

## The Paper Money Issued at Khabarovsk, Russia in 1918

By M. Byckoff

The paper money of the Russian Revolutionary period is mysterious and obscure to the American collector, especially when it originated in the Far Eastern areas of the huge nation. This article deals with one issue from the area around Khabarovsk, north of the better known Siberian city of Vladivostok and on the Trans-Siberian Railway. It is reprinted from *The Journal of the Rossica Society of Russian Philately*, No. 68, by courtesy of Dr. Gregory B. Salisbury, Editor. The author, Mr. Byckoff, is a member of both the Rossica Society and the Society of Paper Money Collectors.

According to Mr. Byckoff, Russia's Far East territories lie east of the Baikal Lake and north of Mongolia and Manchuria. For administrative purposes they are divided into provinces or "oblasts"—the Transbaikial Oblast between the Baikal Lake and Manchuria, the Amur Oblast to the north of the Amur River, and the Maritime Oblast east of Manchuria and the Ussuri River and the shores of the Sea of Japan and Tatar Straits. To the north of these provinces the vast territory of the Yakutsk Oblast reaches the North Arctic Ocean; east of Yakutsk Oblast and north of the Sea of Okhotsk is Kamchatka Oblast.

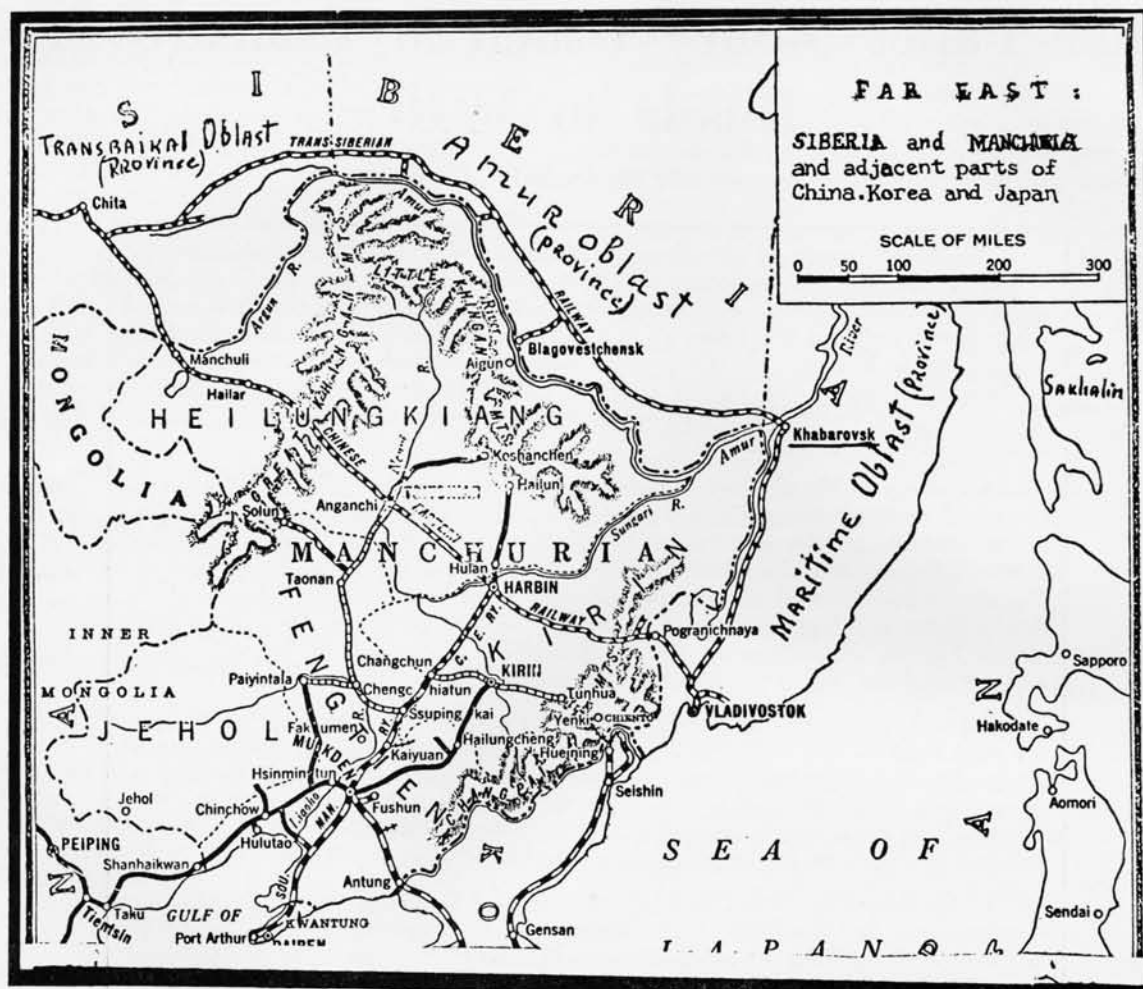
After the February 1917 revolution, the Provisional Government of Premier Minister Prince Lvov dismissed all General Governors and Governors appointed by the Imperial Government and appointed new "Commissars of the Provisional Government." In most cases they were members of "The Union of Cities and Zemstvo," an organization formed at the beginning of World War I to assist the Imperial Government in the production of military supplies.

