

Chemins de fer Orientaux 1867-1883

Prelude 1867-1883

The genesis of the Orient Express — a direct luxury train service between Paris and Constantinople — cannot be attributed to a single person or organization. Several historical developments coincided.

After a train trip through Europe, Sultan Abdülaziz decided that Constantinople should be linked to the West by rail. This plan was carried out by Baron Maurice de Hirsch and his *Chemins de fer Orientaux*. Meanwhile in the US, George Pullman developed the luxury sleeper car that enabled overnight train travel. The Belgian Georges Nagelmackers introduced this concept in Europe.

Requirements

Still, not all the requirements had been fulfilled. A consultative body was needed to make the highly fragmented European railway companies work together. The first International Timetable Conference took place in 1872, the same year that Nagelmackers introduced his first *Wagons-Lits* and the first train entered Constantinople. But it would take over 10 years before the Orient Express could be launched.

SLEEPING-CARS

WAGONS-LITS

SCHLAFWAGEN

VERKEHRS-NETZ

PARIS-Bordeaux-Biarritz-Irun-MADRID	BERLIN-Magdeburg-Düsseldorf-AACHEN
CALAIS-Paris-Blogne-(BRINDISI)MalledesIndes	BERLIN-BRESLAU
PARIS-BRÜSSEL	BERLIN-Minden-Düsseldorf-CÖLN
PARIS-Lüttich-Aachen-CÖLN	BERLIN-Bromberg-Königsberg-EYDTKUHNNEN
PARIS-Metz-Mainz-FRANKFURT a. M.	BERLIN-Bebra-FRANKFURT a. M.
PARIS-Lyon-Marseille-MENTON	BERLIN-HAMBURG
PARIS-Culoz-Turin-Genf-ROM	FRANKFURT a. M.-Mainz-Strassburg-BASEL
PARIS-Strassburg-München-WIEN	MÜNCHEN-STRASSBURG
OSTENDE-Aachen-Lüttich-Brüssel-CÖLN	WIEN-Orsowa-BUKAREST
OSTENDE-Brüssel-Metz-Strassburg-BASEL	BUKAREST-JASSY

TOILETTE

BY NIGHT LA NUIT

BY DAY LE JOUR

SLEEPING-CARS

The Carriages of this Company, which circulate on all the principal lines of Europe, are divided in compartments of two and four places, which are by day elegant private parlours, and by night bedrooms most comfortably disposed.

Separate toilet Rooms for Gentlemen and Ladies.

The ventilation heating and lighting are of the most approved kind.

The conductors accompanying the Cars speak several languages.

Places can be secured in advance by telegram or letter to the Agencies hereafter mentioned.

Places can also be retained by telegraphing to the terminal stations of departure, or from the Conductor at the Sleeping-Car.

SLEEPING-CARS

Les voitures de cette Compagnie qui circulent sur toutes les grandes lignes de l'Europe, sont divisées en compartiments à deux et à quatre places, formant le jour d'élegants salons et la nuit des chambres à coucher avec lits parfaitement aménagés.

Cabinets de toilette séparés pour les Messieurs et pour les Dames.

Ventilation, chauffage et éclairage perfectionnés.

Le Conducateur chargé du service de l'intérieur parle plusieurs langues.

Les places peuvent être retenues à l'avance par lettre ou par télégramme aux Agences de la Compagnie.

Les chefs de station de départ se chargent également de réserver les places qui leur sont demandées par télégramme.

Pour les places non retenues à l'avance s'adresser au Conducateur même de la voiture.

SCHLAFWAGEN

Die Wagen dieser Gesellschaft, welche mit dem grössten Erfolge die hauptächlichsten Linien Europa's befahren, sind in Coupe's zu zwei und vier Plätzen eingetheilt.

Dieselben bilden während des Tages elegante Salons, welche für die Nacht in bequeme Schlafkammern hergerichtet werden.

Separate Toiletten für Herren und Damen.

Verbesserte Ventilation, Heizung und Beleuchtung.

Der den Wagen begleitende Conducateur spricht mehrere Sprachen.

Plätze können im Voraus telegraphisch oder schriftlich bei den untenstehenden Agenturen reservirt werden.

Die Vorsteher der Kopfstationen können ebenfalls auf telegraphische Benachrichtigung Plätze reserviren. Für nicht im Voraus reservirte Plätze wolle man sich an den im Wagen befindlichen Conducateur wenden.

COMPAGNIE INTERNATIONALE DES WAGONS-LITS

AGENCES

PARIS, GRAND HOTEL, 2, Rue Scribe.

BERLIN, Unter den Linden, 67.

COLOGNE, Am Central-Bahnhof.

