



125:01.

G12 124 has been shunting containers from Haifa Port towards Haifa Yard and is passing the Railway Museum on the right of the picture. 15.11.2018.
(Photo: Oliver and Stefan Heckmann)

EDITORIAL.

Sometimes one starts a quarter wondering whether there will be enough material to fill an issue, and then suddenly the problem is what to leave out. This time I have very consciously incorporated a lot of reports from Israel - some rather repetitive, but these are details that will soon be forgotten if not recorded now; many are from other railways in the region, especially Turkey. I have also consciously cited at length articles from other publications which reflect the polemics of the present time concerning the Jerusalem line, Jerusalem trams and cable car schemes – the arguments are often bitter and not necessarily well-informed or based on real facts. Readers of Harakevet may well have their own view as to the importance of such schemes – as do I. It is always amazing to look back at some previous issue and see what has changed, what even I had forgotten had been included and published! What bitter struggles were fought before something was built that is now taken for granted. So the reader is asked for patience if there is concentration on repetitive detail. Track works, timetable changes, incidents, security escalations, special workings are all part of the bread-and-butter – as well as staff changes and labour disputes.

We can assume that the future will see further reports on the urban railways in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv (and now elsewhere) as they approach completion; likewise progress on electrification, delivery of new stock and the long-discussed extension(s) to Eilat. In ten years' time this will already be ancient history.

Elsewhere there is much happening in Turkey as schemes began years ago reach fruition; in Iran likewise as Chinese 'soft diplomacy' reaches out westwards to extend the new Silk Road towards the Mediterranean – even now in Lebanon. Articles received on Railway Enthusiasts in Israel and the railway memorial at Thessaloniki are held over till next issue! In general there is a lot of positive news to report and this is good. Enjoy!

The Editor.

NEWS FROM THE LINE.

(i). LABOUR DISRUPTIONS: OVERTIME DECISION.

From a press release of 02.03.2019:

The railways announced few hours ago that according to the Labour Court decision the new arrangement of up to 5 hours overtime (after each journey) will start from this evening; the union appealed to the court to recognize only 1.5 hours overtime. This was the court's effort to avoid disruptions to passenger train services; the court however also decided that both sides would meet again on Tuesday 05.03.2019 to put an end to the disagreements.

(ii). FURTHER LABOUR DISRUPTIONS: A LONG-RUNNING SAGA.

Aharon wrote on 14.03.2019: "Israel Railways Ltd. have suffered during this week from all sorts of sanctions performed by the members of the drivers' union; they include: Stops of trains at stations for 5 minutes longer than required; not approving the movement of track equipment to where it is needed; spare parts stuck at ports, etc.; this is in addition to sudden announcements of drives being "sick".

They refused to return to work even after the chairman of the Labour Union and the Labour Tribunal instructed them to do so. It seemed that the approaching general elections of 09.04.2019 were encouraging them to do this, particularly that the current powerful Transport Minister Mr. Israel Katz had announced that he wanted the job of foreign minister or security minister - of course if Mr. Netanyahu were to be the next Prime Minister - and that the current General Manager Mr. Shahar Ayalon would end his job at the end of this month - so there were no leaders at the moment.

As of 09:25 local time general punctuality is 86.5%; punctuality at intermediate stations 87.4%; out of 136 trains to be operated 119 arrived on time, 16 were late and one cancelled; the chaos continues with no solution seen at the moment!"

Then: from a press release of 25.03.2019 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

"After a month of sanctions by the worker's union which caused many disruptions to regular track maintenance works, the sanctions ended today and maintenance works are gradually being resumed."

On 27.03 Aharon wrote: "As of 09:10 local time today average punctuality is 91.4% for intermediate stations, 86.6% for end stations; Of 123 trains supposed to operate, 97 arrived on time, 13 arrived late and 13 were cancelled. This is due to maintenance works which were delayed due to the reported employees' sanctions and now cause speed restrictions. Additionally, the fragile and

explosive security situation around the Gaza strip can change train movements every moment."

Then Aharon reported: "Israel Railways Ltd. have announced on their website on 31.03.2019 that the court has instructed the employees union to stop immediately all



- 125:003: At the end of October 2018 it was reported that Jordan expressed a wish to end the so-called 'Peace Island' agreement over a small area of land in the Jordan Valley.. The Editor recalled once, many years ago, having seen two old standard-gauge wagons standing there for no discernible reason, and Chen Melling was able to locate an image of these wagons - in the foreground Resh 25.027 and behind it Resh 25 238.

the sanctions and that all the trains on the A1 line have to operate according to the new timetable, including Fridays and Saturdays nights. This, however, does not reflect the fact that the employees still create difficulties, causing delays in many preventative maintenance works; also the average punctuality is rapidly changing from 96% yesterday at 08:00 to just 86.8% at the same hour today; The union is ignoring the court's decision."

From a press release of 18.04.2019 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

"A success for the railways' management: the Labour Court today ordered the railways' employees who have imposed sanctions over several months to return immediately to full work without any pre-conditions, together with a return to focused negotiation; Even the General Labour Union was on the Court's side in this particular case; Furthermore, the Bombardier TRAXX electric locomotives which were on hold at Haifa East diesel depot are now being transferred to the electric depot at Lod to enter service as soon as possible.

The Management response: "We are satisfied with the court's decision and call upon the employees' union to start negotiations to cope with the huge challenges which we face."

Once the employees of IR returned to regular work, punctuality improved significantly; By 09:00 on 22.04.2019 it was 95.6% for arrival at final points and over 97% for intermediate stations; out of 122 trains operated 117 arrived on time, 5 were late, none cancelled!

(iii). ROCKET ATTACKS CONTINUE.

On 25.03.2019 IR announced that, due to the



• Some of the Bombardier TRAXX electric locomotives stabled 'on hold' at Haifa East diesel depot.

security situation after a rocket launched from Gaza that morning hit a house near Kfar-Sava and injured 7 people and with the expectation of a strong military response, following instructions by the Rear Areas Command, "the Negev Line between Ashkelon

and Beer-Sheva would be closed for traffic with the stations of Sderot, Netivot and Afikim until further notice."

(iv). COMPTROLLER'S REPORT.

The State Comptroller in his annual report has strongly criticized public transport in general and also included the railways, LRV and Metro projects; the Transport Ministry's response was that even a decade of intensive action cannot wipe away the failures of the past 60 years; the Railways' response was that they were studying the report and would respond shortly.

(v). ERTMS WORKSHOP.

On 12.03.2019 and 13.03.2019 an INTEGRATION WORKSHOP FOR Israel Railways ERTMS PROJECT was held at the auditorium of the railways' management complex at Lod.

(vi). TIMETABLE IMPROVEMENTS AND REINSTATEMENTS.

From a press release of 17.03.2019: "The railways intend to introduce a new timetable on 29.03.2019 hand-in-hand with completion of first stage of electrification. The following improvements will take place: On Fridays, services will be provided until approximately 18:00; on Saturday nights, services will start at about 20:30.

On the A1 Ben-Gurion Airport - Navon section services will be provided until 22:00 between Sunday and Thursday and on Saturday nights until 23:00. Two trains per hour on weekdays and five extra on Saturday evenings. This will increase the number of daily trains from 54 to 62 and add 45 per week. The stations at Modi'in will return to regular activities including at weekends and the Modi'in - Nahariyya line via Ben-Gurion Airport will return to full activity including on Fridays and Saturday nights.

Services between Beer-Sheva Central and Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central (via Kiryat-Gat) and between Beit-Shemesh and Herzliyya will return to regular including evenings. Friday services between Beer-Sheva Central and Tel-Aviv HaHagana and between Ashkelon and Tel-Aviv HaHagana will return to regular. Special Friday trains between Lod and Haifa Central the 8 through the stations of Petach-Tikva and B'nei-Brak, thus by-passing Tel-Aviv, will continue running.

A new passenger station is to be opened during 2019; Mazkeret-Batya (on the line to Beer-Sheva south of Ramla and Na'an junction). [This opened on 30 May.]

The railways' management noted: "The recent period has been characterized by temporary closure of rail sections in favour of track development and electrification works; this has placed challenges on the employees and also disruptions to passengers; we thank the passengers for their patience (?) and their cooperation. We are confident that upon the works' completion, the results will speak for themselves and the efforts will pay off".

(vii). LOST AND FOUND.

From a press release of 05.03.2019 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

"Although station teams are already experienced with returning lost/left belongings to owners, each case is unique - like today's; Shift manager at Ra'anana West station Mr. Alon Catriel admits that he had never encountered such a valuable lost item: During a regular check of the train after arrival at the station (which is the final destination of trains from Beer-Sheva) the team of cleaners together with the shift manager found a bag containing cheques with a value of \$64,000 (NIS 234,000) belonging to an engineering company and lost by a woman employee. Mr. Catriel acted quickly; he secured the items in the station's safe and instructed the team to guard it.

At the same time he contacted all the stations en-route and quickly found that at Rosh-HaAyin North a passenger had arrived who reported the loss; she explained that she fell asleep during the journey and upon awaking she rushed to alight and forgot the cheques. Mr. Alon traced her according to the details on the cheques, contacted her, and she came later at night to pick up the lost items.

It is not the first time for Mr. Alon, now a shift manager and formerly a railway inspector, to find precious lost belongings and return them to their owners; in the past, a suitcase with passports and important visas was left behind; the passenger almost missed his flight, but thanks to Mr. Alon he received it in time and could fly."

(viii). MORE TROUBLES ON THE 'A1' JERUSALEM LINE.

(a). On 06.03.2017 18.00 the train from Jerusalem Navon station to Ben-Gurion Airport station had to be cancelled due to a brake failure on the electric locomotive of the 17.30 train from Jerusalem - despite the fact that the repair team overcame the problem; the 18.30 train ran as usual.

(b). From 'Jerusalem Post' 17.03 2019 by Eytan Halon:

"Originally due to open in 2008, Israel's flagship infrastructure project has been plagued by repeated lengthy delays and soaring costs. The severely delayed high-speed railway set to shuttle commuters from around the country to Jerusalem is "expected" to reach Tel Aviv's HaHagana Railway Station later this year, according to Israel Railways. With electrification work still ongoing between Tel Aviv stations and Ben-Gurion Airport, it was decided to open the railway partially in September 2018

between the airport and Jerusalem's new Yitzhak Navon Railway Station.

While Israel Railways has been hesitant to publish a revised estimate concerning the completion of the electrification works, the company said on Sunday in a statement regarding new train timetables that it "expects the train service to reach Tel Aviv HaHagana" later this year.

The electric railway line, the first in Israel, has required the construction of nine bridges and five tunnels. When complete, the railway is expected to cost in the region of NIS 7 Billion, more than double its original estimate.

When work is eventually concluded, trains are slated to reach a maximum speed of 160 km/h (100 mph) and carry passengers between the two cities within approximately 28 minutes. Until then, those wishing to travel by train from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv currently need to disembark at Ben-Gurion Airport and board a regular diesel-powered train. Approximately 900,000 passengers have travelled on the new line since its September opening. "The recent period, characterized by the closure of segments for development work and the electrification of the tracks, has been challenging for our passengers and employees," said IR in a statement. "Today, the development and electrification work is continuing in Tel Aviv and other areas... We guarantee that your patience will pay off, and bring a faster, greener, safer and more efficient train, from many more places to many more destinations and for a lot more passengers."

The new Spring timetable, due to take effect on March 29, will see an extension of the Jerusalem - Ben-Gurion Airport line's operating hours. On weekdays trains will run until 21:30, rather than 19:30 at its current frequency of two trains per hour in each direction. In addition, five additional trains will operate on Saturday evenings, running once per hour in each direction.

Following progress on the electrification of the line, a full service to Ben-Gurion Airport and Modi'in stations will recommence. The Nahariyya - Ben-Gurion Airport service will also be extended to Modi'in and return to its normal route."

(c). Statistics.

From a press release of 24.03.2019 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

"1,041,282 passengers used the AI line between Ben-Gurion Airport and Jerusalem Navon stations between 25.09.2018 and 20.03.2019 in 6;500 trains.

The number of passengers rose steadily from a daily number of 5,832 in October 2018 to 6,436 in November 2018, to 8,302 in January 2019 and to 8,950 in February 2019; between 29.03.2019 and 25.09.2019 - with hopefully completion of the electrification between Ben-Gurion Airport and Tel-Aviv HaHagana stations - there will be 62 trains daily instead of 54; the journey however will now cost 50% of normal fares instead of being free of charge as it had been so far from the completion of electrification."

(d). Loco Failures.

On Saturday night 06.04.2019 the second train to Jerusalem had to be returned to Ben-Gurion

Airport station due to a failure on the Bombardier TRAXX electric locomotive; the railways' technicians eventually solved the problem and the trains returned to schedule after 22.00.

(e) Animals on the Line.

On Sunday 07.04.2019 the 08:00 train to Jerusalem hit an animal at 08.20 near Tunnel 3, the nearest to Jerusalem Navon station (the surrounding area is a nature reserve); the train carried 120 passengers. This caused a temporary closure of the line and alternative bus shuttle services to Ben-Gurion Airport station had to be established. A replacement locomotive was soon sent to the train to take it back to Ben-Gurion Airport station.

(f). Sanctions causing Availability Problems.

IR announced on 09.04.2019 that, due to a communication failure on a Bombardier TRAXX locomotive, four trains on the AI had been cancelled from 19:00 on; technicians solved the problem after one hour and traffic resumed; alternative shuttle buses had been arranged as backup in case of overcrowding.

The railway authorities have noticed that due to the refusal of the employees' union headed by Mrs. Gila Edrei to enable the acceptance and operation of seven TRAXX locomotives which have arrived in Israel and are supposed to enter service, there are no locomotives of this type in reserve and this means that service may be seriously disrupted. Operating trains on the AI at a service frequency of 2 trains/hour requires three locomotives; two for operation and one as standby.

Currently three locos operate; in case of an additional failure the frequency will reduce until the problem is overcome; if this repeats, the service will be stopped until additional back-up locos are in place.

The fleet consists currently of eleven locos as follows:

- Three in service (including the one just repaired).
- One locomotive undergoing maintenance.
- Two locos still awaiting acceptance tests due to employees' sanctions.
- Five locos awaiting wheel re-profiling as part of acceptance procedures but not done due to the same sanctions.

(g). Loco hits electrical component.

From an announcement of 15.04.2019 by Israel Railways Ltd. on their website: "This morning a Bombardier TRAXX locomotive running on the AI as a route opener train (prior to start of service) hit an electrical component and caused the line to be closed until the damage was repaired; the impact on services was quite heavy as the service to/from Modi'in was also stopped; this line shares the AI between Ben-Gurion Airport and Anava Junction; Two hours later at about 12:15 services between Ben-Gurion Airport and Modi'in were fully resumed, while services from Ben-Gurion Airport to Jerusalem Navon resumed at 16:30 and in the opposite direction at 17:30 but with only half the service frequency - namely one train/hour each direction instead of every half an hour.

The railways management says that while failures may still occur, their number is declining while more passengers use the line despite the end of free tickets on 31.03.2019, though they are still at half price. Despite the completed repair they are short of electric locomotives in running order due to the already-mentioned sanctions. This caused today the re-elected Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to give the following statement: "The chaotic actions of the railways' employees union will come to an end shortly; We will immediately create a commission which will legislate a law which will not permit sanctions and/or strikes in vital services; the public will no more be captive in the hands of pirates!"

The main disagreements centre on the rest time of the drivers who require 30 minutes at the end of



• Catenary repair works on the catenary performed by S.E.M.I. (Photo courtesy of Matan Berkovich, IR Press office.)



each journey instead of the 10 minutes given by the management; they say that this time is required to manage to get to the toilet and to reach the cab at the other end. The media joke that maybe they should receive an electric scooter to cover the train length along the platform....

Meanwhile, the punctuality (within 5 minutes) as for 21:30 was 85.3% arrivals at intermediate stations; 81.4% arrival at final stations; out of a total of 571 trains operated until this time, 463 arrived on time, 86 were late, and 32 were cancelled.

(h). Failures.

Even without the clashes at the Gaza Strip the railways are facing daily failures mainly on the A1, partly communication failures on the TRAXX locomotives as well as air brake problems; Two recent examples:

On 07.05.2019, due to a failure on the TRAXX locomotive of the 06:30 train from Jerusalem Navon to Ben-Gurion Airport, this train was cancelled and service frequency reduced from 2 trains/hour to 1 train/hour.

Due to an air pressure failure on a Vossloh locomotive on the train which departed from Netivot at 06:36 to Ashdod with final destination Ra'anana West, the train stopped near Ashdod; a replacement locomotive was sent to bring the train to Ashdod station where a replacement train took the passengers.

(i). A Counterblast:

And then – a rather remarkable article giving a different viewpoint. This appeared in 'Jerusalem Post' on 11. May 2019, by Gol Kalev – a real counterblast to the negativity, a welcome reminder of the need for optimism and a positive attitude:

"Railways and the power of media – two new things that shaped 19th-century Europe – were both of great interest to Theodor Herzl, the founder of Zionism. Some of Herzl's Zionist thinking occurred while riding on trains, and as a powerful journalist for one of Europe's leading newspapers, Herzl fully understood how newspapers could shape public perception of political developments and events (such as the Dreyfus Affair). The new train line between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv seems to be such a case of media shaping public perception. The line that Herzl envisioned over 100 years ago was inaugurated in September on an experimental basis and for free, running every 30 minutes.

Having ridden the train about 100 times, only once was a train cancelled. Official Israeli railroad statistics show a similar pattern, with fewer than 1% of trains being cancelled. In nearly all other cases, the trains left and arrived precisely on time. This makes the Jerusalem line one of the most reliable modes of travel, even during its experimental phase!

It is not just reliable, but also relatively luxurious. The double-decker cars are impeccably clean, well-maintained and usually quiet. Given the generally sparse use by the general public, each passenger gets his own suite, which includes a table, dual electricity plug and floor-to-ceiling windows through which one can view the astonishing miracle that Herzl dreamed. This first-class-like travel experience

makes the ride productive and inspiring for business travellers, writers and casual travellers alike. Just as Herzl came up with great ideas while on train rides through Europe, so do some of today's Zionist innovators come up with their great ideas while on train rides through the Jewish state that Herzl seeded.

The ride is not just reliable and luxurious, it is also quick. The 47-minute ride from the capital to the White City (soon to be shortened to 28 minutes) makes the train a quicker, safer and more convenient alternative than taking a car or bus – the previous modes of transportation that connected Jerusalem, which now, like the horse, seem increasingly outdated.

During the experimental phase, there is a simple transfer at Ben-Gurion Airport from the electric train that descends from Jerusalem to a regular train that leaves from the same platform. One can either continue working on the train (there are 10 minutes until the electric train reverses course back to Jerusalem), sit in the outskirts of the platform on the spacious benches, use the bathrooms or listen to sounds of a piano occasionally trickling down from the station upstairs, while observing new arrivals to Israel as they descend the escalator from the airport into the platform area.

Only 47 minutes after departing Jerusalem, one arrives in Tel Aviv.

BUT THEN a bizarre phenomenon occurs: Telling people that you took the train is met with a strong reaction. "Why are you risking your life? Every other train gets stuck in the tunnel." "It takes an hour just to get through the station." "You need to take a bus from the airport." These are just some of the comments one hears. Some even refuse to accept that it took only 47 minutes, opting to believe what they think they heard on the news rather than an eyewitness account. Regular passengers on the train report similar reactions upon arriving in Tel Aviv: "The Jerusalem line is a national disaster, and please don't let facts get in the way."

Not only is there substantial negative press about the Jerusalem-Tel Aviv line, but when a train does get cancelled, it turns into national news! Israeli major news sites consistently report service interruptions as news items and when doing so, they usually include in the article the history of previously cancelled Jerusalem trains. Needless to say, there is no word on the dozens of bus lines that get cancelled every day. (Imagine a breaking-news headline like this: "The 10 a.m. 480 bus got cancelled; passengers boarded the 10:10 a.m. bus instead.")

Of course, there is legitimate criticism about Israel Railways, its management and unions, as well as about its prioritizing this line over others, but the intense negativity that is directed specifically at the high-speed Jerusalem line entrenched a mindset among Israelis that is disconnected from reality. Herzl understood that mindsets are difficult to change. Jews in his time viewed Judaism through a particular prism that included a yearning to return to their homeland, but only in a theoretical, defeatist, "some day" dreamlike way. Even before he launched Zionism, Herzl understood that the Jews would not listen to him, given their sagging spirits and enslavement to such a mindset.

To make his case, Herzl resorted to trains! He argued that when railroads were first constructed, some people "were of the opinion that it was foolish to build certain lines because there were not even sufficient passengers to fill the mail coaches."

Railroads were an astonishing leap in human progress that occurred during Herzl's century, replacing animals as the primary mode of transportation, radically shortening distances and facilitating expansion to new frontiers. And yet, far too many people were stuck in old mindsets that were shaped by journalists and others: If there are not many who people travel from Vienna to Paris, why invest a massive amount of money to build railroads?

"They did not realize the truth – which now seems obvious to us," said Herzl. "Travellers do not produce railways, but conversely, railways produce travellers."

As Herzl intuited, the reality of a fast, convenient and reliable railway between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv would likely alter the dynamics of the two cities. He understood that just as obsessive naysayers spoke ill of the trains, they would also speak ill of Zionism. He described them as "nothing more than men sunk into the groove of daily routine, unable to emerge from a narrow circle of antiquated ideas." But at the same time, he understood the power of media and other opinion-leaders. "Their adverse opinion carries great weight and can do considerable harm to a new project."

THE LAUNCH of the Jerusalem train provides a case study for such "great weight." It might also be indicative of a broader reality, that those who read Israeli newspapers and consume Israeli media often have a more inferior understanding of Israel than those on the outside. That is because the negative knowledge acquired from domestic media at times surmounts the positive information it provides. This is neither new nor unique. The foundation of Zionism was laid from the outside and by an outsider, Herzl, who had very little to do with the Jewish community. Similarly, some of the contemporary innovative Zionist thinking is done on the outside. Indeed, Diaspora Jews and non-Jewish friends of Zion can contribute tremendously to the development of the Zionist story – as they can see things that newspaper-reading Israelis, sunk into the groove of daily reporting, cannot. When influenced by the media, it is indeed sometimes difficult to emerge from a narrow circle of antiquated ideas.

