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NORWEGIAN SHIPOWNERS IN THE PORTS OF THE POLISH CUSTOMS AREA IN THE YEARS 1919–1939 (MAIN PROBLEMS)

Keywords: Polish-Norwegian relations in the years 1919–1939, Norwegian merchant fleet, Norwegian shipowners, economy of Gdańsk in the years 1919–1939, economy of Gdynia in the years 1919–1939

Summary

In the interwar period the Norwegian merchant fleet was ranked fourth-sixth in the world. That is why Norway was an attractive economic partner for Poland, which in 1919 did not possess any merchant fleet. In the same year the Norwegian government sent to Poland an economic mission headed by Samuel Eyde, the Norwegian shipowners and their Union were represented by Thor Thoresen. Regrettably, at the beginning of the 1920s financial problems of Poland resulted in the lack of interest in operating the port of Gdańsk on the part of the Norwegian shipowners.

In 1921 one of the biggest Norwegian shipowners, *Det Bergenske Dampskibsselskab* (BDS), took up transporting herring to Gdańsk purchased within the so called second Polish-Norwegian Herring Contract. In the same year BDS set up a branch in Gdańsk, and in 1928 – in Gdynia, *Bergenske Baltic Transport plc* ('Bergenske' or BBT). In 1921 BDS set up a navigational line to the Baltic ports and London, and in 1931 – together with *Det Stavangerske Dampskibsselskab* – another line to the ports of western Norway. BDS participated in the creation of smaller shipping companies (*Nord Ost-See Reederei A-G*, *Standard Line Reederei A-G*, *Bellmore Reederei A-G*, *Norna Reederei-Gesellschaft*

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mbH). The BDS ships also sailed in the South-American line, *Den Norske Syd-Amerikalinjen* (SAL).

Among the Norwegian shipowners the biggest line to Gdańsk and Gdynia was operated by Wilhelm Wilhelmsen (*Gulf-Gdynia Line*, GGL). Thanks to that line a huge quantities of American cotton were delivered to the ports of the Polish customs area. Navigational lines were operated also by Fred Olsen & CO. (a line to the ports of eastern Norway) and *Gunstein Stray & Sønn* (*Vore-Line* to Antwerp). The Norwegian shipowners in many cases used tramps, which dominated in Gdańsk, and so were they in Gdynia with the exception of the years 1934–1936.

An essential element of the activity of BBT was broking and forwarding. BBT was one of the biggest brokers in Gdańsk and Gdynia. In addition, thanks to the fact that *'Bergford' Holz-Speditions und Lager GmbH* and *'Berghof' Lager und Warrant GmbH* remained in the same hands, BBT exported a large quantity of wood from Gdańsk. *'Bergenske'* cooperated also with Polish forwarding companies, the Polish Lloyd and C. Hartwig. All those companies had branches in Poland and abroad, which enabled BBT to run complementary transport, i.e. using sea and land transport.

In the interwar period (1919–1939) the Norwegian merchant shipping was the 4th to 6th biggest in the world and its scope of operation included mainly ocean ports of the world. As far as the entries into the ports of Gdańsk and Gdynia are concerned, it occupied – respectively – the 5th and the 6th places. The importance of the Norwegian shipowner in the Polish harbours (the Port of Gdańsk was included in the Polish customs area on January 1st, 1922) was augmented by the fact that the Republic of Poland was a young state at that time and possessed a tiny merchant shipping, which could not satisfy the country's shipping needs; additionally, the size and importance of the Norwegian merchant shipping might further the development of the ports in Gdańsk and Gdynia, as well as enhance establishing ocean connections of those ports.

The above presented facts translate into research postulates, which will be analysed in this article. What should be first investigated is the scope of engagement of the Norwegian shipowners in the ports of Gdańsk and Gdynia. Additionally, the article is an attempt to answer the question concerning the extent to which the Norwegian merchant fleet was used by Poland. As this article is an abbreviated version of a wider publication (to be launched soon), here the characterisation of the sources and the current state of research have been omitted.

