

The new railroad boom beyond the Elbe

by Rainer Apel

If something productive is to come from the historic visit of West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl to Poland, from the special European Community summit proposed by French President François Mitterrand, and from the various promises from the West for credit to Warsaw, then there is no time to lose in beginning the economic development of Poland.

The development of Poland's economy and that of East Germany is interrelated, and the question of German reunification can only be solved in this connection, in close cooperation between the Germans, the French, and the Poles.

On Nov. 15, the American politician and economist Lyndon H. LaRouche proposed a policy of beginning "real economic development," of development of industrial infrastructure in the tradition of the German national economist Friedrich List. The industry of East Germany could play a key role in the development of Poland.

"If we consider East Germany's economic statistics, we recognize that the industrial productive capacity of East Germany is not bad. The only problem is that the country has been bled far too much by the Soviet occupation troops, and in fact in various respects. The population of East Germany has available a relatively high level of professional qualifications with the ability for accelerated conversion of advanced technologies."

Only a few days before, LaRouche had called for the use of "mobile methods of military engineering" on the civilian task of developing the Polish economy: "We need a team that works like an engineering staff. That will make the airlift at the time of the Berlin blockade look like a minor matter."

The immediate program

The task to be solved and the financial resources necessary for it are enormous. A choice must be made between immediately effective measures, and those steps that will show concrete results only after the passage of a certain amount of time. The problem of emergency transport to Poland could be immediately solved: There already exist rail lines that lead into Poland's most important economic centers (see **map**, next page). The best constructed of those is the central line from Berlin to Frankfurt/Oder to Warsaw; another runs in the north from Rostock through Szczecin to Gdansk; and another in the south from Berlin through Cottbus

to Wroclaw and Katowice. The industrial regions in south-east East Germany around Leipzig, Dresden, and "Karl-Marx-Stadt" (Chemnitz) are in part connected (on the German side) by electrified train lines to the principal lines out of Poland.

Of course, these lines in East Germany are for the most part single-tracked, and the antiquated track bed seldom allows velocities over around 35 miles per hour; but according to experts, with better organization of loading and unloading capacities to solve what has long been the actual bottleneck, there could be a doubling of the transport capacity of these lines within a short time.

Currently, chronic congestion of thousands of railroad cars is prevalent at the East German-Polish border and in Polish train stations because of sloppy dispatch work. If, additionally, the even greater backup of rail cars (currently 30,000 merely in East Germany) and the inefficient employment of Polish railway workers on the Soviet border could be quickly eliminated, further capacities for Poland would be freed up.

