

# HaRakevet

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הרכבת

A Quarterly Journal on the Railways of Israel  
and the Middle East  
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## EDITORIAL

The world does not get better. Once again one must note with regret that in the past quarter there has been much conflict and stress, much blood has been shed.... and yet throughout the Middle East wherever it is possible infrastructure construction work and strategic planning goes ahead, something usually-overlooked in the world's media. In this issue (going to press in early September) we can read how plans are being formulated for extensive Mass Transit ('Metro') systems in the Tel Aviv and Jerusalem areas, how IR is seeking to procure up to 90 hybrid diesel / electric locos by 2050 and we bid farewell to the IC3's. Under the rubric 'Other Middle East Railways' we have a remarkable account of a railway enthusiast's visit to Iraq and, in view of the continued troubles affecting the Red Sea route and increased emphasis on overland rail transport from East to West, we add further studies on the several rail links through Central Asia being built or improved, also an article on the pathetic remains of rail operations in Jordan as well as an intriguing fact-finding mission.

Just in, but too late for this issue, is a book on the Hedjaz Railway by Metin Hülügü - to be reviewed hopefully next issue - We hope in the meantime to visit the forthcoming 'Innotrans'.

In view of the current miseries it may seem inappropriate to end (as usual) with the word "Enjoy!" - but we hope you can nevertheless read and learn and find some hope in these dark times.

The Editor.

- [146:03 Addis Ababa 1967 photo David Smith](#)

## NEWS FROM THE LINE

### (i). TRACKWORKS

(a). **TEL AVIV HAAGANAH.** From a press release of 16.06.2024 by Israel Railways Ltd.: "As an integral part of the annual infrastructure works, including upgrading and components replacement at Tel-Aviv HaHagana station, the following changes in train traffic will take place between Thursday 27.06.2024 at about 23:00 and through the whole of Friday 28.06.2024:

- Trains between Ben-Gurion Airport (including night trains operated in the night between Thursday and Friday) and Nahariya, will run between Tel-Aviv HaHagana and Nahariya stations only and will not call at Ben-Gurion Airport.

- Trains between Modi'in and Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central stations will operate between Modi'in and Ben-Gurion Airport stations only and will not operate between Ben-Gurion Airport and Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central stations.

- Trains between Jerusalem Navon and Herzliya stations will operate in split mode; between Jerusalem Navon and Ben-Gurion Airport stations and between Tel-Aviv HaHagana and Herzliya stations.

- Trains between Be'er-Sheva Central and Nahariya stations will operate in split mode; between Be'er-Sheva Central and Lod, and between Tel-Aviv HaHagana and Nahariya stations; there will be no continuous travel between Be'er-Sheva, Lehavim/Rahat, Kiryat-Gat, Mazkeret Batya, Kiryat-Malachi and Tel-Aviv.



- Trains between Ashkelon and Binyamina stations will operate in split mode; between Ashkelon and Lod stations, and between Tel-Aviv HaHagana and Binyamina stations.

- Trains between Beit-Shemesh and Netanya stations will operate in split mode; between Beit-Shemesh and between Tel-Aviv HaHagana and Netanya stations.

The railways will provide alternative bus shuttle services free of charge between the closed stations. The service will resume on Saturday night, 29.06.2024 at about 21:00."

#### (b). BINYAMINA.

From a press release of 17.06.2024 by Israel Railways Ltd.: "As an integral part of the annual infrastructure works, including upgrading and components replacement at Binyamina station, the following changes in train traffic will take place both on Friday 05.07.2024 and on Friday 19.07.2024:

Trains between Be'er-Sheva Central and Binyamina stations and between Haifa Hof-HaCarmel and Nahariya stations only; There will be no continuous travel between Tel-Aviv and Haifa, however, it will be possible to use trains combined with bus shuttle services.

Trains between Atlit and Beit-She'an stations will operate between Haifa Hof-HaCarmel and Beit-She'an stations only and will not call at Atlit.

The railways will provide alternative bus shuttle services free of charge between the closed stations. The service will resume on Saturday nights 06.07.2024 and on 20.07.2024 at about 21:00."

#### (c). HOLON AREA

From a press release of 25.06.2024 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

"Due to works to be performed along Highway 20 by Ayalon Highways there will be changes to train traffic at Rishon-LeZion, Holon and Bat-Yam (similar to those performed at the end of May 2024), the stations of Holon Junction, Holon Wolfson, Bat-Yam Yoseftal, Bat-Yam Komemiut, and Rishon-LeZion Moshe Dayan stations will be closed on Friday, 05.07.2024.

Trains between Ashkelon and Herzliya stations will operate in split mode; between Ashkelon and Yavne West stations and between Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central and Herzliya stations, and will not call at Tel-Aviv HaShalom, Tel-Aviv HaHaganah, Holon Junction, Holon Wolfson, Bat-Yam Yoseftal, Bat-Yam Komemiut and Rishon-LeZion Moshe Dayan stations.

Other trains running through Tel-Aviv stations will operate as usual. The service will resume on Saturday night 06.07.2024 at about 21:00."

#### (d) NA'AN JUNCTION

From a press release of 08.07.2024:

In the Na'an junction area, the following changes to train traffic will take place between Wednesday, 24.07.2024 and Saturday night, 27.07.2024 including:

Trains on the Be'er-Sheva Central - Nahariya line will operate on Wednesday 24.07.2024 and Thursday 25.07.2024 in sections, namely: between Be'er-Sheva Central and Kiryat-Malachi/Yoav and between Lod and Nahariya stations only; there will be no service between Kiryat-Malachi/Yoav and Lod stations; on Friday 26.07.2024 and Saturday night 27.07.2024 services will be provided between Lod and Nahariya stations only.

Trains on the Be'er-Sheva Central - Carmiel line will operate between 24.07.2024 and 27.07.2024 between Lod and Carmiel stations only and not between Be'er-Sheva Central and Lod stations.

Trains on the Beit-Shemesh - Netanya line will operate between Lod and Netanya stations only and not between Beit-Shemesh and Lod stations. Mazkeret-Batya station will be closed.

The railways will provide alternative shuttle bus services free of charge between the closed stations. Traffic will resume on Sunday 28.07.2024 at about 16.00.

#### (e). HUTZOT HAMIFRATZ

From a press release of 29.07.2024 by Israel Railways Ltd.: Due to infrastructure works to take place at Haifa Hutzot-HaMifratz station area, between tonight after midnight (30.07.2024 at 00:01) and Sunday 04.08.2024 at 04:00, the stations of: Nahariya, Carmiel, Akko (Acre), Ahihud, Kiryat-Motzkin, Kiryat-Hayim and Hutzot-HaMifratz will be closed; there will be no services north of Haifa. The night trains will operate between Ben-Gurion Airport and Haifa Central the 8 stations only and will not call at: Nahariya, Akko (Acre) and Kiryat-Motzkin stations. The Valley Line between Beit-She'an David Levy, Afula/Raphael Eithan, Migdal Ha'Emek/Kfar-Baruch, Yokne'am/Kfar-Yehoshua - Haifa will operate regularly. The railways will provide intensive shuttle bus services to/from the closed stations. Traffic will resume on Sunday, 04.08.2024 at 04:00.

#### (f). BEIT YEHOSHUA

As part of the railways' infrastructure maintenance programme to replace track components in the area of Beit-Yehoshua railway station, the following changes on train traffic, will take place on Friday, 06.09.2024 only:

The service of trains between Modi'in and Nahariya will operate in split; between Modi'in and Herzliya and between Netanya and Nahariya stations; Train No.139 will terminate at Ben-Gurion Airport station (instead of Modi'in) at 01:47.

Trains between Ben-Gurion Airport and Nahariya (night trains operating between Thursday and Friday) will be split; between Ben-Gurion Airport and between Beit-Yehoshua and Nahariya stations; there will be no direct link between Haifa and the northern stations and Ben-Gurion Airport; it will be possible to combine journeys with buses. Trains between Be'er-Sheva Central and Nahariya stations will be split; between Be'er-Sheva Central and Herzliya and between Beit-Yehoshua and Nahariya stations.

Trains between Ashkelon and Binyamina stations will start/terminate at Ashdod Ad-Halom station instead of at Ashkelon due to works to be performed at Ashkelon station. Trains on the Beit-Shemesh - Netanya line will operate between Beit-Shemesh and Herzliya stations only.

The railways will provide alternative free bus shuttle service between the closed stations. Traffic will resume on Saturday night, 07.09.2024 at about 21:00.

#### (g). ASHKELON

From a press release of 29.08.2024: Due to the railways' programme to replace track components in the area of Ashkelon railway station, the station will be closed on 05.09.2024 only. The railways will provide alternative free bus shuttle service to/from the closed station. Traffic will resume on Saturday night 07.09.2024 at about 21:00.

#### (h). HUTZOT-HAMIFRATZ

From a press release of 01.09.2024: As part of the railways' infrastructure maintenance programme in the area of Haifa Hutzot-HaMifratz railway station, the following changes will take place between Wednesday, 11.09.2024 and Sunday 11.09.2024:

Trains between Modi'in and Nahariya will operate between Modi'in and Haifa Central the 8 and will not call at Haifa Merkazit-HaMifratz, Haifa Hutzot-HaMifratz, Kiryat-Hayim, Kiryat-Motzkin, Akko (Acre) and Nahariya stations. Trains between Ben-Gurion Airport and Nahariya

(night trains operating between Thursday and Friday) will operate in the night between Tuesday 10.09.2024 and Wednesday 11.09.2024 between Ben-Gurion Airport and Haifa Central the 8 stations, but will not call at Nahariya, Akko (Acre) and Kiryat-Motzkin stations. There will be no services between Haifa Hof-HaCarmel and Carmiel stations. The Atlit - Haifa - Beit-She'an line (the Valley Line) will operate regularly. The railways will provide alternative free bus shuttle service between the closed stations. Traffic will resume on Sunday morning, 15.09.2024 at about 04:00.

**(i) KIRYAT GAT**

From a press release of 02.09.2024 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

As part of the infrastructure maintenance programme in the area of Kiryat-Gat railway station, the station will be closed on Friday 20.09.2024 only. As a result, the rail stations of Be'er-Sheva Central, Be'er-Sheva North/University and Lehavim/Rahat will be closed. The railways will provide alternative free bus shuttle service to/from the closed station. Traffic will resume on Saturday night 21.09.2024 at about 21:00.



- Aerial view of Unfinished bridge on the Tel Aviv - Jerusalem motorway at Anava Junction.
- **(ii). FAREWELL TO THE IC3 DIESEL UNITS**

From a press release of 23.06.2024 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

"In January 2024 the railways said "Goodbye" to the mythological IC3 DMUS (Flexiliner) after 31.5 years of service. The 33 trains were sold to the Rumanian company Ferotrans for \$1.5 Million; The trains will now operate in the Iasi area."

**(iii). BEIT SHEAN STATION RENAMED**

On 04.07.2024 the railways held a ceremony to unveil a sign at Beit-She'an station which will be called from now on "David Levy Station" in commemoration of Mr. David Levy who was all his life a citizen of Beit-She'an and fulfilled several ministerial jobs; He died on the 02.06.2024 at the age of 87. There were quite a few remarkable participants at the ceremony.

**(iv) AMBITIOUS BE'ER-SHEVA PLANS**

From a press release of 03.07.2024 by the Transport Ministry:

"The energetic Transport Minister Mrs. Miri Regev visited today Mr. Rubic Danielovich the energetic mayor of Be'er-Sheva.

They discussed promoting the 250 km/h trains from Be'er-Sheva to Tel-Aviv and the planned Be'er-Sheva LRV project."

**(v). CYBER SECURITY**

From a press release of 02.07.2024 by Israeli Transport Ministry: "Transport Minister Mrs. Miri Regev visited today the National Smart Transportation Cyber Centre at Be'er-Sheva and opened the world's first Centre of its kind for dealing with Cyber threats."

**(vi). CREDIT RATING**

From a press release of 14.08.2024 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

The Credit Rating agency 'Midrug' - 'Rating' in Hebrew - has raised the Railways' rating and its bond rating from Aa1 to Aaa, and its rating horizon from Positive to Stable.

This is a result of a substantial improvement in the railways' activity and its financial strength, thanks to the new operational and development agreement with the state which also strengthens the linkage between the two factors; it is a significant achievement considering that Israel is in an ongoing war situation.

**(vii). FIRST HALF 2024 RESULTS**

From a press release of 15.08.2024 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

"On 15.08.2024 Israel Railways Ltd. published the results for 1st half of 2024:

The company ended the 1st half of 2024 with an EBITDA of almost \$36M (NIS 132M) compared with almost \$104M (NIS 383M) over the same period of 2023.

The total profit for the 1st half of 2024 was \$27.6M (almost NIS 102M) compared with \$293M (NIS 1081Bn) over the same period of 2023.

The total revenues the 1st half of 2024 were \$460M (almost NIS 1.7Bn) compared with almost \$531M (NIS 1.96Bn) over the same period of 2023.

**Passenger Traffic:**

During the 1st half of 2024 the railways carried a daily average of 266,000 passengers compared with 277,000 passengers over the same period of 2023.

During the period the railways carried 31.4M passengers compared with 34.4M passengers over the same period of 2023.

Revenues during the 1st half of 2024 were \$405M (NIS 1.495Bn) compared with almost \$460M (almost NIS 1.7Bn) over the same period of 2023.

Average punctuality during the 1st half of 2024 was 96.8%; slightly higher than 94.1% over the same period of 2023.

**Freight Traffic:**

During the 1st half of 2024 the railways carried 3.1M tons; slightly higher than 3M tons over the same period of 2023.

During the 1st half of 2024 revenues were around \$44.2M (NIS 163M) compared with \$59M (NIS 218M) over the same period of 2023.

The losses during the 1st half of 2024 were \$8.13M (NIS 30M) compared with a profit of \$7.6M (NIS 28M) over the same period of 2023." 146:05

### (viii). TECHNICAL INNOVATIONS DEPARTMENT

From a press release of 19.08.2024 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

"The railways keep investing in technological innovations and for the first time have appointed a Deputy General Manager of the Technological Innovations Department; this is Mr. Mayer Rechter, 57, with a rich experience from the air force, aviation, cyber, etc."

### (ix). LONGER TRAINS

From a press release of 21.08.2024 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

"The Transport Ministry and Israel Railways Ltd. have recently started operating for the first time Alstom (formerly Bombardier) double-deck push/pull trains (red trains) of 10-car formation with a capacity of 1,300 seats; these trains were operating until now in 7- and 8-car train formations.

Due to the forecast of growth of passenger traffic from 70M in 1919 to 300M in 2040, the operation of Alstom double-deck push/pull trains of 10-car formation will be introduced gradually first on the northern lines.

## I. R. TENDERS

(i). Tender No. 42225 For the Supply of Detrainment Ladders for Disembarking Passengers from Railway Vehicles. Deadline: 15 August 2024

(ii). Tender No. 42216. For the Design, Manufacture and Supply of Industrial Ultrasonic Cleaning Machine (UCM) for Maintenance of Railway Vehicles. Pre-requisites for Participation in the Tender: The bidder must be the designer, manufacturer and supplier of the proposed cleaning machine. The bidder has designed, manufactured and supplied, commencing from 2019 and up to the final submission date, at least fifteen U.C.M (minimum volume tank 500 litre) for the transportation industry. The Manufacturing Plant must be certified for a Quality Control system in accordance with ISO 9001 or 9002, the certification must be valid and up to date. Israel Railways Ltd. Procurement & Contracting Division...."

(iii). Tender 42217. Technical Specification No. M-05-2623/27 Industrial Cleaning Machine for Axle boxes of Railway Vehicles Ver.: 26/7/09. Israel Railways Ltd., Rolling Stock Division

"1. General: The cleaning machine shall be used in Kishon Workshop(Haifa) for cleaning Axle boxes of railways Vehicles, and other metal parts of Railways vehicles from machine oil, grease, mud, dust, etc. Most of the parts to be cleaned will be inserted into the machine secured on a basket. The machine shall be standard heavy duty proved for industrial use with experience in railways workshops or equivalent. The cleaning machine is especially designed for the thorough cleaning of oil, grease and dirt from heavily contaminated components. The cleaning system is operational using a spraying water solution. The machine shall be fitted with simple loading equipment. The machine will be provided with two Parts Baskets..."

(iv). Tender No. 230801: Operating a 540 sq.m Convenience Store at Tel-Aviv Savdor/Central station: The contract consists of: An adjustment period of up to 6 months. Authorization period of 60 months. An additional authorization period of 60 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 22.07.2024.

(v). Tender No.124257: Providing Israel Railways Ltd. with Credit Cards matching services: The contract is for 76 months with optional extensions of up to additional 84 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 01.08.2024.



The railways have already been operating for several months Siemens DDEMU formations of up to 12-cars with 2,000 seats, on the AI line to Jerusalem as well as on the suburban services between Binyamina and Ashkelon."

- IR double-deck train. Photo courtesy of Mr. Daniel Fogel from the IR's Press Office.

(vi) Tender No. 223154: Providing Consultancy services planning control and supervision regarding ground and foundation:

The contract is for 12 months with optional extensions of up to additional 48 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 04.08.2024.

(vii) Tender No. 123227: Providing Supervision Services on the railways' Electric Bills: The contract is for 12 months with optional extensions of up to additional 48 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 17.07.2024.

(viii) Tender No. 124253: Providing Investigative Services: Making Follow-ups, installation of a hidden Video System, performing Graphologist tests, Locating addresses, and phone numbers, etc.: The contract is for 24 months with optional extensions of up to additional 36 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 14.08.2024.

(ix) Tender No. 124260: Providing Services of Supply, Installation and Maintenance of Vehicle Protection and Tracing Systems, Driving Monitoring, Command and Control systems for the railways' vehicles' fleet: The contract is for 36 months with optional extensions of up to additional 36 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 22.08.2024.

x). Request for Information ("RFI") Concerning ISR Future Freight Locomotives

### 1. Introduction and Objective:

1. In recent years the railway lines in Israel are undergoing significant development – constructing new lines and the electrification of many existing lines, particularly the main lines. Yet still a considerable part of the network shall remain non- electrified in the foreseeable future.

2. Israel Railways Ltd. ("ISR") is requesting hereby information from potential manufacturers and suppliers for examining the available world solutions to effectively run freight trains on such a combined network – electrified lines with their obvious advantages and non-electrified lines; enabling smooth transition from one mode to another – electric mode to diesel/battery/any other options or other mode and vice versa

3. The objective of this RFI is to explore the options of acquiring the future freight locomotives or any other type of locomotive that meets the attached technical requirements for ISR, as well as to review and estimate the costs involved.

4. ISR asks for information from Manufacturers and Suppliers of locomotives, which will include detailed particulars regarding the procurement, operation, and maintenance, all as generally defined in Appendix A attached hereto and its Attachments and as further described below.

5. In case of slight deviation from the requirements listed herein, participant is still invited to submit its proposal. ISR shall not rule out a proposal which offers a pure Diesel Locomotive solution, Battery Locomotive solution, Hydrogen-powered Locomotive solution or any other single or combined mode solution as long as the participant is able to prove, with no doubt, that such a proposal will provide substantial economic or other advantages over a multi-mode proposal which includes electric pick-up.

6. This RFI is not to be considered as a request for proposals or as a tender and the provisions of neither the Israeli Mandatory Tenders Law 5752-1992 nor the Government Procurement Agreement shall apply hereto.

7. Notwithstanding the aforesaid, ISR may, as a result of this RFI, at its sole and absolute consideration, approach one or more of the participants to this RFI and/or to any other party, in order to obtain additional information.

8. Notwithstanding the aforesaid, ISR may, as a result of this RFI, at its sole and absolute consideration, conduct an additional procedure, inter alia, tender procedure, and may use, at its sole consideration, any of the information provided in this RFI.

9. This RFI shall not, under any circumstance, constitute any commitment on ISR's part to negotiate with any or all interested parties, nor to enter into any agreement for the acquisition of the locomotives abovementioned.

The participants are invited to submit ISR data and any technical and commercial information regarding the proposed locomotives currently manufactured by the participants. The information should be delivered in compliance with the technical requirements of the locomotive detailed in this document.

2. As part of the data, participants are requested to provide detailed Technical Specification for the proposed locomotive.

3. For the avoidance of any doubt, it is hereby clarified that Responder's response may include slight deviations from the technical requirements specified. Should the locomotives offered deviate slightly from the requirement specified, the Responder shall specify the deviation.

4. It is clarified that one of ISR's main objectives is to procure "of-the-shelf" products, as much as possible, considering the technical and the operational requirements specified in this document and its Attachments, having proven design, and been tested and accepted in accordance with TSI, EN and UIC standards.

5. Participants are requested to provide a List of Customers and their contact details for the proposed locomotives including delivered quantities for the last 10 years – all in accordance with the chart in ANNEX A.

6. It is also clarified that ISR is considering acquiring maintenance services via the manufacturer for the fleet of the acquired locomotives under constellation yet to be determined.

7. Details regarding maintenance requirements and policies, predictive maintenance capabilities, and estimated lifecycle costs to be provided.

8. Participants are requested to suggest their warranty policies and periods.

9. ISR estimates that the total required number of new locomotives shall be up to 90 units: 18 – 20 should be delivered until 12/2026; the rest of the locomotives shall be delivered in batches and commissioned until 2040.

10. Participants are requested to indicate estimated, non-binding pricing of a unit and the expected price discounts with relation to the above numbers of locomotives to be acquired.

11. The supply of the first locomotive shall be 24 months from the purchase order....."

Israel Railways – Yoseftal 1, Lod – 7136801, Israel

### 4. Submission of Response

Responses shall be submitted in writing, to the attention of Mr. Izik Adar, no later than: October 10, 2024, at the following address and/or by email [izika@rail.co.il](mailto:izika@rail.co.il).



• Photo 146.06 IR freight locos

(xi). Tender No. 42228. For the Manufacture and Supply of W14 Rail Fastening Systems. Israel Railways Ltd., in accordance with its obligations under the Israeli Mandatory Tender Laws and its implementing regulations, wishes to obtain bids for:

The manufacture and supply of W14 Rail Fastening Systems for Universal Monoblock Concrete Sleepers with SKL14 Clamps, all in accordance with and subject to the terms specified in these General Terms and Conditions and the accompanying Tender documents.

