National and Transnational Transport Policies in Socialist Eastern European States: Interactions between Integration into the CMEA and Rapprochement with Western Europe

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ABSTRACTS

Based on the finding of the overall failure of the introduction of a common transport policy in the EEC before the 1980s, the article deals with the successes and failures of transnational transport policy in socialist Eastern Europe during the Cold War period. It notes similarities and differences in modal split and tensions between various nation-states, the EEC, and CMEA bodies and among experts in networks and international organizations. The bulk of the transportation of goods within the CMEA was conducted by rail, but cross-border railway connections have been rather neglected. The transnational transport policy of the European socialist countries increasingly focused on the establishment of transport links to Western Europe and overseas, with road, sea, and air transport being the main focus, along with the commercial use of transit traffic and participation in non-socialist international organizations.

Ausgehend von der Feststellung, dass die Einführung einer gemeinsamen Verkehrspolitik in der EWG vor den 1980er Jahren insgesamt gescheitert ist, befasst sich der Artikel mit den Erfolgen und Misserfolgen der transnationalen Verkehrspolitik im sozialistischen Osteuropa während der Zeit des Kalten Krieges. Er stellt Ähnlichkeiten und Unterschiede in der Aufteilung der Verkehrsträger und Spannungen zwischen verschiedenen Nationalstaaten, der EWG und den RGW-Gremien sowie zwischen Experten in Netzwerken und internationalen Organisationen fest. Der größte Teil des Gütertransports innerhalb des RGW wurde auf der Schiene abgewickelt, aber die grenzüberschreitenden Eisenbahnverbindungen wurden eher vernachlässigt. Die transnatio-

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nale Verkehrspolitik der europäischen sozialistischen Länder konzentrierte sich zunehmend auf die Schaffung von Verkehrsverbindungen nach Westeuropa und Übersee, wobei der Straßen-, See- und Luftverkehr im Vordergrund stand, ebenso wie die kommerzielle Nutzung des Transitverkehrs und die Beteiligung an nichtsozialistischen internationalen Organisationen.

1. Introduction

The development of European integration is often equated with the history of the European Union (EU) and its predecessors, the European Community (EC) and the European Economic Community (EEC). This is a reductive perspective in at least two respects.[1] Firstly, a dialectical correlation between nationalism and European integration has existed since the nineteenth century. The two world wars acted as disintegration shocks[2] and protectionist reactions to economic crises and nationalist-authoritarian governments reinforced isolationist tendencies during the interwar period in nearly all parts of Europe. At the same time, non-state actors and international organizations, strongly promoted cross-border cooperation in a European and even global framework. These European integration processes in the first half of the twentieth century were already characterized by numerous asymmetries. For example, the individual social subsystems were interconnected to varying extents.[3] Also, both the centres and peripheries as well as the winners and losers of the First World War, participated in European integration processes – again, to different degrees due to self-determined compartmentalization or exclusion by the victorious states. At the same time, there were competing attempts to integrate individual European subregions, which were mostly linked to the efforts of expansive nation-states to achieve hegemonic rule over "complementary areas". It was only under the conditions of the Cold War, from the mid-century on, that an interest in putting aside national hegemonic aspirations and striving for sustainable "European" integration emerged, leading to an even broader understanding of the need to achieve integration in Europe. But the Cold War was also the reason why this integration process could only develop in one part of the continent.[4] Ultimately, it was the endeavours to bundle forces in the "Western world" that were decisive in accelerating the European integration process in the 1950s. However, on the other, eastern side of the "Iron Curtain" – and this is the second important reason for the reductionism to the previously stated dominant view – a process of political and economic integration also took place. The states united in Comecon – the Council for Mutual Assistance (CMEA) – and the Warsaw Pact justified their integration project less with a "European idea" than an alternative model of society and,

1 K. K. Patel, Europäische Integrationsgeschichte auf dem Weg zur doppelten Neuorientierung. Ein Forschungsbericht, in: Archiv für Sozialgeschichte 50 (2010), pp. 595–642.

2 D. Stevenson, The First World War and European Integration, in: The International History Review 34 (2012) 4, pp. 841–863.

3 W. Kaiser and J. Schot, Writing the Rules for Europe: Experts, Cartels, and International Organizations, London 2014.

4 K. K. Patel, Project Europe: A History, Cambridge 2020, pp. 13–22.

consequently, a different economic system: namely, a socialist planned economy. For this reason, integration here had somewhat different objectives than in the capitalist market economies of Western Europe, and accordingly, socialist integration policy also used other instruments.[5] Nevertheless, analogous to Western European integration, the years between the Second World War and the end of communist rule in Eastern Europe were characterized by tensions between national peculiarities of development and the influence of intensifying globalization processes in addition to increasing interconnections within Eastern Europe.

The end of the Cold War was closely linked to the largely failure of the socialist integration project. In contrast, the Western European integration project increased its scope in terms of content and space between 1992 and 2004. In this period, the social sciences lost interest in the CMEA, and even historians paid little attention to the Eastern European integration processes of the communist era. This is unfortunate, among other reasons, because the experience with the transnational integration processes before 1990 undoubtedly has an influence on the current attitudes in the Central and Eastern European countries toward European policy issues.

Despite, or precisely because of, the asymmetry mentioned above – that is, the understanding of "integration" in socialist planned economies, which differed from the notion that guided in Western Europe – a history of European integration in the latter half of the twentieth century cannot be written without an analysis of the CMEA. This is partly because there is ample evidence that the developments in the EEC and the CMEA influenced each other.[6] An analysis of the entanglements between the two projects of integration in the West and East can complement and sometimes even correct the results of older comparative studies. Political science studies have habitually been normative in considering the EEC/EC as the "normal case" of European integration. Historical studies have often fallen into a teleological trap by looking at the history of the two European integration projects in the period between 1945 and 1990 from its conclusion and, thus, described the development of the CMEA as deficient from the outset.[7]

In this article, the transport sector is examined as a field of fundamental relevance for the implementation of integration processes that is particularly well suited for both a comparative analysis and a history of entanglements between the Western and Eastern European integration processes. The transport sector has been selected because it ensures the mobility of goods and people and thus presents an elementary prerequisite for all economic and social integration processes. This applies both to the functioning of a common market, such as the one that Western Europe has been developing since the

5 U. Müller, Introduction. Failed and Forgotten? New Perspectives on the History of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, in: U. Müller and D. Jaješniak-Quast (eds.), Comecon Revisited. Integration in the Eastern Bloc and Entanglements with the Global Economy, Comparativ 27 (2017) 5–6, pp. 7–25.

6 S. Kansikas, Socialist Countries Face the European Community. Soviet-Bloc Controversies over East-West Trade, Frankfurt am Main 2014.

7 A. Steiner, The Council of Mutual Economic Assistance: An Example of Failed Economic Integration? in: Geschichte und Gesellschaft, 39 (2013), pp. 240–258.

foundation of the EEC in 1957, and to a planned, "rational" division of labour, which the CMEA defined as its most important goal in 1962.[8]

The transport sector is "an essential instrument for the growth of trade flows, whilst also being subject to national interventionism".[9] Furthermore, the efficiency of a transport system depends very much on the degree of its own integration. This is determined on a material level by the density and capacity of the transport networks and the combination of different transport modes. Equally important is institutional integration, which involves, inter alia, technical standardization, unification of legal norms, principles of pricing, and, finally, harmonization of transport policy objectives and instruments.

