

Shipping made in Hamburg

The history of Hapag-Lloyd AG



Historical Context

By the middle of the 19th century, the Industrial Revolution has caused the disappearance of many crafts in Europe, with the result that fewer and fewer workers are now required. In a first process of globalization, transport links are developing at great speed. For the first time, railways are enabling even ordinary citizens to move and live somewhere else, while the first steamships are being tested in overseas trades. A great wave of emigration to the United States is just starting.

“Speak up! Why are you moving away?” asks the poet Ferdinand Freiligrath in the ballad “The Emigrants,” which became something of a hymn for a German national movement. The answer is simple: because they can no longer stand life at home. Until 1918, stress and political repression would prompt millions of Europeans – and especially many Germans – to head to the New World in search of new opportunities and a new life.

Germany is splintered into backward princedoms under absolute rule. Poverty is widespread, and the lower orders are emigrating in swarms. That suits the rulers only too well: In their eyes, a ticket to America produces a solution to all social problems, as troublemakers can be sent across the “big pond.” The residents of entire almshouses are collectively dispatched on voyages. New York is soon complaining about hordes of German beggars.

The dangers of emigration are just as unlimited as the hoped-for opportunities in the United States. Most of the emigrants are literally without any experience and have never left their place of birth. To get to the paradise they dream of, they must first go through hell. Reaching the port cities after a strenuous journey, these exhausted people have to wait for weeks there for passages and are harried and robbed in the squalid port districts.

The crossings on small wooden sailing ships lasts between 70 and 100 days on average, but they are often much longer. Passengers – especially emigrants in the low, cramped tween deck – are treated like cargo of inferior value. They often have to bring along their own provisions, drinking water rapidly grows scarce, and hygienic conditions are catastrophic. The death rates are correspondingly high, and every voyage involves taking a risk with an unknown outcome.

In 1845, more than 115,000 Germans – or the population of a medium-sized big city – emigrate. Nine out of 10 of the travelers emigrating via German ports embark in Bremen, where the Senate had passed protective laws in 1832. Hamburg, home to the largest port in Germany, had done its best to keep the poor and often sick emigrants away with restrictions. Since the easing of these restrictions in 1837, conditions in the port area and on many ships were still so bad that Bremen’s lead was not in any danger.

In 1846, the German-American “Ocean Steam Navigation Company” is founded. Among those involved is Hermann Henrich Meier, a Bremen merchant and later parliamentarian who dreamed of a direct Bremen-New York steamship line. The company rapidly slides into bankruptcy. Hamburg remains generally reserved in its attitude toward progress. But it has no wish to leave emigration, a growth market, to the competition in Bremen.

1847

On May 27, 1847, conditions for emigrants start to improve decisively. In the conference room of the Hamburg Stock Exchange, shipowners and merchants found the Hamburg-Amerikanische Packetfahrt-Actien-Gesellschaft, or Hapag for short. Adolph Godeffroy becomes its first director. Its aim is to run a faster, more reliable liner service between Hamburg and North America, initially New York, using first-class sailing ships.

1848

The Board of Directors wishes to create “something outstanding,” and this is also apparent in its novel corporate philosophy. Hapag for the first time sees its passengers not as human freight, but as customers whose business needs to be sought. The fully rigged sailing ship “Deutschland” enters service on October 15, offering even emigrants modest yet noticeable improvements appropriate to the times. “Service at sea” is a concept that means success.



1849

Four packet sailing ships – the “Deutschland,” the “Nord-Amerika,” the “Rhein” and the “Elbe,” all of around 500 grt and with room to accommodate some 220 passengers – are regular record breakers. For the outward passage from Hamburg to New York, they require a sensational average of only 40 days. And, with the westerly wind, they only need 28 days to return. The crush is great and, in Bremen, there are complaints that Hapag is luring emigrants away with unsuitably good food.

1850

The collapse of the German Revolution of 1848 and the ensuing repressions sparked a fresh surge in emigration. Hapag, which understood itself to be “sound and respectable through and through,” is in a phase of “gratifying progress.” One particularly attractive offer is that “attention has been paid to providing a separate berth for every passenger.”

1851

Mail was transported overseas in packets, bags of oiled leather or linen, and this valuable cargo was only entrusted to the fastest, most reliable liner shipping companies. To call a shipping company such as Hapag a “packet line” called for ships of high quality and well-trained crews. Several shipping companies founded at that time included this demanding seal of quality in their names. It has only survived with Hapag.

1852

Hapag pays its shareholders a dividend of 4 percent for the first time. Since a united Germany does not yet exist, its sailing ships fly the red-and-white flag of the City of Hamburg as the flag of their home country. But this was not always the case. For example, when the Elbe estuary was blocked for German ships after the outbreak of the war between Germany and Denmark in 1849, Hapag was the first German shipping company to re-flag a ship at short notice. The “Deutschland” then sailed undisturbed to New York as the Russian-flagged “Hermann.”

1853

Hapag’s director, Adolph Godeffroy, summons an extraordinary meeting of shareholders and passionately advocates building two large screw steamships. Although he had only recently still rejected technical and business experiments of this kind, he is aware that time is now pressing, as the eternal Hanseatic rivals are stirring. Competition looms from the Weser – meaning from that “bustling neighboring city” of Bremen, as Godeffroy unhappily calls it.

1854

There is no united Germany yet, not even the North German Federation, but Hermann Henrich Meier is planning to launch a major German shipping line to be based in Bremen on the Weser. Apart from his dream and some shares in a few modest river steamship and towage companies, which he wishes to merge, all that he has so far is a name: “Norddeutscher Lloyd,” or North German Lloyd (NDL).

1855

The first Hapag steamships, “of iron and first-class,” are launched at Caird & Company in Greenock, Scotland. German shipyards are not yet capable of building iron screw steamships. The “Hammonia” and the “Borussia” are both of over 2,000 grt, 101 meters long and almost 12 meters wide, and they can reach a speed of 11 knots. They have a crew of 80 and can carry 510 passengers, 310 of them in steerage (i.e., on the tween deck).

1856

Hapag’s first steamship, the “Borussia,” arrives in her home port for the first time on April 4 with Captain Ehlers at the helm. There is a tremendous reception for her – with salutes, fireworks and a big street party – as she sails on her maiden voyage. A month later, the city greets her sister ship, the “Hammonia,” with the same enthusiasm. The “Borussia” transports the mail in record time on her very first voyage, and Hapag offers a monthly liner service.

1857

Hermann Henrich Meier has managed it. Along with young Eduard Crüsemann from Berlin, he has convinced the business community of Bremen to invest in a “magnificent, exclusively German” transatlantic steamship line. Norddeutscher Lloyd (North German Lloyd – NDL) is founded in Bremen on February 20, 1857. In Hamburg’s port district, Albert Ballin is born as the 13th and last child of a small businessman, a Danish-Jewish passage agent, on August 15. He literally grows up in the harbor.

1858

The residents of Bremen rejoice as the “Bremen,” NDL’s first steamship, sails down the Lower Weser on June 12. The entire region celebrates, thrilled to identify itself with the renowned company. On board, Meier presents the coat of arms that later becomes part of the company’s flag: an anchor crossed by a key encircled by an oak wreath. Meanwhile, Hamburg is struck by a catastrophe when the Hapag steamship “Austria” catches fire at sea, resulting in the loss of 471 lives.



1859

Tremendous plans yet a miserable start: Three of the four NDL steamships prove unserviceable. Offering tough competition from the start, Hapag attempts to push its new rival out of the North Atlantic business. An alternating sequence of keen competition and discreet cooperation sets in between the shipping companies that represent the two Hanseatic cities, which had traditionally been rivals through the centuries. This cooperation is to persist for over a century and set benchmarks in world shipping.

1860

NDL is on the brink of collapse, with heavy losses, a poor image and rebellious shareholders. The end seems to have arrived when yet another bank suddenly offers a large packet of shares for re-purchase at just 28 percent of their nominal value. In a bold coup, Meier re-acquires these shares on his own initiative. Thanks to his excellent contacts, he succeeds in rescuing NDL.

1861

Success for Hapag and NDL: The United States postal authorities grants Hapag the contract for transporting all mail between New York and Southampton. The press is amazed by the unparalleled service on board the Hapag steamships. Even for steerage passengers, “soft white bread of superb quality is baked daily.” There was a fresh start for NDL, too: A new overseas steamship, the “Hansa,” is launched.

1862

A first Hapag-NDL joint project sees the companies coordinating their departures instead of dispatching them in costly direct competition against each other. In the following year, they jointly lease an area in Hoboken, New Jersey, on the Hudson River opposite Manhattan. Hapag and NDL build adjacent piers and passenger facilities there. These will form the gateway to the New World for millions of emigrants.

1863

In recent years, Hapag has distributed dividends of between 6 and 10 percent, although the American Civil War has caused a steep drop in passenger figures in the United States and the cargo business is also noticeably ailing. NDL reports its very first financial year free of crisis, has established itself firmly in the North Atlantic trade, and pays a dividend of 2 percent.

1864

Hapag has sold the “Hammonia,” its first steamer, to Allen Line in Liverpool and orders a new vessel. Rather than having it built by its “house shipyard” – Caird & Company in Greenock, Scotland, which had also built NDL’s first two steamships – it awards the contract to C. A. Day & Co. in Southampton. The 2,665 grt “Allemannia,” which is around 98 meters long and can accommodate 760 passengers, enters into service in 1865.

1865

Following the end of the American Civil War, passenger totals on the North Atlantic rise steeply once again. Hapag follows Bremen’s example and offers weekly sailings. The company considerably extends its handling facilities at Jonashafen in Hamburg, orders two new 3,000 grt steamships, and plans a connection to New Orleans.

1866

The war between Prussia and Austria is followed by the foundation of the Prussia-dominated North German Federation. Hamburg and Bremen join, and soon Hapag and NDL ships are no longer sailing under the flags of their respective cities but under the colors of the federation, the black-white-red flag later regarded as a seal of quality on all the world’s oceans.

1867

The new Hapag steamships – the second “Hammonia” and the “Cimbria” – enter into service at the beginning of the season. At 3,035 grt and 3,025 grt, respectively, and around 100 meters long, they are the largest German ships. A crew of 125 looks after 678 passengers – 58 in first class, 120 in second class, and 500 in steerage. With a speed of 11 knots, the steamships are able to cross the Atlantic in 10 days.

1868

Cautious growth: The next Hapag steamships of the “Hammonia” class – the “Holsatia” and the “Westphalia” – are put into service. While these are again the largest German ships, they only marginally top their predecessors. Hapag is expanding in line with its self-image – namely, in a sound, “dignified and thoroughly respectable” manner. By 1874, Hapag will have put a total of 13 steamships of this type into service.

1869

Mourning on the Weser: Eduard Crüsemann, co-initiator of the founding of NDL and the shipping company's first director, dies at the young age of 43. In the city, the word is that he has literally worked himself to death for the company. That is now the most honorable thing that can be said about someone from the region that has died, as even the Bremen Senate (i.e. parliament) says: "We bask in the glory that NDL casts on Bremen."

1870

"The outlook for the new financial year remains bright in all respects," prophesies Hapag's Board of Directors. The company now has a dry dock of its own for its growing fleet and moves into the first building it has owned, at Deichstrasse 7. However, war breaks out in July between the German states and France. All overseas shipping activities come to a halt in August and September.

1871

The Franco-Prussian War has been won, the unified German Empire is proclaimed, and the king of Prussia is crowned emperor of Germany. While Hapag enters the new era with 14 steamships, NDL owns 16 transatlantic steamers and transports over 40,000 people to the New World this year. The capital of both companies has considerably increased. Both continue to vie for the top spot as the young empire's most important shipping company.

