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הרכבת

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75:01.
*Bygone Days on the Hedjaz Railway. A mixed train
in Syria in the 1980's. (Photo: Keith Chester).*



*See page 7, Fire damaged
coach in Haifa East Station.*

EDITORIAL.

To start with two apologies:-

A technical problem at Steve Waldenberg's computer in Leeds led to some names and addresses of subscribers being deleted or the details damaged as Issue 74 was being prepared for despatch - we can only hope everyone who was meant to receive a copy got one, otherwise you would not be reading this! Much work has gone into restoring the data. But this also brought home the fact that the number of subscribers remains very low - we have no budget for advertising as such, and depend on word-of-mouth, and the hope that someone will see an issue in a library or archive somewhere (many issues go as 'Complimentaries' to such archives) and subscribe! To put it bluntly, the Editor/Publisher is subsidising around half of the costs of producing this magazine from his own limited means. An attempt to attract advertising went drastically wrong, and there is no official sponsorship. So if you are interested in the continuation of the magazine, it would help if you could not only renew the subscription promptly but also inform a few friends of its existence!

This issue is delayed by a few weeks, due to the Editor's personal circumstances. At a certain point a "cut-off point" had to be established, and this was the 24th. January. This means that the "new new timetable" had just come into effect on I.R., and that certain developments are still unresolved (such as the eventual fate of through services to Jerusalem). This is also an issue filled with news on the Level Crossing problem and the various measures, political debates and tenders for new bridges that have resulted. As usual, we print what we can, 'for the record', some from official press releases (thanks to Aharon), some from critical press stories, some from personal or 'inside knowledge' (thanks to Sybil, Gary and others), but inevitably several issues will be incomplete. Hopefully the next issue will provide more clarity! The main thing is that, despite everything, the wars, the politics, the setbacks, the I.R. system is still expanding and so there is a lot of Current News again.

This time we have less on 'Other Middle East Railways' and less historical material - a lot depends simply on what news comes our way. (My thanks to all contributors.) But we hope we have achieved some balance.

Enjoy!
The Editor.

NEWS FROM THE LINE.

(a). FUEL ISSUES.

On 3.11.2006 in the 'Jerusalem Post':- "The Israeli Fuel Authority is drafting a plan to reduce Israel's dependency on oil and plans to present it to the relevant ministries later this month. The document - entitled "Sustainable Development of Energy for Transportation and the Reduction of Oil Dependency" - will be presented to officials from the Transportation, Finance, Infrastructures, and Environment ministries. Officials at the Ministry of National Infrastructures told 'The Jerusalem Post' that Israel currently imports 90% of its oil from Russia and the Caspian region, and ranks 42 out of 211 countries in annual oil consumption. Many of the points in the Fuel Authority initiative have to do with renewable energy sources, "green taxes", and new, stricter emissions and import regulations."

(b). LEVEL CROSSING SAFETY PROJECT.

From a press release of 10.10.06 by Israel Railways:

"The Railways have selected 4 local companies to install detection and visual identification systems at level crossings; The systems must be capable of mapping visually the level-crossing area, identifying disruptions and obstacles, as well as transmitting pictures and warnings to both the drivers' cabs and to the Railways' central Control.

In July 2006 Israel Railways published an invitation for participation in offers for these systems. This was addressed to companies involved in integration of communication at an ultra-low-current, capable of the design and implementation of detection, observation, communication, and control systems; the companies had to prove previous experience in such systems which also include CCTV, and wide-band wireless systems.

15 companies took up the challenge. A professional committee headed by the Deputy General Manager for Safety has recommended four selected companies, considering their implementation potential, including their suggested solution and methodology, their particular experience in the relevant area, offer availability, and price.

During the coming months, controlled tests will be carried out with the four competitors in order to assess the implementation, fitness, and quality of the solution offered; to be tested are the systems' performances taking into consideration the percentage of detections, the number of false alarms, the maximum time needed for detection and warning, survivability, number of failures in a given period of operation, and performance of the system's control centre.

At the pilot stage each of the four competitors will install their systems at a sequence of three level crossings, from which the information will be transmitted to the devices to be installed at the Railways' control centre as well as on 2 locomotives.

The total number of systems to be installed by the four competitors at level crossings will therefore be 12, as well as on 8 locomotives, and at the Railways' central Control.

The pilot project is to last for 6 months, after which the winner will install his system at all level crossings, at the Railways' Control centre, and on all d.m.u.'s and locomotives within 3 months.

It is important to state that there are currently no technological products of this type in existence "on the shelf"; However, in order to improve safety, the railways have decided to test systems and innovations which can be implemented on other railways too; currently, radar systems are installed at a very few level crossings in Germany and Italy, and such systems are being tested at four level crossings in Israel.

The suggested solution (in principle) has been introduced to a professional committee headed by Prof. Ben-Israel. This in the meantime concluded that installing CCTV was the most efficient solution for level crossings until grade separations are built.

The 4 companies selected for the pilot test are:

Orad Control Systems Ltd; Elta Systems Ltd. (part of IAI-Israel Aircraft Industry and specializing in radars); Ortec Ltd., and Magal Security Systems Ltd. (formerly part of IAI).

The level crossings at which the equipment will be installed have been selected according to the following considerations:

- 1. Existence of electrical and communication infrastructures nearby.
- 2. Level crossings close to each other, less than 2 km. apart for each group.
- 3. The level crossings to be equipped are not intended to be closed shortly.
- 4. The risk level of the selected level crossing.

The level crossings locations as per group are as following:

: Group No.1 - MAGAL; level crossings Nos.40, 42, and 43 - all at Haifa's main industrial zone. (No. 40 is integrated with Kishon Works signal box)

: Group No. 2 - ORAD; level crossings Nos.50, 51, and 52 near Akko, and integrated with Akko station's signal box.
 : Group No. 3 - ELTA; level crossing No.132 on the Tel-Aviv - Ramla road No.44 and integrated with Lod station's control centre; level crossing No.133 near Beer-Yaakov station and integrated with its signal box; level crossing No.134 at Beer-Yaakov East, also integrated with the same signal box.
 : Group No. 4 - ORTEC; level crossing No.145 at Beit-Gamliel (between Rehovot and Yavne, and level crossing No.147 at Yavne, both integrated with Yavne station signal box; level crossing No.150 on roads Nos.40 and 41 near Ashdod and integrated with Pleshet Junction signal box.

(d). ELECTRIFICATION PLANS & TENDERS

From a press release of 17.10.06 by Israel Railways:

"The Railways have selected the following three consortia of competitors for the electrification tender, who have passed the pre-qualification stage towards the best and final choice:

- Consortium No. 1: Balfour Beatty Rail GmbH of Germany; Electra Ltd., and Danya Cebus Ltd. of Israel.

- Consortium No. 2: Elecnor S.A. & Semi S.A. of Spain.

- Consortium No. 3: Siemens AG of Germany & China Railways Construction Company.

- (A fourth group headed by Alstom is probably out of the game.)

The intention is to improve the environment, increase speed and frequency of services and reduce noise.

There will be a need to purchase electrical locomotives and e.m.u.'s. (Electric multiple units). General Manager Mr. Opher Linchevski said: "The electrification project is not only one of the railways' main projects to be carried out within the next few years, but also one of the most complex infrastructure projects to be carried out in this period; an overall total of 420 km. of lines will be electrified in stages according to the network development and budget constraints; In the first stage, at least 250 km. will be electrified, including the fast link A1 to Jerusalem (and to Modi'in)."

The project, when carried out, will be within a frame agreement for construction and maintenance for 10 years with an optional extension of an additional 10 years.

The construction consists of three main components: Installation of overhead power supply, Building Substations, and Building the Control System.

The Railways intend to sign on the contract at the first half of 2007; the first stage will cost \$372 Million.

The contract documents include the technical specification, work description, tender procedure and the contract details, on behalf of which the competitors will introduce their offers.

Meanwhile, the Committee for National Infrastructure has wondered how I.R. could publish such a huge tender without showing

it to the Committee first! Questions such as: "Why was no environmental survey carried out, what will be the electromagnetic radiation influence, and has Israel, which uses its electrical supply reserves almost up to the limit, the ability to supply the additional electricity needed for the railways electrification?" - have been raised.

The Railways' response was: "On the contrary, we're working in full coordination with the Committee; principal lines already agreed with the Committee have been included in the tender; the environmental survey will soon be carried out, and will be shown to the competitors prior to their offers in order to enable them to make the needed amendments; However, due to the importance of the project, the Railways have decided to avoid any delay in publishing the tender; the Railways are fully committed to implementing all the Committee's recommendations and requirements".

(e). MODI'IN LINE PROGRESS.

On 16.10.2006 a visit took place along the alignment of the line between Ben-Gurion Airport and Modi'in (currently almost completed), as well as on the A1 alignment to Jerusalem, currently under construction, to the vicinity of Latrun Monastery.

The participants in the visit were: Israel Railways General Manager Mr. Opher Linchevski, the Mayor of Modi'in Mr. Moshe Spector, his Deputy for Transportation Mr. Michael Harlap, the municipality's Manager, and the city's Architect, as well as the project management and Israel Railways employees.

The aim of the visit was to demonstrate the complexity and size of the project as well as how the environment is being protected despite the huge works being carried out.

The main news and messages from the visits are:

All participants are confident of the important role the rail link will bring to Modi'in once it starts next year, particularly in terms of the citizens' quality of life - they will be able to reach Tel-Aviv in 21 minutes and Jerusalem in 17 minutes; 3 trains an hour in each direction will be operating at rush hours.

The first station to be opened in Modi'in is Pa'atei-Modi'in (Modi'in Outskirts) which is located adjacent to a mall called Yishparo and is almost completed - it will be opened in September 2007, to be followed by Modi'in Central station to be opened at the end of 2007; This is a big underground intercity station currently under construction.

The A1 route will be the first electrified line and will hopefully open in 2011; since the line to Modi'in will open 4 years earlier, it will be temporarily operated by diesel trains. Mr. Linchevski said that the lines from Ben-Gurion airport to Modi'in and to Jerusalem are one of the biggest projects undertaken in Israel in recent years; only the Trans-Israel toll Highway No.6, the final cost of which is estimated at \$1 billion, is similar; He also reported that the line from Tel-Aviv to Ben-Gurion airport is a real success; it is used

annually by 1.1 million passengers and traffic is rising annually by 20%; it is anticipated this will grow even more from the end of 2006, when the already-completed link to Lod, Rehovot, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Beer-Sheva, Dimona, and Jerusalem (the rebuilt old line) is opened.

A later Press Release of 19.12.2006 announced that Linchevski had announced the opening of Pa'atey Modi'in in July rather than September - there had apparently been a lot of pressure from the Mayor to expedite this. Aharon Gazit noted that by the end of December the line from Ben Gurion to Modi'in Outskirts was practically complete and work was also well advanced on signals and communications, and track was being laid in the final tunnel towards Modi'in Central.

The final cost of the line (Modi'in Central alone swallowed 30% of the budget!) will be \$355M, for which IR gets a 19km. double-track fully-grade-separated line with very impressive structures and earthworks, built to strict environmental requirements, including the planting of 40 different species of plants, and preserving ancient earthworks. Two separate 100m. tunnels were built in order to bypass ancient graves.

Planned frequency is now 2 trains/hour in each direction at peak periods. During 2007 work will start on the curve to link Outskirts station and the "A1" Jerusalem line, to enable through services Modi'in - Jerusalem (the new station at Binyanei haUma). Modi'in Outskirts has a parking area for 312 cars, with room for potential expansion for another 300 places over the adjacent Road 431, with either a subway or bridge link.

(f). MORE RE-ROOFING AT HAIFA EAST STATION.

"As mentioned in 67:4(l) the large two-storey stone building housing, inter alia, the IRM offices and archives was due to be re-roofed with red tiles in 2005. However, this was delayed by a year and work finally began on 31.05.2006. The old asbestos sheeting and original wooden beams were quickly removed during the first week, and long decades of pigeon guano cleaned out, but then things slowed down considerably. The pace was just beginning to pick up again when the Lebanon war broke out and more than a month was lost. When work restarted the new aluminium beams were lifted into place and fixed to the side walls. During this operation a workman put his boot through a carefully preserved high wooden ceiling in the archives, bringing a large panel and lighting fixtures crashing down in a great cloud of evil-smelling, finely-powdered pigeon shit (not all had previously been cleaned up) that covered everything within a radius of several metres and collected in all those inaccessible nooks and crannies. The cleaning woman was not best pleased. Neither was I.

The work included an extension to the roof at the east end of the building to replace an ugly breeze-block accretion which seems to have dated from sometime after WW2 (see background of photo No.5 in 50:8). A sym-

metrical stone-faced gable end has been fashioned here instead. This is historically correct and in harmony with the rest of the building: anyway, it is evident that the building itself has undergone at least one major extension and a number of interior alterations over the years. The top section of a flight of exterior metal stairs, redundant after replacement of that cheap and nasty breeze-block extension, was removed.

