

which was thwarted. December is ending with the Wall Street-serving media gloating that nothing happened. The Dec. 20 *Washington Post* wrote of Reid: "His Marshall Plan proposal fell flat."

Here is the *demand* problem, on which steel and other industry unions and groups need to act, rather than suicidally trying to cut world steel production further.

Maglev Projects On The Agenda For 2002

by Rainer Apel

Reviewing 2001, one of the most positive developments was the signing of the maglev cooperation agreement between China and Germany, at the end of January. The agreement on a 32 kilometer Transrapid link from Shanghai to Pudong, the first magnetically levitated train project outside of Germany, has sparked initiatives in Germany and in other countries of Europe.

Whereas the main obstacle to the realization of maglev projects on German territory, the fiscal austerity and budget-balancing policy of the government, has not been removed, politicians from several parties are promoting proposals for local, regional, and European-wide projects. The latest is a proposal by Bernd Protzner, Christian Social Union member of the Bundestag (parliament) in Berlin, for a maglev line from Munich to Berlin, via Bamberg and Erfurt. This would involve the construction of about 600 kilometers of track, and it would go beyond the envisaged local project of building a maglev line between Munich and its international airport—comparable to the Shanghai-Pudong project.

An even broader perspective was laid out at a July 10 seminar of the Chamber of Industry and Commerce in Hamburg, which called for a "Eurorapid," which would link major cities in the Netherlands, Germany, Denmark, Poland, the Czech Republic, Austria, and Hungary. Several other chambers of industry in Germany, for example in Dresden, Leipzig, and Schwerin, have held similar events.

In Poland, the first public call for a maglev project was issued in late August. Krzysztof Makowski, Deputy Mayor of Lodz, proposed a maglev connection between his city (the second-largest in Poland) and Warsaw, in connection with numerous other projects for developing transportation infrastructure and the industrial production base of Lodz. If the government could not provide the funding, the 200 km maglev line from Lodz to Warsaw could even be carried out by private investors, who would also operate the train, Makowski said. Improvement of highway and railroad infrastructure is viewed as crucial for further industrial buildup in the region, according to both Makowski and Lodz Mayor Krzysztof Panas, and the maglev system would be the ideal solution, in their view.

And in Austria, Gerhard Rübiger, a Member of the European Parliament, proposed to include maglev in the discussion about future close cooperation among the three airports of Vienna (Austria), Bratislava (Slovakia), and Gyor (Hungary). At least for the envisaged Vienna-Bratislava connection, a maglev system should be considered, he said. Maglev

FIGURE 15
Transrapid Maglev Projects for Central and Eastern Europe



Source: Transrapid.

transfer between the three cities would make it possible to operate the airports, which are each about 30 km apart, as if they were one huge airport. Travel time between them would be reduced to a couple of minutes with the Transrapid, which can reach a speed of up to 500 kilometers/hour.

Rübig proposed creating a large transport corridor that would combine highways, traditional rail connections, and resumed shipping on the Danube River (which Vienna and Bratislava border on directly, and Gyor indirectly, through the Raab River). The entire border region encompassing eastern Austria, western Slovakia, and northern Hungary could be turned into a giant transport hub for Central Europe, Rübig said.

Chinese-German Cooperation

In China and Germany, a publicity campaign has been launched on the first commercial maglev train project, Shanghai-Pudong, which is to begin operation on a regular schedule in February 2003. If completed on time, that project could lead to other, even larger maglev projects in China, such as between Shanghai and Nanjing, or Shanghai and Beijing, in the context of the new five-year national transport development plan, which is to be passed in the Spring of 2003. In the wake of German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder's China visit in November, a flood of articles have appeared in Germany, drumming up support for maglev projects on German terri-

tory. "Commander" Wu Xiangming, the director of the construction work on the Shanghai-Pudong project, has organized the construction in a military-engineering style, which will allow the project to be completed in less than two years. The Chinese took only six months to build an entire new factory near Shanghai, which started producing the concrete and steel components of the line in November, to the amazement of German journalists who have visited the site.

Eckhard Rohkamm, director of the German firm Thyssen, which is producing the Transrapid maglev system, reiterated during Schröder's China visit, that with new, and larger maglev projects in China, the system would no longer be produced in Germany, but should be done in China — this also in view of future exports to other Asian countries.

This implies the transfer of technical know-how from Germany to China, which is an important issue for the Chinese, as illustrated in talks that Prime Minister Zhu Rongji had in Beijing on Nov. 12 with Gov. Sigmar Gabriel of Lower Saxony. Zhu told Gabriel that if ambitious projects like a 1,200 km maglev track from Shanghai to Beijing were to be realized, the train system would necessarily have to be produced jointly by Germany and China, on Chinese territory, for reasons of efficiency in time and of money. Apart from that, a joint maglev venture between China and Germany would establish a genuinely new type of industrial cooperation, under conditions of the 21st Century.

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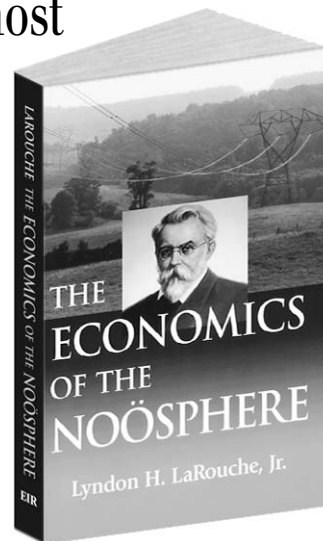
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