

# A logistical challenge

The strongest light-metal press in the world shipped in sections to China via Neustaedter Harbour in Bremen

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Picture captions: MS "Anmn Sophie" being loaded in the Neustaedter docks with plant components for transport to China

BLG personnel attaching the lifting cables of a crane to a bulky component of the light-metal press. In order to load the unusually large and heavy goods safely onto the ship a second floating crane is also used.

Main picture caption: The various components are loaded in specially-made crates at the Neustaedter Docks

Bremen: From Mönchengladbach via Bremen to Qingdao in China – that is the logistical challenge for the transport of the world's largest aluminium extrusion press.

The fully-assembled machine weighs some 2000 tonnes. With a press power of 15000 tonnes it counts as one of the strongest currently available. A trio of Bremen companies is working hand in hand on the project.

"Made in Germany" sounds good to the Chinese. In April a delegation of the staterun Chinese Shandong Yankuang Light Alloy Company from Jining travelled the long way to Mönchengladbach in order to inspect the press they had ordered. The basic parameters: 150NM aluminium extrusion press, Schloemann series, 12 m high, 5 m wide, and 40 m long.

Ulrich Vohskämper, manager of the hydraulic press section of the manufacturer SMS Meer explains the use of this novel type of extrusion press: "Presses of this size are used for example to produce sections for vehicles in the transport sector. That is very relevant in countries such as China, because it is currently investing large sums in its infrastructure", Vohskämper explains. In simple terms, liquid aluminium is introduced into the press, and shaped sections come out at the other end. These can be among other things the roofs and side sections for the high-speed trains which will in future operate on the new line between Beijing and Shanghai.

## Conserved for 24 months

While the Chinese customers were admiring their fully-assembled product, the next steps were already being prepared in the background by the Bremen packaging specialists PTS Logistics Group, and the transport company Transgerma Riedl & Kiehntopf, the Bremen-based maritime transport organisation of the Riedl Group. The remit was to dismantle, pack and transport by ship and heavy-goods transporters along the roads and waterways from the Ruhr area to Bremen and then from there to China.

To begin with, this will involve a convoy of heavy-goods vehicles from Mönchengladbach to Krefeld, where the extreme loads will be transferred to inland waterway barges. Along the roads, hundreds of traffic signs and other obstructions will have to be taken down, and then reinstalled when the convoy has passed. Organisational measures are required including applications for permission from local authorities. Very heavy loads will be loaded directly with a total of 159 small, medium and large wooden crates, some fitted with specially designed steel base constructions to cope with the enormous weights.

This represents a true logistic challenge. The cylinder head alone is nearly six metres long and weighs 180 tonnes. "When it comes to the final assembly in China not a single component can be missing", comments Uwe Peters, founder and coowner of the PTS Group. The remit for the packaging includes sealing all components and dessicants in aluminium foil. "We guarantee the conservation for 24 months," says Peters. The packaging company has its own wood-working shop in Sittensen, where the panels of the crates can be made exactly to specifications.

Marco Loos, commercial project manager at PTS Logistics, has been working full time since May with a team of seven full-time staff and as many as eight assistants. "The heaviest components of the machinery weighing more than 190 tonnes cannot be fitted into crates – they are sealed into their own foil packaging in order to ensure stability during loading."

It is not apparent at first sight, but the MS Ann Sofie (SAL Shipping Company) is a heavy lift ship, specially designed for carrying loads like these. Freight weighing several hundred tonnes can be taken on board in a single lift. The heavy lift freighter, built in 2008, was chartered by Transgerma maritime transport company, and arrived in Bremen after a dry-dock inspection in Hamburg.

Klaus Bunte from Transgerma is up early this Sunday to supervise the loading. Two floating cranes, each capable of lifting 100 tonnes, have been linked together for the transport of the heavy loads. Between Sheds 20 and 22 in the Neustaedter Docks they are manoeuvring the plant components to precisely the right position in the hold of the ship. Klaus Bunte is paying close attention to the loading list. "Everything is going to plan", he says. "By about 10.00 pm the last crate will be on board." But the presence of a film team is evidence that is not just any normal job. The manufacturer accompanies the components of the huge press in sound and vision from the quay to the crane and onto the ship.

For Sven Riekers, operating manager of BLG Cargo Logistics with responsibility for the loading areas this job "...is no everyday assignment, even though we have many years of expertise as

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operators of the largest packed freight docks in Europe with special equipment for handling heavy goods." Riekers praises the high quality of the services provided by the docks when dealing with assignments of these dimensions in comparison with other docks such as Antwerp. And in contrast with Hamburg, the packed goods can always be offloaded at the required terminal, so that flexible and rapid handling is ensured. China's growth is setting a value-creation chain in motion which not only benefits many companies in Bremen but also the Bremen docks.

The final reassembly of the 40-metre long giant of steel and advanced technology in China is planned for 2012. It is possible that the plant components will be stored temporarily at the site of the 2008 Olympic Games. The last piece of good news is that the Chinese want to purchase three more extrusion presses. SMS has already started work on the second press and Bremen is the first choice as export dock according to Sven Riekers. And under a long-term contract, packaging specialists PTS have already secured the follow-up packaging order.

PTS company secretary Sven Hermann is relying on continuity. "We aim to establish project-specific long-term networks. The current Bremen project for our customer SMS is a good example of partnership and cooperation along the entire logistics chain." But Marco Loos is glad that the next time they will already have the measurements for the dimensions of all the press components before the packaging work starts.