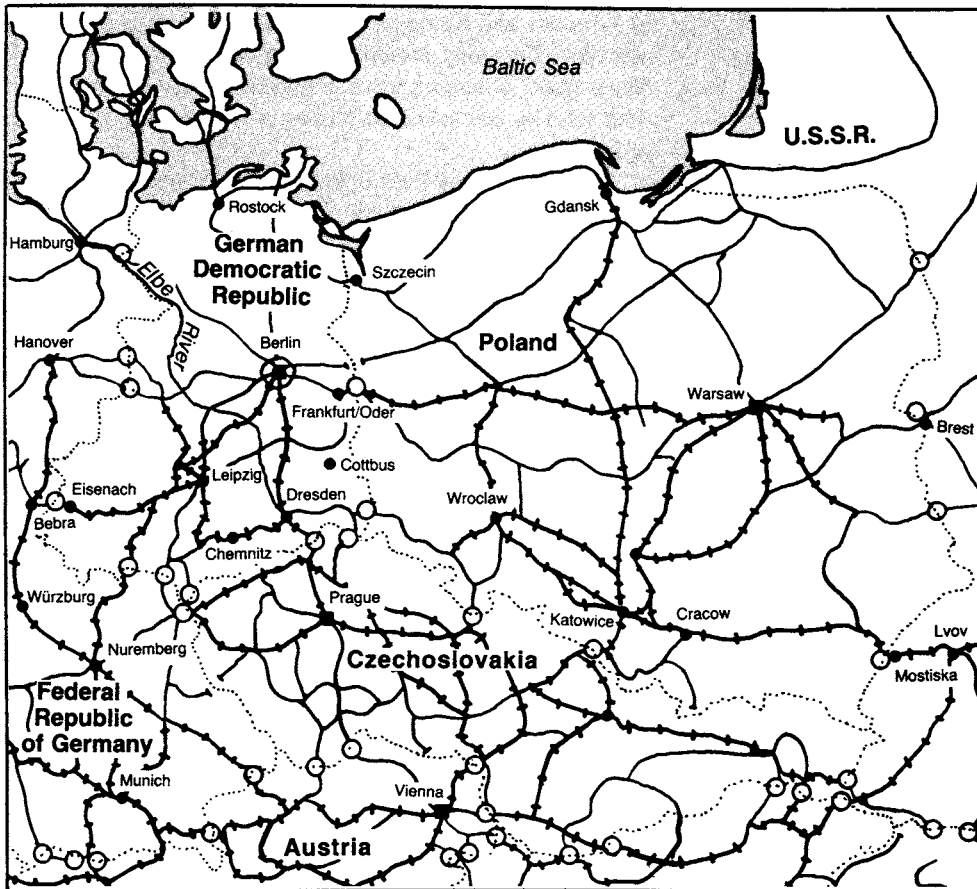
Soviet trains have a larger track gage than the Polish, making necessary considerable transfer work at the Polish border. The required deliveries from Poland and East Germany to the Soviet Union and the large-scale collapse of Soviet railway management has recently led to intolerable conditions. It is urgent that there be discussions with the Soviet Union on this.

According to the assessments of Western experts, there could be a considerable increase in transport volume between East Germany and Poland after elimination of the bottlenecks in shipping. This would affect, however, only emergency deliveries—for example, those urgently desired by the Polish government for improvement of the agricultural output in the coming spring: 10,000 tractors and 3 million tons of grain and fodder that must still be transported to Poland this winter.

A new railroad net—a gigantic task

The complete commitment of East Germany's existing rail net for aid to Poland is only possible for a brief time, given the need for renovation and buildup of the German national railroad. A solid railway infrastructure must be built from the ground up, making possible the operation of modern, high-speed trains with maximum speeds of 100 or even 150 mph. The investments necessary for that are enormous, and vary according to the nature of the terrain. The planned suburban rapid line between Hanover and Berlin of approximately 175 miles in predominantly level areas, will cost more than \$2.7 billion; estimates for the only slightly shorter new stretch between Hanover and Würzburg, which goes through hilly land and will require extensive tunnel construction, are over \$6 billion.

A fast track, leading for example from Bebra in the Federal Republic through Eisenach (G.D.R.) to Leipzig, would supposedly cost \$8 billion; a connection from Frankfurt/Oder



Main railways in Eastern Europe

KEY

- ⊕⊕⊕ Electrified lines
- Other lines
- Frontier post

In the east, Brest and Mostiska are the two major frontier posts of transfer from the wide Russian gage track to the standard gage used in Poland. Chemnitz is the soon-to-be-resumed historical name of the city called "Karl-Marx-Stadt" on many modern maps.

in the G.D.R. to Wrocław in Poland, as much as \$11 billion. Fast tracks must be considered as arterials, to and from which a dense web of additional veins, additional new rail lines, would lead. As in the last century, when the fundamental structure of the present European rail network came into existence, the construction of track would unleash a general upswing of industrial investment along the rail lines. Rail construction would be necessary for the creation of a strong industrial work force, especially for the Poles, who are still predominantly agricultural, in contrast to the East Germans.

If we start from the ambitious concept of a fast-track line with 150 mph maximum velocity, and make a decision for the equally useful system with intercity capacities (ca. 100 mph maximum), then pure construction costs could be lowered by 30-40%.

