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European Bicycle Path EURO-ROUTE R1 Calais - St.Petersburg

History and Evolution

Presentation at the International Conference
“Marketing for the R1 European Bicycle Path” on 18 and 19 January 2006
at Schloss Criewen north of Berlin

Aids : Overhead projector / folios

The spoken word prevails

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I was pleased to accept the invitation to this conference to report to you on the history and evolution of European bicycle path EURO-ROUTE R1, referred to here in short as “R1.” It is approx. 3,500 km long.

Some information about me – to the extent not already known - :

At the end of 2000, I retired after 40 years as a road construction and traffic engineer with the country administration of Höxter in North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany. As director of the road construction department in the Civil Engineering Office, I was responsible for planning and construction of a 450km county road and a 270km national network bicycle path in Höxter.

Mostly in a private capacity, I worked on the eastward extension of the 275km Westphalia “R1” bicycle path (from the Dutch border to Höxter) as consultant, planner and initiator.

Our senior country manager, Mr. Sellman, and construction manager, Mr. Mussenbrok, should not go without mention in this matter. Both took official initiative and were committed to the construction of the Westphalia R1 bicycle path and its link to the Dutch bicycle path, and pushed for an eastward extension to Berlin.

With the construction of 35km of missing sections (18km alone in Höxter county) between 1984 and 1988, six counties and the city of Münster turned existing forest trails and trade paths into a 275km path largely removed from main roads, at a cost of DM6 million, thereby making the scenic and cultural wealth of the area more accessible.

Upon the recommendations of the German Minister of Transport in 1982, the “R1 Bicycle Path” was uniformly signposted with > R1 and a bicycle symbol, as well as a directional arrow in green on a white background < in both travel directions, and, for its official opening on 13 May 1988 in Höxter, a bicycle tour map was issued in German, and a year later in Dutch.

The Westphalia-Lippe Regional Authority assigned the letter “R,” to the region-wide tourist bike path network it had set up, and number 1 to the first multi-regional tourist bike path. The link with the North Sea route LF1 and the central Netherlands route

LF4 was completed in July 1991, for which we give our heartfelt thanks to our friends at the foundation "Landelijk Fietsplatform." There is now a continuous 800km bike path from Boulogne sur Mer / Calais to Höxter.

Here with us today is Mr. Eric Nijland, the foundation's representative at that time. If we are successful at this conference at getting Mr. Nijland to intercede so that an additional "R1" logo may be affixed to the existing signposts for LF1 and LF4 (see Estonia), then we will have achieved a lot for the corporate identity of the European bike path EURO-ROUTE R1, which, with the EURO TUNNEL at Calais, provides the link to the UK.

I request this of Mr. Nijland very sincerely.

The R1 has been so well received by bicycle tourists that the county of Höxter has suggested an eastward continuation via Magdeburg to Berlin. Of the five counties written to, Goslar assumed coordination.

With the publication and remittance of the third edition of the map for the "R1 Westphalia Bicycle Path" in January 1992, the county of Höxter offered its support for the continuation of the R1 toward Berlin to all of the counties and independently administered cities brought into the process by the county of Goslar.

They took advantage of the offer.

With respect to the length of the routes, we continued working in the "Euro Route R1 municipal consortium" with 17 counties and independent cities, divided into the work-groups of Lower Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt, Potsdam and Berlin. Among the supervisors of the work groups at that time, those who are still active and here with us today are: Günther Roddewig of Staßfurt for Sachsen-Anhalt and Raimund Jennert of Potsdam, who has since been promoted to managing director of LTV Brandenburg.

When the then county of Seelow, east of Berlin on the Oder, asked to be connected to the R1, this was my "cue." It was my springboard to Poland and Königsberg, to the Baltic States, and even perhaps St. Petersburg!!

After careful research – in September 1994 in the locality as well – I submitted my proposal to the Polish Info Centre for Tourism in Cologne on 5 December 1994 for continuation of the R1 through Poland, mapping of the route, and appropriate measures concerning use and tourist marketing. I recommended that they accept the proposal and implement it.

