

The interview

Alberto Antolini, Ocrim

Guido Grassi, the Knight of the order of Merit for Labour, founded Ocrim in 1945. Today, Ocrim remains an Italian company; the Antolini family owns the stock of which Alberto Antolini is the Chief Executive Officer, his brother Sergio the Vice-Chairman and his father, Primo Antolini, the chairman. Servicing the agri-food chain, Ocrim operates in the milling sector through the construction of mills processing wheat, corn, cereals and animal feed. Coupled with its 'Italian made' heritage, Ocrim prides itself on investment and attention paid to the training of future generations through its Milling Technology school, situated in Cremona which has been in existence for over 50 years, training millers from all over the world.

How does Ocrim continue to expand and grow?

In 2010 we did 40 to 45 percent of our business in Africa and we have rapidly and successfully shifted operations over to Asia. It's a massive amount of logistics, planning, and marketing. Some of our competitors have built factories in Asia, and we have managed to do so also.

It has really been rather like pulling off an acrobatic act – mainly a question of timing. For ten years, there was very little prospect for growth in some countries. It was an uphill struggle. We spoke to one government and asked them to give us a project to refit eight mills. We found ourselves with a project for three. Not much, but what can you do? That project was the best available at the time. We have been working away on that, and things have started looking up. We signed a contract a couple of months ago.

The Philippines is one of the most important countries we now focus on. Currently we have 18 percent of the market share over there.

Your products sell very well despite the fact that you are in an incredibly competitive market. Why do you think this is?

Our ethos. At the end of the day, we believe our job is to help our customer make good flour. So we make the best products we can, and we endeavor to give the best after-sales support we can. Milling is a very expensive business. When a customer buys a mill, the life expectancy of that mill is about twenty years. This is not a short-term investment! The client has to be sure the mill will do the job, and that consistent help will be available should any problems arise. Sometimes clients feel letdown by the price, sometimes by the company staff they interact with, and sometimes the technology is not what they expected. Also multiple sites of product origin can lead to confusion. If it sometimes comes from China, sometimes South Africa and sometimes Brazil, the confusion for the customer is crazy.

How does the training you offer make Ocrim unique?

Whenever anyone talks quality, they always mention Ocrim. You can count on one hand the companies that give decent training. This is obviously one of our strongest selling points - having a quality school of our own. I think it is also a question of dimensions. We adapt and move quickly like a mouse. We try to be like a mouse! This speed of mobilisation is another factor that has enabled us to establish ourselves so rapidly in Asia.

When we have a big project in for example, Indonesia or the Philippines, we are able to train both here in Cremona and also on site at the client company. Two or three of our millers go over and train them so they can get hands-on experience with the machinery itself.

What plans do you currently have for your new plant in Cremona?

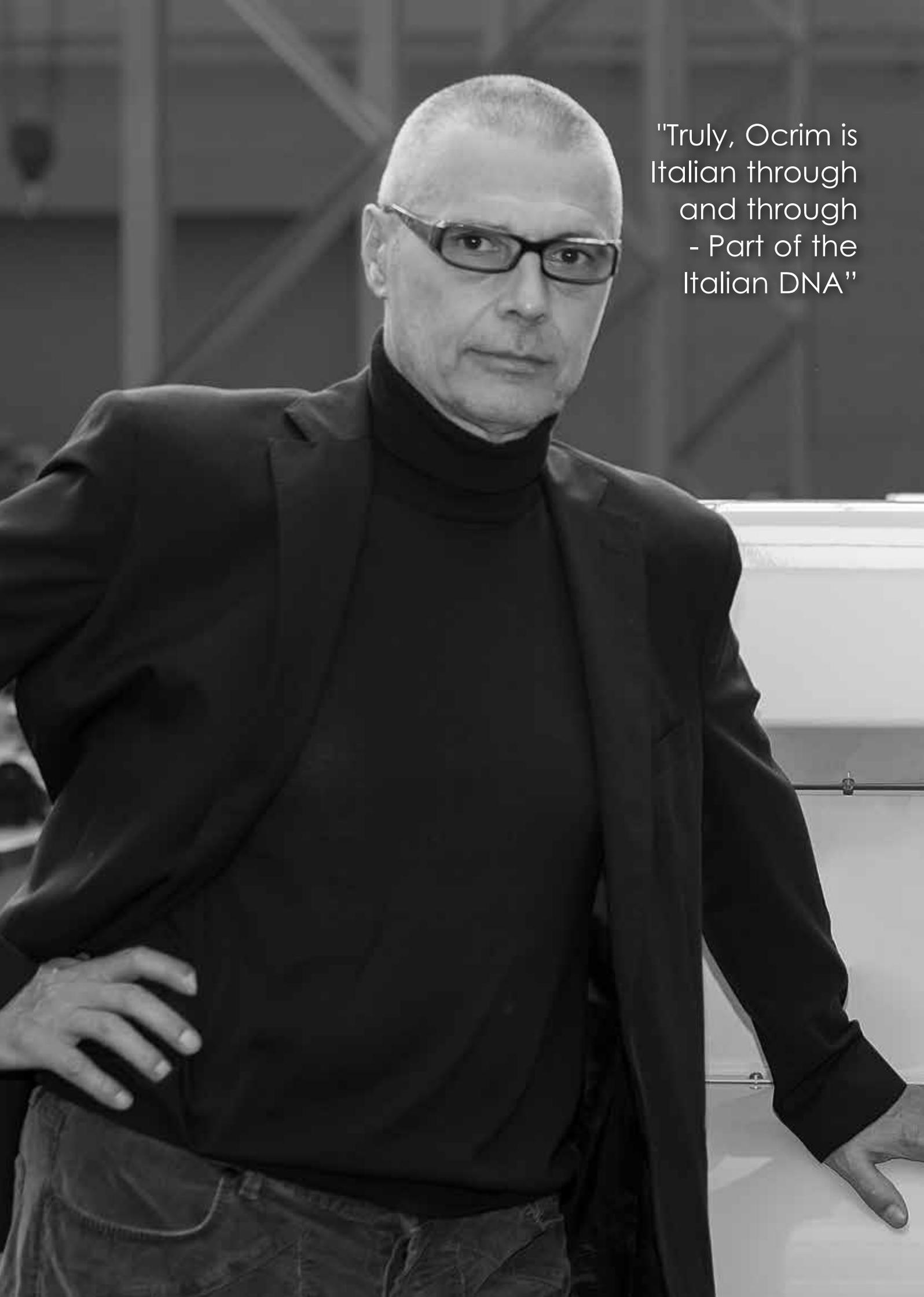
At the moment, in Cremona, we make rolling-machines and transistors. All other parts are made in our other factories: paints, ball-bearings, plastic injection-mouldings, steel structures and such like. The purpose of the new project in the port is to increase the production of roller mills and transistors rather than other parts. Today we are making about 200 machines a year. We aim to double that.

When will the new plant be completed?

Its ready now. We prepare each step before we take it. All our plants are ready to double production immediately. If we were not already able to do so, we could not expand into another market. For example, last year, our business in Indonesia was 185 roller mills for a single customer. If we can only produce the two hundred a year that we currently do, and are not able to double that immediately, then we cannot expand into another market because that one customer has already used up our year's production potential. So we have made sure that we are able to double up production immediately.

Are the electrical components used in the roller mills Italian-made as well?

Yes, and not just Italian! All the parts in our machines are made by us, just in different locations. Truly, Ocrim is Italian through and through - "Part of the Italian DNA".



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