

transportation chief Soogil Young made clear that “such high-technology infrastructure programs” as China’s Silk Road, the high-speed rail grid under development in Korea, and connections to Europe, “will be the economic future for the 21st century, the most important growth-leading sector not only for the economy of Korea, but for Japan, China, and our entire region.”

Also, LaRouche’s call for the bankruptcy reorganization of the world financial system is under study, particularly in Japan, where LaRouche briefed leaders during a December 1995 trip to Tokyo. Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto will make an early, unscheduled trip to the United States, to visit President Clinton on Feb. 23-25, Tokyo said on Feb. 9, despite the fact that Clinton is already scheduled for a State visit to Japan on April 16-18. “The rumor in Tokyo is that Hashimoto wants urgently to discuss the Japanese and international banking crisis with Bill Clinton,” Japanese financial sources told *EIR*.

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## Interview: Dr. Soogil Young

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# Eurasian land bridge: the economic future of the 21st century

*Dr. Soogil Young is president of the Korea Transport Institute (KOTI) of the Transportation Ministry in Seoul, South Korea. Dr. Young, a graduate of Johns Hopkins University, served at the Korea Development Institute from 1981 to 1993, when he assumed his present post. He was interviewed in Washington on Feb. 8 by Kathy Wolfe.*

**EIR:** How are South Korea’s new high-speed rail lines progressing?

**Young:** The Republic of Korea is very interested in high-speed rail, both domestic and international lines. In 1994, we decided to import TGV technology from the Alstom Company in France. Our Line No. 1, the “Seoul to Pusan High-speed Rail Line,” which is already under construction, is scheduled for completion in 2001. This is only the first of five major high-speed rail lines planned, to be completed by 2010. This year we’re initiating Line No. 2, from Seoul to Mokpo in the southwest, called the “Honam High-speed Rail Line,” being designed by my institute. Next will be Line No. 3, from Seoul near Korea’s west coast, due east to Kangnung on the east coast, called the “East-West High-speed Rail Line.” Line No. 4 will run from Pusan in the southeast, to

Kwangju in the southwest. Line No. 5 will run from Pusan in the southeast, up the eastern coast to Kangnung—the “East Coast High-Speed Rail Line.”

**EIR:** Will they all be TGV lines, or will you also use magnetic levitation (maglev) technology?

**Young:** Of course, the French would like us to choose French TGV technology for the entire national system, but we could also introduce German or Japanese high-speed technology. It’s still under negotiation, for the later lines. Regarding magnetic levitation, or maglev, our understanding is that it is not quite commercially available right this year, but we have many Korean engineers arguing for the use of maglev as soon as possible. Possibly it will come into play during construction of the later lines, Lines No. 3-5.

Now, we also hope, that progress in peace talks with Pyongyang, and economic integration with North Korea, will allow us to extend Line No. 1 from Seoul, northwest to Pyongyang and Shinuiju [on the North Korean-Chinese border]. Then, we would also like to extend Line No. 5, the East Coast High-Speed Line, all the way up the east coast of Korea, to Rajin-Sanbong near the Chinese and Russian borders, which could also link up to the Trans-Siberian Railway at nearby Vladivostok. We call these the “Trans-Korean High-Speed Rail Lines.” From there, we hope to link these up to Beijing, and then directly to the Trans-China Railway, or “Silk Road,” and the Trans-Siberian Railway. From there, we can go directly all the way to Paris and Amsterdam.

**EIR:** Lyndon LaRouche, our magazine’s founding editor, has called this the “Eurasian land bridge.” It is the center of his plans for world economic development.

**Young:** Yes, the Eurasian land bridge: That is our great vision for Korea’s future.

Now, high-speed rail will be the most important mode of inter-region transport in the 21st century, but it must be supplemented with a network of high-speed roads. We’re also interested in the U.N.’s ESCAP program for a Pan-Asian Highway, and we plan to build roads to connect up with it.

We also plan major port expansions, starting with Pusan, which is our largest modern container port, but now severely congested. We will expand it significantly. We’ve also begun a major expansion of Kwangyang port, in the center of the south coast. We plan Pusan and Kwangyang to be twin super-ports, which become international points of concentration of freight and other shipping. They would concentrate shipments from Japan and the Pacific to our east, and from the Mideast, Southeast Asia, Shanghai, etc. to our west, from all these sea lanes, upon the Korean Peninsula, and then we will ship the goods up the peninsula to the Eurasian continent.

We hope in this fashion to build Korea into the Amsterdam and Rotterdam of Northeast Asia, the transportation hub of the entire Northeast Asian region.

