

Conference in Beijing: toward a new 'continental bridge era' for Eurasia

by Mary Burdman

A committed group of national leaders of China, Iran, and other nations along the Eurasian Continental Bridge, from Asia to Europe, presented their vision of a new, "continental bridge era" in human history and development, at the International Symposium on Economic Development of the Regions along the New Euro-Asia Continental Bridge, held in Beijing May 7-9. The meeting was organized by the State Science and Technology Commission, the State Planning Commission, and Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation of the People's Republic of China. It was the result of two years' effort by its organizers, to promote development of the "Silk Road" railroad connecting Asia and Europe. The United Nations Development Program, World Bank, European Commission, and Asian Development Bank, were among the co-organizers.

The symposium agenda was "the linkage between East and West," epitomized by the September 1990 "historic connection of the railway between China and the former Soviet Union." Yet, there was a "clash of cultures" at the conference, between the policy of economic development and peace, on the one side, and, on the other, the British Empire's geopolitical machinations to prevent the creation of a flourishing Eurasian continental bridge—a British policy that has launched two world wars in this century.

This was not the "clash of civilizations" of Arnold Toynbee, Bernard Lewis, and Samuel Huntington—that British imperial fabrication which is an attempt to "divide and conquer" the very nations committed to building the Eurasian continental bridge. The clash of cultures in Beijing, was that between the policies of the nation-builders and the imperial deconstructionists.

The national leaders addressing the conference presented a vision they have worked hard to realize since 1985, when the railroad into northern Xinjiang, which made the connection to Central Asia and Europe possible, was built. The concept of a "continental bridge," put forward by the Chinese organizers of the symposium, is to actually create new, man-designed, economic regions, enabling mankind to bring human society and civilization to the 80% of the Earth's surface now too desolate for such development. Using the most advanced technologies, including the maglev train and nuclear energy, all regions of Europe and Asia, Africa, and the Americas, can be brought into the "continental bridge era."

One book distributed to the participants, on the history of the Euro-Asian continental bridge, even refers to "the 'cantata' of the continental bridge" (see box).

There were some 60 papers presented at the symposium, many with high-level technical content, by government officials, representatives of railroad and energy ministries and international organizations, shipping companies, and other institutions, providing detailed information on the current and potential infrastructure development of the continental bridge. One session was dedicated to projects for reclaiming desert areas, water management, and other measures to improve the terrain through which the railroad passes—which borders some of the greatest deserts and highest mountains on Earth.

During the conference, Prime Minister Li Peng announced to a selected group of delegates, that the new railway linking Asia and Europe, is the "new Silk Road for the twenty-first century," and that the Chinese government had a "cooperative attitude" to development and cooperation among the nations along the railroad.

Iranian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs A. Broujerdi, in his speech, proudly announced that his nation was about to celebrate the opening of the "Iron-Silk Route" railroad (Mashhad-Sarakhs-Tajan), built over the mountains between Iran and Turkmenistan. Many Chinese national and provincial officials spoke at the conference, emphasizing the economic achievements of their areas, and how the continental bridge will foster greater development.

Demands of 'the Empah'

However, the imperialists also made their presence felt. Vice-President of the European Commission Sir Leon Brittan, a co-chairman of the symposium, delivered a rude diatribe, announcing that China and all other nations along the continental bridge must comply with the demands of "the market"—i.e., the current world financial system tottering on the brink of collapse—and "international obligations"—the demands of various supranational institutions such as the European Commission, United Nations, and World Bank. If not, he warned, "the market" will see to it, that the project will fail. To add insult, he then, at the opening ceremony of a conference on Eurasian railroad development, demanded that China toe the imperial line on the World Trade Organization

and the free market—issues *not* on the agenda. Another British delegate was Nicholas MacLean, of the Union of Industrial and Employers Confederations of Europe and the British Royal Society for Asian Affairs. In the old “Great Game” tradition of British manipulation, MacLean told how he had “travelled the silk route,” and gave a speech calling for the Eurasian nations to turn to roads, air routes—i.e., everything except railroads—and emphasizing the importance of “prices” in determining use of the Silk Road.

There were other anomalies at the symposium. One was the lack, outside of presentations by the delegates of the Schiller Institute, of discussion of the imminent collapse of the current world financial system—although there is certainly a group, among China’s highest-level officials and economists, aware of the dangers represented by the “financial AIDS” of the current system, including the disaster in Mexico and the Barings Bank debacle.

