

## 欧亚邮件取道西伯利亚

西伯利亚邮运服务对中国/欧洲邮件之裨益,1900-1933



CHINA—EUROPE MAIL VIA SIBERIA

CHINA-EUROPE MAIL VIA SIBERIA, 1900--1933

# 1. Construction and Completion of the Trans-Siberian Railway, 1891-1903

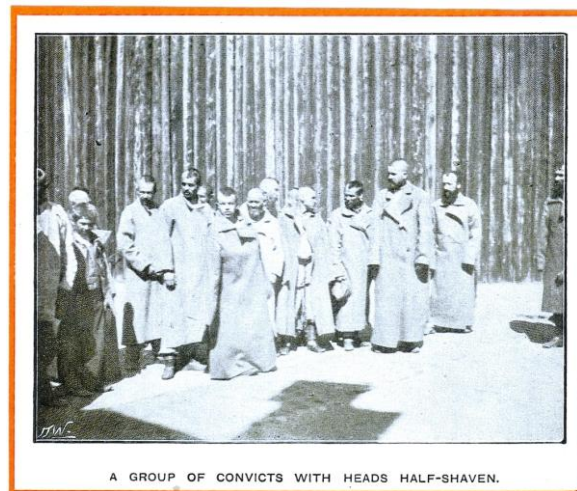
## 1.1 Brief Background History About The Trans-Siberian Railway

On the 19<sup>th</sup> May, 1891 the Grand Duke Tsarevich had officially laid a stone at Vladivostok, as a prelude to the “First Great Enterprise of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century” to herald the “Longest Railway in the World” extending 4,300 miles !

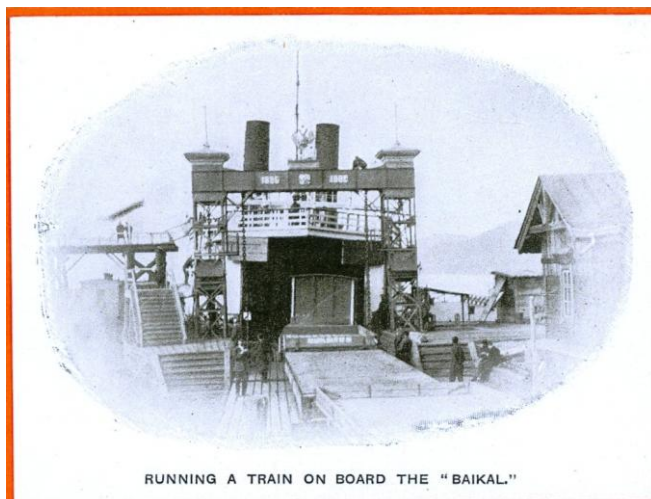
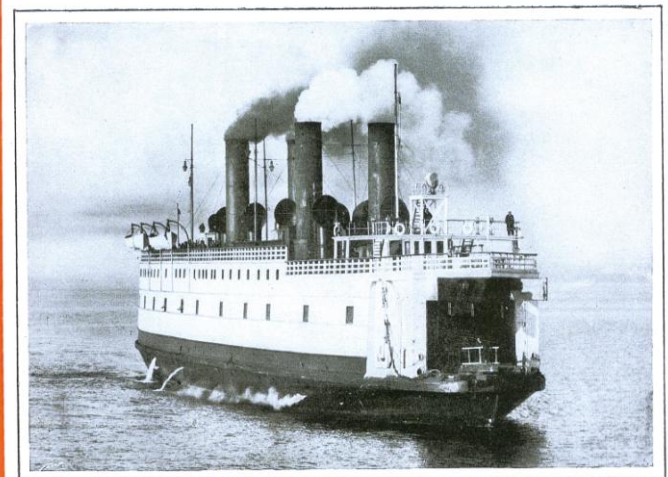
The Tsar made known of his ambition to build a railway connecting Moscow with Peking when in Exposition Universelle de 1900, a propaganda postcard captioned “Panorama Transsiberien” had been designed with fine print description at bottom “De Moscou A Peking (Campement Kirghis Pres de Tomsk)” because at that time the Trans-Siberian Railway was almost completed.



The completion of the Russian Trans-Siberian Railway, in 1903, linking Europe with the Orient, was hailed as a marvelous and splendid achievement, despite the fact that much of the work on the track, bridges and other construction was slipshod and often without proper supervision. The use of convict labour and political prisoners on this work resulted in carelessness, indifference and neglected precautions, making sections of the Railroad dangerous and well below the accepted standards which other nations demanded.



However, notwithstanding this, it was still a great engineering feat in Railway construction. The prospect of rapid transport—London to Shanghai in 16-18 days—Fare 50 pounds (so an advertisement for the Railway stated in 1903) was astounding. Prior to this event, the sea trip via Suez Canal could take six to ten weeks.



The Russians encountered two obstructions in pushing forward the Trans-Siberian Railway. The first of these was found at Lake Baikal. The railroad reached Irkutsk in 1898...but it had been found impossible to drive the track around Lake Baikal and link up at Chita due to the mountainous ranges, which went right into the lake.



Two Railway Ferry Ice-breaker ships were ordered, “Baikal” and “Angara” then taken to pieces and carried by rail/river and sleighs and reassembled on Lake Baikal. The link-up to Chita across Lake Baikal commenced in 1902 and remained in operation until 1904 when the final rail link was completed.

Another obstruction arose from geographical limitation : the railway had to follow the contour of the Amur River southwards to Vladivostok in the shape of an inverted “U”, whereas if the rail route could cross Chinese Manchuria, several hundred miles of total mileage, plus time factor could be saved.

## 1.2 Extension into China as the Chinese Eastern Railway (& South Manchurian Railway)

The German landing in the Shantung peninsular allowed Russia to secure a leasehold of the Liao-tung territory together with the right to connect Port Arthur with Harbin by an extension of the Chinese Eastern Railway..... The line was started in 1898 and was completed from Harbin to Port Arthur in 1901.

When the concession was granted for the building of the railway the Chinese inserted clauses forbidding the construction of the line or stations at or within Chinese towns. So with the concession attached to the Railway Charter, whole new European type towns with ample space, were constructed by the Russians, away from Chinese towns, together with spacious and uncluttered Railway stations and sidings. Many of them were later to be completed by the Japanese after the Russo-Japanese War.

In August 1896, the Russian owned Russo-Chinese Bank secured a contract from the Chinese Government to build the “Chinese Eastern Railway” crossing Manchuria from west to east, linking at both ends with the adjacent sections of the Russian “Trans-Siberian Railway”. Work began in 1897, and the line (and stations) was opened to traffic in 1901. Russia demanded the right to protect the Railway with her own troops and this meant nothing but “Occupation !”

The “Boxer Movement” attracted the attention of major foreign powers and China herself, presenting Russia with a golden opportunity to enter Manchuria by force and complete the Chinese Eastern Railway whilst China and the foreign powers were busy sorting out their differences and grievances stirred up by Boxer Movement. With the linking up of East and West, the thoughts of rapid mail communications appealed both to business and trading companies and private individuals alike.

Alas, for all the publicity given to the new Railroad.....there was also another motive behind the intensive activity to get it into operation. The primary object of completing this Railroad was the Tsar’s concern for the speedy supply, reinforcement of his Eastern Military and Naval Forces, and in conjunction with his policy of territorial expansion in China and Manchuria.

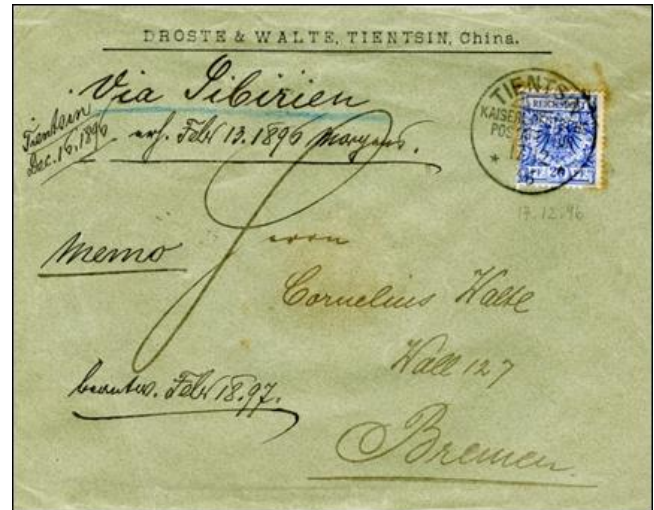
## 1.3 Construction Progress of the Trans-Siberian Railroad

- |                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| <b>1892-1896</b> | The West Siberian sector from Chelyabinsk to the Ob River was completed by Engineer Constantine Mikhailovski.   |
| <b>1893-1899</b> | Mid-Siberian sector from Ob to Irkutsk and a branch from Taiga to Tomsk was completed by Engineer Nicholas Mezheniniv.  |
| <b>1894-1896</b> | The Chelyabinsk-Yekaterinburg section was completed by Engineer Mikhailovski.   |
| <b>1895-1900</b> | The Transbaikalia sector from Mysovsk on Lake Baikal to Sretensk on the Shilka River was completed by Engineer Alexander Pushenchnikov.                                     |
| <b>1897-1901</b> | Transbaikalia line was completed by Engineer Pushechnikov and Connecting line from Ussuri area to the Chinese Eastern Railway was completed by Engineer Alexander Yugovich. |
| <b>1897-1904</b> | Chinese Eastern Railway from Manchouli to Pogranichnaya and from Harbin to Dalni and Port Arthur was completed by Engineer Yugovich.  |
| <b>1899-1904</b> | Circumbaikal loop from Port Baikal to Mysovsk was completed by Engineer-contractor Alexander Pertsov and others.  |
| <b>1908-1916</b> | Construction of the Amur section (Kuenga to Kharbarovsk) by Engineer Alexander Liverovski and other.  |

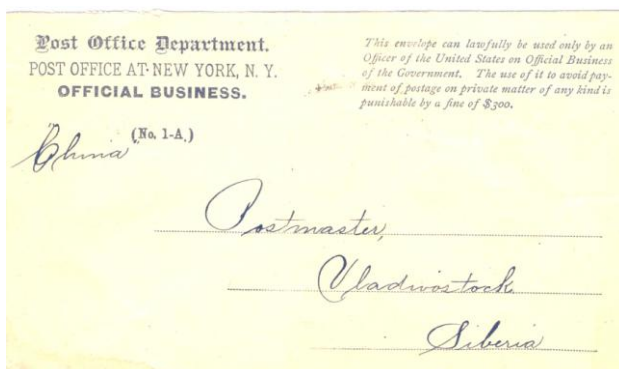
## 2. Experimental “Via Siberia” Mail Berlin-Peking by German Post Office

The German Post Office organized an experimental trip in December 1896 to January 1897, carrying mail from Berlin to Peking on the completed sections of the Trans-Siberian Railway, as far as Lake Baikal, thence by land route to Kiachta and Urga to connect the Russian Postal Wagon service from Urga to Kalgan and Peking. This exercise aimed to ascertain the efficiency of this new mail route over the extant sea route and the whole journey took “weeks” longer. Three reasons might have caused delay : (a) mail items had been forwarded to a Russian company which affixed Russian stamps on each item before the Russian Post Office put them on board the Trans-Siberian Railroad, (2) at the inception of trans-Siberian Railway service, the schedule had not yet been fixed and (c) the German post bag was pretty big, heavy and could not be carried on camel back at Kiachta and had to be transported to Urga by car. After this trip, the idea of a new route to China via Mongolia had been dropped, but what happened to the mail items carried on the experimental trip ? Did they have transit daters to evidence their passage on Trans-Siberian Railway ? Were German and Russian stamps affixed on all items ?

Tientsin German Post Office handled the above item to Bremen Germany dated 17/12/96 and there was manuscript endorsement “Via Sibirien” at upper left corner, below which the sender deliberately wrote “Tientsin Dec. 16, 1896” against the latter the recipient wrote a remark in German to confirm date of receipt as Febr.13 1896(7). Perhaps another experimental trip from Tientsin to Bremen took place even earlier in February 1896 ? Anyway, 61 days transit time disinterested the German Post Office and when the eastbound experimental journey also proved unsatisfactory, the mail route between Germany and China via Mongolia was no longer pursued with keen interest.



At around the same time in 1896, the United States New York Post Office was also anxious to gather information on the progress and efficiency of the via Siberia mail service, when it sent this stampless “Official Business” cover to “Vladivostok China”. The dispatch dater was absent, but it reached San Francisco on October 7 1896 and was carried by steamer to Nagasaki, arriving there on October 28 but there was no Vladivostok arrival dater, perhaps it was sent to Tientsin since “China” was written at upper left corner.



Around 1896 the construction of the Chelyabinsk-Yekaterinburg section had been completed and the extension from Irkutsk-Baikal just commenced, perhaps some publicity concerning the speedy construction progress has aroused much interest from European nations which resulted in the experimental trip by the German Post Office and from United States of America as well as evidenced by this Official Business cover which probably contained request for information.



## Trans-Siberian, Chinese Eastern & South Manchurian Railways, November 1901



This map illustrated the seven connections onto the Trans-Siberian Railroad during the Qing Dynasty three of them in Sinkiang Province i.e. Kuldja (Inin), Kashgar and Tacheng, one in Mongolia i.e. Kiachta and four in Northeast Provinces i.e. Manchouli, Harbin, Suifenho and Pogradichnaya, the last named is a small town built by the Russians within Chinese territory to serve as an exchange station of mails.

### 3. Acceptance of “Via Siberia” Mail from China by Russian Post Offices

Prior to the completion of the entire Chinese Eastern Railway in November 1901, Russia had already made use of the completed sections of the Trans-Siberian Railway to deliver mail from Mongolia to the west and the March 1901 registered cover below originated from Urga, franked with 3 Russian stamps totaling 30 kopeks, canceled by indistinct Russian Post Office Urga dater with Troitsko-savsk transit dater of 8 III 1901 (Julian calendar, or Gregorian calendar March 21, 1901) New York transit 4-17 1901 and REGISTERED APR 23 1901 Nevada City, - Cal. daters all on reverse. The very fact that this item had been delivered via Troitsko-savsk evidenced its crossing the border to Russian territory and it is envisaged that the mail subsequently boarded the Trans-Siberian





Railroad proper at Verkhne-Udinsk station (now named Ulan-Ude) at the south eastern end of Lake Baikal. The 30 kopek Russian postage paid can be broken down into international letter rate 10 kopek, international registration rate 10 kopek, additional weight or alternatively acknowledgement of receipt fee 10 kopek. Another point of interest is to note the impromptu made registration label from the Russian Post Office Urga, at the very early stages of acceptance mails from Mongolia back to China.

The Russian Post Offices in Kuldja, Kashgar and Tacheng of Sinkiang Province also began to accept mail "Via Siberia" and surprising enough, this service had been utilized to deliver mail items from cities in Sinkiang to Kalgan or Peking, the following red band cover from Ilie (Kuldja) to Peking is a typical example.

This 1901 IV 17 (Julian calendar) registered red band cover paid 20 kopek Russian postage, 10 kopek each for international letter rate and registration fee. Since the address was written in Chinese, staff of Russian Post Office Kuldja wrote Russian language version of address with "via Troitsko-savsk" instruction on cover back below which is Russian Post Office Peking arrival dater 1901 V 31 (also Julian calendar). The sender was a firm dealing with goods and merchandise from Peking and this cover contained an order list. The 48 day transit time was not surprising considering the fact that Manchouli exchange station had not been opened and the more difficult Mongolian trip via Urga had to be taken.



In the latter half of 1902, Russian Postal Agencies in Newchwang, Tientsin, Shanghai Peking and Yinkow began to accept mail items with Russian postage, to be carried along Chinese Eastern Railway to Manchouli, there connecting Trans-Siberian Railway to Russian or European destinations. However, great efforts to improve the efficiency were required to establish the confidence of "Via Siberia" service because the long transit time would not be considered, especially when the sender to pay extra postage in Russian currency.

The 1901.I.9 cover (Julian calendar) on the right originated from Peking, was franked 5 kopek canceled Russian Post Office Peking dater with manuscript endorsement "Via Newchwang and Trans-Siberia", the Moscow transit dater 1902 II.8 evidenced its trip on the Trans-Siberian Railway and it arrived Vienna 24.2.02. At this time, the Manchouli exchange station had already begun to function (since November 1901), but the 32 day transit time make it impossible to ascertain whether it entered China via Kiachta or Manchouli.







A month later in February 1902, the German Post Office handled a postcard from Hankau, the date of dispatch being 10/2 02 and it arrived Bruxelles Belgium on 1 MARS 02, an unbelievably short 19 days in transit. Did Bruxelles Post Office staff forget to change the month slug to April? The 19 day transit time was actually achievable in 1909 as illustrated by later examples.

