

HORIZONS OF BUSWORLD

We met with Didier Ramoudt, President of Busworld International Ltd., and asked him to answer a number of questions in the light of the pending exhibition Busworld Russia Powered by Autotrans due to be held in Moscow in October this year.

Alexander SOLNTSEV



■ **Mr. Ramoudt, what is the prehistory of the Busworld exhibition? What does it amount to today considering the opening of new exhibition venues in India, China and Turkey?**

– The first exhibition of Busworld took place in Belgium in 1971 (at that time called Car & Bussalon) and it was organized by the Federation of Flemish Private Coach and Bus owners called the B.A.A.V.

The initiative was taken at that time to show the members of the federation the different

models and possibilities of Coaches and Buses, enabling them to make an objective choice and compare the quality offered. Operators from France, Holland and Germany visited the fair too and so the link across the borders of Belgium was made.

Today that same Busworld has grown to the largest Coach and Bus exhibition in the world with nearly 35,000 professional visitors coming from 114 countries and 411 exhibitors coming from 36 different countries.

After 30 years Busworld decided to go abroad and started the first out of Europe Busworld in China – Beijing. This was a yearly event and from the second year we expanded the exhibition to Shanghai and became a large event too. After came Busworld Turkey, Busworld India, Busworld Russia and also Busworld Latin America.

■ **Do exhibitions in different countries have any specific features or are they arranged according to the same pattern?**

– We try to keep the same philosophy at all our Busworlds. This means that the main key issues are the same taking into account the end user, so read «the passenger». Issues such like safety, comfort and sustainability will always come back in our Busworld's theme. For this we have created Busworld Academy as a knowledge platform organizing conferences, seminars and debates in order to keep the operators, the constructors and the respective authorities up to date what the future will bring on the level

of new techniques as well as on the different mode applied in public transportation.

Our exhibitions are a meeting center for professionals and we try to keep a good balance between the business on one side but also some distraction during the event such as music, attractions and entertainment.

Every country where we organize a Busworld has also its specific needs and wishes regarding the passenger transport. For example, in the tourism business: tours organized by coach operators are very different. The needs of high quality coaches in the West – Europe are very different from the needs in India or Russia, for example. These countries are still at the initial phase of development.

On the other hand, the public transport in Russia and China are of a completely different magnitude than in Western Europe. Russia and China are countries where the public transport by the road is in many ways the only way of getting somewhere. Also road infrastructures are different in all these countries and the coach and bus constructors do have to take this into account when exhibiting at Busworld.

■ **Let's talk more precisely about Busworld Academy. What does it amount to, what are its structure and objectives?**

– Busworld Academy has been created in the womb of Busworld International. Why? As organizers and being ourselves coach and bus operators we feel that it isn't enough to invite our exhibitors to bring only the best to the exhibition, to bring the latest inventions and visions, but that we needed an academic platform to explain our visitors what is new on the market, how and when it will be

Busworld China: Didier Ramoudt with Niu Bo, President of Yutong, the world's biggest bus manufacturer



implemented, what the future of the passenger transport will be, why to choose X or Y engine, etc.... And, of course, what is the use to exhibit the latest inventions, if the law of any country doesn't allow these inventions to be implemented. For this we need the authorities also to know what is going on in the passenger transport so that they can take them into account in new regulations helping the industry to proceed with market research in the interests of the passenger.

Busworld Academy for this invites people with a certain authority in their discipline to bring their view on the developments and share them with constructors and operators. Also debates between different groups and here we give, for example, a platform to the federations of bus and coach owners to go in debate with the authorities to share their problems.

Busworld Academy has now agreed on a strategic partnership with the International Road Union (I.R.U.), who is a global actor, in order to fortify the academy sharing her knowledge in the international passenger transport.

■ **Recently the Busworld geography expanded thanks to the inclusion of Russia. ITEMF Expo company and Busworld International Ltd. signed an agreement of partnership in organizing an exhibition titled Busworld Russia powered by Autotrans in Moscow in October 2016. As we know Busworld Russia shows were held in Nizhny Novgorod in 2010 and 2012. In your opinion, what are the reasons why they saw no continuation?**

– Let me say, when I became the president of Busworld International in 2011 the first thing I did was to evaluate the different international exhibitions. Busworld Russia at Nizhny Novgorod didn't have any growth potential due to different factors:

1. As a destination the reachability was bad. In 2012 Aeroflot was not even flying to N.N.
2. The facilities of the Yarmarka didn't corresponded to our needs.
3. The overwhelming presence of one local busbuilder made it a national exhibition rather than an international one.
4. We didn't grow in the second edition.

If I will compare Moscow and N.N., it wouldn't be fair. Everybody knows the metropolitan Moscow and this is already the half of the job done. The decision makers are in Moscow, the exhibition halls are of the best, the tourist business is in full evolution, the public transport is ready for a fundamental renewal and the best is that we have found with ITEMF not only a very solid partner but also a reliable and experienced organizer of exhibitions. We are very confident, that despite the sanctions, despite the weaker rouble that Busworld Russia powered by Autotrans will be a success because all international market surveys foresee that Russia together with former Soviet Union countries is the 4th fastest growing and potential market for coaches and buses due to the high amount of old buses which have urgently to be replaced and to the constant growing market of the «Marchroutes».

The Russian authorities are very aware that the public transport should give the necessary comfort and safety to the passengers going to their job, going to visit their family's, going on a visit to

the hospital or going to the shops and market. The bus is an important economic vein in society and can not longer be disregarded as such.

■ **Are you familiar with the Russian bus market? How do you evaluate it?**

– I will not pretend that I know the Russian bus market very well, but in the 22 years being active in Russia and Ukraine I have seen the evolution. In many cities the very old trolleybuses have been banned from the street and replaced with more recent models. The buses in general have had their best times behind them and are waiting for the eternal rest. Due to the lack of investing the necessary money in the past in public transport, the respective authorities will be confronted with high provisions in the budget. But waiting longer will only aggravate this situation.

In Busworld Academy we will foresee a debate on this issue as it is really becoming very urgent. We are strong believers that the private sector can help to solve this problem and that it can relieve



A historic picture taken on October 17, 2015, at Busworld in Kortrijk, Belgium. The agreement on arranging Busworld Russia Powered by Autotrans is signed by Sergei Alexandrov, General Director of ITEMF Expo, and Didier Ramoudt, President of Busworld International Ltd.

substantial amounts from the budget by giving the private entrepreneurs the possibility to invest in new buses in return for a long-term contract with the authorities.

For the coach business we also foresee a bright future. Tourism in Russia is more than Moscow and St Petersburg. This huge country has so much to offer and to visit where only coaches can bring you. The many historical buildings spread all over the country, the rich nature, the many architectural beauties.

There is a huge international and national market waiting to be developed in a professional way. Also this will be a topic at the Busworld Academy.

■ **What are the further plans of Busworld International Ltd. of organizing new exhibitions?**

– At this moment we are developing for 2017 the Central Asia and South East Asia markets. We foresee to start either in Kazakhstan or Uzbekistan and Djakarta seems to be a good choice. This we will first consolidate in the coming years. A road show is also in the program, this means that we will operate Busworld exhibition only once in the chosen country worldwide and we are already thinking to launch this road show in Cuba 2018. I think I will need another good talk with our partners from ITEMF... ■