1872

With the founding of the German Empire and the economic upswing, there is a temporary lull in emigration from Germany. By contrast, emigration from Eastern Europe – and especially the exodus of Jews from the Russia tsarist empire – skyrockets. NDL, which is now transporting more passengers than its competitor in Hamburg, decides on the largest newbuild program in its history with the aim of steering growing overseas traffic toward the ports of Bremen.



1873

NDL aims for the top with a fleet of large, fast and modern steamships, the first of which was the “Strassburg,” which had entered into service the previous year. In its own city, Hapag had been facing competition from Adler-Linie in 1872, but an economic crisis that had started in Vienna brings the boom of the Gründerjahre (i.e., the “founders’ years” lasting roughly between 1867 and 1873) to an end. With a solid financial base, Hapag escapes almost unharmed and later buys up its competitor.

1874

After the sudden death of his father, Albert Ballin (17) is forced to take over his small emigration agency in the Port of Hamburg. Ballin, having grown up as a Jew in difficult circumstances, is from his own personal experience far more aware of the situation – including the worries and the needs of his clientele – than the well-heeled shipowners. The agency, which had previously been of no significance, begins to flourish.

1875

Bremerhaven, December 11: During the loading of the “Mosel,” a barrel slips from the crane, hits the quay, and detonates in the middle of crowd of people boarding the ship. The first major insurance scam has failed. The lethal cargo was intended to sink the fully booked NDL steamship at sea. This unprecedented attack by a single perpetrator claims 81 lives and leaves over 200 people seriously injured, but almost 800 people are saved because the barrel detonated prematurely.

1876

With the “Habsburg,” NDL puts the last of 13 steamships of the “Strassburg” class into service. Of more than 3,000 grt and with a crew of around 100, this type of ship had performed equally well in all trades, carrying over 1,000 passengers at a speed of about 12 knots. The ships are fitted with modern compound steam engines. NDL’s fleet now comprises 22 large ocean-going steamships.

1877

Johann Georg Lohmann becomes director of North German Lloyd. Running its own quays, repair workshops and dry dock in Bremen and Bremerhaven, NDL is Germany’s largest shipping company. Even if its business is not doing well once again, the company is regarded as a “state within a state” as well as a highly respected, invulnerable institution. Shipping is in the doldrums, and recently opened lines are soon incurring losses.

1878

Problems arise for Hapag, which has never been a sacrosanct institution in its home city in the same way that NDL has been in the much smaller Bremen. Rather, it is just one shipping company among many. Competitors are constantly appearing on its home turf, with Adler-Linie being the most recent. Hapag had acquired the company and all its vessels in 1875, thus burdening itself with an oversized, uneconomical and partly obsolete fleet, in contrast to NDL’s fleet.

1879

Ruinous competition, ship losses and economic problems cause NDL to experience a slump. Director Lohmann decides to use first-class steamships for the North Atlantic route to get the company back on track, to make it the talk of the industry, and to take it to the top. The star among the liners on the New York run is the new British “Arizona,” whose speed of 16 knots allows it to cross the Atlantic in eight and a half days. The aim in Bremen is to outshine her.

1880

Changing of the guard: After 33 years at the top, Adolph Godeffroy, Hapag’s first director, steps down. He leaves behind a solid company of good repute. His successors, some of whom are very old and extremely conservative, give preference to their own affairs and tend to run the business as a sideline. Most members of the Supervisory Board are also far more committed to other things. This is soon reflected in the company’s results.

1881

NDL’s new flagship, the “Elbe,” proves a sensational success in every respect. Her interior layout and Johann Poppe’s decoration in opulent “steamship style” cause as much of a stir as her maximum speed of 16 knots. She immediately breaks records for commercial vessels. NDL now has nine of these splendid vessels built in quick succession. Achieving record speeds becomes a hallmark of the Bremen-based company.

1882

With the “Rugia” and the “Rhaetia,” Hapag has steamships built at German shipyards for the first time. The Hamburg-based company have nothing remotely comparable to compete with NDL’s fast steamship service. Their new flagship, the third “Hammonia,” which is launched in Glasgow, is obsolete from the start. However, the ship does feature one remarkable innovation, as it is the first German ship to be equipped with electric lighting on board.

1883

On January 19, two hours after midnight, Hapag’s “Cimbria” collides in dense fog with the British steamship “Sultan” 19 nautical miles northwest of the North Sea island of Borkum. The “Cimbria” is torn open by the other vessel’s pointed bow and sinks within 15 minutes. Over 430 passengers and crew members perish in the icy waters. The catastrophe overshadows the inauguration of Hapag’s new pier in Hoboken.

1884

Hapag had ignored the ambitious young passage agent Albert Ballin until this outsider mounted a frontal attack in 1881. Together with a shipowner, he is now offering unbeatably low rates for transporting masses of passengers to New York. A long, destructive rate war follows, and the cheapest passage across the Atlantic eventually costs just six dollars. Hapag, which has already been plagued by “business despondency,” is now starting to list.

1885

NDL, which is already enjoying great success with its weekly express steamship sailings, is also awarded the government contract for the new imperial mail steamship services to the Far East and Australia. This represents another success for Hermann Henrich Meier, who had already campaigned for the creation of these services as a member of Germany's parliament, the Reichstag. Hapag, on the other hand, does not even bid for the contract and is "five minutes from going under" – until the shareholders become defiant and replace the members of the Board of Directors.



1886

Hapag's new leadership ends the rate war and brings Albert Ballin on board, initially as head of the passage department. Although this was a very unorthodox personnel decision, it will eventually prove to be one of the most fortunate in economic history. At almost 29 years old, the highly intelligent outsider – half visionary, half pragmatist – has found his mission in life. He is to lead Hapag to the top spot in the global shipping business.

1887

Carl Laeisz, a Hamburg-based shipowner operating sailing ships and the leading figure on Hapag's Supervisory Board, supports and encourages Ballin as he presses forward, and his dynamism sweeps the company along. The company's share capital is increased substantially, and two modern twin-screw steamers are ordered. Also new is the fact that, for the first time, a German shipyard will be building one of the state-of-the-art ships: the Vulcan yard in Stettin (today's Polish city of Szczecin).

1888

Wilhelm II, the new emperor of Germany, is not just the most high-ranking ship lover in the empire, but also the most influential trendsetter. Ocean-going shipping becomes very fashionable in Germany. The shipping companies discover that the emperor's enthusiast backing is also good for business, as it is an unbeatable marketing tool. Hapag and NDL vie for the emperor's favor and soon attain a semi-official status extending far beyond their economic role.

1889

In honor of the empress of Germany, the first Hapag express steamer is named "Augusta Victoria" and breaks a record on her maiden voyage, sailing from Southampton to New York in just seven days! The ship, designed in a rococo style by NDL's company architect Johann Poppe in keeping with the philosophy of "completely decorating everything that can be decorated," is enthusiastically received. But there is one slight gaffe, as the name of the empress is actually Auguste Victoria.

1890

Taken by surprise by Hapag's rapid comeback, NDL's director Lohmann makes the most crucial mistake ever in the company's history: He ordered two new ships but stuck with the obsolete single-screw type, thereby robbing NDL of its entire technical and commercial edge on the fiercely contested North Atlantic route. A series of accidents with express steamers brings additional setbacks for the Bremen-based company.

1891

Ballin, since 1888 Hapag's youngest director, dispatches the flagship "Augusta Victoria" on a pleasure cruise to the Mediterranean in January. His colleagues declare him to be mad. However, with Ballin serving himself as host, the multi-week expedition – with its organized shore excursions at 13 ports – proves a tremendous success. This also marks the premiere of the modern cruise and the beginning of "sea tourism," which Hapag will continue to offer.



1892

A turbulent spring in Bremen: NDL director Johann Georg Lohmann collapses and dies at a preparatory meal for the traditional Bremen seafarers' banquet. Hermann Henrich Meier, now 83, who had left the company to protest the business policies of the director of "his" company, returns in triumph. Dr. Heinrich Wiegand, NDL's 37-year-old legal adviser, is appointed Lohmann's successor.

1893

After the previous year's devastating cholera epidemic, the Senate of Hamburg imposes rigid restrictions on emigrants from Eastern Europe. Ballin initially threatens to move Hapag to Bremen, but then he radically alters the company's business policy: Hapag, which also started calling itself the "Hamburg-American Line" after the Senate eased its restrictions, will no longer primarily focus on the passenger trade, which is so sensitive to economic developments. Instead, it will concentrate on the cargo business.

1894

Hapag and NDL sign an agreement to jointly operate a liner service between Mediterranean ports and New York. Competitive Italian shipping still lies in the future, and many emigrants from the Balkan countries prefer to sail on the "Sunshine route" rather than having to first make a long journey to northern ports. The service is also popular among Americans wishing to visit their ancestral homelands in the Mediterranean or to travel in Europe.

1895

Horror on the coast: The "Elbe," once NDL's most famous ship, is rammed in the English Channel by a British coal vessel on the night of January 29-30. The large NDL steamship sinks within 15 minutes, and more than 200 lives are lost. There are just 20 survivors, including five passengers. The accident prompts a debate in the Reichstag, Germany's parliament, about ship safety.

1896

The 12,261 grt “Pennsylvania” is launched for Hapag. The combined passenger-cargo ship is the world’s largest ship for a while. She can transport over 2,800 passengers and 14,488 tons of cargo, or just one of the two. A series of highly profitable “P” steamships of various sizes now forms the solid commercial backbone of Hapag’s fleet, while its big luxury liners ensure a brilliant image.

1897

As part of his ongoing efforts to reform NDL, Heinrich Wiegand continues to make express passenger shipping the priority and has ordered a four-funnel express steamship. This is launched at the Vulcan yard in Stettin. The ship is named the “Kaiser Wilhelm der Große” after the reigning monarch’s grandfather and is the first of four ships named after figures from the House of Hohenzollern. With these vessels, NDL aims to regain supremacy on the North Atlantic.

1898

The “Kaiser Wilhelm der Große” breaks all records by sailing across the Atlantic – from the Needles to Sandy Hook – in just five days at a cruising speed of over 22 knots. In New York, she is feted like no other ship ever has been. This voyage marks the beginning of the “German Decade” in the competition for the fastest Atlantic crossing, and the four-funnel express steamers become NDL’s pride and trademark. In Bremen, the legendary company founder Hermann Henrich Meier dies shortly before turning 90.

1899

At Hapag and NDL, the existing leadership configuration is legally anchored to a certain degree when Albert Ballin and Heinrich Wiegand are officially appointed directors-general. The time of the patriarchs is over. At the turn of the century, the two companies are headed by modern managers who look beyond the boundaries of their home cities and are capable of acting on a large stage. Hapag and NDL communicate and cooperate on a greater scale than before.

1900

Journalists coin the term “Blue Riband,” borrowed from the award for the fastest horse in horse racing. The bearer of the intangible but prestigious trophy is the “Deutschland,” a new Hapag express steamer. On behalf of the Reich, Hapag and NDL transport troops to China to put down the Boxer Rebellion; on the quay in Bremerhaven, Kaiser Wilhelm II delivers his infamous “Hun speech.” A major fire destroys the NDL piers in Hoboken, New Jersey, killing over 300 people.

1901

The liner networks of Hapag and NDL now span the entire globe. While Hapag has the world’s largest fleet, NDL transports the largest number of passengers. Both shipping companies are status symbols and ambassadors of an up-and-coming Germany, and their services also help open up and consolidate Germany’s young colonial empire abroad. On one of Hapag’s steamships, Wilhelm II utters the legendary words: “Germany’s future lies on the water.”



