

Russia-China Partnership Plans To Go Into Space

by Mary Burdman

It could well turn out, that the most important result of the visit of Chinese President Hu Jintao to Moscow and Kazan in Russia on March 27-29, was the agreement between China's National Space Administration and the Russian Federal Space Agency to launch a mission to Mars, as early as October 2009. The Chinese Space Administration called the agreement, signed by its head, Sun Laiyan, and Russian Federal Space Agency (Roskosmos) head, Anatoli Perminov, and witnessed by Russian President Vladimir Putin and Hu Jintao, "an important milestone in Sino-Russian space cooperation." A Russian Phobos Explorer spacecraft will carry a Chinese satellite to the Martian moon Phobos. This Explorer, which is to carry equipment that the Hong Kong Polytechnic University helped to develop, would then bring soil samples back to Earth. The China National Space Administration stated that the agreement "indicates the two sides have taken a key step forward to working together on a large space program."

Chinese astronomer Tong Huiquan of the Nanchang Institute of Technology told Agence France Presse March 29: "No one has more experience in space exploration than the Russians, and there's no question that their technology is far ahead of China's. But China's economy is doing better than Russia's, and China can provide Russia with some economic assistance, so it's fair to say it's a win-win situation." The mission will be used to study the origins of the Solar System and Earth.

Strategic Cooperation

This year, 2007, marks ten years of the Sino-Russian "strategic partnership." In April 1996, Russia and China, with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, signed the initial joint security agreement which became the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in 2001. With an exchange of Presidential visits in 1997 and 1998, Russia and China launched their partnership, confirmed in their "Good Neighborly Treaty of Friend-

ship" of 2001. What could, historically, become one of the key developments of this strategic partnership, occurred in November 1998, when then-Chinese President Jiang Zemin gave a landmark speech at Novosibirsk, calling for scientific cooperation at the highest level to become the foundation of Chinese-Russian relations.

Jiang Zemin's 1998 speech was greeted by American System economist Lyndon LaRouche as marking a potential revolution in world development, to mobilize Russia's unique scientific capability, in cooperation with the leadership of China, the most populous nation on Earth, to transform the vast Eurasian landmass. But its promise has yet to be realized. Now, as LaRouche has recently, repeatedly emphasized, the United States, the world's only true republic, must again take up the world leadership it assumed under Franklin Roosevelt, and work with Russia and China, as well as India, as the only nations on the planet capable of acting to get the world out of its current disastrous condition.

While the discussions between Hu and Putin were not on the level of the Jiang Zemin speech, there were approximations of the ideas laid out in 1998. A *People's Daily* commentary of March 29, by Xu Tao, head of the Office of Russian Studies at the China Institute of Contemporary International Relations, one of China's highest-level policy institutes, emphasized the effects that recent world financial crises, such as those of 1997-98, have had on Chinese-Russian economic relations. While much has been done to build up economic ties, Russia's own industrial decline has been a big curb.

"Russia's machinery and electronics exports dropped drastically in the post-2001 years, ebbing to \$202 million in 2006. This phenomenon has negatively affected the healthy, sound growth of Sino-Russian trade," Xu Tao wrote. Last year, Putin told Russian and Chinese officials and entrepreneurs that it is a matter of urgency to change the current trade of oil and other Russian raw materials for Chinese consumer



Presidential Press & Information Office

Russian President Vladimir Putin (left) and Chinese President Hu Jintao (right) reached a number of historic strategic cooperation agreements during Hu's visit to Moscow March 27-29.

goods. Russia itself has recently determined to reverse its own "uneven" national industrial structure and its entire international trade, Xu Tao wrote.

Beyond Oil for Consumer Goods

Before he went to Russia, Hu Jintao told a group of leading Russian journalists in Beijing on March 20, that Russian and Chinese cooperation is critical for international stability, and relations between the two are now "at their highest." Beijing and Moscow are "closely cooperating on crucial international problems such as the nuclear problem of the Korean Peninsula and the Iranian nuclear problem, which certainly plays a serious role in maintaining peace and stability around the world," he said. The two countries should "intensify their practical cooperation in the economy, the energy sector, science, technologies, and other areas in the spirit of mutual benefit." The official reason for Hu's visit was to inaugurate the Year of China in Russia, following on its counterpart in China in 2006.

Hu also emphasized that trilateral cooperation among China, Russia, and India is "beneficial for the development of these three nations and that of the world at large." Their trilateral cooperation "is not aimed against any third party," he emphasized, but they share interests and outlook, including advocating "a multi-polar world; they want international issues and interstate disputes to be settled on the basis of universally accepted norms of international law and seek a consolidated role for the United Nations." The other critical basis for Eurasian cooperation is the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which is now preparing a document on admitting new members; India is as yet still an observer.

China's own key economic task is "raising the living standards of our citizens." China faces "many problems that hinder" this, he said, including the "big press[ure] of employment," and "a lack of regulation in redistribution of incomes." The social welfare of the villages—where some 800-900 million Chinese live—especially "urgently demands further de-

velopment," he said.

