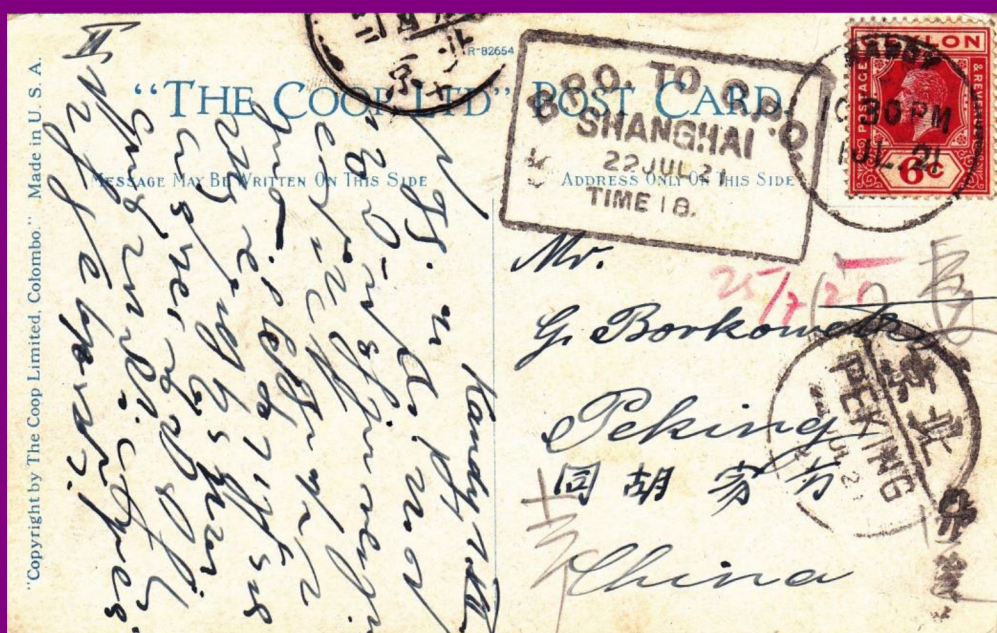


欧亚邮件取道西伯利亚 西伯利亚邮运与中国邮集之二



CHINA—EUROPE MAIL VIA SIBERIA COLLECTION EXHIBITING CHINA-EUROPE MAIL VIA SIBERIA, NO. 2

“VIA SIBERIA” MAIL SERVICE & CHINA, 1903-1932

The completion of the Russian Trans-Siberian Railway, in 1903, linking Europe with the Orient, was hailed as a marvelous and splendid achievement, 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.

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 had to pay extra postage in Russian currency. 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



1903 picture post card Peking to Belgium, franked Russian Kitai Overprint on 2 kopeks pair canceled Russian Post Office Peking c.d.s. 1903 V 28 (Julian calendar, or June 10), endorsed “Siberia” at lower left, transit Moscow with Belgian arrival c.d.s. 2 Juillet alongside.



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 Suifenhao 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.

1904 French army cover franked French Post Office 15c canceled French Post Office Tientsin c.d.s. 16 MARS 04 Even though endorsed in French “Voie Transsiberienne”, it is doubtful whether the actual delivery complied with such instruction. Lorient arrival c.d.s. of 13-4 04 on reverse gives some clue as to transit time needed : 28 days.



“VIA SIBERIA” MAIL SERVICE & CHINA, 1903-1932

General Post Office of Great Britain issued, on 16th 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.

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.

1904~5

registered
picture post
card to
Milano, Italy,
franked

French	Post
Office	25c
and	10c

canceled

French Post
Office

Tientsin c.d.s.

21 DEC 04,
it was

carried by French mail boat with octagonal PAQUEBOT ship marking of 6 JANV 05 with "R" registration handstamp at left.



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.

1906 picture post card (Hong Kong) from Tientsin to France without “Voie Transiberriene” mail instruction because “Via Siberia” mail service was interrupted by the Russo-Japanese War.



“VIA SIBERIA” MAIL SERVICE & CHINA, 1903-1932

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 a public announcement to this effect in May 1907, as if on behalf of the Russian Post Office.

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 on mail items indicated lack of confidence that the “Via Siberia” mail service could now be restored to its former efficiency.

1907 western type cover franked on reverse Chinese Imperial Post 5c, 4c and 1c paying 10 cents international postage rate, with stamps canceled Chengchow (Honan Province) lunar year c.d.s., endorsed Via Transsiberien on front with Tientsin 22 NOV 07 transit and Bruxelles 11 DECE 07 arrival c.d.s all on reverse. Transit time : 19 days only.



Even though Russian Post Office officially announced resumption of “Via Siberia” mail service as late as February 1909, confidence had already been restored and mail senders often wrote down in manuscript “Via Siberia” on their mail items as illustrated by this **1908** picture post card from Russian Post Office in Shanghai to Denmark on 18 5 08.