To be clear, criticism is crucially important in a democracy, even at the risk of being excessive. Similarly, a culture of complaining, scepticism and dissent could be constructive. Yet, there is a point where opposition turns to slander: about the trains, the price of Milky pudding, life in Israel, the morality of our soldiers.

With Israel's military might, thriving economy, strengthening alliances with its Arab neighbours and with the world's nations dependent on Israeli technology, the existential threat to Israel is shifting to a political one: attempts to negate Israel's *raison d'être* as the nation-state of the Jewish people and to demoralize Israeli society.

Israel remains a resolute society, with high conviction and an unmatched sense of mutual

responsibility. The Zionist ideology that Herzl established remains the ultimate and infinite ideal that unites Israeli Jews, and through which non-Jews relate to the Jewish state. This was evident in the recent elections; nearly all Israeli Jews and an increasing number of Israeli Arabs voted for Zionist parties (Meretz, a Zionist party, got into the Knesset thanks to the Arab vote). Still, while there are those in Israel who take pride in the half-full glass, there are those who obsess on the half-empty aspect.

The two points of the train symbolize diverging attitudes toward optimism. On the Tel Aviv end, there is a tendency by many to complain, while on the Jerusalem end, to appreciate. A few short blocks from the Jerusalem train station, a sign proclaims: "This land is very, very good," and a short walk away, in the Mahaneh Yehuda shuk, one frequently notices customers at bars pause briefly before sipping their wine to recite a blessing and say thanks. In doing so, they are injecting some valuable perspective to the "I want it, I got it" mantra. The train, therefore, can also turn into a vehicle to spread the Jerusalem optimism to vibrant Tel Aviv.

IT IS exactly this Tel Aviv vibrancy, including the availability of shared-bicycle and scooter options, that for six months now has turned it into something of a neighbourhood of Jerusalem and vice-versa. Those Tel Aviv inner-city modes of transportation make the commute from any of the four Tel Aviv train stations to the beach, restaurant, gallery or bar a matter of mere minutes, and contribute to the predictable certainty of arrival time, since, like the train, they are traffic-neutral.

After 3,000 years as a landlocked city, during most of which it was surrounded by walls, Jerusalem now has a beach! One can sip coffee in the Jerusalem shuk, indulge in an urge to hit the beach, and get there in just over an hour. Jaffa, which used to be known as "the port of Jerusalem," can now more than ever be considered part of the café, bar and restaurant scene of Jerusalem.

Such new realities are not readily visible to most news-consuming Israelis, but for the small but growing clique of early-adopter passengers, this is now reality.

This is also due to those regulars' familiarity with the train station, akin to business travellers at airports. It might take a neophyte 20 minutes to go through the station's security and make it down 80 metres to the underground platform. Yet for the experienced passenger, it takes only about five minutes, being familiar with the elevators, having his card pre-loaded, understanding which staircase to take to the platform and even which car is most likely to be quiet.

An ultra-Orthodox man who is one of those regulars shared that the last few months led him to a stark revelation: "I always suspected news is fake, but not until I began experiencing the train did I realize the extent of this. There is absolutely no connection between how it is reported and how it runs." Commuting daily from Jerusalem to Ramat Gan, that man said the train improved his life tremendously, and he knows who he should be grateful to. "It is thanks to this fake news that we still get to ride the train for free!" he says, referring to the extension of the initial three-month free period

due to perception of repeated failures. That man estimated that he has saved well over NIS 1,000 in waived fees.

Yet, a few weeks ago, the party came to an end: The railroad company begun charging. Jerusalem still has a beach, but now it will now be not just an hour but also NIS 11 away.

When the supersonic Concorde was grounded in 2003, there were business travellers who claimed that the world will always be divided between those who took the Concorde and those who did not. The Jerusalem train early adopters will inevitably soon experience fuller and noisier train rides, as the cloud of negative news dissipates (hopefully Israel Railways will designate an ample number of "quiet cars," given the nature of the audience and the destination).

Yet those early adopters will always be left with the sense of being part of the six-month experimental period when they witnessed firsthand another aspect of Herzl's dream come true, and in doing so, were vested with the task of preserving and transforming the dream. "All the deeds of men are only dreams at first," Herzl wrote, "and in the end, their deeds dissolve into dreams."

Accessibility remains an issue

Israel takes pride in its advances in accessibility. And while the new Jerusalem train station and the trains themselves are fully accessible, a person in a wheelchair must take four separate elevators to board a train. The elevators are not right next to each other, and there is just one small elevator that goes from the main elevators to the platform. Passengers in wheelchairs share this small elevator with people carrying suitcases and strollers, and anyone else who prefers riding an elevator to climbing stairs.

Staff in the station, as well as throughout the Israeli railroad network, are there to assist. Indeed, for pre-coordinated rides, train staff wait at the trains' doors with equipment to facilitate moving from the trains to platforms and vice-versa for those who need assistance.

The Jerusalem train station is located right near the central bus station light rail stop, which helps. But in Tel Aviv, the Light Rail is still under construction. All in all, accessibility remains an issue, and lack of sufficient infrastructure makes the ride longer and more challenging for the elderly and for passengers with disabilities." – G.K.

(ix). A DOG'S LIFE.

From a press release of 17.03.2019 by IR.:

"The shift managers at Tel-Aviv HaHagana station Mr. Abraham Shalev and Mr. Assy Avrami are used to serving tens of thousands of passengers daily and providing first aid whenever needed, but service to dogs such as provided last week, even they don't remember: A passenger who alighted from the train and went onto the escalator did not follow the safety instructions regarding handling dogs; his Yorkshire dog's leg was caught at the bottom of the escalator, thus being injured; the cries of both the owner and the dog were clearly heard all over the station. Mr. Abraham Shalev arrived immediately, pulled out the

dog and eventually saved his life; the station team came immediately after with first-aid equipment and bandaged it; the dog was then taken to a veterinarian.

Mr. Shalev said: "I'm pleased on behalf of the team, that we saved the dog's life; most of us have dogs and love them, however, owners have to follow instructions."

(x). POINTS PROBLEM.

From an announcement of 17.03.2019 by Israel Railways Ltd. on their website:

"Due to a technical failure which occurred today at around 15:00 on a turnout point machine at the Tel-Aviv area, trains were shifted from one track to another thus causing the following disruptions: Trains from the Western Negev line (Beer-Sheva - Ra'anana) started/terminated at Tel-Aviv HaHagana station; trains from the north started/terminated at Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central station; trains between the two stations were provided; trains between Beit-Shemesh and Netanya started/terminated at Tel-Aviv HaHagana station; at 17:00, passenger services between Lod and Rishon-LeZion HaRishonim stations were suspended and alternative bus services provided."

Only at about 18:10 had the problem been resolved and traffic resumed gradually; punctuality was as low as 85%.

(xi). KFAR CHABAD LEVEL CROSSING WORKS.

From an announcement of 17.03.2019 by Israel Railways Ltd. on their website:

"As part of the annual maintenance programme, infrastructure works for replacing track components and upgrading safety at the Kfar-Habad (between Tel-Aviv HaHagana and Lod) level crossing will be performed. Therefore the line section between Tel-Aviv HaHagana and Lod stations will be closed for traffic between Monday 01.04.2019 at 22:00 and Wednesday 03.04.2019 at 04:30; Kfar-Habad station will be closed as well.

Trains between Beit-Shemesh and Netanya, Ashkelon - Netanya, Rehovot - Binyamina, and Beer-Sheva - Carmiel from the south will start/terminate at Lod; from the south, trains will start/terminate at Tel-Aviv HaHagana; there will be additional changes and alternative bus services free of charge."

(xii). MESS ON THE TRACKS

On 07.03.2019 at about 12:05 a person who broke onto one of the tracks at Beit-Yehoshua station was hit by a passing train (doing at least 120 km/h) and was evacuated to hospital; as per police instructions, both tracks were closed to traffic; trains from/to the north started/terminated at Netanya; trains from/to the south started/terminated at Herzliyya; at about 13:30 one of the tracks was reopened but only for trains passing through the station; traffic fully resumed at about 15:00; punctuality was as low as 87% for a while.

(xiii). NEW TICKET FOR TOURISTS.

From a press release of 24.03.2019 by the Transport & Roads' Safety Ministry:

"A new public transport service: the ministry's National Authority for Public Transport, in cooperation with the Nature & Parks Authority and the Ministry of Tourism, has issued a special multi-line smart card for tourists which provides a 20% reduction in the entrance to up to six such sites; this is in addition to the value of this card as a daily and/or weekly free pass as used by the Israeli citizens.

It is called ISRAEL PASS, being sold at stand "On the line" of Terminal 3 of Ben-Gurion Airport; It is anonymous without need to provide personal details."



• Picture of the new 'RavKav' (Multi-Line/Multi Journey) ticket. Courtesy of Mr. Avner Ovadya Ministry of Transport.

(xiv). POOR FINANCIAL RESULTS.

From a press release of 25.03.2019 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

"The railways presented today their data including financial reports for 2018:

2018 shows a total loss of \$91M (NIS 330M) compared with a total loss of \$8.3M (NIS 30 M) in 2017; the current loss includes, among others, a \$57.5M (NIS 209M) value write-off reported already during the 3rd. quarter (Q3) of 2018, \$13.5M (NIS 49M) amortization expenses, as well as \$12.7M (NIS 46M) penalty due to failure to comply with annual punctuality aims, mainly caused by the worsening overcrowding at stations due to severe shortages of rolling stock and track infrastructures.

The Freight sector had a sector loss of \$20.4M (NIS 74M); it suffered from a partial strike during the whole year organized by the employees' union; this loss is the main reason for the company's operational loss; the 6.5% governmental subsidy for freight is in a constant decline.

The company has therefore decided on major savings in general expenses like conferences, refreshments, and better utilization of human resources.

Passenger Sector:

In 2018, the railways carried 67.7M passengers compared with 64.6M in 2017; up by 4.8%.

The daily average of passengers carried in 2018 was 257,000 compared with 245,000 in 2017; up by 5%.

The revenues from passengers were \$208M (NIS 753M) compared with \$206.4M (NIS 748M); revenues including operating fees were \$567.5M (NIS 2.056 Billion) compared with \$558.3M (NIS 2.023 Bn); up by 1.6%.

Freight Sector:

Revenues from cargo haulage in 2018 were \$49 Million (NIS 177M) compared with \$52.4M (NIS 190M) in 2017; down by 7%.

Freight haulage in 2018 was 8.5M to compared with 9.1M in 2017; down by 6.5%.

The decline in freight haulage and increased loss were mainly due to the sanctions made by the employees' union bringing a constant standstill, but also due to a critical shortage of rolling stock, motive power and tracks, while de-prioritising the cargo sector in favour of passenger trains.

The positive point is that steel coil haulage is rising as well as haulage of ammonia.

The average punctuality in 2018 was 91.6% compared with 93.62% in 2017; down by 2%; this was partially due to the rise in passenger traffic, a significant rise in the number of passengers with bicycles, and the rise in number of passengers with limited capabilities which grew from 40,000 in 2017 to 46,000 in 2018; up by 15% .

In 2018 565 passenger trains/day were operated compared with 518 trains/day in 2017; up by 9%; 60 freight trains/day were also operated.

The railways continued progressing infrastructure projects such as new and rebuilt stations and tracks, ECTS LEVEL 2, electrification, etc."

[Brief comment by the Editor: This is a rather astounding and contradictory report and one wonders what accountability principles lie behind it, with write-offs, allocation of depreciation etc. Traffic and income rises, new stock is bought, new lines open... If penalties for unpunctuality are such a major factor due to increased station dwell time the obvious thing to do is to ease timings and allow for such dwell time! It is alas fairly typical of large organisations facing losses in the millions to cut back on paper-clips, ink cartridges and orange juice, thus saving perhaps \$20,000 maximum...]

(xv). A POSITIVE IMPRESSION.

This was an OpEd piece on 'Times of Israel' 02.04.2019. by Andy Blumenthal.

"Recently on my trip to Israel, I was so impressed with Israel's modern transportation, including its

new train system that performs double duty for Israel's national security.

Israel Railways zips passengers north-south between Nahariyya and Be'er Sheva and east-west between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. The trains were clean, efficient, and not very costly to ride for around \$11 for an entire day. There is also a promotion for the next few months with free tickets from the Jerusalem station.

But the best thing of all is that Israel thinks in terms of both "guns and butter" at the same time. While the train system augments the already good bus service and provides an important public service, it also serves for the strategic defence for its citizens.

Coming into the train station in Jerusalem, you are 80 metres (262 feet) below ground, and we had to take I believe four escalators to get to the surface. At the top of two or three of these were huge metal doors that can be closed to seal the tunnels and whoever is underground.

I understood that there are provisions for 3,000 to 5,000 people to shelter from a nuclear, chemical or biological attack on the holy city of Jerusalem. Honestly, when I learned this, I was both comforted at the thought of protecting the people of Israel with this bomb shelter (and presumably others like it), but also I was frightened at the thought of a nuke going off in Jerusalem.

I couldn't help thinking of the prophetic vision of Ezekiel, of the climactic battle of Gog and Magog, and the possible death and destruction that could happen before the ushering in of the Mashiach and the ultimate triumph (physical and spiritual) of good over evil.

Going to Jerusalem, there is so much life, history, and incredible holiness. It is a treat to be there whether at the Kotel or in the Shuk. Jerusalem is the eternal capital of Israel, as President Trump has recognized in moving the American embassy there, and we should be grateful to him for this.

I value the new train system to get to Jerusalem, and I look forward to taking it many times, please God, in the future. At the same time, I appreciate the new underground shelter that Israel has wisely invested in to protect its inhabitants from enemies old and new, near and far."

(xvi). ELECTION DAY: RELATIVE NORMALITY.

Israel Railways Ltd. announced on their website that unlike former election days on which trains operated reduced services, on the election day 09.04.2019 trains would operate for the first time according to a full operational timetable - 580 trains/day.

The Election Day, which is an official holiday particularly as far as public sector is concerned, may create high demand - hence the strengthening of services.

According to the law, each citizen has the right to travel free from any place to the election point and therefore from 08.04.2019 at 20:00 until 09.04.2019 at 23:59 the railways will issue a paper ticket for one journey only at each station; the multi-liner smart card will not be valid for free travel.

The railways prepare for over 250,000 travellers; in the elections for the local authorities (municipalities, etc.) 250,000 used rail.

All this will happen only if the employees do not impose sanctions again; the public transport drivers - buses only, not including the Jerusalem LRV and the Haifa Carmelit drivers - have meanwhile threatened to strike on that day due to their claim that they are working too hard and earn too little.

On 09.04.2019 itself an IR press release announced:

"By 14:00 today 160,000 passengers had used rail; it is estimated that by 22:00, the time for voting stations to close, the number will reach 250,000 as happened on the election day for local authorities; on the A1 line load factor was 100% with a restricted number of 400 passengers/train as the line is still in test running mode; general load factor was 60% to 70%; busy stations were: Jerusalem Navon, all Tel-Aviv stations, and the Jerusalem Biblical Zoo station (on the old line)."

(xvii). TRACK PROBLEMS AT BEER SHEVA NORTH.

Israel Railways Ltd. announced on their website that due to track deformations at Beer-Sheva North/University, causing speed restrictions and service disruptions, intensive infrastructure works including replacement of 1 km of track will take place between Monday 15.04.2019 at 21:00 and Thursday 18.04.2019 at 05:00; the stations of Beer-Sheva North/University and Dimona as well as the line between the two will be closed. Works will cause the



Relaying between Beersheba and Dimona. Photos courtesy of Mrs. Yael Weitzmann/Amram of IR Press Office.)

following traffic changes:

Trains on the Negev (Western) line between Ra'anana and Beer-Sheva from the north will start/terminate at Ofakim station; alternative bus shuttle services will be provided between Ofakim and Beer-Sheva North/University stations in both directions.

Trains between Herzliyya and Beer-Sheva as well as between Carmiel and Beer-Sheva (both running through Lod and Kiryat-Gat) will start/terminate at Lehavim/Rahat; alternative bus shuttle services will be provided between Lehavim/Rahat and Beer-Sheva stations in both directions.

(xviii). NEW GENERAL MANAGER.

On 10.04.2019 the Railways' Directorate appointed Colonel (Reserves) Mr. Michael (Micha) Maixner as the new General Manager, succeeding Mr. Shahar Ayalon who left his job on 31.03.2019 after 27 months.

The appointment was approved after the selection of Mr. Maixner earlier this week by the railways' Directorate Search Commission. The new appointment must further be approved by the Transport and Finance Ministers after consultation with the commission for checking nominations in the public service.

Mr. Maixner was found the most appropriate candidate for the job, fulfilling all the precondition

requirements, particularly with his leadership capabilities and ability to motivate the employees. He presented a vision, strategic systems thinking, the designing and performance of operation of complex systems and a rich professional experience in managing complex situations and crises, including in industrial relations.

Colonel (Reserves) Mr. Michael (Micha) Maixner is 61, married with three children and is currently the General Manager of the Israeli company Imco Industries located at Neshet near Haifa and specializing in the development and manufacturing of electro-mechanical systems for military and civil applications; He was formerly the General Manager of the Merkavim bus builder located in Caesarea industrial zone, and formerly General Manager of Hod Asaf Industries Ltd. (Steel City in the past) which recycles scrap iron and steel and manufactures iron for buildings, etc.. In his military career he was the Head of the Authority for developing the Israeli main battle tank MERKAVA and head of Self-Propelled Vehicles in the technological unit of the IDF Logistic and Technological Branch.

His job will be a challenging one, particularly due to an unprecedented rise in passenger traffic demand while suffering from a severe shortage of track infrastructure and rolling stock, tense industrial relations forming the background of many conflicts between the management and the employees' union headed by Mrs. Gila Edrei, and a huge development programme including electrification, emus, revival of the Eastern Line, a fourth track on the Ayalon railway, ETCS LEVEL 2, etc.

We wish him success!

On 15.04 Aharon added: "Unofficial but reliable sources in the Transport Ministry said that the newly-appointed General Manager Mr. Maixner will start his job at the beginning of June 2019 in order to have an overlapping period with Mr. Ayalon."

(xix). LOD LEVEL CROSSING CLOSURE.

The railways announced on their website that from Thursday 02.05.2019 at 22:00 to Friday, at about 18:30 trains passing through Lod from Ashkelon, Yavne East, and Rehovot as well as from Binyamina to Ashkelon, will operate only partially and some not at all due to closure of the level crossing and opening the long-awaited grade separation on the Lod - Rehovot line just south of Lod station.

(See photo next page...)

(xx). NEW DEPUTY GENERAL MANGER, FINANCE.

From a press release of 11.04.2019 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

"The railways' directorate has appointed on 10.04.2019 Mr. Mordehai Vataro (57) as the new Deputy General Manager of Finance who will lead the railways' economic and financial systems in the coming years.

Mr. Vataro was formerly Deputy General Manager of Finance of the Port of Haifa, the Manager of the National Health Maintenance Organization (HMO)



northern region, and Deputy General Manager of Finance of CPC dealing with fuel and energy, and of Israeli Shipyards.

The reason for selecting Mr. Vataro for his job is his huge experience in governmental companies particularly the port of Haifa which has many challenges similar to those of the railways regarding industrial relations; Mrs. Edrei formerly worked in the port of Haifa as senior purchaser of fuels and lubricants.

He has also experience with the Finance Ministry and with companies committed to stock exchange reporting.

While his challenges will be the same as those of Mr. Michael (Micha) Maixner, he will have an additional challenge to reduce the railways deficit. We wish him success too!

(xxi). FURTHER INDUSTRIAL BATTLES.

The tense industrial relations between the management and the union headed by Mrs. Edrei reached a new record on the morning of 12.04.2019 when eight traffic managers at the control centre at Hof HaCarmel announced they were sick; this accounts for almost half the manpower which is 21; Four controllers who had just ended their night shift which had started the previous day at 22:00 had this extended by 2 hours which is the limit according to safety regulations.

As a result, the management decided to put traffic on halt until 08:00 for safety reasons until further notice.

By 09:00 the "missing" controllers had been "found" and traffic started to resume slowly; it was estimated that two hours would be needed to return to regular, however, there was no confidence that such "sicknesses" would not repeat.

The chairman of the workers' union meanwhile instructed them to return immediately to full work; The management stated: "The employees are a human capital, but we will not allow Mrs. Edrei to manage us!"

(xxii). HEAVY PESSACH TRAFFIC.

From a press release of 24.04.2019 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

"An "Industrial Peace" on IR; until today at 13:00 about 800,000 passengers have been carried by the railways during the past four weekdays of the Passover holidays (21.04.2019 to

24.04.2019); it is estimated that until the start of Second Passover on Thursday 25.04.2019 at about 19:00 the number of passengers will reach 1 Million.

The calculation of the data shows that between 21.-23.04.2019 the daily average passenger ridership was more than 205,000; this counts as 80% capacity compared with 257,000 daily over the same period of 2018; to be more accurate, the daily average over the whole Passover holidays was 220,000; the explanation is the extra rainy and cold weather between 21.-22.04.2019.

Unlike regular working days, during holidays passengers travel throughout the day in greater numbers and the railways strengthened their staff at stations

The A1 line between Ben-Gurion Airport and Jerusalem Navon stations enjoyed high demand; By 24.04.2019 at 13:00 40,000 passengers had used it; it was estimated that until the start of second Passover on Thursday 25.04.2019 at about 19:00 more than 50,000 would be carried; trains ran with 100% loading factor with the current limit of 400 passengers/train; from the beginning of test runs on September the line has carried 1.25 million passengers.

Punctuality was around 90%; an improvement over that of the sanctions period of the last three months when it was sometimes down to 76%."