Because of a request to include a legal entity, or the ADFC, I asked for their consent and received it on 5 April 1995 after a presentation of the plan to the Tourism Board. – do you remember, Mr. Hofmann? – and on 2 August 1995, the news came that the PTTK had approved the initiative.

Then came an invitation to a symposium on 16 October 1996 in Bydgoszcz and signposting from Kostrzyn to Gronowo along 675 kilometres, under the management of PTTK vice-president Mr. Boronski, after the State Traffic Office approved the signposting. The signposting was completed in December 1997. I would like to mention the flyer issued by Mr. Boronski for the subsequent ITB on Euro-Route R1.

Unfortunately, the publisher W.Kettler of Berlin, described the R1 Bicycle Path in August 2004 in its bicycle tour guide "Masuria by Bike" without talking to Mr. Boronski or myself beforehand. But, please take note: With very few exceptions, the author found his way alone with the local signposting!

Mr. Boronski is here with us today. I am especially pleased by that.

In Germany on 1 October 1993, the segment of the R1 from Höxter to Staßfurt, and on 27 March 1993, the segment to Wittenberg, were adapted, signposted and

opened, and the bicycle tour map was issued by the consortium with the publisher BVA for Euro-Route R1 Hörter-Berlin-Oderbruch Part 1: Hörter-Wittenberg. In the Harz region, at the request of the neighbouring counties, the usual signposting in green was changed and R1 was depicted with *Brockenhexe* on a bicycle in brown. Unfortunately, this segment requires urgent improvements to the route guide and path quality, and the signs are obviously very popular with souvenir collectors, and are often missing for cyclists.

The international publisher Esterbauer, which has taken notice of the activities on the R1 in the direction of Berlin, offered to collaborate with the issue of a bicycle tour guide covering Arnheim to Berlin.

I accepted the offer and we received this very practical bicycle tour book "European Bicycle Path R1 from Arnheim to Berlin" in 2003.

Although the R1 through Berlin was signposted in December 1997 under the direction of the very committed Reinhardt Lippold, a graduate engineer with the Berlin governmental administration, after the change of route guide in Berlin, as well as here in Brandenburg, the signposting must be changed and gaps closed to the Polish border, in accordance with the map, in the usual manner. The final signposting in Berlin was contracted out and is supposed to be completed by the middle of this year.

Until then, flyers and printed directions provide help. The latter came about through Ms. Stöber of the Berlin governmental administration, after a joint tour with you, my dear Ms. Loh. I am pleased that you were able to come here today on the part of the federal Ministry of Transport.

In a letter of 27 November 1996 to the tourist boards of the three Baltic States and other local institutions, as well as the Embassy of the Russian Federation in Bonn, I proposed the continuation of the international long-distance bicycle path EURO-ROUTE R1 from the Polish-Russian border at Gronowo/Mamonovo through the Kalingrad region and the Baltic States to St. Petersburg in Russia.

In addition, I contacted representatives of the North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) administration and the Baltic States Information Centre (InfoBalt) in Bremen.

The aforementioned institutions held cycling seminars in Latvia in 1997, and in Estonia in 1998, with the support of the NRW administration. The result of the research conducted locally by the German teacher Dirk Jung, with the help of various interested persons in these countries, facilitated publication of the bicycle tour guide "Velo Via Baltica" by the "Baltic Central Tourism Office in the Federal Republic of Germany" in March 1999 with the financial support of the NRW regional administration. The bicycle tour guide met the objectives agreed to between Peter Michels of the NRW state chancellery, Albert Caspari (InfoBalt) in Bremen, Dirk Jung as author, and me, in Schmallenberg (NRW). The route guide is reflected on the overview map of April 2005. "This is already a beginning of the EURO-ROUTE R1", Saulius Ruzinskas of the Bicycle Information Centre in Klaipeda and chairman of the Lithuanian Bicycle Association reported in January 1998, regarding construction of the bicycle path on the Coronian Spit.

Now, some good news: The 200km coastal bicycle path from Nida to the Latvian border on the course of the R1 is expected to be finished this summer, Saulius Ruzinskas also said..

Hopefully, signposting and/or posting of the R1 signs will be done by then. I consider this to be essential in the long run.

