
Interview: Chinese Vice-Minister Hui Yongzhen

Eurasian rail bridge: 'A modern Silk Road and bridge of world peace'

Hui Yongzhen, vice-minister of the State Science and Technology Commission of China, has responded in writing to a series of questions submitted to him by Mary Burdman. The following is the text of the interview. A few minor wording changes have been made from his original, where reasons of style made this necessary. Vice-Minister Hui submitted the following headline for his responses:

A talk on the New Asia and Europe Continental Bridge favoring the development of the Asian-European continent

EIR: China officially opened the "Eurasian Rail Bridge" to Europe in June 1992. Could you describe the benefits this rail link—the shortest route between the Pacific Ocean and western Europe—will bring to both the economies of Asia and Europe?

Hui: The New Asia and Europe Continental Bridge (NAECB), having been linked up, has opened the land corridor between the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, and offered the opportunity and favorable conditions for further strengthening the economic and technological exchange and cooperation between countries of the Pacific Rim Economic Circle, the European Economic Community, the Middle East, eastern Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States, and West Asia. To develop and construct an economic corridor along the NAECB will exert a positive influence on the integration of Asia and Europe, on the peace and development of the world.

At present, there are altogether nine regional economic groups of various forms and sizes under the influence of the NAECB, more than 30 countries and regions included. It will help to strengthen the economic and technological cooperation between countries along the NAECB, and will especially enhance the regional economic grouping of these countries. It will also offer a new opportunity for the adjustment of the industrial structure and the rearrangement of industry along the NAECB.

The successful exchange of goods on the NAECB, and the prosperity of the region along it, is significant for the integration of Eurasia, and will contribute to the peace and

development of the world. Certainly, efforts are needed of peoples and the main countries of Asia and Europe.

EIR: It is frequently reported that China is in urgent need of more infrastructure. Could you discuss the policy for building new rail lines, including high-speed rail lines? Is there discussion of China building not just the state-of-the-art technologies such as the [German] ICE, but also the more advanced technologies, such as maglev [magnetically levitated rail]?

Hui: According to the railway construction policy of the Chinese government, to exploit the East, to join up the North and South, to enhance the main lines and increase the branch lines, and then to gradually form a rail network, the Chinese government will not only gradually make the whole Chinese section of the NAECB double-tracking, but also reform those main lines connected with it, such as Baoji-Chendu, Baotou-Lanzhou, Qinghai-Tibet, etc., so to sufficiently improve the transportation capacity of the Chinese section of the NAECB. Though the NAECB has already opened, further improvement is needed. The development policy of the Chinese government toward the Chinese section of the NAECB is to gradually develop from a double-tracking and electric railway to a highly convenient and high-speed railway. The technological policy for the railway construction and development of the Chinese government has made our technological development direction the application of the new and advanced technology for promoting the transportation capacity and improving the service.

"The transportation technology of high-speed railway" as a main technological project of "the Eighth-Year Plan" of China, has been included in "the Ten-Year-Planning of national economy of the P.R.C." Especially to build the high-speed railway between Beijing and Shanghai, whose speed can reach more than 200 kilometers per hour, has been approved by various departments of the Chinese government and all social groups. China is in the most urgent need of high-speed railway; its advantage can be possibly exploited to the full extent. The Chinese people are looking forward to the opening of all the high-speed railways as soon as possible.

In recent years, the maglev has caused much attention of

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those departments concerned. The scientific research institutes concerned have invested much capital and put in many research personnel. It is supposed that, in the near future, some achievements in scientific research which can be used will be made.

EIR: In an article published in the *China Daily* on Oct. 2, 1992, you discussed the importance for China of developing the regions along the Eurasia railway line, where one-quarter of China's population lives. Could you elaborate on this development policy? How will it benefit the entire Chinese economy and nation?

Hui: Chinese development practice in recent years has shown that the "three alongs" policy of opening to the outside world, which are along the coast, along the borderland, and along the Yangtze River, is successful. In order to accelerate the steps of economic development and opening to the outside world, and to reduce the distinction among the west, the middle, and the east of China, the State Science and Technology Commission of China, the State Planning Commission of China, and other Chinese central departments concerned, as well as local governments, have organized specialists concerned, who have been investigating the regions along the NAECB and putting forward the development strategy of "four alongs," including the economic zone along the main traffic lines. At present, the development of the Chinese regions along the NAECB has been in the initial stage, and the Chinese central government has been organizing specialists and local government personnel concerned to study and formulate the development policy. The main points of the policy can be summarized as follows:

The Chinese government would speed up the development course of the economic zone along the NAECB centrally, exchanging between the east and the west of China, extending to the north and the south of China, and points leading line, lines leading surface, beginning from non-balance and gradually reaching balance in the development process. The forerunners are two regions respectively located in the west and the east end of the NAECB; the fulcrum is the large and middle cities; the axis is the economic zone along the NAECB; the emphasis is the superior resources which are processed in local and simultaneously in foreign land[s]; the principal part is processing industries of the resources; the two wings are high-technology industry and tertiary industry.