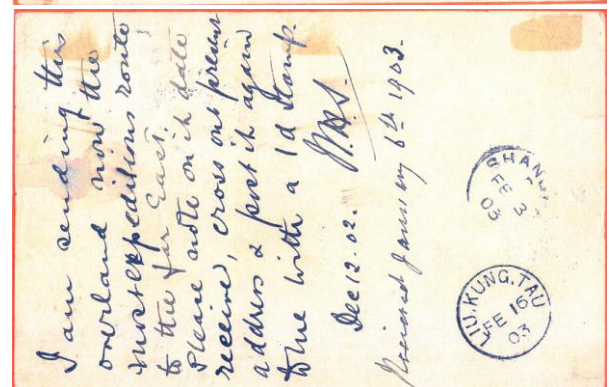
Another example Peking--England recorded a 10 day transit time from Chefoo (1902 XI 25) to Moscow (1902 XII 5) and this was what the public was waiting for. With the opening of the Manchouli route efficiency of the via Siberia mail service was enhanced, attracting more and more people entrusting their mail items to this service.



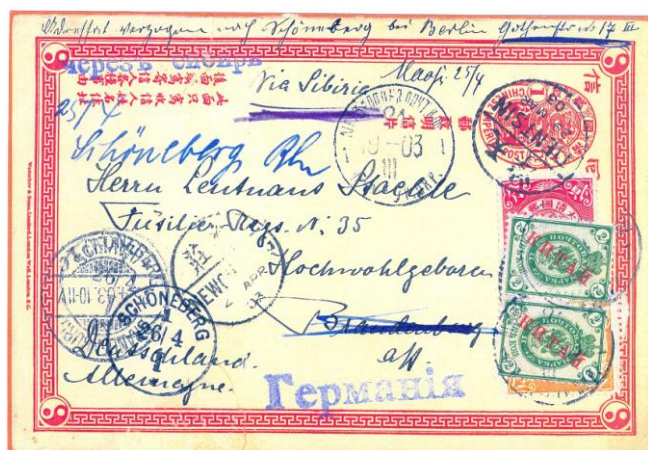
The British residents from Liu Kung Tau of British Leasehold territory of Weihaiwei were among the first to utilize "Via Siberia" mail service apart from the major cities. The 19 NOV 02 cover arrived Maidstone on DE 19 09, requiring a transit time of 30 days.



Another sender from Liu Kung Tau sent a post card endorsed "Via Port Arthur and Moscow" and he wrote a message requesting the recipient to note the date of receipt and then send the card back. The recipient duly obliged and this card revealed important facts : it took 25 days to reach England but the return trip sea trip via Shanghai took 40 days because Russia was still negotiating the imposition of additional postage for the use of "Via Siberia" mail service and since most European countries did not accept the fee standard, "Via Siberia" mail service was not available to eastbound mail.







Two postal stationery cards, both endorsed “Via Siberia”, from Tientsin and Shanghai respectively give some idea as to the transit time required to reach European destinations. Both items had to pay additional Russian postage, the transit time from Tientsin to Schoneberg of Germany is 28 days and from Shanghai to Weymouth United Kingdom is 25 days. It is interesting to note that the manuscript endorsement “Via Siberia” was crossed out on the latter card but it still arrived United Kingdom in just 25 days, and could not have possibly be delivered by sea route.

China was not a member of the Universal Postal Union and had to pay the additional Russian postage for the use of “Via Siberia” mail service. Initially Russia did not agree to carry mail items for other UPU countries free of charge, instead it demanded to charge the following scale of fees which the European nations found hard to accept:

(a) 15 francs/kilogram for letters (equivalent at that time to \$3.00 U.S., or 12/6 sterling per 2.25 lbs.)

(b) 3 francs/kilogram for other articles (60c U.S. or 2/6 sterling per 2.25 lbs.) excluding postcards which were unacceptable.

#### 4. Official Inauguration of “Via Siberia” Mail Service, October 1903

On October 1 1903 Russia agreed that foreign post offices in China, Japan and Korea can send mail items destined for Europe via the trans-Siberian railway and in the same month, the French “Bulletin Mensuel des Postes” advertised the following notice :

In Europe, the arrangement of sending mail items to the Far East by the Trans-Siberian Railway was as follows : (1) postal sendings, intended to go by way of the Trans-Siberian route, will be sent from Paris at 8.05 p.m. by mail train No. 125 as far as Tergnier, and from there by train No. 127, (2) a mail train will leave daily from Moscow at 4:40 p.m., arriving on the 17<sup>th</sup> day following, at the terminals of the Trans-Siberian Line (Vladivostok, Port Arthur, Yinkow) The total time for the journey from Paris is 20 days. A daily departure will also take place in the opposite direction.

The sendings will be transported beyond Dalny, Port Arthur and Vladivostok by mail steamers controlled by the Chinese Eastern R.R. Co., leaving on the following routes :

- (a) From Dalny and Port Arthur for Chefoo (on the south coast of the Gulf of Po-Chi-Li),--every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday—Travel time : 16 hours.
- (b) From Dalny and Port Arthur for Shanghai (direct service)—every Wednesday—Travel time : 2 days.
- (c) From Dalny and Port Arthur for Nagasaki (direct service)—every Wednesday—Travel time : 2 days
- (d) From Dalny and Port Arthur for Shanghai, via Chomulpo, Korea--every 16 days—Travel time : Dalny to Chomulpo 2 days, Chomulpo to Shanghai 2 days.
- (e) From Vladivostok to Shanghai via Gensan and Fusan in Korea, and Nagasaki—every 23 to 24 days—Travel time : Vladivostok to

No. 14.

**MAILS**  
FOR THE  
**FAR EAST**  
(Via SIBERIA).

**FOR LETTERS AND POST-CARDS ONLY.**

THE Siberian route is now available for the transmission of letters and post-cards from this Country for the Far East; but not for any other classes of correspondence or for parcels.

Letters and post-cards intended for transmission by this route should be specially superscribed “via Siberia” or “via Russia”; and the postage must be fully prepaid. Any letters and post-cards in regard to which these conditions are not observed will be sent by the ordinary routes followed in other cases.

Letters addressed to H.M. Ships on the China Station, to the Colony of Hongkong, or to Chefoo, Wei-hai-Wei, Shanghai, Amoy, Canton, Foochow, Hankow, Hoihow, Ningpo and Swatow, at all of which places there are British Post Offices, can pass at the rate of 1d. per ½ oz. To other places in China (including Manchuria), and also to Japan, Korea and the Philippine Islands the rate for letters is 2½d. per ½ oz.

The rate for post-cards is in all cases 1d. each.

Mails containing correspondence complying with the above mentioned conditions will henceforth be despatched from London to Moscow every evening, Sunday excepted. From Moscow there is a daily service to Dalny or Vladivostok, whence the Mails are sent on by Russian steamers as opportunities offer.

The time occupied in transit varies according to circumstances from 22 to 30 days.

By Command of the Postmaster General.

GENERAL POST OFFICE,  
3rd November, 1903.

(4) Printed for His Majesty's Stationery Office by W. F. Gifford & Sons, Ltd., Progress Square, Old Bailey, E.C.



Nagasaki 5 days, Nagasaki to Shanghai 3 days.

If available, the mail steamers of the Russian Volunteer Fleet will also be used for the transport of mail on the following routes :

- (a) Port Arthur to Nagasaki : one voyage per month. Travel time : two days.
- (b) Port Arthur to Shanghai : one voyage per month. Travel time : two days.
- (c) Vladivostok to Nagasaki : two voyages per month, at irregular intervals. Travel time : four days.
- (d) Vladivostok to Shanghai : one voyage per month. Travel time : six days.

Finally, postal communications between Tientsin and Peking will be served by the North China Railroad with a mail train which will run four times weekly in both directions between Newchwang and Peking (i.e. the then completed section of the Peking-Moukden Railway)

Under the pressure from many European nations reminding Russia to fulfill the obligations of member countries to the Universal Postal Union, Russia reluctantly agreed to allow UPU members utilize via Siberia mail service free of additional charge in Russian currency. When this final hurdle was cleared, Great Britain Postmaster General issued a Notification on November 3, 1903 specifying relevant details and fee scales of this service.

The Chinese Imperial Post applied to join the Universal Postal Union but the abnormally long observation period could only be overcome by signing separate Postal Agreements with individual selected members of UPU and the Postal Agreement with French Post Office became effective January 1 1902, with Japanese Post Office July 18, 1903, British Post Office Hong Kong February 1 1905, German Post Office November 3, 1905 and Russian Post Office February 19 1909. By the time of inauguration of via Siberia mail service, sender of mail items to Europe no longer had to pay additional Russian postage, they just handed them to French or less conveniently, Japanese Post Offices because these post offices could transfer the mail to Russian Post Office for delivery free of charge, making use of their status as UPU members.



The upper postal stationery card originated from Pingxiang and transited Siangtan on NOV 28 1903 with further transit in Shanghai DE 15 03 arriving Hamburg 9.1.04, requiring only 25 days from Shanghai to Hamburg. The lower postal stationery card from Swatow is of particular interest, it could be the only one of the via Siberia mail items with Pa Kua cancellation, used in China around 1897-98. It comprises six thick complete (denoted by 1) or broken (denoted by 2) bars, used at the initial period of Chinese Imperial Post pending the arrival of "dollar chops" ordered from Japan. Apart from this, it could be the earliest example of mail from southern provinces of China adopting the via Siberia service.



So far we have only come across west bound mail using via Siberia service, but as Russia finally agreed to allow mails from UPU countries to travel on the Trans-Siberian Railway, the first east bound mail left London on September 28 1903 to connect with Paris-Moscow mail train. In November 1903 the General Post Office in London published a bulletin stating that mail for the Far East would leave London every evening except Sunday.

As the via Siberia mail service began to function smoothly, transit time between Peking to Paris only required 21 days, as for Shanghai to Paris, 23 days are required. The approximate transit times between various stations on the way are set out in

Paris to Harbin	2 days	Shanghai to Dalny	2 days
Harbin to Moscow	15 days	Dalny to Harbin	2 days
Moscow to Paris	4 days	Harbin to Moscow	15 days
		Moscow to Paris	4 days
Total	21 days	Total	23 days

Mr. Robert Hart, Inspector General of Customs Peking, began to correspond with his former colleague and friend Mr. (Ian Campbell) residing in London Great Britain continuously throughout the period from 1868 to 1907 and 1437 letters had been compiled and published, both the sender and recipient carefully wrote down the dates of dispatch and receipt. Letter No. 1294 was endorsed "Via Siberia" which was dispatched on October 4 1903 and only needed a transit time of 30 days to reach its destination on November 3, as compared with forty to sixty days transit time shown on some earlier items of the same year.

It is quite understandable that Mr. Robert Hart did not make full use of the via Siberia mail service because he feared that Russian Post Office might inspect the contents of his letters, and apparently he did not make known the considerable saving in transit time to the general public in China. By the time inauguration took place and people began to utilize this service, they could only know the result in two months' time, assuming one month transit time each way. After two rounds of communication, the Russo-Japanese War broke out and this explained why China-Europe mail via Siberia are scarce.

## 5. Russian Traveling Post Office Daters Used On Chinese Eastern Railway

The Chinese Eastern Railway is a T shaped railway built by the Russians during the Boxer Movement. For better management of mail delivery and efficiency, Russian Postal Department assigned a series of numbers to be included in traveling post office daters to differential one from the others.

No. 259 Chita---Manchouli	No. 261 Manchouli---Harbin	No. 263 Harbin---Vladivostok	No. 265 Harbin---Port Arthur
No. 260 Manchouli---Chita	No. 262 Harbin---Manchouli	No. 264 Vladivostok---Harbin	No. 266 Port Arthur---Harbin

According to recently updated records kept by Mr.Philip E. Robinson, leading authority on Russian Traveling Post Office daters, the circular Type dater was first used on No.264 train Vladivostok to Harbin on August 26, 1901.

The postcard at right traveled onboard No. 262 train from Harbin to Manchouli on 1903 IX 4 (Julian calendar, equivalent to September 17) from where it exited China to reach Liepzig on 1.10.03 with a transit time of only 14 days. 4 Kopek postcard rate was applicable.

No. 262 Traveling Post Office dater is by far the commonest of all the 8 types mentioned above, simply because Harbin-Manchouli is the proper direction for mail items to exit China to Europe.

Another postcard was franked with 2 Russian stamps paying 4 kopek postcard rate, canceled No. 262 Traveling Post Office dater 1903 IX 4 (Julian calendar, equivalent to September 17) with Sens Yonne French arrival dater 5 OUT 03, 22 days in transit.





These circular Traveling Post Office daters had been used until 1906 and replaced by oval types, the earliest type appeared on No. 259 train from Chita to Manchouli on July 5, 1902.

This 1906 postcard only paid 3 kopek postage and was not treated as a postage due item, it was probably dispatched from Russian Post Office in Chinese Northeast provinces, boarded No. 261 train heading from Manchouli to Chita where it exited China to reach its Russian destination. From this example, it can be seen that Russian language mail items could still get through to utilize “Via Siberia” mail service after the Russo-Japanese War in 1904 like this civilian card, military personnel could send mail free of postage by applying handstamps of his military unit.

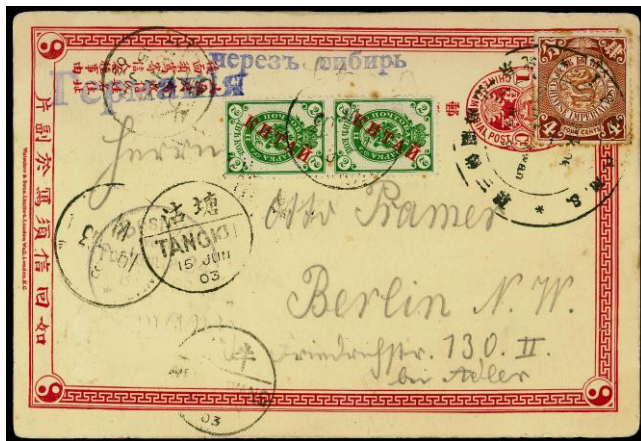


The oval Traveling Post Office daters continue to be used when this 1917 postcard received No. 261 dater (eastbound) instead of No. 262 dater (westbound), perhaps staff members forgot to switch to proper daters.

All is quiet and normal when this card reached its Russian destination in just 13 days, just before the outbreak of first of the two 1917 revolutions in Russia.



According to recently updated records kept by Mr. Philip E. Robinson, these oval Traveling Post Office daters had been used as late as July 9 1923 on the No. 261 train from Manchouli to Harbin, even after ALL the Russian Post Offices in China had closed down in 1920.



Peking-Shanhaikwan No. 3 train post office dater, Russian 2k pair canceled Russian post office dater via Tangku, Tientsin, Newchwang with indistinct Berlin arrival dater.

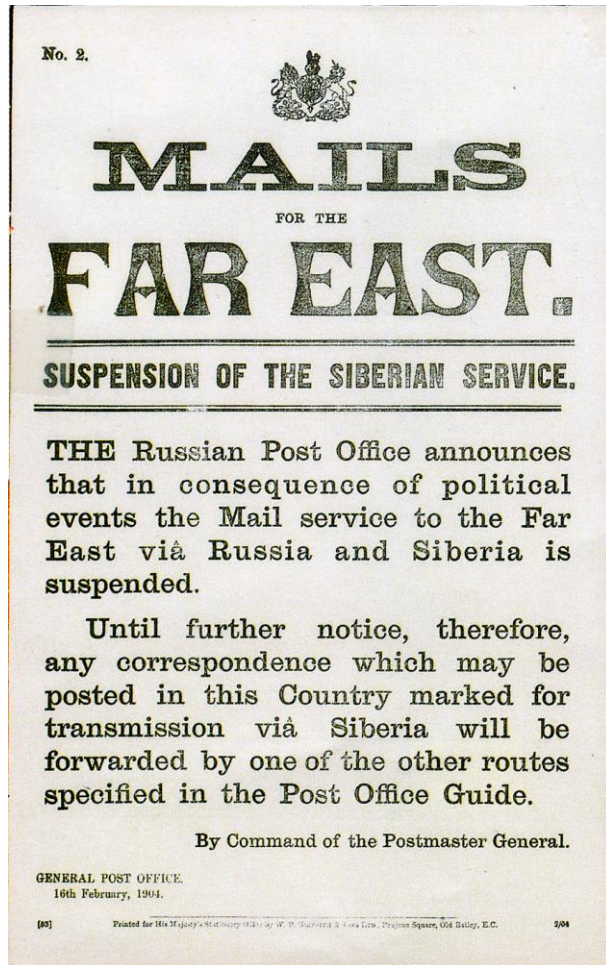
## 6. The Russo Japanese War, February 1904

Both Russia and Japan intended to have full control of Chinese Northeast Provinces for territorial expansion and for the rich natural resources. The completion of the Chinese Eastern Railway by Russia within Chinese Northeast Provinces, connecting Manchouli with Suifenho and Vladivostok in the east-west direction, and Harbin with Port Arthur in the North-South direction, effectively hindered similar ambition on the part of Japan.

Without prior warning, the Japanese Army attacked the Russian fleet anchored at Port Arthur on



February 6, 1904 and war was declared on February 8 when Russia later announced on February 16 that the Trans-Siberian Railroad was to be closed temporarily.



