

The Great Rail Projects of Colombia

Due to a printer's error, an incorrect version of the accompanying map was published in last week's *EIR*, in Maximiliano Londoño's article "Reaping the Food Potential of the Colombia-Venezuela Plains." The article presented a detailed proposal for the construction of high-speed, maglev rail corridors in Colombia, including a set of three tunnels, which would cut through the Andes Mountains, in order to fully integrate the nation's rail system with the World Land-Bridge, connecting it through the Darien Gap, which separates Colombia and Panama and today has *no* rail or even highway links through it.

Londoño also presented the concept of intermodal connections between the proposed rail network, and the navigable rivers which flow east from Colombia into both the Orinoco and Amazon River systems. The Meta River, for example, is navigable nearly all the way to Villavencio; while the Putumayo is navigable all along the border of Colombia and Peru and part of Ecuador, where an intermodal connection can then be built to the national rail system.

These combined rail-river great projects are particularly important for opening up the entire Eastern Plains region of Colombia for a major increase in agricultural production. Along with the contiguous plains area of Venezuela, this area can produce as much as 60 million tons of grain per year—more than a third of the total Ibero-American production today!

Similar great infrastructure projects are very much on the agenda of nearly all the Presidents of the nations of Ibero-America. For example, on Aug. 12, the President of Ecuador, Rafael Correa, travelled to Argentina, and reported in a press conference afterward that his trip had included an overflight of the extensive Paraná-Paraguay waterway, the large in-

frastructure project which joins Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, Brazil, and Bolivia, spanning 700,000 square kilometers.

One of the reasons for meeting with Argentine President Cristina Fernández, Correa said, was to seek Argentina's technical assistance and advice in building a similar structure on Ecuador's Napo River, which would be part of a multi-modal, bioceanic corridor that would connect Ecuador's Pacific port of Manta with the Amazon River/Atlantic port of Manaus, in Brazil.

That project would span the Brazilian, Colombian, and Peruvian Amazon regions as well, Correa said. Ecuador's transportation minister, who joined Correa, told the media, "We know how important the [Paraná-Paraguay] waterway is for Argentina, and we hope that in some way, you can advise us, using your great experience and success."

