

Japan's Traffic Facilities and Communications

International Railway and Steamship Service

As early as 1915, through traffic between Japan and Russia via the Siberian Railway was but in force. The arrangement was followed by similar arrangements for more extensive through traffic covering the through booking of passengers and baggage from Japan to European capitals, circular tours round the world and in the Eastern hemisphere. Besides railways concerned in the Far East and Europe, the Canadian Pacific Railway was the participant in the round-the-world circular tour, and leading steamship companies on the Suez route took part in the circular tour arrangement via Siberia and Suez.

All these international through traffic arrangements via Siberia had been in fair progress and promised development to the welfare of the whole of mankind, until the European War broke out with the subsequent revolution in Russia which interrupted international traffic through Russia. Consequently, all the above arrangements for international through traffic via Siberia had to be cancelled.

The important position which the Siberian Railway holds in world communications is so evident that no explanation is needed. All the world, therefore, waited for the reopening of the Siberian route, but this hope was not fulfilled until very recently. When diplomatic relations with Russia were restored in the spring of year before last the Japanese Government, at the initiation of the Railways, proposed to the Soviet Government a conference in Moscow for the reestablishment of these through traffic arrangements via Siberia which existed before the war. The proposal was accorded a prompt acceptance and the delegates of Carriers from Japan, China, and Russia met together in Moscow in October last and sat for a conference which lasted for about a month-and-half. The conference aimed at the re-establishment of such through traffic via Siberia between the Far East and Russia as was in practice before the war, but it came to an abrupt termination owing to the withdrawal from the conference of the delegates of the Chinese Eastern Railway and the Chinese Government Railways, due to disparity of opinion between them and the Russian delegates on the question regarding the operation of through trains between Russian Railways and the Chinese Eastern Railway, whose delegates opposed the proposal submitted by Russia for running such through trains.

The conference, however, was replaced by another conference which had been called in Moscow for through traffic of a wider scope, extending from the Far East to West Europe. It passed various important rules and regulations as well as an agreement for the restoration of the Europe-Asia through traffic via Siberia. The conference was attended by delegates from France, Germany, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Russia, and Japan, and passed a resolution upon the establishment of a through train from Riga to Vladivostok, to be operated in connection with the express train between Riga and Paris and Ostend.

With regard to international routes in the Far East, anyone who is acquainted with the geography of Asia acknowledges the routes via Harbin to be most convenient, and there is no doubt that when the Chinese Eastern Railway joined in the arrangement, through train or cars will be put in service between Riga and Changchun and Vladivostok via Harbin. For the development of world

communications, the participation of the Chinese Eastern Railway should be urged so that it may be realized at the earliest possible date.

The marine transportation business began with a shipping company jointly organized by the Government and private industrialists in 1870. Two years later the Government decided to subsidize the company and change its name to Nihon Teikoku Yubin Jokisen Kaisha (The Japan Mail Steamship Co.).

As the provisions for transportation were inadequate, the Government lent 10 steamships which it had bought from abroad to the Tsukumo Shokai under the management of Mr. Yataro Iwasaki. The Tsukumo Shokai later changed its name to the Mitsubishi Kisen (steamship) Kaisha and absorbed in Japan Mail Steamship Co.

In 1883 the Kyodo Unyu Kaisha was established with the support of the Government and next year individual shipowner in Osaka organized the Osaka Shosen Kaisha. The Mitsubishi Kisen and the Kyodo Unyu in 1885 amalgamated and organized the Nippon Yusen Kaisha (N. Y. K.) with capital of ¥11,000,000.

Japan's marine transportation at that time was limited to hugging along the home coast and the Chinese and Korean coasts at the furthest, leaving the real ocean service to Europe and America and elsewhere to foreign shipping companies.

When N. Y. K. opened the Bombay route in order to transport Indian raw cotton in 1893, it marked the beginning of a deep sea service by a Japanese steamship company. When in 1896, after the Sino-Japanese War, a law for encouraging marine transportation was promulgated, the European, the South America, and the Australian routes were started by the N. Y. K. while the Toyo Kisen Kaisha started a regular San Francisco run.

The Russo-Japanese War further stimulated our maritime activity, and all the different steamship services on the Yangtse River were united into one, namely, the Nisshin Kisen Kaisha. In 1912 Chosen Yusen Kaisha and the Nanyo Yusen Kaisha were established. The O. S. K. opened in 1910 its regular Tacoma route and the T. K. K. in the same year revived its South American service. Maritime activity in all directions was noticeably increased.

The outbreak of the great war in 1914 stimulated the marine activity to an unprecedented extent. An enormous number of ships of the belligerent nations were commandeered by the respective governments, leaving all the principal routes vacant, and the Japanese ships were compelled to replace these commandeered ships. It was at that time that one was able to meet Japanese vessels flying in almost any part of the world.

The price of ships at the same time soared sky high. Whereas it was about ¥100 per ton before the war, it rose to ¥820 in August, 1917, and as high as ¥1,000 in June, 1918. All shipbuilding yards were flooded with orders for new vessels while the general shortage of ships everywhere and rise in freight rates returned an immense profit to all shipping companies.

The very first electric street car line that was built in this country was the 4-mile line from Shichijo Station (railway) to the exposition ground in Kyoto by Kyoto