

Potential for 'Strategic Triangle' Cooperation Grows

by Mary Burdman

During November the three great Eurasian nations—Russia, China, and India—have launched new bilateral and trilateral diplomacy, featuring the unprecedented “triangular” visit by Russian President Vladimir Putin to China and India from Dec. 1-5. Putin’s trip to Beijing and New Delhi will bring together the three members of the Eurasian “strategic triangle”—first officially proposed by then-Russian Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov in New Delhi in December 1998.

A “community of principle” among the three Eurasian giants is a goal to which Lyndon LaRouche has given great importance, and contributed policy leadership, since well before Primakov’s 1998 statement. China and India, the world’s two most populous nations, each has a continuous cultural history stretching back many millennia; Russia has a scientific tradition and capability, vital for developing the huge Eurasian landmass.

All three nations face great economic and security challenges, which they must cooperate to solve. These problems are being exacerbated by the war drive by the military “Utopians” in Washington, who are already basing a “permanent” war in Afghanistan and demanding more wars in Eurasia. Both Russia and India have been hit with brutal terrorist attacks, including the hostage-taking in Moscow on Oct. 23 and the bloody assaults in India’s Jammu and Kashmir state beginning Nov. 23-24.

Finally there was the Nov. 21-22 “NATO expansion summit” in Prague. While Putin was at it, the Kremlin confirmed his exceptional travel plans. According to high-level Russian and Indian sources, this announcement was a very forceful reaction to the Prague events by Russia, turning to its Eurasian neighbors.

The strategic triangle nations, if they reach a common

perspective for Eurasian development, could now play an irreplaceable role in shifting the dangerous course of history.

Smooth and Measured Transition in China

Putin arrives in China Dec. 1 for a three-day visit, invited by President Jiang Zemin; he will also meet, for the first time, the new Secretary General of the Chinese Communist Party, Hu Jintao, who took office Nov. 15, after the conclusion of the CPC’s 16th Party Congress in Beijing Nov. 11-14. Putin’s long-planned summit with Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee will follow on Dec. 4. He will make an important policy speech to the Indian Council of World Affairs, and on Dec. 5, will meet with leaders of Indian industry, before returning to Moscow.

Plans for this potential breakthrough were made already on June 3-4, when 16 Eurasian nations held the first summit of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) in Almaty, Kazakhstan. Putin’s planned trip was first publicly noted Sept. 14, when Foreign Ministers Igor Ivanov of Russia, Tang Jiaxuan of China, and Yashwant Sinha of India held their first-ever high-level “triangular” meeting on the sidelines of the 57th UN General Assembly in New York. On Nov. 6, senior policymakers held the second meeting of the Russia-India-China “Trilateral Dialogue” in Beijing. The Dialogue, of leading academicians and institutes, first met in Moscow in 2001, and will meet next in New Delhi, to discuss joint relations and the situation in South and Central Asia.

Without question, an essential element in this diplomacy was the leadership transition which took place in China. As mandated, Party Secretary-General Jiang Zemin—who remains national President until his term expires in March—and

other senior leaders retired, bringing forward the new “fourth generation.” At the same time, there was also frank discussion of the enormous challenges China’s 1.3 billion people face. Observers in Beijing emphasized Secretary Jiang’s sober and truthful report to the Congress. Three issues were emphasized: how to create a “*xiaokang shehui*,” or “well-off society,” for China’s people in the coming decades; the solid results of the five-year campaign to “Develop the West,” generated by enormous investment in building infrastructure; and important political developments.

These last included the enhanced role of China’s democratic parties, which date back to the 1920s and 1930s, in the political process, and the introduction of the concept of the “Three Represents” as an amendment to the Chinese Constitution. The “Three Represents,” first proposed by Jiang Zemin in July 2001, calls on the Party to “always represent the development trend of China’s advanced productive forces, the orientation of China’s advanced culture, and the fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of the people in China.”

Those who proclaimed this a “capitalist turn,” would do well to read Prime Minister Zhou Enlai’s June 1952 speech on the “Chinese National Bourgeoisie.” Zhou Enlai stated then, that it was “essential” for China, with its huge population and backward economy, to use the “initiative” of its entrepreneurs, most of whom had remained in China after the Revolution.

‘A Passage of Civilizations’

Within the triangle, the steady growth of China-India relations is going in a direction not seen since the 1950s. Most remarkable: The commander-in-chief of the Central Command of India, Lt. Gen. Dinash Singh Chauhan, was the first military official to meet the new chief of staff of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army, Gen. Liang Guanglie, in Beijing on Nov. 25. General Liang is also a member of the Central Military Commission of the CPC. He emphasized that India and China do not regard each other as a “threat;” both generals stated the importance of inter-military ties, and the current negotiations between India and China on border issues. The meeting took place at the time of the 40th anniversary of the short but sharp 1962 border conflict between India and China; some 4,000 kilometers of joint border is undemarcated.

Joint trade, which was a focus of the visit of Chinese Prime



Vladimir Putin and Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee meet in New Delhi. Putin will meet Vajpayee and Jiang Zemin in early December. The “Strategic Triangle” makes possible, and depends on, realizing the potential of Eurasia-wide “New Silk Road” development.