VIENNE, Kirzharring, 1.

FRANKFURT a. M., Universal-Reise-Bureau (Frankfurterhof).

BUCAREST, Gara Tapavitchi, 18.

MADRID, Puerta-del-Sol, 6.

LONDRES, ...

BRUXELLES, 21, Montagne de la Cour.

AVIS

Pour éviter aux voyageurs l'ennui de stationner aux quaiets des gares, les Agences de la Compagnie vendent des billets de chemin de fer pour les principales destinations de l'Europe.

Railway tickets are now sold at our Agencies for all the most important stations in Europe to avoid passengers the trouble of waiting at the booking office for their tickets.

Zur Bequemlichkeit des Publikums verkaufen die Agenturen der Gesellschaft Bahn-Billets für die grossen Stationen ...



Constantinople and the Bosphorus 1862

A journey to Constantinople over the Mediterranean or via the Danube and Black Sea took at least one week.

The Sultan's tour 1867

In 1867 Abdülaziz was the first Ottoman sultan to travel through Europe. He visited the Paris World Exhibition, was received with ceremony in London and visited Brussels, Berlin and Vienna on his way. He mostly traveled in his own imperial railway carriage.

For centuries, the Ottoman Empire had been a closed bastion. From 1840 onwards sultan Abdülmecid carried through reforms. Symbolically, he exchanged the old Topkapı Palace for the Western-style Dolmabahçe. Sultan Abdülaziz continued this policy and modernized government, the navy and schools. He developed good relations with Britain and France and could not refuse the invitation of Napoleon III and Queen Victoria in 1867.

Railway connection

After his European rail journey Abdülaziz decided to construct a railway between Constantinople and Vienna. His empire already had some local railways, but as yet no international connection. Abdülaziz would not witness the — delayed — completion of the railway. Because of high debts and the Bulgarian uprising he had to step down in 1867.





Sultan carriage 1866

Manufacturer: Metropolitan, Birmingham

Length: 9.5 meters

Rahmi M. Koç Museum, Istanbul

Chemins de fer Orientaux 1870

As early as 1851 the Serbian Prince Alexander had pleaded in vain for a railway connecting Constantinople with Western Europe via his country. But when Sultan Abdülaziz finally decided in favor of such a connection, it would not run through Serbia but through Bosnia, then still part of the Ottoman Empire.

In 1869 investor Maurice de Hirsch won the concession for 2,500 kms of railways, with a price per kilometer guaranteed by the Ottoman state. For the implementation he founded the *Chemins de fer Orientaux*, the Oriental railways. Construction started expeditiously at multiple locations: at Constantinople, between Salonika and Skopje and in Bosnia. In 1872 the first train entered Constantinople.

Delays

Soon, political changes and the financial problems of the Ottoman state forced Hirsch to agree to a new, limited concession without a link to Vienna. Revolts in the Balkans and the Russo-Turkish War caused further delays. Bulgaria became independent and Bosnia was annexed by Austria. A rail link with the West would be a long time coming.





Railway construction 1875

Construction of a railway viaduct in Thrace, probably at Mustapha Pasha (Svilengrad).