This article first discusses the question of the extent to which the integration of national transport systems and a common transport policy were achieved within the framework of the EEC until 1990. It does so using the available publications, which have often focused on the thesis of the failure to implement a common transport policy in the EEC. The aim of this analysis is to distinguish the indicators that determine the opportunities and limits of integration in the transport sector of the second half of the twentieth century. Then, the most important problems of transport sector integration in the CMEA are analysed in order to identify commonalities with the analogous developments in the EEC as well as distinctive characteristics of the Eastern European transport integration process. In a further step, this comparative analysis is complemented by a discussion of the extent to which the Eastern and Western European transport policies were intertwined. This involves an analysis of cross-bloc cooperation but also questions the extent to which transport links to Western Europe influenced intra-bloc integration processes. This should result in new perspectives for the study of integration processes in both parts of Europe, their mutual interdependence and their repercussions on the recent development of European integration.

2. The Failure of Attempts to Implement a Common EEC Transport Policy until the 1980s

The integration of the transport sector and contribution of this to other economic integration processes lend themselves to a comparative analysis of the EEC/EC and CMEA since the state played a significant role in both areas (West as well as East) as the owner and/or regulator of transport companies. As the transport sector played a key role in the post-war reconstruction process, it seemed logical that the Treaty of Rome mentioned the establishment of a common transport policy as – along with common foreign trade and agricultural policies – one of the most important objectives of the EEC.

8 J. M. van Brabant, Economic Integration in Eastern Europe. A Handbook, New York 1989, pp. 64–71.

9 E. Bussière, M. Dumoulin and S. Schirmann, The Development of Economic Integration, in: W. Loth (ed.), Experiencing Europe. 50 Years of European Construction 1957-2007, Baden-Baden 2009, p. 68.

In the early years of the EEC, however, the definition of a common transport policy within the EEC remained very "vague".[10] Only in 1961 did the European Commission circulate its vision on the future of transport integration, the Schaus Memorandum, named after the Commissioner of Transport. Concrete negotiations between the commission and council about this issue began only in 1963. These negotiations ended without result.

In the 1970s, the accession of the UK, Ireland, and Denmark made it even more difficult to agree on a common transport policy. In the 1980s, a common transport policy in the EC was still in its infancy:

In 1985, the situation had hardly changed compared to how it had been 25 years earlier; apart from the exclusion of two modes of transport from the Community's scope for action, the road haulage market remained subject to a quota system, the rail sector was marked by State intervention, and there was no common planning for the construction of infrastructures.[11]

This led to an action by the parliament before the Court of Justice against the council for failure to act with regard to transport policy. This case, which was brought in January 1983, led to the judgment of 22 May 1985 condemning the council for a breach of the Treaty in failing to ensure the free provision of international transport services and not laying down conditions under which non-resident carriers might operate transport services within a member state. Such a condemnation for inactivity was unprecedented.[12]

The reasoning of the Court of Justice points to two overlapping ideological and political conflicts, which contemporary analysts and historians have cited in explaining the EEC's inability until the 1980s to implement a common transport policy. The first conflict was between the liberal idea of a free market as a prerequisite for an optimal allocation of resources on the one hand and the thesis of market failure in the field of infrastructure, a basic assumption in the theory of the "public economy" (Gemeinwirtschaftslehre), on the other. This thesis justifies the necessity of state ownership in the transport sector or at least state regulation of the transport market. The second conflict was between the subordination of transport policy to the objective of integrating the European internal market and the use of transport policy for economic, social, and regional policy objectives in the framework of the states. Consequently, this was also a conflict between the EEC as an institution and the nation-states.[13]

In the 1950s, the central issue in the organization of transport markets in all the founding member states of the EEC had been the "rail-road conflict".[14] This conflict resulted

10 Patel, Project Europe, p. 26.

11 Bussière et.al., The Development of Economic Integration, p. 69.

12 J. Basedow (ed.), Europäische Verkehrspolitik. Nach dem Untätigkeitsurteil des Europäischen Gerichtshofes gegen den Rat vom 22. Mai 1985, Tübingen 1987, pp. 19-22; J. Whitelegg, Transport Policy in the EEC, London 1988, pp. 6–8, 15.

13 V. Ebert and P.-A. Harter, Europa ohne Fahrplan? Anfänge und Entwicklung der gemeinsamen Verkehrspolitik in der Europäischen Wirtschaftsgemeinschaft (1957–1985), Stuttgart 2010, pp. 47–120.

14 G. Schulz, Die Deutsche Bundesbahn 1949–1989, in: L. Gall and M. Pohl (eds.), Die Eisenbahn in Deutschland. Von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart, München 1999, pp. 320–340.

from the fact that the railways in the EEC states were de facto monopolistic, state-owned enterprises, which, particularly in the Federal Republic of Germany and France, were supported in their competition against privately organized road haulage and also to be protected from any competition against other foreign or private railway companies.[15] The Netherlands and later, also Italy and the new member states of the 1970s, however, were more interested in transit traffic and in favour of liberalizing transport markets, which would benefit road freight transport.[16] A combination of structural changes in regulatory thinking towards more competition and less government, transport markets that were changing technically with a shift in emphasis towards road freight, a general institutional dynamic within the EC, and a number of new actors in relevant decision-making positions came together to set a process in motion that found its decisive catalyst in the European parliament's petition and the rulings of the European Court of Justice.[17]
Due to the aforementioned tendency to broaden the perspective on the history of European integration by analysing developments before 1945 and the actions of non-state actors, the developments in the transport sector, too, appeared in a new light. Already, during the "transport revolution" of the nineteenth century, international agreements had been concluded on the financial management of foreign trade transport and questions of insurance and liability as well as transport law in general and various measures of technical standardization. The railway sector played a pioneering role in the development of international cooperation and networks.[18]
Only a few years after the construction of the first railway lines, railway companies from several countries had agreed on various regulations within the framework of the Association of German Railway Administrations, founded in 1847. The de facto successor of the Association was the International Union of Railways (Union Internationale des Chemins de Fer, UIC), established in 1922. Experts in transport technology and economy met at international congresses, founded international associations and organizations, prepared international agreements, and evaluated their implementation.[19] This "technocratic internationalism" still functioned in dictatorial systems to some extent and was able to quickly regenerate after the end of the war.
During the post-war period, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe International Transport Committee (UNECE-ITC) was responsible for the reconstruction of the transport system, often in collaboration with the UIC when it came to the

