

Great Infrastructure Projects Are on the Eurasian Agenda

by Rachel Douglas

When Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin visited China in October 2009, the Russian-Chinese investment agenda, featuring high-speed rail, ports, and nuclear power, pointed toward what the real-economy content of a Four-Power (U.S.A., Russia, China, India) initiative for a new international credit system could be. Now, this potential transformation of Eurasia through infrastructure development has advanced through a series of late-Summer meetings, culminating Sept. 6-9 in the 6th Baikal Economic Forum (BEF) in Irkutsk, eastern Siberia.

Related deliberations took place in the framework of Putin's tour of Siberia and the Far East in August, during which he personally drove over 2,000 kilometers on the new Khabarovsk-Chita highway, giving media interviews from the driver's seat; President Dmitri Medvedev's Sept. 7 meeting with President Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakstan; and a railway conference in Khabarovsk, addressed Sept. 2 by Russian Railways President Vladimir Yakunin and Presidential Representative in the Far East Federal District Victor Ishayev. During these events, a far healthier side of Russian policy-making was at the forefront, in contrast to the ongoing chase, by Rosnano CEO Anatoli Chubais and his followers on the Kremlin staff, after market niches for such products as biosphere-destroying solar panels—in the name of “modernization.”

Missing from the picture is any significant American participation in these important Eurasian actions. Real development corridors along a New Silk Road in

Eurasia are not on the Obama Administration's agenda. But, the LaRouche movement's campaign for the NAWAPA (North American Water and Power Alliance) concept of Biosphere transformation knits all the continents together, with infrastructure lines across the Bering Strait, and through shared interest in real economic development.

The Baikal Forum

A lead article in China's *People's Daily* showcased the Baikal Forum, which was attended by over 1,500 people from 17 countries. Participants from “Russia, China, Japan, and the Republic of Korea,” the report said, “mainly discussed economic modernization and innovative development in Russia's Siberia and Far East Area.” Russia and China took the occasion to renew their commitment to “enhancing coordination to invigorate or rejuvenate northeast China and Russia's Far East.”

Among the participants was Sergei Mironov, head of the Federation Council of Russia's Federal Assembly. Attending the forum from the Chinese side were Zhang Guobao, head of China's National Administration of Energy, and Jiang Shusheng, vice chairman of the Standing Committee of China's National People's Congress. At the Forum's final press conference, Mironov said that the most important condition for successful interaction with foreign countries in the Russian Far East was “the urgent modernization of transport infrastructure in Eastern Siberia and the Far East.”

The rapid development of the China's northeastern



The late-Summer tour of Siberia and the Far East by Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin (second from right), culminating in the 6th Baikal Economic Forum, significantly advances the prospects for large-scale infrastructure development across Eurasia, including the replenishment of the Aral Sea. Shown: Putin is shown a model of the planned Vostochny cosmodrome Aug. 28.

provinces of Heilongjiang and Jilin (Dongbei) as a major manufacturing center sets the stage for upgrading regional transport lines. While China is developing its own high-speed and other rail links to Central Asia and Europe, the access of the northeastern provinces to the Russian port of Vladivostok and the Trans-Siberian Railroad are important for both China and Russia.

“Creating corridors between the European Union, China, and the Asia-Pacific countries,” said Mironov, “is a strategic objective of our country. . . . Our main task today is to become a bridge between Europe and Asia, not only politically and culturally, but also in the literal sense of the word. Russia needs to build a major road, rail, pipeline, air, and sea Euro-Asian road—a Silk Road of the 21st Century.”

The Baikal discussions were consonant with the Sept. 2 session of the Assembly of Railwaymen. There, Yakunin and Ishayev presented Russians Railways’ updated plan for the upgrade and expansion of the Baikal-Amur Mainline, the famous “second Trans-Siberian Railroad.”

The Chinese report pointed to recognition by Russia’s leadership, that “a backward Far East can be a stumbling block to long-term national development, and will possibly impede Russia from impacting the Asia-Pacific as a world power.” It noted Russia’s preparations to host the 2012 Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation

summit at Vladivostok, Putin’s Far East tour, and his Sept. 7 statement to the Valdai International Discussion Club meeting in Sochi, that Russia need not fear mass Chinese immigration to the Russian Far East. Indeed, in the Far East highway interview he gave channel Rossiya 24 on Aug. 31, Putin emphasized that it is Russia’s mission to develop these neglected areas, and that having China as a prosperous and flourishing neighbor is an advantage in that effort. “We have coexisted with China for a thousand years,” Putin told the Valdai meeting, adding that productive high-technology industry is the most important area for cooperation.

Lyndon LaRouche took note of this important development by situating the role of the Russia-China relationship in the global crisis. “The issue is, the Russians have the particular, historically defined ability to develop the mineral resources of the northern part of Asia,” LaRouche said.