“VIA SIBERIA” MAIL SERVICE & CHINA, 1903-1932

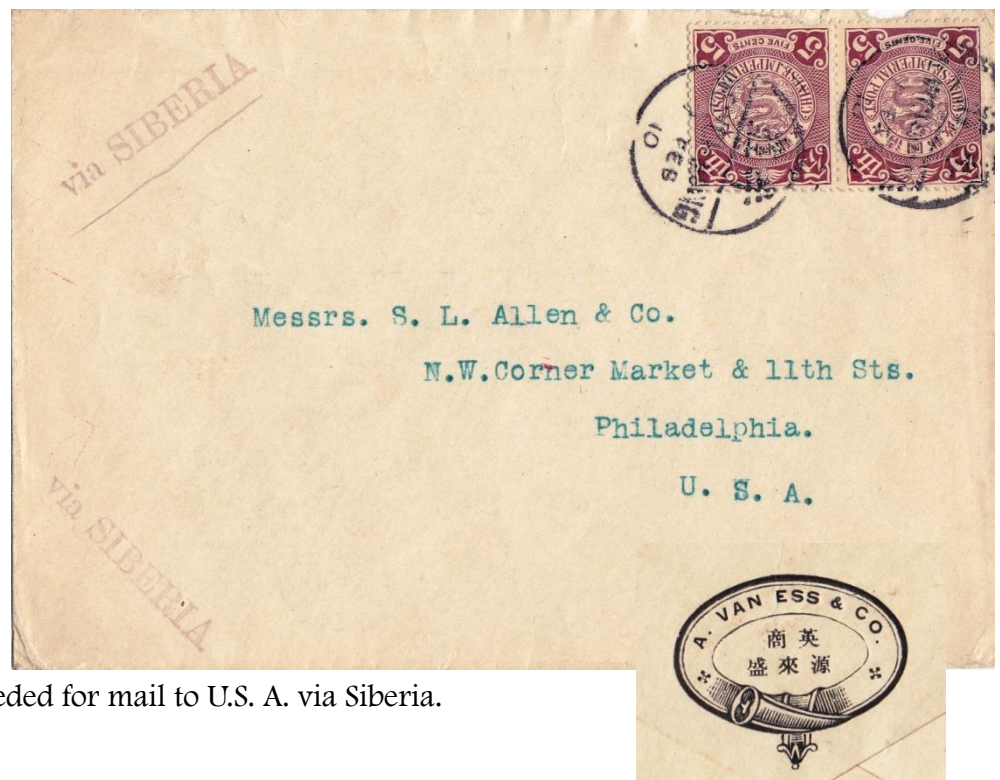
In February 1909 Russian Post Office announced the official resumption of the Via Siberia mail service after mounting pressure from European nations. A Postal Agreement was entered into between China and Russia, effective February 19 1909 when Russia agreed to deliver China/Europe mail via Siberia mail service free of additional Russian postage. For members of the Universal Postal Union countries, their membership status qualified them the availability of “Via Siberia” mail service because Russia was also one such member.

1909 picture post card (Hankow—The Kansui River) franked French Post Office 5c pair canceled French Post Office Hankow c.d.s. 23 AVRIL 09, addressed to DINANT of Belgium with 13 MAI 09 arrival c.d.s., transit time 20 days.



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 mandarinates 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.

As the “Via Siberia” mail service became ever popular, some mail senders even tried to explore the time taken by mail to reach eastern coast of the United States of America via the Siberian mail route as illustrated by this **1910** western style cover to Philadelphia, U.S.A. from Newchwang of the Chinese Northeast provinces. The two Chinese Imperial Post Office 5c stamps were canceled with NEWCHWANG bilingual c.d.s. 7 FEB 10 but there was no transit or arrival c.d.s. to substantiate the calculation of actual time needed for mail to U.S. A. via Siberia.



“VIA SIBERIA” MAIL SERVICE & CHINA, 1903-1932

With the inauguration of South Manchurian Railway by Japan around 1909, 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.

On October 10, 1911, Wuchang Revolution broke out and revolutionary forces began to gather behind the leadership of Dr. Sun Yat Sen who proclaimed the founding of Zhong Hua Min Guo or the Chinese Republic on January 1, 1912.

Internal turmoil within China did not affect “Via Siberia” mail service and a picture post card sent from Tangku to London England on 10 NOV 1911 was as usual endorsed “Via Siberia” it managed to get across to Moukden two days later on 12 NOV 11 and arrived London NO 29 11, a transit time of 19 days only.



During the first year of the Chinese Republic, “Via Siberia” mail service was still widely chosen as the most efficient mail route for China—Europe and even some China—U. S. A. mail in spite of the internal political conflicts between Dr. Sun Yat Sen and Yuan Shih Kai. A 1912 picture post card (Chien Men-Peking) to London, franked Chinese Imperial Post 4c canceled Peking 8 AUG 12 c.d.s. with French Post Office Peking c.d.s. of even day alongside and bold manuscript instruction “VIA SIBERIA” above.