1902

Hapag and NDL jointly conclude an agreement with the powerful Morgan Trust of American banker J. Pierpont Morgan. After having taken over several companies, including the UK-based White Star Line, the trust has been striving to monopolize the North Atlantic trade. Thanks to Ballin's negotiating skills, the Germans are able to preserve their independence and avoid cut-throat competition. The "Lion of Wall Street" has failed in his bid for a North Atlantic monopoly.

1903

In Hamburg, Wilhelm II dedicates not just a monument to his grandfather Wilhelm I, but also the new Hapag port facilities at Kaiser-Wilhelm-Hafen and Ellerholzhafen, each of which has a 10-meter water depth at high tide. Three kilometers of quays have been equipped with 140 standard cranes and three heavy-lift cranes, seven warehouses and 22 kilometers of railway tracks. As a whole, the facility takes up a major part of the total area – including land and water – of the Port of Hamburg.

1904

After the great success of the cruises, Hapag's Board of Directors decides to get more involved in tourism. At the beginning of 1905, it takes over Carl Stangen's famous travel agency in Berlin, carrying on the business as the "Hamburg-Amerika Linie Reisebüro." In doing so, Hapag becomes one of the largest tourism companies. NDL follows suit with the "Weltreisebüro Union" ("World Travel Union"). The two are based at a prime location: Berlin's main boulevard, Unter den Linden.

1905

Luxury instead of record speed: Hapag withdraws from the Atlantic contest. Its new flagship, the "Amerika," is more economical than the coal-devouring express steamers, rolls less, and offers extra space and comfort for all classes. For the first time, emigrants can book cabins in third class for only slightly more than steerage class. Passengers respond enthusiastically, and the "palatial ship" is a resounding success.

1906

Just a few years after the emigrant halls have been opened on the Veddel, an island on the Elbe that is part of Hamburg, Hapag has to considerably expand them. This last stop on the old continent is an internationally award-winning “emigrant town” covering 50,000 square meters. This year, 180 Hapag employees look after almost 102,000 travelers from all over Europe there. Demand continues to grow for this all-round service for emigrants, which isn’t offered anywhere else in the world.

1907

Bremen celebrates North German Lloyd’s 50th anniversary. In its new administration building designed by Poppe, self-confidence and prosperity are embodied in stone. Hapag and NDL get involved in the African business, which was previously dominated by the shipowner Adolph Woermann. This also includes shipping connections to the German “protectorates” there. After initially competing, they soon team up in a joint operation with two other partners.

1908

A serious shipping recession hits NDL very hard because it is exclusively a passenger shipping company. This is only made worse by the fact that more and more travelers are preferring the comfort of Hapag’s ships over the record-breaking speed of NDL’s express steamers. For perhaps too long, NDL has clung to what made it famous. It responds by launching the “George Washington,” a slower but especially luxurious flagship.

1909

Heinrich Wiegand dies in March at the young age of 53. Besides heading NDL, this versatile manager had also energetically pursued his second major interest, the development and industrialization of Bremen, Bremerhaven and the Lower Weser area. NDL had co-founded companies or acquired stakes in others, and Wiegand had campaigned intensively to have better canals and rail links built. His successor is Philipp Heineken.

1910

A sensation in Hapag’s annual report and a new dimension in the civilian “arms race” on the North Atlantic: The company makes plans to order three luxury liners of gigantic dimensions and unprecedented luxury. At around 50,000 grt, they will be bigger than anything sailing anywhere in the world – in fact, twice as big as the flagship of the German merchant fleet, NDL’s “George Washington.”

1911

The third dimension: a planetoid is discovered and will be named “Hapag” two years later. This is fitting given that the company is among the pioneers of civil aviation. Since 1908, Ballin has been trying “to make the airship serviceable for practical transport purposes.” Hapag backs Graf Zeppelin, while its travel agencies have been selling tickets for the four airships of Deutsche Luftschiffahrts AG since 1910. By 1914, it will sell tickets to 42,000 passengers.

1912

An ambiguous highlight: Wilhelm II names the first of Hapag's leviathans – and the largest ship in the world – the “Imperator.” This superb “Made in Germany” product is a floating grand hotel that sets new benchmarks in technology, navigational equipment and service. On board, even the emigrants are accommodated in cabins instead of shared quarters. However, from the bow of the luxury liner looms a symbol of political hubris: a huge bronze eagle perched on a tiny globe.



1913

Optimism accompanies an economic boom in Europe. Yet Albert Ballin, at the zenith of success as Hapag's top manager, is aware of the cracks under the glittering surface. He is increasingly concerned about political tensions between Germany and Great Britain and fears that the arms race in Europe could lead to a devastating war. This has prompted him to take semi-official missions since 1908 in an effort to mediate between the countries.

1914

Wilhelm II has traveled to Hamburg again for the christening of the “Bismarck,” Hapag's third giant steamship. It is to be the farewell gala of the German Empire. Eight days later, shots ring out in Sarajevo. Ballin travels secretly to London for a last, desperate attempt at mediation. But his efforts are in vain, as what he calls “the most stupid and bloody war in world history” begins in August.

1915

Survival is now the main priority, and overseas traffic has collapsed. Hapag and NDL ships not required by the navy lie at anchor rusting in German or foreign ports, and many of the companies' employees have been called up for military service. Numerous other employees and the facilities of both companies are put in the service of the German Empire. Port warehouses become provision stores, the emigrants' halls become military hospitals, and NDL fits out hospital trains.

1916

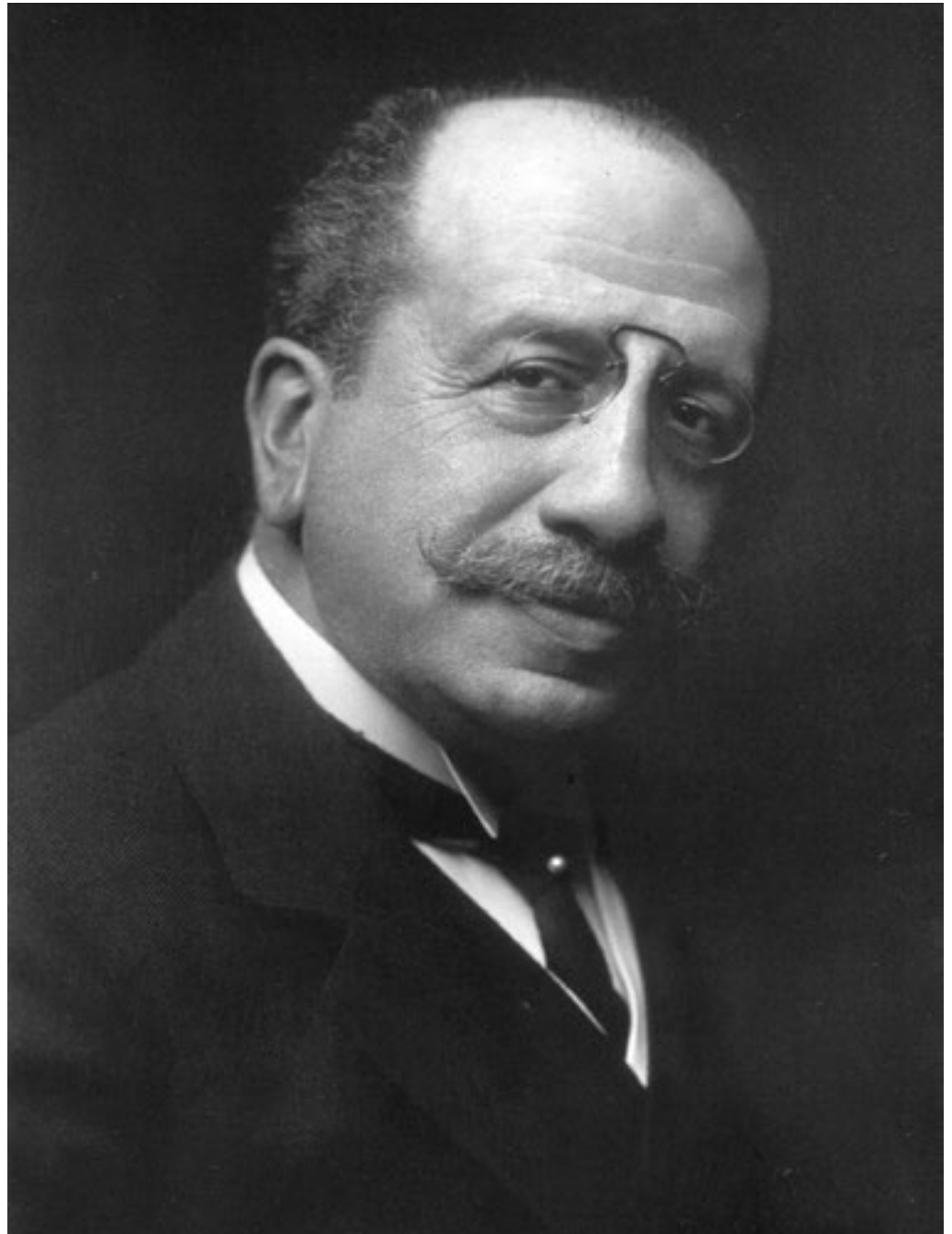
Great excitement in the United States: “German U-boat in Baltimore!” This is the “Deutschland,” which was built and equipped in secret by NDL. The cargo submarine, which is 65 meters long and has a crew of 29 under NDL Captain Paul König, had broken through the British blockade of the North Sea. In Baltimore, she takes on rubber, tin and nickel before completing the dangerous return voyage, which lasts a bit longer than three weeks. The “Bremen,” the second merchant U-boat, was less fortunate, disappearing on her first outbound voyage.

1917

The United States enters the war. The “Vaterland,” Hapag’s flagship, with a book value of 34 million marks, has been laid up in New York since 1914 and is now seized. “Not much will remain of the Hamburg-American Line,” says a resigned Ballin. Along with NDL director Heineken, he nevertheless fights for a long time for a shipping compensation act. This comes into force in the fall and provides for large newbuilding loans after the cessation of hostilities.

1918

The war is lost. The Great General Staff now asks Ballin, long discredited in Berlin as a “pacifist,” to head the peace negotiations. He is willing to do so, but things turn out differently. The revolution reaches Hamburg, and Ballin, who is seeing his life’s work collapse before his eyes, is personally threatened. The 61-year-old takes a large quantity of sedatives – whether or not with suicidal intent is unclear – and passes away the next day, on November 9, at the same time as the German Empire comes to an end.



CHRONOLOGY ECONOMIC BOOM UNTIL WORLD WAR II

1919

German shipowners complain that this is “the worst of all the war years.” In June, the Peace Treaty of Versailles is signed. All German ships of over 1,600 grt as well as half of all vessels between 1,000 grt and 1,600 grt are allocated to the victorious powers. Hapag and NDL, which were the world’s largest shipping companies five years earlier, no longer have fleets.

1920

The flagship of the NDL fleet is now the “Grüßgott,” a 781-grt excursion steamer. The Bremen-based company looks for American partners to facilitate a return to its old trades. It negotiates in New York with the United States Mail Steamship Company, and a US delegation arrives in Bremerhaven on the “Susquehanna,” the first steamer to arrive from the US in the postwar period. The Americans had seized the ship as a war prize, but it was already well known in the port city as the “Rhein,” formerly owned by NDL.

1921

In the spring, Wilhelm Cuno, Ballin’s successor as the head of Hapag, signs a cooperation deal with the Harriman Group’s United American Lines, brokered by the banking house Warburg. This covers all the pre-war trades except East Asia. As a start, the liner service to New York is resumed. In January, the “Mount Clay,” a former NDL steamship once known as the “Prinz Eitel Friedrich,” calls at Cuxhaven for the first time.

