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הרכבת

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רכבת ישראל בע"מ - חטיבת תשתיות

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91:01. "The Yanks are coming! Some anonymous photoshopper has decided to take an image of what looks like a Santa Fe 'war-bonnet' General Motors F-unit diesel of the 1950's and superimposed this on an artist's impression of the new line to Jerusalem. This image appeared on a large sign adjacent to Highway 1 between Sha'ar HaGai and Latrun. As Sybil Ehrlich, the photographer, notes, 'The artwork is beneath criticism. And as for the badly Photo-shopped IR logo on the front... what can I say?' One hopes the construction standards are higher than the artistic ones."

# EDITORIAL.

First, an apology; For some unknown and untraceable reason some of the items in issue 90 came out in a different font and in capital letters between the Editor's computer and Steve Waldenberg's. Several attempts to send again in different formats proved as frustrating as any other need to change gauge part-way along a route. Also, occasional copies have emerged with one side not properly printed. But hopefully all readers of either hard-copy or electronic versions will have been able to read, enjoy and learn.

This issue brings us to the end of another Series and so the need for a further subscription renewal. As a reminder, the one attempt to gain some commercial sponsorship through advertising proved disastrous (for all concerned) and we rely on your subscriptions to cover at least most of the costs of actual production and transmission - many copies do go free to libraries and institutions, and the .pdf version saves appreciably in postage costs. The aim of the Editor is simply for the information to be circulated as widely as possible, so copying or lending is fine - I work for the love of it, but we just need to make sure that printer, paper and postage get their fare share!

This issue includes a bizarre turn of events in Israel, a country whose political leaders are not always known for their aesthetic sensibilities, and where electrification is suddenly turning out to produce more sparks than illumination. But also there is suddenly much more progress on the possible/probable line to Eilat, further proposals for a line to Ramallah, and even a possible Fata Morgana of a line to Baghdad..... Will the trams in Jerusalem be running by then? The only problem is that there is so much 'current news' that, once again, historical items have been rather squeezed. But I am not complaining.

Enjoy!

**The Editor.**

**Old and new: a 1945 armoured bus of Egged alongside the Alstom Citadis LRV on 28.09.10 at Jaffa street, Jerusalem; photo: Aharon Gazit**

# NEWS FROM THE LINE.

## (i). DISABLED ACCESS.

Several Disabled organisations have recently applied to the Courts to protest against the Railways regarding the way they are treated at stations. Claims include that boarding facilities are operated only when the Station Master is present, as he is the only person authorised to operate them; Also that the Railways refuse to co-ordinate journeys for them at rush hours, explaining that it is impossible to secure reserved seats for them due to the overloading of trains, and it also often occurs that despite co-ordination ahead of a journey, the railway employee needed to assist the disabled to disembark from the train is absent.

The Railways responded that they are committed to providing the facilities at only half of the old stations and equipment of the others is being gradually implemented. It is not only the Station Master who is authorised to operate the facilities, as additional employees are also authorised; the rush hour issue is a real problem but the disabled travellers must realise that they have no priority over other passengers, who also risk being left behind at stations due to a shortage of capacity.





However, the judge rejected the Railways' arguments, explaining that the Disabled are indeed different, because they did not choose their situation, and therefore the Railways are indeed committed to providing them with the facilities required and secure seats. He further ordered IR to pay the trial costs and penalty totalling \$6,500.

#### **(ii). TURNING ON THE HEAT.**

19.08.2010 was one of the hottest days this summer, with temperatures reaching 45°C. But for travellers in train No. 176, formed of double-deckers, who boarded it at Tel Aviv Hashalom station - already running 20 minutes late - the nightmare was just beginning, for they found the air-conditioning had failed - in an overcrowded train with internal temperatures of 65°C and sealed windows! Their problems ended only when Lev HaMifratz was reached at 17.40 - 'thanks to the fact that the air-conditioning started to work from time to time'. IR responded that immediately after the failure had been reported a technician had joined the train team and repaired the equipment during the journey.

#### **(iii). INDUSTRIAL UNEASE.**

The newly-elected Chairman of the the Railway Employees' Union, Mrs. Edrei, has announced that she intends to make life for the management difficult, because of their intention to outsource the maintenance work on the new double-deck stock to the manufacturer, which may cause some 100 employees to lose their jobs. The management's response was that each step is co-ordinated with the Unions.

On 16.09.10 it was announced that the Union Committee is not satisfied with the possibility that maintenance of the 74 double-deck coaches soon to be ordered might be outsourced for fifteen years under a contract to be signed with the manufacturer, instead of being carried out at IR depots. The Railways also clarified that they are intending to increase the order from 74 to 200 in order to cope with growing traffic demands. However, at this date the General Labour Union had not yet approved calls for an industrial conflict. The Railways management considers that Mrs. Edrei is merely manoeuvring to reach a power position - her claim that jobs will be lost is incorrect since the employees are already unable currently to keep up with the maintenance demand, so there will remain plenty of work for them as well, in addition to whatever outsourcing opportunities are gained - and these will only be for the new stock.

#### **(iv). INFRASTRUCTURE WORKS.**

(i). Traffic on the Beer-Sheva and Jerusalem lines resumed on 29.08.10 after infrastructure works were completed at several locations. This included arranging for the passage of tracks over graves; rearranging of lev-

el crossing in the Ramla area and preparatory works for double-tracking the Lod - Ramla section. During the line closures 18-28.08.10 alternative bus services were provided.

(ii). The Haifa - Nahariyya line was closed between 14.00 Sunday 12.09.10 and 10.00 Thursday 16.09.10, due to engineering works on the Carmel road tunnel projects to be carried out by the Yefe Nof Company close to the track.

(iii). From a press release of 23.11.2010:

Further works to double the lines will involve closure to public traffic from Tel Aviv - Beer Sheva - Dimona and Tel Aviv - Beit Shemesh - Jerusalem from Friday 10.12. - Thursday 16.12.2010, traffic resuming on the Friday. The lines Lod - Ashkelon and Lod - Rishon leZion will also be closed from Friday 10.12 to Sunday 26.12, traffic resuming on Monday 27.12. This will mean over half the system is closed down! The only lines operating normally will be Modi'in - Nahariyya and Tel Aviv - Kfar Saba, so that frequencies between Tel Aviv Savidor and Hahaganah will be down to about two an hour each way! Shuttle bus replacement services have been arranged.

Works to be carried out include more doubling on the Tel Aviv - Beer Sheva line, furthering work on grade separation No. 133 at Beer Yaakov, double-tracking works on the Peleshet Junction - Ashdod section, and signalling and communication works on the Tel Aviv - Jerusalem line as part of the scheme to increase track capacity and service frequency on the Ayalon section in Tel Aviv by 30%

#### **(v). RAMALLAH LINE?**

Although not yet officially confirmed by either the railways or government ministries, and possibly connected to the peace talks with the Palestinians in Washington, the popular newspaper 'Israel Today' has announced that a rail link is to be built from the A1 Jerusalem line, west of the city, to Ramallah. It is intended for both Jewish and non-Jewish populations.

Apart from the need to construct the line with bridges and tunnels the service will use existing infrastructures, but a line from Anabe Junction (west of Modi'in) to Rishonim station is to be built and then linked to the line now under construction between Rishon LeZion West and Peleshet Junction. This will enable Palestinians to travel between Ramallah and Gaza, though the final alignment has still to be settled. As does so much else.... One must await any further developments to make this so-called 'safe passage' a reality.

#### **(vi). LEVEL CROSSING INCIDENT.**

On the morning of 29.08.2010 a road vehicle broke through the barrier arm at a level crossing between Nitzanim and Ashkelon. As a result it was hit by a passing train.

Fortunately there were no casualties, but traffic had to be handled on a single track according to police instructions, causing delays for several hours.

#### **(vii). WINTER TIME AND FESTIVALS.**

From an IR Press Release of 01.09.2010: On Sunday 12.09.2010 Winter Time was to start; as a result, services on Fridays and Holiday Eves will end earlier. Services on Saturday nights and the end of Holidays will start two hours earlier.

During the various Jewish festivals special timetables are provided both before and after. On Tuesday 07.09.10 a Thursday service will operate; on Wednesday 08.09 a Friday (summer) service will operate; this is Erev Rosh Hashanah. On 09.9 and 10.09 no services operate. On 11.09 night trains will operate as on Saturday summer nights.

On Friday 17.09, eve of Yom Kippur, trains will operate until 11am as per winter timetable and then end gradually. On Saturday night 18.09 there will be no service. There are further such complex alterations around the Sukkot period.

#### **(viii). PUNCTUALITY BONUS.**

The Railways could scarcely expect a better compliment - both the Finance and Transport Ministries have decided that the railways deserve a bonus, since the average punctuality of the first two quarters of 2010 was 91% against an expected minimum of 89%.

#### **(ix). ELECTRIFICATION PLANS.**

(a). On 30.08.2010 the National Infrastructure Committee handed over to the District Councils and the public the electrification project, to be approved in the first quarter of 2011, and then hopefully to be approved by the government towards the end of 2011. Said General Manager Yitzhak Harel: 'Approving this project will enable the railways to implement their huge potential as a leading means of public transportation.' The \$1.32 Billion project - not including motive power and rolling stock - will be implemented - if approved - on most of the lines within ten years. In the first stage, lines from Carmiel (in the Galilee, 22km east of Acre) to the centre of Israel, as well as lines to Kfar Sava, Ashkelon, and Modi'in would be electrified by 2015, to be followed in 2017 by the long-awaited A1 fast link to Jerusalem.

In the press release the railways stressed the numerous advantages and benefits of electrification, such as greater acceleration, reduced emissions and noise, 60% reduction in fuel consumption, etc. However, there are opponents such as SPNI who claim that the source of pollution will merely be moved from the locomotives to the coal, oil or gas power stations, and that the demand for electric power will require construction of at least one new such station to cope with railway needs. In addition, the speeds claimed - 160-200km/h - can easily

be achieved by diesel traction, which is also becoming much cleaner and quieter.

The description of an electric loco pulling an 18-coach train (compared to a diesel able to pull only 9) seems unrealistic, simply because this will require platforms 500m long!

(b). Benny Attar adds: „At least they are actually working on the project. Work has started on the tunnels. Signs have been put up on the route of the Haifa - Afula - Bet-Shean route, with the transport minister's name in large letters, but no earth has been turned yet.

The Mayor of Haifa has gone on record objecting to electrification of the railway on environmental grounds. (because the catenary masts will spoil the view). He has also objected to high speed broadband internet in Haifa for the same reasons (supposedly because the communication company will have to access new junction cabinets in the pavements). The Mayor of Haifa is a failed (ex-MK) politician not noted for his intelligence.“

(c). Nevertheless on 31.10.2010 came a press story in various forms - we quote and paraphrase here mainly from the ‚Globes‘ version - „Haifa Mayor Yona Yahav and environmental organisations have won a victory over Israel Railways. The National Planning and Building Commission's Coastal Protection Committee has forbidden IR from building overhead catenary along a stretch of line considered sensitive because of its proximity to the sea. The committee forbade the placing of masts for the railway because of the severe aesthetic damage it would cause the coastal vista. Yahav said: „This is a historic turning-point that will bring about development in Haifa, the likes of which no Israeli city has ever seen“. IR said that the decision was liable to delay the railway electrification programme throughout the country, and it also jeopardised the electrification of the Akko - Carmiel line, which is due to begin operating in 2015. A 20-km. stretch of line runs through Haifa, including 7km. along the sensitive Mediterranean shoreline.“ Protestors consider the catenary will create a 'partition' between the city and the coast, that there will be more radiation in the area, and instead they recommend realigning the track here underground.

Initial reactions were of course a mixture of disgust, sardonic cynicism and idealistic attempts to suggest solutions - to turn Atlit into an interchange station, to stop running through trains beyond Atlit, to run trains that can operate on both 25Kv AC overhead and a much lower dc third-rail contact supply as in southern England. It is hard to see how Haifa can develop much further than it has with vast new city areas stretching along what used to be a pretty coastline at Hof Carmel. Noisy and fume-producing diesel locos would presumably still be acceptable to this

genius, who seems to have no objections to the coastal motorway. One suggestion is that the whole storm is merely a political reaction to IR moving its headquarters offices from Haifa to Tel Aviv. We shall see.

Both Railways and Transport Ministry intend to appeal, pointing out that a new underground station in Haifa would cost some \$830M.

[Aharon notes that the bodies opposing railway electrification are not doing the same against the Israel Electricity Co., whose high-voltage network is soon to pass these residential areas; maybe this corporation is too powerful to be defeated; nor do they work against the highly-polluting nearby road, which could also theoretically be realigned into a tunnel...]

#### **(x). ELECTRIFICATION TENDER.**

Linked to the above: On 07.10.2010 IR published a tender document TC/MT/13/10 for a single company to design the Israeli electrification, which will work with the winning company selected from abroad as well as working with the authorities regarding statutory approvals etc. The contract will be valid from the date it is signed until the end of the project. Latest bids by 02.12.2010.

‚Railway Gazette‘ reported (04/10) that the National Infrastructure Committee had released the electrification plan, valued at US\$1.32Bn., excluding rolling stock ‚at the end of August‘. The plan aims to see most lines electrified within ten years. The first stage would cover from Tel Aviv northwards to Akko (though see above for environmental objections), then south to Ashkelon and east to Modi'in by 2015, with the A1 fast link to Jerusalem following in 2017. Top speeds of 160 - 200km/h are envisaged for the electrified routes.

#### **(xi). MORE DOUBLE-DECKERS.**

From a press release of 10.10.2010 by Isra-Rail Co.

„The Railways Higher Tenders Committee headed by General Manager Yitzhak Harel has selected Bombardier Transportation as the winning bidder for the next tender for double-deck trains. The deal, worth almost \$195M, is for 78 cars of three types. It was signed after several months of negotiation and a price reduction of between 15 and 20%, delivery schedules have been accelerated and the railways will enjoy future price reductions when purchasing from Bombardier.

The current order is for ten 6-car push/pull trains (as against the existing 5-car trains) including one car equipped for the Disabled, providing 800 seats per train. The additional 18 cars will enable expansion of the existing train sets from five to six coaches. According to the final agreement reached after negotiation, deliveries will take place between November 2011 and April 2012.

The Railways' strategic decision to purchase more coaches is due to the constant annual growth in passenger traffic, plus the need to avoid lengthening of platforms, and the ability to board and disembark quickly. Harel stated that the new stock was also required for the new lines currently under construction and he hoped the Finance and Transport Ministries would approve budget finance for the purchase of further additional trains.“

#### **(xii). MORE INFRASTRUCTURE WORKS.**

The Railways continue their infrastructure enhancement works at full tempo; Sometimes these take place during holiday periods with heavy passenger traffic as was the case with Sukkot, when the Tel Aviv - Haifa - Nahariyya line was closed for traffic between Thursday night 30.09.2010 and Saturday night 02.10.2010 due to the following works: Upgrading 300m of track near Zikhron Yaakov (north of Binyamina) and replacing turnouts at Atlit, Hof HaCarmel and Hadera West. As a result there was no service to all stations from Nahariyya to Hadera, and alternative bus services were provided.

[Editor adds: It is unclear why nothing ran from Haifa to Nahariyya! Also, the whole point of having double track with bi-directional signalling is so that trains can be worked past the works site.....]

More of the same is planned: Between 28.10 and 05.11.2010 the Haifa - Nahariyya section will be closed in both directions due to the following works: Laying a turnout at the northern end of Akko station; building two culverts at km. 22.135 and km. 22.538 north of Akko station; drainage at Na'aman station and performing the third stage of track realignment at Lev HaMifratz station due to the Carmel road tunnels.

From Friday 15.10. - Friday 22.10.2010 the Tel Aviv - Beer Sheva - Dimona line will be closed for traffic in both directions due to following works: Erecting an underbridge for road traffic near Beer Sheva University; building two culverts; checking and testing the signalling system along the line and realigning (straightening) 600m of track near the Rif bridge. Alternative bus services will be provided in both cases.

The line Tel-Aviv - Beer-Sheva - Dimona was to be closed to traffic in both directions from Friday 10.12.2010 to Thursday 16.12.2010, traffic returning to normal on Friday 17.12.

The lines between Lod and Ashkelon and Lod and Rishon LeZion will be closed to traffic from Friday 10.12.2010 to Sunday 26.12.2010, services resuming on 27.12.

[Editor notes: These are very long times for engineering work.... How come the Government doesn't complain?]

A later report by Aharon noted that on Sunday 12.12.2010, the first day of the

very limited operations, despite many published advertisements and announcements, over 1,000 passengers turned up at Tel Aviv Savidor and were stuck awaiting non-running trains - and getting increasingly angry. In addition there were many delays on the Modi'in - Ben Gurion - Tel Aviv - Haifa - Nahariyya line, the only one still operating, due to stormy weather which led to many trees falling onto the tracks. Services returned to normal the following day.

### (xiii). NEW JERUSALEM LINE: A V.S.I.P. VISIT.

From a press release of 05.10.2010 by the Transport and Road Safety Ministry: "Minister Yisrael Katz, together with the IR General Manager Yitzhak Harel, the General Manager of the T&RS Ministry Yaakov Ganot (a retired Police Commander) and other senior members of the Ministry and the Railways visited today the building works sites along the alignment of the A1 fast link to Jerusalem. During the visit Minister Katz briefed the press on his desire for the railways to complete these works by 2015 rather than the currently-envisaged 2017. Since he started in his post a year ago the status of this line has been changed, there are no further obstacles to swift work and completion. He added that he is also committed to a rail network designed for the Palestinians in the West Bank to be linked with the Israeli network.

Mr. Harel said the Railways are making great efforts to push the works forward; the main visit was at Section C of tunnel number 2 (twin bores) of about 1.2km. length. Works on the longest twin-bore tunnel (11.25km. each) will commence within a few months when the two big Tunnel Boring Machines [TBM] will arrive."

[N.B. Editor Notes: A 'V.S.I.P.' is a Very Self-Important Person....]

In The 'Jerusalem Post' 28/10/2010 was an article by Ron Friedman: "Fast Train Expected to open by 2017." "After years of delays and extreme budgetary inflation, the rapid train line connecting Tel Aviv to Jerusalem looks to be on track. [groan. Ed.] In a Knesset State Control Committee meeting Wednesday, Transportation Ministry Director-General Yaakov Ganot said that work on the track was going full steam ahead [groan again, Ed. Which editor accepts these constant pathetic clichés?] and promised that the project would be completed by 2017. Now several MK's are interested in building an additional station in Mevasseret Zion, risking further delays.

The rapid train project, whose initial planning began in 1995, was originally scheduled for completion in 2008 at a cost of NIS 3.8 Billion. Today, the project is estimated to cost upwards of NIS 6Bn. In a progress report to the committee, Israel Railways general manager Yitzhak Harel said that contractors were proceeding with works along

the entire track and that excavations for the Jerusalem station, to be situated 80 metres underground, at the entrance to the city near the central bus station, had reached the 40m mark. He warned, however, that if work on the electricity system powering the track didn't commence soon, the project could be delayed further. "The train needs to operate on electricity and if the power lines don't start start getting connected soon, at the beginning of 2018 there will be a track, stations and tunnels - but the train won't operate because of all the objections to the power lines", said Harel.

The Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel's representative at the meeting, Avraham Shaked, said that his organisation does not oppose the installation of power lines and that it was clear to them that a track running on such an incline required electricity.

The project's problems have already been featured in two State Comptroller reports, in 2005 and 2009; both put the blame for the delays on the Transportation Ministry, the Finance Ministry and Israel Railways, claiming that all the bodies involved had approved the project before sufficient inspections and analyses of possible problems were conducted, and without waiting for all the construction permits to be authorised. According to the most recent report, one of the main causes for delay in construction was Israel Railways' failure to conduct a proper environmental impact study, leading to legal disputes with environmental groups over the route of the track.

In the course of the meeting several MK's including committee chairman Yoel Hasson (Kadima), Rachel Adato (Kadima) and Zevulun Orlev (Habayit Hayehudi) suggested building another station along the route, in the suburb of Mevasseret Zion. Hasson said that the train had to be a growth engine for the city and warned against sending the residents of Mevasseret Zion to the coastal region for their shopping, business and entertainment needs instead of to the capital. "Just like a railroad from Tel Aviv to Haifa developed Haifa and the cities on the route, so the line to Jerusalem must take into account the surrounding cities and provide a fast and convenient substitute for using private vehicles" said Hasson.

Eliyahu Hasson, a former director-general of the Transportation Ministry and a Mevasseret Zion city councillor, claimed that there had been many mistakes in the planning of the line, among them the fact that there was only one station in Jerusalem. He said that both Haifa and Tel Aviv, which have smaller populations, have four stations each. In response Ganot said that there are two additional stations planned for the capital, and that he would present the minister with the residents' request that the Jerusalem light rail be extended to Mevasseret Zion. Harel said that construction of a station for the fast train in Mevasseret was impossible because of the

slope of the track. Hasson called on Ganot and Harel to notify the committee of any body that creates obstacles or further delays to the project, which he described as being of national importance."