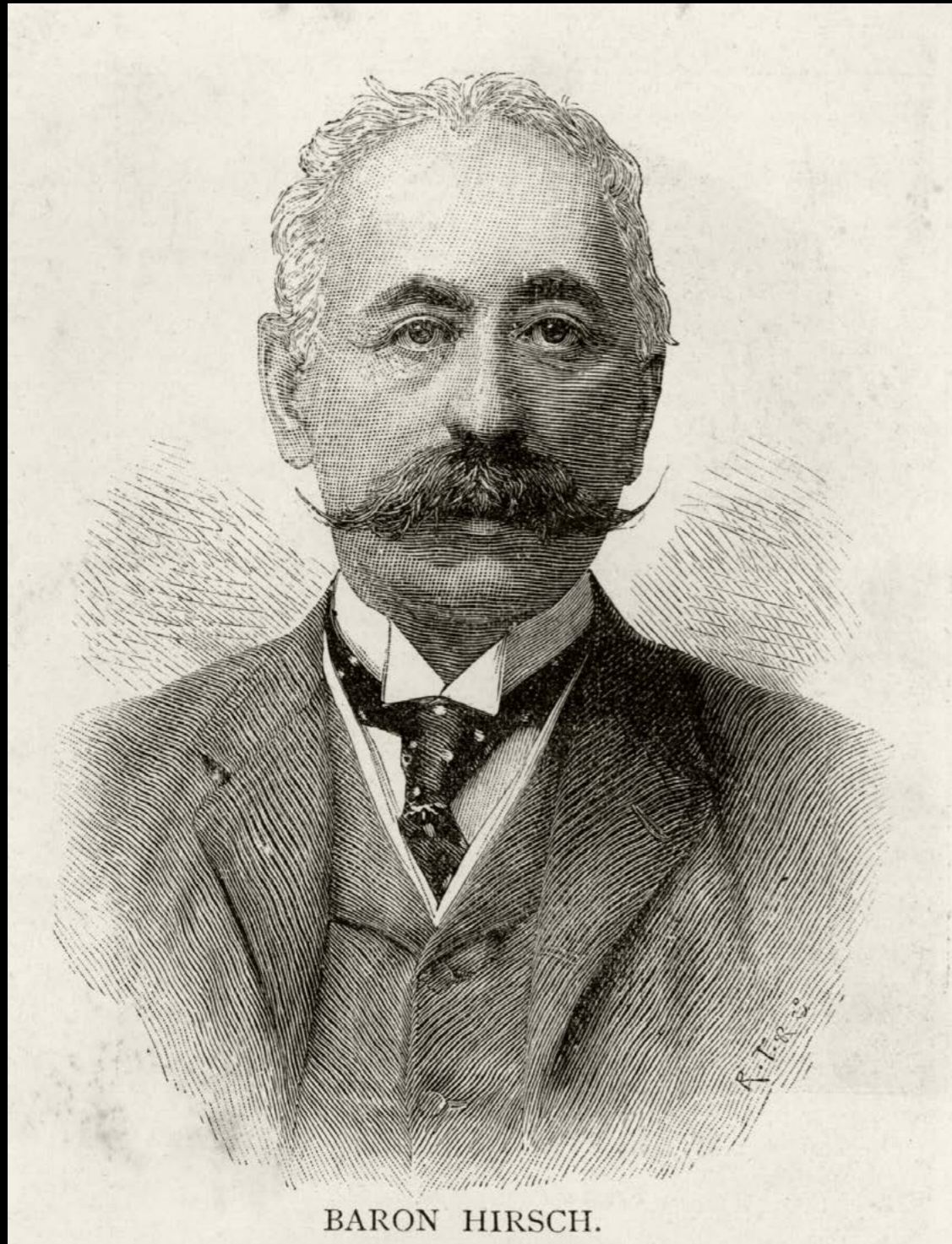
Maurice de Hirsch 1831-1896

Baron Moritz von Hirsch auf Gereuth was from a German-Jewish banking family, raised to nobility by the Bavarian king. He married a Belgian banker's daughter, lived in Paris and Versailles and mainly invested in Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire.

Hirsch was one of the richest men in Europe. He amassed his capital through sugar and copper speculations and railway investments. Despite a difficult start-up period, the *Chemins de fer Orientaux* certainly contributed to his wealth. In 1890 Hirsch transferred his interests in Ottoman railway projects to the *Deutsche Bank*, under pressure of the German imperialist policy on the Ottoman Empire.

Philanthropist

Hirsch helped Jews who were victims of pogroms and donated money to Jewish educational institutions. He founded an organization that enabled Russian Jews to emigrate to Argentina. In this way a part of the proceeds of the Orient Express, through its dependency on the *Chemins de fer Orientaux*, benefited charity.





Locomotive 8 1871

Chemins de fer Orientaux

Manufacturer: Wiener Neustädter Lokomotivfabrik

Length: 15.3 meters

The oldest preserved Turkish steam locomotive was part of the first locomotive series of the *Chemins de fer Orientaux*. They would haul the Orient Express for decades. The locomotive, over 100 years old, was still used for shunting in 1975. Today it is located at Sivas.

Pullman Palace Car Company

1865

Sleeping cars are an American invention. Initially, European railways were too fragmented for long distances. The first sleeping car ran in Pennsylvania in 1839. George Mortimer Pullman introduced the luxury sleeping carriage in 1865 and founded the successful *Pullman Palace Car Company*.

The richly decorated sleeping cars consisted of benches that were combined into beds at night. Pullman's 'hotels on wheels' also had on-board restaurants and the porters provided impeccable service. The Pullman name became a synonym for luxury and comfort.

Gap in the market

In 1868 the young Belgian Georges Nagelmackers traveled the US by Pullman train. He saw a gap in the European market, but gave the concept his own interpretation. While the American Pullmans were moving dormitories with only curtains offering some privacy, Nagelmackers' *Wagons-Lits* would be fitted with separate compartments.





Lady in a Pullman sleeper *before 1900*

Two couches were put together as a bed at night, while another bed was folded down from the slanted ceiling.