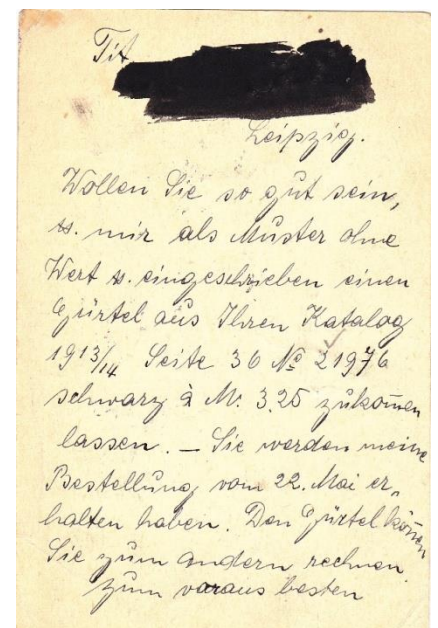
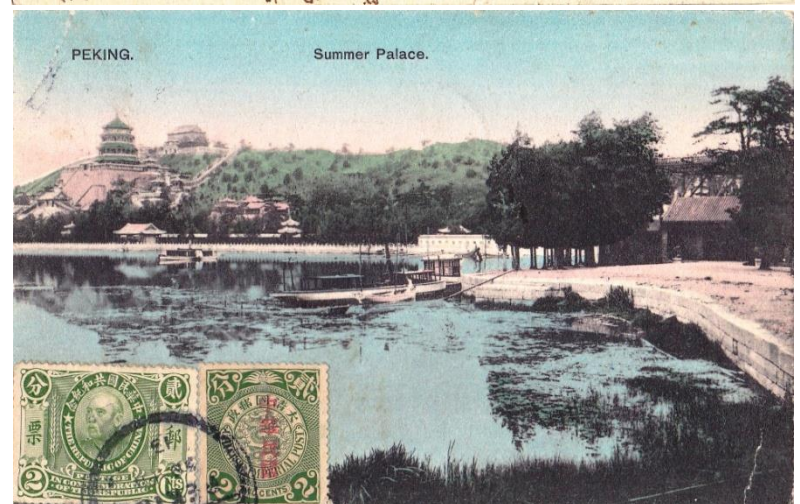


“VIA SIBERIA” MAIL SERVICE & CHINA, 1903-1932

Physical changes began to make appearance when the coiling dragon stamps used during the Qing Dynasty were overprinted “Zhong Hua Min Guo” for use during the period from founding of the Republic to September 1914. Two sets of commemorative stamps had also been issued, one set in honour of Dr. Sun Yat Sen and the other in honour of Yuan Shih Kai. The four cents international post card rate on the **1913** picture post card was made up of 2c Republic overprint on coiling dragon and 2c “Republic” commemorative stamp on a post card (Summer Palace) to Denmark, with Peking c.d.s. 30 APR 13 and French Post Office Peking c.d.s. of even date alongside, above which is a bold blue handstamp “VIA SIBERIA”.

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.

Actually in the initial stages of World War I the “Via Siberia” mail service was only slightly affected and a “flag” type 1c postal stationery card to Germany in **1914** was uprated with a junk 3c stamp, canceled Kiaying c.d.s., transit via Swatow 9 JUN 14 and Shanghai 13 JUN 14 and endorsed “via Siberia” at lower right corner. This item was posted one month before the outbreak of World War I and it originated from the southern province of Kwangtung, evidencing that mail senders from southern provinces of China also elected to send mails “Via Siberia”.



“VIA SIBERIA” MAIL SERVICE & CHINA, 1903-1932

Mail censorship is inevitable for countries engaged in World War I when Russia actively set up mail censorship stations along the Trans-Siberian Railway as Vladivostok, Manchouli, Irkutsk and Petrograd etc. Sometimes when mail items censored in Russia had to be censored again when it reached European countries en route to destination.

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.

A 1915 5 ore postal card from Norway to Shanghai was uprated with another 5 ore stamp, canceled machine duplex datestamp 12 XI 15, it received Petrograd censor marking on its way and reached Russian Post Office Shanghai 15.12.15, 33 days transit time, evidencing delay caused by mail censorship.



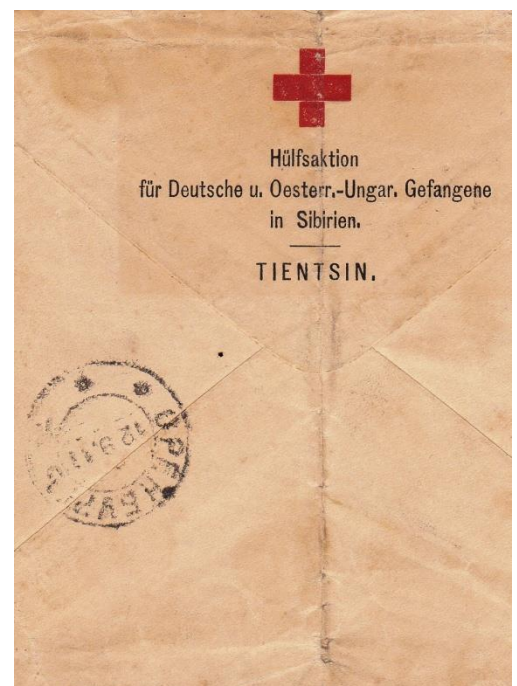
Year 1916 was another tumultuous year for China, Yuan Shih Kai could not withhold his ambition to become Emperor when he announced the founding of “Hung Hsien Empire” on January 1, 1916 with himself as the Emperor of this constitutional monarchy. Since he had clear gestures of conceding to Japan’s greedy demands for supporting him, the whole nation went against him and he had to abdicate on March 23, 1916 and he later died in June the same year. Even with political instability within China and World War I waging in Europe, mail senders still entrusted “Via Siberia” mail service for their mail to Europe as illustrated by this 1916 registered cover from Fengtien to Le Havre.