In the Maritime Oblast in 1917, the General Governor was a civilian, Mr. Gondatti, who had the rank of the Camerger of the Imperial Court. Despite his affiliation with the Court he was a liberal in the best sense of the word and possessed administrative ability. After dismissal by Prince Lvov, A. N. Rusanoff was appointed to the position. Rusanoff was at this time the Director of the Gymnasium (Realist) for boys at Khabarovsk. He served uneventfully until the October revolution.

Repercussions of October reached Khabarovsk only at the end of November. Rusanoff, to cope with the situation, summoned representatives of cities and Zemstvo organizations of the Maritime Oblast for conferences at Khabarovsk on Dec. 11, 1917. The conference established a sort of collective administration in the Oblast and organized a representative body called "Zemstvo Bureau" to which Rusanoff transferred his duties and functions.

In January 1918, the Zemstvo Bureau moved to the city of Blagoveshchensk. In February, local Bolsheviks, following the example of their comrades in Petrograd, organized Soviets of Soldiers, Workers and Peasants Deputies and ordered local Zemstvo and cities administrative centers to close and transfer their functions and duties to ISPOLKOM of Soviets (ISPOL-KOM=Ispolnitelnyi=executive; KOM=Komitet=committee).

Meanwhile, in Khabarovsk itself, Oblast Ispolkom was organized; all members were active members of the Bolshevik Party. To head this organization the Petrograd Council of People's Commissars appointed an old Bolshevik comrade Tabelson, who assumed the name "Krasnoshchekoff" (Redcheeked). Newly arrived from the U. S. A., he called this organization "Far-Eastern Soviet of People's Commissars." However, this name was a name only. From the beginning to the end in September 1918, in Amur Oblast in Sakhalin as well as in Transbaikial Oblast local Oblast Soviets at the same time were functioning and were issuing their own paper money without sanction or consent of the Far Eastern Soviet of People's Commissars in Khabarovsk.



Because of its remoteness from the Central Authorities in the capital and transportation difficulties, the supply of paper money in the Khabarovsk region was completely cut off at the beginning of 1918. The shortage of currency was intensified by the fact that, upon instructions from the Central Government, the Council of National Commissars in the Far East was obligated to take out of circulation the whole range of Government Securities and bonds including the coupons attached thereto, which had all served in place of paper money, since they had now been demonetized by the Central Soviet Government.

In an effort to get out of this difficult situation, the Council decided to place its own paper money in circulation. These bills, with values of 10, 25 and 50 rubles, were prepared from the designs of a local artist or artists, printed locally and went into use in February, 1918. All three values of this issue have one and the same design. On the face of the bill a hemisphere is shown, featuring the western basin of the Pacific Ocean and the countries bordering it. The hemisphere rests on a bank of clouds, and a folded band issuing from it on both sides encloses the word "FAR" at left and "EAST" at right (see Fig. 1). The figures of value are given in each corner. Above the hemisphere there is an inscription at top reading "Far Eastern Council of

National Commissars" in script capitals, and under this, the face value of the bill is spelled out in words: "TEN RUBLES" or "TWENTY FIVE ROUBLES." However, this last designation in words is missing on the 50 ruble bill. At bottom left there is the word "Predsedatel" followed by the signature of Krasnoshchekov (Chairman of the Council of National Commissars in the Far East) and at bottom right the abbreviation "Kom. - Fin." and signature of T. Kalmanovich (Commissar of Finances). At bottom center below these two designations, there is the term "Upr. Gos. Banka," signed "Fugalevich" (Fugalevich, Director of the Khabarovsk Branch of the State Bank). These notes were nicknamed "Krasnoshchekovki," because of his signature as Chairman on the bills.

