

China and Russia promote Eurasian high-speed rail and bridge projects

by Mary Burdman

Leaders of the People's Republic of China and Russia are expressing their support for the development of a Eurasian rail network, the "Great Project" vital for the economic development of the Asian-European landmass.

On June 15, China revealed plans to upgrade its high-speed train capacity, to develop networks for trains that can go at least 250 kilometers an hour. Such an intention was put forward by the chief engineer of China's Railway Ministry, at a conference in China sponsored by the Japanese Railway Ministry. According to BBC, the Japanese are eager to win the Chinese over to Japan's own "bullet train" model of high-speed rail. Most of China's rail plans concern lines in coastal areas, including one line, soon to be finished, connecting Canton to Shenzhen. But the "big potato," for which the Japanese and others are bidding, is the planned \$8 billion project for a Beijing-to-Shanghai line, to cut that journey down from 17 to 7 hours, and to triple the number of passengers who can take the line.

As BBC points out, transport is China's most serious bottleneck. The capacity is strained so much by transporting such items as coke and coal, that even when industrial output was reported up by 20%, there was no capacity for the rails to take more freight.

In our May 27 issue, *EIR* published an exclusive interview with Vice Minister Hui Yongzhen of the Chinese State Science and Technology Commission on the Eurasian Continental Bridge—the rail network, finally completed in 1992, that links Lianyungang on the Yellow Sea, ultimately to Rotterdam, Holland, on the North Sea. Here we publish tables, supplied by the Chinese State Science and Technology Commission, which were not able to appear with Mr. Hui's interview due to technical problems.

A key aspect of Vice Minister Hui's proposal for the New Asia and Europe Continental Bridge is the idea of the "economic corridor" along the railroad itself. One-fourth of China's population lives in this corridor, and, especially in the east, it contains much of China's industry. However, as **Tables 1a, 1b, 2a, and 2b** show, the internal (western) regions, including Ningxia, Shaanxi, Gansu, and Qinghai, are far less developed. One of the purposes of building this "economic corridor," is to develop these interior regions. **Table 3** shows the shorter distance of the New Asia and Europe Continental Bridge, as compared to the Trans-Siberian railroad.

Strategically vital projects

On May 29, the final communiqué of the Beijing meetings of visiting Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin and Chinese President Jiang Zemin and Prime Minister Li Peng, specified both nations' support for Eurasian rail development. China and Russia "agreed to participate in bilateral and multilateral projects, including a 'continental bridge' linking Europe and Asia," the *China Daily* reported on May 30. Two days before the communiqué was issued, Li Peng had proposed making full use of the continental bridge to improve Russian-Chinese ties, during his discussions with Chernomyrdin. While the current Eurasian land bridge connects far western China with Kazakhstan, Li Peng called for linking the railway lines in the eastern parts of the two countries. He said that it is necessary to increase border trade between the two countries, and that they must improve transport facilities in border regions. Seven cooperative pacts, including for cooperation in border control, trade, science, technology, and sea transport, were also signed.

Chinese President Jiang had said to Chernomyrdin that Sino-Russian relations should be handled with a strategic view to the future.

China has also announced plans for a 57-kilometer bridge-tunnel complex which would cross the strait between the Bohai Sea and the Yellow Sea, to link the Shandong and Liandong peninsulas in China's northeast. In May, the *China Daily Business Weekly* announced efforts to improve the economic integration of the rim of the Bohai Sea, which has long been the center of China's heavy industry. While the region includes over 11 cities with over 1 million population each, including Beijing and Tianjin, China's enormous transport and communications bottlenecks are choking development. This project has only progressed to feasibility studies, but Shandong and Liaoning provinces are already planning a train-ferry to connect Dalian, the main port in Liaoning, and Yantai in Shandong, both important rail heads to the interior, to be operational by 1998.