15 R. Fremdling, European Railways 1825–2001, an Overview, in: Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte 44 (2003) 1, pp. 209–221.
16 Ebert and Harter, Europa ohne Fahrplan?, pp. 160–190.
17 C. Henrich-Franke, Initialzündung oder Katalysator einer wettbewerbsorientierten Verkehrspolitik? Die Untätigkeitsklage und Verurteilung des Rats durch den EuGH im Mai 1985, in: Journal of European Integration History 2 (2020), p. 265.
18 P. Véron, Railway Integration in Europe: UIC – A Key Player of East-West Railway Integration, in: R. Roth, and H. Jacolin (eds.), Eastern European Railways in Transition. Nineteenth to Twenty-First Centuries, Farnham 2013, pp. 243–256.
19 A. Badenoch and A. Fickers (eds.), Europe Materializing. Transnational Infrastructures and the Project of Europe, Basingstoke 2010.

railways. The European Conference of Ministers of Transport (ECMT) was founded in 1953 and became the main forum for the development of a Western European transport policy, using the existing transnational transport associations and institutions as its technical arms.[20] The experts operating in this environment were of the opinion that the EEC – which was founded in 1957 and to which important transit countries, such as Switzerland and Austria, did not belong – was unsuitable or, at least, unnecessary for advancing (Western) European transport integration.[21]

Thus, the EEC's problems in implementing a common transport policy that followed new principles derived from the resistance of the member states and the established international organizations and networks of experts. Only the declining importance of the railways, which were organized as state-owned enterprises, and the simultaneous rise of decentralized road freight transport enabled the integration of a Western European transport area based on market mechanisms. In order to identify similarities and differences to the development in CMEA, the following section analyses the transport mode split in the CMEA states as well as the competences of the international institutions that influenced the Eastern European transport integration. Finally, the question of the extent to which the relationship with Western Europe influenced the external transport policy of the CMEA states is addressed.

3. Transport Modal Split in the CMEA

In almost all the European CMEA countries, railways played a very important role in transport. This also emerges from a comparison between Western and Eastern Europe in terms of both passenger and freight transport.[22] The Soviet Union was even described as a "railway economy", while the transportation system of the USA – a pioneer country of railway construction since the 1830s – was characterized by the "highway".[23] One indication of the exceptional importance of the Soviet railway network was its intensive use. During the 1980s, the load per kilometre of railways in the Soviet Union was five times greater than in the United States and seven to ten times greater than in Western Europe.[24]

20 K. K. Patel and J. Schot, Twisted Paths to European Integration: Comparing Agriculture and Transport in a Transnational Perspective, in: Contemporary European History 20 (2011), pp. 397–398.

21 G. Ambrosius and C. Henrich-Franke, Alte Pfade der Integration und der Versuch, nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg neue Wege einzuschlagen: das Beispiel der Infrastrukturen in Europa, in: Historical Social Research, 32 (2007) 4, pp. 275–304.

22 B. Mieczkowski, Transportation in Eastern Europe: Empirical Findings, New York 1978, pp. 37–42; D. Turnock, The Economy of East Central Europe, 1815–1989: Stages of transformation in a peripheral region, London/New York 2006, pp. 358–366.

23 Mieczkowski, Transportation, p. 3.

24 J. Blaha, M. Kahn and M. Vale, Transportation in the East: The Key to Trade between the Two Europes, in: Eastern European Economics 29 (1990/91) 2, p. 34.

The importance of railways in the state socialist countries initially emerged out of historical preconditions. Similar to Western Europe and the US, the railway radically changed the transport systems in the period between the mid-nineteenth century and the First World War across East Central Europe and the Baltic States and in parts of the western Russian Empire.[25] But while a saturation of the railway network took place, the latest around 1930 in the West, railway construction in some parts of the East continued until the second half of the twentieth century. Poland, for example, built 2,220 kilometres of new railways in the 1970s and early 1980s (including a main line from Katowice through Warsaw to Gdansk). The Soviet Union carried out railway construction until its dissolution.[26] In 1989, for example, the 3200-kilometre Baikal-Amur Railway Magistral (BAM) was opened.

Some secondary lines of local or, at most, regional significance were shut down after completion of the post-war reconstruction of the major railway lines in the 1960s, especially in the German Democratic Republic (GDR), Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia. However, the growth of freight traffic on the road in Eastern Europe was much slower than in Western Europe – even partially reduced after the second oil shock in the 1980s. This points to another cause of the persistence of the railway: the "logistical revolution" of Western Europe that occurred in response to the emergence of a consumer-oriented economic system remained largely absent in Eastern Europe.[27]

In addition to the historical factors, the strong position of the railway in Eastern Europe was also based on geographical conditions. Coastal shipping on the Baltic and Black Sea was not very attractive for the internal traffic of the socialist riparian states; there were only a few navigable rivers and canals in the East as a whole; and the communist leaderships of the socialist countries also developed a politically motivated preference for railways as an already existing state monopoly that could be managed centrally and – at least theoretically – optimally integrated into the planning process of economic development.[28] In the case of road haulage and inland waterway transport, the regulation of private enterprises or their nationalization proved to be much more complicated and time-consuming.

The much greater importance of railways in Eastern than Western Europe is particularly evident in OECD data on the market shares of the three main modes of transport in domestic markets. This shows that as recently as 1990, railways had a two-thirds share of commercial transport in the East, and they were not overtaken by road freight until 1998. In Western Europe, this had happened around 1960.

25 A. Grübler, The Rise and Fall of Infrastructures: Dynamics of Evolution and Technological Change in Transport, Heidelberg 1990, pp. 90–126.

26 A. Heywood, Back to the Future? Russia's Railway Transport and the Collapse of the Soviet Union in Historical Perspective, in: R. Roth and H. Jacolin (eds.), Eastern European Railways in Transition: Nineteenth to Twenty-First Centuries, Farnham 2013, p. 274.

27 R. Vahrenkamp, Die Logistische Revolution – Logistik und Güterverkehr in Europa 1950–2000, in: R. Roth and K. Schlögel (eds.), Neue Wege in ein neues Europa. Geschichte und Verkehr im 20. Jahrhundert, Frankfurt am Main, 2009, pp. 452–475.

28 Mieczkowski, Transportation, pp. 46–51.

Table 1. Market Share in Trade Transport (on the basis of tonne-kilometres)

	Western Europe*			Central and Eastern Europe**		
	Rail	Road	Inland waterways	Rail	Road	Inland waterways
1970	31	56	13	81	16	3
1975	25	63	12	76	21	3
1980	23	66	11	72	25	3
1985	21	70	9	74	24	2
1990	17	75	8	67	30	3
1995	15	78	7	54	43	3

* Western Europe: Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Luxemburg, Norway, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, and the UK.

** Central and Eastern Europe: Albania, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Hercegovina, Croatia, Czechoslovakia (Czech Republic and Slovakia from 1995), Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Poland, Romania, and Slovenia.

Source: ECMT and OECD (eds.), Trends in the Transport Sector, 1970-–1998, Paris 2008, pp. 23, 58.

A different and more differentiated picture emerges from the data presented in Tables 2–4, which are taken from contemporary statistics. These focus on the seven European CMEA states and, consequently, allow statements on country-specific developments. It is true that the great importance of the railways is also evident here. Table 2, however, includes transport abroad as well as at home, so sea transport and (oil) pipelines are also included, unlike in the OECD statistics.