A second anomaly was the lack of representation of Russia, a nation obviously indispensable to the development of Eurasia. There is no question of the importance both Russia and China accord to their mutual relations, especially after the state visit of President Yeltsin to China April 23-26. This visit, Russian officials announced, consolidated Russian-Chinese relations “within the framework of constructive partnership.” During President Yeltsin’s visit, the leaders of five countries—Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan—met in Shanghai, to sign the historic, first-ever agreement on military confidence in the border areas in Asia.

That there were no speakers from Russia at the Beijing symposium, although the invitation had listed a deputy prime minister of Russia as among the four honorary chairmen, can only be attributed to the current intense and very uncertain political situation within Russia.

The ‘continental bridge era’

Building continental bridges, will take humankind into a new era of development, independent of seacoasts, rivers, or other natural transport modes. “The continental bridge transportation that is referred to now, is none other than the international through-transport which takes the railway as its chief means, and containers as its medium, combines various modes of transportation, such as ocean shipping, aviation, highway, river transport, and pipelines, runs across a continent, and links up the sea with the land ‘pervading the whole way,’ ” states the *Study on Strategic Significance of the New Euro-Asian Continental Bridge*. The authors, a group of prominent Chinese officials and economists, endorse the use of modern transport, particularly the magnetic levitation (maglev) train, with the potential to run at 500 km an hour.

In his keynote speech May 7, Minister Song Jian, State Councillor of China and chairman of the State Science and Technology Commission, emphasized the 2,000-year-long history of the Silk Road connecting Europe, Africa, and Asia.

With the rapid development of modern science and technology, “the construction and opening of the New Eurasian Continental Bridge will once more brighten the Silk Road, which had once made great contribution to the spreading of ancient civilization and traditional friendship,” he said. Since, as the Chinese proverb holds, “Everything is difficult at its beginning,” cooperation is necessary—but, he stressed, there must be adherence to certain principles, especially respect for national sovereignty, and achieving common economic development as the way to resolve international problems. With a “strategic view focusing on the future,” and “economic development as the first priority,” the continental bridge nations should seek “common ground, while reserving differences, and common development as priority when handling the issues between countries,” Minister Song said. “A thousand-mile journey starts from the first step,” which is the purpose of this symposium, he said. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, “we should revitalize the Silk Road which stands for the essence of opening-up, civilization, evolution, and friendship.”

In his speech to the conference plenum, Rui Xingwen, chairman of the China Development and Promotion Commission of the New Euro-Asia Continental Bridge, stated: “Obviously, continental bridge transportation is just unfolding, and its rise will initiate a great revolution in the history of the world’s communications and push forward the world’s communications and transportation into a new stage. . . . It is imaginable that the future human society will neither be hindered by oceans, nor be frustrated by severe cold, altitude, or desolation any more. . . . People can take advanced civilization and prosperity to the vast, backward land-locked regions . . . to form new environments for the existence and development of human society.”

Zepp LaRouche: man’s universal quality

To these ideas, Schiller Institute founder Helga Zepp LaRouche brought the principle, that the unique potential of human creative reason can take mankind to the level on which any conflict can be resolved. Mrs. Zepp LaRouche led her institute’s delegation of Dr. Jonathan Tennenbaum and this author, to the conference. Mrs. Zepp LaRouche and Dr. Tennenbaum, were invited speakers at two of the three, day-long workshop sessions held by the conference on May 8. The still-much-too-influential “balance of power” politics and “clash of civilizations” propaganda, is nothing other than an intelligence operation, Mrs. Zepp LaRouche said. “There is no such contradiction among world cultures, that cannot be overcome. To the contrary, it is the characteristic of man, which differentiates him from all other living beings, that he possesses the unique quality of creative reason. This is the universal quality which unites all men, and allows man to find the ever-higher levels, on which conflicts can be solved. In China, this philosophy has been well known since the contribution of the great

universal thinker Confucius.”

She described how her husband, American economist Lyndon LaRouche, “based on this thinking . . . proposed an economic program, the foundation-stone of which is that only the global reconstruction of the world economy can create a way out of the present crisis. . . . The strategic reality affecting every region, is the fact that the presently hegemonic financial system is in the end-phase, before its collapse.” She outlined how a new world economic system could be organized by sovereign national governments. “We have to decide,” she concluded, “how we ourselves want to be regarded by future generations.” Do we leave them greed and chaos, or do we face humanity’s crisis of existence, with all that is great and noble, “to win out of it the inspiration for a new renaissance?”