The designs and colors of the background on the face of the bills vary for each value: on the 10 ruble note, it is in bright violet; on the 25 rubles in rose, and on the 50 rubles in orange-yellow. The rectangular border on the face is the same for all values and consists of a narrow panel depicting a garland of laurel leaves, entwined in some places with a ribbon. The central design, signatures, text and border are all in black. On the reverse of the bills and towards bottom center, there is a representation of a rising sun with rays reaching out into the sky; the sun is almost hidden by an oval with

an ornamental frame enclosing a shield with the figures of value of the bill (see Fig. 2). Below this frame there is the year date "1918." To the right of the rising sun, there is a view of the countryside, with a sloping hill, windmill, dates, gardens and cultivated fields. The figure of a peasant in a Russian shirt with rolled-up sleeves, bareheaded and in bast shoes fills out the right half of the bill. With his left hand he supports a scythe on his shoulder. At the feet of the reaper there is a steam locomotive emitting a cloud of smoke. On the left side of the bill there is a workman in the same size as the peasant, again with sleeves rolled-up and bareheaded, hammer in hand and in working pants and shod in leather half shoes. At his feet there is an ocean-going liner, ploughing up waves through an unruly sea and further back the crystalline surface of a river with a little steamer peacefully sailing thereon. The shore is covered with trees and beyond them, up on the high hills, there are some factories with tall chimneys belching some clouds of smoke. In the center of the bill above the sun, there is wavy band with the initials R.F.S.R. (Russian Federated Soviet Republic) in the center. Of the 50 ruble note, the face value is given above the band in script capitals, and at top on all values there is a line of text reading "Obligatory for circulation within the bounds of the Far East." This line is flanked by the figures of value placed at an angle. A warning about prosecution in accordance with the law for forging currency bills is placed on the face of the notes under the signature of the Director, Fugalevich.

A total of 535,299 bills in the amount of 11,369,575 rubles was issued during the existence of the Council of National Commissars in the Far East. It is believed on good authority that when Khabarovsk was captured by the forces of anti-Bolshevik organizations, the new authorities turned for help to Omsk, as they had no currency bills of their own whatsoever. At around the same time as the fall of Khabarovsk, the city of Blagoveshchensk was also taken by the Whites on September 14, 1918. The latter also lacked a currency medium and apparently asked Omsk for a supply of bills. At Omsk, the Siberian Provisional Government had at its disposal modest stocks of the Romanov and Duma issues and was also at that time in the process of preparing its own "Siberian Notes" for circulation. However, it could not immediately satisfy these requests for cash, and it was therefore decided to place substitutes on the market. On September 23, this Government issued a regulation concerning the circulation, on a par with paper money, of the short term securities paying 5 percent, the 4 percent Government Treasury series, bonds of the Freedom Loan including the 100-ruble detachable coupons supplied therewith, as well as coupons from all Government stocks due for redemption up to October 1, 1918. (See "Collection of Regulations and Orders of the Siberian Provisional Government," October 12, 1918, No. 14, Section No. 1.). The supply of these securities at the branches of the State Bank in the cities of Khabarovsk, Vladivostok, Blagoveshchensk, Nikolaevsk-on-Amur and Petropavlovsk did not amount to much more than "two million rubles" and therefore could relieve the local shortage of currency for a short time only.

At this time of the year, the fishing season ends both on the Amur, as well as along the shores of the Sea of Okhotsk and the fishing cannery had to have quite large stocks of cash on hand to pay off the seasonal workers who had come into the area to process the catch. These workers included many from remote places in the Far East and even from Western and Eastern Siberia. The same situation was also applicable to the steamship flotilla on the Amur River, as the navigation season had drawn to a close and the steamer crews had to be paid off in cash. Local private banks also began to ask for cash from the branches of the State Bank, since they (i.e. the former) in turn were being pressed by their depositors and regular clients who had accounts and needed cash to pay for the delivery of gold from the local mines as well as for provisions and supplies delivered during the navigable season to the mines and logging camps.