#### 1. Pre-requisites for Participation in the Tender

1.1. The bidder must be the manufacturer of the proposed SKL 14 Clamps.

1.2. The bidder must be the designer, assembler and supplier of the proposed W14 Rail Fastening System.

1.3. The bidder has supplied at least 360,000 W14 rail fastening system sets (one set per one concrete sleeper) in accordance with EN13481-2 standard between 2019 and the Final Submission Date, and has manufactured the SKL 14 Clamps as part of such sets.

One Set per one concrete sleeper includes:

- Four Screws;
- Four Washers;
- Four Clamps;
- Four Angled Guide Plates;
- Two Rail Pads;
- Four Dowels"

146:06



## Light Rail

### A. TEL AVIV

(i) NTA - Metropolitan Mass Transit System Ltd. Tender No. 303/2024 - for Design Consulting Services. Deadline: 25 July 2024.

(ii) NTA Tender No. 002/2024: Early screening stage for Management of Information at Security Events: NTA intends to select one winning bidder only. The contract is for 36 months with optional extensions of up to 48 additional months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 19.08.2024.

(iii). NTA Tender No. 087/2024: Providing Consultancy Services regarding all sorts of Licensing: The contract is for 24 months with optional extensions of up to 36 additional months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 21.08.2024.

#### (iv). METRO LAW FIRST READING

From a press release of 16.07.2024: "The Greater Tel-Aviv Metro Law has been approved today by the Knesset (Parliament) Environment & Internal Affairs Committee led by Transport Minister Mrs. Miri Regev; it came after long discussions between the Metro representatives in the Transport Ministry, the Finance Ministry, the Ministry of Justice and The Planning Administration. It passed today on the first reading of the plenary and has still to pass in the second and third reading of the plenary."

(xii). Tender No.124264: Providing services of Waste Disposal from railway sites: The services are to be provided from the following sites: Lod and surround, Be'er-Sheva, Holz and B'nei-Brak. The contract is for 24 months with optional extensions of up to additional 36 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 12.09.2024.

(xiii). Tender No. 124249: Providing services of Supplying a Management Portal System: The contract is for 12 months with optional extensions of up to additional 48 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 30.09.2024.

(xiv). R.F.I. No. 124265: Supplying a 3-Dimensional Scanner for the Rolling Stock and Motive Power including the Equipment and companion Software: Latest date for submission of proposals: 20.08.2024.

(xv). Tender No. 223152: Providing services of Design, Installation, Supply, Guarantee, Performance Assurance and Maintenance of PV Photo-Voltaic Installations on Roofs of all Railway Buildings: The contract is for 60 months with optional extensions of up to additional 60 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 22.08.2024.

(xvi). Tender No. 124255: Providing services of Guarding and Security at all railways' sites: Services refer to the southern and northern regions, together or separately. The contract is for 24 months with optional extensions of up to additional 36 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 25.09.2024.

(xvii). Israel Railways Ltd. Tender No. 240801: Building and Operating Loading/Unloading Grain Facility at a 2000 sq.m. area of Netivot railway station (on the Western Negev line): The contract is for 120 months with optional extensions of 168 months and up to additional 132 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 09.09.2024.

(xviii). Israel Railways R.F.I. for providing Services for Coffee and Ancillary Products by Food Trucks at all railway stations apart from Jerusalem, Tel-Aviv, Haifa and Be'er-Sheva: Latest date for submission of proposals: 05.09.2024.

#### (v) FURTHER LEGISLATIVE STEPS PASSED

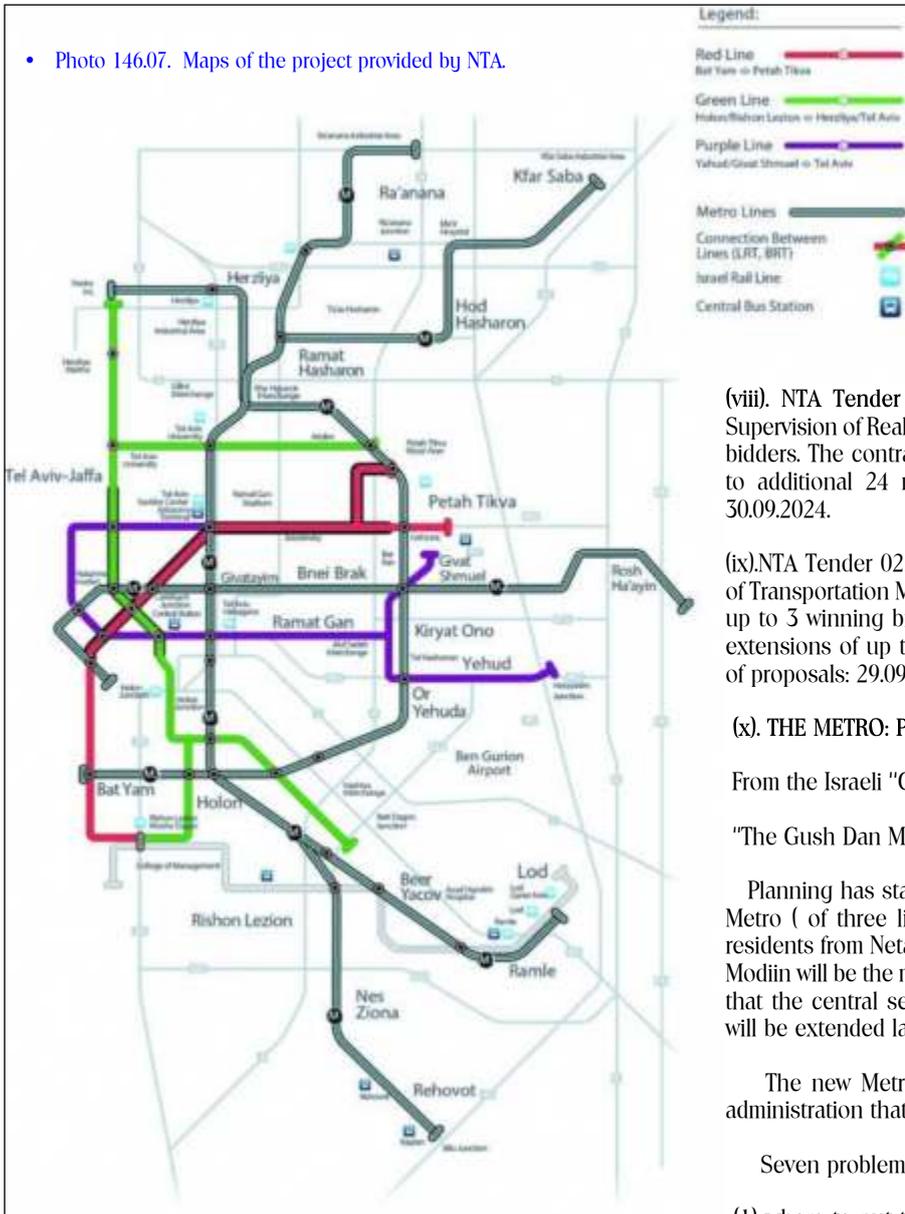
From a press release of 25.07.2024 by the Transport Ministry: "The Greater Tel-Aviv Metro project, is at last underway after it has been approved this morning (25.07.2024) by the Knesset in second and third reading.

The \$40.65 Billion (NIS 150Bn) mega project, will consist of three Metro lines totalling 150km and 109 stations all (stations and lines) underground, will serve 24 local authorities and will carry 2 million passengers/day."

Steve Sattler adds: "Nobody knows at the moment where the money will come from; some cynics say it will eventually cost \$81.3Bn (NIS 300Bn), and the date of opening the first line some when in 2040 is an illusion; the best may occur not before 2070..."

"I.R.J." reported in a more neutral tone: "The Metro system, which will complement Tel Aviv's existing three-line, 90km light rail network, will serve 24 local authorities and is expected to carry two million passengers per day. It is unclear how the project will be financed, with local commentators suggesting that the final cost could be double that currently envisaged. Similarly, no completion dates have yet been announced, although trains on the first line are not expected to enter public service until the early 2040s".

- Photo 146.07. Maps of the project provided by NTA.



I use the RED LINE light-rail twice every week and I have found the stations sparsely used, always clean, shiny and with very few problems. Service personnel and security guards are always present and very helpful.

At this time the only practical connection between the Jerusalem train and the Dan Kal is the Savidor/Arlozorov station complex, and with the new lines - it is expected that three interchange points with the national trains will then be available."

(vi). NTA Tender No. 335/2024: Providing Services of Knowledge Management: NTA intends to select one winning bidder only. The contract is for 36 months with optional extensions of up to additional 24 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 18.09.2024.

(vii). ONE YEAR ON

On 19.08.24 Steve Sattler wrote: "It has been 12 months since the very expensive GUSH DAN, - THE 'DANKAL' - light rail opened.

So far 72% of the region's residents have used the new system, but only 21% use it every working day. Moovit did a survey and found that over 80% feel that it cuts their travel-time to work, and 72% are happy with the service. The main complaints are that there are not enough stations in the right sections of the cities, and that the new lines (the only line that runs is the RED line.) are taking too long to finish.

The DANKAL administration says that they expected over 200,000 clicks of the travel cards every month, but the actual usage is lower. Only an average of 90,000 'clicks' use the service every month.

The national security situation is not really relevant to the usage or non-usage. Only 13% of the 1,500 people surveyed said that 'the security situation' causes them to either use or not use the light-rail. As the TLV municipality closes more and more roads in the city centre, they expect more drivers to use the service. Within 5 years another two lines could be working, so then the Eastern residents will have options to use the service - routinely.

(viii). NTA Tender No. 0661/2024: Providing Services of Patrol and Supervision of Real Estate assets: NTA intends to select up to 3 winning bidders. The contract is for 36 months with optional extensions of up to additional 24 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 30.09.2024.

(ix).NTA Tender 025/2024: Providing services of design and operating of Transportation Models and motion simulation: NTA intends to select up to 3 winning bidders. The contract is for 36 months with optional extensions of up to additional 24 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 29.09.2024.

(x). THE METRO: PLANS

From the Israeli "GLOBES" newspaper. 29th August (via Steve Sattler):  
"The Gush Dan Metro.

Planning has started for the METRO of Tel Aviv and Gush Dan. This Metro ( of three lines -initially. Blue, Orange and Yellow) will serve residents from Netanya in the North to Yavne in the South. In the East, Modiin will be the main city on the Metro line. It is reasonable to believe that the central sections will be built first and then the end stations will be extended later on.

The new Metro administration will grow out of the current NTA administration that runs and builds the Light Rail system.

Seven problems are already known to planners:

(1) where to put the 40 million tonnes of rock, stone, clay and sand that will be dug out by the 24 TBMs that will cut the tunnels. (Prof. Sattler' says to build Islands off the coast for a second airport and residential communities ).

(2) Find the right engineering experts to prevent any new digging from damaging the existing and soon-to-be-built Light-rail tunnels. A vertical separation of 10-18 metres between the Light-Rail level and the Metro level is necessary. Vibrations and water damage are serious considerations. (Tunnels will be to be water-proof.)

(3) As the TBMs are cutting they will change, damage or enter water pockets, wet rock or the Shephelah aquifer and some of this water will need to be pumped out, cleaned, stored and used. (It is mostly not-salt water.)

The main body of 'stone' and clay under the greater Gush Dan region is loose, light and wet stone. It is not solid bedrock - as is found under Manhattan. (One idea floated is to have all the metro rails on springs or pads, to keep the vibrations down to a minimum.)

(4). Massive numbers of engineers, trained skilled workers and 'imported' workers will be necessary.

(5) Initial calculations show that 1.5 million curved segments of pre-formed concrete will be needed - either imported or poured in Israel. Similarly, initial planning is considering building 3 -5 local (and small) power stations - underground - powered by gas to supply electricity to the Metro and the nearby businesses. (There are also security issues with the national power grid.)

(6) Other security issues are strong tunnel (curved) walls, escape tunnels and vertical shafts, and emergency service sections to deal with 'terrorist' or civil emergencies. (Earthquakes are common in the Middle East)

(7) The cost will be relatively high by international standards, and various government bonds will need to be issued. The project will take from 30 -50 years."

## B. JERUSALEM

### (i). TRAM EXTENSIONS

On 23.06 Steve Sattler wrote:

"The Jerusalem Municipality has just announced that the two extensions of the Red-line Light-Rail (L1) will start to function for public use by the end of November 2024. One extension runs into Neveh Yakov and one to the Hadassah Hospital.

There have been constant delays for these two projects. It seems that, finally, the safety and electrical issues have been resolved. But - This is not the final word about the issues - as more delays are normal and may yet be expected."

### (ii). METRO NETWORK PLANS

From "I.R.J." 08.07.2024: "Israel's Ministry of Transport has approved the start of planning for a Metro network to serve Jerusalem. With the city's population expected to rise from 1.9 Million to 2.2 M. by 2050, and the Greater Jerusalem travel area expected to grow to around 4 M. passengers per working day, the government has accepted that a Mass Transit system is needed.

The city is currently served by a single light rail line, plus the underground section of the A1 Link main line from Modiin and Gush Dan. An extension of the railway to serve central Jerusalem and plans to build eight more light rail lines are no longer considered sufficient to meet future demand. The ministry and the municipality of Jerusalem are therefore preparing a tender to produce a professionally-drafted master plan.

Initial planning on a Jerusalem Metro started five years ago at the Hebrew University. Designs were based on the international standard of three to four Metro lines to serve a city of 2 million people.

The Jerusalem Metro is likely to be built at a depth of 30-40m, with some sections at grade. The city is built on limestone rock and the challenges of tunnelling near archaeological and religious sites mean that the first line is expected to take 15 years to complete.

Separately, the municipality has announced that extensions at both ends of the 13.8km light rail L1/Red Line will open to passengers by the end of November. Construction of the extensions serving Neve Yakov, to the north, and Hadassah Hospital, in the southwest, has been considerably delayed."

Parallel but also additional information came from a press release of 03.07.2024 by the Jerusalem Transportation Master Plan: "By 2050 the experts are planning a population for Jerusalem of 1.9 to 2.2 M residents. The Jerusalem complex - the Gush - with all the cities and towns nearby - will grow to almost 4 million travellers every working day. The current situation with some 1,000 buses, 9 ( future) tram lines and the extended underground A1 railway line from Modiin and Gush Dan will not be

enough. The first planning for the Jerusalem Metro was done by students at the Hebrew University 'Urban Planning Chug', some 5 years ago.

Needless to say, the drilling of tunnels through the Jerusalem limestone rock and various archeological and religious sites and items will have an effect on the planning. The MOT and the Municipality are now preparing a tender for the professional design of the master-plan.

In any event, the first Metro line will only be ready after some 15 years of work."



• The planned Metro line maps prepared by the Jerusalem Transportation Master Plan team.

### (iii). NEW NORTHERN BUS TERMINAL

From "Jerusalem Post" 02.07.2024:

"With an Investment of NIS 500 Million: A Separate Central Bus Station for Ultra-Orthodox Jews in Jerusalem.

Tomorrow, the Arazim Terminal, located in the northern part of the capital, will begin operations. It has primarily served routes between ultra-Orthodox neighbourhoods and communities, although it could have also saved secular residents of Ramot, French Hill, and Pisgat Ze'ev a long journey to the central bus station.

After about four years of construction a large transportation terminal in northern Jerusalem, the Arazim Terminal, will begin operations tomorrow. It is located at the Ramot Junction on Route 1, with good accessibility to urban and intercity lines.

Adjacent to the Terminal, which was built with an investment of around half a Billion Shekels, the Blue Line of the light rail will pass.

This line is expected to start operating in 2030. Additionally, a park-and-ride facility for 1,000 cars is currently under construction and is set to open in 2026. Thus, the terminal will serve as an important transit point for the city's transportation means.

The Terminal includes charging stations for 215 electric buses, aiding in the transition of urban transportation in the capital to zero-emission vehicles. It also features a "green roof" abundant with vegetation, which reduces landscape damage and is more environmentally friendly. The parking lot covers 50,000 square metres, includes 12 bus platforms, administrative buildings and rest areas for drivers.

However, despite the Terminal's proximity to the Har Hotzvim employment area, which attracts many workers from outside Jerusalem, and its adjacency to the giant Ramot neighbourhood that also houses a large secular population, and despite being located near large secular neighbourhoods such as Pisgat Ze'ev and French Hill, at least initially, the terminal will primarily operate routes to ultra-Orthodox concentrations.

From the Terminal's opening, the following routes will operate: Line 404 to B'nei Brak, 426 to Petah Tikva, 424 and 407 to Netanya, to Rehovot, 546 to Komemiyut, and northern lines 859, 982, 983, 992, 993, 996, 997, 999, 952, 972, 996, 997, to Safed, Rechasim, Kiryat Ata, Nof Hagalil, Migdal HaEmek, and Haifa. On Sunday July 21 and Sunday August 4 additional routes will be added to the terminal.

Jerusalem Mayor Moshe Lion stated, "The project addresses the city's growing population and developing transportation needs through the Moriah Jerusalem Development Corporation. We will continue to promote projects that provide accessible and efficient alternatives to private car use, thus reducing road congestion and air pollution."

Deputy Minister of Transportation, MK Uri Maklev (United Torah Judaism): "This is important news for the neighbourhood residents, providing them with bus lines to the heart of the city and shortening travel times. Transportation in Jerusalem has doubled in recent years, and Arazim provides an appropriate response to this."

- - new Bus Terminal

(iv) The NEW PURPLE 'TRAM' LINE. By Steve Sattler, 14.08.2024:

"The regional planning authority for Jerusalem has issued the permit to build the PURPLE 'Light-Rail' line in Jerusalem.

It will be 10 kms long, and serve Kiryat Yovel, The Katamonim and then Talpigot. After Talpigot this line will (as a later extension ) run to Armon Ha'Natziv. There will be five 'crossing-points' with other Jerusalem 'light-rails'. This line will be mainly serving South Jerusalem, Malcha, the sports-complex and the Hadassah Hospital. The 'future' extension will serve the new mega-suburb of Arnona Valley, - with over 1,200 apartment units.

All across Jerusalem, workers have finished about 70% of the new two lines - Green and Light-Green. Under about 30% of the new lines being built - the CITY is renewing very big clean-water pipes, sewerage, new underground power lines and re-building roads and pedestrian sections."

### C. HAIFA - NAZARETH

In the Dutch magazine 'Op de Rails' 07/2024 is a brief note - (translation by the Editor): "In mid-May the Israeli government signed an agreement with a consortium led by Alstom for the design, construction, financing and exploitation for a period of 25 years of the fast tram line between Haifa and Nazareth; This contract includes the ordering of 54 Citadis low-floor trams, including their maintenance. In peak hours there should be a four-minute interval and at least 100,000 passengers per day are expected. Should construction begin in 2025 the line could go into operation in 2029."



# OTHER MIDDLE EAST RAILWAYS

146:07

## A. IRAN

### RASHT - BANDAR-E-ANZALI LINE OPENS

From [www.railjournal.com](http://www.railjournal.com) : "An official ceremony took place in the northern Iranian province of Gilan on June 20, inaugurating 37km of new railway linking the provincial capital Rasht with the port of Bandar-e Anzali on the Caspian Sea.

The ceremony was attended by Iran's Interim President, Mr Mohammad Mokhber. Other dignitaries in attendance included Roads and Urban Development minister, Mr Mehrdad Bazrpash.

Work on the new line began in 2006. It is eventually to be expected to carry 600,000 passengers and seven million tonnes of freight a year.

Completion of the project will help to improve connections between ports on the Persian Gulf in the south of Iran with those on the Caspian Sea to the north. The Rasht - Bandar-e-Anzali line also forms part of the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) transit freight route connecting southern Asia with northern Europe.

The railway is expected to foster closer cooperation between Iran and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), comprising Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Russia, and between EAEU member states and Arab countries in western Asia."

& Urban Development Mehrdad Bazrpash. They were joined by Russian presidential aide Igor Levitin, Azerbaijan's Deputy Prime Minister Shahin Mustafayev, and the Governor of Astrakhan Oblast Igor Babushkin, along with ambassadors from several neighbouring countries.

Running through the northern Iranian province of Gilan, the Rasht - Caspian Railway Project completes an all-rail link across Iran from the Caspian Sea to the Gulf port of Bandar Abbas. As part of the INSTC, it will carry intermodal freight moving between northern Europe, the Volga basin and the Indian subcontinent via a mix of rail and shipping connections. It is expected to cut the transit time between St Petersburg and Mumbai to around 10 days, compared with 30 to 45 days using longer maritime routes.

The north-south corridor is being developed jointly by Iran, Azerbaijan and Russia, and also includes the rail link now under construction along the western side of the Caspian between Rasht and the Azeri border town of Astara.

Bazrpash described the opening of the port branch as an 'historic development', which would significantly boost the country's capacity to handle transit freight by rail. Kheirullah Khademi, CEO of the Iranian construction company that built the line, told local media that it would be able to carry up to 7 million tonnes per year, along with 600,000 passengers."



- Iranian passenger train).

More detail is given in "R.G.I." 25.6.24:

"The 37 km extension of RAI's Qazvin - Rasht line to the Caspian Sea port of Bandar-e-Anzali was opened on June 20, completing a further section of the International North-South Transport Corridor through the central Asia region.

The line was formally inaugurated with a ceremony attended by Iran's acting President Mohammad Mokhber and Minister of Transport

## B. TURKEY

### (i). TURKISH TRAMS FOR SERBIA

From "R.G.I." 12.07.24: "On July 11 Beograd city transport operator GSP named Turkish supplier Bozankaya as the winner of a 7.8Bn Dinar contract to supply 25 trams. The first is to be delivered in 12 months, and the rest within the following 13 months. GSP has specified five-section, completely low-floor vehicles between 29 and 32m long

with a minimum of 40 seats and a total capacity of at least 160 passengers at 4 per sq.m."

### (ii). ANKARA – ISTANBUL LINE TO BE PROTECTED FROM LANDSLIDES

From "R.G.I." 0208.2024: Infrastructure manager TCDD has awarded construction company IC Ictas a TL707.6M contract to rebuild and reinforce a section of the Ankara – Istanbul high-speed line in the Bilecik area which is prone to flooding and landslides.

