

Talking about Hydraulic Drives in Buenos Aires

by Carmen Maldacena, EW Correspondent

Wittur Hydraulic Drives srl Sales and Marketing Manager Eng. Resul Hacıogullari and Dr. Alessandro Mordini, its sales supervisor, visited their trade company Wittur SA (formerly Soimet), which is located in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Having kindly accepted an invitation to be interviewed by your reporter, the conversation was a good opportunity to learn about the recent changes that have taken place in this Wittur Group company (formerly Omar Lift), which is located in Bergamo, Italy and dedicated to the manufacture of hydraulic equipment. In addition, the interview rendered an update on the global situation of this type of equipment and its inevitable comparison with the machine-room-less (MRL) installations.

The Company's Past and Present Situation

In 1936, the Italian company Officine Meccaniche Auto Ricambi (OMAR) went into the automobile spare part business. After World War II, it began manufacturing industrial hydraulic components such as cylinders for crane trucks. However, in 1977, the firm focused its activities on the elevator industry with the production of cylinders for hydraulic elevators.

The German holding company Wittur AG purchased Omar Lift in 1993, and it came into the group as a manufacturer of hydraulic elevator systems. Recently, its trade name was changed to Wittur Hydraulic Drives srl. Four years ago, the firm was reorganized, not only to be able to properly answer the customers' needs in a modern, swift and efficient manner, but also to fit into the Wittur Group's network of functions and capabilities. As a result, volume has almost tripled and sales have grown 20% over the 2006-2007 period.

EW: Why are you visiting Argentina?

Alessandro Mordini (AM): In Argentina, we have been represented by our trade company Soimet SA, now Wittur SA. Having realized that the nearest we are to our trade companies and end customers the better results we achieve in terms of sales improvement, we are here to get an accurate knowledge of the market as well as of its actors to be able to offer a correct and customized product. Even though globalization is a fact, each market has its own characteristics, which cannot be overlooked.

We proceeded in this way in Spain. Thanks to the exchange of ideas and joint work performed, we increased our sales around 30%. We are working well together with our Argentine company, but there are details that must be tuned up. In a year's time, we expect to give you figures that will show the improvement achieved here and in Brazil.

EW: Will you visit Brazil as well?

Resul Hacıogullari (RH): Yes, and as it is a very important market for us, we wish to support the Brazilian structure, especially on account of the large volumes traded in that country. Even though Wittur Group has a factory in Brazil, the hydraulic equipment is completely manufactured and Conformité Européenne certified in Italy, and then it is distributed worldwide. However, Argentina is an exception. Wittur SA (formerly Soimet) locally finishes the cylinders to offer a wider range of sizes and models. As regards the power units, it is easier to find solutions with stocked pumps and accessories.

EW: How would you describe the global market for the hydraulic equipment?

AM: If we consider its penetration in the global market, the figures are decreasing. There is a clear trend to replace hydraulic technology with electric traction, but by no means are hydraulic elevators doomed to disappear. However, correct applications must be found. There is an expanding hydraulic market for residential lifts and big freight elevators. In both cases, we have a clear advantage in installation and cost.

In northern Europe, the market is certainly decreasing as well as in the U.S. and Canada. However, the systems are not well known in Eastern Europe and Russia, as we realized in the latest Moscow Exhibition.

Continued



(l-r) Carmen Maldacena, Alessandro Mordini and Resul Hacıogullari



Wittur Hydraulic's facilities in Bergamo, Italy

Elevator technicians devised very complicated electric solutions to build a freight elevator instead of using a direct-central or side-piston hydraulic system, because they don't feel familiar with hydraulic technology. We are working hard on that, visiting customers and introducing our products to this market, as well as in other areas where we realize that a better knowledge is needed.

We have also increased our market share in Middle Eastern countries like Iran and Syria, and in Asia through Wittur China, in a country where hydraulic installations are steadily growing. I would say the market is stable in the rest of the world.

EW: Is the campaign against hydraulic elevators justifiable for ecological reasons?