As of 15:30 on 30.04 average punctuality at final destinations was 97.6%; at intermediate stations 97.3%; out of 320 trains operated, 301 were on time, 19 were late, none cancelled." [sic. - this actually works out at 94% punctuality!!]

(xxiii). HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY.

02.05.2019 was the Holocaust Memorial Day (called also the Martyrs' Remembrance Day); the date is set according to the Jewish calendar to commemorate the rebellion in the Warsaw Ghetto which lasted four weeks (19.04.1943 till 16.05.1943) and was the largest of its kind. The day, however, refers to the 6 Million Jews who died in World War II; as an integral part of the ritual a siren sounds, during which those in attendance are

silent, the public stands at attention and all traffic stands still; the railways are no exception.

(xxiv). NATIONAL MEMORIAL DAY AND INDEPENDENCE DAY SERVICES.

Israel Railways Ltd. announced on their website changes to the timetable on the two following specific dates:

On Wednesday 08.05.2019 : the Memorial Day for Israel's Fallen Soldiers and Victims of hostile activities: Until about 15:00 as usual with the following changes:

- Trains between Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central and Beer-Sheva Central to start/terminate at Herzliyya instead of Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central.

- An additional train to depart from Ashdod Ad-Halom at 14:17 calling at: Yavne East, Rehovot, Lod, all Tel-Aviv stations, Herzliyya, Beit-Yehoshua, Netanya, Hadera West, Caesarea-Pardes-Hanna, Binyamina and all Haifa stations, terminating at Haifa Central 16.42.

From 15:00 on:

On the following lines trains to operate at a service frequency of 2 trains/hour in both directions:

????Nahariyya - Modi'in Central and Jerusalem Navon - Ben-Gurion Airport.

On the following lines trains to operate at a service frequency of 1 train/hour in both directions:

Carmiel - Beer-Sheva Central; Beit-She'an – Atlit; Binyamina – Rehovot; Binyamina- Ashkelon; Herzliyya – Beit-Shemesh; Ra'anana - Beer-Sheva Central; Ra'anana West - Rishon-LeZion Moshe Dayan (West) until 17:00, and Lod - Rishon LeZion Harishonim.

On the Beit-Shemesh - Jerusalem Malkha line service frequency one train every two hours in both directions.

Between Beer-Sheva North/University and Dimona, six trains will operate through the day in each direction.

The Ministry of Defence will provide special bus services free of charge from Tel-Aviv University station to the nearby Military Cemetery where the central memorial service is to take place. Members of bereaved families will enjoy 50% reduced prices when showing the relevant identity card.

On Thursday 09.05.2019 - Israel's Independence Day:

On the following lines trains will operate at a service frequency of one train/hour in both directions:

Carmiel - Beer-Sheva Central; trains will call at Ahihud, Kiryat-Motzkin, Kiryat-Hayim, Hutzot Hamifratz, Merkazit HaMifratz, all Haifa stations, Binyamina, all Tel-Aviv stations, Lod, Ramla, Kiryat-Malakh-Yoav, Kiryat-Gat, Lehavim-Rahat, Beer-Sheva North/University and Beer-Sheva Central.

Binyamina – Ashkelon; Binyamina – Rehovot; Nahariyya - Ben-Gurion Airport (night trains); Tel-

Aviv HaHagana - Beer-Sheva Central (night trains); Jerusalem Navon - Ben-Gurion Airport; Nahariyya - Modi'in Central (calling at Atlit); Herzliyya - Beit-Shemesh; Lod - Rishon LeZion Harishonim; and Beit-She'an - Atlit.

Between Ra'anana West and Beer-Sheva Central and between Beit-Shemesh and Jerusalem Malkha line service frequency will be one train every two hours in both directions.

Where heavy traffic is expected station staffs will be strengthened and their presence extended.

For those celebrating at the many events at HaYarkon Park, adjacent to Tel-Aviv University station, the 04.58 train between Tel-Aviv HaHagana and Beer-Sheva Central will depart instead back from B'nei-Brak (adjacent to the other side of Hayarkon Park) while calling at all Tel-Aviv stations.

Night train services between Nahariyya and Ben-Gurion Airport, as well as between the south, central and north of Israel will operate as normal.

Towards Independence Day the railways will issue about 400,000 paper tickets specially decorated with the national flag at 500 automatic vending machines as well as at manned cashiers' offices at more than 60 stations.

(xxv). LAG BA'OMER.

Another event towards for which the railways needed serious preparations was Wednesday 22.05.2019 and Thursday 23.05.2019; This is called Lag BaOmer and is a Jewish holiday celebrated on the 33rd day of the Counting of the Omer, which occurs on the 18th day of the Hebrew month Iyar. This day marks the hillula, a celebration, interpreted by some as anniversary of the death of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, a Mishnaic sage and leading disciple of Rabbi Akiva in the 2nd century, and the day on which he revealed the deepest secrets of Kabbalah in the form of the Zohar (Book of Splendour), a landmark text of Jewish mysticism. This association has spawned several well-known customs and practices on Lag BaOmer, including the lighting of bonfires, pilgrimages to the tomb of Bar-Yochai in the northern Israeli town of Meron, and various customs at the tomb itself.

Another reason for why Jews celebrate Lag BaOmer is that it marks the day that the plague that killed Rabbi Akiva's 24,000 disciples came to an end, and for this reason the mourning period of 'Sefirat HaOmer' concludes on Lag BaOmer for some people.

Hundreds of thousands come to celebrate at Meron in the Galilee which is a very small place, thus creating severe overcrowding and road congestion; therefore no private cars are allowed to approach; instead, thousands of buses and of course Israel Railways would provide the services.

While there were many direct buses from all over Israel, many other provided shuttle services to/from Carmiel railway station, the nearest one to Meron.

The following strengthening trains were to be operated:

On Wednesday, 22.05.2019:

From Carmiel to Haifa Hof-HaCarmel at: 10:16, 12:16, 13:16, 18:16, 21:16, 22:16 and 23:50.

From Haifa Hof-HaCarmel to Carmiel at: 11:17, 12:17, 13:17, 21:17 and 23:17.

From B'nei-Brak to Carmiel at: 17:00 and 19:00.

From Rosh-HaAyin North to Carmiel at: 20:48 and 23:20; the trains will call at Petah-Tikva Sgula, Petah-Tikva Kiryat-Arie and B'nei-Brak.

From Carmiel to B'nei-Brak at: 23:06.

On Thursday, 23.05.2019:

From Carmiel to Haifa Hof HaCarmel at: 00:50, 01:50, 02:50, 03:50, 10:16, 12:16, 13:16, 16:16 and 18:16.

From Haifa Hof HaCarmel to Carmiel at: 00:17, 01:17, 02:17, 03:17, 04:17, 05:17, 11:17, 12:17, and 13:17.

From Rosh HaAyin North to Carmiel at: 01:00 calling at Petah-Tikva Sgula, Petah-Tikva Kiryat-Arie and B'nei-Brak.

From Carmiel to B'nei-Brak at: 01:06 - a direct non-stop train.

From Carmiel to Rosh HaAyin North at: 03:06, 04:10 and 10:06 calling at B'nei-Brak, Petah-Tikva Kiryat-Arie and Petah-Tikva Sgula.

(xxvii). MORE CONFLICT FROM GAZA: MAY 2019.

From a press release of Thursday 02.05.2019 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

"Due to the clashes along the Gaza Strip which have continued since last Friday and intensified during Saturday and onwards, the IDF has instructed all the public transport providers to the south to stop services to the south except in emergency cases; trains are operated (now) on the regular line to Beer-Sheva through Lod, Ramla, Kiryat-Gat, Lehavim/Rahat; the Negev (Western) line through Ashdod, Ashkelon, Shderot, Netivot and Ofakim, as well as the related stations are closed."

A few days later: "During the clashes along the Gaza Strip the rail link with Beer-Sheva was only useable through Na'an, Kiryat-Gat, and Lehavim/Rahat, but on 05.05.2019 at around 14:00 a rocket fell on the track near Goral Junction (where the Negev/Western line from Ashkelon merges with the Na'an, Kiryat-Gat and Lehavim/Rahat section) damaging the track and communication/signalling components; Traffic started/terminated at Kiryat-Gat; after a security patrol team searched the area, traffic resumed at



• Patrol Team near Goral Junction. (Photo courtesy of IR security dept. via Matan berkovich, IR).

The railways added a notice that the number of seats is limited.

(xxvi). FUEL LEAK.

On 01.05.2019 a train supposed to leave Tel-Aviv Hahagana at 18:00 for Nahariyya had to be cancelled due to an oil leak on the diesel locomotive; passengers had to waste between 10 to 50 minutes in order to change to alternative trains and finally arrived at Akko (Acre); 'Automatic compensation' was automatically activated; punctuality as at 18:30 was 93% for final stations, 95.5% for intermediate stations; out of 435 trains operated 405 were on time, 20 late; 2 cancelled.

16:03 to/from Beer-Sheva.

On 06.05.2019, after a cease fire agreement with Hamas had been achieved and following the IDF instructions, traffic resumed on the Negev/Western line from Ashkelon to Beer-Sheva and to the north; the first train from on this line departed at 11:19 and from Ashkelon at 11:43."

On 14.05.2019 'Times of Israel' reported: "Authorities to expedite work to shield roads, trains near Gaza. After anti-tank missile kills civilian during latest round of fighting, government agrees to speed up introduction of protective measures.

Following the latest round of violence along the Gaza Strip border, authorities will expedite

construction of a protective wall to shield trains travelling near the border from attack, Channel 12 news reported Monday.

Representatives of the Defence, Finance and Transportation ministries met at the Prime Minister's Office Monday and agreed to move forward with the project, estimated to cost NIS 100M (\$28M), once a new government is formed. The protective wall for trains travelling to Sderot had previously been approved, but budgetary issues had delayed its construction. Channel 12 reported that plans have also been drawn to protect roads in the area from anti-tank missile fire."

(xxviii). TRACK WALKER

Cases of persons breaking through fences along tracks and walking on them are also quite frequent. One such occurred on Thursday 09.05.2019:

The person's life was saved only by the attention of the Shefayim level crossing inspector and the railways' safety department staff who identified the danger, communicating with the train driver, who applied both the horn and emergency braking system and succeeded in stopping the train from 140 km/h; the "track walker" himself got off the track in the last moment without any injury; the railways immediately contacted the police who quickly arrived and took the man for investigation.

The train driver Mr. Michael Namzenko said: "During a routine journey I heard all the emergency networks shouting about a person on the track at Shefayim and immediately identified the "walker"; I immediately applied the horn and emergency braking system; I have been a driver for 27 years, I have experienced many events, but despite all these I trembled for several minutes".

The level crossing inspector Mr. Nashaf Abdalla, who has held this job for 10 years and has received several certificates of appreciation, said: "I identified a person who seemed to me drunk walking on the track and, being aware of the fast train coming very shortly, I immediately broke into the emergency networks to warn them in time."

During 2018 more than 15,000 cases of breaking onto railway lines occurred, causing delays of thousands of precious minutes; the persons involved were not only suicides but also those taking a short cut or desiring to take photos near or on the track.

- *How not to drive a car. Near Bat-Gallim 23.05.2019. (Photo: IR).*



xxix). EUROVISION SONG CONTEST.

From an announcement of 14.05.2019 by Israel Railways Ltd. through media:

"For the Eurovision semi-final contest which started on 14.05.2019 the railway cashiers have prepared themselves to provide services to many guests who would be watching it on screens and in the special building (for invited guests only); The railways have produced a film in which they greet the Eurovision delegations in English, French, Turkish, Spanish, Hebrew and in sign language.

During the Eurovision days, services provided at the adjacent Tel-Aviv University station will be strengthened by extra teams, and times of activity will be extended."

(xxx). FAILURE ON CARMIEL LINE.

IR announced on their website that Train 446 which left Haifa Hof HaCarmel for Carmiel at 08:59 had to stop at Gilon tunnel which is just after Ahihud station (the last stop before the final destination, Carmiel); however, the train succeeded in reversing to Ahihud station, from which passengers were transferred to Carmiel by buses at about 11:15. As a result the line between Kiryat-Motzkin and Carmiel was closed for about 60 minutes and at 12:15 traffic resumed.

(xxxi). TIMETABLE RESTORATION.

From a press release of 14.05.2019 by the Transport & Roads' Safety Ministry:

"Good news for the people of northern Israel: From 26.05.2019 there will be 19 additional trains between Nahariyya, Tel-Aviv and Beer-Sheva, according to the decision of Transport Minister Mr. Israel Katz to resume the service frequency on the line, which had been reduced on September 2018 due to the start of service on the AI between Ben-Gurion Airport and Jerusalem Navon stations, as well as a shortage of rolling stock caused by the this new service (AI).

The change will mainly comprise operating 3 trains/hour between Nahariyya and Tel-Aviv each direction in rush hours compared with current 2 trains/hour each direction in rush hours at present; consequently the service frequency between Tel-Aviv and Haifa will increase from 3 trains/hour to 4 trains/hour each direction at rush hours; this will increase the daily capacity by 12,000 to 15,000 seats.

The improved service will be provided both by Bombardier double-deck push/pull trains and by the surviving Bombardier IC3 Flexliner dms which can significantly reduce overloading at rush hours; this follows a successful test carried out by the railways about a month ago.

Very soon, additional Bombardier double-deck trains (and further on the Siemens double-deck emus) and Bombardier TRAXX electric locomotives

will arrive, further relieving the overloading problem at rush hours.

According to the new timetable of 26.05.2019 the trains between Nahariyya and Beer-Sheva will depart from Nahariyya at 05:27 and continue at hourly intervals until 09:27 and also between 15:27 and 19:27 at hourly intervals; in the opposite direction trains will depart Beer-Sheva Central at 04:53 and at hourly intervals until 07:53 and also between 12:53 and 18:53.

The trains will call at Akko (Acre), Merkazit HaMifratz, all Haifa stations, all Tel-Aviv stations, Lod, Ramla, Kiryat-Malachi-Yoav, Kiryat-Gat, Lehavim/Rahat and Beer-Sheva stations.

As part of the electrification works on the AI between Ben-Gurion Airport and Tel-Aviv HaHagana stations, as well as between Ben-Gurion Airport station and the electric locomotive depot at Lod, there will be changes in the coming weeks to train traffic on Fridays between Tel-Aviv and the South; From midnight on Thursday 30.05.2019 and Friday 31.05.2019 there will be no trains between Modi'in, Ben-Gurion Airport and Tel-Aviv HaHagana stations; alternative bus shuttle services will be provided between Modi'in Central and Ben-Gurion Airport and between Ben-Gurion Airport and Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central stations.

Trains between Beer-Sheva and Tel-Aviv HaHagana will terminate at Lod as will trains between Ashkelon and Tel-Aviv; alternative bus shuttle services will be provided between Lod, Tel-Aviv HaHagana, and Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central stations. Traffic will resume every Saturday night.

Completion of electrification of this link will avoid the need to tow electric locomotives by diesel up to Ben-Gurion Airport station and will save a lot of time.

Details to these changes: IR announced on 21.05.2019:

Due to infrastructure works - mainly replacement of turnouts and electrification - the following line closures and traffic changes are to take place between Thursday 30.05.2019 at 22:00 and Sunday 02.06.2019 at 04:30:

On Thursday 30.05.2019:

Ra'anana West - Beer-Sheva Central line: from 21:32 until service end, trains to/from the north will operate between Ra'anana West and B'nei-Brak in both directions; trains to/from the south will operate between Tel-Aviv HaHagana and Beer-Sheva Central in both directions.

The 21:53 from Beer-Sheva Central to Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central will terminate at Lod.

The 23:07 from Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central to Beer-Sheva Central will start at Lod.

On the Modi'in Central - Nahariyya line: the 23:18 from Modi'in Central to Nahariyya will terminate at Tel-Aviv HaHagana; at 23:58 a special train will operate, departing from Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central with final destination Nahariyya.

On Friday 31.05.2019:

Trains between Ra'anana West and Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central will start/terminate at B'nei-Brak.

Due to electrification works the line sections of Tel-Aviv HaHagana - Lod and Tel-Aviv HaHagana - Modi'in will be closed and the following traffic changes will take place:

On the Nahariyya - Beer-Sheva Central line (through Kiryat-Gat): from/to the north, trains will operate between Nahariyya and Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central in both directions; from/to the south, trains will operate between Beer-Sheva Central and Lod in both directions.

On the Nahariyya - Modi'in Central line: from/to the north, trains will operate between Nahariyya and Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central in both directions; there will be no services from/to the south.

On the Ashkelon - Binyamina line (through Rehovot): from/to the north, trains will operate between Binyamina and Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central in both directions; from/to the south, trains will operate between Ashkelon and Lod in both directions.

Beer-Sheva Central - Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central line: trains will operate between Beer-Sheva Central and Lod in both directions.

The following stations will be closed: Lod Ganei-Aviv, Kfar-Habad, Tel-Aviv Hashalom, Modi'in Central, Modi'in Outskirts and Ben-Gurion Airport.

The special Friday trains between Lod and Haifa Central (through Petakh-Tikva and B'nei-Brak) will not operate.

On Saturday night 01.06.2019:

On the Ashkelon - Binyamina line (through Rehovot), Nahariyya - Beer-Sheva Central and Nahariyya - Modi'in Central lines:

From/to the north, trains will start/terminate at Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central station.

From/to the south, trains will start/terminate at Tel-Aviv HaHagana station.

On the Ra'anana West - Beer-Sheva Central line (through Rishon LeZion Moshe Dayan - Negev line):

From/to the north, trains will start/terminate at B'nei-Brak station.

From/to the south, trains will start/terminate at Tel-Aviv HaHagana station.

On the Nahariyya - Ben-Gurion Airport line (including night trains), service will operate between Nahariyya and Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central in both directions.

On the Jerusalem Malkha – Beit-Shemesh - Tel-Aviv line trains will operate between Jerusalem Malkha and Lod in both directions.

Traffic will resume on Sunday morning at 03:13.

(xxxii). VIDEO ON LEVEL CROSSING DANGERS.

IR in cooperation with one of the TV networks produced a short report on-line (in Hebrew) from

20.05.2019 regarding violating the law at level crossings;

It can be watched at : <https://youtu.be/9xPOcA6tXsA>

(xxxiii). STICKING BRAKES.

On 15.05.2019 the crew on suburban train 228 from Rehovot (06:53) to Binyamina saw suspicious smoke which seemed to come out of one of the Bombardier push/pull set power generators; the train was stopped about 1 km from the nearest railway station of Caesarea/Pardes-Hanna (just 5 km south of its final destination of Binyamina) and the 150 passengers had to walk this distance along the track; the line was closed for traffic; one passenger was injured while getting off the train and others received bottles with cold water. It was found that the cause of the smoke was trapped disc brakes pads; the crew succeeded later in bringing the empty train to Binyamina at about 10:10, but traffic resumed only at 10:20.



• Stuck train of double-deckers.

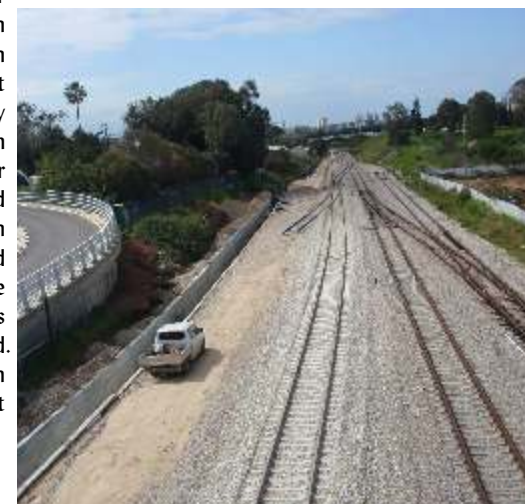
(xxxiv). HEAT WAVE.

On 22.05.2019 Israel was hit by a heat wave that led to many forest fires but also to the rails expanding and buckling, thus leading to a reduction or suspension of services. Humidity in some areas was as low as 5% and the temperature in shade as high as 46°C; many fires broke out.

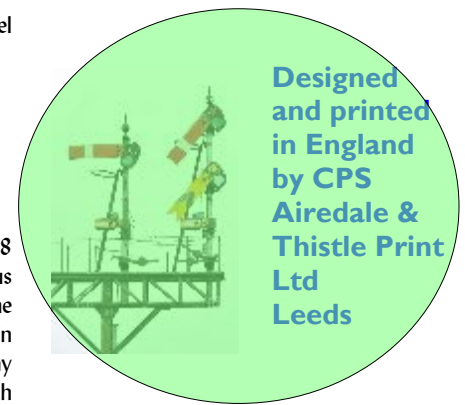
Railways are no exceptions, and due to the fear of deformed rails speed restrictions were imposed on many lines as from about 15:00; the Lod-Rishon LeZion HaRishonim railway section was closed at that time, with delays on other lines. Shortly thereafter, on the AI Ben-Gurion Airport - Jerusalem line, service frequency was reduced to 1 train/hour in both directions. At about 18:00 the speed restrictions were stopped on most lines - except in the Lehavim area (north of Beer-Sheva) where speed is restricted to 80 km/h - but delays still occur; the Lod - Rishon LeZion HaRishonim railway section was reopened and traffic on the AI gradually resumed. Friday 24.05.2019 was the hottest day, but from 15:00 there is a change in weather with the heat wave broken and gradual cooling.

As though the heat wave was not enough, on 24.05 a car driver broke onto the track near Haifa Bat-Galim causing further delays.

(xxxv). REHOVOT STATION EXPANSION.



See more photos on next page.....





• Works under way at Rehovot station which is being rebuilt and a fourth track and platform added. The situation as at 1st. March. (Photos Aharon Gazit)

125:05.

TENDERS.

(i). Israel Railways Ltd. Tender No. 11846: Providing Guarding and Security Services - including car patrol - at all railway northern sites: The contract is for 24 months with optional extensions of up to additional 36 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 07.04.2019.

(ii). Tender No. 190301: An Open Area at Kfar-Sava to be used for Parking by rail users: The contract is for 36 months with optional extensions of up to additional 24 months. Proposals by 08.04.2019.