### (xiv). MODI'IN INITIATIVE.

Mr. Sharon Ma'oz is chairman of a local Citizens' Movement entitled 'Mod'in for All of Us.' (Aharon Gazit is also one of the voluntary members). He has requested that rail services between Modi'in and Tel Aviv be improved, especially by increasing frequencies during the morning peak period - currently no train departs between 08.00 and 08.45; In addition, their complaint is that unscheduled halts extend journey times from the advertised 35 minutes to up to 52 minutes. Mr. Maoz also intends to negotiate directly with both the Railways and the Transport and Roads Safety Ministry regarding creation of a rail link between Modi'in and Rehovot; at the moment such a journey is impossible, but the proposal is for a line through Beer-Yaakov to Rishon LeZion HaRishonim in the median of Highway 431 (which links Modi'in with Rishon leZion West). Transport Minister Mr. Katz has spoken favourably of the proposal.

In a later report from Aharon-

Mr. Sharon Maoz and Mr. Yanov, members of the citizens' committee in Modi'in, attended a meeting on 22.11.2010 at the offices of the railway management in Tel Aviv, with Mr. Moshe Amsalem, the Deputy General Manager for Passenger Services, Mr. Yehiel Tobol the Department Manager for Passenger Services, and Mr. Oleg Pasternak, Manager of the Timetable Planning Dept.

Main subjects discussed were:-

(i). Increasing service frequencies between Modi'in and Tel Aviv in the morning peak between 07.00 and 09.00.

(ii). Cancelling the 'Reserved Seat' carriage in order to reduce congestion and increase the number of seats available.

(iii). More trains after 07.30.

(iv). Adding a connection between Ben Gurion Airport and Lod for those passengers wishing to go southwards to Rehovot, Ashdod and Ashkelon and towards Beer Sheva. (Mainly soldiers.)

(v). Better feeder bus services to be provided by Veolia.

The meeting was held in a very positive atmosphere, and after discussing some of the complexities of timetabling it was announced that the management would cancel the reservation of seats on Sundays, when the trains are very congested, and on other days the ticket inspector will be allowed to use his initiative in respect to allowing other passengers to use reserved (but unoccupied) seats. During 2010 the two trains from Tel Aviv which terminated at Ben-Gurion have been extended to Modi'in; but the best news refers to 2012, when the railways will introduce a new signalling system which should enable an increase in line capacity.

This will enable to provision of the connecting services between Ben Gurion and Lod [i.e. over the connection to the north-south line. Ed.]. The arrival of the newly-ordered double-deck trains and new locomotives will also enable increase in frequency and reduction in congestion. Regarding the bus feeder lines, IR is in discussion with Veolia and both sides are making efforts to increase co-operation.

The General Manager recently announced that the administration has asked government to increase the subsidy, in order to enable fares to be reduced - they are currently 26% higher than bus fares.

#### **(xv). NEW SDEROT, NETIVOT AND OFAKIM STATIONS.**

From a Transport & Roads Safety Ministry Press release of 26.10.2010: Minister Katz announced that the tender for construction of the railway station at Sderot on the Ashkelon - Beer-Sheva line, currently under construction at a cost of \$552 Million, was published today. The station will cost almost \$12M and will include a modern terminal, platforms, underground and overhead passages, access roads and a parking area.

During January 2011 the tender for the station at Netivot will be published, to be followed in March 2011 by that for the station at Ofakim, each to cost ca. \$8.3M. The line has seen various ups and downs and real progress only began to be made when Minister Katz took up his post in 2009. The 60km. long line is being built as double-track (even though the Finance Ministry had wanted infrastructure for two tracks but with only a single track laid at present) and includes 3 overhead road bridges, 15 railway bridges, 4 grade separated road crossings, 11 under-track agricultural road bridges and 48 culverts.

Works are expected to be completed within three years, after which there should be four trains per hour in each direction, making a total of some 73 trains daily, to cover the line in 45 minutes.

So far the Railways have completed the development works on the Ashkelon - Yad Mordechai section (near the Gaza Strip), including track laying; Recently work started on the Yad Mordechai - Netivot section which includes two bridges over the Yitla and Tohu creeks as well as building the infrastructure for double track along the whole alignment; work is soon to commence on the next section between Netivot and Goral Junction.

Criticism has been made at the idea of building the Sderot station outside the town, where the same result is feared as at Dimona - i.e. there will be more staff than paying passengers on the trains. The Transport Ministry seems to believe that "efficient bus shuttles" will compensate for this. [Hmmm. Some officials never learn. Ed.] Minister Katz and IR General Manager Harel and the Transport Ministry's General Manager Jacob Ganot

visited the new line along its whole alignment on 02.11.10.

#### **(xvi). NEW LINE TO YEROHAM.**

Further good news for the south of the country is an announcement that Minister Katz intends to approve the idea to build a new 12.5km. rail link between Dimona and Yeroham. This is mainly the result of the efforts of a Yeroham citizen named Avisrur. The intention is to use it initially for freight but later for passenger traffic as well. Several managers of factories situated in Yeroham, a development town with many social problems, then announced that they would in this case consider expanding their factories and thus create several hundred new jobs.

#### **(xvii). A VIEW TO 2012.**

In a recent interview with 'Yediot Acharonot' on 03.11.2010, Mr. Harel gave his prognosis for the near future. Here are some extracts:-

2012 should be a good year for the Railways with 78 new double-deck push/pull coaches entering service; there are probably another 72 'on option'. During this year the work on doubling the lines to Beer-Sheva, Kfar-Sava and Nahariyya should be completed, in addition to the completion of the line between Tel Aviv, Rishon LeZion West and Ashdod - which should open in 2011. Trains will start operating regularly until midnight, except the Ben-Gurion Airport line which will enjoy a 24-hour service. All lines should enjoy a 15-minute interval service synchronised with complementing public transport services.

Transferring the Railways' management centre from Tel Aviv Savidor-Central to the Lod station area is essential; the Railways will get a high price for the expensive land in Tel Aviv and can invest it wherever it is needed. The new site will create more jobs, this in addition to increasing the manpower necessary for the planned growth in the network and equipment; at the end of the decade there will be 1,000 trains daily compared to the current 340.

Harel and the government are jointly determined to outsource rolling stock maintenance; they are offering the concerned employees a partnership in exploring this option, together with - for example - Bombardier. The Railways will also soon build a new depot at Beer-Sheva to complement the existing ones at Haifa East and Lod.

Towards the end of the current decade the Railways intend to discuss the possible introduction of high-speed lines and trains working at 250km/h; the first would be introduced on the planned line to Eilat which, according to Mr. Harel, would make this very attractive - but also to Haifa and Tiberias in the Galilee. In relation to the line to Eilat, many companies around the world - especially in China - appear anxious to build it. The current highest speed is 150km/h attained between

Tel-Aviv and Haifa and also soon to be possible to Beer-Sheva.

Currently the railways reach a punctuality level of 90%.

The current Finance Ministry appears to recognise the importance of the Railways - unlike certain predecessors - and is prepared to increase its subsidy, thus reducing fares and making rail travel more attractive; additionally the government is promoting the Smartcard common to all modes of public transport, which will eventually reduce fares by 25%.

He is not concerned about those protesting against electrification, since it is obvious that an electrified network is advantageous compared with pollution in the cities.

IR has converted a double-deck coach to convey six bicycles as well as disabled wheelchairs; this will operate on the line to Kfar Sava where the demand for such is high. If this is successful, additional cars will be converted, until each train has one such carriage. This will be easier to implement once the new cars arrive and the trains can be increased from 5-car to 6-car formation.

In terms of Safety, this remains the priority. Breaking through level crossing barriers appears to be a national sport (400 cases last year!) and even installing cameras has not done enough.

#### **(xviii). LUGGAGE LOCKERS.**

A paid luggage locker system - the first ever on the Railways - has recently been introduced at Tel Aviv Savidor; lockers are in two sizes, 60x40x30cm and 60x30x70cm.

#### **(xix). CHANUKAH WITH RESERVATIONS.....**

In fact during the Chanukah holidays 05.12.10 - 09.12.10 there were to be no seat reservations available due to the increased passenger forecast. (In the event the disastrous forest fires in the Haifa / Carmel area meant that passengers were carried free for several days to enable those who had been evacuated to move to other areas.)

#### **(xx). A 1930'S DREAM REVIVED.....**

During the opening of the new road tunnels under Haifa (which, for a toll, enable traffic to pass round the city in only eight minutes, and were built by a Chinese contractor) Prime Minister Netanyahu announced that Israel had been in contact with the Iraqi government to discuss construction of a railway line to Baghdad. He said that since the revived Hedjaz line between Haifa and the Jordanian border is under construction, there would no problem in extending it from Irbid on to Aman and to Baghdad! Such a line was suggested in the 1920's and 1930's but in the end a pipeline was built instead.

## (xxi). INQUIRY INTO LEVEL CROSSING ACCIDENT.

From a press release by the Ministry for Transport and Road Safety. The independent committee appointed by the Ministry to investigate the collision between a train and a minibus on 05.08.2010 north of Kiryat Gat, which cost the lives of four people and led to four injured, two of whom were rail passengers, has presented its conclusions. According to this the Railway authorities had made all appropriate level crossing precautions and it was the car driver who violated all regulations, including breaking through the barrier arms and ignoring all the warning devices installed. The Committee also apportioned blame to the two local Settlement Councils which had put obstacles in the way of preparing access roads for an overbridge - which could otherwise have been completed before this accident occurred.

## (xxii). EILAT HIGH-SPEED LINE.

From a press release of 22.10.2010 by the Transport & Road Safety Ministry:-

Minister Katz issued today a Request for Information (RFI) for implementation of construction of the fast rail link to Eilat. The purpose of publishing such an RFI was to check the interest of the private sector in the project and ascertain how the sector can become a partner in it - this includes design, construction, financing and operating the line.

The project is currently being promoted as part of the nationwide 'Israel Ways' project to link all parts of the country with a network of roads and railways from Kiryat Shmona in the north to Eilat in the south. This ambitious plan is to cost almost \$7.6 Billion, out of which \$690M have been allocated to planning roads and railways. The line to Eilat will be 170km. long and of double track; along the alignment there will be 63 bridges with a total length of 4.5 km, and five tunnels totalling 9.5 km. The distance between Tel Aviv and Eilat will be 350 km.

The line will have eight new stations: Hatzeva, Sapir Centre, Paran, Yahel, Yotvata, Timna (adjacent to the new airport now being promoted), Shekhoret and Eilat. The line is to be served by two sorts of trains - fast trains will cover the Tel Aviv - Eilat route in no more than 2.5 hours; stopping trains will call at the intermediate stations. The Ministry has checked six alternative alignments and selected the optimal one which runs via the Mount Tzin and the Arava. The project is currently being promoted statutorily through the District Planning Committee of the Interior Ministry. Survey and measuring works along the alignment are due to start soon. Surveys prepared by the Economics Planning Department of the Transport & Road Safety Ministry have found that the annual passenger traffic to Eilat is currently 8M, according to their forecast, passenger traffic by rail may reach 3.5M annually.

The line will also be used for freight traffic; from the port of Eilat directly to the centre of Israel. Traffic will include phosphates, potash ores etc, from the Negev and the Dead Sea north to Ashdod and Eilat, as well as imported cars which are currently transported by lorry. Current annual freight traffic to and from Eilat totals 2.5M tons of chemicals and 140,000 vehicles.

Minister Katz said: Rail freight traffic has many advantages over road by reducing the number of lorries, the accidents in which heavy road vehicles are involved and the air pollution; not less significantly, this will significantly change the Israeli social and transportation map, thus bringing the periphery nearer to the centre."

## OFFICIAL DOCUMENT PROPOSAL FOR THE EILAT LINE.

The 20-page document includes (following are extracts):-

2.1. Government Resolution No. 1421 of 24.02.2010 instructed the Government to promote, inter alia, the design of a railway to Eilat.

2.2. This is part of a broader programme known as 'Netivei Israel', a Transport Programme for the promotion of both the Negev and the Galilee, helping develop the peripheral areas by connecting them to the central region. The cost of the entire project is estimated at NIS 27.5 Bn. (€8.5 Billion.)

2.3. Instructions are to examine different topographical alignment alternatives, recommending the optimal alternative to enable a travel time of no more than 2hr. 30 min. for an express passenger service between Tel Aviv and Eilat.

2.4. The railway had the potential for economic viability as it can satisfy demands for freight transport from the Dead Sea and Negev area (chemicals and fertilizers) to Eilat, and for freight transport between the Port of Eilat and the Port of Ashdod.

2.5. The Min. of Transport has decided to examine the feasibility of contracting with the private sector to implement the project.

### 3.1.2. Line Characteristics:

Total double track length to be constructed: 169km.

Total length of upgrading to double track: 88km.

Number of bridges: 63. Total length: 4.5km.

Number of tunnels: 5. Total length: 9.5km (1 cut & cover, 5.5km; 4 to be bored, 4km. (optional).

Number of local stations: 7

1 central station in Eilat.

1 Depot and stabling provision.

Infrastructure according to chosen power system (diesel or electric.)

The following sections are involved:-

Tel Aviv - Lod. 20km. Double track already exists and is being upgraded to 160km/h. Track

upgrade is not part of the project.

Lod - Beer Sheva. 73 km. Double track is currently under construction and designed for 160km/h. Track construction is not part of the project.

Beer Sheva - Dimona. 34km. Existing track requires upgrading to 160 km/h and doubling. By the Concessionaire.

Dimona - Zin. 54km. Existing track requires upgrading to 160m km/h and doubling. By the Concessionaire.

Zin - Hatzeva - Eilat. 170km. New double track to be constructed and designed for speeds of up to 200 km/h. The Hatzeva - Eilat section to be suitable for speeds of 230 - 300 km/h. By the Concessionaire.

An optional short cut is possible, reducing the route length by 34km. The construction of the shortcut includes a total of 4km. of four double-track tunnels through the Zin Mountain, 10km. of double track and 10km. of single track. The shortcut tracks should be designed for 160km/h. By the Concessionaire.

### Rail Freight.

Rail Freight services to be given by the Concessionaire:-

Dimona - Eilat Centre, of materials originating in the Dead Sea; Eilat Centre - Ashdod Port via Beer Sheva. The Beer Sheva - Eilat section does not include the Zin shortcut due to vertical slopes [i.e. gradients] of 3%.

Note: Freight services already exist from Dimona to Ashdod Port.

Optional extension of the line from Eilat Centre southwards to the Port of Eilat. Length: 3 km.

### 3.1.3. Traffic Concept.

The system allows a mix of passenger and freight rail traffic.

#### Passenger Services:-

The Project must offer passengers a fast, comfortable, reliable and safe journey. Passenger information systems must be provided, and disabled access guaranteed. Both regular and express services must be offered. The regular passenger service between Beer Sheva Center and Eilat will include 8 stops along the route: Dimona (existing), Hatzeva, Sapir, Paran, Yahel, Yotveta, Timna Airport and Shehoret. The passenger express-service begins/ends at HaHagana Tel Aviv station and ends/begins at the Eilat Transport Center, with a two-minute stop at Beer Sheva North station. Service frequency must be optional according to demand. Total travel time for the express service should not exceed 2hr. 30 min. Freight service must guarantee safe transportation, in particular of hazardous materials such as chemicals. Frequency is not restricted, but must be integrated into the passenger service timetable.

### 3.1.4. Demand Forecast.

Based on an economic evaluation made by AB Plan Ltd., MATAT Ltd. and TOP Acoustics Ltd. in 2007 for the MOT:-

- Actual 2-way passenger flow for 2005 was 8 Million for all travel modes.

- Total 2-way passenger flow forecast to Eilat for 2020 is 11.3 Million for all travel modes. The 2-way passenger flow for rail travel, based on a travel time of 190 minutes from Tel Aviv to Eilat, is 2.9 M.

Should the travel time by railway take less than 2hr. 30min. it is predicted that Rail will be favoured over other modes of transport and attract more passengers from other travel modes, and Rail will attract additional passengers to Eilat.

Freight: The Port of Eilat primarily handles deliveries of chemicals and fertilizers from the Dead Sea loaded onto the train at Dimona, and from the Negev (Zin) to the Far East, and of imported goods from the Far East to the center of Israel (mainly vehicles).

Freight volume: Actual for 2008 and Forecast for 2020 for all transport modes:-

	2008	2020 (low / medium / high)
Chemicals (1000 tons)	2,350	3,300 / 4,500 / 5,400.
Imported vehicles (100 of units)	145	165 / 185 / 200.
Containers (1000 TEU)	240	75 / 210.

Note: There are no passenger or freight rail services on the Sabbath (from Friday evening to Saturday evening) nor on Jewish holidays (also from evening to evening.)

### 3.2. Rolling Stock.

Either diesel-powered or electric-powered rolling stock can be proposed for passenger and/or freight rail traffic. The passenger trains must comply with a maximum train speed of 200km/h or 300km/h, depending on final Project specifications. Currently, the default is 200km/h.....but the MOT is examining the feasibility of a 300km/h system. The alignment runs mostly through desert climate conditions. Temperatures during summer exceed 40° Celsius. Sand storms must also be taken into consideration. Maximum longitudinal slope is 1.3 - 4%.

A Simulation using Vision software was carried out on 02.06.2010 for an express service on the Tel Aviv - Eilat route (without the shortcut) using the following locomotive and railway car sets, set at a maximum of 200km/h;., producing the following journey times:

Set A: 1 D67 diesel locomotive and 4 double-deck carriages. 2hr:34min.

Set B: 2 D76 locomotives and 8 double-deck carriages. 2hr:29min.

Set C: 1 E6.4 electric locomotive and 8 double-deck carriages. 2hr:19min

Via the optional shortcut, travel time could be reduced by 13 mins. using the electric locomotive.

### 3.3. Miscellaneous.

Should it be decided that operation is to be carried out by the private sector, it must be integrated into the Israel Railways timetable. Safety must comply with Israel Railways Ltd. safety regulations which are based on West European standards. The system must comply with Israel's environmental and statutory legislation.

Any requests for clarifications were to be submitted by 15.12.2010, any responses by 28.02.2011.

[Editor comments: There are several intriguing points about this description. Why should an extension to the Port of Eilat be considered 'optional'? Is it really considered likely that freight would be transhipped to lorry for the last three kilometres? And why should passenger services start from Tel Aviv HaHaganah and not Central? Admittedly this makes relatively little difference inasmuch as all other services from the north and east halt at both these Tel Aviv stations, but even so, reversal at HaHaganah would occupy platform space whereas some stabling/reversing sidings are available at Central. There is no mention of integrating Fares.]

91:05.

## TENDERS.

(i). Tender No. TF/MT/15/10 : Providing Preliminary/Statutory Design Services, as well as Final Inspection and follow-up services for railway sites.

To include: Preliminary / Statutory design as well as final inspection of railway stations, control buildings and other sites, approvals, etc. The railways intend to select eight or more winners. The contract is for 36 months with optional extensions of up to additional 24 months. Bids by 11.10.2010.

(ii). Tender No. MS/MC/07/10. Framework agreement for providing services to renew Rolling Stock Electric Motors, Alternators and Coils. The tender refers to two separate work areas, in Northern and Central Israel, with separate bidding for each area. Contract is for 12 months with optional extensions of up to additional 36 months.

(iii). Tender No. HN/KB/08/10. Excavation and Walling works at the planned Railway Management building at Lod station. To include: Uncovering surface, removal of trees, dismantling and removal of waste materials, excavation and basic walls, treatment of existing infrastructures and building new, electricity and earthing, water pipelines and drainage, roads and parking areas, safety and traffic arrangements. Implementation time: 5 months, Bids by 20.09.2010.

(iv). Tender No. BT/RC/04/09. Supply of Rescue Equipment. Bids by 29.09.2010.

(v). Tender No BN/KB/06/10: Maintenance and Rebuilding Works to be carried out at all Railway Sites, Stations and Installations. The tender is divided into three areas . each for a different bidder. Northern: from Nahariyya to Binyamina; Central: South of Binyamina to Tel Aviv South, including the eastern line from B'nei Berak to Kfar Sava; Southern - south of Tel Aviv South station, including the lines to Modi'in and Jerusalem. Contract is for 36 months with optional extensions of up to additional 24 months. Bids by 21.09.2010.

(vi). Tender No. MS/RC/2010/14. Operating Taxi Services to/from Hadera West Station. and MS/RC/2010/18: Operating Taxi Services to/from Kfar Sava/Hod-HaSharon-Sokolov station. The contracts are for 12 months with optional extensions of up to additional 24 months for each tender. Bids by 16.09.2010.

(vii). Tender No. HN/RC/04/10. For Manufacture and Supply of a Track Motor Vehicle with Track Measurement, Recording and Inspection Systems. For supply of one such TMVM vehicle. Bids by 28.10.2010. Capable of measurement at 120km/h.

