

The 'Survivors Club' Is Building New Silk Road

by Mary Burdman

In his speech to the third Foreign Ministers Meeting of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) in Beijing on May 24, China's President Jiang Zemin called for the creation of a "New Silk Road" between Asia and Europe, "to actively boost exchanges between these two civilizations in the new century." Jiang's short, but pointed, speech, is only one of many recent indications, that the group of Eurasian nations dubbed the "Survivors Club" by Lyndon LaRouche in 1998, is ever more aware of the urgency of expanding cooperation in order to counter the "all sides" confrontationism of the disastrous George W. Bush Administration.

At the opening of the one-day meeting, Jiang said that Asia and Europe "have made indelible contributions to the advancement of human civilization and the promotion of world peace and development." However, he said, currently, "the development of the world is unbalanced or even inharmonious. . . . The unjust and irrational international political and economic order remains unchanged. . . . It will be a long and uphill journey to bring about a lasting peace and the common development of mankind.

"In the new century, it is the responsibility of statesmen and people of all countries to find ways to seize the rare opportunities for development. . . . ASEM should be developed [and] should become a major channel for exchanges between Eastern and Western civilizations. Both Asia and Europe are cradles of human civilizations and have long been associated with each other. The ancient Silk Road, which used to be an important passage of interflow between Asian and European civilizations, has played a unique role in the exchanges between Eastern and Western civilizations. ASEM should build up a new Silk Road to actively boost exchanges between these two civilizations in the new century." He concluded that

ASEM "should be an important force for promoting the establishment of a new international political and economic order."

