
Intelligence and History

Grigori Bondarevsky's Passion for Eurasia

by Mary Burdman

During his long career, Prof. Grigori L. Bondarevsky emerged as one of Russia's senior intelligence experts. This involved certain special missions; but the nature of his intelligence work was far broader. It involved a grasp of crucial historical processes and precedents, on the basis of which, uniquely, intelligence assessments could be made. "The Professor" saw his life's work as concerned with developing a comprehensive concept of historical processes, from which standpoint, judgments of current policies and events could be made. His daily work ranged from current events, to extensive delving in Russian and other historic archives. He always brought what he learned "in the archives" to bear on unfolding events, to great effect.

Professor Bondarevsky was one of the chief figures involved, from early on, in crafting Russia's integration into the "Eurasian Land-Bridge" rail-corridor-centered infrastructure, and in crafting the Russia-China-India "strategic triangle" which has taken shape in recent years. On both of these related fronts, he became an important contributor to, and collaborator of Lyndon LaRouche and his movement.

One of Professor Bondarevsky's favorite phrases, was that some development, was "of the greatest importance." I cannot reproduce his intonation, but the emphasis was always on the "great." This phrase became a marker for me, as I was struggling, a decade ago, to begin understanding something which has become "of the greatest importance": the strategic necessity of cooperation—economic, political, military, and cultural—among the nations of the vast Eurasian landmass, for the future of the entire world.

This idea was the life work of Grigori Bondarevsky. He was himself a living part of its history: He began his career with a study of the Berlin-Baghdad Railroad, and lived and taught for many years in Tashkent, that ancient Silk Road city which also was the "capital" of Russian and Soviet Central Asia after it was conquered in 1865. He knew both the millennial history and the modern conditions of the nations of Central Asia, (or "Middle Asia," as this huge region is known in Russia and China)—especially Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan—as few others did. His knowledge of areas of West Asia (called the "Middle East" by those of European or American orientation) was comparable.

His greatest love was India, and his work to promote the long-term relations between it and his own nation. Especially

among the heirs of the Congress Party tradition, this love was mutual. To this, as history progressed in Eurasia in the 1990s, he added both nations' relationship to China.

The Professor first met the LaRouche movement in September 1990; in December 1990 and again in March 1991, he visited our institute in Wiesbaden, and there opened up to us the importance of the imminent completion of the rail line between Xinjiang in China and Alma Ata (now Almaty), Kazakhstan—the famous Second Euro-Asian Continental Bridge (**Figure 1**). This rail line had been almost completed in 1959, when the "Sino-Soviet split" had halted construction. As a result, there were *no* rail connections between Central Asia and China, just as there were no rail connections between Central Asia and South Asia. Indeed, South Asia, the Indian Subcontinent, still has no rail connections to any other region of Eurasia.

This time, the early 1990s, was one of great turmoil: After the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, for the first time in half a century, the potential for building infrastructure and political bridges from western Europe to eastern Asia, could be realized. For those of us in the West, two great regions—Central Europe, stretching from eastern Germany and the Balkans, into Belarus and Ukraine; and Central Asia—re-emerged on the world stage.

There were, however, great troubles. The Soviet Union was breaking up, due primarily to profound economic contradictions which Lyndon LaRouche had clearly and publicly foreseen already in the early 1980s. Mischief makers—Margaret Thatcher in London and François Mitterrand in Paris, taking up their governments' old roles which had set off World War I—along with their cohorts in Washington, New York, and Boston, drew Russia and Central Europe into the terrible trap of "Shock Therapy" and economic ruin.