1922

The White Star Line puts the “Homerich” into service. NDL had had her built in Gdansk as the “Columbus,” but then the company managed to prolong the ship’s fitting out for eight years so as to delay her delivery. This only transpires thanks to a discreet barter deal known as the “Columbus Agreement.” In return for the finally completed luxury liner, NDL receives six steamships, with which it is able to resume its liner service to South America and East Asia.

1923

Amid chaos and inflation, the first new top-of-the-line ship of Germany’s merchant fleet, Hapag’s “Albert Ballin,” sails on her maiden voyage to New York. The 20,815 grt ship is barely half the size of the “Imperator.” Nevertheless, she is seen as a symbol of hope and the will to survive, like Fritz Höger’s Hapag House on the Alsterdamm, completed in 1921.



1924

“The most astonishing resurrections in the history of world shipping”: Hapag and NDL are back in their old trades. With the second “Columbus,” NDL once again dispatches a luxury liner to New York. The United States drastically tightens immigration requirements, causing a sharp decrease in emigration. In response, Hapag relies on a quartet of less spectacular, yet cost-effective ships. NDL aims to return to the top.

1925

Hapag and NDL also get involved in civil aviation. Deutsche Aero Lloyd AG, the result of the merger of Deutsche Luft-Reederei and Lloyd-Luftverkehr, is already flying more than 6,000 kilometers a day on liner services in Europe. In 1926, the company will merge with other airlines to form Deutsche Luft Hansa AG. As the name reveals, both Hanseatic shipping companies hold stakes in the company.

1926

Sensation on the coast: NDL orders the turbine-driven express steamers “Bremen” and “Europa.” At around 46,000 grt and with a maximum speed of 29 knots, these are intended to regain supremacy in the North Atlantic business. The spectacular flagship, the “Bremen,” is even being built in NDL’s home city of Bremen. While still on the slipways of the shipbuilder AG Weser, this gem becomes the much-admired star of the region.

1927

“Political funnels”: After the merger with the Austral-Kosmos Group, Hapag adopts the former’s black-white-and-red funnel markings. This represents a controversial but unassailable comeback for the “black-white-red flag” of the former German Empire. Even during the Weimar Republic, German shipping stubbornly retained these colors, regarding them as a symbol of past glory. Atop the yellow funnel, they now become a Hapag hallmark.

1928

Planned and accompanied by Ehrenfried Günther Freiherr von Hünefeld, NDL’s “propaganda chief,” the first east-to-west transatlantic flight is completed by a single-engine Junkers aircraft called the “Bremen.” It lasts 36 hours, and the pioneers are celebrated enthusiastically on two continents. Euphoria reigns at NDL: Christened by Reich President Paul von Hindenburg, the “Bremen” is launched in August, followed the next day by the “Europa” in Hamburg.

1929

The maiden voyage of the “Bremen” proves a complete success, and a German liner holds the Blue Riband for the first time since 1908. The ship is an ambassador, symbol of resurrection, and superstar adored in her home port like no other ship before. With her futuristic silhouette, she embodies technology, momentum and glamour in equal measure. Depicted in spectacular modern poster art, she becomes the icon, embodiment and highlight of the brief Golden Twenties.



1930

The world economic crisis, recession and depression hit shipping so hard that Hapag and NDL are forced to cooperate more closely. The shipping companies sign a "Union agreement," which is designed to have the commercial effects of a merger without formally sealing such an agreement, as neither wishes to give up "their own individual existence and the publicity value of their long-standing organizations" at any price. The pact will only last a few years.

1931

“A crisis year of maximum dimensions” for both NDL and Hapag: Of the German merchant fleet’s total tonnage of 4.2 million grt, 650,000 grt is idle. An eerie calm haunts the ports, and mass unemployment rages. Both economically and politically, the downward trend continues. Internal frictions between Hapag and NDL intensify to such an extent that terminating the Union agreement is considered.

1932

Brisk business during the crisis: Hapag and NDL had re-started the cruise and tourism business in 1926. The “small-scale tourism” of the services to German seaside resorts booms without interruption, as do the dream voyages for an international clientele. The range of offerings has become exclusive and varied, from Hapag’s world cruises starting in New York to NDL’s first combined sea-air offerings.

1933

Hapag and NDL, which are both partly state-owned, make adjustments to to align with the desires of Germany’s new rulers, the Nazis. Jewish banker Max Warburg, Ballin’s best friend who has been especially close to Hapag for decades, is kicked off the Supervisory Board. Warburg retains his dignity, delivering a passionate farewell speech to an embarrassed auditorium, sarcastically settling scores with the new top managers. His grand exit makes international headlines.



1934

Already interrupted by the war, the vast flow of emigrants has almost entirely dried up since the United States rigorously tightened its immigration laws in 1924. The extensive emigrant town in Hamburg, which had been used annually by 170,000 emigrants from large parts of Europe before 1914, had been reduced in size for German emigrants after the war and re-named “Überseeheim” (“overseas home”). This, too, is now almost empty. Hapag returns the site to the City of Hamburg.

1935

A glittering image and a disastrous financial situation: The North Atlantic passenger trade brings Hapag and NDL heavy losses, all the more so since ships sailing under the swastika flag are shunned by parts of the international public and more modern foreign competition is coming into service. Hitler insists that, for reasons of prestige, the loss-making service should “somehow” be maintained. This prompts the Third Reich to assume all of the financial risks.

1936

The Olympic Games in Berlin trigger a boom in the North Atlantic passenger trade, and 700 NDL employees look after the athletes in Berlin. The party organization “Kraft durch Freude” (Strength through Joy – KdF) charters Hapag and NDL steamships to offer deserving “comrades” low-cost cruises, which invariably also included party propaganda. The success of the KdF program marks the start of mass tourism at sea.

1937

The “Potsdam,” the “Scharnhorst” and the “Gneisenau” sail for NDL to the Far East on the most important route apart from the Atlantic. Outfitted with turbo-electric propulsion, two of them are the fastest and most modern passenger ships on this route. The sleek, luxurious ships – which were also built as floating advertisements for the Third Reich – cause a sensation in all ports of call, but they soon prove to be uneconomical.

1938

Horror at Hapag: The four-masted barque “Admiral Karpfanger,” built as the “L’avenir” in 1908 and acquired by Hapag in 1937, fails to return from her first voyage to Australia. The last telegram of Hapag’s first training sailing ship reaches the Norddeich Radio station on March 12, then she disappears near Cape Horn. The 60 men on board – including 44 young men between the ages of 15 and 19, representing Hapag’s next generation of officers – are lost at sea.

1939

Hapag’s SS “St. Louis” remains out at sea with more than 900 Jewish people fleeing Nazi persecution on board. No country is willing to grant them entry, and they cannot return. Finally, the passengers are rescued by the moral courage of Captain Gustav Schröder and his crew. After a five-week odyssey, they are permitted to call at Antwerp. As Germany invades Poland and war breaks out, 858 German vessels are still at sea.



1940

A spooky first in Hamburg: The first and only launch of a large passenger ship during wartime. With its 41,000 grt, Hapag's second "Vaterland" is noticeably smaller than her famed 54,282 grt predecessor, which was and still is the largest liner to ever operate under the German flag. The newbuilding, also built by Blohm & Voss, is never to sail. Initially serving as a timber store, she is destroyed by Allied bombs at the quay in 1943.

1941

Death of a legend: The “great ‘Bremen’,” which was waiting to be converted to a troopship, is destroyed by fire at the quay in Bremerhaven. After an inferno lasting two days, the most popular ship to ever operate under the NDL flag is no more than a burnt-out wreck. A 16-year-old mentally handicapped ship’s boy later admits to starting the fire and is executed. Whether he was really the arsonist was never ascertained.

1942

Hapag and NDL are re-privatized and once again independent companies. In the previous year, their shares had been sold to “suitable, mainly Hanseatic business circles” at the request of the central government in Berlin. The co-heads of NDL, Johannes Kulenkampff and Richard Bertram, sell the overly “ostentatious” head office building in downtown Bremen, but NDL remains there as the tenant.

1943

“Operation Gomorrah,” the devastating Allied bombing raids lasting days, transforms Hamburg into a wasteland. The port is destroyed and full of sunken ships. A year later, a major raid on the center of Bremen follows, and NDL’s head office is lost along with all of the company’s business files, supplies and silver. The gutted building designed by Poppe is later demolished.

1944

The technical operations of Hapag and NDL perform ship repairs for Germany’s navy. Employees who have been drafted into the military are replaced by foreign forced laborers. Nevertheless, the “Thousand-year Empire” is coming to an end: With the triumphant advance of the Red Army, masses of people start to flee westward from the eastern parts of Germany. Completely overcrowded Hapag and NDL ships help to rescue people fleeing the Russian advance from ports in East Prussia and Pomerania.

1945

Defeat under the swastika: More than 2 million people are successfully brought to safety across the Baltic Sea ahead of the Red Army, yet tens of thousands of fleeing civilians, seafarers and soldiers perish. For example, more than 5,000 people drown in icy water after the “Steuben” – in happier days the pride of the NDL cruise fleet and known as the “White Swan” – was torpedoed off Pillau (Baltiysk).



1946

Rock bottom for the German merchant marine: The flag of Germany, as the aggressor nation, is banned from all the world's oceans. The merchant fleet, with a pre-war total tonnage of 4.2 million grt and 1.5 million grt at the end of the war, has to be handed over, except for just 170,000 grt to meet Germany's own needs. The maximum ship size is restricted to 1,500 grt. At 2,674 grt, even NDL's first "Bremen" of 1858 would have had to be surrendered.

1947

Hapag is now based on the Ballindamm: The Hamburg Senate has renamed the Alsterdamm to mark the 90th anniversary of the birth of Hapag's legendary director-general. The company turns 100 but sees "no cause for celebration." Apart from a small core group of employees, it has had to lay off its entire staff and survives on modest activities. Like NDL, Hapag becomes engaged in catering, towage and soon also services to seaside resorts.

1948

A big role for a small ship: After the war, the 904 grt coastal resort steamer "Glückauf" becomes NDL's flagship. The throng of takers is enormous, and the captain a celebrated seafarer. The 68-meter-long "Glückauf" is commanded by Gottfried Clausen, who had twice sailed the "Commodore Johnsen," an NDL training sailing vessel, around Cape Horn.

1949

Eager for at least temporary relief from the postwar gloom, Germans are more and more interested in the first tourism offerings. A large part of foreign territory remains off-limits, but Hapag and NDL – their travel agencies now collaborating and also constituting two of the founders of what later becomes Touropa – join other partners to offer relaxing holidays by special train to Mittenwald, Ruhpolding and Oberstdorf in the German Alps.

1950

The most stringent restrictions on German shipping have been eased. In view of their limited tonnage, Hapag and NDL avoid costly rivalry and return to the old trades together, even without an operating agreement. The 2,399 grt "Hamburg" is launched as the first postwar newbuilding for Hapag – and for Germany. The liner trade to New York is resumed, initially as a cargo-only service.

1951

Instead of the provisional “pennant C,” the West German merchant fleet is permitted to hoist the black-red-gold flag of the young Federal Republic of Germany. Yet shipping’s semi-political role has largely been played out. Cars and aircraft are supplanting ships as symbols of dynamism, yearning for faraway places, and new beginnings. Hapag puts the cargo ship “Odenwald” into service, followed by six more vessels of the same class. NDL takes delivery of six motor cargo ships as its first postwar newbuildings.

1952

Return to the company’s own Kuhwerderhafen, now rebuilt; return to the North Atlantic: Hapag manages the 21,000 grt “Italia” for Home Lines on the traditional route to New York. Overseas traffic begins to noticeably revive as part of West Germany’s “economic miracle.” NDL, which had initially planned to give up the North Atlantic service, now wants to resume the New York service as quickly as possible.