Minister Zhu Rongji to India in January, is rising towards an all-time high of over \$4 billion for 2002, and grew especially in the third quarter. Chinese exports to India are up 34.4% over 2001, and Indian exports to China, up 22.7%. Trade grew by almost 25% in 2001. Zhu Rongji has called for expanding bilateral trade to \$10 billion in the next two to three years.

On Nov. 21, Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Wang Yi was in New Delhi for the 14th meeting of the Joint Working Group (JWG) on the India-China boundary. The two sides did not exchange maps on the contentious “western sector” of the border—which involves Kashmir, and therefore, Pakistan—but the meeting was, according to Indian Foreign Secretary Kanwal Sibal, “held in a positive and forward-looking manner.”

More important strategic issues are coming to the fore, which should, as the Calcutta *Telegraph* wrote Nov. 13, put “irritants,” such as China’s close ties to Pakistan, “to the background.” Prime Minister Vajpayee was invited by Zhu Rongji to visit China, and the date—put back by the two-month delay of the Beijing Party Congress—is under discussion. Vajpayee’s visit will be the first by an Indian Prime Minister to China since that of P.V. Narasimha Rao in September 1993; before that, there was the groundbreaking visit of Rajiv Gandhi in December 1988.

Vajpayee would also officially meet Hu Jintao, who favors improving Sino-Indian bilateral relations “from the historical perspective and a long-term viewpoint.”

Beyond that, relations depend on a full dialogue of these two great civilizations, which have had many exchanges



New Chinese party chairman Hu Jintao will meet Russian President Vladimir Putin during the latter's extraordinary triangular diplomatic tour of both Beijing and New Delhi, from Dec. 1-5.

over thousands of years. As C. Raja Mohan, editor of the Indian daily *The Hindu*, wrote Nov. 21, “the time is now” for India and China, to “declare their national commitment to transform the Himalayas from the political barrier they are today, into a passage between the two great civilisations.” Vajpayee’s visit to China requires “one big idea,” Mahon wrote, and this should be it. The perspective should include “reopening of the historic silk road that runs between Sikkim and Tibet.”

Indian press report that India asked President Putin to extend his visit to New Delhi, but he thought this not urgent, since their bilateral ties are already “cloudless.” Gen. Andrei Nikolayev, chairman of the Russian State Duma’s standing committee on Defense, stated on Nov. 26, as he left for a seminar on the Russian-Indian strategic partnership, “India is the only country with which we share all the cutting-edge military technology available to us, because it is a long-term investment in Russia’s national interests and strategic security. Our alliance will not be against anyone, but for molding a new security calculus to face the new challenges.”

At another such seminar in New Delhi Nov. 22, the spokesman for the Russian Ambassador expressed Russia’s wish, that India would join the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the leading Eurasian security cooperation organization, which was founded by China, Russia, Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. Uzbekistan joined in 2001.

There is one real problem in Russian-Indian ties, which is that trade and economic links have stagnated, and are in no way commensurate with their level of political relations.

India’s Junior Minister for External Affairs Digvijay Singh told the Nov. 22 seminar that the two sides will expand cooperation in science and technology, where they have a “natural synergy.” Singh said that Indian trade with Russia was only worth \$1.4 billion. Large defense deals will be finalized during Putin’s visit.

‘Bridges Between East and West’

Chinese Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan was in Moscow Nov. 23, to participate in the Foreign Ministers’ meeting of the SCO, and to meet Putin and Russian Foreign Minister Ivanov. Putin told Tang that he hoped his China visit “would succeed in reaching new boundaries in cooperation.” Economic relations are crucial; Chinese-Russian trade rose to more than \$10 billion in 2001. “Without China, a lot of Russia’s heavy industry would collapse,” journalist Fred Weir quoted Sergei Kazyonov, an expert with the Institute of National Security in Moscow. China is “practically the world’s only willing customer” for Russian nuclear technology, hydro equipment, civilian airliners, and other heavy-engineering goods.

On Nov. 26, Vsevolod Ovchinnikov, a “grand old man” of Russian-Chinese relations in the last century, wrote in the official Russian government newspaper *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, that the Russian-Chinese “strategic partnership for the 21st Century,” already established by 1998 and confirmed by the treaty signed by Putin and Jiang Zemin in 2001, has brought relations to “a qualitatively higher level” than ever before. Unlike the Stalin-Mao Zedong 1950 agreement to a military-strategic alliance against the United States, the current strategic partnership, not aimed against any third party, has “the goal of building a new world political and economic order.” While trade has been growing “at the unprecedented rate of 33% per year,” Ovchinnikov wrote that Putin has been calling for even greater economic cooperation: “energy bridges” from Russia to East Asia, including the gas and oil pipelines from Russia to China.

“Given their geographic positions in Eurasia, Russia and China are uniquely situated to function as bridges between the East and West, forming the equivalent of the ancient Silk Road,” Ovchinnikov wrote. He stressed not only “the modernization of the Trans-Siberian railroad” and its connection to the Trans-Korean railroad, but—unlike some less-developed circles in Russia—gave equal weight to China’s “Second Eurasian Continental Bridge” from Lianyungang to Rotterdam.”

Ovchinnikov noted that the SCO ministers, at their Moscow meeting, had emphasized growing relations with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). There is real progress in developing the ASEAN+3 (China, Japan, South Korea): “It would be most beneficial,” he concluded, “to include in this the representation of Russia,” creating a “consultative mechanism according to the formula ‘ASEAN plus Four.’ ”