Seaway Heavy Lifting

A New Child is Born
The new contractor, Seaway Heavy Lifting, is formed as a 50/50 joint venture between the Norwegian offshore company Stolt Nielsen Seaaway (later Stolt Comex Seaaway > Stolt Offshore > Aenergy > Subsea 7) and the Russian state oil company Kалininograd Morneft (later LukolKaliningradMorneft) on October 15th 1991. The latter intends to develop the D6 oil field in the Baltic Sea, and the Stanislav Yudin crane vessel was built for this purpose. KMING puts the Stanislav Yudin on the market in 1999. This vessel, which although built in Finland, has some Soviet characteristics such as its communist hammer and sickle symbol, and its Russian crew. Three tugs are also immediately made available to Seaway Heavy Lifting along with the crane vessel, crew and equipment: the Bakhkan, the Nefteogaz 31 and the Nefteogaz 66.

Two major offshore contractors are active in the North Sea at this time: Heerema and Smit. Michel Bonte, former Commercial Manager at Heerema knows the offshore market all too well. He learns about the Stanislav Yudin, but Heerema at that time does not show any interest in this vessel. A year later, he comes into contact with the Russian owners. By then, Stolt Nielsen Seaaway (later Stolt Comex Seaaway > Stolt Offshore > Aenergy > Subsea 7) Stolt Nielsen Seaaway already has a close relationship with the Russians. Bonte’s contact with the Russian owners eventually leads to the forming of Seaway Heavy Lifting and Michel Bonte’s appointment as General Manager.

The main office for administrative issues and engineering is initially at SNS in Aberdeen. Rotterdam becomes the home port because much of the expertise available at this time comes from the Netherlands and the focus is mainly on work in the North Sea. Michel Bonte quickly establishes an office in the “attic” of a real estate office on the Droopstraat in Zoetermeer, the Netherlands. Elles Blasse becomes the first secretary.