General Post Office of Great Britain issued, on 16<sup>th</sup> February 1904 a Notification concerning suspension of the Siberian service.

The services from Marseilles by French mail ships, From Brindisi by English mail ships and from Naples By German mail ships have again become the normal routes for the transmission of mails destined for China, Korea and Japan.

Dispatches from Paris

Every second Saturday evening, starting from March 15 via Marseilles.

Every second Saturday morning, starting from March 12 via Brindisi.

Every second Tuesday evening, starting from March 1 via Naples.

For Japan and China only, forwarding of mails via Canada or the United States is possible. Onward Transmission is as follows :

- (a) Leave Vancouver about every three weeks.
- (b) Leave San Francisco four times per month.
- (c) Leave Tacoma three times per month.
- (d) Leave Seattle twice monthly.

Picture post cards of this Russo-Japanese War had been prepared, most of which depict war scenes, some with both Russian and Japanese stamps canceled with appropriate daters from the corresponding post offices.



Picture postcard entitled "Siberia On The Road To Manchuria---Near Lake Baikal"

To ensure prompt transfer to both artillery, ammunition and soldiers, the former had been carried on train to cross Lake Baikal whilst soldiers had to travel on sledges over the frozen lake.



Picture postcard entitled "Russo-Japanese War --No.11—Port Arthur 24<sup>th</sup> Feb.1904

The Russian crossing Lake Baikal (50 degrees below zero). The railroad established on the lake is only for trans-shipment of Artillery and ammunitions, the soldiers continue to cross in sledges, and the cold is severe.





Because of the war, this postal stationery card was withheld in Shanghai Post Office April 22 to May 12 before dispatch, it arrived Weissenburg on 16.6.04, 35 days in transit.

A Russian soldier on active service from 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion 23<sup>rd</sup> Artillery Brigades sent this card back home whilst on No. 261 Manchouli-Harbin train towards Port Arthur, This 1904 VIII 31 card bears a purple free-frank seal of his unit.



Even though the Czar's Army was initially defeated, the returning sailors from the Varyag met with warm welcome and congratulated on their return to St. Petersburg.



Japan produced a vast number of coloured picture postcards depicting victorious war scenes with stamps canceled to order to record the approximate date of the subject event.



Japan was victorious from the very start, the long supply line from Moscow to Port Arthur greatly reduced efficiency of Russian Army especially when a heavy blow was dealt by surprise.

Another Russian serviceman was repatriated home as he sent this card (post free purple frank of his unit on top right) whilst on board No. 260 Manchouli—Chita train of the Chinese Eastern Railway.

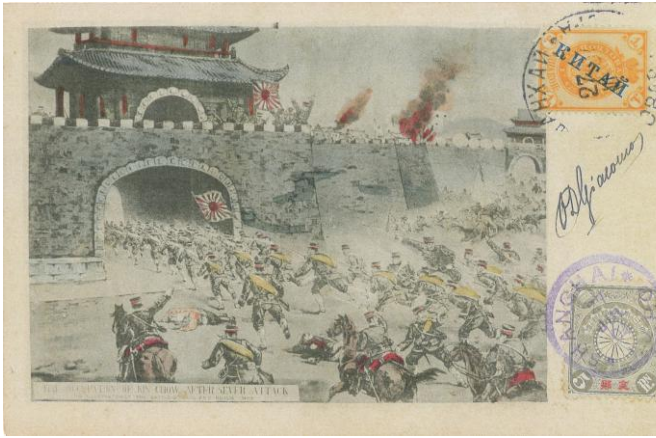


On the war front, reinforcement in the form of Siberian riflemen arrived at Liao-yang where the ground battles were fought.

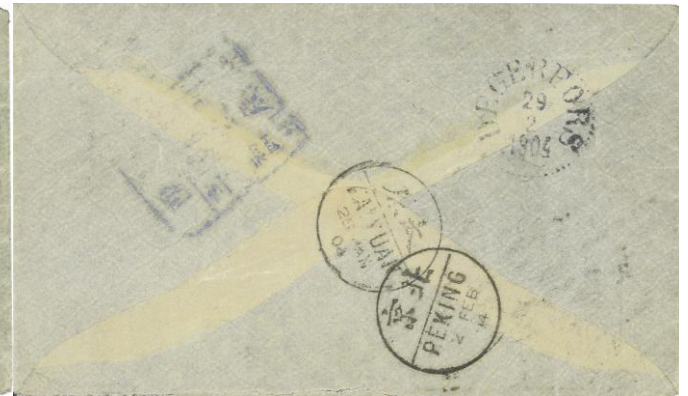


Some had actually been used from Shanghai back to Kyoto in 1905 and upon arrival, Japanese stamps were added and canceled commemorative handstamps





It had been reported that a small number of French military covers or cards from China back to France had been carried on the Trans-Siberian Railway after the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War, however, some other items from China, dispatched prior to the War, also went through to Europe, with inevitable delays caused by the War.



The above cover from Yuncheng of Shansi Province, transited Taiyuan 28 JAN 04 and Peking 2 FEB 04 and was handled by French Post Office Peking 3 FEVR 04 arriving Degerfors of Sweden on 29 2 1904 illustrating a transit time of 27 days from Peking to destination which would have been impossible by sea mail.

18 months after the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War, the soldier from 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion 23<sup>rd</sup> Artillery Brigades survived the War and was repatriated home.

He sent a postcard back home, with postage free military handstamp of his unit, which bears oval No. 262 Harbin-Manchouli TPO dater 2 8 05. He wrote about the guarding of the Chinese Eastern Railway by Russian frontier guards at Buhedu. At this point in time, peace is right across the corner.



## 7. Treaty of Washington 1905 to Unofficial Resumption of Service 1907

### 7.1 Treaty of Washington

Russia was defeated during the Russo-Japanese War, and as part of the terms included in the Peace Treaty brokered by the Americans and signed in Washington 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 Russian will henceforth be named South Manchurian Railway



and controlled solely by Japan, together with the ownership of a narrow strip of land on both sides known as the South Manchurian Railway Zone and the right to station army for safety protection of the railway.

From this point in time, No. 265 Russian Traveling Post Office dater was applicable to that section of railway from Harbin to Kwanchengtse and vice versa No. 266 from Kwanchengtse to Harbin.

Japan did use the seized portion of the Chinese Eastern Railway between Port Arthur and Kwanchengtse to carry its own mail during the Russo-Japanese War and small three segment Japanese language daters had been used, and suffice it to say that these mails were directed back home to Japan and did not concern “via Siberia” mail service. There was a period of stand off between Russia and Japan when Russian troops were still present near the cede section of railway now known as South Manchurian Railway but later with the presence of Japanese troops near the Chinese Eastern Railway, Russia had to honour the Treaty of Washington and withdrew her troops from South Manchuria.

Japan’s ambition did not cease upon becoming the possessor of South Manchurian Railway, a greater goal was to link it with Chosen Line via Antung to Seoul, Fusan, (by ferry to) Shimonoseki, Osaka and Tokyo. It took Japan a few years to change the railway gauge from 5 feet wide type to 1 meter narrow gauge and the South Manchurian Railway was fully operational in 1910.

## 7.2 Longer Transit Time for China—Europe Mail

Let us look at three examples to see the respective transit times taken by the British, French and German Post Office when handling China—Europe mails.



Hankow 15 FEB 05 to Herent Belgium 25 MAR 1903, handled by Shanghai British Post Office, Transit time: 38 days



Shanghai 30 MAY 05 to Bruxelles Belgium 7 JUL 05, handled by French Post Office Shanghai, Transit time : 33 days



Tientsin 4/9 05 to Cassel Germany 20.10.05 handled by German Post Office, Transit time 46 days.

The Universal Postal Convention, signed at Rome on May 26, 1906 between the various member countries of the UPU, devoted the second article of its Protocol to the “settlement of forwarding charges to be paid to the Russian Administration on the right to exchange mails by way of the Trans-Siberian Railroad” It is also specified that “unsealed transmission is not accepted by the above-mentioned railroad.”

One year’s time was required to materialize the provisions specified in the Protocol during this time only Russian language items with Russian postage could be delivered via Siberia mail service. as illustrated by the following examples.



1906 IV 23 postcard from soldier on active Service with purple free frank handstamp at top right and Russian arrival dater 1906 V 11. Transit time 19 days.



1906.9.1 postcard from Harbin Station to Russia, transit Moscow 21.9.06. Transit time from Harbin to Moscow: 20 days.

### 7.3 Tzarist Russia Weakened by Russo-Japanese War

The Russo-Japanese War had a grave impact on the Tsarist Government now that it was weakened by its military reverses. From the beginning of 1905, the vast empire was shaken by a revolutionary government which spread to Siberia when dissident governments were set up in several industrial centres such as Krasnoyarsk and Chita on the Trans-Siberian Railroad, and there was even a military revolt in Vladivostok. Rail traffic was interrupted and was used to carry contingents of troops loyal to the government, leaving from Moscow in the west and Harbin in the east, joining force in Siberia to crush the rebellion. Order was restored at the beginning of 1906 but it appears that international postal traffic was not re-established until the spring of 1907. Very few items had been recorded as having been forwarded by the via Siberia route between March 1905 and April 1907.

### 7.4 Partial Resumption of via Siberia Mail Service in February 1907

On February 18 1907 mail items to the Far East can utilize via Siberia mail route if they had been marked with 'Via Siberia'. The French "Bulletin Mensuel des Postes" issued the following public announcement in May 1907, as if on behalf of the Russian Post Office.

#### **"Utilization of the Trans-Siberian Railroad for the Transportation of Postal Correspondence".**

The Trans-Siberian Railroad is again available for the transmission of ordinary and registered letters, as well as postcards, exchanged between France on the one hand and Japan, Korea and North China, including Shanghai and Hankow, on the other. Mail for the southern provinces of China may also be forwarded by the Trans-Siberian Railroad, but only if it bears a notation indicating the use of this route.

Letters and boxed with value declared, as well as all articles at reduced rates, cannot be forwarded by the Trans-Siberian until further notice. Such articles will continue to be directed by way of Suez or Vancouver, as the opportunity of departure permits.

Departures to link with the Trans-Siberian are made in Paris every evening at 8.45 p.m. by Train No. 125. Transmission of the mails between Moscow and Vladivostok is carried out by express train leaving three times weekly on Sundays, Wednesdays and Thursdays at 10.30 p.m. St. Petersburg's time.

In the opposite direction, departures from Vladivostok take place on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays at 11.45 a.m. Kharbin time.

The effective length of transmission from Paris to Moscow is 4 days, and from Moscow to Vladivostok about 12 days 7 hours, thus making a total length of 16 days 7 hours.

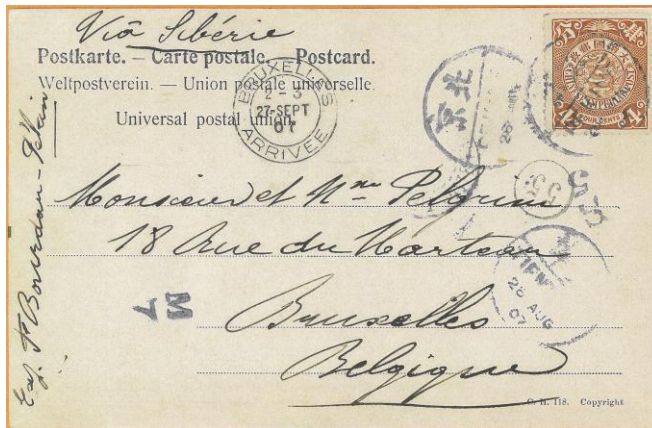
Since the Trans-Manchurian line, which branches off at the station of Manchouli from the main Siberian line to serve Port Arthur, Dalny, Tientsin and Peking cannot for the moment, be utilized for postal traffic, the transmission of mail for South Manchuria, China and Japan is being carried out by way of Vladivostok. Departures from Vladivostok are as follows :

- (1) For Tsuruga (Japan) on Wednesdays, arriving at the destination on Fridays; duration 39 hours.
- (2) For Nagasaki and Shanghai every Sunday, arriving at Nagasaki on Tuesdays and at Shanghai on Thursdays.
- (3) For Nagasai every Saturday; duration of the voyage 61 hours.
- (4) For Gensan, Fusan and Chemulpo, every fortnight.

There are also mailboat services linking Nagasaki and Shanghai with Dalny and Tientsin. From the last-named, there is a rail service to Peking.



Four examples serve to illustrate the gradual increase in efficiency of the “Via Siberia” mail service after its resumption of service pursuant to public announcement in May 1907.



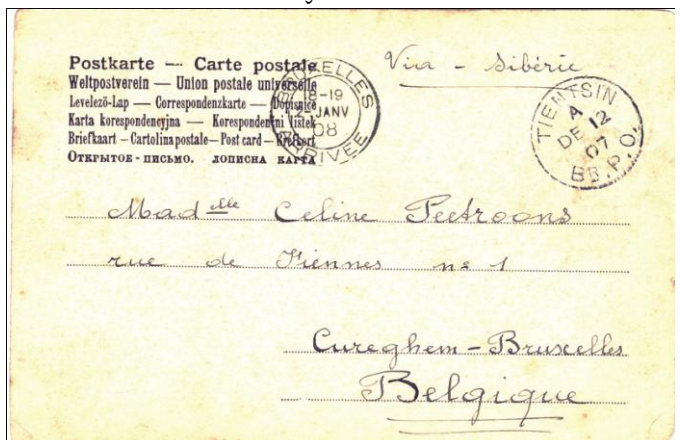
Postcard from Peking 26 AUG 07 via Tientsin to Bruxelles Belgium 27 SEPT 07, Transit time 32 days.



Postcard from Hankow 2 SEP 07 via Shanghai to Bruxelles Belgium 4 OCTO 07, Transit time also 32 days.



Postal stationery card from Shanghai 23 NOV 07 to Prag of Czechoslovakia 20 XII 07, Transit time 27 days.



Postcard from Tientsin British Post Office DE 12 07 to Bruxelles Belgium 2 JANV 08, Transit time 21 days

In the first half of 1907, across Europe and Far East, sender of mail items dare not believe that the Russian Post Office will act according to the Notice issued by the French Post Office. The reluctance to indicate “via Siberia” route had caused undue delay sometimes more than 10 days.

On the other hand the British Post Office in Tientsin and Shanghai actively increased their market share of mail business when each of the said offices needed 5 daters with index A,B,C,D,E to deal with the vast amount of mail items handled there and then.

Little did the senders know that via Siberia mail service was not without risks. Russo-Japanese War and the ensuing internal rebellion weakened the Tzarist Government which did not have the resources to guard the entire Trans-Siberian Railway against bandits to ensure safety of passengers and mails. Apparently the French Post Office did not mention this in its earlier public announcement in May 1907. This postcard depicts bandits robbing mail carriages, and in some rare occasions, they rob Trans-Siberian trains as well.



When the via Siberia mail service resumed in 1907, foreign residents in remote central and



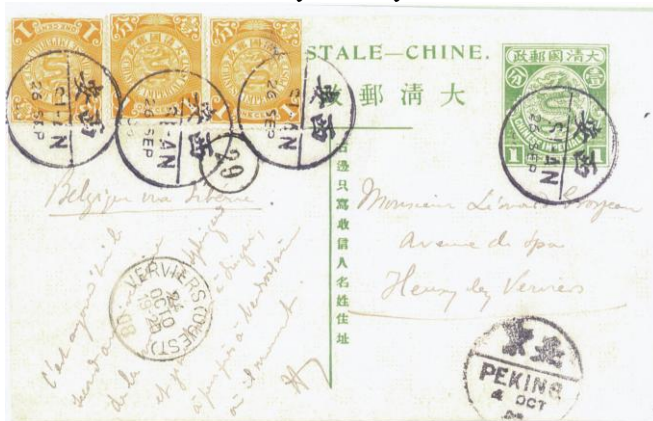
southern provinces in China also made use of this service when senders in Kansu, Yunnan, Shensi, and Kiangsi entrusted their Europe bound mail to via Siberia mail service.



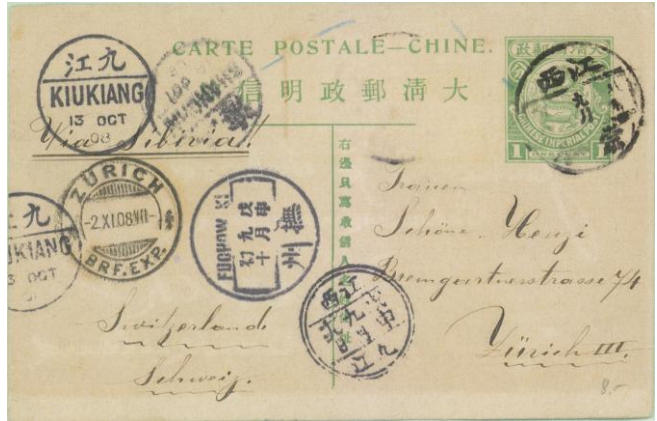
1908 postal stationery card from Lanchow Kansu Province (May 1 08) via Tientsin 20 MAY 08 to Bruxelles Belgium 7 JUN 08. Transit time Tientsin/Bruxelles only 18 days.