In his presentation on economic planning, Dr. Tennenbaum said, that it is essential to discard calculations based on

GNP, which gives a monstrously distorted picture of economic reality. Instead, he said, we must use the criteria provided by the science of physical economy. Economic planning must be based on “density functions.” The most advanced technologies must be used to build basic economic infrastructure in the most concentrated way, in the “corridors” along the continental bridges. The gigantic scale of infrastructure investments required today, he said, can only be achieved through the use of “Hamiltonian” modes of productive credit-generation by sovereign nation-states.

The Iron-Silk Road

Another remarkable intervention, was the speech by Iranian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs A. Broujerdi, announcing the May 14 opening of the Mashhad-Sarakhs-Tajan railway, which he described as “this grand project of the century.”

‘The Cantata of the Continental Bridge’

The following excerpt from the book A Study on the Strategic Significance of The New Euro-Asian Continental Bridge, edited by Gao Zehngang, deputy mayor of the port city of Rizhao in Shandong province, indicates the level on which Chinese officials are thinking, to develop their nation. Mayor Gao not only refers to the relations between city and hinterland development as a “cantata,” but also says, that to develop his city into a world-class port on the scale of the great port cities of Europe, it is required to free the population from peasant-like thinking, epitomized in the Chinese expression, “Do not let the wholesome water flow into others’ fields.”

* * *

To do a good job in effecting “the ‘cantata’ of the Continental Bridge,” featured by the strengthening of the economic cooperation between the bridgehead and the Continental Bridge zone

The relationship between the bridgehead and the Continental Bridge economic zone is one of mutual promotion and common development and prosperity, as the bridgehead serves as the “dragon head,” “display window,” and “pivot,” while the economic zone serves as the “backyard,” “basis,” and “backing force.” That is why the “Continental Bridge cantata” should be made a good job featured by the further strengthening of the economic cooperation of the bridgehead with the Continental Bridge zone. . . .

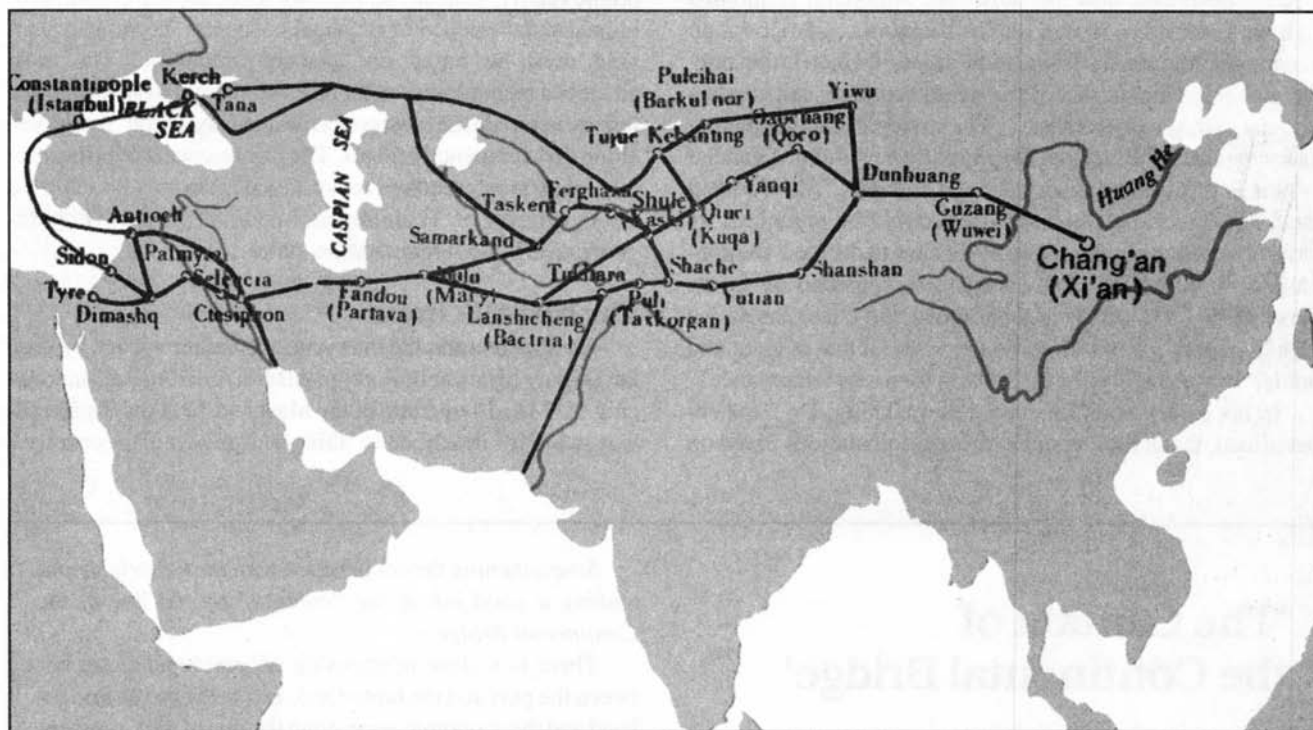
Strengthening the cooperation with the hinterland and making a good job of the “cantata” by the line of the Continental Bridge