The Chinese government developing the regions along the NAECB will greatly promote Chinese economic development, which could be summarized into six aspects:

1. The development of the economic zone along the NAECB is favorable to China participating in international cooperation and social division, by which China could make a greater contribution to world development. The NAECB radiates more than 30 countries and regions in Asia, Europe, and Africa. The NAECB being linked up has a great significance to China walking toward the world, extending economic cooperation and exchange with Central Asia, West Asia, South Asia, East Asia, and Europe, speeding up the formation of a large transcontinental economic corridor, carrying forward the development of Asian-European integration and initiating the new economic pattern of the world.

2. The development of the economic zone along the NAECB is favorable to heightening its ability of competition and overall coordination in the national economic development of China. The economic zone along the Chinese coast is a dragon head of China opening to the outside world, which has gradually been advanced from the east to the west of China, that is an inevitable outcome of the economic development of the east coastal area, and needs the middle and the west of China providing more help. The economic [advance] of the middle and the west of China needs the support of technology, capital, qualified personnel, and management experience from the east of China. In order to keep the sustainable economic growth, the opening to the outside world must extend inland from the regions along the coast and the borderland. The dispersed and potential prosperities in the provinces and regions along the NAECB can be transformed into integral prosperity, by using the NAECB corridor, which has two directions.

3. The development of the economic zone along the NAECB is favorable to making the borderland prosperous and enriching the people. The western sector of the economic zone along the NAECB is an area where most Chinese minority nationalities live, and about 10 nationalities live in the areas which stride across national boundaries of neighboring countries. Developing the economic zone along the NAECB has a positive significance to accelerating and enlarging the west of China opening to the outside world, improving and raising people's living level of the minority nationalities who live in the west borderland of China, and changing the less-

developed situation of technology and economy.

4. The development of the economic zone along the NAECB is an important guarantee of realizing the strategic goal of redoubling the national economy. The middle and west part of the economic zone is one of the Chinese regions where energy resources and raw and processed materials are rather rich, and is an important resources and economic corridor. Carrying out the strategy of "electric energy carried to the East from the West" and "the East using the materials from the West" powers the economic development of the middle and the west of China, so that the resources prosperity in the middle and the west could be changed into economic prosperity, and the difference between the east and the middle and west of China could be gradually reduced, which would support the whole national economy going up a new stage. Therefore, developing the economic zone along the NAECB could realize the combination of industrial inclination and regional inclination, which is an important support of realizing the strategic goal of redoubling the national economy.

5. The development of the economic zone along the NAECB is favorable to controlling the deterioration of the ecological environment. The Chinese part of the NAECB is about 4,131 kilometers, where 2,365 km is in desert region, 1,194 km in loess plateau region, and 572 km in Huang-Huai-Hai region. In the desert region and loess plateau region, water resources are in short supply, desertification and soil erosion are serious, and the ecological environment is rather fragile, where natural resources excessively exploited and ecological environment destroyed, with the less-developed economy, have formed infernal circles. Only to positively absorb capital, technology, and qualified personnel from China and other countries, and to comprehensively participate in the development of the economic zones along the NAECB, could we control the deterioration of the ecological environment, change the less-developed situation of the desert region and the loess plateau region, and promote the economic development of Huang-Huai-Hai region and all of China.

6. The development of the economic zone along the NAECB is favorable to furthering the reform and improving the socialist market economic system. The development of the economic circle along the east coast has sufficiently proved that the policy of opening to the outside world is the catalyst to further the reform and cultivate the market economy. Extending from the east coast to the NAECB economic zone, the opening to the outside world will definitely further the reform and the opening of the economic zone along the NAECB, and will bring the emancipation and development of the productive forces of the zone and speed up its transition to the socialist market economic system. The reform of this zone directly influences the reform of the whole nation and its deeper development.

EIR: Almost a century ago, France, Germany, and Russia

were building a Eurasia rail network to China and to the Middle East and other regions. Although this policy had drawbacks, ultimately it could have created the most advanced industrial economy in the world on the huge Eurasia land mass. It has been the contention of our magazine that British "geopolitical" opposition to this policy was one of the fundamental underlying causes of World War I, and of the other wars of this century. At this time, when there is again an historic opportunity to develop Eurasia, how do you think the Eurasian Rail Bridge project will contribute to world peace?

Hui: The NAECB being linked up, developed, and used will create significant influence upon the relationships among countries of South Asia, Central Asia, West Asia, and Europe, which will make more frequent trade contacts, large freight volumes of land transport, and closer relationships among the countries. Especially, when the economic zone along the NAECB is energetically developed, unity and cooperation of countries in the world will be promoted. The realization of the NAECB project will greatly promote the development of the world economy, make the superiorities of economy, science, and technology be mutually compensated, absorb each country of the world to participate in development of this area, and carry forward the peace and the development of the regions along the NAECB. Therefore, the NAECB is a modern Silk Road of China. It is also a "bridge of world peace."

EIR: Economist Lyndon LaRouche, founder and contributing editor of *EIR*, has, since late 1989, proposed the concept of a Berlin-Vienna-Paris "Productive Triangle," which, because of its density of population and industry, and its cultural heritage, could become a motor for the development of all Eurasia. From this base, through use of the most advanced technologies, including high-speed rail and nuclear energy, industrial development could be extended to all the nations of the entire land mass. How might you evaluate such a concept?

