



International Railway Organization in 19th and 20th
century Europe

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1. Introduction

"And, indeed, the railway itself is an object lesson as to the futility of mere artificial restrictions on progress. The passenger boards his train at Calais, and frontiers are wiped out between the English Channel and Brindisi; or he sets out on his journey from St. Petersburg and his destination is the distant port of Vladivostock in the Far East. For him the artificial distinction that calls this "Europe" and that "Asia" is wiped out."¹

International railway traffic was already running in the 19th century. The "Orient Express" running from Paris to Constantinople since 1883 was one only from the "trains de luxe", as they were called, providing for international railway passenger traffic in Europe in the 19th century.² International "trains de luxe" were run throughout the 19th and 20th century by the *International Sleeping Car Company*. Other known examples of international railway services are the "Trans-Europe express high-speed trains" running in the post second war world period. Known as T.E.E. trains, these were designed to provide a fast and comfortable passenger service between what their initiators regarded as "the most important business centers in Europe".³ In analogy to these passenger services, international goods trains have run throughout the 19th and 20th century, providing for international freight services.⁴

As existing historiography on railway documents, the political unit of the nation-state has provided the political context in which railway technology was introduced and railway networks developed in Europe. If this is the case, then the following question, consequently, arises: how did international railway traffic become possible? What agents shaped this process? Some authors of railway history refer to the work of international railway agreements and organizations and their importance in promoting international railway traffic.⁵ However, an overall account of these

¹ From an article in the journal *Railway Gazette* of the 1910s, "The International Railway Congress", in: *The Railway Gazette*, 33, (1910), p. 70.

² "The International Sleeping Car Co.", in: *The Railway Gazette*, XXXII, 41, (1900)

³ "High-Speed Diesel-Electric Trains for International Services", in: *The Railway Gazette*, 107, (1957), pp.190-192.

⁴ In an analogy to the T.E.E. trains, in the same period the Trans-Europe-Express-Marchandises (T.E.E.M.) provided for fast long-distance rail services over the systems of several countries. G. Baum, "The T.E.E.M. Trains of Western Europe", in: *The Railway Gazette*, 114, (1961), pp. 744-745.

⁵ Laurent Tissot, "Les Modeles Ferroviaires Nationaux et la Creation d' Un Systeme International de Transports Europeens, 1870-1914. Coordination, Integration ou Unification?", in: *Relations Internationales*, 95, (1998) Laurent Tissot, 'Naissance d' une Europe Ferroviaire: La Convention Internationale de Berne (1890)', in Michele Merger and Dominique Barjot, eds., *Les Entreprises et Leurs Reseaux: Hommes, Capitaux, Techniques et Pouvoirs XIXe-XXe siecles. Melanges en l' honneur de Francoic Caron*. (Paris: 1998) Laurent Tissot, 'The Internationality of Railways; An Impossible Achievement?', in *Die Internationalitat der Eisenbahn* (Zurich: Chronos, 2003) Douglas J. Puffert, 'The Technical integration of the European railway Network', in Albert Carreras, Andrea Giuntini, and Michele Merger, eds., *European Networks: The Development of a Transnational System of*

organizations, their work, mission and their history, as well as an assessment of their importance for the history of railways and the history of European integration has yet to be done. In this paper I aim to fill partially this gap in historiography. In particular, my aim is to make an inventory of international organizations and to identify the ones that were most prominent in providing international railway traffic. Following in broad lines the canonical periodization of political historians, I divide my narrative in three periods, each of which is defined by the political situation and, as I will show, by the dominant international organizations: 1830s to 1910s, 1910s to 1940s and finally 1940s to 1991.

I base my narrative on my research in secondary literature, railway journals and particular the *Railway Gazette (R.G.)*, the *Bulletin of the International Union of Railways* and research in the archives of some of the most prominent organizations, including the *Transit and Communications Committee of the League of Nations* (1919), the *Inland Transport Committee of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe* (1947) and the *European Conference of Transport Ministers* (1953).

2. The first railway organizations of an international scope: 1830s to 1910s.

International co-operation in the field of railways started early in the 19th century. This mainly took the form of bilateral or multilateral agreements between railway administrations, or in some cases even treaties between governments. In many cases such agreements established organizations, international in character. Such organizations were limited initially as far as their geographical scope of activity was concerned.⁶ Many subsequently expanded their geographical field of activity and broadened their field of interests.

An early development that made international railway traffic possible throughout Europe was the adoption of gauge of 1435m by the railway systems of many European countries. This later became the standard gauge for railways in most countries in Europe. Existing historiography refers to this process as an "ex ante" standardisation of gauge, which was a result of a process of diffusion of railway technology and technical knowledge from the United Kingdom to continental Europe in the initial phase of development of railway technology.⁷ This "ex ante" standardisation of railway gauge during the initial period of railway construction in Europe made possible the establishment of connections between some of the independently evolving national railway networks. Through their interconnection, national networks provided the basic material infrastructure on which international passenger' and good' trains run.⁸

Transport and Communications (1994) Michelet Pierre, *Les Transports au Sol et L' Organisation de L' Europe* (L' Universite de Lausanne, 1961)

⁶ Ralph L Wedgwood and J. E. Wheeler, *International Rail Transport* (London, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1946), p. 1.

⁷ In particular, according to historiography Stephenson himself built lines in several parts of Britain and much of Belgium during the mid-1830s, while other British engineers introduced his gauge to several parts of Germany and Italy by the early 1840s. These pioneering railways set the pattern for subsequent lines that branched out from them, as compatible gauges were clearly adopted to facilitate through traffic.

