

›ACROSS THE BORDER‹

International Railway Investments in the 19th and 20th Centuries

International Railway History Association / Association Internationale d'Histoire des Chemins de Fer (Paris)

General information:

The Intern. Railway History Ass. (IRHA) is very pleased to invite researchers in Traffic, Business and Social History to our Intern. conference which is supported by the Austrian Min. of Traffic, Innovation and Technology (Bundesmin. für Verkehr, Innovation u. Technologie [bm:vit]), the Austrian Railways (Österr. Bundesbahn [ÖBB]) and Bombardier.

Scientific Committee: Guenter Din-hobl (IFF – Klagenfurt, Wien, Graz u. Innsbruck), Prof. Dr. Andrea Giuntini (Univ. de Módena), Erwin Mauron (Stift. Histori. Erbe der SBB), Dr. Michèle Merger (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique), Miguel Muñoz Rubio (Fundacion de los Ferrocarriles Espanoles), Baufine Ducrocq (Ass. intern. d'histoire des chemins de fer), Dr. habil. Ralf Roth (Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Univ.), Paul van Heesvelde (Min. of the Flemish Community – Mobility Unit), Paul Véron (Union Intern. des Chemins de fer). For more information : <http://www.ffe.es/ai/index.htm>; contact: Aihc-Irha@ffe.es

Date: September 17-19, 2004.

Location: Panhans Hotel, Semmering, Austria.

Deadline for submission: March 15, 2004.

Please send your proposal (max. 1 page) and a short CV to Dr. habil. Ralf Roth, Johann Wolfgang Goethe- Univ., Historisches Seminar, Grüneburgplatz 1, D-60629 Frankfurt a.M.; Tel.: +49 / (0)69 / 798-32627 and +49 / (0)69 / 83 83 38 85; Fax: +49 / (0)69 / 798-32622 and +49 / (0)69 / 83 83 38 85; e-Mail: RalfRoth1@compuserve.com, or to Günter Din-hobl, IFF – Interuniversitäres Inst. für Interdisziplinäre Forschung u. Fortbildung der Univ. Klagenfurth, Wien, Innsbruck u. Graz, Schottenfeldgasse 29/5, A-1070 Wien; e-Mail: guenter.dinhobl@univie.ac.at

International financial transactions that have taken place across national borders continue to attract our attention and are of the greatest importance in Europe and throughout the world. The conference will focus on the major investors who, in the 19th and 20th centuries, first established railway shares as an act of national unity. A considerable number of these investors also wanted to create extensive networks outside their own countries and thus invested a lot of capital in foreign companies.

Examples of railway entrepreneurs and railway financiers engaging in foreign investment are plentiful. One of such example is the line from Cologne to Antwerp which was the fruit of an interesting collaboration between the state of Belgium and the *Rhenish Railway Company* in the first days of the construction of the German railway network. Another example is the Rothschild family in the 1840's and 1850's who, with their banks in Frankfurt am Main, Paris, London, Vienna and Geneva, invested their capital not only in numerous lines in Germany, France, Austria and the United Kingdom but in nearly every other European country as well. Later in the 1860's British railway financiers were engaged in railway construction on a large scale in Prussia, while French railway financiers contributed to railway construction within the Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy. Some of these developments are regarded as initiating a second period of private investments in railway construction. This is especially true for Prussia and the German states. To overcome the problems of the Prussian Railway legislation British investors had to rely upon the cleverness of a German insurance broker by the name of Bethel Henry Strousberg, a Prussian who had lived a long time in London. With the help of these English railway financiers he became not only the biggest »railway king« but also the biggest entrepreneur in general in Germany at that time. Once he established his success in Germany, he then directed his energies towards railway construction in Russia and Rumania.

These few examples illustrate the key role that multinational collaborative efforts played in creating the European railway network as well as other networks on other continents. It is therefore necessary to establish a European perspective of railway history which is more than the sum of several national railway histories. The following questions and topics should be addressed in the papers to be presented:

- We would like to discuss the role of financiers, businessmen and engineers of the railways in the time when certain well-known individuals of European capitalism appear on the scene. We believe that it is important to study the most significant European investors who have acted not only in Western Europe but also in central and eastern parts of Europe.
- When, where and why were railway investments from investors from other countries of great importance?
- How difficult was it for foreign investors to realise their interests in light of national laws and government policy as well as the economic and cultural barriers that existed at that time.
- What were the economic and political consequences of railway investments across the borders?
- As a tribute to our conference host in the town of Semmering, Austria, with its 150 year old railway line (<http://www.noel.co.at/partner/trsued/whsemmeringbahn/home.htm>) we welcome papers which address railways in Austria and its international financing.

Decisions about the submitted papers will be taken in spring 2004.