Economic cooperation with Russia can change this situation in China. Putin and Hu Jintao opened the biggest exhibition of Chinese technology and products ever set up in a foreign nation on March 27, but while joint trade has risen six times or more from just \$6 billion ten years ago, it is dwarfed by Chinese processing trade exports to the United States, and Russian oil and other exports to Europe. Russia is China's eighth-largest trade partner and China is Russia's fourth-largest. Yu Guangzhou, China's Vice Minister of Commerce, said in Beijing March 21 that machinery and electronic products are too small a part of bilateral trade, and mutual investment has not grown fast enough, and Konstantin Vnukov, director of the first Asian department at the Russian Foreign Ministry, told the Moscow press that the "issue of improving the trade structure is on the agenda."

In Moscow ten days later, Yu Guangzhou said that the Chinese National Exhibition in Moscow was a "massive boon" for bilateral trade. "To enlarge Sino-Russian trade in machinery and electrical products, the two sides should cooperate in priority areas such as electricity, nuclear energy, space, telecommunications, electronics, shipbuilding, and automobiles," Yu announced. China is urgently trying to expand its imports, to some \$1 trillion worth by 2010, to counter its huge trade surplus with the United States, and Russian machinery can gain a big market.

Regional Cooperation

The Russian and Chinese Presidents issued a joint declaration at the end of their talks March 27, in which they agreed to continue intensive cooperation in international affairs. In reference to the SCO, Putin said, "We are positive that our joint efforts will help enhance the security of Russia and China, and will promote stability in Central Asia, in the Asia-Pacific Region, and in the world as a whole." Their declaration stated: "Russia and China believe that Iran's nuclear problem must be resolved purely through peaceful means and negotiations," and "Russia and China reiterate their positions in favor of the Korean Peninsula's non-nuclear status, which is of vital importance to peace and security in the Asia Pacific Region." The two Presidents called for creating a special UN committee to draft an agreement to prevent the weaponization of space.

The Eurasian Land-Bridge

Eurasian infrastructure apparently was on the "back burner" during Hu's visit to Russia, but the issue remains urgent nonetheless. Eastern Siberia's economy is falling apart, and the population is leaving in droves. Russian officials fear that the vast Primorsky Territory will remain totally underpopulated. Yet this huge area contains great potential wealth. While there are fears among Russians of Chinese migration, the region has in the past been a magnet for urgently needed immigrants from European Russia, China, Korea, and many other places, eager to take part in fast-growing industries and agriculture. The best way to develop this re-

gion, would be in cooperation with its neighbors: the United States, and China.

In addition to Russia agreeing to continue supplying China with 15 million metric tons of oil a year, to be shipped via Russian Railways, Russian rail director Vladimir Yakunin spoke in Moscow about a large-scale rail container project to transport cargo containers between Asia and Europe, through Russia. Yakunin was quoted by *Kommersant* March 27, saying: "We won't be able to compete with shipping amount-wise, but we'll have better speed and accuracy. We want to begin with 30,000 containers annually, raising it to 250,000 in three years at most."

Russia and China have also made an agreement to cooperate in developing Russia's Far Eastern and China's Northeastern regions. Russia's Vneshekonombank, China's State Bank for Development, and the administration of the Krasnoyarsk Territory in Siberia have signed a regional investment cooperation agreement. This includes construction, energy, transport, and other areas. Last July, Chinese and Russian scientists began a joint expedition to map out the vast mineral resources of Siberia, with the hope, on the Chinese side, that this would give them new methods for seeking such resources in Northern China. The Chinese delegation included members of the five institutes of the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

In Moscow, Hu Jintao met Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Fradkov March 27. Hu called for coordinating strat-

egies on economic and regional development and creating a plan "for medium- and long-term scientific cooperation," and faster development of key projects in space, nuclear energy and other energy resources, new materials, chemical engineering, bio-technology, communications, and information technology. In early March, Fradkov had visited Russia's Far East, to promote an effort to save this region from economic and demographic implosion. In Vladivostok March 1, Fradkov called for investing "several trillion rubles" to develop infrastructure and industry in the Far Eastern and Trans-Baikal regions, possibly including building a long-envisioned rail tunnel from the mainland to Sakhalin Island. Two weeks later, in Yakutsk, in the vast Sakha Republic in northeastern Siberia, Fradkov again called developing the area's transport infrastructure a strategic issue for all Far Eastern Russia, while visiting the city of Yakutsk.

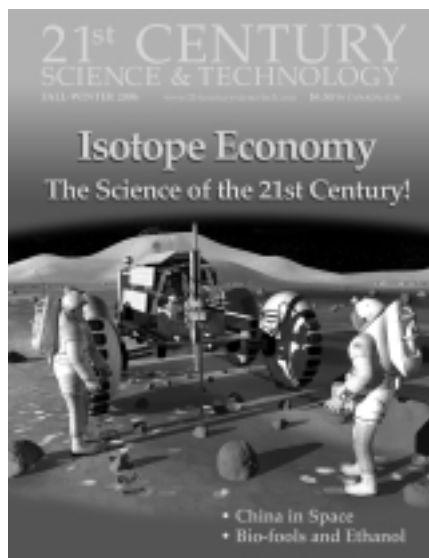
Hu also went to Tatarstan, a center of Russian oil and petrochemical, machine-building, and other industries. Hu and Mintimer Shaimiyev, president of Russia's Republic of Tatarstan, agreed that regional cooperation is an important part of the strategic cooperation that the two countries are engaged in. "President Putin and I have agreed to give priority to the enhancement of regional cooperation between the two countries," Hu said. The two agreed to strive for cooperation in infrastructure, scientific research, and in the manufacturing, processing and petrochemical industries.

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