



Friday, June 26, 2015 - 6:00 PM
Community Church Assembly Room, 40 East 35th Street, Manhattan

THE LAST SHIPS OF STATE: THE PASSENGER SHIPS OF THE SOVIET UNION

by Doug Newman



The BALTICA at Tilbury Landing Stage, Thames River on July 31, 1976

(Ted Scull)

Often ignored by or unknown to Western ship enthusiasts, the Soviet Union once possessed one of the largest and most varied fleets of passenger ships ever assembled. At its peak in the 1970s and 1980s, the Soviet passenger fleet included everything from pre-World War II German ocean liners, damaged in the war and salvaged, to cruise ships and passenger-car ferries as modern as any in the world. Their purposes were just as varied, but all were literal ships of state, each in its own way serving the Soviet state and only it, even after Western governments had abandoned their support for passenger shipping. Each proudly wore on its funnel a version of the Soviet flag, a golden hammer and sickle on a red band; and those that left home waters carried this symbol into ports around the world, including New York. They were truly the last ships of state.

PONY Branch board member Doug Newman will tell the story of the passenger ships of the Soviet Union in all their diversity, covering both those familiar in the West and those that never ventured beyond the Iron Curtain, along with the variety of international and domestic routes they plied and the ways in which they served the Soviet state. He will conclude with a brief overview of the fates of the ships and the Soviet shipping companies after the fall of the Soviet Union. He will illustrate the talk with both original, unpublished photos and selections from the publicity materials produced about the ships over the decades.

NEXT EVENTS: The Ocean Liner Bazaar - October 3; Cruise on ROYAL PRINCESS - October 10; WSS PONY 50th Anniversary celebration - October 24

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MEMBER PHOTO OF THE MONTH



ROYAL VIKING SEA at New York, July 1976

(Bob Allen)

MUSEUMS, LECTURES AND HARBOR CRUISES

CONTACT THESE INSTITUTIONS BY EMAIL OR PHONE FOR CURRENT EVENTS AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

SOUTH STREET SEAPORT MUSEUM www.southstreetseaportmuseum.org or 917-492-3379.

MYSTIC SEAPORT www.mysticseaport.org or 860-572-0711.

VANCOUVER WSS & VANCOUVER MARITIME MUSEUM www.worldshipsocietyvan.ca for information or if you visit, contact Glenn Smith: 604-684-1240, email glenn.smith@worldshipsocietyvan.ca. Next meeting: Wednesday, September 9.

NEW SOUTH WALES WSS: Meetings are held at the Uniting Church Complex in Lord Street, Roseville. Contact the branch at PO Box 215, Strathfield, New South Wales 2135, Australia for additional information.

THE NATIONAL LIBERTY SHIP MEMORIAL, INC. www.ssjeremiahobrien.org or liberty@ssjeremiahobrien.org or 415-544-0100. 1275 Columbus Avenue, Suite 300, San Francisco, CA 94133-1315.

PROJECT LIBERTY SHIP www.liberty-ship.com or 410-558-0164.

NEW YORK WATER TAXI, www.nywatertaxi.com or 866-989-2542. Harbor cruises departing from both South Street Seaport Pier 17 and Pier 84 at West 44 Street. Hop on – hop off service throughout New York Harbor is offered as well. Contact via website or telephone for departure times and prices.

CIRCLE LINE DOWNTOWN, www.circlelinedowntown.com or 866-989-2542. Harbor cruises on the ZEPHYR from April to December, and aboard New York Water Taxi from January to March, departing from Pier 17, South Street Seaport.

CIRCLE LINE, www.circleline42.com or 877-731-0064. Circle Manhattan and other harbor cruises, departing from pier 84 at West 44 Street.

NEW YORK WATERWAY, www.nywaterway.com or 800-533-3779. Trans-Hudson ferry service and special-event cruises.

THE NATIONAL LIGHTHOUSE MUSEUM www.lighthousemuseum.org or 855-656-7469. Contact for schedule of cruises and events.

