

Series 26 No.1

Issue No. 96 March 2012

הרכבת

A Quarterly Journal on the Railways of the Middle East
Edited and Published by Rabbi Dr. Walter Rothschild PhD
Passauer Strasse 4, D-10789 Berlin, Germany
e.mail:Rothschild-Berlin@t-online.de



:96:01 Abir Sultan; (source: Elgrabli Communication)



96:01a Moshe Dyan Station - photo Sybil Ehrlich

EDITORIAL.

A lot has happened in the three-to-four months since the last issue. The Middle East remains filled with conflict and potential conflict. One can safely say that the interest in tourism to Syria has plummeted to a new low, with the city of Homs besieged and sections almost destroyed, thousands of civilians and opponents of the Government killed and more thousands injured.... Somehow in such circumstances no-one wants to check out the latest events on the Hedjaz system there. Unrest continues in Egypt, in Libya a faction wishes to split off and effectively re-form the former Cyrenaica in the eastern part of the country; There has been more talk of sanctions and even attacks on Iran (though I presume German locos are still being merrily delivered there....)

In Israel the internal tumult (as opposed to foreign policy threat) has been less, although as this issue goes to press the rocket attacks from the Gaza Strip have reached a new intensity. In terms of railways many schemes seem to be approaching fruition or being seriously started at the same time. These should include a missile-free station for Sderot, though one is unsure how this will be achieved.

At a personal level, the Editor lost his father in February after some four stressful months of fighting pancreatic cancer... This has also meant many trips to England and helps explain why this issue is slightly delayed. Better news is that Chen Melling and his wife Galit now have a baby son. Mazal Tov! Chen will no doubt soon learn the truth of the saying "A father is a man who has photos in his wallet where the money used to be."

So, as always, this issue is a bit of a mixture. Personal issues mean less history and more reliance on current news. Enjoy!

The Editor.

Minister Katz said, that as part of his new job, Mr. Shamir will be the head of the management promoting the construction of the planned fast rail link to Eilat (on the Red Sea), to be used for carrying both passengers and freight between the Red & the Mediterranean seas.

The decision for the appointment is Mr. Shamir's rich experience in managing large projects and initiatives, which will no doubt help him in leading the transportation revolution promoted by the ministry from Eilat in the south to Kiryat-Shmona in the north near the Lebanese border.

Mr. Shamir, married and with three children, has an of M.S. in Electrical & Electronic Engineering from the Technion (Haifa high technical institute). He is a member of the directorates of the Technion and the Ben-Gurion University (Beer-Sheva), as well as the Chairman of Shalem Centre for Education.

He served for 25 years in the Air Force, both as a pilot and electrical & electronic engineer, as well as commander of various units there; he reached the rank of colonel and was responsible for development and manufacture of ground and airborne communication and control systems.

His civilian jobs, apart from the last one at IAI, were Vice President of Scitex consortium in Israel, General Manager of Elite Sweet Products, Vice President of the investment company Etgar (challenge), the Chairman of the national airline El-Al Directorate who managed its privatization, and the Chairman of Shamir Optical Industries.

(b). NEW HEAD FOR INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS BODY:

From a press release of 21.12.2011 by the Transport & Roads' Safety Ministry: The Ministry has appointed Colonel in Reserves Jacob Blitstein as the head of the „Israel Ways“ ambitious projects' management. The almost \$21 billion project is for building a dense network of roads and railway lines all over Israel, and is considered to be the biggest investment ever in transportation infrastructures.

Mr. Blitstein is married, with three children, and has served the army for 25 years in a variety of commandment and headquarter jobs; he was later active in managing technological projects for the Army and the Defence Ministry, as well as consulting and management services for Israeli firms active in South America. He has a B.A. in Justice, Economy, and State Science, and an M.A. in Law and Business Management.



96:03. Holon Junction Station

96:04.

NEWS FROM THE LINE:

(a). NEW HEAD OF ROADS MINISTRY.

From a press release of 05.12.2011 by the Transport & Roads' Safety Ministry:

Transport & Roads' Safety Minister Mr. Yisrael Katz, has appointed Mr. Yair Shamir (the son of once Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir), formerly and until recently, the Chairman of the IAI- Israeli Aerospace Industries Ltd., as the Chairman of the National Roads' Company Directorate; he will succeed Mr. Micha Goldman (in the past a member of the parliament) who will end his job at the end of January 2012.

(c). BIG PLANS AT LEV HAMIFRATZ:

The Yefe-Nof company of Haifa will soon start building near the bridge near Haifa and under it will construct a metropolitan Public Transport Centre to serve all the incoming traffic from the north and east of Haifa, including: the Haifa - Nahariyya railway line, the Valley Railway line (i.e. revival of the Hedjaz line) currently under construction, the Metronit (BRT), bus lines, taxis, a future cable car to/from Carmel mountain, and Park & Ride facilities.

As part of the plan a new railway bridge is to be built nearby to link the Lev-Hamifratz station with the Valley Line; it will run over the nearby Haifa - Acre main road No. 4 thus making this station into a junction. The work is expected to last about 2 years.

(d). SPECIAL TRAINS OVER CHANUKAH:

The railways operated additional trains during the Chanukah holidays between 21.12.2011 & 22.12.2011 and between 25.12.2011 & 28.12.2011.

The additional trains were:
Southbound:

No. 299 starting at Netanya at 08:54 and terminating at Ashkelon at 10:26.

No. 53 starting at Haifa Central the 8 at 10:18 and terminating at Modi'in Central at 12:07.

No. 257 starting at Binyamina at 11:58 and terminating at Ashkelon at 13:37.

No. 265 starting at Binyamina at 13:58 and terminating at Ashkelon at 15:37.

Northbound:

No. 54 starting at Modi'in Central at 10:03 and terminating at Haifa Central the 8 at 11:51.

No. 258 starting at Ashkelon at 10:28 and terminating at Binyamina at 12:10.

No. 66 starting at Ashkelon at 12:28 and terminating at Binyamina at 14:10.

(e). CHAOS AGAIN.

At the beginning of the week commencing 18.12 an Earthworks' sub-contractor working near Kfar-Habad (on the Tel-Aviv - Lod section) disconnected a communication and signalling cable, thus causing real chaos on the lines south of Tel-Aviv HaHaganah station for several hours.

Even special bus services provided by the ministry were insufficient, and the public began to ask questions regarding the Railways' ability to function in emergency situations.

(f). INFRASTRUCTURE WORKS - SERVICE DISRUPTIONS.

From the Isra-Rail Company Ltd. announcement of 28.12.2011 on its website:

„Due to infrastructure works to take place on the lines to/from Beer-

Sheva, Dimona, and Jerusalem, there will be no services on Saturday night, 28.01.2012 between Tel-Aviv, Jerusalem, Beer-Sheva, and between Beer-Sheva and Dimona on both directions; traffic will resume on Sunday morning, 29.01.2012. Consequently, trains between Nahariya and Beer-Sheva, and between Haifa and Beer-Sheva, will start/terminate at Tel-Aviv Hahagana station.“

Due to works on the Haifa - Nahariyya line, traffic was to cease from Friday 16.03.2012 in both directions between Haifa Central - The Eight and Nahariyya, resuming on the Saturday night 24.03 from Haifa as far as Kiryat Motzkin and from Thursday 29.03 onwards to Akko and Nahariyya.

(g). EILAT LINE PLANS. - SEVERAL ITEMS.

(i). From a press release of 04.01.2012 by the Transport & Roads' Safety Ministry:

„The Transport & Roads' Safety Minister Mr. Yisrael Katz presented today to the government the grandiose plan for the rail link to Eilat on the Red Sea. The new points about the plan, not published so far are: Two levels of passenger services; the fastest service will call only at Beer-Sheva; the semi-fast service will call also at eight new stations to be built.

The line will consist of four main planned sections:

- The first section between Tel-Aviv and Beer-Sheva; the existing line is being double-tracked and upgraded.

- The second section comprises 35 km of existing line between Beer-Sheva and Dimona; This requires upgrading and double-tracking.

- The third section comprises 65 km of existing line between Dimona and Hazeva, which requires upgrading and double-tracking and new alignments with construction of tunnels.

- The fourth section between Hazeva and Eilat is the most complex one. Here several alternative alignments are being checked, the favoured one is a 170 km double-track line between Tzin (the extreme southern rail point) and Eilat. As already mentioned, the Tel-Aviv - Eilat line will include sixty-three bridges with a total length of 4.5 km and five tunnels with a total length of 9.5 km.

The speed to be reached in the mountainous sections will be 160 km/h while along the 175 km of new line at the Arava (prairie) it could reach 300 km/h! Depending on the government decision, Minister Katz will promote simultaneously three alternative contracts for building the line:

- Building based on a unique agreement between the governments of Israel and China; the Chinese with an impressive record of building railway lines are very interested in this project and so are the

הרכבת

governments.

- The second alternative is to build with partnership with the private sector.

- The third alternative is to finance the entire project through the State.

Minister Katz will bring the project for the government approval within six months.“

(ii). From a press release of 09.01.2012 by the Transport & Roads' Safety Ministry: „Further to the press release of 05.01.2012 regarding the line to Eilat, Minister Katz is now pressing to end the statutory planning within three months; Minister Katz, who visited China recently, has agreed on cooperation with his Chinese colleague regarding transportation projects including the mentioned line.“

(iii). On 06.02.2012 it was reported that the Cabinet had approved construction of the line.

(iv). A letter in the „Jerusalem Post' in February by Jac Friedgut of Jerusalem noted: „Immediately after the Six Day War I was engaged by the Israel Ports Authority to come from New York and analyze the economic feasibility of a transportation link between the Mediterranean and Eilat in view of the closure of the Suez Canal. My study demonstrated the importance of various elements: that the cargo link to Eilat be essentially from the Port of Ashdod; that cargo other than new automobiles be containerized for efficient transshipment; and that an Ashdod - Eilat link could attract Mediterranean - Asian cargo, even in competition with the canal. That study was undertaken 45 years ago. better late than never.“

(v). From „Asian Times'. A dragon dance in the Negev. By M K Bhadrakumar, Feb 2, 2012

The Bedouins of the Negev will soon witness the sight of a Chinese-built railway line snaking its way through the mélange of brown, rocky, dusty mountains and the wadis and deep craters, leading north from the resort city of Eilat in the Gulf of Aqaba toward the eastern Mediterranean.

Israeli Transport Minister Yisrael Katz visited Beijing in September and he has been quoted recently as saying, „The professional capability of the Chinese companies in the construction of railway systems and transportation networks is among the best in the world.“

The Israeli Transport Ministry has underscored that Israel would prefer Chinese state-owned companies to undertake the construction of a so-called „Med-Red“ railway through the Negev Desert's Zin Valley connecting Israel's Mediterranean and Red Sea coast cities of Haifa and Eilat. Swiftly following up on Katz's discussions in Beijing, China began working on a joint proposal with Israel for the Eilat link. Chinese and Israeli companies may jointly execute the project and, conceivably, China

may invest in the project. The proposed rail-cum-road links would facilitate transfer of liquefied natural gas from Israel's Mediterranean coast to the Red Sea coast from where they can be shipped across the Indian Ocean to China. Again, the communication link would enhance the scope for China's exports to central and southern Europe and the Balkans.