(viii). Tender HN/KB/10/10: A new Double-Track Alignment and linking it to the existing line, as well as Upgrading Level Crossing No. 210 (near Ramla station), between Matliakh and Ramla. Works include: Preparatory and digging out; treatment of existing systems, communication infrastructures, earthworks - excavation and filling; infrastructure works for tracks, roads and access / agricultural roads; roadbeds including ballast, concrete - pre-stressed and on-site; culverts; under-track pedestrian subways and drainage; earthing; foundations; railway communications infrastructure works, fences and gates; upgrading Level Crossing No. 210; dismantling track on the old alignment; infrastructure for future grade separation (underbridge); gardening and environmental treatment, provisional traffic and safety arrangements.

The project is urgent and therefore the bidder is requested to carry it out with at least two shift teams daily. Implementation time: 8 months, Bids by 19.10.2010.

[This tender is part of the upgrading and double-tracking of



the Tel Aviv - Beer Sheva line, shared until Na'an Junction with the old line to Jerusalem.]

(ix). Tender No. TF/MT/10/10: Providing A Services for Railway Development and other Projects. The contract is for 84 months with optional extensions of up to additional 60 months. Bids by 18.10.2010.

(x). Tender Nos. MS/RC/2010/16. Operating Taxi Services to/from Netanya Railway Station; and

(xi). No. MS/RC/2010/7: the same for Kiryat Gat Railway Station. the contract in both cases is for 12 months with optional extensions of up to additional 24 months. Bids by 09.11.2010.

(xii). International Tenders MC/RC/02/10 for Design and Installation of Full Testing System for Diesel Engines - application date has been extended to 18.10.2010; and then later final submission of proposals postponed to 12.01.2011.

(xiii). International Tender HN/RC/04/10 - for Manufacture and Supply of a Track Motor Vehicle with Track Measurement, Recording and Inspection Systems - has been extended to 28.10.2010, and then later: Final submissions and proposals postponed to 25.01.2011.

(xiv). Tender No. TC/MT/12/10. Public Tender to provide Drawing Office services for the Upgrading of railway stations, buildings, railway lines and other sites. The contract is for 36 months with optional extensions of up to additional 24 months; latest bids by 12.12.2010.

(xv). Tender No. BN/KB/04/10. Construction of Sderot Railway Station. Works include: Station building, underground and overhead passages, platforms, control building, earthworks, roads, gardening etc. The tender comprises following: 01: Structure A; 02: Structure B; 03: Structure C, Passage; 04: Structure D; 05: Platforms; 06; Control Building; 07: Electro-mechanical systems; 08: Development, Landscaping and Roads and Parking area; 09: Railway Infrastructure within the station area; 10: Maintenance from works completion until handing-over to the railways. Implementation time: 24 months, latest bids by 22.11.2010.

(xvi). Tender RC/MT/17/10: Providing Consulting Services in order to improve the Railways' Purchasing Procedures. The contract includes following-up the writing of purchasing documents, including technical specifications, assistance in cutting costs and/or increasing value of existing commitments. The contract is for 12 months with optional extensions of up to additional 36 months; latest bidding date 23.11.2010.

(xvii). Tender TK/SR/06/1: Framework agreement for Supply, Delivery and Maintenance Service - including repairs and preventative maintenance for all the Diesel Generators operated by the railways. The agreement is for 24 months with optional extensions of up to additional 36 months; latest bidding date 11.11.2010.

(xviii). Closed Tender MC/SR/10/10 - NDT (Non-destructive Testing) services to Detect Cracks on IC3 Flexiliner dmu bogies per EN-473 or SNT-TC-1A of ASNT. Contract is for 24 months with optional extensions of up to additional 36 months. Latest bids by 23.11.2010.

(xix). Tender No. CA/SR/11/10: Framework agreement for providing full services including Maintenance and Repairs to Elevators, Escalators and Lifts for the Disabled at stations and buildings throughout the rail network. The tender is divided into two areas, North and South; each bidder can bid for either or both. The contract is for 24 months with optional extensions of up to additional 36 months. Bids by 16.12.2010.

(xx). Permit to produce and distribute daily or weekly Free Newspapers; for the whole network except Ben Gurion Airport. Contract is for 26 months.

(xxi). Tender MC/RC/23/2010: Permit to operate multi-channel Advertising Media at stations all over the network and on trains - this includes marketing, installation, operation and maintenance. Contract is for 84 months with optional extensions of up to additional 36 months. Submissions by 23.12.2010.

(xxii). Tender No. MS/RC/2010/25.. Operating a Taxi service for services to/from Kfar Sava-Nordau station. Contract is for 36 months, ms buds by 30.12.2010.

#### **TENDERS AWARDED.**

The following international companies have won recent tenders:

HN/RC/02/08: For Weed Control Vehicles: Geismar. (Value €2.1M).

HN/RC/02/08. Special Bridge Inspection Vehicle; Brushwood and Drainage Vehicle. Phooltas Tamper. (€4.34M.)

HN/RC/01/09. Steel Sleepers and Insulation components: EFSA. (€1M).

NO/RC/01/06. Public Information Systems. (ASCOM AG & Eurocom Digital Communications Ltd. (€15M.)

TC/MT/06/10 - Preliminary, Statutory, Early and Detailed Design of railway lines: To Emi Metom Engineering and Consulting, Hason Yerushalmi, Decker, Tedem, Mahod, D.E.L., Gruner D.E.L. and Yinon.

HN/KB/05/0: Grade Separations at Bustan HaGalil: Ter Arme.

HN/KB/07/10: Double tracking the Lydda - Ramle section: Einav HaKhetz.

HN/KB/11/09: Infrastructure works for tracks on the section Yad Mordekhai - Netivot Tender B: Elyakim Ben-Ari.

HN/KB/13/09: Netivot Tender C: Sikun u-Binui Solel-Boneh Infrastructures Ltd.

HN/KB/17/09: Grade Separation on Road No. 411: Ashtrom.

TC/MT/07/09: Design Services for constructing the new Railway Management Building at Lod station area: B. Peleg Architects.

Photographic submissions for HaRakevet should be sent as j.peg files **without any compression** to the editor. If your e mail server has problems then why not try "wetransfer" for an easy method of sending large files. (Access via Google or similar search engine)

## LIGHT RAIL SCHEMES.

### A. JERUSALEM.

#### (i). SURVEY ISSUES.

In August 2010 the concessionaire CityPass carried out a survey among various segments of the public, regarding potential use of the combined Bus/LRV card to be introduced soon, as well as to assess public perceptions of the new vehicles. Much of this questionnaire was routine but one question caused angry reactions: "Since the Red Line passes through three Palestinian neighbourhoods, would you as a Jew oppose it?" Some accused CityPass of racism due to this question! However, CityPass responded that precisely because there is a mixed population of potential passengers, it is important to raise all the questions before service starts.

Another issue raised was Security. Since passengers will of course board the vehicles directly, there is no way to perform even a visual check and trains are known as an easy target for terror. However CityPass claims that precisely because the passengers will be from mixed populations, the chances of terror events is lower.

CityPass has also started to employ students as dummy passengers in order to check both trains and passenger behaviour during the test runs. The line is expected to carry 100,000 passengers daily.

#### (ii). HAPPENING.

On 22.08.10 CityPass organised a 'Happening' for children in the northern neighbourhood of Pisgat Ze'ev - the aim being to make the children familiar with the LRV. The event took place at Yekutiel Adam station which was decorated with balloons, flags etc. The energetic Mayor of Jerusalem, Nir Barkat, who is pushing ahead with the project, recently took a ride with schoolchildren on one of the Citadis trams.

#### (iii). JERUSALEM PARADE.

From a press release of 13.09.10 by the Jerusalem Municipality: „Mr. Nir Barkat will participate in the Sukkot holidays on 28.09.10 in a special event under the slogan ‚From the Carriage to the LRV.‘ This will consist of an LRV train running on the electrified section of Jaffa Street up to the municipality, leading a parade of horse-drawn carriages from Ottoman times and several buses of the 1950's and 1960's which were originally in service in Jerusalem, taken from the collection of the Egged bus museum at Holon.“

This event indeed took place - a later report by Aharon Gazit adds:

„As an integral part of the Jerusalem Parade (with almost 100,000 participants) which took place during the Sukkot holidays on 28.09.210, a special event was celebrated - "From the Horse-Drawn Carriage to the LRV." There were two horse-drawn carriages, four historical buses including an armoured Egged bus of the 1940's, and the LRV Citadis No. 13 which ran under its own power along Jaffa Street for the first time, on the section between the Davidka and Zion Square, accompanied by three bands and with the participation of Jerusalem's Mayor Mr. Barkat, Transport Minister Katz and many other senior officials. Latest date for opening is now April 2011.“

#### (iv). BILLION DOLLAR BABY.

By Gerard Heumann, ‚Jerusalem Post‘ 19/09/2010.

**„The long-awaited inauguration of the Jerusalem Light Rail line, the first of its type in the country, is scheduled, barring further delays, for April. Already five years behind schedule due to bureaucratic bungling, a total lack of experience with this mode of transportation and horrendous project management, construction has wreaked havoc in the life of the city over most of the last decade.**

The price tag, needless to say, double the initial estimates, is staggering – about a \$1 Billion (NIS 500 Million in fines alone paid to the CityPass consortium that is building the tramway for the delays). Not since Herodian times has there been such an enormous expenditure of public treasure.

This, not for an entire system as was originally planned, but for just a single line with 23 stations connecting Mount Herzl with Shuafat, an Arab neighborhood, and Pisgat Ze'ev via the city centre. A long list of excellent public improvements in the town center, along with the addition of advanced buses on exclusive lanes connecting Talpiot with Har Hotzvim support the plan.

Among the main arguments given by the planners for the decision to build the line was that buses are slow, pollute and won't succeed in getting people to stop using their cars. They claimed that these high capacity (each carriage having double the capacity of a bus), speedy, quiet, green, comfortable and modern trams, will. Their main goal: improving access to and enlivening Jerusalem's deteriorating city centre through the increased use of

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public transport and a major programme of street improvements to include the conversion of most of Jaffa Road into a pedestrian mall. Convinced of the plan's viability, many developers are building alongside the route in the centre of town.

The planners managed somehow to seriously understate or neglect mention of the nightmarish social, economic and environmental impacts that would be the result of having to relocate and renew all of the existing utilities infrastructure – water, sanitation, electrical and communication lines, over the full length of the exclusive right of way for some 14 kilometres – even before the very first sections of rail could be laid down. So extreme was the situation that, upon his election as mayor, Nir Barkat announced that he intended to scrap the entire project. But of course the point of no return had long before been reached.

Calatrava's graceful, light and elegant suspension bridge at the western entrance to the city, designed to carry the trams over this complex intersection, was unnecessary. Beautiful, but irresponsible. Suspension bridges enabling unusually large spans without the need for intermediate supports were first conceived to enable the crossing of rivers. But where's the river here? Vehicular traffic could just as easily have passed under a bridge constructed in the normal fashion at just a fraction of the NIS 300 Million this bridge has cost. But these were just a few of the facts the planners neglected to mention. A fixed rail line hasn't the reach of a city bus capable of getting anywhere there is a paved road.

As there's just a single line, reaching your destination in the center of town will require most commuters to transfer from bus to rail and back again, or from car to rail and back, from the several park-and-ride garages along the length of the route. If too many decide not to make the transfer, the line will fail economically. All hinges on the success of the transfer scheme.

Unfortunately, too, in contradiction to the planners' arguments, Jerusalem is not to be compared with other historical cities of similar size such as Valencia, Spain or Nantes, France, where light rail systems have met with brilliant success. Security has always been a major concern here. The tramway's routes are fixed, their schedules known. An advanced communications system will provide information on travel times.

Also, unlike buses, trams cannot stop quickly or be detoured in case of emergency. The tram cars have been fitted with special glass to resist stones and firebombs. Yet only most recently, with the actual operational deadline fast approaching, did the police force issue a statement to the effect that it could not carry the security burden for the line.

Can it be that the planners downplayed this critical issue and that the light rail solution is entirely inappropriate to Jerusa-

lem's security context? Another important matter, still not finally decided, is signalization priorities. If the rail line wins over vehicular traffic as it must, many vital inter-neighborhood connections will be affected. Finally, with far less space allocated to parking, finding a spot for your car will become far more difficult. Perhaps that, at least, is for the best.

Whatever happens, Jerusalemites are not likely soon to forgive or forget the trauma of the 10 years of construction, the endless disruptions to traffic, the businesses ruined, the broken bones caused by tripping over rubble or the NIS 1Million party thrown by mayor Uri Lupolianski before the election upon completion of the bridge and prior to the torturous work of having to tear up Jaffa Road had even begun.

And what of the "workers," chatting, eating or resting in the shade. Just watching them (five managers for every man working on a single square centimeter of paving) drove many of us up the wall. Together with the minister of transportation, some of the very same people that brought us the Holyland, former mayors Ehud Olmert and Lupolianski, took the decisions here too. Let us pray that, this time, they were far better informed

One thing is certain. Naïve enthusiasm over these attractive, shiny, streamlined, French-built carriages has no place here. It is entirely possible that this gigantic project has solved one problem at the cost of creating and compounding a thousand others. Although of late there has been renewed talk of extending the line and building an additional one, justifying the prohibitive sums already spent won't be easy. Wasting public money is a slap in the face to the have-nots, of whom there are far too many living in Jerusalem today. The real test still lies ahead."

(The writer is a Jerusalem architect and town planner.)

#### **(v). AT A CROSSROADS.**

By Peggy Cidor, from 'In Jerusalem', 15/10/2010

"As Yair Naveh prepares to leave CityPass, 'In Jerusalem' evaluates the project that residents despairing of roadworks and disruption.....

November 21, 2006, was an unseasonably warm day. At the top of Sderot Herzl, all the who's who of Jerusalem gathered for an important ceremony.

Even former mayor Ehud Olmert attended the laying of the cornerstone for the long-awaited light rail. A major part of the ceremony was the activation of Appitack, a special - and very expensive - vehicle brought from Switzerland especially designed for the laying of tracks.

The ceremony was a public relations success, and soon the photos of the event were published in the media. But two hours after the ceremony Efrat Zemer, a reporter for one of the local Hebrew newspa-

pers, was driving by the site and noticed that the fence had disappeared, as well as the Appitack and the workers.

The explanation she received from the workers at the site was astonishing. The whole ceremony, she was told, had been a sham. The expensive device had turned out to be unsuitable for Jerusalem soil, but nobody wanted to cancel the official ceremony. On top of that, there was a mistake regarding the exact place - it was done some 20 metres to the left of the correct spot.

"Even [humourist] Ephraim Kishon wouldn't have dreamed up such a bizarre scenario," comments Shmuel Elgrabli, spokesman for the Jerusalem Transportation Master Plan, designers of the light rail system.

The light rail project was the dream of the capitalist ideology: a major mass transit project for the capital that would be achieved through private funding and a minimum of state support but still designed to meet the public's needs. What could be better? Well, nothing, except for the reality on the ground. As a result of the numerous pitfalls of the Jerusalem light rail, one thing is certain. Tel Aviv's light rail system - if it ever comes to fruition - will not be built according to the Jerusalem model: no build, operate, transfer (BOT) model, no private financing - and, above all, no disruption to the public. "The residents of Tel Aviv should be brought here to see what they will be spared, following the Jerusalem residents' incredible suffering," concludes a high-ranking official at the Master Plan.

Last week, the light rail project hit another snag: Yair Naveh, the CEO of the project for the past two years, has been appointed IDF deputy chief of General Staff.

A major-general in the reserves, Naveh had served as OC Home Front Command and later the OC Central Command. Naveh's departure at this critical stage of the project does not sit well with the Transportation Ministry or the municipality. Both feel frustrated as, despite some disappointments regarding his ability to solve problems and advance the work, Naveh's presence at the helm is certainly better than an organization with no leader.

"We wish Yair Naveh luck in his new position in the IDF. We are sure that CityPass, an international consortium, will not allow replacing him to impact on its fulfilling its commitments - as quickly as possible and to the necessary standard - to the state and Jerusalem residents, who have also suffered," says Elgrabli. So far, according to Elgrabli, CityPass has not officially presented a potential candidate.

Following Naveh's decision to step down, there is good reason to assess the light rail project and see where it stands.

What really happened to the project that started off with so much fanfare in the Prime Minister's Office and promised to bring the ancient capital into the 21st century? In fact, nothing really new: negligence, sloppi-

ness and, apparently, a fair share of cynicism. What follows is an attempt to outline the failures, step by step, as well as several explanations by observers, some of them provided on strict conditions of anonymity.

The Tender for the huge public transportation project - the first of this scope in the country - was published in October 2002, though it had already been conceived and approved a few years before under Olmert. He had also determined the route of the city's first tramline, which would later be nicknamed the 'political' path, as it connected the Arab neighborhoods of Beit Hanina and Shuafat with the city centre. The route had been chosen despite the fact that it was the least profitable of the eight lines in the system. But in the 1990's Olmert believed in an undivided Jerusalem under Israeli sovereignty.

Four companies submitted their proposals, two of which reached the final stage - Africa-Israel and CityPass. The winner of the tender was CityPass, an ad hoc consortium of foreign and Israeli companies. It won, primarily because its offer was cheaper than Africa-Israel's by half a Billion Shekels. By law, explains Elgrabli, there is an obligation to choose the least expensive offer.

The second reason was the notion that nothing could meet the needs of the project better than an international organization that had some serious experience under its belt and had built similar systems in France, Italy and Switzerland.

The ceremony marking the choice of CityPass was held on July 17, 2005, at prime minister Ariel Sharon's office, with all the relevant participants, including French ambassador Gérard Araud sitting in the front row. Araud's picture, released to the press, would later be used as a weapon by the Palestinians to exert pressure on the French government to stop its participation in the project, on the grounds that the light rail would go through the occupied part of the city' and thus would be a breach of international law. The pressure reached its peak with a special request from Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas to then French president Jacques Chirac. He responded that in France the government had no sway in matters of private enterprise.

To this day, the Palestinian pressure has not abated. In fact, one of the constituents of CityPass, Veolia (the French operator of the light rail), was taken to court in France by a pro-Palestinian organization that claimed that Veolia was collaborating with the army in occupied territory. Veolia has since tried to pull out of the project by attempting to sell its share to the Egged and Dan bus companies, but Israel has refused to allow it, warning that such a step would cause an immediate dismantling of CityPass. As a result, Veolia has lost quite a few projects in Arab countries.

The roadwork for the light rail began in January 2006, but it was not long be-

fore there were signs indicating that something was wrong - for example, the lack of workers along the path of the tracks. „Whenever we asked for the reasons behind such a low pace of work,“ recalls a high-ranking official in the municipality’s Engineering Department, „the answer from CityPass was that they hadn’t obtained the necessary permits from the municipality. Technically this was true, but the fact is that the plans they submitted were far from acceptable for such a high-profile project.“

Considering that at the time CityPass’s CEO was Kuki Edri - until just a few months before the CEO of the Moriah auxiliary, who built all the infrastructure before digging the tracks and a man highly reputed for his professional abilities - „the sloppy plans submitted were hard to understand, let alone accept, and the feeling was that the problem lay elsewhere.“

A quick glance at the plans - shown to this journalist under strict conditions of confidentiality - revealed that there was no clear indication of the exact route of the tramway lines. And in some other plans checked by the municipal engineer’s staff, the route was not delineated in the right place on the maps.

According to Elgrabli, CityPass has been making complaints about lack of permits from the municipality since the beginning of the project, but „unfortunately, even on stretches and at times where permits were issued, CityPass didn’t carry out the work at the pace and quality desired,“ says Elgrabli, who nevertheless points out that the Master Plan is not flawless. „As a government that employed private companies we expected much more. From the outset we warned of a lack of engineers and workers on the route, about the quality of the plans and requests for permits, etc... In addition, we are constantly troubled by arbitration on mutual lawsuits and the litigiousness of an engineering project, and that is a shame.“

The first official news that something was really problematic was released on July 5, 2007, by ‚The Marker‘, followed by a decision to renegotiate the franchise agreement, which was concluded on May 26, 2008. It stated that an agreement had been reached between the state and Citypass. The deadline was postponed by 19 months, and the state agreed to pay compensation (the first in a series) to CityPass.

Another important decision was to appoint two arbitrators - one to represent each party (attorney Dov Weissglas for CityPass and Judge Boaz Okkon for the state). Justice Meir Shamgar was appointed arbitrator in cases where the two could not agree. Engineer Avi Adwin was named technical consultant for the arbitrators. The new deadline for the completion of the project was set for January 15, 2009. Nothing happened on that day, and once again it was ‚The Marker‘ that revealed, ten days later, that major disagreements among the parties within CityPass

were jeopardizing the continuation of the project.

Following a few press conferences with the arbitrators, a new completion date was published: September 8, 2010. Deputy Mayor Naomi Tsur said to this journalist, „It is also my birthday. This time it will work out. I’m sure it will be ready.“

In this particular case, perhaps the reason for the failure to get the railway ready lay somewhere else. At CityPass, apparently no one uses a Jewish calendar. Otherwise, they would have known that September 8 was on the eve of Rosh Hashana! Needless to say, yet again the light rail was not ready to roll.

