

Book Review – TEE-The Story of the Trans Europ Express

Review by Blaine Bachman



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In the realm of railway publishing it's rare that a significant work is made available in multiple languages. Such is the case with the recently published book, TEE-The Story of the Trans Europ Express (the book's likely title were it to be translated into English), now available in German and Italian as well as in the original French. Authors Maurice Mertens and Jean-Pierre Malaspina have created an encyclopedic volume documenting the TEE system, its trains, and the equipment employed over the years of its existence. Alba Verlag and Editrice Trasporti su Rotaie have recently made this book available in German and Italian, respectively.

At this point it must be mentioned that the current publication is a recompilation of a book originally written in the 1990s by Maurice Mertens, now deceased. With the permission of the Mertens family, Mr. Malaspina set about re-editing the book, adding the many photos and other graphics that are so welcome by the typical rail hobbyist. Malaspina also gets partial credit for the Italian translation.

Each version of the book contains between 300 and 400+ pages of meaty content. The Italian-language publication, upon which this review is based, has 412 numbered pages and it is virtually impossible to turn to any point in the text without finding at least one photo or full-color illustration. The book is divided into two major parts: *Part One – Network and Rolling Stock* and *Part Two – The Trains*.

Part One begins with an overview of the TEE concept followed by descriptions of the system at various times from its inception through its maximum extension and on to its gradual replacement by the EuroCity system of international trains. Much useful information is presented in table format and the reader can track the expansion and subsequent decline of

the TEE system via a series of maps that show the city to city connections at key moments in history. Photos pertinent to the discussion are also included and nostalgia buffs will enjoy the reproduced covers of several TEE brochures that round out the graphical content of this chapter

The first half of Chapter 2 covers the multiple unit TEE trainsets and the locomotives that were typically used in TEE service. Much is said about the TEE commission's attempts to promote unity among the participating railway administrations, some of which were successful (e.g., exterior colors, levels of service, and minimum permissible speeds) and others that were less so (e.g., unified rolling stock and standard interior design features). The second half of the chapter discusses each of the several coach types specifically constructed for TEE service by the participating railways. Again, there are plenty of photos plus side elevation and floor plan drawings for each of the types.

Part Two encompasses the remaining two-thirds of the book and discusses each of the 60 named TEE trains, including the so-called 'Internal TEEs.' Every train from *Adriatico* to *Watteau* is covered in an average of four pages each. Most of the write ups include sample schedule information, train numbers, and consist changes over the years; many also include a bibliography of primary resources. Of course, there are again plenty of photos.

One very neat feature (in the Italian version at least) is the inclusion of sample train consists using small graphical depictions of the train's engine and cars. The individual drawings used are derived from those ever popular 'train gifs' that are found on the Internet and which populate the 'MM Screensaver.' Though not absolutely authoritative, these depictions can be very helpful to the modeler seeking to duplicate a representative consist.

In conclusion, this is the best book of its type to come along in quite a while and arguably the most complete collection of TEE facts ever assembled for public consumption. The depth of information is sufficient for most hobbyist purposes and the cited bibliographies and long list of contributors, to whom the authors express thanks in the final pages, speak to the accuracy and completeness of the work. If you do not buy another book this year, consider this one (assuming the subject is of interest) as a worthy addition to your library.

Book/Publisher Information:

- FR: TEE-La légende des Trans Europ Express, LR Presse, €49.50, ISBN 2-903651-45-0
- DE: TEE-Die Geschichte des Trans Europ Express, Alba Verlag, €39.90, ISBN 978-3-87094-199-4
- IT: TEE-La leggenda dei Trans Europ Express, Editrice Trasporti su Rotaie, €49.50, ISBN 978-88-85068-31-5