On 1 June and 12 July 2005, I wrote Prime Minister Brazuskas and several ministers by e-mail requesting the posting of the "R1" logo in both directions, as well as the

corresponding illustration on bicycle path maps, etc. The German embassy in Wilna promised me in August 2005 to broach the subject in a meeting with the director of the Lithuanian Tourism Office.

After a personal meeting on 8 March 1998 at the ITB in Berlin, like all other tourist boards in the Baltic States, on 30 June 1999, Latvia received information on the bicycle travel guide "Velo Via Baltica" and the route proposal described in the enclosed press release of 3 April 1999, and still shown on the overview map of April 2005. I made reference here to my proposal of 27 November 1996.

Regarding my question about identification with the project and willingness to signpost the R1, the director, Mr. A. Kalnins of the LATVIAN TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AGENCY of the Ministry of Environment Protection and Regional Development, answered on 14 July 1999: "Latvian Tourism Development Agency thanks you about your active interest in the developing bicycle route. Latvian Tourism Development Agency informs you that it is possible to include Velo VIA BALTICA in the mass media and is possible to make such route in this area."

There was no reply to subsequent inquiries, mostly recently on 2 April 2001, to the agency and at the Road Transport Department of the Ministry of Transport in Riga, and the remittance of the publicity brochure "Discovering Germany by Bike," in which the EURO-ROUTE R1 was solicited in Germany while taking into account its significance over the entire path length (see the program for today's conference).

Unfortunately, the route has not been signposted locally (posting of R1). The travel guide has not been updated for several years. Instead, EURO-ROUTE R1, not to be confused with EUROVELO, was revised again and illustrated in the BaltiCCycle Guide "Discover Latvia by Bike" by Frank Wurft within the www.bicycle.lt project. The new guide describes EURO-ROUTE R1 under the heading of "Castle Routes" from Riga via the LV/LT-border to Klaipeda (418 km), and from Riga to Valka on the Estonian (Valga) border.

This makes it possible to experience the route.

We are very grateful to Mr. Frank Wurft M.A., who has brought together cycling (association) interests in the Baltic States over the past five years with the "BaltiCCycle" project, and most recently in Poland, and is helping to establish a bicycle culture in the Baltic States. He is also here with us today. I think it is appropriate for all of us to ask him work with us to meet the needs of the R1, especially regarding signposting with the "R1" logo.

I sent an e-mail on 13 June 2005 to the ministers of the Economy, Transport and Environment of the Republic of Latvia asking them to intervene in the continuation of the EURO-ROUTE R1 through their country, and to permit signposting in both directions with the "R1" logo, the illustration in bicycle path maps, etc. The German Embassy in Riga informed me that it has sought support for the project from the Latvian Ministry of Transport.

In a letter of 5 March 1998, the Estonian Tourist Board expressed support for the idea of continuing the EURO-ROUTE R1 through Estonia, and likes the idea of routing the path through Valga, Tartu and Narva. The subject was discussed further in a face-to-face meeting at the 1998 ITB.

Rein Lepik, president of the Estonian Bicycle Club, who was predominantly responsible for drawing the national bicycle map in 2001 for the national bicycle path network, pledged his cooperation to me on 10 February 2000.

So, in April 2005, EURO-ROUTE R1 was signposted by Rein Lepik with his Vaenta Aga bicycle club on time for the celebration of International Hanseatic Day 2005, held from 30 June to 3 July 2005 in Tartu, utilizing national Route 4 from Valga to Tartu and national Route 3 from Tartu to Narva (www.bycycle.ee) on 515km (see destina-

tion guide in the program for today's conference, and my e-mail of 25 April 2005 on everything concerning the R1).

I would like to give my heartfelt thanks once again to Rein Lepik for the good and fruitful work. I am very pleased that we were finally able to arrange a meeting with you today.

Kaliningrad Gebiet and Narva-St.Petersburg in Russia.

