

3-1-1986

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### Recommended Citation

Anonymous, "Chinese upgrading training structure" (1986). *WMU in the News*. 239.  
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## CHINESE UPGRADING TRAINING STRUCTURE

IT is no longer accurate to say that Eastern and Third World crews are necessarily inferior to Western seafarers. Thanks mainly to IMO assistance, the quality and amount of training available in the developing countries has improved radically over the past few years, and now encompasses 'new' areas such as computer technology, electronics maintenance and ship management as well as more traditional skills. In today's increasingly competitive market, seafarers must not only be cheap to employ — they must also be well-trained in order to carry out their work with maximum efficiency, and countries with 'emergent' maritime interests are aware that they must step up their training schemes to meet this demand. A case in point is the rapid development of the Chinese training infrastructure.

THE JEWEL in the crown of the seafarers' training system in the People's Republic of China is Dalian Marine College. With a current capacity of around 3,000 students — shortly to be increased to 5,000 with the addition of new facilities — the college is certainly one of the largest maritime training centres in the Far East, if not the world.

In 1984 Dalian was established as an Eastern arm of IMO's World Maritime University (see LSM Nov p60). Within the WMU, its function is to provide short courses, from a few weeks to a year, to students from Asian and Pacific countries. This is an extension of its existing role as base for the Asian Pacific Marine Training Institute.

The courses offered to overseas students cover most modern aspects of shipping, including cargo handling, use of radar, and simulator work. A recent

addition is ship management, and there is increasing interest in advanced computing and electronics.

The college reports a substantial amount of interest in its courses, from countries as widely spread as Iran, Indonesia, Pakistan, Thailand, North and South Korea, Albania and various parts of Africa. It claims that courses are currently three to four times over-subscribed. With the help of the Chinese Ministry of Communications, it is in the process of building new classrooms and other facilities to meet this demand.

### Cadet ship

Possibly the most ambitious part of this expansion programme is a plan to build a fully-equipped 10,000dwt general cargo ship for ocean-going training. College officials say that the ship will be built to a design produced by a Dalian graduate, probably in the Dalian Shipyard. It will have berths for around 160 students at a time, and the intention is to run the vessel in trade, with voyages lasting around two months each.

The College already has two 10,000dwt training vessels, the British-built, coastwise operated Yuhong — which has been at Dalian since 1974 and which can take up to 60 students — plus the 20 year old Yuying, which currently provides ocean-going training. Dalian also has a 400 ton coaster and four 22 HP motorboats. Students practice rowing techniques in the College's 14 sampans.

Further practical training is available

*Picture above: Opening of the World Maritime University's Dalian branch in the presence of IMO Secretary-General C P Srivastava*

in the 120-student machine shop with welding and casting facilities plus a comprehensive range of machine tools. The electronics department also has its own shop, but the bulk of the College's electrical equipment is scattered amongst its 54 teaching and research laboratories.

Most of the radar and navigation equipment in use at Dalian dates from 1980 when it was provided largely by Norway. The envisaged training vessel will incorporate new technology in her navigational and operational systems, and so will play a considerable part in enhancing College resources. Moreover, a computer building is under construction at Dalian which, the authorities hope, will be equipped with the assistance of the IMO. There is also a library with around 450,000 volumes in various languages.

This impressive array of resources has taken some time to accumulate. The College first came into operation in 1953, when it was formed by merging three marine schools — the Shanghai Nautical College, the North East Navigation College and Fujian Navigation School.

### Specialist Areas

Since then it has gradually expanded its areas of coverage, until today it has six separate departments, specialising in navigation, maritime law, ship management, marine engineering, computer science and electronic engineering.

Within these departments the College offers 10 specialist areas of training. Under the general heading of marine transport management, students can study navigation, marine engine management, marine electrical equip-

ment management and marine communications. Under marine engineering they can specialise in automatic control, computer science, electronic engineering and communications engineering. Also encompassed is a course in marine transport administration, which covers ship management and maritime law.

The majority of courses last for four years, apart from the marine engineering courses which span a five year period. Syllabuses are much the same as in most Western colleges, with each department having a core of compulsory subjects supplemented by specialist courses taken in the final years of training. In addition, all students are required to take a range of subjects which relate specifically to the PRC's political and social environment.

For instance, one teaching laboratory at Dalian is given over to the study of Marxism/Leninism. Five or six years ago, in the early days of China's international emergence in an economic context, there were considerable fears on the part of the Chinese authorities that crews would be 'corrupted' by the influence of the West. In some cases Chinese ratings did in fact jump ship, only to be taken back to China.