The general method for construction of a fast-track network would be to continue operation on existing lines, while constructing the new lines parallel to them. One question that would have to be answered quickly, is whether the electrification of existing lines, which will have to be discontinued for a time, should be accelerated, or whether the existing rail network should be used to a maximum by diesel trains until the new express networks are available.

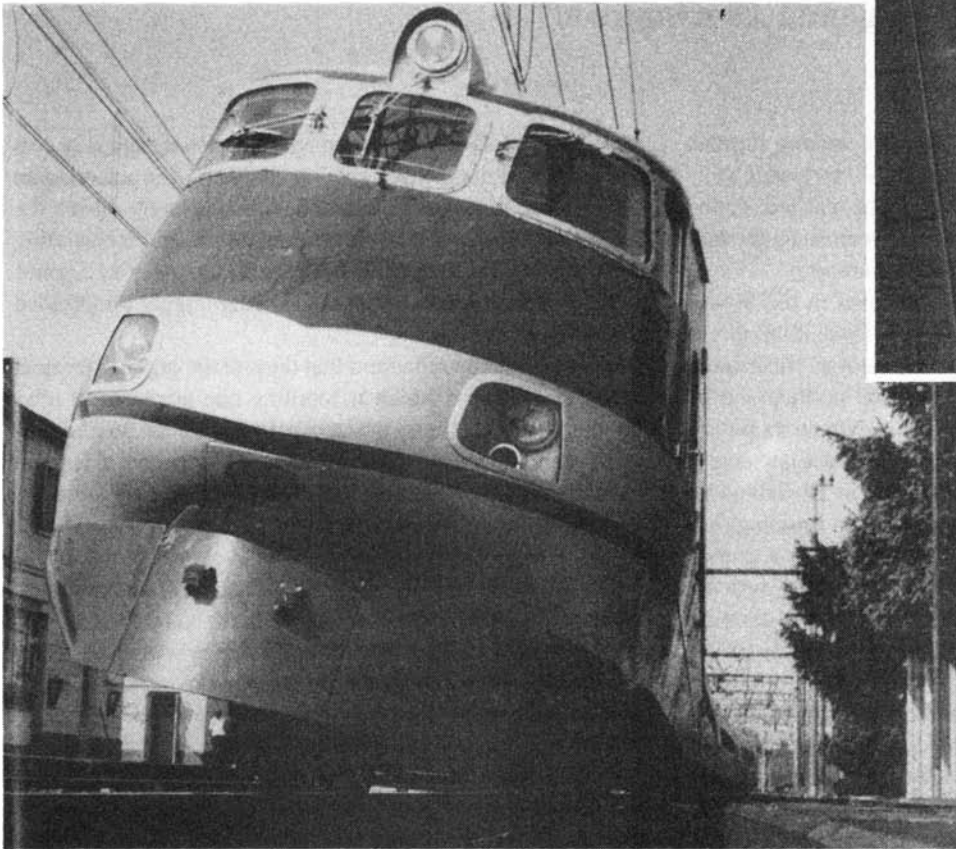
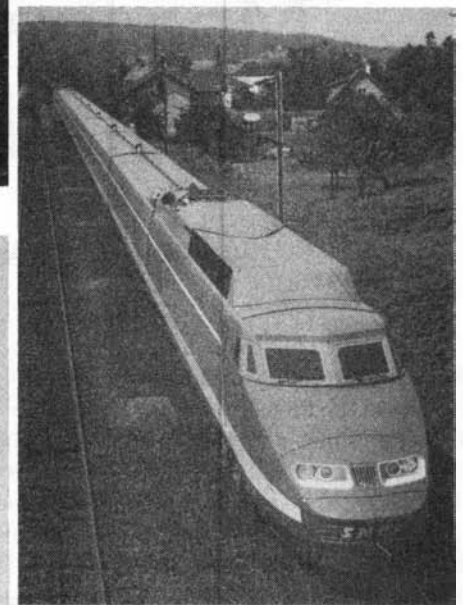
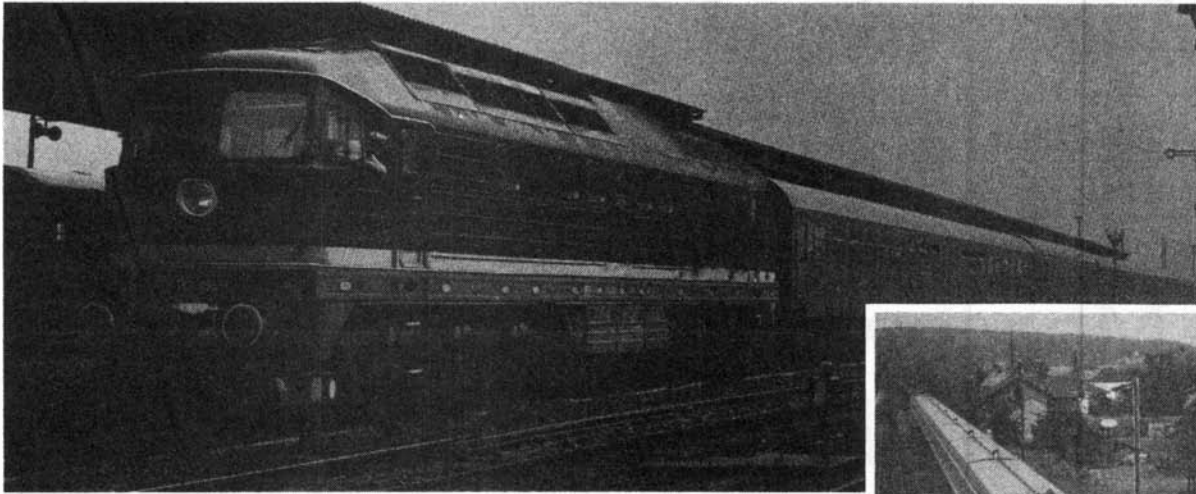
It is sensible to use the French experience gained in the