1953

Comeback in the most important trade besides the Atlantic: Hapag and NDL launch a joint service with monthly sailings to the Far East with the “Weserstein,” an NDL-owned turbine-powered ship. From 1955 on, the two shipping companies will already be offering a service sailing at 10-day intervals. In 1954, it is also the “Weserstein” that for the first time returns to the old imperial mail steamer route to Australia.

1954

Jubilation at Bremerhaven’s Columbus Quay: The “Gripsholm,” a Swedish passenger motor vessel, is transferred to NDL. It belongs to a joint venture between the Bremen company and Svenska Amerika Linjen and is to be manned by NDL. Renamed the “Berlin,” she is the first passenger liner to sail under the German flag on the North Atlantic since the war. Once again, the legendary key-and-anchor flag flies from a large passenger ship.

1955

Back on all the major routes: A decade after the end of the war, Hapag and NDL are again operating services virtually all over the world, mainly on a joint basis. While Hapag has 25 of its own cargo ships on liner services, NDL has 27 ships. As part of West Germany’s “economic miracle,” overseas foreign trade is growing rapidly. Hapag acquires a stake of almost 28 percent in a new airline, Deutscher Flugdienst GmbH.



1956

The “Stein” era: Having ships whose names end in “-stein” has become something of calling card for the NDL fleet. Although catchy, it can also cause problems. Place names are required, but using invented names isn’t an option. With the fleet growing rapidly, new place names are becoming hard to find. Each time a launching is approaching, entire departments can be found frantically poring over atlases for a suitable name.

1957

Bremen can celebrate again: NDL turns 100 years old and is bidding on its next large passenger ship: the former luxury liner and troop transporter “Pasteur,” which the French government wishes to sell. Uproar in France: The pride of La Grande Nation under the flag of its wartime foe? The liner goes to Bremen, nevertheless, and receives a warm reception when she calls at Cherbourg as NDL’s flagship, renamed the “Bremen,” in 1959.

1958

Hapag does not wish to resume passenger liner services on the North Atlantic and instead concentrates on its traditional core business: cargo services. The company also shows the flag in sea tourism again with the “Ariadne,” an elegant snow-white luxury cruise ship. Owing to the very high fares, even for this exclusive market, demand for her remains limited. The ship is sold in 1960.

1959

NDL's management team has not changed since the end of the war, and Richard Bertram and Johannes Kulenkampff are still at the helm. The chairman of Hapag's Executive Board since 1953 has been Werner Traber, who comes from a Hamburg shipping family. He will play a key role in determining the fortunes of Hapag and, later, Hapag-Lloyd AG for almost two decades.

1960

Both Hapag and NDL pay dividends of 6 percent again for the first time. NDL, having achieved turnover of DM 259 million, regards its rehabilitation as completed for the time being. Hapag, with a turnover of DM 286 million, want to continue expanding its fleet. It currently has 49 ocean-going vessels, and three more are under construction. Both shipping companies see themselves as increasingly threatened by the flag protectionism of many nations.

1961

NDL also returns to the cruise business. Initially the company offers a classic, dispatching its "Berlin" to the Norwegian fjords. The cruise to northern waters, once made famous as the Kaiser's annual vacation, proves to be as popular as ever. Yet even on cruise routes, the former "Gripsholm" – launched in 1924 and no longer up to standard on the North Atlantic – is already almost a dinosaur.

1962

In Bremerhaven, the technical side of NDL has become the Lloydwerft shipyard, a successful supplier on the international market. The company's largest shore operation has two large dry docks and specializes in converting and repairing even very large ships. Employing up to 1,900 workers, it nevertheless comes under growing pressure owing to the expansion of international shipbuilding capacities.

1963

The combined cargo-passenger ships deployed on the Far East route become uneconomical. While they can no longer handle the growing volume of cargo, passengers increasingly prefer to cover the long distance of this route by air. Hapag and NDL aim to launch a weekly express service with cargo-only vessels. Hapag awards contracts for seven 10,900 grt fast cargo ships, each with a capacity of 12,600 tons.

1964

NDL has purchased a third large passenger ship, the 11-year-old Swedish "Kungsholm." Refitted and renamed the "Europa," she is to be deployed from 1966 both in the cruise business and on the transatlantic passenger service in roughly equal measure. NDL's Executive Board continues to back the latter, increasingly offering its large liners as a comfortable supplement to jet aircraft.

1965

Although the end of the North Atlantic passenger trade is becoming more and more obvious, NDL takes delivery of the "Kungsholm." The newbuildings for the Far East route are coming into service. Hapag invests heavily in its West Indies service, placing orders for 10 new 7,500 grt ships with a cruising speed of 17.5 knots. These are modern, optimally equipped but conventional cargo ships. Their time is coming to an end.

1966

Arrival of the box: The “Fairland,” a container ship of the US shipping company Sea-Land, sails to Europe for the first time, berthing at Bremen’s Überseehafen on May 6. Still viewed by European shipping companies with skepticism, the standardized multimodal container for combined sea and land transport will trigger a revolution in the transport business within a few years. Many shipping companies will fail to survive the transition.

1967

The Far East remains a dynamic growth region. NDL deploys its “fast runners” of the “Friesenstein” class on this service. With a cruising speed of 21 knots, they cut the round-voyage time from 120 to 105 days. With larger tank capacities, refrigerated holds, a car deck and a heavy-lift derrick, these may be optimally equipped for this region – but not for transporting and handling containers.

1968

Hapag and NDL cooperate more closely than ever before, embarking together on a new era. On October 25, NDL’s “Weser Express” inaugurates the first European full container service to New York for Hapag-Lloyd Container Linien. Hapag’s “Elbe Express” follows two weeks later. The structure of shipping is changing so rapidly that speculation is rife in the industry that a merger of Hapag and NDL is both inevitable and imminent.

1969

NDL enters the bulk shipping market. While the Hapag-NDL merger is still publicly denied as “absurd,” it is being discreetly negotiated in Hamburg and Bremen. Two things are clear: The future belongs to container transport, and investments on the required scale cannot be made by one shipping company alone. Cooperating for many years in a “friendly marriage of necessity,” the Hanseatic rivals accept the implications.

1970

Hamburg-Amerikanische Packetfahrt-Actien-Gesellschaft and North German Lloyd merge on September 1, retroactively from January 1. This marks the end of a Hanseatic interplay of competition and cooperation that had lasted 113 years, set benchmarks in world shipping, and propels the two former rivals to the top. At the same time, it marks the start of the history of the premier German shipping line, Hapag-Lloyd AG, initially based in both Hamburg and Bremen.



CHRONOLOGY BREAKTHROUGH OF THE CONTAINER

1971

Hapag and NDL are of almost identical size at the time of their merger. With more than 10,000 employees, 112 ocean-going ships and a turnover of over 1 billion DM, the new Hapag-Lloyd AG belongs to the top echelon of the world's liner shipping companies. At Shed 73, covering 25,000 square meters, the company puts its first container handling facility into service in Hamburg's Kaiser-Wilhelm-Hafen.

1972

The "Bremen" is sold and handed over to new owners. In the previous year, she had been the last survivor on the passenger liner service between Europe and the New World that Hapag and NDL had to thank for their birth and ascent. In December 1971, she was the last "Bremen" to sail from New York on a passenger liner service, 113 years after the first Lloyd steamship of the same name had sailed on this route for the first time.

1973

On March 30, an aircraft bearing Hapag-Lloyd AG's double arrow logo takes off for Ibiza. This is Hapag-Lloyd Flug GmbH's first plane. The new airline is designed to boost the Group's involvement in tourism. As a cruise ship, the "Europa" bears the Group colors of blue and cognac. In brand-new white painting, but proven top-notch service on board, she is the much-loved "Grand Old Lady" of tourism at sea.

1974

A long-term cooperation agreement is reached with Rickmers Linie, with which Hapag-Lloyd is resuming its service to China. The latter initially owns 70 percent of the former, which had previously been family-owned. The German port operations are restructured and Unikai Lagerei- and Speditionsgesellschaft, a storage and freight-forwarding company, is founded. Two multi-purpose supply ships are to pave the way for entry into the offshore business.

1975

The Port of Hamburg celebrates: The "Münsterland" finally returns home after a record-breaking involuntary voyage lasting eight years, three months and five days. In 1967, during the Six Day War between Israel and Egypt, the Hapag cargo ship had been caught between the fronts and would be trapped for years along with 13 other ships from eight countries in the Great Bitter Lake while the Suez Canal was impassable.

1976

The shipping business is internationalized, with several subsidiaries being set up abroad during this decade. Unterweser Frachtschiffahrt GmbH is now known as "Kosmos" Bulkschiffahrt GmbH, based in Bremen, after DDG "Kosmos," which had merged with Hapag in 1926. The new "Kosmos" manages the flagship of the German merchant fleet, Hapag-Lloyd's 188,668 grt supertanker named the "Bonn."

1977

The full containership “Melbourne Express” opens the Europe – Australia/New Zealand liner service for the ANZECS pool of European shipping lines. Hapag-Lloyd manages the nuclear-powered bulk carrier “Otto Hahn” for the GKSS, an institute set up to assess the use of nuclear energy in shipbuilding and shipping, which proves to be uneconomical. Hapag-Lloyd Flug takes over the airline Bavaria Germanair.

1978

At 3 o'clock on the morning of December 12, Hapag-Lloyd's LASH carrier the “München,” sailing from Bremerhaven to Savannah and caught in stormy weather near the Azores, transmits a brief distress call. This large, modern ship then disappears. The most extensive search-and-rescue action ever mounted in the history of shipping yields nothing more than a few pieces of wreckage and no trace of the 28 people on board. The cause of the tragedy is assumed to have been a rogue wave.

1979

A second oil price shock, more serious than the one in 1973, and over-capacities in international shipping put Hapag-Lloyd under equal pressure both at sea and in the air. For the first time since the merger, the Group does not pay a dividend. The Group acquires an initial majority stake in Haiger-based Pracht Spedition und Logistik GmbH, taking it over completely in 1986.

1980

Sharply higher fuel prices have an especially catastrophic effect on the airline, which with Bavaria Germanair had acquired many older aircraft with excessive fuel consumption. Hapag-Lloyd Flug plunges deeply into the red. Problems hit long-established DGG Hansa in Bremen and Hapag-Lloyd takes over its services to the Middle East as well as Madagascar/Mauritius.

1981

One turbine is removed from each of the four containerships of the “Hamburg Express” class on the Far East run on account of rising fuel prices. They now operate as single-screw vessels. A legend has to go: Launched in 1952 as the Swedish “Kungsholm”, the “Europa” was one of Lloyd's last North Atlantic liners and then Hapag-Lloyd's top-of-the-range cruise ship. She is now sold to Panama.

1982

The Group is reorganized and streamlined, once again concentrating on its core businesses of liner shipping and tourism. In keeping with this realignment, a spectacular 33,819 grt newbuilding bearing the traditional name the “Europa” flies the Group's flag on cruise routes for the first time. She is a five-star “dream ship” in the luxury class. Hapag-Lloyd also manages the “Polarstern,” a polar research and supply vessel owned by the German government.



1983

The Group's involvement in tanker and bulk shipping is terminated. The multi-purpose ships are sold, tanker management discontinued, and the Group's own supertanker, the "Bonn," is last laid up in Brunei. Major shareholders – including Deutsche Bank, Dresdner Bank and the Veritas insurance company – rescue Hapag-Lloyd from the deep crisis with 350 million DM. The head office building on the Ballindamm, with its rich tradition, is sold to the Iduna insurance company.