Then we are building a super-airport, the New Metropoli-

tan Airport, on Youngjon Island off Inchon, the port for Seoul. As with the new Osaka Airport, this is on land reclaimed from the sea. It will accommodate 100 million passengers a year by 2020, with four runways, the first to be completed by the year 2000 and the fourth by 2020, making it the largest airport in Northeast Asia. It will expand beyond the new Osaka Airport, because there is no other location in the region like this; its area can be extended indefinitely, by reclaiming more land from the sea, and it is far less earthquake prone than sites in Japan. Korea, in general, has far fewer earthquakes than Japan, so few that it is not comparable. This should increase the international competitiveness of Seoul as a major business hub for Northeast Asia.

**EIR:** Can you estimate the cost of the airport?

**Young:** About 14 trillion won [\$20 billion].

Now, the basic assumptions of all these projects, are two. First, we are assuming economic integration will come with North Korea, if not political reunification.

**EIR:** You seem very hopeful about reunification.

**Young:** Yes, we hope very much that Korea will be reunified. We are quietly, but reasonably, quite hopeful about the prospects. The second assumption is that financing will be available. I'm hopeful of this as well.

**EIR:** As you know, LaRouche originated such plans back in 1989, when Germany was reunified. He proposed a "European Productive Triangle," based on high-speed rail lines between Paris, Berlin, and Vienna, with connections into Russia, China, and the Pacific. Are you projecting such a growth triangle in Northeast Asia?

**Young:** Yes, this is a wonderful idea. We can say that Northeast Asia contains such a triangle, a growth pole for all of Asia, which Prof. Choe Sang-chul at Seoul National University has already named the "Bei-Se-To Development Corridor," taking the first syllable each of Beijing, Seoul, and Tokyo.

For example, there is already talk about a major regional bridge-tunnel project from Pusan at the southern tip of Korea, to Fukuoka in Japan.

**EIR:** I had no idea this was a concrete plan. By the map, it would seem to require two 60-kilometer undersea tunnels, longer than the world's longest, the 54-kilometer tunnel from Honshu to Hokkaido in Japan.

**Young:** It's quite concrete, but for now it's the Japanese who are promoting the Pusan-Fukuoka bridge and tunnel. There's a lot of discussion about it in Japan. But it's unpopular in Korea, and has many opponents. We have a difficult history, with Japan's occupation of Korea, and many Koreans are still worried about Japan. You know our old saying: "A shrimp is often crushed between two whales," meaning Japan, and China. By the way, there is a Japanese study of the plan, financed by Rev. Sunmyung Moon. But regardless of all this,

it's only natural that the Japanese would want to be connected to the mainland, and I personally don't think it's a bad idea.

**EIR:** Would Koreans feel stronger and more confident about this after reunification?

**Young:** With Korean reunification, in the 21st century, anything is possible.

**EIR:** Will extending the high-speed rail lines into North Korea mean that lines can also be connected into Manchuria, which is now landlocked? This would allow China's two big northeastern provinces, Heilongjiang and Jilin, access to the sea for the first time.

**Young:** Yes, this has tremendous potential for expanding trade and production. We believe the northeast provinces of China will be highly developed in the 21st century, and that's the enormous value of our projected East Coast Line. Manchuria is very rich in mineral resources and raw materials.

**EIR:** What kinds of sums does all this involve?

**Young:** A ballpark figure for Korea's five-line, high-speed system is about 360 trillion won, about 4% of our Gross National Product annually, between now and 2010, at 780 won per dollar [\$460 billion]. This means that all such high-technology infrastructure construction programs will be the economic future for the 21st century, the most important growth-leading sector, not only for the economy of Korea, but for Japan, China, and our entire region.

**EIR:** The International Monetary Fund's "shock therapy" policy has certainly not permitted such growth in eastern Germany, Russia, and Poland, but has ruined the economies completely. What have Koreans learned from Germany's bitter experience?

**Young:** Such policies are not for us. We must be careful to learn from their unfortunate experience.

**EIR:** For financing, will you borrow expensive Euromarket foreign debt, or use domestic sources?

**Young:** I'm in favor of using the international capital markets where feasible, but I think that Korea can finance 90% of its needs domestically. It can be done through taxes, and through Korean banks and brokerages, which are growing every day. We should be cautious about incurring a big foreign debt.

**EIR:** How will Korea power such a huge program?

**Young:** Much of it will be nuclear power, of course. Korea is already heavily dependent on nuclear power, for more than 40% of our electricity. The increment of power expansion needed for these projects must come from nuclear power. It's the obvious choice. We have no great fossil fuel resources, and nuclear power is environmentally far more friendly, in any case.