The latest deadline set is April 7, 2011, but Elgrabli - and many others - admit there is no way it will work out this time, either. Among other reasons, this date is not realistic because, as it was discovered a few days ago, there is still no electrical system on the Calatrava Bridge for the light rail, so it cannot reach that part of the route unless it is dragged there.

It didn’t take long for the people at the Master Plan to understand that Money was the main issue behind the problems. CityPass’s „low“ offer turned out to be insufficient to finance the project. In fact, the Transportation Ministry and Master Plan discovered that even after it took CityPass two years to gather the sum they needed from the banks, they were still short some NIS 500 million - „exactly the sum that made their offer so much more attractive than Africa-Israel’s and won them the tender,“ a high-ranking official at the Master Plan points out (Africa-Israel’s offer was NIS 2.7 Billion, while CityPass’s was NIS 2.2.Bn.).

High-ranking officials at the Transportation Ministry and at the municipality suspect that this accounts for the repeated delays and perhaps the large number of lawsuits filed by CityPass against the state, many of which have garnered the organization considerable sums (close to NIS 200 Million, according to sources at the municipality and Master Plan).

„They began to ask for money to continue the work, just as any ordinary contractor would do, and we thought that something was wrong here. After all, the BOT is precisely about not being in such a situation,“ says a high-ranking official at Kikar Safra. To enable work to continue, someone at the Transportation Ministry suggested using some of the terms of the contract - such as to bring forward some of the steps. As it happened, at that time the railcars had just been completed in France. Alstom, the French builder of the cars, insisted that they be taken from the warehouse in La Rochelle. But there were no tracks ready in Jerusalem or even a warehouse in which to keep the cars in the interim. „Nevertheless, we proceeded to release a progress payment - the step required to release the money for the cars - and the

railcars were sent over, with all the necessary PR fanfare. A warehouse was hastily prepared near Pisgat Ze’ev, and CityPass obtained the money,“ recalls a source at the Transportation Ministry.

The roadwork in the city centre, along Jaffa Road, is another example of what infuriated the people at Master Plan. According to the original plans, the work was to be done in stages in order to cause as little disruption as possible to traffic and commerce in the city. But CityPass decided to handle things differently. Two years ago, the company’s workers took over the main artery of the city one morning and began to dig, much to the despair of the downtown merchants.

„The merchants were convinced that the municipality was responsible, since CityPass claimed that it had all the necessary permits,“ explains a source at Kikar Safra. That was true, except that the municipality’s Engineering Department and Master Plan determined that there would be no digging along Jaffa Road all at the same time. But their plan was disregarded, and the damage caused to the downtown merchants is still acute, since the merchants’ committee has filed a number of lawsuits (about NIS 5 Million still in progress) against the municipality for their financial losses.

As for the state, the transportation minister sent an official letter to the arbitrators, saying that „CityPass is acting outrageously“ and requesting that they „force CityPass to resume the work and get it done on schedule and restore normal life back to the residents of Jerusalem. There is no question that the company is capable of completing the work on schedule. They do not use the many working days they have at their disposal, and in so doing they have made life in Jerusalem unbearable.“

CityPass responded by rejecting the accusations, calling them „absurd“ and adding that it was just „a clear judicial but baseless attempt to retaliate against the lawsuit filed by the company for the delays caused by the state.“

In August 2008, Naveh was appointed CEO of CityPass. „At first, there was a sigh of relief by all concerned,“ recalls Elgrabli. But that feeling did not last long. One of Naveh’s first steps was to hire an engineer who is an expert at assisting in lawsuits - and at the Master Plan, the smiles quickly froze. The „battle of the lawsuits,“ as it has been nicknamed by an official at Kikar Safra, has reached high levels: While CityPass has filed suits that total some NIS 700M., the state, through the Transportation Ministry and the Master Plan, has filed lawsuits for about the same amount, though the state has already paid NIS 50M. for damages caused to the organization (in delays for issuing permits) and some NIS 150M. in additional claims for causing delays.

„They win because their attorneys are the best in the country, while ours are not



equipped for such a battle," admits an official at the Master Plan.

But perhaps the strangest issue is the story of the traffic lights. Every country works with a local independent electronic system for traffic lights. In Israel, the system was developed by the Technion. It is called the 'Inbar system' and is considered one of the smartest of its kind. The first problem was almost a diplomatic issue. CityPass announced that the French parties of the consortium could not work with the Inbar system („It doesn't speak French" was, according to a staff member at the Master Plan, the explanation given). Master Plan suggested that CityPass prepare a plan of its own, disregarding the Inbar requirements, and that after that, „a solution would be found somehow."

CityPass required total priority for the railcars at traffic lights along its route. Master Plan was ready to grant it, except at a few major intersections (10 to 20 of the 100 traffic lights along the route), where, according to Elgrabli, it could cause major traffic problems.

„For some reason," says Elgrabli, „CityPass is insisting on demanding total priority at all traffic lights, in all situations and at all times of day and night, contrary to what is accepted worldwide." He adds that the rail cars would only have to wait 10 to 35 seconds at these intersections. „CityPass is even threatening/implying that a decision that does not allow full priority to the light rail at all traffic lights could lead to a massive lawsuit against the state," Elgrabli says.

CityPass refused to accept these considerations, claiming that if a tram has to stop at traffic lights, then there is no need for such a system at all. Master Plan suggested a test according to rush hours that would allow flexibility in the priorities. CityPass refused. As a result, there were more delays until the light rail obtained full priority except for French Hill.

There were a few more problems along the way. For example, on the test runs earlier this year, it was discovered that the paving stones alongside the tracks could not withstand the weight of the cars, so the paving stones had to be replaced. The trees supplied by the municipality to be planted along the route were poisoned because CityPass used highly toxic soil. And thus far, nobody knows how the Bridge of Strings will react to the weight of the railway cars when they are filled with passengers as no tests have yet been carried out.

At the moment, things are slowly getting back to normal in the city centre, but at the municipality and at Master Plan, there is a high level of frustration due to the many failures associated with the project. „Perhaps it was indeed too large a scope for us after all," admitted H., a high-ranking official at Kikar Safra who was there right from the beginning.

### The project:

- Jerusalem is the largest city in the country (750,000 residents) and has the highest use of public transportation (52% compared to 32% in Tel Aviv with less than 400,000 residents).

- CityPass, which won the tender for the light rail, is a consortium composed of Alstom (France), Ashtram (Israel), Polar Investments, Harel Investments (Israel) and Veolia (France).

- The total investment in the light rail project is NIS 3.5 Billion, which is divided as follows:

- NIS 1.3Bn. from the state for expropriations, infrastructure, bridges, administrative staff and parking areas.

- NIS 2.2Bn. comes from the private sector for financing, planning, construction and building and purchase of the railway cars.

- The agreement between the state and the private company lasts for 30 years (three years of construction and 27 of operation).

- The first railway line is 13.8 kilometres long. There are 23 stations, two bridges, a tunnel, a depot (at the Ma'leh Adumim junction) and 46 rail cars. Passengers will enjoy a smart tickets system and four parking areas along the route.

### (vi). JERUSALEM MUNICIPALITY TESTS LIGHT RAIL OVER 'STRING BRIDGE'

By Melanie Lidman. „Jerusalem Post", 19/10/2010:

„Soaring more than 120 metres into the air, the white cable Calatrava Bridge at the entrance to Jerusalem is visible from almost everywhere in the city and has also been one of the most visible points of contention in the 11-year-old light rail project. The light rail has become notorious for its never-ending delays and frequent, competing lawsuits demanding millions of shekels in compensation for CityPass, the consortium building the rail, and the Transportation Ministry.

At midnight on Monday night, something new was meant to cross the bridge, popularly called the String Bridge: rail cars. Testing the trains on the bridge will represent „the beginning of the end" of light rail construction, said one worker. Officials are still confident that the light rail will begin operation on April 7, despite serious work that remains to be done.

„There's no one happier than me today," said Shmuel Elgrabli, spokesman for the Jerusalem Transportation Master Plan, which designed the light rail system, calling the bridge's technical tests a „historic moment." „It doesn't happen a lot of times in life that you have a vision and you watch it being built before your eyes," he said. „I felt personally all the problems along the way, and all the difficulties, and the pain we've gone through", Elgrabli said. „All the planning and construction was like the pregnancy, and now the birth is beginning. And it will be a long labour; it's not going to happen overnight, but slowly, slowly, we're seeing it."

Originally scheduled to be operating in 2007, the project's deadline was moved repeatedly to the current April 7. The construction has caused massive disruptions to the downtown area, especially to vendors on Jaffa Street, whose merchants' committee has filed a number of lawsuits demanding compensation for shop owners. CityPass has also filed lawsuits against the city for delays on permits and other problems, adding up to close to NIS 700 Million. The Transportation Ministry has filed lawsuits against CityPass for a similar amount. CityPass has already collected about NIS 200M. from the state.

The bridge itself, designed by world-class architect Santiago Calatrava, was denounced for its high price tag - nearly NIS 250M. Many residents believed that the bridge should have been less flashy and more affordable. But Elgrabli defended the design choice, noting that the other above-ground design called for eight huge columns that would make the entrance to the city „feel like a jail." He also asked for Jerusalem residents to have some patience with the bridge, saying that once the rest of the modern business complex at the centre of the city is completed the bridge will be more in context. He said the city is working on plans for buildings higher than 50 stories, reaching higher than the bridge.

„It's totally legitimate for people not to like to bridge," said Elgrabli. „There were a lot of people who didn't like the Eiffel Tower at first as well. For a hundred years they said ‚You have to destroy it, how could you build something so ugly in such a beautiful city that's just for show.' Now try to think of Paris without the Eiffel Tower."

The trains for Monday night's tests were brought from the depot at the Ma'leh Adumim junction using electricity, as the wires are already electrified and ready for use along much of the track. Previously, special trucks have been used to move the trains along the track. The tests involved 10-12 trips across the bridge, at first with one train at a time and afterwards with two trains at a time. „I really feel like we're getting close to the end," said Jamal, a security worker guarding the trains near the Central Bus Station on Monday. „When we started, we didn't think it would ever end... We feel like we're really going to make an important step tonight."

Passersby ogled the sleek new train as it waited next to the bridge on Jaffa Street, with plastic bubble wrap still on many of the seats. „In the morning I saw this train, and there was happiness in my heart," said Yoram Rahamim, a Jerusalem resident for more than 50 years. Rahamim echoed the sentiments of many Jerusalem residents, who are praying for the project's completion so that normal life can resume downtown. Traffic at the city's western entrance was diverted from under the bridge at 11:30p.m., though the measure was more for insurance than safety, said one worker. „We're 100 percent sure it will pass over in peace," he said.

### **(vii). GESHER TZAR ME'OD IN JERUSALEM.**

From a press release of 19.10.2010 by Transport & Roads Safety Ministry, Jerusalem Municipality, Jerusalem Master Plan Team, and Moriyah - the company for Jerusalem Development:-

„At 00:15 yesterday [does this mean 'early today'? Ed.] the LRV project moved forward with the historic run of two Citadis trains with a total weight of 170 tons; the results were good and more tests have been taking place since. The most important tests include full braking from 40km/h while negotiating the almost 90-degree curve of the bridge which - according the designers - is the only one of this type in the world. All tests are being carried out at night, thus causing minimum disruption. They will take some three months; the results will then be sent to the designer Callatrava, who will finally approve them. The first runs were without electrical power, trains were pulled by a road/rail vehicle - but more sections have been electrified since, and will enable tests under own power.“

### **(viii). NEW DIRECTOR.**

CityPass approved on 23.11.2010 the appointment of Mr. Yehuda Shoshani as successor to Yair Naveh who returns to the IDF as a General and No. 2 in the military hierarchy. Shoshani (53) is a Colonel in the Reserves, and for the past six years has worked as manager for Asian Pacific region for Teva (a major medical products company) as well as being a senior business manager. He served in the Army for 28 years as a brigade commander, and as the Army's representative to the Defence Ministry's delegation in South-East Asia. He has a BA in computers and electronics and an MA in State Sciences. He is married with two daughters and lives at Re'ut (a part of Modi'in). CityPass Chairman Abraham Shokat greeted Shoshani, saying "The LRV will make a major contribution to the development of Jerusalem and its economy; I am sure that Mr. Shoshani will lead it in the best way towards its full commercial operation". He also thanked Mr Naveh for his work.

### **(ix). WHOLE LINE TRIALS.**

From a press release of 25.11.2010 by CityPass.

"The project took another step forward today when in the evening one of the LRV trains ran over the entire alignment from Pisgat Zeev in the north to Mount Herzl in the south."

### **(x). KNESSET COMMITTEE VISIT.**

From a press release of 01.12.2010:

Today the Knesset Higher Committee for State Control visited the Red Line alignment and the operating centre and depot, including a ride on one of the trains on a test run over part of the northern section.

The committee, headed by chairman Mr. Joel Hasson were guests of the newly-appointed CityPass General Manager Yehudah Shoshani. They were impressed by the driver's cab and the system's equipment, but were disappointed and dismayed to learn the opening date is still set back, now to some time between June and October 2011. They were particularly angered at lack of progress in terms of traffic regulation at traffic lights to give LRV's priority. MK Mrs. Marina Solodkin declared that the citizens of Jerusalem cannot wait any longer and this must be dealt with.

In the meantime the Mayor of Jerusalem, Nir Barkat is suggesting that trams run free of charge on a shuttle service along Jaffa Road, parallel to bus services, to reduce the time needed for shaking-down test runs and give passengers a taste of the new services before the main official opening. This will also give the concessionaires some experience in the way passengers respond to the new transport mode.

On 29.11.10 the Jerusalem Transportation Master Plan authorities announced that work will begin on the first 11km of cycle lanes all over the city, at an overall cost of \$9.5M for the planned 107km. The lanes will be integrated into the transport plan and will include facilities for parking bicycles at LRV, BRT and regular bus stops.

### **(xi). POLITICS.**

Politics, as always, rears its ugly head. Although we try to be as neutral and apolitical as possible, there are times when one almost despairs at human stupidity and nastiness.... This article, by Gemma Pörzgen, appeared in 'Frankfurter Rundschau' on 01.12.2010, p. 16 (translation by Editor):-

"At first it seemed a nice job for the TÜV Nord (Standards Testing Centre); The press release stated that the TÜV Nord was helping to get Jerusalem's tramway underway. 'When the first trams roll through Jerusalem in 2011, TÜV Nord Systems will have played a significant role in that'. 'The first tramline in Israel should help in transporting tourists from the Jaffa Gate to the Damascus Gate', was the intention, according to spokesman Sven Ullbrich.

However, the tramway project is not only intended to resolve transport problems, but should also link the centre of West Jerusalem with the controversial Settlements in East Jerusalem. From the point of view of critics this tramway line is therefore intended to support Israel's Settlements Policy and is against international law. When the first criticisms arrived at TÜV Nord, the initial reaction was one of amazement. 'As a professional organisation we are politically neutral and responsible only for controlling the technical safety of structures and systems, to prevent danger for people and the environment', said the spokesman. But the problem here is not different perspectives but the difficult territory of international politics.

At the moment there is a claim  
הרכבת

against Veolia in France because of its involvement in the tramway construction. The Foreign Office in Berlin on its website warns companies that investment in the Occupied Territories is coupled with substantial financial risk. "The West Bank, the Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem have been occupied by Israel since 1967. The Federal Government distinguishes strictly between the territory of the State of Israel and the Occupied Areas' is specifically stated there. [sic. Has no-one told the German diplomats that Israel has withdrawn from the Gaza Strip? Ed.] A Foreign Ministry spokesman confirmed that they have already been in contact with the TÜV-Nord regarding their involvement in Jerusalem. In such cases the Federal Government stresses its position, which is in general agreement with that of the EU and the majority of States. 'There is however no legal right to influence the matter' says the Spokesman.

But only a few firms seem to be aware of the difficult political context before they get active in the Middle East. Or they rely upon Israeli government information, which however refers to the settlements which have been built against international law as being part of Israeli territory. The German-Israel Chamber of Commerce (AHK) in Tel Aviv under its Israeli executive director Grisha Alroi-Arloser does not have on its website any indication that involvement in areas in the Israeli settlements on Palestinian territory is potentially politically explosive and could undermine moves towards a peace process in the Near East.

The TÜV's casual approach to the complicated political situation in Jerusalem is no exception amongst German companies. In mid-November 'Der Spiegel' reported that the Deutsche Bahn was involved in the construction of a fast railway line between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem that passes through Palestinian territory. In September the TV magazine programme 'Panorama' discovered that Heidelberg Cement, with the help of a subsidiary firm, is removing minerals from the occupied Palestinian West Bank. All these cases indicate to the Palestinian General Delegate in Berlin, Salah Abdel Shafi, that the firms are not adequately informed and the Federal Government is lacking in political education for them. 'Each case is different', he says. 'In the case of Heidelberg Cement we knew all about it.' In the case of Deutsche Bahn the Palestinian General Direction is still involved in researching the matter. He was hearing for the first time regarding the involvement of TÜV-Nord in the controversial tramway project. But the Palestinian representative has a clear warning for all German firms: 'If these firms do not withdraw from their involvement, we see no solution except through taking legal measures.'"

## B. TEL AVIV.

(a). The picture here was still unclear in the autumn; despite the recent government decision to cancel the concession of M.T.S. and build it with a fully-State-financed Government company, the Attorney-General suddenly decided to postpone the decision in order to discuss the M.T.S. appeal further - they claimed that the company did not deviate from the 2007 contract signed with the State. „The government officials claim that the postponement is only temporary, but it is clear that the project is stuck. This comes in addition to the sudden resignation of Mr. Yishai Dotan, General Manager of NTA (the company managing the project). No-one has yet been appointed as his successor.“

### (b). PILGRIMAGE TO THE HOLY CITY.

From a press release of 16.11.2010 by CityPass: “Today, Tuesday 16.11, the Mayor of Tel Aviv Mr. Ron Khuldai, the Tel Aviv Municipality General Manager Mr. Menachem Leiba, the head of the Tel Aviv LRV Management Mr. Eldad Merhav and senior members of NTA were guests of CityPass. They were accompanied by CityPass Chairman of Directorate Mr. Abraham (Beiga) Shohat, the outgoing CityPass General Manager Mr. Yair Naveh and his successor Mr. Yehuda Shimshoni. The visit included the whole alignment and the neighbourhoods through which it runs, the Jaffa Street including the pedestrian-only section, the operational centre and depot, and finally a short ride on one of the trains.

Mr. Naveh described the main lessons learned from the project, and advised the guests on how to avoid such mistakes in Tel Aviv. Mr. Khuldai declared that he had no doubt that it must be compulsory to give priority to LRV at traffic lights, this being the only way to speed up travel and encourage use of public transport. CityPass is now carrying out test runs as well as checking systems along the whole alignment.”

In the meantime things are starting to move again on the Tel Aviv LRV project; the former concessionaire MTS has almost ceased to exist, only three employees remaining to close the business down, out of a former 150 staff. Meanwhile the project managing company NTA has started to publish tenders including:-

Tender No. 037/2010: Providing Management and Design services for Transportation, Transportation Control (ITS) and public transport services. There is as yet no date for the beginning of the contract; however, once signed it will be valid until 31.12.2013 with optional extensions for up to another two years. Bids by 12.12.2010.

Request for Expressions of Interest (RFI) - for Red Line; with respect to the Preliminary and Final Design for the ten underground stations for LRT.

An RFI - Red Line - for the Acquisition and Maintenance of the LRV Fleet.

[So, amazingly, since (as Aharon points out, Mohammed is not coming to the mountain) - the firm which made so many mistakes and delays in Jerusalem is now teaching Tel Aviv how to do things better! Ed.]

### (c). FINANCE DECISION.

The Government was meant to make a decision on financing this project on 05.12.2010, but due to the extensive and tragic fires in the Haifa area this was postponed for a week. In the meantime it has been announced that NTA wants to extend the Red Line from its southern end at Nissenbaum Street in Bat Yam for some 2.5km. to link with the Israel Railways station at Moshe Dayan (Rishon LeZion West). This would mean three intermediate stops and an LRV terminus. This would add about \$272M to the Red Line's overall cost which would then be \$3.27Bn. It is estimated that the extension could increase passenger traffic by 30M to 50M annually.

On 12.12.2010 the Government instructed the Finance and Transport & Roads Safety Ministry to promote the development of the Greater Tel-Aviv Mass Transit System; the main issue is of course the current impasse on the Metro/LRV system due to cancellation of the MRT Concession. The project is classed as of national importance, and after some time for consideration the government has decided it should be implemented and financed by the Ministries, and \$3.0 Billion have been allocated. NTA has been selected to implement the Red Line. The State will promote the project in co-ordination with the municipalities involved, who will play a crucial role in implementation. The line is now foreseen as operational by 2017.....

91:07.