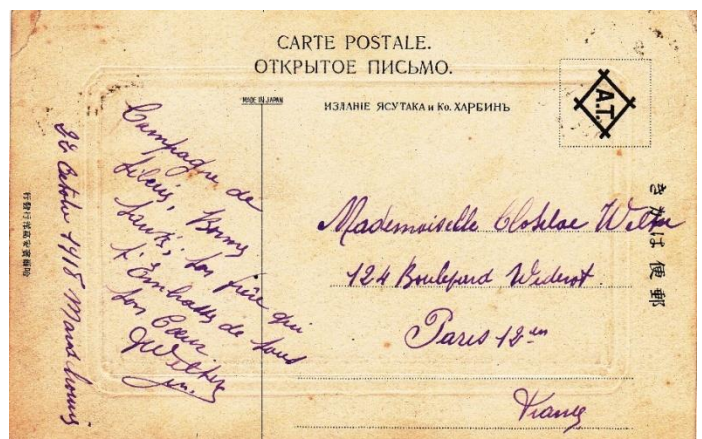
“VIA SIBERIA” MAIL SERVICE & CHINA, 1903-1932

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.

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. Censorship of civilian mail became even more strict, especially those written in German language. However, the International Red Cross assumed an active role to take care of prisoners of war in various prison camps and arranged mail correspondence from prisoners to their family members one such 1917 cover with printed heading “SERVICE DES PRISONNIERS DE GUERRE” was written in Russian language originated from a prison camp in Tientsin and handled by the Russian Post Office Tientsin. The absence of censorship marking came as no surprise because the mail could have been written in Russian language and posted in the presence of Russian Post Office staff.



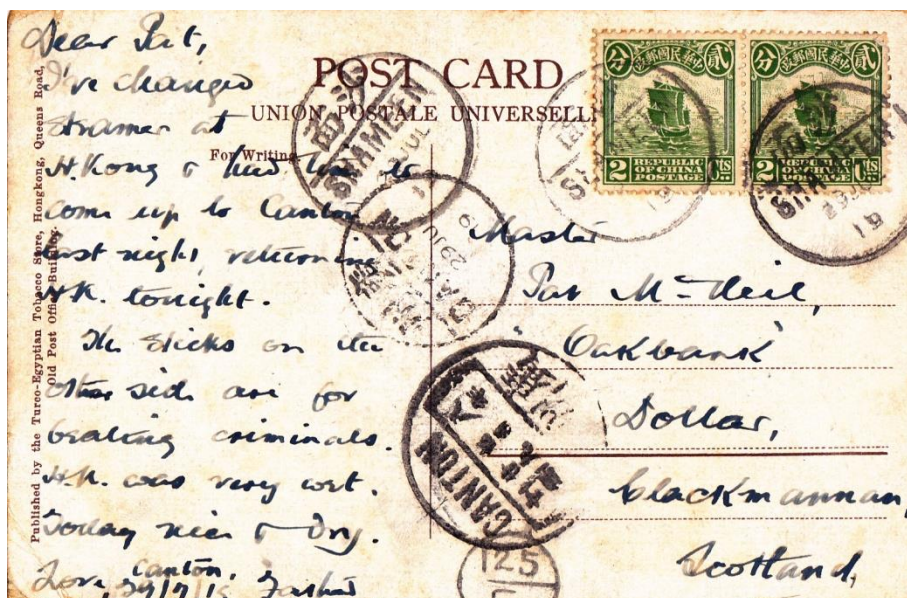
Year 1918 was a difficult year for European countries as World War I began to take its toll when mail exchange was solely for the purpose of reporting safety, itinerary or unhappy events such as casualties etc. A 1918 picture post card of Harbin station was franked with junk 1c and 1/2c stamps canceled Harbin c.d.s. 17 OCT 18 with message and purportedly addressed to Paris. Since the 1.5 cents postage was not the correct 4c international post card rate, it is doubtful whether it had actually been posted.



“VIA SIBERIA” MAIL SERVICE & CHINA, 1903-1932

On November 7 (Julian calendar October 25) 1917 another revolution broke out when the communist party seized control and the success of this October Revolution had turned Russian state from parliamentarian to socialistic in character. The new government signed an armistice with Germany in December and by that time a coalition of anti-Bolshevik groups including invading armies from the victorious Allies attempted to unseat the new government in the Russian Civil War from 1918-1923 and this civil war marked the longest suspension of via Siberia mail service in the entire history of its operation and it is difficult to find 1918 mail items from China to Europe via Siberia.