In fact, the share of rail traffic in eastern Europe was already decreasing quite significantly in the 1960s. This was primarily due to the increase in the share of maritime transport, which covers longer distances with larger loads and is therefore particularly noticeable in these statistics. In the inland countries, such as Hungary and Czechoslovakia, maritime transport played a lesser role (although it also increased significantly in the former), so there was a lesser decline in their share of rail transport.

Table 2. Percentage share of Transport Modes on Total Goods Transport Performance in the European CMEA Member States (on the basis of tonne-kilometres)

		Bulgaria	Hungary	GDR	Poland	Romania	USSR	Czecho-slovakia
Railways	1960	63	85	69	65	83	83	79
	1973	27	67	34	41	50	67	68
Inland waterways	1960	6	7	4	1	4	6	4
	1973	3	5	1	1	2	4	3
Maritime	1960	23	2	22	34	5	7	13
	1973	63	12	58	52	39	17	14
Road transport	1960	8	6	6	1	4	2	4
	1973	7	11	5	2	6	2	7
Oil pipelines	1960	–	–	–	–	4	3	-
	1973	–	6	3	4	2	10	9

Source: H.-J. Dubrowsky, Die Zusammenarbeit der RGW-Länder auf dem Gebiet des Transportwesens, Berlin 1975, p. 14.

Table 3 presents a different indicator: goods transport volumes in absolute terms. It first shows a generally strong growth in transport volumes, which was higher than the growth in production. This was the result of an increasing division of labour, leading to an intensification of domestic and foreign trade, which can be seen as typical of modern economic growth. The figures presented in Table 3 also reflect the return of the East Central and Southeast European economies to world markets in the 1960s. Railways dominated in 1960 but thereafter grew more slowly than most other modes. While this was not the case for inland waterways (which declined in relative terms), it did hold for maritime transport, pipelines (as the most modern mode of transport for oil, the most important commodity at the time), and especially for road transport.

The volumes transported by road more than doubled within 13 years in almost all countries. The increase was particularly large in Romania, although the initial level there was very low, and important long-distance road links were not built until the 1960s. Only in the GDR, which already had a dense but rather poorly maintained road transport infrastructure at the time of its foundation, was the increase in road traffic relatively small.[29]

29 U. Müller, Mobilität in der Planwirtschaft. Das Verkehrswesen, in: H. Schultz and H.-J. Wagener (eds.), Die DDR im Rückblick. Politik, Wirtschaft, Gesellschaft, Kultur, Berlin 2007, pp. 176–198.

Table 3. Freight Transport Volumes by Means of Transport in the European CMEA Countries (millions of tonnes)

		Bulgaria	Hungary	GDR	Poland	Romania	USSR	Czecho-slovakia
Railways	1960	38	96	238	287	78	1,885	194
	1973	76	123	281	431	206	3,346	261
Inland waterways	1960	2	2	12	3	2	210	4
	1973	4	3	12	10	5	419	5
Maritime	1960	1	0	1	6	0	76	0
	1973	17	0	12	23	5	186	0
Road transport	1960	49	71	132	45	57	1,719	132
	1973	151	164	180	141	302	4,627	279
Air transport	1960	1	2	5	2	3	697	15
	1973	14	7	20	16	15	2,206	28
Oil pipelines	1960	–	1	–	–	6	130	–
	1973	–	9	24	24	13	421	16

Source: Dubrowsky, Die Zusammenarbeit der RGW-Länder, p. 15.

Finally, Table 4 presents the transport mode divisions for foreign trade within CMEA. The statistics show that in the 1950s, railways were used for almost all the trade between the CMEA countries. Although this share is decreasing, it is still only slightly below 50 per cent in 1980. In the same year, almost 30 per cent of intra-CMEA trade was carried out using pipelines. This is evidence of the great importance of intra-CMEA trade in commodities, the most important of which, oil, could be transported much more cheaply by pipeline than previously by railway tank cars.[30]

30 R. N. North, Current Developments in Transport and Traffic Between the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, in: J. F. Tismer, J. Ambler and L. Symons (eds.), Transport and Economic Development – Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, Berlin 1987, pp. 270.

Table 4. Percentage Shares of Modes of Cross-Border Freight Traffic within CMEA 1950–1980

	1950	1960	1970	1980
Railway	89.3	87.9	66.1	45.3
Maritime	7.1	7.5	12.7	20.6
Pipeline	1		16.4	29.8
Inland waterways	2.6	4.5	4.6	3.1
Other		0.1	0.2	1.2

Source: H. Brezinski, Der internationale Verkehrsverbund im RGW, in: Infrastrukturprobleme in europäischen RGW-Staaten, Marburg 1989, p. 101.

Transport integration of the CMEA area on the basis of the railway faced two major problems, both of which primarily concerned transport between the Soviet Union and the European member (CMEA-6) states. First, the Soviet railway lines had a larger gauge (1524 or 1520 mm) than those of the CMEA-6 countries, whose main branch lines used the European standard (1435 mm). The change of lanes delayed the border crossing on the Soviet western border and at the eastern borders of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Romania and caused additional costs. This called for efforts to make more efficient detours and projects to extend Soviet wide-gauge railway lines into the territory of its neighbouring CMEA countries.

The second problem resulted from the structure of foreign trade goods. While Soviet exports consisted mainly of raw materials and fuels transported by open wagon (for ores) or in special wagons (oil), the other states exported a much greater proportion of capital goods and consumer goods requiring closed or other (different types of) special wagons. This asymmetrical structure of foreign trade goods caused many wagons to be transported back without a load, a problem that led to the establishment of a common freight car park (Общий Парк Вагонов, ОПВ [OPW]) in 1963. As a result, the ratio of empty runs was reduced, but numerous conflicts occurred over this arrangement in the following years.[31] For example, there were lasting disagreements between the member states about wagon rents. Another way out of this problem was to use transport systems that did not require the repatriation of cargo space. In fact, in the 1960s, and especially the 1970s, the CMEA countries cooperated on several oil and gas pipeline construction projects, which led to an almost complete elimination of the corresponding rail transport.[32]

31 H. Brezinski, Der internationale Verkehrsverbund im RGW, in: Infrastrukturprobleme in europäischen RGW-Staaten, Marburg 1989, pp. 115–117; F. Flade, The Role of the OSJD in International Rail Transport in Eastern Europe", Unpublished Paper for the European Social Science History Conference in Belfast, 2018.

32 Blaha et al., Transportation in the East, pp. 32–33, 39–40; F. Flade, Energy Infrastructures: Poland and the Construction of Transnational Electricity, Oil, and Gas Systems, Wiesbaden 2017.

