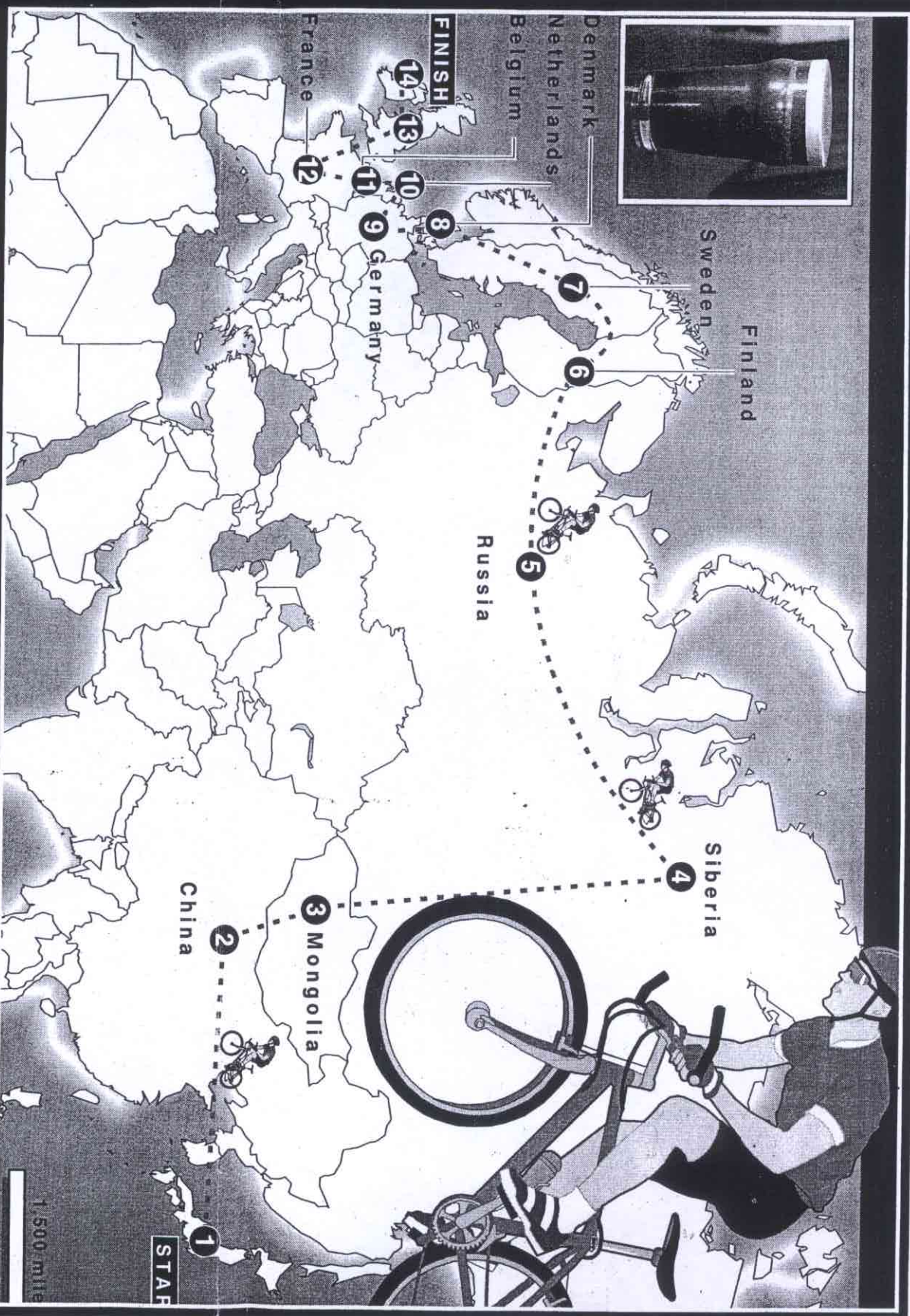
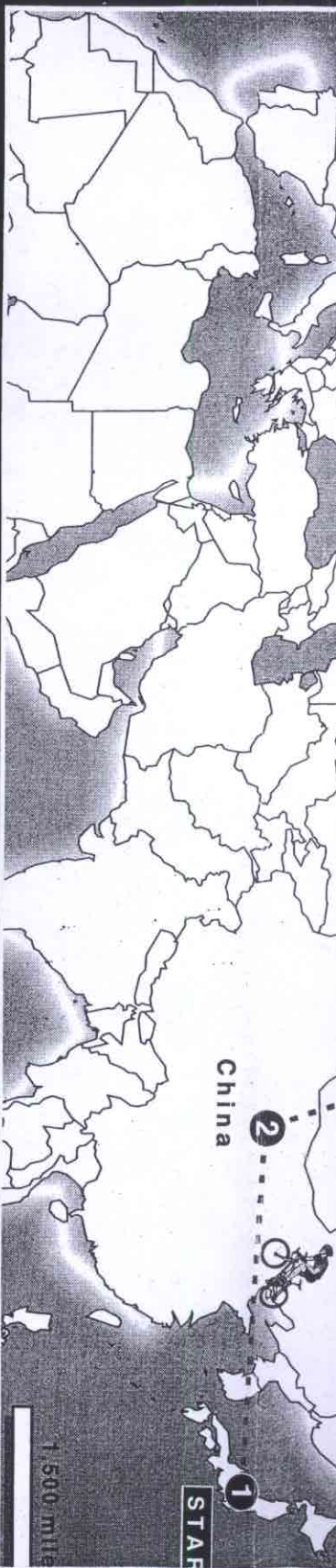