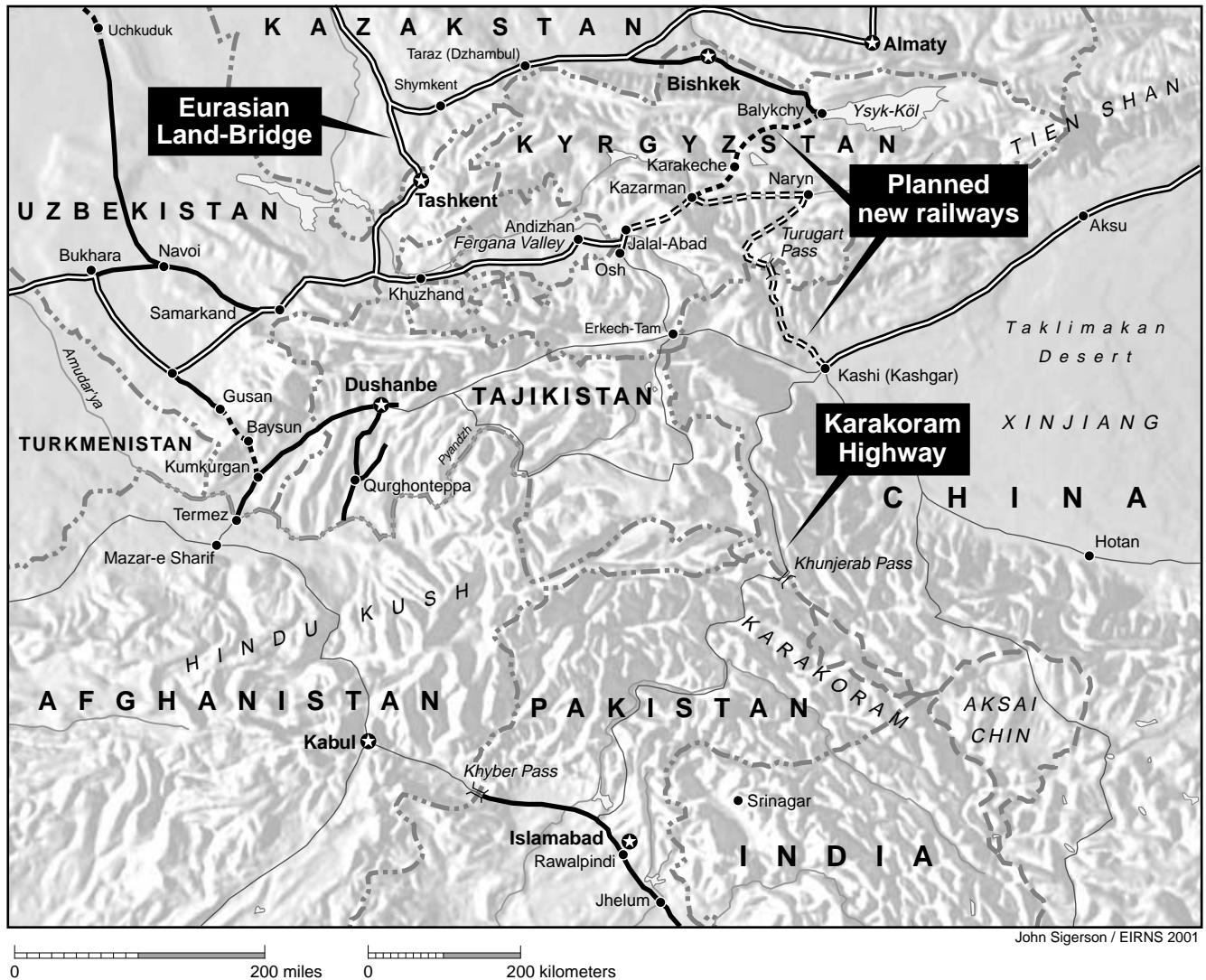
China—1.1 billion people striving to "reform and open up" to a world tipping over into global depression—got into serious economic contradictions. This set off the national unrest, culminating in the Tiananmen demonstrations which were taken over in the final days by "diehard leaders"—who all escaped to careers at prominent U.S. think-tanks.

In a manner eerily recalling 1914, the United States, Britain, and France set off the 1991 Gulf War, followed by new Balkans wars, doing their all to wreck once again the potential for European-Asian cooperation and development.

This was also the time Lyndon LaRouche was unjustly imprisoned, on trumped-up charges, for five years in the United States. Yet, from his prison in the American Midwest, in response to this strategic situation, LaRouche developed his "Productive Triangle Paris-Berlin-Vienna" program, to turn the re-united Europe into a powerhouse to generate economic development in central and eastern Europe, and beyond.

Amidst this turmoil, as we learned from Professor Bondarevsky, Eurasian development was not destroyed. As he told us at that fascinating March 1991 two-day seminar in Wiesbaden, great events were taking place. One month later, on a

FIGURE 1
Central Asia, Fulcrum of the 'Paris-Shanghai Railroad'



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visit to the United States, my husband was able to talk to LaRouche in prison. Told of our discussions on Eurasian infrastructure with Bondarevsky, LaRouche immediately responded: "Developing Eurasia! That is my policy!"

The key rail project at the time, was the ongoing construction of the final kilometers of the China-Kazakstan rail link. The completion of just about 120 kilometers of railroad would, explained the Professor, for the first time since the Trans-Siberian Railroad was completed in 1903, open up a Euro-Asian rail link connecting the Pacific, through Central Asia and Russia, to Europe and the Atlantic. A second great rail link was under construction, that through Turkmenstan,

Uzbekistan, to Iran, opening up Central Asia to the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean for the first time.

This was not all. Still being planned today, is the Shanghai-to-Paris railroad, extending from China's greatest industrial city, to the city of Kashi in Xinjiang, and then to Kyrgyzstan, Osh, and through the legendary Fergana Valley to Tashkent in Uzbekistan. From there, the rail line would be connected to western Europe. All these areas were well known to the Professor.

As ever with Professor Bondarevsky, this discussion involved a lesson in history. He had worked under successive Soviet and Russian governments, beginning with that of Josef

Stalin. To understand the importance of these rail links, you had to understand the unique economic development of the U.S.S.R. The Soviet Union, especially the Asian regions, were only brought into an industrialized economy very late, and this was done under Stalin's economic plan.