Attempts to Establish Shipping Relations with the Port of Gdańsk by the Norwegian Shipowners

In 1919 the young Polish State suffered from the shortages of the basic food articles and raw materials. The country's economic problems were exacerbated by the fact that Poland had no merchant shipping then, which could transport goods. That is why Norway – as a neutral state not related to any of the belligerent countries – that possessed an enormous merchant fleet (1,892,000 GRT¹) was a very attractive economic partner for the Polish authorities. The Norwegians seemed to be interested in the Polish matters, which was proved by – *inter alia* – the Norwegian press, where the importance of regaining independence by Poland was emphasised.² A perfect occasion to develop closer relations between the Norwegian shipowners and Gdańsk appeared at the peace conference in Paris, where the Norwegian industrial and commercial circles were looking for markets for their raw materials and food articles, especially herring, as they had just lost the Russian market. Fredrik Hartwig Wedel-Jarlsberg,³ the envoy of the Kingdom of Norway in Paris, was appointed president of the Norwegian delegation to the peace conference in Paris. An important role was also played by Samuel Eyde, an engineer and industrialist, and Christian Monsen,⁴ a shipowner. Poland was represented by Roman Dmowski, Ignacy Jan Paderewski and Władysław Grabski. An important event that facilitated the bilateral relations was the recognition of Poland by the Norwegian government as an independent state by virtue of the Royal rescript dated 31st May, 1919.⁵

¹ J.O. Egeland, *Kongeveien. Norsk skipsfart fra århundreskiftet til den Annen verdenskrig*, vol. 2 (Oslo: H. Aschehoug & Co., 1973), 249.

² M. Stachurska, „Obraz Polski w prasie norweskiej w latach 1914–1918”, *Rocznik Gdański* 64 (2005), 1–2: 70.

³ E. Denkiewicz-Szczepaniak, „Stosunki polityczne i gospodarcze Polski z Norwegią w latach 1918–1926”, *Zapiski Historyczne* 70 (2005) 2/3: 54.

⁴ A. Matla, „Zarys polsko-norweskich kontaktów gospodarczych w latach 1918–1921”, *Komunikaty Instytutu Bałtyckiego* 20 (1983) 35: 152; J. Szymański, *Stosunki gospodarcze Polski z Norwegią w latach 1918–1929* (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, 2005), 28.

⁵ R. Omang, *Norsk utenrikstjeneste*, vol. 2: *Stormfulle tider 1913–1928* (Oslo: Gyldendal Norsk Forlag, 1959), 304; Szymański, *Stosunki gospodarcze*, 39; idem, „Etablering av diplomatiske forbindelser mellom Polen og Norge i årene 1919–1923”, *Folia Scandinavica Posnaniensia* 9 (2006): 305. In the letter from KNP to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) dated 17th June, 1919, and in ‘*Monitor Polski*’ there appeared the information that the Polish State had been recognised by Norway by virtue of the Royal rescript dated 21st May, 1919. Cf.: Archiwum Akt Nowych (henceforth: AAN), Przedstawicielstwo Rady Regencyjnej Królestwa Polskiego w Berlinie, catalogue no. 20, Letter from KNP to MSZ (MFA) dated 17th June, 1919, 924; ‘*Monitor Polski*’, 136 (21.06.1919), 2.

Official Polish-Norwegian talks took place in Paris in June.⁶ The Norwegians had already known that the Polish intended to build a new port on the Baltic shore they were given. The Polish were of the opinion that from among the three Scandinavian states the best choice was Norway, as it possessed a huge merchant fleet and was able to breathe new life into the Polish maritime commerce, at the same time taking care of exports and imports of Poland. Those plans resulted from Poland's aspirations to become independent from the domination of the German economy, and especially the German merchant fleet.⁷

The Polish-Norwegian talks produced tangible results already on July 9th, 1919 when – in view of a fall in the turnover with France – a decision was made in the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*Utenriksdepartementet*, UD) to organise an economic mission in Poland headed by S. Eyde.⁸ Another important decision was to appoint a representative of the Norwegian Union of Shipowners (*Norges Rederforbund*, NRF)⁹ to be sent to Poland. Kristofer Lehmkuhl, director of *Det Bergenske Dampskibsselskab* (BDS), one of the biggest Norwegian shipping companies, proposed Einar Nielsen for that position, a member of the BDS board and a person responsible for shipping contacts within the Baltic Sea in that company.¹⁰ The management of NRF appointed Thor Thoresen as the shipowner's candidate.¹¹