AM: The supposed pollution is not supported by evident and known figures referring to serious accidents on a vast scale. The risk of oil leakage during normal operation is limited to cylinder seal wear, even then in extremely small volumes. In case of accidents (i.e., pipe failure), we provide hydraulic and electrical devices to detect abnormal pressure values and stop lift leakage.

Furthermore, we can supply additional containers for our pump units, for a complete protection in any event. My personal belief is that there is no serious ecologic hazard in the hydraulic elevators as such, but design, manufacturing and installation quality are important, like in any other technology.

EW: What is your opinion about hydraulic vs. MRL elevators?

RH: We can offer MRL solutions also for hydraulic lifts. The issue is not to eliminate the hydraulic elevator, but to use each system for the benefit of the investor, installer and final user. As we have mentioned, a hydraulic elevator is still the easiest and most suitable solution for some installations. Hydraulic elevators are maintained quite easier than electric MRL lifts, and they are often cheaper. Furthermore, it is not difficult for small- and mid-size maintenance companies to exchange a valve or a cylinder – even between different hydraulic component suppliers.

EW: Could you describe the improvements recently achieved by Wittur Hydraulic Drives?

AM: We improved company performance on two fronts: features and quality of our products and our service. As an example, I would like to mention the newly developed "Silent Kit", adopted as standard on all our NL-type distribution valves. Noise level is a very important decision factor for hydraulic systems without machine rooms.

The modular valve design is another strong asset: it allows a clear separation of the different valve sections that control the various phases of the car travel, making it much easier to analyze and to solve potential problems. Its regulation is precise and easy, and maintenance is quite simple so that service time can be considerably reduced.

Another essential achievement is customer satisfaction. Out on-time delivery is above 97%, orders are processed in an average of 0.5 business days and, in the event of claims, the case is examined within an average response time of 0.7 business days, providing specific corrective measures.

EW: Where does Wittur Hydraulic Drives hold the biggest market shares?

RH: Because of location reasons, we have the best sales results in Italy, but, as we said, we are doing very well in Spain and South America. *Mardini and I travel to*

Continued



Cylinder production



(l-r) Mordini and Haciogullari

learn more about the different markets, support our sales force and establish or improve our relationship with our customers. North America is one of our next targets.


Wittur Hydraulic Products

At your reporter's request, the visitors gave a quick survey of the products manufactured by the company. To



Pump unit production

cover lifting needs for nominal loads from 100 to 20,000 kilograms, cylinder production includes coaxial immersion cylinders with 50- to 230-millimeter diameter rods, two- and three-stage telescopic cylinders, single or double 8 to 600 l/min units and all the accessories.

Here, the innovations include the E-Board 1, which is an electronic board to control low-speed strokes, and a Soft Start board for motor ignition up to 18.4 kW. The company supplies modular solutions of oil cooler systems to facilitate their installation above the unit. Minilift tanks can be supplied in four models with four motor power levels (1.5, 1.8, 2.2 and 2.9 kW) and five capacities (8, 12, 16, 23 and 35 l/min). Elevator tanks are available in six models for flow rates from 25 to 600 l/min and motor power from 2.2 up to 58.8 kW. Their oil-submerged motors offer silent operation, with 56 dB(A) during high-speed lifting. They are now fine tuning a new product for systems with pit units. 

Bestseller List - February 2008

ELEVATOR WORLD Books, Videos, CDs and Products

- 1 2005 Edition Field Employees' Safety Handbook
published by Elevator World, Inc.
- 2 CET® Course 1 - Introduction to Elevators
published by Elevator World, Inc.
- 3 CET® Course 2 - Basics of Installing Elevator Components
published by Elevator World, Inc.
- 4 Elevators 101, 2nd Edition
by Zack McCain
- 5 A17.1 2007 Safety Code for Elevators and Escalators
published by the American Society of Mechanical Engineers
- 6 Electric Elevators Books 1 & 2 combined
by Fred Hymans
- 7 Installation Manual
published by Elevator World, Inc.
- 8 Electric Motor Repair
by Robert Rosenberg and August Hand
- 9 Safety Meetings, 3rd Edition
published by Elevator World, Inc.
- 10 Standard Textbook of Electricity 3rd Edition
by Stephen Herman



Complete hydraulic installation