The Professor pointed out a feature of Russian development which was unlike that of western Europe, but, in some ways, like that of the United States: Russia had to use what were, at the time, the newest technologies in developing much of its area, especially the Asian and Pacific regions. This was done first in the 1920s-30s; and again in the 1950s, to rebuild after World War II—a war so destructive, that it cost the lives of some 45-50 million Russians.

Stalin built a system to last, he thought, for centuries: with factories of the same industry scattered to the ends of the U.S.S.R.; with a rail and an energy system to link them—but not to connect to the surrounding countries. When the Soviet Union broke apart, the system collapsed, creating a “terrible imbroglio” for all the former U.S.S.R. nations.

This, as Bondarevsky told us then, and repeated in an interview he gave *EIR* in 1995 (see below in this section), led to the realization that economic integration was necessary for Eurasia. “In this situation, [for] the idea of Eurasian union—opposed by nationalistic and some other forces—one of the best possibilities to start with, is railways,” he said.

The Eurasian Land-Bridge

These insights from the Professor were an invaluable addition to the concept of the “Eurasian Land-Bridge,” which has become so fundamental to the international movement led by Lyndon and Helga LaRouche. He contributed greatly to a new understanding of what was going on in China, in Russia, in West Asia, and in India. He had information and insights on policy decisions and discussions on Eurasian developments, taking place anywhere from Indonesia to Germany, and many places in between. To give an idea of the quality of his contribution, I look back at articles I wrote in 1990, on China and Russia, in which I noted the critical agreements of these two nations to “reduce military forces along their common border.” Little did I know then, that this was the seed kernel of what was to become the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), founded by China, Russia, Kazakstan, Kyrgystan, Tajikistan in 1996, and later joined by Uzbekistan—another development whose historic importance the Professor stressed.

But after our meetings with Professor Bondarevsky, this changed. By March 1991, I was able to appreciate the importance of the growing Chinese-Soviet relations in the wake of the first Bush Gulf War, including, already then, their joint commitment to developing their “traditionally close friendship” and opposition to a U.S.-dominated “unipolar” world order. The Professor emphasized the importance of the first Chinese-Soviet summit in 34 years, held in May 1991 in Moscow. Mikhail Gorbachov did not survive long after this, but the process initiated by his 1986 speech in Vladivostok,

declaring the U.S.S.R. an Asian as well as European nation, has survived. At the time of this summit, the Professor told us, “the last section of a rail link between the Central Asian republic of Kazakstan, and Xinjiang in China, will now be completed even more rapidly than planned, probably by the end of this year.” He proved correct.

In June 1992, after many discussions with the Professor, I wrote my first extensive piece on the “Eurasian Railroad,” the world's greatest rail network. In 1996, a Schiller Institute delegation led by its chairwoman, Helga Zepp-LaRouche, participated in the Symposium on “Economic Development along the New Eurasian Continental Bridge” in Beijing. Here, we discussed not only China's development policy; high-level representatives of Iran also proudly announced the opening of the Ashkhabad-Mashad railroad, the second gateway to Central Asia.

Strategic Triangle

Professor Bondarevsky's special quality of being able to point to critical changes affecting strategic issues, was not limited to the Eurasian Land-Bridge. Another crucial insight was his early recognition of the importance of the developing relations among Russia, India, and China, and his efforts to help those relations.

In August 1995, he told us: “There is a new idea developing, which I am fostering, for a ‘trilateral’ relationship, comprising Russia, China, and India.” This is “an answer, in a sense, to that Trilateral Commission [of the United States, Western Europe, and Japan].” Just at that time, the “neo-conservatives” in the United States were exerting very heavy political pressure on China, and pushing the “independence” of Taiwan. “If these trends continue,” he said, “if this strategy of containment [against China] is followed, then Russia and China will become ever closer and ever warmer in relations. The consequences of this are very important.” India, he said, thought that “this is very good.” Indian relations with China were becoming “much warmer,” with much less focus on the border problem.

This “triangle,” he said, would involve many joint projects, some of industry and infrastructure, but most, military. Russia and China, he said, would soon resolve their border problem, as the founding of the SCO group the next year demonstrated. This idea was one forerunner of Lyndon LaRouche's call for a “survivors' club” of nations, resisting the “Washington Consensus”-led drive for globalization which had brought so much grief to Asian nations, Russia, Ibero-America, and the United States itself in the critical years 1997-98. The core of such a “survivors' club” consists of the Strategic Triangle nations, Russia, China, and India.

Finally, Professor Bondarevsky was a great friend, both personally and politically. In May 2001, commenting on the new Eurasian Transport Union announcement from Moscow, he told us: “The new Eurasian Transport Union is a great success, and I can assure you, this process will go on. We are working with Lyndon LaRouche, hand-in-hand.”