## NOTES AND COMMENTS.

### (a). THE 'BAHAMAS' NAMEPLATE.

Mention has been made of the LMS 'Jubilee' replica nameplate 'Bahamas' which Paul Cotterell bought for 100 Pounds back in 1967, to help raise funds for the loco's purchase. In 'Push and Pull' (magazine of the K&WVRPS) Autumn 2010 p.7 is an illustrated article on the formal handover of this plate to the Bahamas Railway Society (named after the loco, not the place!) at Ingrow Railway Museum near Keighley. So it has found its way to a good home.

### (b). 8F 2-8-0's LOST AT SEA.

This has been a topic which, if the pun be allowed, has resurfaced several times in previous issues. An article in 'Black Eight' No. 126 of Summer 2010 p. 80 attempts to gather the known facts - the problem being that, over the decades, many contradictions and errors have been repeated. What follows is taken from the article, much of which is based on research by Ray Martin into wartime convoys and shipping.

Although J.W.P. Rowledge's 'Heavy Goods Engines of the War Department Vol. 2' mentions the SS 'Pentridge Hall' as conveying a batch of 8F 2-8-0's to Persia, and having to jettison WD Nos. 608, 617, 619 and 622 in the Bristol Channel during a severe storm, it appears that the correct name of the ship is in fact the 'Pentridge Hill' (named after a hill in north-east Dorset).

The SS 'Thistlegorm' which was sunk in July 1941 in the Red Sea had been carrying WD Nos. 370 and 371 as deck cargo.

WD Nos. 304, 322, 415, 416 were all lost in January 1941, en route to Egypt; and Nos. 428 and 433 were lost in June 1941, also en route to Egypt.

The 'Berhala', en route from Hull in Convoy OB 318, was conveying WD Nos. 338, 354, 355 and 356 when torpedoed about 250 miles off Freetown on 23rd. May 1941. The ship was sunk by U-Boot U-38 at position 09.50N/17.50W - one torpedo struck the port side of the ship at 19.51hrs., a second at 20.20. The ship then sank within eight minutes. Three lives were lost.

Rowledge records that seven WD 2-8-0's were lost at sea on their way to Turkey, where they were shipped in components and not complete. Nos. 343, 344 and 345 were on the 'Jessmore' west of Ireland when the vessel was in a collision - until now presumed to have been with the 'Baron Pentland' on 19th. Feb. 1941, but it now appears possible the collision was actually with the 'Baron Haigh' on 21st. Feb. 1941.

The preserved loco LMS 8233 / WD 307 / BR 48773 was in all probability transported on the SS 'La Pampa' which was in convoy OS8 from Liverpool (Oct. 3rd. 1941) with ships from Oban, and Belfast as well, and several (including La Pampa, 4149 tons, 10.5 knots) from Milford (South Wales). The convoy (46 ships sailed, 3 did not) reached Freetown safely on Oct. 26th., no ships being lost. 'La Pampa' then spent much of 1942 ferrying 'heavy lifts' - including locomotives and rolling stock - from Bombay and Karachi to the Persian Gulf.

Research continues!

### (c). HANS KOHUT.

A note that should have appeared much earlier. Back in January 2004 Hans Kohut of Givatayim wrote a touching 'farewell' - of the sort that makes the Editor both sad and proud. "I am no longer mobile and therefore entered a local nursing home for Parkinson's Disease patients, for the rest of my life. My only connection with the Railway is now with Paul by phone and with Benny and Yaniv in the Tel Aviv Rail HQ. But even phone communication is not easy at all! So, 'Harakevet' will my my 'chief informant' until I leave this planet for good. My best thanks in advance for everything in my remaining years...."

For those who never knew him - Hans was one of the 'pioneer' railway enthusiasts in Israel in the time when one needed a lot of patience to await a train at all..... his late brother Ernst was, by enormous coincidence, a member of my congregation 'Sinai Synagogue' in Leeds when I served there 1984-1994.

### (d). SEJED STATION.

Back in 2001 Peter Smerdon of Basingstoke sent me a page (p.14) from the Baedeker Historical Palestine guide book of 1912. This describes the route by train from Jaffa to Jerusalem:-

"25 Miles: Sejed. The station is situated in an insalubrious but fertile plain. From Sejed the line follows the depression of the Wâdi es-Sarâr (the 'valley of Sorek'; Judg. xvi.4), which is wide at its mouth, but afterwards narrows. Beit Atâb, situated on the top of the hills to the left, remains for some time in sight; farther on, also to the left, the weli of Sar'a (the ancient Zorah, Josh. xv.33, xix.14; Judg. xiii.2). To the right lies the deserted village of 'Ain Shems (the ancient Beth Shemesh, 1 Sam. vi.9; 1. Kings iv.9), where excavations are now being carried on by the Palestine Exploration Fund. A megalithic wall, dating from the Israelite kingdom, with a well-preserved gate (S.) and quadrilateral bastions has been laid bare nearly in its whole circuit. Pottery of the same period as well as of pre-Israelite times (imported from Cyprus and Crete) has also been found. Farther to the S., on the hill, is Beit el-Jemâl (agricultural college of the Salemans).

31/2M. Deir 'Abân; the station is about 3M. distant from each of the three villages that are served by it; Deir 'Aban (to the S., not visible), Sar'a (see above), and Artûf, a colony of Bulgarian Jews (pop. 95) founded in 1896, a little below Sar'a. Sar'a and Artûf are seen on a hill to the left. The mountains now begin. Shortly after entering them we see high up in the rocks to the left the mouth of a grotto, the so-called Samson's Cavern (the story of Samson is localized in this district; Judg. xiii-xvi). The line passes along precipitous walls of rock and ascends the windings of the Wâdi es-Sarâr. We pass (38 1/2M)

Deir esh-Sheikh, on a hill to the right, and (40 1/3M) 'Akûr, on a hill to the left; beyond it, the Wâdi Kalônîyeh opens on the left. The line continues to follow the Wâdi es-Sarâr. On a hill to the right is the village of (46M) Bittir.

47 1/4M. Bittir. The Baither of Joshua xv.59 in the Septuagint (Beth-arabah of Josh. xv.61 in the A.V.), or Bethar, played an important part in the insurrection of Bar Cochba against the Romans... The latter succeeded in capturing it only after a siege of 3 1/2 years (A.D. 135), when a terrible massacre of the inhabitants ensued."

### (e). NEW RAILWAY ATLAS OF NORTH AFRICA.

Neil Robinson writes that 'World Rail Atlas Vol. 7 - North, East and Central Africa' is now available - „It is exactly the same A4 landscape soft-back format as the last publication. The layout of the book is very similar, although I have made a few format refinements to generally improve the appearance.

I am selling it at £25.99 plus GBP 5.10 postage to all European addresses (or GBP 2.20 postage to UK). You will especially be interested in the Egypt coverage. Paul Cotterell's studies and maps of the WW1 trench railways of the Sinai were very useful indeed. But only large scale research uncovered exactly how many narrow gauge railways had existed in Egypt, and how many more I failed to research fully, and how many I have (no doubt) missed altogether."

The book can be ordered from Neil at: 1, High View Close, Darfield, Barnsley, South Yorkshire, S73 9AR. He has supplied me with a copy which is very much up to the standard of the previous volume and is highly recommended!

### (f). THE GRAVE OF GEORGE SYKES IN HAIFA.

Michael Gottschalk of Haifa has been pursuing his researches indefatigably, coming up with a few dead ends but, with the help of others, often stumbling upon useful information. In addition the Palestine Police Old Comrades Association has offered to help sponsor the refurbishment of an appropriate headstone. Here is just a digest.

In the 1901 London Census is a George Sykes aged 33, i.e. born about 1868 in Clapham, London, and married to Frances Sykes (27 at this time). He is described as 'Works Manager, Telegraph Engineering' and the Household included Diana Smith (60) (possibly maid/cook? Or Francis' mother?); Rose Botwright (16) - (possibly housemaid) and children George (3), Marie (2) and Dorothy (11 months). The family is for some unknown reason not found in the 1911 census.

In December 1928 a George Sykes married a Doris Clarke at Marylebone, London.

It is now known that George Robert Hughenden Sykes was born 19th. April 1897, at Barrington Road, Brixton, Lambeth, London; He attended Dulwich College and when World War 1 broke out joined the East Kent Mounted Yeomanry. After the war he joined the Great Eastern Railway Company at Stratford, became a member of the Institute of Mechanical Engineers and in 1926 transferred to Palestine Railways. (This has made matters complicated because he was not in the military any more when killed in 1929 and therefore the Commonwealth War Graves Commission is not responsible for maintenance of the grave.) We also know why he could not be found in the lists of the Royal Engineers!

In the 'Journal of the Institute of Locomotive Engineers' Vol. 19 (1929) p. 831 is an Obituary:-

"Mr. George R. Hughenden Sykes met his death on the rioting that took place on the 25th. August last in Palestine. His duties at Haifa as Locomotive Running Superintendent of the Palestine Railways no doubt made him a marked man in the movement of troops, and the rioters 'stoned him to death' literally.

Born in 1897, Mr. Sykes was educated at Dulwich College and at the outbreak of the Great War in 1914 volunteered for service, joining the East Kent Mounted Yeomanry in August of that year.

After training at Herne Bay, Crowborough and Blackdown (Aldershot) camps he was drafted overseas attached to the 57th. West Lancashire Division, 170th. Brigade in France, being for most of the time a dispatch rider in the 'Signals'. He remained in the army until 1919, and notwithstanding some exciting experiences, received no wound, in striking contrast to the method of his death during a so-called peace time occupation in Palestine.

After leaving the Army he underwent locomotive-shop training at Stratford, and in the Running Department of the former Great Eastern Railway under the late Mr. Hill, Locomotive Superintendent, joining the Palestine Railways as Locomotive Running Superintendent in 1926. He was elected a member of the Institution on the 29th. of January, 1929."

[So we see a life cut tragically short, a man of a technical family, educated, qualified, enthusiastic, trained in locomotive engineering and accepted by his peers, entrusted with a responsible post, recently married.... not yet a father. Intriguingly his contemporaries assumed he was not a random victim but specifically hated for his work in troop movements.]

There is an intriguing possible link - which may be no more than coincidence - with Benjamin Disraeli; the reason is the unusual name Hughenden, which could be de-



rived from some association with Hughenden Manor near Beaconsfield.

From a website concerned with Disraeli's life and writings:- „In the summer of 1833 Disraeli met Sir Francis and Lady Sykes (d. 1846) and shortly afterwards began an affair with Henrietta. Sir Francis's property included Basildon Park in Berkshire (now a National Trust property), a setting for Henrietta Temple, the novel inspired by the affair and the pressing need to settle debts. Henrietta was aristocratic and sensuous and, as the references to ‚A mother's kiss' (and ‚your faithful and fond love') indicate, capable of meeting Disraeli's complex emotional needs. Their relationship was aided by Sir Francis's frequent absences abroad and complicated in the summer of 1834 by Henrietta introducing Disraeli to his future mentor, the Lord Chancellor, Lord Lyndhurst (1772-1863) with whom she later became involved. But it would be her affair with Disraeli's friend, the painter Daniel Maclise, which ended their relationship in December 1836 and subsequently threatened Disraeli's future.

In 1838 Sir Francis sued Maclise for adultery and, until deterred by his solicitor, threatened to recover money he claimed had been improperly paid to Disraeli. It has been suggested that it was this money that helped to stave off Disraeli's bankruptcy at a critical time for him. In the Mutilated Diary entry for 1833 Disraeli attributed his ‚happiest year' to being in love with Henrietta, the memories of this tenderness shaping his last letter to her in 1837 as her life fell apart. This letter from Henrietta on [8th]. August 1834 refers not only to the pain of separation but also to her pleasure that he is working on the novel, Henrietta Temple, and to her confidence that ‚it will mend our broken fortune'. She continues ‚Dearest my tears will blot the paper, & I cannot restrain them, I know not what I write'; not even detailing the latest society news helped: ‚If you knew how desolate this [London] house is - your white stick on the sofa [sic], a ghost of departed joy'.

Jim Foy, the General Manager of Hughenden for the National Trust is sceptical: „Reading through your e-mail trail below, I can see that you are referencing the relationship between Benjamin Disraeli, formerly of Hughenden Manor, and Lady Henrietta Sykes, in querying whether George Sykes was involved with Hughenden Manor at all? This relationship, as I understand it, commenced in 1832/3 until 1837 and Benjamin Disraeli did not purchase Hughenden Manor until 1848, long after this friendship with Lady Sykes had ended. Benjamin Disraeli then died in 1881, some 16 years before Mr George Hughenden Sykes was born, with the Manor and estate passing to his nephew Conningsby Disraeli until 1936 when the estate was held in Trust by the Abbey family who made Hughenden Manor over to the National Trust in 1947.

From the information at hand it would seem that any link between George

Hughenden Sykes and Hughenden Manor is merely a coincidence and in name alone. If Mr Sykes is a descendant of the Sykes family, once of Basildon Park, you could perhaps contact the team there as we do not hold any information on this family.“

A genealogical researcher has come up with quite extensive information from the British archives, going back several generations. Not all of this is relevant here. But we have confirmation that George Henry Sykes married Frances Riches; on 19th. April 1897 he was a ‚Master Telegraph Engineer' and in 1901 his residence was given as 15, Vernon Road, Clapham. George Robert Hughenden Sykes was their first child, born 19th. April 1897 at 78, Barrington Road, Brixton, London. He married Doris Clarke on 21st. Nov. 1928 at the Marylebone Register Office. Doris had been born 1892 in Greenwich, i.e. was a few years older than he, and she died 1965 in Surrey. So the poor couple had only some ten months together and there seems to be no record of her ever having remarried. At the time she was widowed she was 37 and childless. George's death is given as ‚26th. Aug. 1929, Haifa, Palestine.' His two sisters were:

Marie Agnes M. Sykes born 14th. July 1898 at 78, Barrington Road, Brixton, and died September 1972 in Thanet; in 1921 she had married a Henry T. Pockett who died June 1968 in Thanet; They had a son Raymond (March 1922) and a daughter Sheilah (August 1931), the latter died 2002;

and Dorothy Hilda Sykes, born June 1900, Clapham, married Leslie Norman Spear in March 1931 and had one daughter, Jennifer, born 1939. So there are indeed some living descendants of the family, though not from George's direct line.

A rededication of the headstone for Sykes is now planned for 11.00 on 22nd. Feb. 2011 at the Haifa cemetery, and anyone who wishes to attend is welcome. This really is a quite remarkable story. Kol HaKavod to Michael.

#### (g). SELAH MERRILL.

Hanswulf Bloedhorn of Tübingen has written, in relation to our comments on the opening of the railway to Jerusalem with: „one Selah Merrill" and „It is believed that Selah Merrill was somehow connected to the American Colony" that: „S. Merrill (2nd. May 1837 – 22nd. Jan. 1909) was a Theologian and studied at Yale as well as, from 1868–1870, Hebrew in Berlin. As an Archaeologist I especially value his early archaeological observations in Syria/Palestine, where he later served as US Consul in Jerusalem. Further information on his life can be found on Wikipedia: <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selah\\_Merrill](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selah_Merrill)>.“

#### (h). RUTENBERG POWER STATION.

In ‚Berliner Zeitung' 30/31.10.2010  
הרכבת

p. ‚P.1.' (Travel supplement) is an article by Franz Lerchenmüller on tourism in Israel and Jordan entitled ‚The Way of the Waters', which includes: „As a symbol of the efforts to make the Jordan into a River of Peace, a new ‚Peace Park' is to be opened, on an island between Jordan and Yarmuk, three kilometres south of the Lake Tiberias, on which Israel and Jordan signed their peace agreement in 1994. In the 1930's the Israeli [sic!] engineer Pinchas Rutenberg built here a hydroelectric power station, in agreement with the King of Jordan. [sic. - at this period still Transjordan ] From the Israeli side the entrance only goes to the three bridges constructed from black basalt, which were built in the Roman, Ottoman and British periods. From Jordan the entrance into Israel is possible. Bent tracks and old barbed wire runs between the canals, ruins and a crumbling embankment. Bats fly through the walls of the former turbine house. But there is no shortage of fantasies amongst the people here to make out of this site an attractive Israeli-Jordanian joint tourism project. The building with the mighty turbines will become a multi-media visitor centre. The former houses of the workers will be converted to Eco-Lodges. The station in Bauhaus style, a large white hall with a horseshoe-shaped flat concrete roof attached, will be revived. The graffiti from the 1930's will stay - ‚Why is the train late again?“. Most important though will be the flat area currently overgrown with bushes. The former reservoir will be flooded again and provide a resting place for the 500,000 birds which fly through here annually. Model for this is the Hula Agamon Lake in the northern Jordan Valley - a restored area at which nowadays cranes, storks and pelicans gather, whilst along the channels beavers fill their stomachs and show no interest in the tourists, who travel through the area on electric cars. And that is how it should also be at Peace Island - it will involve investment of ten million dollars, a large portion of good will on both sides and stable political circumstances to enable this to become reality.“

#### (i). OBITUARY - AMITH BEN-SHALOM.

On 22.11.2010 I was shocked and saddened to learn from Sybil Ehrlich of the sudden death of Amith Ben-Shalom. She attended the Levaya (funeral) and notes: „There were loads of people there, but the only people from the railfans crowd apart from myself were Chen, Uri Yinon and Uri Ben-Rehav. The cemetery is in Moshav Avihayil, on the northern edge of Netanya. The family has connections with Moshav Bitan Aharon (I think they lived there at one time) and Avihayil is the regional cemetery for the moshavim. It's a beautiful, quiet place, full of trees and tranquillity....

His mother was also there. Amith was 48 years old, with a wife and children. People who had been in recent correspondence with him thought that in the last few weeks things seemed a bit strange, confused, not like himself. We asked Amith's brother

Rami what had happened. Rami said that many years ago Amith had had cancer and recovered and put it all behind him. In recent weeks he was suffering terrible back pains and was afraid the cancer had returned. They were waiting for the results of the tests... and then...

Amith and Paul must be having a wonderful time together now, with all those old industrial locos in Gan Eden."

#### (j). HEDSCHAS.

I recently gave a lecture in Bochum - in the Christuskirche (where else)? The Pfarrer there showed me a Memorial from the First World War laid with thousands of mosaic tiles, listing the fallen soldiers and the countries which were „The Enemy“ at the time. Intriguingly, along with England, Russia, Italy, Japan, France, Guatemala, Siam, Honduras etc. stands ‚Hedschas‘! It appears that the Kingdom (established in June 1916) was classed as a formal participant in the war.

#### (j). HOLOCAUST RAILWAY GUILT?

True to the Editor's use of his prerogative to include items that, while not strictly speaking to do with the Middle East, nevertheless have a ‚Jewish‘ angle and involve Railways:- Recently two campaigns to force modern State Railways to accept and admit responsibility - and to compensate for - their activities during the Holocaust have come to our attention. The Editor, a Rabbi working in Europe and heavily involved in Remembrance ceremonies and projects, confesses that despite a deep historical interest in the gruesome details of railway operations in the period, he is more than a little unhappy at the attitude displayed by some organisations, which boils down to „Your Grandfather Killed My Grandfather - therefore You Must give Me Money.“

First, from a JTA News Agency briefing dated 14.11.2010:

„French Rail Co. apologizes for collaborating with Nazis. The head of the State-owned French railway company SNCF made an unprecedented show of regret for the company's responsibility in sending some 76,000 Jews in France to Nazi death camps. The apology came as part of a bid to assuage American and Jewish community reticence about working with a company that notoriously collaborated with Nazi occupiers.

SNCF chairman Guillaume Pepy told American lawmakers and Jewish community leaders in Florida earlier this month that the company ‚wants to convey its profound sorrow and regret‘ for being ‚part of‘ the Nazi plan to exterminate Jews, according to an English-language statement by the company dated Nov. 4th. ‚SNCF was part of this plan - it carried the trains of deportees to the French border with Germany‘, the statement said.

SNCF hopes to secure a \$2.6 bil-

lion bid for a high-speed rail project in Florida and another \$45 billion project in California, but it has met with opposition from lawmakers and members of the Jewish community in both states, some of whom want the company to clarify its role during World War II before any sale is considered.

The Holocaust Documentation and Education Center in Florida did not accept the SNCF apology, the French news agency AFP reported. ‚If they want to issue an apology, they should issue an apology directly to the survivors. Who are they issuing the apology to?‘ said Rosita Kenigsberg, executive vice president of the Holocaust organization. ‚They are spending so much money coming here, paying a PR campaign, they are talking with everybody except the people directly involved. I don't understand‘, she told AFP.

In the past, the company insisted it acted under the ‚yoke‘ of Nazi occupiers - an idea that it did fully disavow in the Nov. 4 statement. In 2007, the SNCF won an appeal in France freeing the company from taking individual responsibility for shipping Jews to Germany during WWII. A formal apology issued in person, and similar to what was said in Florida, has not been given in France.