In view of the Russian Civil War, The Chinese Post Office announced that the “via Siberia” postal route to Europe, Sinkiang and Mongolia was forced to be suspended in Mar. 1918. However, by the end of 1918, west bounded mails could still reach the Asha station between Cheliabinsk and Ufa in European Russia. Later Omsk became the western limit in October 1919, and Irkutsk in Dec. 1919. On top of heavy casualties caused by the War, black death began to spread across Europe when mail communication was effectively severed, only those outside the affected area wrote back to their folks to cheer things up and the following 1919 picture post card to Scotland was an example.

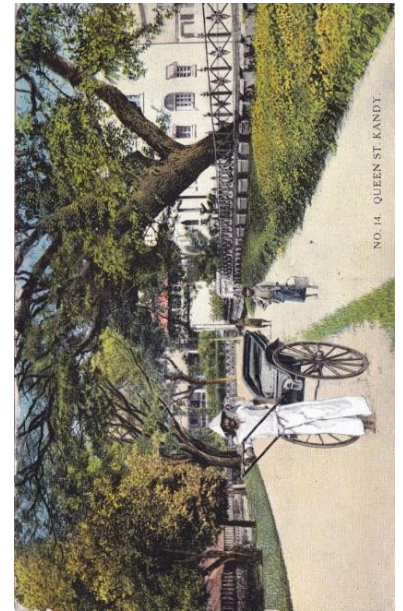


Belgium authorities issued a propaganda “stamp” depicting soldier with knife and fire stick in both hands and another gentleman in suit handing out a hat as if asking for donations. This appeared on a 1920 cover from Chengchow of Honan Province to Antwerpen Belgie and tied to the cover by arrival c.d.s. of 20 X 1920. As expected, the “Via Siberia” mail service was still suspended and this item had to take a sea route via Shanghai.



“VIA SIBERIA” MAIL SERVICE & CHINA, 1903-1932

France suffered heavily during World War I when Britain took up the responsibility of mail boat services between Europe and Far East but with slightly different routing, stopping at Ceylon on the way when the following 1921 picture post card from Ceylon to Peking was able to utilize this mail boat service all the way to Shanghai where it was delivered by the British Post Office to Chinese Post Office with square type handstamp of 22 JUL 21 and two days later on 24 JUL it arrived Peking.



Mail items from European countries to China and vice versa are very scarce during 1922 and transit c.d.s. on mail items were also omitted, perhaps on account of shortage of labour and the following 1922 picture post card from Los Angeles of U. S. A. to Chefoo China did not leave clue as to the actual mail route taken but the transit time could be worked out to be 42 days (NOV. 10 to 22 DEC.)

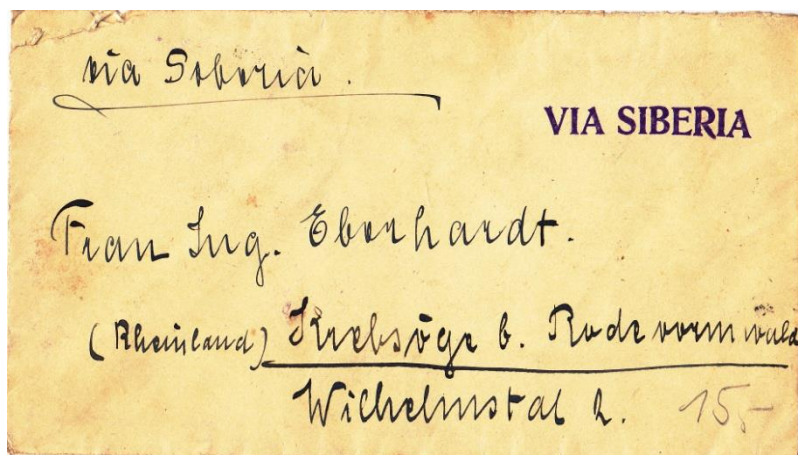


“VIA SIBERIA” MAIL SERVICE & CHINA, 1903-1932

At long last in 1923, the Soviet Union was able to gain control of the entire span of former Czarist Russia from St. Petersburg in the west to Vladivostok in the east and resumption of “Via Siberia” mail service was the anticipation of all European and Asian countries in the Far East. Again there was no official announcement of the actual date of resumption but mail items endorsed “Via Siberia” could be carried according to instruction from the latter half of 1923.

Perhaps firms situated within the Chinese Northeastern provinces were the first to pick up news about the resumption of “Via Siberia” mail service when this firm in Mukden sent the following 1923 November 25 letter to Germany with handstamp “VIA SIBERIA” at cover front.

