

Danish Maglev Plan A Challenge to Germany

by Michelle Rasmussen

The campaign of the Schiller Institute (SI) in Denmark, for Denmark to lead Europe into the maglev age (magnetic levitation trains), and for the construction of two major bridge projects, is at the center of a hot debate about future infrastructure projects there, and now also Germany. Lyndon LaRouche's proposal for a "Great Four Power" (the U.S., Russia, China, and India) agreement to revive the world's physical economy, can be aided by the optimistic debate about ambitious long-term infrastructure projects the SI has helped catalyze in the small country of Denmark, which can help orient Europe, and especially Germany, towards the future.

Since its first 50,000-run campaign newspaper from July 2006, the Institute has campaigned for a national maglev system, to be connected to Germany via an already proposed joint Danish-German bridge across the Baltic Sea, called the Fehmarn Belt Bridge, currently the subject of intense intra-governmental negotiations. The SI plan also includes connecting Denmark's two largest cities, Copenhagen on an island, and Århus on the mainland, by a maglev link over a new bridge across the Kattegat Sea—bringing the current 3½ hour trip down to 25 minutes.

On June 21, *Die Welt*, the major Hamburg-based German newspaper, covered the Schiller Institute's maglev campaign, under the title, "Copenhagen-Hamburg in 40 Minutes." The article, which leads the newspaper's international section, highlights the Schiller Institute's campaign in very beginning. "Whereas Germany is hesitant to give state guarantees of several billion euros to secure the Fehmarn Bridge project, and whereas citizens on Fehmarn are protesting against it, the Danes are one step ahead. The Schiller Institute, a combination of general interest lobby for a strong state and citizens initiative to support huge infrastructure projects, says that Hamburg and Copenhagen are not even a one-hour train ride apart. With a maglev train like the Transrapid and with the bridge, it can be feasible to drive from the one big northern European city to the other in 40 minutes, they say." The SI hopes that the *Die Welt* coverage will spark a renewed debate about utilizing German Transrapid technology in Germany, and strengthening the case for Germany to join Denmark in building the new bridge between the two countries.

Then, on June 22, Germany's national radio station Deutschlandfunk reported on a small singing demonstration the SI had held in front of the German Embassy in Copenhagen on June 18, to pressure the German government to agree now to build a joint bridge. The bridge has been discussed for



Schiller Institute/Michelle Rasmussen

The Danish Schiller Institute's campaign for a national maglev system, and a bridge across the Baltic Sea to Germany, has sparked a hot debate about infrastructure projects in Denmark and Germany. Here Tom Gillesberg (right) and Feride Istogu Gillesberg (left) present a model of the Fehmer Belt Bridge to German Ambassador to Denmark Dr. Gerhard Nourney.

a long time, and the decision has to be made in the next couple of weeks. If up to 30% of the costs are to be covered by the EU, the application has to be in Brussels by July 20. The German government has been hesitating, especially due to the financing question, while the Danish government has proposed the same model as that behind the construction of the last two great projects—the internal Great Belt bridge, and the Øresund Bridge between Denmark and Sweden: state guaranteed loans to a state company, to be repaid through user tolls.

Therefore, the demonstrators held up a giant poster in German, “Where is Germany? Say ‘Yes’ to the Fehmarn Belt Bridge,” with a model of the proposed bridge, flying Danish and German flags, and including maglev trains with magnets. An SI statement was also distributed. The demonstrators sang a special version of a Haydn canon, “The Danes say ‘yes’, the Germans ‘no’, yes, no. Let’s build the bridge. A big nation should not think small.”

At the end of the demonstration, the German Ambassador, Dr. Gerhard Nourney, spoke to the demonstrators, and the SI presented their model bridge to him. Deutschlandfunk began their “Europe Today” story about the Danish bridge debate with the beginning of the bridge song, the demonstration and the presentation of the model bridge to the ambassador, though without mentioning the Schiller Institute by name. And, the *Die Welt* article was written after notification about the demonstration.

Jyllands-Posten (*JP*), Denmark’s largest newspaper based on the Danish mainland in Århus, which is promoting the new internal Danish bridge, unfortunately at the expense of the bridge to Germany, posted an internet article entitled, “Demonstration in favor of Fehmarn Belt Bridge,” with an interview with Tom Gillesberg, the chairman of the Schiller Institute in Denmark.

Accelerating the Momentum Towards Maglev

At the same time as the SI is pressing for Germany to agree to build the Fehmarn Belt Bridge, the momentum is accelerating towards the possibility of actually implementing the Institute’s maglev plan in Denmark.

At the end of May, the SI began distributing its third 50,000-run campaign newspaper, entitled, “Århus-Copenhagen in 25 minutes,” including Gillesberg’s speech to the Transportation Committee of the Danish Parliament.

On the occasion of the ten-year-anniversary of the opening of the Great Belt Bridge, on June 1, the director of the Danish State Railroad (DSB), Søren Eriksen, announced that he was in favor of a high-speed train connection between Århus and Copenhagen via the debated Kattegat Sea Bridge, and called for the politicians to investigate this possibility as soon as possible.

On June 20, *JP* carried front-page and page-two coverage of the proposal for a maglev link on this route, after interviewing representatives of Siemens, the designer of the Transrapid maglev train, now operating only in Shanghai, and the Danish engineering firm Rambøll, about the realistic prospect for such a maglev. (*JP*, as well as many other news media, had already covered the SI national maglev proposal in April, when the Kattegat Bridge debate began.) The statements by Siemens and Rambøll were then also covered one day later in *Die Welt*.

On that same day, *JP* decided to give the Institute the opportunity to present its maglev plan itself, by prominently publishing an op-ed by Tom Gillesberg, identified as the chairman of the Schiller Institute in Denmark, entitled “Thinking Ahead: Maglev Trains.” Accompanied by a color photo of the author, it was placed right next to their own editorial.

The op-ed was a response to *JP*’s renewed campaign to build the new domestic Danish Kattegat bridge, at the expense of the bridge connecting Denmark and Germany, and the announcement of DSB’s support for building a high-speed rail long this new route.

Gillesberg’s op-ed argued that we should think ahead, and not only build both bridges, but also include a maglev rail that would be the beginning of a Danish and international maglev net operating at speeds of 500-600 km/h.

“First with the new, or last with the old?” quoted from the op-ed, is placed over the title. The highlighted quote reads, “Let’s quickly get started on building the Fehmarn Belt Bridge and at the same time prepare the Kattegat-link, so we can start building the Kattegat project soon.”

The intensive debate the Schiller Institute has created about future-oriented great regional infrastructure projects, which can hook up to the Eurasian Land-Bridge, by distributing three mass campaign newspapers, and breakthroughs in press coverage in Denmark, and now, in Germany, has shown the effective results of the SI’s “Danish flank.”

The newspaper articles referred to in this article can be read at: www.magnettog.dk