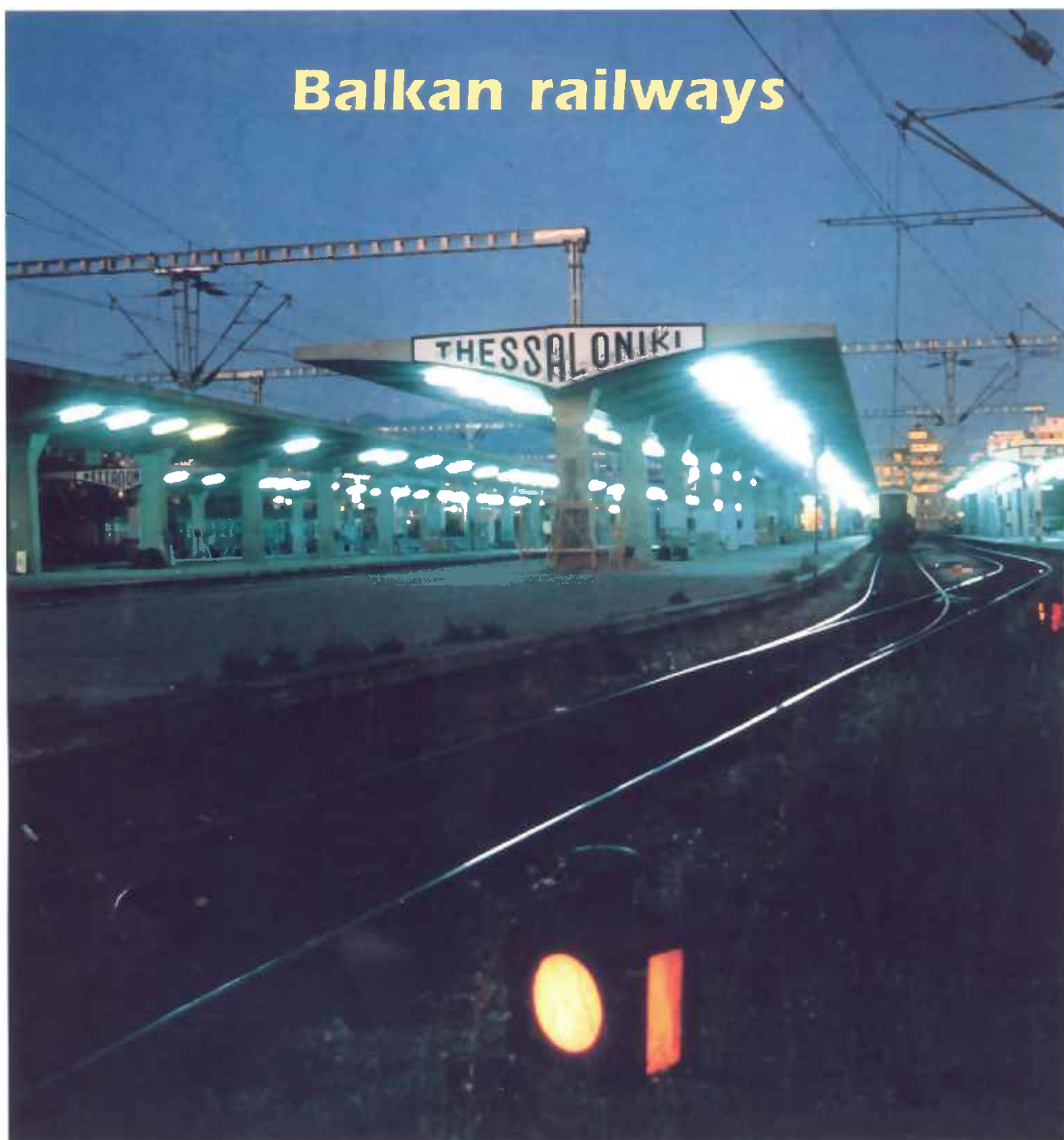


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Balkan railways



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DECEMBER 1997
28th YEAR

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Thessaloniki station



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The Hellenic Railways Organisation

Development perspectives



K. Giannakos
Assistant Director General, OSE

The Hellenic Railways Organisation - OSE is a public enterprise operating in the form of a limited company and administers railway transport and the railway infrastructure in Greece.

OSE operates lines with a total length of 2,474 km, of which 1,565 km are standard gauge, 887 km are metre gauge and 22 km are 0.75 m gauge lines.

Important modernisation projects have been implemented during the last few years on the principal Athens - Thessaloniki railway trunk route and new modern rolling stock units (Intercity train-sets, railcars, passenger coaches and wagons) have been put in service throughout the network.