There is a close relationship of interdependence between the port and the hinterland, and between the bridgehead and the economic zone along the line of the Continental Bridge. The bridgehead serves as a “door,” while the economic zone, as a “backyard,” or “base.” Therefore, the authorities of Rizhao City have set up the principle of “setting feet in the city, serving the hinterland, developing in cooperation and sharing the development and prosperity,” and have taken the creation of a fine environment of service as a measure of great strategic significance. For this reason, the following points are stressed:

To strengthen the consciousness of service by emancipating the mind

Efforts have to be made to lead the whole city in breaking away from the conservative, localistic idea featured by “do not let the wholesome water flow into others’ fields,” and in adopting a concept of viewing the situation as a whole featured by the idea of “the bridgehead and its hinterland share the same boat,” so that every citizen can fully realize that the city will not be able to fulfill its supposed role as the bridgehead and a port city, if they view the matter only from the angle of the city itself, and that only by cooperating with the hinterland, will it be possible to compete in both the domestic and world markets and turn, at the earliest date, the great potential held by the city as the eastern bridgehead of the the New Continental Bridge into actual productivity. And thus, the continuous emancipation of the mind, and strengthening of the consciousness of serving, will lay an ideological basis for further expanding the hinterland and enhancing regional cooperation. . . .

Main land routes of the silk trade, circa 1100 A.D.



Source: *The Silk Road on Land and Sea*, China Pictorial Publishing Co.

The “Iron-Silk Route,” Minister Broujerdi emphasized, was the result of the collaborative work of nations, not international agencies. It “was finished by our experts and with the help of the brotherly country of Turkmenistan, without any international assistance,” he said. “We have now constructed the missing link in Euro-Asian railway network.” He took the opportunity, “to express our appreciation for the cooperation of the government of China in constructing segments of the railway network, to make possible the first running of a train from Lianyungang port to Tashkent in November 1995. The nations of the region and the world will now see the fruits of collective and regional effort for greater economic prosperity and well-being.”

Plenum speakers included Ling Syargei, deputy prime minister of the Republic of Belarus, who emphasized “achievements in establishing a market economy,” and integration of Belarus with the “European transport corridor,” from Germany and Poland, to Belarus. Mr. Yongjian, United Nations Under Secretary-General for Development Support and Management Services, stated that, for the nations of Europe, Central Asia, and other countries belonging to the Community of Independent States (CIS), and East Asia, “the basic need is the construction of the New Euro-Asian Continental Bridge.” He noted that “the United Nations can act as a facilitator and communicator, but it cannot substitute for the com-

mitment of individual states and their international partners.”

During the conference, official representatives of Mongolia, Kazakhstan, and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, announced their ongoing, or planned, cooperation with the continental bridge. Kazakhstan and China, among many other agreements, have agreed to joint use of the Chinese Pacific port of Lianyungang, a great benefit to landlocked Kazakhstan. Razdak Sandalkhan, minister of infrastructure development of Mongolia, said his nation is “interested in . . . connecting to the New Euro-Asian Continental Bridge. Jong U Kim, chairman of North Korea’s Committee for Promotion of External Economic Cooperation, said that, “by beginning, we are already halfway there.” North Korea, he said, “will actively cooperate with the Eurasian Bridge plan.”