⁸ Douglas J Puffert, *The Economics of Spatial Network Externalities and the Dynamics of Railway Gauge Standardization* (Stanford University, 1991), also Puffert, 'The Technical integration of the European railway Network', pp. 132-134.

Among the international unions established in the 19th century between railway administrations, of particular interest is the work of the Union of German Railway Administrations (in German V.D.E.V.). It is important because within its sphere of activity, it covered the whole field of international railway conditions for technical considerations to legal standardisation, timetables etc.⁹ The V.D. E.V. was set up in 1846 as the Union of Prussian Railway Administrations (Verein Preussischer Eisenbahn Verwaltungen). A year later, the Union changed its name into Union of German Railway Administrations (Verein Deutscher Eisenbahn Verwaltungen, 1847). A modification of the status of the Verein which brought an expansion of its activity, took place in 1876. The new status relaxed the conditions of admission to the Union, and thus membership was broadened. In particular, according to the conditions for membership as defined in this statute, all railway administrations that exploited lines in the territory of the German Empire, the Austro-Hungarian monarchy and the Grand-duchy of Luxembourg could become members of the Verein, but exclusively for the part of these lines that were situated in the above mentioned territories.¹⁰ In 1879, it united 110 railway administrations from Germany, Austro-Hungary, Luxemburg and the Netherlands, representing in total a network of 53.385 kilometres.¹¹ It included eight committees responsible for a variety of issues such as the transport of goods and passengers, the material infrastructure, technology and exploitation, statistics, the statute of the Verein, its journal etc.¹² In the second half of the 19th century the Verein was developing technical standards. In particular, already in 1856 it published a Technical Convention for the construction and exploitation of the railways of the meber-networks.¹³

Under the support of the Union of German Railway administrations grew up another organization, important for the promotion of international railway traffic. During the *European Time-Table Conference*, as it was named in 1891, railway administrations met and decided the time-table of international trains with the purpose of establishing correspondence of services between the railway services of different countries and the achievement of agreements with regard to the composition of international trains.

Other international unions of railway administrations that were established in the 19th century were the *International Exchange Union* (head office at Magdeburg) which was responsible for enforcing the "Regulations for the Use of Rolling-Stock" between its member Administrations, the *Austro-Oriental Union* (with offices at Budapest), and the *Union between Railways of Central Europe and Italy* (with offices at Strasburg and Magdeburg).¹⁴ The *Union Internationale des Voitures et Fourgons*,

⁹ Wedgwood and Wheeler, *International Rail Transport*, p7 .

¹⁰ M. Philippe, "Notice Sur L' Union (Verein) des Chemins de Fer Allemands", in: *RGCF*, 2, 4, (1879), p. 245.

¹¹ Philippe, 'Notice Sur L' Union (Verein) des Chemins de Fer Allemands', pp. 241-151. Later on railway administrations from Roumania became also members. Wedgwood and Wheeler, *International Rail Transport*, p. 5.

¹² The Verein published two periodicals: the *Organ Fur die Fortschritte des Eisenbahnwesens*, established in 1845 by the German railway engineer, Edmund Hensiger von Waldegg. According to existing historiography since 1864, under the responsibility of the Verein this became the leading engineering weekly newspaper for the European railway world. Furthermore, the Verein published *De Zeitung des Vereins* since 1861, two times per week. Philippe, 'Notice Sur L' Union (Verein) des Chemins de Fer Allemands', p. 245.

¹³ Philippe, 'Notice Sur L' Union (Verein) des Chemins de Fer Allemands', p. 245.

¹⁴ Geographically, the union covered the greater part of the Austro-Hungarian, Belgian, Dutch, French, German, Luxembourg, Roumanian and Swiss Railways.

was founded in 1889 to deal with questions of exchange of international traffic, with the aim to regulate the international use of carriages and vans.¹⁵

Activity with regard to the promotion of international railway traffic was not confined to the level of railway administrations. In the second half of the 19th century the Swiss Federal Government took the initiative for the establishment of agreements between governments that would facilitate international railway traffic. This was a few years after the opening of the St. Gothard railways, in a period when the Swiss railway networks were facing financial difficulties.¹⁶ It seems legitimate to suggest that the Swiss Government by promoting these agreements promoted the transit character of the country so as to help its railway networks to come out from their financial predicament. On the invitation of the Swiss Federal Government, representatives from the governments of several central European countries participated in a series of meetings which resulted in the establishment of two intergovernmental agreements promoting uniform technical and legal conditions for the running of international railway traffic. Both agreements were binding with respect to international traffic on the railway administrations in the countries members.¹⁷ The geographical scope of the European countries which eventually adhered to these agreements grew significantly towards the end of the 19th century and in the first decades of the 20th century.

The initiative began when the Swiss Government first invited the governments of its neighboring countries (Germany, France, Italy and Austria) to a conference in 1874 with the purpose of reaching an agreement on a common regulation for the transport of goods by rail. After much negotiations, the first international conference took place in Berne in 13 May 1878. During a series of conferences (September 1878 and July 1886) the convention on the transport of goods by rail took shape. It was signed by the representatives of governments from Germany, Austria, Hungary, Belgium, Denmark, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Russia and Switzerland in Berne in 14 October 1890. It came into force in 1st January 1893 after the ratification of the countries that signed it.¹⁸ When ratified, the convention became part of the legislation of each ratifying country.¹⁹ This convention is of great importance for the history of railways for two reasons: first, it established for the first time an international code of merchandise traffic between the countries that signed it.²⁰ Second, it established a Central Office at Berne under the supervision of the Swiss Federal Council with a duty to receive suggestions for modifications of the Convention, to prepare for the periodical meetings of the Conference, to arbitrate on disputes and to facilitate financial relations between the member administrations.²¹

¹⁵ The initiative came from the Prussian and Bavarian Railways, who invited their neighbour administrations to a conference in 1889. As a result of this action a Conference was established for regulating the international use of carriages and vans. Meetings were held in conjunction with the European Time-Table Conference. Wedgwood and Wheeler, *International Rail Transport*, pp. 5-6.