Clearly, Israel and China are poised to enter a profound and highly strategic engagement. Netanyahu told a cabinet meeting in Tel Aviv on Sunday that he intended to develop the proposed rail and road networks joining Eilat to northern Israel as a „junction between continents“. He went on to flag China's interest in the project. Beijing would have already sized up the immense strategic potential of an audacious transportation route across the Negev bypassing Egypt's congested Suez Canal, which would connect Asia with Europe. It almost seems Washington has lost the plot. [Ambassador M K Bhadrakumar was a career diplomat in the Indian Foreign Service. His assignments included the Soviet Union, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Germany, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Kuwait and Turkey. (Copyright 2012 Asia Times Online (Holdings) Ltd.)]

(vi). As mentioned, on 05.02.2012 the government took (at last) the historical decision to approve the proposal for construction of the line to Eilat. The project is therefore under way; preliminary design is to be completed in April 2012 and the statutory procedures should be completed by the end of 2012 - a short timescale as it is intended to complete the line within five years! There is no doubt that the Greens and others will protest and may appeal to the Courts regarding anticipated environmental damage, but Mr. Katz is determined to get the line built.

(h). INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS PROBLEMS CONTINUE.

From a press release of 01.01.2012 by Isra-Rail Company Ltd.: Should anybody have had the illusion that the railways will reach at last a temporary settlement, then the announcement of the Railway Workers' Union has shown the opposite: the union chairman Mrs. Gila Edrei declared a work dispute, according to which lines will be closed on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays starting from 02.01.2012; Contacts between the railways' management, the chairman of the general workers' union, and the transport minister, delayed this - for the present - to Wednesday, 04.01.2012.

On 05.01 it was announced: „Minister Katz has meanwhile succeeded in removing the strike threat and both sides now re-entered negotiations.“

While the newly-named Ministry is busily promoting projects, the unrest in daily work at the railways continued: On Sunday, 08.01.2012, only one train to Ashkelon was in service as a result of the workers' sanctions; On 09.01.2012, there were no services between Tel-Aviv and Jerusalem and between Tel-Aviv and Harishonim (at Rishon-Le-Zion East); both may be seen as a blow against the ministry's and the railway managements' intention to outsource maintenance of the new rolling stock. It seems, however, that in addition the rail workers are being encouraged by the General Workers' Union to strike soon on a social background. On 10.01.2012, following the labour tribunal decision, trains ran regularly until further notice.... Which led to the next item:-

(i). STRIKES.

There was a Histadrut strike starting Thursday, February 9. This affected Israel Railways as well as government offices. No trains ran until the following Sunday morning. However, then IR workers went on another strike on Monday, February 13, over the outsourcing of maintenance to Bombardier. The Tel Aviv Labour Court ordered them to end the strike by 9 a.m. on Tuesday, which they didn't and were consequently in contempt of court. The court fined three union officials NIS 1,000 for each hour they violated the injunctions (issued at 11 p.m. Monday), and if they continued striking after 6 a.m. Wednesday the fines would increase to NIS 2,500 an hour. It also ordered the union's board to pay NIS 15,000 in legal costs. In addition, on Tuesday two train passengers filed an NIS 364 Million class-action lawsuit over recent disruptions and delays. On Feb. 15th. a union official said „We tried to find a solution - we even thought of taking passengers for free... but we aren't allowed to do that.“

(j). MAINTENANCE OUTSOURCING CONTRACT.

Despite all the industrial unrest, on 16.02.2012 Minister Katz instructed IR to sign the outsourcing contract with Bombardier Transportation for the maintenance of the 130 new double-deck push/pull coaches. The Railways then did sign, on 19.02, despite the disagreements with the unions.

(k). REORGANIZATION WITH A VIEW TO PRIVATIZATION.

On 08.03.2012 Minister Katz announced that Israe-Rail Co. Ltd. is to be reorganised - as part of the planned privatisation - into three main sections: Cargo, Real Estate & Business, and Maintenance. He did not confer beforehand with the unions on this step, and this was the match that lit the flame of further protests. However, having learned lessons from recent events, the Unions decided not to strike outright and so inflame public anger; Instead they will stop cooperation on development plans and on some maintenance activities.

The Management reacted on the same day and listed publicly the activities which will therefore be held back due to this union reaction:-

- the project to increase capacity on the Ayalon link line in Tel-Aviv, which would enable traffic over 24 hours a day, four trains an hour (instead of the current two) to Beer-Sheva, to be covered in 50 minutes (as against current 80 minutes); this was originally planned for 19.05.2012 but will now be delayed until at least June.
- An additional track for freight trains at Mamshit station.
- double-tracking works between B'nei Berak and Petach-Tikva-Segula stations, also rebuilding Petach-Tikva-Arieh station with two platforms instead of one.
- installation of points at Na'an Junction in order to cut travelling time between Tel Aviv, Beit Shemesh and Jerusalem.
- delays in double-tracking the Kiryat Motzkin - Nahariyya line.
- delays in current maintenance works which may cause lower punctuality due to speed restrictions according to the condition of the rolling stock.
- maintenance of barrier arms at level crossings.

(l). NEW JERUSALEM LINE PROGRESS.

On 06.02.2012 Minister Katz participated, together with Railways' General Manager Boaz Zafir, at the start of operations of the first TBM to bore the 3.6km. tunnel No. 1 between Latrun monastery and Sh'ar HaGai, this marking an additional stage in work on the A1 fast rail link to Jerusalem.

(m). PROGRESS ON SDEROT AND NETIVOT LINE.

On 13.02.2012 Minister Katz announced that towards the end of 2013 the inhabitants of Sderot and Netivot, which lie on the 60km. \$583M rail line between Ashkelon and Beer Sheva currently under construction, will be linked to the rail network two years ahead of the originally-planned date. The whole line should now be completed in the last quarter of 2015.

Sderot station is currently under construction at a cost of \$20M. It will be the first station in Israel to be protected against missiles. Construction will start soon at Netivot station. From December 2013 it should be possible to reach Tel Aviv-HaHaganah in under 60 minutes; travel habits may be revolutionised by timings such as Netivot - Ashkelon in 21 minutes, Netivot - Ashdod in 32, Netivot - Yavneh in 48 mins., Netivot - Rishon leZion in 58 mins., Netivot - Sderot in 9 mins. etc. The Yavne - Ashdod section will be opened during 2013, providing a direct link from Netivot to Nahariyya through Tel-Aviv.

(n). INAUGURATION OF YAVNEH WEST STATION.

On Sunday 26.02.2012 Minister Katz together with IR GM Zafir and the Mayor of Yavne, Mr. Zvi Gur-Arie, officially inaugurated the new railway station at Yavne West, one year ahead of the original planned date. The station cost \$13M and includes a 800 sq.m. building, three platforms each of 300m, lifts for the disabled and escalators, a park-and-ride area for 750 cars (to be completed soon), and a layby for buses and taxis. Travel time between Yavneh West and Tel Aviv

HaHaganah stations will be 28 minutes; the initial service frequency will be two trains per hour in each direction, which will be further increased to three per hour after completion of signalling upgrading and the arrival of additional rolling stock.

(o). REBUILDING HAIFA MAIN LINE IN CUTTING.

An historic agreement was reached on 28.02.2012 between the Railways, the Transport, National Infrastructure and Roads Safety Ministries, and the Haifa Municipality to rebuild the section of line from just north of Hof HaCarmel station and Shikmona - a distance of some 1.5km. - from the surface into a cutting. The main reason for this struggle, in which about ten different bodies took part and which lasted for around a year, was concern that the planned electrification with catenary and masts would 'create a partition between the public and the sea view' - as though the main road that runs parallel does not do the same! The project will cost about \$133M, to be financed by the Ministry, and is only the first stage as there is an intention eventually to rebuild the entire section through Haifa as far as Haifa East station in an underground trench!

(p). FARE RISES.

The Transport & Roads' Safety Ministry has announced on 29.12.2011 that fares on railway passenger services will rise by an average of 2.7% from 01.01.2012; excluded from this is the line between Tel-Aviv and Rishon-Le-Zion West where fares will remain unchanged.

(q). BEIT YEHOSHUA COLLISION FINDINGS.

On 26.12.2011 Aharon reported:

„About more than five and half years after the deadly collision at Beit-Yehoshua, which left five passengers dead and dozens injured, the State Advocate's Office has reached a plea bargain deal with the main defendants involved in the event. As an integral part of a bridging procedure between the state advocacy and the defendants' lawyers, it has been decided that an amended indictment will be lodged against the then-Deputy General Manager for Traffic Mr. Harel Even, according to which he will admit negligence, while the railways will admit causing death by negligence.

The indictments against the then-General Manager Mr. Ofer Linchevsky and the Deputy General Manager for Safety Mr. Yuval Blum will be cancelled as a result of difficulties with finding proper evidence.

An arrangement has been also reached with the driver of the commercial vehicle involved in the collision being accused of driving under drugs influence, according to which he will admit Five cases of killing, thus being a candidate for a prison sentence of 8 years.

The families of the victims are to respond within a few weeks, after which the State Advocate office will decide whether

to amend the arrangements again or to introduce them as they are to the court in February 2012.

(r). TRANSPORT MINISTRY NAME-CHANGE.

The ministry has announced that from 09.01.2012 its name will be: „The Transport, National Infrastructures, and Roads' Safety Ministry“ to reflect all its activities. [Ed. comments: This is a bit of a mouthful and clearly does not reflect ALL activities - there is for example no mention of making coffee or completing crosswords. We may just use the term ‚Transport Ministry‘ and hope that our readers are intelligent enough to know what is meant thereby.]

(s). VALLEY RAILWAY TENDERS.

From a press release of The Transport, National Infrastructures, and Roads' Safety Ministry of 09.01.2012: Minister Katz announced today that his ministry is accelerating the Valley Railway line (ex-Hedjaz) project: the National Roads Company has published today two tenders for the extreme Eastern part of the line; the first one refers to a 12 km section of infrastructure between Beit-Shean and Gidona (section B4) Tender No. 11/12; the second tender refers to a 700 m bridge to be used as a grade separation for road No. 722 adjacent to Tel-Kashish near Kfar-Yehoshua.

Implementation time of both tenders is 24 months and latest date for submission of proposals was 20.02.2012. Within a few months the last two tenders will be published; one for building the line section between Afula and Gidona, and the second for a 5 km section to cross the city of Afula. Other tenders to be published are for the following five out of eight stations to be built along the line: Haifa - Lev-Hamifratz, Kfar-Yehoshua, Kfar-Barukh, Afula, and Beit-Shean.

(12.03.2012:) The National Roads Co. has recently published Tender No. 10/12 for the revived Hedjaz Railway section 3 between Merhavia and Gideon. Implementation time: 23 months. Proposals to be submitted by 19.03.2012.

(t). BICYCLE CARRIAGE TEST SCHEME.

The railways have announced on a new pilot service starting from 10.01.2012, within which bicycles could be transported on trains between Hod-Hasharon (Sokolov) and Rishon-Le-Zion West (Moshe Dayan) only, outside peak hours, namely before 06:00, between 09:00 and 15:00, and from 19:00 until the last train of that day between Sunday and Thursday; On Fridays there will be no limited hours; on Saturday nights there will be no such services due to congestion; the pilot scheme will last for one month, after

which it will be decided whether it should be tried on other lines.