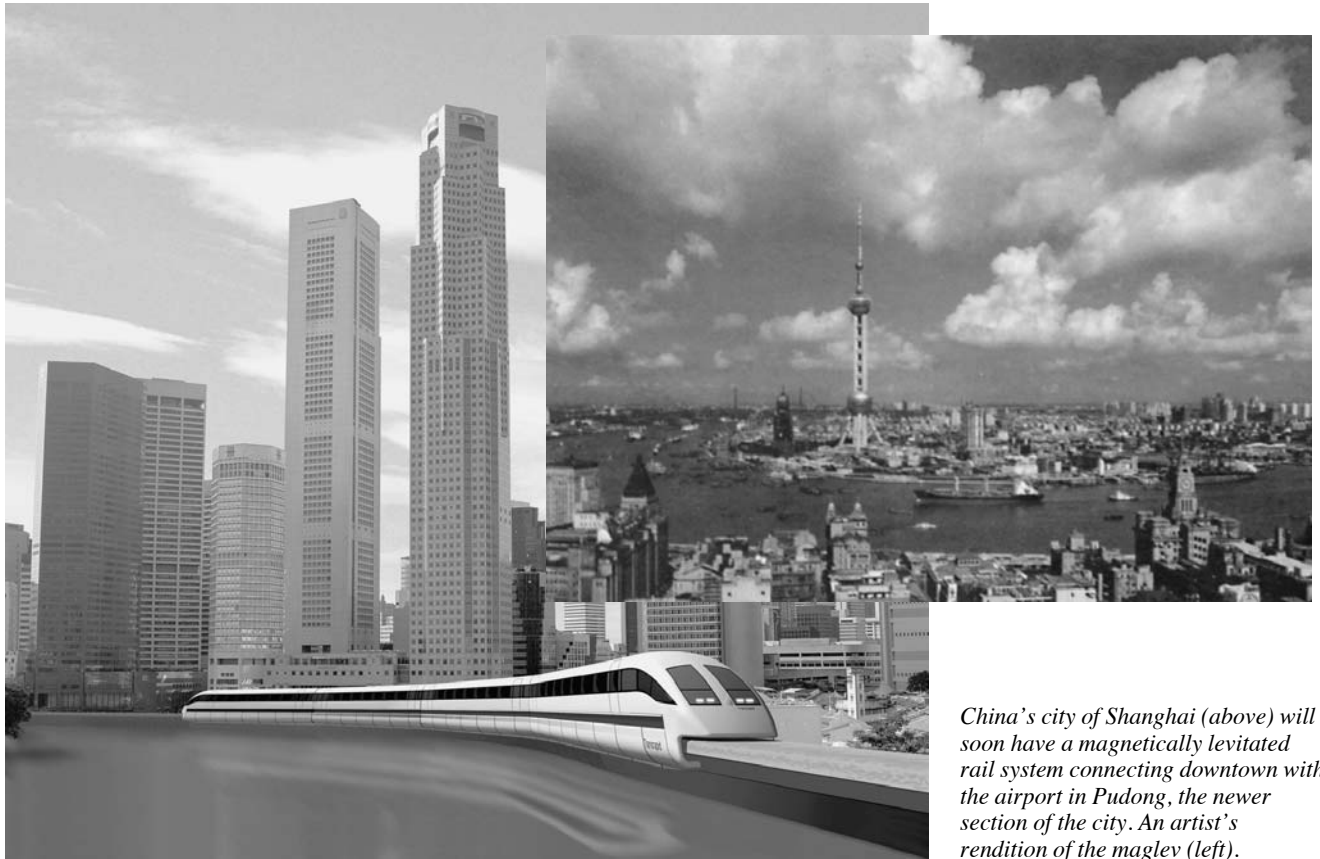
Transrapid Moving Fast

A leading example of the level of Eurasian cooperation, which will provide "a rare opportunity for development," is the progress of the Chinese-German project to construct the world's first commercial Transrapid magnetic-levitation (maglev) technology train in China. The first section of this project, a 32 kilometer line from downtown Shanghai to its airport in the Pudong area, is now being built at a speed that is taking even its German contributors, ThyssenKrupp AG, which created the Transrapid technology, and the German Transport Ministry, by surprise.

There is every indication from the Chinese side, that the ultimate purpose of the Shanghai project, is to expand this short Transrapid line into a project that would revolutionize world transport: building a 1,300 km Transrapid to connect Shanghai, China's biggest industrial city, to the capital, Beijing.

Already, a project "general staff" has been created in Shanghai, led by engineer "commander" Wu Xiangming, who recently received German Minister of Transport Kurt Bodewig and ThyssenKrupp AG Chairman Ekkehard Schulz during their May 19-26 visit to China. The German delegation took note, that the Chinese factory to produce the cement supports for the maglev track is much larger than would be required for just the short Pudong line, and already, maglev terminals are being planned for the cities of Hangzhou and Nanjing — which are several hundred kilometers from Shanghai, and clearly, "jumping-off points" for the line to Beijing.

When Bodewig and Schulz met Prime Minister Zhu



China's city of Shanghai (above) will soon have a magnetically levitated rail system connecting downtown with the airport in Pudong, the newer section of the city. An artist's rendition of the maglev (left).

Rongji in Beijing on May 23, Zhu told them that the decision on which technology to use for the long-planned high-speed rail line between Beijing and Shanghai, will be decided by the success of the Pudong project. The Chinese Prime Minister, an engineer who comes from Shanghai, told his German guests that he would prefer to use the Transrapid technology. To convince skeptics, who are critical of the cost of the project, Zhu emphasized that it is important that the Pudong project—which is on schedule—be completed by early 2002 as planned, so that the working commercial maglev can be assessed for the government's discussion of the new national infrastructure development plan, to be finalized in Spring 2003.

Bodewig signed a memorandum of understanding with the Chinese Transport Minister, on the mutual exchange of technology and know-how, including from the actual project construction in China, for further application in commercial maglev projects in both China and Germany—where, to date, only a demonstration Transrapid has been built. A joint Chinese-German review is planned for late 2002, and feasibility studies on new projects, such as Beijing-Shanghai, should be prepared for early 2003, Bodewig and his Chinese hosts decided. Another project already being proposed, is to connect Beijing with the port city of Tianjin on the Bohai Sea.

Beijing Mayor Liu Qi met with Schulz, and called for cooperation with the German group to develop Beijing's urban transportation system, including with the maglev.

Also on May 23, in Berlin, 10,000 km to the west, the German and Chinese Finance Ministers were meeting, to discuss China's construction of the Transrapid. "Now there are greater chances for further use of the technology," German Finance Minister Hans Eichel stated after their meeting. Chinese Finance Minister Xiang Huaicheng, who received a model maglev from Eichel, said that the project "is a breakthrough for Transrapid," and both governments are "focussed on making it a success. . . . I hope that Transrapid will be able to be used in an even larger scope. The success of the Shanghai rail system can point the way to other uses in other regions of the world." Xiang also met with German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder to discuss, among other things, that both nations will now name a Transrapid commissioner.

Revolutionizing Transport

Reflecting on his talks in Beijing after his return to Germany, ThyssenKrupp's Schulz said that there is a "vision to bring the Transrapid from this country to others, through joint ventures." The Pudong project will be for the maglev train, what the 1835 Nuremberg-Fuerth rail line, the first in Ger-

many, was for the German rail system, Schulz said.