(iii). Request for Information: "Regarding academic opportunities: For the certification of Israel Railways' Engineers abroad.

A. Background:

One of Israel Railways' ("ISR") goals is to enhance our employees' capabilities and to enrich their skill sets in their respected fields. To date, and to the best of ISR's knowledge there are no professions academic programs offered that will certify ISR engineers.

ISR is interested in receiving information regarding any program offered in English on the market today and which can accommodate the schedule of those same individuals who work throughout the day, in such a manner that they would be able to work throughout the day and join the program in the evenings.

Furthermore, ISR is interested in receiving information regarding the areas listed below that are offered both abroad that ISR employees can join as well as programs offered in Israel.

B. Areas of interest for academic certification:

The following is a list of the areas which ISR is interested in pertaining information about their existence, and the ability to have ISR employees join, either abroad or locally in Israel.

1. Request to receive the curriculum for a training course to certify Mechanical Engineers to be Rolling Stock Train Engineers

2. Request to receive the curriculum for a training course to certify electrical engineers to be Rolling Stock train electrical engineers.

3. Request to receive the curriculum of a training course to certify Electrical and Electronics Engineers to be Automotive Signal Engineers..... "

(iv). Call for providing Repair and Maintenance services for Electrical Service Vehicles used by the railways: Latest date for submission of proposals: 11.04.2019.

(v). Tender No.11824: Providing Placement and Employment of Human Resources in Israel Railways for a variety of jobs as needed:

The railways intend to select two winners for employment and three for placement.

The contract is for 24 months with optional extensions of up to additional 36 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 17.04.2019.

(vi). Tender No. 21832: Receiving proposals for a framework agreement for Removing Waste Materials from various railway sites: The waste removal is to take place from Lod, Beer-Sheva and Bnei-Brak station sites. Any bidder can suggest himself for more than one site; the railways intend to select the cheapest one. The contract is for 24 months with optional extensions of up to additional 36 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 21.05.2019.

(vii). Tender No. 190201: Removing and purchasing of Scrapped Equipment from sites all over the network: The contract is for 24 months with optional extensions for up to additional 36 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 02.05.2019

(viii). Tender No. 41808: For the Design, Manufacture and Supply of Turnouts Carrier Tilting Wagons ("TCTW") . The bidder must be the designer, manufacturer and supplier of the proposed TCTW and has designed, manufactured and supplied from 2014 at least six (6) Turnouts Carrier Tilting Wagons. Bids by 17.06.2019. (IR envisages ordering three of these bogie flat wagons designed for carrying pre-fabricated points at an angle to enable them to fit into the loading gauge.)

(ix). Request for Information: E-003-0010. For a Road/Rail Mobile Flash-Butt Welding Machine.

(x). Tender No. 190401: Placing and operating automatic selling machines for Cellular Phone Accessories at railway stations: The contract is for 12 months with optional extensions of additional 24 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 20.05.2019.

(xi). Tender No. 190401: Placing and operating a general goods Sales Counter (not food and drinks) at Jerusalem Navon railway station: The contract is for 12 months with optional extensions of additional 24 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 20.05.2019.

(xii). Tender No. 11921: Building, supplying, installation, responsibility and maintenance services of Mobile Phones' Android, IOS, interfaces, SDK, and additional applications for the railways; must be off-the-shelf item for mobile ticketing: The contract is for 60 months with optional extensions of up to additional 84 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 25.07.2019.

(xiii). Tender No. 11823: Providing maintenance and professional services to the railways' Internet system and Digital Channels: The contract is for 26 months with optional extensions of up to additional 72 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 25.07.2019.

(xiv). Tender No. 21942: Performing sound-proofed Acoustic Protection on apartments along railway line alignments: The intention is to select up to three winning bidders. Work on each apartment is to be completed within one week. The contract is for 24 months with optional extensions of up to additional 36 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 20.06.2019.

(xv). Tender No. 21750: Construction of Grade Separation No. 202 at Kfar-Habad: Note: the grade separation is to replace an existing level crossing adjacent to the railway station of the village with that name and the nearby small business centre; the village is an ultra-orthodox Jewish one and visited by many people during the year; the station is located midway between Tel-Aviv HaHagana and Lod stations; the passage of trains creates a severe bottleneck to be eliminated when works will be completed within two years. Latest date for submission of proposals: 13.06.2019.

(xvi). Tender No. 61876: Providing agronomical consultancy, design control, and inspection on treating vegetation and trees along tracks and at stations and sites damaging and endangering tracks: The intention is to select 3 winning bidders. The contract is for 12 months with optional extensions of up to additional 48 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 22.05.2019.

(xvii). Tender No. 170601: Providing taxi services to/from Ashdod Ad-Halom railway station:

(xviii). Tender No. 170602: Providing taxi services to/from Kfar-Sava Nordau railway station:

(xix). Tender No. 170601: Providing taxi services to/from Ahihud railway station: Each tender has to be quoted separately. The contract for 36 months for each tender. Latest date for submission of proposals for each tender: 27.07.2019.

(xx). Tender No. 190601: Operating taxi services to/from Rosh Ha-Ayin North railway station: The contract is for 36 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 13.06.2019.

(xxi). Tender No. 11845: Providing Maintenance Services for Pumps for Sewage, Drainage, and Pressure pipes:

The railways intend to select two winning bidders, one for the network northern part and the other for the southern part. The contract is for 24 months with optional extensions of up to additional 36 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 20.06.2019.

(xxii). Tender No. 11827: Providing consultancy services for developing Technical Writing regarding Technical and Professional jobs: The railways intend to select 3 winning bidders. The contract is for 24 months with optional extensions of up to additional 24 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 11.06.2019.

(xxiii). IC3 SETS FOR SALE.



• IR Flexliners sets 7 & 9, for sale. (Photos: Courtesy Aviad Shafir, IR)

Call for purchase of two used Bombardier Flexliner IC3 dms Nos. 7 and/or 9. The train/trains are to be sold "AS IS" through a tender to be published soon. Latest date for submission of proposals: 22.05.2019. Any questions should be written to Mr. Aviad Shafir, Israel Railways Ltd. Commercial Department Manager; P.O.B. 757 Lod 7136801, Tel.: 00-972-8-6533767; mobile: 00-972-50-7922085 email: AVIADS@rail.co.il; Meanwhile, members of DSB visited recently the railway facilities to check the possibility of purchasing two other dms.

B. TENDERS ALLOCATED.

Israel Railways Ltd. have announced on their website that Delek Industries Ltd. (one of Israel's biggest oil companies) won Tender No. 31902 for supply of Grease for wheel bearings at \$41,783.00 (NIS 150,000.00)/year.

LIGHT RAIL.

A. ISRAELI PUBLIC TRANSPORT NEWS:

On 14.05.2019 we learned:

"Egged Bus Operator, for years THE symbol of Israeli public transport and with a market share of 70%, is to undergo privatization with external investors; it is the last company in Israel to survive as a Cooperative.

The new partners will be other bus operators, insurance companies, bus manufacturers and bus importers; rail vehicle manufactures will also participate.

The company has a fleet of 2,950 buses, 1,300 shareholder members out of a total of 6,500 employees, and carries 0.9 million passengers/day.

As far as rail is concerned, the company won the NTA tender for operating the LRV Red Line and will participate in tenders for the Jerusalem LRV to operate the existing (and being extended) Red Line, as well as the Green and Blue lines to be built.

This is a radical change of mind in the company which was for years anti-rail."

B. TEL AVIV.

(i). GREEN LINE PREPARATIONS.

From a press release of 28.02.2019 by NTA:

"Towards the PQ (Pre-Qualification) for building and maintaining the LRV Green Line between Holon and Herzliyya and the LRV Purple Line between Kiryat-Ono and Tel-Aviv, six groups have been registered as bidders: CRRC, CAF, CREC, Siemens, Allied and John Laing, Alstom, etc.

The \$4.12 Billion (NIS 15 Bn) PPP tender will be published in May 2019 and NTA General Manager Mr. Yehuda Bar-On said that the number of bidders prove their trust in NTA projects.

(ii). NTA Tender No.269/2018: Selecting a contractor for building the Red Line Petakh-Tikva Kiryat-Arye LRV station adjacent to Israel Railways Ltd.'s active station including a connection between the two: Latest date for submission of proposals: 01.04.2019.

(iii). NTA Tender No. 2018/211: Providing writing, editing, and maintaining of CAD STANDARD instructions: One bidder. The contract is for 12 months with optional extensions of up to additional 48 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 30.04.2019

(iv). NTA Tender No.206/2018: performing minor works (demolishing of buildings on the alignment, fencing, and waste removal) by subcontractors: The contract is for 36 months with optional extensions of up to additional 24 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 16.05.2019.

(v). NTA Tender No.2019/097: Installing Acoustic Protection on Residential Buildings along alignments: Works include also air condition, temporary warning signs, waste removal, precautions, etc. The contract is for 36 months with optional extensions of up to additional 48 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 30.05.2019.

(vi). NTA tender No. 166/2019: Providing external legal consulting services regarding Design, Building, and Regulation: The contract is for 36 months with optional extensions of additional 36 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 21.05.2019.

(vii). NTA Tender No.019/218: Providing SAP and other Computer Services:

The contract is for 36 months with optional extensions of up to additional 24 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 17.06.2019.

(viii). NTA Tender No. 165/2019: Providing installation and maintenance works of 34 Road Traffic Lights on the Green Line and 17 traffic lights on the Purple Line + CCTV cameras at all the traffic lights: The works will be done as part of other infrastructure works. The contract is for 60 months + optional extensions of up to additional 6 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 04.06.2019.

(ix). FIRST LRV TEST RUNS IN CHINA.

On 16.04.2019 NTA announced the first and successful test run of the Red Line's first LRV train at the CRRC Chang Chung plant.

The manufacturer held a rollout ceremony with an NTA team including the Executive Vice President Mr. Shay Yiftakh and Deputy General Manager for Technologies and Systems Mr. Ephrayim Kalipha; the team included also quality control experts who were very satisfied with the manufacturing procedures so far; they continue overall checking.

NTA General Manager sent his congratulations to the professional teams: "We have completed and achieved today another important milestone on the Red Line project; Next month we will start track laying in advance of the arrival of the first train later in 2019; tunnelling is almost complete; we are progressing well with preparations along the surface sections according to schedule with the aim of opening the line in October 2021, despite all the sceptics".

- Upper:-
- Works near Jaffa on the Tel Aviv Red Line system - on the original Jaffa - Jerusalem railway alignment
- lower:-
- Works on the Tel-Aviv LRV/METRO Red Line in Petakh-Tikva at Jabotinsky Road.

Photos by Aharon Gazit. 19.03.2019.-



C. JERUSALEM.

(i) NIMBY OBJECTIONS. "SAVE EMEK REFAIM STREE". From 'Jerusalem Post', 09.07.2017. By Elias Messinas.

This is not "hot news" by any means – two years old - but it illustrates some of the attitudes in the wealthier parts of Jerusalem. 'NIMBY' is an abbreviation for "Not In My Back Yard". [Heavily edited].

"No one is objecting progress. People may be negating changes, but progress is always a good thing. Better conditions, better services, better living standards. Progress almost always comes with a price tag. When people are asked they have to choose between what they are willing to lose in order to gain what is coming ahead. In the case of historic street Emek Refaim, what comes ahead – the light rail and planned traffic changes in the neighborhood – do not seem to justify the heavy price that the neighborhood is asked to pay. This is why the local community has departed on a just campaign to improve the plan and save the neighbourhood.

The light rail or fast tram is an urban public transport system that uses rolling stock - vehicles that move on a railway - similar to a tramway, but operating at a higher capacity, and often on an exclusive right-of-way. Light rail networks have exclusive paths and resemble light metros, or partially operate on streets, giving right-of-way to the light rail over vehicles. Light rail systems are found throughout the world. They have been especially popular in recent years due to their lower capital costs and increased reliability and the fact that they are electrically operated and therefore reduce air pollution in cities.

The Jerusalem light rail network began in 2002. It was undertaken by the CityPass consortium, with a 30-year concession to operate it. After repeated delays due to archaeological discoveries and technical issues, the red line, the first of several light rail lines was completed in Jerusalem in 2011. The line is 13.9 kilometres (8.6 miles) long with 23 stops. Extensions to the red line are currently under construction to the northern suburb of Neve Yaakov and to Hadassah Ein Kerem Hospital to the southwest. When completed in 2018, the line will extend to 22.5 km. The red line project has been criticized for budget overruns, for its route choice and effect on neighbourhoods, and for contributing to air and noise pollution during construction. As construction took almost a decade, it had also severe economic repercussions for small businesses along its route, especially along Jaffa Street in the city centre.

The green line was approved by the City of Jerusalem, while the blue line, which is planned to pass along Emek Refaim street, is in the approval process (Ministry of Interior plan number 101-0178129). Due to the severe damage to the street

and the surrounding neighbourhood, the plan was met with opposition by the local community. The opposition process under way, is a great example of community involvement in the planning process. An example that teaches us of what happens when the city and the winning CityPass consortium try to ignore the community, but the community makes sure it is heard, and it is heard loud and clear.

Like most residents of the neighbourhood, I became aware of the community process in January 2017. The community campaign opened with a gutsy preliminary petition before the Regional Court, based on breach of trust. At the end of the summer of 2016 Mayor Nir Barkat gave the community only 3 months to come up with alternatives to City Hall's plan. In November the community – assisted by local professionals and academics - presented the City with a 120-page report on the alternatives. However, within 24 hours of meeting with the Mayor and the City Council the original plan – ignoring the community objections and alternatives - was submitted to the Regional Planning Council. The appeal hearing at the Jerusalem District Court took place on Sunday, January 29 2017 at 11am. Given the speed with which the alternative plans were dismissed, Judge David Mintz accepted the community claim of an implied agreement and promise, but the petition was rejected based on the judge's interpretation of other salient facets of the community petition, and he ordered the community to pay the others side's costs.

Next, a meeting was scheduled to learn about legal objections to the light rail project on Emek Refaim on Monday, January 16 2017 at 8:00pm at the Community Centre Ginot Hair (Beit Yehudit) on Emek Refaim. The meeting invited residents and merchants of the Moshavot, and anyone opposed to the plan, to come and learn about the filing of legal objections before the Regional Council, on March 6 2017, after having obtained a filing extension for objections. The evening's agenda included an update of legal proceedings initiated so far, an explanation of the procedure for filing objections before the Regional Council, a presentation of strategy and the importance of the objections, and hands-on assistance with preparation and filing of the objections, including signature before a lawyer who was present for that purpose.

On February 19 residents were informed that Amutat Refaim Bamoshavot (NGO) was registered on February 1 2017 (no. 580638690) with over 1,000 signed supporters. The Amuta filed a pivotal objection based on the 120-page report – with a complete outline of planning insufficiencies and procedural illegalities – backed by expert opinions, and supported by more than 1700 objections by individuals, businesses, and organizations to the plan.

On Wednesday June 14 the local planning and building committee held a series of meetings with residents and organizations that submitted objections to the plan at the City Hall. These hearings were not binding and not a substitute to hearings before the District Planning and Building Committee. However, discussions with residents

formulate the recommendation of the local committee to the District Committee. More than 100 residents showed up wearing campaign T-shirts, building up community presence and political pressure to the committee politicians. Due to pressure an additional meeting was scheduled for June 28 2017 at the City Hall. In parallel, a public campaign was underway, including banners along Emek Refaim, and posters in residents and businesses.

On July 20 2017 from 9:15 the hearings at the Regional Planning committee will take place. This is the decisive committee, yet, they intend to hear 1,700 objections in one day (!). Residents are invited to attend this important meeting.

Given the experience of Jaffa street, with long delays and the collapse of the businesses along the route of the light rail (see: <http://www.jpost.com/Local-Israel/In-Jerusalem/Jlem-merchants-disrupt-city-council-meeting-over-light-rail-construction>), the objections oppose repeating the same errors on Jaffa street and cause similar destruction to Emek Refaim.

Emek Refaim is the main axis of the German Colony historic neighbourhood, established in the 1870s by members of the Templar sect from Wurttemberg, Germany, who settled in the Refaim valley SW of the Old City. The land was purchased from the Arabs of Beit Safafa. The Templars were Christians who broke away from the Protestant church and encouraged their members to settle in the Holy Land to prepare for Messianic salvation. They built their homes in the style to which they were accustomed in Germany - farmhouses of one or two stories, with slanting tiled roofs and shuttered windows, using local materials such as Jerusalem stone instead of wood and bricks. The Templars engaged in agriculture and traditional trades such as carpentry and blacksmithing. Their homes ran along two parallel streets - Emek Refaim and Bethlehem Road. The Templars were deported by the British Mandatory government during World War II, considered as enemy citizens. Some of them resettled in Australia. Many of the lots were purchased by well-to-do Christian Arab families attracted by its location between the developing neighborhoods of Katamon, Talbiya, and Baka, which were populated by some of Jerusalem's wealthiest Arabs. In 1948 the Arab residents fled due to the fierce battles for control of the area during the Arab-Israeli War. The abandoned homes in the German Colony and other parts of Katamon were used to house new immigrants. Since the end of the 20th century, the neighbourhood has undergone a process of gentrification, with the restoration of old landmark buildings and incorporating some of their architectural features, such as arched windows and tiled roofs, in new construction. Numerous cafes, bars, restaurants, and boutiques have opened in the neighbourhood. Emek Refaim street has a mix of architectural styles, including Swabian-style homes, late provincial Ottoman-style, and British Art Deco from the Mandatory period, mixed with the eclectically ornamental look of houses from the beginning of the twentieth century.

This very sensitive ecosystem, which includes historic buildings, adult trees, and a neighbourhood-scale street culture supported by pedestrians, local businesses, cafes and restaurants, is in danger to

disappear during and after the light rail work is completed. To just point out the physical barrier required by law to be erected along Emek Refaim, to separate between the light rail from vehicular traffic, will separate the sides of the streets and damage the continuity of public space and the free-flow of pedestrians, bicycles, cars and public transportation. For this reason, the community, aided by professionals and experts, proposed to the City to seriously examine the tunnelling of the blue line under Emek Refaim, as an alternative to the current plans, and as was approved for another neighbourhood - Geula. Experts show that tunnelling will be cheaper and will protect the unique architecture and natural foliage in the neighbourhood, the community character of the area, and will avoid years of destructive building to the businesses and to local residents. These objections are also supported by the councils of the Baka and Ginot Ha'ir community centres and public institutions such as the College of Management and the local Clalit health clinic...."

[One wonders at such sentences as "Experts show that tunnelling will be cheaper"! But apparently-intelligent citizens seem to think so. Ed.]

(ii). POLITICS REARS ITS UGLY HEAD AGAIN.

From the 'Jerusalem Post' 15.05.2019, (by Evyatar Halon): "French firm could face lawsuit after quitting Jerusalem light rail tender."

"French rail transportation company Alstom has been threatened with possible legal action after pulling out of a tender for the extension of the Jerusalem light rail, allegedly citing human rights concerns. On Monday the Parisian multinational informed its Israeli consortium partners, Dan Public Transportation and Electra, that it would be not be submitting a final bid to participate in the project, reported, which will include the construction of a new track reaching Gilo and Mount Scopus - areas beyond the 1949 Green Line. In a strongly-worded letter sent to Alstom published by Channel 12, Dan and Electra said it would be demanding compensation from the company, stating that they are responsible for the loss of revenue worth "hundreds of millions of Euros."

"You acted in an unfair and two-faced manner," the companies said. "You misrepresented that you wished to enter the tender, but at the same time provided unreasonable demands that would clearly not be accepted. Your part in the project was critical and your withdrawal from it will make it impossible for us to meet the requirements [of the tender]," the companies wrote.

In an urgent letter sent to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Finance Minister Moshe Kahlon on Sunday, the eve of the closure of the tender, Dan and Electra requested a last-minute extension, expressing their "complete surprise" at Alstom's expected withdrawal and citing a decision based on human rights concerns.

Alstom's position "is entirely based on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict," the companies said, with the French firm contending that "the tender in question and the execution of the project ostensibly harm or are liable to harm human rights," and that its participation in the tender is contrary to French law. Only two of seven consortia invited to participate in the competitive process submitted bids by the Monday deadline.

The tender includes taking over the operation and maintenance of the existing Red Line, as well as the extension of the northern segment of the line to Neve Yaakov and the southern segment to Hadassah Ein Kerem Hospital. The selected consortium will also be responsible for the construction of the Green Line, which will run from Mount Scopus to Gilo and Malha, with branches to the Hebrew University's Givat Ram campus and Givat Shaul. The new line is expected to transport 160,000 passengers around the city on a daily basis.

The two consortia competing for the tender will be, first, a joint group of Shikun & Binui and Egged, together with Chinese company CRRC, Spanish firm COMSA, Portuguese corporation EFACEC and Polish service provider MPK; and second, Shapir Engineering and Spanish company CAF, together with Portuguese firm Steconfer and Ukrainian municipal company Kyivpastrans.

The winning group is expected to be announced during the last quarter of the year, with the operation of the expanded network due to commence gradually in 2022 and be fully operational in 2025."

(iii). THE CONTROVERSIAL CABLE CAR.