1984

After restructuring and the subsequent double capital reduction, the independent shareholders' stake in the Hapag-Lloyd Group amounts to no more than a bit over 10 percent. The main shareholders, with 80 percent between them, are now Deutsche Bank and Dresdner Bank. Consisting of Allianz and Münchner Rückversicherung, the Veritas insurance group holds 10 percent of the shares. The supertanker "Bonn," a loss-maker from the outset, is sold for a knockdown price.

1985

Things are quickly looking up again. At the Hamburg-based shipbuilder Blohm & Voss, four container ships – the "Nürnberg Express," the "Köln Express," the "Düsseldorf Express" and the "Stuttgart Express" – are refitted and lengthened. In contrast, the end of the Group's own shipbuilding activities is foreseeable: Hapag-Lloyd had transferred Lloydwerft to Bremer Vulkan AG in 1984 in exchange for a 12 percent stake in the shipbuilder.

1986

Hapag-Lloyd pays dividends again and sells its stake in Bremer Vulkan. This marks the end of a chapter in the Group's history going back to NDL's early days. The shipyard had been founded as the company's technical arm, later gaining renown on the market for repairing and lengthening large ships. The last Hapag-Lloyd-owned shares of Bremer Vulkan go to Hibeg, the holding company of the city-state of Bremen.

1987

In its own building again: Hapag-Lloyd re-acquires the headquarters building at Ballindamm 25. The sandstone facade of Fritz Höger's building – completed in 1921 – is cleaned and restored. The cargo fleet also receives a new look, having sailed under a combination of Hapag stacks in three colors and the blue-white NDL house flag with the key motif. From now on, both flag and funnel markings are in the new Group colors.

1988

After Hapag-Lloyd AG's acquisition of the remaining shares, Rickmers Linie, founded in 1866 and one of the pioneers in business with Asia, becomes a wholly owned subsidiary. It complements Hapag-Lloyd container services with conventional multi-purpose cargo ships and specializes in transporting general cargo and project shipments. In addition, it operates regional feeder services between China and Hong Kong.

1989

Hapag-Lloyd sells its shares in Unikai to the state-owned terminal operator Hamburger Hafen- und Lagerhaus-Aktiengesellschaft (HHLA). As a result, for the first time since the early days of Hapag, the company no longer has any port facilities of its own in Hamburg. Contrans Logistik GmbH and its 36,000 containers are acquired and integrated into the Group, boosting its total container fleet to over 80,000 units.

1990

Hapag-Lloyd Flug embarks on long-haul tourism with nine long-range aircraft, with the first destinations being Kenya and the Caribbean. The shipping line has ordered five new 4,400 TEU mega-container ships from a South Korean shipyard. These vessels, known as Panamax ships, can still sail through the Panama Canal and therefore be flexibly deployed worldwide.

1991

The “Hannover Express” enters into service on the “racetrack” route to East Asia as the first of what will eventually be eight gigantic container ships of the new generation. Nevertheless, the results from liner shipping in this region fluctuate. The TRIO consortium, in which the shares of this trade had been apportioned, is not renewed. Only Hapag-Lloyd and three Japanese shipping lines remain in the East Asia Alliance for a limited period.

1992

Global partnership: Hapag-Lloyd, Nippon Yusen Kaisha (NYK) of Japan, and Neptune Orient Lines (NOL) from Singapore agree to a cooperation in the container business. From now on, Hapag-Lloyd containers will be transported “piggyback” by NYK and NOL on their transpacific service. In return, the Asian partners receive container slots on Hapag-Lloyd vessels on the North Atlantic route.

1993

The Hapag-Lloyd Group’s liner shipping activities are decentralized. These are now split between the Europe, America and Asia/Australia regions, which are each responsible for their own results. Centralized cargo departments are disbanded. A changing of the watch on the Ballindamm: Hans Jakob Kruse, who has been chairman of the Executive Board for many years, moves to the Supervisory Board. As his successor, Bernd Wrede now stands at the Group’s helm.

1994

Hapag-Lloyd is the first transport company to receive the ISO 9002 certification for outstanding quality management. After the demise of the ANZECS Consortium, the company participates in a new Australia/New Zealand joint service. The Group sells two towage companies, Hamburg-based Lütgens & Reimers and Bremen-based Hapag-Lloyd Transport & Service GmbH, which has also managed the research vessel “Polarstern.”

1995

Founding of Hapag-Lloyd China Ltd., with nine offices in Hong Kong and China. During the 1990s, several own branches are set up and several agencies taken over around the world. Ahead of the legally prescribed date, the “Europa” receives a certification for ship safety and environmental protection under the ISM code. Previously on charter to the company, the cruise ship the “Bremen” is acquired. Hapag-Lloyd’s airline, HL Cruises and the HL travel agency also receive the coveted ISO 9002 certification.

1996

The Grand Alliance, the world’s largest consortium of liner shipping companies, commences services. Already working in an alliance, the partners Hapag-Lloyd, NYK and NOL are joined by P&O Container Lines from Britain. With a combined container fleet of around 400,000 TEU, the alliance transports around 3.8 million TEU this year. The alliance strives for close cooperation not only at sea but also on shore.

1997

150 years of Hapag-Lloyd: The head office building in Hamburg is given the name “Ballin House.” The Hapag-Lloyd Foundation, which supports the arts and culture – especially in Hamburg – in long-term partnerships is established. Liner shipping activities become independent as Hapag-Lloyd Container Linie GmbH. Hapag-Lloyd acquires Hanseatic Tours and pools all cruise activities in its subsidiary Hapag-Lloyd Seetouristik.



1998

With the approval of Germany’s Federal Cartel Office, Preussag AG acquires a majority stake in Hapag-Lloyd AG with retrospective effect to October 1, 1997. Touristik Union International (TUI) acquires a 50.1 percent majority stake in Preussag’s new subsidiary in two stages. The interim holding company Hapag Touristik Union (HTU) combines all tourism activities under the Hapag-Lloyd AG umbrella.

1999

The Hapag-Lloyd Group is restructured. HTU’s tourism business, including Hapag-Lloyd Flug, is allocated directly to Preussag and re-named TUI Group GmbH. Hapag-Lloyd Container Linie, Hapag-Lloyd Cruises and Spedition Pracht (acquired in 1979) continue to be run from Hamburg. In addition, Preussag transfers the VTG-Lehnkering and Algeco logistics companies to Hapag-Lloyd.

2000

Hapag-Lloyd achieves its best result in the company’s 153-year history. The Group’s 7 percent operating profit margin represents a record figure for the transport and logistics industry. The last shares of Rickmers Linie are sold, marking the end of a business partnership commenced over a century earlier.

2001

The “Hamburg Express,” the first of four 7,500 TEU container ships, is put into service. VTG-Lehnkering’s maritime services are sold. Hapag-Lloyd acquires a 25.1 percent stake in Hamburg’s Container Terminal Altenwerder (CTA), one of the world’s most advanced facilities. Chairman of the Executive Board Bernd Wrede leaves the company at the end of the year and is succeeded by Michael Behrendt.

2002

The Hapag-Lloyd Annual General Meeting in June agrees to a squeeze out of minority shareholders. Immediately afterwards, Preussag, which is now the sole shareholder in Hapag-Lloyd AG, changes its name to TUI. Hapag-Lloyd and VTG-Lehnkering acquire the European rail logistics activities of the Australia-based Brambles Group. The Annual General Meeting of VTG-Lehnkering approves Hapag-Lloyd’s acquisition of all its shares.

2003

The christening ceremony of the “Berlin Express,” the last newbuilding in the 7,500 TEU series, is held at the CTA in Hamburg. Hapag-Lloyd now orders three larger ships, each with a capacity of 8,000 TEU. Germanischer Lloyd certifies the fleet under the ISO 9001 norm for quality and under the ISO 14001 norm for environmental protection, confirming that it meets the very highest international standards.

2004

With an operating profit of EUR 343 million, Hapag-Lloyd achieves a new record result. TUI’s supervisory board initially decides to float part of the company on the stock exchange, but then it reverses its decision because the issue price to be achieved would not match the true value of the company. Hapag-Lloyd now focuses on shipping and divests itself of its logistics activities in VTG, Pracht and Algeco.

2005

New record: Hapag-Lloyd attains turnover of EUR 2.7 billion and a result before revenue taxes of EUR 278 million. While 95 percent of revenues are generated by container shipping, the remainder comes from the cruise business. The Group continues to give high priority to training and offers a total of more than 160 training places. TUI acquires 89.5 percent of the British-Canadian shipping company CP Ships.



2006

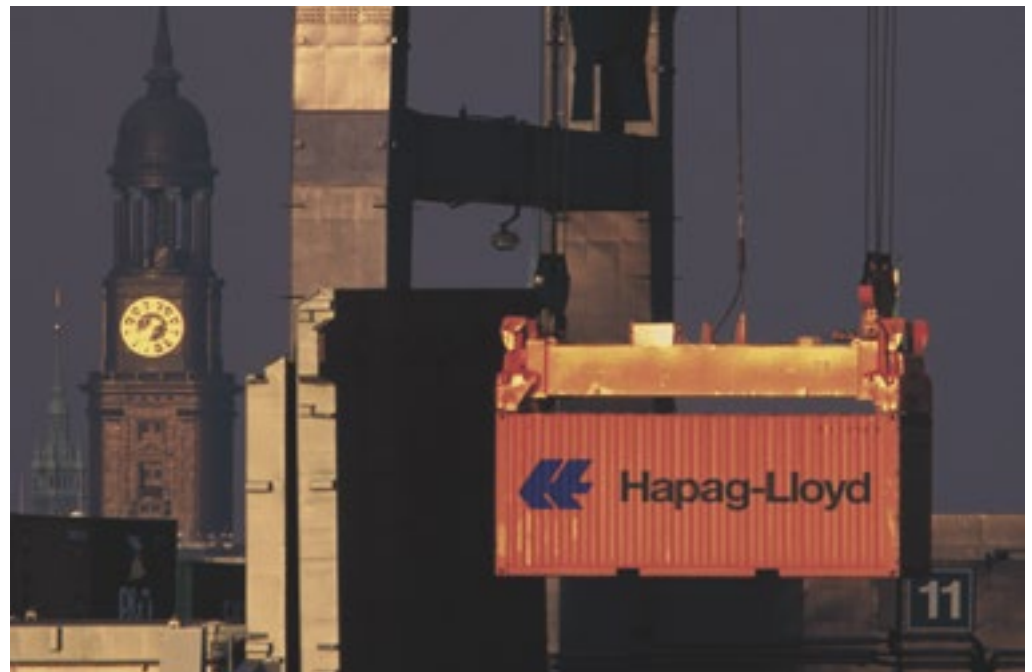
After integrating CP Ships, Hapag-Lloyd is the world's fifth-largest container shipping company, with 8,571 employees in shipping and a fleet of 138 cargo ships with total capacity of 467,000 TEU and transporting 5,004,000 TEU. With the "Chicago Express," the company puts into service its second state-of-the-art training ship, one the world's largest, with 15 trainees and two training officers on board in addition to the crew.

2007

While container volumes transported are up on the previous year's, at almost 5.5 million TEU, turnover totals more than EUR 6.2 billion. Hapag-Lloyd orders eight more 8,600 TEU newbuildings. Hapag-Lloyd is the first shipping company in the world to be awarded Germanischer Lloyd's "GL Excellence – 5 Stars" rating for meeting especially high standards of safety, quality, industrial health and safety, and environmental protection.

