



News from the archives

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30932/1992-3252-2019-17-5-326-330>



110 years ago, the experts paid the same attention as they do today to the issues of how to better connect the territories. Immediately after the construction of the Trans-Siberian Main Railroad, the public discussion focused on the construction of the railway from Archangelsk to Ob, from Siberia to Alaska. It is worth also commemorating the first attempt initiated in France to legally regulate the interaction between the infrastructure of different modes of transport, sea and rail transport, to facilitate the multimode transportation.

Keywords: infrastructure, railways, Siberia–Alaska railway, sea ports, adjacent tracks, multimode transportation.

The editorial board expresses gratitude to the staff of the library of Russian University of Transport for the assistance in preparing this publication.

About Siberia–Alaska railway. — In detail analyzing the well-known project of Siberia–Alaska railway, with a strip of land 24 kilometers on both sides provided by the American company, Richard Gennig in the Berlin weekly Zukunft says:

«Americans know what treasures this country lurks in itself. For many years, they sent their engineers there for reconnaissance, and if they are now ready to allocate 500 million rubles, they have perfectly calculated all the expected profit: roads of several thousand kilometers and a sea tunnel of almost fabulous sizes in the vicinity of the Arctic Circle are not in vain! What for the time being, one does not have to wait for passenger traffic, the Yankees know this well. But he wants once again to conclude a profitable deal, as with purchase of Alaska, from which he annually extracts gold alone for almost the entire purchase price paid in 1867 to Russia for concession of the region (for only 3 million rubles). Does America not feed in construction of this road political plans like those that it cherished, acquiring the Philippines? The possibility of economic conquest of East Asia is worth allocating huge sums of money for this» («SPb. Vedomosti», No. 12, January 16, 1909).

— With regard to the German writer's view set forth here, it would be worthwhile to recall the paper in *Zheleznodorozhnoe Delo*, «What do we need and what we don't have», published in 1906 (p. 349). Incidentally, it states that German capital would be ready to seize concessions in our Far East, but on conditions more disadvantageous for us than the Americans. And the very article by Mr. Richard Gennig shows their indifference to our treasures.

The Germans will not expose the Americans only for the purpose of protecting us from irreparable losses.

(*Zheleznodorozhnoe delo [Railway Business]*, 1909, No. 14–15, p. 88).

The project of connecting Arkhangelsk with the river Ob. — The Engineering Council of the Ministry of Railways is considering an urgent project to expand the network of northern railways. It is planned to build a new line up to 1200 miles long from Arkhangelsk to the river Ob («*Russkoe Znamya*», No. 286, December 20, 1908).

(*Zheleznodorozhnoe delo [Railway Business]*, 1909, No. 30, p. 176).

Regarding the new French law on adjoining of railway lines to waterways. — In France, a new law has been promulgated, facilitating the establishment of a closer connection between rail and waterways.

This law of December 3, 1908 deserves all the more attention since up to now, despite the general, so to say, axiomatic truth, that each railway line, regardless of whether it is a main or secondary, can only be considered normal when it adjoins an industrial or commercial center at one end and rests against the sea or another rail line connected to a port with the other, or connects two of these rail lines — despite this truth, not all statesmen recognize that inextricable, interacting connection between rail and water internal and external communication lines, which should underlie the right state economy. The new law reads:



Art. 1. It is granted in seaports and on navigable rivers to owners and concessionaires of public warehouses, as well as concessionaires of public equipment and owners of private equipment legally authorized, the right to arrange adjacent branches granted to owners of mines and factories, under the conditions set forth in Art. 67 technical conditions of the concession construction of secondary railways, according to the law of June 11, 1880 and 70 Art. Of Decree of July 11, 1907.

Art. 2. Decrees of the State Council, issued upon presentation of interested societies, on the basis of the results of a questionnaire that recognized public utility, may prescribe the construction of waterways and the installation of equipment necessary to ensure and facilitate the approach of ships to railway stations.

The works will be carried out by the companies according to the projects approved by the Minister of public works: the costs of initial arrangement are borne by the state with participation, if necessary, of those interested.

Art. 3. The State Council will take decisions regarding the remuneration of railway companies for damage that may be caused to them by this law.

This is almost the first law that puts the interests of waterways in the forefront of the plan and indicates that in the state economy water communications, ports and railways are structures that are equally necessary for the welfare and prosperity of the country. But at the same time, one should not forget the very important side of the matter, that natural waterways constitute a natural phenomenon and that where nature did not give them, their artificial planting is associated with enormous costs, and their operation is caused by serious climatic difficulties, while the railways are communication lines, easily constructed, the cheapest in construction, and capable of developing without difficulty in accordance with increasing requirements. Therefore, it is clear that without diminishing the importance of waterways, the role of railways in serving the country will always be of paramount importance.

It is rare that rivers actually compete with railways, or vice versa*; their role, and, moreover, an important role, is to serve as suitable means of communication bringing goods to the railways; in specific cases, they unload the latter, and although rivermen often complain that the railways compete with them for their preferential summer (navigation) tariffs, these complaints can only serve as evidence of the retrograde stagnation of the river itself, which, forgetting to carry (train) on water is much cheaper than on rails, they do not want to introduce the necessary improvements in their carts, both technical and administrative.

A completely different situation is the question of the equipment of ports and marinas; here the task is more complicated. Ports and marinas are the gates of highways; ports as their main gate, and marinas as their side gates. These port gates were mistakenly atrophied from railways and administratively

allocated to a particularly departmental agency, which, however, due to the seriousness of its negative value, can only be considered as a temporary measure. As for the «side gates», i.e. of marinas of navigable rivers, it is absolutely right to concentrate the center of interest of their creation and development in the very environment of water businessmen, giving them the right to facilitate concession by them, adjacent to highways, of access roads of any particular nature, as the above new law in France provides for.

Here, by the way, it is worth noting that the opinion formed almost everywhere that the waterways are, as it were, stepsons of the country in comparison with railways, cannot be recognized as correct and thorough. Waterways before the emergence of the railway network played an outstanding role, as cheap and non-monopolized means of communication; the state spent large amounts of money on their mutual artificial conjugation and on increasing their throughput. The construction of new channels, canalization and river locks, as well as clearing and dredging, have long absorbed a lot of the country's money, but in most cases river companies themselves started and abandoned it, while the railways, which received their main development through private capital and private activities, with the assistance of the state treasury subsequently redeeming them and supplementing their network with new lines, they themselves put the country's communications to the forefront.

One has only to compare the size of our state budget 50 years ago, i.e. for the time when the water and highway routes were still in full prosperity, with the figure of state revenues now reaching 2,5 billion rubles a year that the state treasury receives thanks to the planting and development of our railway network, and then it will become quite clear, what the matter is, and why do the governments of all countries continue to more or less seemingly push aside the faded waterways becoming the victims?

Railways (with few exceptions) are connected in an organically tightly arranged system that promotes development of state payment elements by raising and developing the country's industrial, commercial and agricultural activities, and if these roads take anything from the state, they will return it a hundredfold in return; of course, not in the sense of fiscal direct revenues from the extras of operations, but by directly contributing to the growth of its active budget.

This should be the state point of view on railways. The role of waterways is to serve as a commercial aid to railways, being for them the last access, unloading and transfer routes, as well as exhaust and receiving gates, and provided that the correct administrative and economic policy is established, these waterways may not burden the state treasury, but draw the funds needed for self-existence and self-development from themselves.

Enaes

(*Zheleznodorozhnoe delo [Railway Business]*, 1909, No. 14–15, p. 82–83). ●

* We do not talk about timber floating rivers.