

# Germany Is Getting ‘Re-Magleved,’ Finally

by Rainer Apel

The go-ahead for a Munich maglev project between the city and its airport, came just a week after the groundbreaking international conference of the Schiller Institute on Eurasian Land-Bridge development in Kiedrich, Germany, which prominently featured maglev projects.

The contract signed on Sept. 24 by the Federal government of Germany and the state government of Bavaria, to build the 1.95-billion-euro track between Munich and the airport, about 23 miles, is a technology breakthrough: It will give Germany its first commercial maglev line. So far, the only other operating maglev is the German-designed system between Shanghai and its airport.

Moreover, the contract is a political paradigm shift, ending a 30-year struggle in Germany for a commercial maglev project, which has been sabotaged jointly by radical ecologists and penny-pinching bureaucrats. The latter, the bureaucrats and the banks, actually killed the promising project of a 200-mile maglev between Germany’s two largest cities—Hamburg (1.8 million citizens) and Berlin (3.4 million)—in early 1999, after the ecologists themselves had run out of arguments against the project.

The Munich decision created a spark that can be expected to ignite other pro-maglev initiatives, of which there are many in Germany. Supporters of these initiatives have been in more or less direct contact with the LaRouche movement, which for years has campaigned for a national maglev grid, to serve as the kick-off for continental projects in Eurasia and other regions.

The first such ignition came on Sept. 28, when the Chambers of Industry and Commerce of Rheinhessen (which includes Mainz and Bingen), Frankfurt, and Wiesbaden sent a joint letter to the German Ministry of Transport, calling for a crash project to link the airports of Frankfurt and Hahn by a 60-mile maglev track, as a next step after the Munich project. The letter addresses the advantage of Hahn as having what only few German airports have, and what Frankfurt does not have; namely, a full nighttime operation license. It also addresses the job-creation effect of airport development: The airport of Frankfurt now employs 120,000 citizens for its operation.

Several years ago, the Chambers of Industry along with the Mayors of Frankfurt, Wiesbaden, Mainz, and Bingen joined in calling for that Frankfurt-Hahn project, with reference to a later extension of the track into Luxembourg and Belgium, which would make it a 250-mile track. In addition



Transrapid

*The approval of the Munich maglev project is a breakthrough for this technology in Germany. Here, an artist's illustration of maglev in operation in Munich.*

to that regional ferment, the project will definitely be prominent on the agenda of the LaRouche movement's BüSo party, for the Hesse state election campaign in early 2008, in the context of the party's call for Eurasian Land-Bridge development. This campaign has already begun, with signature collection for the BüSo slate of candidates.

A squad of LaRouche Youth Movement organizers also encountered much technological optimism at an international conference of maglev experts in Dresden, Sept. 26-27. Unlike past years, the international attendees met in an environment drastically changed for the better by the Munich maglev decision. Research specialists and engineers who had worked at the Shanghai maglev construction site a few years ago, now were optimistic that a real commercial maglev train would soon be running in Germany. Also, they saw how the Munich project would ignite the debate on similar, and larger projects elsewhere—in India, Russia, Indonesia, Ibero-America, and in the United States, where indecision about going ahead with planned maglev projects has dragged on for decades, similar to the situation in Germany.

## Maglev for Freight, Too

Maglev trains for passenger transport at speeds of 280 miles an hour and more are one aspect of the technology. Even more important may be the development of a freight version of the German Transrapid system. This came to the fore, when former German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder toured the Gulf-Arabian states in March 2005, and was surprised to find those nations more interested in the freight version, for their planned 600-kilometer Gulf Coast Railway project. A high-speed freight link connecting the rich mineral resources that Saudi Arabia has in its north, for example, to the ports along the Gulf coast, would make the development of these northern areas much more efficient. This implies the construction of several

hundred miles of track in Saudi Arabia and about twice that much in the other Gulf states.

In March 2005, the Germans could tell the Arabs only that a freight maglev was possible, but that unfortunately, such a system was not available yet. Some preliminary thought had been invested in the freight question by German maglev engineers during the 1990s, but the long years of Transrapid standstill in Germany have blocked any more in-depth public discussion about it.

However, sources have repeatedly told representatives of the LaRouche organization in private, that a simple retooling of a maglev passenger train into a unit for transport of standard, as well as smaller-size containers, could

be accomplished with a few modifications. Seats would be replaced by equipment, to provide a stable hold for containers. A concentrated engineering effort could develop a second-generation maglev train for speeds up to about 130 miles/hour. This would be superior to any long-distance transport by trucks, in any case, and fully capable of replacing air freight over shorter and medium distances.

Freight maglevs were in discussion at the time when the aforementioned maglev project between Hamburg and Berlin was still on the agenda, in the 1990s. The idea was to use that track during largely passenger-free nighttime periods for high-speed freight transport, and to link that track to logistics centers connected through several regional branches of the track. This would have created a really broad infrastructure corridor between Germany's two largest cities, with a job-creation effect in the range of several hundred thousand.

What short-sighted decision-makers did not understand then, will now come back on the agenda, after the Munich maglev decision. The broader German public is beginning to pose the question of why there are allegedly no funds for such maglev projects, when the central bankers have recently found plenty of money to pump into the bailout of bankrupt funds and banks.

For the 190 billion euros alone that the European Central Bank made available on Sept. 25 in a special emergency credit window for such sinking speculators, Germany could have already built a large part of a national maglev grid. It can easily be done: The German government just has to announce a 10-year program in the range of 200 billion euros (20 billion per year), to get going on building such a maglev grid. The payback to the economy in terms of jobs and development will be far greater than this initial investment.