4. Institutional Fundamentals of a Transnational Transport Policy in the CMEA

In October 1947, almost exactly one hundred years after the founding of the Association of German Railway Administrations (Verein Deutscher Eisenbahnverwaltungen), a conference of the Ministers of Transport of the States of Central and Southeastern Europe that were under Soviet influence was held. The meeting took place in Belgrade (Yugoslavia still belonged to the nascent Eastern bloc at that time). It was proposed by the Soviet Union that "East Central Europe should leave the Western European railway regime and join the Soviet regime, including adopting its standards".[33] At the next conference, held in Warsaw in December 1948, agreements for the carriage of goods and passengers (SMGS/SMPS)[34] corresponding to the Soviet demand were made.[35] The contracting parties were Albania, Bulgaria, Hungary, the GDR (since 1950), Poland, Romania, the USSR, and Czechoslovakia – in short, all the members of the CMEA. However, as an institution, the CMEA was still very inactive in the early 1950s and this was especially the case for the field of transport policy.[36]

In 1955, a conference of the SMGS and SMPS contractors was held in East Berlin, where the idea to institutionalize the cooperation more strongly was developed. In 1956, the Organization for the Cooperation of Railways (Организация Сотрудничества Железных Дорог, ОСЖД [OSJD]) was founded in Sofia. The geographic reach of the OSJD extended beyond the CMEA by uniting, in addition to the eight aforementioned European railway companies, four Asian ones of state socialist countries: China, North Korea, Mongolia, and North Vietnam. Here, socialist internationalism seemed to be very concretely associated with a geo-strategically important Eurasian project of the Soviet Union. It was no coincidence that the second OSJD meeting took place in Beijing. However, the office of the OSJD responsible for executive and coordinating tasks was permanently located in Warsaw.[37]

Although the OSJD described itself as an organization of railway companies, the most important decisions were made at the conferences by the responsible ministers of the member states. However, these annual conferences were prepared in permanent commissions in which experts from companies and scientists dominated. The work of the OSJD focused on the evaluation and development of the SMGS and SMPS agreements, economic issues, such as tariff policy and the efficient handling of international transport, and, above all, technical issues, such as standardization of structure gauge and railway

33 Kaiser, and Schot, Writing the Rules, p. 161.

34 Agreement on International Freight Transport by Rail (Соглашение о Международном Железнодорожном Грузовом Сообщении, СМГС [SMGS]); Agreement on International Passenger Transport (Соглашение о Международном Пассажирском Сообщении, СМПС [SMPS]).

35 I. Jakubec, Schlupflöcher im Eisernen Vorhang. Tschechoslowakisch-deutsche Verkehrspolitik im Kalten Krieg. Die Eisenbahn und Elbeschifffahrt 1945–1989, Stuttgart 2006, p. 91.

36 van Brabant, Economic Integration, pp. 38–47.

37 German Federal Archive (hereafter BArch), DM–1/2681.

vehicles, safety installations, operating instructions, and signal regulations. In addition, there were also measures to expand scientific and technical cooperation.[38]

With the organizational expansion of the CMEA after 1957, in addition to about 22 other commissions, a Standing Commission for Transport was created. Standing commissions were charged with the task of encouraging and organizing cooperation in fields of planning and scientific-technical cooperation within single sectors. In fact, the commissions prepared the decisions of the CMEA executive committee and council meetings.[39] Thus, the members of the commissions controlled the implementation of the recommendations of the CMEA – but without executive functions. The Standing Commission for Transport was soon divided into five sections, responsible for the coordination of transport plans, railways, shipping, road transport and roads, and aviation. In 1975, an independent Standing Civil Aviation Commission was founded, which can be interpreted as a reaction to the numerous legal peculiarities in this sector and to the sector's enormous growth in the 1970s.[40]

Compared to the OSJD, the CMEA Commission for Transport was a lot more concerned with economic policy issues, notably with the coordination of investment plans and the development of cross-border infrastructures.[41] However, many areas of competence overlapped – in the field of technical standardization, for example, as well as with regard to pricing in general. Financial affairs, in particular, posed a considerable potential for conflict between member-states of the two organizations. The relationship between CMEA and OSJD has not yet been systematically investigated, particularly with regard to the ways in which they handled overlapping areas of responsibility. This may also be due to the fact that the OSJD lost much of its importance because of the political-ideological quarrel between the Soviet Union and China. As a result of this disagreement, no ministerial conferences of the OSJD were held between 1966 and 1984. However, disputes among the CMEA-6 states had already blocked the OSJD's work in the early 1960s – that is, before China unilaterally reduced its membership fees and generally insisted – like Romania – on the primacy of national sovereignty.[42]

During this period, the CMEA executive committee was sometimes able to make compromises in conflicts between the CMEA countries in the OSJD. After the geopolitically – and ideologically – motivated Sino-Soviet split, however, this was no longer possible. Nonetheless, the conflict between the Soviet Union and China had, in some respects, only a delayed and rather minor effect on the OSJD. Many of the OSJD structures at the middle and lower levels worked without ministerial conferences in the late 1960s

38 BArch, DM–1/2318, pp. 9–10. See also the Journal of the OSJD (published since 1958).

39 H. Machowski, Der Rat für gegenseitige Wirtschaftshilfe. Ziele, Formen und Probleme der Zusammenarbeit, in: Rat für gegenseitige Wirtschaftshilfe. Strukturen und Probleme, Bonn, 1987, pp. 30–31; van Brabant, Economic Integration, pp. 140–152.

40 Brezinski, Der internationale Verkehrsverbund, pp. 102–104; E. Kramer, Die Entwicklung des Verkehrswesens in der DDR, Berlin 1978, p. 141.

41 Brezinski, Der internationale Verkehrsverbund, p. 103.

42 Flade, The Role of the OSJD.

and even in the 1970s. This was facilitated by a clause in the OSJD contract that allowed individual railway companies to cooperate in solving problems that were only relevant to some member states. In the end, the OSJD even survived the collapse of the Soviet Union and the CMEA, reformed itself in the early 1990s, and devoted itself to the coordination of international rail transport between Europe and Asia, which now has a very promising future.[43]

From the mid-1960s on, the CMEA's Standing Commission on Transport was the most important multilateral institution for a transnational transport policy in Eastern Europe. It achieved success in some areas, including the introduction of the aforementioned Common Freight Car Fleet in the 1960s, the introduction of common principles for the implementation and increase of container traffic in the 1970s, and the organization of specialization and standardization in the production of means of transport. The latter involved not only locomotives and railway wagons but also ships, aircraft, buses, and lorries of different size classes. In some cases, such as with the concentration of aircraft production in the Soviet Union, specialization enabled greater investment and promoted technological innovation. In other cases, as in the production of lorries, the elimination of all competition caused problems with regard to the reliability of deliveries and quality of products.

The CMEA was less successful in coordinating national transport plans and developing cross-border infrastructure. The Comprehensive Programme of 1971, which can be considered the most important reform attempt in the history of the CMEA, also contained numerous transport policy measures.[44] However, the list of projects reveals, above all, the areas that had been completely neglected in the 1950s and 1960s, such as cross-border passenger traffic, for which there was a sudden increase in demand due to the introduction of visa-free travel between the GDR, Poland, and Czechoslovakia in 1972. Moreover, many of the projects that were decided in 1971 were subsequently either carried out with great delay or not carried out at all. This applies, for example, to the electrification of the Berlin-Warsaw-Moscow railway line, which was not completed until 1990.

