Syzran, 2-Chelyabinsk, 2-Krasnoyarsk, 1-Nizhneudinsk. The train travels normally, two or three persons left... (Fig. 14)



Fig. 14

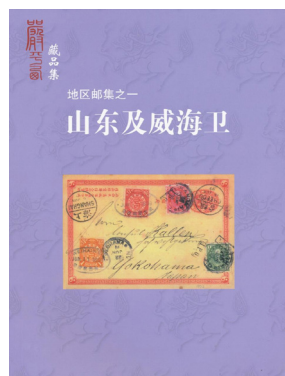
At one of the stations I took a photograph from a short distance of a herd of camels close to a fence. (Fig. 15)



Fig. 15

By comparing the St Petersburg arrival marks on all the cards, it can be seen that only several days separated the four cards sent before the war (15 IX 1905) and the two cards sent after the war (19 IX 1905). However, the messages on two of the soldier's postcards indicate that he was also able to communicate with his family by telegram, and on at least one occasion he was able to send a letter home by giving it to a doctor he had met who was returning to St Petersburg.

As our soldier seems to have been a prolific writer of postcards, many other cards sent by him may have survived to the present day. It is our sincere hope that readers or their friends who happen to have items of a similar nature in their collections will inform the authors who will continue their happy task of publishing Trans-Siberian journeys to record these fleeting moments in history and philately.



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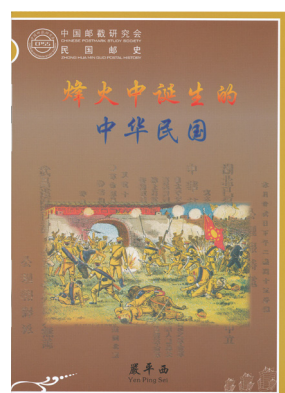


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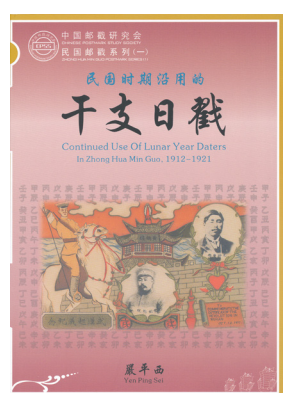


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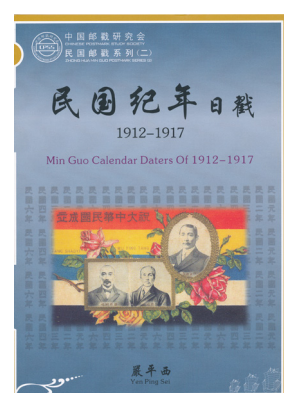
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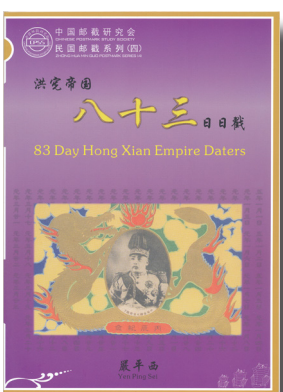
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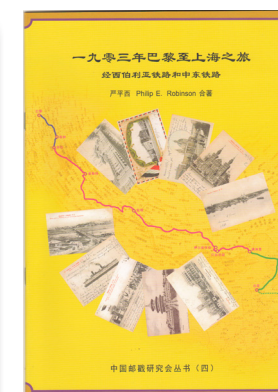
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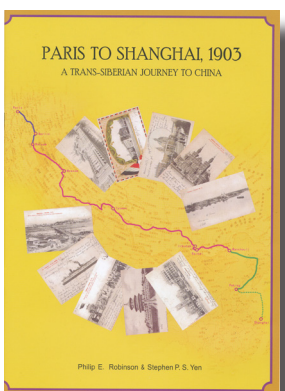
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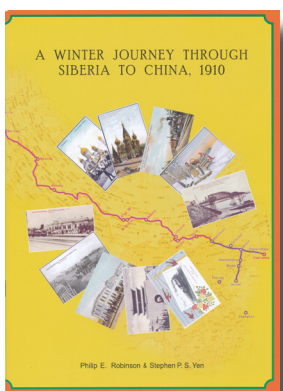
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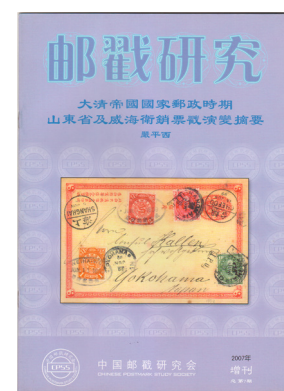
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15

Le portail occidental d'un tunnel dans la chaîne de mont Jablonovi.

Тоннель Яблоноваго Хребта близъ Читы.

A Tunnel in the Yablonovoi Mountain chain near Chita

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