While the German side will produce the trains for the short Pudong project—creating 1,000 jobs in Germany—for the potentially much greater projects, it would be essential to have train production on site, in China. This would likely mean a genuine joint venture, in which both sides have equal access to the Transrapid know-how. China's Science and Technology Minister Xu Guanghua, with whom Bodewig also signed a memorandum of understanding, called for broad Chinese participation in the construction of the Beijing-Shanghai project, to help reduce the cost, estimated at 50 billion deutschemarks (about \$25 billion).

In the longer term, this could mean German-Chinese cooperation to build Transrapid projects in other regions of Eurasia. The maglev technology, not just for passenger travel but also for freight transport, would transform the economic potential of the Eurasian land-mass, because of its speed, economic efficiency, and utility in extreme terrain. Use of the maglev and other such new technologies, is the kernel of Lyndon LaRouche's unique concept of the Eurasian Land-Bridge.

Another "Great Project" is also moving forward on schedule: the railroad to the "roof of the world." The construction of the first 100 km of the Qinghai-Tibet railway is set to begin as planned in July, Vice Minister of Railways Sun Yongfu announced in Beijing on May 21. To meet the unique problems presented by this rail project, which will be built not only at unprecedented altitudes, but also on frozen ground and across extremely rugged terrain, the Rail Ministry is bringing together the most talented engineers from all over China to work on it, Sun said.

Re-Linking Korea

These rapid developments highlight the importance of the "Survivors Club" bringing all its resources to bear to resolve another critical situation: the current impasse on the Korean peninsula. Almost a full year after the historic inter-Korean summit in Pyongyang on June 13-14, 2000, when South Korean President Kim Dae-jung called on North Korean National Defense Commission Chairman Kim Jong-il and the Pyongyang leadership to "re-link the broken railways," work on this vital link in the Eurasian Land-Bridge remains stalled. Last Autumn, South Korea launched, with well-merited fanfare, work on its end of the 20 km section of track needed to reconnect the North and South Korean rail systems, which has been cut since 1953 by the Demilitarized Zone.

Yet, this Spring, no progress has yet been made on the rail construction—a result of provocative and stupid comments made by President Bush on North Korea, when Kim Dae-jung visited Washington in February. Administration policy has been followed up by the visit to Seoul in early May, of professional wrestler look-alike, State Department Undersecretary Richard Armitage.

Pyongyang, for the time being, is simply not going ahead with construction. One essential measure, clearing the dense land mines in the DMZ, has not been begun, and a North-South military agreement for joint cooperation to begin the clearance, has yet to be signed. There are reports that Pyongyang has withdrawn both workers and construction equipment from the site where they had been since last September, although this could be due to deployments to other construction sites.

Seoul had hoped that the rail line could be reopened by this Autumn, but, unless work begins soon, it will be difficult to complete construction until next Summer.

China, Europe, and Russia, are all taking diplomatic steps to ease the situation. Italy, Germany, Sweden, and the European Union have all extended diplomatic recognition to Pyongyang since last year, and EU current chairman Göran Persson visited North Korea in May. The ASEM foreign ministers' statement of May 24 supported the implementation of the Joint Declaration signed at the June 2000 Inter-Korean Summit, and called for the early convening of a second inter-Korean summit, which would mean that Kim Jong-il would visit Seoul. No date has been set for this yet by Pyongyang.

Also in May, Russian and North and South Korean rail experts presented their reports on the potential for linking a united Korean rail system to the Russian Trans-Siberian Railway, to all three governments. The Russian government has just issued a proposal for coordinating rail communications among the three countries, and with China.

Beijing has taken a particular initiative. Li Peng, chairman of the Standing Committee of the National Peoples' Congress, paid a five-day visit to South Korea, where he met President Kim Dae-jung on May 25. A central item on the agenda, was the urgency of Chinese and other nations' diplomacy to help re-start North-South Korean moves toward reunification.

In his meeting with Li Peng, Kim Dae-jung said that the most important issue for the Korean peninsula, is to establish the basis for peaceful existence and exchange between North and South Korea, and asked for China's help in ensuring that relations between the two Koreas, and between North Korea and the United States, develop in parallel. Kim stated that "not only should inter-Korean ties be improved, but the relationship between North Korea and the United States should be enhanced at the same time. In that regard, I hope for China's cooperation."

Li Peng responded that the "artificial separation" of a nation would not historically last long, and that the ultimate independent and peaceful unification of Korea would benefit the region and the world. "China firmly backs all efforts made by the South and the North to improve relations, realize reconciliation and cooperation, and achieve the independent and peaceful reunification at last," Li said.

Rainer Apel contributed to this article.