

# Business Briefs

## Eurasia

### Rail Development of Land-Bridge Advances

The extension of the Berlin-Moscow rail link to China, via Kazakstan, was discussed in the Kazak capital, Astana, on Nov. 10, between President Nursultan Nazarbayev and Russian Transport Minister Sergei Frank. This involves modernization of existing rail links, with only a minor part being construction of new ones. Frank also offered the Kazaks access to the extension of this link from Berlin, to the northern Russian region of Novgorod, which has been completed.

They also discussed the planned Grand North-South Railway Link, from Russia to India, via Kazakstan and Iran—which was on the agenda of two recent international conferences, in St. Petersburg and New Delhi.

Meanwhile, designers have completed a blueprint for a rail link from Sakhalin Island to the Russian mainland, Interfax reported on Nov. 7. The blueprint will be submitted to the Railways Ministry by the end of the year. Designers will begin to calculate the cost of the project. The rail track needed to connect the island will be some 10 kilometers long. It has not yet been decided whether the track will be built atop a bridge or inside a tunnel. Ultimately, the ministry hopes to link the mainland to Japan by building a 40-km Sakhalin-Hokkaido rail line.

## Austria

### Social Democrats Debate LaRouche's Bretton Woods

Jürgen Bozsoki, a young official of the Austrian Social Democratic Party (SPOe), has published a book, *The "Blind Spots" of the Social Democracy*, with the explicit backing from a faction within the party's leadership, in which he covers Lyndon LaRouche's proposal for a New Bretton Woods financial system.

The foreword is by Hans Peter Martin, author of the best-selling book *Die Globalisierungsfalle (Globalization Trap)* and a member of the European Parliament, and by

former Austrian Finance Minister Ferdinand Lacina, a think-tanker within the SPOe and a member of the Austrian Parliament. They encourage people to read the book and urge a debate on its content.

Bozsoki documents the intellectual bankruptcy of the Social Democrats, who have blinded themselves to the fact that their concepts have hopelessly failed, as had communism before. He attacks the "Third Way" wing of the European Social Democracy around British Prime Minister Tony Blair, as well as those around former German Finance Minister Oskar Lafontaine and French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin.

Bozsoki uses "LaRouche's Triple Curve" to explain why speculation has destroyed the system and is leading to hyperinflation, threatening a "collapse of civilization." He lists immediate steps to put the economy back on track: a New Bretton Woods; re-regulation of the world trade in goods; an international bankruptcy procedure eliminating unpayable debts and speculative titles; a tax reform to punish speculative investments; and, a Marshall Plan for underdeveloped countries.

Plans are on the table to remedy the situation, he says, such as LaRouche's proposed "Eurasian Land-Bridge." "Only a large-scale crash program can use idle capacity, production would be increased, tax revenues with it. If the program is executed correctly, there would be no inflationary tendencies, because production would grow faster than the amount of credits."

## Radiation

### Chernobyl Ecological Impact Has Been Positive

"The net ecological impact [of the Chernobyl accident] has been positive. . . . The sum effect for the flora and fauna in the highly radioactive restricted zone has been overwhelmingly positive in favor of biodiversity and abundance of individuals," U.S. researchers have found. In other words, what the anti-nukes portray as a nuclear desert, is actually a thriving wildlife preserve.

On a recent visit, Dr. Ronald Chesser, of Texas Tech University and the International

Radioecology Lab in Slavutych, Ukraine, wrote in *Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry* that he and colleagues sighted many moose, roe deer, wild boar, foxes, river otter, and rabbits, as well as numerous rodents, in the most contaminated 10-kilometer "exclusion zone." Comparable search time in the 30-km zone around the plant yielded no sightings of these animals, except for one rabbit. "Diversity of flowers and other plants in the highly radioactive regions is impressive and equals that observed in protected habitats outside the zone."

Chesser, who specializes in the effects of radiation dose, said that the radioactive site is "magnificent," and there are no two-headed animals or deformed frogs, or any other monsters regularly conjured up by the media and the anti-nukes about the effects of Chernobyl. Chesser and his colleague, Robert J. Baker, wrote that their "observations support the contention that regulatory limits of contaminant exposure to plant and animal populations should remain higher than those set for humans."

Unfortunately, Chesser and colleagues attribute such positive ecological consequences, to the fact that there are no human beings in the contaminated zone, and conclude that "the world cannot afford to experience additional human population growth," if we are to promote biodiversity.

In the Winter 2000 issue of *21st Century Science & Technology*, radiation specialist Zbigniew Jaworowski discusses the unnecessary removal of hundreds of thousands of residents from the 30-km exclusion zone, where radiation levels from the accident were lower (in terms of lifetime dose) than natural radiation levels in many areas of the world.