The re-roofing was finished right at the end of September following a three-day blitz by the contractor to lay the tiles before the first of the early season rains. He almost got it all done in time too, but a sudden shower caused a minimal amount of water damage in the rooms housing the historical archives. The archival material itself was, blessedly, untouched and the contractor later made good the slight damage to the interior walls and also that caused previously to the original ceiling by the aforementioned intrusive boot. Sandblasting of the building began in mid-October. Another nightmare! Despite sealing up doors and windows, clouds of fine dust still penetrated and settled over everything - amazing how the stuff seeps through the tiniest crevice. The sandblasting was finally completed on 27.10, by which time the cleaning lady was threatening to quit in disgust. Me too. At least it has revealed features hidden beneath a patina of grime and the stonework has been re-pointed. A large unused cellar beneath part of the building was filled with concrete. Other, relatively minor, jobs remained such as replacing the outside stairs with wooden treads instead of metal, removal of redundant and unsightly pipes and cables, spraying the exterior of the building with a clear liquid to protect against damp, painting, plus 101 other small jobs. The bulk of the outside work was completed by mid-November, though internal renovations had still to be carried out (but not in the museum offices or archives because we'd already redecorated these the year before).

And very nice indeed the old building looks too, after an extensive facelift. It remains a fine example of craftsmanship by Palestinian Arab stonemasons whose skills were much sought-after throughout the Middle East. Which reminds me that, while I had always thought this and other buildings at Haifa East were built of stone from local quarries, one of the contractors reckoned that the hard limestone used had probably been quarried somewhere around Tzephath in the Galilee. This would have entailed a good deal of transport by camel, but the Turks (or maybe it was the British even) brought basalt stone blocks to Haifa, probably from the Golan Heights, as this was used to pave around what is now the small exhibits building of the railway museum on the south side of the tracks and this extremely hard black volcanic stone paving is still well in evidence there. It can also be seen in many (but not all) surviving bridges, culverts and buildings along the route of the old 'Valley Railway' in the Jordan and Yarmuk Valleys as well as on the still active sections of the Hedjaz Railway in Syria." (P.Cotterell.)

Chen Melling adds: "Paul says the extended gable roof "...is historically correct and in

harmony with the rest of the building." Though I agree it certainly is in harmony with the rest of the roof line, I must assert that it is not historically correct. All photographic evidence we have of this building, starting from the late WWI period (before this section of the building was constructed) and including the early British period up until the addition of the breeze-block accretion suggests this section of the building never had a gable roof over it. In fact, in the early 1920's this area of the roof served as the basis for two rectangular water tanks, presumably serving the adjacent Hijaz Railway locomotive shed (which today houses the Museum's Large Exhibits Hall)."

[The Editor notes: For the sake of new readers: Chicken-Shit is what one works FOR; Pigeon-Shit is what one works IN.]

(g). ATLIT FOOTBRIDGE.

A new footbridge between the platforms at Atlit station was nearing completion in October 2006. It is in the same style as that at Binyamina.

(h). BENEI BERAK SILOS.

The 'Mamgurot & Makhsanim' grain silos at Benei Berak station appeared empty in late-October 2006 and were becoming derelict. The sidings were rusty and had already been partly lifted. There was no sign of the Ford 6610 shunting tractor mounted on an old IR Esslingen diesel railcar bogie (see photo in 'Industrial Railway Record' 137). The overhead railway was still in place but the wheeled tanks featured in 52:8:a were not to be seen, and the two semaphore signals suspended from a bracket had also gone. It is not known when these silos closed and rail traffic ceased.

(i). KIRYAT ARIEH STATION.

The new Kiryat Arieah suburban station between Benei Berak and Petach Tiqva-Segula was well advanced, with platforms laid and buildings being erected. Also well in evidence were preparations for doubling of the remaining section of single track on this line east of Benei Berak, with stacks of track panels in Benei Berak station ready for transport and laying. (P.C.)

(j). MAJOR TIMETABLE CHANGES.

(i). As of late November, it seemed that the new timetable which was due to go into operation on 14.10.06 but had run into numerous delays was not to be implemented (surviving copies should quickly become collectors' items). Apparently an updated timetable would instead come into force about February 2007, to include several additions to the network due for completion in the meantime, plus "a recasting of services on the Jerusalem line intended to ease persist-

ent delays caused by congestion along the Ayalon corridor through Tel Aviv."

(ii). On 01.01.2007 a new timetable did indeed come into force; the major changes are that trains from Beersheba to Ben Gurion Airport traversed the old former P.R. main line northwards from Lod via a new spur to the airport, and thence to Tel Aviv, and that the Tel Aviv - Jerusalem service was effectively abandoned as a through service, being split at Beit Shemesh. This means that double-deck trains (which would have difficulty on the hillier sections) now terminate at Beer Sheba, and passengers have to change into an IC3 for the continuation to Jerusalem! It should be noted that the actual frequency to Beit Shemesh is not increased - the service remains hourly - and the main idea seems to be to reduce the impact of delays on one leg of the journey affecting the other - though how this will affect connections remained to be seen. Connections in the mornings are long - up to 45 minutes - but in the afternoons better at 10 minutes. On 'Pasim' there has also appeared some disgruntled comments on the cost of the recent upgrading of the Jerusalem line - which now, if the service is reduced to a Beit Shemesh shuttle, hardly seems to have been worth it! Certainly the much-vaunted linking of the nation's capital with the coast will now have to await the opening of the new line! Though the IR website states that this change is merely "an experiment".

Sybil mentions that "New stations mentioned in the timetable to open at a date to be announced: Lehavim Central (between Kiryat Gat and Beersheba, does this imply that there will be more than one station at Lehavim?), Kiryat Aryeh (between B'nei Brak and Petach Tikva Segula) and Ganei Aviv (between Lod and Kfar Chabad). Also, due to open in July but not indicated in the new timetable is Pa'atey Modi'in."

In peak periods there will now be three trains an hour from Kfar Saba to Tel Aviv.

Photos from Aharon Gazit show the new spur as being severely curved and graded, climbing from the former PR main line from south to west to join the new A1 route on its high embankment.

Within two weeks after operation of the link between Ben-Gurion airport and Lod linking Beer-Sheva with the airport began, passengers from the south (mainly Beer-Sheva) were complaining about the longer travelling time to Tel-Aviv, extended by about 10 minutes due to the fact that all trains are stopping at the airport. They are demanding the operation of additional direct trains for those who do not wish to alight at the airport and have complained to the Transport and Roads' Safety Ministry, whose response was that this is still a pilot project. However, anybody who knows the history of the airport line realises that the station there was built within an existing structure where no space was left for 2 additional tracks to be used by passing by trains to and from Jerusalem; it is self-evident that a similar additional time (10 minutes) will apply to and from Jerusalem; the only difference in favour of the passengers to and from Beer-Sheva is that direct trains from Lod to Tel-Aviv and vice versa can be added, unlike the A1 Jerusalem line

(k). MORE ON THE JERUSALEM LINE SERVICE SPLIT.

"Tel Aviv to Jerusalem and back by train in 4 hours." By Sharon Kedmi. (from 'Ha'aretz' 09.01.2007.)

"The train from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem left the Savidor (Arlozorov) station at 12:34p.m. yesterday. After 50 minutes, the train pulled into Beit Shemesh, a little after schedule. Here the passengers had to switch to another train, which left 10 minutes later, arriving in Jerusalem after 34 minutes. The trip between Israel's two large cities took more than an hour and a half. The way back, however, took no less than two and a quarter hours, including a 45-minute wait in Beit Shemesh. The bus from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, by comparison, takes some 50 minutes.

At the beginning of the month, Israel Railways split the Tel Aviv-Jerusalem line into two: Tel Aviv-Beit Shemesh and Beit Shemesh-Jerusalem. The TA-Jerusalem line, reopened in 2005, was slammed for its negligent construction, endless delays and being uneconomical. The fast line to Jerusalem is under construction and scheduled to be opened in 2011.

Israel Railways CEO Opher Linchevski, who decided on splitting the line to Jerusalem, openly admits the failure of the TA-Jerusalem line. "The line hasn't proved itself and is uneconomic. Most of the passengers who use it are residents of Beit Shemesh and they suffered most from the line's inadequacy. We decided to split the line to improve service, convenience and accuracy," he said.

The line to Jerusalem via Beit Shemesh was inaugurated at the end of the 19th century by the Turkish-Ottoman rule. With the establishment of the state, Israel Railways began to operate it but stopped in 1998 due to the track's disrepair. The government examined three options between 1992 and 2001 - a fast line via Shaar Hagai, whose construction would take at least until 2011 but would be economically viable, adding a second line and upgrading the existing one. This last would be the fastest to carry out, although the line would be uneconomic and the trip would take a long time. Finally at the end of 2001, then-Prime Minister Ariel Sharon decided to implement two options at once: upgrade the existing line and operate it, as well as build the fast line.

Upgrading the line was problematic from the get-go. Its final cost was much higher than planned - some NIS 540 M. instead of NIS 330 M. The works ended a year behind schedule and the environmental organizations said they caused grave damage to the forests of Jerusalem's mountains. Then State Comptroller Eliezer Goldberg said in his May 2005 report that the upgraded line had been constructed without conducting a single proper economic feasibility test.

The upgraded line was opened ceremoniously in April 2005. But the tracks - whose construction was apparently flawed - caused damage to the coaches' lower carriage. Fixing the coaches has cost tens of millions of shekels. The tracks are suitable for trains that

go at a speed of 50kph, not for the fast modern trains used in the Western world today, which go more than 100kph. The journey on the upgraded line takes at least 75 minutes - longer than a bus ride at rush hour. Today, on the split lines, it takes even longer. An average of 100,000 passengers travelled on the line during 2006, 30,000 of them from Beit Shemesh to Jerusalem, or some 250 passengers per train. Taking into consideration the holidays, during which time ridership jumps significantly, the average number of passengers is much smaller. In addition, the Jerusalem railway station is far from the city centre. The price of a one-way TA-Jerusalem trip is NIS 19, compared to NIS 17.7 on the bus. To top it all off, there is no reception on cellular phones during most of the trip.

Yesterday there were only about 50 passengers on the train from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. "This is usually the case until Beit Shemesh," the conductor said. There were even fewer passengers on the train leaving Jerusalem on the way back.

None of the passengers on the train were daily commuters, except Haim Reisler, who said that due to his disability it is easier for him to take the train. "But the trip to Jerusalem has become intolerable," he said. "It was long to begin with, and now is even longer, sometimes by an hour. To my regret, I may have to give up the train," he said.

Gary Pickholz adds more information on the technical problems:- "The only trains that could make it up the hill to Jerusalem (actually the greater strain was during braking DOWN the hill from Jerusalem) were the single-decked trains from Bombardier. The double-deckers could never handle the strain or the curves on the old Ottoman line. It turns out that even the Bombardier trains were being put under 3.5 times the maximum strain of European safety standards on parts of the old line, especially the two famous 'complete U' curves at Bar Giora and Ein Kerem. All of the brake gears were cracked upon inspection, and the trains had to be taken out of service, repaired and replaced. Bombardier then came back and said that the trains were never designed for that kind of stress, and that all of their cars will crack within 6 months service on that run, and that it is a violation of the terms of service to employ them on that type of run." It appears that litigation is under way, along with allegations that I.R. paid more for re-engineered than for new units, and with accusations of corruption and kickbacks along the way.... [Nevertheless, British, Yugoslav, French and German coaches were used for years on this line.... so why the problems with bogies and braking systems now? Ed.]

Official confirmation of this kerfuffle comes from a diplomatically-worded I.R. Press Release of 14.01.2007:- "I.R. and Bombardier Transportation have reached an agreement for a common programme to improve and maintain the bogies of the IC3 d.m.u.'s supplied by Bombardier. This calls for replacing all bogie frames and well as additional improvements to the bogies and will eliminate the problem of excessive wear and tear. Since 1992 IR has purchased 49 such diesel-multiple-units in several production series. Some

18 months ago, when traffic on the Jerusalem line was revived, the phenomenon of increased wear and tear appeared on units running on this sharply-curved line; in this case the trains were from the series bought second-hand from S.J. but initial checks revealed that this would have occurred with any IC3 train; The reason is simple, the bogies with their 2700mm wheelbase were not built to negotiate curves with radii smaller than 150m; on the (badly!)-rebuilt line there are at least three with radii less than 140m. Once the problem had been detected Bombardier, in cooperation with IR, began additional maintenance as needed, as an intermediate solution until a fuller technical one can be found, with normal maintenance schedules and costs. However a further inspection revealed that the bogies must be totally replaced with an improved version. Here a conflict began over the issue of who was to pay for the increased wear and tear; last week this was resolved through implementation of an interim solution. According to this, Bombardier will participate in the maintenance of the existing bogies until the new bogies arrive, and then maintenance will continue under their technical guidance and support. Bombardier will in the meantime develop a new and improved type of bogie, the first of which will be supplied within 10 months from the signing of the contract."

So - it really does seem that no-one thought about the track geometry, nor about improving it during the expensive rebuilding.

(l). BUDGET ISSUES.

(i). From "Ha'aretz" 03.12.2006. "Decision on bloated NIS 8 Billion Railway Budget Due Today. Transportation and Finance to rule on Railway's demand for investment, and habit of Overspending Budgets." By Sharon Kedmi.

