

The 'Productive Triangle' can break bottlenecks in Soviet food crisis

by Rainer Apel

The current planning of Western emergency food aid to the Soviet Union has exposed weaknesses at crucial nodal points in the transport infrastructure that connects the West with Russia. Neither the railroad system, nor the land routes, nor the transportation capacities (trucks, locomotives, etc.) are in a shape that would allow an efficient flow of goods. The ports are naturally qualified to deal with large shipments, but the secondary distribution network from the ports to the mainland is in need of considerable short-term improvement.

The total volume of emergency aid requested by the Soviet Union in talks in Moscow in mid-December between Chancellor Helmut Kohl's national security adviser, Horst Teltschik, and Soviet Deputy Prime Minister Stepan Sitaran, namely 1.5 million tons of non-perishable food products, is almost the exact equivalent of what the American and British allies transported during the 11-month Berlin airlift in 1948-49. There is reason to doubt that such an operation can be repeated for the current aid lift to the Soviet Union, because the Anglo-Americans are not at all committed to use their air transport capacities for such purposes, but rather want to employ them for logistical reinforcements to the Persian Gulf expedition corps.

This calls attention also to the fact that at this very moment, the United States is absorbing 600 freight trains of the reserves of the Deutsche Bundesbahn (the state railroad in western Germany) for a huge logistics operation from the American bases in Germany to the ports of Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Bremerhaven, and Nordenham, for transshipment to the Gulf. By comparison: To bring the requested 1.5 million tons of food aid to the Soviet Union from Germany and other European countries would require some 1,200 to 1,500 freight trains over the crucial next four winter months. This is between 100 and 120 trains per week—almost exactly what the U.S. logistics operation in Germany is absorbed between mid-November and Christmas.

In spite of all existing bottlenecks, especially at the central gage-shifting rail transit station of Brest-Litovsk on the border between Poland and the Soviet Union, the immense, immediate pressure created by the scope of the food supply crisis in the East will create conditions of emergency management between the governments involved in the aid program.

A failure to supply at least minimal food rations to the Soviet population would lead to a collapse of the Soviet system, with explosive social and strategic repercussions—for example, a stream of "famine refugees"—that will inevitably spill over to the rest of the European continent and pose a lethal threat to the national security of all states.

The policy of List and LaRouche

If reason prevails among the challenged governments, the current crisis should promote a synthesis between efficient, immediate emergency management, and an instant entry into a sound continent-wide crash program of infrastructural, industrial, and agricultural development of the type outlined in Lyndon LaRouche's "Productive Triangle" program. There is no reasonable alternative to such an approach, nor any time for diplomatic niceties. The only alternative would be a collapse into conditions worse than those that prevailed in the 1920s and 1930s, with inevitably ensuing civil war situations and the emergence of fascist regimes throughout Europe.

In order to facilitate the best possible transition from this winter's aid program to the Triangle concept, food aid transports to the East should be run by ship and rail, to create an incentive for large-scale investments in the partially ailing port and railroad infrastructure in Europe and the Soviet Union. This will create an investment input into those sectors of industry that produce rolling stock and other rail equipment, as well as capital goods and other machinery that are required to put the European economies back in shape. Necessarily, this will be a dirigistic policy in the tradition of Friedrich List—one that is directly opposed to the free market fantasies that have swept into Eastern Europe—especially Poland—and the Soviet economic reform project, over the past two years.

As for the recommended emphasis on improvements and maximal use of existing capacities in the port-rail infrastructure, the following options seem to be most promising:

1) **The Baltic ports of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia** can be used for the transfer of large volumes of food aid to the Soviet Union. So far, Moscow has commissioned only the two ports of Leningrad and Vyborg on the Russian Republic's section of the Baltic coastline. It is important for the

stabilization of the internal Soviet situation, however, that the institutions of the individual republics be brought in on the food aid program in a way that improves their status vis-à-vis the center in Moscow.

