

## A Sunny Springtime

The annual Hanover Fair took place from 22 to 27 April this year, and unlike the previous years, the atmosphere was busy, optimistic, relaxed, I would even say happy. End of Fair press releases usually insist on the positive impact of the Fair on business and this is not to be denied. But the last years, it was difficult to hide the moroseness of the economy.

This year was different, there was something new in the air. 11 % more visitors, an increasing participation from countries from Central and Eastern Europe as well as Far Eastern countries, more managers and decisionmakers among the visitors, are the key aspects of the balance sheet. The next edition will take place from 14 to 19 April 1997.

Central and Eastern Europe is attracting a lot of the attention as these new markets open up and new companies look for business opportunities. The authorities of the Fair pointed out that the leading Central and Eastern European countries in terms of floor space booked were Poland, Czech republic and Hungary. This confirms the growing business in those countries, and by turning to p. 45, you will see that Budapest will certainly be the place to be next September as a visitor or as an exhibitor.

This year Fair was devoted to Robotics and Energy Technologies. Very few drives were to see, most new products will be proposed next year. Manufacturers are completing their product range in the very low or very high power range. Equipment are getting smaller, more compact, the ergonomics becomes important, as well as the user-friendliness and the ease of commissioning. Software and communications are keywords, but power electronics design, thermal design, magnetics are also playing an important part in the development of new products. Volumes are oscillating between  $400 \text{ W/dm}^3$  for very low and very high power equipments and  $1$  to  $1.5 \text{ kW/dm}^3$  for middle sized equipment (2 to 30 kW).

Communication software is a key feature of the equipment. Some equipment are multi-system compatible as no unique standard is emerging. We can see rather that a number of different systems, more or less specialised in a particular field, are, in reality, looking for expansion. As a result, computer and/or terminals are appearing in the factory and specially protected devices where proposed. Quality is still stressed on, but the ISO advertisement mode has fade away.

Last but not least, the Fair made visible the last changes that occurred in the economic world with the concentration of the business under fewer but larger companies. Those giants cultivate now the art of "being local everywhere". My apologies, EPE Journal cannot follow. Wherever you are, you are reading this unique edition of the Journal!

I am presently working to get more "products and applications" information out of the Fair for the next issues. You will see from p. 45 to 47 that we are proposing you general and specialised events. You might also already start thinking about your paper to be proposed in Trondheim, 8 - 10 September 1997.

Happy Springtime!

B. Sneyers  
Editor

