

## Rhine-Main-Danube Canal 1,200 years in the making

**793:** Charlemagne undertakes an attempt to construct a canal between the Altmühl River and the Swabian Rezat River, and thus to link up the Main and the Danube.

**1836:** Construction begins on the Ludwig Main-Danube Canal.

**1845:** Ludwig Main-Danube Canal is completed.

**1921:** Founding of the Rhein-Main-Donau AG company.

**1922:** Construction begins on the first lock steps on the Main and Danube.

**1924:** First RMD power plant is brought on line in Würzburg.

**1927:** Start of the systematic Main extension, bringing on line a total of 16 power plants up to 1940.

**1940:** Conclusion of the Main extension up to Würzburg.

**1941-47:** Interruption of construction because of the war.

**1954:** Release of the Main up to Ochsenfurt.

**1957:** Release of the Main up to Kitzingen.

**1960:** Construction begins on the stretch of canal near Bamberg.

**1962:** Conclusion of the Main extension up to Bamberg.

**1966:** Duisburg contract for the extension of the water highway between Nuremberg and Vilshofen (Passau).

**1972:** Nuremberg city harbor begins operation.

**1975:** The Rhein-Main-Donau AG is the second largest hydropower producer of the Federal Republic of Germany.

**1976:** Contract for the canalization of the Danube between Regensburg and Vilshofen.

**1984:** Start of the earth works at the Main-Danube juncture.

**1991:** The 56th hydroelectric plant of the RMD comes on line.

**1992:** Opening of the Main-Danube Canal.

This means that the areas of eastern and southern Bavaria and Austria, which might as well have been at the end of the world until the Berlin Wall came down, will have much cheaper access to the markets north of Nuremberg.

The same holds true for the nations of eastern and southern Europe along the Danube, including Ukraine and other

nations bordering the Black Sea. Since many of these nations produce bulk goods and need to import heavy machinery to develop their economies, they will save a lot of money in transport costs, both in purchasing what they need and in delivering their products. That's why these nations were all represented at the opening ceremony: They hope to stabilize their shaky economies and political systems.

### Accelerate development

German Minister of Transportation Krause pointed out in his speech at the opening of the canal that actually two dreams had come true: that the canal itself, envisioned by Charlemagne, Goethe, Napoleon, and King Ludwig, among others, had been completed; and also, three years ago, communism had fallen, the Berlin Wall and the Iron Curtain had come down, and Germany had been reunited. Now, he stressed, is the time to realize the joy that we felt while we were dreaming the dream.

In order to do that, many more infrastructure projects—other waterways, high-speed rail grids, power plants, highways, etc.—not only in Germany, but in every part of Europe, will have to be built; otherwise all the political gains of the last three years might be lost.

Krause mentioned, as an example, a modern high-speed railroad from Moscow through Berlin to Paris. Regular readers of the *EIR* will remember that this idea was circulated by Lyndon LaRouche from his prison cell, right after the Berlin Wall came down.

Krause demanded a reform of laws governing the planning of infrastructure, i.e., taking away the legal means of sabotage which the environmentalists, who have caused billions of deutschemarks worth of damage and years of delay through interminable lawsuits, have wielded. "That is why the costs of reunification run so high; we have a bureaucracy, with which we just cannot make it," he said. "We cannot wait for 15 years until we know if, and how, we can build infrastructure needed urgently."

### Crisis in eastern Europe

The reason why there is no time to lose in making these investments is the deteriorating political and economic situation in eastern Europe. For its nations, communism meant no investment in infrastructure except for military purposes. Economic development was sacrificed to an ever-expanding apparatus to control internal and external opposition, and an emphasis on looting socialist economies for the benefit of the Soviet empire. Because of lack of investment, the physical base of the system eroded. At a certain point, the system was no longer able to provide even the most basic economic means of existence for its population, and lost the power to continue its control by force, both because of rising internal opposition and because of decaying means.

The collapse of communism did not happen because of external opposition, since the "free trade" governments of