It should be noted that there were a whole host of other institutions dealing with the problems of cross-border transport in Eastern Europe, both bilaterally and multilaterally. Of particular significance were the arrangements made immediately after the Second World War, which often followed agreements dating back to the interwar period. The main objective of these arrangements was to secure transit routes for Czechoslovak and Hungarian foreign trade, that is, to create the material and institutional conditions for the use of ports on the Baltic Sea and the Adriatic. As early as 1947, Poland met Czechoslovakia and Hungary for corresponding agreements regarding Gdansk and Szczecin. Despite the Iron Curtain, however, already since the early 1950s, Hamburg became the

43 Véron, Railway Integration, pp. 251–255. See also http://en.osjd.org (accessed 3 January 2024).

44 R. W. Stone, Satellites and Commissars. Strategy and Conflict in the Politics of Soviet-Bloc Trade, Princeton/Oxford 1996, pp. 113–147; A. Uschakow, Integration im RGW (COMECON). Dokumente, 2nd ed., Baden-Baden 1983, pp. 1095–1096, 1110–1114.

most important trading centre for Czechoslovak overseas trade, just as it had been before 1938.[45]

A second wave of concluding agreements and founding organizations occurred parallel to the institutional consolidation of the CMEA around 1960. For example, the Budapest Convention on Mutual Cooperation in Air Transport of 1957 and the Berlin Agreement on the Cooperation of Socialist Air Transport Companies of 1965 were important. As a result of the latter, a "pool" of airline companies from the CMEA-6 states emerged. Here, close cooperation developed, significant even by international comparisons, although the attempt to found a joint airline company failed.[46]

Regarding maritime transport, the 1971 agreement between the GDR and Poland provided far-reaching cooperation that culminated in the creation of the trade association Interport in 1974. The goal of the GDR was to achieve the joint use of the port capacities in order to redirect foreign trade traffic via Hamburg to Stettin in Poland and thus to save foreign exchange. However, fees for the use of the Polish ports were, in principle, also based on "tariffs applicable in other states".[47] The implementation of this principle proved to be very problematic. There were several complaints from the East German side about untimely increases in tariffs for incomprehensible reasons. This may be the main explanation for why the Interport agreements were never implemented effectively.[48] Nevertheless, there were other attempts at cooperation in the field of maritime transport. In 1978, for instance, Bulgaria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and the Soviet Union established an International Maritime Company to coordinate maritime traffic across the Black Sea.[49]

The examples above show that new bilateral and multilateral institutions in the field of air and maritime transport emerged as a result of greater diversification of the modal split in CMEA. These institutions – with more or less success – intensified the cooperation between CMEA countries. As a result, transport integration in the CMEA area deepened. It is also striking that these were often initiatives and organizations that included only some of the CMEA member states. Unlike in the founding phase of the OSJD and in the CMEA Transport Commission, the internal integration of the Eastern bloc sometimes played only a subordinate role. The need for transport connections with Western Europe and the world as a whole almost always had an influence on these projects.

45 Jakubec, Schlupflöcher, p. 177.

46 Kramer, Die Entwicklung des Verkehrswesens, pp. 140–141; S. Albrecht, Internationale Luftverkehrspolitik in der Zeit des Kalten Krieges von 1944 bis 1965. Das Beispiel Tschechoslowakei, in: Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte 1 (2007), p. 93; BArch DI–2/195, p. 81; BArch, DY 3023/1221, pp. 274–278.

47 BArch, DY 3023/1222, pp. 212–214, 403–404.

48 G. Sieber, Zum deutsch-polnischen Verhältnis, in: S. Bock, I. Muth and H. Schwiesau (eds.), DDR-Außenpolitik im Rückspiegel. Alternative deutsche Außenpolitik? Münster 2006, p. 15; M. Roe, Polish Shipping Under Communism, New York 2018.

49 Blaha et.al., Transportation in the East, p. 32.

5. The East Central and Southeastern Socialist Countries as Actors on the Stage of a Pan-European Transport Policy

In the case of the CMEA-6 states, the outward orientation meant a just shift in priorities rather than a radical change in the transport policy. Already in the 1950s, the experts working in the railway sector had tried to maintain or restore links with the (Western) European and global institutions. Indeed, the states of Eastern Europe had remained active members of the UNECE until 1950, which was considered "one of the few remaining bridges between east and west".[50] The Inland Transport Committee of the UNECE strove for traffic crossing the bloc boundaries, and immediately after the end of the Korean War, Czechoslovakia once again attended UNECE meetings, emphasizing the potential of international rail transport in serving as a model for peaceful coexistence between East and West.[51]

The Western European countries, however, relied less on the UNECE than on the UIC in their rail policy, particularly with the latter having become the official UN railway organization in 1949. Later, this reliance switched to the ECMT, which was founded in 1953. In contrast to the Soviet Union and China, which left the UIC in 1947, the railway companies of Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary remained as members.[52] The GDR's Deutsche Reichsbahn (DR) also managed to gain observer status and later a de facto membership in the UIC despite the diplomatic refusal of the GDR and the Hallstein Doctrine.[53] In 1977/78, Volkmar Winkler from the GDR served as director of the UIC. Before him, the Polish and Hungarian representatives had taken on this responsibility, and in the 1980s, the Czechoslovak and Bulgarian state railway companies performed the same duty.[54]

It should also be highlighted that the already-mentioned SMGS and SMPS contracts only applied to the traffic between the signatory states, while, of course, the international rules developed since the International Railway Transport Convention of 1890 (Bern) applied in all cases of traffic with third countries. The establishment of the OSJD was not supposed to – at least from the point of view of the East Central European railway experts – lead to the isolation of Eastern Europe but merge its bargaining power in order to improve the compatibility of Eastern and Western standards and to enforce common East European interests in international institutions. To this end, the OSJD, particularly the DR in the GDR, even took the initiative of eliminating one of the most serious problems of European rail transport.

In the 1950s, the connecting of rolling stock was still done manually in Europe on the basis of nineteenth-century technologies. In the USA, Japan, and more recently, even

50 Kaiser and Schot, Writing the Rules, p. 102.
51 Ibid., pp. 163–164.
52 Ibid., p. 176; Z. Frisnyák, The Centrally Planned Economy and Railways in Hungary, in: Roth and Jacolin (eds.), Eastern European Railways in Transition, p. 180.
53 BArch, DM–1/2318, pp. 3–7; BArch, DM–1/3585.
54 Véron, Railway Integration, p. 251.

in the Soviet Union, automatic coupling systems were introduced, significantly increasing both the circulation speed of the wagons and the safety of the railway workers. The OSJD decided to develop an automatic coupling system under the leadership of the GDR that could replace the mechanical systems that existed in the member states and was compatible with the Soviet system. In parallel, the UIC under the leadership of the French and West German state-owned companies (SNCF and Deutsche Bundesbahn, DB), also worked on an automatic coupling for the Western European railways.[55]

From 1967 onwards, a joint technical working group of experts from the UIC and OSJD worked on the development of a common standard for couplings to ensure the future use of Western and Eastern European freight wagons on both sides of the Iron Curtain. At that time, however, there was still no mutual recognition between the two German states, so the essential contribution of the DB and the DR to this working group can also be interpreted as part of a "hidden integration" and a step towards the policy of détente.[56]

By 1972, the working group had developed a model for a common automatic coupler, which, however, was heavier and, above all, more expensive than each countries' separate developments. Due to their different circumstances, moreover, the Western European railway companies were not able to agree on a common date for the implementation of the new technology. Hence, the negotiations between the UIC and OSJD on this issue did not lead anywhere. After the economic crisis of 1974/75, the loss-making state railway companies in Western Europe abandoned the project because of the high costs.