1908 postal stationery card from Yunnanfu (May 30 08) to Norge, endorsed "Via Siberia" but still carried via Tengyueh 24 JUN 08 with Kristiania arrival dater 6 VIII 08.



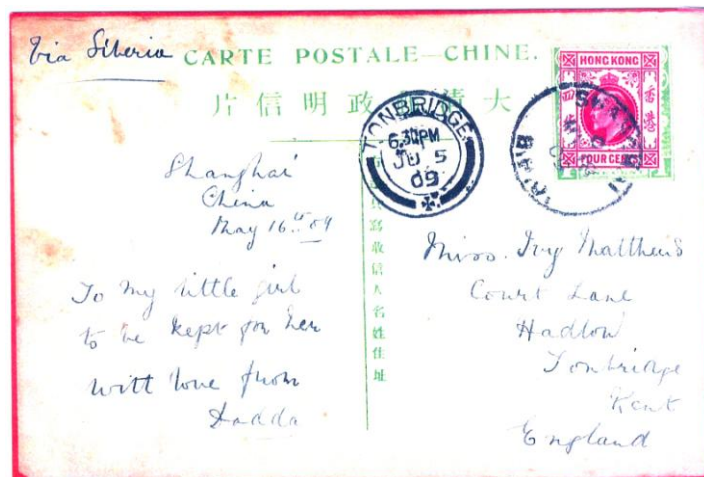
Postal stationery card Sian 26 SEP 08 (Shensi Province) via Peking 4 OCT to Bruxelles, Belgium 24 OCTO 08, 20 days transit time from Peking to Bruxelles.



Postal stationery card Fuchow (Oct.13 08 Kiangsi Province) via Kiukiang 13 OCT 08, Shanghai to Zurich Switzerland 2 XI 08, 20 days transit time from Kiukiang to Bruxelles

## 8. Official Resumption of Via Siberia Mail Service 1909

In February 1909 Russian Post Office announced the official resumption of the Via Siberia mail service after mounting pressure from European nations. A Postal Agreement was entered into between China and Russia, effective February 19 1909 when Russia agreed to deliver China/Europe mail via Siberia mail service free of additional Russian postage.



A period of stability ensued, from official resumption of Via Siberia mail service in 1909 to the eve of World War I in 1914 when vast expansion of mail volume was experienced not only by Chinese Post Offices but also by various Foreign Post Offices such as the British Post Offices in Shanghai and Tientsin, each of them needed 5 daters (index A to E) to cope with the increase in business, and the card on the left from Shanghai MY 16 09 to Tonbridge of U.K. JU 5 09 is a typical example.



Many significant events happened in China in 1909 amongst which was the signing of a special agreement between Tsarist Chinese Eastern Railway Company and the Qing Government in Peking which provided inter alia, that inside every Russian Mail Carriage on Chinese Eastern Railway a section measuring 1.5M to 2M could be partitioned off at the expense of the Chinese Government and used to transport "Official Mail" for the Chinese mandarin free of charge. This section of the mail carriage was to be supervised by persons appointed by the Chinese authorities. Simultaneously regular Chinese Post Office mail was also allowed to be transported in this section but only upon payment of sufficient postage. Apparently this right was not exercised during the Qing Dynasty or alternatively no specific dater had been used then, since Dong Qing daters had not been recorded until 1913.



Baby Emperor Hsuan Tung ascended the throne on September 8 1909 and a set of commemorative stamps in three denominations 2c, 3c and 7c had been issued. A 9 DEC 09 post card from Foochow was franked with 2c stamps x 2, addressed to Torino of Italy, endorsed Via Siberia and transited Shanghai on 14 DEC 09 but the indistinct arrival dater failed to give any clue as to transit time taken.

Foochow is the provincial capital of Fukien Province and before 1909 mail items to Europe had to transit Hong Kong and carried by mail boats via the Suez Canal. The above card went northward to Shanghai, indicating the compliance of the sender's requested route via Siberia.

The Imperial Chinese Post Office at Urga of Chinese Mongolia was set up on January 14, 1910 which corresponded to the 4<sup>th</sup> day of the Severe month (12<sup>th</sup> lunar month) in the year Gan Hsu. Initially mail delivery service took place once every week and the red band cover franked with Chinese Imperial Post 2 cent stamps x 2 was actually carried on the third mail delivery service which took place on January , 1910 and as usual, it exited Mongolia via Kiachta and entered into via Manchouli even though only the Harbin transit dater is shown on the cover.



Japan had almost completed the gauge alteration work to the South Manchurian Railway and whilst publicity had been going on to the effect that the South Manchurian Railway could then connect with Chosen Line in order to connect it with the main trunk line running all the way from Tokyo via Yokohama, Osaka, Shimonoseki (by ferry) Fusan, Seoul, Antung, Moukden, Changchun to Harbin. Shanhaikwan had been chosen as the intended exchange station for mails between China and Japan and oval Shanhaikwan I.J.T.O. dater had been used since November 1909 as illustrated by the post card Pekin (16 SEPT 09) to Shanhaikwan.



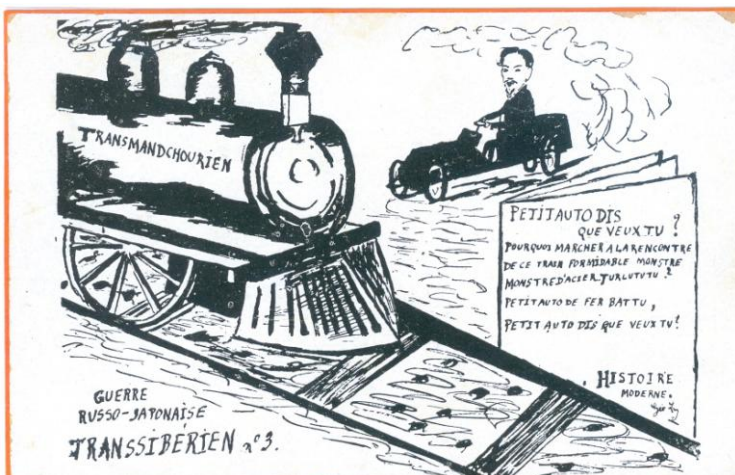
Later Japanese Post Office realized that Shanhaikwan was not the ideal choice for an exchange station of China/Japan/Europe mail and instead Mukden and Changchun began to function as new exchange stations because of their respective locations as terminus of Peking-Mukden and Changchun-Harbin lines. A suffix "-s" was added to regular I.J.P.O. dater of both post offices to distinguish its status as an exchange post office.

## 9. Period Of Stability And Great Expansion, 1910-1913

### 9.1 Connection of South Manchurian Railway with Chinese Eastern Railway 1910

Towards the end of 1910 Japan began promoting the semi-weekly South Manchurian Express between Dairen and Kwanchengtzu and picture post cards like the one shown here with roses and swift swallows and overhead electric cables is a typical propaganda material.

The French public had a different view of the South Manchurian Railway and a satirical post card with a short verse raised the doubt in the mind of the French people, posing the question which of the two belligerents of the Russo-Japanese War was most interested in the Trans-Manchurian section railway as a means of territorial expansions in South Manchuria.



The French postcard depicts a train TRANSMANDCHOURIEN with the following verse at right :

“Little car tell me what you want ?  
Why do you go to meet this fearsome monster ?  
This monster of steel-fiddlesticks.  
Little car of wrought iron  
Little car say what you want !”

the Chosen Line which leads all the way to Tokyo by another railway cum ferry network, Japan had quick access to South Manchuria, but with so many eyes watching over the shoulder, not much



could be done other than usual railway operations. With the establishment of Mukden and Changchun as exchange stations in replacement of Shanhaikwan I.J.T.O. for mail items between China, Japan, Russia and Europe, a period of prosperity commenced and lasted until the outbreak of World War I

on July 28, 1914. At this time, the Peking-Moukden Railway was also nearing completion, and with the purchase from Japan of the narrow gauge section from Sinmintun to Moukden and subsequent conversion of gauge width, Peking-Moukden express train began to operation in the latter half of 1911, attracting vast amount of mail items from cities within China to converge at Peking via the Peking-Hankow line or the Tientsin-Pukow line.



# SIBERIA, MANCHURIA, CHINA & JAPAN.

10

Mo. Tu. Fr. Sa.	1813	dep. Berlin (Schles.) p. 90.... arr.	1023	Tu. We. Fr. Sa.
Tu. We. Sa. Su.	8 55	dep. Warsaw (Gl) p. 99a .... arr.	2134	Mo. Tu. Th. Fr.
" " " "	1740	dep. Stolpce c .....	1322	" " " "
We. Th. Su. Mo.	2140	dep. Niegoreloje f .....	1249	" " " "
" " " "	1135	arr. Moscow (Smolenski) .... dep.	2245	Su. Mo. We. Th.
" " " "	1619	dep. Moscow (Smolenski) .... arr.	1832	" " " "
" " " "	1710	arr. Moscow (Severnii) .... dep.	1735	" " " "
We. Th. Su. Mo.	1745	dep. Moscow (Severnii) .... arr.	17 0	Su. Mo. We. Th.
Th. Fr. Mo. Tu	13 4	dep. Viatka .....	2114	Sa. Su. Tu. We.
Fr. Sa. Tu. We.	8 22	dep. Sverdlovsk .....	2 31	" " " "
Sa. Su. We. Th.	3 42	arr. Omsk .....	6 35	Fr. Sa. Mo. Tu.
Sa. Su. We. Th.	4 2	dep. Omsk .....	6 15	Th. Fr. Su. Mo.
" " " "	1626	dep. Novosibirsk .....	18 7	" " " "
Su. Mo. Th. Fr.	9 44	dep. Krasnoyarsk .....	1 8	We. Th. Sa. Su.
" " " "	1537	dep. Kansk .....	1856	Tu. We. Fr. Sa.
Mo. Tu. Fr. Sa.	1222	arr. Irkutsk .....	2229	" " " "
" " " "	13 2	dep. Irkutsk .....	2147	Mo. Tu. Th. Fr.
Tu. We. Sa. Su.	1530	arr. Karymskaya .....	2013	" " " "
" " " "	1532	dep. Karymskaya .....	2010	" " " "
Fr. Sa. Tu. We.	3 19	arr. Chabarovsk .....	7 44	Tu. We. Fr. Sa.
" " " "	3 44	dep. Chabarovsk .....	7 19	" " " "
Sa. Su. We. Th.	6 3	arr. Vladivostok .....	1837	Sa. Su. Tu. We.
" " " "	1532	dep. Karymskaya .....	2010	" " " "
" " " "	3 20	arr. Manchouli .....	8 10	" " " "
" " " "	1610	dep. Manchouli * .....	7 10	" " " "
" " " "	1330	arr. Harbin* .....	8 30	" " " "
" " " "	9 30	dep. Harbin* .....	1410	" " " "
" " " "	1525	arr. Hsinking* .....	8 30	" " " "
" " " "	1630	dep. (Changchun) .....	7 0	" " " "
" " " "	2230	arr. Mukden* .....	2340	" " " "
Cho. Ma. Exp.	Daily	2245 dep. Mukden .....	2325	" " " "
" " " "	" " " "	7 40 arr. Dairen (Daini) .....	1620	" " " "
CONNECTIONS				
BERLIN—MOSCOW via Daugavpils.				
Mon. Tue. Fri.	2356	dep. Berlin (Schles.) p. 90A .. arr.	7 8	Tue. Fri. Sat.
" " "	20 5	dep. Daugavpils c .....	1318	Mon. Thu. Fri.
Tue. Wed. Sat.	2145	dep. Indra c .....	1139	" " "
" " "	0 45	dep. Bigosovo .....	1038	" " "
Wed. Thu. Sun.	1555	arr. Moscow (Smolenski) .. dep.	19 5	Sun. Wed. Thu.
HARBIN—POGRANICHNAYA—VLADIVOSTOK.				
Tue. Thur. Sat.	7 30	dep. Harbin* .....	16 0	Tues. Thu. Sun.
Wed. Fri. Sun.	1645	arr. Pogranichnaya* .....	6 15	Mon. Wed. Sat.
" " "	" " "	dep. Pogranichnaya* .....	" " "	" " "
" " "	" " "	arr. Vladivostok .....	" " "	" " "
MUKDEN—TIENTSIN—PEIPING.				
Daily	1st day	2255 dep. Mukden .....	6 35	2nd day
" " "	2nd day	1045 arr. Shanhaikuan .....	1840	1st day
" " "	" " "	195 arr. Tientsin (East) .....	1150	" " "
" " "	" " "	20 0 dep. Tientsin .....	1136	" " "
" " "	" " "	2317 arr. Peiping (Pekin) .....	8 45	" " "
MUKDEN—KEIJO—FUSAN—JAPAN.				
Chosen	1st day	23 0 dep. Mukden .....	2250	3rd day
Manchuria	2nd "	2125 arr. Seoul .....	7 0	" " "
Express.	3rd "	8 30 arr. Fusan .....	1955	2nd "
" " "	4th "	1655 arr. Tokio .....	13 0	1st "
TIENTSIN—PUKOW—NANKING—SHANGHAI.				
" " "	1st day	1820 dep. Tientsin (East) .....	7 10	3rd day
" " "	2nd "	2045 arr. Pukow .....	1 40	2nd "
" " "	3rd "	2335 arr. Nanking .....	2315	1st day
" " "	" " "	0 0 dep. Nanking .....	2255	" " "
" " "	" " "	7 45 arr. Shanghai .....	16 5	" " "
Steamer services from Vladivostok to Japan, see page 806, and from Dairen to China and Japan, p. 808/810.				
TIME Moscow time is two hours later than that of Greenwich. When it is 12.0 noon at Moscow, it is 10.56 at Irkutsk, 18.0 at Harbin. Times at intermediate stations on the Trans-Siberian Railway are given in Moscow time. ¶ Moscow time ¶ Vladivostok time: 7 hours fast of Moscow time. * Manchukuo time: 6 hours fast of Moscow time. a Mid-European time. From Niegoreloje to Moscow, and from Moscow to Manchuria and Vladivostok (via Chabarovsk.) Sleeping Cars of direct communication, soft and hard class cars.				

A consolidated time table of railways between Siberia, Manchuria, China & Japan looks like the one on the left.

The first category covers the section from Berlin via Karymskaya to Vladivostok, with a branch line from Karymskaya to Manchouli and Harbin. The schedule for train from Harbin to Hsinking and then Mukden and Dairen was also included under the this category. (Traveling Post Office Nos. 261 and 262 operated on this section Manchouli to Harbin, Nos. 265 and 266 operate on the section from Harbin to Kwanchengtse). As can be observed from this table, it required 10 days to travel from Warsaw to Harbin and further 4 days to reach Dairen and this time schedule is identical to the journey taken by an English gentleman Mr. James H. Stewart in November 1910 who wrote a series of post cards back home which are included as an appendix to this book.

Train from Harbin to Porgranichnaya starts at

7.30 and arrives Porgranichnaya 16.45 the next day. It stops overnight and resumes its journey to Vladivostok at 6.15 the third morning but the arrival time at Vladivostok is unknown. Suifenho, a small mail exchange point near the border, is completely left out of the picture. (Traveling Post Office Nos. 263 and 264 operated on this line.)

This consolidated schedule gives food for thought : even though railway authorities would liked to even out the train schedules, smooth connection between various lines was still far from perfect and several days longer transit time might befall those mail items posted on a particular day in the week or one a particular combination of railway network. Since it was impossible to change the time schedule of Trans-Siberian Railroad, China made an effort to minimize delays by establishing a system of express trains on the Peking-Moukden and Tsinan-Kiaochow Railways, both of which were aimed to speed up mail delivery as far as Mukden and due diligenece ends there, beyond which China did not have jurisdiction over South Manchurian or Chinese Eastern Railways.





During Russo-Japanese War 1904, Japan had made use of the South Manchurian Railway for military mail delivery purposes when Japanese language “Railway Mail Matter” daters had been used on military mail items to and from Japan but these did not concern Trans-Siberian Railroad.

Now the South Manchurian Railway must also handle foreign language mail items when Japanese Post Office adopted double oval English language daters for use on items posted on board, or transited the South Manchurian Railway. North bound Mukden-Changchun train was assigned I.J.P.O.1 and south bound Changchun-Mukden train was assigned I.J.P.O. 2.

The upper cover originated from Korea (May 24 14) and traveled via Chosen Line and South Manchurian Railway (IJPO.1 Mukden to Changchun 27.5.14) to connect Trans-Siberian Railway to Paris, France.

The lower card from Antwerp (19.XI 1911) was carried on south bound IJPO.2

(6.12.11) from Changchun to Mukden to reach Dairen on the ensuing day 7.12.11.