The impact of the Schiller Institute presence was made clear on the last day of the conference. In the final general meeting, reports were given on the three programs of the day before. The rapporteur on the “Trade and Economic Cooperation” workshop told the assembled 400 delegates: “We had many helpful suggestions on the conference. . . . One was that there should be more contributions by women. It was the sense of the leaders of our workshop, that the best contributions were by women. These included by the president of the Schiller Institute, and the director of the Development Research Center of the State Council.”

Sir Leon's diatribe

The speech of Sir Leon Brittan, the representative of the European Commission, to the conference plenum, was outrageous. Sir Leon has had previous conflicts with the Chinese government. In March 1994, during a visit to Beijing in his role as then-EC Trade Commissioner, he demanded that China comply with the British Empire's free-trade (looting) policies in order to join the future World Trade Organization (WTO), something China has refused to do. Sir Leon was then subjected to a frosty public reprimand by Mme. Wu Yi, China's minister of foreign trade, when she noted at a joint press conference, that Sir Leon was acting as a "native of the United Kingdom," when he threatened that the *entire* European Community would retaliate for any attempts by China to "discriminate" against trade with Britain. At issue were British machinations against Beijing in its Crown Colony of Hongkong. Sir Leon was incensed; the press conference was shut down.

At the continental bridge symposium, Sir Leon retorted to Minister Song Jiang's principles of national sovereignty and common development, with the demand that the international private sector be in charge. "It is clearly important to ensure that infrastructure planning is *soundly market-based*. . . . The critical mass of funding *cannot* be based on government contributions. . . .

"To put it bluntly, demand to use a land-bridge between Europe and Asia will only be high if certain political conditions are met: . . . there must be stability and a prospect of continued peace, there must be sound *independent* economic structures that allow transporters and economic operators to get on with their business free of the fear of *arbitrary* or *discriminatory* government attention. *Only if these conditions are met* will foreseeable demand for use of a bridge grow to a level where the necessary capital can be attracted," he threatened. He then proceeded, yet again, to raise the issue of the WTO, claiming that "Chinese negotiations for the WTO are not, I fear, a subject for optimism today. . . . WTO is a rules-based organization, and we cannot engineer China membership on false terms." Sir Leon, the guest of the Chinese government, went on menacingly: "If China were a WTO member, then the prospects for continued economic liberalization and development would be surer and a land-bridge would be more attractive as a result" (emphasis added).

Sir Leon's behavior angered conference participants from Europe and Asia. The European Commission, and Sir Leon directly, had acted, more than once, to delay the symposium, which was rescheduled several times since late 1994. His motivation could be accounted for by the desire of his imperialist circles to hold first the Asia-Europe Meeting, designed by the EC, at least, on the theme of Europe and Asia *without* Eurasian development (see *EIR*, March 22, p. 52). Sir Leon began his speech by noting that the Beijing conference "has come to fruition at exactly the right time, just eight weeks after the historic Asia-Europe summit meeting" in Bangkok

in March.

However, it should be noted, that Asian nations, especially the Republic of Korea, put building the Eurasian railroad on the agenda in Bangkok.

It is possible, that Sir Leon's offensive behavior caused reactions among China's government leaders as well. The Beijing symposium, the invitation announced, had been scheduled to take place in the Great Hall of the People, "the most important center of political, economic, cultural, and diplomatic activities in P.R. China." While there is no question of the view of the Chinese government, as to the strategic importance of the continental bridge, it is possible that the symposium was moved to the Beijing International Conven-

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tion Center, in reaction to the unacceptable rudeness of the European Commission's representative.

But the British imperialists got their comeuppance. Not only were Helga Zepp LaRouche and Jonathan Tennenbaum able to place Lyndon LaRouche's name and policies before the conference, but delegate Mary Burdman also spoke from the floor in one workshop, on the political battle in the West—especially the United States—between the nation-builders, and the free-trade looters. She said that, while she is always impressed, on coming to China, with the commitment of its people and leaders to national economic development, nevertheless the people of China and Asia, in order to understand the current world situation, must also understand that there are two, opposing traditions in the West. One, is the American System tradition that built the United States, Germany, Japan, Russia, into industrial powers, and was the inspiration for Dr. Sun Yat-sen. Lyndon LaRouche is now the leader of this tradition. Opposing this is the oligarchical, free-trade policy, centered in the City of London, which has, among other things, utterly destroyed the economy of Russia. Britain's MacLean, who was in the workshop audience, turned red, at these words, and was barely able to maintain his aplomb.