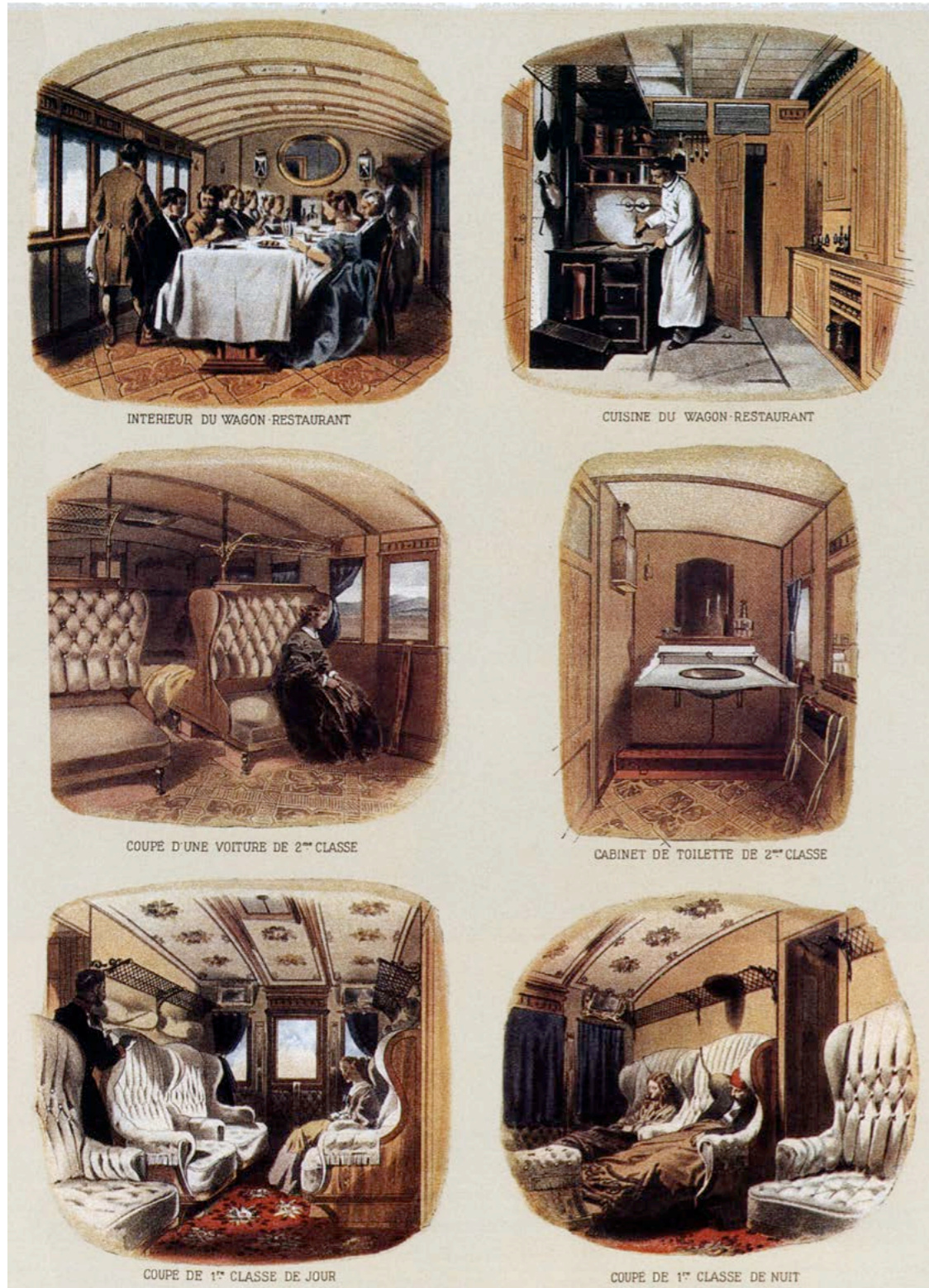
European inspiration c. 1870

Besides the American example, Georges Nagelmackers also found inspiration for his plans in Europe, royal carriages being the most important ones.

In the course of the 19th century almost all European monarchs had gotten salon carriages. Around 1870 sleeping carriages were added to the royal trains: moving bedrooms with real beds and every comfort imaginable. For ordinary travelers — even the wealthy — such comfort was not available. However, in some carriages the seats were reclinable and blankets were distributed at night. Couches that could be converted into actual beds only existed in the United States.

First-class

In the class society of the 19th century, there was great difference between the three passenger classes. While the third class had simple wooden benches, first-class carriages had opulent furnishing, the extent of which differed by railway company. One of the earliest luxury trains ran around 1865 from Odessa to Kiev, part of Czarist Russia. The toilets and the dining car were unique for that time.





