

The choice in Eurasia: infrastructure or geopolitics

by Mark and Mary Burdman

While international attention has been focussed on the Chinese military maneuvers near Taiwan, a series of highly significant events in the Eurasian-Asian region is tending to be overlooked. With increasing momentum since early March, a strategic realignment has been taking shape in Eurasia, involving a new complex of relations among the three major powers in the region, Russia, China, and India, as well as Iran and the Central Asian republics.

Should the question of infrastructure development assume a prominent place on the agenda of diplomatic discussions there, this emerging geometry of relations could give an impetus to realizing Eurasian-wide projects, along corridors of infrastructure development, as recommended by U.S. Democratic Presidential candidate Lyndon LaRouche, in his program for a so-called "Eurasian land-bridge." This positive potential can be weakened, however, by two closely interrelated problems.

On the one hand, there is the tendency of the architects of this strategic realignment, particularly in Moscow and Beijing, to conceptualize it, to a significant extent, in "geopolitical," anti-United States or anti-NATO terms. This proclivity is being played upon, and fostered, by geopoliticians on the London side, including the circles of former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and former President George Bush in the United States. They are endeavoring to engineer a geopolitical confrontation between the United States and China and/or Russia, to deliver a major blow to the reelection chances of President William Clinton. Beyond this more immediate domestic aim, the London-Kissinger group is forwarding the British Empire's traditional "geopolitical" policy. As enunciated by the British inventor of "geopolitics," Sir Halford

Mackinder, earlier in this century, the British view any trends toward cooperation and development in the "Eurasian heartland," as a mortal threat to the Empire.

Yeltsin to China

The central feature in the "Eurasian" dynamic, is the qualitative upgrading of Russian-Chinese relations. Barring unforeseen developments either with his health or on the Russian domestic front in the lead-up to Russia's June Presidential elections, or incalculable developments on the Chinese-Taiwan front, Russian President Boris Yeltsin is scheduled to make a highly significant State visit to China. On March 18, the Russian Itar-Tass news agency announced that the visit would take place on April 24-26. The visit is to be Yeltsin's third to China since December 1992. It will be his first trip abroad since recovering his health. His last trip, was to the United States, where he held a summit meeting with President Clinton, at the late President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Hyde Park, New York estate.

Yeltsin is scheduled to travel to the Chinese capital Beijing, and to Shanghai. He and his Chinese hosts will sign what Itar-Tass describes as a "declaration on major international questions and the situation in the Asian-Pacific region." In Shanghai, Yeltsin and the Chinese leadership are to be joined by three leaders of Central Asia, President Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan, President Imomali Rakhmonov of Tajikistan, and President Askar Akayev of Kyrgyzstan. Agreements on outstanding border issues, security cooperation, and other issues of regional importance are to be discussed. In September 1995, when it was anticipated that Yeltsin would be going to China in November (it was rescheduled

because of his poor health), Itar-Tass had announced that the five countries would sign "a very important military and political document." That dispatch said the document "has no precedents in Asian history," involving "military confidence-building measures in the border area along the entire former Soviet-Chinese frontier." Itar-Tass noted, then, that approximately 20 documents had been prepared, to be signed at the summit.

A possible precedent

A possible precedent for the upcoming Eurasian summit was set in October 1994, when leaders from the railway and transport ministries of Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan met in Beijing, to discuss increasing cooperation on the Eurasian Railway. This vast rail network, which links China's Yellow Sea coast with Rotterdam in Europe, had been beset with problems since the final link between western China and Kazakhstan was completed in 1992. In the first intergovernmental cooperation agreement signed in the region, the participating nations agreed to "fully utilize the Eurasian Railway which links their countries," and to coordinate their transportation plans.

Leading up to the April diplomacy, the Russians have, in recent days, through the mouths of various Foreign Ministry spokesmen, repeatedly stressed their support for the official Chinese view that "Taiwan is an integral part of China." Anti-Chinese propaganda, which had been rampant in certain of the Russian media on such issues as clandestine Chinese immigration into the Russian Far East, or alleged Chinese designs on parts of Siberia, have been toned down. The Chinese have returned the compliment, emphasizing that Russian actions in Chechnya are "legitimate." There is also an expanded array of Russian-Chinese arms deals.