## 9.2 Peking-Moukden And Peking-Hankow Railways Were Also Nearing Completion

The following pair of 1910 via Siberia picture post cards were addressed to Bruxelles of Belgium and Targoviste of Romania respectively and were both carried on the Peking-Changte or Changte-Peking section of the Peking-Hankow Railway. With the inauguration of South Manchurian Railway, China was speeding up railway construction or acquisition with the ultimate target to connect Moukden by Peking-Moukden Railway branching further lines from Peking to Hankow and from Tientsin via Pukow, Nanking to Shanghai.



In 1911 Japan finally agreed to sell to China that portion of narrow gauge railway from Sinmintun to Moukden and gauge alteration works soon ensued and the entire Peking-Moukden train was operational in the latter half of 1911. Initially an express train service had been implemented, the sole aim of which was to facilitate mail delivery as far as

Mukden to connect South Manchuria, Chinese Eastern and Trans-Siberian Railways.







#### 9.4. Two 1911 Via Siberia Mail Items Recorded Aerial Flight In China & First U.K. Aerial Post

A March 5, 1911 post card with hand drawn water-colour painting on reverse, was franked with Kitak overprint on Russian 3 kopek stamp, canceled Russian Post Office Shanghai dater 6.3.11. It was from a son to his father in Southbourne on Sea, England with manuscript via Siberia above address. The son Roland wrote "I went to a place about 15 miles from here to see a French Aviator, Vallon by name fly on a biplane. Just fancy, aviation already in China. He flew successfully, crowds were there, and it was very interesting."



It was not until May 7 1920 that China had successfully carried out a trial flight between Peking and Tientsin and regular service between these two points commenced on July 1 1920 when a set of 6 airmail stamps had been issued on the day of official first regular flight previously mentioned.



Elsewhere in the United Kingdom, a first aerial post (London to Windsor) was inaugurated on September 9, 1911 and a post card addressed to Canton Via Siberia franked pair of 1/2d stamps with commemorative cancel FIRST UNITED KINGDOM AERIAL POST SP 9 1911, and Canton arrival dater OC 4 11 at bottom. Mail senders Europe to China and vice versa, were all interested to explore quicker, safer and cheaper means of mail transportation as technology advanced.

#### 9.5 Other Significant Events Or Illustrative Items, 1911-1913

The Imperial Chinese Post Office at Kiachta was established towards the end of 1910 and sender of mail to Peking and Kalgan could post mail items at this Chinese Post Office, paying Chinese postage and by virtue of the Postal Agreement between China and Russia, Kiachta Post Office could request Russian Post Office deliver them to Peking via Trans-Siberian Railroad free of additional postage.

A red band cover from Kiachta was franked Chinese Imperial Post 4c, another 2c stamp had dropped off, canceled Kiachta lunar year dater corresponding to February 17, 1911, it transited Harbin, Peking and arrived Kalgan 9 days later as evidenced by recipient's manuscript record on cover back. It is a pity that Harbin, Peking and Kalgan daters are all unclear, and the transit time from Kiachta to Harbin at the very early stages of Kiachta Chinese Post Office cannot be ascertained.





With the founding of the Republic on January 1 1912, Dr. Sun Yat Sen ordered Chinese Imperial



Post stamps to be overprinted Zhong Hua Min Guo for use at initial stages and postal stationery cards were also overprinted likewise. These could be used as late as September 1914.

This December 1912 postal stationery card and the 3c stamps were both overprinted Zhong Hua Min Guo, canceled Changsha dater, via Hankow, Tientsin to England via Siberia.

The first definitive set of stamps from 1/2c to \$20 in basic designs of Junk, Reaper and Hall of Classics was released by the Republic in mid 1913, even though the earliest usage dates of each value are yet to be ascertained. The 21 NOV 13 registered cover from Shanghai to Denmark via Siberia was franked with junk



4c, reaper 16c, paying 20c for international registered letter, it arrived Moukden 25 NOV. Charlottenlund arrival dater 8.12.13 on cover back gave clue to 17 day transit time.

Earlier there is a 1908 postal stationery card from Yunnan to Norway via Siberia but was still delivered via Tengyueh and Bhamo. As the train network developed, senders in Yunnan also adopted Via Siberia mail service

as illustrated by the following 1c postal stationery card from Yunnanfu 16 OCT 13 with additional franking of 3 stamps, paying 4c international post card rate, endorsed France par Transsiberien. It traveled northwards to Shanghai 25 OCT 13 and Moukden 29 OCT and the arrival backstamp 10-11 13 helps to ascertain the transit time to be 25 days.



Foreign residents in the remote province of Kueiyang also adopted Via Siberia mail service when the 1c postal stationery card to Switzerland was dropped into a letter box. The 1c postage was canceled Tungchow Letter Box handstamp with Kueiyang bilingual dater 19 MAY 13. International post card rate was 4c but this card was not treated as a postage due item and instead, a red handstamp meaning Via Hankow had been applied after which it transited Hankow (date indistinct) and Moukden 11 JUN. The transit time of 23 days from Kueiyang to Moukden was quite surprising, because it only took 25 days for a card from Yunnanfu to reach France.





Shortening of mail transit time gives the feeling that the world was getting smaller and “around the world” post card became the novelty of the times: the sender sent it to an overseas friend, the recipient did the same and so forth until there is no space left.

A 1913 “round the world” post card originated from France 20.1.13 and addressed to Persia arriving 1913/2/1 and then readdressed to Shanghai arriving 3/3/13. The recipient in Shanghai affixed 5c commemorative stamp and sent it to Genova of Italy. The Vladivostok and another

Russian transit dater evidenced a journey on the Trans-Siberian Railroad on the second trip from Persia to Shanghai, but why was it carried all the way to Vladivostk before turned back to Harbin ? This printed card was meant to be used 5 times, but it was not certain whether the 4<sup>th</sup> recipient was obliged to mail it back to the original sender of the card.



## 9.6 Chinese Traveling Post Office On Chinese Eastern Railway

In 1913, the Republic of China at long last exercised her right to partition off space on mail carriages of the Chinese Eastern Railway for delivery of official and civilian mail items when Chinese language Dong Qing daters had been used. Since by that time Da Qing Empire had already been replaced by the Republic and the character Qing, meaning Da Qing Empire was no longer appropriate and the dater was changed to Zhong Dong, meaning Chinese Eastern in 1916 as illustrated by this postal stationery card from Suifenho to Vladivostok and with the limited number



of similar items available, it is difficult to conclude how many sections existed on this line and the meaning of the numeral in the bottom segment of the dater.

Still later with the standardization of all train post offices in China, bilingual train post office daters with assigned numerals began to be used on east-west Manchouli-Suifenho and north-south Harbin-Kwanchengtse lines until the establishment of Manchukao puppet government in Northeast Provinces. Please refer to Chapter 3 for more details.



## 10. The First World War, July 1914

The First World War broke out on July 28 1914, Russia and Germany were members of two antagonistic camps. Since the cutting off of transportation and supply lines was of strategic military importance, it would be reasonable to assume that Germany might bombard the Trans-Siberian Railroad to achieve this effect. The following two covers illustrated that the Trans-Siberian Railroad was unaffected at the inception of World War I.



This cover from Shanghai was dispatched on July 27 1914, on the eve of World War I and was franked with 3 junk 2c stamps, Russian Kitai overprint on 5 kopek and an unoverprinted 2 kopek stamp. Since the cover transited Moscow and was redirected within Russia, the Russian postage might be added before redelivery, but why using Kitai overprinted stamps? One explanation was that the Republic was not yet a member of the Universal Postal Union and the earlier Postal Agreement between Russia and Da Qing Empire was not applicable to the Republic. Sender of mail items to Russian destination had to pay Russian postage to ensure via Siberia mail service. The Moscow transit dater 1 VIII or August 14, indicated that the transit time Shanghai to Moscow was 18 days, unaffected by the outbreak of World War I.



The section of Trans-Siberian Railroad from Ulan Ude eastwards was also unaffected at the initial stages of World War I when a registered red band cover from Kiachta, dispatched on July 26 1914, two days before the outbreak of World War I, transited Harbin (indistinct transit dater), Peking, Taiyuan and arriving Fenchow of Shansi Province on August 12, with a total transit time of 17 days. Manuscript inscription on cover back requested via Siberia route, and the 16 cents postage represented domestic letter rate 6 cents with further 10 cents for international registration fee since mail items using via Siberia route was considered international mail items irrespective of its final destination within China.



## 11. Eighty Three Day Hung Hsien Empire, 1916.1.1-1916.3.23

After the founding of Zhong Hua Min Guo on January 1 1916, Dr. Sun Yat Sen was elected the first President but it was Yuan Shih Kai who persuaded Emperor Hsuan Tung to abdicate. Dr. Sun did not wish to see China torn by internal rivalry, he retired the presidency to Yuan. Yuan's ambition was to establish a constitutional monarchy with himself as Emperor, based on backing of Japan. His ambition did not go unnoticed and his intention to concede to Japanese demands met with strong and sustained opposition from many provinces. In December 1914, he proclaimed the founding of his Hung Hsien Empire on January 1, 1916 and "yuan nian" (first year) dater would be used instead of the normal fifth year (of the Republic) dater for 1916.



A 1915 red band cover from Kiachta was dispatched on December 26, 1915 and manuscript on cover front requested via Siberia route, but when it arrived Shansi Province, two transit and arrival daters showed "yuan nian" i.e. first year of Hung Hsien Empire, 1916.

A great majority of existing Hung Hsien Empire items are domestic covers or post cards, mail items via Siberia to European destinations are quite rare, this Mienchow cover to Birmingham England on January 18, 1916 illustrated "yuan nian" dater of the Hung Hsien Empire but with year placed at left, the red amended handstamp at left means via Siberia.



A delightful combination of interesting philatelic subjects converge on this 4 cent postal stationery card. First, it was overprinted and used as a Prisoner of War card with printed address to Copenhagen. Second, it traveled on Peking-Mouden line, South Manchurian Line, Chinese Easter Railway and finally Trans-



Siberian Railroad Third it linked Hung Hsien Empire with World War I because Tientsin dater indicated "yuan nian" i.e. first year of the Hung Hsien Empire whilst like other WWI mail items, it had to be censored at Petrograd.

Opposition forces in various Provinces joined force and brought the downfall of the Hung Hsien Empire on March 23 1916 when Yuan Shih Kai announced abdication of throne. As far as post offices are concerned, the dater should be

altered from "yuan nian" of Hung Hsien Empire to fifth year of the Republic.





News did not travel fast to remote province of Mongolia and this 10 cent rated "international" cover via Siberia was franked three junk stamps, canceled Kiachta "yuan Nian" April 10 dater, by that time the Hung Hsien Empire had already come to an end 17 days ago. The Manchouli transit dater, and various Shansi transit and arrival daters correctly showed fifth year dater of the Republic which was reinstated after the Hung Hsien Empire.

"One Year" dater had been used from some post offices during the Hung Hsien Empire, as though predicting that the Empire could last only one year but this 83-day Empire ranks the shortest lived Empire in Chinese history. Since they do not appear on via Siberia mail items, no illustration is provided.

Shortly after his abdication, Yuan Shih Kai died on June 3, 1916, when China was once again in great instability as warlords began to claim sphere of influence for their own selfish purposes.

## 12. Censorship Of Civilian Main During World War I, 1914-1918

Mail censorship is of utmost importance for nations engaged in war and as such, Russia established a war censor station in Manchouli, the main gateway between China and Russia after the outbreak of World War I.

The postcard here is franked 4 kopeks canceled Manchouli Russian Post Office dater 23.2.15, addressed to Essex of England, from someone actually working in War Censor Russian Post Office at Manchouli. Two censor markings appear at left, circular type being applied by military mail censor office and the rectangular type more commonly used on civilian mails and so was another circular type with only two Russian alphabets meaning passed censor as illustrated by another 1915 post card from Peking to Italy which had been carried on Peking-Moukden train and transited Harbin



and Manchouli even though manuscript endorsement at upper left corner reads Via America, because the sender was worried that this card to Italy might not go through Russian censorship in the first instance, was it included in the via Siberia mail bag by oversight ?



By far the majority of China/Europe mail from and to destinations beyond St. Petersburg had been censored at Petrograd and the diversity of censor markings and their colouring, the delay caused by censorship of various foreign language items, including those to warring nations, is an interesting topic to be pursued and studied.



card censor marking of Petrograd is at left side, overprinting sender's manuscript "Holland".

Italy was an ally of Germany during World War I and hence an adversary of Russia when this 1916 registered cover from Shanghai 9 APR 16 to Bologna of Italy was cut open at right hand side and the contents examined and resealed with censor tapes, over stamped with censor marking.



Torino arrival marking on cover back 5.5.16 indicated that transit time was 26 days, only a slight delay was caused by censorship.

Perhaps the contents of the mail item itself determined additional transit time caused by censorship as illustrated by the Kitai overprinted Russian postal stationery card used from Peking Russian Post Office on 14.4.18 to Stockholm with Pagersta arrival dater 4.6.16, total transit time 39 days. The rectangular censor handstamp is of a special type with Russian language "war censor" and serial number at the end, and this might have been used from a senior war censor officer whose responsibility was to let the card pass or detain it indefinitely.



Russia did not have a set of well defined rules as to how mail items from Sinkiang and Mongolia back to China were to be censored. Suffice it to say, that none of the aforesaid items had been censored at Manchouli as illustrated by following examples : a Sinkiang item from Kashgar was censored at an unknown station, Mongolian items back to China had been censored at Irkutsk and even carried as far as Vladivostok for censorship before returning to Peking via Harbin !





A registered red band cover was franked Russian 20 kopek stamp canceled Russian Post Office Kashgar dater 26.4.16 with registration slip on reverse. Faint red censor marking just above the stamp but without identification of name, Peking arrival dater 5 JUN 16 on cover back. Total transit time taken was only 27 days.

It would be interesting to note that this registered cover had not been opened for examination whilst other registered items were usually did and resealed by war censor officers.

A 1916 red band cover with Russian postage was canceled by Urga Russian Post Office dater 4.5.16 and it was carried all the way to Vladivostok for censorship and the red rectangular censor handstamp was applied on cover back before returning to Peking via Harbin, arriving June 12, 1916, 39 days in transit.



An interesting 1916 registered red band cover from Tsain Bashi was franked 3 Russian 10 kopek stamps canceled Russian Post Office Tsain Bashi dater 26.2.18. It was not censored at either Manchouli or Vladivostok but was carried on the Trans-Siberian Railroad to the west to be censored at Irkutsk where it was cut open at bottom, resealed with Irkutsk censor handstamp applied thereon. Russian Post Office Kagan arrival dater 18.3.18 appeared on cover front, from which it can be deduced that the transit time required was only 20 days.



Harbin Russian Post Office recorded an early oval type censor marking in red ink, without specifying the name of censor station. Its use 4 days after the official outbreak of World War I on July 28 1914 is not surprising and indeed at the beginning of hostilities, was censor offices had already been set up. The cover arrived London SEP 2 1914 with a transit time of 32 days giving an idea of the delay caused by mail censorship.





A Russian language postcard posted at Porgranichnaya 15.4.16 to Nikolsk Ussuriysk recorded a purple censor marking with Vladivostok arrival dater 19.4.16 below.

S.D. Tchilinghirian and W.S.E. Stephen in their authoritative book "Stamps Of The Russian Empire Used Abroad" only recorded a 32 x 22 mm rectangular type censor marking which includes Russian name Porgranichnaya. This circular marking must have originated from Vladivostok censor office.



A similar strike of the circular censor marking in red appears on a 1915 registered Prisoner of War cover from Tientsin to Nikolsk-Ussuriski. The alphabet T within the censor marking indicated the abbreviation of the censor station and this could be the originating Russian Post Office in Tientsin when staff members examined the contents and applied this "passed by censor" marking on the cover so that further censorship along the way could be dispensed with. This indeed did happen because posted on July 3 at Tientsin, it transited Changchun July 5 and reached Nikolsk-Ussuriski 26.6.15 (Julian calendar, corresponding to July 9) and the total transit time was only 6 days.

An entirely different story befell another registered Prisoner of War cover, also from Tientsin, but this time addressed to Germany and handled by Chinese Post Office Tientsin. As expected, it transited Manchouli, was opened for censorship at Petrograd, resealed with 2 different types censor markings on the sealing tape and on cover back but without arrival dater.





### 13. Internal Revolutions In Russia, 1917

Two revolutions took place in Russia in 1917 and had a great impact on the Trans-Siberian Railroad because the damage done to this magnificent railroad was far greater than that caused by World War I. The February Revolution resulted in the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II with which ended the Tsarist Imperial Russia. A Provisional Government was set up under the leadership of Alexander Kerensky. Earlier in page ( ) a January 22 1917 postcard traveled on No. 262 train (Manchouli to Chita) and reached its destination Revel 4.2.17 in 13 days and did not receive any censorship marking perhaps the text was written in Russian language.

On March 15, 1917 China declared war on Germany and Austria and became a member of the Allied Forces and all German Post Office in China had to close down. Now that China became a country participating World War I, the importance and gravity of mail censorship became more apparent, even between members of the Allied Forces as illustrated by the following incoming cover from Voseges (1917.3.30) via Siberia, Peking (5.27), Hankow (5.30), Yochow City (1.6) to Wenchow (6.11) in 62 days. The cover was opened at left, examined, resealed with military censor tape overstamped oval type censor handstamp.



