

035 – January 2012

Sink positive!

Will the cruise shipping industry learn its lesson from the “Costa Concordia” disaster?

by John R. Kuehmayer

“Think positive”, the mainstream dictated substitute religion has extinguished not only all critical approaches to daily life problems and challenges but also any realistic assessment of both technical and economical risks in all kinds of enterprises. Worldwide shipbuilding and shipping are not exempted.

Accompanied by wishful thinking and boosted by excessive greed for profit, many safety related considerations in modern cruise ship building were abandoned by investors, financiers, cruise line operators, shipbuilders and classification societies likewise, firmly embedded in a vast legal vacuum, passionately promoted by anarcho-capitalistic

hardliners! Business ethics were printed on shiny, glossy paper. Nothing less than malicious deception!

This discreet evolution was attentively hedged by the media and supported by distractive measures of the legislators – to name only red tape in general and excessive green shipping hysterics in particular! To accomplish this scenario, the entire shipping community is released from liability – with the exception of a single person: the captain of the ship.

Let us hope that the sinking of the “Costa Concordia” sets an end to these grave deficiencies in the cruise industry!





'Gargantuan' cruise ships 'terribly unstable'

Edited by Justin Stares

January 18, 2012 (18:00)

www.maritimewatch.eu

European Union law-makers should concentrate less on green shipping and more on safety, according to the chairman of a marine equipment manufacturers' association.

"Gargantuan" cruise ships such as the Costa Concordia are "not safe, terribly unstable" and start listing in the wind as soon propulsion is cut, according to John Kuehmayer, chairman of the Austrian Marine Equipment Manufacturers. Maritime safety has been pushed down the list of EU priorities by profit. "If we talk about cruise ships we talk about money. Design is the result of cost. Money, and money, and again money, is governing this glittering business. Safety was replaced by the substitute religion of 'think positive', " Mr Kuehmayer told the Maritime Watch.

A former secretary to the International Council on Combustion Engines working group on engine safety, Mr Kuehmayer says cruise ships are riddled with design faults that cause engine room black-outs and render lifeboats difficult to deploy.

"The only vessel designed for yearlong passages across the North Atlantic is Cunard's Queen Mary 2. All the other cruise ships have to be cheap money-making machines," he said. "That's it. Basta. This only works because of the 'services' provided by the flags of convenience strongly supported by the 'establishment' of leading European classification societies."

Lifeboats are a particular concern and are in many cases little more than "nice decoration", he claimed. "As soon as a cruise ship is in trouble, it starts listing. This reduces the possibility to bring lifeboats into the water by 50%. From the very first moment on."

One possible solution would be greater use of "free-fall" lifeboats that are much easier to deploy, but this option has been rejected by shipowners on grounds of cost. "New ways of solving the problems with easy-to-access and simultaneously launch – free-fall – lifeboats on board cruise ships on both sides – starboard and port – and in rough seas, were discussed with industry in the design phase of Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines' *Oasis of the Seas* Class mega cruise ships," Mr Kuehmayer said. The idea was abandoned for "cost reasons" – increased capital expenditure and reduced profitability. Free-fall lifeboats would reportedly have reduced the number of balconies. "There is not a single free-fall lifeboat deployed on cruise ships!" said the association chairman. "Many in the industry were shy to talk about risks."

He continued: "Again, because of cost reasons, cruise ships were built with a flat keel, like all other commercial vessels. But their freight is passengers, and their hotel section puts the centre of gravity much higher than on a bulker or box ship." Almost all cruise vessels need shallow draft in order to be able to operate close to land and in archipelagos such as the Caribbean. "When listing, much more water enters a ship with a flat keel", Mr Kuehmayer explained. These issues all need addressing by lawmakers in the EU, he said.



The **Maritime Watch** is an independent agency providing exclusive news, market intelligence and commentary on European Union regulatory affairs. Maritime Watch subscribers receive up-to-the-minute, in depth coverage of regulatory threats and opportunities emanating from the EU institutions in Brussels, Luxembourg and Strasbourg. It is the only service that can boast full-time, dedicated professional coverage of maritime EU affairs. The service focuses on market-sensitive information and is aimed at companies trading with and within Europe.

The website is updated constantly throughout the legislative cycle. Information is sorted according to three categories: intelligence reports, news and rumors. News and rumors are typically uploaded or updated several times a week, depending on legislative activity. Justin Stares is Lloyd's List – the world's leading maritime publication – permanent correspondent in Brussels.

www.maritimewatch.eu