THE MOTOR ROADS OF CHINA

As with the railways, the motor roads of China constitute so extensive a subject that it is impossible in the space at the writer's disposal to give more than its most salient features and a few of the more important statistics. Ever since the inauguration of the National Good Roads Association of China in 1921, popularly known as the "Good Roads Movement," great activity in the planning and construction of new motor highways has stirred the various governments, provincial and national, in this country. This movement itself was mainly the result of the activities of the American Red Cross in 1920 in devising and carrying out road construction schemes for the alleviation of distress in various famine stricken areas.

Previous to this, as the result of persistent representations to the Central Government on the part of Lo Kou-shui, the then technical secretary and advisor to the Ministry of Communications, to construct motor roads as a subsidiary to the railway construction programme in hand, a presidential mandate was issued in 1919 giving regulations for the construction of new roads. But this had done little to stimulate active road building. Naturally, the political disturbances and civil wars that have racked this country in the interval since the "Good Roads Movement" was started have greatly interfered with road construction, and many of the plans evolved have remained on paper only. This can be seen by a comparison of the details of projected motor roads with those already in existence. Every province now has its official "Roads Bureau," and these have prepared extensive programmes for road construction, but the fact remains that in most cases the plans have only partially been put into execution, while in only too many instances no work of any sort has been commenced. Nevertheless, there is every indication that this state of affairs is not going to last, and that motor roads will be coming into existence in every direction.

Outstanding in the construction of motor roads is the province of Shansi, Governor Yen Shi-shan having long ago concluded that the best way to develop this province was the wholesale and immediate introduction of motor traffic and the building of motor roads instead of the much slower and more expensive construction of railways. As a matter of fact, considering the hilly and mountainous nature of this province, there is a lot to be said in favour of Governor Yen's policy, although it is evident that sooner or later railways, at least connecting the main towns, will have to be built if the province is to be developed to its maximum potentiality.

Shansi, however, does not hold pride of place as to the total mileage of motor roads it contains. This position is held by Shantung, which boasts 1,675 miles of motor roads, mainly due, it must be admitted, to the work of the American Red Cross and the China International Famine Relief Commission.

Next to Shantung comes Honan with 1,338 miles of motor roads, again mostly built by the International Famine Relief Commission in 1922 and 1923, while Kiangsu makes a good third, with, 1,241, and Shansi
fourth with 1,069 miles of motor roads. As the estimate of the Kiangsu road mileage includes the roads in and about Shanghai, it is possible that Shansi may beat this province in its mileage of country roads. According to the latest estimates, no other province has as much as a thousand miles of motor road, only seven having five hundred miles or over and eight having under that figure. Yunnan's motor road mileage has been estimated at from eleven to thirty-five, this province being a long way behind the others. But this is hardly to be wondered at when the extremely mountainous nature of this province is taken into consideration.

Considerable activity in motor road construction has been taking place of late in the provinces of Kiangsu, Chekiang, Kuantung and Kuanhsi, while Chihli province has not been idle in this respect. In many places motor bus companies have been responsible for the construction of roads between towns, while in some cases the local inhabitants have constructed roads for the use of automobile traffic, notably in Chihli.

Surveys for a road to run from Woosung at the mouth of the Whangpoo River in the Yangtze Estuary following the Kiangsu and Chekiang coasts to Hangchow are being pushed forward, as well as for many others in the eastern provinces of China south of the Yangtze. If things go according to plan, and the necessary funds are forthcoming, there should soon be a regular network of good roads in this part of China, which must inevitably give a tremendous impetus to the Shanghai motor car, lorry and bus trade.

Mongolia has 3,620 miles of motor road, including the longest road in the domain, namely, that from Kalgan to Urga, which is 800 miles in length.

The three provinces of Manchuria have only 1,500 miles of motor road between them, but road as well as railway construction is being pushed forward rapidly in this area, and we may soon find that the Three Eastern Provinces have taken leading place in this respect.