### (iii) NEW TRAM SECTION IN ISTANBUL

From 'Metro Report Intl.' 12.08.2024: "Construction has started on a 3.2km section of tramway in central Istanbul, linking Feshane on tram Line T5 with Bayrampasa Meydan."

## C. EGYPT

### (i) E.T.C.S. CONTRACT

From "I.R.I." 10.07.2024. "Egyptian National Railways (ENR) has awarded Mermec a €130M contract to supply ETCS Level 1 for the Al Ferdan – Bir Al Abd and Balouza – East Port Said lines. Mermec will work jointly on the project with local contractor El Hazek Construction.

The project forms part of a developing logistics corridor connecting the Sinai Peninsula with Egypt west of the Suez Canal, fostering wider economic development in Sinai and reducing transport CO2 emissions.

Mermec will also provide operations and maintenance training for Egyptian personnel. The company's strategy to develop new business outside its home market of Italy could also see it establish a centre of excellence for railway signalling and infrastructure projects in Egypt.

The contract with ENR was signed by Mermec Vice-President, Mr Angelo Petrosillo, Egypt's Transport Minister, Mr Kamel Al-Wazir, and ENR Chairman, Mr Mohamed Amer Abdel Aziz, in the presence of Italy's ambassador to Egypt, Mr Michele Quaroni.

Contract signature took place on the sidelines of the Egypt-EU Investment Conference in Cairo on June 30, when Al-Wazir also signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Mr Michal Ron, chief international business officer at Italy's export credit agency, SACE.

SACE which will support green transport projects in Egypt and encourage the participation of Italian suppliers through export credit insurance and guarantee programmes worth up to €800M."

- [Desiro DMU Egypt](#)



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### (ii). 'GUARDIAN OF THE NILE' LUXURY TRAIN

"ENR has concluded an agreement with Italian company Arsenale to launch a luxury tourist train service known as "The Nile Guardian Train". The 15-car train will operate between Cairo, Luxor, and Aswan, showcasing Egypt's cultural heritage and tourist attractions."

In "R.G.I." 18.07.2024 is added: "Italian high-end hospitality company Arsenale and ENR have signed heads of terms for the launch of a Guardian of the Nile luxury cruise train in 2027."

Photo 146.20A. A new Siemens train for Egypt stabled at the 'Rail Adventure' sidings at Braunschweig Hauptbahnhof awaiting further delivery to a port and then its destination. A few issues ago we featured a train for Israel at the same place! (Photo - from a moving train - The Editor)

## D. DUBAI

### METRO EXPANSION

From "I.R.I." 03.07.2024: "The number of metro stations in Dubai is set to more than double by 2040, rising from 55 to 140. Expansion of the metro network is part of a wider economic strategy revealed by the Executive Council of Dubai on June 30. The meeting was chaired by Sheikh Maktoum bin Mohammed, deputy prime minister, minister of finance and first deputy ruler of Dubai.

Dubai currently has 55 Metro stations - 35 on the Red Line and 20 on the Green Line - as well as 11 stops on the city's Light Rail network, with services operated by the Dubai Roads and Transport Authority (RTA). Officials say the total number of stations will increase to 96, serving 140sq.km by 2030, rising further to 140 stations, serving 228sq.km. by 2040.

According to local media, extending the metro network is seen a key part of Dubai's vision of a "20-minute city", which aims to increase use of public transport by 45% and reduce carbon emissions to 16 tonnes per capita.

Work is expected to start on the Dirhams 18Bn (\$US 4.9Bn) Blue Line later this year, which will add 14 new stations and 30km to the Metro network, more than half of it underground. Completion is scheduled for 2029. In May the RTA extended the deadline for bids to build the new line to July 22, after six consortia prequalified for a tender issued by the RTA at the start of this year."

## E. IRAQ.

From 'Metro Report Intl.' 24.07.2024: "The city of Baghdad has awarded a contract for the provision of project management and supervision services for the US\$17.5Bn Metro project.

The contract has been awarded to a 50:50 joint venture of Malaysian company HSS Engineering and its UAE-registered long-term collaborative partner Consultant HSS.

The scope includes design review, overseeing the pre-qualification stage of the procurement process, auditing surveying activities, reviewing project performance specifications, conducting schedule reviews and providing supervision services.

The project management consultancy element of the contract is worth 0.6% of the overall construction cost, and the construction supervision element is worth 1.2%. Completion of the metro is envisaged for May 2029."

On 02.08.24 it added:"An international consortium has been selected to negotiate a design, build, finance, operate, maintain and transfer contract for the long-planned Baghdad metro project, Prime Minister Mohammed Shia' Al Sudani has announced."

On July 25 Al Sudani chaired a meeting to receive the accreditation of the consortium, which his office said includes Alstom, Systra, SNCF, Talgo, SENER, Deutsche Bank and 'specialised Turkish construction companies'. The consortium will now negotiate the technical, financial and operational details of the contract with the municipality and the National Investment Authority. Al Sudani said the strategic project would be the largest of its kind in the region and ensure Baghdad meets the highest global standards and caters to future developments.

## F. LIBYA

From "I.R.J." 10.07.2024: "Libya's Deputy Transport Minister, Mr Fadlallah Ashour and the head of the Railway Project Implementation and Management Agency, Mr Saeed Al-Kilani, have met with the Russian ambassador to Libya, Mr Aydar Aganin, to discuss the reactivation of the \$US 3Bn project to build the 551km new line between Surt and Benghazi. Russian Railways (RZD) was awarded a contract in 2009 to deliver the new railway, but construction came to a halt following the toppling of the Gadaffi regime in 2011.

Both parties agreed on the need for a clear roadmap and timeline for reactivating the Surt - Benghazi project. The meeting concluded with a commitment to collaborate closely and to see the project through to completion.

The Surt - Benghazi line was intended to form the first phase of a new railway along the Libyan coast from the border with Tunisia to the frontier with Egypt. It was designed for diesel operation at up to 160km/h with provision for future electrification and a maximum speed of 250km/h. China Railway Construction began work on the 352km Surt - Misratah - Al Khums section and the 172km western section between Tripoli and the Tunisian border at Ras Adjir.



In 2009 Ansaldo STS was awarded a signalling, telecommunications, and power supply contract covering for both sections. The following year, RZD subsidiary Zarubezhstroyteknologiya awarded Ansaldo STS and Selex Communications a €247M contract to supply signalling, automation, telecommunications, power supply, security, and ticketing systems for the entire 551km Surt - Benghazi line. Work subsequently came to halt during the period of political instability that followed the ousting of the Gadaffi regime."

## G. U.A.E.

### DESERT AIR CONDITIONING UNITS.

From "R.G.I." 21.07.24. "Liebherr Transportation Systems (China) has supplied heating, ventilation & air-conditioning units for three push-pull trainsets which Etihad Rail ordered from CRRC Qingdao Sifang last year."

## H. INTERNATIONAL LINKS

### (i). See 145:07 'MIDDLE CORRIDOR'

From "I.R.J." 10.07.2024: "The first China-Europe Railway Express service left Xi'an in Shaanxi province on July 1, loaded with consumer goods, new cars and spare parts and bound for Baku in Azerbaijan. China Railway (CR) is operating a daily freight service to Baku, crossing the Chinese border at Khorgos and running on the Trans-Caspian or Middle Corridor route across Kazakhstan to the port of Aktau on the Caspian Sea. Consignments then move by ship across the Caspian Sea to Baku in Azerbaijan. End-to-end transit time is 12 days. The new service is expected to inject impetus into the promotion of trade between China and Europe, and with countries along the new route.

Development of the Middle Corridor for transit traffic to Europe also forms part of China's Belt and Road initiative. The Middle Corridor provides the shortest route between the Pacific coast of China and Europe, but its many border crossings and the need to transfer containers between different gauges, and from rail to ship and road, mean that transit times are three times longer than the northern route via Russia.

However, interest in developing the Middle Corridor has increased since the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the start of attacks in the

Red Sea on shipping bound for the Suez Canal, as the Trans-Caspian route between China and Europe is the least vulnerable to external shocks."

### (ii). From "R.G.I." 17.06.24: KAZAKHSTAN TRAFFIC

"Kazakhstan's national railway KTZ reports that rail freight traffic with China totalled 12.8 million tonnes from January to May 2024, up 12.4% on the same period in 2023.

The Chinese city of Jinhua and Kazakh national railway KTZ have signed a MoU for the joint development of terminals to promote transit freight."

### (iii). TRANSIT FREIGHT TRAFFIC DRIVES KTZ EXPANSION.

From "R.G.I." 19.07.2024. "New line construction and fleet renewals have cemented Kazakhstan's position as a key node in the Eurasian transit market. Further expansion is now in hand, with more investment planned by 2030."

(iv). UZBEKISTAN: From "I.R.J.": "Hyundai Rotem's first order to export high speed trainsets was amongst several co-operation agreements signed during South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol's visit to Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev on June 14.

Plans for the 270Bn Won order for Hyundai Rotem and South Korean operator Korail to supply and support six trainsets had first been announced when an Uzbek delegation visited South Korea last year.

Following confirmation of the order, Hyundai Rotem said the 250km/h distributed power trainsets would be similar to the 260km/h KTX-EUM sets operated by Korail. The 1,520mm gauge version to be supplied to Uzbek national railway UTY will have seven coaches rather than six, providing a total of 389 seats in VIP, business and economy classes and a dining car. They will be adapted operation in a hot and dusty environment, with additional steps for use at platforms just 200mm above rail. The trainsets are to be deployed on UTY's Toshkent – Bukhara (590km), Bukhara – Khiva (452km) and Miskin – Nukus (196km) services.

Export diplomacy: Hyundai Rotem said the South Korean government's 'active export diplomacy' had played an important role in securing the order. The Ministry of Economy & Finance and Export-Import Bank of Korea are providing finance through an Economic Development Co-operation Fund loan. The manufacturer said this followed the practice of other countries that offered financing to increase the international competitiveness of their high speed train manufacturers. Hyundai Rotem said the order would establish a 'bridgehead' for future exports of high speed trains, and would support 128 domestic companies in its supply chain."

#### (v). AN OVERVIEW OF LAND ROUTES THROUGH KAZAKHSTAN

From "R.G.I." 17.07.2024 by Vladimir Waldin: "Sitting astride several Eurasian land bridge corridors, Kazakhstan has been well placed to develop rail freight flows between China and Europe, as well as north-south connections to India and South Asia."

"Kazakhstan sits at the crossroads of world trade routes, and its government has outlined an ambitious vision to strengthen its role as a key transit hub for the Central Asia region. Speaking at the 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly on September 28 last year, President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev emphasised the strategic importance of using his country's geographical advantages to stimulate further development of its transport and logistics industry.

No fewer than 13 international corridors pass through Kazakhstan. There are five principal freight flows, all of which are dominated by rail. Three east-west axes link China with Europe, via Russia and Belarus to the north, across the Caspian Sea to Azerbaijan and Turkey in the centre, or via Uzbekistan to the south. Two north-south corridors link Russia with South Asia and Africa, running from eastern Siberia to Central Asia and from European Russia to Iran and beyond. Of these, the North and Middle corridors handle the largest flows.

Thanks to support from the European Union the Middle Corridor is a strategic priority for Kazakhstan, enshrined in the 'Concept of Transport & Logistics Potential Development to 2030', which was adopted in 2022.

Demand for transit through Kazakhstan has increased rapidly in recent years against the background of the Red Sea crisis, which has forced ship owners to switch to the longer route around Africa, increasing delivery times by 14 to 18 days. According to the UN, transit through the Suez Canal dropped by 42% between May 2023 and February 2024, while the cost of maritime shipment from Shanghai to European countries by sea has trebled. Conversely, the aggregate cost of rail transport has fallen by a third over the past decade.

#### Landbridge Flows

The North Corridor, or New Eurasian Land Bridge, links China's coastal cities of Liangungang and Rizhao to Rotterdam in the Netherlands and Antwerpen in Belgium. Since 2016, China-EU container trains along the North Corridor through Kazakhstan, Russia and Belarus have been operated by UTLC ERA, which is jointly owned by the three national railways: KTZ, RZD and BCh.

ERA reported a total of 674 000 TEU carried via this route to the end of 2023. Around two-thirds was moving between China and Russia and

Belarus, while the rest was China-EU transit traffic. In the first quarter of 2024, EU traffic reached 90 000 TEU, accounting for more than 90% of transit through Kazakhstan on this route. Most consumer goods moving through Russia are not subject to sanctions, and the route remains competitive as the running time has been reduced to six or seven days.

The Middle Corridor – often branded as the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route – received a major boost from the geopolitical developments in 2022-23, when it was seen as a safe alternative not subject to sanctions. Typical transit times are 13 to 15 days, compared with at least 25 days by sea. It is also around 2,000km shorter than the Trans-Siberian route through Russia.

The corridor builds on the vision of the EU-backed TRACECA programme (Transport Corridor Europe – Caucasus – Asia), established as long ago as 1993, although it really began to take off after the Trans-Kazakhstan Railway was completed in 2014. It has been given further impetus from China's Belt & Road Initiative, with President Xi Jinping making a keynote speech in Astana in 2013.

In 2020 the route carried just 350 000 tonnes, but the figure jumped to 530 000 tonnes the following year. Shippers highlighted a variety of problems including the high cost of using multiple modes, a lack of integration between information systems and a lack of co-ordination between operators. Additional risks include unstable weather, ferry port congestion, and falling water levels in the Caspian Sea, as well as simmering unrest in the Caucasus.

During the Silk Road forum at Tbilisi in October 2023, representatives from Kazakhstan's state railway KTZ, Azerbaijan's ADY and Georgia's GR established a joint company to promote the route – Middle Corridor Multimodal Ltd. And on November 7, the three railways signed an agreement with the Azerbaijan Caspian Shipping Co and the ports of Aktau, Baku and Batumi to establish a route co-ordination committee. One priority is the development of single transit documentation covering all modes.

The same month, China and Kazakhstan signed a separate agreement at the 3rd Belt & Road Forum, covering technical development.

The involvement of so many parties reflects the EU's interest in controlling the transport, whereas China considers any corridors in the western direction as an opportunity to deliver freight to Europe. The continued strengthening of economic ties between the Central Asian countries and their neighbours has been a driver for transport development in the region, where political stability is key to ensuring security and predictability for freight logistics.

The Middle Corridor is usually considered more in the context of trade from China to the EU, but there is also scope to develop eastbound flows. European logistics operators including Rail Cargo Group, Maersk, Numinen Logistics and Netherlands-based Rail Bridge Cargo have recently started using the corridor more actively.

Traffic volumes reached 2.8M tonnes in 2023. The infrastructure has capacity for up to 6M tonnes per year, although the Kazakh government is looking to increase this to 10M tonnes per year in 2025. World Bank projections envisage an increase in demand to 11.8M tonnes by 2030 – almost 9M westbound and 2M eastbound – but this could only be achieved by improving operational efficiency using digital systems and removing organisational barriers. According to EBRD, the corridor has the potential to carry 26M tonnes by 2040, but that would require investment of US\$19.6Bn in infrastructure enhancements.

The EU's desire to establish a reliable connection to Asia, bypassing Russia and the problematic sea routes, has encouraged interest from international financial institutions. As part of a commitment to spend €10Bn on the development of Central Asia's transport infrastructure, announced at the Global Gateway Investor Forum in Brussels at the end of January, the EIB signed MoUs with Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan to co-finance transport projects totalling €1.47Bn (not all rail).

Another €1.5Bn agreement was signed between the EBRD and Kazakhstan, aimed at ensuring sufficient capacity and stable transit times. These can be considered landmark agreements; until recently most transport infrastructure was developed with Chinese backing, as Western institutional investors were discouraged from investing in such a remote region.

During the forum, Kazakhstan's Minister of Transport Marat Karabayev and European Commissioner for Transport Adina-Ioana Vălean discussed the possible transfer of the Aktau and Quryq ferry ports from KTZ to a trust managed by EU companies on a ship-or-pay basis, along with Kazakhstan's plans to develop a container hub on the Caspian Sea.

In March, AD Ports Group acquired from Georgia's Inveco LLC a 60% stake in the Tbilisi Dry Port currently under construction. Another stake in the development is held by Norwegian shipping group Wilhelmsen. The dry port is expected to become a key logistics hub for the Trans-Caucasus region and is planned to have an eventual processing capacity of 286 000 TEU per year. Commissioning is scheduled for the fourth quarter of this year.

It will be accessed by direct rail services to and from Turkey, as well as links to the port of Baku in the east and Poti and Batumi to the west, offering ferry connections to Bulgaria and Romania. Estimates suggest that by 2040 the container flow along the corridor may reach 1.9 M TEUs per year. The capacity of the Baku – Tbilisi – Kars line has been increased from 1M to 5M tonnes/year under a modernisation project completed in May.

#### Southern Corridor

The Middle Corridor is also seen as part of the Carec transport network being promoted under the Central Asia Regional Economic Co-operation programme, supported by the Asian Development Bank. This also includes the putative South Corridor linking China and the EU via Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan. China's BRI includes a similar route, described as the China – Central Asia – West Asia Economic Corridor, which is primarily focused on connections with the Arabian Peninsula.

At present, Kazakhstan is the only country on the Southern Corridor with a rail connection to China. Construction of a more direct China – Kyrgyzstan – Uzbekistan route has been discussed several times, and a trilateral inter-governmental agreement was signed in Beijing last month. Work on the 454km line is now expected to start in October at an estimated cost of at least US\$5.1Bn. The project is actively supported by Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, but construction would take several years, during which container trains will continue to travel northwards.

Meanwhile, construction is already under way on the Darbaza – Maqtaaral and Baqty – Ayagös routes, together with a third border crossing between China and Kazakhstan scheduled to open in 2027, augmenting the current crossings at Dostyk/Alashankou and Khorgos/Altynkol, which can each handle around 18 trains/day. This should ensure that Kazakhstan continues to take a significant share of the traffic for many years to come.

The Middle and South Corridors have been seen as competitive, although the various countries have common strategic interests. A four-party Agreement on Strengthening Land Transport Connectivity in Central Asia was signed in September 2023, setting legal obligations that are the responsibility of the respective government agencies. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have had Ministries of Transport & Communications since gaining independence, while Uzbekistan has had a Ministry of Transport since 2019. Kazakhstan's transport portfolio was merged into the Ministry of Industry & Infrastructure Development in 2014, but separated out again last year.

Earlier this year, KTZ and UTY announced plans to establish a joint venture and agreed to co-operate on infrastructure developments, including the building of new terminals.

Both corridors have benefited from institutional support from the international Carec and Traceca programmes, at least until 2026. In terms

of China-EU transit, they are seen as alternatives to the Trans-Siberian, the Northern Corridor and the southern sea routes. However, those routes continue to dominate the market. The Trans-Siberian Railway moved 144M tonnes of freight in 2020 while, despite all the problems in 2023, the traditional maritime route conveyed around 1 Billion tonnes.

Investment risks facing the South Corridor include instability along the Afghan border and the possible emergence of a 'water conflict' between Central Asian countries and Afghanistan, which claims a significant proportion of the water of the Amudarya River that forms the border. Meanwhile, Iran has had strained relations with the USA since 2019 at least. Countries in the region are now making diplomatic moves to (re-)establish economic ties with Afghanistan. At the end of 2023, the Kazakh authorities removed the Taliban from their list of banned organisations, and earlier this year the first Azerbaijan ambassador in modern history arrived in Kabul.

#### North-South Axis

In its efforts to diversify access to sea routes, Kazakhstan is also prioritising the development of its north-south corridors, which provide access to the Gulf region and the Indian Ocean. As part of this initiative, it intends to modernise the Kazakh section of the Bolaşak – Chelyabinsk railway. At a meeting of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council in St Petersburg on December 25, President Tokayev invited his Central Asian neighbours to join the project. The creation of a joint logistics company is now being considered.

Actively supported by Russia, the North-South Corridor includes three variants. One uses the Caspian Sea, involving transshipment through the ports of Olya in Russia and Bandar-e Anzali or Amirabad in Iran. There are two all-rail land routes – the eastern one through Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, where modernisation is being advocated, or the western route through Azerbaijan, where work began last year to complete the missing 164 km Astara – Rasht link through northern Iran.

Plans have been floated for a Belarus – Russia – Kazakhstan – Uzbekistan – Afghanistan – Pakistan corridor, for which a development road map was adopted in the Uzbek city of Termez in April. During recent talks in Afghanistan, Kazakhstan's Deputy Prime Minister Serik Jumanarin said his country was ready to take part in construction of the 1 520 mm gauge Trans-Afghan Railway and other projects in that country, including the supply of track materials. Development of a rail corridor from Kazakhstan to Afghanistan fits logically with the construction of the Darbaza – Maqtaaral line, creating the prospect of developing freight traffic between Kazakhstan and the Middle East.

European countries have been looking at the development of the so-called "Lapis Lazuli Corridor" across the Caspian Sea to Turkmenistan and Afghanistan, but are somewhat more cautious about the TAR project. However, Uzbek Deputy Transport Minister Jasurbek Choriyev told the Tashkent Investment Forum in early May that the line is planned to be built by the end of 2027.

Russia has also expressed interest in the TAR, underlining its readiness to provide part of the financing and undertake feasibility studies. It has been supporting the development of an alternative access to Kyrgyzstan via the Caspian port of Turkmenbashi and Uzbekistan, bypassing Kazakhstan, signing an MoU during the first SCO International Transport Forum in Tashkent last November 2023.

Kazakhstan is particularly interested in expanding the export market for its agricultural products. Analysts at the Eurasian Development Bank suggest that the annual flow of grain from EEU countries including Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan to North Africa, southeast Asia and the Middle East along the three routes of the North-South corridor could reach somewhere between 8.7M and 12.8M tonnes by 2030. This forecast assumes the completion of the Astara – Rasht – Qazvin railway by 2028 and the modernisation of infrastructure and rolling stock on both of the corridor's land alternatives."

See map on next page



## TOUR DETAILS

Day 1. Overnight flight with Turkish Airlines from Germany to Basra.