Sleeping car of Empress Elisabeth 1873 (*Technisches Museum Wien*)

Sisi's carriage, inconspicuous from the outside, consisted of a bedroom and a boudoir with washstand and toilet.

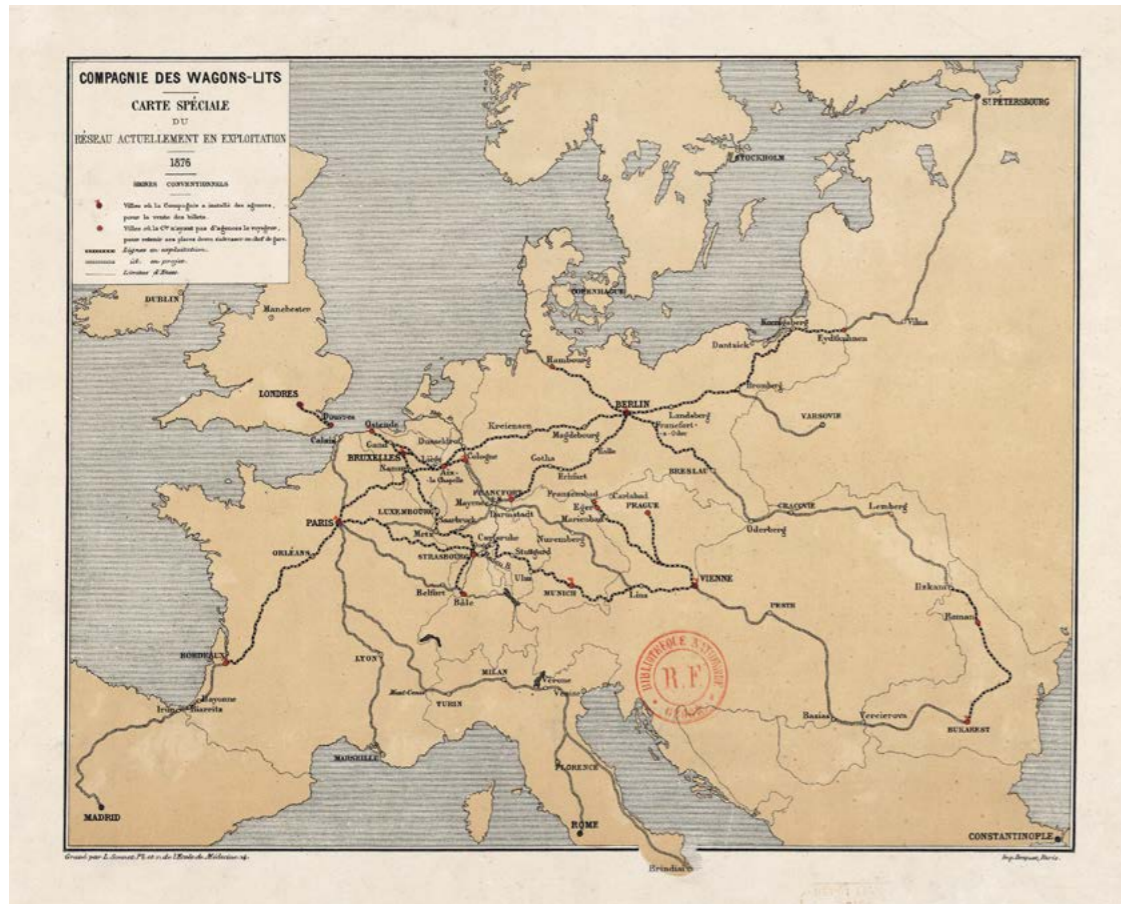
Compagnie Internationale des Wagons-Lits 1872-1876

In 1870 Georges Nagelmackers worked out his plans for a European sleeping car company. He closed a deal on sleeping cars in the *Indian Mail*, a postal train from Ostend to Brindisi with connection to steamers for India. The agreement was cancelled when the Mont Cenis tunnel was opened; the train now ran through France. The Franco-Prussian War caused further delays.

In 1872 Nagelmackers engaged in a partnership with the American William Mann to run the first four sleeping cars in the Paris-Vienna train. The Ostend-Berlin route soon followed. In 1876 Mann withdrew and Nagelmackers founded his *Compagnie Internationale des Wagons-Lits*. Soon, its network stretched from Madrid to Bucharest.

Royal

The Belgian King Leopold II was one of the first shareholders of Wagons-Lits and also wielded his influence in negotiations. The two lions in the Wagons-Lits logo referred to the royal involvement.



SECTION BELGE — LA COMPAGNIE INTERNATIONALE DES WAGONS-LITS



Mann Boudoir Sleeping-Car 1873

Georges Nagelmackers (left) operated the first European sleeping cars together with William Mann (right).