“But China does not have that experience. Therefore, the collaboration between Russia and China, on things related to *this* kind of question, is crucial, not only for both China and Russia, but for the world as a whole—because the development of this area, which links the United States and Canada to Siberia and Russia, is the key to the future of all humanity, at this time of crisis.”

LaRouche also noted the just-released video by Meghan Rouillard of LaRouche PAC’s Basement Team, on the famous Turning Northern Rivers project to replenish the Aral Sea in Central Asia (<http://www.larouchepac.com/node/15727>). Rouillard’s presentation “on the Aral Sea axis and the riparian reorganization to deal with that, which [Mikhail] Gorbachov killed—the British agent Gorbachov, killed.” Said LaRouche, “This is also relevant in this area, because you have to develop the management of the water systems of Asia, in this sense, in this way, just as we are planning for the question of the U.S.A./Canada/Mexico with NAWAPA; we have to do that, as a precondition for saving this planet—British agents such as Gorbachov notwithstanding! They are not called British agents; they’re called agents of the IIASA [International Institute of Applied Systems Analysis]—which is the same thing as the British Empire. Bertrand Russell’s British Empire.”

LaRouchePAC’s video tour of the continental

FIGURE 1



An upshift of the Eurasian Biosphere will be accomplished with the development of Russia's Far East, combined with related projects in Central Asia, the Bering Strait, and the North American Water and Power Alliance (NAWAPA).

NAWAPA project is being released in a Russian-dubbed edition this month, just as a lively discussion has broken out in Eurasia, both of the Turning Northern Rivers project and of the Bering Strait crossing, which will connect Eurasia and the Americas, and the great projects of each.

Northern Rivers and Bering Strait

The meeting between Presidents Medvedev and Nazarbayev took place at the 7th Forum for Interregional Cooperation, held in Ust-Kamenogorsk, Kazakhstan. In a Summer when Central Asia's drought has only gotten worse, while whole regions of Russia went up in the flames of wildfires, the talks focused on water resources, as well as railways cooperation.

Nazarbayev broached the subject during their press conference: "Why not recall a project to divert the flow

of Siberian rivers into the southern regions of Russia and Kazakhstan, as we discussed today and yesterday? Over time, this problem may turn out very large [and] necessary to secure drinking water for the entire Central Asian region. Unfortunately, today, the issues of water security have been left without proper attention. . . . Nature has decided to remind us of this fact."

Medvedev responded: "We are open to discussing ideas, including some ideas from the past that had been gathering dust."

The Turning Northern Rivers great project, also known as the Ob-Irtysh project or the Siberian-Aral Canal, has been discussed for more than a century. It would take water from the Siberian River Ob and its tributary, the Irtysh, via canal to the water-hungry Aral Sea region of Central Asia. Advanced engineering plans were drawn up in the 1980s, but deep-sixed during Gorbachev's

chov's reign (1985-91). Leaders of the Central Asia Republics, along with Russian figures such as Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov, have refused to let the idea die. The desiccation of the Aral Sea, as water from the Amu Darya and Syr Darya rivers was taken for irrigation in Central Asia's Soviet-era cotton monoculture, became one of the greatest environmental catastrophes on Earth.

As for the Bering Strait tunnel project, connecting the Siberian/Far East frontier to the NAWAPA region through Alaska, Federation Council member Aslambek Aslakhonov, a former advisor to Putin as President, revealed in an Aug. 24 interview that it will be on the agenda of the November Group of 20 summit in South Korea. Aslakhonov, who represents the Siberian region of Omsk, said that the Korean hosts were expected to advance this agenda item, while in the Russian government, "the overall attitude is positive" to the Bering Strait project. The concept means not only mineral resource development, Aslakhonov pointed out. "One main advantage," he said, "will be creation of hundreds of thousands of new jobs," as well as the "opportunity to build new houses, whole new communities, and develop industry and the whole region."

Putin's Tour

Prime Minister Putin's strategic tour of Siberia and Russia's Far East began Aug. 23 with his visit to scientific research outposts in the Far North, and continued to the end of the month with visits to Kamchatka, Yakutia, and, via the new highway, the Amur and Trans-Baikal regions. The focus was infrastructure and improving living standards for the region's sparse population—critical issues for creating the economic base to build such great projects as the Bering Strait tunnel.

During his four-day road trip from Khabarovsk to Chita, the first paved road to link the Far East to the rest of the nation, Putin stopped off to lead a meeting at the construction site of Cosmodrome Vostochny on Aug. 28. The next day, he launched the Russia-China section of the East Siberia-Pacific Ocean oil pipeline.

Economic life develops around great projects, Putin said. He told the Cosmodrome meeting that building this facility will reaffirm Russia's "high status and leading position" in space technology and exploration. On July 19, he had announced the allocation of almost 25 billion rubles (over \$800 million) to begin construction of the Cosmodrome in earnest over the next three years. From this location, Putin said, Russia will pursue the exploration of the Moon and Mars.