Day 2: Basra - Shuaiba - Umm Qasr - Basra

Morning: Arrival in the south of Iraq. Uncomplicated entry and meeting with the tour guide. Transfer to Hotel and check-in. Brief pause and briefing. You will explore the station and the locomotive depot at Basra. The first line from Baghdad to Basra was built already in the early part of the 20th century, under guidance of the British regime. You then travel to Shueiba, where the line to Baghdad branches off. You travel southwards via Al-Zubayr to Umm Qasr where you visit the goods station and the only deep-water harbour of Iraq. Here since the Iraqi Revolution of 1958 there is also the country's most important military harbour. Then return to Basra alongside the freight line. Free time in Basra which you can use, together with the tour guide, to explore the city and the

(vi). On 06.08.24 'R.G.I.' reported: "An expedited freight service making use of upgraded border facilities has transported containers 4,486km from Xi'an in China to Toshkent in Uzbekistan in what Kazakh national railway KTZ says is a record five days."

(vii) MORE NEW LOCOS. In "I.R.J." 03.09.2024: "Kazakhstan Railways (KTZ) is to acquire a total of 579 new locomotives by 2029, according to information it released on social media. The state-owned operator says that it expects to purchase 374 "modern locomotives" between 2025 and 2029, in addition to 200 locomotives to be supplied by CRRC under a \$US 1.3Bn framework contract agreed in October 2023.

The Chinese manufacturer will supply 100 mainline and 100 shunting locomotives. It is unclear who will supply the other 374 locomotives, what type they will be, or the anticipated cost of the new fleet. KTZ claims to currently own over 1,600 locomotives. It purchased 113 locomotives in 2023 and this year expects to take delivery of 185 locomotives, 119 of which have already been supplied. The locomotives will be deployed to haul grain, one of KTZ's key freight commodities. In 2023 KTZ announced plans to acquire a significant amount of new rolling stock from suppliers including Alstom and Wabtec, comprising 187 diesel locomotives, 245 electric locomotives and 150 battery-electric locomotives, plus over 800 coaches and 2,100 wagons."

## I. IRAQ

### RAILWAY TOURS

See: <https://orientaltours.de/reise/04/irak-bagdadbahn/> for details of nine-day railway tours to Iraq! The next scheduled tour is 02.12. to 12.12.2024.

"Discover the world of Railways in modern Iraq with an unforgettable journey along antique cultural sites, pulsing cities being reconstructed, desert landscapes and the remains of the Bagdadbahn, which was completed in the 1930's. From Basra to Mosul you are mainly on the route of the current and former line and can visit stored locomotives, destroyed repair workshops and grandiose locomotive cemeteries.

After many years it is once again possible to visit Iraq and this tour offers a look behind the surfaces. You will experience as well as many aspects of the trains a world-famous site such as Babylon and busy activity in the metropolis of Baghdad with its unique mixture of Tradition and Modernity.

This nine-day special tour offers a view from an experienced and knowledgeable guide to the themes of Iraq's historic stations, loco depots and the locomotive cemeteries of Iraq. A kaleidoscope of locomotives of different classes and lands of construction awaits you.

bazaar. Overnight in Hotel.

Day 3. Basra - Nasiriyah - Samawah - Diwaniyah.

Morning, travel northwards to Baghdad. On the way we pause in Nasiriyah and visit the local station. Then we continue to Samawah and here visit the loco depot and the station which is significantly larger than that at Nasiriyah. Then onwards to Diwaniyah, where we visit the station. The city east of Nadjaf is one of the most important on the line between Basra and Baghdad, Overnight in Hotel.

Day 4. Tag: Diwaniyah – Hillah – Babylon – Karbala – Bagdad

You travel further to Hillah and visit the local station - then in conjunction visit one of the most famous UNESCO world heritage sites of antiquity - ancient Babylon. You visit the historic city, the reconstructed Ishtar Gate, the Procession Road and the foundations of the original Ishtar Gate. Here in Babylon you gain extra access to the old Temples, the Lion of Babylon, the Lybrinth, the southern and northern palaces and come to the place where Alexander the Great died. The next spot is the famous Shiite pilgrim city of Karbala, and here we visit the station. During the pilgrim season several special trains arrive here. Further on to Alexandria with a visit to the station. Then continuation to Baghdad and overnight in Hotel.

Day 5: Baghdad

In the morning we visit the main station at Baghdad, the cupola is one of the finest buildings in the country. Here as far as possible we visit the station administration. Then we go to the locomotive memorial, to the loco depot and to the loco workshops. Here you gain deep insights into the Iraqi train traffic.

In the afternoon we have a city tour of the capital city of Baghdad, during which we shall pass several significant tourist sights. These include the statues of the 'Arabian Nights', iconic monuments of the Iraqi nation and legendary places in the capital. In the evening there is free time, you can visit the bazaars or dip into the city's night life. Overnight in Hotel.

Day 6: Bagdad – Ramadi – Fallujah – Samarra – Kirkuk

Following breakfast journey to Ramadi where we visit the local station. The line runs from here westwards in the direction of the Jordanian border. We travel further towards the east and reach the famous city of Falluja and from here further to Samarra. Here we explore the station and travel onwards to Kirkuk. Overnight in Hotel.

## Day 7: Kirkuk – Mosul

In the morning we visit the station of Kirkuk, before we travel further to Mosul. Here we visit the station of the city, one of the most important trade centres in the country. There is then free time in Mosul, in the evening we visit a cafe in which you may enjoy local music. The building formerly served the IS as a hospital. Overnight in Hotel.

## Day 8: Mosul – Baiji – Tikrit – Baghdad

After breakfast we return to Baghdad. On the way we pause and visit the stations of Baiji and Tikrit. Here we gain some impressions of the railway line north of Baghdad. Overnight in hotel in Baghdad.

Day 9: Baghdad to Germany. Early morning transfer to airport and return via Istanbul to Germany."

I won't add all the details of which tips and meals are included, anyone interested can work this out for himself. One needs a visum (ca. €90) and so forth.

### (ii). TRAVELS IN THE LAND OF THE TWO RIVERS.

In 'Lok Magazin' 07/2024 pp.96-105 is an article by Joerg Gloeckner on a recent (February 2024) tour he made to this troubled country.

"Between War and Peace. Most people will connect the name Iraq with War. At the moment however the land is enjoying unusually peaceful times, yet it remains heavily indebted in spite of its oil wealth. Many railway lines are still lying destroyed.

Indeed the country has been involved in four major wars since 1980. Up to half a million people died, the economy and the infrastructure were destroyed. Many stations of the State Railways still look now as they did in 2017 when the war against the so-called Islamic State (IS) was officially declared to be over. Nevertheless the people there are enjoying a minor boom, they are founding private companies and building new houses.

### No Arabian Nights Tale

In February 2024 I had the opportunity to visit the Iraqi Republican Railways (IRR) from Basra on the Persian Gulf to Mosul on the border to Kurdistan. The visit to several stations and depots had been officially permitted. What I found was a minimal operating railway, many destroyed lines and repair works that were only making slow progress. There are enormous cemeteries of locomotives and rolling stock and workshops which are only in a position to maintain some vehicles by cannibalising others for the necessary parts. Yet everywhere one encounters very friendly railwaymen who are very willing to give information about the railway and its plans for the future.

When hearing about the numerous construction and reconstruction projects one must however listen very carefully and especially note the word "Inshallah" – with this non-committal attitude of "If God so wishes" the Iraqi State Railways has survived so far despite the most difficult circumstances.

Let us therefore take a look at what began originally with the 'Bagdadbahn' and the German engineers in the Ottoman Empire. Back then in the days of the Kaiser the vision was still of a through railway link between the North Sea and the Persian Gulf.

### Basra: Where Four Countries Meet.

There where the waters of the Euphrates and Tigris flow together into the Shatt el-Arab and join the Persian Gulf, the countries of Iraq, Iran, Kuwait and Saudi-Arabia come very close together. The metropolis of Basra with its population of two million is therefore a trading centre of great importance. South of the city the new deep-sea harbour of Port Faw is under construction, planned also as a transshipment point for goods for Europe. The thought of providing overland competition to the Suez Canal was already a major factor at the time of the construction

of the Bagdadbahn. Is this a realistic perspective, in view of the current state of the Near East? The head of IRR in Basra should surely know.

We stand before the entry to the station which is, at the same time, the headquarters of the Southern railway administration. The locals go in and out without any problem. We want to do the same, but are immediately stopped by soldiers standing in the shade of the entry arch. All strangers are automatically suspicious here, there could be explosives tucked into the camera bag. However our wishes are soon explained with the help of a Permit in Arabic and we can look around the entire Around Baghdad

Many Iraqis and Iranians visit Kerbala once a year. For the Shiites the Imam Husain Mosque is a holy place on a par with Mecca and Medina for all Moslems. Up to 20 million pilgrims come each year. In consequence it was sensible to rebuild the old metre-gauge line to standard gauge. When there is no specific festival for the Shiites taking place, there is normally just one train per day. As some consolation for the rather sparse service there is a memorial loco plinthed in front of the station. Despite the lack of any identification plates it is probably the last IRR steam loco, No. 1429, a wartime 8F 2-8-0 loco built in Great Britain in 1942. (Without its tender). (See Cover).

We come to Baghdad. Road traffic has been in a state of collapse for years already and now after endless announcements the construction of a Metro was announced in 2024 and tenders were issued. Currently planned is a network of 150km with seven lines and 64 stations. The Metro trains should run automatically without drivers. The frustrated car driver, caught in his continuous traffic jam, can only say "Inshallah!" to this.

The station at Baghdad is in contrast an oasis of calm. From here one may travel once a day to Basra, to Kerbala or to Fallujah. In front of the mighty station building with its cupola and two clock towers stands a well-cared for memorial, one of the first locomotives of the Bagdadbahn. All the locos carried the name 'Bagdad' and then a running number. This one was No. 5 (Borsig 8480/1912), originally an 0-6-0T which was later rebuilt with a 6-wheel tender.

All around the gigantic, barely-used railway area is enormous construction activity, so frantic that one fears the city planners could discover the area and use it for other purposes. It is for now still a small treasure trove. We find the old Saloon Car of the last Iraqi King Faisal II, still proudly carrying the number '1'; this carriage, built by the British, is in poor condition but should be retained for museum purposes.

In the Wagon Works a phosphate wagon is currently being provided with a new bogie and in the Loco Depot several machines are being worked on. New for us are the former USSR Class DES 3500 (TEM 18i, built Brijansk 2004), the Chinese Class DEM 2700 (Dalian 2002) and, alas only standing stored, the Japanese shunting engine DHS 112 (Nippon 1974). A Diesel loco, DEM 2717, is especially noticeable as it carries on its side the inscription "Allah is the Only God and Mohammed is his Prophet" and it is used for the pilgrim trains.

### The Ruins of the IS

Wherever we go, whether we leave Bagdad to the west or to the north, we see continuously the destructions wrought by the IS. The so-called 'Islamic State' has left behind a landscape of rubble and ruin which has, in terms of the railways, barely changed in the more than six years which have since passed. Whoever enters a station here will be fully irritated at what he sees. It really looks as though the fighting has just finished. We find a destroyed tank on the platform at Ramadi – it had knocked down the lamp posts like matchsticks. However a shell must have then destroyed it and so it stands there still. There is no rail traffic. A little later in Tikrit things look similar. Only to Fallujah does a train come once a day from Baghdad. The station here has however no station building any more. In the station of Samarra it also looks still like wartime. In this city, holy to the Shiites, there was severe fighting with the IS. Already in 2006 the Al-Qaida terrorists had blown up the Golden Mosque. Today a pilgrim train runs occasionally from Baghdad to Samarra, but there is no other passenger service.

## Kirkuk and Mosul

In Baiji the line to Kirkuk diverges from the old Bagdadbahn. This was built with the help of the Deutsche Bundesbahn subsidiary 'DE-Consult' and entered service in 1987. In the Third Gulf War, when it came to the deposing of Saddam Hussein, aeroplanes of the US Air Force destroyed it in 2003. This strategically-important railway linked the oil fields of Kirkuk with the refinery in Baiji. The great valley bridge over the Tigris was badly damaged.

When the IS later besieged Kirkuk the Kurdish Peshmerga were able successfully to defend the city which lies close to Kurdistan. The beautiful new station at Kirkuk remained untouched. Nevertheless the link has not yet been restored after over 20 years. Should one however expect to find a ghost city here, one would be very wrong; over 90 railwaymen come here daily to perform their tasks and nothing pleases them more than that an occasional visitor comes.

The city of Mosul with its million-strong population did in contrast fall to the IS and was captured by them. The station, the depot and the locomotives were all destroyed. Not one stone remained on another of the station building. However the two-storey structure has since been rebuilt as a sign of defiance and was taken into use by the railwaymen in February 2024 – even though here also there is, for the foreseeable future, no actual railway traffic.

### The 'Railway Cemetery' at Baiji.

The railway junction at Baiji has been especially severely affected. In this industrial city was the largest oil refinery in the country. The IS turned this all into rubble. Whereas the refinery is now, in February 2024 at last recommencing production, there are no signs of reconstruction visible on the railway. In Baiji the Bagdadbahn crosses the line built in 1987 from Kirkuk to Haditha. All the railway infrastructure and workshops were therefore rebuilt and renewed in Baiji. One can easily see that the DE-Consult was involved here due to the buffer stops made by the Osnabrück firm of Rawie or the gantry cranes by Demag.

However the modern layout has been totally destroyed. Everywhere there lie wagons and locomotives, scattered across the area. It seems as though there were no great bombing raid here, and explosives were also not used; instead the IS seems to have simply overturned each vehicle with heavy machinery. This includes over 100 wagons, mainly tank wagons, and 35 locomotives. The state of the locomotives indicates that since the IS was defeated they have been cannibalised as a source of spare parts.

### Conclusion: An Unusual Journey.

There are few railways which have been so badly affected by War. Over the years one can read from the deliveries of rail vehicles to Iraq what the state of the world was at the time. When nowadays security in Iraq is discussed, then people speak very quickly about the USA, Iran and Israel, and their Near-East policies have indeed had effects. In the background Russia and China are also playing a role; The neighbours Syria and Turkey are in contrast pursuing their own specific interests. Even the situation in the Red Sea or the Suez Canal has an effect upon the railways in Iraq. But why should there not be a container shuttle from Basra to Hamburg? The historical Bagdadbahn was at the time a spectacular but also an interesting idea. Iraq would gladly revive it, analogous to the new Silk Road being created by China. And so – Why not?"

Notes:

#### 1. "IRR Iraq Republic Railways:

Route length: ca. 2,270km (dependent upon repair and new construction). Standard gauge. The metre-gauge lines have been completely closed since 1988. Diesel locomotives: ca. 500, of which ca. 30 operational. Diesel railcars: 12, of which 8 operational. In 1991 there were 654 passenger carriages and 12,827 goods wagons. Only a small

fraction of these are currently operational. Couplings are the Soviet type SA3 (but often also the screw coupling and buffers to enable through working into Syria and Turkey.)"

#### 2. "Wars in Iraq.

- The First Gulf War between Iraq and its neighbour Iran lasted from 1980 to 1988. It concerned dominance of the Persian Gulf and border conflicts. The war ended with an enormous loss of lives and economic infrastructure on both sides and a Cease-Fire.

- The Second Gulf War began in August 1990 with Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. Here also at issue were territorial claims as well as conflict regarding oil production. As well as much destruction, burning oil fields were the result. By March 1991 the Iraqis had been defeated by a coalition of troops from 22 countries, led by the USA.

- After the attack on the World Trade Centre on 11 September 2001 the Third Gulf War (20 March 2003 to 1 May 2003) was more generally a fight against Terror or also the 'Axis of Evil'. The American President George W. Bush wanted to depose the Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, who had refused to reveal details of assumed major strategic long-distance weapons. American forces then occupied Iraq with their troops until 2011 and are still present in the country with some 2,500 men.

- The Fourth War began with the conquest of the western and northern Provinces of Iraq by the so-called 'Islamic State' (IS). The terrorist organisation was already infamous and feared for its brutalities in Syria. In Iraq too it has murdered and destroyed many cultural sites and much infrastructure. The Iraqi government declared this war over in 2017 with the defeat of IS."

#### Photos.

The article is well illustrated, including:

- Three Chinese-built multiple unit trains (CSR Sifang 2014) Nos. 120, 210 and 200 standing at Basra.

- DES 3177 (CKD 12337/1982) of the CSD class T669.1 overturned at Baiji

- Derelict DEM 2512 (Henschel 32640/1983) stands before the newly-rebuilt station building in Mosul.

- In the Baghdad loco depot stand DEM 2717 (Dalian 2002) and is used for pilgrim trains to Kerbala. DEM 2826 is one of the last locos to be built in Lugansk in the Ukraine.

- Turkish-built shunting loco working at Baghdad Central Workshops.

- Shuaiba Refinery between Basra and Umm Qasr: Diesel-hydraulic Bo-Bo DH-FPL-174 has come light engine to be photographed.

- DH-FPL-172 stands in Umm Qasr, the southernmost station in Iraq. Built 2008 by Tülomsas in Turkey.

4. Travel Information: "The Foreign Office has issued a partial travel warning for the country. The centre around the Euphrates and Tigris down to the Shatt al-Arab could be travelled easily by the author in February. Since all official buildings are guarded by the military it is recommended to apply for an appropriate permit for stations and depots; one will then receive a friendly welcome. Also recommended is a car with a knowledgeable driver and a Guide as translator. A German travel agency (Oriental Tours) and its Baghdad office can make all arrangements. It is possible to acquire a visum on arrival. Whoever wishes to visit Kurdistan or Erbil requires an additional visum."



• Derelict Station Iraq and left and below derelict locos



• Plinthed 0-6-0



• Baghdad Station



### (iii). Locomotives and Railcars in Iraq.

A detailed List of motive power in Iraq as at 16 March 2024. By Johannes Gloeckner.

Class DHS 101-127. B-B DH. Built Japan 1968-1981.

DHS 101 - 103 built Nippon Sharyo 2559-2561/1968.

DHS 111 - 113 built Nippon Sharyo 3095-3097/1974.

DHS 121 - 127 built Nippon Sharyo 3334-3340/1981.

Class DHL 131-144, 151-162. B'B' DH.

DHL 131 - 144 built Tülomsas 2002, Type DH 10000.

DHL 151 - 162 built Tülomsas 2004, Type DH 12000.

Class DH-FPL 171-175. B'B' DH. Fitted with Voith Turbo gearbox and fire-protected for use in Refineries. ('FP' = 'Fire protected')

DH-FPL 171 - 175, built Tülomsas 2008, Type DH7000B.

Class DEM 2001-2020. Co-Co DE. Built Czechoslovakia 1963-64 Type T678.0

DEM 2001- 2010 built CKD 5657-5666/1963.

DEM 2011- 2020 built CKD 5802-5811/1964.

Class DEM 2101-2105. Co'Co' DE. Built USA 1965.

DEM 2101 - 2105, built Alco 3416-01 - 3416-05, 1965, Type DL500D

Class DEM 2201-2220. Bo'Bo' DE. Built France 1970-71.

DEM 2201 - 2213 built Brissonneau et Lotz/MTE 1970, Type BB6700.

DEM 2214 - 2220 built Brissonneau et Lotz/MTE 1971

Class DEM 2301 - 2361. Co'Co' DE. Built Canada 1975-1977.

DEM 2301 - 2330 built MLW 6083.01-30, 1975-77

DEM 2331 - 2361 built MLW 6093.01-31, 1975-77.

Class DEM 2401-2455 Co'Co' DE. Built Spain 1980-81.

DEM 2401 - 2404 built Macosa 1631-1634/1980 Type J26CW/AC EMD 16-645E

DEM 2405 - 2455 built Macosa 1635 -1685/1981.

Class DEM 2501 - 2582. Co'Co' DE, Built Germany 1983.

DEM 2501 - 2582 built Henschel 32711-32720; 32639-32710. All built 1983. Type JT22CW 12-645E3B. (Passenger locos for 120km/h.; Nos. DEM 2559, 2560, 2561 were used on Saddam Hussein's special train.)

Class DEM 2701 - 2750. Co'Co' DE. Built China 2002. Type DF10FI

DEM 2701- 2750, built Dalian 2002.

Class DEM 2801 - 2830. Co'Co' DE. Built Ukraine 2004. Type TE114i. This is a further development of the TE114, which was also delivered to Syria with only one cab, as LDE2800. Some locos were probably built 2003 and were available at Lugansk for the 'Oil for Food' UN Programme.

DEM 2801 - 2830, built Lugansk 2004.

Class DES 3000- 3008 Bo'Bo' DE. Built Czechoslovakia 1961-1963. Type T435.0

DES 3001- 308, built CKD 1961 - 1963.

Class DES 3009 - 3036. Bo'Bo' DE Built Czechoslovakia 1969-1973. Type T458.1

DES 3009 - 3022 built CKD 1969

DES 3023 - 3036 built CKD 1973

Class DES 3101 - 3202 Co'Co' DE. Built Czechoslovakia 1979-1982. Type T669.1

DES 3101 - 3200 built CKD 1979-1982

Class DES 3301 - 3306 Co'Co' DE. Built Russia 2004. Type TEM 18i

Delivered as part of UN Oil for Food Programme.

DES 3301 - 3306, built Brjansk 2004.



• Chinese built DMUs

Class DEM 4001 – 4011. Co'Co' DE. Built France 1982. Type CSE26-21. (built for passenger traffic, to 105km/h)

DEM 4001 – 4011 built Francorail-MTE 1982

Class DEM 4191 – 4161. Co'Co' DE. Built France 1982. Type CSE26-21- (Geared for freight traffic, to 100km/h)

DEM 4101 - 4161 built Francorail-MTE 1982.

#### Diesel Railcars.

12 trains each of 10 carriages with 2 power cars. 160Km/h. 2343 seats. Built Sifang, China 2014. Nos. 101, 110, 120, 130, 140, 150, 160, 170, 180, 190, 200, 210.

#### Permanent Way Vehicles.

Ro-Rail ZAGRO vehicles RV5 & RV7.

#### Industrial Locos

No. 501 CKD 5398/1961 BN150 B DH. Type T211.0

No. 502 CKD 5399/1961 BN150 B DH. Type T211.0

TGK2-4644 Kaluga 1976. Now plinthed at Nasiriyah station.