¹⁶ Tissot, 'Naissance d' une Europe Ferroviaire:'

¹⁷ Wedgwood and Wheeler, *International Rail Transport*, pp. 1-2.

¹⁸ Revision Conferences took place in 1896, 1905 and 1911 in Berne. Umberto Pipia, 'Trasporti Internazionali', in *Diritto Ferroviario* (Milano: Societ`a Editrice Libreria, 1912), pp. 450-1.

¹⁹ Wedgwood and Wheeler, *International Rail Transport*, pp. 3-4.

²⁰ These were the governments of Austria-Hungary, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Russia, and Switzerland.

²¹ Wedgwood and Wheeler, *International Rail Transport*, p. 4.

This was the first intergovernmental body established in Europe, dealing with issues of international railway traffic.²²

In the same period, the representatives of governments from Austria-Hungary, France, Germany, Italy and Switzerland were gathered in the first technical standards conference that was held at Berne after the initiative of the Swiss Federal Government, in 1882. During the conference, the Swiss representative proposed the conclusion of an agreement that would settle down the standards for the circulation of railway rolling stock in the railway systems of different countries. As a result of this first encounter a final protocol was signed (21 October 1882) that laid down the conditions to be fulfilled by rolling-stock passing between the countries named. The protocol on *the Technical Unity on Rail Transport (L'Unité Technique, UT)* that was actually put into force on 1st of April 1887 included provisions that secured uniformity in rolling-stock exchange on the Continent: it determined technical parameters such as the dimensions of loading gauge, the maximum length of vehicles and maximum axle load, it fixed the position of couplings, continuous brakes and steam heating pumps.²³ More conferences followed that led to a new version of the convention on the technical uniformity of railways, which came into effect on July 1st 1908, while²⁴ the regulations were modified again in the following years. After 1912, the conference stopped convening. Instead, an international commission was established, responsible for the enforcement of new treaties, while the Swiss Federal Council was charged to make it approved through correspondence with the countries that had signed the agreement.²⁵ Throughout the period of its existence, *the Technical Unity on Rail Transport* issued books setting out the standard requirements laid down in their regulations, covering gauge, construction details, maintenance of wagons on foreign lines and loading. The various governments implemented the decisions

²² In order to supplement the provisions of the C.I.M., a Union of Railway Administrations was established in 1902 which in turn set up a special Committee, known as the C.I.T. (Comité International des Transports par Chemin de Fer). Its function was to deal with regulations supplementary to the C.I.M. and to keep them up to date. These regulations, together with those of the C.I.M. itself, formed the "Règlement uniforme pour le transport international des marchandises par chemins de Fer".

²³ *Unité Technique des Chemins de Fer (UT), 1882-1982, (Plaquette du centenaire)* (L'Office Fédéral des Transports, Berne, Administration gerante de l'Unité Technique, 1982), pp. 4, 25.

²⁴ In particular, a second conference in which 10 states participated was held at Berne in 1886, and a third with the participations of 16 states was held in Berne in 1907. In particular, Roumania and the Netherlands joined in, in 1887, Serbia in 1888, Greece and Belgium in 1890, Bulgaria in 1891, Sweden and Russia in 1899. Spain and Portugal, having only broad-gauge railways did not adhere.²⁴

²⁵ In 1911, 1912, the commission elaborated the third version of dispositions (that was called version 1913) which was entered into force on 1st may 1914. In the interwar period, the UT co-operated closely with the UIC (see below) and published a revision of the Protocol in technical Unity in 1938. By this time almost all countries of standard gauge of continental Europe participated in the organization. See Puffert, 'The Technical integration of the European railway Network', p. 137, *The European Conference of Ministers of Transport (E.C.M.T.)*, Booklet issued for the Centenary Session of the Committee of Deputies held in Stockholm on 10th June, 1969, p. 11. Pierre, p. 25., List of Permanent International Organizations (Digest No. 40), *International Chamber of Commerce, Digest No.40*, (Paris: International Chamber of Commerce, 1923), pp. 9-10. Also, with regards to the technical unit see "Standardisation on Continental Railways; L'Unité Technique des Chemins de Fer", in: *The Railway Gazette*, 17, November 15, (1912)"Standardisation on Continental Railways, Continuous Brakes for Goods Trains- The Recent Trials at Vienna", in: *The Railway Gazette*, 17, November 22, (1912)"Standardisation on Continental Railways; The Westinghouse Improved Brake for Goods Trains", in: *The Railway Gazette*, 19, November 14, (1913)"International Equipment", in: *The Railway Gazette*, 28, Septembre 6, (1918), p. 251.

reached by the Unit`e Technique but this legislation was not (as the Berne Convention referred to later) embodied in international treaties.²⁶

Different in character from the above mentioned organizations was the International Railway Congress Association (IRCA, 1885). It was established during a meeting of railway men of various nationalities held in Brussels in 1885 with the object of celebrating the Jubilee of the Belgian state railway system. It had a worldwide scope. During its meetings, delegates met and discussed developments in railway technology. Its main concern was the development and dissemination of technical railway knowledge.²⁷ As it is reported in contemporary articles in the *Railway Gazette* those conferences formed the only occasion when an interchange of views between railway interests on a worldwide basis was possible.²⁸

3. The interwar period: 1920s-1940s.

During the First World War international railway traffic stagnated and international railway organizations paused their activity. The end of the war signalled not only the beginning of a new period in the socio-political history of Europe, but also a new period as far as international railway organization is concerned. Political developments led developments with respect to international railway organization. In particular, two new international bodies were formed that were concerned with issues of international railway traffic in the immediate post- WW II period. These were the League of Nations and the International Union of Railways. Throughout the interwar period these bodies co-operated closely with each other and with the international bodies established in the previous period in handling different issues concerning the regulation and promotion of international railway traffic.