The company said it hopes to ‚reach out‘ to American Jewish leaders to better explain SNCF's actions during the war. For more than a decade, it has made its historical archives available to American and other researchers.“

The trouble with this form of moral equivalence is that there is no logical limit. The railways of the period were used to haul numberless prisoners of war, political deportees, re-settlers, forced workers, refugees as well as those destined for extermination. There are enough books describing the mass transports of political prisoners to places like Buchenwald, totally separate from the ‚Jewish‘ racial issue - which of course also affected Roma and Sinti.

Then there is the politically-suspect idea that ‚The Jews‘ somehow control the transport policy of American States; and the rather emotional idea that working with a company that collaborated is not OK if it is SNCF but is OK if it is Ford or IBM or... a long list of such business deals has been researched and revealed. And what is the difference between ‚regret‘ and ‚a show of regret‘? Is it merely a chance to earn \$48 Billion? Even I might say ‚Sorry‘ for such a sum....

There is more on this issue: In ‚Berliner Zeitung‘ 29.11.2010 p.11 is an article by Axel Veiel on the French dilemma:

„He is friendly, almost charming, and in addition the 52-year-old Guillaume Pépy is an incorrigible optimist. How else could he have considered steering the French railways towards new shores in times of increasing international competition? In such circumstances it is even more remarkable what the

SNCF chief had to say recently in the USA. He confessed to „Deep pain and regret“. Unusual tones. But unusual things have been happening, and the SNCF has to re-write its history.

The chapter which speaks of the railway administration's heroic resistance against the German Nazis needs looking at - this was rewarded with the ‚Order of the Foreign Legion‘ and the ‚War Cross with Victory Palms‘. It needs to be added that it was French loco drivers who drove French Jews in French cattle vans to Auschwitz; and to this must be added that those in charge at the SNCF did nothing to protest against these transports.

Without an appropriate correction of this History, Jewish voters have clearly told US Representatives, the SNCF and its partners Alstom, Veolia and Vinci will not get the \$45Billion contract for construction and operation of the high-speed line from Los Angeles to Sacramento. Without a late ‚mea culpa‘ the French may also not participate on the competition against Japanese and German firms for the other nine lines which President Obama has planned. There would then be no hope for lucrative export orders for the TGV to the American market.

It is an open question, just how much regret is necessary to get such a lot of business. Negotiations are taking place at the highest level on this point. France's new Foreign Minister Michèle Alliot-Marie had hardly arrived at the Quai d'Orsay before she met the Executive Director of the American Jewish Committee, David Harris. The smart successful lawyer and the Minister, known for her discreet manner, presented a united face afterwards. ‚The SNCF will acknowledge its history and create some clarity‘ it was announced. For Richard Prasquier, head of the Jewish Representative Council of France, with this statement the railway company is taking a step in the right direction. ‚The SNCF will only get out of this situation when it tells the truth‘, he believes. The SNCF top managers had until now believed that they had long been freed of any stain of collaboration with the German Nazis. In March 2007 the Administrative Court of Bordeaux had ruled against an earlier decision which had made the SNCF guilty of involvement in the deportation of Jews and had been sentenced to payment of compensation. The judges had declared that the Nazis and the Vichy regime had ordered the deportations and that the SNCF had had no possibility to express a different viewpoint. ‚The Court decision shows that the SNCF was under pressure and had no decision-making powers of its own‘ declared the railway company's lawyer, Yves Baudelot, with satisfaction.

In an earlier decision the Court had found that the SNCF was indeed aware of the transports of the Jews and had made no protest and had supplied the cattle wagons. But now it is not the French Justice system but the American political system which needs to

be convinced and which is judging the SNCF. And so, three and a half years after the Bordeaux ruling, Pépy announced his deep regret - albeit with the rider that the repentance is for deeds which were performed under pressure from the German occupiers. It is unclear whether David Harris and the other Jewish representative organisations will be satisfied with such a 'Yes, but...' response."

In Germany the emotions are screwed up even higher. A leaflet was distributed with the Jewish weekly newspaper in November 2010 by the 'Train of Remembrance' organisation ([www.zug-der-erinnerung.org](http://www.zug-der-erinnerung.org)).

The 'ZUG DER ERINNERUNG' leaflet reads (in excerpts):-

"The Deutsche Bahn AG has been celebrating station festivals for months, to mark 175 Years of German Railways. The high point will be a major ceremony with the Bundeskanzlerin in Nürnberg in early December.

For several thousand people, who experienced the German railway system in a tragic manner between 1933 and 1945, such festivities are unacceptable. These people are survivors of the mass deportations performed by the predecessor of the DBAG, the Deutsche Reichsbahn.

The 'Reichsbahn' dragged its victims all over Europe into Forced Labour or Extermination Camps. There were millions, including uncounted children and young people. Those being deported had to pay for their journey to death themselves; the 'Reichsbahn' charged fares for the special trains to Auschwitz. The 'Reichsbahn' wagons returned filled with the booty plundered from the dead. Without the German railway system it would have been impossible to carry out the mass murder, which also brought economic benefits, on this scale.

The last survivors of the 'Reichs-

bahn' crimes have deserved that they should be recompensed. After a lifetime of damage due to the deportation and their lives as slaves, it should be automatically understood that in their old age they should be able to live without financial worries. But the 'Reichsbahn' heirs refuse; the DBAG and the German Government refuse to pay compensation to the deportation victims of the 'Reichsbahn'. Instead they are fobbed off with 'Help Projects' in Eastern Europe, at a rate of about €25 per person. The DBAG is turning its victims into beggars. The helplessness of the weakened and impoverished survivors of Auschwitz is being misused.

This is the same concern which currently earns billions. As the plans for the massive construction project in Stuttgart illustrate, the 'Reichsbahn' heirs have enough money to invest in controversial future projects. But how far is the DBAG really oriented towards the future, when it does not want to remember the blame attached to German railway system? .....

The NS victims travelled at least 48 hours in their sealed wagons to the camps. The deportees had to pay their own fares - half price for children. The Reichsbahn offered a discount towards groups of 400 persons or more - and never paid any of the money back.

Instead of proper compensation the DBAG is offering survivors meagre sums - the ca. 200,000 'Reichsbahn' victims in Eastern Europe are being offered single payments of €25. Due to the short-term collapse of the air-conditioning system in trains, the DBAG paid those affected €500 last summer; 48 hours of deathly terror on German rails seems to be worth only €25...."

The leaflet is illustrated with photos of children who were deported, and of the DR electric E19 loco at Nürnberg Museum. It concludes by calling for a mass demonstration at Nürnberg Hbf. on 4th. December.

[Editor comments - a Very emotional appeal, which also mixes up the extermination trains (from which, naturally enough, there were very few survivors) and the trains of 'Zwangsarbeiter' from Eastern Europe, of whom many remain.]

#### **(k). OBITUARY: GEORGE BEHREND. 1922 - 2010.**

From 'Today's Railways Europe' No. 179 (Nov. 2010) p.19:-

Railway writer and historian George Behrend died on 12th. July at the age of 88. "An expert on Pullman and Wagon-Lit cars, Behrend wrote several books on these and many other railway-related topics... Born at Burghclere, Hampshire, he lived on Jersey from 1956 to 1989 and then in Findochty, north-east Scotland. During his time there he was a supporter of the Keith-Dufftown railway and helped to bring two Pullman cars and original Pullman crockery to the line. His wife, Jeanette D'Eyer, died in 1992. They had no children. He continued to make one trip abroad each year while his health permitted, his favourite being the Orient Express to Venezia. He also travelled all the way from his home to Penzance, Cornwall using sleeper trains on two consecutive nights on one occasion: from Inverness to London one night and then from London to Penzance the following night. Deteriorating health finally led to him moving into a nursing home in Cullen in early 2009. Behrend had an extensive knowledge of rolling stock throughout Europe and often received calls requesting the number of a particular vehicle. If he did not know the answer offhand, he would know where to find it in his vast collection of information. It is understood that some of his archive will now go to the Wagons-Lits Society."

[The Editor adds: I read 'Gone With Regret', his homage to the Great Western Railway, several times in my youth. But it was years later that we made contact and I recall friendly and helpful and supportive letters - also on Sleeping and Dining Cars in Egypt and on Palestine Railways - at a time when these things are by no means automatic. These notes then appeared in 'Harakevet'.]

91:08.

## **OTHER MIDDLE EAST RAILWAYS.**

### **A. IRAN.**

#### **(i). CHINA LINK.**

From 'Telegraph.co.uk' 07.09.2010, by Malcolm Moore. "China is poised to sign a \$2 Billion (GBP1.3 Bn) deal to build a railway line in Iran in the first step of a wider plan to tie the Middle East and Central Asia to Beijing.

China's railways minister, Liu Zhijun, is expected to visit Tehran this week to seal the deal, according to his Iranian counterpart, Hamid Behbahani. 'The final document of the contract has already been signed with a Chinese company and the Chinese minister will visit Iran on September 12 to ink the agreement', said Mr. Behbahani.

The new line will run from Tehran to the town of Khosravi on the border with

Iraq, around 360 miles as the crow flies, passing through Arak, Hamedan and Kermanshah. Eventually, the Iranian government said, the route could link Iran with Iraq and even Syria as part of a Middle-Eastern corridor. That could also benefit the 5,000 Iranians who make pilgrimages each day to the holy cities of Najaf and Karbala in Iraq.

Nicklas Swanstrom, the executive director of the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute at John Hopkins University, said the contract to build the line was the first step for China to build an entire rail infrastructure for central Asia. 'It makes sense that if you build railways in Iran, you then get deals to stretch the lines into central Asia', he said, referring to a

'very concrete plan' to run a railway from Iran through the landlocked countries of Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and eventually to Kashghar in China, in a modern 'silk route'.

The line would give the central Asian states vital access to Iran's ports of Chahbahar on the shores of the Persian Gulf. 'For China, it would cut the cost of transporting goods to Europe by 5-6%', said Professor Swanstrom. 'It also makes political sense, because while technically the US, Europe or Russia could block China's sea routes, it would also have a land route. And by tying your neighbour's infrastructure to you, it brings them closer', he added. 'It decreases Russia's influence in the region, and definitely

decreases the influence of the US and Europe.'

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the Iranian president, raised the idea of the new railway earlier this year at a summit in Tehran. Transport ministers from Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Iran are expected to gather in Dushanbe, the Tajik capital formerly known as Stalinabad, next month to firm up a deal for a 1,225 mile route. The Asian Development Bank is funding a feasibility study for the project. Iran is determined to forge tighter links with its neighbours, and rebuild itself as a trade hub, in order to build a regional alliance that would support it against NATO countries. At the beginning of last month, Mr. Ahmadinejad said Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Iran should join forces to become 'an obstacle' to Western influence in the region.

Iran has pointedly not signed the European Union plans for a trade corridor through Europe, the Caucasus and Asia, and has instead busied itself with bilateral agreements with its neighbours. Reza Rahim, the Iranian vice-president, has promised to cut freight times between Europe and China from two months by sea to eleven days by land.

In addition, the current sanctions allow China, which relies on the Persian state for 15% of its energy needs, to drive a hard bargain on the construction contract for the line. China is rapidly expanding its own high-speed rail network and has unveiled plans for lines that will connect Beijing with London, both through Russia and through central Asia. China Railway Group, the largest railway construction company, has also recently revealed it has had 'early stage contact' with South African companies about undertaking rail projects on South Africa."

'Railway Gazette' adds that the meeting was scheduled for September 12th., that the line would run west from Tehran through Hamadan, Malayer and Kermanshah to the Iraqi border at Khosravi, and construction is expected to take two and a half years. „The line will eventually offer onward connections via Iraq to the Mediterranean port of Latakia in Syria with the long-term objective of offering China a southern route to Europe.“

[The Editor adds: Fascinating to see how, a century later, an equivalent of the Baghdadbahn will now be built from east to west to link the Orient with the Mediterranean - rather than the other way round! That already tells us a lot about geopolitical changes in the last century.]

## (ii). CHINESE TRAMS FOR MASHAD

From 'Op de Rails' magazine of the Dutch NVBS: 10/2010, p.485, no sources quoted:- (but thanks to Marc Stegemann for the cutting):-

„Chinese rolling stock manufacturer CNR Changchun is building 60 fast trams for the Mashad (Iran) future fast tramway network. The first line, intended for opening in

2010, has a length of 24 km and will eventually become part of a 77 km network.

Initially second hand rolling stock had been obtained, so in 1996-1997 some articulated trams were bought from Düsseldorf Rheinbahn. No doubt, these are or will be scrapped.“

## B. LIBYA.

In 'Lok Magazin' 10/2010 p.16 - is a brief item on new contracts won by Vossloh. "In connection with the new construction of the Libyan railway network by China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation Vossloh will supply 1300km. of rail fastenings and points. Deliveries will run from 2010 to 2010. This means Vossloh is now involved in both of the new lines being currently built - one along the Mediterranean coast should bridge the gap in rail services between Egypt and Tunisia, whilst the second reaches into the interior of the country to access mineral deposits.

From 'Fern Express' III/10 p. 57: On 11th. June 2010 Vladimir Yakunin, the President of RZD, opened a rail factory at the town of Ras-Lanuf in Libya. This is a part of the RZD contract to build the Surt - Benghazi line. The plant will be able to turn out 500km of rail per year, up to a maximum of 700 km. per year.

## C. EGYPT.

In the 'Industrial Railway Society Overseas News Bulletin' No. 874 (Sept. 2010) p. 25 is an entry on the Media Production City with its metre-gauge 4wh. Alexandria tram (built by La Brugeoise for Cairo) and USATC 0-6-0T ("Discussion amongst the IRS Yahoo group has led to the tentative identification of this locomotive as Viw 4467/1943, originally USATC 1994, later WD 311 'Sapper'" disposed of at Suez in June 1952 and of which nothing more has been recorded).

Also the TEMPLE OF KARNAK Visitor Centre. Inside here is preserved a 600mm gauge 0-4-0DM "allegedly built by Buda-Lanova in 1934, together with a (4wh.) carriage. The locomotive was supplied new to the temple site, which was then under excavation. The railway was used to carry away the excavated silt and sand. When this work was completed the locomotive was kept and is now preserved.

Buda was a petrol and diesel engine manufacturer; Lanova was a design feature introduced by Buda in 1933 - hence its prominence in the engine casting. The locomotive frame carries the name of The Ruth Co. and it is probable that the builder was, in fact, the Ruth Mine Co., a known supplier of narrow gauge mining and contractors' railway equipment."

## D. HEDJAZ.

### "THE AQABA-BAHN, A German Railway in the Desert.

" By Dirk Höllerhage, in 'Eisenbahn Kurier' 1/2011, pp. 72-76. Describing a holiday in August 2009.

"I set off from Amman in our hired car together with my son and niece far too late in the afternoon; when we were only halfway to the Red Sea darkness fell, the clear star-strewn desert night. Fortunately the roads in Jordan are very well constructed. Shortly before entering Aqaba I noticed in the light from the headlights to our left a lengthy earth embankment that looked like it belonged to a railway. This must be the line linking the Hedjaz Railway to the Red Sea! A railwayman in Amman had told me that there is no more rail traffic on this line; nevertheless I cannot resist turning off at the next field track in order to inspect the tracks - an what appears in the light of a pocket torch is a pleasant surprise - the rails are well-polished and clearly used! So something must be working here after all!

Even before breakfast I leave our hotel the next morning to seek out the station of Aqaba, which must lie somewhere on the hillside above the town. Suddenly I hear a loud throbbing noise through the open window, and at the same moment from behind a house facade appear two orange-coloured diesel locos, which are slowly and with much effort dragging a long freight train up the gradient from the harbour.

I can hardly believe my good fortune, for I had truly not reckoned on such an encounter. The ensuing chase after the train leads me to the centre of activity, the operational headquarters of the railway.

Behind the high fence I observe tracks, goods wagons and locos, as far as the eye can see. After making a short telephone call the gateman lets me in, and a few moments later I enter with awe the large locomotive shed, in which a lot of activity is already taking place. Naturally I am greeted with a welcoming cup of tea in the office of the chief of the depot and On this occasion I gather the information I shall need for the coming days of photography. The connecting line from Batn el-Ghul to Aqaba was opened on 6th. October 1975, in order to convey the phosphates from the mines of Abyad and Wadi al-Hasa near Faraifa south of Amman to the harbour at Aqaba. Originally this branch from the Hedjaz Bahn should have been built at the beginning of the 20th. Century - as part of the plan to build the main line - but this was prevented by Great Britain's veto, which even included sending warships to anchor outside Istanbul, in order to hinder the construction. [sic. - this is not actually the historical reality. Ed.]

Only two generations later was the idea of building a link to the Red Sea revived. In 1965 a



German Engineering Bureau - with help from the Bundesbahn - prepared a scheme for the alignment, and in 1972 construction finally began between Aqaba and Batn al-Ghul, and at the same time the Hedjaz line was completely renewed up to the phosphate mines already mentioned. The project was financed with a long-term loan through the Credit Institute for Reconstruction in Jordan, of 232.7M Deutschmarks within the framework of German Development Aid.

The line Fairaifa - Batn al-Ghul (152km) remains in the ownership of the Hedjaz Railway, a religious foundation (Waqf) that cannot be disposed of. It is leased to the Aqaba Railway Corporation for operation. The new line from Batn al-Ghul to Aqaba Port (117km) is directly part of this Corporation.

Between four and six goods trains are constantly under way along this 1050mm-gauge line. Each consists of up to 32 phosphate wagons and two General Electric locos double-heading, some of which are now well over 20 years old! There is no fixed timetable; once a train has been loaded at the mines, it sets off straight away to the south. Due to the many crossing loops along the way on the single-track line an efficient operation and swift transit to the Red Sea can be guaranteed.

Coming from the North, the line is not very spectacular or photogenic. The phosphate trains run straight on through the lunar-style landscape. The scenery however changes dramatically immediately after Ma'an, for here begins the legendary Wadi Rum, a breathtaking desert landscape of indescribable beauty. The rails are now embedded in fine golden sand, and the white rakes of wagon curve through the countryside and past countless rock formations rising majestically into the steel-blue sky, as though on a model railway. The eye can simply never be satisfied - and in the middle of all this there runs a railway!

After passing through the Wadi Rum the tracks follow a valley of about 40km. that shortly before reaching the Jordan Valley becomes more like a canyon. A short tunnel is traversed, and then, following a curve to the left, the line heads straight down to the waiting ships in the harbour. On this section the trains climbing up along the edge of the town of Aqaba can be photographed with a wonderful background of the Red Sea and the Egyptian coast.

On the next morning I have positioned myself by the exit from this tunnel, to catch a shot of a 'Mountain climber' in front of the imposing Jordan Valley and with the State of Israel in the background. I don't need to wait long. Hardly have the roaring diesel locos poked their noses through the tunnel mouth than the goods train begins to slow down and then with squealing brakes comes to a stand next to me. 'Would I like to come for a ride?' asks the engine driver in broken English, and looks down from his cab window into a very surprised face! Unfortunately

I have to turn down this invitation, because I am with the car and no-one can say when I will be back again at this point. Son and niece are waiting for me in the hotel, since there are other activities planned for today apart from photographing trains - namely, a camel ride in Wadi Rum.

With painful backs we survive the torture of the ride; on the way back in the evening to our accommodation a phosphate train comes suddenly, punctually with the setting sun, at the station 'Rum'. Thanks to its slow progress and my flash apparatus we are still able to follow the train for half an hour into the desert. My son and niece stand next to me at every stop and watch the proceedings with interest. At some point the asphalted road stops abruptly direct next to the tracks, and turns into desert sand. End of the line, there is nothing more we can do here. Quickly the camera apparatus is set up as the big GE diesel is appearing with its bright headlight in the distance - and again the unbelievable happens. With squealing brakes the 32 wagons are brought to a halt directly adjacent to us. One of the three railwaymen on board jumps down and asks us in a friendly fashion whether we would like to travel on the loco to the phosphate mines? 'At least the young lady', the engine driver high above us adds, for clarification, staring hard at my niece. So - while we have been fascinated by the sight of the train, and I was busy working the shutter of my camera, the train crew were apparently just as interested at every encounter by a view of my niece. So now they had taken the bull by the horns and stopped the train on the open line to observe the attractive, unveiled blonde beauty from closer to. A ride through the night with such female companionship would have been simply too enticing! But unfortunately this time, too, we must decline the offer. I gladly make a few souvenir photos as requested, then the horn blares again and the ground begins to tremble beneath our feet. With earsplitting noise the phosphate train gets moving once more and vanishes into the darkness of the Wadi Rum.

So on the morning of our departure day my son brings me by car to the railway tracks, where a goods train is already awaiting departure. Since our plane to Germany departs from Amman, and the train also goes about 270km. to the north, I could travel in the cab whilst my son and niece drive parallel to me, and then by the northernmost phosphate mine, according to the map, the road and railway run close together and one could be relatively easily picked up again. That at least is my plan.