Within Hellenic Railways Organisation - OSE today there is under development what is for Greece an astonishing modernisation and development program with an overall budget totalling some 3245 million ECU co-funded by the European Union and national funds. This program, which is due to be completed by the year two

thousand, will radically change the face of railways in Greece putting them on a par with those of European Union countries and bringing great benefits for the Greek National Economy.

These benefits relate to regional development goals, to the needs for the decongestion of the road network, to efforts to upgrade environmental conditions in problematic urban areas like Athens, Thessaloniki, Patras, Larissa and Kavala, and also the recognition of

our country's role as a transport hub for the needs of landlocked Balkan countries and the countries of the former Soviet Union.

Beyond that, this programme will help to achieve another set of goals, namely:

- The inclusion of our country in the combined transport corridor between Central, North and Eastern Europe, Northeast Africa and the Middle East, with the development of our coun-



Photo: E. Koutoumpouris

try's geographical position as a hub for the sea corridors of the Mediterranean, the Black Sea and the Adriatic.

- Energy saving and monitoring of technological developments.

The railway is an effective instrument for the fulfilment of these goals, the realisation of our country's developmental policy and upgrading of its role in the surrounding area.

The horizontal railway trunk route crossing the Macedonian and Thrace regions via Florina - Thessaloniki - Drama and Alexandroupolis, with the already approved rail link to the port of Kavala in the Xanthi region, is offered as an access route for loads coming from the North and for their distribution towards the three ports of north Greece, Thessaloniki, Kavala and Alexandroupolis, and also towards Volos further to the south, where Crete Corridors IV and IX terminate.

If construction of a rail link on the OSE network from Kalambaka to the port of Igoumenitsa goes ahead, this will constitute a western gateway to the country and a horizontal railway route will exist from Igoumenitsa to Volos which, combined with railway ferry boats between Brindisi - Igoumenitsa and Volos - Lattakia (Syria), will upgrade the role of Greece as a main transit route to and from the countries of the Middle East and North Africa.

The use of railway ferry boats that carry the whole train-set cuts out the cost of loading and unloading at the ports in between and makes

the whole transport process especially attractive from an economic standpoint.

Development projects of the Greek network with positive influence on Epirus and Thessaly

Widening of the Paleofarsalos - Kalambaka railway line

Construction work on this line started years ago; 58 km out of a total of 80 km were built and work was then halted.

OSE took action and in 1993 this project was included in the Provisional Cohesion Funding Instrument with limited funding; in 1994

the European Union approved its full financing.

The object of this project is to widen the existing metre gauge line to standard gauge for speeds of 160 km/h speed.

The infrastructure and the laying of the line will be finalised in 1998, providing a direct link between West Thessaly and Athens and Thessaloniki. Already the infrastructure work is in the final stages and track laying work for the new standard gauge line is about to begin.

Igoumenitsa - Kalambaka railway connection

The new line will be a single, electrified one measuring a total length of 150 km.