3.1. Railways and the League of Nations

The Treaty of Versailles established the League of Nations with the purpose of safeguarding international peace and promoting economic and social cohesion in Europe. Article 23 of the Covenant of the League provided that "subject to and in accordance with the provisions of international conventions existing or hereafter to be agreed upon, the Members of the League...(e) will make provision to secure and maintain freedom of communications and transit and equitable treatment for the Commerce of all the Members of the League...".²⁹ For the implementation of this term the League of Nations established the *Advisory and Technical Committee for Communications and Transit*. Among its tasks was completind the work of drafting international conventions that would establish regulations for the realization of the ideal of the liberal transit regime. Two other bodies had already started working towards the drafting of such conventions since the armistice. These were the "Commission of Ports, Waterways and Railways", that began work during the Peace Conference and the "International Commission of Enquiry on Freedom of Communications and Transit" that replaced the former, after the deliberations of the

²⁶ Wedgood, pp. 2-3.

²⁷ See "IRCA and UIC must find New Roles", in R.G.I., June 1974, p. 203, Wedgwood and Wheeler, *International Rail Transport*, p. xi, "The International Railway Congress", in: *The Railway Gazette*, 13, (1910)"The International Railway Congress", in: *The Railway Gazette*, (1910)

²⁸, pp. 70-71.

²⁹ {Hostie, 5 A.D. 63 /id}. p. 19.

Peace Conference were finished.³⁰ The latter was also dissolved before the formation of the Advisory and Technical Committee for Communications and Transit.

With regard to railways, of great importance to the history of railways in Europe was the work of the Advisory and Technical Committee of the League of Nations with the assistance of its rail sub-committee in preparing the Convention and Statute on the International Regime of Railways. This convention was signed in 1923, during the second General Conference on Communications and Transit that took place in Geneva. It came into effect in 1928, after it was ratified by the countries that signed it.³¹ These were the governments of most European countries. This was the first time that an attempt was made at an international level to formulate and codify all the facilities necessary for the efficient international operation of railways, to specify the various obligations of States in regard to railway transport, and to prohibit discrimination in railway tariffs against the nationals or goods of foreign States.

Further important work of the Advisory and Technical Committee on Communications and Transit of importance to railway traffic was the *Convention and Statute on Freedom of Transit* which was established at the second general conference for Communications and Transit in Barcelona in 1921). Furthermore, the rail-subcommittee worked on issues regarding the negotiability of railway transport documents, the questions of frontier sections of line and frontier stations.³² In addition, throughout the period of its existence, the rail-subcommittee of the LoN was responsible for the settlement of disputes that arose among railway networks of different nationalities.³³

Although it was an advisory and consultative body without power to enforce its decisions on the member-states, the work of the Advisory and Technical Committee of the LoN is of great interest to the history of railways.

3.2. The International Union of Railways

An immediate result of the First World War with regard to international railway organization was the establishment of an organization that united railway administrations of Europe and a few countries of Asia and Africa. Although the purpose of the Union was to promote international railway traffic in Europe, as stated in its protocol (1922), railway administrations of non-European countries could become members insofar as their networks were connected to the networks of the European member-countries. However the International Union of Railways was established from the start as an organization with predominantly European character.

In particular, the idea for the formation of a Union of European Railways first arose during a Conference that took place in Porto-Rosa in 1921. Organised by Italy, this conference brought representatives of the seven successor states of the Austria-Hungarian Empire together with representatives from Great Britain, the United States and France to discuss measures for the economic restoration of these

³⁰ In this certain neutral states -Argentina, Holland, Spain and Switzerland as well as the Allies were represented.

³¹ These were the governments of most European Countries, apart from the U.S.S.R., Luxemburg, Portugal, Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria. Apart from India and Japan, no extra-European State with large railway networks became a Party to the Convention. It applied, however, to extensive non-European states, in particular, to British colonies and protectorates {Hostie, 5 A.D. 63 /id}, p. 84. {Hostie, 5 A.D. 63 /id}, p. 84.

³² Wedgwood and Wheeler, *International Rail Transport*, p. 11.

³³ The influence of the Sub-Committee on Rail Transport has been practically confined to Europe.

countries to ensure the economic recovery of the rest of Europe.³⁴ Transport issues were regarded as crucial as far as the restoration of the economies of these countries was concerned and thus were discussed during the conference. In particular, with respect to railways, the seven states successors of the Austro-Hungarian Empire were facing the following difficulties: they were connected through a railway infrastructure which was the remainder of a network that had been built so as to satisfy the needs of a socio-political entity that was no longer in existence. There was no regulation allowing the use of this infrastructure in the new political context. During the conference the main question discussed concerned ways to make the railway rolling stock that was now standing still in the newly drawn frontiers start moving again crossing borders. During the conference regulations were drawn so that international railway traffic among the newly created states would be possible. However, the representatives of the participating states recognized the need for the establishment of agreements concerning Europe as a whole. The idea arose for the creation of a union of European railways that would promote international railway traffic in Europe.