Georges Nagelmackers

1845-1905

The story goes that Nagelmackers, son of a wealthy banker from Liege, was sent to the US by his father to get over his unrequited love for his niece. This journey eventually led to the creation of a company that drastically changed travel in Europe and acquired a *de facto* monopoly on sleeping and dining cars.

With a solid financial background and a degree in engineering, Nagelmackers was the right man in the right place. Being a 'neutral' Belgian was an advantage amid the rivalry between France and Germany. His perseverance was an indispensable trait, first when his family decided not to invest in his plans and later during difficult negotiations with railway companies.

Founder

Georges Nagelmackers was the founder of legendary luxury trains, such as the *Orient Express*, *Méditerranée Express*, *Rome Express*, *Sud Express*, *Nord Express* and the *Trans-Siberian Express*. In 1890 he also established the *Compagnie Internationale des Grands Hôtels*.

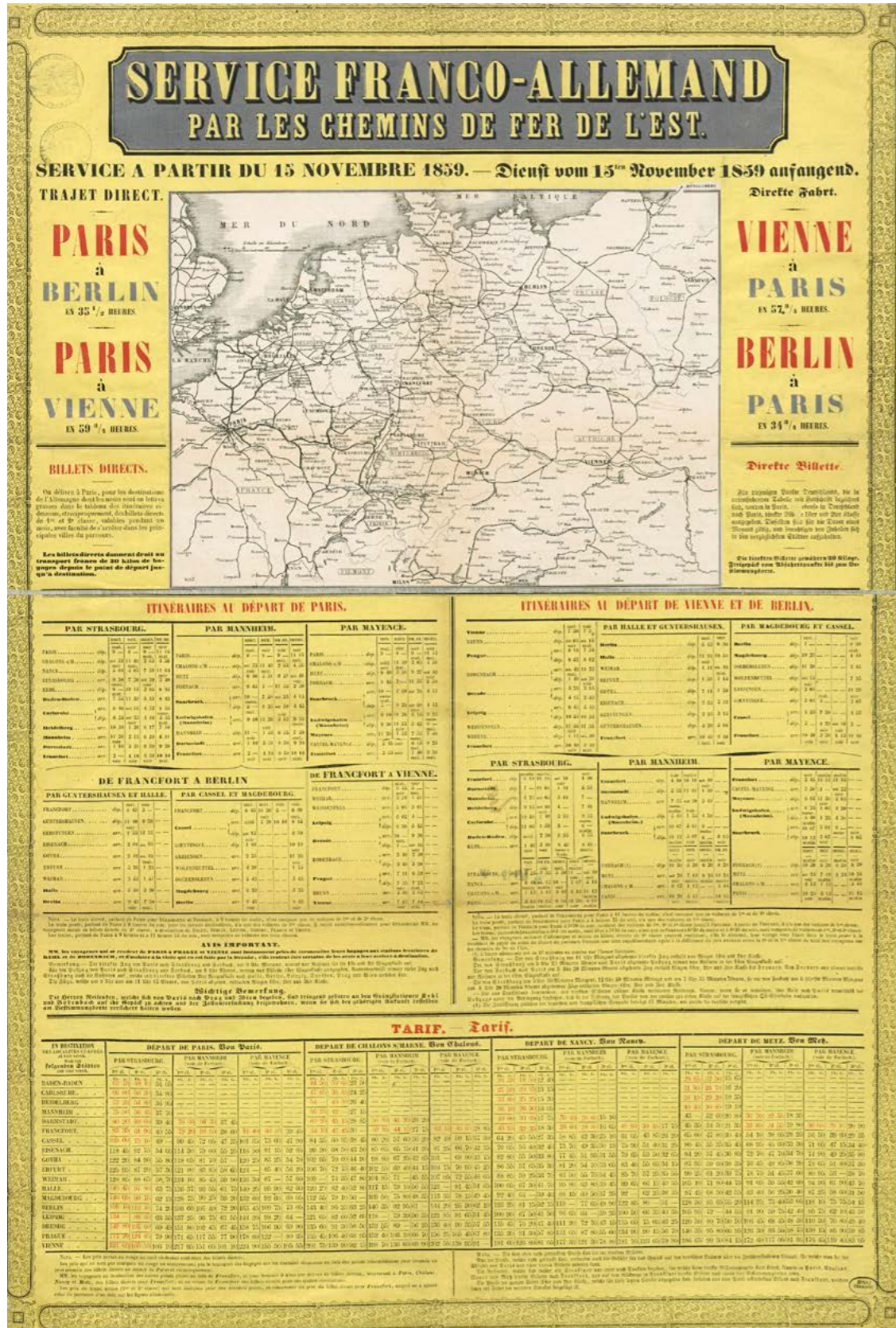