The Norwegian mission headed by Eyde came to Poland in August 1919. The meeting of the Polish and Norwegian representatives took place in Warsaw, with

⁶ E. Denkwicz-Szczepaniak, „Działalność dyplomatyczna i gospodarcza Samuela Eydego w Polsce w latach 1919–1923”, in: *Polska-Norwegia 1905–2005*, ed. J. Szymański (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, 2005): 97.

⁷ Nasjonalbiblioteket i Oslo, Håndskriftsamlingen, Sam Eydes arkiv (henceforth: NBO, Hs, SE arkiv), untitled document that commences with the words: *Under mit ophold i Paris*, 1–3.

⁸ Riksarkivet (henceforth: RA), *Utenriksdepartementet* (henceforth: UD), catalogue no 2559, H4–NII, *Kommersielldelegasjon til Polen fra Norge*, Bind I 1919, Letter from UD to Jørgen Blydt, the commissioner for trade, dated 10 VII 1919.

⁹ The Norwegian Union of Shipowners, since 1984 the Norwegian Union of Shipping Companies (*Norges Rederiforbund*), was created in 1909 as an organisation protecting shipowners against the state's interference in the technical, financial and organisational questions of the Norwegian sea freight. In the 1920s that organisation gained influence in many ports dispersed all over the world, *inter alia* in New York, New Orleans, Newcastle, Cardiff, Liverpool, Hull, Atwerp, Hamburg, and Rotterdam. Cf.: S.A. Brækhus, *Norges Rederforbund 1909 15. september – 1934* (Oslo: Forbundet Oslo, 1934), 14; B. Kolltveit, J.G. Bjørklund, „Norsk sjøfart i det 20. århundre”, in: *Norsk sjøfart*, vol. 2, ed. B. Berggren, A.E. Christensen, B. Kolltveit (Oslo: Dreyer, 1989), 171; F. Olstad, *Norsk Sjømannsforbunds historie*, vol. 1: *Vår skjebne i vår hånd* (Oslo: Pax Forlag A/S, 2006), 112.

¹⁰ RA, UD, catalogue no 2559, H4–NII, *Kommersielldelegasjon til Polen fra Norge*, Bind I 1919, Letter from W. Klaveness to C. Michelet dated 12.07.1919.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, Letter from W. Klaveness to UD dated 15.07.1919.

the participation of – *inter alia* – Sophus E. Dahl, head of the *Norges Bank* (Norwegian Bank), Wilhelm Gjersøe, T. Thoresen, Żegowski, Barański¹² and Ludwik Spiess, the Norwegian honorary consul in Warsaw. The most important document that presented the state of research of the Mission is a 37-page study of October 1919, which is a picture of the Polish economy at the beginning of its independent functioning. It contains – *inter alia* – the record of the conversation between W. Gjersøe and Admiral Kazimierz Porębski,¹³ which shows that there was no coordination in the plans of the Polish side concerning the creation of a Polish-Norwegian shipping company.¹⁴

Another problem dealt with at the meetings was the question of the Vistula, which was to facilitate the transport of goods from the whole of the country to Gdańsk and *vice versa*.¹⁵ Very detailed information on the parameters of tugs, sluices, shipping conditions in particular seasons suggests that the Norwegians treated Poland as a transit country. Such a statement may be deduced from the fact that according to the report of October 1919 the Vistula was still for a long time to play a transit role. The Norwegians also got interested in the Black Sea, which Poland might use for navigation after building a port in the Romanian town of Brăila.¹⁶

Regretfully, the poor financial condition of Poland eliminated the possibility of establishing more intensive Polish-Norwegian shipping relations and of using the port of Gdańsk in 1919. What may be regarded as the only success of the mission of S. Eyde is signing the Polish-Norwegian Herring Contract on November 3rd, 1919 and the related loan of 28 million given by Norway,¹⁷ as well as appointing S. Eyde Norwegian minister and general consul of Norway in Warsaw. On

¹² Regrettably, the first names of Żegowski and Barański were unavailable.