"The Transportation and Finance Ministries will hold a meeting today to discuss the Israel Railways request to increase its development budget, by NIS 8 Billion, to a total of NIS 32 Billion. This is the second request by the railways this year for additional funds. Recently the railways have received a lot of criticism for over-running their budget and schedules for new projects that the company had set for itself. Therefore, the ministries seem to be leaning toward denying the request.

The present development budget for the railways is NIS 24 Billion through 2011. The original budget was NIS 20 Billion, which was approved in 2003 for the five-year period through 2008. However, in 2005, after an outside consulting firm revealed huge cost overruns and delays due to planning and implementation faults, the budget was increased and lengthened by three years. The budget was later cut by NIS 2 Billion as a result of the recent war in Lebanon."

(ii). From a press release of 05.12.2006 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

"In a discussion held to-day at the Finance Committee of the Knesset regarding the Railways' development budget, the General Manager Mr. Linchevsky said: "The Railways' development plan contains 33 projects, of

which 29 are being already implemented; Of the 4 whose implementation has not yet started, 2 are under the threat of budget cuts - the line to Carmiel at the Lower Galilee, and the Valley Line (Hedjaz line), though both have statutory approvals, and, from the Railways' side, are ready for implementation. It is important to mention that both the Transport Minister and Israel Railways see both lines as vital for the near future and within the development plan; the Transport Minister has instructed his assistants to insist on including the lines in the plan.

The Government decision to cut \$238 Million annually in 2007 and 2008, means cancelling both lines and hurting the development plan and the infrastructure of the periphery.

The Government has to enable the implementation of the two lines through one of the following solutions:

- either, by raising funds by the railways in a similar way to the one introduced by the Minister of Finance.

- or, by deploying the budget up to 2013 instead of 2012 so implementation will be carried out within the reduced budget." The Committee has decided to insist on carrying out both projects as planned!

(iii). And a story from 'Ha'aretz' on 02.01.2006:

Railways continue to develop after all. "Transportation and Road Safety Minister Shaul Mofaz is wasting no time following Finance Minister Abraham Hirschson's announcement that the treasury would renew the planning process for the Jezreel Valley (the 'Emek railway'), Galilee and Negev routes. Mofaz instructed Linchevsky to begin work on the Emek railway and the Acre-Carmiel route immediately. Two tenders relating to the Emek railway were halted last August due to suspension of budgeting for four major railway projects. The Emek railway is part of Israel Railway's long-term plan which includes 30 projects in all, at the cost of NIS 26 Billion. The plan had been scheduled for completion in 2011. The Emek railway project connecting Haifa and Beit She'an was originally slated for use in 2008, but its future is now unclear. The Acre-Carmiel route was declared a national infrastructure project in 2003, linking Haifa, Acre, Nahariya and Carmiel. A continuing rail track to Kiryat Shmona is also in the planning."

(m). STRIKE.

On 29.11.2006 I.R. was hit by a one-day strike, apparently called by the Histadrut over the delayed-payment of wages to some local Government employees. Since I.R. is now a semi-privatised entity it is hard to see what the connection is here.

(n). AYALON FOURTH TRACK.

From an IR Press Release of 23.10.06: "Mr. Gideon Siterman, General Manager of the Ministry of Transport, today presented to Prime Minister Olmert and the Ministers of Finance and Internal Affairs a request to define the construction of a fourth track on

the Ayalon railway as an infrastructure project of national importance. The fourth track, between the University station in North Tel Aviv to Lod, would have an overall length of 22km. The project would include enlarging the existing stations along the alignment, as well as a new alignment for the Ayalon Creek along which the line (and the Ayalon Highway) run. Total cost would be \$465M. The revolutionary idea of realigning the creek was actually that of a former General Manager of the Ministry, Engineer Benzion Salman; his plan was for a 5km. underground water channel, bringing the creek's winter flow (it is largely dry in summer) directly into the sea near Jaffa. Mr. Siterman said a fourth track would enable greatly-increased train frequencies all over the Greater Tel Aviv area. Further development of the network both southwards to Beersheba, and through Rishon leZion, Ashdod and Ashkelon, as well as northwards to Ra'anana and Kfar Saba along the coast line, will create such a burden on the Ayalon line that without the fourth track no further increase in frequencies will be available. (The 3rd. track will be operational from 01.01 2007.) A further advantage would be to eliminate for the future the winter floods from the creek."

(o). EL AL OFFICE CLOSED.

For many years El Al operated a "Check-In" service for passengers in a small hut by the car park at Tel Aviv Merkaz station; A note in the 'Allgemeine Juedische Wochenzeitung' for 02.11.2006 p.4 informs that this was closed recently, on cost grounds. One supposes that now that the airport is only a few minutes away by regular train services, the need to book-in the evening before is reduced.

(p). CAR HIRE.

From an I.R. Press Release of 95.11.2006: "As part of the programme for increasing the services available to passengers, the Railways have selected Shlomo Sixt Car Rentals as the winner of the tender for operating services for 2-wheeled vehicles at railway stations and storing them there. The aim is to provide passengers with a mode enabling them to continue from the stations to their destinations. This will start at Tel Aviv Savidor (Merkaz) Station, which is used by 650,000 passengers monthly. In the station hall a special service stand will be installed, similar to those for car rentals at airports, and during the first year of operation additional stands will be opened at other stations.

Three bidders participated in the tender process, all of which have experience in selling or renting 2-wheeled vehicle (and others). The selection of the winner placed emphasis on quality and customer services. The international Sixt company uses PDA (Personal Digital Assistance) for checking the vehicles at entrance and exit, thus cutting customer-handling time. According to the contract, the rental time will be variable,

starting from half a day, and the rental costs will be under the Railways' control. Sixt has committed itself to fares cheaper than its competitors. Sixt mainly rents out cars and 2-wheeled vehicles are a new venture for it."

(q). FARE DISCOUNTS FOR STUDENTS.

Israel Railways Ltd.:

From a press release of 21.11.2006 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

"Further to the agreements of July 2006 between the Minister of Transport and Road Safety (new title) Mr. Shaul Mofaz, and the Students' Association representatives, and further to the discussions of the governmental inter-ministerial Committee for Fares' Reform which took place in March 2006, Israel Railways have requested the Ministries of Transport (and Road Safety) and Finance to approve an offer for a Fares Reduction for students using rail services.

According to this offer, students buying a Semester 'monthly-freedom' ticket for 4 months will enjoy a 50% reduction compared with a regular non-student monthly season ticket. Additionally, the offer proposes a fares reduction of 37% on the Tel-Aviv - Beer-Sheva line between Thursday evenings and Sunday mornings, the time when students travel at weekends.

Mr. Mofaz promoted fare reductions for students in all public transport services, including the railways too, but so far the Finance Ministry has not approved it. He said that the benefit from the fares' reduction is double: "It encourages students to use public transport services, and simultaneously supports their studies".

Israel Railways' General Manager Mr. Opher Linchevski, who presented the offer to the ministries said: "These are logical from the transport, social, and economic aspects, and are of combined worth: increasing the number of passengers, encouraging students to use economical public transport, and economically worthwhile. We've already proved that fare reductions and differential fares on the Beit-Shemesh - Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv - Netanya lines were economically worthwhile; On these lines, passenger traffic grew significantly and steadily, and despite the fares reductions, revenues grew! Our desire is to implement the same economic logic to students, and I'm committed to paying back to the State the additional income resulting from the fares' reduction!"

(r). THE DIRECTORATE!

The Directorate of Israel Railways met on 16.11.2006 for the first time since July, since it requires a minimum of 7 members but for that period had only 4! In this week the Ministries of Transport and Finance signed on the appointment of two new members - Mr. Uzi Yizhaki, a senior Deputy General Manager for Traffic at the Transport Ministry, and accountant Eyal Kashpitzky; as the Public's representative. A week earlier, Mr. Boaz Sofer, a senior Deputy General Manager at the Finance Ministry's taxation authority, was also appointed a member of the Directo-

rate. This body discusses serious matters such as the budget, development plans, safety, electrification etc., and the gap had led to delays in decision-making.

(s). NEW SPOKESPERSON.

I.R. has a new Public Relations Officer or Spokesman/person (or "Dover/et"): Maly Cohen. We wish her well!

(t). NEW ROUTES PROPOSED TO SERVE ARAB POPULATION.

Transport and Roads Safety Minister Mr. Shaul Mofaz, has recently (mid-January 2007) said that he wants to promote building railway stations for the Arabic centre; currently there is no station at cities where this population lives. Among the alternatives to be checked: building an LRV line between Haifa and Nazareth and the revival of the Hedjaz line, while additional stations in the south to serve the Bedouin population is also being considered. Mr. Mofaz also said that he wants to encourage private sector's investments in transportation at up to \$3.55 billion, half of which in rail projects.

(u). COMBINED BUS/RAIL TICKETS.

From an I.R. press release of 02.01.2007: I.R. and Egged have agreed to sell in the Kfar Sava - Hod Hasharon area combined train/bus monthly season tickets which provide a 20% reduction on the "Monthly Free" season ticket and will be valid an entire day, marked for a specific day and month. These tickets are already on sale. The new ticket comprises two separate sections - a railway one providing for unrestricted travel on all rail lines, and an Egged monthly season valid on all bus lines in the above-mentioned cities. Thus this area joins others which since March 2006 have also enjoyed such cooperation agreements - Tel Aviv - Haifa, Tel Aviv - Ashdod, Tel Aviv - Herzliya, Beit Shemesh - Jerusalem and Beer Sheba - Dimona. Linchevski said that the purpose was to encourage use of public transport in the most efficient, cheapest and comfortable manner. "We see a growing importance for cooperation between various modes of public transport, which reduces overall travelling expenses, thus making things easier for the traveller."

As a comparison: A regular monthly season Kfar Sava - Tel Aviv rail ticket is \$73.40, a bus season \$33.40, a combined ticket \$85.40 - a 20% saving. Hod Hasharon - Rosh HaAyin rail season \$61.12, bus season \$33.40, combined ticket \$76.65 - a 20% saving.

75:04.

ROLLING STOCK NEWS.

(i) END OF FRENCH COACHES.

The eight second-hand ex-SNCF stainless steel coaches, already laid aside for some time, were officially condemned by the Scrapping Committee on 10.08.2006. Though structurally sound and quite possibly capable of another half-century of service, they had been deeply unpopular with the travelling public. In mid-October some at least were still standing, along with other stored coaches, in the Golani sidings between Haifa East and Central stations. They will be offered for sale in preference to scrapping, and there is even a rumoured possibility (from a reliable source) of them being bought back by SNCF for rebuilding and further service in France! (See Tender below.)

(ii). IC3 SET CONDEMNED.

IC3 set 31, wrecked in the fatal collision with a semi-trailer on 21.06.2005 near Revadim on the Beersheba line (see 70:04), was also officially condemned on 10.08.2006. It will be scrapped.

(iii). TWO COACHES BURNED OUT.

In the evening of 08.01.2007 a fire broke out aboard a couple of loco-hauled coaches standing in a rake of stored vehicles at Haifa East station. The fire began in Carel Fouché 76 which was very severely damaged with all seats being burned down to their metal frames, all windows exploding from the heat, the roof mounted air conditioning unit at one end being destroyed, and the whole interior being comprehensively crisped. The vestibule at one end of the adjacent coach, Boris Kidric 625, was badly damaged by flames and the rest of this coach was scorched and blackened inside. Both coaches are expected to be withdrawn permanently following this fire. This is not the first such incident here (see 32:4:i and 32:5) but, while details are not presently known, arson is not suspected this time. (P.C.)

(iv). PUSH-PULLS REPAIRED.

On 18/1/07 three push-pull coaches, damaged in the collision at Ahuzam near Qiryat Gat on the Beersheba line in July 2005 (see 70:04:b), were unloaded at Ashdod port following repair in Spain. They were noted, completely covered in a white plastic sheathing, arriving at Haifa East on 23/1 behind Bo-Bo 759 as part of a short freight train. (P.C.)



TENDERS:-

(i). CHANGE OF TENDERING PROCEDURES.

From a press release of 21.01.07 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

"The railways will from this week start implementing a formula to prevent and annul Dumping offers; according to the regulations, any offer higher by 20% than the average of offers by other competitors will be cancelled automatically; if the offer deviates by 10% or more than estimated, pricing with bidders offering up to 10% from the succeeding candidate will be available.

During recent months the railways have significantly changed the rules for tendering; in any case, the maximum reduction in offer will be 35% of the estimate for each section; this will enable a better and fairer competition; additionally, the Tenders' Committee has decided that the price of buying tender documents of up to \$118,000 will be \$71, and will not exceed \$3,555 for tenders of \$24 Million.

(i). NO/RC/01/06. Passenger Information System. Design, Engineering, Manufacture, Installation, Testing, Training, Managing, Warranty and Maintenance of a Passenger Information System. For a period of ten years. Tenders by 01.03.2007.

(iii) NO/RC/02/06. For Future Automatic Ticket Fare Collecting system. To include: Design, Engineering, Manufacturing, Supply, Installation, Testing, Training, Warranty and Maintenance of Future ATFC systems, for a period of 10 years. By 28.02.2007.