As crew supply has developed, however, this tendency has disappeared. Whether this can be put down to effective political indoctrination on the part of the Chinese or more contentment on the part of their crews is a moot point. But ship-owners have pointed out that the Chinese will make only their best seamen available for work abroad.

### Practical training

Another core subject is physical education. All students have to be able to swim at least 1,000m before graduation. They also have to be able to read English and conduct a conversation in that language. For the top language students there are semi-compulsory courses in Japanese and German.

Practical experience forms a large part of any student's course, with six months' work at sea built into the four or five year programme. This is split into two placements — one in the second year and one

Training ship "Yuhong" — soon to be joined by a purpose-built 10,000dwt vessel



just before graduation. However, a graduate must serve another six months at sea after graduation, before his temporary certificate can be changed for a permanent ticket.

On the face of it, there is little to choose between Western colleges and Dalian as far as courses are concerned. The Dalian courses conform to the same STCW 1978 convention standards adhered to by most other recognised training establishments. However, it is only in the past three or four years that Dalian course coverage has expanded to match that on offer elsewhere. A description of the curriculum written by college staff in 1981 makes no mention of advanced computer courses nor of ship management, and the resources open to the College then were approximately half of what it claims now.

### Rapid expansion

This rapid expansion is due to a number of factors, not least the active involvement and encouragement of the IMO. Another powerful spur has been the willingness of foreign shipowners to use Chinese crews. The extra training gained by working overseas is highly valued by the Chinese authorities, and it is this as much as the hard foreign exchange to be earned that has prompted them to push more and more seamen into the foreign market.

Shipowners are getting a reasonable deal as well. Chinese crews are not the least expensive available, but every rating supplied has been through either Dalian or the smaller college at Tientsin, and has served on COSCO vessels. A Hong Kong shipping source commented, "All the PRC seamen I have dealt

with have been very highly trained. They have all done fire-fighting and cargo handling courses as well as their work at Dalian and Tientsin, and they have all had previous COSCO experience. The Chinese are taking crew supply very seriously indeed".

### Officer supply

The question then arises of how long it will be before foreign flag ships are using Chinese officers. The training facilities are certainly there, not at Dalian but at Qingdao, where the Qingdao Ocean Shipping Mariner College provides specialised advanced training for seamen who have already been through Dalian or Tientsin.

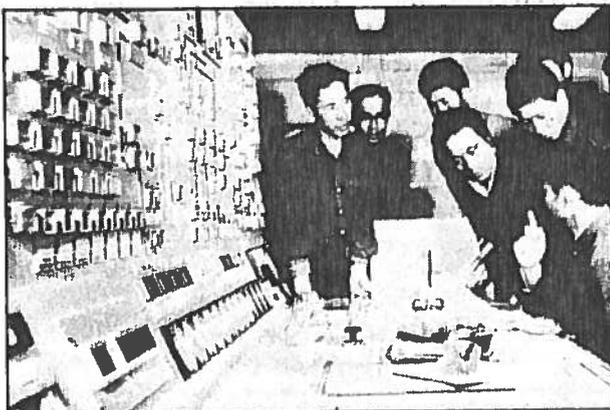
The IMO has been actively assisting Qingdao to improve its facilities and teaching standards, specifically in the field of engineering. There is already a limited radar and engine simulation facility at Dalian, and moves were made in 1985 to install a full scale diesel engine simulator at Qingdao.

With IMO help, staff from the College have been visiting training establishments in the UK, Germany, Japan, the US and Norway to study advanced training techniques. Two Qingdao lecturers have taken the World Maritime University's two year degree course in nautical education at Malmo in Sweden, and another three have received specialist training in the transportation of hazardous cargoes and advanced marine engine automation.

The intention is obviously to bring Chinese officer training standards in line with the world's best. Initially this will be reflected in the operation of COSCO ships, but given the dramatic growth in use of Chinese ratings over the past few years, only political considerations can prevent the appearance of skilled Chinese officers on the international market in the near future.

### Inshore tradition

In view of the fact that many Western countries have built up maritime skills on the basis of an existing fishing fleet, it is interesting to note that the Chinese have an extensive tradition of inshore seamanship. There are also a number of small nautical schools and colleges providing basic training for COSCO seamen, and the general education system aims to guide students into appropriate practical training courses.



Engine-room simulator, built as part of an ongoing expansion programme