The railways have published special instruction regarding how the bicycles can be carried safely. The train numbers with such services are:

From Hod-Ha-Sharon to Rishon-Le-Zion: 601, 621, 625, 627, 631, 633, 637, 639, 643, 645, 649, 651, 655, 681, 683, 685, 687, 689, 691.

From Rishon-Le-Zion to Hod-Ha-Sharon: 602, 622, 624, 626, 630, 632, 636, 638, 642, 644, 648, 650, 654, 656, 682, 684, 686, 688, 690.

(u). EXTRA BUSES INSTEAD OF TRAINS FOR THE MILITARY.

Another new service to be introduced from 22.01.2012 on Sundays Only, is intended to reduce congestion between 06:00 and 09:00, for soldiers. Or to put it another way, free travel for soldiers on Sunday mornings has been withdrawn on the main Tel-Aviv - Nahariyya line because of overcrowding.

Therefore, on the lines between Tel-Aviv, Beer-Sheva, Dimona, Ashkelon, Rishon-Le-Zion West, Harishonim, Jerusalem, and Modi'in, soldiers will be permitted to travel freely; Whereas to/from all the stations north of Tel-Aviv Hahagana, there will instead be special buses which will provide them with a comfortable journey, seated only.

A map of the different lines has been produced, in Hebrew; green lines are open for soldiers; red lines are bus lines, and the blue points are interchange stations.

On the first Sunday of operation - in this case 22.01.2012 - on which soldiers travelled north of Tel-Aviv Hahagana station by bus, the scheme worked relatively well with the 300 buses provided for this purpose functioning reasonably, although there was some congestion; the railways' General Manager Mr. Boaz Zafrir said that capacity on trains between 06:00 and 09:00 during the critical hours on each Sunday reached 100% compared with 200% before the new arrangement. It is hoped that after the arrival of all the new rolling stock ordered the previous arrangement may be reinstated.

(v). FOOTBALL SPECIAL.

On 23.01.2012 the railways provided a special train for the football fans who watched a game at the Haifa Kiryat Eliezer stadium, which is adjacent to Bat-Galim station; the train then left Haifa at 23:20, calling at Netanya and Hertzliya, and terminated at Tel-Aviv Hahagana at 00:22.

(w). THE OLD JERUSALEM STATION:

From a press release of 22.01.2012 by the Jerusalem Municipality: The Authority for Developing Jerusalem

and Isra-Rail Co. Ltd. have selected the Florentin Co. owned by Avi Murdoch as the winner of the tender to design, building, preserve and operate the site of the old Jerusalem station as a cultural, recreation, and leisure centre. The winner is requested to erect at the site up to 8 old railway carriages to be used as cafés, bars, and for commercial activities; the winner is also requested to preserve strictly the historical site dating from 1892, which has been abandoned and become heavily damaged since 1998 when the old line was closed.

The work on the tender was prepared by the Manager of the Authority for Developing Jerusalem Mr. Motti Hazan, his deputy Mrs. Anat Zur, the railways' Business Development Department Manager, the railways' member of the Legal Department solicitor Jacob Ashkenazi, and solicitor Matan Ben-Shaul of Yehuda Raveh solicitor's office. The site has been designed by the architects' office A. Architects-Eyal Ziv.

However, many still claim that it was a fatal mistake not to continue using the old station after the old line had been rebuilt and the „White Elephant“-Malka station was built instead in the middle of nowhere!

(x). PLANS FOR LINES ON THE WEST BANK.

[NB: As Editor I pondered a while whether to include this item here or under „Other Middle East Railways“. In the end - because IR is involved - I have placed it here but mean thereby no political statement!]

From „Ha'aretz“, 27.02.2012; by Chaim Levinson:- „Israel Railways has prepared a major plan for providing train service throughout the West Bank to serve both Israelis and Palestinians. The plan, prepared at the request of Transportation Minister Yisrael Katz, calls for establishing 11 new rail lines, according to a map that Ha'aretz has obtained. Katz has on several occasions expressed his intention to build a railway network in the West Bank.

Except for the proposed line from Rosh Ha'ayin to the West Bank settlement of Ariel, the prospects for actually carrying out the entire scheme are seen as slim. There are diplomatic, legal and budgetary hurdles involved, as well as a need for cooperation with the Palestinian Authority, which administers large areas of the West Bank. No target date has been set for implementing the plan and no cost estimate has been presented, although the sums involved would clearly be substantial. The Transportation Ministry confirmed that it was pursuing the plan for the new rail lines „so as to permit it to be carried out in the future,“ and in accordance with „a legal commitment the ministry made to the High Court of Justice.“

In a visit to the northern part of the West Bank in 2010, Katz promised

to revive the pre-state Ottoman and British Mandate-era rail line there with establishment of service between the city of Jenin and Afula in the Jezreel Valley. Katz also allocated NIS 3 million to plan a line from the Israeli town of Rosh Ha'ayin, northeast of Tel Aviv, to Nablus in the northern West Bank. Detailed plans were drawn up for the first part of that line - from Rosh Ha'ayin to Ariel.

Last December, at an event at which Katz was honoured by the Yesha Council of West Bank Jewish settlements, he said he had instructed Israel Railways management to expedite the planning of the rail lines.

According to the map that Ha'aretz obtained, the proposal calls for 475 kilometres of rail lines. For purposes of comparison, the combined length of existing routes in Israel proper is currently 1,100 kilometres. The West Bank network would include one line running through Jenin, Nablus, Ramallah, Jerusalem, Ma'aleh Adumim, Bethlehem and Hebron. Another would provide service along the Jordanian border from Eilat to the Dead Sea, Jericho and Beit She'an and from there toward Haifa in the west and in also in a northeasterly direction. The proposed scheme also calls for shorter routes, such as between Nablus and Tul Karm in the West Bank, and from Ramallah to the Allenby Bridge crossing into Jordan.

Israel Railways hired engineer Gidon Yerushalmi, to the tune of NIS 1 Million, to develop the West Bank master plan. Yerushalmi's firm has previously worked on other such projects. A preliminary document on the project explains that its aim is to „address the transportation needs of local residents and other passengers.“

The plan also includes infrastructure that would connect the rail lines at a later stage to lines in the Gaza Strip and in Arab countries. An emphasis is being placed on „continuity between the rail network within the Green Line [Israel's 1967 borders] and the planned network in Judea and Samaria.“ The map obtained by Haaretz was presented in December to the top planning council of the Israel Defense Forces' Civil Administration. (Because the West Bank has not been formerly annexed to Israel, the IDF has general administrative authority there.)

At the time, the members of the Civil Administration's council appeared to give serious consideration to the plan. There was discussion, for example, of a tunnel under Nablus as part of the proposal. For his part, the council chairman, Shlomo Moshkovitz, noted that the plan calls for rail lines through areas under partial or total control of the Palestinian Authority. The Palestinians can be expected to object, Moshkovitz said, and the plan is „without value without their approval.“



TENDERS.

(i). Tender No. MS/RC/18/11: providing stands for Sale of Kosher Coffee and Pastry at the stations of Sha'ar Holon (Holon Gate), Holon Wolfson, Bat-Yam Yoseftal, and Bat-Yam Komemiyut. The intention is to erect mobile stands and chairs and tables, to be removed at the end of each working day and stored until next day in coordination with the railways. The contract may be given to one bidder for all the stations or to four separate bidders each for one station. The contract is for 12 months with optional extensions of up to additional 12 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 02.01.2012.

(ii). Tender No. BN/KB/05/11: Building an Acoustic Wall at Acre.

Works include: preparatory and dismantling, earthworks for basic beams, excavations for roadbeds, tamping infrastructures, tamping and filling from excavation surplus, new filling and tamping, catamping infrastructures, tamping and filling from excavation surplus, new filling and tamping, casting head beam from reinforced concrete, casting drilling piles at work site, building the acoustic wall from prepared elements, gardening and irrigation, and fence works.

The tender consists of the following sections:

- 01 – earthworks.
 - 02 – cast concrete.
 - 23 – piles.
 - 40 – development works.
 - 41 – gardening and irrigation.
 - 70 – acoustic wall.
 - 99 – organisation and direction works.
- Implementation time: 6 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 01.01.2012.

(iii). Tender No. MC/SR/12/11: Surveying the lower trackbed base by a ground penetration Radar (GPR). Latest date for submission of proposals: 15.02.2012.

(iv). Tender No. TM/KB/02/11: Frame agreement for carrying out alumino-thermic welding work of rails as well as turnouts, rail cutting, manual track tamping, drilling holes in rails, replacement of rail pads, ballast regulating, dismantling of track panels, etc. The contract is for 24 months with optional extensions of up to 36 additional months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 13.02.2012.

(v). Tender No. BN/KB/11/11: Building the railways' administrative complex within the Lod station site. Works include:
Structure 1 – a central building for the railways' management consisting of two underground floors, entrance floor, and eight floors of offices.
Structure 2 – An open parking area and landscape development works.
Structure 3 – Daily supervision of works.
Implementation time: 30 months.
Latest date for submission of proposals: 14.02.2012.

(vi). Tender No. TK/MT/11/12: Consultancy services for media, telephones, radio, and internet: The contract is for 36 months with optional extensions of up to additional 36 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 09.02.2012.

(vii). Tender No. MN/KB/01/12: Implementation Manager for the management of the A1 fast link to Jerusalem: The proposed job requirements are: Control and follow-up on the companies involved in the project in aspects of keeping schedules, budget, quality, implementation, etc. until handing over to the railways' operational departments. The contract is for the time from signing with the winner until project completion. Latest date for submission of proposals: 02.02.2012.

(viii). Tender No. MC/SR/21/12: Calibration services for Fuel Gauges and Thermometers of the railways refuelling points. The contract is for 12 months with optional extensions of up to additional 60 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 13.02.2012.

(ix). Tender No. TH/SR/22/12: Providing machining services for manufacturing of spare parts mounted on track machines: The tender refers to facilities at Haifa East and Lod. The contract is for 12 months with optional extensions of up to additional 48 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 14.02.2012.

(x). Tender No. TC/MT/06/11: A designer for electric trains' high voltage contact network: Work will include: preliminary design of the network along the lines, changes and adjustments at passenger and operational stations, deployment of communication lines, additional designs as needed, and employing sub-consultants when needed. The contract is for 36 months with optional extensions of up to additional 84 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 01.03.2012.

(xi). Tender No. HN/RC/01/12: Manufacture and Supply of R350 Head Treated Rails. Bids by 21.03.2012.

(xii). Tender No. MS/RC/2012/2: Operating Taxi Services to/from Herzliyya station. Contract is for 36 months, submissions by 02.03.2012.

(xiii). Tender No. HN/KB/11/11: Completion works at the northern area of Beer-Sheva depot, located at the former Beer-Sheva station. Works include: laying 3.5km. of track and several turnouts; building a main railway communication channel on the new alignment; building a northern refuelling platform to include sand filling, WC cleaning and emptying pad, fire-fighting and additional systems; a tunnel for passage of road vehicles; operational tunnel; drainage; sanding infrastructure; refuelling system; track for washing carriage bodies; concrete works; electricity, lighting, air-conditioning, sanitary installations etc.

