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Hansa Mare owners to go separate ways

THE OWNERS of one of Germany's leading shipping investment funds have decided to end their co-operation for future shipping projects, writes *Herbert Fromme, Cologne.*

Harro Kniffka and Jens Meier-Hedde, who jointly set up Hansa Mare in 1991, are now going separate ways.

With 20 containerships chartered out to leading lines around the globe, Bremen-based Hansa Mare is an important supplier of container vessels.

Among its customers are K-Line, Sinotrans, P&O Nedlloyd, OOCL, MSC, MOSK and Yang Ming.

"Hansa Mare will continue to exist in order to deal with the present tonnage," said Thorsten Mackenthun, one of Hansa Mare's managing directors. "After all, we have 20 ships and 3,800 investors to look after." But Mr Mackenthun confirmed that Hansa Mare will not do any new business.

The company did not comment on the reasons for the break-up, but Mr Meier-Hedde conceded that there had been "differences of opinion" over international expansion. The split up had nothing to do with changes in the German tax law, which transformed Germany's ship financing market considerably, he said.

The country is no longer aid-



The Hansa Mare containership Mare Atlanticum has made its maiden call at Bremerhaven for charterer K Line under its new name, Donau Bridge. The 4,038 teu vessel has been chartered to the Japanese line for three years. Pic: Ralf Witthohn

ing purely the ownership of a vessel, although there are still some tax advantages, but the profitable operation of a ship -

through the tonnage tax. Meanwhile, Mr Kniffka has left the Hansa Mare management, while keeping his 50%

stake. Together with Swiss businessman Adrian Howald he has set up a new company in Switzerland, Hanseatic Lloyd

AG in Kreuzlingen.

It will work in Germany through a subsidiary with the same name, which will continue to offer shipping investments. In addition to his role in the run-off of Hansa Mare, Mr Mackenthun will manage the German Hanseatic Lloyd operation. "We will have at least one ship this year," he said.

At the same time, Mr Kniffka is seeking to tap international financial markets with his main Swiss operation. This will include new business models for ship finance. Hanseatic Lloyd will take advantage of the favourable taxation in Switzerland and of its proximity to Zurich.

For his part, Mr Meier-Hedde has founded Schlüssel Kapitalbeteiligungen. "We are preparing one project for this year," he told Lloyd's List. This could be either a container vessel or a bulk carrier, which would be part-financed by German investors.

Mr Meier-Hedde's main company, Schlüssel Reederei, in Bremen, will continue to operate the Hansa Mare vessels, as it has done for the last nine years.

Hansa Mare's flagships are eight 4,000 teu vessels, of which five are on charter to Kawasaki Kisen Kaisha of Japan (K Line) and three to Sinotrans. The fleet also includes six 2,900 teu vessels and six 1,000 teu ships.