The Kwantung Leased Territory, that part of South Manchuria under Japanese control, has 331 miles of motor road, a lot of which is well metalled, even macadamized; while Hainan Island boasts 465, Hongkong and Kowloon 138 and Macao nine miles of motor road. The total mileage of motor road in China, Mongolia and Manchuria, inclusive of foreign concessions, leased territories and treaty ports, has been estimated by Miss A. V. Smith,* U. S. Trade Commissioner at Shanghai, as 18,485, the construction of which, considering that only a decade ago there was hardly a properly constructed road outside the treaty ports, and also that the country has been torn with internal dissensions and civil wars during almost the whole of the intervening period, is an accomplishment that is not to be despised.

The importance of motor roads to China can not be over estimated. The whole country's transport system is hopelessly backward, and, while an extensive net-work of railways is needed in order to develop the

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*"Motor Highways in China," compiled by A. Viola Smith, assisted by Anselm Chuh, May 1, 1928, Shanghai.
country's resources, these railways must be fed by motor roads, while in many cases motor roads actually following the line of the railways would prove of the greatest value. Inter-provincial trunk roads have been planned and even commenced in some cases, and these must prove of the greatest importance to the country.

Unfortunately the various provincial treasuries have become so depleted of late, not to mention the national treasury, as the result of civil war, that it is a question how much they will be able to devote to the enterprise of motor road construction, and it is to be feared that unless some means can be devised for the introduction of foreign capital many of the excellent schemes now afoot to meet China's needs in this direction will not be put into effect for a considerable time.

However, with the recent success of the Nationalist Government against the Wuhan party, hope has been renewed of a truly united China, and if this becomes a fait accompli, it is conceivable that confidence will be sufficiently restored for the advancement to China of foreign capital for the purpose of road construction. It might be suggested that the big motor industries of America and Europe should investigate this possibility, since the more good roads there are in China the greater the market for automobiles of all descriptions.

THE MOTOR HOUSEBOAT AND CRUISER IN CHINA

One of the most popular pastimes of the foreign community in such places as Shanghai is motor-boating, whether it be comparatively short outings on the adjacent rivers and creeks, or long cruises of several days duration into the hinterland in search of game or on holiday bent. China has always been a good country for houseboating; indeed most of the splendid shooting that made this country famous as a sportsman's paradise in the old days was done from houseboats. The days of the old fashioned houseboat are numbered, however, and more and more both sportsmen and pleasure trippers are taking to the motor houseboat or motor cruiser as the quickest, surest and in the end most economical means of getting to their shooting grounds or picnic spots and back.

Many old style houseboat owners have adopted the method of using a motorboat to tow the houseboat, but this cannot be considered economical, since, in addition to the expense of a mechanic to look after and drive the motorboat, and of the fuel used, it is necessary to have a full crew aboard the houseboat in case of accidents. It may, however, save a good deal of time, while the motorboat can be extremely useful in taking one about when one's destination has been reached and the houseboat moored. In this connection it may be said that of late out-board motors have become very popular, since these can be used even on sampans, while a small boat, fitted with an out-board motor and lashed alongside a houseboat, will, with the help of the yuloh, take it along at as much as five and six miles an hour.

But the ideal, of course, is a well equipped motor cruiser, and Shanghai boasts a number of very fine craft of this nature. Unfortunately, the initial outlay on such vessels is rather heavy, which means that they are somewhat beyond the purse of the average sportsman or houseboat enthusiast, and it would be a good thing for these if some enterprising firm of boat-builders could hit upon a design that would give a 30 or 40 foot boat, with a good, cheap running engine, a fair turn of speed and the necessary accommodation for two to four passengers at a price of about two thousand dollars or so. It should be of shallow draft to enable it to get up some of the side creeks, and need not be elaborately fitted up within, at least to start with. The owner could add what he wanted in this direction as time went on.