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PEDAL POWER: Yasuyuki Ozeki from Osaka, Japan cycled 12,000 miles across Asia and Europe to drink a pint of stout in Dublin's Guinness Hop Store

THE 12,000-MILE EPIC



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THE 12,000-MILE PINT

Osaka to Dublin — for a Guinness

BY NICOLA TALLANT

JAPANESE cyclist Yasuyuki Ozeki nipped out for a pint of Guinness one morning last April.

Five months, 13 countries and 12,000 miles later he finally got to drink it — in a pub in Dublin.

"God, that Guinness is good," he said yesterday at the end of his epic overland journey.

Refreshing

Saddle-sore Yasuyuki, 27, has achieved star status since setting out on his trip from Osaka.

But it wasn't thoughts of fame and accolade that kept him going.

Rather, he kept his mind focused on the day when he would finally park his bike outside a Dublin pub, wander in, order his pint and savour that first refreshing sip.

Yasuyuki journey, on a specially-built bike, took him

through China, Mongolia, Siberia, Russia, Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Holland, Belgium, France and England.

Yesterday, as he pulled into Dublin, he raised his fists, punched the air and declared: "I'm home!"

Yasuyuki's love affair with Ireland began five years ago when he made his first visit here.

Since then, he has come back again and again and last year he decided to challenge himself to get here by pedal power.

He said: "It was tough, I'm bloody knackered. But for this pint it was worth it."

The madcap cyclist who has been giving regular progress reports on his journey to the Gerry Ryan show on 2FM said he had the time of his life pedalling his way

across the globe.

"I ate sheep for breakfast in Mongolia and drank vodka in Russia," he said.

"I cycled all the way through Germany and the Netherlands where I met up with my girlfriend.

"I had only four pairs of undepants with me so I need a good wash now."

Kiss

Yasuyuki was met yesterday at the Guinness Hop Store by friends from across the world.

His Dutch girlfriend Maria Tsalpatris was first to greet him with a big kiss.

And the man he describes as his "Irish Dad", Dubliner Gene Kavanagh from Sandycove, stood the first round.

Gene recalled: "The first time I met Yasuyuki was at

Christmas a few years ago.

"I was walking around the Forty Foot in Sandycove where everyone goes swimming and there he was.

"When I was leaving I asked him where he was going to have his Christmas dinner. He told me he'd be going round to McDonalds for a Big Mac.

"I told him McDonalds was closed on Christmas Day and said he could come with me. That was the beginning of our mad friendship.

"He challenged himself to the bike trip, but then again he would do just about anything for a laugh. He's a great sport."

Yasuyuki is taking a month off in Ireland to recover from his trip of a lifetime.

He will stay in Dublin for a few days and then head for Co Kerry — on the train.



CHEERS: Yasuyuki raises his glass