THE WORKING HARBOR COMMITTEE www.workingharbor.com or 212-757-1600. Cruises to both remote and well-travelled parts of New York Harbor - the Hudson River to view tugboat races, Gowanus Bay and Erie Basin in Brooklyn, and a circumnavigation of Staten Island.

THE NOBLE MARITIME COLLECTION, www.noblemaritime.org or 718-447-6490. Maritime lectures and art exhibits at the Sailor's Snug Harbor Cultural Center on Staten Island, NY.

ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES

| SHIP | FROM | TO | VOYAGE | PASSENGER(S) | DATE |
|-----------------|---------------|---------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------|
| ARMONIA | Civitavecchia | Civitavecchia | Western Mediterranean | Carol Miles and Mario Di Stefano | 05/15 |
| VEENDAM | Boston | Boston | Bermuda | Tim & Lisa Dacey | 05/15 |
| AZORES | Bristol | Hull | England, France & Holland | Bob Allen | 06/15 |
| QUEEN ELIZABETH | Athens | Rome | Greek Islands, Turkey & Italy | Paul Immerman & Ellen Meshnick | 06/15 |

SHIP'S LOG - APRIL

In this year of centennials, our April meeting focused on the sinking of the LUSITANIA on May 7, 1915. After David Hume was outed as the perpetrator of the "name that ship" puzzle in the April porthole, branch secretary Greg Fitzgerald introduced LUSITANIA expert Jim Kalafus to discuss his interest in the ship.

Jim is one of an informal group of historians and researchers that studies the TIATNIC and LUSITANIA as a "labor of love." The LUSITANIA has been a part of his life since childhood; his grandmother had sailed on it several times.

Mr. Kalafus' enthusiasm for and love of the topic were apparent as, with the use of archival photos, he described the general situation, specific incidents, and some people involved.

One positive aspect of the LUSITANIA research was the availability of first person descriptions, as many of the survivors wrote long letters about their experiences (and in some cases contradicted themselves soon after). There was also the ability to speak with some of the survivors or their families. Many of the photos we saw were of passengers and crew, all identified by name.

On that fateful but clear and beautiful day, the LUSITANIA sailed into a fog bank, stopped and sounded her foghorn. Frightened, most of the passengers gathered their families together and prepared for disaster. As the ship cleared the fog, everyone relaxed and scattered to enjoy what was left of the voyage, then, ironically, came the torpedo! Had the attack occurred earlier when the passengers were expecting trouble, so many more could have been saved.

Among the personal experiences described was that of Barbara Anderson, who enjoyed discussing her situation despite having been only 2 ½ at the time and subsequently losing her mother (from tuberculosis) and baby sister. They were helped into a lifeboat by a purser named Harkness, who managed to get 80 more people into the boat. Then the lifeboat was caught between two of the funnels when the LUSITANIA listed briefly. Some passengers had an even more harrowing experience; they were sucked into the funnels during the list, and those who were thrown out ended up in the packed lifeboat.

According to Mr. Kalafus, some questions warrant further investigation, such as the presence, or lack, of a military escort (two families claimed to have seen naval vessels for a time). Among other elements brought up was that infamous German newspaper ad warning travelers not to sail (it appeared too late for plans to be changed). Oddly, the question of munitions onboard was not mentioned.

Years later, although Harkness had died, Barbara was able to meet and thank his family.

We thank our speaker for one of our most interesting meetings. And we also thank our galley crew for their usual good work.

Marge Dovman



LUSITANIA, subject of last month's program, as seen here in a 1907 company postcard.

(Cunard Line / Bob Allen collection)

CRUISE WITH PONY WORLD SHIP SOCIETY

Join members of PONY World Ship Society on their annual cruise. We sail October 10, 2015 on the REGAL PRINCESS for 7 days to New England and Canada, round-trip from New York. For more information, contact Brad Hatry at Pisa Brothers Travel. Call 212-265-8420 x 222, or 800-729-7472 x 222. Email brad@pisabrotherstravel.com. Make your reservation soon, while a wide selection of cabins is still available!

THE BAZAAR IS COMING!