This was reissued on 05.12.2006, and is part of the initiative of Minister Mofaz to create integration between all modes of public transport through use of 'smart cards'. Commuters, those who enjoy regular reduced fares and anyone else will be able to purchase tickets for periods as long as 4 years; those who get reduced fares will be enabled to do this at automatic ticketing machines. The new system is expected to be on-stream by mid-2008 and will gradually replace the existing system.

(iv). Tender No. B/07/06: Supplying and Installation of Control System for fuel received at refuelling facilities located at Haifa, Lod, Ashdod classification yard, Beer-Sheva North, and Dimona. Works include: dismantling of existing equipment, purchasing, supply and installation of fuel counter including pipe works, pipe supports, and equipment checking. Implementation time: 4 months. Latest bidding date: 04.10.06.

(v). Tender No. B/16A/06: Building Acoustic Walls near "El-Azahara" and "Habanim" at Lod. Works include: earthworks, concrete, pre-stressed structures, metal works, painting, and piles. The works are to be carried on 2 structures:

Structure 01: building an acoustic wall near "El-Azahara" school.

Structure 02: building an acoustic wall near "Habanim" school.

Implementation time: 4 months. Latest bidding date: 05.10.06.

(vi). Tender No. B/10/06: Upgrading Lighting and Electricity facilities at coach painting department of Kishon Works at Haifa. Implementation time: 3 months. Latest bidding date: 30.10.06.

(vii). Haifa Port. An interesting tender was published by The Haifa Port Company for adding a 3rd track at the railways' classification yard located at the eastern container terminal. Works include: dismantling of existing asphalt and concrete areas, repaving and laying the 3rd track and points work, as well as painting marking the whole area. Implementation time: 9 months. Latest bidding date: 26.10.06.

(viii). Tender No. TH/RC/01/06: Manufacturing and supply of 35000 ton of basalt crushed stone Ballast for the Ben-Gurion-Modi'in line. The railways reserve themselves the right for additional optional 10000 tons. Latest bidding date: 20.11.06. (Note: this ballast is needed for the 1.8 km tunnel running from Modi'in Central station in order to avoid dust flying from trains passing; This tender has not yet been implemented, and may well never be!)

(ix). Tender No. MC/SR/09/06: A frame agreement for providing Freight Haulage and other logistic services all over Israel. The contract is for 12 months with optional extending of up to additional 48 months. Latest bidding date: 22.11.06.

(x). Tender No. RC/2006/25: Sale of 2nd hand 8 French Passenger Coaches. The 8 coaches were built by Carel-et-Fouché of stainless steel; One was manufactured in 1959, and the rest in 1965; They were in service on Israel Railways for about 10 years; they were bought at the time the traffic boom started and the railways needed desperately any available rolling stock. Upon their arrival, the coaches were slightly rebuilt and air-conditioned, but for daily operation a power car is needed. The coaches are numbered 0100200091 through 0100200098. They are for sale "As Is" at their locations at Haifa Kishon works and at Haifa East station. Latest bidding date was 24.12.06; however, so far no serious offer has been given and the tender is pending. [Note: Ironically, these coaches could be ideal for the Beit-Shemesh - Jerusalem section thanks to their 2340 mm wheelbase, but for some reason they have never been operated there!]

(xi). Tender No. BN/KB/12/06: A frame agreement for providing Maintenance and rebuilding services for sewerage and drainage pumps at 40 sites from Nahariyya in the north to Dimona in the south. The contract is for 24 months with optional extension of up to 48 additional months. Latest bidding date: 31.12.06.

(xii). Tender No. MC/RC/05/06: Supply of 3 sorts of Forklifts for spare parts store at Haifa Kishon works. Latest bidding date: 03.01.07.

(xiii). Tender No. TK/KB/05/06: A frame agreement for providing maintenance serv-

ices in the "Total Risk" system, and carrying out works upon request of electrical systems at passenger stations. The contract is for 36 months with optional extension for additional 48 months. Latest bidding date: 04.01.07. (xiv). Tender No. MC/KB/12/06: Supply and installation of Greasing and Oiling Systems at the various railway depots. Works include: dismantling of existing equipment, purchasing, supply and installation of storage tanks, oil rollers, and oil pistols. Implementation time: 5 months. Latest bidding date: 10.01.07.

(xv). Tender No. MC/KB/11/06: Installation of Instruments and mechanical conversions of refuelling control systems on rolling stock and motive power. Works include: electricity works, purchasing, supply, and installation of fuel level sensors on rolling stock fuel tanks, mechanical works to be carried on rolling stock fuel tanks. The works are to be carried out on the rolling stock at the railways' depots of Haifa and Lod, while implementation will depend on equipment availability, in coordination with the railways' administration and in stages. Latest bidding date: 10.01.07.

(xvi). Tender No. HN/KB/28/06: Building a Railway Bridge at km 68.130 on the Kiryat-Gat - Beer-Sheva section.

The project consists on the following structures:

Structure 01: infrastructure works along the whole alignment.

Structure 02: a railway bridge at km. 68.130.

Structure 03: sewerage and irrigation systems.

Structure 04: security building.

Implementation time: 10 months. Latest bidding date: 15.01.07.

(xvii). Tender No. BN/KB/02/07: Development works of the area at Tel-Aviv South station - the railways' training centre. Works include: renewal of paved areas. Implementation time: 2 months. Latest bidding date: 22.01.07.

(xviii). Tender No. HN/KB/19/06: Building a Railway Bridge over Na'aman river (near Akko). Works include: earth works, cast concrete, pre-stressed concrete roadbed carried out in the pushing system, sealings, earthing, track laying, river banks re-arranging, and basement. Implementation time: 18 months in stages. Latest bidding date: 21.02.07. (Note: this bridge is part of double-tracking the Kiryat-Motzkim - Akko - Nahariya line.)

(xix). Tender No. HN/KB/32/06: Building 2 grade separations at Tamar region Level Crossing No. 277, and near Talmei-Yafe village; grade separation No. 286. Works include: earthworks, roadbeds, drainage, and water pipelines. The works are to be carried on 2 structures:

Structure 01: building an underline road bridge.

Structure 02: building an underline road bridge and a culvert.

Implementation time: 12 months. Latest bidding date: 21.02.07.

(xx). Tender No. HN/KB/36/06: Building 2 grade separations; one near Givat Koakh village-level crossing No. 119 and the 2nd near Level Crossing No. 124 (near 119). Works include: 2 overhead road bridges and agricultural roads development. Implementation time: 12 months. Latest bidding date: 19.02.07.

(xxi). Tender No. HN/KB/38/06: Building a grade separation at Level Crossing No. 27 on road No. 531 between Kfar-Neter and Netanya km. 69.639 on the main line Tel-Aviv-Haifa. Works include: an overhead road bridge, earthworks, pavements, drainage, culverts, lighting, and roads development. Implementation time: 18 months. Latest bidding date: 15.02.07.

(xxii). Tender No. HN/KB/39/06: Building a grade separation; an overhead Road Bridge over road No. 410 and the railway track, a pedestrian ramp at Gamliel junction, and a Road Bridge over Gamliel river near Level Crossings No. 144 and No. 145 - all near Rehovot. Works include: earthworks, concrete, sealing, electricity, communication, gardening and irrigation, the two bridges and the pedestrian ramp. Implementation time: 18 months. Latest bidding date: 20.02.07.

(xxiii). Tender No. MC/RC/2007/2: Operating a Taxi service station at Akko station. The contract is for 12 months with optional extending of up to additional 24 months. Latest bidding date: 06.02.07.

75:07.

LIGHT RAIL PROJECTS.

A. TEL AVIV.

(i). "Miscalculated traffic on TLV train to cost taxpayers Millions a Year." From 'Ha'aretz' 14.12.06. By Sharon Kedmi
"Gauzy over-optimism regarding the need for Tel Aviv's future light train system will wind up costing the taxpayers tens of millions of shekels a year, claim elements at both the Transport and Finance Ministries, behind closed doors at least.

The mistake was made in respect of the future "Red Line" light train. Passenger traffic will be tens of percent short of forecasts, the officials fear, which will force the State to subsidize the company that runs the train system. These subsidies, which are part of the general safety net that the government is deploying for the train operators, will likely run at tens of millions a year, the officials explain.

Last year the government Tenders Committee decided that the winner of the light-train system in Tel Aviv would get almost complete guarantees from the state regarding volumes of passenger traffic. The original estimates run at 100-120 million passengers using the Red Line by the year 2020. But the officials now suspect the real demand will

be only 70% of that level.

It is the norm for the State to provide guarantees in huge infrastructure projects carried out by or with the private sector. Mainly, the guarantees are designed to make credit for the project more readily available. Guarantees were provided in the Trans-Israel Highway project and the light-train system in Jerusalem, for example.

Transport sector sources say that the guarantees in the Tel Aviv case had been tied to projected passenger traffic, as estimated eight years ago. They say the government officials are perfectly well-aware of the problem, and even admit to it in private conversations. But there is no intention of preparing a new model, which would take a very long time, they explain.

The mistake, however egregious, won't affect either the tender or the choice of winner, add the sources. But it does mean that the winner's profits could be below original estimates, which could lead to reluctance among financial backers.

The Tenders Committee will be announcing the winner within weeks: Metro Transportation Solution-MTS or Metro-Rail. The winner will build the train system and operate it for 32 years, then transfer it kit and kaboodle to the state."

(ii). From 'Haaretz', 31.12.2006. "Leviev beat Arison: MTS group with Africa-Israel will build Tel Aviv train." By Sharon Kedmi.
"Lev Leviev's Africa Israel (TASE) and its partners in the MTS group have beat Shari Arison's company and partners to the biggest private-sector contract in Israeli history, which will bring light-rail service to Tel Aviv. Or at least part of it: the tender relates to the Red Line.

The list of participants reads like a Who's Who of business. MTS consists of Africa-Israel, Siemens of Germany, the Egged bus cooperative, CCECC, a Chinese infrastructure company, the Portuguese infrastructure firm Da Costa Soares, and the leading Dutch transportation company HTM.

This is the biggest tender ever held in Israel. MTS' bid was sweeter than rival Metrorail's by just NIS 400 Million: it bid about NIS 7.1 Billion versus Metrorail's NIS 7.5 Billion. The interministerial Tenders Committee convened in Jerusalem this morning to rule once and for all on the winner of the plum contract. MTS' technical bid received a higher score, and its financial model also seems to give it an advantage over its only remaining competitor, Metrorail.

Metrorail consists of Shari Arison's Housing and Construction; the Israeli company Ashtrom; the French railcar manufacturer Alstrom; Vinci, the largest infrastructure firm in the world; the German infrastructure company Zublin; and the French public transportation company Connex.

Work on the project is not expected to start before 2008, and the first trains of the Red

Line will leave in 2013.

The idea of building a train in the Greater Tel Aviv area is nothing new. Back in 1973, the Prime Minister at the time, Golda Meir, ordered her officials to look into it. But it was only in 2001 that the tender for the first line started to roll. The final tender was published three years ago, in October 2003, and the deadline for filing bids was postponed five times. In February three offers were submitted: by MTS, by Metrorail and by Speedan, a group that was disqualified for failing to meet preconditions.

In the first round the bids were very high: MTS suggested NIS 9.4 Billion and Metrorail wanted NIS 9.1 Billion. Speedan suggested NIS 6.8 Billion, but then it was disqualified. The project is BOT - build, operate, transfer. The winners get to build the line and run it for 32 years, after which they give it to the state for no recompense. But the state is providing a safety net of minimum passenger traffic. Conversely, if traffic is greater than predicted, the state will get a percent of the revenues."

A later version of the article adds:-

"They will not have much time to spend celebrating: They will be very hard pressed to meet the conditions and schedules they presented in their bid. MTS' bid was sweeter than rival Metrorail's by just NIS 400 Million: It bid about NIS 7.16 Billion versus Metrorail's NIS 7.5 Billion.

MTS will have to prove many things, including that its controversial method for digging the tunnels is feasible, and that Siemens' train cars - which are in use in only one city in the world, and not very successfully - are reliable.

The win will also turn 'Africa-Israel' into the leading infrastructure contractor in Israel, with over NIS 18 Billion in projects, and the company is competing for billions more. The interministerial Tenders Committee convened in Jerusalem yesterday morning to rule finally on the winner of the plum contract. MTS' technical bid received a higher score, and its financial model also seems to give it an advantage over its only remaining competitor, Metrorail.

Leviev said: "I am pleased over the challenge that we have won to build the light-rail infrastructure... I am convinced that Africa-Israel will provide the residents of Israel with the most modern and sophisticated light rail system, as we have proved before in building the Trans-Israel Highway in a very short time."

Transportation Minister Shaul Mofaz said at the ceremony announcing the winner: "Israel is 25 years behind in infrastructure compared to developed countries, and our pace of development is not fast enough, and regulatory and bureaucratic barriers disrupt regular life. This is a new era for the State of Israel. We have to prepare for larger participation of the private sector in such projects", added Mofaz.