The ports that can be used in addition to Leningrad and Vyborg, are Klaipeda in Lithuania, the two Latvian ports of Libau and Riga, and the four Estonian ports of Parnu, Baltysk, Tallinn, and Narva. Another option is to use the big port of Kaliningrad, and eventually Pillau—both in the Russian enclave and military off-limits zone of Kaliningrad. The demilitarization at least of sections of the Kaliningrad enclave would be vital, because a Russian gage rail connection exists from northeastern Poland into the military zone which, if fully used, would spare gage-shifting procedures that are required at the other border transit stations.

2) **The northern Polish rail route** can be used to take off pressure created by the chronic rail jam at Brest-Litosvk. The northern route runs from Poznan to Torun, Olzstyn, Bialystock, from there to Grodno (in Belorussia) and further on to Vilnius (in Lithuania) and other main cities in the three Baltic republics.

The capacity of the northern route is not as big as that of the central Polish route Poznan-Warsaw-Brest—which is the main transit route from the West into the Soviet Union—but can, because it runs through a less-populated region of Poland, be used exclusively for the food aid operation for a period of transition, until the bottleneck at Brest is finally overcome.

3) **The Black Sea ports** of the Soviet Union, also equipped with relatively well-functioning railway links to the rest of the country, can be used to land Western food in large quantities. These are the ports of Odessa, Sebastopol, Taganrog, and Novorossisk.

4) **The railway pivot of Kharkov**, the largset in the southern Soviet Union, should be used as well. It can be reached from the Black Sea ports and over an existing Russian gage rail route that connects the two important heavy industrial regions of eastern Slovakia (Kosice) and southern Ukraine (Krivoi Rog).

The ‘rolling highway’ concept

The standard procedure for bringing food, and, later, also agricultural technology and industrial equipment to the Soviet Union, should be the application of the “rolling highway” concept of combined rail-truck transport. This would bring an entire truck convoy over the distance of 1,000-3,000 kilometers within several days, without the usual excessive logistical requirements of supplying gasoline (nine tank trucks for every convoy of 14 trucks), and land them at well-selected railway pivots deep in the Russian interior, whence they can travel on to the end distribution points at a 50-kilometer diameter. The usual gage-shifting procedures at the central transit points at the Soviet borders can be eliminated by special equipment, eventually built by Soviet Army

engineers, which would allow the roll-off/roll-on of trucks from the European to the Soviet trains.

All of this should be done in a serious approach comparable to the job done by the Army engineering corps of the Soviet Union and East European countries under conditions of wartime logistics operations. The use of whatever available capacities of military, railway, and other logistics units of the countries involved in the aid operation, seems necessary, with the proviso that this proceed in the framework of civilian planning and administration, because a further extension of the degree of militarization of the Eastern societies is not desirable.

The structures built up during the winter aid operation can be used as a point of departure for the creation of a sound, long-term transport and production infrastructure between West and East on the Eurasian continent.

‘Free market’ method won’t do the job

by Jonathan Tennenbaum

The following is abridged from a memorandum on German economic policy from the perspective of a Paris-Berlin-Vienna “Productive Triangle” as the fulcrum of a European economic boom.

The immense, immediate pressure created by the scope of the food supply crisis in the East will create conditions of emergency management between the governments involved in the aid program.

In order to facilitate the best-possible transition from the present winter aid program to the full-fledged Triangle concept, food aid transports to the East should be run by ship and rail, to create an incentive for large-scale investments in the partially ailing port and railroad infrastructure in Europe and the Soviet Union. This will create an investment input into those sectors of industry that produce rolling stock and other rail equipment, as well as capital goods and other machinery that are required to put the European economies back in shape.

There is no precedent for the situation Germany finds itself in today. On the one hand, in many respects the starting-point is extraordinarily favorable, at least compared with the rest of the world. On the other hand, without a radical reversal of the economic policy trends of the past 10 years, it will