A story without end! A quick summary in telegraphese:

Starting on 13 November 1997, correspondence with the Foreign Office in Bonn and the Russian Federation Embassy, forwarding of my complex project documents to the responsible overseas representative of the Embassy in Moscow for the Kaliningrad region and St. Petersburg. Letter to the governor and the delegate for German Trade and Industry at the field office for Kaliningrad, Mr. Stein, on 2 June 1998; the latter expressed little hope in a letter of 30 June 1998: "The bicycle is more or less a toy for children (here)." However, he wished me continued success, affirmed the beauty of the Kaliningrad countryside, with the Coronian Spit, and recommended that I contact the director of the Tourism Board, Vera V. Simogljadowa. I did this on 25 August 1998, sending all project documents, and a subsequent reminder. No reply!

There were other attempts later, until I was successful in May 2001 at having the R1 included in the Poland-Russia-Lithuanian project "Nature Conservation and Tourism on the Vistula and Coronian Spits" sponsored by the German Federal Environmental Foundation (DBU) in Osnabrück. Citing various reasons in a letter of 1 September 2003, the assistant director of the Kaliningrad regional administration, T. Masepa, who had received my written requests through the special representative for East Europe, the DBU engineer Mr. Kulke, rejected the routing of the path over the Gronowo/Mamonovo border crossing to Kaliningrad and the Coronian Spit. He said there were also no special bike paths. These motorways were a main route for car traffic. Their use by cyclists would greatly increase the risk of car accidents. Mr. Masepa believes that continuing the Euro-Route R1 through the Kaliningrad region would be unacceptable, and recommends exploring the "Gusew-Goldap" and „Sowjetsk-Panemune“ border crossing approx.150km to the south.

I shared the results of my detailed study with Mr. Masepa, with an e-mail of 15 October 2004. It is not possible to do without the currently planned border crossing!

Unfortunately, I received no reply.

To my knowledge, bicycle tourists have been using the border crossing over the last two years without problems.

In the meantime, I wrote on 6 May 2003 to President Putin, who is well-known to be from St. Petersburg, and whose wife is from Kaliningrad. I have not learned whether this letter and a reminder of 4 March 2004, with a copy of the first letter to the Ambassador of the Russian Federation, reached their addressees. I recommended to Ms. Simogljadowa the continuation of the R1 through the Kaliningrad region under the currently proposed conditions, and asked her to intercede. On 30 November 2005, I invited her to today's conference.

Instead of a reply, I learned on 19 December 2005 that Ms. S. was no longer in that post, and on 11 January 2006, I learned of the cabinet reshuffle and positive turn of events in the R1 project.

Please permit me to read the message or have it read.

Dimitri Suchin, a St. Petersburg native and architect currently living in Berlin, helped me a great deal with the segment from Narva to St. Petersburg. Mr. Gourevich, current chairman of the St.Petersburg bicycle club Velopiter, proposed a more detailed

continuation like that which appears in the overview map of April 2005. Unfortunately, Mr. Gourevich has now moved to Moscow, and so the route has still not been fully detailed. Perhaps his successor, Mr. Viktor Nechaev and Ms. Olga Pavlova have arranged for the specification and fully detailed route guide with the government. I wrote to the county office manager, the supposedly German-speaking director of the state Urban Development Institute, and Lord Mayor Walentina Matwienko in St. Petersburg at the beginning of the year in the same manner. Unfortunately, I have still not received an answer. Judging from experience, there may be several reasons for this, and not the result of bad faith.

To sum up, I would like to state: Euro-Route R1 is uniformly signposted with "R1" over approx. 2100km.

I hope to be able to amend and change the overview map of April 2005 within this year.

And had Mr. Aart Buurma begun the Berlin-St. Petersburg bicycle tour with his wife this year, I would certainly have been able to give him better info and documents. Your cycling performance, as well as your information brochures for such a tour, receive great respect. Perhaps they will be reissued soon.

In the future, if someone asks for the R1 guide book or the R1 map in a bookstore, and the book dealer replies "would you like another bicycle tour guide?," because both the book and the map are sold out, then you will have been successful with the "Marketing for the R1 European Bicycle Path" project as well.

Thank you for your patience and attention.

Note: If you travel from St. Petersburg to the magnificent St. Peter's Square, the summer home of the tsars, via the combined bike/hiking path there (future R1), then pass by the new Putin residence, which I was shown in July 2004.