2008

With the "Bremen Express" and "Kuala Lumpur Express," Hapag-Lloyd holds the naming ceremonies of two more 8,600 TEU container ships in March and April. In March, TUI decides to put Hapag-Lloyd up for sale. On October 12, after a tendering procedure, it is confirmed that the Albert Ballin Consortium – made up of the City of Hamburg, Kühne Holding AG, Signal Iduna, HSH Nordbank, M.M. Warburg Bank and HanseMerkur – will take over a majority share of Hapag-Lloyd. The remaining share stays with TUI.



2009

On March 23, the Hamburg Consortium acquires 56.67 percent of Hapag-Lloyd's shares, with 43.33 percent remaining with TUI. The year is overshadowed by the economic crisis, with a steep drop in revenues and earnings. While an exceptional program of savings is implemented, various capital initiatives by the owners strengthen the shipping line's equity base. The City of Hamburg and Germany's federal government make available a credit guarantee. However, as the market environment increasingly stabilizes during the second half of the year, this guarantee is no longer needed.

2010

With the extensive savings program – which also involved having all employees forgo part of their salary – and the rapid recovery of the world economy, Hapag-Lloyd navigates out of the crisis. Indeed, the year closes with the best result in the company's more than 160-year history. In December, Hapag-Lloyd orders four 13,200 TEU container ships and changes a previous order for six newbuildings, which was placed in early 2008, to also involve 13,200 TEU ships. The 10 units will be delivered between mid-2012 and the end of 2013. Furthermore, the Ballin House is bought back from TUI. At the end of the year, TUI's share of Hapag-Lloyd increases to 49.88 percent, with the Hamburg Consortium holding a 50.12 percent share.

2011

After the record year of 2010, an unnecessary rates battle for market share by two major competitors prevents all carriers from being able to pass on steeply increased oil and bunker prices to their customers. An extremely challenging year ends with only a small deficit, while almost all competitors book heavy losses running into the triple-digit millions. In the summer, Hapag-Lloyd celebrates the 125th anniversary of its Far East and Australia services. Shortly before the end of the year, Hapag-Lloyd also joins five Asian partner shipping companies in launching the new G6 Alliance for the Asia-Europe trade.

2012

In February, the City of Hamburg announces that it will acquire more Hapag-Lloyd shares from TUI. This means that, starting in late June, the Albert-Ballin Consortium – including the City of Hamburg as a shareholder – holds 78 percent of Hapag-Lloyd and TUI the remaining 22 percent. March sees the start of the G6 Alliance with Hapag-Lloyd and five Asian partner shipping lines cooperating in the Asia-Europe trade. The new, powerful alliance is a success. The first three 13,200 TEU newbuildings are put into service and also operate in the G6 Alliance's Far East services. In mid-August, a major celebration is held in Hamburg for the naming of the first of the ships in this mega-class, the "Hamburg Express."

2013

In the first quarter, the possibility of a merger with Hamburg Süd is explored, but the negotiations are terminated without result on March 24 by the shareholders of Hamburg Süd. In 2013, four additional new 13,200 TEU ships are put into operation. In the fall, the Albert Ballin Consortium disbands, as planned. The members of the consortium instead opt for a cooperation agreement. At roughly the same time, Hapag-Lloyd issues a bond of EUR 400 million that is oversubscribed several times. At the end of the year, talks begin with the Chilean shipping company CSAV, which is the 20th-largest carrier in the world. The aim is a takeover of the container business of CSAV. The G6 Alliance also decides to expand its successful cooperation to all East-West trades beginning in mid-2014.

2014

The negotiations with the Chilean shipping company CSAV are successful. A binding contract is signed in April, and Hapag-Lloyd takes over CSAV's container-shipping business in December after the deal is approved by all the necessary competition authorities worldwide. As a result, Hapag-Lloyd becomes the fourth-largest liner shipping company in the world and one of the market leaders in Latin America. In return, CSAV receives a 30 percent stake in Hapag-Lloyd, which is increased to a 34 percent stake as a result of a cash capital increase at the end of the year. The three biggest shareholders of Hapag-Lloyd AG – CSAV, the City of Hamburg (HGV, 23.2 percent) and Kühne Maritime (20.8 percent) – agree to pool 51 percent of the shares in Hapag-Lloyd in order to be able to make key decisions together going forward. At the end of June 2014, CEO Michael Behrendt and Ulrich Kranich step down from the Executive Board and are replaced by Rolf Habben Jansen and Anthony J. Firmin, respectively. In late 2014, Michael Behrendt becomes Chairman of the Supervisory Board.



2015

The first half of the year focuses on the integration of CSAV. By the summer, the container business taken over from the Chilean shipping company is integrated into Hapag-Lloyd more quickly than planned and without any major disruptions. The integration's slogan is "Better together – Mejor juntos." In April, five 10,500 TEU vessels are ordered to be gradually deployed on routes between Europe and South America in the period between the fall of 2016 and the spring of 2017. In the fall, the company succeeds in going public. On November 6, the shares start trading on stock exchanges in Frankfurt and Hamburg at the issue price of EUR 20. More than 13.2 million new shares are issued, primarily to institutional investors, bringing in roughly EUR 265 million. These funds are earmarked for purchasing new ships and containers.



2016

Hapag-Lloyd and the United Arab Shipping Company (UASC) hold talks in the first half of the year about a possible cooperation. In July, both sides sign a business combination agreement (BCA) to merge both companies subject to the approval of the necessary competition authorities. At this point, UASC is owned by the Gulf states of Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Iraq and Bahrain. At the end of October, Hapag-Lloyd launches its activities on social media channels. Since then, it has been providing information and interacting via its accounts on Facebook, Twitter (now X), Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn and XING. In November, the “Valparaíso Express,” which gives its name to the series of 10,500 TEU vessels ordered in 2015, is the first of these ships to enter into service. They are optimally designed for the South America trade and the passage through the new locks of the Panama Canal. Its sister ship, the “Callao Express,” is delivered in December.

2017

By the end of April, Hapag-Lloyd has commissioned the remaining three vessels of the “Valparaíso Express” class. The G6 Alliance phases out at the end of March. On April 1 comes the launch of the new THE Alliance, which Hapag-Lloyd and four shipping companies from Japan and Taiwan had agreed to form the previous year. In this alliance, the partners organize more than 240 vessels into 32 services in the high-volume East-West trade lanes.

Hapag-Lloyd brings in a total of EUR 650 million as a result of two placements of senior notes (in February and July), whose volumes are able to be upsized due to high demand. These proceeds are earmarked for the early redemption of older bonds with less favorable terms.

On May 24, Hapag-Lloyd and UASC merge. In accordance with the agreement reached the previous year, UASC is integrated into Hapag-Lloyd. In return, the owners of UASC receive newly issued shares of the Hamburg-based shipping company. The majority shareholders of UASC – Qatar Holding LLC (QH) and the Public Investment Fund of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (PIF) – become new key shareholders of Hapag-Lloyd, with respective stakes of 14.4 and 10.1 percent. With a 22.6 percent stake, CSAV remains the largest single shareholder. Together, CSAV, the City of Hamburg (HGV) and Kühne Maritime continue to hold an absolute majority of the voting rights. As a result of the merger, Hapag-Lloyd’s fleet grows to 230 ships. The largest of these are the six ultra large container vessels (ULCVs) contributed by UASC, each with a capacity of approximately 19,900 TEU. The company’s total TEU capacity now stands at about 1.6 million TEU. The combined entity consolidates its position as the fifth-largest liner shipping company in the world. On July 10, TUI AG announces that it has sold all of its shares of Hapag-Lloyd, thereby severing ties between the two companies stretching back roughly two decades.



2018

Owing to the positive results of 2017, Hapag-Lloyd pays out a dividend to its shareholders for the first time since the IPO in 2015, thereby acknowledging their many years of trust. On November 9, 2018, to mark the centenary of Albert Ballin's death, Hapag-Lloyd AG newly establishes the Albert Ballin Award for Global Action and two Albert Ballin Awards for Globalization Research. The first global action award goes to the non-governmental organization Médecins Sans Frontières / Doctors Without Borders for its humanitarian efforts worldwide.

In November, Hapag-Lloyd presents its new medium-term "Strategy 2023" to the public. Its goals are to become the "number one for quality" in the industry (including in terms of customer satisfaction), continued digitalization, selective growth and consistent profitability. Contrary to expectations, the rapid and successful integration of UASC allows the target of USD 435 million in annual synergies to already be reached in 2018.

2019

2019 began with a shock: On January 3, a fire broke out in a container on the "Yantian Express," but it was successfully brought under control within a few days. Investigations determine that improperly declared dangerous goods had probably self-ignited.

Hapag-Lloyd successfully advances its Strategy 2023 projects. After defining Quality Promises, a method is developed that will allow their implementation to be tracked while simultaneously monitoring customer satisfaction. Digitalization and the automation of business processes is continued with the introduction of several innovative products, such as Quick Cargo Insurance and Shipping Guarantee. For the year as a whole, an impressive volume of almost 1 million TEU is booked via the web channel, which had only been launched at the end of 2018.

After increasing its number of regions to five following the mergers with CSAV and UASC, Hapag-Lloyd establishes a sixth region, Region South Europe, to strengthen its competitive position in the Mediterranean region as it experiences rapid economic growth as well as to be closer to its customers there.



In addition, Hapag-Lloyd acquires a financial stake in a terminal in Tangier, which will allow its global liner services to enjoy closer ties to the region. Thanks to careful preparatory work, Hapag-Lloyd's entire fleet is readied in time to comply with the new sulfur cap stipulated by the IMO 2020 emissions regulation at the turn of the year 2019/2020.

While low-sulfur fuel oil is predominantly used to comply with the regulation, exhaust gas purification systems (“scrubbers”) are installed on the vessels of the “Hamburg Express” class.

To mark the 101st anniversary of the death of Albert Ballin, Hapag-Lloyd hosts the “Albert Ballin Round Table,” a moderated panel discussion with five former and current mayors of the city-state of Hamburg on the issue “Hamburg at the Crossroads of Globalization and Digitalization.”

In financial terms, 2019 is one of the best years in the history of Hapag-Lloyd. The company succeeds in exceeding its expected cost savings and further optimizing its capital structure.

This exceptional year is dominated by the Covid-19 pandemic and the measures taken worldwide to contain it. Hapag-Lloyd counters the initial slump in global demand for container transports by launching a cost-cutting program. Then, the second half of the year sees a steady and unexpectedly strong rebound in cargo volumes along with a simultaneous rise in freight-rate levels.



The recovery is mainly driven by catch-up effects and robust demand for consumer goods in the United States and Europe. This enables Hapag-Lloyd to conclude the year with a much better result than in the preceding years and to earn its cost of capital for the first time in a decade. Nevertheless, the pandemic poses major challenges to the company. The extreme fluctuations in transport volumes trigger bottlenecks in global supply chains as well as unprecedented shortages of shipping capacity and empty containers. All this demands flexible adjustment measures. Since Hapag-Lloyd’s top priority is to safeguard the health and well-being of its employees, flexible working is encouraged wherever possible, and over 90 percent of the company’s global staff is working from home by the end of the year. The technical and other requirements for making this possible are satisfied in a very short period of time. Hapag-Lloyd’s seafarers are no less impacted, as travel restrictions in many countries hamper crew changes, meaning that crews often have to stay on board much longer than originally planned. Hapag-Lloyd focuses on efforts at various levels to improve the situation.

Hapag-Lloyd and its fellow member carriers of THE Alliance are able to offer an even broader and more attractive product portfolio after the South Korean shipping company HMM becomes the newest alliance member.

With Hapag-Lloyd LIVE, the company offers real-time monitoring of refrigerated containers for the first time. The goal is to outfit the entire reefer fleet with the necessary equipment within two years. A special feature of this new tool is how it supplies customers with completely unfiltered and unprocessed data.