This example of automatic coupling demonstrates, firstly, that the level of technological development in Western and Eastern Europe was about the same in some cases, such as in the transport sector. Secondly, it shows that interest in pan-European integration projects was sometimes even greater in the East than in the West. In 1971, the idea of joining the ECMT was even discussed in Hungary (it had observer status in the 1980s),[57] and the East Central European countries stepped up their efforts to improve transport links with Western Europe at the UN level. This was particularly evident in the initiative to build a trans-European north-south motorway (TEM) from Gdansk via Ostrava, Bratislava, Budapest, Beograd, Sofia, and Istanbul to Ankara.

In 1974, Poland and Hungary brought the TEM project to the attention of the competent bodies of the UNECE. Subsequently, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UNECE conducted several inquiries, ascertaining that ten European governments were interested in the development of a motorway as a European cooperative programme. The project was repeatedly delayed, however, and has only been implemented in parts. It should be noted, however, that the initiators were East Central European

55 K. T. Elsasser, "Die Einführung der automatischen Kupplung erfordert langfristige Planung". Eine Geschichte des Scheiterns der europäischen Bahnen, in: D. Gugerli, M. Burri, and K. Elsasser (eds.), Die Internationalität der Eisenbahn 1850–1970, Zürich 2003, pp. 285–292.

56 D. Jajeśniak-Quast, "Hidden Integration" – RGW-Wirtschaftsexperten in europäischen Netzwerken, in: Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte 1 (2014), pp. 179–195.

57 Frisnyák, The Centrally Planned Economy, p. 180.

countries, while Western countries, including Austria, Italy, only took up the project later.[58]

It is not by chance that not only efforts to improve transport links but also cooperation with the West within the framework of international organizations were so marked among the transit countries of Central and Eastern Europe. As the political détente between East and West occurred in the 1970s and trade relations intensified, state railways of Czechoslovakia and Hungary realized that they could not sufficiently use their favourable geographical positions in the centre of Europe to channel transit traffic to their own territories and thereby generate foreign exchange revenue. Thus, for example, "technological obsolescence in comparison to Western Europe led to a reduction in transit from Southeastern Europe to Western Europe through Czechoslovakia".[59] Nevertheless, transit traffic remained an important source of revenue. In 1988, East-West traffic by rail brought 52 million dollars to Czechoslovakia, while the traffic of goods moving in and out of Yugoslavia earned 17.8 million dollars. Profits from such traffic made up 60 per cent of the total profit of the Czechoslovak railways, although it accounted for only 6 per cent of the total traffic."[60]

6. Transit Traffic Regulations as an Indicator of the Change in Transport Policy Priorities in the European CMEA States

The technical preconditions as well as the legal and financial regulations of transit traffic generally influence the possibilities and limits of transnational integration processes. In the case of the CMEA, the transit problem was also symptomatic of changes in the premises of transport policy.

One of the first measures of the railways of Eastern Europe now united by the Warsaw Agreement on Goods and Passenger Transport of 1948 (SMGS/SMPS) was the creation of a standardized payment system for freight traffic, the Unified Transit Tariff (Единый Транзитный Тариф, ETT). The Soviet Union adopted the principle that transit tariffs should be lower than domestic tariffs.[61] This was probably less about promoting a general integration process than facilitating transportation from satellite states to the Soviet Union. This was absolutely necessary for the rapid completion of the post-war reconstruction of Eastern Europe generally, but especially the USSR as well as for the expansion of the heavy and defence industries.

However, the introduction of the ETT in 1951 did not end but actually only initiated discussions on the structuring and concretization of tariffs. In the GDR at the end of

58 U. Armangil and B. Vásárhelyi, The Trans-European North-South Motorway (TEM). Finding the Ways of Practical Co-Operation, in: Transport Reviews 8 (1988) 1, pp. 75–82.

59 I. Jakubec, Transport under Socialism. The Case of the Czechoslovak State Railways 1948–1989, in: Roth and Jacolin (eds.), Eastern European Railways in Transition, p. 152.

60 Blaha et al., Transportation in the East, p. 35.

61 Brezinski, Der internationale Verkehrsverbund, p. 116.

the 1950s, the "scientific justification of tariffs" was considered to be the "most difficult problem of work in international transport affairs".[62] In fact, 20 years were spent on developing and implementing the rules of the tariff contract and organizing the financial settlement. In other CMEA member states, there was more fundamental criticism of the tariffs.

In Hungary, for example, the idea of a transnational tariff system was criticized for making it much more difficult to use rail tariffs as an instrument of national economic policy – which had been practiced in the country since the 1870s. As important transit countries, Czechoslovakia and Poland were also put in a disadvantaged position by the ETT introduced in the early 1950s.[63] In 1964, these countries were able to enforce a tariff increase of 35%. In October 1975, at its 73rd session, the Executive Committee of the CMEA argued for the adjustment of transit tariffs and set an increase of 70 per cent, which was to apply from 1976 onwards. Poland considered this insufficient and, supported by Czechoslovakia and Hungary, demanded that the coefficient should instead be increased to 200 per cent from 1977 on – and, furthermore, announced its transit rate contract as a precautionary measure.

Polish Transport Minister Tadeusz Bejm, who also chaired the CMEA's Standing Transport Commission, held an extraordinary meeting of transport ministers in December 1976, which resulted in a compromise that allowed Poland to remain a member of the ETT. As early as June 1980, however, Poland – now together with Hungary and Czechoslovakia – renounced the international rail tariff agreement as well as the agreement on freight car rental rates and the SMGS as a whole. A compromise was again found with the assistance of the CMEA's executive committee, but the multiple terminations of the treaties as the most radical means of pressure was a clear indication that the ETT was perceived by some CMEA members to be extremely unfavourable, while the other CMEA members were constantly confronted with demands for higher fees.[64]

In addition, there was some dysfunctionality in the system caused by the lack of currency convertibility in the CMEA countries and the subsequent use of the "transfer rouble".[65] The rules on transit traffic in the SMGS provided that the freight costs were initially paid in full by the consignor to the recipient, who then settled the claims of the transit countries according to their respective shares. This actually meaningful procedure meant that transit traffic to Western Europe was remunerated in foreign currency; that to other CMEA states, however, was in transfer roubles. Particularly in the 1970s, under the conditions of an extreme shortage of foreign exchange, this system resulted in very

62 BArch, DM–1/2318, p. 41.

63 Ibid., p. 20; Frisnyák, The Centrally Planned Economy, p. 179.

64 F. Flade, Beyond Socialist Camaraderie. Crossborder Railway between German Democratic Republic, Poland and Soviet Union (1950s–60s), in: The Journal of Transport History 40 (2019) 2, pp. 251–269; BArch, DY 3023/1221, pp. 318–320, 349–354, 364, 370–1, 393–4; BArch, DY 3023/1222, p. 45; BArch, DY 3023/1224, pp. 177–180, 224–240, 249–259.