Hui: At present, the international environment has two characteristics: a) the regionalization and transnational grouping of the world economy has become the general tendency; b) the development of the economic corridor has become the international trend. In my opinion, the development theory of the "delta area" of Berlin-Vienna-Paris is also compatible with this tendency. So I think the same theory has a positive guiding function and some influence on the development of the economy of Eurasia.

The construction of high-speed railways is the key to the realization of the "delta area" theory. In recent years, the 12 members of the European Economic Community, plus Austria and Switzerland, have unanimously agreed to build a high-speed rail network on the land of Europe. In 20 years, the high-speed railway will connect France, Germany, Britain, Belgium, Netherlands, and Luxembourg,

and in 2050, it will bring the whole European continent into the network.

It is estimated that in the beginning of the twenty-first century, with the development of the railway in China, the NAECB will certainly join Asia and Europe, even the whole world into a developed, cooperative union, full of vigor and hope.

EIR: The father of the Chinese revolution of 1911, Dr. Sun Yat-sen, became China's minister of railways, and developed a remarkable plan for rail and port development in China. Are his ideas one of the contributing influences in the elaboration of the Eurasian Rail Bridge proposal?

Hui: Mr. Sun Zhongshan [sic], the revolutionary pioneer of the new-democratic revolution, meticulously drew up a magnificent blueprint, which thoroughly described the strategic idea, taking the construction of railways and ports as an emphasis in his "A General Plan for National Reconstruction." This is a summary of successful experience, which is that the United States of America, due to its rapid economic development, had exceeded England in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Mr. Sun firstly pointed out that, the more the difference of the economic levels, the greater the requirement for commodity production and circulation. The railway, linking regions where some areas have dense population and flourishing economy while others have sparse population and less-developed economy, is able to make profits much more than the one linking regions where there is less difference of economy and population. Goods are just like streams: The longer the drop, the greater the potential energy. Therefore, he also talked about constructing Xinjiang railway and Xizang railway, and firstly linking up the more remote trunk lines.

Mr. Sun put forward that 100,000 miles of railways would be constructed in China and form an independent Chinese railway network, southeast railway system, northeast railway system, northwest railway system, and plateau railway system. The central railway system is just the idea of the present NAECB. Therefore, the NAECB having been linked up is the practical realization of the great idea of Mr. Sun which fully reflects the strategic and technological foresight of Mr. Sun's railway construction idea.

EIR: Can you describe for our readers the current situation of China's infrastructure? What are the most urgent needs, and what steps are being taken to meet them?

Hui: Thirteen billion yuan [renminbi] has been invested in order to link up the great NAECB international corridor by the Chinese government in the 10 years from 1983 to 1992. The infrastructure has been newly established. Although the whole NAECB has been linked up and the development in the regions along the NAECB has been devoted much attention by many countries and regions, from a long-term point of view, the transportation, communication network, electric

power base, and power transmission network need to be further improved, town-city systems and industrial production base need to be strengthened, and the steps of opening to the outside world and economic development need to be quickened in the Chinese regions along the NAECB. For solving the problems indicated above, the Chinese government will formulate a policy on favorable terms, further quicken the steps of economic development in the Chinese regions along the NAECB, enthusiastically absorb the capital, technology and qualified personnel from abroad for the NAECB development, welcome overseas travelling traders to participate in the cooperative development in the fields of traffic, energy resources, communication, raw and processed materials, agriculture, etc. in Chinese regions along the NAECB.

EIR: The development of the Eurasian Rail Bridge will clearly contribute to China's relations with other nations in Asia, Central Asia, and Europe. How do you envisage these relations developing?

Hui: The NAECB is easterly contiguous to the Pacific Rim Economic Circle, consisting of Japan, the "Four Small Dragons" of Asia, East Alliance, etc.; westerly link the European Economic Community, and draw the economic circles of Central Asia, West Asia, and South Asia into the radiation range of the NAECB. It provides convenience and a new development juncture for the trade development and the economic and technological cooperation among China and the countries and areas in the radiation range above. Especially, there is a good mutual compensation in the aspects of industrial structure, technological structure, and product structure between western China and its contiguous countries. Chinese products have broad market prospects in Central Asia, West Asia, South Asia, East Europe and the Arab countries. That the NAECB is linked up and operated, has provided favorable conditions for developing the economic zones along the NAECB, realizing mutual [compensation], and promoting the economic development, common prosperity, peaceful association, and mutual coordination between China and these countries.

That the NAECB has been linked up, has opened a facile corridor for China doing import and export trade with Europe, countries in the Middle East, and countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States, provided favorable conditions for western China introducing foreign capital and developing economy, given favorable circumstances to the Chinese eastern coastal areas constructing ports, improving investment environment and developing economy, made a great progress in the friendship relation between China and the countries and regions of Southeast Asia. The development of the NAECB not only closes the relationship among countries of Asia and Europe closer, but also further improves the relations among China and countries of Asia, the Middle East, and Europe.