FUTURE PLANNED LINES

STAGE 1 THE RED & GREEN LINES / STAGE 2 YELLOW & PURPLE LINES



The lines are in the planning or depositing stages and are subject to change



1 RED LINE

22 Km. The Red Line will start at the Petach Tikva Central Bus Station, pass by Bellinson Hospital, along Jabotinsky road in Bnei Brak and Ramat Gan (Diamond Exchange Business Center). The line will continue to the Arlosorov Train Station, along Menachem Begin St., by the Azrieli Center, South Hakirya district and Beit Hadar and along the old Turkish Railway to Yaffo, from there along Jerusalem Blvd. in Yaffo to the southern part of the city of Bat Yam.

2 GREEN LINE

14 Km. This line is part of the initial operating system but will be constructed at a later stage. The planned path will start at the Rishon Lezion Terminal (western part of the city), through the city of Holon to the center of Tel Aviv and will connect to the Red Line in Tel Aviv. An option to extend the line northwards is being examined.

3 YELLOW LINE

24 Km. This line will connect between the Red Line in the region of Ramat Gan and the cities of Ramat Hasharon, Herzliya, Ra'anana and Kfar Saba.

4 PURPLE LINE

12 Km. This line Will connect Tel Aviv and Bikat Ono.

Section Being Examined Underground Section

But it seems that MTS will have to fight another battle first - in court. Metrorail is expected to file suit to stop the MTS' victory. If the court decides to examine the tender process and the committee's actions, the light rail project could be buried for years.

However, even if MTS succeeds in court, it will have another two major challenges. First, it will have to finish detailed planning with five different municipalities along the route, each of which has a mayor with no small ego.

Also, MTS will have to reach a final financing agreement for the project. Sources say that two years is definitely a realistic time frame for closing such a complex financial deal. This means that work on the project is not expected to start before 2008, and after at least five years of intensive construction, the Red Line trains - the first stage of the project - will leave in 2014."

(iii). THE BATTLES START.

Already on 01.01.07, just one day after announcement of the winning bidder - MTS - the competing group Metro-Rail headed by Alstom announced that it will appeal to the Supreme Court, claiming that the Super Combino offered for Tel-Aviv is far from being a proven vehicle.

Meanwhile, more than 250 residents living along the Red Line alignment at Petakh-Tikva, mainly at Orlov street, have appealed to court as a group claiming that the line will cause worsening of their quality of life, further to that already suffered due to infrastructure works. Another appeal was made by two Bnei-Brak residents living near Geha junction, who suddenly discovered that the LRV line will pass through their homes. NTA in response said that they are checking both cases from the legal aspect.

B. JERUSALEM.

Works on laying the first track section of the Jerusalem LRV's first line "the Red Line" between Neve-Yaakov in the north and Mount Herzl in the south, became at last a reality on 22.11.06 in a ceremony at Mount Herzl, the site of the first track.

Prior to the ceremony, there was a press briefing at the "Binyanei-Ha-Uma" congress hall at 11.00 am, in which greetings were given by the Transport Minister Mr. Mofaz, the Mayor of Jerusalem Mr. Lupolyansky, the General Manager of the municipality Mr. Eithan Meir, the General Manager of the winning concessionaire City-Pass, Mr. Jacob (Kuki) Edri, Transport Ministry's General Manager Accountant Gideon Sieterman, and Transport Ministry's Deputy General Manager Mr. Alex Langer, who all stated that the LRV will change the whole city's quality of life and will unite - at least as far as the first line is concerned - the south with the north.

Since more LRV as well as BRT lines are planned the whole life in Jerusalem will undergo a step-change in life quality.

Later on at 14.30 the ceremony itself took place in a specially-assembled temporary huge tent, where Prime Minister Mr. Ehud Olmert, Transport Minister Mr. Shaul Mofaz, Finance Minister Mr. Abraham Hirschson, and the Mayor Mr. Uri Lupolyansky gave their speeches, followed later, by symbolically pouring cement as well as screwing the first track bolts. Mr. Olmert also received a gift; a golden profile of the LRV rail. (see photograph on back cover)

75:07.

NOTES AND COMMENTS.

(a). RAKEVET HA'EMEK DISPLAYS.

As noted there are several 'museum' displays along the former Valley Line; the persons responsible (or to whom the credit should be given!) are Rafi Yarivat at Kar Yehoshua, Omri Shalmon at Gescher, and Nahum Levi at El Roy

(b). "TZENA TZENA". EARLY ISRAEL POTENTIAL RAILWAY LOCO PURCHASES.

"Tzena tzena" is the name of a song about the 'Austerity' period at the beginning of Israel's independent existence, when belts were very tight indeed.

In 'Op de Rails', a Dutch historical railway magazine, 2006/4, p.173 is an article on the disposal by Nederlandse Spoorwegen of various British-built 'Austerity' steam locos in the 1950's. This includes some information quite eyebrow-raising and certainly new to the Editor and the handful of others who may be classed as experts in this field.

"Not all contacts with foreign railway companies came to fruition. In November 1952 there was talk of the sale of ten locomotives of the 4300 series (i.e. Austerity 2-8-0's) to Israel. The Metallurgische Handelmaatschappij Roba in Amsterdam was acting as dealer between the NS and Jerusalem for this sale, which depended on the new budget for Israel Railways. Since the new budget would only be ready in mid-January 1953, the NS was prepared to extend the option to purchase until 1st. May 1953.

In the meantime NS was also involved in negotiations with another possible trading partner, the Handelsonderneming Holten in Utrecht, which on 18th. December 1952 had declared an interest (probably not for the first time) in the purchase of ten locos of the 4300 series and the four last examples of the 8100 series (the Austerity 0-6-OST's), also for

export. In a letter of 29th. December 1952 NS declared itself prepared to extend the option for the purchase of these fourteen machines until 1st. April 1952, coupled however with the warning that the company was not permitted to "open or carry out negotiations, whether direct or indirect, with eventual possible recipients in Palestine (sic) and/or Belgian Congo."

Which ten 4300's were reserved for possible transport southwards cannot now be decided with any certainty; possibly they were included in the contingent which were meant for Sweden. The four 8100's were 8102, 8109, 8107 and 8130, which continued shunting with the NS and were withdrawn between 1953 and 1955."

This is amazing stuff - that I.R. was interested in the purchase of war-surplus British 2-8-0 locomotives! 8107 was sold to a sugar factory in Rosendaal and is now on the museum railway at Haaksbergen. Several other of the 0-6-OST's survived into preservation. 2-8-0's NS 4383 and 4464 went to Sweden in June 1953, becoming there SJ 1930 and 1931 - and the latter was later reimported into Britain where it is being rebuilt to its original form on the Keighley and Worth Valley Railway. Curiously, the British 'Riddles' WD 2-10-0's were sent to the Middle East (some later being sold to Greece and Syria, some of the Greek locos also now preserved in Britain), but none of the 2-8-0 version. (Thanks to Marc Stegeman).

(c). ELIMINATION OF LEVEL CROSSINGS.

From the Minutes of 26th. November 1946, at the 19th. monthly Heads of Department meeting of Palestine Railways (Minute 507):-

"The Acting Chief Engineer referred to a request from the Municipality of Benyamina for the provision of a footbridge just north of the station there, at a point where children were always going down the embankment across the line and up the other side. They ignored the nearby crossing.

The Acting Chief Engineer had come across a plan for such a bridge which would just skirt the structure gauge. He therefore thought it advisable to draw attention to the danger of circumscribing one's load capacity too much. One could move a signal post, where movement of a footbridge might be a different proposition.

The Superintendent of the Line had now proposed minimum clearances of 6 metres vertically and 5.50 metres laterally, and these were agreed to be reasonable. The Acting General Manager remarked that we could not rule out bridges. We have a programme of bridge construction to eliminate level crossings."

Only sixty years were required!

(d). NARROW GAUGE RAILWAY TO BALFOURIA.

Chen Melling has uncovered another interesting snippet in the Haifa University Library. It comes from a book entitled 'From New Zion to Old Zion: American Jewish Immigration and Settlement in Palestine 1917-1939', and the following passages are pertinent:

"In 1921 thirty workmen, some of whom had served in the Jewish Legion, were employed at Balfouria. They were organized in a co-operative society and, according to Arthur Ruppin, their work was done in a satisfactory manner...Nearly 200 people were engaged in building the first structures...A provisional [sic - presumably temporary] narrow-gauge railway was extended from the Afula station... to Balfouria. This greatly facilitated the transportation of large quantities of building material arriving daily from Haifa."

This is the first reference known to me of such a line. Balfouria is a moshav farming settlement, established in 1922 and named after Lord Arthur James Balfour of the famous Declaration. I assume it to have been a 60cm gauge Decauville railway. Balfouria is two or three kilometres north of Afula on the main road to Nazareth. I would expect the motive power to have been mules or horses. (P.C.)

(e). HEDJAZ RAILWAY WEB SITE.

This internet site is particularly active and items are being added all the time. It is sponsored by Nabataea.net and can be found through that name or simply by typing in Hedjaz/Hijaz Railway. There are hundreds of photos, both old and fairly new, and the site does not limit itself entirely to the HR but includes associated lines. There is excellent coverage of the Yarmuk Valley. Highly recommended. (P.C.)

(f). SOME DECAUVILLE LOOSE ENDS.

a). On 04.07.1957 IR noted that it had 2 Decauville locos unsuitable for use plus numerous skip wagons (presumably also unwanted).

b). Among a list of redundant material for scrap on 01.12.1960 were 2 used Decauville diesel locos and 16 Decauville wagons from Mivtza Kadash (i.e. The Sinai Campaign of 1956). These were "acquired in Mivtza Kadash and put into store but we have no use for them".

I feel sure these two notes refer to the same Decauville equipment, and that it had belonged to ESR. Can our Egyptian experts please provide enlightenment? (P.C.)

(g). 'BEDFORD' DECAUVILLE SPARES.

On 11/2/1947 the Acting District Engineer at Lydda enquired of the Stores Superintendent in Haifa whether he had 12 piston rings and 6 valves "for 'Bedford' decauville engine No.5453". Shortly after, the DE also indented for a head gasket and fan belt from the main stores for this Bedford engine. It is known for certain from File 118.61/2 in the IRM Archives that the last two items, and possibly also the piston rings and valves, were not available in the PR stores and had to be purchased from The Automobile Supplies of Tel Aviv. But what exactly was that 'Bedford' decauville engine No.5453? I have not come across this name before in connection with PR and am inclined to think that it is only an engine under discussion here, not a complete loco. Some 'Simplex' petrol-engined 60cm gauge locos, built by Motor Rail of Bedford in England, did work in Palestine but none are known to have been PR property, certainly not in 1947 and not with the (?works) number 5453. Could the 'Bedford' engine have been installed in one of the four Decauville 60cm gauge locos that are presumed still owned by PR at this period? Two of these were built by Hunslet (works numbers 1836 and 1936) and two by Kerr Stuart (4429 and 4460). (P.C.)

(h). Re 72:07:(b) THE EMERGENCY HR LOCO SHED AT Kfar YEHOShUA.

File 100/45/46/2 "Citrus Sheds Location" in the IRM Archives provides a little more enlightenment, showing that the citrus shed at Qalqilya station was dismantled and re-erected as an emergency loco shed at Kfar Yehoshua on 20.11.1941. There were fears at the time that the Germans, then deep inside the Soviet Union, would sweep south through the Caucasus into the Middle East and link up with Rommel's army in North Africa. These fears quite quickly proved unfounded and the Kfar Yehoshua loco shed saw little, if any use, as such before being removed in 1947 for further use in its original function as a citrus shed at Petach Tiqva station. (P.C.)

(i). PERSONALIA.

Regrettably we have heard from Theodor Schuchat, a long-standing subscriber, that his dear wife was killed in a fire which destroyed their apartment in Washington D.C. Theodor is now to be found at 11015 SE Lake Road, Bellevue, WA 98004-7557. Our sympathies go to him.

75:08.

OTHER MIDDLE EAST RAILWAYS.

A. EGYPT.

(i). TRAVELLER'S REPORT. From "C.R.J." No. 147, Autumn 2006, p. 27.

EGYPTIAN NATIONAL RAILWAYS. A visitor in early 2006 found nearly all trains loco-hauled, with other locos in use as station pilots. At least six classes of locomotive were seen in action: Henschel 1982-built Co-Co, EMD Bo-Bo and Co-Co, Adtranz Co-Co, GM Co-Co and Bo-Bo centre-cab shunters. Pride of the fleet is the 'Turbine', the Egyptian equivalent of the British HST. The whole line from Alexandria to Aswan is double-tracked, with line speeds of 100 to 120 km/h. South of Luxor, to Aswan, the signalling is mechanical.

SUGAR RAILWAYS. Around Luxor the sugar industry remains buoyant, and the narrow gauge sugar railways continue in use. Four road level crossings and loaded cane wagons were seen, but regrettably time did not permit further investigation. The cutting season runs from January to March, or possibly April. At a station about 40 km. north of Aswan, thought to be Edfu or Esna, a standard gauge ENR EMD-built Bo-Bo diesel was shunting two-axle cane cars ready for the season's start at the adjacent mill.

CAIRO RAILWAY MUSEUM. The same locos were on display as noted earlier. Regrettably, all are virtually impossible to photograph owing to the cramped layout."

(ii). ACCIDENTS.

