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HUPAC CELEBRATES 40 YEARS

Hugh Edgely

This year Hupac celebrates its 40th birthday, but what were some of the early milestones along the way to its current success? How has the wagon fleet evolved?

1967 Five pioneers founded Hupac at Chiasso in the Ticino. They planned a company with its own special wagons; that would fill the trains; and would undertake the loading and unloading of the trains. In his trucks, Hans Bertschi was transporting antifreeze from BASF in Ludwigshafen to Milan. Early on he began toying with the idea of doing the stretch through Switzerland by rail. Dr. Franz Hegner, Head of Freight at SBB, allowed himself to be persuaded by Bertschi in 1964. That year, Bertschi AG began transporting its tanker trucks on standard railway wagons from Basle to Lugano.

Bertschi drawbar trailer loaded on Wippen wagon

Sandro Bernasconi, from transport company Fratelli Bernasconi Cie., was also determined to send his semi-trailers unaccompanied by rail over the Gotthard. But how could this load be achieved technically? The trailer legs did not provide enough grip on the railway wagons, thus jeopardising safety. "Sandro Bernasconi had a very practical turn of mind", says Theo Allemann, former Hupac CEO. "He invented the railway wagon with a trailer hitch, on which the semi-trailer could be attached with the kingpin in the normal way."

Securing Trailer

The fourth member of the team was Pietro Ris, General Manager for Italy and the Canton Ticino for the company Danzas AG. Pietro Ris, recognized early the dangers of Switzerland being bypassed. He campaigned hard for upgrading the railway for intermodal traffic.

Last but not least, Ueli Maeder, proprietor of the Jacky Maeder Company was keen on the project for a joint intermodal business and decided to invest there and then.

Loading Danzas Trailer

1968 Hupac began operating with 10 of its own Wippen wagons, constructed by Ferriere Cattaneo in Giubiasco. "This was the first time that road hauliers invested in railway wagons", explains Allemann. "They made sure that the railway wagons were running loaded, actually with their own road vehicles. That is how intermodal traffic paid for itself and developed long-term." The first Hupac trains ran between Basle and Melide near Lugano. "The sceptics at that time were dumbfounded", remembers Theo Allemann. "For some road hauliers we were traitors, and many railway people wanted nothing to do with road traffic on railway wagons. The first time we loaded four semi-trailers it took seven hours", recalls Theo Allemann. "The latest gantry cranes do the transfer within one minute."

1969 Hupac carried out the first international combined transport with its own wagons on the Cologne-Milan Rogoredo stretch.

1970 In Munich several progressive companies – including Hupac – joined together to form the combined road/rail umbrella association UIRR (Union Internationale de sociétés de transport combiné Rail-Route).

1971 Hupac entered into a service agreement with the German combined transport operator Kombiverkehr, for a better integration of the traffic in Northern Europe.

1973 The international activity of

Melide

Hupac Terminal

Hupac expanded considerably with the opening of the Milan-Rotterdam axis. Trailstar and Hupac began to collaborate closely to develop the constantly growing volume of transport between Holland and Italy. Trailstar has since been acquired by Hupac.

1976 Rolling Highway was added to unaccompanied traffic on the Altdorf-Cadenazzo stretch.

1978 Transport activities started to be transferred to the Busto Arsizio terminal, which later became the main Hupac transfer centre in Italy. "The Milan terminal was important for intermodal traffic", recalls Theo Allemann. "In the early days, Hupac re-loaded freight in the station at Rogo. Lack of space meant we soon had to move to Greco Pirelli. The transalpine traffic kept growing, and soon even this location was bursting at the seams". Allemann kept looking round optimistically, and happened to get talking to a manager from the Italian State Railways. He mentioned that at Busto Arsizio, space could be made available to Hupac on a derelict timber re-loading yard with a rail connection. The dynamic company rapidly set up a transhipment yard on the site. However, the local people in the heavily populated area objected to the growing number of trucks.

Allemann found a partner in the local mayor, who raised the prospect of a greenfield site for building a new terminal. After much persuasion, the terminal was finally declared to be in the public interest, so within a few months, the 18 private plots of land could be compulsorily purchased. In 1992, Busto II was opened and soon filled to capacity. After further purchases of land in the neighbouring community of Gallarate, further expansion was begun and Busto Arsizio-Gallarate terminal was opened in Autumn 2005.

1980 The Rolling Highway became international with a connection between Milano Greco Pirelli and Freiburg i. B.

1981 The cooperation between Cemat and Hupac led to a strong traffic development in Italy.

1990 Hupac introduced shuttle trains between Cologne and Busto Arsizio; an innovation destined to revolutionise the characteristics of the Hupac transport services.

Wagon Technology The central question of combined transport has always been which type of wagon is best for

carrying the load units from road freight transport on the railways. For decades, the engineering department of Hupac has reconciled the requirements of the market, railway infrastructure and train operation, working with the manufacturers to develop innovative rolling stock. The evolution of Hupac's rolling stock shows how the wagons in combined transport have become ever longer, more stable and can accommodate taller loads.

1967 Hupac purchased 10 two-axle Wippen wagons for semi-trailers. The payload was 16t.

1971 Four-axle Wippen wagons join the fleet capable of carrying a payload of 25t.

1972 Hupac purchased 10 low-floor wagons from Simmering-Graz-Pauker, with which whole HGVs could be carried with a payload of 16t.

1978 The pocket wagon I (13m long, 44t payload) ushered in a new successful series of wagons that allowed the transportation of semi-trailers as well as swap bodies.

1980 New low-floor wagons with a 40t payload come into operation on the Singen-Milan Rola connection.

1983 Pocket wagon II, 16m long, for 60t payload.

1984 Pocket wagon III, 18m long, for 60t payload.

1987 The first wagon for swap bodies and containers only goes into operation.

1990 Introduction of the low-set Mega double wagon for lorry loading-units with an internal height of 3m.

Wippen Wagons en-route

Editor's Note: Hugh Edgely prepared this article with help from Hupac, who also provided the historic photographs. Swiss Express thanks Irmtraut Tonndorf and her colleagues for all their help.

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