

gram is essential, especially in areas with lots of people and developed economies.”

Guo said that China’s current Gross National Product is no less than Japan’s was in the 1960s, when the idea of high-speed rail lines was first put forward.

However, Guo, like his colleagues in the industrialized and other developing nations, is talking about what amounts to 15- or 20-year-old technology, such as the ICE now being promoted by Germany, or France’s TGV. Yet, just one example of the enormity of China’s needs, is the fact that during the two-week New Year Festival last spring, 900 million people traveled around the country.

China’s Mid-Term and Long-Term Development Program, issued by the State Council in March, made the development of trains and tracks capable of 200 kilometers per hour a priority. There are three main lines which should be converted first, Guo said. They are from Beijing to Guangzhou (Canton), to Shanghai, and to Harbin in the far northeast. These lines pass through the major population centers and carry up to 40% of total passengers and freight. The new Beijing-Kowloon line is under construction, along an alternate north-south route, but it will “only ease the grim situation going north and south,” the *China Daily* wrote.

Guo suggested a combination of high- and medium-speed lines, and said that the ongoing work on the Guangzhou-Shenzhen “quasi-high-speed” lines was a “model” of how to bring in technical renovations while making “full use” of the present line.

The southern Silk Route

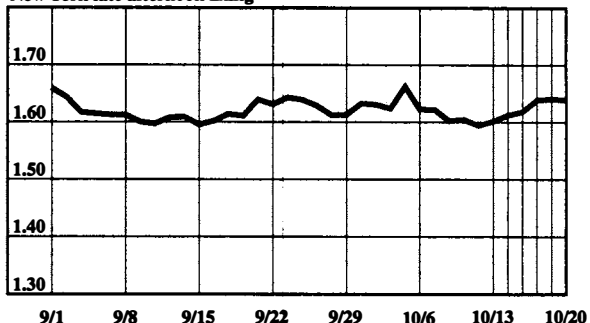
Other Eurasian rail projects are also “being actively pursued,” the *Hindustan Times* reported Sept. 26. India has agreed to send a group of rail experts to Iran, to discuss building the vital 300-kilometer rail link between the Iranian city of Mashhad and Ashkhabad in Turkmenistan (see *EIR*, Oct. 8, p. 57). Iranian President Rafsanjani has indicated that Iran could become the link between Europe and Asia with the completion of these rail projects. During the week of Oct. 11, Rafsanjani, accompanied by Transport Minister Akbar Torkan and other ministers, visited the Central Asian republics of Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan.

To promote closer cooperation among Asian nations, the plans included also reviving the “southern Silk Route,” linking China and India with Myanmar (Burma), the *Hindustan Times* reported. Discussion is ongoing about completing “missing” rail links between Kunming in southwest China and Myitkyina in Myanmar, with Dibrugarh in Assam, India, to Bangladesh. China has already built a 50-ton rail bridge linking Ruili in China with Maoschweli in Myanmar, while Bangladesh has “taken up” the ambitious Jamuna bridge project. This road and rail bridge, to be begun next year, will be the first over the huge Jamuna (Brahmaputra) River, linking north and south Bengal.

Currency Rates

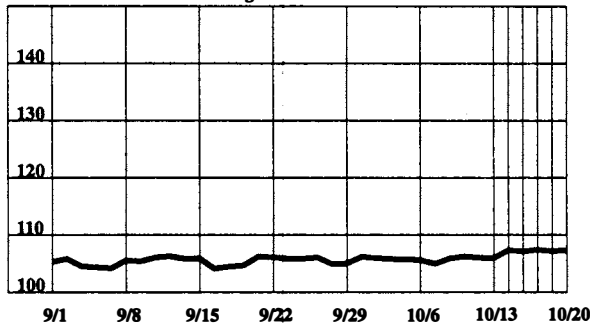
The dollar in deutschemarks

New York late afternoon fixing



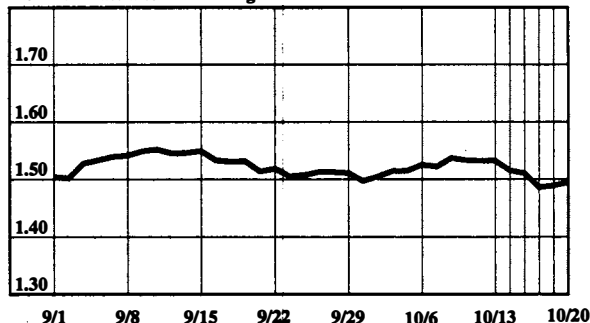
The dollar in yen

New York late afternoon fixing



The British pound in dollars

New York late afternoon fixing



The dollar in Swiss francs

New York late afternoon fixing