From 'Koppeling' 22.09.06 p.9. (Translation from Dutch by the Editor). "Within two weeks Egypt suffered two major rail accidents. Both occurred north of Cairo the capital. On 21st. August two passenger trains collided, with 58 dead as a result; On 4th. September there was a collision between a passenger and a goods train, and five were killed."

B. IRAN.

A note in 'C.R.J.' No. 147 p. 33 informs that Cuba has ordered an unknown quantity of wagons and passenger coaches from Wagon Pars of Tehran.

C. TURKEY.

(i). ANNIVERSARY BLURB.

From 'Innotrans' brochure August 2006. "150 Years of Turkish State Railways: new Focus on Rail. This year, Turkish State Railways (TCDD) is celebrating its 150th. anniversary. The year 1856 saw the laying of the foundations for the Turkish railway system with the building of the 130 km. railway line from Izmir to Aydin. By the end of the Ottoman Empire in 1923 the railway network had grown to over 8,600 km., and was largely under the control of western European powers seeking to advance their own national interests in the Middle East. When the Republic of Turkey was proclaimed, the railway network on the country's remaining territory totalled 4,000 km. Under the founder of the modern Turkish state, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, large amounts of funds were invested in developing the infrastructure. Over a period of no more than 18 years, the railway network was extended by just under 3,400 km. Starting in 1950, however, the emphasis was placed on roads, but since 2003 the railways have once again come to be regarded as a major area for investment, attracting billions in funding. With the objective of making Turkish State Railways competitive again, investment is being directed chiefly towards high-speed lines and the modernisation of existing track. In addition, extensive restructuring is aimed at making TCDD a profitable undertaking again."

(ii). ESKISEHIR TRAMS. From 'Nonstop' (Bombardier Magazine) 2/06 p.29. "Continuing Success in Turkey." (translation from German by the Editor).

"From the beginning of 2004 up to 170,000 citizens of the Turkish city of Eskisehir were able to reach their destinations quickly and reliably. The city council had commissioned a consortium under the

leadership of Bombardier Transportation to build a 14.2 km. long Stadtbahn (i.e. Light Rail) system. With the contract worth a total of 127 million Euros (187 CAD), the amount for Bombardier comes to around 80 M. Euros (117M. CAD). The contract also includes support of operations for one year and maintenance of the system.

'Following the success of our transport systems in the cities of Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir and Adana, the Eskisehir contract is further evidence of our good links to the Turkish transport authorities', said Patrice Pelletier, President of Total Transport Systems for Bombardier Transportation. The commission from Eskisehir Municipality confirmed the importance of the Turkish market for Bombardier Transportation. The Turkish engineering group Yapi Merkezi took over the actual construction of the double-track formation with 24 halts, depots and station. The Swedish Bombardier factory at Vasteras is responsible for the development and construction of the system, which is to be delivered complete. The deliveries include the electrical supply systems, radio equipment, traffic lights and points control systems. The Bombardier factory in Wien is delivering 18 Stadtbahn vehicles. The 100% low-floor vehicles are based on the proven 'City Runner' platform, currently being delivered also to Lodz (Poland) and Linz (Austria)."

(iii). TURKEY: TWENTY YEARS AGO.

From "LOK Report" 8/85 p.41, an article by Florian Schmidt. (Translation by the Editor):-
"Overview:

The retreat of steam power on the TCDD continued unabated in the months September and October. The traction changes hit various locations, so that now the lines Irmak - Zonguldak, Divrigi - Erzican and Sivas - Malatya are operated with the brand-new General Motors DE22 class. Steam line locomotives are becoming more and more a rarity in Turkey.

The remaining workings involve more and more shunting, light passenger trains and works trains, such as ballast trains. The condition of the machines is almost the same everywhere - that is to say, poor. The majority of the locomotives have in the meanwhile been gathered into large dumps and stand cold. A question about steam operations will now be answered more and more frequently by Turkish railwaymen with "Buharli? Yok!" (Diesel!)

Specific Reports.
Zonguldak.

According to the 'Depo-Chef' at Catalagzi they are waiting for the Krauss-Maffei diesel locos, which should drive the steam engines from their shunting duties in the Spring. Most recently only two locos of the 46.2 class were in service.

Eregli - Armutcuk.

The line, about which little has been reported recently, is fully in the hands of 45.0 class. Of the four locos available, two were given examinations in June. In October 45001 and 45049 were in steam, whilst 45009 was

Reserve and 45017 was cold. Departures from Eregli are at 07.00, 13.00 and 22.00. The locos travel smokebox-first in the direction of Armutcuk, all trains are Mixed. Divrigi.

55028 and 46053 (!) still shunt the station, in Demirdag are three further 56.1's. At the beginning of October the sole steam working was the Yolcu departing at 04.30 to Erzincan.

Erzurum - Kars.

At the end of September the entire G3-traffic was dieselised. Only remaining steam workings were the Mixed pair 1921/1922 and the local services around Erzurum. Here there are nevertheless ten 56.1's in steam, as well as two 56.5's. In Kars, where the locos may be found in excellent condition, there remain one 55.0 and at least three 56.5. The first diesel locos should arrive in January.

Samsun.

All steam duties in the Ladik direction have been taken over by Diesel locos. On the lines to Azot and Carsamba trains are still powered by steam. However the Depo already has three DE24 diesel locos allocated, and the ten Krauss-Maffei diesel locos which have been ordered are expected daily.

Sivas.

There remains still very limited steam operation with 56.1's, mainly on shunting. In the Depo and the Works a lot of scrap is around, including a half-cut-up 56.3, some 56.7, 57.0 and an original P8 tender with Nohab maker's plate. 34057 and two 44.0's shunt in the wagon works.

Diyarbakir.

Only 56108 and 46251 in steam, and these shunt. There are no more line duties. Stored were many 33's, 46.2 and 56.0, as well as one 44.0.

Tatvan.

46212 and 46233 shunt at the ferry harbour.

Kahramann Maras - Köprüagzi.

Here too diesels have taken over. In October all 34.6's were standing cold and in poor condition in the Depo. The same fate was shared by recently-examined 45004 and 45007 as well as 56009 (Oil) and 56109 (Oil).

Mersin.

The last three examples of class 46.01 are still in steam. As well as shunting duties and the disinfestation of US-Army goods wagons there is also a transfer trip to the harbour area on their programme.

Konya.

Steam shunting in the station by 45011 as well as the 'star locos' 46055 and 46060. Burdur System.

Here there is still plenty of steam activity. All the Mixed trains now run daily, Egridir is however only reached by the train pair 1401/1406. Since the locos cannot turn at Isparta, there is a lot of tender-first running. The depots at Burdur and Dinar are still allocated five 44.0, four 55.0, ten 56.3 and three 57.0,

of which one serves the line Civril - Sütlac.

Izmir.

The Yolcu 1123/1124 is now diesel worked, but now and then there is a steam pilot loco. (e.g. a 57.0). The Thursdays and Sundays 1325/1326 to Ödemis were worked in early October by 46105. The well-known trains 1125/1126 (Manisa - Alasehir) and 1161/1162 (Afyon - Alahesir) are still steam-worked. This latter is now Afyon's last remaining steam passenger train. The shunting at Afyon station is still well-handled by steam locos (classes 55.0 and 57.0, the 56.5's handle the line workings.)

Balikesir.

There is limited freight working in the direction of Soma and Bandirma (where a 46.2 still shunts), using a few 56.5's. All workings are however uncertain."

D. IRAQ.

The website page www.ajg41.clara.uk/iraq/ locomotives gives access to quite a lot of information, put together by Andrew Grantham, including the existing but derelict '8F' 2-8-0, which was probably WD 547.

E. SYRIA.

(i). NEW DIESEL MULTIPLE UNITS. (From 'Eisenbahn Revue' 11/2006 p. 559.)

CFS has purchased ten five-car diesel multiple unit trains from Rotem of South Korea. The units can travel at max.160 km/h, and the first has already been delivered. They are for use on Damascus - Aleppo services. The units are built in South Korea, the diesel engines come from Cummins and the transmissions from Voith.

(ii). D.G.E.G. TOUR: "WITH STEAM AND DIESEL FROM THE YARMUK VALLEY TO PALMYRA."

More details of the programme for this ambitious tour, planned for 11th. or 14th. till 26th. February 2007, are taken from the brochure. (Translation by the Editor):-

"Syria. That is the Orient, the Desert and - Hedjaz Railway. Its northern terminus lies in the Syrtian capital of Damascus. The fact that the legendary Bagdadbahn also traverses Syria for a short distance on its way from Turkey to Iraq is also well-known. Not so well-known is the fact that this Arab country also has a standard gauge network of 2460km. The aim of our tour is to traverse and learn these routes. Lines will also be traversed that are normally used only for goods traffic. Since the lines often run close to major tourist and historical sites, we will supplement the tour with a modest tourist programme, including Palmyra, the Kerak of the Crusaders and the water wheel on the Orontes. The Hedjaz Railway with its unusual 1.05m. gauge is also a part of our programme. Flights there and back are by Royal Jordanian, which has a good reputation. This airline also issues 'Rail and Fly' tickets. The route via Amman also offers the possibility of taking the twice-weekly International Train from Amman to Damascus. Since the semi-private Aqaba Railway in Jordan has introduced a regular steam-hauled train as a

tourist attraction from the beginning of the year - this over a freight line that has never before known steam traction - we also offer the possibility of travelling with this. The 'Pre-Programme' in Jordan will likewise be rounded-off with a tourist programme, including Petra and Wadi Rum.

Almost all sections will be traversed using special trains. On the standard gauge these will comprise seating coaches and a restaurant car and will be hauled by various large diesel locos. Photo-halts on the open line are planned.

(We omit here details of prices and hotels, meals etc.) Numbers required are a minimum of 20, a maximum of 45.

Entry: German nationals require a visa for entry into the Arab Republic of Syria. Organisation of a visa is a part of the travel service, and we will inform you when we need your passport. Please note: Should the passport include an Israeli entry stamp or an entry stamp from a border crossing which links to Israel (such as Allenby or King Hussein bridge to Jordan or the Taba crossing from Sinai to Egypt) entry will not be permitted. For Jordan and Syria the same passport must be used. The visa for Jordan will be granted on arrival in Amman.

Main Programme:-

Wed. 14th. Feb. 2007.

Afternoon - fly with Royal Jordanian from Frankfurt/Main to Amman, the Jordanian capital. Evening meal and overnight.

Thursday 15th. Feb. 2007.

The regular International Train departs 8am to Dera'a, the first town beyond the Syrian border. The Hedjaz Jordan Railway possesses all of five Diesel locos of the GE-Type U10, of which four are six-axle machines. After observation of the shunting manoeuvres (the train to Amman should come at about the same time) a coach will bring us to Bosra, some 30km. away. Visit the historical part of the town, which has a 2,000-year history. The amphitheater of the Roman period was only excavated a half-century ago. Dinner in hotel.

Friday 16th. Feb. 2007.

A special steam train with historic coaches awaits us for a journey via Dera'a to Zeizoun, in the Yarmuk Gorge (55km.) This branch line of the Hedjaz Railway, opened 1905, led earlier to the harbour at Haifa, but was cut on Israeli territory from 1946 and dismantled. The partially-buried section Muzeirib - Zeizoun has only been traversable again since November 1999. The line falls from 529m. altitude, at Dera'a, to 260m. at Zeizoun. The journey then continues via Dera's to Damascus (150 km.). The line runs through mainly flat and mostly fertile, partially cultivated land. Many stations from the beginning of the last century may still be seen. Overnight in a hotel in walking distance from the station of Kanawat.

Saturday 17th. February.

A visit to the Syrian capital in the morning, including the Omayyad Mosque, built 2,000 years ago as a Temple, then turned into a church, and since the 8th. century a mosque. Then a visit to the narrow-gauge depot at Cadem. Following this the first journey on the CFS, the 367km. Magistrale to Aleppo,

which should be reached by sunset. In the largest city of Syria (Damascus is the second-biggest) we will stay 2 nights.

Sunday 18th. February.

The day begins with a special train from Aleppo even further to the north, to Meydan Ekbez, the border station with Turkey. Following our return around 17.00 (the journey is 100km. each way) we get to know the Suq during a visit around the town; this is the heart of Aleppo and is considered especially beautiful.

Monday 19th. February.

We head eastwards with yesterday's special train. From Aleppo via Ar Raqqah to Deir Ezzor (340km.). From here there should be, in a few years, a direct line to Iraq. A sight of the town is the filigree hanging bridge over the river. We overnight in a modern hotel.

Tuesday 20th. February.

The special train continues from Deir Ezzor to Al Qamishli; here the relatively new line joins the section of the Bagdadbahn completed in 1930. We travel along it to the border station of El Yaroubieh, where the train reverses and heads via Al Qamishli back to Al Hasakah. We overnight here. The programme for this day totals 450km.

Wednesday 21st. February.

We now return to Aleppo, 470km., and overnight here again.

Thursday 22nd. February.

Following a depot visit in the morning we take our special train over the mountain stretch (one of the very few in Syria) from Aleppo to Latakia. From the harbour city we travel along the line built in the last decade along the coastline to the next harbour city, Tartus. At the time of the State's independence Tartus was only a village; now it is a modern, large city. Syria's only island lies off the coast. After 280km. journey we overnight in Tartus.

