

Development of Railway Transportation Is Essential for Sino-Russian Cooperation

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Zhao Huasheng: Thank you very much for accepting my question and also your time, Mr. Vladimir Yakunin. I have three questions for you. The first one is, we know just a couple of weeks ago, President Xi Jinping and President Putin signed the joint declaration of cooperation in connections between the Silk Road

economic belt and Eurasian Economic Union. We know transportation has a crucial role to play in Sino-Russia cooperation in general, and in cooperation between the Silk Road economic belt and Eurasian Economic Union in particular. So looking forward to the future, what picture will you give us in that regard?

Yakunin: Firstly, I should say that the communications among leaders is always very essential for world development. Specifically, I refer to the level of understanding and trust between two leaders, Chinese and Russian, Putin and Xi Jinping. And in my mind, the agreement memorandums signed in Moscow paved a new road for very substantial development of, not only economical, but also political relations between us. From the perspective of the future, I suppose that I am completely supportive for the idea of collaboration between new silk belt, now I would say, new silk belt from the road of collaboration and economic development of Euro-Asian Union. But among those, I would particularly refer to Trans-Eurasian belt of development, which is the sister, or the brother of the original idea of the new Silk Road. To my mind, we hear a very good perspective in developing on-land transportation of the goods and trades between Asia and Europe and vice versa. It is maybe the first time when we have the opportunity and real competition between the railway systems and deep-sea operators. It is not controversial because everyone should fulfill the interest of South-Pacific sector or the economy, likewise air-fleet or air-cargo operations. So the future seems to be in favor of the development of this kind of relations and the development of the huge territories of Eurasian continent and sustainable and comprehensive, trustful integral development of economy of the countries of this continent.

Zhao Huasheng: Thank you. And the next question is about the railway system between China and Russia. For the past more than one hundred years, we only have one railway connection that links directly China and Russia, that is China's Manchuria and Russia's Zabaikalsk, which was opened in 1903. There are two

other railways connecting China and Russia, but they are going through third country. That is the railway goes through Erlianhaote, and Mongolia, which was starting to operate in 1956, another one is through Xinjiang's Alashakou and Central Asia, which was opened just before the collapse of the Soviet Union. Do you think it is time for us to expand our railway connection between China and Russia, especially in the border areas because we have more than 4300 kilometers of common border lines?

Yakunin: Yes, you are absolutely correct. The first railway connection between China and Russia, which goes through Mongolia, is just a great achievement. But now it seems to be not enough. And the two sides are considering opening new transport operations, for example, constructing a railway over Ergun River. But, further to say, it is essential not only to increase the number of trans-border points for operation, but also to enrich the substance of this collaboration. The more goods we attract to the railway system, the better the economic development for will be. Russia started to develop vast area behind the Ural, due to the construction of Trans Siberia (Railway). In China, it is also extremely essential to develop impoverished regions through constructing railway communication. Where there is railways and other infrastructures constructed, there will be hope of a promising future and better life.

Zhao Huasheng: Thank you. And I also have another question. I think people of China and Russia are interacting more and more frequently with each other and people are getting more and more aspiring to see each other, to travel to each other's country. I think travelling by railway is an attractive option for a lot of people. But the problem is that the train takes too long a time to travel. Many years ago I travelled three times by train from Beijing to Moscow and it took five-six days for a one-way trip. So do you think it is reasonable to build high-speed railway from Beijing to Moscow and from an economic point of view, do you think it is worthwhile?

Yakunin: It is more than reasonable and you are absolutely correct using the word

“travel” in connection with railway transport, because flying above there is clouds and you don’t see anything there. That is just transporting a person from one side of the world to another. Travelling, that is observing the nature, observing a way of living of the people. So of course, being a railway person, I am in favor of this pattern of travelling, as far as there is landscape through this trip. You know, it will bring in great interest once a very high-speed railway system linking Beijing with London is created. And our leader was talking about the collaboration and the transporting route from the border of Pacific to the border of Atlantic. So that is the idea and new systems that are already invented, like the magnetic levitation railway systems, could also be taken in. Maybe one day in the future, the railway systems will transport people at a speed as fast as airplanes.

Shen Yi: My pleasure to be here and I have some very general questions. The first is about the strategic relationships, the strategic effect of the relationships between China and Russia in today’s world. You experienced the world from the 1980s till now (and) the world changed a lot. So what’s your understanding on the importance of Sino-Russia relations and how to develop this bilateral relation?

Yakunin: Since 1980s, I suppose the world changed dramatically. And the rise of China in the economic, social and political spheres has influenced the global paradigm of development. From this perspective, when we are talking about the future, of course the collaboration of territory of Eurasia, the collaboration between two great nations, Russia and China, will be an even more essential factor of influencing the development in the world. So from this point of view, I suppose the latest visit of Xi Jinping, to Moscow to commemorate the victory in the World War II together with the Russian leaders and other leaders is a very clear sign of the trust, of the wish to develop this strategic alliance. So I am very positive that the collaboration between us will influence the future development of the world pattern.

Shen Yi: And when we are talking about the Sino-Russia relationships, we cannot neglect or bypass the elements of the role of United States in this bilateral relation. And today, of course, United States' relationships with both China and Russia have some problems or conflicts. What's your prediction or understanding on the future development of this triangle relationship? There is saying in today's world that closer relationship between China and Russia will lead to the collapse of the hegemony of United States, and a balance of power. What's your opinion on that?

Yakunin: Both Russian and Chinese leaders stated in Moscow that the friendship we have is not against anybody but in favor of our own development. So considering any closer relations between China and Russia as a challenge and risk for any other country is the very obsolete mentality of the post cold war period. In my mind, we need to accept that United States is a nation of great people, a nation of great achievements. We are bound to live in this world together. But you know in the contemporary world, when we are talking about stability, when we are talking about peace, when we are talking about trust, there are ambitions are not acceptable. You know I can talk about myself. I'm Russian. I don't want anybody to teach me how I should conduct my life. I don't accept it. I want my kids, my grandkids, and grand grandkids to live in a pure, clear environment, to live in a peaceful global environment with their friends from China, South Korea or the United States, wherever. And I don't accept any suppression towards my country, towards my people and towards my kids.

Shen Yi: And you are the very important VIP guest to this Shanghai Forum. Can you raise a few words to Shanghai forum, like suggestions or comments? I think they will be heartily welcomed.

Yakunin: We value very much the ideas, the platform and the substance of Shanghai Forum. And this time, once again, the Shanghai Forum presented itself as a free

platform for idea exchange. And for the entire world, the words are being delivered, the remarks are being considered, and more essentially, the collaboration among representatives from different countries and backgrounds in the family of Shanghai Forum will be an essential basis for the further development of perspectives we shared here, which is expected to contribute to a more trustful, peaceful and sustainable global society.

Shen Yi: Thank you very much.