International Timetable Conference 1872

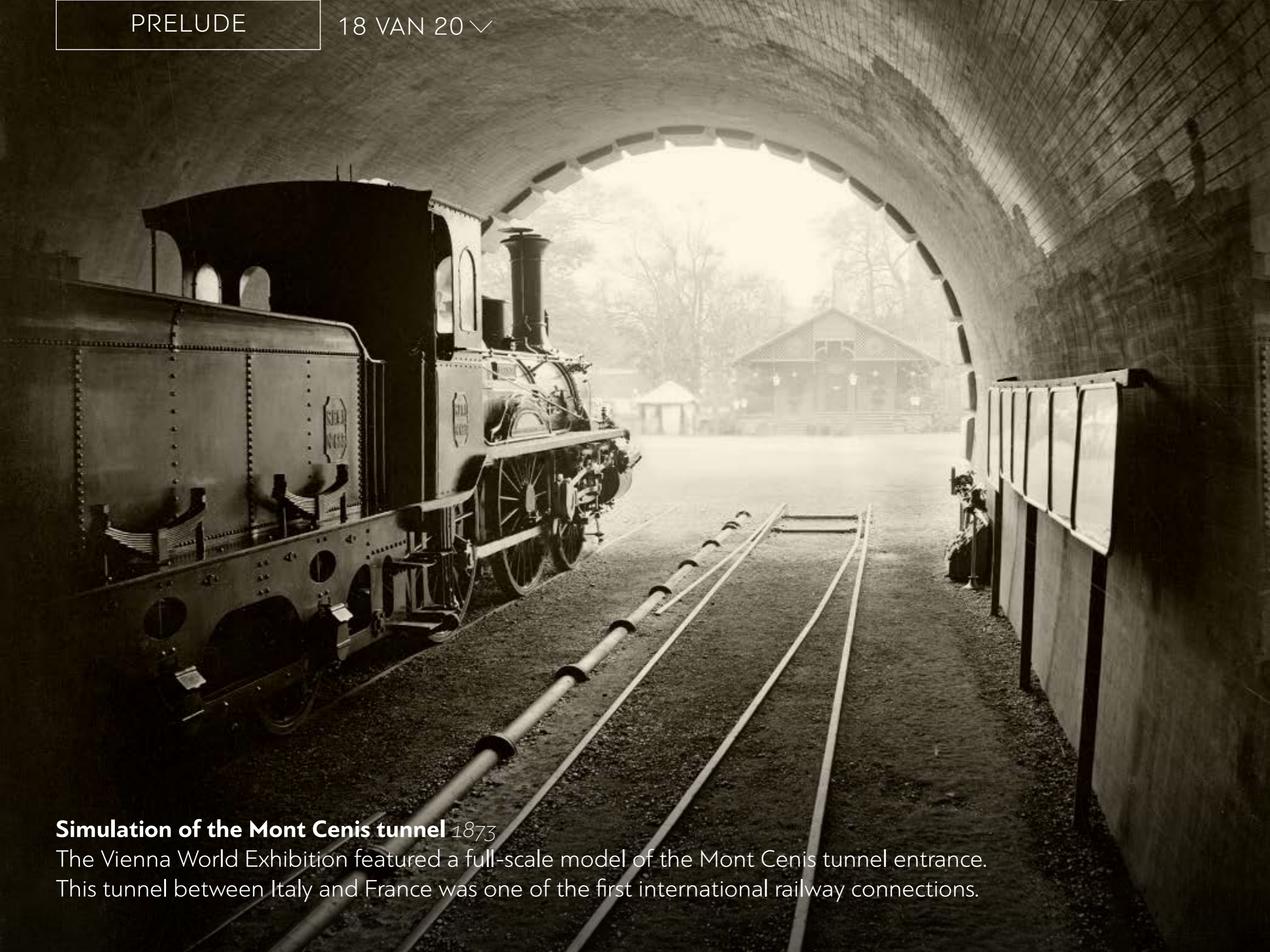
When the first sleeping cars appeared on the tracks of Europe, international cooperation was still in a fledgling stage. Consultations were limited to railway companies with directly adjacent tracks. Even in countries with different railway companies operating, there often was no coordinated national timetable yet.

International travelers had to figure out their journey using *Bradshaw's Continental Railway Guide* or *Cook's Continental Timetables*. New editions had to be released every month.

Cooperation

In 1872 railway companies from five countries deliberated for the first time on a joint timetable for long-distance trains. Noteworthy was the participation of both French and German companies. Other European railways soon joined the *Internationale Fahrplankonferenz*. As of 1879 governments also became involved, as well as Wagons-Lits as the operator of sleeping and dining cars. This paved the road for the Orient Express.