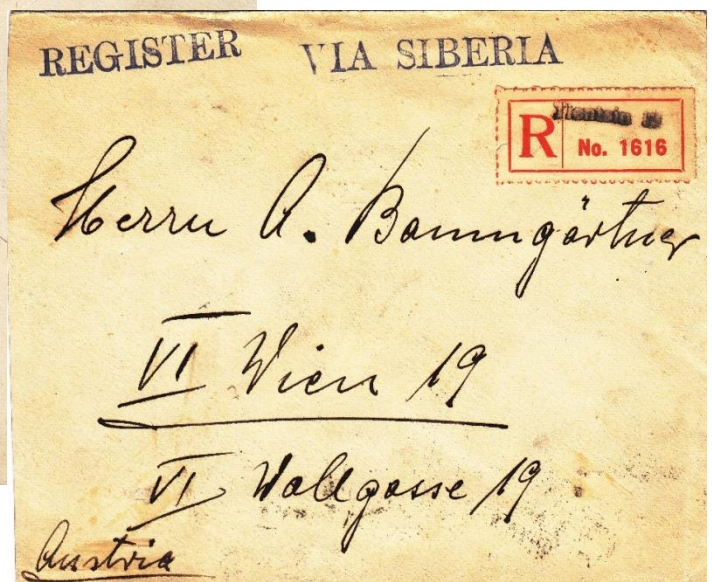
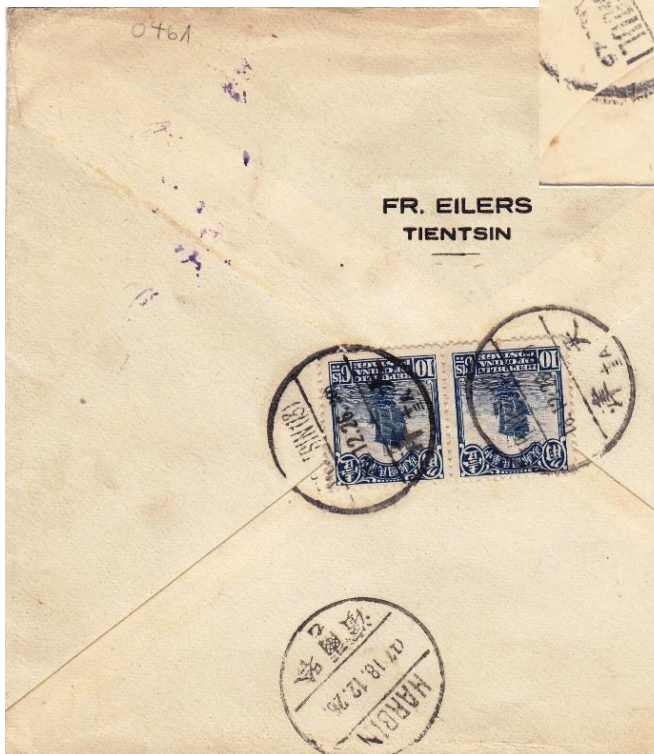
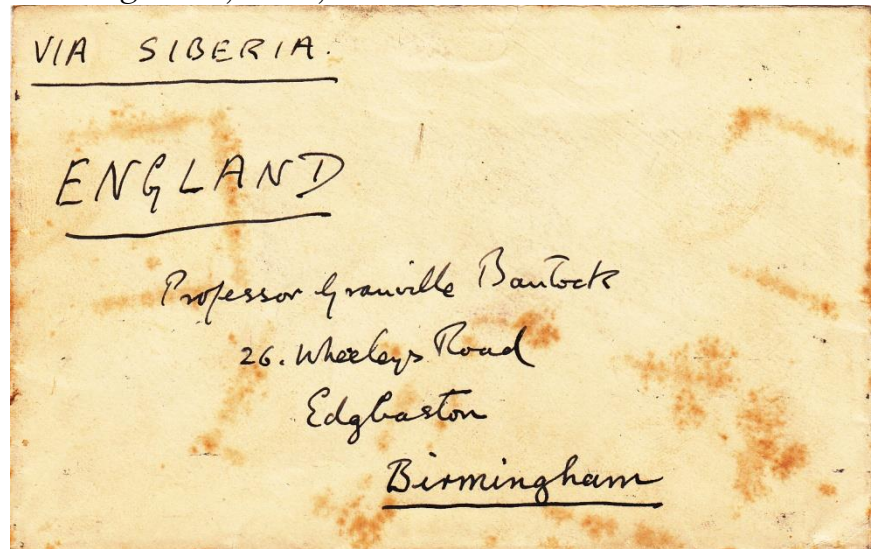
Beginning from 1924, confidence of “Via Siberia” mail service had reached former levels and the mail volume surged drastically and almost each and every mail item destined for European countries benefited from this free service rendered by the Government of the Soviet Union as illustrated by a 1924 registered cover from Tientsin sub-office No. 13 to Austria on 24.7.24 with Moscow transit c.d.s. 9.8.24.



“VIA SIBERIA” MAIL SERVICE & CHINA, 1903-1932

An automatic machine cancel adopted by Moscow Post Office was recorded on an **1925** cover from Harbin to Birmingham, it was franked with 4 junk stamps paying the correct 10 cents international letter rate with stamps canceled by Harbin c.d.s. August 24, 1925, it transited Manchouli and received its bilingual c.d.s. from where it was delivered to Moscow on 6 IX 25 where it was sorted again. Perhaps the surge in mail volume had caused Moscow Post Office to adopt the automatic machine cancel.