Friday 23rd. February.

The special train brings us to Oum Jamee (also known as Aum Game). By bus we visit the crusader castle of Kerak, the most beautiful and best-maintained example from this period. It is based on a fortification that the Emir of Hama erected in 1031. About four hours later the special train brings us to Al Akkari, where the line to Tripolis (Lebanon) and Beirut branches off. In the 1940's one could reach Cairo this way. We overnight in Hama. The train journey totals 108km. The green city on the Orontes is famous for its waterwheels. Over 1500 years ago the massive wheels hauled water out of the Orontes river and brought it into aqueducts which carried it into the fields and houses.

Saturday 24th. February.

From Hama we go with the special train first to Mhine, where the very new line to Damascus branches off. The next section to Palmyra would normally be used exclusively by freight trains, which bring phosphates to the harbour at Tartus. This stage for the day totals ca. 200km.

The oasis of Tadmur with the ruins of Palmyra lies in the middle of the Syrian desert, between the Mediterranean and the southwards-flowing Euphrates. Tadmor is Aramaic and means 'City of Palms'. Septima Augusta Zenobia, in the 3rd. Century the King of Palmyra, made the town into one of the most splendid cities of the then-known world. Only

the Roman domination and then the Arabian in the 7th. Century brought this to an end. We shall visit in the afternoon what is left. Overnight in Tadmor.

Sunday 25th. February.

The special train takes us from Palmyra via Mhine to Damascus (250 km). On the bus journey further on to Amman we shall make a stop at Hame, where the steam locos of the Trans-Lebanon line are stored. Dinner and overnight in Amman.

Monday 26th. February.

The Royal Jordan flight departs Amman at 10.20 for Frankfurt.

The PRE-PROGRAMME.

Sunday 11th. February.

Afternoon flight with Royal Jordanian from Frankfurt to Amman. Dinner and overnight.

Monday 12th. February.

Get to know Amman with a city tour. It is built on seven hills (750 - 1000 m. over sea level), its foundation goes back to Biblical times. We then continue by bus to Akaba on the Red Sea, for dinner and overnight.

Tuesday 13th. February.

In the morning we take the steam train, comprising Pacific loco 85 and modernised old coaches, from Akaba over a very curved line uphill to Wadi Rum. The steam trip is some 60km. long. We then take a Jeep trip along the Wadi (a dried river bed) and overnight in a tent camp in the desert.

Wednesday 14th. February.

In the early morning we go by bus in about an hour towards Petra. The ancient town of the Nabataeans is reached from the bus parking place via a quarter-hour walk. "The view of Petra, especially in the morning, before the rays of the sun have reached the tips of the sandstone sierra, is of endless, indescribable beauty..." wrote the Orient-Traveller Alexander B.W. Kennedy, some 11 years after the Swiss Ludwig Burckhardt discovered the rose-red city. In the afternoon we travel further to Amman and meet up there with the main DGE group.

Some Further Information.

Syria, with a history of over 5000 years, only possesses its current borders and area since 1946, as it freed itself from the French colonial power. The northern neighbour is Turkey, on the west lies the Mediterranean, south-west beyond the Anti-Lebanon mountains is Lebanon, further to the South Israel. The borders with the eastern neighbours Jordan and Iraq run largely through the Arabian Desert and form a straight line. Syria's area amounts to 185,180 sq. km. (half as large as Germany), it has 18.5 M. inhabitants.

The standard-gauge network of 2,460km. is relatively young. With the exceptions of the short section of the Bagdadbahn in the East and the similarly original line from Turkey to Aleppo and Homs, which earlier led to the Lebanon, the railways were only built from 1970. At this period Hafez al-Assad had Putsched himself into power and introduced with Soviet help a massive new construction programme. The 750km. long line from the harbour of Latakia via Aleppo to the oilfields near Qamishli in the North-East were opened for operation in stages between 1974 and 1978. The transport of Phosphates - the area where these are mined lies in the

desert around Palmyra - to the harbour at Tartus is served by the line opened in 1980 via Homs. The capital of Damascus was then finally linked to the standard-gauge network through a branch built in 1983. The 80km. gap along the Mediterranean between Latakia and Tartus was closed by the railway builders in 1992.

A 150km line was to lead from Deir Ezzor to Abou Kemal and further in the direction of Baghdad, from 1981. However due to political reasons the Syrians suspended construction in the following year, but have now resumed it. The 230km. line from Deir Ezzor to Palmyra currently exists only on the drawing-board.

From 1996 a line was due to be built parallel to the Hedjaz line to Deraa, laid out for 160km/h running, and then continued on to Jordan. However, up until the present day Jordan has been unable to agree formally to the construction proposal. Similar pipe-dreams include a new underground main station in Damascus. As a preparation for this, the terminus station of Kanawat was closed. In its track area should be built a shopping mall with an underground station beneath.

Due to the strong competition from road services the passenger train service offered by the CFS (Chemins de Fer Syriennes) is rather limited. There are between 16 and 20 trains which run daily over a part of the network only. Happily the passenger statistics are now showing a rise again.

The narrow-gauge Hedjaz Railway (1050mm) was built during the Ottoman period. Damascus - Dera'a opened in 1903, the branch from Dera'a via Zeizoun to Haifa followed in 1905 and the eastern branch to Bosra in 1912. The twice-weekly passenger train Damascus - Amman is the only regular train offered by this railway, and indeed recently the through service was broken at Dera'a to enable the stock to work back the same day to their departure stations. In Jordan there is no other regular passenger traffic any more. The Aqaba Railway was built in 1975 and climbs 1150m over a distance of 113 km.

Apart from the French B&L Bo-Bo locos of Class LDE 650, the standard gauge CFS diesel loco fleet comprises six-axle diesel-electric machines. The classes LDE 1200 (built 1972) and LDE 2800 (1974, and 1984) come from the Soviet Union, the classes LDE 1800 (1976) from General Electric and LDE 1500 from CKD. From 1999 the rather aged loco fleet was rejuvenated through the delivery of 30 French Alsthom locos (of the 'Prima' type). After 2000 the CFS began a modernisation programme for the class LDE 2800, which are fitted with General Electric engines.

The majority of the passenger coach fleet comes from the former DDR, a smaller proportion from Romania. The stock is being gradually modernised by Wagon Pars in Iran. Iran is also delivering goods wagons in large numbers.

F. UNITED ARAB EMIRATES.

From 'Fern Express' 3/2006 pl. 49.

Deutsche Bahn has not won the 3-Billion-Euro contract for an S-Bahn and Underground system in Dubai, but is bidding for work on a regional network of freight lines to be built in the country. In addition there are plans and negotiations for a 'Transrapid' MagLev line along the Persian Gulf.

G. SAUDI ARABIA.

Also from 'Fern Express' 3/2006: Saudia Arabia has two lines which link Riyadh and Dammam. They are both single-track and run parallel for the first 150 km. The first ('Line 1') is 449km. long and was built in 1951 and is not used by passenger trains and has a top speed of 135km/h; the other ('Line 2') is 556km. long and opened in 1982, is used by freight and has a top speed of 60 km/h. There are now plans to upgrade both of these, so that the top speeds will be 200km/h and 100km/h respectively, and introduce new rolling stock.

Temperatures of over 60deg. Celsius have led to up to 50% of the locos being out of service. Improved maintenance and improved training of the training staff has now seen this drop to 10%. DE-Consult is involved in bidding."

Marc Stegeman adds the following, largely from the Dutch Economics Ministry website:-

"Saudi-Arabia has a very extensive infrastructure network, but its logistical sector is inaccessible for foreign companies. Opportunities can be found in projects such as new railroad lines and exporting (second hand) means of transport. Main railway connections are Dammam to Riyadh via Al-Kharj and Harah (571 km), and Hofuf to Riyadh (322 km), both by Saudi Government Railroad Organisation (SGRO). See saudirailxpansion.com/index.htm for information on extensions: From 2009, the new "Saudi Landbridge" Jubail via Dammam (King Abdul Aziz Port, 115 km) via Riyadh Dry Port to Djedda (Jeddah Islamic Port, 950 km) will improve freight transport between the east and west coasts to take 18 hours (currently 4 days by ship). The existing line Riyadh - Dammam will be improved, including a link with the above new lines. For passenger transport (with increasing numbers of pilgrims) the holy towns Mekka and Medina will be rail connected to Djedda, with a branchline to Janbu. Saudi Arabian Mining Company (MAADEN) and Saudi Oger Contractors have planned to build a rail connection to the aluminum ore area north of Riyadh."

"Another useful source is the archive of saudiarailworld.com on the internet, with free subscription to a beautiful magazine. In their search engine try looking for Railway, Hedjaz, Orient, Express, Trains and their photographic collection linked to those articles. Nice to have a read (if you've got some time to spare)... But HaRakevet readers might be interested."

D.D.R. NOTES ON EGYPT IN 1983.

"Eisenbahnpraxis" was a magazine published by Transpress for the (East German) Deutsche Reichsbahn. The 5/83 issue includes two unnumbered pages (the rear cover inside and outside) on Egypt by Dr. rer. oec. Ing. Dietmar Klubescheidt of Zeesen.

"Geography & Economy.

The Arab Republic of Egypt is divided into 25 large administrative Governorates, covers an area of 994,860 sq. km. and has 41 Million inhabitants. 92% of all citizens are Moslems, the rest Copts and Jews. The land is bordered on the west by Libya (the Libyan desert), in the south by Sudan (the Nubian Desert), in the north by the Mediterranean and in the East by the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aqaba and Israel. 99% of the inhabitants live in the 22km.-wide Nile Valley and in the Nile Delta area (ca. 35,000 sq. km.) The capital of the Republic is Cairo (El Qahira), with over 10 Million inhabitants (including the suburbs.) Other large cities are Alexandria, El Giza, Port Said, Suez and Assuan (Aswan).

The Nile Delta has a Mediterranean climate, in the rest of Egypt there is a desert climate. Egypt is an agricultural country with a developing industry. Natural resources include Oil, Natural Gas, Phosphates, Manganese ore and Iron ore. On the whole Egypt remains inadequately researched geologically. Only 4% of the country's area is cultivated; nevertheless agriculture remains as before the most important element in the Egyptian economy. The basis for cultivation is the irrigation system along the Nile, in the Nile Delta and in the newly-won areas. Water supply is assured even during the dry periods thanks to the Aswan Dam, which was built with Soviet help. At the same time the generators attached to this dam produce 10 Billion k.W.h. of electrical energy per year. In Egypt up to three annual harvests are possible. Major crops are cotton (for export), rice, maize, wheat and sugar cane, plus vegetables, fruit, and especially onions. Animal husbandry (camels, sheep, goats, poultry) is mostly performed by beduins.

In the years since the country gained political independence (1952) it has striven for industrial development. Mining and related industries have gained importance, whereby the proportion of foreign capital has increased. Processing industry is to be found in Cairo, Alexandria, Assuan and the larger centres in the Nile Delta (food

industry, sugar production). With assistance from the Socialist states in the last fifteen years factories for chemicals, metallurgy and steel (Helwan), Aluminium production (Naz Hammadi) and cement have been built. 60% of the electrical energy is won from water power. As well as the railways, Egypt has two airports, 3300km. of roads and a large trading and fishing fleet.

Historical development.

Egypt was referred to already 5000/4000 years before our time-reckoning. From 1517 to around 1840 it was under Turkish authority and then became a half-colony. In 1914 it became a British protectorate. In 1922 Great Britain announced the ending of the Protectorate and the creation of an 'independent Kingdom'. In 1923 Egypt became a constitutional monarchy. In 1953 a Republic was declared. Diplomatic relations between the Arab Republic of Egypt and the DDR have existed since 11th. July 1969. Development of Railways.

Egypt was the first country on the African continent in which a railway was built for public traffic. On the orders of the then-reigning Muhammed Ali Pasha thousands of slaves built the line from Alexandria to Cairo, almost 200km. long. The first section was opened in 1854 and in 1858 the entire line completed. The project was led by the English engineer Swinburne, who was famous especially for the construction of the Mont Cenis tunnel. A little later a line from Cairo to Suez was built, of 144.5km. After construction of the Suez Canal in 1869 this line declined in importance and was later demolished. In 1930 it was decided to rebuild it, especially in order to be able to reach Suez more comfortably, as this was being developed as a bathing resort.

Railway construction in Egypt was swiftly extended. In 1861 the network was already 450km. It was mostly financed with English capital. It is of interest that almost all Governors, Kings or Presidents of Egypt until the present have supported railway construction or indeed showed almost a passion for it. This passion led to the use on the railways of saloon coaches and saloon trains. The first Royal Train was delivered from England as early as 1856, and in 1862 a saloon railcar was likewise delivered. In 1877 a special train was imported from the USA, and in 1902 England delivered two more special saloons. In 1913 E.R. received from Germany (A.E.G.) a railcar with Benzol drive. In 1924 the USA delivered a saloon train and the last King, Farouk I, ordered a 2-car diesel train from Fiat in Italy, which was delivered in 1951. The saloon coaches, especially those of the earlier years, were decorated in oriental finery.

The System.