In an interview on June 8, *EIR* founder Lyndon LaRouche said of Yeltsin's proposal: "We need the project full scale. This is not a white elephant. . . . This is rails! And rails are the arteries of commerce and production. The great problem, in Europe and Eurasia, is the lack of an efficient rail system covering the Eurasian continent; and thus whole areas of

TABLE 1a

Economic and population situation in the regions along the New Asia and Europe Continental Bridge (1992)*

Region	Population (million persons)	Social laborers (million persons)	Land area (million mu)	GNP (million yuan)	National income (NI) (million yuan)	Total social product (TSP) (million yuan)	Growth rate of GNP (%)	Growth rate of NI (%)	Growth rate of TSP (%)
Beijing	11.02	6.686	3.7818	70,900	50,720	148,100	11.6	15.8	16.5
Tianjin	9.20	4.721	2.5436	41,120	34,430	133,280	11.7	13.2	20.1
Hebei	62.75	31.793	209.379	115,610	94,980	257,880	13.9	12.1	17.1
Shandong	86.10	44.051	229.203	198,000	168,560	514,120	19.5	18.2	25.5
Jiangsu	69.11	37.294	182.586	197,790	169,700	606,970	26.5	28.2	41.4
Anhui	58.34	29.827	213.664	72,490	66,540	170,350	17.4	24	23.9
Henan	88.61	43.866	256.397	121,320	101,730	266,770	13.7	14.2	18.7
Shanxi	29.79	4.027	240.588	51,820	40,610	110,040	12.8	12.1	14.1
Neimeng	22.07	9.794	247.50	37,840	30,650	74,420	11	9.4	12.7
Ningxia	4.87	2.244	454.522	7,860	6,040	15,870	7.5	6.9	9.9
Shaanxi	34.05	16.991	291.36	49,450	39,890	10,001	8.7	10.8	11.2
Gansu	23.14	11.127	571.066	30,190	26,580	65,330	9.7	10	12.8
Qinghai	4.61	2.16	1,091.629	8,430	6,240	14,190	7.4	7.1	10.4
Xinjiang	15.81	6.357	2,462.963	38,230	29,210	69,540	13.1	9.8	13.9
Total	519.47	260.943	6,459.6368	1,041,050	865,880	2,546,870	13.2	13.7	17.7
China	1,771.71	594.315	14,400.00	2,403,600	1,984,500	6,584,200	13	14.4	21.8
Percent of country	44%	43.9%	44.9%	43.3%	43.6%	45.6%	101.4	95.1	81.3

* Including Tianjin City and Beijing-Baoto railway

TABLE 1b

Economic and population situation in the regions along the New Asia and Europe Continental Bridge (1992)**

Region	Population (million persons)	Social laborers (million persons)	Land area (million mu)	GNP (million yuan)	National income (NI) (million yuan)	Total social product (TSP) (million yuan)	Growth rate of GNP (%)	Growth rate of NI (%)	Growth rate of TSP (%)
Shandong	86.10	44.051	229.203	198,000	168,560	514,120	19.5	18.2	25.5
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Qinghai	4.61	2.16	1,091.620	8,430	6,240	14,190	7.4	7.1	10.4
Xinjiang	15.81	6.357	2,462.963	38,230	29,210	69,540	13.1	9.8	13.9
Total	414.43	207.94	5,993.970	775,580	665,100	1,933,190	13.6	14.1	18.2
China	1,771.71	594.315	14,400.00	2,403,600	1,984,500	5,581,200	13	14.4	21.8
Percent of country	35.4%	35%	41.6%	32.3%	33%	34.6%	104.8	98.1	83.4

** Not including Tianjin City and Beijing-Baoto railway

TABLE 2a

Telecommunication situation in the regions along the New Asia and Europe Continental Bridge (1992)*

Region	Fax	Telephones	Direct international telephones	Urban switchboards	Rural switchboards
Beijing	248	1,236,868	61,043	803,000	27,766
Tianjin	33	428,608	6,493	349,900	47,694
Hebei	267	790,694	133,053	559,672	224,829
Shandong	880	1,036,411	10,706	708,851	503,602
Jiangsu	829	1,504,899	58,214	938,786	505,686
Anhui	312	456,665	13,392	326,786	144,056
Henan	122	639,550	18,281	474,496	185,880
Shanxi	35	425,916	1,347	360,902	115,064
Neimeng	147	363,537	2,675	288,610	85,3903
Ningxin	5	70,352	279	43,562	6,122
Shaanxi	168	400,779	3,878	226,210	83,376
Gansu	223	263,182	1,676	164,144	37,459
Qinghai	54	71,921	104	43,650	4,057
Xinjiang	140	244,942	4,853	161,234	34,613
Total	3,463	7,934,324	315,994	5,449,302	2,006,397
China	9,410	18,888,188	2,120,643	13,554,970	5,595,581
Percent of country	36.8%	42%	14.9%	40.2%	35.9%