Even in 1926 the business aspects of the Chinese Eastern Railway was still vested with the Soviet Union which chose Harbin as a mail exchange station when Chinese mail destined for Europe and beyond were delivered to the Soviet Union post office there for onward transmission, in majority cases without any transit c.d.s. as was this registered cover from Tientsin to Austria on December 16, **1926** with registration label on cover front and bold handstamp VIA SIBERIA at top of cover front.



“VIA SIBERIA” MAIL SERVICE & CHINA, 1903-1932

Foreign residents in China could even send their mail items “Via Siberia” at postal agency counters such as the following **1927** picture post card (Japanese Concession of Hankow) to Helsinki of Finland at Nikkow postal agency. The text was written 28/1, 1927 and the arrival c.d.s. was 18.2.27, a transit time of 21 days.



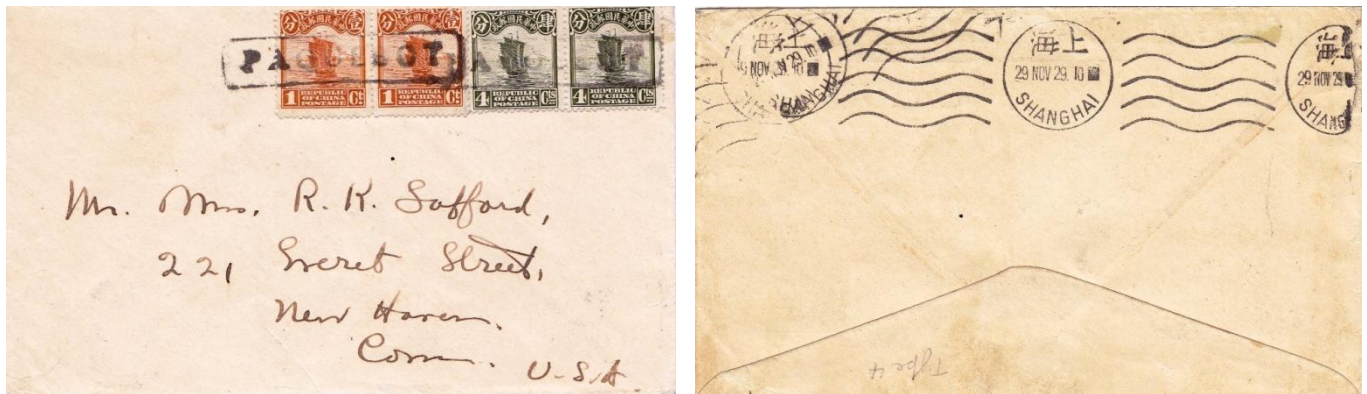
An interesting post card depicting street scene of Harbin was sent to Stettin in **1928** endorsed Via Siberia Germany. Pen marking of three crosses on picture side seem to indicate the flat in which the sender was residing at that time. The street was busy with plenty of pedestrians and Romanesque building with round dome at far end of the street.



Years of peace and prosperity was about to be interspersed with hostility and danger when in 1929, young Marshal Chang Hsieh Liang, the warlord of Chinese Northeastern Provinces, was persuaded by Generalissimo Chiang Kai Shek to “nationalize” the Chinese Eastern Railway. Chinese authorities 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. The U.S.S.R then broke all diplomatic relationships with China and Soviet bombers bombarded Suifenho and initiated military conflict which was to be known as the “Chinese Eastern Railway Incident of 1929”.

“VIA SIBERIA” MAIL SERVICE & CHINA, 1903-1932

Soviet armies were victorious at several military engagements taking place at Fushan, Mishan and Suifenho. Chinese armies stationed at Manchouli and Chalaireh had been routed by Soviet army which went on to capture Hailar, forcing the young Marshal Chang to sue for peace. Even though peace was restored in January 1930 the “Via Siberia” mail service was interrupted for the period from July 1929 to February 1930, during this period, mail items had to be carried by PAQUEBOT or other mail boat services such as the following 1929 cover to U.S.A. with 4 stamps paying 10 cents international letter rate canceled by PAQUEBOT handstamp and Shanghai automatic machine datestamp 29 NOV 29 verified this period of suspension of service.



The restoration of “Via Siberia” mail service took almost two months and such delay was illustrated by a 1930 Mongolian first flight cover for which the sender paid 80 mung airmail postage for the aerial trip Ulanbator to Irkutsk and thence by Trans-Siberian Railway to its destination within China. Even though “all clear” message was given and the first flight took place on 11.1.30, the Harbin backstamp which canceled Chinese postage due stamp was actually dated February because traffic on the eastbound Chinese Eastern Railway was restored on 1930.1.10 and the on the westbound railway on 1930.1.15 with full operation “officially” resumed on 1930.1.20 which was not the actual case as illustrated by the following example when Harbin post office began to handle mail as late as February 1930.



“VIA SIBERIA” MAIL SERVICE & CHINA, 1903-1932

1931 was an eventful year in the history of “Via Siberia” mail service; in the first instance, Eurasia Aviation Corporation launched its Shanghai—Manchouli “International Flight Service” and the inaugural week took place on May 31 to June 6, 1931. On payment of international airmail postage for passages outside China, Chinese Post Office made arrangements, that mail items for European destinations could take two separate air passages, from Irkutsk to Moscow and from Moscow to Berlin. At this point in time, it would seem that airmail service would sooner and later replace “Via Siberia” mail service as the most efficient means of mail transport.