The idea of creating a group of European Railways was discussed again during the International Economic Conference of the League of Nations in Genoa (May 3, 1922). Consequently, the French Railways³⁵ summoned a Conference (17 October 1922) for the technical representatives of all the administrations of the railways in Europe and other countries concerned,³⁶ in which among other issues, they would study the creation of a permanent Conference to standardize and improve conditions for building and operating railways for international traffic.³⁷ During this conference the *International Union of Railways* was established.³⁸ Membership was confined to railway administrations operating at least 1000 km of permanent way on the standard gauge or wider either situated in Europe or in railway communication with the lines of affiliated administrations. The object of the Union as defined in the 1st Article of Association was "... the unification and improvement of the conditions of establishing and working of railways, with a view to the international traffic of Europe".³⁹

Throughout the interwar period the U.I.C. was prominent in promoting international railway traffic, due to its wide geographical sphere of activity but also to the broad array of railway issues with which it was concerned. It included various sub-committees working on different fields of international railway traffic, such as a revision of the international regulations for the transport of goods, the promotion of similar regulations with respect to the traffic of passengers and luggage by rail, the revision of the technical standards for international traffic, the moderation of the financial disputes between railway administrations of different nationalities, etc. It co-

³⁴ These were the states of Austria, Czecho-Slovakia, Hungary, Poland, Roumania and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. "The Transport Commission at the Genoa Conference", in: *Digest*, 21, (1922), p. 3

³⁵ In particular the "Comite de Direction des Grands Reseaux Francais" organize the conference. The countries represented at the Conference were Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, China, Czecho-Slovakia, Denmark, Esthonia, France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Holland, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Letonia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Roumania, Saare Valley, Serbia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, as well as the Oriental railways and the LoN. The International Union of Railways" *The International Union of Railways*", in: *The Railway Gazette*, 37, (1922), p. 534.

³⁶ Ibid. Union Internationale des Chemins de Fer, Internationaler Eisenbahnverband, International Union of Railways, (Paris: 1982), pp. 5-6.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 8.

³⁸ The International Union of Railways, , p. 534.

³⁹ "International Union of Railways", in: *The Railway Gazette*, 37, (1922), p. 550.

operated closely with the existing organizations throughout its activity. Its relationship with these organizations was governed by formal and informal agreements. Through close co-operation it was also ensured that duplication of work would be avoided. For example, starting in 1924 the UIC worked in co-operation with the Technical Unity on Rail Transport on a revision of the code of technical standards laid down by the latter in 1907. As a result of common effort they drafted a new code of standards,⁴⁰ which was completed in 1935. The new code came into force in 1938.⁴¹ The U.I.C. also participated in the four General Conferences on Transport and Communications organized by the League of Nations representing the interests of the railway administrations of Europe.

3.3. The Union of Railway Administrations of Central Europe.

Of further importance in this period was the change in the name and scope of activity of the Union of German Railway Administrations.⁴² Throughout the interwar period, and in particular in the early 1930s the union followed a persistent policy of expansion. In particular, it modified its statutes in 1929 in such a way that the membership to the union could be broadened. New provisions were included that broadened the geographical scope of the union that, according to the new status of the Union, had now as its object the unification of the railway networks of Central and Northern Europe.⁴³ Furthermore, the new statute provided for the simplification of the conditions of admission so that next to the ordinary members of the Union, extraordinary members could also be admitted. Consequently, Swedish, Norwegian and Danish state railways and Swiss railways joined the association as associate members but without voting rights. Following the modification of its statute the Verein changed in 1932 its name into *Union of Administrations of Railways of Central Europe (Verein Mitteleuropaischer Eisenbahnverwaltungen, 1932)*.⁴⁴ It was active in different fields of international railway traffic such as operation, track, rolling stock, disputes, finance and statistics. In those fields a whole series of regulations were drawn up.⁴⁵ Interestingly the Union of German Railway Administrations was also a member of the UIC.

3.4. Other developments.

Parallel to the establishment of the above mentioned European bodies, the establishment of international organizations complementary to the ones already in

⁴⁰ In particular, the UIC acts as a technical research body for UT. Functions, Means of Action and Inter-relationships of International Railway Transport Bodies, sub-Committee on Rail Transport, Inland Transport Committee, ECE, TRANS/SC. 2/7 Rev. 1, 21 February 1949

⁴¹ It was accepted by the Governments of 18th standard gauge countries, constituting a solid block from the Pyrenees to the western frontiers of Russia and the Baltic States.

⁴² After the war, Roumania and the newly formed Czecho-Slovakia and Hungary withdraw from this union. "International Conference", in: *The Railway Gazette*, 37, (1922), p. 445.

⁴³ "L' Union Des Administrations de Chemins de Fer de L' Europe Centrale: Verein Mitteleuropaischer Eisenbahnverwaltungen", in: *Bulletin de L' Union Internationale des Chemins de Fer*, IXe, 10, (1933), p. 376

⁴⁴ It encompassed then the networks of Germany, Austria, Denmark, the Netherlands, Hungary, Luxembourg (Prince-Henri), Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the air company Deutsche Luft Hansa.⁴⁴

⁴⁵ Functions, Means of Action and Inter-relationships of International Railway Transport Bodies, sub-Committee on Rail Transport, Inland Transport Committee, ECE, TRANS/SC. 2/7 Rev. 1, 21 February 1949, p. 27.