Again and again the engine drivers have invited me to join them on the loco and even stopped on the open line to 'gather me up'! In view of this experience I clamber carefree and full of anticipation up to the cab of the waiting freight train. But to my surprise the driver reacts very coolly to my request. His request to see my permit indicates that

something is wrong here. Of course, I do not have one! The exit signal turns to green. The railwaymen present are visibly nervous. The number of the loco despatch office is dialled, and the phone is pressed to my ear. For a trip on a locomotive I need a permit, confirms the voice at the far end. I can indeed get one at the Despatch Office, but by now it is too late for that. The locomotive's motors are already at full revs, and there is nothing that can be done without official permission. As the train slowly sets itself in motion I clamber down from the cab and stand like a damp poodle, alone on the railway embankment. How often I could have taken this ride, and now that at last I have the opportunity, it is not possible! What a pity!

But that is just one more reason to travel another time to that wonderful land between the Dead Sea and the Red Sea, for a loco cab ride through the Wadi Rum stands high on my list of things to do."

## E. TURKEY.

(i). 'Op de Rails' of the Dutch NVBS magazine: 10/2010, p.485, no sources quoted:- „Three Gotha 4 wheel trams were aquired by Bursa (Turkey) from the company running the nostalgic tramway line on the Asiatic part of Istanbul. Bursa counts 1.3 M inhabitants and two fast tramway lines with Stadtbahn-B rolling stock.“

## (ii). HAYDARPASA STATION FIRE.

On Sunday 28.11.2010 around 15.00 the historic Haydarpasa station in Istanbul caught fire. According to press reports the fire began due to repair works on the roof, quickly spread to engulf the roof and then the upper stories of the building. From 'Hurriyet' online: „Talat Aydin, a Transportation Ministry official, confirmed that repair work was being done on the building and said that the extent of the damage would become clear after an examination. Aydin also said that the roof did not collapse, indicating that the fire had not affected other stories of the building,. Believing that the entire structure could be at risk, authorities evacuated the scene, sending curious onlookers back to their homes. Train services in the station were halted and both personnel and passengers were removed from the building as a security precaution.

Coastal security teams, ambulances and police all responded to the fire which filled the air with heavy black smoke that reportedly reached across the Bosphorus to the Ortaköy neighbourhood on the European side of the city. Fire teams arriving from nearby districts such as Kadiköy, Üsküdar, Erenköy and Kartal tried to put out the fire using cranes and extinguishing foam. Istanbul Governor Hüseyin Avni Mutlu said he would make a statement about the cause of the fire after examining the incident.

Built in 1908 as the starting point of the Istanbul - Baghdad railroad, the Haydar-pasa station was previously damaged by fire in 1917 after ammunition stored in the building during World War I was sabotaged.

The building is a first-class monumental structure, said Eyüp Muhcu, the head of Turkey's Chamber of Architects, who noted that the historical station was constructed on 220 wooden columns and expressed doubts about the response to the blaze. 'Helicopters could have intervened on the scene within 10 to 15 minutes', he said. 'I can't understand why the authorities didn't do this. This attitude naturally brings suspicions to mind.' Istanbul authorities had previously suggested a major architectural transformation project that would involve reconstructing the historic station by demolishing the Haydarpasa Port, a proposal that has received criticism from some circles in the city."

## **F. ERITREA.**

By coincidence I have come across two accounts, one of the past and one of the present (and possible future) on this railway. Both are lengthy but they somehow 'fit together'. Place-name Orthography is of course slightly different.

(a). From 'Far Wheels', *A Railroad Safari* by C. S. Small - a classic of its time. Pub. Cleaver-Hume Press, London, 1959. The flyleaf notes: "Mr. Small, an American oil man, wrote this book in Tokyo but duty and service have taken him over the world from Japan to Mozambique, Port Sudan to Peru, and everywhere he has sought out and ridden upon the local trains. In a manner informal but well-informed, he sketches the setting of these lines, and their sometimes farcical history."

### **From: pp. 14-27: Ch. 2, 'SCARTE- MENTO RIDOTTO - FERROVIE ERITREÉ**

"Even though there is no unanimity of opinion, few will dispute that the shores of the Red Sea are the leading contenders for the dubious distinction of being the hottest places on earth.

Trunk air lines avoid the region and most travellers by ship pass through the Red Sea with only a cursory glance at the barren desert-like shoreline which shimmers in the waves of heat. This Sea has been, from time immemorial, a highway to the East. Centuries before the Suez Canal the ancient Egyptians had connected the Red Sea to the Mediterranean by means of a canal to the Nile. Few chose to tarry along this highway for all the riches lay beyond its borders. With the exception of the pearl fisheries at Khamaran Island and the salt deposits of Saleh, there was nothing to divert the voyager destined for Punt or Ophir.

The eastern shore, one side of the

Arabian Peninsula, is virtually closed to all non-Moslems, except for a handful of oil men and commercial travellers. Jeddah, the port for the holy city of Mecca, Hodeida, and Mocha in the Yemen, are Arab cities crouching in the lethargy of centuries.

The western shore, where temperatures of 168 degrees Fahrenheit have been recorded, is a barren waste that comprises the coast line of Egypt, the Sudan, Eritrea and French Somaliland. There is nothing to attract the casual tourist to the ports: Port Sudan, Massaua, Assab and Djibouti, except, perhaps, the perverse distinction of visiting a place that no-one wants to see.

These ports exist to serve a plateau which lies to the west at an altitude of 3,000 to 8,000 feet. Here, on the plateau, the tropical sun is tempered by the altitude and with adequate rainfall crops are produced for export. From three of the four ports narrow gauge railroads cross the sandy desert and climb the escarpment to serve this agricultural economy.

At Port Sudan there is a 3 foot 6 inch gauge line with over 2,000 miles of trackage which serves with the prosperous aplomb of a typical British colonial system. The goal is the fertile triangle between the White and Blue Niles which lies 250 miles west of the Red Sea. This system, with an operating surplus of nearly a million pounds, carries over 2,000,000 passengers and more than 1,300,000 tons of freight per year. Two-thirds of this freight passes through Port Sudan. Rather than tarry along the Sudan Railway, we will pass on to a less respectable but more interesting system to the south.

Massaua is the port for the former Italian Colony of Eritrea. Lost by the Italians in 1941, it passed to a British caretaker administration. In 1952, under the sponsorship of the United Nations, Eritrea was federated with Ethiopia. The Ottoman Turks, Arabs and even the medieval Portuguese pursuing the Prester John myth, preceded the Italians.

Massaua is built on three islands surrounded by the blue waters of the Red Sea. The Island of Massaua is the site of the wharves and the oldest part of the city. Here the buildings are predominantly Arab and there is a maze of narrow streets and alleys, malodorous and intriguing.

On the Island of Tallud are the railroad station, and a group of villas, built by the Italians, heavily shaded by lattice work. The paint is now peeling off them and they look forlorn in the gaze of the sun. The only well-maintained building on the island is the Government House. The hotel CIAAO (pronounced 'Chow', and representing 'Compagnie Italiano Albergo Afrique Oriental') occupies the far end of the island. Next to it is a new Coptic Church, probably the only new building since the forced departure of the Italians.

The third island is occupied by the salt works which remain prosperous since the raw materials, sea water and sun, are

free for the taking. Other industrial plants, a shipyard and the Ethiopian Naval Base, gaily painted but without ships, take up the rest of the area.

The city was heavily subsidised during the Italian regime as was the entire colony. It has now reverted to its proper economic level as a minor port. The physical plant is still in excellent condition and the idle power-cranes on the deserted modern quay look like rows of sleeping birds.

Massaua is not without its compensations. In spite of the scalding heat that brings all activities to a standstill from April to October, the clouds of swirling white dust and the glare, the best restaurant in the Red Sea area thrives in this woebegone town. The 'Restaurante Primavera' is located on the second storey of an old building overlooking the port. The tables are out on a balcony from which one can watch the languid switching in the port area and what maritime traffic there might be stirring. The shrimps here are the best in the world, for they come to your table minutes after they have left the Red Sea. After the shrimps, the spaghetti, which you take for nourishment, is cooked precisely, with loving care. It is characteristic of Massaua that the proprietor is a former electrician and one starts the fan on the balcony by twisting two live wires together.

At the end of the causeway which connects the Islands of Massaua and Talluda there is a café where, when the sun has gone down, one meets one's friends at the sidewalk tables. The swarms of flies, and the humid atmosphere which makes every movement an effort, only heighten the enjoyment of a cold glass of Melotti beer at this oasis.

In 1887 the Italians commenced the construction of a 75 centimeter (29.5 inches) gauge railroad from Massaua to Asmara. The gauge was changed to the Italian narrow gauge standard of 95 centimeters in 1900. They reached Ghinda in 1904, but it was not until 1911, twenty-five years after construction had commenced, that they finally conquered the escarpment and reached Asmara. Their goal was 73.09 miles from Massaua and 7,143 feet above sea level. The Ferrovie Eritréé is one of the spectacular mountain railroads of the world.

There are two ways of seeing the most interesting part of the line. The first is to ride the steam-hauled passenger train which takes ten hours for the Massaua-Asmara trip. This method is recommended only for the hardiest. The Mallet type tank engine burns soft coal and the passenger cars have hard wooden seats and are crammed with the locals, who betray little familiarity with soap and water. It is a magnificent trip up the hill complete with smoke, cinders, exhaust beats and the high-pitched squeak of the continental type steam whistle, all in the best tradition.

An effete method of accomplishing the same objective is to ride on one of the littorinas. These are Fiat rail cars built in the

1935-37 period and equipped with powerful diesel engines at each end. They seat twenty-eight passengers and contain, a bit abaft of amidships, a bar dispensing warm beer and sticky soft drinks. This amenity is not to be regarded lightly in the Red Sea heat. These cars make the run in three hours and forty-five minutes and they are usually on time. From the front seat you can get an unimpeded engineer's view of the line.

The rail car departs from a halt just outside the port gates on the Island of Massaua. It crosses the causeway leading to the Island of Tallud and stops again at the main station. The next stop is a few hundred yards further on for passengers who have walked over from the CIAAO Hotel. The final Massaua stop is on the mainland side of the causeway leading from the Island of Tallud. While crossing this causeway you can look back and see the white buildings silhouetted against the blue sky. At this distance Massaua looks clean and inviting.

At this halt three Eritrean policemen in British-style battledress board the car. They poke their Lee-Enfield .303 rifles out of an open window and slam home a full clip. If you are not the nervous type the click of the bolt as a live cartridge is pushed home into the chamber adds spice to the trip. The precautions are taken against the **shifita** - the Amharic word for bandit.

The **Shifita** started as local patriots against the Italian occupation, and as such, their activities were encouraged. When the Italians had been driven out they continued against the British Administration, for by this time they had become thoroughly to enjoy their lives of crime. They are still in business today and their only concession to independence is to stop killing the people they rob. They are principally active on the highway and usually take all their victim's clothes, leaving him to drive into town in his birthday suit. They have been known to hold up trains, which gives this trip a somewhat Wild West flavor.

The first section is 18.2 miles from Massaua to Mai Atal, across a typical coastal desert where the only vegetation is the thorn-bush. Some of these East African deserts are horrible in their desolation, especially in those regions where one finds the charred lava beds, sulphur yellow and and blood red sandstone. But this stretch is often pretty, and after an occasional rain can be quite beautiful, with the thorn-bushes decked out in green and yellow.

The rail car runs at a steady twenty-five miles per hour and the wind whips across one's face like an oxy-acetylene flame, and even the warm beer served aboard furnishes temporary relief for parched throats and lips. Six miles out of Massaua you start up a 1.7 per cent grade and by the time you have crossed the dry river bed at Dogali on a thirteen arch brick and masonry bridge the grade has steepened to 2.8 per cent. At Mai Atal, where the aerial ropeway crosses the

railroad, you are 551 feet above sea level.

Shortly after leaving Mai Atal, the highway and the railroad part company, and the railroad enters a broad valley alongside the dry bed of a river, or what is locally called a torrent. Such channels are dry most of the year, except when it rains on the plateau, when a wall of water rushes down the precipitous grade and flings itself into the sea. In a few days it has dried up and gone.

In this valley one gets a feeling of extreme remoteness. Herds of camels nibble at the leaves of the thorn-bushes and somehow escape impaling their lips on the thorns. As they move they raise a cloud of dust that remains suspended in the still air. The flat floor of the valley contains native farms where corn struggles against the drought. In the distance the mountains are obscured with a blue heat haze which gives a sense of unreality and blurs the horizon. This is harsh and brutal country and inspires either to hatred or wonder.

You are returned to reality as the operator pneumatically shifts gears and the twin diesel engines growl as the car squeals around the 128 foot radius curves on the 3 per cent grade.

A short distance from Damas you encounter the first and second of the thirty tunnels on the line as the rain winds in and out of the lava rock formations that make up the slope which you are climbing. You realize that the twenty-five years for the construction passed quickly when you see the tunnels and deep cuts which were hacked out of the rock by muscle, sledge hammer, drill steel and black powder. There is a short stretch of downgrade into Damas station and then the climb is resumed at 2.6 per cent.

The valley as you approach Ghinda narrows until it is less than a hundred yards wide. After three tunnels in quick succession you cross and recross the Dongollo Torrent on six closely-spaced bridges. Suddenly, as the valley reaches its narrowest point, it bursts out into a small plain and you roll into Ghinda station 43.15 miles from the coast and 3,258 feet above sea level.

The transformation is dramatic because of its suddenness. All at once life becomes bearable for the altitude has robbed the sun of its sting. The vegetation undergoes a complete change, for the thorn-bush is gone and is replaced by bushes which might be found anywhere in the temperate zone. Even in the dry season the Ghinda plain is green.

At the station the three policemen get off and return to the coast on the rail car which is waiting on the siding. The operator takes a few minutes to get a new set of train orders and to gossip with the loafers assembled on the platform. It is evident that the arrival and departure of the littorina is watched with special interest for these cars carry only the élite in first and second class. The ordinary folks travel third class in the steam train. They are not upset by the class distinction

for, being in no hurry, and only infrequently having the price of a ticket, the ten-hour trip gives them the opportunity properly to savour the journey. There is no color bar or racial discrimination in Eritrea, and for a land so recently released from foreign rule there is surprisingly little offensive nationalism.

With a new set of orders the operator boards the car and with him come three new policemen. The policemen are all over six feet tall and carry their loaded rifles with careless ease.

From Ghinda to Asmara the grade is a steady 1.5 per cent uncompensated for the 230 foot radius curves. The largest 0-4-4-0 Mallet tank engines have a rating of only ninety tons in this section. The older 0-4-4-0 tank engines can only drag fifty-five tons up the incline.

From Ghinda to Nefasit through Embatkalla the line climbs through a valley with towering hills on both sides. The grade turns and twists as it conforms to the contours of the slopes. There are five tunnels on this short stretch.

When you reach Nefasit it appears as if the railroad could go no further. Ahead is an escarpment almost 2,000 feet high. You can see the highway ascend the face by a series of hairpin bends and a grade far too steep for a train. Yet the builders found a route which climbs at a steady 3.5 per cent, 185 feet per mile, and the grade is not ameliorated or compensated for the sharp curves.

In this section you lose all sense of direction as you wind in and out of twenty tunnels, many of which contain reverse curves. Looking out the window of the car, you can see either a sheer drop of over a thousand feet or several levels of track below on the mountain's face. The tunnels are numbered, and to increase your confusion there are two numbered sixteen. As you climb, it becomes noticeably cooler, and if you are on the afternoon train, it is quite cold on the shady side of the mountain.

Arbaroba station is carved out of the rock and it is the last before the terminal. There are three spiral loops and a high stone viaduct, on a sharp curve, on the final stretch to the summit which is 7,303 feet in altitude and 1.5 miles from Asmara. The descending grade to Asmara station is a modest 3.0 per cent and the station is 160 feet lower than the summit.

Certainly for Africa, Asmara is a beautiful city and in great contrast to Massaua. Its latitude places it in the tropics and makes the days warm and pleasant. The altitude makes the nights cool and crisp and lends a crystalline sparkle to the air. Here, on a flat high plateau, were lavished all the arts of building for which the Italians are renowned. Wide streets bordered by stately trees are flanked by smart-looking shops, theatres, and the inevitable Italian cafés that produce little cups of coffee from portentous chromium-plated contraptions. The outer fringes of the

town abound with villas, guarded by tall slim eucalyptus trees, whose gardens are a profusion of brightly colored flowers. Even the utilitarian railroad shops have their share of this riot of color. Asmara is a tribute to the Italian stonemason and gardener.

One can understand why the Italians were so successful in Eritrea when one realizes that many parts of it are similar to Italy. The Italians were familiar with a harsh land with mountainous terrain where the sky is always blue and the heat and the dust give a particular tang to the atmosphere. In so many parts of Africa, and especially the British areas where the architecture comes from a cold climate, the buildings look alien and out of place. When one sees the Italian farms in the narrow valleys between Asmara and Cheren or between Decamare and Nefasit, one realizes that the builders were right at home here. As they were at home with the terrain, so with the inhabitants. There was not the wide gulf between the Eritreans, who are of Nilotic stock, and the swarthy Italians, as exists in the other parts of Africa between the negroid Bantu and the Northern Europeans. Many of the early Italian settlers married Eritreans and formed a class which bridged the two civilisation.

Eritrea must have been a pleasant backwater in the days before Mussolini decided to create the second Roman Empire. Even this insane folly was not wholly bad. Asmara, which had been a dusty colonial village, was rebuilt into the imposing city that it is today. Over fifty thousand artisans were imported to build power plants, roads and other public works which remain today. The Fascist overlords were insufferable and well merited their defeat and expulsion, but the peasant class toiled as they did at home. What is left of Eritrea today is a monument to those workers who did not suffer from the disease of most white men in Africa, which is that they are too proud to work.

Unfortunately, today, both the town and the railroad shops are but a hollow shell. The apparent prosperity is skin deep. Asmara is only a false front and behind the impressive facade there is no solid prosperity. The prosperity vanished with the subsidized economy at the time of the Italian defeat.

The well-equipped and neatly-kept railroad shops are a sad sight since the yard is littered with derelict locomotives. These derelicts are not victims of dieselization, for, with the exception of the rail cars, the entire line is steam-operated. (Note: Diesel locomotives were introduced in 1956.) They are the victims of shrinking business and its attendant poverty. Of the sixty-four locomotives in use at the peak of 1938, some twenty-odd remain in running condition. The bones of the other forty rust forlornly in the brilliant sunshine, cannibalized to keep the others in steam.

The line reached Asmara in 1911 and continued slowly westward toward the

Sudan border. The high flat plateau continues but a short distance west of Asmara when broken mountain country is again encountered. At Cheren, the scene of the fiercest battle of the last war in Eritrea, there is another spectacular stretch as the track descends again through the Cheren Gorge to the hot and sandy desert region that stretches to the Sudan border. By 1925 the line had reached Biscia and it was the intention to continue westward to Tessenai, where freight could be interchanged with the Sudan Railway which had built their 3 foot 6 inch gauge track to this point. The line to Tessenai was never built as the Italians were occupied with their plans to conquer Ethiopia.

As a part of this bold-faced scheme of aggression, sixteen new locomotives were purchased and twelve secondhand engines were obtained from Sicily. Even with the new larger locomotives the railroad had a very limited capacity. The new engines could only handle eight loaded cars between Ghinda and Asmara and the older engines were limited to five. After deducting the tare weight of the cars the useful tonnage was small indeed. To carry the materials of war and to handle the materials for the enormous building expansion at Asmara an aerial tramway or ropeway was constructed from Massaua to Asmara. The ropeway marched to its destination in a straight line scaling the mountain sides and leaping from crest to crest. It thus spanned the gap with forty-nine miles of wires instead of the tortuous seventy-three miles required by the railroad. In addition, a highway was constructed which is a masterpiece of mountain engineering.

Ethiopia, its peasant army often only equipped with spears, was beaten by the legions of Il Duce largely by use of modern weapons which included aerial bombing and poison gas. By the end of 1938 the railroad had reached its zenith and was paralleled by the ropeway and the highway. Asmara was aglitter with the preposterous uniforms of the Fascist bumbler who kept telling themselves and the rest of the world that the second Roman Empire was well under way.

By 1941 the house of cards had collapsed. A decisive defeat had been inflicted by the British at the Battle of Cheren. It is rather ironical when you visit the war cemeteries at Cheren and find that the British dead were largely Indian troops and the Italian losses principally their Eritrean askaris. Following this defeat the British South African and East African troops swiftly occupied all of Eritrea. Requiring rail and cars for the North African campaign the British Army ripped up the track from Biscia to Agordat. Farther south in defeated Italian Somaliland the entire railroad, which started from the coast at Mogadiscio, was dismantled and carted off to Tunisia. Since this line was the same gauge as the Eritrean line some of the locomotives saw service in both areas.

Today the aerial ropeway lies idle.

The carriers sway futilely over the yawning abyss of the spans that leap from mountain to mountain. Attempts to salvage it have been defeated by the high cost of removal which today exceeds the value of the materials. The railroad, now operated by the Imperial Ethiopian Government Railway and Ropeway Administration in Eritrea, chugs apathetically up and down the 3.5 per cent grades.