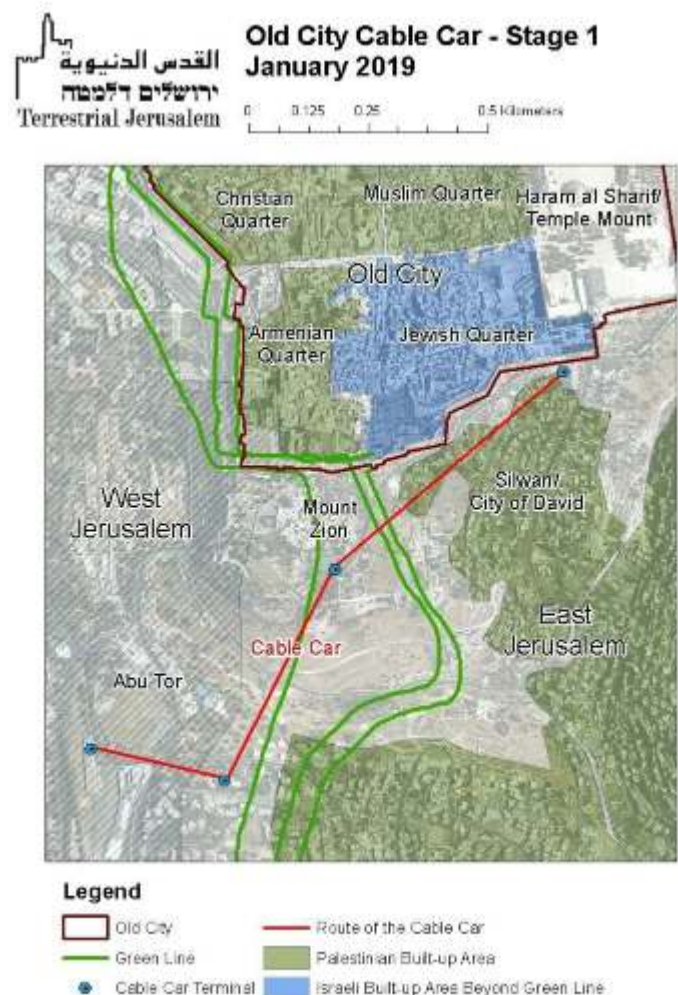
This rather opinionated 'Op Ed' Blog appeared in 'Times of Israel' on 13.03.2019, by Anna Roiser, the 'New Israel Fund's Engagement and Outreach Coordinator'; It is noted "Anna spent seven months living in Jerusalem in 2017" and that sparked off a series of rather hostile and sarcastic comments from readers regarding her naivety and over-optimism!

"Would you be willing to damage something you love to stop someone else from having it? Specifically, would you be willing to damage the beautiful and ancient landscape of Jerusalem to stop East Jerusalem becoming part of a future Palestinian state? The Israeli government's answer, in the form of a planned cable car to the Old City of Jerusalem, is "yes".

The cable car plan, approved by the government and open for public consultation until the end of March, will start at the First Station shopping complex in West Jerusalem, pass over the tranquil and historic Hinnom Valley, and pause at Mount Zion before terminating in the East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Silwan, close to the Dung Gate of the Old City.

Silwan, like the rest of East Jerusalem, came under Israeli control in 1967. The two-state solution envisaged an Israeli capital in West Jerusalem and a Palestinian capital in East Jerusalem, with each side having access to their holy sites in the Old City. However, many on the Israeli right are determined that both East and West Jerusalem should forever be part of Israel, speaking of their commitment to maintaining a "united and undivided city".

This is fictitious: Jerusalem remains very much divided. Arabs and Jews live in separate neighbourhoods, with separate school systems, and even separate bus networks. Most Jewish Jerusalemites wouldn't dream of visiting Arab neighbourhoods, some of which are cut off by the separation wall, and all of which suffer from a deliberate and significant lack of investment.



• *Image of the completed cable car.*



However, whilst there is no doubt that the cable car project will further the aims of both Elad and Israel's right

Recognising this de facto division of the city, the Israeli right is looking for ways to inextricably bind East Jerusalem to West Jerusalem, so that it can never be separated out into a Palestinian capital. That would be a death knell for the two-state solution.

Silwan, where the cable car will terminate, is home to the "City of David" archaeological site. Unlike other Israeli archaeological sites, it is run by a private organisation with an overt political agenda, the far-right settler group Elad. Elad's stated goals are to increase Jewish presence in Silwan through archaeological excavations focused on Jewish history, Jewish tourism, and moving Jewish residents into the neighbourhood. Through these goals Elad aims to tie Silwan firmly to Jewish Jerusalem. Although archaeologists are divided over whether the site was the location of King David's ancient city, Elad presents it as fact.

Elad is to play a central role in the cable car programme: the cable car will terminate at the top of Elad's new visitor centre, the 'Kedem Center', a seven storey building to be constructed 20 metres from the Old City walls, for which planning permission was given in 2017. The visitor centre will include a Bible Museum through which the cable car's passengers will pass, before accessing the Old City through underground tunnels. This will provide Elad with an unparalleled opportunity to impart their narrative of the area's past, in order to influence its future. The current Palestinian residents and reality of the neighbourhood will be literally and figuratively passed over by visitors.

The cable car is one of a number of moves towards entrenching Jewish presence in Silwan, including the eviction of Palestinians to make way for Jewish settlers, refusing building permits to Palestinian residents and a law passed in November 2018 allowing the building of Jewish homes in the City of David National Park (building homes in national parks otherwise being prohibited).

Whilst the cable car planners use the pretext of relieving traffic flow to the Old City to justify the proposal, many doubt it will achieve this goal. Rather, it's clear that this is a far-reaching political move dressed up as urban planning. Its approval was announced on the 50th anniversary of the day Israel captured East Jerusalem in 1967, it has been fast-tracked away from the usual city planning processes, and it's funded (at a cost of NIS 200 Million) by the national government, not the municipality. Last week, the Transportation Ministry revealed that it was not involved in the project at all.

wing leaders, what has been described as the "disneyfication" of Jerusalem comes at huge cost to this historic landscape. It has been decried by Israeli architects and preservation experts, as well as by UNESCO.

Stepping back, the cable car project is important not only because of its implications for Jerusalem's landscape and politics, but also because of what it illustrates about the lengths to which the Israeli right is willing to go to pursue its interests.

Just as the beauty of Jerusalem's ancient landscape is at the heart of Jerusalem's character, Israel's identity as Jewish and democratic is at the heart of the state's character. And just as the right are willing to damage Jerusalem's delicate landscape if they think it will further their goals, so too they are willing to undermine the very essence of Israel's identity.

Steps such as these chip away at the essence of what is ostensibly being protected. The cable car is a highly visible illustration of this process, demonstrating the destructive lengths to which the Israeli right are prepared to go in order to pursue their vision. Each step, we are told, is necessary to protect and advance Israel, to defend her against those who wish her harm. But what kind of Israel will be left when they are done?"

Then in 'Times of Israel' 03.04.2019 came:

"With Objection period ending, Opposition to Jerusalem cable car plan peaks. (By Sue Surkes.)

"In the run-up to Wednesday's deadline for objections to a controversial government plan to link West Jerusalem to the Old City by a cable car, internationally renowned architect Daniel Libeskind, veteran Israeli archaeologist Meir Ben-Dov, and the Israel Association of Architects and Town Planners have joined public figures, activists and others demanding that the project be scrapped.

The Tourism Ministry has touted the cable car scheme as an attraction and as well as a solution to traffic congestion and pollution around the Old City walls, as visitors to the capital break records, reaching the four million mark.

Boosters argue that the car will attract tourists and is the greenest, least disruptive, and most financially feasible way to get up to 3,000 visitors per hour from West Jerusalem to the Western Wall, the most venerated site where Jews may pray.

Opponents, however, say that the plan is obtrusive and culturally and politically irresponsible, and that rather than solving the traffic problem it will simply shift it to the area of the First Station.

A feasibility study commissioned for the project has been kept from the public. The Jerusalem Development Authority - which is implementing the plan on behalf of the government and the Jerusalem Municipality - has said that revealing data in advance of a tender for construction would be unwise.

Fifteen pylons up to 26 metres tall

If implemented, the plan will see cable cars strung over some 15 pylons, from nine to 26 metres (30 to 85 feet) high and visible from key points overlooking the Hinnom Valley. There will be a middle station at Mount Zion and a storage depot for cabins in the neighborhood of Abu Tor.

Those opposing the project include more than 27 international architects, among them Ron Arad, Moshe Safdie and Santiago Calatrava; 70 Israeli architects, archaeologists and public figures who put their names to a petition; the 760-member Moreshet Derech, one of two organizations representing tour guides, which says that its members will not divide their groups among cable car carriages for fear that they may lose them on the other side and will therefore not use the facility; the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel; the Society for the Preservation of Israeli Heritage Sites; the Karaite community, over whose ancient cemetery the cable car is set to pass; the environmentalist group Adam Teva V'Din; the human rights organizations Emek Shaveh and Bimkom; the Khan Theater; and Jewish and Palestinian residents from both East and West Jerusalem and elsewhere.

Supporting the project is the Israel Tour Guide Association, with some 2,000 members. Its chairman, Benny Kfir, poured cold water on those who have "made opposition in Jerusalem a profession." He said that an association study of tourism transportation and access had confirmed that massive overcrowding was harming tourists, guides, and the tourism experience and that making more parts of the Old City more easily accessible to spread the load was an immediate need, whatever the solution was. He also belittled claims by the rival tour guide organization that groups could not be divided between cable cars, saying it worked perfectly well at Masada, a fortress site on a desert mountain top in southern Israel, where big groups could be split up as they queued for the [much larger, single] cable car. Those arriving first just waited at the other end.

He added, "I know that there are opponents. Our view does not mean that we love Jerusalem less."

Libeskind: Project threatens 'irreplaceable cultural assets'

Libeskind's objection was expressed in a letter to David Schonberg and Chaim Crown, two Jerusalem lawyers who are opposing the cable car project.

Libeskind — a Polish-American Jew whose projects include major museums and other cultural

institutions across the world — wrote that the project “threatens irreplaceable cultural assets.”

Dismissing claims by advocates that the cable car will help relieve traffic around the Old City walls, he insisted, “Jerusalem’s traffic problems should not be solved by cable cars which will mar the image of Jerusalem with a technology reminiscent of a Swiss mountainside.” He continued, “This project threatens irreplaceable cultural assets and as regards Jerusalem, the landscape is a precious heritage for all.”

Archaeologist and historian Meir Ben-Dov, who supervised excavations near the Temple Mount, first as deputy director alongside the late Benjamin Mazar, and then as director for a decade from 1976, said modern, alien construction such as this would cause “irreversible historical and archaeological damage” in the Old City basin.

“It is inconceivable that what hasn’t been excavated in 2000 years should be dug into now to implement a project in a moment of distraction that will serve as a badge of shame,” Ben-Dov wrote. Lamming what he called the planners’ total disregard for the property rights of those likely to be harmed by the cable car, the archaeologist, who was also responsible for excavating the Western Wall tunnels, claimed that construction of the stations would be in “crude violation” of the Antiquities Law, which mandated preservation of excavated sites.

One chance to object

The project — strongly backed by Tourism Minister Yariv Levin and Jerusalem Mayor Moshe Lion — has already been approved, subject to a period of public comment, which ends on April 3.

In the regular planning system, the public has the right to object at the local and district level, and to appeal at the national level. Under the National Planning Council, by contrast, there is just one period during which the public can object, and presentations are not made before the council but rather before a so-called “investigator,” who studies the submissions and then advises the NPC according to his or her conclusions.

After just one presentation before the Jerusalem planning committee last year, the scheme was whisked away to the NPC — a fast track body within the Finance Ministry set up to handle major infrastructure projects such as gas and railway lines that cross local authority boundaries, as well as some tourism projects. ‘No limit to vulgarity’

Last week, though, the Israel Association of Architects and Town Planners submitted a legal opinion to the National Planning Council charging that the NPC is not legally authorized to deal with the project and that the law does not allow the building of tourist infrastructure in a national park surrounded by open areas.

Referring to a publicly available report of a transport consultancy commissioned by the planners that found that a less obtrusive light rail line to the Dung Gate area would be three times more expensive than a cable car and would take twice the time (three years) to build, the association wrote, “Is there no limit to cynicism and vulgarity, when the reason for choosing the more damaging option is that it is faster and cheaper to implement?”

The association decried the plan to locate the final station within the controversial Kedem complex being planned by the right-wing City of David Foundation just opposite the Old City walls because it would require adding an extra story to the building after a prolonged public battle had succeeded in making the complex lower. (It will still stand a little below the height of the walls.)

It also questioned why a preservation file had not been compiled about the area in question, saying that if such files were automatically prepared for 20th century buildings, it was many times more important to create one for the sites of historic, national, architectural and archaeological importance that the project was set to impact.

The cable car would only be active for 40 percent of the time — standing idle on Sabbaths and holidays, for breakdowns and maintenance, etc. — the association predicted, while the pylons would be visible around the clock.

Dismissing the assertion by the office of project architect Mendy Rosenfeld that the stations, largely made of glass, would be transparent, the association charged that both in style and volume, they would fail to integrate into the landscape and were totally out of proportion to existing buildings.

“What will be left of the view of the Hinnom Valley will be the view of stations and pylons, which dwarf every other element of the view — the natural sweep of the landscape, the vegetation and the hillsides, and of course all the rest of the built areas behind them — the historical buildings, the churches and their courtyards.”

The project would also cause visual and acoustic damage to the residents of the crowded Palestinian village of Silwan, over which the cable car is set to pass on its way to the Dung Gate, it said. On traffic, the association charged that a cable car was never included in Jerusalem’s traffic master plan, that the Transportation Ministry’s lack of involvement, raised questions and that the traffic details provided by the planners were not up to date.

“It’s not clear why a thorough transportation and tourism survey has not been undertaken. Such a survey, under proper professional supervision...is a condition for rational decision-making that is not politically or emotionally slanted,” the association wrote.

In a letter sent earlier this month to the prime minister and the ministers for tourism and Jerusalem affairs, world renowned architects Arad, Safdie, Calatrava and others charged that powerful interest groups” were putting tourism and politics above safeguarding cultural treasures.

“No other important historic city has a cable car,” they wrote. “It is a matter of international consensus that the choice of a cable car is not appropriate for ancient cities with a skyline preserved for hundreds or thousands of years. Cities like Rome and Athens with millions of visitors a year did not build a cable car.”

Aner Ozeri, who is responsible for the Old City Basin at the Jerusalem Development Authority, and who told this reporter that the architect’s impressions his office had submitted to the National Planning Council were deceptive (“only the 2D

plans tell the truth”), told a residents’ meeting in Jerusalem on Sunday that maintenance work would be carried out only at night, that breakdowns were highly unlikely, that no houses would be demolished, that the cable cars would pass four to six metres (13 to 20 feet) above the houses, and that the cost of a journey would be the same as that for a public bus thanks to government subsidies.

While no decision had been made, it was likely the system would not run on the Sabbath, he added, during which all the cable cars would be stored either within the Abu Tor depot or the stations, with just the pylons and 4.5 centimetre (1.8 inch) diameter cables visible.

Ozeri said the aim was to provide additional access for tourists to the Old City, not to divert them from other entrance gates. Underground parking would be provided close to the First Station at the Liberty Bell Garden.

Asked why the Transportation Ministry was not involved in what the JDA describes as a transportation project and part of Jerusalem’s evolving mass transit system, the project’s director, Shmuel Tsabari, told the meeting that the ministry had initially viewed it as “some kind of fun fair” but was now pushing the cable car option for Nazareth and Mount Meron in the country’s north.

He indicated that political rivalry within the Likud party was behind the decision of Transportation Minister Israel Katz’s decision to advance an extension of the new Tel Aviv-Jerusalem regular train line to the Dung Gate while Yariv Levin at the Tourism Ministry was backing a cable car. Also present at the residents’ meeting was Hebrew University geography professor Ronnie Ellenblum, who opposes the cable car project. He quoted the JDA’s own figures to show that rush hour traffic jams around the First Station were already far worse than those around the Old City. He claimed the project was being built to ensure sufficient visitors to the City of David’s Kedem Centre, which will exhibit finds from the Givati parking lot archaeological dig.”

(iv). THE JERUSALEM LRV PROJECT.

The concessionaire CityPass announced on 28.04.2019 that the company will not participate in the new tender for extending the Red Line and building the Green Line, as well as operating both of them, or building and operating the futuristic Blue Line; they will eventually pull out from light rail altogether after 8 years of operation.

From the original seven groups which participated in the tender on March 2018, only the following three groups remained: The Israeli company Shapir Engineering Ltd. with CAF; Shikun UBinui with Egged Holdings and Meridiam Infrastructure, and IDT GEK Tema with Pangea Israel.

The Finance Ministry will have to compensate CityPass.

The 'Jerusalem Post' reported on 11.05.2019 (by Peggy Cidor), in what is a good general overview of the shenanigans to date:

"The first time officials in Jerusalem began thinking about the need to adapt public transportation to the growing numbers of residents was in 1968. When the eastern part of the city was annexed to the capital, it transformed from a small city located at a dead-end point surrounded by a frontier to a large city (three times its original width) on its way to becoming a metropolis. The city with the largest population in the country would need modern infrastructure and urban development.

Public transportation was the first goal, and that is how the plan for a new network was conceived. Later on, the city focused on a light rail plan. When it is finished, the public transportation network will include eight lines, backed by a large bus network using public routes and a complex of ring roads around the city to encourage residents and visitors to renounce their private cars and use public transportation.

Thus, the Jerusalem Transportation Master Plan was born, as a joint project of the Jerusalem Municipality and the Transportation Ministry, under the direction of the municipality. For years – for various reasons, mostly lack of approved budgets – the Master Plan staff was off the public radar. Things changed radically in 1995 when the Master Plan was approved by former mayor Ehud Olmert, and approved by the government in 1998. Infrastructure work began in 2000, but the first train did not move on the rails until August 2011 (instead of 2006 as planned).

The Red Line was the first line, connecting Pisgat Ze'ev in the north to Mt. Herzl. It caused massive disruption of daily life in Jerusalem. There were repeated delays, complications, inevitable mistakes, and above all, the Build, Operate, Transfer (BOT) tender conditions were not the best choice to ensure citizens' interests.

CityPass, the company established to run the line, had its own interests. Eventually, things reached a point where mayor Nir Barkat, elected in 2008, opened his first press conference by announcing his first objective was to cancel the entire project. The project was not shelved, but Barkat managed to get total control of the Master Plan (which had been working as a semi-independent unit) and convinced the government that the BOT system was not to be reused for the next lines planned. As a result, the coming lines – the Blue, the Green and the entire Transportation Plan for the capital – were under complete control, from the state through the municipality.

Now the Red Line is undergoing two extensions – to its original 14-km. route will be added another 9 km., extending from Neve Yaakov to Hadassah University Medical Center in Ein Kerem. Today it has 23 stops, running every six minutes, with 150,000 passengers per day. It runs 23 trains that can transport up to 500 passengers at time with a total of 46 cars. It is expected to reach 220,000 passengers per day with the two extensions. One of the major complaints against CityPass is that since its first year operating, no car or train has been added to the existing lines, and this creates extreme crowding in coaches at rush hour. That, in addition to public anger at the company's unfriendly attitude toward passengers – with

tickets and fines given without any distinction between cheaters and those who were unable to validate their Rav-Kav, even if the passenger had a daily/monthly pass or if it was due to faulty train scanners – led the authorities to present CityPass with a much less attractive tender for the next lines.

Last week in a dramatic move, CityPass announced its decision not only not to submit a tender for the Blue and the Green lines, but to quit the entire project completely and leave Jerusalem.

The next tenders will be published soon. The Transport Ministry and the municipality made it clear that they will be in full control; the tender will address the operating company only.

Due to major local opposition, the Blue Line project has become a civil activism issue. The segment of about 1 km. (on Emek Refaim St.) of the 20-km. line - which was approved back in 2016 – has raised major opposition from residents. The Blue Line, with 45 trains and 90 cars due to depart every three minutes, will connect Gilo to Ramot, with 42 stops. It is expected to serve a quarter million passengers per day.

Originally, the train was supposed to run through the old rails when it was proposed by mayor Olmert. However, since then, a local civil project that transformed the old rails' path into a city park required a change in plan. The Messila Park, an urban jewel, had gathered massive support against its eventual harm from light rail construction. The Master Plan staff thus decided to route it through one of the German Colony's picturesque streets, a decision that caused a fight that is still going on between supporters of Messila Park and those of Emek Refaim. Both sides claimed victory at some point at the local, district and the State Appeal Committee for planning levels. Each side can still appeal to the High Court of Justice.

The issue is now likely to be in the hands of Mayor Moshe Lion. Emek Refaim supporters claim that Barkat refused to seriously consider the alternative of a tunnel under Messila Park, which would save both the street and the park. Master Plan CEO Zohar Zollan was the former director of

Barkat's municipal election campaign and even wore a campaign shirt on TV, leading some to suspect his impartiality, and they have asked Lion to become the decision-maker.

Thus far, Lion has resisted taking the reins. He has said he understands the concerns of the German Colony residents, but hasn't done the one thing they hoped: to declare that he wants to hear from experts on the issue.

In a recent interview with 'In Jerusalem' Lion said he is willing to do so, but only under the condition that the ministers of Treasury, Construction and Transportation all agree. Currently, Transportation Minister Israel Katz is the only one that has not signed on.

Meanwhile construction continues on the Green Line, expected to connect Gilo (through Patt Junction) with Mt. Scopus. The cornerstone was laid in May 2018. Construction is expected to take four years and it will also have an extension that will connect the two Hebrew University campuses – Givat Ram and Mt. Scopus.

Additionally, Israel Railways has begun planning an extension of the line from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem that will continue from the Navon Station at the city entrance to the Kotel. The line will have two stops in the city, both underground, like the Navon stop, under Jaffa Road. It has not yet been decided where the final station will be located. The options are either at Mamilla, under the Old City, or along Jaffa Road by the Dung Gate. The project is estimated to cost NIS 2 Billion."

D. HAIFA.

THE HAIFA CABLE CAR PROJECT.

The Transport Ministry published on 07.03.2019 Tender No. 24-18 for a licence to operate and maintain the cable car between the Check Post/Merkazit HaMifratz transportation centre, the Techniyon and the Haifa University on Mount Carmel. (See earlier reports). The contract is for 72 months with optional extensions of up to additional 72 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 30.04.2019.