In September, Hapag-Lloyd opens an office in Lagos, Nigeria. As Africa’s largest economy, the country will play a crucial role in the shipping company’s strategy to grow on the continent.

Toward the end of the year, Hapag-Lloyd orders six container ships with capacities of over 23,500 TEU, which will rank among the world’s largest container ships when they are delivered. The ships’ dual-fuel engines can operate using either liquefied natural gas (LNG) or conventional low-sulfur fuel oil, which enables them to lower their CO2 emissions by between 15 and 25 percent. Hapag-Lloyd concludes “green financings” for the newbuildings in line with the Green Loan Principles of the Loan Market Association. In doing so, Hapag-Lloyd breaks new ground in the container shipping segment by financing newbuild projects geared toward sustainability.

Following the previous year's pandemic-related downturn, the global economic environment significantly rebounds in 2021 thanks to measures taken by numerous companies, governments and central banks.

But the lingering pandemic also has an impact on this year. While demand for consumer goods remains robust worldwide, regional Covid-19 restrictions continue to exert massive pressure on global supply chains and to push freight rates even higher.

Hapag-Lloyd counters the lack of available transport capacity by making adjustments to its network and expanding its container fleet by roughly 300,000 TEU. In addition, the shipping company orders six more mega-carriers of 23,500+ TEU and purchases a number of newbuilding contracts and used vessels. At the end of the year, Hapag-Lloyd's fleet comprises 253 modern ships with a combined transport capacity of 1.8 million TEU.

Innovative "green financings" are concluded again for the large newbuildings as well as for the early redemption of an existing bond. Sustainability is included as an additional pillar of the company's "Strategy 2023" and accompanied by ambitious targets. For example, the CO2 intensity of Hapag-Lloyd's entire fleet is to be reduced by 30 percent by 2030 compared to 2019 (EEOI) and climate neutrality is to be achieved by 2045.

In the spring, Hapag-Lloyd completes the world's first conversion of a large container ship to operate using liquefied natural gas (LNG) and deploys the vessel, newly christened the "Brussels Express" (15,000 TEU), on the Europe-Far East trade.



At the beginning of July, Hapag-Lloyd acquires the Dutch carrier NileDutch, a leading provider of container services to and from West Africa, and strengthens its market position there by gaining a denser network, new locations and experienced personnel. In addition, the East African business is also expanded with the opening of an office in Kenya and a new liner service. The company's global workforce grows to more than 14,000 employees.

Well into the year, global supply chains are still plagued by disruptions, which impact the available transport capacity and carriers' schedule reliability. Beginning in mid-February, the situation is exacerbated by Russia's full-scale war of aggression on Ukraine, which triggers a deterioration of the global economic situation. Freight rates initially remain high, but demand declines in the second half of the year as the economy cools. This, in turn, causes port congestion to ease and the rate level to normalize.

Overall, Hapag-Lloyd is able to report robust business performance and achieve the best result in its history, which is also manifested in the highest dividend it has ever paid out. The result crowns Hapag-Lloyd's 175th anniversary year, which is celebrated with numerous guests. For the first time, a woman joins the Executive Board when Donya-Florence Amer is put in charge of the IT and Human Resources portfolios.

The acquisition of the container liner business of Deutsche Afrika-Linien (DAL) complements the company's portfolio of services, especially to and from South Africa. Another major focus is investments in terminals and infrastructure: Hapag-Lloyd AG acquires a stake in Wilhelmshaven's JadeWeserPort by acquiring 30 percent of the shares in EUROGATE Container Terminal Wilhelmshaven GmbH & Co. KG and 50 percent of Rail Terminal Wilhelmshaven GmbH. It is also a co-founder of a joint venture to develop a new terminal in the Egyptian port of Damietta. In addition, it agrees to acquire a 49 percent stake in the Spinelli Group, a leading Italian logistics service provider. And it reaches an agreement with the Chilean SM SAAM S.A. to completely take over its subsidiaries SAAM Ports S.A. and SAAM Logistics S.A. These subsidiaries are active in 10 port terminals in six countries in North, Central and South America as well as in the associated logistical services.

In August, Hapag-Lloyd launches a Fleet Upgrade Program to modernize the technology on more than 150 existing ships within five years, such as by installing new and improved propellers and bulbous bows. The program helps the company in its efforts to achieve its CO₂ reduction targets. Furthermore, in addition to its reefers, the shipping company starts to equip all its standard containers with real-time data-transmission technology. In doing so, Hapag-Lloyd is taking a pioneering role in the sector.

As part of the "Hapag-Lloyd Cares" initiative for Ukraine, the company conducts numerous aid drives to benefit the population of the country under attack. Many employees show great dedication while assisting in these efforts.



Thanks to long-term contracts with its customers, Hapag-Lloyd can still benefit at first from the extraordinary market conditions of the preceding years. However, in the second half of the year, the ongoing normalization of supply chains and a cooling of the economy will cause freight rates to fall to a level that is no longer reasonable in many cases. Although revenues and earnings fall significantly compared to the prior year, the company still manages to achieve the third-best result in its history.

The equity investment in Spinelli and the acquisition of the SAAM subsidiaries are finalized, and Hapag-Lloyd also acquires a 40 percent stake in the Indian company J M Baxi Ports & Logistics Ltd. All terminal activities will be bundled in the new Terminal & Infrastructure business segment and managed by Hapag-Lloyd Terminal Holding in Rotterdam.

In addition, Hapag-Lloyd acquires a 50 percent stake in the newly founded Norcoast Logística S.A., based in São Paulo, Brazil. The joint venture company specializes in integrated logistics and transport services in Brazilian coastal shipping.



The “Berlin Express” is the first of the new LNG-powered large container ships to enter into service. With a length of almost 400 meters and a capacity of 23,664 TEU, it is the largest container ship to ever sail under the German flag. German First Lady Elke Bűdenbender performs the christening ceremony in Hamburg at the beginning of October. The newbuildings and other measures help to steadily improve the fleet’s carbon footprint.

Priority is also being placed on advancing the digital transformation, which is resulting in the provision of new digitally available services. These include “Ship Green,” a biofuel-based option for emission-reduced maritime transports.

After five eventful years, Hapag-Lloyd brings its Strategy 2023 to a successful conclusion. A significant increase in customer satisfaction was achieved, the company’s financial position was strengthened, its status as a global player was consolidated, and the decarbonization of its fleet was advanced. Efforts are initiated to formulate the next strategy, known as Strategy 2030, which will have a much more intense focus on quality and sustainability.

Starting the year off with a bang: In mid-January, Hapag-Lloyd and the Danish shipping and logistics company Maersk A/S announce a long-term operational partnership, which is scheduled to launch in February 2025 and will replace their previous alliance memberships. With the partnership, known as “Gemini Cooperation,” they aim to establish a new type of hub-and-spoke network in the main east-west trade lanes, combining intercontinental mainliner services with regional shuttle networks and feeder services. Once fully phased in, the network aims to achieve industry-leading schedule reliability of over 90 percent. The declared goal is to set new standards in terms of reliability, connectivity and sustainability.

The armed conflict that broke out in the Middle East in October 2023 is having a significant impact on the industry environment. Like other shipping companies, Hapag-Lloyd avoids the passage through the Red Sea and instead reroutes its ships around the Cape of Good Hope, which leads to significantly longer transit times and considerably higher fuel consumption. However, due to a favorable development of demand and higher rates resulting from a shortage of transport capacity, Hapag-Lloyd achieves the third-best annual result in its history.

The shipping company takes over the activities of its agency operating in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and will work independently there starting in March. Hapag-Lloyd also opens an office in Kampala, the capital of Uganda.

In mid-April, Hapag-Lloyd presents its Strategy 2030. Building on the successes of its predecessor, this strategy sets out the company’s future course in terms of quality, sustainability, innovation and operational efficiency. Quality and customer centricity are to remain key focuses, and growth in terminals and inland transport is to strengthen its core business in liner services.

Starting in July, Hapag-Lloyd’s Terminal & Infrastructure segment will operate under the brand name “Hanseatic Global Terminals” (HGT).

On November 4, Eva Maria Tschentscher, the wife of Hamburg Mayor Peter Tschentscher, ceremonially christens the “Hamburg Express” in Hamburg. The seventh ship with a capacity of 23,664 TEU is the eponymous flagship of Hapag-Lloyd’s “Hamburg Express” class.

On November 6, while the modernization of the fleet continues with new deliveries and conversions, Hapag-Lloyd signs contracts for the largest newbuild program in its history. Two series of 12 ships, with respective capacities of 16,800 and 9,200 TEU, are ordered from two different Chinese shipyards. All 24 units will be equipped with low-emission dual-fuel engines for LNG, which can also be operated with biofuels. This marks the first time since 1987 that Hapag-Lloyd has ordered ships in China.

Captain Silke Lehmköster assumes the position of Managing Director Fleet, making her the first woman at Hapag-Lloyd to be in charge of managing the fleet as well as pressing ahead with innovative technologies and newbuild projects.



Advances are also made with digital services: Hapag-Lloyd announces the introduction of “Live Position,” making it the first container shipping company to offer its customers fleet-wide tracking of standard boxes from the start of transportation until arrival at the destination.

As planned, Hapag-Lloyd and Maersk launch the Gemini Cooperation in February. After a transitional phase lasting several months, approximately 340 vessels from the two shipping companies are now operating on 57 Gemini services between North America, Europe and Asia. The fact that most of the terminals used at the strategically selected hub ports are operated by one of the two partners ensures short handling times as well as reliable connections between mainliner and shuttle services, thereby providing better resilience against disruptions in the supply chain. This hub-and-spoke configuration enables Gemini to achieve 90% schedule reliability in its very first year, setting new industry standards, as intended.



This was even achieved under challenging market conditions, as the new U.S. trade policy – announced by President Trump on April 2 under the slogan “Liberation Day” – has created volatility in demand and freight rates. At the same time, weather-related disruptions, bottlenecks at major seaports, and the continued need to reroute ships around the Red Sea hampers operations. Nevertheless, global trade remains robust, and cargo flows find new routes – to which Hapag-Lloyd can respond flexibly and successfully thanks to its global network and modern fleet.

The operational fleet reaches a new record high of over 300 ships in 2025. In June, the “Wilhelmshaven Express” is the last ship of the “Hamburg Express” class to be delivered to Hapag-Lloyd. Her christening ceremony is held in October at the EURO-GATE Container Terminal in Wilhelmshaven, in which Hapag-Lloyd holds an equity stake via HGT. Thanks in large part to its role as a hub in the new Gemini network, the terminal handles more than a million standard containers (TEU) in a single year for the first time in its 13-year history.

HGT founds Hanseatic Global Terminals Latin America S.A., headquartered in Santiago de Chile, marking the first regional expansion of its brand. The terminal portfolio expands with the acquisition of a 60% stake in CNMP LH, which operates the Atlantique Container Terminal in Le Havre, France.

Through a strategic realignment of its organizational structure in Africa, Hapag-Lloyd broadens its presence in a key focus market. A new office in Oman further strengthens Hapag-Lloyd’s Region Middle East.

In the fall, a contract is signed with a Chinese shipyard for the construction of eight new vessels, each with a capacity of 4,500 TEU. This marks Hapag-Lloyd’s first newbuild project involving state-of-the-art, sustainable dual-fuel methanol propulsion systems. In addition, a decision is made to charter 14 newbuildings in the size range of under 5,000 TEU on a long-term basis, providing a major boost to Hapag-Lloyd’s efforts to modernize and decarbonize its fleet.

Thanks to Gemini’s industry-leading schedule reliability and the company’s significantly improved digital offerings, Hapag-Lloyd achieves new highs in customer satisfaction and increases its transport volume by 8% compared to the previous year.