Another experienced philatelist and postal history researcher had been communicating with me for over a year to share items and information relating to our common interest : China-Europe Mail Via Siberia and he has gone into depth to study the turbulent years 1917-1923 with many illustrative items, his article is shown in the Appendix of this article. My heart felt thanks to this friend for bridging the deepest gap which I myself will certainly fail to cross.

### 14. Full Resumption Of Via Siberia Mail Service 1923 & 15. Period Of Stability And Expansion 1924-1928



Items relating to this period are abundant and common, it's now time to focus attention on the development of airmail in China. The first experimental flight between Peking and Tientsin took place on May 7 1920 followed by official inauguration of Peking-Tientsin First Flight on July 1, 1921. China's entire effort is to establish an airmail route from Shanghai via Nanking, Peking to Manchouli to shorten mail delivery time on land. At around the same time, "airmail outside China" became possible and mail sender in China could pre-pay the airmail postage for his mail outside China, e.g. Irkutsk to Moscow, Moscow to Berlin, Berlin to London etc. Another article "Co-operation With & Competition From Airmail Service" will deal with this subject in more detail.

## 16. Ownership Dispute Of Chinese Eastern Railway 1929-1930

Chinese Nationalist Government persuaded Marshal Chang Hsueh-liang, then warlord of Northeast Provinces, to nationalize the Chinese Eastern Railway and acting upon such advice, Marshal Chang dismissed all Soviet heads of Chinese Eastern Railway departments and divisions and there were group firings of other Soviet workers, with about 60 deported to USSR and some 200 other held under arrest. Marshal Chang Hsueh-liang deployed 60,000 troops facing the Soviet frontier in preparation for Soviet retaliation. On July 28 1929, the Union of Socialist Soviet Republic broke off diplomatic relationship with China. On September 7 1929 Soviet bombers bombarded Suifenho and initiated military conflict. Later in October, Soviet armies were victorious at several military engagements taking place at Fushan, Mishan and Suifenho. The decisive battle took place on November 27 1929 when Chinese armies stationed at Manchouli and Chalainoreh had been routed by Soviet army which went on to capture Hailer, forcing the young marshal Chang to sue for peace.



The 7.6.29 cover (left) from Shanghai to Zurich was franked with 9 stamps paying a total postage of 43 cents (international letter rate 10c, additional 20g weight units 6c x 3, international registration fee 15c, total 43c), blue VIA SIBERIA handstamp at left, with 24 VI 29 Zurich arrival backstamp. Since the total transit time was only 17 days, the Trans-Siberian Railroad functioned properly before the outbreak of war in September 1929.



A similar cover (right) dated 1929.10.8 franked with 6 stamps totaling 49c (letter 10c, additional 20g weight units 6cx4, registration 15c) was sent via Hong Kong (1929.10.11) on account of closure of Trans-Siberian Railroad owing to military conflict, arriving Zurich 1929. 11.9 by sea route. The transit time required was 32 days.



With the break up of diplomatic relationships between U.S.S.R. and China, Trans-Siberian mail service was interrupted and this 1929.8.10 registered cover Harbin to Munchen Germany chose "Via U.S.A." route, simultaneously using the express delivery service, paying a total postage of 55c (international letter rate 10c, additional weight unit 10c, registration 15c, express delivery 20c, total 55c). The indistinct MUNCHEN backstamp 15 (?) 29 could not determine the actual time taken for this item to reach destination.



Another practical solution to achieve speedy delivery of China/Europe mail is illustrated by the above registered cover from Chengtu on 8.1.19 (1930) to Italy, 7 stamps on cover back paid the international letter rate 10c and registration fee 15c totaling 25c and the cover was endorsed Via Japan & Siberia, it transited Shanghai, and according to manuscript instruction was carried by mail boat to Japan and then to Vladivostok from there it could travel all the way west bound to reach its destination on 13.2.31 with a total transit time of 34 days, but the trip from Shanghai to Milano Italy only took 22 days. The problem arising from the breaking up of diplomatic relationship between China and U.S.S.R. was overcome by the intermediary of Japanese Post Office which delivered this item from Shanghai via Tsuruga Japan to the Russian Post Office at Vladivostok, and the duty of U.P.U. member to provide free service to another member enabled this item to take a westbound trip from Vladivostok to its European destination.

After signing of an Agreement between U.S.S.R. and Marshal Chang, the management of the



Chinese Eastern Railway was vested with China but 50% of the profit arising from its operation had to be paid over to U.S.S.R. Traffic was restored on the eastbound Chinese Eastern Railway on January 10, 1930, and on the westbound Chinese Eastern Railway on January 15 1930 and by January 20 full operations involving Chinese Eastern Railway's connection with Trans-Siberian Railroad were resumed.

News on resumption of operations on the Trans-Siberian and Chinese Eastern Railroads reached Urga when a Chinese merchant company sent this letter to a business counterpart in Kalgan on 7.2.30. It arrived the Soviet border town of Troitsko-savsk in March and took another

month to reach Harbin, evidencing slower than normal service and the possibility that mail items might have been withheld in Troitsko-savsk pending censorship at initial stage of resumption of service. Since Mongolia was then an independent Republic, this incoming item was treated as a postage due item with twice the normal postage levied, when 4 junk 4c stamps were affixed on cover front and canceled Harbin transit daters.



A Chinese mail censorship office was established and the incoming postage due registered cover from Ulan Bator received its circular Chinese/Russian language censor cachet of "East Manchuria Special District Fifth District Police Headquarters Examined", Judging by the presence of Manchouli transit dater, this could have been applied onto mail items when they entered China at Manchouli. Another oval type censor handstamp with identical Chinese/Russian language text had also been used on incoming mail items. No date is shown hence it could have been applied at Manchouli Post Office or later on board the Chinese Eastern Railway. There is no clue whether Russian, foreign language or all mail items were subject to such censorship at that time but it confirms the fact that the control of the Chinese Eastern Railway now vests with China.

Another 1930.3.31 red band cover Urga to Kalgan reached Verkhne-Udinsk station on the Trans-Siberian Railroad in 14 days. In spite of indistinct Harbin transit dater, the Kalgan arrival dater 4.14 evidenced normal function of both railroads, and so was the relocation of exchange station from Troitsko-savsk to Verkhne-Udinsk.



## 17. Development Of "International" Airmail Service In China 1931

Even though the first biplane flew over Chinese skies as early as March 1911, it took China almost ten years to develop a regular airmail service between Peking and Tientsin on July 1 1920 and from that time onwards, focus has always been on domestic routes between large cities. Commencing August 1924, for the period between May and October every year, China National Post can arrange, in an effort to shorten delivery time, the newly founded Moscow-Koenigsberg Air Line to carry mails to Europe, after the same had been carried by Trans-Siberian Railroad from Manchouli to Moscow. Later in 1925, mail items could be sent from Berlin to destination by air and still later in 1926 the airline service was extended to Berlin so that from Moscow onwards, mails were carried by air all the way. i.e. the "all-up" airmail service.

This 9 SEP 24 cover from Peking to England "VIA SIBERIA" and endorsed "Par avion de



Moscow a Konigsberg” paid a total postage of 24c (10c international letter rate and 14c additional airmail postage for Moscow to Berlin section). The intention to save 3 to 4 days transit time may not be materialized or alternatively, canceled out by delay arising from intermittent flight schedule at early stages of airmail service. In general, the prepayment of international postage on mail items originating from China is rather uncommon.

Sender from the southern provinces also had knowledge of aerial service from Moscow to Berlin as illustrated by 1925.6.30 registered cover Amoy to London endorsed “Peravionia Moscow”. The 50c postage paid represented international letter rate 10c, registration fee 10c air fare for Moscow to Berlin flight 30c. The lack of Moscow, Berlin transit and London arrival dates fail to disclose in more detail the save in delivery time resulting from such aerial trip. Since such covers are rarely seen, perhaps the 50 cents postage is five times the normal international letter rate of 10 cents and much more important is the fact that the time saved by the aerial trip outside China might not worth the extra postage, as was the opinion of most sender of China/Europe mail items.



With the advancement of aerial flight technology and experience, an American John Henry Mears started “Round the World” flight on June 28, 1928. The plane started from New York and flew over the Atlantic Ocean, Siberia and stopped at Manchouli and Japan. This postcard from Manchouli to York England, reached New York after 12 days, sending a loud and clear message that airmail service can replace overland train service in the very near future.



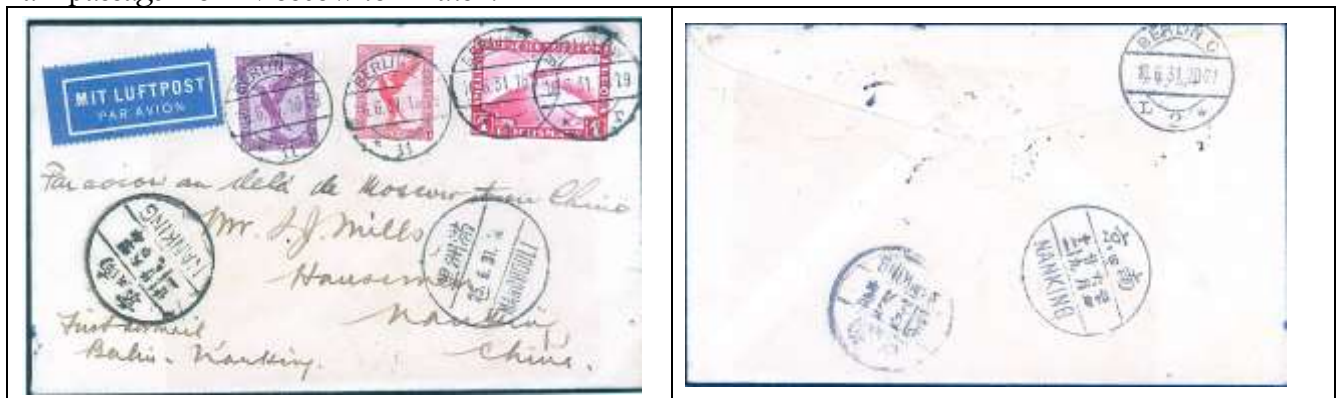
Commencing from June 1929, airmail service between Irkutsk and Moscow has been established, resulting in further saving of delivery time because mail for European destinations can now take two airmail passages, one from Irkutsk to Moscow and then from Moscow to Berlin.

After persistent efforts, preparation and trial flights, the first flight of the Shanghai-Manchouli International Air Route by Eurasia Aviation Corporation took place on May 31 to June 6, 1931 and by that time, sender of airmail items to Berlin or beyond, already made use of the “all up” airmail service from Irkutsk to Moscow and Moscow to Berlin. Nevertheless, the passage from Manchouli to Irkutsk was still by way of Trans-Siberian Railroad. The following cover paid a total postage of \$2.40



(inclusive of 80c for Irkutsk/Moscow passage and 60c for Moscow/Berlin passage), illustrating hefty increase of postage in an effort to shorten delivery time.

The return “First Flight” flew from Berlin on June 16, 1931 transiting Manchouli June 25 and arriving Nanking June 29 as illustrated by the above cover. The manuscript on front did not specify air passage from Moscow to Irkutsk.



This 1931.8.5 airmail cover from Nanking to Stolp Germany paid the “all-up” airmail postage of \$2.75, just before the outbreak of “Mukden Incident” on 1931.9.18, it arrived Manchouli on 13.8.31 and Berlin on 24.8.31. During the 3.5 months time from May 31 to September 18 1931, mails paying “all-up” airmail postage are quite scarce.

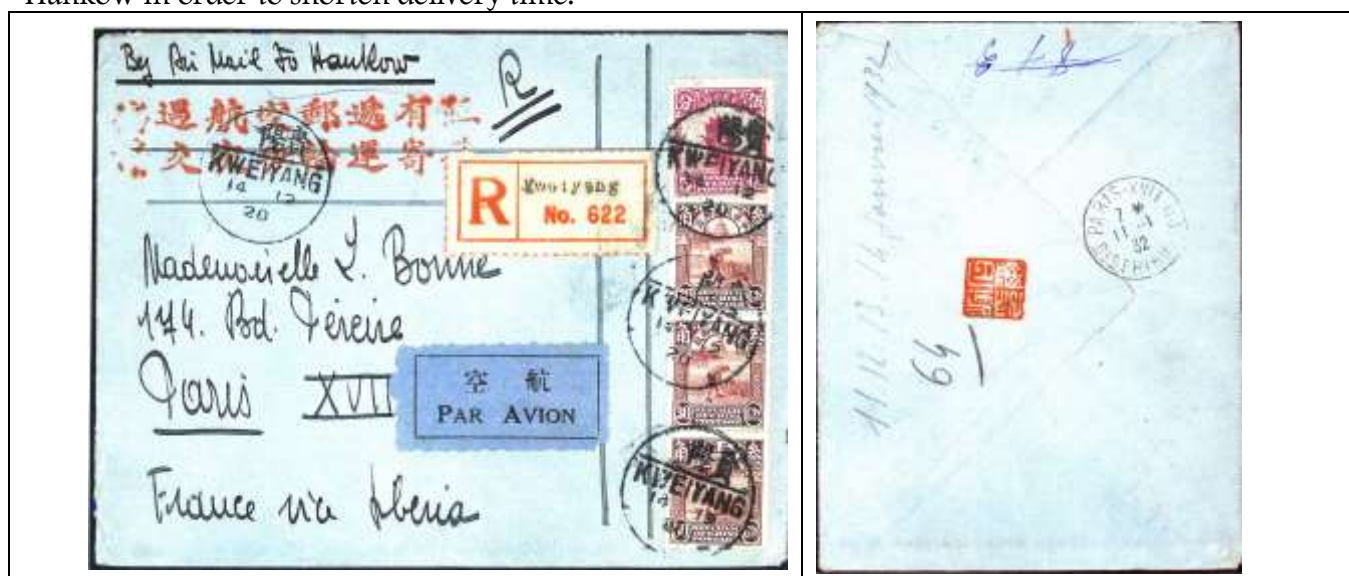




After so much effort and resources, this “international” airmail service was successfully launched on May 31 1931, no one would expect it could only last not more than three months because on September 18 1931 the Mukden Incident took place and Japan used it as a pretext to occupy the Chinese Northeastern Provinces by force when the Nationalist Government and Eurasia Aviation Corporation had to suspend this international airmail service sometime in October 1931.

## 18. Mukden Incident 1931 And Establishment of Manchukuo 1932

Using Mukden Incident of September 18, 1931 as a pretext, Japanese armies began to occupy the Northeast Provinces by force but initially mail delivery services of the Chinese Post Offices were not affected. After October 1931, Shanghai-Manchouli air route was closed owing to political situations there and then but the Chinese Post Office at Manchouli was still functioning and the following registered airmail cover from Kweiyang 14 12 20 (1931) to Paris (11 1 32) marked “Via Siberia” took 28 days to reach destination. The sender was mindful in payment airmail postage to Hankow in order to shorten delivery time.



In the face of Japanese military occupation after the Mukden Incident, the Chinese Post Offices in Northeast Provinces continued to provide normal postal services, including the exchange of outgoing westbound mail items to European countries and incoming eastbound mail items from European countries to China. “Via Siberia” remained a popular instruction on mail items, including this registered cover from Chaotung of Yunnan Province to London, franked with 6 stamps payment a total postage of 80 cents canceled Chaotung dater 1931.10.26, transit through Yunnanfu 11.1, Ami 11.3, Shanghai 11.13 arriving London 11.30, total time taken 35 days.



The following cover from Northeast Provinces exhibited revised postage rates effective 1931.7.1 : it is a registered cover from Harbin to Norwich England and the 80c postage is arrived as follows : International letter rate (20g.) 25c, additional weight units (20g) 15c x 2 and international registration 25c.



The transmission of incoming mail item from Mongolia to China was unaffected even in December 1931 when the following incoming cover from Ulanbator reached Harbin on 1931.12.5 , postage levy of 10c was made but in view of probable lack of postage due stamps, definitive stamps with Kirin overprints on junk issues had been used temporarily as due stamps.



An incoming wrapper from Bruxelles Belgium 17.11.1931 to Kansu Province transited through Hutupi (indicating its entry at Tacheng) Sinkiang Province where a 1c stamp was added and canceled with three segment Kansu dater of blank date. The Taiyuan dater 1932.1.8 on back of wrapper added some mystery, was the wrapper redirected to Taiyuan ?





Trans-Siberian Railroad was still the main channel of communication between Tihwa in Sinkiang Province and other cities in China, but international postage rate was applicable. Cover dated 1931.4.2 from Harbin to Tihwa paid 40c postage, half each for international letter rate and international registration rate, it reached Tihwa 5.13 after 41 days.