• Installing masts for the new Haifa cable car 08.04.2019. (Photo: Transport Ministry via Aharon Gazit)

E. THE HAIFA – NAZARETH TRAM/TRAIN PROJECT.

From a press release of 24.03.2019 by CROSS ISRAEL HIGHWAY LTD. (the governmental company responsible for managing the project):

CROSS ISRAEL HIGHWAY LTD. announced today that the winner of an overall detailed design of the \$88 Million (NIS 320M) project is the Spanish firm Ineco in a joint venture with the Israeli firm Yenon – Research & Design Ltd., which is one of Israel's leading civil engineering firms specializing in highways, railways, transportation and traffic engineering.

Other bidding groups were:

- French Egis Rail with the Israeli firm AMY-METOM Engineers & Consultants Ltd.
- DB with the Israeli firm TEDEM Civil Engineering Ltd.
- Beijing Urban Ltd. with the Israeli firm GRONNER D.E.L. Engineering Ltd."

F. EILAT.

(We take the definition of 'Light Rail' very loosely to include funiculars (such as the Carmelit) or cable cars; Now in Eilat comes another proposal for an innovative public transport system which will not involve steel (or rubber) wheels on rails – but we will introduce it here for now. Editor.)

Eilat inks deal with SkyTran, taking step toward futuristic pod transport system

US startup awaits ministry approval but hopes to start project this year; 'maglev' network could provide much-needed reduction in traffic congestion. By Shoshana Solomon 4. April 2019.

"US company SkyTran has signed a memorandum of understanding with Eilat to build a Jetsons-style elevated rail system that will cross Israel's southernmost city to the newly opened international Ilan Ramon airport, a senior official at the firm said.

"The system will go down to Taba [border crossing with Egypt] and around the hotel area," said SkyTran co-founder Thomas Curran in a phone interview. "The city has a problem with traffic and this is the most viable solution. We are hoping to already start putting poles in the ground this year, but we still need to get approvals from the transportation and finance ministries in Israel. "

This is the fourth agreement the startup has reached with an Israeli city, after last year SkyTran — which has received investments from former Google chairman Eric Schmidt and India's Reliance Industries — got the nod from the city of Netanya to operate the elevated rail transport system between the Sapir railway station and the Kiryat Nordau neighborhood, over coastal Route 2.

The startup also has memorandums of understanding with Herzliyya — which is conducting a feasibility study for the project — and Ra'anana, where a feasibility study has been completed and the project is go to a regional committee for review.

A SkyTran pod (simulation courtesy of www.skytran.us)

The company has to do things in parallel: continue to develop its system while bringing municipalities and other entities on board, Curran explained

The transportation system is being developed by the Irvine, California-based SkyTran in partnership with Israel Aerospace Industries, which is also an investor in the firm, using technology developed at the NASA Ames Research Center in California.

The plan involves a network of computer-controlled, two- or four-person "jet-like" vehicles employing passive magnetic levitation (maglev) technology; aluminium rails have a motor that spins a magnet that sits on the transportation pod, propelling it forward.

"This is a disruptive and game-changing solution for the planet and Israel," he said. "It is a mass transportation solution where one bi-directional glideway has the same capacity as six lanes of a freeway."

The company hopes to have a commercial product up and running in the market in two years, Curran said, after it managed to raise funds over the past four years from investors.

In addition to Schmidt and Reliance, investors in the company include Draper Associates, WeWork's Adam Neumann and OurCrowd, Curran noted, without revealing how much the startup has raised. He added that more funding will be needed to complete development.

The company last year conducted a demonstration of its transportation pod at a location of the Israel Aerospace Industries near Ben-Gurion Airport in which it "levitated" a 720-kilogram (1,587-pound) vehicle and transported it at 70kph (44mph), he said. The rails of the fully completed system will be at a height of some 8 to 9 metres (26-30 feet) above ground.

The company is now testing out the switching system, seeing if the pods can change from one elevated track to another and align correctly so passengers can disembark when they reach their destination.

A similar testing facility is being set up in Mexico and Texas, Curran said, with an additional half-scale development site up and running at a NASA facility in California.

"The whole system can be set up with one-tenth of the cost of a light rail or 1/100th of the cost of a subway," Curran said. And the travelling pods "don't have to deal with traffic lights or crossings."

SkyTran's testing facility being set up at a site in Mexico (Courtesy)

Curran said he didn't know yet where the first commercial application of the system will be launched. "I am hoping it is going to be in Israel but we don't exactly know."



OTHER MIDDLE EAST RAILWAYS.

125:07.

A. EGYPT.

(i). CAIRO METRO: BOGIE DROP TO REDUCE DOWNTIME.

From 'Metro Report Intl.' 05.03.2019: "Representatives of the National Tunnels Authority and Cairo metro depot operator Colas Rail recently visited the UK to inspect a bogie drop which Sheffield-based depot equipment manufacturer Mechan is to supply for a depot on Line 3, the Al Thawra line. This will enable bogies to be removed and refitted without needing to uncouple metro cars from a trainset, reducing the time which a train is out of service and helping to meet growing passenger demand.

The bogie drop is scheduled to be installed during June. As part of the contract Mechan will make two scheduled maintenance visits per year for the next two years, and provide spare parts for five years.

Mechan supplied a similar bogie drop to Cairo in 2010. 'Our original bogie drop is still working reliably and efficiently and it is a huge endorsement of our build quality that Colas Rail requested a replica', explained Sales Manager Lindsey Mills. 'Despite the language barrier and time zone issues, the design and build process has been issue-free and we look forward to completing the project later this year.'

(ii). TALGO TRAINSETS FOR 160km/h ORDERED.

From 'R.G.I.' 08.04.2019: "Egyptian National Railways has selected Talgo to supply and maintain a fleet of six 160km/h trainsets at a total cost of around €158m, the manufacturer announced on April 7. Intended to operate inter-city services on ENR's principal routes linking Alexandria, Cairo and Aswan, the trains will be formed of 14 passenger vehicles, together with a diesel-electric locomotive and a generator car.

According to Talgo, the interior configuration of the trains will be derived from the 36 trainsets currently being supplied for the Haramain High Speed Railway in Saudi Arabia. These climate-controlled trains have been designed to operate in very high temperatures and are pressure sealed to minimise the ingress of sand.

Each 14-car set is expected to carry 492 passengers, offering a mix of first and second class, as well as a cafeteria car and spaces for passengers with reduced mobility. All vehicles will have onboard wi-fi, and a passenger entertainment system with LED screens at each seat will be provided in first class.

The procurement contract is valued at €126M, with a separate contract covering eight years of maintenance priced at €32M.

The project is being funded by the European Bank for Reconstruction & Development under a tender launched in August 2016. Final bids were submitted in October 2018, and the formal contracts are expected to be signed shortly, leading to delivery in 2021-22. Talgo President Carlos de Palacio Oriol told *Railway Gazette* that the company had specified a minimum of two years for manufacturing and testing to ensure reliable operation, despite suggestions from the customer that the delivery schedule might be accelerated.**

B. TURKEY.

(i). UPGRADE OF LINK TO EUROPE TO BE FINANCED BY E.U.:

From 'R.G.I.' 01.03.2019: "A €275m grant to support the €1Bn modernisation of the 233km line from Istanbul to the Bulgarian border at Kapikule was signed by representatives of the European Union and Turkey on February 28.

The route is designated as being of European significance because it links to the core trans-European network. Under the upgrading programme, the electrified mixed traffic line is to be double-tracked and equipped with ETCS Level 1 to allow trains to operate at up to 200km/h.

In November a consortium of Alsim Alarko and Gulermak Agir Sanayi was awarded a €530m contract to modernise the 189 km Cerkezkoý – Kapikule section of the route, including the renovation of five stations, six viaducts, 24 other bridges, two bored tunnels and seven cut-and-cover tunnels. This is scheduled to be completed by April 2022.

As part of its discussions with the EU, Turkey has also pledged to begin construction of the planned Europe – Asia rail link via the Yavuz Sultan Selim Bridge across the Bosphorus by 2029 at the latest. The third bridge across the strait opened to road traffic in August 2016, and has provision for double-track railway which could provide a freight route bypassing central Istanbul. This in turn would help to develop rail freight traffic between the EU and Turkey, the Middle East, Caucasus and Central Asia. Routes for the required connecting lines have not yet been finalised.

Meanwhile, the Marmaray suburban railway project which has been under construction since 2004 is nearing completion. An initial short-distance commuter service through the Marmaray tunnel began in 2013, and Minister for Transport & Infrastructure Cahit Turhan recently announced that suburban services on the full 76.6 km Halkali – Gebze route are to be launched in the first week of March.

He did not give a date for the start of high speed passenger services from Asia to Halkali via the Marmaray tunnel, or for the start of freight services, but previous official announcements have suggested

high speed trains could begin running a few months after the launch of the suburban service."

(ii). Then: In 'R.G.I.' on 12.03.2019: MARMARAY SUBURBAN RAIL CORRIDOR ACROSS ISTANBUL OPENED.

"President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan officially opened the 77 km Marmaray suburban rail corridor across Istanbul on March 12, 15 years after construction began.

The President rode an inaugural train from the opening ceremony at Kartal on the Asian side of the route east as far as Gebze, where suburban services terminate. Speaking at the ceremony, Erdoğan said the suburban services were expected to carry up to 75,000 passengers/h or around 1.7 million passengers/day. He added that the inclusion of a third track along the corridor for use by long distance trains offered a rail route between London and Beijing.

The suburban services are operated using Hyundai Rotem Class E32000 EMUs ordered in 2008. These run at a maximum speed of 100 km/h with a commercial speed of 45 km/h, with 2 min to 10 min headways. There are 43 stations, and the end-to-end journey time is around 1 h 10 min.

With the opening of the corridor, high speed services from Ankara will no longer terminate at Pendik, but will use Marmaray's third track to call at Gebze, Pendik, Maltepe, Bostancı and Soğutluçesme on the Asian side and Bakırköy and Halkalı on the European side. The third track could also be used by freight services, Transport Minister Cahit Turhan said.

No mention was made of the historic waterside Haydarpaşa terminus, where remodelling ahead of an anticipated reopening for high speed services has been delayed by the discovery of substantial archaeological remains.

Work on the Marmaray link began in 2004 with the construction of the immersed tube tunnel under the Bosphorus. TCCD's suburban services from Halkalı to Sirkeci on the European side and Gebze to Haydarpaşa on the Asian side ceased in March 2013, ahead of the launch of a shuttle service through the tunnel between Yenikapı, Sirkeci and Üsküdar in October of that year. This initial operating section was later expanded to 13km and five stations.

Completion of the remainder of the route was repeatedly delayed by various factors including disputes over the cost of construction, the discovery of archaeological remains and problems with road crossings.

The first tender for construction works for the suburban line was awarded in 2007 to a consortium of Alstom, Marubeni and Turkey's Dogus for US\$815M, but was cancelled after the consortium pulled out citing increased costs. A second tender in 2011 was won by a 70:30

consortium of Spain's OHL and Invensys Rail Dimetric for US\$933M, but was suspended in mid-2014 with the consortium again complaining that the cost of the work far exceeded the agreed fee.

Work restarted in 2016, but suffered repeated delays pushing back the completion date to the end of 2018, and finally March 2019."

(iii). DURMAZLAR UNVEILS FIRST TRAM FOR ISTANBUL.

From 'Metro Report Intl.' 12.03.2019: "Durmazlar unveiled the first tram that it is supplying for the future route T5 in Istanbul on March 11. According to the manufacturer, the styling is intended to evoke waves. The Bursa-based manufacturer signed a contract in January 2018 for the supply of 30 trams. These would run without catenary using Alstom's APS ground-level power supply technology. This uses an embedded third rail to supply power to trams.

Due to open in June 2020, the 14-stop 10km line along the southern edge of the Golden Horn from Eminönü to Alibeyköy Cep Otagari is being built by Doğu İnşaat. Work started in March 2017."

(iv). ELECTRIFICATION AT KIRIKKALE FOR OIL TRAFFIC:

From 'R.G.I.' 13.03.2019: "Infrastructure manager TCDD announced on March 12 that it had awarded the contract for electrification of 231 km of single track on the Nenek - Şefaati route to a consortium of domestic companies Ultra Teknoloji and Emery İnşaat Enerji. The contract is valued at TL69.9M. TCDD received two bids.

The work involves electrification of the single track main line between a junction with the Ankara – Sivas conventional line near Kırıkkale and the town of Şefaati, which is around half way along the corridor linking Kırıkkale with Kayseri. The wiring work is to be completed within 300 days.

Also included in the contract is the electrification of 76 track-km of branch line and sidings serving the Tupras oil refinery at Kırıkkale; this is to be completed within 120 days. The refinery is supplied with crude oil by pipeline from the Mediterranean coast, but it distributes much of the fuel it produces by rail. The company also ships fuel oil by rail to another refinery at İzmit for further processing."

(v). HIGH SPEED TRAIN SERVICE EXTENSION.

The latest TCDD YHT timetable update from 13th March has the YHT service extended further from Pendik into Istanbul. Six YHT's from Ankara and two from Konya are now extended from Pendik halting at Bostancı to terminate and start from Sogutluceme (1.5km short of Haydarpasa terminus). A further three YHT's (two Ankara and one Konya) are now shown as going right through to terminate and start from Halkalı, halting at Bakırköy, and also Sogutluceme and Bostancı.

(vi). THE FATE OF SIRKECI STATION?

Several e-mails on the TurkRail site occupied themselves with this question. Removing names (data!) we had:

"Is there any hard info about the future of the Sirkeci station and of the line from Kazlıçeşme to Sirkeci? Will it be abandoned, or will it be possibly used for the future services from the west?"

Some yard parts of it will serve as Marmaray yards. I don't know if it will serve as a train station towards the West and Europe. But, why not...?"

So, the line Kazlıçeşme - Sirkeci is still in use?

Not for the passenger services at the moment."

(vii). TESTING STARTS ON ISTANBUL TRAM ROUTE T5 AND METRO M7.

From 'Metro Report Intl.' 19.03.2019: "Istanbul Mayor Mevlüt Uysal inaugurated test runs on a driverless metro line and catenary-free tram route on the European side of the city on March 19.

The driverless metro Line M7 has been under construction since 2014. The 24.5km east-west route from Kabataş to Mahmutbey will serve 19 stations using 75 four-car trainsets supplied by Hyundai Rotem. Bombardier is supplying its 'Cityflo 650' signalling.

Work on the second phase from Mahmutbey to Esenyurt started in 2017. Hyundai Rotem is supplying an additional 20 trainsets to operate the extended line.

Line M7 will be the city's second driverless metro line and the first on the European side. Line M5 opened on the Asian side of the city in 2017 and was extended last year.

Uysal also rode on a tram along the future T5 route. Work started in March 2017 on the 14-stop 10km line along the southern edge of the Golden Horn. Due to open in June 2020, this will connect Eminönü and Alibeyköy Cep Otagari.

Durmazlar is supplying a fleet of 30 trams that will run off-wire using Alstom's APS ground-level power supply technology."

(viii). ESKİŞEHİR TRAM EXTENSION OPENS.

From 'Metro Report Intl.' 13.03.2019: "Eskişehir mayor Yılmaz Büyükerşen inaugurated an extension of the city's metre-gauge tram network on March 10 at a ceremony at the former eastern terminus of Açıyaya.

The 3km eastern extension to Şehir Hastanesi adds four stops. A further extension from Şehir Hastanesi to Sultandere is planned. The latest extension brings the length of the network to 48 route-km. Further extensions are planned, which would take the network to 60 km once they are completed."

(ix). CONTRACT FOR LINK TO SODA PLANT AWARDED.

From 'R.G.I.' 08.04.2019: "Infrastructure manager TCDD announced on April 2 that it had awarded contracts for construction of an 18.5km

branch to a soda plant at Yenikent. The contract award to a consortium of HCA İnşaat, İmaj Altyapı Ust Yapı and Efecemler İnş Nak Madencilik is valued at TL353.5m; TCDD received 11 bids.

The new line would link the soda factory to a junction at Sincan on the conventional main line between Ankara and Istanbul. The contract covers land clearance and preparation, tracklaying, electrification, signalling and telecomms; work is to be completed within 1,080 days. The award follows cancellation of a previous agreement with Aga Enerji awarded in July last year.

The Kazan soda plant was commissioned in 2017 and has the capacity to produce 2.5 M tonnes per annum of dense soda ash (sodium carbonate) and 200,000 tonnes per year of sodium bicarbonate, much of which is exported internationally."

(x). CONTRACT FOR STATIONS ON HIGH SPEED LINE.

From 'R.G.I.' 08.04.2019: "TCDD announced on April 3 that it had awarded a contract worth TL97M for construction of five stations on the Ankara – Sivas high speed line to a consortium of Osman Acar İnşaat Gıda Enerji and Omer Adiguzel. The stations are to be located at Yerkoy, at a junction with the existing Kırıkkale - Kayseri line; Yozgat; Sorgun; Akdagmadeni and Yıldızeli."

(xi). FERTILIZER TRAFFIC.

From 'R.G.I.' 12.04.2019: "Azerbaijan's state oil company Socar is planning to export fertiliser from a new plant to Turkey via the Kars – Tbilisi railway."

(xii). METRO ACROSS BOSPHORUS PLANNED.

From 'Metro Report Intl.' 23.04.2019: "The Ministry of Transport & Infrastructure is planning to build a metro line connecting the European and Asian sides of Istanbul, using a three-level road and rail tunnel to cross the Bosphorus.

The 30.2km route would link İncirli on the Thracian side with Söğütluçeşme in Anatolia. There would be four stations on the Asian side, including interchanges with the Marmaray suburban line, as well as metro lines M4 and the future M5.

The line would enter a tunnel at Burhaniye to cross the Bosphorus to Mecidiyeköy. The 4.3km tunnel would have three levels, with the two upper levels carrying road traffic and the lowest for the metro line. The tunnel would have an outer diameter of 16.8m and inner diameter of 15.5m.

On the European side, the line would serve 11 stations, including interchanges with existing and future metro, tram and rail lines at Mecidiyeköy, Gayrettepe, Haliç, Topkapı, Vatan and Yenikapı. It would use 24.5km of 6m diameter twin bore tunnels, including a tunnel under the Golden Horn.

The line would have a design capacity of 1.5 Million passengers a day. The ministry's Directorate of Infrastructure Investment has conducted test drilling at seven sites along the planned route and says that the first tenders could be called later this year."

(xiii). **ISTANBUL PLANS A THIRD HERITAGE-STYLE TRAMWAY.**

From 'Metro Report Intl.'
23.04.2019: "Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality has announced plans to build a new heritage-style tram line.

The 2.2km route planned for the Esenler district would connect Menderes station on metro Line M1B with Yıldız Technical University Davutpaşa Campus, running along Atışalanı Caddesi and Davutpaşa Caddesi. It would serve five stops along a single-track line. Services would be operated using one tram with capacity for 45 passengers. The project is estimated to cost TL10.5M, and opening is planned for 2020.

Istanbul currently has two heritage-style tram lines. T2 is in the Beyoğlu district on the European side of the city, and T3 forms a circular route in Kadıköy on the Asian side."

(xiv). **'NATIONAL TRAIN' HOME-BUILT EMU'S UNDER CONSTRUCTION.**

From 'R.G.I.' 17.04.2019: "State-owned passenger train manufacturer Tüvasaş expects to begin construction of the first of 21 five-car electric multiple-units under the National Train programme 'within the next two months'. The first trains should be handed to operator TCDD Tasımıcılık before the end of the year, the company told *Railway Gazette* at the Eurasiarail trade show in Izmir on April 12.

Tüvasaş has already taken delivery of aluminium extrusions for assembly of the bodysheils at its new factory in Sakarya province. On April 16 it opened procurement for the supply of roof panels and aluminium fittings.

TCDD Tasımıcılık has ordered 20 production trainsets in addition to a pre-series train; the 160 km/h EMUs will have a seating capacity of 322. Further batches totalling 76 trainsets in seven and eight-car formations are expected to be ordered later this year, although there are reports that wider economic constraints may see this delayed.

The five-car sets already ordered will be formed of three standard class cars, a premium saloon with 2+1 seating and a buffet car. One of standard class cars will be equipped for passengers with reduced mobility.

The National Train programme is one of several industrial projects being promoted by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. It is intended to reduce Turkey's reliance on imported technology and showcase local manufacturers, several of which already supply components to international rolling stock manufacturers. Suppliers involved include Tülomsaş (traction equipment), Bozankaya (bogies) and Aselsan (traction convertors and train control systems)."

(xv). **EURASIA RAIL.**

This professional Fair for rail transport in the Eurasian region was held in Izmir April 10-12th. A preview in 'PrivatBahn' 2/2019 p.94f. indicates

exhibitors were to come from Turkey, Germany, France, Czech Republic, China, Italy and Russia. Firms will include Siemens, Alstom, Skoda, Huawei, Yapiray, Bozankaya, Bombardier, Knorr-Bremse, Metro Istanbul, Metro Izmir and Caf. There will be the usual seminars, workshops, discussions, podium debates etc. on many themes.

This will be the eighth such gathering at Izmir, where new information can be exchanged and lucrative deals made. The Fair will extend over some 14,000 sq.m.

Turkey plans to reach a network of 25,000km of railway by 2023; by this means 42 cities in which 77% of the Turkish population live will be accessible by high-speed train. 3,500 extra high speed line are planned, plus 8,500km 'normal' high-speed line; 13,000km will be built new and 4,400km renewed. This should altogether lead to a 10% rise in passenger and 15% rise in freight traffic.

(xvi). **AN IMPORTANT RAILWAY YEAR : 2019.**
An article in 'Privatbahn' 2/2019 p.92f. by Peider Trippi together with RailTurkey.

(Translation by the Editor).

"In recent years Turkey has focussed on the expansion of its high speed rail network between the most important centres. For 2019 the through connections to Europe is planned and the expansion of internal metropolitan links and the ETCS expansion.

Substantial investment in the Turkish railway infrastructure has in the last ten years catapulted the historic railway network into the modern times. As well as the extended High-Speed network in 2019 the through railway link from Georgia via Kars to Bulgaria. The third track with ETCS Level 1 in the Marmaray Tunnel will in 2019 for the first time link the stations in the Western part of the metropolis to the HS network in the rest of the country to the East. Freight traffic will be able to use the Tunnel between midnight and the early morning hours.