## Aerospace

### Boeing Faulted for Production Deficiencies

The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration released its official audit of Boeing, the world's largest aircraft manufacturer, at the end of October, following reports of potentially dangerous deficiencies in the manufacture of its aircraft. According to John

Hickey, manager of the FAA's Transport Aircraft Directorate, "The findings show that these were not isolated events, that they were in fact systematic issues."

The audit, which studied everything from aircraft engineering to parts receiving and production processes at six Boeing plants in Washington State and Oregon, found 87 problems in the production processes and 20 in the engineering processes.

Boeing was not fined, since the audit found that the deficiencies did not have an immediate impact on safety. Nonetheless, Hickey stated, "The Audit Resolution Plan contains immediate corrective actions to fix specific, localized deficiencies; additional actions for continued delivery of complying and conforming airplanes and systemic process improvements necessary to fix deep-rooted system deficiencies." This required that Boeing not only to address "specific problems, but also the underlying conditions leading to those problems."

The audit was mandated after several potentially dangerous incidents were reported, including: an airline stating that two of 16 bolts holding the vertical stabilizer onto the tail of a 767 were not sufficiently tightened; assembly line mechanics at the plant where Boeing's 747s, 767s, and 777s are produced reported that fuel tank repairs were being made after the tanks had been inspected, and that foreign debris, including rivet guns, were occasionally left in fuel tanks; and adhesive was found to be improperly applied in a condensation barrier that keeps moisture from dripping onto cockpit electronics, which led to a halt in the delivery of 50 aircraft.

## Mining

### South Africa To Abolish 'Private' Mineral Rights

South Africa plans to abolish the concept of private mineral rights and return them to the state, although existing private rights will be honored, Minister of Minerals and Energy Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka said on Nov. 7. The government also wants to create a new system, requiring mining companies to actively use their mineral rights or lose them,

she said. Compensation issues are also under discussion.

Speaking earlier to the South African Chamber of Mines, South African President Thabo Mbeki said: "We must deal with the issue of mineral rights once and for all. The mineral resources of the country are a common heritage of all South Africans, which we must exploit to the benefit of all our people." However, he said, the government does not want "to impact negatively on current mining, planned investment, property rights, and the rule of law. We opt for the path of cooperation, rather than the route of confrontation."

## Health

### Europe Reacts to Fear of 'Mad Cow' Spread

There is growing fear in Europe that bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE, or "Mad Cow" disease) and Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (CJD) in humans, is spreading out of control, and public health officials are taking extraordinary measures to curb it. In France, officials are banning the organ-meat delicacy, sweetbreads, and in Switzerland, the Red Cross is refusing to take blood donations from anyone who spent more than six months in Britain during 1980-96. European Union officials are urging member-states to enforce mandatory herd testing by January, and even more stringent testing. The EU ordered random testing after it was found that the number of cows infected with BSE had tripled in France during 1999-2000.

France is on the verge of a panic, as Health Minister Dominique Gillot warned on Nov. 7 that dozens of people would likely die of CJD, contracted from eating BSE-infected meat. "With the number of cases of Mad Cow disease increasing in France, it is very probable that we are going to see dozens of cases," he said.

President Jacques Chirac backed officials calling for a ban on the use of meat and bone meal in animal feed, because these products are regarded as the most likely vector for BSE. "We must ban animal meal without any delay, and move toward a systematic tracing program in order to limit the risks of contamination," he said on LCI TV.

**POLAND'S** Oil and Gas Mining Co. will start negotiations with Russia's Gazprom soon, on additional gas deliveries to western Europe. Deputy Prime Minister Janusz Steinhoff said that Poland had been opposed to a new pipeline, but now Russia is talking about an "additional 60-80 billion cubic meters," for which new pipelines are needed.

**LATVIA'S** Central Statistics Office released preliminary census data on Nov. 7, indicating that the population on March 31, 2000 was 2,375 million, a decrease of 291,000, or 10.9%, from the 1989 census. The data also indicated that the population is aging, and that the urban population decreased 13.5%.

**CHINA'S** Yunnan province has agreed to sell electricity to Thailand. Thais will provide 70% of the \$1.2 billion investment, and the Chinese 30%, to build a 1.5-megawatt power station in the city of Jinghong. Construction will start in 2006, and Thailand will buy 1.5 MW annually starting in 2013.

**DAEWOO**, the South Korean automaker, has stopped production, after filing for court receivership on Nov. 10. Its creditors refused further credit when the 13,000-member labor union refused to go along with planned layoffs. "The government and creditors botched the sale to Ford . . . and now workers are being asked to shoulder the responsibility," said a spokesman for the 600,000-member Korean Confederation of Trade Unions.

**NORTH AND SOUTH KOREA** signed four new treaties facilitating greater economic cooperation on Nov. 11, in effect creating a Most-Favored Nation status between the two countries.

**ZIMBABWE** President Robert Mugabe, during a visit to Nigeria in October, said that his nation is in a difficult situation following the introduction of a structural adjustment program recommended by the International Monetary Fund.