Simulation of the Mont Cenis tunnel 1873

The Vienna World Exhibition featured a full-scale model of the Mont Cenis tunnel entrance. This tunnel between Italy and France was one of the first international railway connections.

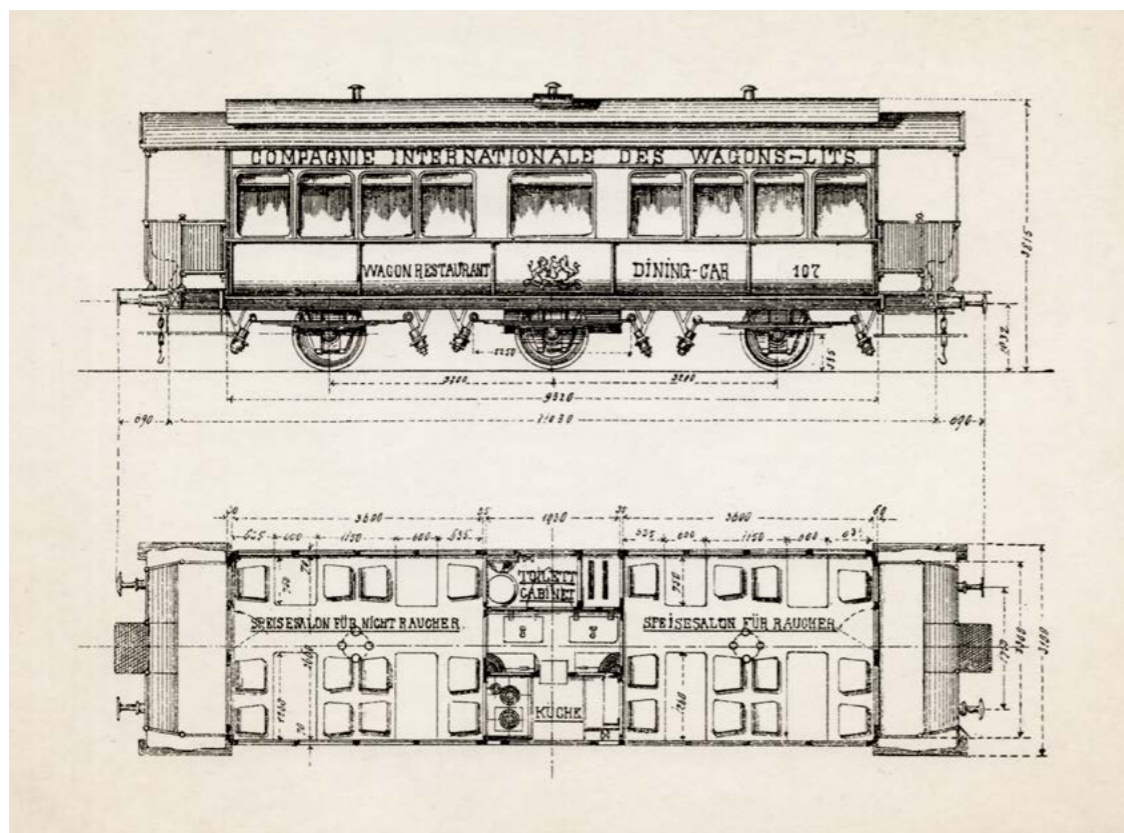
Train Eclair 1882

In October 1882 the first luxury train left Paris, a test train that entirely consisted of Wagons-Lits sleeping and dining cars. Until then, Wagons-Lits cars always ran in regular trains. This *Train Eclair* — lightning train — owed its name to its average speed of 48 km/h, reaching Vienna in 27 hours, more than 6 hours faster than conventional trains.

Part of the 44 passengers were invited guests, others were paying travellers. One of the four sleeping cars was the first one in Europe with bogies. Because of its comfortable running this type of carriage was the future. Also part of the train was Wagons-Lits' first dining car that included a kitchen. The menu included oysters, venison and chocolate pudding.

Result

The *Train Eclair* only ran once between Paris and Vienna as a trial. With the successful result, Wagons-Lits could persuade eight railway companies to collaborate in a luxury train that would go beyond Vienna: the Orient Express!



Sleeping Car 74 1880

Compagnie Internationale des Wagons-Lits

Manufacturer: Van der Zyp

Length: 12.9 meters

This three-axle sleeping car ran in the *Train Eclair*, the 1882 test train between Paris and Vienna, which was a forerunner of the Orient Express. Besides beds the carriage also had compartments with seats.

