

# North Korean MgO from Quintermina

IT'S ALL HAPPENING in the magnesia supply market. Further to last month's lead news report on Russian magnesia supply breaking into the European market through a German trader (see *IM January '09*, p.6), IM has learned that the considerable magnesite resources of North Korea are to be made available to the global market through Quintermina AG of Switzerland.

Although the company was unable to disclose details at time of press, **IM** can reveal that the new business is to facilitate supply of North Korean "competitive quality magnesia" for agricultural, industrial, and refractory applications.

The main focus is caustic

calcined magnesia (CCM; low iron grade, agricultural grade, including 90200, 92200, 94200), and dead burned magnesia (DBM; including 9003, 9010), and later, perhaps fused magnesia (including 96%, 97% MgO).

Quintermina is headquartered in Chur, Switzerland, and is managed by David Copley, who is also the Managing Director of Steinbock Minerals Ltd.

Details that are available in the public domain reveal that Quintermina is a joint venture between RHI and Copley.

It would seem that RHI and Steinbock have formed a joint venture to secure magnesia materials from North Korea.

The magnesite resources of North Korea, an extension of the magnesite-talc belt

from Liaoning, China, are considerable, amounting to some 3,000m. tonnes. Current production is in excess of 100,000 tpa DBM.

Sourcing magnesite from North Korea over the last few decades has been tackled by few, and even fewer have succeeded. Key challenges include lack of fuel and power supplies, basic infrastructure for freight, and modern technology, not to mention dealing with a very sensitive government.

However, Steinbock and its associates, notably the logistics company Yasheya Ltd, have a respected pedigree in dealing with North Korean minerals going back many years. Steinbock told **IM** that it has managed to regularly ship lots of

5-10,000 tonne CCM and DBM on a monthly basis over the last two years.

RHI, a leading refractories producer and consumer of magnesia, has made little secret of its intention to secure and invest in raw material resources worldwide (see *IM October '08*, p.6).

Outside China, North Korea stands out as the relatively untouched "Eldorado" of magnesite. Last month we reported "North Korea as an alternative [magnesia source] is looking no closer to coming to large scale commercial fruition." Perhaps we are about to be proved wrong.

**IM** intends to publish a more detailed report on Quintermina in a forthcoming issue.

*David Copley of Quintermina will be speaking on **Supply of magnesia from North Korea and China at MagMin 2009, 10-12 May 2009, Amsterdam** – see p2&3.*