Obituary

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Eric Loewy 1917–1996

In the 19th century the major civil engineering projects, which provided the arteries for the development of commerce throughout the world, were attributed to individuals, for the greater part British. These names were renowned in their profession and beyond. In the present century, outstanding individuals continue to provide the essential creative element and to take the responsibility for success, but undertake these functions relatively anonymously. Eric Loewy was such an engineer, engaged in a leading role in many of the major modern ports around the world. He recognized that the planning of such works required an understanding on a social and economic level so that the port, with its infrastructure, would effectively perform its objectives as part of appropriate development.

As an illustrious—and gregarious—traveller, he got to know well the countries in which he worked and where he had many friends, often renewing friendships with engineers in distant parts with whom he had trained years earlier.

Eric Loewy, who died at Nettlebed on 23 May 1996, indirectly from cancer, was born in 1917. He took a degree in civil engineering at City and Guilds (now Imperial) College, London. His career started at the outbreak of World War II with maritime work and work associated with the repair of city war damage. In 1947 he joined Sir William Halcrow & Partners where he was to remain for the rest of his professional life, being appointed partner in 1969 until retirement in 1983 after which he continued to work for many years as consultant to the firm. His specialist knowledge included the planning, design and construction of port and maritime works. He understood the engineer's function as extending beyond the provision of works to the effective performance of the services for which they are intended. This required a study of the functional relationships with the region, the local communities, the economy, the politics, the industry and agriculture: such a perception is only now becoming more widely accepted by his profession. He was an authority on cargo handling and port operation. Such projects usually entail contributions from different disciplines and Eric Loewy was in his element in providing the requisite synthesis. His work also required a sound understanding of hydrodynamics, with dependence on physical and numerical models to contribute in establishing optimal layout for ports and breakwaters and he sat on the Advisory Committee to the Hydraulics Research Station, Wallingford for a number of years.

During the early part of his career he was involved in the planning design and construction of port developments in the UK at Shoreham Harbour, famous for its wave resonance problems; dry docks at Sunderland; deepwater quays at Middlesbrough; and river and dock improvements at the Port of Boston. In the 1960s he enjoyed a long association with the Port of Tema, Ghana which included dry docks and shipyard contracts, and the development of Tema fishing harbour.

Eric Loewy had a particular interest in river and maritime transport navigation. In South America he was responsible for studies and design of a new deepwater channel linking Buenos Aires and the River Parana in Argentina. He was also responsible for the Paraguay River Navigation Study involving the study of improvement of navigation of 250 miles of the river. In other parts of the world he had overall responsibility for the development of the new deepwater port at Victoria, Seychelles; ports studies in the Philippines leading to the development of General Santos and Port of Cagayan; two container terminals in New Zealand; and the development of deepwater general cargo and container berths at Teesport. He made a particular study of the development of Europort from all aspects with special reference to the applicability of its background and experience to the circumstances of the UK and other countries.

In Indonesia he was responsible for the Indonesian Port Study which was followed by the detailed design and construction of the Port of Belawan which is the largest export port in Indonesia. Commencing in 1977 he played a major role in the design development of the 66-berth deepwater port at Mina Jebel Ali, constructed on a virgin stretch of coastline in the Emirate of Dubai, for which construction sta-

tistics exceeded many superlatives. He also had a long association with Thailand, having been project director for the study, design and construction of the ports of Songkhla and Phuket.

Eric Loewy published numerous technical papers and articles on many aspects of port and maritime works for one of which he was awarded the Gold Medal of the Society of Engineers. He was an avid attendee at technical conferences and served on many committees associated with various professional bodies. In particular he was an ardent supporter of the Permanent Association of Navigation Congresses for which he served on the British National Committee for many years. He was Chairman of the Permanent Committee for Developing Countries and was made an Honorary member in recognition of his contributions.

He was a Fellow of the Institution of Civil Engineers, Member of the American Society of Civil Engineers and a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society. He was a keen Alpinist, a British member of the Swiss Alpine Club and a possessor of wide knowledge and interests in the arts.

He is survived by his wife Pat and their three daughters.

SIR ALAN MUIR-WOOD, FRS, FENG, FICE