

Report from Bonn by Rainer Apel

Technologies for the future Europe

New steps to build the "productive triangle" are taken as new technologies and railways are considered.

East German cabinet minister for finance Walter Romberg put the idea of cross-border economic cooperation back on the European agenda on June 11. In a parliamentary debate in East Berlin, he said that it would be dangerous to contain the impulses of the post-July 1 German Monetary Union to East Germany, and not care about the situation in neighboring Poland.

The new stream of refugees and seasonal workers from Poland into Germany that would ensue from the gaping difference in social and economic standards between a united Germany and Poland, can only be prevented by including Poland in a joint economic zone with Germany, said Romberg, who called on France to join this zone.

Reviving the idea of cross-border cooperation between France, Germany, Poland, and Czechoslovakia, is highly important at this particular moment of European developments, which is determined by rather unorganized impulses. There was a more promising situation in March-April this year, when the idea of a concerted industrial recovery program of several European governments was far more up-front.

On April 26, for example, the cabinet ministers of economics of France and West Germany, Helmut Haussmann and Pierre Berégovoy, and the French minister of industrial development, Roger Fauroux, endorsed a joint Franco-German strategy of investments in Eastern Europe.

The French, who have invested a lot in their high-speed TGV railway technology over the past 10 years, are looking for export markets in the East,

and have already offered to build a new route in East Germany from Dresden to Berlin. The West Germans, despite being 10 years behind the French in high-speed train operation, plan to make their own ICE high-speed railway fully compatible with the TGV.

The first ICE route will be opened in June 1991 between Hanover and Würzburg. The state contract with the East Germans on the next big project, the route from Hanover to Berlin—to be completed in 1997—will be signed June 28, and a decision on the route from Cologne to Frankfurt is on the agenda for late June or early July. With the appropriate TGV routes leading via Strasbourg and Brussels, the first generation Franco-German high-speed train connection between Paris and Berlin will be working by the late 1990s.

But while these projects are being completed, experts in Germany have begun to argue that Europe should move into the next generation of train technology right away. German rail-sector industries and the government have some pilot R&D projects for magnetically levitated (maglev) trains. The idea of building the new German and European railway grid on the basis of the most advanced technology of the near future, rather than the best technology of the present, is gaining support in West Germany.

On June 7, Ernst Hinsken, a member of the Bonn parliamentary group of Christian Democrats, called for a maglev train from Bonn to Berlin in a memorandum to the Chancellor. Hinsken, one among a group of about 100 parliamentarians lobbying for railway projects, told *EIR* he favors the maglev

concept over the ICE high-speed technology for the following reasons:

- The maglev train will have an average speed of 500 kilometers per hour or more; the ICE will reach a maximum speed of 260 kilometers per hour only. Why spend money on a rather outmoded technology like the ICE if one could have the more advanced maglev?

- If one thinks of Berlin as the capital of a future united Germany and doesn't want to give up the federalist structure of postwar West Germany, this means that government offices and administrative functions will be kept in Bonn. This requires frequent travel by members of the future parliament between both cities. A maglev route would allow travel between Bonn and Berlin in 60-70 minutes. To move all government functions to Berlin would cost an estimated 100 billion deutschemarks.

- Part of the money saved could be spent on a maglev route benefiting parliament members and the residents of the densely populated industrial region between Cologne and Dortmund. The maglev route from Bonn to Berlin would form the central segment of the route Paris-Cologne-Berlin-Warsaw, Hinsken said, and once operated at a speed of 500 kilometers per hour, it will offer an attractive alternative to air travel between East and West.

The problem is how to coordinate the TGV which already exists, the ICE that will go into operation next year, and the maglev technology still to be developed. Maybe a division of labor between Bonn and Paris is the best way out. France could work further on the TGV technology—the new locomotive model, for example, that is capable of operating on the four different electric currents that are in use in Europe's railways now, while Germany would work on the maglev, for the time being.