65 van Brabant, Economic Integration, pp. 308–338; J. Kornai, The Socialist System. The Political Economy of Communism, Princeton 1992, pp. 351–355.

different treatments of transported goods by the different transit countries, which often made foreign trade much more difficult.[66]

For the GDR, whose foreign trade was mostly with the Soviet Union, the issue of transit traffic through Poland was of great importance, which caused serious problems. In the 1960s, transit traffic over the Polish railways was often hampered by delays in changing lanes on the Soviet-Polish border, lack of wagons, and the under-capacity of the railway lines, which, in turn, often resulted in congestion and eventually the suspension of foreign trade transport acceptance by the Polish state railway. In other cases, Polish railways made the transit dependent on the provision of "wagon assistance".[67]

As a result, the GDR and the Soviet Union also, at times, strove from the 1960s to increase the share of other modes of transport, namely, the construction of oil pipelines and expansion of maritime traffic.[68] Nevertheless, even in the 1970s, border closures for freight traffic had to be repeatedly imposed for several days or weeks. These closures were particularly frequent at the ends of quarters and of each year when the Soviet and East German companies tried to complete their export plans.[69] In addition to the political uncertainties that had emerged since 1980, the already existing delays in transit traffic through Poland and the constant Polish demands for tariff increases formed the impetus for the later construction of a ferry connection between Mukran, in Rügen (GDR) and Klaipeda, in Lithuania.[70]

7. Conclusion

To what extent has the use of Western European transport history as a "background" sharpened the view of analogous developments on the other side of the Iron Curtain or perhaps even changed interpretations? As in the EEC, the implementation of a common transport policy in CMEA was hindered by conflicts of interest between the community of states and those individual nation states. Unlike in Western Europe, however, there was no fundamental debate there about the advantages and disadvantages of state ownership, state regulation, and market-based mechanisms. The transport sectors of all socialist countries were dominated by state-owned enterprises, which were subject to the respective central planning requirements. Private transport companies were non-existent or had only local significance. However, attempts to introduce multilateral planning at the CMEA level failed in the early 1960s; even the coordination of national plans worked rather poorly.

66 Zsuzsa Frisnyák illustrates this through the example of trade between the USSR and Yugoslavia, which, in terms of currency, was considered a capitalist foreign country. The trade relied to a large extent on rail transit through Hungary or Romania. See Z. Frisnyák, Soviet Influence in the Operation of the Hungarian Railways, Unpublished Paper for the European Social Science History Conference in Belfast, April 2018.

67 BArch, Dl–2/164, pp. 2–4; BArch, DM 1/3585; BArch, DY 3023/1224, pp. 43–44.

68 BArch, Dl–2, 164, pp. 2–3.

69 BArch, DY 3023/1222; BArch, DY3023/1223; BArch, DY 3023/1224.

70 BArch, DY 3023/1224, 178–180; W. Klietz, Ostseefähren im Kalten Krieg, Berlin 2012.

The 1971 Complex Programme did include some transnational transport projects. However, thoroughgoing successes were only achieved in the construction and expansion of a relatively dense and modern pipeline network – which continues to have an impact today. Despite efforts to expand the socialist division of labour among the CMEA member states, which did lead to an increase in the exchange of goods, cross-border railway connections were often bottlenecks even in the 1970s and 1980s. Projects like the joint freight wagon fleet and specializations in transport machinery construction sometimes had positive effects at first but suffered in the long run from the deficits typical of socialist planned economies: unreliable supply chains, quality deficiencies, and innovation inertia.

In both Western and Eastern Europe, there were attempts to revive the technocratic internationalism of the interwar period immediately after the end of the Second World War. Thus, some networks and associations in which experts organized the integration of transport spaces existed even before the founding of the CMEA and EEC, and these continued to be influential and effective afterwards. Besides national governments and the governing bodies of the EEC and CMEA, the actors within these institutions also had a great influence on the shaping of transnational transport policy. They were often also the ones who sought to increase the permeability of the Iron Curtain, be it for the transfer of knowledge or for the practical needs of cross-border transport. This confirms the results of research on the role of international experts from other sectors in socialist Eastern Europe.[71] It is in this context that the OSJD, founded at the end of the 1940s, should be mentioned. Although it went through a profound crisis in the 1960s and 1970s due to the Sino-Soviet split, it was never completely inactive and has emerged today as the most important international railway organization in the Eurasian region.

In the state socialist countries of East Central Europe, the previously exceptional importance of the railway for cross-border traffic declined from the late 1960s. This development resembles analogous trends in the transport mode split in Western Europe but started later and proceeded much more slowly – partly because alternatives were lacking due to the underdevelopment of long-distance road freight transport. In the East, transport development, changes in the modal split in particular, did not only follow a logic of transport economics but was also determined by changes in foreign trade policy and the growing need to earn foreign currency. The greater part of sea and air as well as cross-border lorry traffic did contributed little to the integration of the CMEA transport area but instead reinforced the newly-prioritised trade with Western Europe and partly also with other continents. Now, the CMEA only came into play when it could be used to pool forces to achieve more success in pan-European or even global transport markets. Everything else was done outside CMEA, either nationally or through bilateral or multilateral institutions. Meanwhile, the reorientation of the foreign trade policies of

71 Jaześniak-Quast, "Hidden Integration"; L. Crump and S. Godard, Reassessing Communist International Organisations. A Comparative Analysis of COMECON and the Warsaw Pact in Relation to their Cold War Competitors, in: Contemporary European History 1 (2018), pp. 85–109.

all CMEA states that began in the 1970s impacted intra-bloc transport relations more negatively than positively. This has been shown by the analysis of the intensification of conflicts between the CMEA states on the issue of transit fees.
In Western Europe in the late 1980s, EC transport policy was primarily concerned with liberalizing its transport market. In this context, Eastern European dumping offers tended to be fought by the transport industry and by politicians.[72] For the East, the intensification of trade with the West and the increase of foreign exchange earnings had a high priority. For this reason alone, pan-European transport integration already had a higher priority in the Eastern Bloc than it had in the West before the fall of the Berlin Wall.
In this respect, a comparative analysis of the development of transportation on both sides of the so-called Iron Curtain – which also takes into account mutual interdependencies – is suitable for a critical interrogation of established master narratives on the role of the state socialist countries in the Cold War. The relatively late and slow change in the transport modal split in the East can, of course, be seen as an indication of delayed modernization, as it has been in the past. Today, however, the return of freight traffic to the railways is sought and worked for throughout Europe – primarily for environmental reasons – and especially in cross-border traffic. The indisputable economic and technical superiority of the West has not always produced sustainable and sensible strategies.
Clearly, the socialist transport system serves as an example of an underfinanced and neglected infrastructure – which can also be found in other regions and political systems. At the same time, however, it provided an arena for the diverse activities of multiple actors striving for economically rational action along with successful and profitable participation in transnational processes, first within the socialist camp and then, increasingly, at the European and global levels.

72 K.-E. Schenk and H.-J. Seeler (eds.), Neue Perspektiven der EG-Beziehungen mit den RGW-Mitgliedstaaten: Bericht über ein Symposion, 23. und 24. März 1987, Hamburg/Bonn 1988.