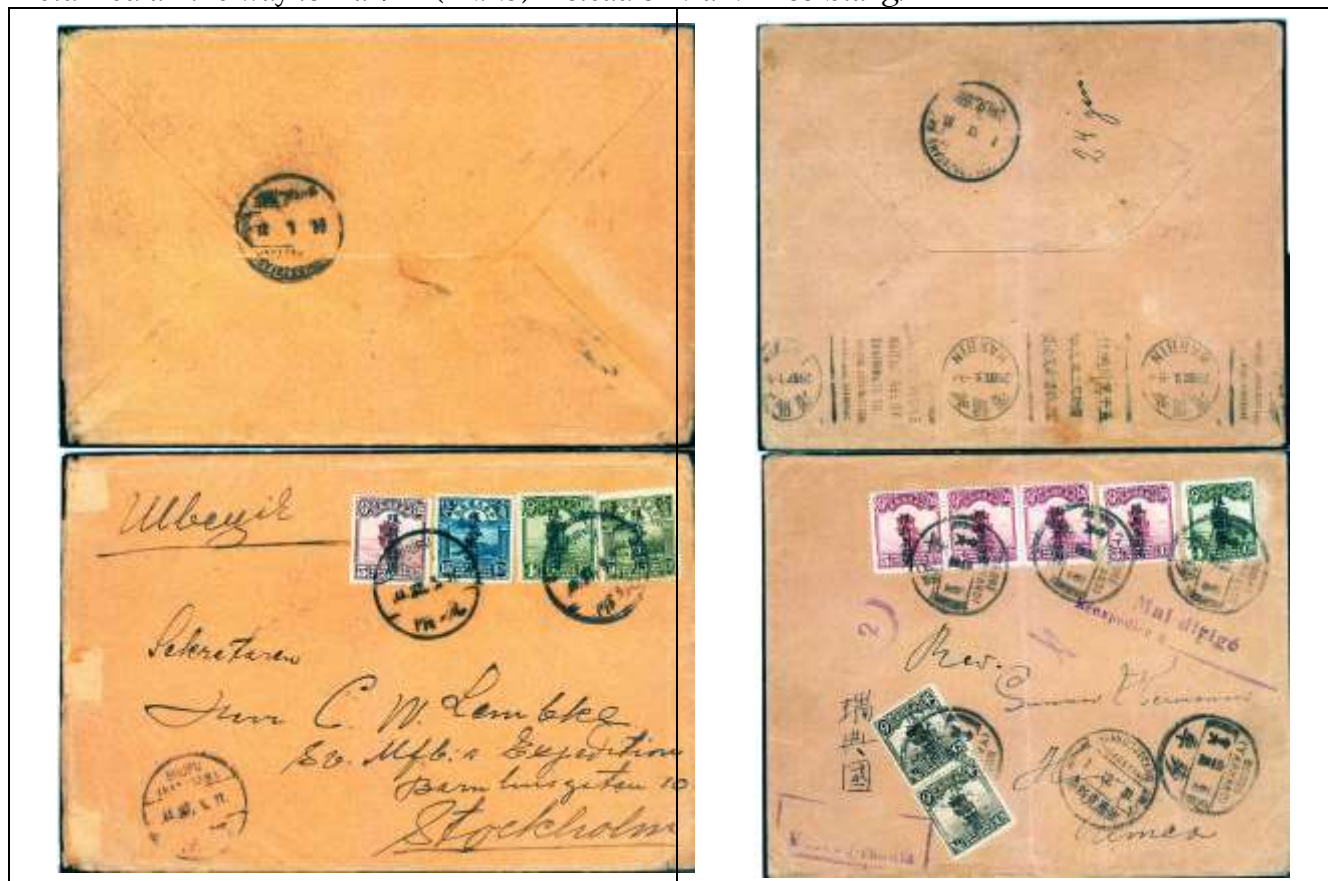


A 1931.8.27 On Postal Service registered item to Sydney Australia illustrated a clear route : transit Tacheng 9.8, Harbin 9.22. Majority of mail items entering and exiting Sinkiang were censored, often as long as 6 months, hence the actual time needed for mail to travel from Tihwa on Trans-Siberian Railroad to Harbin cannot be ascertained.

Cities located at the south-western part of Sinkiang Province can send mail items to Europe by means of exchange station at Erkhoszetang as illustrated by 1931.3.27 cover from Shufu (Kashgar) to Stockholm via Erkhoszetang (4.14). Another 1931.11.26 cover from Soochow (Yarkand) to Switzerland is even more interesting, it transited Erkhoszetang 12.1 but was undelivered and



returned all the way to Harbin (12.29) instead of via Erkhoszetang.



The Chinese Post Office continued its services until its evacuation on July 13, 1932; before that date, it was still possible to transit mail items from Europe (carried by air to Irkutsk) to mainland China as evidenced by the following two covers from Manchester England to Shanghai dated 1931.7.5 and 7.15 both with Par Avion label and English manuscript instruction “Via Siberia”. This pair could be said to be the latest batch of mail items entering China via the Trans-Siberian Railroad before withdrawal of the Chinese Post Office in 1932



With full backing from Japanese government, “Manchukuo” puppet administration was founded in Northeast Provinces on March 1, 1932. A “Temporary Accord” signed on April 26, 1932 allowed all Chinese post offices in Northeast Provinces to function by adopting extant regulations.

## 19. Withdrawal Of All Chinese Post Offices From Northeast Province 1932 And Aftermath.

On July 25, 1932 the political situations deteriorated to such an extent that the Chinese Post



Office ordered evacuation of all its branch post offices in Northeast Provinces involving 2,585 postal workers. With Japanese occupation of the Northeast Provinces and later the setting of Manchukuo, China/Europe mail communication was severed.

A clever sender of “Printed Matter” postal stationery card to Germany on 1932.7.14 paid 5c printed matter rate against the normal 15c for international post card and on the eve of evacuation of all postal staff from post offices in Northeast Provinces.



In September, an incoming cover from Ulanbator to Kalgan recorded a circular Sino-Russian censor marking, the Chinese inscription meaning “Manchouli National Boundary Police Squad-Censorship Section” illustrating that the puppet Manchukuo government supported by Japan had effectively taken control of the Chinese Eastern Railway. After censorship, the cover reached Kalgan on October 7 1932, supported by a Chinese language handstamp on cover back.



With abandonment of Manchouli as the gateway for “all-up” service from Shanghai to Europe, the persistent Eurasia Aviation Corporation undertook to open up a new (less convenient) aerial service from Shanghai to Tihwa in Sinkiang Province with view to connecting the Trans-Siberian Railroad and the airmail services network beyond. After several trial flights involving plane crashes, the first successful trial flight from Peiping to Tihwa took place on 19 December 1931, with return trial flight on January 7, 1932 as illustrated by the pair of trail flight covers illustrated below.



After almost a complete year's further trial flights, preparations and assessment of political situations, the formal launch of the Shanghai-Tihwa airmail service began on 15 December 1932. Prior to this, Sinkiang Post Office issued two "Airmail" stamps by overprinting Chinese characters meaning "Airmail" on Reaper 15c and 30c, both already overprinted "For Use In Sinkiang Only". The cover on the left is the first day example of the regular First Flight from Shanghai to Tihwa and the ensuing cover illustrated the first day usage of the





overprinted 15c and 30c stamps on airmail cover originated from Tihwa Sinkiang to Peiping.

Shanghai-Peiping-Tihwa airmail service was not the ultimate goal, it had to connect Tacheng on the China-Russia border when mail could be off-loaded and delivered to European destinations via Trans-Siberian Railroad. On July 20 1932 Eurasia Aviation Corporation conducted a successful trail flight from Peiping to Tacheng and on the ensuing day, the plane was scheduled to fly back to Peiping but owing to the occurrence of other matters of importance, the plane was transferred elsewhere. At about the same time, the insurgents in Sinkiang had reached such an extent that the safety of passengers and mails would be in jeopardy and the establishment of the intended gateway at Tacheng had to be abandoned.

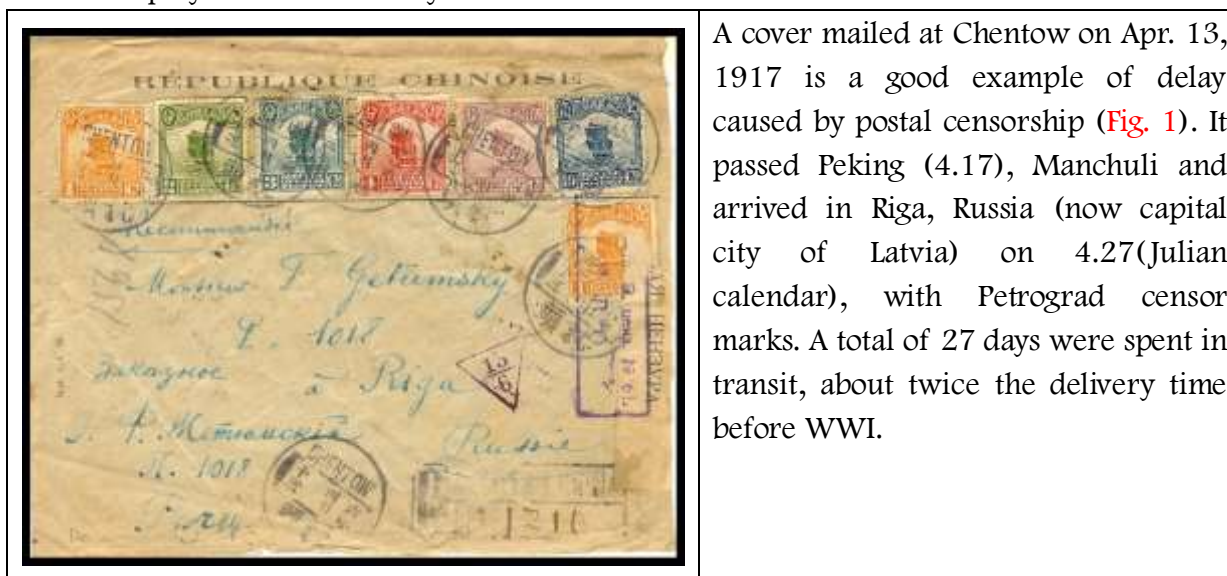


With civil unrest breaking out in Sinkiang from late December 1932, service became intermittent and by September 1933 was essentially abandoned. By that time airmail network covered far and wide, all over China it was not difficult to choose a network of connecting air services for mail delivery to the intended destination, as illustrated by this 1933 airmail cover from Weihaiwai to Ireland



## APPENDIX-----Russian Revolution & Civil War (1917-1923) and the suspension of “via Siberia” postal route

Right after the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria, the heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary on 28 June 1914, Austria declared war on Serbia and triggered the outbreak of World War I. At that time, China was separated by several warlords and among them Marshal Zhang Zuolin controlled the Northeastern provinces of China, or Manchuria. The Trans-Siberian postal route was passable during World War I, but delay occurred frequently partially because of censorship by Russian authority.



A cover mailed at Chentow on Apr. 13, 1917 is a good example of delay caused by postal censorship (Fig. 1). It passed Peking (4.17), Manchuli and arrived in Riga, Russia (now capital city of Latvia) on 4.27(Julian calendar), with Petrograd censor marks. A total of 27 days were spent in transit, about twice the delivery time before WWI.



The cover shown in Fig. 2 has an even longer delay. It was mailed at Voseges, France on Mar. 30, 1917 and was noted “via Siberia”. It bear a French censor mark and tape somewhere en route, and passed Peking on May 27, Hankow on May 30 and arrived in its destination, Wenchow, on June 11. A total of 73 days was spent in transit. Due to the unstable condition of trans-Siberia postal route, mails to European countries were sometimes delivered by the “via America” or “via Suez” route (Fig.3 & 4). The cover of Fig.3 was mailed in Shanghai (1917.6.11), and was sent via Vancouver (6.25), Montreal (7.1), London (7.8) to Zurigo (Zurich), Switzerland (7.28), with French censor mark and tape, using “via America” postal route, 47 days in transit. The cover of Fig.4 was mailed at Kiachta (1917.12.25), Mongolia via Urga (1.2.1918), Kalgan (1.13), Peking (2.2), Shanghai (2.5), Italy (censor tape & mark) to Montreux Switzerland (5.1), almost half a year in transit, using “via Suez” postal route. The cover took almost 3 months from Shanghai to Switzerland.





3 & 4



Following the losses on the battlefields against Germans and collapse in economy, discontent of people grew daily. On March 1917, the February Revolution occurred and Tsar Nicholas II was forced abdicate his throne. A provisional government led by Alexander Kerensky was then established. On Nov. 7 (Gregorian calendar), the October Revolution, led by Vladimir Lenin of the Bolshevik party, overthrew the Provisional Government in St Petersburg. The success of the October Revolution transformed the Russian state from parliamentarian to socialist in character. The Bolshevik leadership then announced an armistice on December and signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with Germany in March 1918 to end the war. However, conflicts between the Red Army ("Reds"), consisting of communist revolutionaries, and the "Whites"—a coalition of the anti-Bolshevik forces backing by nations of victorious Allies such as Great Britain, France, USA and Japan, took place shortly after the October revolution and led to a civil war (1918-1922). Trans-Siberian postal route suffered from the longest suspension since her completion. Mails sent in 1918 by “via Siberia” postal routes are rare, followed by a complete interruption from 1919 to 1922. **Figure 5** shows a rarely seen cover which passed Siberia in 1918. It was mailed on Apr. 27, 1917 in Yiyang, Hunan province, and boarded a train in Peking on May 3. The postmarks of both Peking-Moukden Bureau Ambulant PO and Harbin (1917.5.4) were applied. The cover travelled across Siberia and arrived in Petrograd, where a purple censor mark was applied. It was returned to Moukden, probably because of warfare, and two Moukden postmarks, 1918.4.17 and 4.25, were added. It was then sent to San Francisco by ship, passed by New York (1918.5.29) and U.K., and possibly arrived

in its destination, Norway, eventually. A British censor tape could also been seen on its back.



5

In March, 1918, China Post announced that the “via Siberia” postal route to Europe, Sinkiang and Mongolia was forced to suspend on Mar. 1918 due to war. However, by the end of 1918, west bounded mails could still reach the Asha station between Cheliabinsk and Ufa in European Russia. However, Omsk was the western limit in Oct. 1919, and Irkutsk in Dec. 1919. Russian Civil War resulted in the longest and most substantial suspension of the “via Siberia” postal route.

Figure 6 was mailed at Barnaul, Siberia (1919.6.17) and was delivered via Vladivostok (with a censor mark), Tsuruga (7.11) to Taihoku, Formosa (Japan). Figure 7 was mailed at Chita, Siberia (1919.6.17) and was also delivered via Vladivostok (with a censor mark), Tsuruga (7.11) to Taihoku, Formosa (Japan), affixed with 4 Far Eastern Republic stamps. According to these two examples, we can know that the TSR and CSR railways from Chita via Manchuli, Harbin to Vladivostok were in normal operation at that time. Figure 8 was mailed in 1922 at Chita, Siberia (4.21) and arrived in Peking on 4.28, affixed with two Far Eastern Republic stamps, 7 days in transit. Between 1919 and 1922, “via Siberia” postal route only provided mailing service between Siberia and far eastern countries. Existing mailed covers and cards are considered rare. The postal communication to European countries by trans-Siberian route was completely interrupted.



6





### Alternative routes during suspension period

During the suspension period from mid-1918 to 1922, postal services between China and European countries regressed to the pre-railway time, that is, by American or Suez route. The cover shown on Fig. 9 was mailed at Harbin (1921.8.1) and was delivered via Moukden (8.2), Shanghai (8.6), Port Taufiq (9.11), Port Said (9.11), and Trieste Italy (9.19) to Zagreb, Yugoslavia (9.20) (Zagreb is now in Croatia), using “via Suez” postal route. The cover shown in Fig. 10 was mailed in Copenhagen, Denmark (1919.12.29) and passed London on 1920.1.1. It was planned to deliver via America and Vladivostok to Irkutsk. However, probably at Vladivostok, a note “Returned in consequence of circumstance of war” was applied and the cover was then returned via Vladivostok (1920.7.2), London (1920.8.6) to Copenhagen (1920.8.9), with a Vladivostok censor mark.





Fig. 11 shows incoming cover from Austria to Moukden, transit via Shanghai and handled by the British Post Office as evidenced by the square type marking: B.P.O. to C.P.O (British Post Office to Chinese Post Office), apparently taking sea route.



### China Eastern Railway during Russian Civil War

Russian Civil War was mainly a series of conflicts between the Red Army ("Reds"), consisting of communist revolutionaries, and the "Whites"—a coalition of the anti-Bolshevik forces. After the October revolution, the Bolshevik party established the soviet government and signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with Germany in March 6, 1918 to end the war with Germany. However, this action incurred the wrath of domestic and international anti-Bolshevik forces. Civil war continued from 1918 to 1922 until the retreat of Japanese force from Vladivostok in 1922. During this period, many foreign armies warred against the Red Army, notably the Allied Forces, including armies of Poland, Great Britain, France, USA and Japan etc..., a total of fourteen "interventional armies." Major military operations spread to many parts of the Russian territory, including western (European borders), southern (Black sea area), and eastern (Siberia) Russia.