Two locos by Jenbacher Werke DH200B26 for shunting for the US Army in the harbour of Umm Qasr.

#### 7 Uniloks for the Grain industry.

(According to a further source, also in the country are/were Romanian L45H-001 B'B' DH, built 23rd August 22194/1975 and L45H-002 built 23 August 22195/1975, at Samowah Cement Co.

Also Type LDH 125 B'B' DH Nrs. 125-001-003, 23rd August, 24485, 24488, 24495, all 1984. Al Quaim Cement Co.)

### (iv). BAGHDAD METRO

From "R.G.I." 16.07.2024: Baghdad awards first Metro contract. Joint venture of Malaysian and UAE-based contractors wins \$US 315.9M bid to provide project management and construction supervision services.

The mayoralty of Baghdad has awarded a joint venture company a Dinars 1.5Bn (\$US 315.9M) consultancy contract for the city's planned \$US 17.5Bn seven-line metro network. Malaysian firm HSS Engineers Berhad (HEB) and UAE-based HSS, in a 50:50 alliance, will provide project management and construction supervision services, accounting for 0.6% and 1.2% of total construction costs, respectively.

The JV will receive an advance payment of Dinars 74.5M to kick-start the project. Tenders were invited in February for the design, finance, construction, operation and maintenance of a 148km driverless metro network with 64 stations, featuring underground, surface, and elevated sections. Construction was scheduled to begin later this month, with completion due in 2029, although with major contracts still to be awarded that timescale might no longer be achievable.

"This project will bring modern connectivity to Baghdad, spurring urban growth and economic prosperity," HEB acting group CEO Mr Tan Sri Ir Kunasingam Sittampalam said during a contract signing ceremony in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia."

### J. PALESTINE

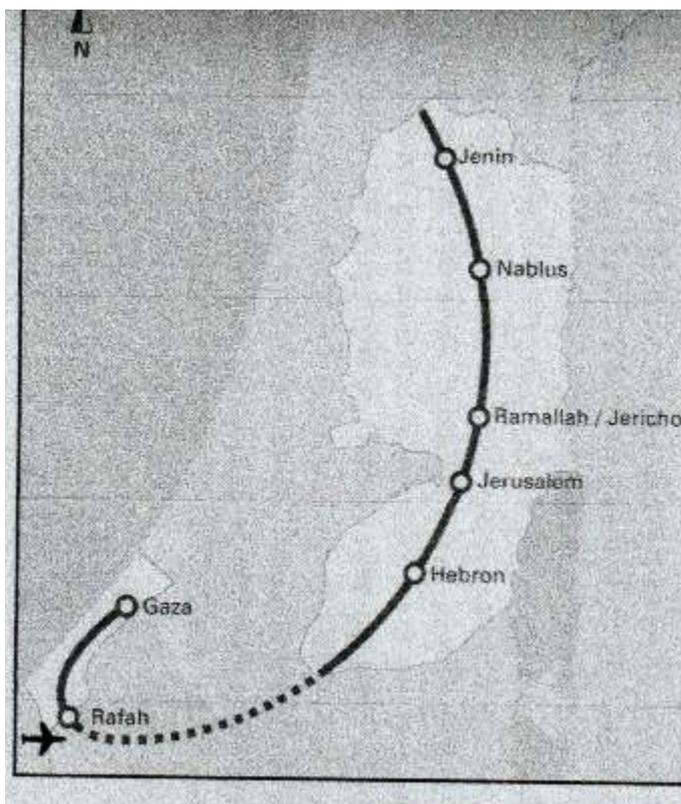
Once again we include this not-uncontroversial heading, thanks to correspondence from Frank Adam who wrote about an historic proposal that, frankly, seems unlikely to gain much traction right now in 2024. even though there has been a massive urban clearance programme carried out in recent months:

"I found a cheap second-hand copy of "The Case for Peace" by Alan Dershowitz. (pub. John Wiley, 2005) on Amazon with on pp. 42f. the maps of the projected hills railway for the PA. The idea behind the layout is that it is on the desert margin, using latest viaducts and tunnels etc so:

- a) will not take agricultural land on the better watered Western slopes of the territories;
- b) will be a bit out of town to avoid landlords gouging and probably in mawat land ("feudal" waste) anyway;
- c) the land between the railway and existing towns will be public for: colleges, hospitals, industrial estates...

The problem is not the engineering. It never is; but the awkwardness of the humans and the narrowness of the veins of political will.

Caveat: The then- (1990's) young PA built Yasser Arafat International Airport just SOUTH of RAFAH. A local plateau (?) Magruntein Hills and WW I minor battle site, it needs careful survey as regards rail but it would make sense to have an intermodal interchange: rail/air/road/local buses. However it still seems politically less itchy to take the shorter southern sweep from Daharigeh in the tip of the Judean salient, directly WEST for GAZA with container and freight optional spur to Ashdod pending expanding Gaza Port and then turn South to Rafah with eventual option to revive the WW I British Sinai line to Kantara." The vision at that time was for a line that would link the two Palestinian areas in a maximum of 90 minutes.



### K. JORDAN

(i). "THE STATION IN THE DESERT – MEMORIES OF THE AQABA AND HEDJAZ RAILWAY." This is an illustrated article by Dr. Jochen Christoph in 'Lok Report' 9/24 pp.52-55 and is rather melancholic in tone. (Translation: The Editor).

"Any railway enthusiast which surely initially think, when he hears of railways in Jordan, of the Hedjaz Railway, which was planned under Ottoman dominion and built from 1900 and finally opened in 1908 under the supervision of the German engineer Heinrich Meissner. With this line Constantinople was linked via Damascus with Medina in what later

became Saudi Arabia. In this way the southernmost cities of the Empire were linked, even though Mecca was not reached by the railway. Nevertheless the travel time for soldiers and pilgrims was substantially reduced and the pilgrims could be more easily controlled and the Arabian provinces should be easier to protect.

Following the Arab Revolt against the Ottoman Empire during the First World War Transjordan existed as a British Protectorate from 1921 to 1946. In 1946 Jordan was recognised as an independent state and was ruled further by the Hashemite royal family.

The entire Hedjaz line was once 1,322km. Within Jordan together with the branch that ran off to Aqaba there were 618km, all 1050mm gauge. Various steam locos were in use, and the Jordanian administration of the Hejaz Railway acquired some diesel locos from the USA in 1976 (Type GE U10B). In 1977 the Syrian administration acquired some Diesel locos from Romania.

The last weekly international train (for freight) between Amman and Damascus was apparently suspended in 2006. Since the beginning of the war in Syria in 2011 there has been no foreign link for the Jordanian railway any more. In the meantime it is now also a long time since there were any regular internal trains either. In the station at Amman there is a railway museum where, amongst other things, some steam locos and Diesel locos of the 'Hedjaz Jordan Railway' stand. The legal status of the Hedjaz Railway is of an indissoluble religious foundation ('the Railway of the Prophet') and this will politically hinder any full closure proposals until further notice.

A branch off the Hedjaz line was the Aqaba Railway opened in Autumn 1975, although it had been planned from the beginning. Financed mainly with German money, it served to transport minerals (phosphates) from where they lay in the interior to the harbour at Aqaba, the country's only port. Jordan is the fifth-largest producer of phosphates (for fertiliser) worldwide. The mines that formerly were linked to the railway lie some 150km south of Amman (which is at km. 222). At km. 326 is the Qatrana triangle, the phosphate mine at Abiad is near HR km. 348 and Wadi el Hassa in Faraifa at km. 367. The last phosphate mine with a rail connection was Eshidiya, the railway loading apparatus was at km. 514. The branch to Aqaba diverged at km. 522. This line from Hitiye to Aqaba was 116.8km. Long. From the beginning American Diesel locos were used here. There were GE locos of types U17, U18, U20 and C24 built between 1874 and 2007. The Aqaba Railway Corporation (ARC) operated the line, this had taken the route over from the Hedjaz Jordan Railway (HJR) in 1979. Three to six train pairs worked over the line daily, double-headed with up to 32 wagons. Unfortunately this line was closed in Spring 2018, meaning the end for the last regular train services in Jordan.

During a tourist visit to the country in October 2023 we made a pause at Wadi Rum station, the former crossing station on the Aqaba line at km. 58.1. Here there are still some vehicles standing which are apparently still used from time to time for tourist trains ('Al-Hijaz Train'). Steam loco No. 85, a Pacific is of Japanese construction; she has been in Jordan since 1959 and for some years has not been operational but can still roll. Several of these engines were built in Japan for Thailand but were no longer needed there and then some years later could be sold to Jordan. In Amman there used to be identical No. 82 for the special Tourist trains. The last steaming of No. 85 as far as I know was in March 2028.

The American Diesel loco (no number visible) is operational and serves to move the steam loco and the carriages. In order to make the loco optically a better match to the steam engine the Diesel loco, actually in yellow and orange, has been repainted black with a light green near the cab. The paint layers have begun to peel off and the loco does not look very attractive. On Jordanian internet sites reference is made to the Tourist Train – If there are enough bookings the 'Hijaz Train' should work twice per week over a relatively short stretch of line of some 15km – on Sundays and Wednesdays at 15.00. This for a price of 20 Jordanian Dinars per person, which works out at some 28 Euros. Correctly it is stated that the train will now be worked by a Diesel rather than with steam. In memory of the events of the First World War, I cite, "The passengers can experience an appropriate performance of the Arab

Revolt against the Ottoman Empire from the year 1916." In other words a Beduin raid on the train is acted out for the tourists. At that time the British fought on the Arab side and attempted to interrupt the Hedjaz line was served as a supply route for the Ottomans and their allies. Lawrence of Arabia can be mentioned here, who was able to arrange several such interruptions through attacks and explosions of various forms. He organised his legendary (and later also filmed) exploits from the wilderness around Wadi Rum, part of an extensive rocky desert in current Jordan, to the south there runs the border to Saudi Arabia.

The reason given for the closure of the Aqaba railway has been given as the sale of the harbour area to an investor. With the relocation of the harbour extensive modernisation measures were also planned. The area of the old port was to be used for the expansion of the city centre. The railway facilities had to be moved away to enable this. The new harbour facilities situated some way to the south do not have any rail connection.

In 2019 there were apparently plans to investigate whether the new harbour should be provided with a railway connection, but it would appear that these plans have run literally into the desert sands. In the end the road transport lobby has triumphed also in Jordan. In consequence this railway line through the desert which never had any passenger services, was only in operation for some forty years.

In the depot at Aqaba there are reported to be some US diesel locos, not particularly old, rusting away and awaiting their fates. I could however not check this for myself, but was able to see that some of the railway tracks to the old port have indeed been covered over and have been covered with new roads, or that new buildings have been constructed on the old railway alignment. For the rest the old line is being gradually covered with sand and rubbish.

For some years there has been consideration given to link Jordan with a standard-gauge railway with its neighbouring countries. In connection with this a new line from Amman to the port of Aqaba is mentioned. It is not improbable that, should these plans ever come to fruition, some sections of the old Aqaba line could be re-used as alignment for a new standard-gauge route and so be revived."

(Photo captions refer to freights (photos by Oliver Heckman), a steam special in May 2004 with loco 82 in which the caption notes that since then the population of Amman has doubled to an estimated 4.5M, thus changing the landscape irreparably, sections of dismantled or semi-buried track in Aqaba and the tourist locos and stock at Wadi Rum on the fateful 7.10.2023 - as he writes, at the time these were taken the group had no knowledge of the attack on Israel that day...)

## (ii). LOOKING FOR GUIDANCE

A quite remarkable item by Owen Hayward in 'Heritage Railway' 322 (2-30 August 2024) p.41 that provides some hope after all: "...At the end of June the Llangollen Railway welcomed a delegation from the Hejaz Railway in Jordan, who were keen to better understand the UK's approach to heritage railways..... The Hejaz Railway is now seeking to revive its use for both tourism and general commuter purposes, with the aim of the UK visit being to examine how such heritage lines function here. The tour involved visiting numerous locations to investigate the railway museum experiences provided in the UK and to see some examples of modern railways -

high speed, underground, light railways (London Tramlink and Docklands Light Railway) and suburban - as it seeks to establish potential links with UK organisations and individuals that may be able to support heritage and main line railways in Jordan, while also examining and discussing the potential refurbishment and upgrade of the HR, and the issue of standard versus narrow gauge.

LR Trust manager Tom Taylor said: "The Jordanian visitors experienced our 'Evening Ramble', an evening driver experience service aimed at the rail enthusiast. With great delight they took it in turns to drive WR 2-8-0 No. 3802 and the following day managed a return trip to the new station at Corwen. They were amazed to learn that everything on our railway line, less some key building infrastructure, has been

rebuilt – and predominantly by volunteers! They were hugely impressed by our new station at Corwen and a tour of the goods shed and MPD showed examples of the work we have achieved.

It should be said that the group are no strangers to this area as the Hejaz Railway currently has a fleet of eight operational steam locomotives, all oil-fired and in regular use. Their senior driver and engineer was exceptionally jealous of our machine shop facilities given that he manages all his own maintenance using machines that predate ours by several generations!

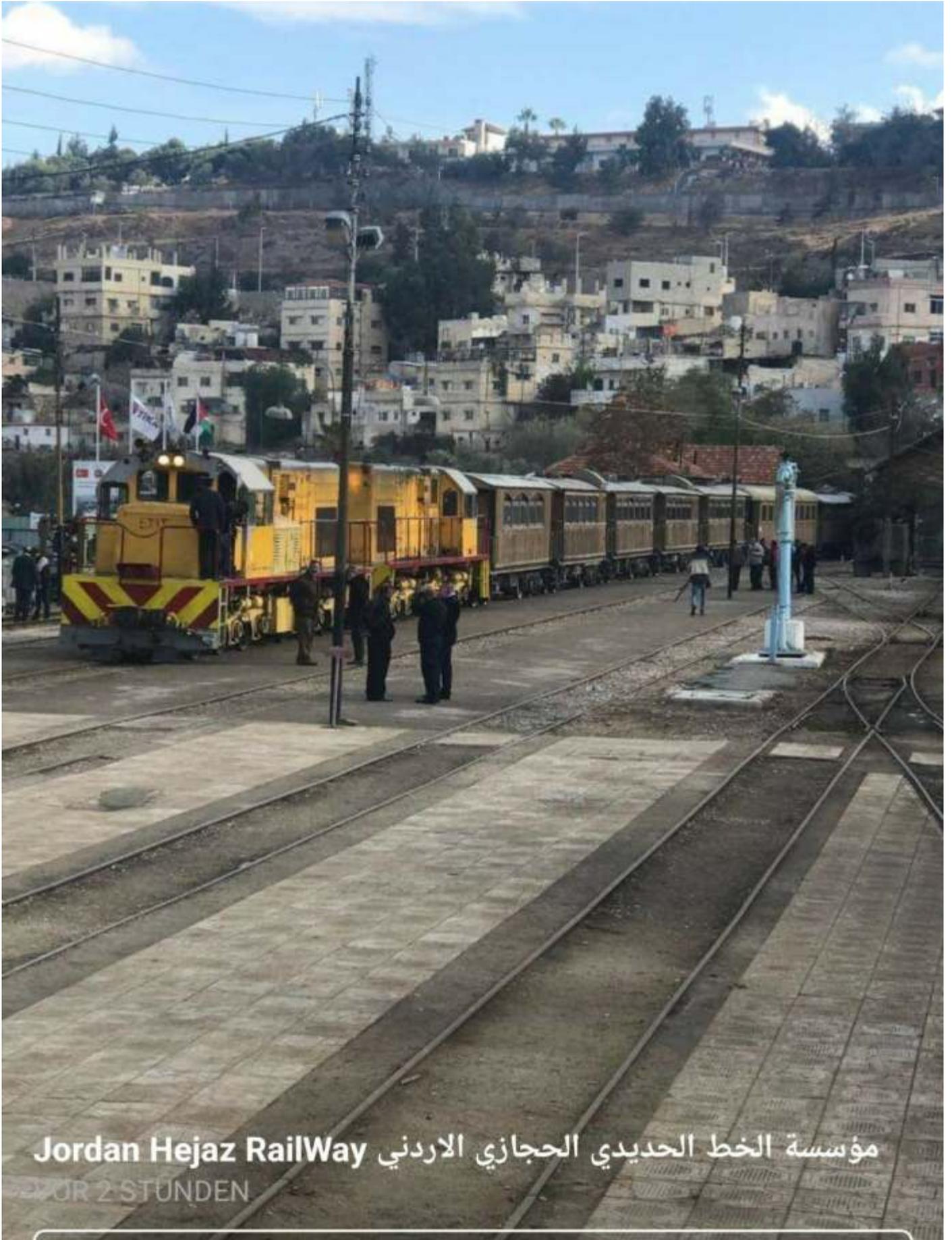
Throughout the visit, the two groups discussed LR's funding models and plans to maximise income from all available sources and further talked about how the tourism trade works for the Denbighshire line along with how the marketing team seeks to best exploit it.

At the end of the visit, the groups exchanged small gifts, and then the delegation left to visit the Great Central railway and Locomotive Maintenance Services at Loughborough and spent the following day at the National Railway Museum in York." The delegation was led by the HJR Director-General Zahi A Khalil.

[Editor comments: Clearly there must have been some preparation behind the scenes for this epochal 'networking' visit and work by embassies and trade departments and by various railway museum specialists; one assumes there is a great desire to export modern rolling stock and equipment from the UK to any rebuilt railway network in Jordan, irrespective of the idea of maintaining a small 'museum' narrow-gauge section for tourists. Some years ago a small group from the Talyllyn Railway went to advise the Sudan Railways on locomotive maintenance etc. Jordan has always retained close links with Britain, as its armed forces demonstrate. That it claims to have eight operational steam locos is news! Saudi Arabia has turned a few HR relics into tourist sites and is reviving a short section near Al Ula – and Syria had for some years tourist operations from Damascus to Serghaya... Maybe one will indeed be able to include positive reports in the future. It would be good...]



• Jordanian railcar).



- [JHR Train in Amman](#)

## (i). ZAMBIA

An article in 'Times of Israel' 18.07.2024 described the Livingstone 'Gateways Jewish Museum ' which is apparently situated within or adjacent to the Railway Museum here. It begins: "On the outskirts of this frontier town about seven miles from spectacular Victoria Falls, a wooden building marked "Gateway Jewish Museum" stands amid 100-year-old steam locomotives and vintage coaches showcasing the railway industry of the country. There's no doubt railways were key to the development of landlocked Zambia. But Jews? "A tiny population influential beyond its numbers," is how Oxford historian Hugh Macmillan described this community, which at its postwar peak numbered no more than 1,200..." (See also issue 138:08).

## (ii). "THE ROTHSCHILD SALOON

No, not a boozier but a special Saloon Carriage numbered 'L1' by the Südbahngesellschaft ('L1' may mean 'Luxus No. 1'). I am indebted to Dr. Reinhard Dietrich for putting me on the trail of this intriguing vehicle. The following is taken and translated by the Editor from the German Wikipedia page on "Salonwagen L1" where several illustrations may also be found.

"The vehicle was built by the Nesselsdorfer Waggonfabrik in Moravia in 1902 and completed and delivered on 6 October 1905 as number "L1" for the Südbahn Gesellschaft, which had itself been financed by the Rothschild family. The ivory-coloured livery was very unusual for European conditions and the modest but at the same time luxurious furnishings and decorations were reported upon in the contemporary press. Its first journey in service took it to Genoa.



Nathaniel Rothschild died in 1905 and the carriage became a part of his estate. The heirs – his three nephews Alfons Mayer, Louis Nathaniel and Eugène von Rothschild – had some alterations made to the carriage so that it was formally accepted into the rolling stock lists again in 1906. It was used for journeys to Trieste and to the French Riviera. In 1907 it was classified as a 'Private Carriage' on the k.k. Staatsbahnen (the "Imperial and Royal State Railways") and was renumbered as 'Salon 5'; from 1913 it had the number 'Sa 505' in the new numbering scheme.

Following the First World War Czechoslovakia demanded the vehicle for use in the Government train and received it then in 1923, which is interesting inasmuch as this was actually a private carriage and not a State-owned one that could be legitimately confiscated. It was allocated to the Foreign Minister, at this period Edvard Benes, and was twice rebuilt in 1923/4 and 1925-7.

It remained in use as a part of the Government Train of the Czechoslovak Republic and the Czechoslovakian Socialist Republic (CSSR) until the end of the 1960s and then was demoted to Departmental use at the depot Praha-Sred. Railway enthusiasts recognised the historic significance of the carriage and in 1982 it was transferred to the National Technical Museum. It is currently stored at the NTM depot of Chomutov and received its last routine overhaul on 23 Feb. 2005.

Technically the vehicle matches the KkStB norms for four-axle express carriages for the period in which it was constructed; length over

buffers is 19.90mm and the distance between bogie pivots is 13.500mm, each bogie having the axles 2.500mm apart. The frame is of steel, the body of wood covered with steel plates. From the inscriptions visible on works photos one can see it was fitted from the beginning with a Westinghouse air brake, a PLM-Henry air brake, an automatic switchable Vacuum brake of the Hardy type and also a hand brake and could therefore be used on all standard-gauge railways within Europe. There was also electric lighting with 35 light bulbs on the Dick system; current was acquired via a dynamo driven from one of the axles and the system was set for 25 ampères and 45 Volts. If necessary, there was also provision for candles to be used in each of the rooms. The carriage had warm water heating, the boiler of which was controlled from the kitchen. In order not to cause any problems when being marshalled in trains the carriage was fitted with through steam heating pipes. At the ends the standard concertina corridor connections were fitted so that passengers and especially train personnel could move between the Saloon and the rest of the train.

The exterior and the interior furnishings were originally carried out according to the precise wishes of Nathaniel Rothschild. He chose light colours and simple forms, this at a period when lavishly-decorated and elaborate quasi-historical styles dominated. A reporter even took the trouble to defend the Nesselsdorfer Waggonfabrik from any possible criticisms by stating that "everything has been carried out according to the specific wish of the client; this has to be emphasised, for it is possible

that there will be many who will not agree with the taste with which the carriage has been furnished and equipped..."