The works will be divided into two: The first to include the infrastructure works, the second to include the fuel tanks and refuelling systems. Implementation of first project 16 months, of second project 8 months following completion of first project. Submissions by 15.04.2012.

(xiv). Tender No. SO/SR/01/12: Advertising, planning and purchase of media services for the Railways. The contract is for 24 months with optional extensions of up to additional 24 months. Submissions by 27.02.2012.

(xv). Tender No. MS/RC/2012/4: A Building for rental near the Ramle - Na'an alignment, the site has an area of 23,000 sq. m. of which 4,000 sq.m. are in a three-storey building. The contract is for 108 months. Submissions by 19.03.2012.

(xvi). Tender No. MS/RC/2012/1: Operation of a General Store at Rehovot station. Contract is for 108 months, proposals by 12.03.2012.

(xvii). Tender No. HN/KB/01/12: Building a Parking Area at the newly-opened Yavneh West station. Works include: Preparatory and earthworks, foundations and supports, drainage, landscaping, electricity and lighting, pavements etc. Implementation: 10 months. Submissions by 06.03.2012.

(xviii). Tender No. TM/KB/02/12: Fencing works at the railway sites in the North. Construction, reconstruction and maintenance along alignments, at sites,

stations, gates etc. The contract is for 12 months with optional extensions of up to additional 48 months. Submissions by 05.03.2012.

(xix). Tender No. CA/MT/04/12: Providing Calculation Services for Efficiency Bonuses. Contract is for 12 months with optional extensions up to additional 60 months. Submissions by 22.03.2012.

(xx). Tender No. LG/SR/06/12: Providing cargo transportation and conveyance services over the network. Contract is for 12 months with optional extensions of up to additional 48 months. Submissions by 29.03.2012.

TENDERS ALLOCATED:-

The following Tender Winners have been announced:

(i). TER-ARMEE won tender No. BN/KB/06/11 worth about \$2.3 Million for building acoustic walls at Neve Itamar (near Netanya) and at Hadera West.

(ii). Hashvil Hayarok (The Green Lane) won tender No. HN/KB/08/11 worth \$1.6 Million for area development, landscaping and irrigation works along the Lod - Na'an Junction section alignment.

(iii). 10.01.2012: The railways have announced that the winners of Tender No. TK/KB/02/11 for Communication works on the Lod - Na'an Junction - Kiryat-Gat - Beer-Sheva sections are:

For the northern part: Manolid Kheiruth Systems Ltd.

For the southern part: Uri Nakhmani & Sons Drills Ltd.

(iv). Tender No. BN/KB/05/11 for building an acoustic wall at Acre; winner: AGA.S.H.Eearth Works Ltd.; worth: \$780,000.00.

(v). Tender No. TK/KB/01/11 for upgrading lighting at Ashdod Port classification yard; winner: M. Drori Electrical Services Ltd.; worth: \$488,000.00.

(vi). 24.01.2012: The railways have announced that the winners of tender No. MC/SR/07/11 for supply of diesel fuel for rail transportation are:

In the northern region: Dor Alon Energy for Israel (1988) Ltd.

In the central and southern region: Sonol Co. Ltd.

(vii). The Railways have recently announced that Vossloh Fastening Systems of Germany won Tender No. HN/RC/01/01 worth €946,860 for supply of SKL W14 rail fastening systems.

(viii). The Railways have recently announced that the local Chemical Lab (Ilioff & Bentur) Ltd. has won the \$46,368 Tender TH/SR/11/13 for calibration of diesel fuel gauges on the railways' sites and rolling stock.

Bombardier Visit

Sybil Ehrlich reports

A group of Israeli journalists was invited by Bombardier to the company's workshops in Goerlitz, Germany, in November 2011. Your intrepid reporter, moonlighting as a "Jerusalem Post" correspondent, was a lucky recipient of this free trip. We saw the construction of double-decker coaches for Israel Railways, from bits of raw metal right through to the finishing touches with the Israel Railways logo, and even "Haifa Merkaz" in Hebrew on the destination board.

The naked shell of a double-deck coach.



A carriage roof about to be put on.

Now they are starting to look like something.





A door is ready to be attached.



Door in process of being attached



There is no doubt about which country this one is intended for!

LIGHT RAIL.

A. JERUSALEM LRV PROJECT.

(i). From a press release of 07.12.2011 by the Transport & Roads' Safety Ministry:

Minister Katz has today instructed the Jerusalem Transportation Master Plan team to be prepared to operate 18 LRV trains as against the 14 currently operated; When full operation begins, the number will rise to 21. The international safety team (ISA) is consulting and assisting CityPass in overcoming the continuing problems with the communication and tracing and control systems.

(ii). From a press release of 14.12.2011 by the Transport & Roads' Safety Ministry:

The Transport & Roads' Safety Ministry's General Manager-in-Chief Mr. Alex Langer, has yesterday approved CityPass to operate 18 LRV trains instead 14 currently operated already from Friday, 16.12.2011. The approval was given after CityPass had presented its plan for improved safety and service level. It is believed that with the increase of the operational fleet size, the frequency will improve thus enabling train to run at 6 to 9 minutes intervals at rush hours. It is further believed that increased frequency will bring a gradual shift of passengers from buses still running along the alignment, to permanent use of the LRV. It will also enable completion of the „smart traffic lights system“ which provides priority for the LRV at junctions.

(iii). From a press release of 02.01.2012 by the Transport, National Infrastructures & Roads' Safety Ministry, Jerusalem Transportation Master Plan, and the Jerusalem Municipality:

From 13.01.2012, the Jerusalem „South Eastern Pulse“ will come into action; a combined system of the LRV and 22 bus feeding lines will provide revolutionary changes in services, less dense traffic of buses and shorter journey times.

(iv) TICKETING ISSUES. Sybil Ehrlich is foaming at the mouth:-

„(a) The light rail started charging fares on December 1. Single tickets were priced at NIS 6.40, for unlimited bus and light rail rides within 90 minutes. When the passenger puts his Rav-Kav smartcard on the machine reader inside a bus or train, he gets a paper ticket showing the date and time he boarded and how many rides he has left.

On January 1 public transport fares were increased throughout the country, with local Jerusalem tickets being increased to NIS 6.60.

There are no senior 50% discounts for single rides, only for multi-ride „packages“ on a Rav-Kav smartcard. A senior (man over 65, woman over 60) who wants to get half-price rides needs to buy a package of 10 or 20 tickets. There is no date limit for these tickets.

(b) The first phase of bus route reorganisation was introduced in the southwest of the city. Many routes have been cut back, forcing passengers to change onto the light rail if their journey continues along Jaffa Road (the main city centre artery). For example, until now, a person wanting to travel from the Central Bus Station to Hadassah Medical Centre at Ein Kerem took the 27 bus all the way. This journey now necessitates taking the light rail as far as Mount Herzl, and picking up the 27 there, which is the new start/end point of the route. This is only one example of many, too numerous to mention here. Obviously this is a major inconvenience, especially for those with luggage, shopping, prams, grandma... in bad weather.

The Jerusalem Transport Master Plan and CityPass officials have been so brainwashed by their own propaganda into thinking that the light rail is the greatest ever boon to mankind that they can't see the disadvantages and drawbacks for the average user (or would-be non-user in many cases - those who were quite happy to take one bus all the way, as they did until this „improvement“). At a recent press briefing that I attended, the officials were so full of „how wonderful it will all be“ and fancy PowerPoint presentations that there was hardly any time left to ask questions.

Publicity material has been produced in Hebrew, English, Russian, Arabic and Amharic in the form of booklets that are being distributed at the Jerusalem central bus station and other localities.

The website explaining all the changes, with the title of „Maslulan“, which could be translated as „route planner“, www.jet.org.il, is at the time of writing (mid-January) only in Hebrew, although I was told it will be in English as well. Actually the spokesman of the Jerusalem Transport Master Plan insisted on the phone that it was already in English, and he was very surprised when I told him that there was no „English“ to click on.

(c) A serious ticketing problem came to my attention at the beginning of January. People who had put 10 or 20 „rides“ on their Rav-Kav card - each „ride“ being for 90 minutes unlimited travel on buses and light-rail trains within Jerusalem - were being fined by ticket inspectors for not having a valid ticket on the light rail. Wearing my Jerusalem Post reporter's hat, I investigated such an incident that happened to a colleague. It turns out that these ride packages purchased before December 1 (the date the light rail started charging fares) are not valid on the light rail.

If there was any publicity about this, I certainly didn't see it. I collect all the booklets and printed information on Jerusalem buses and light rail that I can get my hands on, and I didn't see a word about „asking for a special Code 62 ticket if you want to go on the light rail“ that apparently one was supposed to do if the first vehicle in the 90 minutes was a bus and the passenger wanted to continue by light rail.

The Master Plan spokesman insisted to me on January 11 that there had been plenty of publicity telling people who put rides on their cards before December 1 to take their Rav-Kav to the Central Bus Station in Jerusalem to get it exchanged. That was the first I heard of it.

Overzealous inspectors are not distinguishing between this genuine misunderstanding - passengers who naturally assume they have a valid ticket, with a date and time stamp showing they are within their 90 minutes - and fare-dodgers who hope to get a free ride. All are being mistreated with equal savagery, by being fined NIS 186.60 (!). Fines are to be paid within a month, which gives the person plenty of time to contest them by calling the telephone number on the back of the fine notice.

All comment is superfluous.“

(v). From a press release of 15.01.2012 by the Transport, National Infrastructures, & Roads' Safety Ministry, the Transportation Master Plan team, and the municipality: „Despite the stormy weather on Friday, 13.01.2012, the „South-West Pulse“- the first stage in the combined network of LRV and buses, which started on that day passed peacefully; A third of the buses lines serving 17 neighbourhoods of 150,000 inhabitants changed their routes, the LRV achieved the frequency - planned for this stage - of 7.5 minutes, and 30,000 people were carried.

Minister Katz and Mayor Barkat observed closely the first day of operation and announced that the next stage will be operated when the LRV frequency will reach 4.5 minutes.

NOTES AND COMMENTS.

(i). TUNNEL TENDERS. From a press release of 11.01.2012 by the Transport, National Infrastructures & Roads' Safety Ministry: Minister Katz has instructed today NTA (Tel-Aviv Metro/LRV project management) to publish tomorrow (12.01.2012 - after years of delays) the international tender for boring the tunnels for both the Red and the Green lines.

Mr. Katz said that this tender is not only one of the biggest ever in Israel, but it is the first time that the ministry has published an international tender financed by the State for the design and building of a mass transit system. According to his promises, the Red line is to be opened in 2017 and the Green line in 2020. The 22 km Red line will include 33 stations of which 23 will be underground; it will link Petakh-Tikva with Bnei-Brak, Ramat-Gan, Tel-Aviv, and Bat-Yam. The 35 km Green line, will include 60 stations of which 5 will be underground; it will link Tel-Aviv with Holon and the outskirts of Rishon-Le-Zion. Also planned are the Violet, Yellow, and Purple lines.

(ii). NTA Tender No. PQ-053/2011 for design and implementation of tunnelling by TBM on the Red and Green lines: The Red line central section is underground and consists of subsections to be implemented both by cut-and-cover system and TBM and NATM. The twin bored tunnels will be 8 km long each, totalling 16 km and including passages between the tunnels.