existence since the 19th century is also characteristic of this period. In particular, next to the *European Timetable and Through Carriage Conference*, officially established in the 1890s, railway administrations instituted the *International Freight Timetable Conference* in the 1930s. During the *International Freight Timetable Conference* railway administrations met and discussed the time-table and composition of international goods trains.⁴⁶ In the field of legislation immediately after the First World War the governments of the signatory countries of the C.I.M. convention signed a new convention for the transport of passengers and luggage by rail. The new convention, prepared by the Office for International Transport by Rail (OCTI) established international regulations for the transport of passengers and luggage by Rail. The International Convention for the Transport of Passengers and Goods by Rail (C.I.V.), as it was named, was put into force next to the C.I.M. convention in 1924.⁴⁷ Moreover, from 1st January 1922 the regulations of the *International Railway Wagon Union (RIV)*⁴⁸ and the *International Carriage and Van Union (R.I.C)* were put into force and two Unions were established under the Italian railways, responsible for the implementation of these agreements. These fixed the technical modalities and financing of the international circulation of rolling material.⁴⁹

Finally, an important development in this period, concerns the establishment of organizations of a more general character that, however, treated issues of international railway traffic. These were the *International Labor Office (ILO)* (1919)⁵⁰ and the *International Chamber of Commerce (ICC)* (1920).⁵¹ Both organizations included rail-subcommittees that were working on issues of international railway traffic in the interwar period. These bodies co-operated closely with intergovernmental organizations in this period, promoting the interests of labour and users respectively on issues of international railway traffic.

4. Third period 1940s-1991

During the Second World War international railway organizations ceased their activity. At the end of the second world war a new period began with regard to international railway organization. Important developments took place both at the level of governments and the level of administrations. Two developments brought changes in the network of international organizations engaged to international railway traffic. The one concerned increasing competition that railways faced from other means of transport, and in particular roads and aviation. The second concerned political developments.

⁴⁶ "Freight Train Timetable Conference" established in 1930. R.G, Volt 63, 1935, p.762.) *The European Conference of Ministers of Transport (E.C.M.T.)*, Booklet issued for the Centenary Session of the Committee of Deputies held in Stockholm on 10th June, 1969, p. 12.

⁴⁷ The C.I.M. Convention was put again into operation under the articles of the Peace Treaties. However, it underwent important modifications: C.I.M. measures were extended to the transport of passengers and luggage. See "Conférence de Révision des Conventions Internationales C.I.M. et C.I.V.", in: *Bulletin de L' Union Internationale des Chemins de Fer*, IXe Annéee, 10, (1933), p. 381. In October 1935, the length of the lines that were submitted to the Berne Conventions was as far as railway networks are concerned: C.I.M., 256.187, C.I.V. 238.596.

⁴⁸ The goal of this Union was to assure the application of the "Règlement pour l'emploi réciproque des wagons en trafic international" R.I.V.

⁴⁹ Pierre, p. 25.

⁵⁰ , p. 3.

⁵¹ {Economic Commission for Europe 49 A.D. 2 /id}p.3

Increased competition from other means of transport and the bad financial situation of the currently state in their greatest part railway networks in Europe triggered European governments and administration to an attempt of centralizing the activities of the international bodies concerned with international railway issues as the establishment of the Inland Transport Committee of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (1947) and the new statutes of the UIC (1950) reveal. However, subsequent political events lead to the creation of new political bodies dealing with issues of international railway traffic and, consequently to a new fragmentation of the international actors engaged to issues of international railway traffic.

Political events influenced international railway organization in the post second world war period. In particular, one of the most important political events in the post second world war period was the relinquishment of the Marshall aid which laid to the division of Europe into East and West. The political division into East and West influenced international railway organization. In particular, in a level of governments new political bodies were created with the purpose of co-ordinating the transport activity, including railway activity in the countries of Western Europe. Such bodies were the *Inland Transport Committee of the Organization for European Economic Co-operation* (OEEC) and the *European Conference of Transport Ministers* (ECMT). Secondly, one of the most important developments in a political level in the post second world war two period was the establishment of the high authority of the *European Coal and Steel Community* (1951), the *European Economic Community* (1957) and later the *European Union*. Aiming at promoting their political goal for the unification of Europe, these bodies were concerned with international railway issues. Consequently, they became members of the network of international actors engaged with issues of international railway traffic in the post second world war period. These political developments influenced also international railway organization in the level of administrations as the establishment of new bodies and the change in the structure of the existing bodies shows.

4.1. The Inland Transport Committee of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe.

As an immediate consequence of the war, the most prominent intergovernmental body handling issues of international railway traffic in the interwar period, the League of Nations ceased its activity. Consequently in the immediate post second world war period (September 1945) the allies established a new body, temporary in character, with an object to deal with the transport situation in Europe. The European Inland Transport Organization (E.C.I.T.O.) as it was named worked from September 1944 to September 1947 for the restoration of transport in Europe to its pre-war conditions. After almost two years of its successful working, governments recognized the need for the establishment of a more permanent intergovernmental body that would continue the work of the ECITO and would be concerned with transport issues in a European level. In the same period, governments were studying the installation at Geneva of the Economic Commission for Europe, an offshoot of the United Nations Economic and Social Committee. It was consequently decided the establishment of an Internal Transport Committee of the UNECE, which since June

1947 took over transport problems.⁵² Throughout the post- Second World War period, the work the Internal Transport Committee of the UNECE performed at Geneva with the assistance of its rail-subcommittee concerned issues covering a wide range of topics, such as customs agreements, facilitating frontier crossings, in particular for through traffic, the definition of important European trunk lines and proposals for their electrification.⁵³ Furthermore throughout the post-World War period the Internal Transport Committee of the UNECE acquired the role of co-ordinator of the activity of the rest international railway organizations and political bodies that were active in the field of Europe.

4.2. International Railway Organization in Western Europe: the European Conference of Transport Ministers, the European Coal and Steel Community and the European Economic Community.