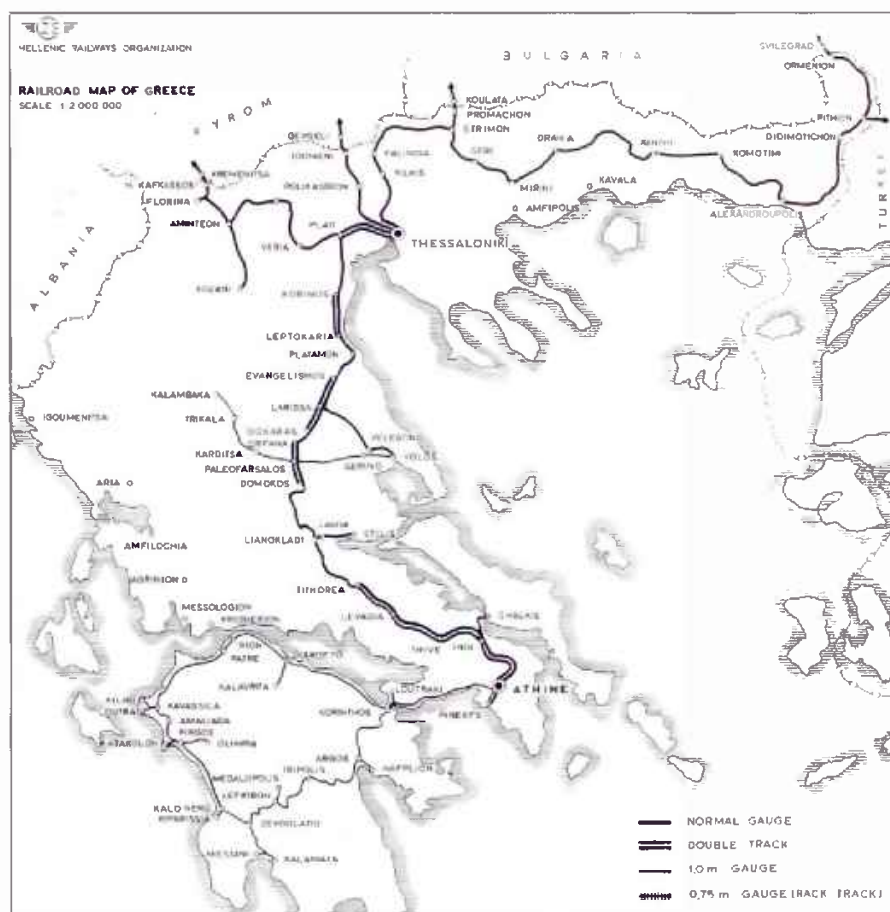




Photo: F. Koutsouropoulos

It has been designed for a minimum speed of 120 km/h. The new line starts at the resited Kalambaka Station as shown in the Kalambaka General Town - Plan. From the north-east it runs into Ioannina where a station is to be built. Between Ioannina and Igoumenitsa two intermediate stations are planned, while in the Igoumenitsa area a port station is planned with dock installations for a railway ferry-boat.

The above project represents the core section of the East-West rail-

way route (the Railway Egnatia) planned as part of the long-term modernisation programme for OSE and is included in the Trans-European Combined Transport Networks.

Renewal of the Paleofarsalos - Volos line

The technical services of OSE and personnel of the Organisation are examining the feasibility and cost of widening the Paleofarsalos - Volos line on the existing layout,

subject to minor variations of parabolas and curves.

Upgrading of the Volos port by a railway ferry-boat connection with Lattakia in Syria and Ilitsov in Russia

With the signing of an agreement between the Hellenic and Syrian Railways concerning the railway ferry connection between Volos - Lattakia on 24 March 1997 at Aleppo in Syria and the project being examined by OSE to build a station for the change of bogies for the Volos - Ilitsov connection, the Volos port will be upgraded and with the simultaneous upgrading of the Igoumenitsa port, the importance of the Brindisi - Igoumenitsa - Volos line considerably enhanced.

Kryoneri - Agrinio - Amfilohia - Arta - Ioannina - Greek-Albanian borders railway line

Work has begun on the reconstruction of the 62 km long Kryoneri - Agrinio line. A preliminary study for the extension of the alignment into a standard gauge line up to Amfilohia has been drawn up. The Kryoneri - Agrinio line is expected to be ready for operation in record time, at the beginning of 1998. As long as the necessary financing is available, the line up to Amfilohia is expected to be opened to traffic by 2001.

In 1998 OSE will embark on a preliminary study for the Amfilohia - Arta - Ioannina line with the prospect of extending it up to the Greek-Albanian border and connecting it to the Albanian railway network.

Kalambaka - Siatista - Kozani line and Siatista - Kastoria line

The Kalambaka - Siatista - Kozani connection is planned as part of the long-term modernisation programme for OSE.

This connection completes the Plati - Kozani - Kalambaka - Larissa - Platy railway loop connecting Northwest Macedonia to the Southern Greek railway network and the future Railway Egnatia. Moreover, as part of Corridor X from Helsinki, a branch line has been approved which will pass through Veles - Bitola - Florina and end at Via Egnatia thus assisting transport via FYROM towards Igoumenitsa.

The Hellenic Railways Organisation today has a direct need for private sector funds in order to realise its three distinguished projects:

- Construction of the railway connecting the OSE network from Kalambaka to the port of Igoumenitsa.
- Construction of the railway connection from Kalambaka to Kozani.
- Completion of the Amfilohia - Ioannina line. The construction of this project is expected to start after the year 2001.

The above projects are profitable and can be self-funding. It must be pointed out that construction of big, modern railway stations is possible, like the ones in foreign railway networks, in Piraeus, Athens, Thessaloniki, Patras can be self-funded.



Photo K. Kakavos

In a first phase CH will be already embarking on the self-funded pilot construction of the new Athens Railway Station. These railway stations will also operate as areas of commercial activity and recreation through in-station stores and offices, and will definitely produce good returns for the investor who will be able to obtain a lease for a reasonable length of time. Examples of such activity in railway stations exist in many European railways.

We believe that Greece can and must be upgraded to become a strategically important hub of transport and communications cor-

ridors and impose its presence in the wider region as an essential partner in economic and geo-political development, increasing and establishing its influence upon the surrounding countries as a factor of stability.

In order to achieve this goal, the role of private or bank funds is of decisive importance to activities which, as shown above, will produce returns. Even more, with the development of the Volos and Igoumenitsa ports, the role of Epirus will be enhanced and it will become a cross-roads of international transport and communication networks. ■