The annual ocean liner bazaar will be held on Saturday, October 3, 10:00 AM until 2:00 PM at the Abigail Adams Smith Auditorium, 417 East 61st Street in Manhattan. Please see the enclosed flyer for details.

MEMORIES AND PHOTOS WANTED

The PONY Branch will be publishing a 50th Anniversary Commemorative Program to be distributed at our 50th Anniversary Celebration this October. Editor and publisher Doug Newman would like to hear from any members who have memories and/or photos of PONY Branch events (e.g. meetings, cruises, etc.) from the past 50 years and would like them to be considered for inclusion in the program. Please send your submissions to wsspony50@gmail.com by July 31, 2015.

NOTES FROM TRAVELS ABOARD HAMMER & SICKLE SHIPS IN 1963

by Ted Scull

By senior year in college I was ready to go out into the world and registered for a year's post-graduate study at La Sorbonne. With six weeks of free time between a summer job and October enrollment in Paris, I decided to use my Russian 101 on a trip to the U.S.S.R.

With a strong penchant for getting there creatively, I crossed the Atlantic aboard the *Hanseatic* (built in 1930 as the *Empress of Japan*), dropped my impedimenta in Paris, and boarded the Direct Orient Express for Vienna. Here I met up with a college chum to share a cabin on the Russian riverboat *Amur*, named after a river in eastern Siberia. Built as war reparations a few years earlier, along with the running mate *Donau*, they were foreign currency earners plying the Danube to the Black Sea.

My limited Russian came in handy straight away, as the grim-faced stewardesses knew no English. Most passengers spoke German or Russian, and I soon found out that many had family ties in the Soviet Union, and with Soviet tourism a new thrust, they could now make visits.

The riverboat's one lounge faced forward, and during meals we sat at one long table and slept in double cabins on the deck below. We had access to half the length of the top deck for sightseeing. Approaching the Iron Gates, a section of powerful rapids that slices through a mountain range between Romania and Yugoslavia (then), the *Amur* paused while an upriver vessel was hauled through the white water by an impressive steam locomotive, its boiler embossed with a big red star, and running on a track that paralleled the river. Then it was our turn, and we were directed to sit down as we rafted through to calmer waters.

At Giurgiu, a Romanian river town, we attempted to tie up but the local police force gestured to keep away. When the captain ordered deckhands throw some lines ashore, a small army contingent suddenly appeared on the landing, and we quickly pulled away and beat it across the Danube to Ruse, in friendlier (to the Soviets) Bulgaria.

Six days after leaving Vienna, the *Amur* docked at Ismail's river station, a tiny port in the mouths of the Danube, sharing the landing with the Soviet passenger ship *Kolhida* (3,219grt and built 1961). We joined her for the overnight transit across the Black Sea to Yalta in the Crimea. Our outside double cabin had upper and lower berths and a washbasin, with showers along the corridor. While walking aft to the stern, some Russians about my age seated at a chess table asked if I played. When I answered, "Da," lots of smiles broke out and a chair was cleared.

I quickly learned that there was no taking up to five minutes to make a move; it was more like 15-30 seconds. It all happened so fast; I don't know if it was a set up, but I won. Everyone shook my hand, and someone bought me a beer, then another.

Awaking the next morning, the ship was approaching the lofty Crimean Peninsula. Landing at Yalta, an Intourist guide transferred us to a seafront hotel. As it was so cheap (\$8 full board) we stayed two weeks, paying for meals with pre-paid coupons. The uninspiring food was utterly repetitive. The menu for lunch and dinner consisted of mystery meat, smashed peas, boiled potatoes and brown bread. Breakfast was a hard-boiled egg, quite tasty large egg red caviar and crispy biscuits.

The hotel faced the port, and Soviet passenger ships arrived and left every day plying the route between Batumi in Georgian S.S.R., Sukhumi, Sochi, Yalta, Sebastopol and onto Odessa. I discovered a secluded spot below the promenade, where I assumed nobody could see me and snapped the arrivals and departures. No one took any notice, and I was able to capture most of the Black Sea passenger fleet, including the pre-war *Pobeda*, *Petr Veliki*, *Rossia*, and *Ukraina* plus the more recent *Latvia*, *Litva* and *Tajikistan*, two of a very large class built from 1958 into the mid-1960s.