Modern Train Control Systems.

Turkey has committed itself to the ETCS system. All newly-constructed lines are equipped with ECTS Standard Level 1; ETCS Level 2 has only been installed on the high-speed line between Polati (Ankara Province) and Konya. The Metro B1 Halkah - Marmaray - Gebze will be operated through from March 2019 with CBTC. With this Communications-Based-Train-Control-System the permission to move and the driving instructions are passed through a Data Communication between the rail vehicles and the track-based equipment, and this is classed as a worldwide Metro Standard. Several busier lines around the country are fitted with Level 0. In Eastern Turkey where there is only less frequent traffic more than 3,000 kilometres is still operated as before with TMI Standards. This manual, telephone-based system works with local stations and a Line Despatcher.

Western Connection and New Openings.

This year infrastructure works started on the high-speed line between Halkali, in the western part of Istanbul, and Kapikule, the border station to Bulgaria. In this way seven towns and the important tourist centre of Edirne will be served. The line will be aligned for 200km/h and will initially be served with passenger trains such as the 'Sofia Express' or the 'Bosphorus Express' hauled by E68000 locos. The line is 230km long and should be completely ready for use in 2022. The contract for the line Cerkezköy - Kapikule has been let for 820M Euro; It includes equipping with 25kV, 50Hz. ETCS Level 1, adaptation of the stations and the removal of the former line.

The first peak of new openings will be in Istanbul which for the first time will mean an East-West link under the Bosphorus. When the stations of Haydarpasa and Halkah are completed the link with the high-speed network will have been achieved. In the Marmaray Tunnel the central of the three tracks with ETCS 1 is available. Further important openings are expected:

- The high-speed line station Konya in Central Anatolia.

- Reopening after a three-year period of interruption of the line Samsun - Kalm - Sivas (linking the Black Sea with Central Anatolia). The modernisation of the first 380km long line built in Turkey in 1932 will allow a reduction in journey time from 9.5 to 5 hours and increase (xvii). THE MARMARAY PROJECT.

Although we have already covered various elements separately, the account in 'Today's Railways' No. 281 (May 2019) p.11 (by 'MB/TB') provides a good and concise overview of what is a massive and complex transformatory project:

"15 years after construction of the trans-Bosphorus rail link started in 2004, on 12. March Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan was able to inaugurate services over the whole of the 76.6km route, travelling on Hyundai-Rotem EMU E 32019 from Kartal to Gebze. Through services now run between Halkah and Gebze, 75km, reaching a top speed of 100km/h and taking 70 minutes for the run, with stops at 43 stations. Headways vary between two and ten minutes. Suburban services are expected to carry up to 75,000 passengers an hour or around 1.7 million a day - this is about a quarter more than Europe's busiest suburban route, Paris RER Line A which has 83 5-car EMU's. In the first week 3.3 million passengers used the route.

The line is divided into three parts: the European section from Halkali to Kazlıcesme (19.2km), the tunnel between Kazlıcesme and Aynlık Cesmesi (13.6km) and the Asian part from Aynlık Cesmesi through Pendik to Gebze (43.8km). Suburban services are operated using Hyundai Rotem Class E 32000 EMUs ordered in 2008 - 34 ten-car and 20 5-car single-deck trains. The trains were delivered in batches - first in 2011 and the last in 2014, but the majority were stored until now at Edirne. Those in service have operated the Marmaray tunnel services since October 2013.

As for high speed services to and from Ankara, these used to terminate at Pendik, but about a third

have now been extended under the Bosphorus as far as Halkali. Technically, this is the first high speed service between Asia and Europe, even if it does not use high speed infrastructure for the westernmost part of its run. West of Pendik calls are made at Maltepe, Bostanci, Sogutluceme and Bakirköy before Halkali. The fastest timings are now Ankara - Halkali 5hrs. 6 min. and Konya - Halkali 5hr. 26min.

No mention was made of the historic waterside Haydarpasa terminus, where remodelling ahead of an anticipated reopening for high speed services has been delayed by the discovery of substantial archaeological remains.

Work on the Marmaray immersed tube tunnel under the Bosphorus began in 2004. The tunnel opened on 29. October 2013. From March 2013 the services from Halkali to Sirkeci on the European side and Gebze to Haydarpasa on the Asian side were abandoned. Shuttle services through the tunnel between Yenikapi, Sirkeci and Üsküdar started on 30. October 2013. Completion of the remaining route was severely delayed by disputes over the cost of construction, the discovery of archaeological remains and problems with road infrastructure. Work included rebuilding the existing double track line to provide two tracks for Marmaray commuter trains and one track for main line trains. The additional track, which has ten crossing loops, will be used by high-speed services during the day and freight at night. In addition, 27 stations on the Asian side and 11 on the European side were completely rebuilt and modernised. Seven stations - Gebze, Pendik, Maltepe, Bostanci, Sögütlücesme, Bakirköy and Halkali will provide interchange between suburban long-distance services. According to TCDD the very first freight train running over the Marmaray corridor was the train moving Stadler passenger coaches to Azerbaijan."

On p.42 is a note on timetables: "From 13 March all high speed services will be extended to run from/to Istanbul Sögütlücesme station, which is situated in a much more central location than Pendik. Three services in each direction also run through the Marmaray Tunnel to serve Halkali in European Turkey."

(xviii). TURKISH RAILPORT.

From 'R.G.I.' 16.05.2019: "Two US\$30M loans to finance the US\$86M development of a privately-run inland rail terminal in Kocaeli province, to the east of Istanbul, have been agreed by the European Bank for Reconstruction & Development and majority Chinese-owned Turkish bank ICBC Turkey. The terminal is being developed by a 67:33 joint venture of Turkish shipping and logistics company Arkas Holding and German inland port and logistics company Duisport.

Scheduled to open in 2020, it is intended to serve industries operating in northwest Turkey, facilitating rail transport within the country and between Asia and Europe via the Baku – Tbilisi – Kars line. The 26.5 ha site will have 5,000 sq.m. of warehousing. The first phase is expected to handle 105 000 TEU and 500 000 tonnes of general cargo per year.

'Arkas' railport combines various modes of transport in an innovative, efficient and

environmentally friendly way,' said Nandita Parshad, EBRD Managing Director for Sustainable Infrastructure, on May 9. 'It demonstrates what private sector involvement can achieve for better trade and regional integration and we are very happy to support this milestone infrastructure project in Turkey.' Arkas Holding is planning to develop a second railport at Mersin on the east Mediterranean coast which would handle road and rail freight between North Africa, Iran, Iraq and Turkey."

(xix). HOW IT ONCE WAS.

In 'Railway World Annual' 1979 published by Ian Allan, ed. G. Freeman Allen, 1978, pp.105f. is the following account by Paul Clark: "ORDEAL BY ORIENT EXPRESS".

"Images used to flash through the mind at the very mention of the name 'Orient Express' - James Bond, Stamboul Train, murder and intrigue, cosy smoking rooms and chandeliers. When I heard the famous train was to cease operation as a through service from Paris to Istanbul from 22 May 1977, the temptation to experience for myself its fabled mystique was irresistible and so, packing siege rations of sandwiches and fruit, I joined the 15.30 from Victoria one rainy afternoon during the last week of operation. From Victoria there was a through connection to Paris Nord, whence three coaches were shunted to Gare de Lyon. There the Direct-Orient proper started its 2,000-odd mile trek to Asia at 23.53 nightly.

Unfortunately I travelled on one of the nights when no sleeping car was included in the Istanbul portion. Indeed, the only part of the train destined to reach the shores of the Bosphorus was one second class SNCF compartment coach - Voiture 100. That was just the first shock on a journey of three days and three nights which was utterly to shatter my illusions of the 'Orient Express'. Admittedly, I would probably have taken a different view had I been able to travel Wagons-Lits. But I was to be subjected to three nights of cramped hell, often overwhelmed by noisy Italians, drunken Yugoslavs and rowdy migrant Turks journeying to their homeland from Germany.

To be fair, the train left Paris conveying a passable clientèle. It did not take too long to discover that I was the only passenger making the through journey to Istanbul. The first morning saw us traversing Switzerland and through the Simplon Tunnel to arrive at Milan around midday.

During that morning I made two more discoveries. First, there was no running water in any coach I could reach from Voiture 100. Second, there was no refreshment car on the train. The lack of water was not too serious as the tanks were to be topped up often during the journey. The lack of refreshments, though, was to be quite a problem. To preserve my siege rations, I bought as much food as I could during the stop of one hour at Milan.

At Trieste considerable mayhem ensued as the train was crammed full of sweaty Italians and Yugoslavs. It was now dark throughout the train - presumably somebody had forgotten to turn on the lights. After an awfully cramped night with two hours' sleep, I shared a breakfast of dry biscuits with my non-English speaking fellow travellers in a misty

Yugoslavia. Even if there had been a restaurant car, I would not have been able to reach it, for both ends of Voiture 100 were firmly locked for no apparent reason and the toilets were again devoid of water. I was still only halfway through my siege rations, so at least I was assured of a lunch on my second day. Belgrade was the next large station and there I managed to stock up on Cokes and chocolate. The empty Coke bottles were to prove invaluable as I could now obtain water from station fountains en route.

I was refused permission to take photographs in Yugoslavia and Bulgaria and the austere formality of the Communist countries was making itself felt. The continuous and imperious request for *Passport!* and *Billet!* by inconsiderate and often armed officials was irritating, to say the least, and my baggage was turned out twice at the Yugoslav/Bulgarian border town of Dimitrovgrad. I was so thirsty at this point and the water fountain opposite my window so inviting that I could not resist jumping down at the frontier station with my empty Coke bottle to refill - only to be promptly ordered back on the train by an armed official.

There was one redeeming aspect of the second day: I had found a Canadian called McGuire en route to India who had joined the train at Belgrade. Realising I had not heard the English language for two whole days I was keen to strike up a friendship for the last leg of the journey. By the time we arrived at the Bulgarian capital of Sofia both he and myself were very hungry. I elected to comb the sprawling new station for food and very nearly missed the train as a result. I changed travellers cheques, bought some dry bread and cold sausages for an exorbitant sum, and after losing my way several times, made the train by a bare thirty seconds. My second evening meal on the 'Orient Express' was actually bread and water, but McGuire saved the day by producing a skin containing whisky and Coke which we calculated ought to last to Istanbul.

There was one more fright that night. McGuire jumped down at an obscure Bulgarian station to refill the Coke bottle from the fountain and was about to do so when the train started moving. I yelled at him and he just made the handrail as I grabbed his arm and pulled him in.

The third night on the train was to be somewhat easier, as I had the blissful luxury of stretching out on the metal luggage rack. It may sound rough, but after being cramped up for so long it was heaven itself! The next morning saw us in Turkey and running some five hours late. I had been saving the last of my siege rations for this morning, as I was determined to have a breakfast on my last day on board the 'Orient Express'. Much to my surprise I pulled out a marmalade sandwich, which was still edible if a bit crushed. That, together with an apple I had been saving since Venice, boosted my morale considerably. I jumped down to attempt to photograph the train at the Turkish outpost of Kapaca, but before taking up a position had to run back as the train had started moving after the briefest of stops. This first excursion on to Turkish soil produced a surprise. The 'Orient Express' which had left Paris as a main line train, was reduced to three coaches and about 20 freight wagons calling at all wayside stations.

During the afternoon of the third day we finally pulled into Sirkeci station, Istanbul. Great was my relief as I stepped on to the platform knowing the marathon was over. I could only wonder what it must have been like to arrive at Istanbul in the heyday of the 'Orient Express'. What I had seen was not the ceremonial funeral of a great train, but the last pitiful throes of an anachronism's lingering death."

[Ed. notes: As with the Trans-Siberian, one comes across several accounts of the journey West-East in the literature, but hardly anyone ever seems to come back the other way! Details of the catering (or lack of) predominate over any comment on the actual railway operations, reversals, loco changes etc.]

Photo Captions by Paul Clark show FS Bo-Bo-Bo E646.063 preparing to haul the train from Milano on 10 May 1977; Arrival at Sirkeci behind TCDD Co-Co DE 18 012 on 12. May.]

C. U.A.E.

(i). ETIHAD RAIL AWARDS STAGE 2 CONSTRUCTION CONTRACT.

From 'R.G.I.' 11.03.2019: "National railway project promoter Etihad Rail announced on March 11 that it had awarded the first construction contract for Stage Two of the network to a joint venture of China State Construction Engineering Corp and South Korea's SK Engineering & Construction.

The 1.5Bn dirham Package A includes design and construction of civil and track works for the 139 km double-track route running west to connect Ruwais with Ghuweifat on the border with Saudi Arabia. This will require 1.3 Million tonnes of ballast, more than 400,000 concrete sleepers and 33,000 tonnes of rail.

Etihad Rail Chairman Sheikh Theyab said award of the contract was a major milestone in the creation of a 'modern, sustainable and cost-efficient' national railway.

Etihad Rail expects to award contracts in the coming months for the rest of Stage Two, which when complete would see the railway running 605 km across the UAE from Ghuweifat in the west to the Port of Fujairah in the east. On February 18 the company signed heads of terms with Abu Dhabi Ports for a planned connection between Khalifa Port and the rail network.

'With the commencement of this first phase of Stage Two, we are reaching a major turning point in the transportation sector in the UAE and Gulf Co-operation Council', said Theyab. 'Pioneering and innovative, this initial link is just the beginning, as Etihad Rail expands its network to improve all aspects of freight transport across our border and around the region, placing the UAE at the centre of regional goods movement as a global logistics hub.'"

(ii). DUBAI METRO CONTRACT EXTENSION.

From 'Metro Report Intl.' 01.04.2019: "Serco Group has signed a two-year extension of its contract to operate and maintain the Dubai metro, the company announced on April 1.

The 680M dirham extension covers operations and maintenance of the two metro lines in the city

until September 2021. This includes the operation and maintenance of the Route 2020 Red Line extension from Nakheel Harbour & Tower to the Expo 2020 site. Testing on the 15km extension is expected to start in February 2020, with passenger services commencing ahead of Expo 2020, which begins in October. Once this extension opens, the metro would have 120 trains in operation at peak times.

Serco has operated Dubai's two metro lines since their respective openings in 2009 and 2011. In 2012 its remit was expanded to add engineering and maintenance responsibilities, and in 2013 the contract was extended for five years to September 2019, with an option for a further two years.

'Serco has delivered operational performance levels on the Dubai Metro with a high train service availability of 99.9% and a punctuality of 99.8%, achieving a record of 204 million journeys in 2018', said Dubai Roads & Transport Authority Director-General Mattar Al Tayer.

Serco also operates the Dubai tramway under a separate 105M dirham contract signed in September 2013."

D. IRAN.

(i). QAZVIN- RASHT OPENING :

From 'R.G.I.' 19.03.2019: "President Hassan Rouhani opened the 164 km Qazvin – Rasht railway with a ceremony on March 6. He said Iranian engineers had overcome many complexities since the project was launched in 2002.

A 40 km branch from Rasht to the Caspian Sea port of Anzali is expected to be completed within two years. Work is also underway on the 130 km line from Rasht to Astara on the border with Azerbaijan which is expected to take four years to complete.

The future interchange between Iran's 1,435mm gauge network and Azerbaijan's 1,520 mm gauge network at Astara will complete a north-south rail route from Russia and northern Europe to the Gulf. This would form part of the 7,200km International North South Transportation Corridor, which Roads & Urban Development Minister Mohammad Eslami said would significantly reduce the cost of freight transport between India, Iran, Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russia, Central Asia and Europe.

Elsewhere, a feasibility study is to be undertaken for a 200km rail link from Iran to Turkey via the Maku Free Zone in northwest Iran.

On March 11 Iran and Iraq signed a memorandum of understanding for the construction of a 35 km rail link between of Shalamcheh and Basra. This has been planned for some time, but Iraq has lacked the funding for the 32 km on its side of the border."

(ii). TEHRAN METRO LINE 6 INAUGURATED.

From 'Metro Report Intl.' 08.04.2019: "President Hassan Rouhani and Tehran Mayor Pirouz Hanachi inaugurated the first phase of metro Line 6 on April 7. The 9km underground route runs south from Shohada Square, where interchange is provided with Line 4, to Dowlat Abad. One intermediate station

has opened, and six more are due to be commissioned at a later date.

A 23km northwestern extension from Shohada Square to Kan is scheduled to open in March 2020. When complete, Line 6 will have 27 stations and a capacity of 1 Million passengers a day."

(iii). FREIGHT TRAFFIC FROM CHINA.

In 'R.G.I.' 12.04.2019: "Representatives of the national railways of Kazakhstan, China, Iran, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan met in Almaty on April 4 to discuss the development of transit freight traffic. 'It is important to develop favourable tariffs for development of transit of goods from China', said Kanat Almagambetov, First Deputy Chairman of Kazakhstan's KTZ. The importance of timely delivery was emphasised, and KTZ committed to providing shippers with suitable rolling stock."

(iv). THE PERSIAN CORRIDOR.

An article in 'Privatbahn' 2.2019 p.90f. by 'tf'. (*Translation by The Editor*).

"Originally planned to link the northern and southern parts of the country better, the Persian Corridor, the North-South link in Iran developed into a major artery of international freight traffic. Even after the end of the military use in the Second World War the Corridor retained its importance in Iranian trade. In the present time the links with the markets of Asia and Europe play a significant role.

During the Second World War the USA supported the Soviet Union materially. However the military equipment and supplies from the USA had to be brought from the USA to the Soviet Union and if possible transported close to the Front against the German Wehrmacht. The route from the American West Coast to the Far East port of Vladivostik was unhelpful for geographic reasons. The route via Central Europe was blocked by Germany and her allies. The plan was therefore developed to supply the Soviet Union via Iran. The 'Persian Corridor' was born.

The corridor led from the Persian Gulf (a constantly ice-free harbour) via Teheran to the southern shore of the Caspian Sea. Supplies were then transported further by ship across the Caspian to Astrakhan at the mouth of the Volga River and from here with river boats further taken into the rest of the Soviet Union. The infrastructure for this was available, for in 1938 the Trans-Iranian railway, a North-South link, had been completed with German help after a period of eleven years of construction.

Germany did not only provide material support; a large proportion of the Iranian railway engineers had been trained in the Reichsbahn Central School in Kirchmöser in Brandenburg. When in 1941 Iran began to show sympathies for the German cause, British and Soviet troops occupied Iran in August that year and took over the Trans-Iranian Railway.

On the way from Iran upstream along the Volga the first major city that one reached was Stalingrad, today Volgograd. Here flowed a substantial proportion of the supplies and a large amount of military equipment. It was precisely these supplies that in Summer 1942 led to the stalling of

the advance by the German troops and their allies and prevented their full conquest of the city (that was also an aim due to the prestigious name it bore, named after the Soviet leader). Taking this city would also have cut the supply route from the Persian Corridor.

As is well known, this Plan failed dismally, and the 6th. Army, encircled and besieged in Stalingrad itself, capitulated in February 1943. 110,000 soldiers became prisoners of war. The Persian Corridor remained open practically all this time during the conflict and from Spring 1943 was one of the most important gateways for the US supplies to the Soviet Union; Altogether about a quarter of all the USA's help to the Soviet Union came via the Persian Corridor - including a complete car factory of the firm Ford.

During the Second World War the control of the Persian Corridor lay in British and American hands; following the end of the war the Soviet Union initially refused to remove its troops from Iran and only following heavy pressure from the USA did the last soldiers finally leave Iran in Spring 1946 - the Persian Corridor was now in the hands of the Iranians.

The Corridor Today.

The Persian Corridor has lost none of its earlier importance. In 2002 Iran, Russia and India signed an agreement for the expansion of the 'International North-South-Corridor' (INSTC). This route should link India with Russia via Iran - and eventually further on to Europe as well - mainly on a land route. Following the entry of Azerbaijan into this agreement the line between Iran and Moscow is in the meantime operable all the way through. An Indian study calculated that this route would be around 30% cheaper and 40% faster than the traditional route through the Suez Canal. It can therefore be assumed that especially the two transit nations of Iran and Azerbaijan stand to profit greatly from the INSTC.

A further project that uses the Persian Corridor is the Treaty of Ashgabat made in 2016. This agreement, named after the capital of Turkmenistan, is a treaty between Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Oman, India and Iran and should help lighten the pressure on the flow of goods between the countries of Central Asia and those on the Persian Gulf. This includes a better access to the 'International North-South-Corridor' and the 'Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia' which is planned to link, as well as the EU, fourteen further countries in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the southern Caucasus."

(v). IRAN: A GREAT NEED TO CATCH UP.

In 'Privatbahn' 2.2019, p.88f., by 'tf'.

(Translation by The Editor).

"There is hardly any country in the Near East which is so much at the centre of media interest than the Islamic Republic of Iran. Whether it concerns the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, the war of Saudi Arabia against the Yemen, Saudi Arabian

blockade measures against Qatar, the war in Syria or the sanctions of the USA against Iran - it is always Iran that stands in the centre of interest.

But it is precisely the US sanctions which hinder the economic development of Iran. The Iranian market offers, according to Tim Frank, the Junior Referent for Transport and Logistics at the Association of Railway Industries, "principally a great potential." However the US sanctions make access to this market so difficult that at present it is almost impossible to do any business with Iran. And yet the demands in Iran are at present very high, especially in the railway sector, since Iran has since 2006 always been subject to sanctions by the international community. The need to catch up on renewals, modernisation and expansion of the railway network is therefore immense.

This estimate applies both to rail passenger and to rail freight markets, both to local services and long-distance ones. The Metro system in Teheran is to be expanded with foreign aid. But also in long-distance services, many efforts are being made. The government is planning further high-speed lines, for example between Teheran, Ghom and Isfahan. In addition in 60 stations train control systems are to be installed, the Iranian Transport Ministry reports. The number of goods wagons grew from 22,000 in 2013 to 24,000 in 2017; in addition 300 new passenger carriages and 160 locomotives have been acquired.