The past months have witnessed other important developments. The Sino-Russian agreement on the western section of their mutual border went into force on Oct. 15, 1995. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Chen Jian announced that the fact that most of the border questions between China and Russia have been settled via law, is "a great event in the relations between the two countries." A treaty on the eastern section of the border has already long been in effect. Chen said that the new Sino-Russian agreement is "conducive to the maintenance of stability and economic development in the border areas, and is of positive significance to the promotion of peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region."

Early in the year, as the details of Yeltsin's visit to China were being worked out, Igor Rogachev, Russian ambassador to China, stated: "A solid basis of stable relations is being laid down for many years to come." On Jan. 25, Oleg Davydov, Russian vice prime minister in charge of foreign trade, announced in Singapore that "orientation toward the East is a strategic choice for Moscow for the next ten years." He said that a closer relationship with China could turn into "the most powerful economic alliance, which will call the

shots on Asian-Pacific markets." Russian-Chinese trade, which fell sharply in 1994, began to rise again last year.

Russia and China have regained mutual trust after a long "zig-zag" of bilateral relations, Russian First Deputy Prime Minister Oleg Soskovets told Chinese Gen. Liu Huaqing, chairman of the Central Military Commission, during a one-week visit to Russia in December 1995. Soskovets referred to Chinese-Russian relations as a "constructive partnership," which is becoming more concrete.

Whatever specific *content* develops in bilateral relations, remains to be seen. Problematically, Russian experts have told *EIR* that a key concern, on both the Russian and Chinese side, is to "counter-balance NATO extension," or "counter the U.S."

It is to be hoped, that that thrust will not become predominant, and that the Clinton administration will reaffirm its commitment to "constructive engagement" or "partnership" with Russia and China. The announced April 21 meeting between U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher and Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen, must be watched closely in this light. As LaRouche has repeatedly stated, in recent campaign speeches, the United States, Russia, and China are the three major powers in the world (the British Empire being the fourth), and positive relations among the three, are of the utmost importance for the coming period of world history.

A visit from the Indian chief of staff

As for India, on March 8, the day the Chinese maneuvers began near Taiwan, the chairman of the Indian Joint Chiefs of Staff, Adm. Vijai Singh Shekhawat, arrived in China for a nine-day visit, including stopovers at numerous military facilities. Although the visit was planned months ago, the Indian government took the occasion to stress its belief that "Taiwan is an integral part of China." More or less simultaneously, there has been a huge Russian-Indian arms deal, in the several-hundred-million-dollar range. Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov, who has made the "Eurasian" orientation the centerpiece of his foreign policy, will visit India on March 29-30. Some Russian planners herald the dawn of a new "Russia-China-India triangle" of relations in Eurasia.

As for Iran, in the first week of March, Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati visited Moscow, where he was given red-carpet treatment. Prior to his Russian stopover, Velayati made an extensive tour of all the countries of Central Asia, and sources report that the Iranians have been doing diplomatic "favors" for the Russians in Tajikistan, where Iranian influence is great, and on the Armenia-Azerbaijan front.

While Iran is notorious for mischief-making, there may be efforts to make it a somewhat more reliable player in international relations. At Russian inspiration, an initiative has been launched to create an "Asian Foundation of Thermonuclear Studies," involving the nuclear research centers of Russia, China, India, and Iran. This will conduct research in

peaceful applications of nuclear energy, with emphasis on thermonuclear fusion. Some Russian planners see it as possibly linking up with an existing international fusion project involving the United States, Russia, Japan, and European nations.

The British counter-offensive

The British are frantic to impede such developments. As we have reported, the British have been involved in an all-points diplomatic wrecker effort across Asia, including shaping the newly formed Asia-European Meeting (ASEM) forum, to their specifications (see *EIR*, March 22, "Britain's 'New Empire' Strategy Invades Asia," and Jan. 19, p. 28).