At each end there was an enclosed Entrance Vestibule and the carriage was then divided into:

- Two Sleeping Compartments with a side corridor with a joint toilet situated between them and – when set up for nighttime use – each with two beds fixed over each other.

- A Saloon, which spread over the entire width of the carriage.

- A Large Sleeping Compartment, also with side corridor, for Nathaniel Rothschild This had also a direct access to the Saloon as well as to the side corridor. Here there was a brass bedstead. In the middle of the compartment and set into the floor was a seating bathtub. There was also a washing table of marble and next to this a WC disguised as a chair. The stove necessary for warming the bathwater was set in the kitchen.

- A smaller Compartment for Staff, accessed from the corridor with two benches facing each other, which could be adapted to make four couchette beds.

- A Staff Toilet, accessible from the side corridor.

- A Kitchen, laid out for kosher cooking. It included the entrance at the carriage end and had furnishings from pitch pine and spruce wood, supply cupboards and also an economical cooking plate.

At the wish of the client the normal carpeting was also dispensed with and linoleum laid on a soft underlay. The walls were covered with light cloth with an elaborate flower pattern, the seats and benches upholstered in shades of blue and also with floral patterns. Wood fittings, doors and windows were painted white or carried out in mahogany. In contrast to the normal brass handles used at the time all handles and grips were in a shiny metal. The exterior of the carriage was painted in

ivory cream when delivered and had red decorations and inscriptions, very unusual for the time.

Following the refurbishment and rebuilding to suit the wishes of the heirs the interior now had darker tones and the exterior was now painted a more modest (and easier to maintain) blue. Exterior inscriptions were in German and French. The luxurious fittings meant a weight of 42.5 tons, unusual for the period.

Once the carriage was taken over by Czechoslovakia there were two further rebuildings, the number of beds raised from six to nine and from plans from this period the bathtub in the main compartment had been removed and replaced with a separate Bath and WC. The bed was now lying in the direction of travel and was larger. The two small clerestory roof sections over the Saloon and Kitchen also disappeared at this time."

A further contemporary report in English and with Imperial measurements appeared in 'The Locomotive Magazine' 15 September 1905 p.162: "A Sumptuous Private Saloon Car. We have been favoured by Mr. James Halcrow, London representative of the Nesselsdorfer Waggonbau Fabriks Gesellschaft, whose works at Nesselsdorf, Moravia cover an area of some 60 acres and employ nearly 2,500 workmen, with the accompanying views of a fine private saloon car built for the use of Baron Nathaniel von Rothschild. It has a length over the buffers of 63ft, the wheelbase of each bogie being 8ft 2 in. and the distance between bogie centres 44ft 5 in. The weight of the car is about 41 tons.... The turn-out of this private saloon is of the most palatial character..."

### (iii). A WAR DEPARTMENT DIESEL SHUNTER

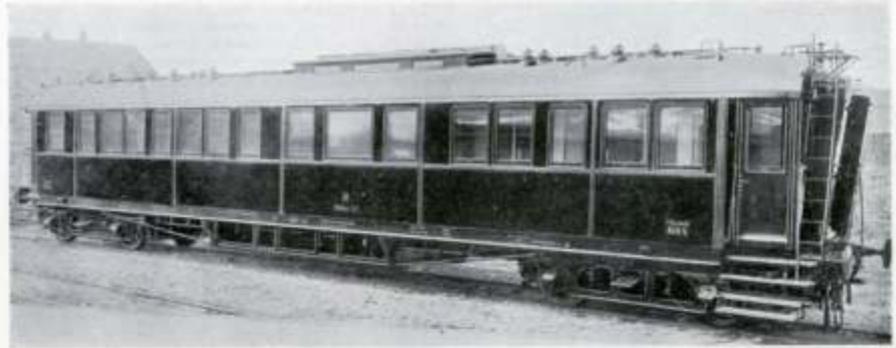
On the Derwent Valley Railway at Murton Park near York an interesting locomotive has recently been returned to working order after a gap of some twenty-plus years. From their website:

"The Drewry diesel-mechanical shunter was built in 1941 for the War Department in a contract with the Drewry Car Company. Drewry subcontracted the work to English Electric at Vulcan Foundry, Newton-le-Willows and it was given works number DC2164 [clearly the 'DC' refers to 'Drewry Car'. Ed.] and was allocated War Department No. 37.

The locomotive along with some of its sisters was shipped to Egypt for the duration of the Second World War before being returned to the United Kingdom in 1947 to Kings Norton MOD Depot near Derby. Interestingly, whilst on war service the locomotive barely turned a wheel. Three of the locomotives returned, Nos. 34, 37 and 38 but the fate of the others is unknown.

DC2164 was sold in 1948 to Shell Mex & BP Ltd. at Trafford Park, becoming their No. 12. She was renumbered No. 16 in 1950 and transferred to the BP depot at Jarrow. In 1964 she was returned to the Drewry Car Factory at Baguley for a complete overhaul and then sent to the BP depot at Saltend near Kingston-upon-Hull.

From 1984 to around 1995 the locomotive was used by the NYMR Permanent Way Department based at New Bridge near Pickering. Following mechanical failure it was laid aside and allowed to deteriorate, including water in ingress in one of the cylinders. ....She arrived in July



PRIVATE SALOON CAR BUILT FOR BARON NATHANIEL VON ROTHSCHILD.

#### A SUMPTUOUS PRIVATE SALOON CAR.

WE have been favoured by Mr. James Halcrow, London representative of the Nesselsdorfer Wagenbau Fabriks Gesellschaft, whose works at Nesselsdorf, Moravia, cover an area of some 60 acres and employ nearly 2,500 workmen, with the

accompanying views of a fine private saloon car built for the use of Baron Nathaniel von Rothschild. It has a length over the buffers of 63-ft., the wheelbase of each bogie being 8-ft. 2½-in., and the distance between bogie centres 44-ft. 5½-in.; the weight of the car is about 41½ tons. As can be seen, the turn-out of this private saloon is of the most palatial character.



INTERIOR OF KITCHEN COMPARTMENT.



INTERIOR OF SLEEPING COMPARTMENT.

2021 at Murton Park and following a thorough mechanical assessment.. she has had a considerable amount of work carried out to a very high standard. This has included returning the Gardner 6L3 diesel engine to working order, fabrication of a new cab, refurbishment of radiators and protective paintwork. On 5 June 224 after three years of hard work by volunteers at the Derwent Valley Light Railway the Drewry made its first run in over 23 years ... and hauled the 14 ton (4,275 gallons) tank wagon 5081 appropriately in War Department livery. Her sister loco went up the beach at Normandy 80 years ago." To this, Christian Wolmar in his book 'The Liberation Line' p.82 writes: "To provide the traction, on June 11 two small diesel locomotives, the first engines to reach France, were shipped across the Channel overnight. Their crossing was far from easy: the two ships carrying the locomotives were machine-gunned by an E-Boot, which was eventually chased away by the escorting ship. Upon arrival at the beach, the locomotives were hauled to the nearby rail line on a tank transporter fitted with tracks rather than wheels. The locomotives were then maneuvered onto the rails by a system of jacks and were immediately put to use...."

Incidentally WD 0-4-ODM WD 31 has been put on display, restored at the "Vlechtmuseum" at Noordwolde, Netherlands; Sister loco WD 33 later became Nederlandse Spoorwegen 162 and has been preserved by 'Stichting 162'.

## (iv). THE BRADFORD "TRACKLESS TRAMS"

Just to mention: The first trolleybuses in England were inaugurated simultaneously in Bradford and Leeds on June 20, 1911, though the Leeds system did not last long, the Bradford one continuing until 26 March 1972 when the Editor was present on the Last Day. Alderman Jacob Moser, the first Jewish Lord Mayor of the city and a supporter of Herzl, a philanthropist who paid for the establishment of the Gymnasium in Tel Aviv and the Bezalel Art School, inaugurated trolley car No. 240 at Laisterdyke. (Thanks to Nigel Grizzard for press cuttings).

## (v) MORE ON THE 'PEACE TRAIN'

We have referred earlier (see 142:08:(x)) to this rather strange and messianic (and frankly unrealistic) but well-meaning project. On 30.08.24 we received the following:

"Dearest Peace Ambassadors,

An extraordinary opportunity lies before us to come together and make a powerful statement for peace. The "El Achai" Peace Train, (that came to me through a real miracle!!! A lost Whats App message in space that ended in the Peace Train's founder's mobile phone! And we had never heard of one another before..) set to journey through 18 countries in the summer of 2025, embodies the vision of peace, unity, building relationships, coming together, building bridges, hope, and a better future. The journey, spanning from Sissach in Switzerland to Jerusalem is a massive statement for peace, and this trip has been in preparation for over 10 years now.

But in order to make this dream come true, the man behind this beautiful mission needs the support of a few of us right now, as a central part of the train, the dining car, is on the verge of being handed back to his owner—unless Maranius can reclaim it by the end of August. This dining car is actually unity, harmony, and the power of peace. Its value is 450,000 CHF, yet Maranius has the chance to obtain it for 100,000 CHF (instead of 450,000 CHF.)

This is how you can help:

Donate: Every contribution, no matter the amount, helps to get the train of hope and peace back on track. If you feel called to contribute, please contact Maranius directly at [uwe.fiedler@el-achai-friedenszug.com](mailto:uwe.fiedler@el-achai-friedenszug.com).

He can exactly tell you how your donation or loan is going to serve "El Achai" and you, at the same time. This is pure love in action!

Spread the Word: Tell your friends, family, and those who are passionate about investing in the future of our planet about this project. The more people who know, the greater the wave of peace and enthusiasm for this journey to Jerusalem in the summer of 2025 will be! Many great artists, singers and TV crews have already expressed their interest in accompanying the voyage.

Get Involved: Join the peace movement and bring in your actions or fundraising ideas.

Unfortunately, there are still forces that seek to prevent peace. In February, the wonderful locomotive of the Peace Train was greatly damaged by arson in a train depot in Switzerland - and no one of the two involved insurance companies wants to come up for the important costs! A sad reminder that the path to peace is often fraught with obstacles. But we know within ourselves that peace is going to have the final word, because in our hearts lives love, unity, and a world in harmony.

This train will not only connect countries, but also build bridges between people, touch hearts, and carry the powerful message of peace across the world. Together, we can make a difference. Let's seize this opportunity, let's stand united, and together, we send the "El Achai"

Peace Train on its so important journey - for peace, freedom, and the unity of all nations on this Earth! "We are the ones we've been waiting for."

See the website:

[https://el-achai-friedenszug.com/?utm\\_source=7sky.life&utm\\_campaign=f447c64072-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2020\\_02\\_11\\_02\\_15\\_COPY\\_01&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_de1c78720b-f447c64072-](https://el-achai-friedenszug.com/?utm_source=7sky.life&utm_campaign=f447c64072-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2020_02_11_02_15_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_de1c78720b-f447c64072-)

Frankly it is hard to see what on earth is intended here since - apart from all the other obvious political and physical and engineering problems - there is no line through Lebanon and no way a 2-10-0 could traverse the OLD Jerusalem line. But one supposes there will be people prepared to make donations.

## (vi) BACK COPIES OF 'HARAKEVET'

Frank Adam of Manchester has been in touch to say that in view of 'downsizing' he has a full set of Harakevet from issue 1 available to a good home. The Editor has already made attempts to interest archives and libraries but with limited success. The NRM has a set, the PEF likewise. If anyone is interested, or knows of a museum / archive that would be interested, please contact me and I will forward any message to him - I assume at least postage costs would be appropriate. But maybe other readers also have spare copies or need back copies - here in Berlin we have some still but supplies of some issues are now gone and in any case of course, thanks to Jeremy the content is available online. (The Editor.)

## (vii). THE SINAI RAILWAY –

Repeated from : 'Harakevet' Issue 38:11 of Oct. 1997. pp.15f. As it seems so sadly relevant.

From: "Railway Gazette" 20 June 1969 p.458:

"As a result of the Six-Day war in June 1967, IR was faced with the task of operating some 300km of lines taken over from Egypt. These comprised the Sinai line, from Gaza south-westwards along the coast to Kantara East, where a swing bridge provided a link with lines in the rest of Egypt, and the secondary line southwards along the east bank of the Suez Canal to Port Tewfiq. A gap of 19km initially separated the Israeli system at the Erez border and the railhead at Gaza. Although the lines had until 1956 been connected, after the hostilities in that year the Egyptians had not only removed the track but the earthworks as well. Between June 9 and 20, 1967, these were restored by Israeli civilian workers, volunteers and soldiers, an operation described in our issue of August 4 1967.

On the Sinai line, IR took over eight General Motors diesel locomotives, seven of which were in good order, some 570 freight wagons and a few coaches. The line was at first operated right through to Kantara East and Port Tewfiq for the Israel Defence Forces and for UNWRA consignments, mainly of foodstuffs. As in 1956, considerable quantities of captured war material were taken north by train. Beyond El Arish, 90km from Gaza, there has always been great difficulty in operating the line because of drifting sand, which sometimes covers the line to a depth of 4 feet. Egyptian Railways had kept the line open by maintaining a large labour force, but this was, in the main, no longer available. IR engineers studied the problem of chemical and mechanical stabilisation of the sand, but eventually it was decided to close the section beyond El Arish, and this has recently been partly dismantled.

Traffic on the remaining El Arish - Gaza line is now operated by the GM diesel locomotives taken over from Egypt, four of which are standard with those of IR. Of the 570 captured wagons, only about 200 were in good condition; all were without continuous brakes and many were useable only as scrap. Track improvement was also taken in hand to enable the average speed of freight trains to be raised from 24km/h to the 34km/h which is normal in Israel." - *See back cover.*

# ***THE "VANGÖLÜ EXPRESS" ISTANBUL - TEHERAN 1974***

146:09

This is the heading of a chapter in a book 'Eisenbahn-Safari - Auf Schienen durch fünf Kontinente' by Hans-Otto Meissner (Bertelsmann 1980). pp. 113-128 cover this journey. (Translation by the Editor). Meissner does not seem to have been related to the great railway engineer 'Meissner Pasha'; Born in Strasbourg as a son of a Reichsminister, he studied law, joined the Foreign Service and worked as an attaché at German embassies in London, Tokyo and Moscow; Wounded as a Panzer officer, for the rest of the war he was German Consul in Milan. From 1950 he had lived in Munich as a freelance author.

"Who knows even that it is possible to reach Teheran by train? Flying - that's obvious and also it is possible to cover the journey in one's own car. One or two people even know that there are quite comfortable buses that travel direct from the Bavarian to the Persian capital. But by rail?

There is no timetable to be found anywhere, not in the main stations and not even at the Iranian General Consulate. One gains the impression that the train which travels from Istanbul to Teheran is a Secret Train. Even people who have lived in Teheran for decades, even those who travel to and from the city several times a year, consider an Istanbul-Teheran Express to lie in the realms of fantasy. So I was left this time with only a flight to Teheran.

But, having arrived, the idea of this secretive rail link gave me no peace. There must surely be something in this rumour?

At INTO, the Iranian National Tourist Organisation, I was advised I had better visit the train at the Teheran station. If the Information office could not tell me anything then surely at least the train crew itself could. Accompanied by a translator I learned first that in the winter half-year the train departs for Istanbul only once per week, whereas in the summer half-year it runs twice per week. But only if there are enough passengers. I make enquiries about how the Lake Van is crossed, since on the map one sees that the railway line ends at the western end of the ca. 100km long inland sea yet continues at the other end, all of this still in Turkish territory. The question was whether the train is brought by ferry across the great sea or whether in the meantime a rail link had been constructed along the shore. On this matter there were several different opinions, even among the gentlemen at the Information Office at the main station. I could find out more exact information only from the two Sleeping Car attendants who would arrive direct from Istanbul the next day. They both told me that for a short while now a ferry has swum across the Lake Van bringing with it the two Sleeping Cars and the two First-Class seating carriages. One has to reckon almost always with delays and even lengthy delays; it has happened that the Vangölü Express has remained standing an entire day, and even delays of several days are conceivable. Due to misunderstandings, the supplies to the Restaurant Car are also often lacking. In addition the Turks tend to thievery. Whereas in contrast on the Iranian section of the line one is wholly safe. What causes greatest worry to the train guard on every journey is that the wild Kurds in Eastern Turkey, especially at Lake Van, who have plans for ambushes, would want to attack the train at night, to rob it, rape the women and murder the men. It is true that they had not done this as yet, but one day it could certainly happen.

This all made it seem an adventure that was very attractive to me.

Nevertheless for reasons of time it was not yet possible for me to use the rail route for my return journey. But for my fourth Iranian stay I wanted very much to allow myself the pleasure, whatever it cost, to try this out. Such a secretive, unknown train could surely exist nowhere else in the world.

When the opportunity eventually came, there were difficulties without end. Firstly, no travel agency in Europe or Asia can sell tickets or even make reservations for the 'Secret Train'. The sole source is, it seemed, Counter 5 at Haidarpascha Station on the other side of the Bosphorus. Here sits Miss Fazilet Soliman, a charming lady in her late twenties, with whom one had best speak personally. She speaks some basic French and is prepared to help where she can, albeit not wholly without reward. It was however unclear whether for travelling alone in a four-bed compartment it would be necessary to pay for four travel tickets as well as four bed reservations, or only one ticket with four bed reservations, or whatever other solution there might be.

There came one problem after another. Then our long-ordered Range Rover was finally delivered, with which we had planned to drive through Iran and later Turkey and Greece. But to achieve this the vehicle had first to be brought also to Teheran. Hardly had my wife taken the steering wheel in her hand than she declared emphatically that she would drive the 4,600km from München to Teheran herself. A reliable lady friend would accompany Marianne.

The post waiting for me at the German General Consulate at Istanbul included amongst other things two tickets and two bed reservations. There remained thus the problem how I could obtain the missing third and fourth tickets. Otherwise, wrote Marianne, there was the dreadful possibility I might be put together with a totally strange man, perhaps one who snored or smoked heavily. She had done all she could to protect me from this, but every purchaser of a ticket had to appear personally at Counter 5 and there show their passport. This would be stamped there and then checked at departure. Nevertheless she and her friend had dared to try to get the other two tickets for me with their names and with the stamp in their passports. It was now left to me to work out how I could now get the other two tickets with only one passport.

So I went to Haidarpascha station. It is a terminus for all the lines in Anatolia and was once planned to be the starting point for the Bagdadbahn which, seven decades ago, was to link the Kaiser's Germany with the Persian Gulf.

An older man in modest clothing crept up; amongst five foreign languages he also spoke fragments of German and had been performing his unofficial services here at the station already for twenty years. One could call him "a Helper in Railway Matters". It would be totally wrong to ignore such people or even to drive them away. They are as valuable as oil in the gearbox, it is their self-assumed task to lubricate the gear wheels of bureaucracy. A few banknotes in the local currency change hands. His discussion with Frau Soliman at Counter 5 begins straight away and soon has reached half a success.

"She will talk to her superior, and ask whether she can sell two tickets for one passport."

For the rest, I should return in the afternoon and bring a box of Pralines for Fazilet, a large box if possible. In addition my "Helper in Railway Matters" makes it clear that a bottle of whisky, preferably of the brand 'Black and White', would be helpful for the enterprise. This can incidentally be acquired just around the corner.

Not long thereafter the charming lady handed me the third and fourth tickets as well as the third and fourth bed reservations. The total cost for everything did not even amount to the cost for a bed in the First Class Sleeping Car from Munich to Hamburg and back.

On 11th March at 17.00 the "Vangölü" would begin its long journey to the East. I was already there at the station by 15.30. Truly, all sixteen carriages are already standing there in the platform. Whoever wishes to travel may board already the carriages of the (at that time still)

Imperial Iranian State Railways are situated in the middle, two with twelve sleeping compartments each and two with seats for six people in each compartment. All the other carriages belong to the Turkish State Railways. They run only as far as Ankara or to other stations within the country. None of the Turkish carriages is intended to cross over the Lake Van. The train is called 'Vangölü Express' because until recently its ultimate destination had indeed been the small town of Van on the shores of Lake Van.

Very few travellers have appeared until now, which is for me an advantage as I can now talk to the two Conductors of my carriage without being disturbed by other passengers. This happens in the well-known old manner. One should however note that the proud Iranians refuse even to touch the money offered to them, not even with their finger tips. No, it has to be slipped into their pockets, whilst they stare fixedly out to the platform.

When would the other three passengers come? Djamschid wished to know, looking at my hand which held four tickets. The friendly man has great difficulty in understanding that I am in fact alone and wish to remain so until my arrival in Teheran. My worry is only, I tell the man, that perhaps angry passengers, forced to stand in overcrowded corridors, might attempt to come and storm the free beds in my compartment.

Djamschid calms me down. He knows a few words of English. Nothing of such a manner is to be expected. Firstly, only tickets with reserved places are sold, and secondly the doors to the Sleeping Car are locked. Everywhere where the train halts he with his colleague will stand guard. The colleague however, he is called Ali, seems to sleep for 23 out of the 24 hours. He has already crept under a blanket and does not really reappear.

Even if our carriage with the best of wills could convey only 48 passengers, there stand, sit, lie and push at least 100 people into it. Whereby there is still a good half-hour to go to the time of departure. More and even more suitcases, bulging sacks and various heavy loads are dragged in, there is the crying of children, women complaining, men shouting, cassette music and the sound of glass bottles. The deep bass voices of old farmers, a higher sing-song from younger throats, so roughly how it must have been at the departure of an emigrant ship in the last century. Within all this noise and confusion my compartment seems to be an oasis of calm.

When the shrill whistle blows three times, around 20 minutes after our scheduled departure time, I learn that around four-fifths of the people in our carriage have only come to say goodbye. Now the noise swells to new heights, crying, laughing, cursing and loud howling from the small children. So each one pushes now towards the two exits. The rest have to jump out but then walk to the end of the platform next to the open windows.

So I have managed it! In the "Vangölü Express" I depart from the great city of Istanbul, on my way to the still-distant Teheran.