The Green line sections are to be implemented using the same systems as those of the Red line; twin bored tunnels will be 3 km long each, totalling 6 km with passages between them.

Latest date for submission of proposals: 27.03.2012.

(iii). MTA has recently published the following tenders:-

Tender No. 060/2012 for Designing the underground sections of the Red Line. Pre-Qualification by second quarter of 2012, ITT by 3rd. quarter, and contract signing in second quarter of 2013.

(iv). Tender No. 001/2012. Provision of Management and Inspection of works on the Red Line. Submissions by 07.03.2012.

C. HAIFA.

The Haifa Municipality, which operates the Carmelit subway, the only metro so far operational in Israel and that since 1959, will extend its operating hours until midnight. The line currently carries 600,000 passengers annually.

(i). A SOLDIER'S MEMOIRS.

In the 'Black Country Bugle' the story of the rediscovery of the turntable at Jaffa station led to some reactions from readers. On 11.10.2011 the following appeared:-

"STEAM PATROL IN PALESTINE.

Former squaddie Frank Jennings of Great Barr was enthralled by the story we published in Bugle 958 about the Black Country-built railway turntable unearthed in Israel because it brought back a whole stack of memories of his time serving with the Army out in Palestine in the years immediately after the Second World War, and he has kindly sent us some....of those precious memories.

"When I was serving in Israel between 1945 and 1948 it was of course called Palestine and during those three years we were certainly given a warm reception. A few years before that, during the war, I worked on the railway as a lorry driver's mate on a 6-ton Scammel Mechanical Horse, a job I did from the age of 14 after leaving school to when I was called up at 18, I was put in the 'Foot Slozgers', the Lincolnshire Regiment, along with a load of other people from the Midlands and Birmingham, and after 16 weeks training we were sent to Palestine. After four weeks in 'D' Coy they put me in the motor transport section because I could drive - yes it was just like that.

A lot of blokes who had served in the war, drivers amongst them, were being demobbed, hence a shortage of those needed to get behind the wheel. As I recall at the time there was just me and a farmer lad who could drive and I was given a Bedford QL.... with an X painted on the radiator, the mark of our regiment which was the 10th. of Foot..... [based at] a place called Al-Sarafand on the Mediterranean coast in the north of Palestine [sic. - it is actually in the south. Ed.] and the following year after we left.

During the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, this small village was depopulated and all the buildings destroyed. It seems strange to think that I was one of the last people to live, albeit in an Army camp, at a place that had been around for centuries and was even known to the Crusaders in the 11th. century.

...[We were] aboard a railway patrol in November 1947, keeping an eye out for terrorists who were always trying to blow up the railways. The chaps I was with had to prod around the railway with a bayonet looking for anything suspicious, nothing sophisticated in that, and from where the train journey began at Port Said in Egypt all the way into Palestine, we had to put wooden shutters up against the windows to stop a barrage of stones that were always being aimed at British squaddies who were just there trying to keep the peace... The locomotive was made in Glasgow and some of the carriages definitely made in the Midlands, but it's hard to imagine that by the time the British Army finally left Palestine on Mandate Day in May 1948 there was hardly any railway left at all.

Politically the British Army was in a no-win situation and because things were beginning to hot up, we were glad to see the back of Palestine. Tragically, during the three years I was in the Middle East, 784 British lives were lost as well as over 200 British Palestine Police. There are in fact over 6,000 graves of soldiers who have died in that part of the world since 1917.

We were sent to North Africa after leaving Palestine..... I thought we were going home. No such luck!"

[Ed adds: The usual intriguing mix of fact and fable. The loco he mentions will have been a North British Class P, the carriages mentioned from Metropolitan; 'Mandate Day' must mean the day the Mandate ended!]

(ii). SOUNDS GOOD.

David Lloyd Klepper, who worked for 39 years in architectural acoustics before moving to Israel, has sent an article he wrote of 'Sound & Communication' magazine, 2002, p. 52-57, on 'Audio-Visual for Public Transport' - mainly concerned with the audibility and intelligibility of announcements on trains and stations in the USA, but with photos of some Israeli stations. This includes captions: "Extensive sound absorbing treatment provides an excellent acoustical environment in the Tel Aviv University station. Half of the station's ceiling is translucent, letting light in; half is perforated metal under glass fibre" and "In the Be'er Sheva Railroad Station hanging perforated metal and glass fibre-sound absorbers provide acoustical control. Both Be'er Sheva and Tel Aviv University stations are good examples of coordination of sound system and acoustical design, with omnidirectional loudspeakers providing excellent intelligibility."

(iii). TROUBLE AT THE EMD PLANT.

In the 'Railway Magazine' March 2012 p.10 is a disturbing news item relevant to the loco stock of IR (and ESR): "Employees of the EMD [Electro-Motive Diesel] locomotive works in Canada are involved in a bitter dispute that could ultimately threaten the future of the plant - the birthplace of more than 600 Class 66 locomotives for the British, European and North African markets, as well as tens of thousands of locos for US and Canadian operators.

Since the start of the year, nearly 500 union workers have been locked out of the plant by management, and the situation threatens to become a flashpoint for Canadian unions trying to hang on to high-paying industrial jobs at a time when recessionary pressures are driving more work towards cheaper wage zones.

Until a few years ago, the EMD plant in London, Ontario, was owned by General Motors, and a dispute such as this would have been unthinkable, but the factory is now owned by Progress Rail (a division of Caterpillar), which wants to impose a collective agreement on the workforce - slashing wages by an astonishing 55%, eliminating pensions,

healthcare benefits, cost-of-living increases and child care leave. The existing contracts expired on Dec. 31st. and the company has basically given the workers a 'take it or leave it' ultimatum despite reportedly making record profits. The Canadian Auto Workers union (CAW) says that hourly rates would be cut from \$35 to \$16.50 and that it will fight the proposal. The Canadian government, which approved the sale of EMD to Caterpillar in 2010, has washed its hands of the matter. A spokesman for Industry Minister Christian Paradis said the minister would not intervene 'because these disputes are between a private company and a union.'

Caterpillar bought the plant in an \$820M takeover of EMD in June 2010 and the union spokesman claimed that the dispute is connected to a new manufacturing plant the company has recently opened at Muncie, Indiana, USA, where wages of around \$24,000 (15,500 Pounds) are paid. Caterpillar has a history of adversarial labour relations, union-busting and use of replacement workers in the US. It also has deep pockets and a reputation for refusing to back down.

Jason Russell, an expert in labour relations at Empire State College, New York, who lives in London, said: 'My guess is that this is going to be a long-drawn-out and bitter conflict.' North American railway journalist Greg McConnell told the 'Railway Magazine': 'A year ago, these people were proudly building SD70AC and export locos and believed that their remarkable increase in productivity would make a difference. Now they're on a picket line and it's a very cold and very sad place.' The locked-out workers say they will fight attempts to bring in replacement workers or move locomotives out of the plant."

[Ed. comments: Without knowing any more than this report, it does seem typical of high-testosterone confrontational capitalism to 'screw the workers' and the Canadian Government will surely be amongst the first to bemoan the loss of jobs and export production should the new owners succeed in destroying a successful plant. That would be a sad end to 'GM-EMD.].

(iv). A MEMOIR OF 190 RAILWAY OPERATING COMPANY R.E. IN PERSIA.

In 'Railway Magazine' March 2012 p. 24 is an interview with/article on a former engine driver, Caleb Priestley, who was a former Royal Engineer in 190 ROC RE in Persia and is now aged 93.

Born in Royston, near Barnsley, in 1918, he started as a Cleaner at Royston shed in August 1936, passed out as a fireman at Normanton and was then moved to Hellifield.

"In July 1939, 21-year-old Caleb was called up for six months 'in case of war' and sent off to become an anti-aircraft gunner with the Royal Artillery. After training, by which time the conflict had broken out, his unit was moved to Guisborough to protect the steelmaking city of Sheffield from air attack, but, after two months, new orders came through. The War Department had decided to set up several railway operating companies for overseas operation, and Caleb's firing experience had been noted. After a short spell with a railway group at Melbourn, Derbyshire, he was transferred to the

Longmoor Military Railway to be trained as a driver, duly passing that hurdle on one of the LMR's saddle-tank locos. He was then transferred to 190 Railway Operating Company in Manchester to await orders.

By now it was 1941 and, under a big German offensive, the Russians were suffering huge losses in both manpower and materials. The maritime supply route to Murmansk was fraught with difficulties but there was an overland alternative - an 860-mile rail route across Persia to the Caspian Sea, where the Russians were able to take delivery of supplies. With searing heat and some formidable gradients along the way, it would test the railwaymen's skills to the limit.

After a long sea voyage, Caleb's unit arrived in Basra, on the Persian Gulf, in December 1941 and linked up with several other Allied military railway divisions - a total UK commitment of around 2,500 men. The challenges facing them were formidable: the line, single-track throughout with passing loops, climbed for no fewer than 175 miles to the 7,000ft.-plus summit at Noor Abad, passing through 130 tunnels along the way. Before the arrival of the Royal Engineers, the line boasted 65 locomotives built by a variety of manufacturers, mainly German. But lack of proper maintenance had left them all in poor condition, and repairs were required if they were to play a serious part in the operation.

So the Allies brought in 104 oil-burning and 39 coal-burning Stanier 8F 2-8-0's from Britain, 96 oil-burning 2-8-2's and 22 0-4-0 diesel shunters from the USA, six German 2-10-2's that had been diverted from China, and three Kitson articulated tank engines from the Kowloon-Canton Railway.

"When we arrived, we set up camp and got everything going on the southern end of the route in two months", said Caleb. "With lots of American Liberty ships arriving at Bandar Shahpur, we were working flat out around the clock, making up trains with shunters on the docks and keeping the supplies moving. In summer, the temperature could soar to over 140°F and we were feeding raging fires in the fireboxes as well!", he recalled. "The injectors would often stop working because the water going in was too hot, so we sometimes had to throw out the fires. Considering that Britain had built railways in India, that was a problem that should never have happened, but it was quickly solved when injector cones of a more suitable type were shipped over to us from Manchester."

..... Eventually Caleb's unit was relieved by the Americans, but the war was still far from over and, as the Allies advanced in Italy, he found himself in that country, sleeping and cooking in boxvans and being called upon to help build temporary bridges after the retreating Germans had destroyed everything of strategic importance. "One morning we'd just left camp when there was a terrific explosion as a booby-trapped German magazine blew up; We'd been shunting right over it only the day before and if we'd left our breakfasts just ten minutes later, we'd all have been killed."

When the war ended, Caleb returned to Longmoor, from where he was sent to Fulford Barracks, York, to report for demob. His old LMS job was still secure....

Despite his wartime driving service, the LMS rule book insisted that six months had to elapse before he could be passed out on the first step of that company's own driving ladder, as a passed fireman/spare driver...."

(v). HEDJAZ RAILWAY MEDAL.

Uri Ben-Rehav has sent an interesting offprint with photo from http://www.rogersstudy.co.uk/hejaz/hejaz_railway/railway_medal.html (listed as 'with acknowledgement to Owain Raw-Rees') - the text is accurate, and Uri notes that he had never heard of such medals before. Presumably they must have been widespread at one time.