A well-informed Russian strategist has informed *EIR* that former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, Bush, and Kissinger are super-active, including vis-à-vis Moscow and Beijing directly, to exacerbate whatever tensions may exist with the Clinton administration, in order, as he put it, "to topple Bill Clinton, and kill his chances for reelection."

This is reflected in the British media. The first shot was fired, by leading anti-Clinton poison pen Ambrose Evans-Pritchard, Washington correspondent for the Hollinger Corp.-owned London *Sunday Telegraph*. On March 10, he charged that the President had neglected the "great power diplomacy that upholds the international system," and that now, "everything is in ruins." Beyond the problems in the Middle East and Northern Ireland, and likely upcoming anti-American terrorism in the Balkans, the real problem is "the profound double crisis in U.S. relations with China and Russia." China's action in the Taiwan Straits is "precipitating the most serious foreign policy crisis of the Clinton Presidency," all of which is the President's own fault. Peter Rodman, a close associate of Kissinger, is quoted: "Bill Clinton has done serious damage to the international system, he's compounded instabilities all over the world. It is like termites eating away at your house: You do not notice the structural damage, and then one day the whole house falls down."

New York Council on Foreign Relations-linked writer Jim Hoagland, reflected what seemed to be a Kissinger line being circulated among policy circles, in an article on on March 12. Hoagland claimed that he had received special information from a Chinese source, that the Chinese are acting provocatively vis-à-vis Taiwan, because "they are prepared to see, and may even welcome, the defeat of President Bill Clinton in the coming U.S. election," and to bring "a conservative, anti-Moscow Republican administration" into power. Stated Hoagland: "The President will argue during this election year that he kept his eye on the economy and avoided disaster abroad. The Republicans at this point must depend on the world's bad actors to act bad along the way, and ruin Mr. Clinton's applause lines, and help the Republicans regain the foreign policy edge. China, Fidel Castro, and the others have recently shown why that is far from a forlorn Republican hope."

Duma vote saves Yeltsin's regime

by Konstantin George

The floundering Yeltsin Presidency has been given a new lease on life by a Russian Duma Resolution, passed March 15. The resolution, initiated by the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF), and supported by the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) of the regime's in-house extremist, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, declared the December 1991 Belovezhoye accords that had terminated the U.S.S.R. "null and void," and thereby amounted to a parliamentary vote "reconstituting" the Soviet Union.

The Duma vote marked a stunning turning point in the internal Russian situation. Whether some of the CPRF leaders involved in this stunt intended it or not, the effect of the Duma vote was to hand the Yeltsin regime a full-blown constitutional crisis, which was the only remaining real option they had to cancel the June 16 Presidential elections, and thus prevent a certain defeat for President Boris Yeltsin. All attempts by the Yeltsin regime to create or exploit crises, such as the escalating war in Chechnya, as pretexts to force a postponement or cancellation of the elections, had failed.

As U.S. Democratic Presidential candidate Lyndon LaRouche observed in a March 20 interview: "This resolution in the Duma . . . is the one thing that might save Yeltsin's butt. Yeltsin was more or less doomed to be replaced by . . . the dynamic of events. And the Communist Party, the revised or neo-Communist Party's candidate [Gennadi Zyuganov] was likely to win."

Within Russia's immediate neighbors, which they term the "Near Abroad," the Duma resolution caused a stampede of all the other Community of Independent States (CIS) governments into supporting the continuation of the Yeltsin-Chernomyrdin regime past June, and thus of the damaging International Monetary Fund (IMF) dictated "reforms." The Duma vote unleashed another stampede among the nations of eastern Europe into wanting to accelerate their admission into NATO. The effects of these two trends on the already-obsessed minds of the CPRF and other neo-imperial currents in Russia is incalculably dangerous. It will tend to heighten an irrational view of many of their CIS neighbors and eastern Europe as a new belt of hostile countries encircling a besieged Mother Russia.

Along with this, a surge in undifferentiated anti-Western and above all anti-American rage is inevitable. This was not