The current network of the Egyptian State Railways (E.R.) comprises 4510 km. of line of standard gauge, and 348 km. of 750mm line. 25 km. of the standard gauge is electrified on the overhead 1500V DC system. Due to the geographical layout of the country the majority of the network is north of Cairo in the Delta area. In the Sinai there is but one line running along the Mediterranean coast via El Arish to Gaza. This line could not formerly be used by E.R., mainly because of the war with Israel, and was partially destroyed. During the Israeli occupation a part of this line between Gaza and El Arish was restored and operated.

In the southern direction there is a single line along the Nile to Aswan and Shellah up to the Sudan border and from there further to Wadi Halfa. The line linking Aswan and Wadi Halfa (in the Sudan) is 410km. long. In the West of the country the line ends at the Mediterranean at Es Salum (Sollum) on the Libyan border. (Libya still possesses no railway.) In Egypt there are a further 253 km. of private railways (mainly industrial), of 1000mm gauge. The rails on main lines are of a maximum 52kg./m. On less-trafficked stretches of line rails of 43 kg/m are used. The greatest radius curves is 1200m. There are barely any major gradients, and are listed as maximum 1%. One of the biggest problems facing the Egyptian railways is sand, especially when the hot south wind blows.

The speeds attained are based not just on the condition of the permanent way but also the condition of the vehicles. For express trains a top speed of 110km/h is given. Welding of rails has also been introduced; by 1978 1000km. of rails were already continuously-welded.

In terms of structures the main ones are bridges over the Nile. Worth mentioning is the 182m. long viaduct, built in 1958, that links Helwan with the southern line near Marazig.

Cairo and Alexandria have suburban systems. Between the station of Cairo Babel-Luk and the southern industrial centre of Heluan (Helwan) is the electrified 25km.-long suburban line, on which run electric multiple units built by the DDR (VEB Kombinat 'Hans Beimler', LEW Hennigsdorf). The signalling and safety systems have been modernised. The main lines are fitted with automatic block, and electric colour light signals are extensively used.

Rolling Stock.

At present the E.R., possesses the following stock:-
39 Steam locomotives.
434 Diesel locomotives.

450 Diesel railcars and multiple units, and railbuses.

49 Electric multiple units.

1,362 carriages of all types.

17,717 goods wagons and service vehicles.

The Diesel vehicles, almost without exception imported, are of up to 1528 kW power.

Especially noteworthy are the comfortable, air-conditioned 6-coach diesel trains for long-distance services delivered in 1965 by GANZ-MAVAG of Hungary. They are passed for speeds up to 130 km/h and possess, as well as 1st. and 2nd. Class open saloon coaches, also a bar and kitchen. E.R. also still possesses 3rd-Class open coaches with wooden benches. The DDR's rail industry has exported not only a large number of these coaches, but also air-conditioned coaches for long-distance traffic, as well as Buffet Cars or coaches with Buffet sections. All coaches possess air brakes. The narrow-gauge coaches of the E.R. also have all three classes. In addition there are Sleeping and Restaurant Cars. The stock of freight and service wagons is very varied. It must be noted that even today there are still vehicles in service with no brakes or only hand brakes. For transport of heavy goods there are wagons of 40T and 65T load capacity, for especial loads wagons with up to 120T capacity. Naturally the E.R. also has refrigerated wagons as well as tank wagons and wagons for minerals and ballast. The electric units, railbuses and multiple units as well as the heavy wagons for iron ore and for grain transport have automatic centre couplings.

Operations.

Around 70% of the entire passenger traffic and more than 35% of the entire goods traffic of the country are transported by Egyptian Railways. It is planned to increase this proportion in the coming years, and the railways will need to adapt for this. As well as local passenger trains, which are mostly worked by electric and diesel multiple units, E.R. also offers long-distance passenger services, some of which are also composed of multiple units. These long-distance trains are all air-conditioned and comfortably equipped. There is a regular and frequent service between Cairo and Alexandria. Such trains also have Sleeping and Dining Cars. The seating coaches are formed of open saloons. On the more important routes operations are carried out with an automatic block system and electric signals.

The E.R. has a well-organised workshops system for rolling stock maintenance. These are also capable of new construction, especially of freight stock.

Also relevant for safe operation is the training of personnel. The E.R. have a training centre at Wardan, 47km. from Cairo. It

should be noted, that the E.R. also has to adapt to the particular habits of the Egyptian travelling public, especially in local and commuter trains. It is known that many Egyptian travellers also like to take their smaller animals with them on their journeys, such as goats or sheep. In order to prevent this, the doorways to local train coaches are made especially narrow and therefore do not match the international norms. Further Developments.

Amongst the more important future priorities are the further modernisation of the network and the rolling stock. Amongst the substantial investment the State is making is the importation of further multiple-unit trains and modern signal and communications technology. The most important issue in modernising the freight stock is fitting brakes to those vehicles that do not yet have any.

The main issue, also in terms of finances, is the maintenance of the lines. The E.R., have modern track maintenance machines for this purpose. On modernisation all tracks are replaced with 52 kg/m rail, and older rails of only 47 kg/m are removed. The new 350km. line between Helwan and Bahariya is almost finished - this is to be used mainly for ore transport.

In order to improve transshipment new goods stations are to be built, including at Qualyub. Further attention is also to be paid to the workshops and their equipment."

[What makes this article interesting is the DDR Socialist perspective; the main point in history is when diplomatic relations were established! The term "Vor unser Zeitrechnung" means one doesn't have to use Christian terms such as B.C. or A.D. In the Colonial time the main emphasis was on luxury private saloons for the nobs and nabobs, whereas afterwards Socialist countries have introduced real industry. And so on... In fact his Bibliography reveals that major sources of information were such 'Western' sources as Janes World Railways 1978, and Dost's book "Der rote Teppich" of 1965, a history of State and Royal trains.

There are a map and four photos, alas all rather grey, accompanying the article. These include an e.m.u. of DDR build on the Helwan line, a GANZ diesel train, a 735kW Bo-Bo diesel loco of Czech construction and a modern coach built in Bautzen. Ed.]

75:11.

BY LAND MAIL FROM HOLLAND TO THE NETHERLANDS EAST INDIES IN 1860.

(Thanks to Marc Stegeman).

Eduard Julius Kerkhoven, born in the east of the Netherlands on July 21, 1834, was the youngest in a family of 16. At 12 years old he went to boarding school, at age 14 to Gymnasium in Kampen and later Deventer. After a difficult decision his father allowed him in 1852 to start studies in Philosophy in Leiden, but he failed. In 1860 his uncle Willem and aunt Mary van der Hucht-Pryce took him to the Netherlands East Indies to their Javanese tea plantation at Parakan Salak. Uncle Willem was also attached to the Billiton Maatschappij.

Eduard Julius started to write letters to his family in Holland. Although he tried to persuade his brothers to take up a position on Java, he warned them of the severe health risks. For that reason he did not want to go to Billiton any more, and instead went into tea plantations himself and for hobbies bred race horses. His children were sent to the Netherlands for their education. He died in Sinagar on Augustus 25, 1905 where his grave can still be visited.

Eduard Julius wrote from Ceylon, 22nd. December 1860, from Mansion House, Point de Galle, the following letter:

"This morning around 9 we disembarked (on Java) and for the first time I saw an "Indische" town. Magnificent green plants everywhere. In Aden and in Egypt the sun was shining bright but the country was barren. On December 5 we arrived in Alexandria, and in the evening already we left by train. I was stunned by the busy, screaming masses at the station. You cannot imagine the ugliness of Egyptians; the Ceylonese population looks better and more human. In Egypt I saw many men missing their right eye, which they cut out to be released from military service. It was a pity it was already dark when we passed the Nile river over a magnificent stone arched bridge, quite long.

The railway coaches were perfect for us, but quite dusty. On the eve of St. Nicolas

(December 4th.) we stayed in the Shephard's Hotel in Cairo. Rather tidy and very big, it hosted many travellers who arrived by the Southampton - Trieste boat. Next morning we took the train to Suez. The desert does not look fine. I saw an antelope! I was unable to see a lot of Cahiro (Cairo) as I had to stay with the ladies. Some went to see the mosque and the old Sultan's Palace. The population resembles the Jews, many of them go on camels and donkeys. When on donkey, they are sitting on the rear so that it looks like the donkey's tail is theirs.

In Suez on December 6 we had dinner in the open, but I suppose you were shivering around the fireplace. It is surprising how far you can go in just several weeks of travelling, to experience such an enormous difference in temperatures. From the desert already I could distinguish the Red Sea. Our boat was moored far from the shore; in the evening we went into a tiny, overfull dinghy, to go on board. You cannot image the scene! Three Company boats together, blasting their steam into the air. In the dark nobody could see well and the passengers clung close together; I was glad to board the 'Nubia' (2.000 tons) with 300 others. The passengers heading for Mauritius and Ile de Bourbon went to the other boats. It took us 6 days to sail to Aden where we stayed about 24 hours for bunkering. One lady had to stay in Aden as her daughter seemed to have smallpox, according to the doctor.

Imagine staying in such a rotten place as a lady alone with her child. Although we regretted having to say farewell to the lady, I suppose we ought to be afraid of sickness were she to have stayed aboard.

I was sleeping in a cabin with three other gentlemen, which was no fun. When the window was closed because of the bad weather, the atmosphere was so bad that I feared to faint. Therefore I always slept on deck. The food is of bad quality, a lot of rubbish for dinner, but nothing attractive to eat for a Dutchman. I would rather have "zuurkool met spek" (sour cabbage with bacon) and clear water to drink, than the mess this black cook had prepared. Never will I advise anybody to travel by land mail! On some days we experienced really hot weather in the Red Sea. In the Strait of Bab-el-Mandeb it is interesting to see Asia and Africa at once, as it is a very narrow strait. The town of Mocha was very well visible when we passed by. The trip from Suez to Ceylon took us 16 days (or 1,147 hours) to cover a distance of 3,442 miles."

(From the internet in Dutch, compilation & translation by Marc Stegeman, source: "Eduard Julius Kerkhoven" by N.P. van den Berg.)

INTERVIEW WITH OPHIE LINCHEVSKI.

The railways' General Manager Mr. Opher Linchevski, gave in mid-January an interview to the most popular local newspaper in Modi'in, the "Modi'in News".

Headlined "We'll meet at the station", the article is summarized here (by Aharon Gazit) with the newspaper's permission.

The opening of Modi'in Outskirts station on July 2007, is a subject very close to Opher's heart; He is 38 years old, and lived for 30 years in Jerusalem; he moved 8 years ago to Modi'in where the couple lives with their 4 children; every morning he drives his car to Ben-Gurion

airport, parks it there, and takes the train to Tel-Aviv Savidor station, both to avoid bottlenecks and to show a personal example.

Here are the main points of his policy:

As far as the Modi'in Central station is concerned, it is the first underground railway station (not Metro) to be built and under a mall (the second such will be Jerusalem's new station, though this is not under a mall); the station was built in a modular way which means that additional parking areas can easily be added; furthermore, the ability to increase the number of trains is a function of trains' availability and demand; initially the frequency will be 2 trains/hour each direction; each train has a 1,000 passenger capacity - if more trains will be needed, the number will be increased.

Opher, who until 6 years ago was manager of the Transportation Department in the Finance Ministry, says: "I came to my job because of the challenge it provides; many like such public jobs in order to have a good time; I'm not one of these; besides, I want to give of my abilities, and then my successor must come; I personally believe that it is unhealthy for a person in the public sector to sit on the same chair many years!"

He came to his job immediately after the tragic collision at Revadim between a train and a heavy semi-trailer in which 8 were killed and 200 injured; this event was a real shock for the railways, where many did not believe until then that a train could be so amaged by a truck; since then, most of the senior people have been replaced, and - according to Opher - all are now professionals, so the Railways are almost clean of political appointments.

He is against the media who constantly put the collisions on the agenda; He says: "500 trains a day cross roads; half a million times each month a car crosses a level crossing; if somebody really believes that an accident or collision may occur once in 6 million journeys, then he lives in an illusion; the 2 collisions - at Revadim and Beit-Yehoshua - tragic as they are, happened only at a rate of once a year; our railways are pioneers in installing radars at level crossings and in the ambition to eliminate all level crossings within 2 years and a half, bearing in mind that during 58 years of Israel Railways this subject has not been treated at all!"

His job is often stormy and attracts fire, but at the same time, the fact that the railways are constantly in the headlines means that they exist and are recognized as vital, and this helped them receive the \$4.5 Billion for the 5-Year plan.

The Railways are already the 2nd-biggest passenger hauler after Egged; they carry almost 2 Billion passenger/km annually; Egged carries 4 Billion, but Dan, the 2nd-biggest bus operator carries 1.5 Billion, being overshadowed by the Railways for the first time ever; the Railways are currently carrying 30 Million passengers annually, this figure is growing annually by 15%, and within 5 years the railways will carry 60 Million, thus becoming the biggest passenger hauler!

Finally he has two ambitions: To see the beginning of tunnel boring on the A1 line to Jerusalem, which should happen at the beginning of 2008, and to cut the ribbon at the opening of the line to Modi'in".

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The actual first track laying (after the 22.11.06 official ceremony) at Mount Herzl, Jerusalem.

75:13 Cadem, preserved Coach.

