

and electrical plants. The Urquijo Bank apparently was in existence until 1948.

### Research Leads

For purposes of investigation of the history of Spain and Ibero-America in this period, we would have to suppose that the scientific, political, and cultural circle which received Humboldt in Madrid and other cities, minimally was related to or influenced by the Jewish intellectual circle. The presbyter Cavanilles, Casimiro Ortega, Francisco Zea, Hipólito Ruiz, Juan Bautista Muñoz, the Abbé Pouret, José Espinoza Tello, Felipe Bauzá, and Clavijo, the last the object of powerful criticism from Goethe.

Insofar as history is not chronological, a good choice of date for the begin-

ning of the Botanical Expedition could be when Humboldt and Bonpland saw the Southern Cross for the first time, at which moment Alexander recited from memory the verses from Dante's *Commedia* which refer to that constellation.

I refer to this, because one of the things that comes out in the chronology of the Humboldt voyage, is that in each of the cities, he engaged in "typical German cultural evenings" (Havana, Caracas, Bogota, Lima, and Mexico City, among others), that of Mexico being "without equal for New Spain." I think that this is important, and would be more so if we could know what was done at such "cultural events."

In the PLAN [Andean Labor

Party—Ed.] Conference in Bogota in December 1982, I made a presentation on the Botanical Expedition, entitled "Science vs. Environmentalism: The First Botanical Expedition," where I found a relationship between the investigations of Humboldt, and Leibniz's *New Essays Concerning Human Understanding*. I send this to you separately. It would appear that "debt" is not only monetary . . .

—Carlos Cota Meza

1. See *Fidelio*, Summer 1999 (Vol. VIII, No. 2). Among the several symposium contributions in that issue, David Shavin's "Philosophical Vignettes from the Political Life of Moses Mendelssohn," includes reference to the Mendelssohn circle and the Humbolt brothers.—Ed.

## Going Native in Siberia

The intent of *The Shaman's Coat* is partly summarized on the very last page, in which author Anna Reid writes:

"It has been fashionable for a while to think of all national identities as invented, to stress the artificiality of treasured national symbols and inaccuracy of not-so-ancient national myths. But the native Siberians are an example of the opposite phenomenon; of how hard it is to disinvent nationalities, of how they persist in the face of governments' best efforts at their destruction. To stretch a metaphor, the shaman bowing in front of the Russian flying-doctor is not donning his coat again, because although he hid it under a suit and tie for a while, he never really took it off."

Reid's emphasis here is revealed by the fact that she is a graduate of the London School of Economics, and participated in "bringing Russia into the marketplace," or the world of free trade. As any review of the literature of the London School of Economics reveals, the looting of natural resources becomes more achievable if a population is divid-

ed into "mini-states," "native rights" movements, or other such methods of community control.

Moreover, given that the Eurasian Land-Bridge as proposed by Lyndon LaRouche intersects this geographic region, an informed reader might ask if the agenda behind Reid's book is to argue that the habits and cultures of the so-called "peoples" of the region must be preserved, over and above the economic development which would lead to the ability of the human beings who inhabit the area to prosper. That is, as has been seen in the case of Brazil's Amazon region, is the intended use of this volume, the fostering of indigenous movements opposed to Siberia's economic development?

### Cultural Relativism

Certainly, *The Shaman's Coat* leaves no doubt that the ideology of cultural relativism is alive and well at the London School of Economics. It is this ideology, the theory that so-called "less-developed peoples"—with emphasis on the term "peoples" as opposed to "men," as in "all men (and women) are created equal"—



**The Shaman's Coat:**  
A Native History of Siberia  
by Anna Reid  
Walker & Company, New York,  
2002  
226 pages, hardcover, \$25.00

guides Reid's quaint account of her travels into Far Eastern Siberia, allegedly in search of shamans, gifted healers, and magicians whose powers allegedly outfoxed even Stalin's police. This is Reid's second such book; her first was *Borderland*—the Nineteenth-century Russian imperialist name for Ukraine.



Main and selected secondary routes of Lyndon LaRouche's Eurasian Land-Bridge proposal.