"The building of a railway was announced by Sultan Abdulhamid II in 1900, that was to be financed and operated entirely by Ottoman subjects (although the principal engineer was German.) Suspicious of foreigners, but unable to maintain power without their help, Abdulhamid recognized that the construction of a railway to the holy cities of Medina and Mecca would not only improve his image as Caliph of Islam, but also increase the tenuous hold that the Empire had on the distant reaches of the Arabian Peninsula. The railway was never completed, however, as violent opposition from Arab rebels prevented the construction crews from reaching Mecca. The Turkish Ministry of War took over administration of the railway in 1911, and during World War 1 it became the target of Arab guerillas organised by the Sherif of Mecca, Hussein Ibn Ali, his son Prince Faisal, and a certain British officer named T. E. Lawrence, along with the 'Arabian Detachment', 'C' Flight, of 14 Squadron R.F.C.

Funding for the Hejaz railway came from donations, the largest of which came from the Shah of Persia. Not all of the donations were voluntary, but those who did volunteer were rewarded with this medal. The medal came in both wearable and non-wearable versions, ranging in size from 26mm to 50mm. The bulk of the medals had the Hegira date 1318, however special series of medals were issued bearing the dates 1322 (for completion of the rail link to Maan) and 1326 (for the link to Medina.) The wearable medals were 30mm in diameter, issued in gold, silver and nickel alloy. Originally, the ribbon of all the medals was red, about 20 to 25mm in width. Those who had made large enough donations to merit the silver medal felt they should wear a different ribbon to differentiate their awards, and so a green ribbon was instituted to replace the red ribbons on silver medals."

A photo of two such is available on the above-mentioned site.

(vi). I.R. MODEL LOCOMOTIVE:

Recently appeared is an HO model by 'Südexpress' of the new 'Euro 4000' Co-Co diesel locomotive in Israel Railways livery of red/grey/blue. Model No. 140112, in DC version, without sound. (Other versions, e.g. with sound, are also available or to become available.) It can be ordered (amongst other sources) from:- Naumann Modelleisenbahn, Chemnitzer Strasse 108, D-51067 Köln, Germany; e-mail: service@naumann-online.de, tel. (+49) -221 - 6910699, Fax 6910696. Cost is about €240 plus postage.

OTHER MIDDLE-EAST RAILWAYS.

(Note: Thanks to Marc Stegemann we incorporate several items from 'International Railway Journal' in 2011 - a little late, but for the fuller historical record.)

A. TURKEY.

(i). FRIENDSHIP TRAIN TO GERMANY.

In 'Eisenbahn Kurier' 1/2012 p.14 is a photo of DB Co-Co 103.245 hauling a train of TCDD coaches in Germany! The caption states that as part of the 50th anniversary commemorations of the formal decision to recruit Turkish 'Gastarbeiters' in Germany, on 29/30th. October 2011 a special train was run by the TCDD from Istanbul to München. 103.245 of München depot took over the train at Salzburg - in Germany it had the train number DZ 13994. One wonders which route this train had taken!

Further information on the TCDD 'Friendship train' comes from 'Eisenbahn Revue' 12/2011 p.581. The train comprised ten coaches including a Generator Coach which could not be used in Austria and Germany. It travelled via Bulgaria, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Austria, and there are pictures of SZ electric loco 541.018 hauling it on the Ljubljana - Jesenice leg, from Jesenice an ÖBB 2016 hauled it (with help from a second over the Tauern). On the return, which started on 31.10.2011, i.e. just one day later, the train was hauled in Austria by 1016.038 and 2016.045. Passengers included various politicians and media but also a dozen or so of the very first 'Gastarbeiter' who had of course originally travelled in much more basic accommodation!

From 'Lok Magazin' 1/2012: The passengers totalled some 40 and the train was organised by Turkish television station TRT.

(ii). RAILFAN REPORT.

Jeff Hawken wrote: „Adana area yesterday (Sunday 18/12/11) had DE24 180 and 360 on the Mersin diagrams, DE24 365 on the morning Iskenderun and DE24 116 on the Islahiye morning and evening. DE24 116 piloted the Iskenderun train from Adana in the morning. DE24 392 piloted the 1515 Mersin - Adana from Yenice in the afternoon. DE22 062 and DE22 066 confirmed recently overhauled, and allocated to Adana.

In the Morning at Kayseri was DE24 202, swapped for DE24 296 in the afternoon. I took the Islahiye train throughout, and made the weekly Damascus to Tehran train, which is still running despite travel restrictions in Syria meaning there were very few passengers. Stock was 2 open coaches, restaurant car, 4 sleeping cars and a postal van, with only one sleeper being in use. Loco was DE24 268 to Malatya, where it was replaced, having lost 75 minutes on the hills due to misfiring engine.

DE24 312 worked forward to Elazig, where DE24 120 worked forward.. I took this to Turhal, and returned to Elazig on the „Posta“ mixed train from Tatvan, today running with DE24 351, 4 coaches and about 25 freight vehicles. My plan to continue towards Kurtalan tonight was thwarted by the news that the line is closed beyond Diyarbakir, so I'm here until 15:00 tomorrow for the Vangolu Express back west ...“

(iii). BURSA TRAMWAY. From I.R.J.' 5/2011: „The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the European Investment Bank (EIB) have agreed to co-finance the expansion of the city's light rail network. EBRD will provide a €15M 15-year loan to finance the acquisition of 15 LRV's, while EIB will grant a €100M loan for constructing new lines.“

(iv). HAYDARPASA CLOSED!

From Jeff Hawken on the ‚TurkRail‘ chatline 22.01.12: „It would appear that from 01 February 2012 the total closure of Haydarpasa station is going ahead. According to websites the following alterations to long-distance services are taking place:

The three overnight services between Haydarpasa and Ankara (Anadolu Express, Ankara Express, Fatih Express) are all CANCELLED throughout in both directions. The Meram Express to / from Konya is CANCELLED throughout in both directions. The Icanadolu Mavi Haydarpasa to Adana and return runs between Adana and Arifiye and v.v. only. All of the long distance services to and from the East (Dogu Express, Vangolu Express, Kurtalan Express, Guney Express, Transasia Express) only run to and from Ankara. They are cancelled between Haydarpasa and Ankara. The Bogazici Treni stopping train from Haydarpasa to Eskisehir runs between Arifiye and Eskisehir only.

I believe similar restrictions will be put in place on the Sirkeci side, such that the international trains will terminate in the outskirts of Istanbul for road connection forward. There is no mention made of any road replacement services for the Haydarpasa closure. Anybody travelling to Turkey for rail travel purposes would be well advised to steer clear of Istanbul until further notice (probably a few years!).“

(v). CAMLIK RAILWAY MUSEUM.

In 'C.R.J.' No. 168 p. 455 is a report on a September 2011 visit: "A large variety of locos is present, 34 in all, with some rusting but others newly repainted. The site is very neat and tidy, and is well set out with many photographic opportunities. There is a new restaurant and toilet block for Ephesus tourists off the many cruise ships. The museum is open every day, with an entrance fee of 5TL (about 2 Pounds). By road it is about 7 miles south of Selcuk and 10 miles east of Kusadasi. Trains from Izmir to Ortaklar and Aydin call at Camlik, but they are very slow and infrequent." The internet is recommended for

further information.

B. SAUDI ARABIA.

(i). TALGOS. From 'Eisenbahn Revue' 12/2011 p.604. Further to the item in Issue 95: "Patentes Talgo will deliver 35 trains of the Talgo 350 Type for the 450km high-speed line between Mecca and Medina. There is an option for a further 23 similar trains.

Each Talgo train comprises two power cars and 13 centre cars. All cars have the Talgo passive tilting equipment and have a floor height of 760mm. They are based on the trains of which RENFE already operates 46 units, but especial challenges are created by the extreme temperatures in Saudi Arabia and the need to prevent ingress of sand.

The entire project includes the trains but also the tracks, overhead supply, signalling (ECTS Level 2), energy supply, construction of workshops and depots, and the maintenance of the line for twelve years. Five consortia from Spain, France, Germany, China and South Korea had competed for the gigantic tender when it was issued some five years ago - the French and Spanish being then shortlisted. The victorious Spanish consortium comprises twelve Spanish firms and two Saudi partners. As well as RENFE and the Infrastructure firm ADIF there is also Dimetronic, the Spanish daughter of Invensys Rail. This firm will deliver the ETCS equipment.

The contract is worth 1.6 Billion Euros for Talgo. The builder has recently won orders from the USA, Russia, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. In 2010 83% of the income came from exports."

(ii). PEOPLE MOVER.

From I.R.J. 6/2011: „Bombardier has signed a \$96M contract to design, build, operate and maintain an Innovia APM 300 Automated People Mover at King Abdulaziz International Airport. The system will be completed in early 2014.“

And: ‚Future Transport‘ is the title of a magazine for the Nordic Rail Fair. From the 2011/ 1 issue on p.5: „Bombardier Transportation has received an order for a train system for King Abdullaziz Airport in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, worth USD 96 Million (roughly SEK 610M). The ordering client is construction group Saudi Bin LaDin Group. The project is expected to be completed in early 2014.“

(iii). TEST TRAINS ON NEW LINES.

From I.R.J. 6/2011: „The Saudi Railway Company (SRN) has begun test operation of phosphate trains on the 1,392km. North-South Railway. The first train carried 200 tons of phosphate from the mines at Al Jalamid to the processing site at Ras Az Zawr in four wagons. When the line is fully operational, trains will be 2.8km. long with five locomotives and 160 wagons, carrying a payload of up to 1,600 tons. Phosphate and bauxite trains will be operated by Rites, of India, under a three year contract.

Construction is now under way on the second, 454km. phase from Az Zabirah Junction to Riyadh Airport, which will allow passenger services to operate from Riyadh to Ha'il, and eventually to Al Jawf. This section is due to be completed by 2014.“

C. ERITREA.

An advertisement in 'Steam Railway' No. 396 (9th. Dec. 2011) for Far Rail Tours announces - too late for Harakevet readers alas - "Eritrea's history and its phenomenal railway not only attract railway enthusiasts, they also create dreams for film producers. Together with an innovative, young film producer we'll run a compact steam event on Eritrea's railway. In addition to the railway programme, we'll visit the Monday-only camel market in Keren. At this market it's sometimes hard to tell whether you've used a time machine to go back to an Arabic market of the middle ages or you're living in 2012. While we're in Keren we'll also pay a visit to the reasonably well-kept station buildings of Keren. The tour will be good for Eritrea 'newcomers' as well as regular visitors. Our programme is very compact and offers only the 'cherry of the cake' of the Eritreans' railway, but we'll use all three different types of locomotive and will probably see the 'new' 442 56 in steam. This loco has been under overhaul for many years, as we've reported. It should be able to haul trains over the stiff gradients by the time we're there. As usual we offer a large variety of genuinely authentic looking trains."

The 'Arbaroba Special' runs/ran Jan. 28th. - Feb. 2nd. 2012 at a cost of GBP 1,140 upwards.

D. DUBAI.

(i). UTIP CONGRESS.

From ,IRJ' 5/2011: The 59th. UTIP Congress was held at Dubai, hosted by the Roads and Transport Authority, and was attended by ca. 2000 delegates from 80 countries; There were 252 exhibitors from 27 countries and some 9,700 visitors attended. It „surpassed expectations“ despite „some scepticism about the location.“ The 60th. Congress will be held in Geneva in May 2013.