To understand the chaotic changes of the postal services during Russian Civil War, first of all we need to know the few major "White" forces at that time. In the spring of 1918 near the end of WWI, many Czech and Slovenia soldiers who had joined the Russian army after being captured from the Austrian army formed the so called "Czech Legion" in Russian territory. The Bolsheviks had agree to withdraw the Czech Legion from their crumbling front and ship them via trans-Siberian railway across Russia to Vladivostok, where they would be transported to the western front and continue the war there. However, when the Bolshevik Red Army attempted to detain and disarm the Czechs in May, discontent and violence occurred and the Legion acted in self defense and seized the railway. The force, which had swelled to some 50,000 armed men at that time, controlled the Trans-Siberian railway all the way from Lake Baikal to Ural Mountain and became a substantial anti-Bolshevik "White"



commander, was named Supreme Ruler of the Russian Provisional Government in Siberian area, and chose Omsk as his capital city. Another anti-Bolshevik force came from outside. In March 1919, Japanese intervention army landed in Vladivostok and moved along the Trans-Siberian railway. Japan soon occupied a large part of the Siberian area. Armies from Great Britain, USA and even China were sent to Vladivostok to aid the White armies against the “Red”. Under the request of the Allies, China government, at that time the Beiyang government in Beijing, began to send troops to Vladivostok region in Aug. 1919. The main purpose of the Chinese expedition army was to protect the Chinese people in Siberia, ensure the normal operation of Trans-Siberian and Chinese Eastern railways, help the Czech Legion to evacuate safely through Vladivostok to return home. Chinese expedition army was resided in areas along the railroad between and Vladivostok, as well as the Ussuri railroad near Iman, in Chinese, I-Ma-Ho, close to Hulincheng on the Chinese side of Ussuri River. Chinese army was evacuated by 1920 with all allied forces, apart from the Japanese who stayed until 1922.



12 & 13

The cover shown in Fig. 12 was mailed in Harbin on June 18, 1919 and addressed to Los Angeles, USA. The two overprinted stamps affixed on this cover were issued by Kolchak’s provisional government. The cover was passed to Japan postal service in Changchun and left a transit mark of June 19<sup>th</sup>. It might board a ship in Shanghai to cross the Pacific Ocean to go to its destination, the USA. By that time, Russian has built the section of Trans-Siberian railway north of Amur River, Khabarovsk and Ussuri River. However, this section of railway was blocked due to Civil War and mails to Siberia still needed to travel on Chinese Northeastern provinces. The Russian post office in Harbin continued to use stamps issued by imperial Russia, or stamps issued by the Provisional Government after February Revolution. Covers affixed with stamps issued by the White government in Siberia were extremely rare. This cover is also a proof that “White” force controlled the Russian Post Office in Harbin at that time.

Red army went into counterattacks gradually in Apr. 1919. Czech Legion was defeated on August. Red recaptured Omsk on Nov. 14 and caught Kolchak in live at the end of 1919, who was then executed in Feb. 1920. Red army gradually controlled the western part of Siberia, and was in contact with the Japanese force. Figure 13 is a postcard sent by a soldier in Czech Legion at the 3<sup>rd</sup> military post office of eastern Siberia, probably around Vladivostok, affixed with a stamp issued by Czech Legion, sent to Harbin via Vladivostok.

The cover shown in Fig. 14 was sent by a soldier in the ninth division of Chinese army on Nov. 9, 1919 at a post office near the Iman station of Ussuri railroad. The destination of this cover was a commercial firm in Peking. The 1-rube Russian stamp issued by the provisional government was

cancelled by an Iman Russian postmark and a Peking arrival postmark. Iman was one of the main residing sites of Chinese expedition force, the ninth division of Chinese army. Mails sent by Chinese expedition force are extremely rare.



14

The cover of Fig. 15 is also an interesting one. It was mailed on the train post office running between Manchuli and Harbin, leaving a special No. 261 train postmark on its front, and destined for Reynolds, North Dakota. At the time, the power of White army dominated the Trans-Siberia railway, including Chinese Eastern railway. This letter was mailed by a soldier of the US expedition force in Siberia on the way from Vladivostok to his residing area in Siberia outside Manchuli. He wrote this letter to his parents at the night in Tsitsihar to report what he have seen on his trip. The US expedition force in Siberia was responsible for the safety of Trans-Siberian railway from Irkutsk to Upper Udinsk (now Ulan-Ude), that is, the railway section south of Lake Baikal



15



16

On Apr. 6, 1920, Far Eastern Republic was created in Siberia eastern to Lake Baikal to serve as a buffer state between winning Red army and the territories controlled by Japanese supported White



army during the Russian Civil War, i.e., Vladivostok and its surrounding areas. Conflicts occurred occasionally. On Nov. 5, 1922, Japanese army was forced to retreat from Vladivostok and the Far Eastern Republic was merged with the Soviet Russia (Nov. 15, 1922). The union of Soviet Russia was eventually completed. The capital of Far Eastern Republic was Upper Udinsk (now Ulan-Ude) before Oct. 1920, and was moved to Chita thereafter.

1920 is an important year for the history of China postal service. Due to the military setbacks of White army, its influence in China was also reduced. Russian Post Offices in China were thus forced to close, that also signified the end of the Russia Post Offices along the Chinese Eastern Railways. “By Oct. 6, 1920, ..., all post offices and boxes set up by Russian in Chinese territory must be withdrawn;” “To expropriate Russian postal matter, ..., please send your persons to contact Russian Harbin Post Office, and order to close all Russian post offices along the Chinese Eastern railway, except the post offices in Suifenho and Manchuli which will serve as exchange offices between China and Russia. However, no receiving and sending mails will be allowed.” (a post office note on Dec. 30, 1920) The cover of Fig. 16 shows an evidence of this historical event. It was mailed on Dec. 11, 1920 at Manchuli. Apparently the sender mailed this letter at the Russian post office there. At that time all Russian postal offices in China Proper has been forced to close. As stated above, Russian post offices along the railway were still in partial operation, especially the post offices of Manchuli and Suifenho. This letter was destined for Manilla and would pass Chinese postal service on its journey. The sender, probably a foreigner, may be afraid that this letter would not get through if Russian stamps were used. He wrote his message on an official postal stationery card of Chinese postal service and affixed 2.5 c postage, to satisfy the postal fare for an international post card at that time. Russian postmark of Manchuli railroad station office was applied on the blank area of the card, instead on Chinese stamps. No Russian stamp was used on this card, which was not possible in the past. Chinese post marks of Dec. 23 nd 24 were applied later in Shanghai. This letter shows the important history of the reclamation of postal authority from Russia.



17

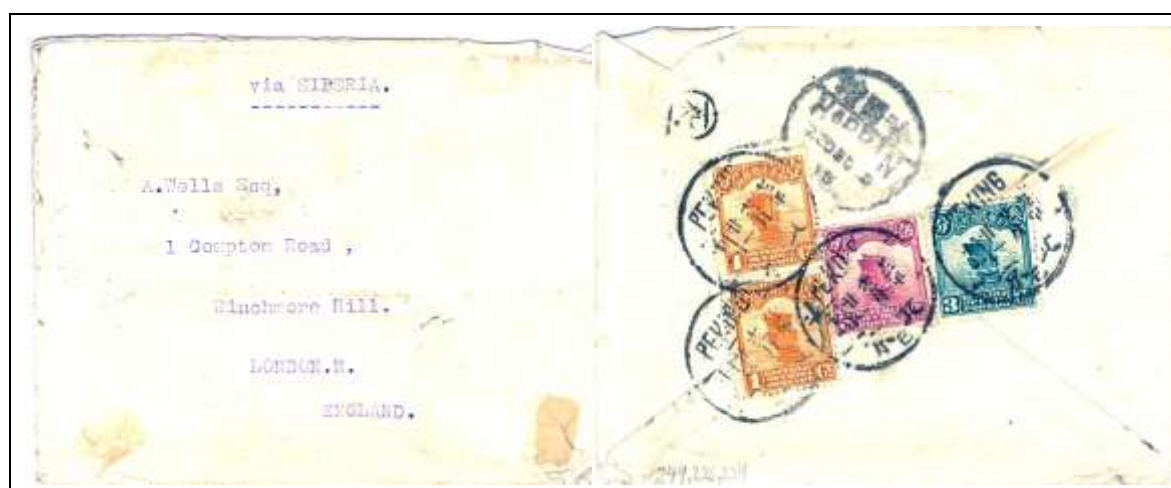
### The resumption of Trans-Siberian postal route

The suspension of “via Siberia” postal route causes significant delay in the delivery of mails to and from European countries. Thus, when the general condition of Russia Civil War stabilized, the Beiyang government of China began to look for the possibility of resuming the transportation of Trans-Siberian railway. On March 23, 1923, the head post office in Harbin received an official letter from the Russian authority in Chita, asking for the resumption of mail exchange. On Apr. 13, 1923, the director of Kirin-Heilungkiang postal district, Mr. William Walter Ritchie (an Englishman), agreed that mails destined east of Suifenho and west of Manchuli should be handled by clerks in the Russian PO in Vladivostok and Chita, respectively. He also reported the policy to the Directorate General of Posts, Mr. H. Picard Destelan, in Peking on May 3<sup>rd</sup>. On May 5<sup>th</sup>, Mr. Destelan replied Mr.

Ritchie, "Agree! I have notified the head post offices in Peking, Tientsin and Shanghai to do as told. That is, mailed destined for Vladivostok and Eastern Siberia should be directed to Harbin PO." According to the 1923 annual report of China Postal Service, the postal service between China and European countries using "via Siberia" postal route has finally resumed on May 10, 1923 since its long close in March 1918. On the same day, the first bulk of mails from London to Harbin after a long suspension were received. Thereafter, the postal service using "via Siberia" postal route was welcomed by the public and grew rapidly. By the end of 1923, China has weekly mail exchanges via Siberia with Austria, Czechs, France, Germany, U.K., Holland, Latvia, and Poland. Therefore, the first day of the resumption of "via Siberia" postal route was May 10, 1923. Moscow transit marks were frequently seen on early mails using this newly open route, for example, the covers shown on Fig. 17 and Fig. 18. These mails were usually dispatched individually and thus, having the chance to leave the Moscow transit marks on them. The cover shown on Fig. 13 was mailed on June 12, 1923 in Shanghai. It was noted with "via Siberia" and passed Harbin and Moscow on June 16 and July 2, respectively. The arrival mark of Stockholm, Sweden is unclear. The cover shown on Fig. 18 was mailed at Cheng-Ting on July, 1923, noted "via Siberia and Moscow." It passed Peking on July 16, Harbin on July 19, and Moscow on July 30. It arrived in its destination, Denmark, on Aug. 6. The speed of delivery was close to that before suspension.



18

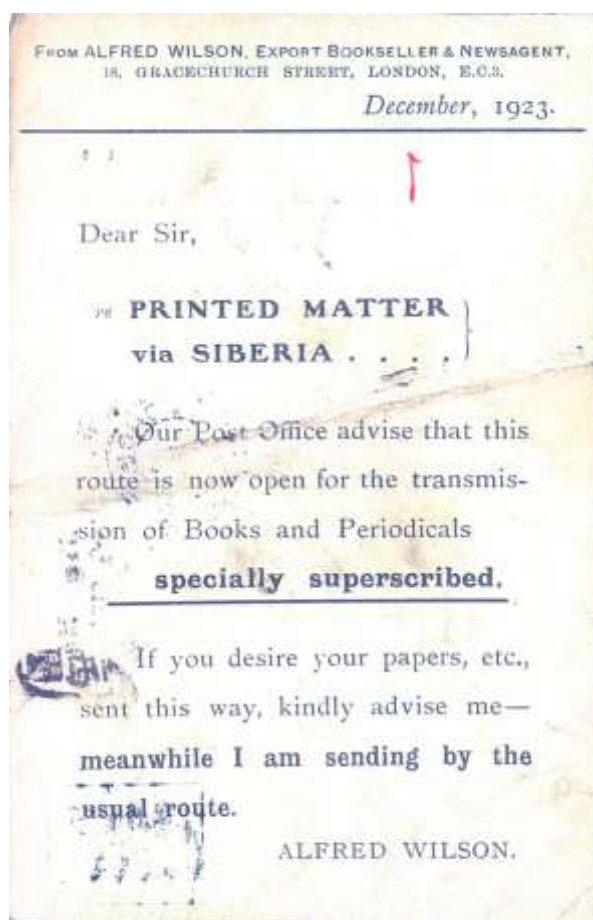


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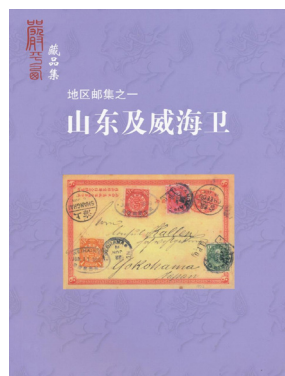
The Moscow transit mark was no longer seen since the end of 1923, probably because of the resumption of bulk mail for "via Siberia" correspondence. A cover mailed from Peking to London, U.K. well demonstrates this change. This cover, having "via Siberia" note on its front side, passed Harbin 2 days later (Fig. 19) and left a transit mark. However, different from letters sent earlier, Moscow transit mark could no longer be found on them. A bookseller's note at the end of 1923



asked senders to “specially superscripted” the choice of postal route if intended to send printed matters by the Trans-Siberian railway (Fig. 20).



THANKS FOR VIEWING !



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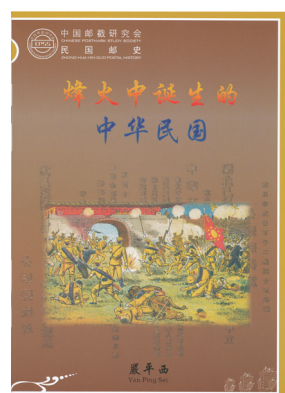


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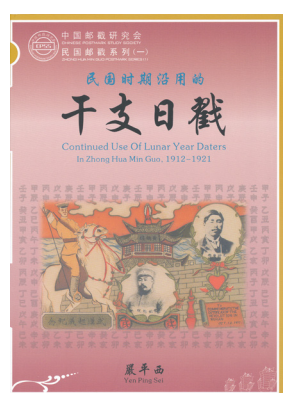


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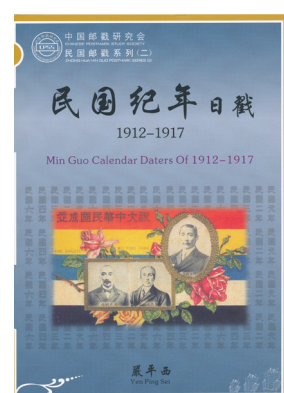
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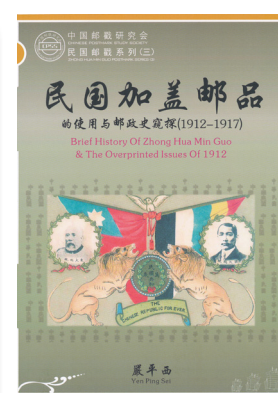
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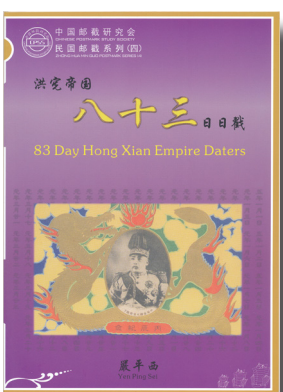
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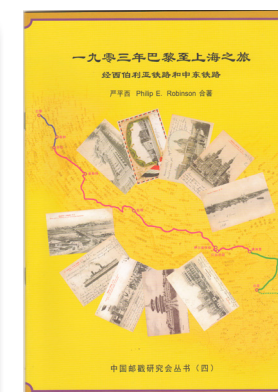
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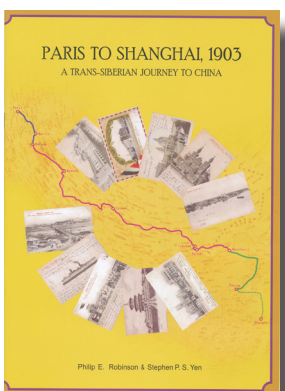
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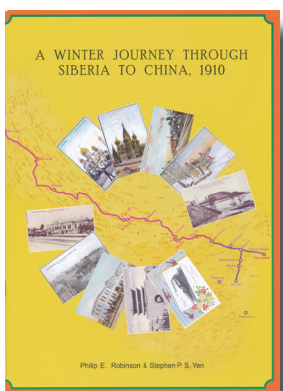
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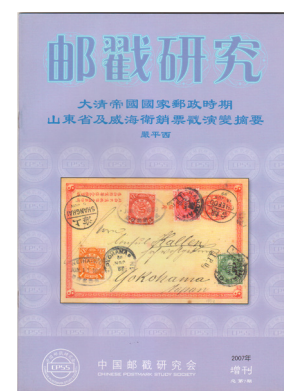
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