construction of fast tracks (TGV) between Paris and Lyon, which went into operation in 1981. Using the most modern technology then available for the completion of the 270-mile line, the French required 10 years, including planning time. Can that be sped up?

The new economic miracle

Construction time can be reduced. That depends on employment of machines, construction material, and workers. For the construction of rail track, enormous amounts of concrete and steel, electrical and electronic equipment, and especially new electrical power capacities are necessary. For tunnel construction, which can, of course, take place at many places simultaneously, earth-moving and driving equipment are employed. Interior covering from reinforced concrete must be put in and insulation installed. Tunnel sections are the most capital- and labor-intensive sections. According to existing West German and French standards, they require up to \$34 million in construction costs per track mile. The more machines and trained workers are available, the more quickly will the construction work on tunnel sections proceed.

Equally expensive will be bridge construction, which requires a tremendous amount of reinforced concrete. The construction of modern tracks for high-velocity trains with



Modern high-speed intercity European trains are exemplified by the French TGV, shown in the photo above, right on the Paris-Lyon line speeding across Alsace, with an initial maximum speed of 162 mph, building to 186 mph; and the Italian Fiat "Pendolino," with a tilting capacity of up to 9° and a maximum speed of 156 mph (left). Current East German standards are exemplified by the Russian-built diesel Class 132 (above, left), photographed near Halberstam in 1978, with a maximum velocity of 75 mph.

maximum speed of at least 100 (intercity) and possibly even 150 mph (TGV, ICE), means a gigantic increase in the production of steel, construction equipment, concrete, electric and electronic equipment, and the employment of qualified construction workers and engineers. We must consider that for each job in large industry, there is added approximately two or three others in middle-sized and small supplier firms. The railroad program, here only roughly sketched, would

have an effect on the European labor market in the magnitude of many millions of new jobs.

The stimulation for industry in both Western and Eastern Europe, including East Germany, would be tremendous. In expert circles, the modernization and use of the rail network for a total length of 24,000 miles east of the Elbe (8,400 in East Germany and 15,600 in Poland) is estimated to cost more than \$500 billion!