(ii). METRO DELAYS.

Also from ,IRJ': „The RTA confirmed ‚last month‘ that the opening of the 23km. Metro Green Line had been postponed yet again, from August to the fourth quarter of the year.

RTA has asked the consortium building the Al Soufouh Tramway to accelerate construction of the first 9.5km. phase. Alstom-Besix initiated a slowdown in January amid discussions over refinancing the project.“

From 'C.R.J.' No. 168 p. 453. „A 2011 visitor found two lines in operation. The original Red Line runs from Jebel Ali in the south-west to Rashidiya, beyond the airport at the other end of town, a run of about 80 minutes. The new Green Line will run from Creek Park (it currently stops two stations short of this) to Etisalat, past the airport on the other side. The main depot is off the end of the Red Line at Jebel Ali. There are two passenger interchanges between the lines and a track connection at Union station for stock transfers. Our reporter covered the whole system in an afternoon using a one-day all-zones card costing 16 dirham, which is just under 3 Pounds.“

(iii). PALM MONORAIL.

Also ,C.R.J.' No. 168: This has a double-track but only one train! Two intermediate stations serve as-yet unbuilt

developments. At each end the train can be switched to the other track. A return trip on this line costs 25 dirham. Extensions are planned, to bring the monorail to one of the Metro stations and to extend the Metro system itself. A tram line is also in prospect.“

Photos on p. 454 (by Jonathan Samways) show 5-car Metro train No. 5036 (why this high number?) and the three-car monorail train crossing from one track to the other at the Atlantis Hotel end of the line.

E. UNITED ARAB EMIRATES.

From ,I.R.J.' 5/2011 „Union Railway has revealed its new corporate identity as Etihad Rail and set out further details of its plans to develop a 1200km railway network across the United Arab Emirates. His Excellency Nasser Al Sowaidi, chairman of Etihad Rail, confirmed the initial phase of the network between the Gulf coast port of Ruwais and Habshan will be completed early in 2013, when Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (Adnoc) will despatch its first rail-borne shipment of granulated sulphur. The line will reach Shah by the end of 2014.

The second stage of the project involves constructing the remainder of the network in Abu Dhabi and the line to Dubai, including the links to Mussaffah and the ports of Khalifa and Jebel Ali. The third and final phase will extend the tracks into the Northern Emirates to serve Sharjah, Fujairah and Khor Fakkan. There will also be links to Oman through Al Ain, and to the Saudi network via Ghweifat.

The company says it has made dramatic progress since its establishment in 2009, and many of the detailed technical, commercial and financial studies for the Dirhams 40Bn (\$US 10.9Bn) network have now been completed. Traffic volumes have been modelled for the next 20-30 years, and forecasts that the network will carry 50 million tonnes of freight and 16 million passengers „can reliably be predicted.“

In I.R.J. 8/2011: „Etihad Rail has confirmed that construction will begin on the country's first railway in the fourth quarter of this year. The 264km. line between the port of Ruwais and Habshan will be completed in early 2013.“

F. QATAR.

From ,I.R.J.' 5/2011: „Qatar Railways Company and Qatari Diar have signed a five-year contract with a joint venture of Parsons and Aecom to manage construction of the Lusail Light Rail network.

The 155M Riyals (\$US 42.6M) agreement was signed in New York last month in the presence of Qatari prime minister His Excellency Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabor al-Thani and United States transportation secretary Mr. Ray LaHood.

Lusail City is Qatar's largest domestic property development, covering an area of 38 sq.km. north of the capital Doha. The \$US 1.8Bn four-line light-rail network will have 29 stations, seven of them underground. A fleet of 20 LRV's will be required to operate the 30km. network, which will include a 6.6km underground section. Construction began in December 2010 and will be completed in the second half of 2015.“

G. IRAQ.

BAGHDAD METRO.

From I.R.J. 6/2011: „The Mayoralty of Baghdad has signed a contract with Systra for design and tender services for the first two lines of the city's new metro network. The agreement covers basic design, preparation of tender documents, and selection of an engineering, procurement and construction contractor. Line 1 will run for 18km. from Sadr City to Antar Square with 20 stations, while Line 2 will be 22km., long and will link Al Fath in the south east of the city with Al Mansour and Al Baya. The two lines will intersect at Al Khulani in the city centre.“

H. AFGHANISTAN.

It's a moot point whether this still counts as 'Middle East' but as there are links to countries to its west we shall include this item from the 'Asia Times' of 11.01.2012, by 'Fozil Mashrab' (apparently a pseudonym.). It adds a lot of political and economic context to the normal 'railway' element.

„The commissioning last month of the 75-kilometre railway line from Hairetan on the Uzbekistan border to Mazar-e-Sharif in Afghanistan is being hailed on both sides of the border. Seen as the start of Afghanistan's first rail network, it is creating openings for a stronger local economy and increased regional trade. The railway's chief financier, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), is confident that this relatively short stretch of railway will help Afghanistan to redefine its role in the region and in the world by unlocking its previously untapped trade potential. That is crucial to putting the Afghan economy on a sustainable footing as troops from the United States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization prepare to withdraw from Afghanistan by 2014.

Construction of the line was agreed by Afghanistan, Uzbekistan and the ADB in 2008 as part of the ADB-sponsored Central Asian Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) program. This envisages interconnecting Central Asia with South Asia and Europe through a web of inland highways and railway lines to boost trans-regional trade and help landlocked Central Asian countries secure access to open sea ports. The ADB provided a US\$165M grant and the Afghan government paid \$5M into the project. Uzbekistan's State Railways Company (ISRC) was contracted to construct the line. Work started in January 2010 and was completed by November that year, well ahead of the scheduled deadline of mid-2011 - and even before Uzbek and Afghan bureaucrats could finish the necessary paperwork and reach an agreement on the terms and conditions of exploiting the line. A successful first 'test drive' was carried out in the middle of last month, although freight traffic was reported to have used the line as early as August.

USRC's offshoot 'Sogdiana Trains' will be responsible for exploiting the Hairatan - Mazar-e-Sharif railway line for the initial three years, according to the agreement between the two countries. During this time, USRC will assist Afghan counterparts in creating the necessary infrastructure to maintain and service the line, trains and locomotives so that future Afghan railway engineers and mechanics

can take over the job smoothly.

The line will initially be used to transport 'commercial and non-lethal cargo.' Theoretically in the not so distant future, Afghan passengers could be allowed to take a ride to cities such as Samarkand, Bukhara and Khiva in Uzbekistan, and travel even further to Russia or beyond.

Before the commissioning of the line, most of Afghanistan's imports from Central Asia already came through Uzbekistan, with some also coming through Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. ADB's vice-president Juan Miranda said the line will significantly raise the capacity to handle goods at the Uzbek-Afghan border from the current 4,000 tonnes per month to 30,000 - 40,000 tonnes per month. Afghanistan-bound cargo was often held up at the Uzbek side of the border as all containers arriving through the extensive Uzbek rail network had to be transferred to trucks, which will no longer be necessary until inside Afghanistan after the line terminates. The ADB is optimistic that gradually with the development of the Afghan economy, especially its mining and agricultural sectors, the flow of materials will be both ways. The withdrawal plans for US and NATO troops will certainly result in outgoing traffic for this new line.

Before then, the line will increase Uzbekistan's strategic importance for US and Western countries as a base for logistical supplies to their troops in Afghanistan through what is known as the Northern Distribution Network (NDN). The US government's relations with its erstwhile 'frontline ally' Pakistan are in deep crisis following the 'friendly fire' incident in November when a NATO air strike killed 24 Pakistani soldiers and injured many others. The Pakistan government has retaliated by 'permanently stopping' the transit of US and NATO logistical convoys through its territory to Afghanistan, leaving thousands of trucks carrying supplies stranded in Pakistan. That leaves Uzbekistan - and the Hairatan - Mazar-e-Sharif railway line - as the major life line for the US to deliver supplies to its troops in Afghanistan. Around 75% of all the logistical supplies to US troops in Afghanistan is already being transported through the NDN, of which 90% crosses into Afghanistan from Uzbekistan, according to US officials.

The new line fits into the US government's new strategy for integrating Afghanistan with other countries in the region so that the Afghan economy will be on a more sustainable footing in the aftermath of the withdrawal of Western troops, which might also result in a sharp reduction in foreign aid to the country. The US strategy has been attractively packaged as a 'New Silk Road', recalling the 'Great Silk Road', an ancient network of trading routes that started in China and India and ran all the way to the Middle East and Europe through Afghanistan and Central Asia. This was the world's main trading artery before Portuguese sailors discovered the sea route to Asia in the 16th. century.

Initially, when the US government unravelled its 'New Silk Road' strategy, many regional heavyweights such as Russia and China suspected a hidden agenda. Some regional observers also suggested this new strategy was meant to pry away mineral-rich Central Asia from under Russian and Chinese influence. However, the recent developments on the ground suggest

that the 'New Silk Road' has been gaining increasing acceptance not only from the landlocked Central Asian countries eager to diversify their trade ties and open access to open-sea ports but also from Russia and China, which have been increasing their exports to Afghanistan.

The withdrawal of US and NATO troops and Afghanistan's integration into regional economies will likely lead to increased Russian and Chinese economic and political influence in Afghanistan. China has already made the single-largest foreign investment in Afghanistan's history by securing the rights to develop the Aynak copper mines, one of the world's largest. Chinese companies plan to build their own railway line to bring out Afghanistan's mineral resources developed by Chinese mining companies.

Russia remains the largest trading partner for Central Asian countries (with the exception of Turkmenistan, whose largest trading partner is next door Iran) and their largest military partner, but China is an increasingly major source of foreign investment and various manufacturing technologies.

Construction of the Hairatan - Mazar-e-Sharif line will increase Afghanistan's exposure to and awareness of its northern neighbours, which have strong secular traditions and have by and large accepted modernity with the prospect of building democratic societies in their respective countries. Afghanistan's ties with its northern neighbours have been extremely limited in the past several decades, with the country exposed mainly to Pakistan, Iran and some other oil-rich Arab countries, which saw Afghanistan with a view to furthering their own ideological and political agendas.

Mazar-e-Sharif is now set to be a bustling inland trading and transportation hub, with the creation of thousands of jobs and opening new opportunities for various businesses, potentially boosting Afghans' morale and confidence in their own future. As trade and economic ties with northern neighbours expand, Afghanistan's previously often crippling dependence on Pakistan and Iran for trade will become history. Already, Kazakhstan, Russia, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are supplying the lion's share of Afghanistan's imports of petroleum products, although Iran and Pakistan remain significant sources for petroleum supplies. At present, Afghanistan's capital city Kabul, receives electricity from Uzbekistan 24 hours a day, while Turkmenistan and Tajikistan are exporting electricity to light up other parts of the country.

Uzbekistan is also gaining from the new line. Its successful construction showcases the country's industrial and engineering strength, developed over the 20 years of its independence under President Islam Karimov and marks the coming of age of one of its national champions - Uzbekistan State Railways Co. The hard currency earned by USBC by constructing and operating the Hairatan - Mazar-e-Sharif line could help cover various rail-related projects that will increase the Uzbekistan domestic railway system's capacity to transit international cargo to its other neighbours. Recent links already commissioned by the Uzbek government include the 223-kilometre, \$150M-plus Tashguzar - Baysun - Kumkurgan line

(2008) connecting the country's two largest southern provinces, bordering Afghanistan, with central Uzbekistan, without having to cross the territory of adjacent countries. Two Spanish-made fast-trains connect the capital, Tashkent, to the ancient city and popular tourist destination of Samarkand.