The Marshall plan, offering United States aid to the European countries which had suffered from the war, opened up a new era in the political history of Europe. It was the period of the division between the capitalist countries of Western Europe which accepted the American help and the socialistic countries of Eastern Europe which refused it. This division influenced international railway organization. In particular, the Organization for European Economic Co-operation (OEEC) was set up in 1948 in order to give effect to the Marshall plan and to co-ordinate activity that was stimulated by the distribution of the financial aid in the countries of Western Europe. The OEEC set up a Committee for Inland Transport that was at first concerned with the distribution of American aid. Overlapping with the activity of the Inland Transport Committee of the UNECE was avoided since Governments generally appointed the same delegates in both cases.⁵⁴

After a first stage of material recovery the OEEC promoted co-operation of the member-countries as far as transport issues were concerned.⁵⁵ Towards this purpose it promoted the establishment of an intergovernmental transport organization. Under the name European Conference of Transport Ministers (ECMT), the new organization provided the framework in which the transport ministers of West European countries met, discussed common transport problems and defined common transport policy in the post second world war period. More specifically a series of events resulted in the establishment of the new organization. In 1953 the French Minister Monsieur Andre Morice after the request of the French Cabinet invited the transport ministers of other Western European countries to meet in a conference in Paris. One of the main aims

⁵² It included three sub-committees on rail, roads and waterways, a number of permanent and ad hoc technical groups and an executive Secretariat. The Internal Transport Committee has the power to send recommendations directly to governments which gives the government representatives a certain freedom of action. But they are not binding in the legal sense of the word.

⁵³ Economic Commission for Europe, Inland Transport Committee, Sub-Committee on Rail Transport, "Functions, Means of Action and Inter-relationships of International Railway Transport Bodies" G IX 10/1/1/18 (5472), TRANS/SC.2/ 7 Rev. 1, 21 February 1949, *The European Conference of Ministers of Transport (E.C.M.T.)*, Booklet issued for the Centenary Session of the Committee of Deputies held in Stockholm on 10th June, 1969.

⁵⁴ , *The European Conference of Ministers of Transport (E.C.M.T.)*. Booklet issued for the Centenary Session of the Committee of Deputies held in Stockholm on 10th June, (E.C.M.T., 1969), pp.14-15.

⁵⁵ In particular the OEEC provided the building where the headquarters of the ECMT were established in Paris and the financial means for the establishment and function of the permanent Secretariat of the ECMT.

was to organize a pool of European railway wagons that would allow the standardisation of European rolling stock and consequently the mass production of rolling stock in Europe and the electrification of main lines crossing frontiers which was hampered by differences in design in different countries of Europe. During this conference that took place in 1953 the idea arose of the establishment of a European transport organization in a level of transport ministers.⁵⁶ In 1952 the OEEC organized a mission in the U.S.A. in the context of a study on the way in which the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) was operating in the United States and how federal transport problems were solved on the basis of legislation specific to the individual states. According to the findings of this mission, it was necessary and feasible to ensure closer co-ordination of the different national transport policies in Europe. Consequently the OEEC organised a conference which after having held three sessions decided in 17 June 1953 the establishment of the European Conference of Ministers of Transport. The protocol establishing the ECMT was signed in Brussels.⁵⁷ The aim of the conference as stated in the protocol that established it was the rationalization of European Inland Transport.⁵⁸ The ECMT in the post second World War period provided the institutional framework under which European Transport Ministers periodically met and took decisions concerning common transport policy in the member-countries. However, this was not a supra-national authority, the conclusions of the conference being put into effect only in the countries that were in agreement with them.⁵⁹

In the same period (1951) the high authority of the *European Coal and Steel Community* (ECSC) was created. It also worked in the definition and implementation of a common transport policy of the member-countries. In particular it established common tariffs for the transport of coal and steel for the railways of the member-states.⁶⁰ It is of particular interest since this was the first organization with supranational authority. The implementation of its decisions to the member countries was mandatory. In 1957, next to the ECSC, another political body was set, the *European Economic Communities (1956)*. According to an article in the journal

⁵⁶ Ministers of transport taking part in the Conference were the ministers of France, Belgium, Italy, Westrn Germnay, Spain and Luxembourg. See "Europ Wagon Pool", in: *Tha Railway Gazette*, 99, (1953), p. 94. Also "French-Sponsored European Transport Conference", in: *Tha Railway Gazette*, (1953),

⁵⁷ Federal Republic of Germany, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Spain, France, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Norway, Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Anglo-American zone of the Free Territory of Trieste signed the protocol In 1955 Yougoslavia also became a member. The following years Ireland (1963), Finland (1975), followed by Hungary, Poland (1991) etc. Protocol Concerning the European Conference of Ministers of Transport, signed at Brussels, on 17th October, 1953. The Governments of the U.S. and Canada have taken part in the activities of the E.C.M.T. since its foundation as observers.

⁵⁸ *The European Conference of Ministers of Transport (E.C.M.T.)*, Booklet issued for the Centenary Session of the Committee of Deputies held in Stockholm on 10th June, 1969, p. 18.

⁵⁹ First Report of the Activities of the Conference First, (1955), p. 13. The ECMT worked on the standardization of railway material in the country-members. In its activity included the establishment of Eurofima in 1955, a company whose main role was the financing of common purchases of standardised rolling stock from the railways of the member-states. In the 1970s transport ministers discussed the development of European transport corridors and the establishment of a coherent European railway system of passenger and trunk lines. ECMT, Annual Report, 1976

⁶⁰ See *Cooperation entre la CECA et la CEE pour une harmonisation des Tarifs des Transports*, Archives of the European Commission, Brussels, 1961.

Railway Gazette, this was politically one of the most important forces shaping Western Europe's rail services.⁶¹

4.3. A New Role for the International Union of Railways in the Post Second World War period.

During the Second World War UIC halted its activity. It resumed its activity in 1946. In the post second world war period, as a consequence of the growing competition from other means of transport and the activity from the part of governments in centralising their activities with regard to transport by establishing the UNECE Inland Transport Committee, attained a different character. It strengthened its role with respect to the rest administrative international railway bodies.