German railway technicians "could do a lot to help in catching up this great demand for railway components and sub-systems" says Frank. This applies both to major train suppliers as to smaller sub-contractors who supply components.

At present the railway network in Iran comprises some 13,000 kilometres. With the 'Vision 2025' the regime in Teheran plans to expand this to 25,000 km. by 2025; to this will be added a substantial modernisation and further development of the infrastructure and an extensive electrification. The planned measures are however only at an initial phase. Between 2013 and 2017 according to the Iranian transport Ministry, 367km of rails were renewed and 878km of line was rebuilt as double-track.

As well as this impressive infrastructure work the investment volume as such is also astounding. The rebuilding of the railway routes and the development projects are budgeted for over 13 Billion Euros. To some extent the new lines are already under construction and some are even partially entering operation. But also the costs for the acquisition of new railway vehicles are very significant, and especially with the Teheran Metro. Iran plans in total the acquisition of 28,500 goods wagons, over 1,500 passenger carriages, over 600 locomotives and 4,000 Metro cars for those cities with a Metro network.

Already between 2013 and 2017 the proportion of rail traffic within the entire transport sector grew from 4.4% to 12.8%. In 2013 32.7M tons of goods were transported, in 2017 it was 40M tons; The passenger statistics also grew from 2.9M in 2013 to 4.9M in 2017."



- A screen-shot grabbed by Marc Stegeman from a Dutch BBN/VARA television documentary on 20th. January about Islamic Tourism in Saudi Arabia. Very much the opposite end of the spectrum from the latest Haramain high-speed lines and yet essentially a part of the same history of providing transport for pilgrims. The Dutch translation says "You have to register and then wait 34 years" but it is unclear what this refers to.

E. SAUDI ARABIA.

From 'R.G.I.' 26.03.2019: "Testing company TÜV Rheinland has handed over the Independent Competent Person certificate for Saudi Railway Co's ETCS Level 2 deployment on the North-South Railway, completing formal acceptance by the national Public Transport Authority.

'This is a globally significant achievement in the railway industry since, according to UIC data, it means that SAR's 2 400km network becomes the world's longest single line. ETCS Level 2 signalled, mixed freight

and passenger service rail network', said Stephane Riverain, Senior Consultant & Project Manager at TÜV Rheinland Middle East, on March 15."

F. QATAR.

DOHA METRO OPENS.

From 'Metro Report Intl.' 08.05.2019: "QATAR: A soft launch for the driverless Doha metro took place on May 8 with the start of passenger services on the Red Line.

Services are operating between 08.00 and 23.00 on the section between Al Qassar in the north and Al Wakra in the south, with 13 stations. The four-station section between Al Qassar and Lusail, and a branch to Hamad International Airport, are due to open by the end of the year, along with the east-west Gold and Green lines.

The Gold Line will run from Al Aziziyah in the west to Ras Bu Abboud in the east, with the Green Line running from Al Riffa in the west to Al Mansoura in the city centre. Interchange between the three lines will be provided at Msheireb.

Services are operated by the RKH Qıtarat joint venture between Hamad Group (51%) and a consortium of RATP Dev and Keolis (49%) under a 20-year contract awarded by Qatar Rail in 2017.

Kinki Sharyo is supplying the three lines with 110 three-car trainsets from its factory in Osaka in co-operation with Mitsubishi Corp as part of the railway systems consortium, led by Mitsubishi Heavy Industries. In addition to undertaking overall project management and system integration, MHI is responsible for the track, power supply, platform screen doors and tunnel ventilation. Thales is supplying CBTC, telecoms, a security system, an operations control centre and an automatic fare collection system. Hitachi is undertaking facilities maintenance."

G. AFGHANISTAN.

In the 1920's the Afghan King Amanullah purchased three steam locomotives from Henschel in Kassel to work on the 7-km.-long 762mm gauge line from the capital Kabul to Darulaman. The line gave up the ghost sometime in the 1940's but the locomotives can still be admired in the National Museum of Afghanistan. Apart from this Kabul Tramway, Afghanistan remained one of the few countries (1.2 times as large as France) where no rails were ever laid. But changes are coming. The first lines on Afghan territory were laid in the 1960's by the Soviet Union from the border town of Gushgy (Kushka) in what is now Turkmenistan for a few kilometres over the border to Towraghondi. Then in the early 1980's the Soviets lengthened a second railway towards Afghan territory as a part of their military campaign, this time from Ternez in what is now Uzbekistan over the Friendship bridge to Hayratan some seven kilometres further. Both of these lines were built to the Russian broad gauge of 1,520mm.

Then things went quiet for thirty years. Only in August 2011 was the line to Hayratan extended 75

kilometres to the airport at the large North-Afghan town Mazar-i-Sharif. The line was operated for freight only by the Uzbek national railway administration UTY. In November 2016 a second rail link to Turkmenistan was opened. The line leaves the line that runs parallel to the river Amurdays and the North-Afghan border at Atamyrat-Kerki. It reaches the border at Ymamnazar and currently runs no further than the Afghan freight terminal Aqina, some three kilometres from the border. The first aim of the line, named the 'Lapis Lazuli', is the larger town of Andhkoy 36km further on, and then this to be followed by making a link through Northern Afghanistan with the line in Mazar-i-Sharif and eventually with the railway network of Tadjikistan. Lapis Lazuli is the much-craved azure-blue stone that has been mined in Afghanistan since ancient times.

On 21st. February a new important step was made, this time on Iranian initiative. Iran has laid a line from Khaf (near Torbat-e Heydariyeh) on the Mashhad - Bafq - Yazd line) via Sangan too the Afghan border near Shamtiq. From here the line has been pushed forward 62 kilometres to the Afghan city of Ghoryan. On 21. February a beginning was made with the laying of what is for now the last planned stage: the line to the large Western-Afghan city of Herat. This would then become the first line in Afghanistan to offer passenger traffic.

All these new lines have as their aim to create new routes for Afghanistan and the Central-Asian former Soviet Republics to the sea and to stimulate trade along the routes."

H. JORDAN.



- Scenes around Aqaba depot on the (former) HJR line from Ma'an in late 2018. Note also former Hedjaz Railway wagons. Photos by Eric Stuart.



I. LEBANON.

There are (at last) things happening in Lebanon but details will be held over until the next issue – suffice it to say that Chinese interest in investment and reconstruction is being discussed and may well be implemented. In the meantime we present a rather remarkable image sent to us by an anonymous contributor, showing – well, the caption supplied with the picture says it all, really. A pity that there is less detail of the cabs and numbers of the locos concerned but one cannot have everything, one supposes.



- *This rather remarkable picture was taken from a Lebanese website - it shows two former DHP G8 0-8-0's standing in Rayak Workshops. Anything else you THINK you might see is a result of your own fantasies; Go and see an Optician.*

125:08.

NOTES AND COMMENTS.

(i). CORRECTION.

The Photo in 124:01 was actually by Yaron Dozetes – a correction was made in the printed version but some readers will have got the earlier .pdf version. Apologies.

(ii). 1948 EXPLOSION.

From Klaus Matzka I received a link to the online archive of 'Wiener Kurier', "issued by the American military forces for the civil population", 4th. Year, No. 51 Monday 1st. March, with the front page headline "28 Dead in Dreadful attack! English Military Train blown up in Palestine." (Translation by the Editor).

"Jerusalem, 1st. March. AP/UP. Early yesterday near Rehovoth a fully-loaded British military train, in which many soldiers were returning from leave, was blown up. 28 British soldiers were killed and a further 35 had to be taken to hospital for treatment. The British Army announced that the train affected was the daily working from Cairo to Haifa which has already been three times the victim of bomb attacks.

Three overcrowded Carriages were blown to Pieces.

Through the explosion three carriages were blown to splinters. Parts of them and of the bodies and rails were found at a distance of some hundred metres from the site. From what has already been discovered it is said the attackers had used three separate explosive charges for the three carriages. Three carriages are always reserved for soldiers on the Haifa – Cairo train and as it happened these were overfilled on the day of the attack, hence the high number of casualties. British troops began immediately afterwards to search all houses in the Rehovot district for explosives and weapons in the hope of tracking down the perpetrators.

Yesterday evening the Jewish extremist organisation 'Stern Gang' announced that they claimed responsibility for this attack. They declared that this had been carried out in retaliation for the explosion in the Ben Yehuda Street in Jerusalem last Sunday. In the explosion on Sunday it is known that many Jews were killed and in some Jewish circles it was felt that the British were responsible for this."

Grim stuff but the very next paragraph reads:

"Arabs attack a factory and murder 11 Jews.

Jerusalem, 1 March, APA. British forces forced their way into a factory on the road between Jaffa and Jerusalem and disarmed a 24-strong Haganah troop there. Two minutes later Arabs attacked the factory and killed 11 Jews by stabbing them and then disfigured their corpses."

Read: <http://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=wku&datum=19480301&seite=1&zoom=33>

(iii). BAGDADBAHN RELIC

The Frankfurt Feldbahn Museum (FFM) has acquired from the South Tynedale Railway (in April 2018) a 60cm-gauge 0-4-0T built by Henschel & Sohn in Kassel (16047) in 1918. It transpires it was originally ordered by Philip Holzmann in Neu-Isenburg near Frankfurt, for use on construction of the Bagdadbahn through Turkey!

(iv). BELGIAN RAILWAYS UNDER PRESSURE.

An item in 'Jerusalem Post' on 14.04.2019 by Hagay Hacohen raises an old sore that keeps being emotionally scratched:

"Will the Belgian train service apologize for deporting WW2 Jews? National Belgian Railways never apologized for deporting the Jews of Belgium to Auschwitz during the Nazi occupation of that country. Will they do so now?"

The Simon Wiesenthal Center joined efforts by the Royal Society of Jewish Welfare in Antwerp to appeal National Belgian Railways to publicly acknowledge its role in the deportation of the Jews of Belgium during the Nazi occupation of the country in WW2.

"It is, indeed, scandalous, that the SNCB has, for some 76 years remained silent regarding its complicity in a crime against humanity," the centre said in a press release on Sunday after the Royal Society of Jewish Welfare in Antwerp informed them of the situation.

More than 25,000 Jews were deported from Belgium using trains operated by SNCB.

In November 2018 the Dutch Railways announced that they would pay compensation to survivors and relatives of those deported by their trains during World War Two. A similar decision was taken by the French state-owned rail in 2014."

(v). AUSCHWITZ RAIL THEFT

In a rather bizarre story, 'Heritage Railway' No. 253 (April 23, 2019) p.22 reports: "A 37-year old US man faces up to 10 years in a Polish jail for attempting to steal part of the railway line leading to the Auschwitz camp. A local police spokeswoman said the man had admitted the attempted theft of an item of cultural importance.

Visitors are now being asked not to take selfies while standing on the preserved tracks leading to the gate. Auschwitz memorial posted a message on social media telling people to respect the memory of the millions of people murdered by the Nazis. Its official page stated: 'There are better places to learn how to walk on a balance beam than the site which symbolises deportation of hundreds of thousands to their deaths.' It reminded people to consider the symbolism when taking a photo."

[Note: This does not make clear which track at which camp. The former Auschwitz I is approached by a lengthy siding running parallel to the road - but disconnected near the station goods yard where a road viaduct approach has been built over the alignment; the iconic Auschwitz II Birkenau camp is approached by a spur of which the last section is famous through many pictures but the rest, leading to the former shunting yard west of the station, runs through what are now private gardens! Ed.]

(vii). FROM SAXONY TO MECCA.

This is the title of an excellent exhibition ('Von Sachsen nach Mekka') at the Verkehrsmuseum in Dresden. Alas, there is no accompanying publication, but a report appeared in the 'Sächsische Zeitung' on 23/24. March 2019. The Editor was invited to the

opening at which Meissner's great-grandson spoke. From the newspaper article by Maximilian Helm:

"Maximilian Keller did not know for a long time how famous his great-grandfather was. He knew only that "he had had something to do with building railways in the Near East". But Keller's relative, a Dresdner named Heinrich August Meißner, was at the turn of the century the most famous person in the entire Ottoman Empire. "Naturally the name Heinrich August had an echo within the family," says Keller, "but somehow he was simply the Great-Grandpa". He himself is on his way to becoming a teacher of History in München. In 2015, as his studies approached their end, it was time for a final Diploma thesis; for this he decided to research his own family history. He discovered that his Great-Grandfather was not just "any old German" in the Orient but had performed major services for the Moslems.

In the late 19th. Century the Ottoman Empire was in a poor state and one spoke of the 'Sick Man of Europe'. At the same time several European powers were interested in gaining influence in the region. The Deutsche Reich under Otto von Bismarck stoutly maintained that it was neutral, but nevertheless in 1882 sent a Financial Adviser and military officers to support the reconstruction of the country. This was helpful for the Sultan Abdul Hamid II, for the Germans possessed the necessary technology for modernising the rather backward Ottoman Empire. When however Bismarck was dismissed in 1890 Kaiser Wilhelm II dropped all neutrality. He envisaged large markets in the Orient for German goods and for the industries of the period. In addition there was enormous interest in raw materials, the Germans being attracted to the mineral oil resources.

It was in this period that Heinrich Meissner, born in Leipzig 1862, first visited the Orient. In 1881 he graduated from the Annen-Realgymnasium in Dresden with good marks and following his military service commenced Engineering studies at the Technische Hochschule Dresden. His main topics were Railway Permanent Way, Telegraphy, Signalling and Road Construction. His results were always good and he graduated 1885 with a 'Very Good'. In December that year he went to join his uncle Viktor Tridon who ran a glass factory in Constantinople. For a year and a half he was able to learn some of the ways of the Orient. In September 1887 he returned to Saxony but also lived briefly in Prague and Vienna. He also began to learn Turkish and Arabic. It was clear he wanted to return to the Orient – and he did this in 1888, using his previous contacts to be engaged by the Turkish state railway company. At first he was involved only in construction of smaller lines. In 1882 he was for the first time entrusted with the leadership of a project. Due to his thorough education his technical and organisational skills far surpassed those of the local engineers. In consequence he was entrusted with the construction of the important railway line from Thessaloniki to Constantinople, a giant project whose successful conclusion made Meißner known throughout the Empire.

Maximilian Keller learned of all this only through scraps of information which he dug up in different places. His family lives scattered over all of Germany. His grandfather Heinrich Eugen Hans Meißner prepared a family history that comprises mainly a loose-leaf folder. Heinrich Eugen had been a grandson of the great engineer and had known him. In this chronicle Maximilian found much information on his relative – the personal notes were important and unique – but only partially appropriate for a scientific work. It was clearly necessary to find other sources and so Keller came across the diary of Helene Franz, the private tutoress of Meißner's son. She also came from Dresden and had been a full member of the family for three years, noting the busy daily life of the engineer. She stayed with the family 1907-1910, then returned to her homeland. As a sign of gratitude for her service the Meißners presented the Dresden Zoo with two antelopes! That could be interpreted in different ways, but the citizens of Dresden found it wonderful!

Keller's own grandmother proved to be his most important source. Liselotte Käppel was a granddaughter of the railway engineer; she had been born in Turey in 1927 and reported a great deal on her grandfather. She was the only living relative who had experienced the famous man personally. In interviews with her Maximilian got to know his Great-Grandfather. "He wasn't doing too badly!" says the 27-year old with a grin. Meißner could afford a large house and a private tutor. He could also afford to employ watchmen to guard his wife. She came from Armenia and was especially in an unsafe situation in Turkey during the First World War.

But he still wanted to know what sort of person his ancestor had been. In the documents he found were awards, certificates, even school reports But it was only the grandmother who could give him a more personal view, even though she had only known him as a child. She described him as a technical man with a burning drive; any suspicion that he was some form of fortune-seeker or mountebank fraud was certainly false. Yet had he remained in Germany he would probably have stagnated and grown sour in some railway office. In the Ottoman Empire however there were real problems that needed to be solved and an entire State needed to be provided with lines of rails. In 1901 he was entrusted with the most important project of the time – the Hedjaz Railway.

This was the largest construction project in the entire Empire. Sultan Abdul Hamid II announced it in 1900 to mark the 25th. Anniversary of his reign. The line should run from Damascus to Medina and then further on to Mecca, so that pious Moslems from Europe and the northern part of the Empire could make the pilgrimages to the two holy places. They lay both in the region known as 'The Hedjaz' which now belongs to Saudi Arabia. But the building of this line along the eastern side of the Mediterranean and the Red Sea ran counter to the plans of the Gerat Powers. Only the Germans signalled their cooperation and desire to work with the Ottomans on this. But the announcement that the line was to be built without any foreign investment was greeted with scorn and laughter. The German ambassador, Freiherr Marschall von Bieberstein, declared that "nobody with any

understanding" would believe that this could ever be managed. The Turks had no money and could neither build the railway nor operate it and so the project would "literally run into the sand."

But the Ottoman Empire astounded everyone by arranging the construction themselves. One reason for this was the enormous amount of donations by Moslems; a third of the costs was met by private means. Ottoman officials were compelled to make donations – each year one month's salary was held back and used for the building. The matter became a political issue also in the international press and the Sultan's popularity grew in Moslem circles. But the construction did not at first go as planned – therefore Heinrich August Meißner was appointed to take charge as from 1. January 1901. At this point he was 38 years old; In his team were 17 Ottomans, 12 Germans, 5 Italians and 5 Frenchmen, 2 Austrians and Greek. The Ottoman engineers were in many respects the decisive ones for from a point near the Oasis of Al-Ula, some 400km north of Medina, they would have to take over all construction matters since no Non-Muslim was allowed to tread upon the holy ground surrounding the cities. In order that Meißner could get at least an overview of the situation, riders on camels set out ahead and reported on the layout of the landscape. Meißner had to direct the construction on the basis of these descriptions. An adventurous method of progress – but it worked.

When the 1,302km line was ready in 1908, Meißner as a non-Muslim was not wanted on the initial run! It went through valleys and mountains, countless viaducts and bridges and tunnels – during the pilgrimage period the railway ran five trains daily and with an average speed of 30km/h managed the journey to Medina in only three days. A camel caravan would have needed one and a half months. By now the chief engineer was known as 'Heinrich Meißner Pasha' – in 1904, due to his services for the Empire, he had been granted the title 'Pasha' and status as a very high official. Following completion Adul-Hamid II even appointed him as 'Rumeli Beyler-Bey' and granted him the 'Iftichar Order'.

The line did not in the end last for very long – in the First World War it was used for troop transports and was frequently targeted for attacks. In 1917 it was interrupted in several places and never really operated regularly again after this.

The military defeat of the Central Powers in 1918 compelled Meißner to return to the homeland. In addition he lost all his titles and the pension in gold that had been promised him by the Sultan. He remained in Dresden for six years and in 1924 received an Honorary Doctorate from the Technical University. But his true homeland remained the Orient and when in this year the Turkish government invited him to return to Istanbul and assist in the reconstruction of destroyed infrastructure he did not wait long. He turned down only the offer to become Transport Minister in Atatürk's government. This would have meant taking Turkish citizenship and Meißner was not prepared to take this step. Instead in 1933 he became Professor for Railway Studies at the Technical High School of Istanbul. He became also President of the German club 'Teutonium'; but

following Hitler's ascension to power Meißner refused to let the swastika flag be flown; the family were in consequence warned that they would be arrested the next time they travelled to Germany. A plaque with the name Meißner is still affixed at the club's building.

In 1939 the engineer fell and broke a thigh. He remained at home and talked much with his grandson who was already writing a family chronicle. However the lengthy period of lying down led to a lung infection and he died on 14. January 1940. Shortly thereafter his family was expelled to Germany due to the second World War. They settled again in Dresden, where his wife and children also had to endure the Bombing Night of 11. February 1945.

The 'Turkish Post' of 10. February 1940 devoted several lines to the Pasha: "Recently the most famous German railway builder of Turkey, Meißner-Pasha, was carried to his grave accompanied by a large number of Turkish and German friends and colleagues. His works became a legend in Turkish circles. Toward the end he lived a quiet, modest life in the pleasant suburb of Moda on the Sea of Marmara, where he met a gentle death at the age of almost 80."

There is not much left of these works to see. Maximilian Keller went to Istanbul with great expectations for research in Turkey – he wanted to visit the residences, find writings and hitherto-unknown photos of Meißner Pasha; But this proved to be difficult. Even at the German Archaeological Institute in Istanbul he found no leads. In a folder of unsorted photos he did find one which showed his great-grandfather; the Institute was pleased to have one small mystery cleared up, but Keller was not getting any further.

At Meißner's grave in Istanbul he then had a surprise. 'The cemetery was fully wild and there were dead pigeons lying around,' he says. But the grave of the engineer seemed to be being cared for. The Turkish relatives only shrugged their shoulders when asked, so he spoke with the cemetery gardener, whose explanation was extraordinary. A friend had told him that the person in this grave had built all the railways in Turkey and on hearing this he had decided to maintain the grave in some order. "This was wholly unexpected," says Keller. But there were no other really significant finds and so he had to return to Germany empty-handed.

The accumulated sources and information were enough for the diploma thesis, but things should not rest there. During his researches Keller had made contact with the Deutsche Bahn Museum at Nürnberg which had recently put together a large exhibition on the Hedjaz railway and through this he got to know Joachim Breuninger of the Dresden Verkehrsmuseum. He showed interest and so Keller together with the museum put together a special exhibition there. This can be seen here until 14. July....."



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Works at the junction of Hantke and Henrietta Szold streets in Kiryat HaYovel, on the Red Line extension to Hadassah Ein Kerem Hospital. View towards the hospital - at left the famous 'Monster' in a playground. (Photo via Aharon Gazit)



Catenary repairs on the AI Jerusalem line (photo courtesy of Matan Berkovich, IR Press office.)



Works on the Tel-Aviv LRV/METRO Red Line in Petakh-Tikva at Jabotinsky Road.

**Photos by Aharon Gazit.
19.03.2019.-**



**NTA Infrastructure works on the median of Orlov St. in Petach Tikva.
(Photos: Aharon Gazit, 13.05.2019.)**