Whilst the last lights glide by outside, I find time to inspect what will be my dwelling for the coming days. There is not a great deal to report about it. Two upholstered bench seats opposite each other, at night the upper bed is formed from the back support of the lower one. The folding table at the window is three times larger than the compartment table that we have. The bin of pale blue plastic could surely take the week's rubbish of a four-strong family. The two brass lamps are only weak, on one of them the switch is broken. In the shabby carpet there are holes as wide as a hand.

At first it is rather cold in the compartment, but after an hour it has become much too warm. The window is screwed shut. However Djamschid comes with hot tea and gives me to understand that with his four-sided key he can control the temperature in the entire carriage, to whatever level I wish. The other passengers must however never learn of our private arrangement. Djamschid is really mainly responsible

for the technical side of things but the good fellow is not so fussy about this; since the lazy Ali just sleeps, the energetic Djamschid also takes on the tasks of preparing the beds and bringing frequent supplies of tea and the emptying of the rubbish bin.

Helpfully the conductor shows me the toilet for Foreigners and warns against the one which the negligent Ali has not cleaned. Shaking his head in despair as he murmurs Ali's name, Djamschid leads me to "his" WC. It radiates cleanliness and, fitted with a seat and a toilet seat it conforms to Western custom. The only thing missing is water for washing and flushing, as well as a roll of paper. This, together with soap, should be brought by the passenger, the conductor explains to me in gestures more than words. But he can provide me with some privately. For the rest the 'Western' WC is normally kept locked, due to the "dirty Turks" from the other carriages. Whoever wishes to use this fine toilet should turn trustingly to Djamschid.

When the bell now indicates that the Restaurant Car is in operation and I decide to go immediately to it, Djamschid carefully locks my compartment, warning once more about the Turks. Apparently these are simply waiting for anyone to leave their baggage unsupervised for a moment. A quick look, a swift grab and so the camera is gone and the brief case as well. At night I should always lock it from within and on no account open up when a "Miss" knocks. Anything could happen, if one is not careful. Being drugged, theft, murder and worse. If Djamschid is correct, this train is like a rolling pub in the Spessart.

He brings me to the Restaurant Car and personally introduces me to the Chief Cook. This man immediately declares himself happy and willing to do all he can for his German guest. However one soon discovers the narrow limits of the possibilities open to him. There are just two *Mentis* and nothing will change in them until Teheran. These are, as later experience teaches, the normal meals in all Restaurant Cars in the Near and Middle East. One has simply the choice between Chicken with Rice or Mutton with Rice. To this there can be added, as the guest wishes, sharp mixed pickles on a separate plate, for the rest before the main course a vegetable soup and afterwards sweet cake with good tea or bad coffee. Since Turkish wine, especially red wine is quite drinkable, I would like to order a half-bottle. But the waiter does not understand this although I make the attempt in five current languages. He brings me Cola, beer, mineral water and vodka. Upset at these misunderstandings the well-meaning chap finally takes me by the hand and leads me to the drinks Pantry of the Car. Here there is wine, indeed a good amount of choice.

As we know, the Orientals love noise; they always turn the dial of the loudspeaker as high as possible. Which then in turn means that the conversation has to be louder than the loudspeaker. Much effort is required if passengers at the far end of the Restaurant Car wish to pursue discussions with acquaintances at the other end. It is only by shouting that the waiter can pass the orders on to the Chief Cook.

As soon as I can I return to my relatively quiet carriage. To the left of me are three German travellers in their twenties. We come in conversation and I gather that they are travelling to the southern tip of India, as far as possible always by rail. Only from Mesched to the Khyber Pass, east of Afghanistan, do they have to leave the railway and instead use a bus. Their passionate love of rails seems to be connected to their profession, for all three are Conductors on the Bundesbahn. Two annual holidays suffice for the longest railway journeys which are currently available on Earth. The next time it will be (with frequent changes naturally) from Lisbon via Madrid, Paris, Berlin, Moscow, Kiev to the Iranian border.

Since I and my books are known to at least one of the three Bundesbahner I receive after some internal discussion a valuable present, namely a four-corner square key. It is from Bundesbahn stocks but functions with its 9x9mm corners exactly as well in Turkish and in Iranian carriages, presumably each four-corner key all over the world acts as a universal Open Sesame for all possible doors, toilets and similar locks in railway areas. This magic key, the generous gift of the helpful

DB friends is now lying well-protected in a special drawer of my desk, a vital companion for all rail journeys.

To the right of my compartment are two Hippies; a straggly long beard, wavy hair, worn trousers and a bulging full seaman's kitbag, but orderly and clean. They are friendly and their voices are only heard very quietly. The slightly smaller version of the two is, according to the pitch of the voice, of the female gender. Further forward there is an Iranian couple with two small children who behave wonderfully well and quiet.

Djamschid has made my bed. Since however the linen seems to have been dyed grey I prefer to lay my sleeping bag over it. An unnecessary precaution, as I can see by daylight. Only the age and the lack of washing powder has greyed the linen. It is actually quite comfortable in the bed. The "Vangöltü Express" halts often and, as it seems to me, also at very tiny stations. It waits then until a train has rolled past from the other direction, then continues.

No "unknown lady" knocks on my door, nor does any robber attempt to break into my compartment and empty it out. In any case he could not have succeeded for I had indeed locked from within. So long as the lamps are burning, any curious person can peer in from the corridor for it does not have, as in our Sleeping Cars, a separate wall to the corridor but large windows as with a seating compartment. There are indeed curtains which one can draw, but they have sight holes the size of fists lined in leather. These are presumably for the conductor, perhaps also for the railway police or even for the Savak, but in fact anyone else can also simply look in.

I had thought on many matters but not on taking with me a water canister with a plastic mug. When I want to get up slowly there is no Djamschid to be seen and in the washroom there is no running water. But what has to be done can if necessary be performed with a can of beer. On my tiny cooker I succeed in warming up some healthy hop juice in order to wash my teeth and the same amount again for shaving. I have a glass and a tea cup from plastic replaces the wash basin. Whoever has travelled or flown for many years in the empty wilderness knows how to improvise. Therefore I have no dry razor with me, because usually there is no plug or batteries.

Then I head to the Restaurant Car for breakfast, but only from about 8 o'clock is anyone stirring there. The coffee is not to be recommended, although 'Turkish Coffee' is famous around the world. But this is barely known in Turkey itself and in Persia absolutely not at all, apart from perhaps in the very top-class establishments. The tea is good, but it is only served in tiny glasses and also very sweet. Pita bread, sheep's cheese, white butter, sugary jam and as a special extra two fried eggs.

Just as the morning meal is coming there appear outside, wrapped in mist and rain, the first suburbs of Ankara. There is not much to see in the poor weather and nothing of it attractive. Men drag mobile steps up to aid the passengers in embarking and disembarking. It is unbelievable, what amounts of baggage come out of the carriage or are stuffed into it. But soon our Express leaves Turkey's capital again and now races at almost 60km/h over the Anatolian Plateau.

For the time being the weather gets better. A pale sunshine glimmers on the damp, seemingly endless, as good as empty plateau. The landscape through which we roll serves mainly sheep and goats as a meagre pasture.

A jolly life develops in our carriage. Regular visits from compartment to compartment and a lively exchange of experiences and also of drinks. Here tea is served, there coffee with cakes or good red wine from local sources. An old Turk offers Raki, a young Iranian serves instead Arak. I reciprocate the hospitality with whisky. So we and our neighbours in the other compartments enjoy a generally pleasant day rolling along the internal Turkish railway line.

In the evening, before arrival in Kayseri, I am invited by Djamschid and Ali into their special compartment. They both cook together what

in fact has been provided by Djamschid alone. He puts a petroleum cooker on the rattling floor, puts a pan on it and cooks rice with chicken. They have bought the fowl from a farmer at the last station, plucked it themselves and emptied it of its organs. A plate and fork are already waiting for me. The two Iranians eat, according to the old custom, with their fingers straight from the pan. The mood is good, the chicken hard and the rice overcooked. To this is added stinking air filled with kitchen odours. Since no conversation is possible, we laugh a lot and promise each other in gestures to remain eternal friends.

For almost an hour the main road to the East runs parallel to the railway line. If all had gone according to schedule and there had been no disaster, Marianne must have driven along here yesterday or the day before. If the two ladies had made a pause then it could even be that, by coincidence, they might overtake my train today.

The second night passes without any special incidents. In the meantime the train is travelling at, according to my estimate, up to 70km/h. but then later it is barely 40km/h. The stops seem longer tonight and to get even longer. It rains without pause and gusts of wind make the windows shudder. Around 9 in the morning we reach the station of Elazig, where there is no station hall and also no shelter over the platform. All the people have now put thin plastic transparent scraps over their heads and shoulders. The rain pours down, grey-brown water overflows out of the ditches. Precisely for this reason is it so comfy in my well-protected compartment and the cosy sleeping bag.

The "Vangöltü Express" stands and stands. Nothing moves, absolutely nothing. Whereby we already have a delay of some eight hours. Around 10.30 Djamschid announces that we shall probably wait even longer. Somewhere an earth slip or an avalanche or some other natural catastrophe has blocked the line. So we must wait. Another hour goes by, two, and soon it is three.

The Deutsche Bundesbahn officials, the Hippy pair from next door and I discuss what a traveller with experience should always have with them in order to cope with most potential problems when travelling in the Near and Middle East. It cannot hurt to provide a list here. Apart from the usual washing things there are, necessary as well as useful: towels, a hand mirror, an Esbit cooker or a small camping cooker with cutlery, cup, plate, bottle opener, cooking utensils, penknife and matches. The 9x9 key must never be forgotten! Further a mini-bowl for shaving and washing. Of course toilet paper as well as slippers and a morning-robe for the walk to the WC. A sleeping bag or at least an own pillowcase. One or two easily-washable tablecloths for the most filthy folding table. There should be no shortage of entertaining things to read and also very important is a dictionary of the local language. A water canister or at least a pair of bottles of mineral water should be taken, as this journey is now illustrating. For possible emergency situations one needs a torch and candles. Food in cans, medications in as small a quantity as possible as well as some high-proof drinks, which can be thinned with water. This is certainly by no means all, but will certainly make things easier in the majority of cases and there is room for all this in every roomy bag.

Youths gather in front of our window, demanding cigarettes and soon also cash. Their gestures are clear enough. I recall the warnings against the wild mountain peoples. Cheeky lads bang with their fists against the echoing steel sides. Djamschid cannot drive them away, and more and more of them gather. The standing train becomes the object of the attacks of the hostile and unruly youth of Elazig. Soon stones will fly.

Suddenly the locomotive whistles and now the "Vangöltü Express" sets itself in motion again. We move slowly forward for half an hour then stand for another hour in the countryside, then roll back again to the station of Elazig.

Was it an attempt to cross the section of line that has been undermined by water or did one simply wish to get rid of the dangerous local youth? We cannot find out, but now there are police standing next to the rails and guarding the train. Our Restaurant Car has been

uncoupled and the locomotive steams away from the train. The heating ceases and when it is dark we have no light in the carriages. With Djamschid I walk up the main street to the post office in order to attempt to send a telegramme to Marianne in the Teheran Park Hotel. That is apparently a very complex and difficult matter, even though the post office itself makes a modern and well-cared for impression.

Rumours regarding the further progress of our train now circulate here and there. We should leave it, we should stay in it until further notice, or return to Kayseri, we would be transferred by buses or even have to take our fates into our own hands. First of all the Bundesbahner and I take steps to prepare for our own food and purchase drinks and also candles. It is simpler than one might think to communicate since some two million Turks have worked as Gastarbeiter in Germany. Everywhere one finds people who can translate, often the shopkeeper himself. A soldier in a well-fitting uniform who speaks German almost perfectly wants to organise for us a box of good candles. We give him 100 Turkish Lira, with which he runs off at a gallop.

In the meantime further contradictory rumours spread. Entire carriages filled with latrine slogans could swim on rain puddles. But it's all irrelevant for me. I have enough supplies and my neighbours too. By candle light we set the little table, cook some meat broth on the tiny camping stove, open a tin of sardines, eat some white bread with ham and I am just about to open the good bottle of red wine when our carriage is suddenly enveloped in a real tornado. People are tramping along the corridor, pushing their luggage with hasty hands and are very excitable. This is all a fully unclear situation in the total dark, since only in my own and the Bundesbahners' compartments are any candles flickering.

Djamschid orders calm, there is as yet no certainty about anything. It is possible, indeed very likely that this is only a false alarm that has brought this disturbance of the night rest. But there must be something behind it. Dimly in the distance by the light of the weak station lamps one can see that three, four, five or even six buses are rolling up and the heavily-laden passengers are storming them. Everything is happening in pouring rain without any recognisable order. The people are simply forcing their way with violence into the vehicles. The English hippy with his girl friend have joined us. Together with the Bundesbahner men we are now a group of six people who, on the instructions of the good Djamschid, maintain our calm. All of them gather with the packed luggage into my compartment, where the candle is burning. Djamschid rushes constantly outside in order to get any latest news. Each time he comes back even more soaked through. We do not however wait much longer in total uncertainty. Now it is really so and we clamber with our packages out into the rain, stumble over rails, wade through puddles, push ourselves through the crowd. Voices cry over each other, nobody seems to know where this, that or the other bus is thinking of going.

"Mus, Mus!" cries Djamschid into the wall of pouring rain. "Bus to Mus, Vangöflü, Teheran."

So. In we must go with all our clutter, dripping wet, breathless, in a rather confused state. I am sitting on my hand suitcase, I hold the sailcloth sack in both arms, have only the travel case stuffed between my legs. Behind me and next to me, above and below, many other people with all their bundles and ballast.

I hardly get any air because a woman of some enormous weight is crammed between the front seat and my stomach. By calling out I can clarify at least that all six of our group are on board. Now we could at least well go, but we don't go. Another few people creep and clamber with brutal violence into the old-fashioned bus. Finally, finally the crate is stuffed up the very last corner. Djamschid has crawled or rolled himself into the luggage net.

The bus shakes itself several times in order to get itself slowly into motion. Its lamps show only a partial light forwards. I estimate that our groaning chariot is carrying three to four times as many people as the police would permit. In terms of weight it may be eight times as much as that permitted, for each person has burdens with him that probably significantly exceed his own weight.

As I see later from my Turkish road map, the two places Elazig and Mus lie only some 280 kilometres apart. But what kilometres! Even in the best weather and in broad daylight it would not be a straightforward or easy journey, for one has to make one's way over a curvaceous road to overcome two mountain ranges, one 1,900 metres high, the other 2,100 metres. It is only good that both the bus drivers, who change places now and then, know the way so well, every metre of it.

But not all of the metres of the rather frightening road are actually there. As far as I can tell from my cramped position in the flickering light of the headlights it seems that gushing streams have washed away the edge of the road here and there and in places eaten it away up as far as the middle. The rest is covered with red-brown, flowing or swimming mud.

The higher we go up the hairpin bends, the worse is the condition of the road. Since cloudbursts alone are not enough for these mountains, so hostile to humankind, hailstones now mix in with the rain. Whoever believes that the weather could not get even more maliciously worse would soon be taught better by these evil mountain spirits. Snowflakes now mix with the hailstones and now clouds of mist also wave to and fro.

Both drivers deserve enormous respect, I myself would long ago have given up the whole business because it seems far too dangerous to convey all these people on such slippery roads, half eaten away by streaming floods, and through such a storm. In the middle of the night we pass deep chasms. It does not bear thinking what would happen should the brakes fail, should we meet a lorry coming the other way or should a hole created by the streaming water suddenly open up in front of our rattling crate on wheels.

Now we have it, a heavy tanker is crawling at snail's pace before us! There is no way to get past it, even if the man at our steering wheel seems to think he can manage it. I close my eyes and feel icy cold with fear. The driver is mad, he wants to try it, an absolute madness, unparalleled! But... but... but... he gets past, with an almost magical facility. The tanker is not so happy, in order to save itself it has to veer to the right, so far to the right that it falls off the road, fortunately only into a field. The oil transporter sinks now into the mud up to the top of the wheels....

Now in this devilish weather there are shepherds before us with flocks of sheep, also donkeys and free-running horses. Children cling to the saddle bag, chickens perch on the donkeys. Ten to twelve families with all their mobile possessions are in flight from the endless rain storms that have already been pouring down continuously for weeks. Above, all is snow; below us the vegetation is rotting. There is no food for the animals and no dry wood for a camp fire.

The sides of the mountains are in movement. Earth and rubble, balls of grass and networks of roots – all flows with the water onto the road. Often the wheels spin and only manage with difficulty to get past the sections that have been laid bare. No vehicle struggles in the opposite direction, nowhere are any lights to be seen. In the bus there is thick, damp, stinking air. Children have fouled their trousers and women have been sick. Then the driver, to cheer everyone up a bit, decides to put the cassette recorder on. Turkish music in full volume. I cannot get to my Oropax, it croaks and squawks and hammers. Whoever has not experienced something similar will never be able to imagine it.

The lighted numbers on the clock show that four hours have passed since our departure from Elazig. We have now been travelling downhill for some time, always, always through pouring rain. All six of our group, I believe, are half drugged by the evil air, the noise, the dreadful cramped conditions and the shaking.

"There is light ahead!" calls one of the Bundesbahner. "Looks like a station" calls one of the others immediately. "That must be Mus", I hear the third. With his sharp eyes he has already made out the name board.

What happens a few minutes afterwards is barely describable. Our bus simply explodes, there is no other way to describe it. Its entire human

freight and everything that these people are dragging with them falls, flies and springs out of the tin container that has until now held us together. Then the mass crawls through lakes of water and puddles in the mud to a dark row of carriages in which one sees – correctly as it turns out – the train running in the other direction.

We had thought already about almost everything, just not about the passengers already in that train. The deadly-tired, soaked, heavily-laden crowd from our bus now swarmed aboard the fully-laden carriages that had already stood here for three days. It was as though they had to be taken by force. But very sensibly the doors had been locked and the curtains drawn. Iranian conductors and Turkish guards attempted to talk to the angered crowd but what they said or indeed shouted got lost in the general pandemonium.

We six stood as though nailed to our places. What else could we do but stand and wait in this wet night? It was Djamschid who, despite lacking a coat, ran through the sheets of rain in order to find anyone who might know anything. In the meantime one of the Bundesbahner reckoned he had seen the outlines of goods vans. Since he thought that we might there find at least some shelter from the nerve-wracking downpour we reached for our luggage, assembled our last remaining strength and headed off in that direction.

They were not goods wagons, as became clearer as we got closer. They were passenger coaches and indeed to be more exact two Sleeping Cars and two First-Class Seating cars; they are Iranian carriages, as the inscriptions and the symbols indicate. The rain is coming down even heavier than before. The door is open and we clamber on board with our totally filthy luggage. We have at least escaped the dreadful rain!

"The best would be that we look for the compartments and beds with the same numbers as we had in the other carriages" I suggest.

"Then we must go first to Carriage Two, so that that matches" advised one of the Bundesbahner.

Ah, here we are already! Here the compartment with the berths numbers 18-19-20 and 21 in Sleeping Car 2, just as it stands on my sheet of paper. It could be a bit cleaner, the compartment, but who knows what sort of messy people had been using it before? First get the wet clothes off our bodies, put the filthy boots in the corner and get the soggy baggage stacked away. My torn handkerchief straight in the rubbish bin.

But this is funny! Whoever was in here before had the same tastes, in terms of Scotch Whisky! There in the bin lies an empty bottle of the same, relatively seldom brand. I had got one of these at the Duty-Free in Munich Airport and had slowly emptied it with my neighbours in the "Vangölü Express". Not only that, this stranger uses the same toothpaste as I, as the squeezed-out tube indicates. One moment, he had also been reading 'Der Spiegel' and indeed this week's issue. That's what I did just yesterday...

There is the ink stain in the curtain, the broken reading lamp over the left-hand bed, remains of red wine on the arm rest, biro marks on the upholstery. How can this be?

My heavens yes, I am in exactly the same compartment of the 'Vangölü Express' in the same train with which I departed Istanbul some one hundred hours ago. The Hippy pair stand in the doorway and stare at me.

"It can't be, but it really is the same car" says the young man, holding a woman's slipper in his hand. "Nancy left this behind in the old train and has found it here again!"

The three Bundesbahn men believe they know the solution to this mystery. The earth slip or avalanche or whatever else it was that had delayed our departure from Elazig had apparently not blocked the line entirely, it was just that one did not want to travel past the obstructed section with passengers on board. Nobody could predict either whether the locomotive and the four Iranian carriages would make it through. But the brave men on their loco and the carriages had indeed made the attempt and have successfully come through to their destination.

What a strange wonderful feeling it is, after all the efforts, strains and the rain once more to lie in a warm soft bed. Now we have before us, as far as humans can tell, the line free to our destination too.

Indeed, nothing much happened now but at some point during the remainder of the night I hear a locomotive whistle and also the hissing from the cylinders. Then the train shakes and my carriage is jolted. By daylight the 'Vangölü Express' is moving again, slowly at first, then constantly faster through the sleeping landscape. By full sunrise and in wonderful weather the train is standing at a concrete ramp at the Lake Van. Already the ferry is opening its massive doors, our four carriages are pushed onto the ship. The planks rattle and the wheels squeal.

Four hours of slow crossing through the still waters. The giant lake offers the viewer a rare and beautiful landscape, especially at this season. The mountains, the peaks, the crevasses are still filled with ice and snow and the sunshine glitters upon it. The slopes are a light green, down to the coastal strip. The lake is grey-green with a light mist hovering above it. There is no other ship as far as the telescope can see. Three, four or five islands seem to swim on the surface. One of them, Achthamar, has been inhabited by Armenian monks for a thousand years, their monastery church belongs to the most significant sacral buildings in terms of Christianity of the Middle Ages. The entire Lake belongs to Turkey but its southern coast and the hinterland here is inhabited by Kurdish tribes who are generally considered – whether this is fair or not – as incurable robbers.

The Turkish Restaurant Car had left us already in Elazig and at the eastern end of the Lake, where the carriages roll again from the ferry, no new one is coupled on. Whoever has not taken care to get their own supplies will have to hunger as far as the Iranian border.

Two steam locomotives pull the train upwards to the highlands of the easternmost Turkey. No village is to be seen and no other human habitation on the snow-covered surface. Tiny stations, which surely lie very distant from whatever place they are meant to serve, cause the Express to make lengthy pauses. Nevertheless we come closer to the border. Officials in civil dress, who only have a few words of any foreign language, move from compartment to compartment.