* Including Tianjin City and Beijing-Baoto railway

TABLE 2b

Telecommunication situation in the regions along the New Asia and Europe Continental Bridge (1992)**

Region	Fax	Telephones	Direct international telephones	Urban switchboards	Rural switchboards
Shandong	880	1,036,411	10,706	708,851	503,602
Jiangsu	829	1,504,899	58,214	938,786	506,586
Anhui	312	456,665	13,392	326,786	144,056
Henan	122	639,550	18,281	474,496	185,880
Shanxi	35	425,916	1,347	360,902	115,064
Ningxia	5	70,352	279	43,562	6,122
Shaanxi	168	400,779	3,878	226,210	83,376
Gansu	223	263,182	1,676	164,144	37,459
Qinghai	54	71,921	104	43,650	4,057
Xinjiang	140	244,942	4,853	161,234	34,613
Total	2,768	5,115,617	112,730	3,448,620	1,620,806
China	9,410	18,888,188	2,120,643	13,554,970	5,595,581
Percent of country	29.4%	27.1%	5.3%	25.4%	29%

** Not including Tianjin City and Beijing-Baoto railway

TABLE 3

Distances from Lianyungang and Vladivostok to main cities of Asia and Europe

Country	City	From Lianyungang (km)	From Vladivostok (km)	Distance shorter from Lianyungang (km)
Russia	Moscow	8,366	9,284	918
Ukraine	Odessa	9,433	10,810	1,377
Russia	Kuibyshev	7,326	8,746	1,420
Russia	St. Petersburg	8,792	9,710	918
Poland	Warsaw	9,683	10,601	918
Germany	Berlin	10,255	11,173	918
Germany	Hamburg	10,721	11,639	918
Netherlands	Rotterdam	10,962	11,880	918
England	London	11,294	12,212	918
Belgium	Brussels	11,070	11,988	918
France	Paris	11,335	12,253	918
Hungary	Budapest	10,476	11,394	918
Czech Republic	Prague	10,426	11,344	918
Austria	Vienna	10,714	11,632	918
Finland	Helsinki	9,235	10,153	918
Sweden	Stockholm	11,266	12,184	918
Norway	Oslo	11,323	12,241	918
Denmark	Copenhagen	10,727	11,645	918
Serbia	Belgrade	10,703	11,647	944
Bulgaria	Sofia	10,890	11,834	944
Bulgaria	Varna	10,580	11,524	944
Romania	Bucharest	10,345	11,289	944
Italy	Rome	11,846	12,790	944
Italy	Venice	11,260	12,204	944
Switzerland	Berne	11,248	12,192	944
Greece	Athens	11,833	12,777	944
Iran	Teheran	9,977	13,322	3,345
Turkey	Ankara	10,798	13,120	2,372
Turkey	Istanbul	11,376	12,592	1,216

Notes: Lianyungang is located in Jiangsu Province of China. Vladivostok is located in the Far East of Russia.

Source: Government of the People's Republic of China.

the continent are left in the backwater of non-productivity because they do not have efficient transport of goods. . . .

“There is in Russia, and in China and elsewhere, a percolating view which is significantly influenced by our work in this field.

“This kind of infrastructure emphasis is very much the emphasis in China. There was recently a decree issued which said that there are no longer any incentives and concessions being given for these enterprise zone operations, but the concessions and incentives will now go into these infrastructure projects. That is the direction of things. It's a good train for us to board, at least in terms of policy. I don't know how much money the United States has to throw into these things, but we should at least commit our policy support to it, and hope for the best.”