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Unsung Maritime University Deserves

By THOMAS W. SCHAAF

On July 4, 1983, a milestone international maritime event occurred that was hardly noted in the United States.

Perhaps that was because it took place over our Independence Day weekend.

But the opening of the unique World Maritime University in Malmo, Sweden, by Lennart Bodstrom, Swedish minister for foreign affairs more likely went unnoticed because Americans have become jaded by the plethora of international organizations brimming with speeches and planning conferences and usually lacking any action or results.

In his speech at the inaugural ceremonies, Mr. Bodstrom said the World Maritime University was indeed unique because it was concerned solely with high-level maritime education on a worldwide basis.

He emphasized that problems connected with maritime safety, environment and equipment specialization cannot be entirely solved by technology. It is the development of human resources — especially in Third World countries where a substantial expansion of merchant fleets is now in progress — that is the main means of preventing accidents at sea and safeguarding the ocean ecology.

The response of the Reagan administration to this international maritime initiative has been to make a presidential appointment to the university board of governors. But it does not plan to provide a categorical grant since United States contributions to the United Nations will constitute a major share of the \$800,000 U.N. grant for the new maritime university.

On the other hand, Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme has pledged \$1 million per year for the university; Norway pledged \$200,000; Italy, Greece, Egypt and Saudi Arabia \$50,000 each; and the Danish Development Program, \$40,000.

The developing countries for whom the graduate level training is primarily intended will provide \$10,000 fellowships per year for each of their students. However, the \$3.5 million budget, with an average annualized student cost of \$28,000, still has approximately a \$500,000 shortfall.

The university intends to establish a general fund made up of contributions which will form a capital base but, at present, support for recurrent costs is needed on an annual or multi-year basis. Needless to say, contributions to the endowment fund or



OLOF PALME

current operating budget are solicited and would be most welcome from governments and non-governmental organizations and associations.

There have also been significant contributions of material and equipment to the university. American manufacturers of navigation equipment, for example, have been generous in providing the latest devices and well-known American trademarks and company names are in evidence.

Such corporate gifts are not only important for the depth and quality of instruction, but could also be good market strategy since many of the students will return to countries which are now involved in building and equipping their own merchant fleets.

The opening of the World Maritime University in July with 75 students enrolled, two-thirds of them from Africa, clearly places this program well beyond the planning stage.

A brief examination of the current status of the school and of the well-conceived and prepared curricula explains why it is strongly supported by knowledgeable individuals, governments sensitive to global maritime problems and private companies anticipating future developments in seaborne commerce — even

though there is little public awareness of its existence.

Rector Solve Arvedson, a Swede, and eight professors of various nationalities including one American, are now on the staff. A number of prominent members of the maritime community in the United States have volunteered their services as guest lecturers and professors.

Edwin M. Hood, president emeritus of the Shipbuilders Council of America, was appointed by President Reagan to be the official U.S. representative; like the other 40-plus members of the board of governors, Mr. Hood accepts no pay for his work or attendance at board meetings.

C.P. Sirvastava, secretary general of the International Maritime Organization (formerly International Maritime Consultative Organization), is charged with overseeing the operation of the university. Mr. Sirvastava, an Indian, has been a principal advocate for creating a center for advanced training and is chairman of the board.

A measure of the groundswell of support of a world maritime school is evident in the provision by the city of Malmo of training facilities, free of cost. In addition, the city renovated an apartment building with 159 flats, each with a kitchen and bath, plus laundry facilities, recreation rooms and, of course, a sauna, for the exclusive use of university students and dependents.

The ultra-modern Kockums Shipyard, whose towering gantry crane is a city landmark, is only a short distance from the maritime university. The proximity of Malmo to Northern Europe will facilitate field trips to shipping and shipbuilding centers.

At present, the curriculum consists of four two-year courses leading to a Master of Science degree and a one-year course for which a certificate is awarded. Maritime safety, maritime administration, maritime education and technical management of shipping companies are two-year degree courses. The one-year course is designed for technical staff of shipping companies.

Additionally, short specialized courses dealing with the critical problems of oil, chemical and liquefied-gas ships and the carriage of packaged and dangerous cargoes have been organized. Those who attend the specialized short courses will be able later to set up training courses aboard ship for the crew on these subjects and crude oil washing.

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Interestingly, the language of the university is English and for those students who need to upgrade their proficiency an intensive nine-week course is offered prior to beginning the graduate level study.

Not mentioned in the catalog nor alluded to during the inaugural ceremony was a subtle but nevertheless important aspect of the World Maritime University which could have as much impact as the technical studies in the prescribed curricula.

That is the Western orientation which will be imparted to families and students as a result of the experiences and friendships from two years of living in the picturesque, tidy and prosperous Swedish city of Malmo and traveling in northern Europe.

Their contact with Western culture and the free-wheeling political and economic aspects of life in multi-party democratic states, which we take for granted, will be a stark contrast to the Marxist-Leninist system of political indoctrination their countrymen receive when trained in the Soviet Union and other communist states.

In the long run, free men in free institutions will always eclipse the single-party, single school-of-thought mentality. And the developing countries will ultimately align themselves with the West if they are given the opportunity to observe the difference and to make a choice without coercion and intimidation.

Many Americans are skeptical of international programs. However, the case for a World Maritime University dedicated for high-level education and promulgation of global standards for shipping in international waters has been thoughtfully conceived and skillfully implemented.

Establishment of the university is a practical and direct approach to a continuing international problem in which even the land-locked states have an interest. For the United States, an island nation dependent on waterborne commerce to transport raw material and the products of our farms and factories, it is in the national interest to ensure that the seas are safe for navigation and protected from pollution.

The World Maritime University is clearly Western-oriented in technology and spirit and it surely deserves the enthusiastic support of the industrialized world.

Mr. Schaaf is a maritime consultant. During the 1980 presidential election he was the Reagan/Bush maritime coordinator.