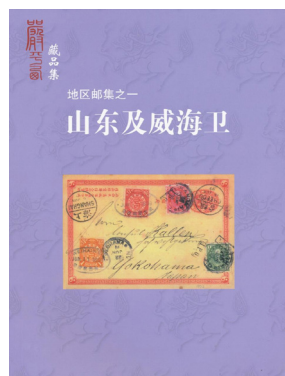
Most of the mail senders still preferred “Via Siberia” mail service because it was much cheaper and efficient and a 1931 doubt weight cover to Germany was franked reaper 20 cents, canceled Nanking c.d.s. of April 10, 1930 and endorsed Via Siberia at cover front, it arrived Braunschweig on 28.4.31, transit time 18 days only.



“Mukden Incident” took place on September 18, 1931 and on this pretext, Japanese Army entered the Chinese Northeast Provinces by force and later on March 1, 1932 puppet Government of Manchukuo was established with Pu Yi as the Emperor. Mail handling business was as usual conducted by Chinese post office staff but increasing pressure and worsening political situation had caused the entire Chinese Post Office staff members to evacuate Chinese Northeast Provinces on July 25, 1932 and the “Via Siberia” mail service was no longer available to other provinces of China simply because mail could not cross over to Harbin to connect the Trans-Siberian Railway. It was not until Japan had surrendered after World War II in 1945 that the “Via Siberia” mail service again became available to China.



The above is April 24, 1932 cover from Shanghai to Italy, sent after the establishment of Manchukuo puppet Government but before the withdrawal of all Chinese Post Office staff on July 25, 1932



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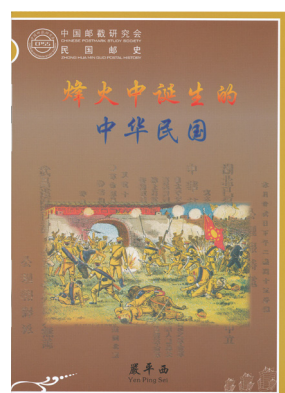


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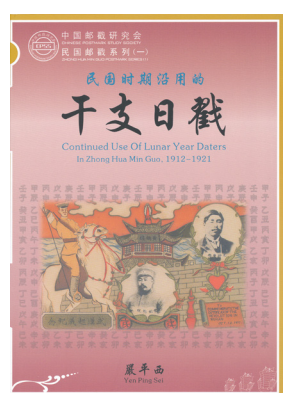


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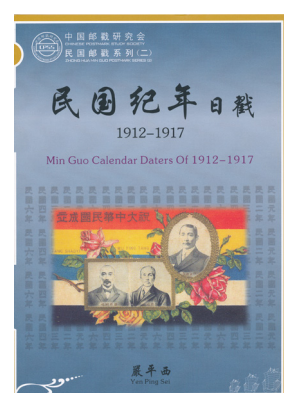
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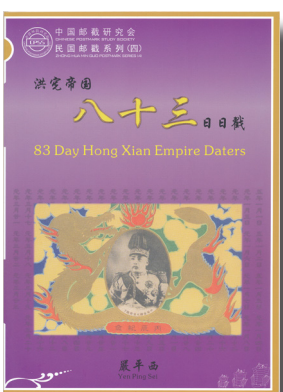
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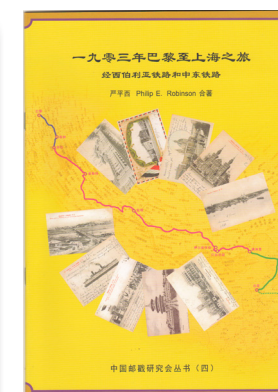
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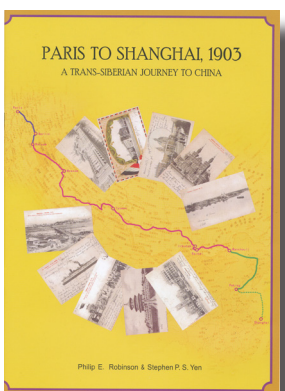
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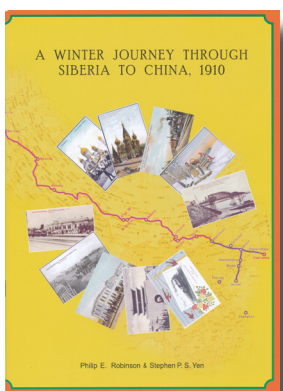
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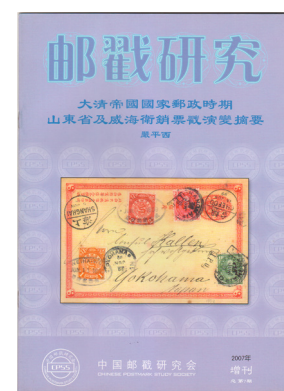
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