

19. Newspapers and Other Services in Tientsin

Local Newspapers

A very large range of newspapers serviced the relatively small foreign community of Tientsin. Newspapers were a very important source of information. There were at least four major English newspapers available in Tientsin in the time when our family lived there – *The Peking and Tientsin Times* (a weekly paper) and *North China Star* (a daily paper) *The Tientsin Evening Journal* (a daily paper) and *The North-China Herald*. Larry only remembers the North China Star. From my research it seems that *The Peking and Tientsin Times* ceased publication before I was born.

This is the Peking and Tientsin Times' masthead in 1902. I have not been able to find a later version in any library.



And here is how the masthead of the North China Star in September 1940.



Here is the front page of *The Tientsin Evening Journal* from November 1945.



There was also a short-lived journal called *Yevreyskaya Stranitsa* meaning The Jewish Page.

The first Jewish daily newspaper in Tientsin started publication on March 10, 1931. It appears in Russian and was entitled *Utro* (Morning) and edited by Dr L. Bichowsky.

The following is the text from the 1931 issue announcing the establishment of this newspaper:

*Tientsin is about two hours' journey from Peking, and is situated in the centre of China. It has a Jewish population of about 1,200 persons. There are foreign Concessions and settlements there which are exempt from Chinese jurisdiction, and enjoy extraterritorial rights. The Russian White Guardists do not possess so much power there as in Manchuria, which explains why it was found possible to publish a Jewish daily newspaper there, and not in Harbin, where the Jewish population is much larger.*⁵⁴

Russian language newspapers were very popular in Tientsin. *Nasha Zarya* (Our Dawn) was published in Tientsin. Other Russian language newspapers imported from Harbin were *Zarya* (Dawn) and *Rupor* (Trumpet) - these were also widely read by the Jewish community.

⁵⁴ The last sentence was wrong – there were Jewish newspapers in Harbin which started publication much earlier.

Another Tientsin Russian newspaper was called *Svobodnoe Slovo* (The Free Word or Free Speech). Here is the front page from January 1947.



Yet another Russian newspaper was called *Nash Golos* (Our Voice); it had, on a semi-monthly basis, a page written for the Jewish community. After the war we also read *Pravda*; this paper was imported direct from USSR and not printed in China. Larry remembers that we used to subscribe to two newspapers – one in Russian and one in English.

Postal service

We had a daily postal service. The postman would knock on our front door and hand over the mail. Those were the days before the compulsory letterbox at the front gate. Letters were a vital source of communication between our family and mother's family in New York.

During the Japanese occupation, especially after the USA joined the war against the Axis powers, we received mail from USA via the Red Cross. Of course, this was a very slow process, and the messages were restricted in length.

Travel within Tientsin

Travel within Tientsin was generally done by rickshaw. During my time, there were the two types of rickshaws – the hand-pulled and the tricycle type. Our family tried to avoid the hand-pulled rickshaws as we all felt it to be a cruel form of transport. At the same time, if there was no alternative, one had to support the rickshaw puller, these poor people had no other source of income. In this picture taken in 1932, mother and father use a rickshaw as a prop. Mother has her dog Prince on her lap. The photo was taken in our front yard just inside the front gate.



Medical Matters

I remember going to our family dentist, Mrs. Voronoff. She had a dental chair in her flat. Looking back, I can see that her dental equipment was very basic e.g., she had a foot-operated drill. It is doubtful if she was properly qualified. I still clearly remember when she had to pull out one of my first teeth to allow a permanent tooth to come through. Her husband, who was a qualified dentist, was killed at the end of WWII by a stray USA bomb meant for the Japanese.

We had several family doctors; the one I remember is Dr. Sandler. He had a very bad hump on his back so he could never stand straight. Among the more common drugs used at the time were sulphur drugs that were banned later because of their inherent dangers. Dr. Sandler was always patient, unruffled and caring. An earlier doctor was Dr. Mayboehme, of German extraction. He may have been a Nazi as he proudly displayed the swastika in his rooms. He disappeared from our lives at the end of the war. Other doctors in town were Dr. Dichne, Dr. Michaelis, and Dr. Lenchitzky.

Measles and mumps were two illnesses that I did catch in China. However, later in Australia I also found out that I was in contact with tuberculosis.

Although I cannot remember them, there were two pharmacists in Tientsin catering for the foreign community. One pharmacy was run by Leo Birulen, a friend of the family. However, that family left for the USA in 1939. Tientsin was not a backwater. We had first class doctors and first class pharmacists. A Jewish Hospital also operated in Tientsin for many years. There certainly was no shortage of Jewish doctors!