The efficient and punctual construction of the Hairatan - Mazar-e-Sharif line means USRC is the likely partner of choice for future railway projects in Afghanistan. The ADB has already drafted plans to extend the line to Herat, at a cost of \$500M. A link is also proposed to run from Mazar-e-Sharif to Kabul and onto the eastern border town of Torkham, connecting with Pakistan Railways. USRC will nevertheless face competition - ambitious plans are reportedly being developed by an Indian mining consortium for a line crossing the centre of Afghanistan to the Iranian coast. Construction of the Hairatan - Mazar-e-Sharif line demonstrates how Afghanistan's neighbours in practice, and not just in words, contribute to the normalization of life in Afghanistan - even if, as some critics say, Uzbekistan's approach and contributions have been rooted in pragmatism."

I. EGYPT.

From IRJ 08/2011: „A call has been issued for international companies to pre-qualify for Phase 3 of Metro Line 3. The project will extend the line west by 7.5km. from Attaba to Imbaba, with a 3km. branch passing under the Nile to reach Mohandiseen. Construction will take around three years.“

J. JORDAN.

The following links will show short films of trains on the Aqaba phosphate line.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A4bvawlyl-g>
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9GL3chxDZs8>
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xe4hcauKDeg>
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KOeYnq_Y6yo

PLANS, DREAMS AND SCHEMES OF 1948.

From the 'Palestine Post', 12th. Nov. 1948 p.4. Thanks to Chen Melling for the tip to this article which is quite fascinating - one sees the admission of conspiracies, the desire to run a uniform class of carriages but with better accommodation, the desire to hold on to the Sleeping and Dining Cars in the expectation that international passenger and freight traffic will eventually resume.... With the aid of hindsight, quite touching optimism.

ISRAEL RAILWAYS START ROLLING AGAIN: By M. PAICOVITCH, Acting General Manager, Israel Railways.

"The Israel Railways began functioning not on May 15th., at the birth of the State of Israel, but a few weeks before, on April 23rd. immediately after the occupation of Haifa by the Haganah.

The morning of that solemn day is still fresh in my memory. I came down to see Mr. Kirby, General Manager of the Railways, who was trying to fix up an office at the Haifa Central Station, as his main offices in the Khoury House had been burned to ashes during the night's fight.

I then suggested to him, point-blank, that we, the Jewish staff of the Palestine Railways, be permitted to take over immediately the operation of the railways between Haifa and Hadera, as this was the only stretch of line in Jewish hands. At that time the British Army was still in command in Palestine and the matter called for very delicate handling. However, on my promise that the British Army would continue to receive priority for all its needs from the Railway in the Haifa enclave, I was entrusted with the operation of that line. Thus, it can definitely be said, the birth of the Israel Railway preceded the birth of the Israel State by three weeks.

It is important to point out, that this early undertaking was enabled only by the previous long 'conspiracy' preparations conducted by the few Jewish officers and employees of the Palestine Railways. Out of 7,000 employees of the Palestine Railways and Ports Administration, we were a minority of less than 6 per cent, and even among these few, not counting some Jewish skilled workmen in the Kishon Workshops, 80 per cent were clerks. But we were fortunate in having a small number of Jews occupying key positions, and thanks to these people, who could be counted on the fingers of one hand, I was able to undertake the task of operating the small portion of line, from Haifa to Hadera, which ran across purely Jewish territory.

Planning Against Chaos.

The preparatory work referred to began as early as November 1947. Aware of the unveiled intention of the Mandatory Government to do all in its power to bring the country to chaos, we foresaw that unless some special steps were taken to ensure the running of the railways without Britons and Arabs, the consequences would be most disastrous. The Jewish Agency and the Vaad Leumi therefore entrusted me with the training of new men - train crews, platelayers and other staff needed for operating a railway. With the whole-hearted help of my colleagues we started in without wasting any time, and thus on November 29, when the decision for the creation of a Jewish state was taken by the United Nations, we already had training classes and other preparatory works in full swing. With the aid of these men, who had received their training under very difficult conditions, with very small funds at our disposal, but with great enthusiasm for our project, we managed to run our first entirely Jewish goods train to Hadera on April 27th.

There was yet another aspect to these preparations, more difficult than the training of men. All the equipment and rolling stock of the standard gauge were dispersed along the line between Haifa and Kantara. We had to gather them in gradually to Haifa for safety, and in this we were hampered by the Arab railway workmen who derailed a Military train north of Lydda, thus preventing us from bringing in to Haifa the balance of our stock. However, on April 23 we had enough locomotives and rolling stock for the handling of heavy traffic. After the occupation of Lydda by the Israel Army in July, we found the rest of our rolling stock, so that at this moment Israel Railways is in possession of 98 per cent of the Palestine Railways stock.

When we began working, our undertaking was moderate, but it was nevertheless an exceedingly hard task. As I said before the British Army was still in command of the Haifa enclave and occupied all the Railway property from Kurdani to Athlit inclusive. What we repaired and arranged during the day, they would spoil and destroy at night, and sometimes even in broad daylight in our presence. Our men showed untiring patience, and it is only thanks to their self-control that no open conflict occurred. Though acting without any help up to June 30, we were officially operating first under what was left of the Mandatory Government and then under the instructions of the British Army.

Under State of Israel

With the declaration of the Provisional Government of Israel and the formation of the Ministry of Communications, to which the Railway Department belongs, plans

for future development were immediately given consideration. While we are at war, it is impossible to reveal the details of all our plans and projects. It is, however, no longer a secret that construction will soon start on the rerouting of the present line to Tel Aviv. The traveller from Haifa to Tel Aviv will no longer have to pass through Kaqun, Tulkarm, Kalkilya and Lydda, since a direct line, less than 100 kilometres long, will take him there. This will save considerable time both for passenger travel and for the haulage of goods.

We are intending to convert our old coaches into a new type which is now being designed, with improved interior accommodations as well as a pleasing appearance, which will make the journey comfortable and enjoyable. There will be only one class of coaches for the public of our State, and these we shall try to have compare favourably with coaches our people may have seen in the countries they came from. We also hope to introduce buffet cars on our local trains, and when we are back to normal conditions and international traffic, we shall have sleeping and dining cars as part of our international train service.

This work will be done at the Kishon Railway Workshops, and here I must mention the unfaltering courage of the shops' workmen. Although they risked their lives daily in getting from their homes in Hadar Hacarmel to Kishon and back, they never failed to attend to their duty. It is thanks to their heroism as well as to the prompt action of the Haganah, that these fine modern workshops were saved from destruction and fell intact into our hands. They are now functioning at full speed, and despite the greatly reduced numbers of workmen, the rate of repairs to locomotives and rolling stock is increasing both in quantity and quality.

On the Rails Again.

We have already made considerable progress since we sent our first goods train to Hadera. Bridges and many kilometres of track have been repaired and restored to working condition, and our trains are now running to the Lebanese border, to Afula, and between Tel Aviv and Lydda. We also have a regular passenger service connecting Haifa with the Haifa Bay area.

Admittedly in view of prevailing conditions, the railways are not yet playing the part they should in the communications of the State. But it is my strong belief that with the construction of the new route to Tel Aviv and especially with return to peace, our railways will become the most important factor in our communications. Among the more distant projects of the Israel Railways is a double-track between Haifa and Tel Aviv, with heavier rails which will enable short trains hauled by Diesel locomotives to cover that distance in less than one hour, instead of one and a half to two hours which will be required even after the completion of the deviation.

It is only with the construction of a railway track across the Negev to Akaba that we shall be able to develop this desert portion of our State. With the introduction of more private sidings into industrial zones, cheap transport will encourage industrial progress. By serving our

HARSH WORDS.

(From Chen Melling):

As is well known, Palestine Railways had to accommodate an enormous growth in traffic during WWII, which despite the provision of many locomotives and thousands of extra wagons from the British Army and neighbouring systems, still led to some disruption. And where there's disruption there's resentment and finger-pointing, as can be evidenced in a letter from 10th February 1944, found in PR Chief Engineer file 102/2 in the Israel Railway Museum archives. The letter, sent by the PR Superintendent of the Line (head of the Traffic branch) to the Chief Mechanical Engineer (with copies to the General Manager and CE), is part of correspondence regarding derailment of PR open wagon no. 1032 on 26.09.1943 in the Sinai, and as it speaks for itself, its content is presented herewith verbatim:

„I regard it as singularly inappropriate that you should quote in your letter an allegation that *the Traffic Branch cannot deliver the ballast*' since you are well aware that the only cause of this is the lack of locomotive power for the Ballast trains.

There have been no question of shortage of open wagons. I have been at pains to bring this to your notice on several occasions and at each Power Meeting you have declared that power for the Chief Engineer's ballast trains will be provided.

Despite this, until last week, little improvement took place and ballast trains were frequently cancelled owing to lack of power.“

Obviously, the SoL had had enough, but it seems that the Engineering Branch was anxious to get this matter resolved, as the CE added a hopeful hand-written note „We may get a train if this now develops“ and one of his District Engineers simply scribbled „Wow!!“ in response to the letter's harsh words.



agricultural centres with up-to-date railway communications, prices of agricultural products will drop considerably. With international railway communications we shall be able to bring fish from Turkey and slaughtered cattle in refrigerated vans from the Balkans at comparatively low prices. A good railway system will contribute to the lowering of prices in Israel.

At the moment the vital fact is that the Israel Railways are on the rails. All our present difficulties are shared by the whole State and will be overcome. We are now training new men for new trains. We are organizing our system and we welcome any suggestion for improvement. It is my strong belief that our Government will soon improve the working conditions of its civil service.

A day will come, which is not far away, when we shall be running through trains from Haifa to Jerusalem via Tel Aviv, and when our railway will be carrying east, west, north and south the goods of a fertile Israel.

Tribute to Mr. Kirby.

In conclusion, I should like to pay tribute to my predecessor, the great railwayman, Mr. Arthur Frank Kirby, C.M.G., who rendered sterling service to this country's railways in the times of the Mandatory Government and earned the respect and devotion of the whole staff irrespective of creed or nationality. He was one of the few Government officials who, when the last Administration left the country, opposed its policy of creating chaos and did his best to hand over the railways in the best order possible under the circumstances.

It gives me great satisfaction, that the previous Superintendent of the Line, Mr. P. C. J. Baker, O.B.E., is still with us as Railway Adviser. For nearly 30 years Mr. Baker has spared no effort towards the growth and development of the Palestine Railways, and has become well known to the Jewish population of this country for his sympathy with our cause.“



Computer image of the new Yavneh West station, opened on 25.02.2012.

Source: IR.



96:13



**Two original 60cm gauge
trolleys from the orchard
railway - see 95:08 (d) at The
orchard museum in Rehovot.
Photos Sybil Ehrlich)**



"Artist's impression of proposals for the restored old Jerusalem station with preserved rolling stock to add ambience. see 96:04:(w)."



One of the new Vossloh Euro 4000 Co-Co locos, pushing a train out of Rehovot station. Photo Jeremy Topaz 13 March 2012