The result of all these demands was that Omsk was swamped with requests by local branches of the State Bank for supplies of currency and this apparently was both incessant and exasperating. The authorities at Omsk understood the situation, but, not finding another way out, they issued a regulation on October 17, 1918, which permitted the temporary circulation of paper money issued by the Soviet authorities in the cities of Khabarovsk, Blagoveshchensk and Chita upon condition that they be stamped as valid up to December 1, 1918, after which they would be exchanged for bills of the Siberian Provisional Government. The validity of bills so treated was to be restricted to the area in which they were originally issued (See the "Journal of Finances, Industry and Trade," Omsk, 1919, No. 7.).

Upon receiving these instructions, the Khabarovsk branch of the State Bank immediately proceeded to validate the "Krasnoshchekov" bills issued by the Far Eastern Council of National Commissars in the values of 10, 25 and 50 rubles. With this purpose in mind, a rubber stamp measuring 76x37mm. with a double-lined rectangular frame was prepared and applied. The text was in the old spelling, including the hard sign. In the left hand of the cachet, a single-line circular seal with a diameter 33-34mm. and showing the double-headed eagle of the All-Russian Provisional Government was inserted (See Fig. 1). Around the eagle at the top there appeared the words "Khabarovsk Branch" and at bottom "of the State Bank," with little stars separating the two terms. The right half of the cachet had a five-line inscription reading "Presented/30 November 1918/at/Khab. Br. St. B./Cashier . . ."; and the cashier added his signature in red ink while the color of the cachet was violet. In spite of the fact that the validity of these stamped bills was extended from December 1, 1918, to the 15th of the same month and then to April 1, 1919, the original date on the validating cachet was not changed. Because of the dispersion of population over the huge expanse of the Maritime province and the great difficulty experienced in getting the bills into the Khabarovsk branch of the State Bank in time for validation, permission was finally given to have the validation carried out also in other places, and these locally validated bills could then be exchanged at the Khabarovsk branch





Figure 1. Obverse of 10 ruble note with rubber stamp "A" on upper right corner: "September 1918 g./Khabarovsk Br./state bank/authorized for circulation." Rubber stamp "B" is on upper left corner: "Presented/30 November 1918/Khab. br. st. b./Cashier . . ."



Figure 2. Reverse of 50 ruble note

of the State Bank for regularly validated "Krasnoshchekov" bills. The local validation of the "Krasnoshchekov" bills was permitted at the following places:

- The Administration of the Ussuriisk Cossack Army at the stanitsa of BIKIN.
- The Treasury at the town of IMAN.
- The District Zemstvo Administration at the village of KIIN. (See Fig. 3.)

Validating cachets made of mastic were applied on the notes at the above points, normally in violet. Upon

delivery of bills so treated at the Khabarovsk branch of the State Bank, they were restamped with the validation of this latter branch, as explained above, and then placed in circulation throughout the area as circumstances required. In view of the above procedures, notes which show only a validation stamp from one of the three designated local points have not yet come to light in collections, although they should theoretically exist.

Bills are also to be found with seals of the Nikolaevsk-on-Amur branch of the State Bank, in two types, as follows:



Figure 3. Reverse of 10 ruble note rubberstamped "Kiinskaya Volostnaya Zemskaya Uprava" and "Zemstvo Primorskoj Oblasti."



Figure 4. Obverse of 10 ruble note rubberstamped in circle "State Bank Nikolaevsk of a Branch for packages."

1. Text in the old spelling in two lines, struck in violet and given in lower case type. The cachet reads "Nikolaevsk-na-amure otделение/gosudarstvennago banka."
2. A circular seal, 34-35mm. in diameter, with the double-headed eagle, crowned and with all regalia,

in the center, and reading at top between stars "State Bank" and at bottom "Nikolaevsk o/A branch." In the center below the eagle there is a term "for packets." (See Fig. 4).

(TO BE CONTINUED)