In particular, at the time in which Governments were organising their transport around ECE, railway carriers promoted the centralisation of their activities. The idea of establishing the UIC as a central international railway organization was submitted in 1948 to the Internal Transport Committee in Geneva, which approved it. As a result, the ECE adopted a resolution (1950) according to which other specialised railway organizations such as the C.I.T., RIV, R.I.C. and the European Time-table Conference gathered round the International Union of Railways (UIC) which became the leader of railway organizations and the sole regular agent for intergovernmental organizations.⁶²

In the introduction of the anniversary pamphlet for the sixty years of the establishment of the U.I.C. Mr. A. Carbonell Romero, president of the U.I.C. writes "It goes without saying that the General Secretariat of our Union will be happy to supply information and further particulars to visitors and all those wishing for a better knowledge of this "Europe that has no bounds" which the U.I.C. is indeed in a way for railways".⁶³ As this quotation reveals, throughout the post second world war period the U.I.C. show itself as the representative body of European Railways. It continued its useful work in promoting the standardization of railway material in the railway networks of the different European countries, the unification of railway tariffs and its overall activity through which it promoted the unification of the railway networks in Europe. Furthermore it co-operated closely with the above mentioned intergovernmental bodies undertaking studies. With regard to the membership of the organization, an important development in the post second world war period was that in 1947 the Soviet railways withdrew from the U.I.C.⁶⁴

While the UIC strengthened its role, the Union of Railway Administrations of Central Europe ceased to exist in the 23rd of May 1946. The Transport Directorate in

⁶¹ Rodney Leach & George Mclsaac, "Blueprint for a European Railway" in R.G.I, April 1972, pp. 129-132.

⁶² *The European Conference of Ministers of Transport (E.C.M.T.)*, Booklet issued for the Centenary Session of the Committee of Deputies held in Stockholm on 10th June, 1969, p. 15. There were six committees engaged in the activities of the U.I.C, their functions being Passenger Traffic; Goods Traffic, Finance, Accountancy and Statistics; Operating; Technical Questions; and General Studies. See "The International Union of Railways", in: *The Railway Gazette*, 101, (1954), p. 402.

⁶³, p. 4.

⁶⁴ However, other railways in the Middle East became Members, followed from 1950 onwards by a number of African, Asian, American and Australian Railways. , pp. 9-10.

Berlin decided to prohibit participation of the German Railways in the four zones in any activities of this Association. As reported in a report in the Economic Commission of Europe, this decision was put into effect which means that in practice the "Verein" ceased to function.⁶⁵

4.3. Transport in Eastern Europe: the Organization for the Co-operation of Railways.

In 1957 a new organization was formed. Under the name Organization for the Co-operation of Railways, (OSJD, "L'Organization de la collaboration des chemins de fer"), it united the railway networks of Eastern Europe under the aegis of the U.S.S.R.⁶⁶ This was a technical Union created by the Countries of socialist economy under the aegis of the U.S.S.R. (also comprises the U.S.R.R. and some other countries China Populaire, Vietnam du Nord etc.).

Interesting is the fact that a lot of the socialist countries of Eastern Europe participated both in the UIC and the OSJD. The definition however of the object of the organization, to promote the objects of railways in the socialist countries, and the fact that Russia adhered from the Organization in 1947, allows as speaking about a division of Europe as far as international railway organization in the private sector is concerned. However, interesting is also the fact that this divided Europe co-operated as far as technical issues were concerned. In particular, the U.I.C. and OSJC worked at the same period in defining and promoting the use of what each organization would consequently define as the "standard" automating couplers for their network-members. However, they co-operated closely so as to establish that their automatic couplers would be compatible.

4. Conclusions

In this paper I have presented an inventory of international railway organizations and political bodies concerned with issues of international railway traffic in three periods on the basis of my research in international railway journals, reports of international railway organizations, studies of international railway organization and finally secondary literature.

This narrative allows me to draw the following conclusions:

A network of organizations was concerned with issues of international railway traffic in the three periods: although some of the organizations seem to have been more prominent than others insofar as their geographical field of activity and the scope of their interests are concerned, in all three periods they constituted a complementary network of actors providing the technical and legal regulations that would make the international railway traffic in Europe possible. To what degree these regulations were implemented by national governments and put into use by railway networks in Europe requires further investigation.

As the presentation of international railway organizations in the three periods reveals, important changes in this network of international railway organizations concerned with international railway issues took place in the three periods. As the

⁶⁵ {Economic Commission for Europe 49 A.D. 2 /id}, p. 24.

⁶⁶ (Naissance et Vie D' Une Union, p12, in Union Internationale Des Chemins de Fer, 1922-1972).

cases of the creation of the International Union of Railways (UIC) and the establishment of the Advisory and Communications Committee of the League of Nations in the interwar period, as well as the establishment of the European Conference of Transport Ministers in the post world war two period indicates, political events influenced developments with regard to the international railway machinery. Thus, the political context was an important factor in shaping developments as far as international railway organization is concerned. Further research into discussions on technical issues and decisions within these organizations can lead to interesting conclusions with regard to the way in which the political context influenced the actual development of railway technology.

Finally, the fact that international railway organizations stopped their activity during the wars and the changes in the network of international railway organizations in the immediate post-World War periods as a response to the changes in the political context, allow me to consider the two world wars as important breaking points with regard to international railway developments. Consequently, I propose that periodization adopted by political historians, is also a useful lens through which to study international railway developments.