

Russian-Korean Rail Development Proceeds, While Obama Drives for War

by Michael Billington

June 8—Russia’s Far East Development Minister Alexander Galushko, speaking in Vladivostok on June 5, announced a series of dramatic agreements between Russia and North Korea, the most important being the construction a rail line through North Korea into South Korea. “We have agreed to launch trilateral projects between Russia, D.P.R.K. [North Korea] and South Korea with a focus on the railroads project,” said Galushko. “It’s important to extend the Trans-Siberian Railroad to the Korean peninsula. It will serve to stabilize and improve the situation on the Korean peninsula as a whole.”

This project will complete the rail connection “from Busan to Rotterdam,” one of the major goals of the Eurasian Land-Bridge project initiated by Lyndon and Helga LaRouche after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, as a means of peacefully integrating the nations of Europe and Asia through physical development programs serving the interests of all.

No timetable was announced for beginning construction, but the severity of the global strategic crisis, especially the drive for war against Russia and China by the British Empire and its stooge President Obama, makes this a most urgent necessity.

Last November, Russian President Vladimir Putin met with South Korean President Park Geun-hye in Seoul, where the two leaders agreed to begin rail and pipeline development through North Korea, both for the economic benefit of the three nations, and as a war-avoidance policy—peace through development. At the time, North Korea’s agreement was only implied, based on private negotiations between Russia and Pyongyang. Now, that agreement has been confirmed.

President Park said after the meeting with Putin in November:

“We, the two leaders, agreed to combine South Korea’s policy of strengthening Eurasian cooperation and Russia’s policy of highly regarding the Asia-Pacific region to realize our mutual potential at the maximum level and move relations between the two countries forward. South Korea and Russia will join hands to build a new Eurasian era for the future.”

President Park has also moved forward with another aspect of the agreements announced during the November summit—collaboration among Seoul, Moscow, and Beijing in the industrial-port project at Rason in the far northeast corner of North Korea, close to both Russia and China, and at the hub of the crucial Tumen River Development Zone which includes China, Russia, Mongolia, and North Korea. President Park sent a team of industrial representatives from POSCO (South Korea’s steel giant), Hyundai Merchant Marine Co., and Korea Railroad Corp. to Rason early this year, to prepare for the South’s participation in the ongoing Russian and Chinese investments there, including the rail projects. This will be the first such South Korean industrial investment proposal in North Korea, other than the joint industrial park at Kaesong.



video from rt.com

A Russian-North Korean ceremony in September 2013, inaugurating a rail line from the Russian border town of Khasan to the North Korean port city of Rason. This project has now been supplemented by the agreement to extend Russia’s Trans-Siberian Railroad to the Korean peninsula, extending through both parts of the divided country.

Minister Galushko announced other agreements with North Korea at the Vladivostok meeting on June 5. The two countries are preparing to start bilateral transactions in the Russian ruble this month, and to increase trade turnover to \$1 billion by 2020, from only \$112 million now. Last month, Moscow agreed to write off \$10.94 billion of Pyongyang's Soviet debt, with the remaining \$1.09 billion to be paid in installments over the next 20 years and invested back in North Korea.

Russia also proposed to invest in the Kaesong Industrial Park, a special economic zone in North Korea near the border between North and South Korea, where South Korean companies are allowed set up production with a North Korean workforce.

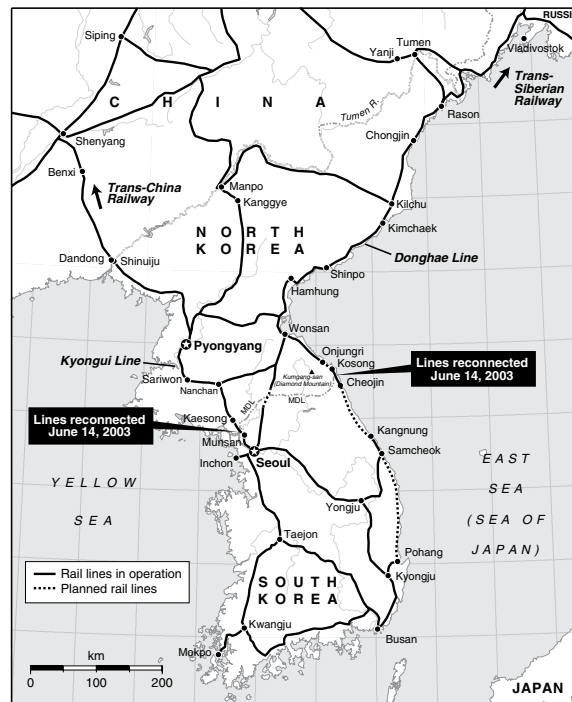
What Cheney Destroyed

It is important to note that the rebuilding of the defunct trans-Korean rail lines, which once traversed North Korea along both the eastern border and western coast, was well under way back in 2003 (see **Figure 1**)—in fact, the crucial rail connections across the border between North and South Korea were opened in a grand ceremony on June 14, 2003. An article in *EIR*, June 27, 2003, by Kathy Wolfe, titled “Trans-Korean Rail: ‘These Lines Will Go Through,’” reported:

“In simultaneous ceremonies on the western Kyongui Line and eastern Donghae Line, the two Koreas at 1:00 p.m. on June 14 reconnected the lines of the Trans-Korean Railway (TKR) for the first time since Sept. 1, 1945. Fifty officials of North and South presided at a ceremony in which 25 kilometers of new rail was laid on either side of the sensitive Military Demarcation Line (MDL) which runs down the center of the 14-km-wide Demilitarized Zone (DMZ).