With the few serviceable locomotives burning coal imported from the United States at great cost and handicapped by the severe grades, the line is hardly an economic proposition. There are no power brakes, with the result that a brakeman must ride each car to set and release the handbrakes. With this rudimentary braking system the downhill tonnage is as severely limited as the tonnage uphill.

There is brave talk of the improvements that will result from diesel traction, but the fact is that the line is kept alive only by stringent regulation of the more efficient trucks on the highway. The idea that Massaua would be the Red Sea port for the lower Sudan is a dream. Regardless of the economics of the proposal, the railroad of the newly independent Sudan would not surrender to Ethiopia its long-haul traffic. As an indication of the Sudanese feeling, their track from Malawiya to Tessenai in Eritrea has been dismantled.

The motive power consists solely of tank engines. There are now only two wheel arrangements in service, a group of 0-4-0s for switching and mainline 0-4-4-0s. There are three classes of mainline engines. The 440 Class of 1911 vintage are Mallet compounds, and five of this group, which once numbered twenty-nine engines, survive. The 441 Class originally were four-cylinder simple engines and there were sixteen in the Class. Only one is left and this engine has been rebuilt into a Mallet compound. Four of this Class were carted off to Libya in 1945, and only one was still in operation in 1954. The 442 Class comprised eight engines, all in existence in varying states of repair. The heaviest engines on the system, they tipped the scales at 48.2 metric tons in working order. They are Mallet compounds and both sets of cylinders are equipped with piston valves. On the number plates, which are of cast brass, the number is prefixed by the letter 'R' which is the abbreviation for 'Scartamento Ridotto', narrow gauge.

The most interesting of the Eritrean motive power types is now extinct. For the connoisseur of weird and wonderful mechanical devices of the Heath Robinson or Rube Goldberg variety, there is no greater treat than to be confronted with a Klien-Lindner locomotive. Only the bones remain at Asmara of five 0-8-0Ts built on the Klien-Lindner patent system by Ansaldo in Genoa in 1922. These engines had outside frames and cranks. The driving axle was inside a subsidiary axle which connected the wheels. The drive was through a ball and socket joint on the inner

axle. A pin through the ball drove the outer axle. The internal diameter of the outer axle was sufficiently large to allow radial movement and a subsidiary gadget allowed the axles to slide longitudinally with respect to each other. All of this blacksmith's nightmare was for the purpose of allowing an eight-coupled engine to traverse the sharp curves. Although the first and last pair of drivers had radial motion these engines were far harder on the track than the Mallets.

For those who are interested in the more desolate places in the world there are the remains of a sixty-centimetre gauge railroad to be seen at Mersa Fatima, a port south of Massaua. The port and railroad were built by the Italians early in the century to tap a potash deposit some fifty miles from the coast. The line ended at Kulluli in the midst of an appalling desolation of treeless and waterless desert. The railroad was killed by the depression and odd bits of it now lie scattered on scrapheaps all over Eritrea.

The locomotives of the Ferrovie Eritree always face in the same direction, to keep the crown sheets covered with water on the steep grade. There are few railroads in the world that can offer a 7,300 foot change in altitude in 73 miles - an engineering achievement of the first magnitude."

[The text continues with extensive lists and notes on the motive power, which we shall not reproduce here.]

(b). In 'Lok Report' 4/2010 pp. 52-58 (published in Berlin) is a beautifully-illustrated and thoughtful article by Bernd Seiler, "ERITREA - A RAILWAY BETWEEN THE PAST AND THE FUTURE" based on a visit in February 2010. Here it is slightly shortened and translated.

"The line still has no regular traffic, apart from a Tourist Train that runs according to demand from Asmara to Nefasit and back. However, this runs only when enough tourists are prepared to pay the \$50 for a ticket. The train then comprises a steam locomotive and one coach. This is wonderful in enabling one to gaze out of the window at the breathtaking landscape as it passes, but the railway enthusiast keen on photography will find this train not very satisfying. Such a person must make do with one of the five to ten charter trains run each year - which of course cost substantially more than \$50.

In the last five years one could say that a lot has been done. There have indeed been some changes. The steam loco 440.008 is now operational and can be used - this is the last one of its type. Some of the four-wheel coaches have been overhauled for the Charter Trains (and paid for by participants in the Far Rails Tours) - and so the time when Krupp bogie coaches were hauled by the aged steam locos on the Charters is now past. But one cannot really see any major progress. In the workshops work is underway on the boiler of 442.56, the running gear stands in the depot. Next to the station

a shed that had been used for years for the bus workshop is now once more set up for railway work. This was formerly the carriage works and should function as such once again. However, there have not been any major developments on the railway. A point has been reached where nothing can move forward without some massive investment. But there are some high-flying plans for the railway and many thousands of dollars have been spent on foreign experts and consultants and visits to various countries to inspect locomotive production. Now one is mainly waiting for an agreement to extend credit, and then make a big push.

### **The Future State Railway of Eritrea.**

The Railway has plans for running timetabled services from Massawa to Asmara. In 2006 there was a test run with a 40-foot container on a flat wagon and an oil tank wagon. Against expectations no problems were encountered in traversing the tunnels. Since the two remaining Krupp diesel locos are renowned for high fuel consumption (one speaks of 5 litres of Diesel per kilometre!), the Manager of the railway travelled to visit various locomotive manufacturers, to investigate the possibility of the acquisition of new locomotives. In 2009 Chinese and Rumanian manufacturers were favoured. Now, following a trip to China, where representatives of Pakistan and Cuba were also encountered (both being countries which have acquired Chinese locos), the cheap offer from China is perceived somewhat differently and instead one is eyeing German engines or Chinese locomotives whose production has been supervised by German engineers. Italy is also being considered seriously.

It is also conceivable that second-hand locomotives could be acquired and these would then be overhauled in Western Europe before being shipped to Eritrea. But before this is possible, there is a great deal to do. The organisation is currently known as the Eritrean Railway Rehabilitation Project. Before any commercial traffic can be undertaken it will be necessary to reorganise it into a more normal form, such as a private company or a State Railway and register it as such. This formal move is necessary in order to find international providers of credit. Should these be found - which will not be easy in the current disastrous state of many lenders - it is intended to rebuild the line to Agordat at least as far as Keren.

At the moment the section Massawa - Asmara has been reconstructed with old materials and is operational; however, the reconstruction was carried out according to the standards of 1920, with rail profiles similar to S28 (28kg./metre), and the route is hardly suitable for regular operation. The axleload is restricted to 12 tons, the loops are short, there is absolutely no signalling or safety system. The old trackbed from Asmara on to

Keren has been cleared for about six kilometres and track could be laid here - if there were sufficient track materials available. But even if several kilometres of plain line could be laid with the materials currently on hand, there aren't any spare sets of points. At the same time there is concern not to have to relay the whole line again soon after a major effort - for the future rail of 50kg/metre is planned, roughly equivalent to the former Deutsche Reichsbahn S49 profile.

### **Future Transport Possibilities.**

The desire of the Railway company to become a 'proper' State Railway and to move large tonnages has not just been taken out of thin air. Of course, if you observe Eritrea now, following the plundering by British soldiers in the Second World War and the dismantling carried out by the Ethiopian occupation troops and then the 30-year war of independence which followed that, you will seek in vain for any industry. Yes, there are a few small works, but they do not seem to need a railway. There is no power station in the interior which needs deliveries of coal, there is no chemical or metallurgical industry, there is no car manufacture. But there is, indeed, some industry. On the Red Sea there is a cement factory; these works produce indeed mainly for export, but the amount - some 250,000 tons per year - which would be transported to Asmara - and beyond, would provide a basis also for the railway. At present the cement works has no rail connection, but it would only be necessary to lay a few kilometres from Massawa.

On top of this there is a salt works on the Red Sea, and this would also be interested in rail transport for its product. But these two industries are not the main reason for the Railway Administration's planning; it is all about Gold! A Canadian firm is currently opening two mines and wishes to transport ore concentrates from the store heaps to the harbour at Massawa; The ore contains mainly Gold, Zinc and Copper. Comparative calculations indicated a major price advantage for rail transport, for the road transport is also not really simple, the topography of the country has always led to various transport difficulties. One mine is at Bisha - this is the larger of the two and will produce a transport volume of between 500,000 and 1,000,000 tons per year. However, Bisha lies around 220 kilometres from Asmara and even 100 kilometres further than Keren, the point on the railway that one could rebuild without too excessive a financial outlay. Even if it were possible to reach Agordat again, the former end-point of the line, it would still be necessary to build 40km. of new route. That is to say, there is a railway alignment further on from Agordat, but it would not be possible to use this without some very major new earthworks. So any project to provide a rail link to his mine would involve not only a lot of physical effort

but also a very large capital investment. Realistically, this seems impossible for the near future.

More hopeful is the plan for the mine project at Embadorho, which only some 25km. from Asmara. The old alignment through the centre of Asmara has been partially built over, and so already project planning is under way for a new alignment - three variants are being investigated by an Italian Consultancy: One is the Reconstruction of the line on the old alignment through the town; A second involves passing round the north side of the town; the third is a southern by-pass, and this seems the most realistic, because the branch southwards could be built from the existing Asmara station and then follow the ring road currently under construction, until the old alignment onwards to Keren is reached and also a branch could be built on towards the mine. The mine at Embadorho reckons on producing some 250,000 tons a year, which would have to be brought to the harbour at Massawa.

For the railway in its current format around 500,000 tons of goods a year would be the maximum possible. When the mine and the cement works have their rail connections, one would be kept pretty busy keeping this volume of traffic moving over the single-track mountain line.

### Potential Orders.

The mine operators have promised to pay the transport costs for the first five years in advance, in order to give the railway adequate capital funds for investment. But that does not seem likely to be enough. For full operations it is reckoned that eight Diesel locomotives and 180 new wagons would be required. In addition there is a need for sleepers, rails, points and other permanent way material, and a signalling system - probably based on radio despatching. Altogether a sum of around 50 Million Dollars is calculated as being necessary. Truly a tiny amount, compared to the sums which various banks suck from the taxpayer in Germany at present. But for Eritrea this is a giant sum.

The locomotives should be diesel-hydraulic (people have good experience with the Krupp engines!) and have around 1,500hp. Offers from China come to less than a million dollars apiece, the German offer is around 2.2M Dollars. In addition one would like five or six new railcars, each with 100 - 120 seats, for passenger traffic. This latter seems to be a bit excessive or over-ambitious - the railcars would never pay for themselves, this would be a pure luxury. In addition timetabled passenger services would be hard to combine with the planned amount of goods traffic - track capacity would almost certainly be filled with freight traffic alone. People still refer to the time when the Italians were preparing their advance against Ethiopia, and over thirty train

pairs per day were operated over the line. But that was done under an almost military organisation, with well-trained railwaymen.

In addition kilometres of line need new thousands of sleepers and rails. It is hoped to use concrete sleepers; purchase of an entire sleeper-producing works has failed due to price reasons, so these would have to be imported. But all this would have to be covered with the capital investment of \$50M. The staff costs in Eritrea are hardly important in this calculation. There are currently around 320 members of railway staff, most of them track workers. There is no desire to dismiss any of them, for when the construction of the lines to the mine and the cement works really gets going....

It is also intended to modernise the Massawa - Asmara line. Planned is a reconstruction with heavier rail and the extending of crossing loops. The bridges will need to be checked for their load-bearing capacity and when necessary renewed. It is obvious that this will adversely affect their appearance; nowadays, all over the world, one sees only insults to the eyesight in the form of concrete beams - rounded arches are no longer planned.

### Not Just Money.

It is however not just Money that is necessary, but the understanding as to how to operate a railway. After more than three decades without regular train traffic the knowledge as to how to operate a railway properly has been lost or discarded. There are no longer any engineers who can truly recall the days of a flourishing railway operation. In consequence major technical mistakes are made and seemingly there is no rule book to teach people how to run a railway. With this context one can only be somewhat fearful at the thought of what might happen when the railwaymen are suddenly confronted with eight new powerful diesel locomotives and 180 new wagons and the expectation that they will shift maybe 1,500 tons per day. Train weights can hardly be expected to exceed ca. 250 tons. In comparison, a locomotive of Class 442 could haul 90 tons on the steepest sections, a Krupp Diesel loco of 1957 could manage 100 tons. 250 tons is in consequence not a limit taken arbitrarily. A timetable of seven train pairs per day seems relatively modest and could surely be managed - but who will organise it? Foreign help is urgently needed, even when people would rather do as much as possible themselves. Should a small, modest railway operation could be commenced at first, the railwaymen would be able gradually to get used to regular operations - but actually what is currently envisaged is a 'big bang' and starting everything at once.

What the railway also needs is the basis for its own internal accounting system. The last accounts for the operations were distorted due to the war. Who is there in Eritrea

who can calculate freight rates that would cover costs, who can arrange a proper set of expenses and incomes, who is in a position to prepare a business plan? The education that the children currently receive is certainly good in African terms, but there is a lack of experience. Experience also with coping with road competition, which will certainly re-awaken when the railway attempts to gain for itself a potentially lucrative transport contract. One can only hope that the Western countries will send in some honest brokers who are both competent and able to work in Eritrea's interests. There is already talk of EU development funds which would cover the financial requirements; in which case one hopes that people understand that this will mean going on a shopping tour within the EU countries, and therefore ignoring the cheaper offers from the Far East, including India - not yet mentioned - which can certainly offer competitive, robust and suitable machines.

### The Future of the Charter Specials.

This fantastic mountain railway is one of the very few in the world where one can still run authentic historical trains in the correct context. In fact I can only think of one other State Railway where it is still possible to run trains as they were forty years ago, and this is also in Africa, in Zimbabwe. Whilst it is hard to foresee the future there, it does seem clear that in Eritrea there will be economic development, however slow and gradual. The political situation is still rather tense, due partially to the way Eritrea handles journalists - UN Sanction have already been applied. Nevertheless the interests of the mining firm will take priority over the political interests and the railway will be rebuilt and reorganised into a company with regular traffic. What this means for the charter trains is pretty clear. As soon as the first freight trains run, on the one hand there will be nobody with any time to organise special trains according to the wishes of railway enthusiasts, and in addition there will be no time to run steam locomotives onto the line when it is running to full capacity - locomotives that need to stop three times between Nefasit and Arbaroba to raise steam, plus the endless photo run-pasts. There would certainly be a few occasional photo specials, but with much more limited time and schedules, presumably with longer waits at crossing loops for trains to pass in both directions, and everything will be dependent on the signalling controllers.

So - even though there are at present few signs that all the ambitious plans will be realised quickly, if you are thinking of a trip to Eritrea you should think of going sooner rather than later, if you want to experience and enjoy this fantastic railway as it is.....

### Diesel Locomotives in Eritrea.

(Information via Thomas Kautzer-Schröder).

The two Krupp diesel locomotives



25D and 27D currently available and operational are well-known. But there were attempts even earlier to bring diesel traction to Eritrea. In 1939 FIAT/TIBB built four Bo-Bo diesel electrics for Eritrea (TIBB Nos. 4217-4220, 46 tons, 550 hp, 70km/h.) Due to the war these could not however be delivered and went instead to Benghazi in Libya (Cyrenaica), where they ran as 201 - 204. No. 204 was destroyed in 1942 in the conflict, the other three received War Department numbers WD.706.34 - 36. So - these locos never reached their intended destination. In 1942 another machine came to Eritrea instead, also due to the war. The remains of this engine still stand rusting at Mai Atal. It is a FIAT/TL B diesel-electric, 22 tons, 150hp., 50 km/h. Two of these went (in 1935?) to Tripoli (Libya), TIBB Works Nos. 4066 & 408, and were numbered A11 and A12 (later War Department WD.706.37 and 38), and two in 1929 to Somalia (incl. TIBB Works No. 4067). Of the engines that went to Somalia, TIBB 4067 was brought to Massawa by the British Army in 1942, in order to be used as a mobile generator in Mai Atal. It stood there next to the tracks and was only re-railed in 2008. The locomotive never actually worked as such in Eritrea. Last year the leader of the ER Training Centre mentioned that consideration was being given to installing a new Diesel engine into this locomotive to make it useable for tourist groups.

### (c). ERITREAN MODERNISATION.

In 'Modelleisenbahner' 12/2010 pp. 30.33 is an illustrated article by B. Seiler on modernisation attempts for this line.

#### (Translation by the Editor).

"Eritrea, at the Horn of Africa, attained its independence only in 1992; in the 30-year long war of independence the railways of Eritrea were almost wholly destroyed; after the independence some 118 km. long section from the harbour in Masawa to the capital Asmara was rebuilt using own resources and the old track materials still available. But it was rebuilt to the standards of 1920. From 2000 the first trains for railway enthusiasts were run, but the railway, with some 300 employees, can not even now run regular services. There is a shortage of almost everything, there is no signalling system, and the maximum axle-loading of the light rails is 12 tons. Apart from a barely-serviceable Krupp diesel loco from 1957 there are still several steam locomotives from the 1930's and a wonderful Fiat railcar named 'Littorina' of 1936. Naturally this anachronism fascinates railway enthusiasts from all over the world.

But seems that the days of this ancient atmosphere are numbered. Now it is important to concentrate on the economic development of this country, still marked by both the World War and the Independence War. This will urgently need some functioning infrastructure. Near Massawa a new cement factory has been established, which would like - as soon as possible - to transport 300,000 tons of cement annually to Asmara and beyond. In the opposite direction several mining companies who are about to start production wish to transport similar amounts of processed ore to the harbour.

The road conditions in the high mountains are too difficult and the railway also seemed unsuitable - for the simple reason that the rumour has been spread for years that the tunnels are too narrow to allow the line to convey containers - in spite of a successful trial run in 2006. Four years later (in June 2010) railway enthusiasts arranged for a second test run with a container on a flat wagon. The loading gauge profile turned out to be adequate everywhere. Eritrea has little foreign exchange and any start into a new railway age is hardly possible without some support. The Canadian ore producer has offered to pay for five years' of transport in advance, but without investment in vehicles, tracks and signalling systems - in amounts into the millions - a regular daily freight service would be impossible.

At least the fossilised repair workshops will now be modernised thanks to a unique donation. The Danish State Railways (DSB) closed down their repair workshops in Arhus and donated the machines and equipment there. The Maersk Line donated two containers and took over the full cost of transporting them. The idea was that of a railway enthusiast, René Strandbygaard, the managing director of the Copenhagen Film Company who has good contacts to both Maersk and DSB, and who had made the acquaintance of this railway on a 'Far Rails Tours' charter trip.

At the invitation of DSB the General Director of the Eritrean Railways, Amanuel Ghebrerelassie, the head of the Asmara Workshops and a railway engineer travelled in September 2010 first to Denmark, to look at the machines and equipment. But also the know-how for running scheduled services on a railway that has not been used for three decades needed to be revived. It was therefore just as important for the delegation to visit a roughly similar railway and experience it in operation and become informed about current railway operations and technology. To find such a line, with modern signalling standards and a heavy traffic, was not exactly easy. The closest fit seemed to be the Harzer Schmalspurbahn (HSB) in Germany. The staff there, and especially the Chief Controller Jörg Bauer, Deputy Workshops Manager Andreas Krause and the head of the Customer Service Dept. Silke Stüber gave of their free weekend time to provide a competent tour of the typical operations and helped the visitors gain an impression of how things were run. As well as riding the trains they were especially interested

in the permanent way and the signalling, the automatic spring-loaded points and line and train radio control systems. Operational Planning, Training and Safety procedures, Timetable Planning, Motive Power and Stock planning, the Centralised Train Control system and the rolling stock Maintenance (and preventive maintenance systems) were also inspected.

In the meantime the cargo, worth some €300,000, set sail. As well as tooling machines, presses, lifting and welding equipment, consumable materials such as welding rods, cranes, lathes and much more, the donation also includes a complete rerailling equipment worth alone more than €100,000. The two containers should arrive at Massawa at the end of November. Once they have been transported on to Asmara the machines will be set up and two State Railway employees who will fly out especially from Denmark will assist their Eritrean colleagues in learning how to operate them. We shall report on the arrival of the freight to the Red Sea and its unusual further transportation in a future issue. (2/2011.)"

Photos include one of the inside of the current Asmara workshops with 0-4-0T's, 202.10 pushing a sister loco - "These small machines are used only for shunting duties and for official parties in Asmara and Massawa." Also of workplates for two machines currently in the Asmara workshops, both built in Germany in 1939!

### G. ETHIOPIA.

From 'Railway Gazette' 01.10.2010: „Chinese Funding for Addis Abeba light rail. The Export and Import Bank of China has reached agreement with Ethiopian Railway Corp. to finance the proposed light rail project in Addis Abeba. A 30km. T-shaped network is envisaged with one line running from east to west connecting the Ayat roundabout with the Torhailoch ring road. The second route would run from Menelik Square to Merkato Bus Station, via Sebategna and Abenet, to link up with the east-west line. The shared track would continue towards Meskel Square and south to Akaki. The network is expected to carry 20,000 daily passengers, relieving transport congestion in the Ethiopian capital.

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