

1,500, the post-office was to sell 3,000, while the rest, or 20,000 sets, was to be taken over by some stamp-dealer.

The plates were to be engraved at the Bureau of Printing and Engraving in Peking. The picture on the stamp was to show a resting camel caravan, a reproduction of a Chinese painting from the Yuan dynasty. (See Pl. 56).

PLAN FOR A REVIVAL OF THE SILK ROAD

As has already been mentioned several times, it was our expedition that first discovered the great change in the lower course of the Tarim and that mapped the new river. Two thousand years ago the famous Silk Road, that connected China with the outposts in the east of the Roman Empire, had followed this part of the river. Why should not this road awake, so to speak, from its perhaps 1,600-year sleep? This last change in the lower course of the Tarim had produced anew the same conditions as prevailed 2,000 years ago, and the old intimate connection between Tun-huang and Lou-lan might now be restored.

What these changes may mean to the Republic of China it is easy to understand. A remarkable geographical and hydrographical event has put a means in the hand of the Government to open the old line of communication to traffic again. Just as in the days of the Han dynasty, it will now be possible to maintain a thorough-going high-road leading from China proper by Tun-huang, Lou-lan and up to the trunk-road along the southern foot of the T'ien-shan to Kashgar. But whereas the caravans in olden times required four months, one would now be able to cover the stretch between Peking in the east and Kashgar in the extreme west by car in two to three weeks. By this means the travelling-distance between the most westerly Chinese dependency and China proper would be reduced to a fraction of what it is at present, and Sinkiang would be brought nearer to China proper. By means of wisely organized traffic with motor-lorries, the products of Sinkiang could be conveyed to the coast, and in the reverse direction foreign goods could be taken to Sinkiang. Officials and other travellers could cover the distance of nearly 4,000 kilometers quickly and conveniently without using the trans-Siberian railway; the traffic between Sinkiang and China would move entirely on Chinese soil.

At a meeting of our Chinese committee in Peking I made known our discoveries in the hydrography of the lower Tarim, and submitted a plan for the laying down of a motor-road between Peking or Nanking and Kashgar. My proposal to send in a memorandum on the matter to the Government was favourably received, and the committee declared itself ready to support such a proposal.