After reading that last page of *The Shaman's Coat*, I had to look again at the dust jacket, to see whether Ms. Reid was an anthropologist, a sociologist, or an ethnologist—that is, someone schooled in the bogus study of “lesser-developed” tribes, cultures, or “peoples.” Having confirmed that she was none of the above, I can only assume her to be part of the new generation of liberal imperialists, trained and certified in profiling the inhabitants of the former Soviet Union, for the purpose of discovering how these inhabitants could be yet again manipulated by the City of London bankers, Wall Street, etc., into tying up the vast oil-, gas-, and mineral-rich Siberian expanse.

Reid's sketches are very much reminiscent of Nineteenth- and early-Twentieth-century British accounts of travels to Russia, Belarus, and other parts of Imperial and Soviet Russia. She documents how Siberia was hard hit, first by the ravages of Stalinism, and then even worse by the effects of *perestroika* and the free-market reforms of the 1990's. But, at the same time, what Reid is attempting to defend, for example, is the right of Tibetan-style serfdom by Buddhist monks on the Russian side of the Tibet border—monks who each have their own mile or so square fiefdom among the Tuvans.

In extremely contradictory fashion,

Reid laments the state of Kamchatka and most of the rest of Eastern Siberia, but insists that only a people's rights movement that has sprung up to enforce the backwardness of the inhabitants of Kamchatka and Far Eastern Siberia, can possibly provide a solution. And, while what the much-abused inhabitants of Eastern Siberia really need is economic development—roads, electricity, running water—Reid is more concerned about being able to find “pure” members of various ethnic groups, i.e., members who have not intermarried.

### The Trans-Siberian Railway

Strikingly, Reid appears to be completely unfamiliar with the Nineteenth-century fight by the great Russian chemist Dmitri Mendeleev and his collaborator, Count Sergei Witte, the Economics Minister, Railway Minister and builder, and Prime Minister, to build up Russia, including the Siberian region. Witte, whose ideas developed under Mendeleev's tutelage, was the chief promoter of the infrastructural development of Russia, all the way out to Eastern Siberia, and down into China.

For Reid, however, the Trans-Siberian Railway, created as the fruit of the Mendeleev-Witte policy, seems to exist in another universe, where economic development and great projects lead only to slaughter. She writes:

“The Buryat-Mongolian border was

laid waste by the original Mad Baron, Roman von Ungern-Sternberg, a wild-eyed Baltic-German who loathed Jews and commissars, believed himself to be a reincarnation of Genghiz [Khan] and reputedly soaked his battle standards at his captives' slit throats and upholstered his saddles with human skin. Bur-NatsKom [the local political committee] supported Grigoriy Semyonov, a half-Buryat former officer in one of the ‘native Cossack’ regiments, who raised a 2,000-strong army with Japanese help, stormed up and down the Trans-Siberian in the armoured locomotives ‘Merciless’ and ‘Destroyer’, and executed 1,800 prisoners in five days near Kyakhta.”

This is one of Reid's only two notices of that great infrastructure project.

### Ritual Euthanasia

Despite her bias, Reid does usefully offer the reader a glimpse of the underdeveloped condition of native Siberians. Kamchatka, for instance, was one of the last places Reid visited, and she makes use of the Nineteenth-century memoirs of travelers to the island, including Anton Chekhov, who was sent there as a doctor to the penal colony. She includes the account of how the Chukchi, who no longer exist as a “pure” people, had adopted ritual euthanasia in the absence of medicine, it being considered an act of mercy for a wife to strangle a sick husband.

At this time in history, what Russia's Far East needs, is to increase the creative and scientific capabilities of every person—person, not tribal member or “peoples” member—who lives there. With more and more nations moving in the direction of Lyndon LaRouche's Eurasian Land-Bridge program—the development not merely of new rail lines, but the infrastructure of cities, universities, hospitals, etc., to go with it—Reid's book is definitely out of step with the potential that exists for humanity in this entire region. Adopting the Land-Bridge would mean burying, once and for all, the policy of creating micro-states, or “peoples,” which can easily be divided and conquered by those who make policy for the London School of Economics.

—Denise Henderson