Qutur is the border station and here one can see immediately what the oil-rich Iranians can achieve. Totally new, very solid and tasteful station buildings. Border officials in well-cared-for, individually-fitted uniforms check politely but also thoroughly the passports, papers and baggage. They seem to possess several foreign languages.

Here our much-travelled train is provided with a diesel-electric locomotive at the front and a nice Restaurant Car is coupled on. So we roll contentedly on into Persia. But another 36 hours must pass, because the train is already so late that it must be slotted somehow into the timetable. It is exactly four days and four nights since departure from Istanbul when the first suburbs of Tehran appear at last.

The rail journey is to be recommended for precisely the fact of these adventures which one can experience in the "Vangölü Express", though one must not do so each time. Naturally it is not something for everyone, but for those who feel bored by mass tourism.

As our train slows and slows further and enters the station of the Iranian capital, I see first Mahmud, my driver during my last previous visit. Immediately afterwards the tree-tall Behesti cannot be overlooked, my translator and constant companion during the eight weeks and then, with a flying raincoat, my wife and behind her her friend. Both have managed to drive the road from München to Teheran without any intermediate incidents. "Not even a scratch on the car!" says Marianne proudly.

What then is the first item on our programme? I would like to ask. She shakes her head energetically. Her view is that I will need some rest first after the dreadful ordeals of the journey, the near-fatal avalanche, the hunger and the cold in the stranded train...

"I cancelled everything" says Marianne with a worried look, "even the big reception for the Federal Minister of Economic Affairs at the Embassy at 6 o'clock. You are going straight to bed!"

# 'IT STINKS OF SWEAT AND GARLIC'

146:11. ' .

*I recently came across an old paperback "Die Schönsten Eisenbahnfahrten" ("The Most Beautiful Railway Journeys") edited by Alfred Preisser, published Bastei Lübbe 1984, ISBN 3-404-66073-0. It comprises 27 brief essays and one, by Christoph Wendt, has this title. pp.78-84. Sub-titled "From the Isar to the Tigris - Terminus Baghdad."*

"The adventure begins already in Munich. The train D293, the 'Istanbul Express', has - despite the timetable and the paid-for seat reservation - no First Class carriage to Istanbul. It is simply that it is kaputt, says the Platform Inspector, shrugging his shoulders.

In other respects too there is not a lot to see in terms of an 'Express'. The train shuffles off into the evening. In Villach Yugoslav border officials climb in and stamp the passports without bothering even to look at them. Beyond Belgrade the landscape becomes more varied. Small houses with flat roofs stand on the slopes, yellow maize cobs are hanging to dry. It is hot. Many of the passengers sit at the open doors, let their legs dangle out. Everyone sweats as though in a Turkish Bath.

From Bulgaria the train finally begins to live up to its name as an Express. It shoots through the night. A brief halt in the well-lit station of Sofia. The points rumble, there are cyrillic letters on the illuminated station signs. Then darkness once more. Soon after midnight there are long rows of barbed wire, searchlights playing up and down and border posts with machine guns. At walking pace the train rolls over the border to the Turkish station of Kapikule.

For five hours absolutely nothing happens, then the first Turkish official boards the train and distributes forms. After a further hour they are collected again. Extensive control of the passports, Customs inspection. At nine o'clock the train finally rolls onwards. Soon afterwards the conductor comes and ask whether we have anything for sale: irons, kettles, hair driers. He goes from one compartment to another, looks in each piece of baggage, and buys whatever he can get. He pays in any currency one wishes.

There is a bay. Districts marked by poverty, skyscrapers, then the open Marmara Sea on one side, the gradually-forming city on the other side. Boats, beach bars, bathing children, the Roman city walls, mosques, a complex of pointwork. With a delay of five hours we reach the Sircesii Station in Istanbul. Here we have to change.

On Sunday morning at 9am on the other side of the Bosphorus the 'Taurus Express' stands at the platform. A long row of carriages, sleeping cars, restaurant cars, through carriages to Adana, to Aleppo, to Baghdad. With cases and crates, with bedframes and mattresses the Turks pile into the train and prepare themselves for the days-long journey to Anatolia.

It runs along the Sea of Marmara, in the distance the Prince Islands appear, then Europe sinks over there in the afternoon haze. An elderly Turk gets up, pushes himself through the corridor. After a few minutes he comes back, still wet in face and hands. He takes off his shoes and socks, washes his feet with water from a bottle of water. Then he shoos the fellow passengers from their bench, kneels down on it, directs himself towards Mecca and performs his prayers, while the Express thunders along the Gulf of Izmir.

The train is full, but at every station more people climb in. There is actually not even any standing room left. The heat hums. Flies buzz everywhere. It stinks of sweat and garlic and sour milk. Sellers force

their way through the overfilled corridor and offer bread, sesame rolls and hard-boiled eggs.

Between Ankara and Adana the chaos in the train gets even worse. There are now fourteen people crammed into a compartment for six, and two more lie in the luggage racks, chew sunflower seeds and simply spit the shells out down below. It is as impossible to get through to the Restaurant Car as it is to get to the toilets which are in any case hopelessly filthy now. So the children simply do what they have to do in the compartment. A blessing, that there is non-stop heavy smoking!

The train disappears into long tunnels with increasing frequency. It is climbing, heading to the Cilician Gate. The train gets slower, the locomotive cannot manage it. Another attempt, but no, it still doesn't work. So without further ado the last coach is uncoupled and simply remains standing on the line.

The stretch of almost 20 kilometres of long tunnels through the Cilician Gate, the passage through the Taurus Mountain range is a technical masterpiece of the old Bagdadbahn. Here and there one can see, almost clinging to the cliff sides, remains of the old roads which were travelled in ancient times by so many conquerors.

For a long time even the draught has brought no cooling effect any more. Outside, everything is dried out. Flocks of black goats seek the shade of gnarled olive trees. Occasionally there are black Beduin tents; camels lie in front of them.

In Fevzipasha the train is divided. Most of the carriages roll onwards to Aleppo (Syria). Only three carriages remain for the 'Bagdad Express'. Each one is overfilled. Once more a chaotic mass of people that pushes its way into the overfilled gangway next to the overflowing compartments. Men curse, women scream, children cry.

In the early morning dawn light seemingly endless border fortifications appear. The train runs close to the Syrian border, eastwards. Barbed wire on one side, watch towers on the other side. Even the smallest station seems like a fortification.

Nusaybin, the border station. The train empties. Then the 'Express' rolls at walking pace to the Syrian border station of Kamishli. "Welcome - Friends from Germany!" the Syrian station master greets us. He is, like all the railway officials, a Kurd. He hands us split cigarettes as a Kurdisch gesture of friendship and assures us, in view of our restless glances at the clock, that he, and he alone decides when the train will continue. Then he lets himself be photographed with the entire station staff.

In the meantime the 'Express' has shrunk to just two carriages, the third one has been left behind somewhere with defective brakes. Instead we drag a few goods wagons with us. "Welcome to Iraq" says a portly older man in civilian clothes, who climbs sweating into the compartment. "I am the Iraqi Customs". He asks everyone where they are from and where they are going, asks after their families and is rather amazed at the tourists who have chosen to travel by train for several days from Alemanya. Then he takes his leave, not without repeating his greetings on entering his country. The luggage does not interest him at all.

Mosul is reached in the late evening. Armed military guards board the train and secure each door. The night journey now traverses Kurdistan, the unsettled areas on the other side of the Iranian border are not far away. The locomotive howls through the hot night. Outside a sandstorm rages, the desert sand gets through every crack. Our sweated bodies are soon thickly encrusted. There is no point in even thinking about sleeping.

Around 6 o'clock an enormous sun disc appears over the sea of houses along the Tigris, and shines on the golden domes of the mosque. Slowly the 'Taurus Express' rolls into the station of Baghdad."

# **No. 10 RAILWAY SQUADRON, ROYAL ENGINEERS IN EGYPT 1951-1952**

146:12.

This article by Robin Thorne, headed "Yes, We Borrowed your Railway" appeared in 'Black Eight', magazine of The Stanier 8F Preservation Society No 152 December 2023, p.55ff.

The refusal of the Egyptian State Railways to convey food and fuel oil was the cause of grave concern, especially as the Army Power Station at Fayid was running low on fuel for the generators. The decision was thus taken to take over key points on the State Railways and run British War Department trains either by consent or by force where necessary. The task of Transportation Branch was to keep the Canal Zone Garrison supplied with all the necessities of life, against the background of a hostile population, who were to engage in many acts of sabotage against Army Trains and the Sappers manning them.

The units involved were 10 Railway, 53 Port and 1207 Inland Water Squadrons, with 169 Railway Workshops Squadron in support. They were eventually supplemented with about 200 Reservists who were activated and used to take over most signal boxes, marshalling yards and port operations from 1952 onwards. I shall however confine my article mainly to the time before those welcome reinforcements arrived.

The Squadrons were tasked to move oil, food and munitions from the Military Port at Adabiya (south of Suez) to Depots, Storage and Power Stations located between Suez and Port Said and also to the massive stores depot at Tel El Kebir. Before the Treaty was abrogated, engine drivers of 10 Squadron were allowed by the Egyptian State Railways to work Army freight trains over the State Network in the Canal Zone, and also to Cairo for engine wheel balancing, provided they were accompanied by a State Railway Conductor. This was stopped as a political move in August 1951 but by this time 10 Squadron had acquired much useful knowledge of the network they eventually took over. The Squadron was located in a tented camp 20 miles south of Suez beside the Gulf of Suez; an ideal location for operating the Dock railways and also the Adabiya - Ataka Military Railway. The Dock labour force was intimidated into not working for the British so to counter this, 53 Port Squadron was moved in. 10 Squadron had many homes, but eventually ended up at Fanara on the side of the Great Bitter Lake - a good central point from which to conduct railway operations. Incidentally, one of the sheds we took over was where the Public Hangman operated!

In Egypt, the British military railway operated to and from the military port of Adabiya to the Egyptian State Railways signal box at Ataka. This was the exchange point in times of peace, for WD traffic destined for various depots in the Canal Zone and was a joint operation between local Egyptian Rail staff, Movement Control and 10 Railway Squadron. After the abrogation of the Treaty and the refusal of the State Railways to convey WD traffic, the method of working changed. The Egyptian signalman at Ataka and the local movements clerk did not take duty and the military railway was effectively worked as a long siding from Ataka to the portside of Adabiya.

Nearly all movements were from Adabiya northwards via Fayid and Nefish/Ismailia. The main reason for this was that the Egyptians refused to berth ships with military stores, carry out customs clearance and other port tasks. It is true that the Royal Navy piloted and berthed ships, but this could be better carried out by a port that was controlled by British power. Even at Adabiya, the local pilot and tugs would not assist in the movement of ships, but once again the Navy carried out what was necessary. The Suez area had always had a complement of one frigate, but by this time it had been strongly reinforced.

After our essential freight movements were refused by the Egyptian State Railways, the officer commanding 10 Squadron, Major

Alexander, decided that we would not lie back and wait developments. We paraded in battle order and several parties were detached to seize railway engines from the Suez Locomotive Depot. Several engines were already in steam, so we moved them to the local Adabiya - Ataka Military Railways, located about ten miles south of Suez. Pressure was exerted on a political level and the engines were very unwillingly returned by us to the Depot. The episode did however demonstrate to the State Railways that the British forces would not take matters lying down.

Each train which left the Army railway at Adabiya to go on to the state railway network was manned as a complete self-contained travelling unit. Its crew consisted of a driver, fireman, a railway signalman (known as a travelling blockman) and a minimum escort of three fully-armed infantrymen, normally from the Royal Sussex Regiment.

The blockman travelled on the engine in order to instruct the driver of action needed at each signal box, level crossing and other route knowledge problems. This could mean that a sergeant locomotive driver would be expected to obey the orders of a Sapper blockman. It sounds odd, but railwaymen knew the way it worked. We were all trained soldiers and combat engineers, but when crunch time came, we were professional railwaymen in Army uniform! Back at camp, the usual rules and respect applied.

Once our trains had left the Army railway, it was necessary to take over control of each signal box as we came to it. The travelling blockman, escorted by the infantry soldiers, had to assess the Arabic Signalling Frame and Diagram of each box before setting up the route for his train. The boxes had mostly been abandoned by local staff and routes set in the wrong direction. Since our Arabic was non-existent, it was necessary to draw a picture of each number on the Signal Box Diagram and then find a similar-looking signal lever. Once the signals had been operated we returned to the engine, gained the double line and proceeded to the next signal box. On a double line the points were usually trailing which meant that even if they were lying in the wrong direction, it would be safe to run through them.

Historically the State Railways were very British in design and operation, especially their Rules and Operating Instructions and they always signalled Sapper trains as 'vehicles running away right line', which corresponded with what we would have done under similar circumstances in the UK. The fact that the levers and signalling diagrams were annotated in Arabic was a problem, but with the Egyptian railways being based on British practice, and also the fact that most of our signalmen were national servicemen from busy civilian signal boxes who could read routes on a diagram and translate that into movements on the track, this made our life so much easier.

The State Railways-owned No. 1 Signal Box was the key to operating trains in a northward direction. During January 1952 it was decided that the box would be fortified with a permanent 10 Squadron signalman. This went on for several months, the crew of the box being supplied by armoured car with the necessities of life including toilet facilities. Relief of signalmen and escort was covered by the same means. After shots were fired at the box, a combined army group flattened the area around it to deny terrorists the cover needed to fire on the installation.

As with many things, the Egyptian Railways followed the British Railways system and many signal boxes were built on station platforms. They were regarded as flash points and dangerous places to take over. The platforms were usually full of very disgruntled passengers, who hated the Sapper railwaymen, not only for the political situation, but because the WD trains forcing passage were

# YARKON PARK

In January 2024 there was some mail correspondence concerning this postcard. It seems that in 1971 a firm in Tel Aviv saw a picture of one of the Porsche-built narrow-gauge trains at the Bundesgartenschau (Federal Garden Show) in Köln/Cologne and wanted to know how to acquire one for a city park in Tel Aviv. Since nobody at the Show could help they wrote to the Lord Mayor of Cologne, who referred them to the firm Henry Escher which may or may not have then referred the enquiry on to the Sollinger Hütte in Uslar. Be that as it may, no such train was built for Israel yet this postcard indicates a thriving little railway of 60cm gauge. In response to queries I wrote: "The Yarkon is the river which for a long time formed effectively the northern boundary of Tel Aviv, flowing east-west into the Mediterranean. The new main north-south railway line built in the 1950's included a triangular junction at 'Tel Baruch' west of what now became B'nei Berak station (it was initially called 'Tel Aviv North') and a spur into what became the then-new station of Tel Aviv North (two platform tracks and a centre engine release road, situated on the west side and at a higher level than the current Tel Aviv Savidor station.) This has now effectively vanished under new development.



cinema with car park) adjacent to the south-to-east spur was/is the Yarkon Park. Having heard rumours from the late Paul Cotterell I went one day for a walk and found a few odd remains of 60cm Feldbahn wagon frames and Decauville track, 60cm gauge. The wagons (which had been fitted with wooden bodies as 4-wheel coaches) were of different bright colours. This is all vague memories of over forty years ago. So I think one can assume that somebody had the idea to acquire some redundant industrial 60cm stock and turn it into a simple circuit round a part of the park. If you look

at:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yarkon\\_Park](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yarkon_Park)

you will see the park was established 1952 and was a deliberate attempt to provide recreation facilities for the population. I suppose there were various narrow-gauge items around at the time, which would not have needed importing. The 'Palestine Gazette' of the period to 1948 sometimes listed such stock for disposal and sale. I had no idea of any attempts to import more modern park railway equipment and would love to learn more! Maybe the original loco simply wore out or the original initiative-taker lost interest....." (The Editor)

When I first went to Israel in 1981 or so this was the situation and to the east side of this triangle (in the centre was a drive-in open-air

*(Continued from page 34)* usually the cause of their own trains running late or being cancelled. The effect would be rather like a foreign Army trying to run trains from London to Brighton, with the resident railwaymen and the local population doing all in their power to stop it happening.

1952 saw a worsening of attempts to mine the railway and take out track, causing some very bad derailments. One of the mined trains blocked the line totally so the OC, Major Alexander, decided to build a new railway round the derailment.

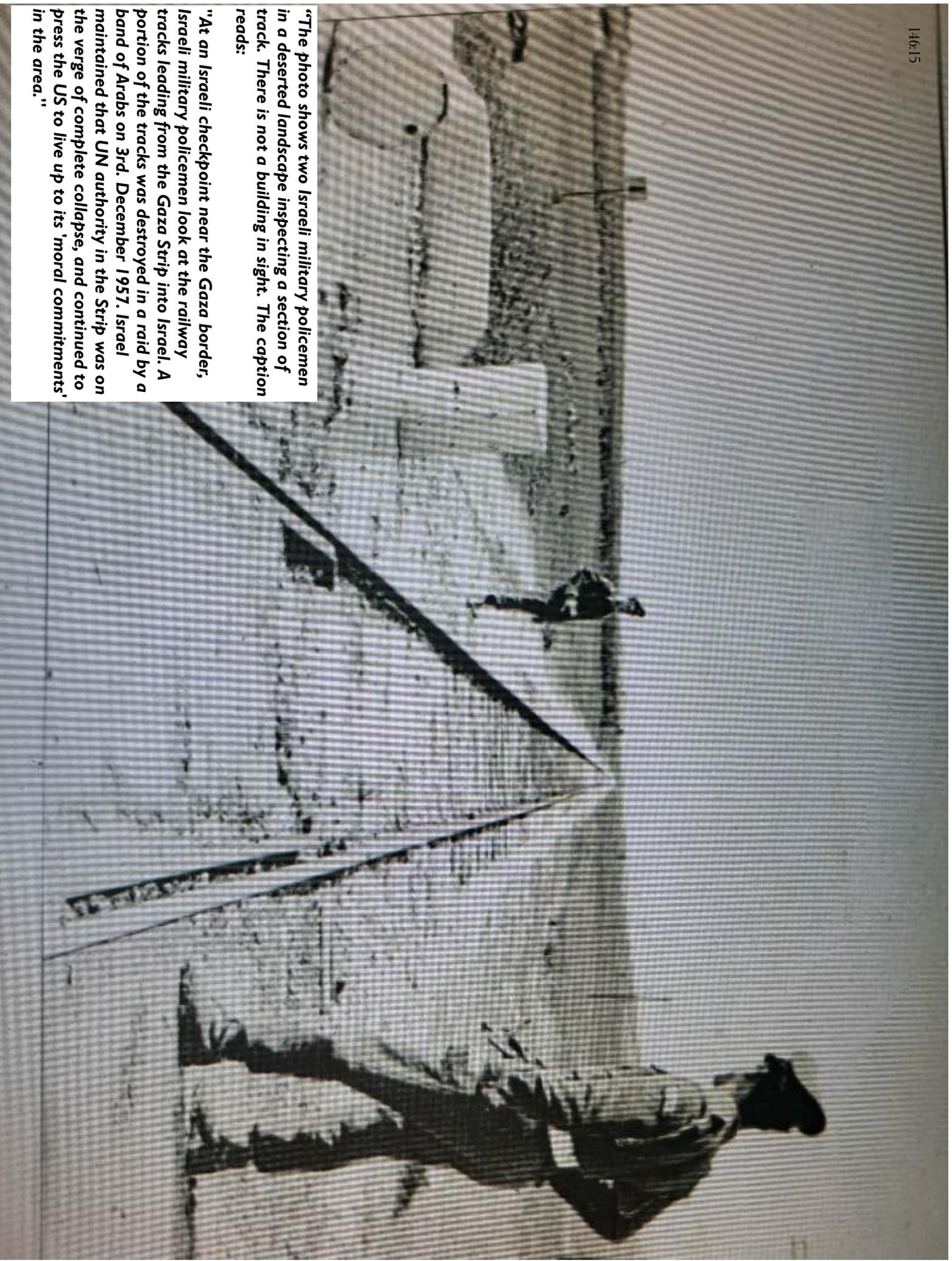
In between these railway duties we had to carry out 24-hour guards of filtration plants, hospitals and of course our own camp. On one occasion when I was Guard Commander, one of my men refused to go out on patrol (remembering we were on active service) and when my direct order to return to duty failed to resolve things in his mind, I placed him under close arrest. He told me in an even tone that he just could not take it anymore – the pressure and danger was just too much for this 6ft 3in Sapper. He took the key to a cell, locked himself in and gave me the key. He was dealt with locally, only receiving 28 days detention, rather than the two years' imprisonment a Court Martial would have awarded.

So life went on until 1956 when the Canal Zone was finally evacuated with the new headquarters of the Near East Land Forces being in Cyprus. In 1965 the RE Railway Squadrons were re-badged to the Royal Corps of Transport and then passed on yet again to the Royal Logistic Corps. At handover, the RCT acquired from us the Transportation Centre at Longmoor together with 8 Railway Squadron, 17 Port Regiment at Marchwood together with three port squadrons, a port squadron in Singapore and a lighterage troop in Cyprus. 1 Railway Group was also handed over together with 100 locomotives, 2,000 wagons and 645 miles of track.

Since then, the capacity to operate railways in time of conflict has been whittled down to one troop of 17 Port Regiment, assisted by various small specialist units. Is that enough? Recent experiences in both Kosovo and the Basra Port area of Southern Iraq show that the Army does need to retain a reasonable railway expertise, so although it will not be an RE responsibility, one hopes that the powers that be will look back on our Corps history if guidance and perhaps inspiration is required."



Tunnels beneath Gaza dug by Hama and containing three narrow gauge trucks.



**"The photo shows two Israeli military policemen in a deserted landscape inspecting a section of track. There is not a building in sight. The caption reads:**

**"At an Israeli checkpoint near the Gaza border, Israeli military policemen look at the railway tracks leading from the Gaza Strip into Israel. A portion of the tracks was destroyed in a raid by a band of Arabs on 3rd. December 1957. Israel maintained that UN authority in the Strip was on the verge of complete collapse, and continued to press the US to live up to its 'moral commitments' in the area."**