“Lead footage of the Seoul evening news repeatedly showed white-gloved North and South Korean engi-

FIGURE 1
Major Railway Networks of North and South Korea, 2003



EIRNS/John Sigerson
Source: Ministry of Construction and Transportation (MOCT) Seoul, Korea

neers at the pivotal western Seoul-Pyongyang line, cooperating shoulder to shoulder in a cold rain as they carefully power-bolted the tracks together at the MDL.

“A ceremonial golden plaque commemorating the first step to Korean unification was laid on the center rail tie. A similar ceremony was held near the east coast. Despite extreme war tensions from U.S. neo-cons’ policy, the two Koreas reconnected their East and West Coast rail lines at the points shown in the June 14 ceremonies, potentially linking from Pusan to the Chinese and Russian rail systems and across Eurasia.

“A Ministry of Construction and Transportation brochure reads: ‘The day will come when the locomotive that has been asleep for 55

years will awaken to traverse this land. The severed history of the Korean people will be reconnected; a forgotten culture will be rekindled, and Koreans will once again travel the same path. . . . Once unfettered from the bounds of history, the Kyongui Line will go beyond simply inter-Korean economic cooperation. The Silk Road Railway will offer a new vision and new possibilities for the development of both Korea and all of Northeast Asia. The 21st-Century Silk Road linking Europe and Asia will link continents and greatly help to revolutionize global logistics. The Trans-Siberian Railway, which links Asia and Europe, as well as the Trans-China Railway, both can connect with the Trans-Korean Railway. This will become the world’s largest overland transportation route, bringing together the European and North East Asian markets.’”

Cheney and Obama: War, Not Peace

But the potential for completing the reconstruction of the trans-Korean rail connections never took place, and the completed cross-border links were never used. What happened to stop this process? The answer is Vice President Dick Cheney and his junior partner George

W. Bush. When Cheney came into office in 2001, one of his first actions was to cancel every agreement reached by the Clinton Administration to end the danger of war on the Korean Peninsula through joint development projects among the United States, South Korea, and North Korea, including the building of a weapons-safe nuclear power plant in the North in exchange for inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to assure that there would be no nuclear weapons program. When that agreement was abrogated by Cheney, the North proceeded to build a nuclear weapon.

On the day before the 2003 festivities in Korea to open the rail connections between North and South, Richard Perle, one of the leading neocons in Cheney's stable, told a Washington audience that the United States "cannot exclude the kind of surgical strike we saw in 1981," when Israel bombed Iraq's Osirak nuclear facility, but this time a U.S. strike against North Korea. "We should always be prepared to go it alone, if necessary," he added.

In fact, the British imperial faction in the United States, including the criminal administrations of both Bush/Cheney and Obama, will do anything necessary to *prevent* a peaceful solution to the Korean crisis. To them, the Korean tensions are one of the available triggers for launching war on China and Russia, and they won't allow South Korea's collaboration with China and Russia, aimed at solving the Korean crisis, to disrupt their war plans.

The current version of this was policy expressed in the past days when the Obama Administration demanded that South Korea accept the deployment of a U.S. Terminal High Altitude Area Defense system, known as Thaad. South Korea has repeatedly rejected the U.S. demand to deploy Thaad missiles in its territory, for the obvious reason that the high-altitude Thaad's are useless against any potential attack from North Korea, which lies only 35 miles from Seoul. Seoul needs low-altitude systems, and is reviewing U.S. Patriot Pac 3 missiles, as well as its own missile systems, for its future needs. The South Korean Foreign Ministry has reported publicly and repeatedly that the Thaad system is only useful against China, and that they want nothing to do with it.

But Obama is pressuring President Park. Bloomberg News reported June 4 that "American officials see improved missile defense systems as a necessary improvement before the U.S. hands over command of South Korea's wartime defenses, as scheduled for December 2015." What they mean by "improved missile-defense systems" is in fact full integration into the U.S.


system aimed at China, as made clear by Gen. Curtis Scaparrotti, commander of U.S. forces in Korea, who said in written testimony last year to the Senate Armed Services Committee that South Korea needed an upper-tier interceptor, such as Thaad, from Bethesda, Md.-based Lockheed, and also more powerful sensors, such as the AN/TPY 2 Radar made by Waltham, Mass.-based Raytheon Co. (RTN), to defeat medium- and intermediate-range missiles—i.e., for a U.S. attack on China, not defense against North Korea.

Despite the pressure, South Korea's Defense Ministry said on June 5 that Seoul is not considering the Thaad system. Sources in Seoul have told *EIR* that, since the government is refusing to purchase the Thaad systems, that Obama is considering ordering the systems to be deployed unilaterally, within U.S. bases in Korea, bypassing approval from Seoul.

Although illegal, it is abundantly clear that Obama cares nothing for laws, domestic or foreign, having boldly violated the U.S. Constitution repeatedly within the United States, and international law by waging wars against nations that are no threat to the U.S.—a process rapidly leading toward global thermonuclear war—or, better, to Obama's impeachment.

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