
High-Speed Rail

Economy Builders Take The Lead In Russia

July 22—Those in the Russian leadership who want to build the real national economy have been making themselves heard recently, on the need to build infrastructure to combat the economic crisis, and on government's essential role. This contrasts with the IT-nanotechnology-financial services emphasis, promoted all year by Rosnano CEO Anatoli Chubais and other "Pirates of the Caribbean," as the guts of Russia's modernization policy.

In addition to Prime Minister Vladimir Putin's July 19 confirmation of funding for construction of the new Cosmodrome Vostochny space launch site in the Far East, Russian Railways president Vladimir Yakunin and others are insisting on modernization which is very different from emulating Silicon Valley.

Cooperation with other nations, including China, Belarus, and Germany, is part of what Lyndon LaRouche has termed the Eurasian nations' "nested agreements for cooperation." In a July 20 interview with the daily *Izvestia*, Yakunin described his discussions in Beijing, where he addressed the July 12 conference on Dialogue of Civilizations and a Harmonious World. China's national infrastructure construction is "a textbook example of how to boost an economy," Yakunin said. "And [do] you know what they said to me three days ago? 'Let's think about a high-speed service between Beijing and Berlin, and Beijing and Paris!' I really liked the idea."

The Chinese side told him that the project might take more than five or ten years, but "this train will eventually run from China to Europe via Russia." Current China-Europe freight transport takes a week. "If you imagine that Russia and China together complete a direct railway line for high-speed trains, how much quicker would that be?" Yakunin said.

Yakunin also described proposals made by Russian Railways to the President's Commission on Modernization, including development of a new test center for high-speed rail technologies, for Russia and its international partners. He asserted, "There are no real alterna-

tives to rail as a carrier of bulk cargo and large numbers of passengers." Western nations went into road-building after World War II, "but now they're sounding the alarm.... Russia has undertaken various measures to support rail. I am sure that inter-regional high-speed services will be developed, especially in the Trans-Urals and Russia's Far East, where, as you know, the transport links are not that great."

Belarus is making specific proposals for constructing an important section of the China-Europe high-speed rail line. According to its press service, Belarusian Railways has proposed a three-way meeting of the Belarusian-Chinese-Russian rail services, to discuss building high-speed rail between Minsk and Moscow. At a July 2 meeting in Minsk, Belarusian Railways invited the Chinese Ministry of Railways to help reconstruct the Baranovichi-Brest railway track—a key section of the Moscow-to-Berlin rail line—for high-speed service. China is interested in "joint cooperation in design, construction and equipment production," Belarus Rail said.

Earlier this year, the Belarus Development Group published a pamphlet titled "Belarus 2018: Toward Regional Leadership through Sovereign National Development," which cited LaRouche on the Eurasian Land-Bridge.

Russian Railways first vice president Vadim Morozov told the July 7 Global Rail Freight Conference in St. Petersburg that strategic rail transport development is essential for overcoming the economic crisis. Morozov stressed the special role of the state in developing infrastructure: "The implementation of infrastructure projects helps create tens of thousands of jobs, supports the real sector of the economy, links long-term state investments, and consequently neutralizes the risk of growing inflation, while forming a real foundation for modernizing the economy and improving its competitiveness," Morozov said.

On July 7, Russian Railways announced it will proceed to build the first-ever dedicated high-speed rail line in Russia, between St. Petersburg and Moscow, with international investment. Although high-speed rail service began in 2009, it has been running on improved existing tracks, slowing down service, and causing serious safety problems. The special tracks had not been built due to lack of funding, according to Yakunin, but 1 trillion rubles (\$330 billion) will now be committed to the 660-km dedicated high-speed line.

—Mary Burdman and Rachel Douglas