Following the stay in Yalta, my friend left for home, and I boarded a train to Moscow, a 24-hour journey packed with Cuban university students who had arrived by ship from Havana, and then joined a tour group of 20. We traveled to Stalingrad, a city totally laid waste during WWII, and still recovering. After staying a couple of nights, we descended a grand staircase to the Volga riverboat landing and boarded the *Miakovsky*, a side-wheel steamer (build date not known).

I shared an upper and lower berth cabin with a young English fellow who spoke fluent Russian that promoted some in the group to think he was some sort of spy as he kept going off on his own. Our guide, a jolly little Russian woman, measuring just over four feet tall, gradually became less jolly after a ship's officer warned her that our group - mostly Brits and Yanks with Russian ties - was fraternizing too much with the Russian passengers. We were ordered to sit at certain tables and use the small forward lounge. It was all a bit awkward but back then you did what you were told.

Docking was fun to watch as the captain used a brass speaking tube on the bridge wing to shout orders down to the engine room - which one could look into - and loudly rang telegraph while maneuvering to the landings, mostly floating wooden stations that rose and fell to the varying water levels of the Volga and Don. Crossing a huge lake (Tsimlyanskoye) with a strong wind blowing, we held on to the railings while the boat rolled to and fro.

Everyone in our group came down with a nasty respiratory illness, except me, and all then recovered in Sochi, a Black Sea sanatorium retreat, before moving onto Kiev and Leningrad. During dinner one evening on the terrace of Sochi's maritime station, I could hardly believe my eyes when the *Admiral Nakhimov* (ex-Berlin 1925) arrived to dock next the *Abkhazia* (ex-Marienburg 1939). What an exciting sight they made. Foreigners were not permitted to visit nor book passage on these older ships; they were strictly limited to Soviet citizens.

The *Nakhimov* would later (1986) have a disastrous collision that resulted in over 400 passengers lost, and almost immediately, the pre-war passenger fleet was withdrawn and scrapped.

Six weeks after leaving Paris, I returned by train, all steam-hauled, traveling, with stopovers, from Leningrad via Riga (Latvia), Moscow, Warsaw and Prague.



AMUR docked on the Danube (above left)
KOLHIDA at Ismail, on the Black Sea (above right)
MIAKOVSKY, as a passenger landing on the Volga (left)
ADMIRAL NAKHIMOV at Sochi, on the Black Sea (below)
(all photos, Ted Scull)



OCEAN LINER CROSSWORD PUZZLE – ANSWERS!

ALT. 9 DOWN: ARAGON
 ALT. 7 DOWN: ARKADIA

OCEAN LINER CROSSWORD PUZZLE by Ted Scull



ACROSS

1. Debut 1940
4. A C.P.R. Mont
8. Post-War Cunard
10. H.A.L.
12. Destroyed by Terrorist Attack
13. THE Honeymoon Ship
16. Flew the Golden Cockerel (First 3 Letters)
17. Think Anchor or Cunard & Italy
20. 2 Stacks & 4 Stacks
23. Think Hoboken Pier Fire of 1900
24. Good Neighbor Ship
25. German & Italian
27. British then Greek (2 Initials as Brit)
29. Last Sailing from New York Sept. 1966
30. The Man, the Ship (2 Initials)
32. US Flag, Native American Tribe (First 4 Letters)
34. 6 Under this Name
35. Collision & Sank off Cape Race
36. A Continent

DOWN

2. African Country - Different Spelling
3. Balkan Country
4. Indochine (First 3 Letters)
5. Portuguese Port-2 initials
6. British then Italian
7. British or Greek & Either Spelling
9. Two of 3 Graces (Either One)
11. India-Africa
13. US & Greek (2 Initials as Greek)
14. Rule.....!
15. Think Cunard or Italian (First 4 Letters)
18. Close Sister A.D. (2 Initials)
19. A country, German Spelling
20. Limped into NY on Maiden Voyage
21. Pre-War Ship & Post-War Ship (First 4 Letters)
22. E.D.L West Africa
25. Name of a Cheese
26. Sank Liberté
28. Launched Sideways into the Thames (2 Initials)
29. British Children to Australia (First 3 Letters)
31. Named after a Queen (First 3 Letters)
33. Carried Immigrants to W&E Africa (First 3 Letters)

N.B. All answers are names of ocean liners

SHIP NEWS

MAGELLAN SAILS AROUND THE WORLD: British operator Cruise & Maritime Voyages is in the news again - this time they are reviving the concept of budget-priced long cruises. In January 2017, they will send their flagship MAGELLAN on a 120-day world cruise, with starting prices of about 75 British Pounds, or approximately \$120 per person, per day. Formerly Carnival's 1985-built HOLIDAY, the 46,000-ton vessel will sail from London Tilbury westward through the Panama Canal and trace a route to the South Pacific, Australia, Southeast Asia, and then proceed through the Suez Canal and the Mediterranean before returning to London. Overnights in port are scheduled for Sydney, Cairns, Hong Kong, Singapore and Ho Chi Min City; CMV will offer shorter cruise segments as well.



CMV's MAGELLAN (ex-HOLIDAY) will sail a budget-priced around-the-world cruise in 2017.

(Cruise & Maritime Voyages)

ONE LESS BELL TO ANSWER: There's more CMV news. The original brass bell from the STOCKHOLM was thought lost when the 12,000-ton Swedish America liner's bow was crushed on impact with the ANDREA DORIA after the two vessels tragically collided off Massachusetts on July 25, 1956. Raised by salvage divers decades later, the bell was traded among collectors and was offered for sale again last year. It was purchased by Rosalea Ryan, a writer and frequent CMV passenger, around the time that Cruise & Maritime Voyages chartered the AZORES, ex-STOCKHOLM. Ryan has loaned the bell to CMV for display on the AZORES while she continues in service, after which the bell will be displayed at the Maritime Museum in Gothenburg, Sweden.



A unique artifact of maritime history will be displayed on CMV's AZORES. It is the STOCKHOLM's bell, recovered from the wreck of the ANDREA DORIA. A large dent in the bell, seen just to the right of "1948," is evidence of the traumatic collision between the two vessels in July 1956.

(Cruise & Maritime Voyages)

DEUTSCHLAND TO BECOME WORLD ODYSSEY: The 1998-built Peter Deilmann DEUTSCHLAND has been chartered to Semester At Sea to become a floating university under the name WORLD ODYSSEY. The 22,000-ton vessel was uniquely decorated in the style of an early 1900's German ocean liner, and few physical changes are planned for her new role, scheduled to commence in September.

STAR CLIPPERS EXPANDING: An 8,700-ton, 5-masted steel sailing vessel will be the latest addition and the fourth vessel of the Star Clippers fleet. Due for completion in 2017, the unnamed vessel will be a replica of late 19th Century sailing vessels, and will be the largest ship in the fleet. She will offer her 300 passengers comfortable surroundings in which to experience Star Clippers unique cruise product, which they describe as "informal elegance."



Star Clipper's new vessel will be an expanded version of the 5-masted ROYAL CLIPPER, seen here. (Star Clippers)

CUNARD AT 175: A glorious celebration took place on the River Mersey at Liverpool on May 25, to celebrate Cunard Line's 175th Anniversary. For the first time, all three Cunard Queens - MARY 2, ELIZABETH and VICTORIA – met at the historic seaport and "pirouetted" to the delight of hundreds of thousands of spectators. There was a fly-by of British Red Arrows jets trailing red, white and blue smoke, and later the evening sky was illuminated with a digital light show and spectacular fireworks. Here's wishing Cunard at least another 175 years!



The three Cunard Queens, MARY 2, ELIZABETH and VICTORIA in formation on the River Mersey, Liverpool, for the line's 175th Anniversary celebration in May. (Cunard Line)

SHIP OF THE MONTH

Ship of the Month will return in an upcoming issue of The Porthole.

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