¹³ Admiral Kazimierz Porębski fulfilled the most important post in the sphere of maritime policy, the head of the Department for Maritime Matters; he was responsible for merchant fleet, maritime economy, ports, shipping and inland navigation.

¹⁴ NBO, Hs, Se arkiv, *Rapport fra den norske delegation til Polen*, Kristiania 1919, 33; RA, UD, catalogue no 2559, H4-NII, *Kommersielldelegasjon til Polen fra Norge*, vol. 1 1919, Copy no 4, W. Gjersøe, record of the meeting, dated 28.08.1919.

¹⁵ RA, UD, catalogue no 2559, H4-NII, *Kommersielldelegasjon til Polen fra Norge*, vol. 1 1919, Copy no. 2, W. Gjersøe, record of the meeting, dated 27.08.1919.

¹⁶ *Rapport fra...*, 6, 19, 31.

¹⁷ T. Cieślak, „Stosunki polsko-skandynawskie w latach 1918–1939”, in: *Przyjaźnie i antagonizmy. Stosunki Polski z państwami sąsiednimi w latach 1918–1939*, ed. J. Żarnowski (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1977): 65.

the other hand, according to Rye Holmboe, Norwegian minister of supplies, the appointment was paid by a huge surplus of herring.¹⁸

There was another Norwegian mission to Poland, in April 1920. That time it was headed by captain Richard Otter and Gabriel Smith, port director, who established contacts with Prime Minister Leopold Skulski and Antoni Olszewski, minister of industry and trade.¹⁹ The envoys were charged with researching the functioning of the future Polish merchant fleet and the usefulness of Gdańsk plots, which the Polish government might purchase to build wharves, shipyards, buildings and storage places.²⁰ The fact that R. Otter and G. Smith had been employed shows that Poland was still uncertain about the possibility to fully enjoy the rights in the Free City of Danzig/Gdańsk. In spite of such doubts, just after signing the Treaty of Riga, one of the biggest Norwegian shipowners, BDS, invested his capital in Gdańsk, and next quite soon he created one of the biggest broking company there, which enhanced the development of the port of Gdańsk, and in the subsequent years also of the port of Gdynia.

The Activity of Det Bergenske Dampskibsselskab in Gdańsk and Gdynia

After the First World War BDS, Walford Baltic Transports Ltd. (WBT), a London shipping company, and *Polskie Towarzystwo Żegluga Morskiej* (Polish Shipping Company) 'Sarmacja', plc, established cooperation providing part of the supplies resulting from the second Polish-Norwegian Herring Contract signed on January 22nd, 1921.²¹ The deliveries made by the Bergen shipowner allowed to reveal the condition prevailing in the port of Gdańsk and the needs of the Polish maritime trade; thanks to that, on April 27th, 1921 the representatives of the three companies signed a contract of mutual cooperation.²² Therefore, the statement

¹⁸ Omang, *Norsk utenrikstjeneste*, 306.

¹⁹ P. Jaworski, „Prasa norweska wobec niektórych problemów odradzającej się Polski 1920–1921”, *Rocznik Gdański* 58 (1988) 2: 92.

²⁰ RA, UD, catalogue no 2772, H2-N, Polen: *Skipsfarten havneforholdene og olje bunkringstasjon 1920–1937*, Letter written by S. Eyde to UD dated 25.02.1920.

²¹ The contract included a purchase of 100,000 barrels of herring payable before January 1st, 1925. Cf.: *Statsarkivet i Kristiansand, Norges Bank avdeling Kristiansand*, catalogue no 0048, Letter from *Norges Bank* to *Norges Bank avdeling i Kristiansand*, dated 27.12.1924; Szymański, *Stosunki gospodarcze*, 61.

²² *Bergens Sjøfartsmuseum Arkiv* (henceforth: Bsj), Ms 26 (*Det Bergenske Dampskibsselskab*, henceforth: BDS): *Aa–Forhandlingsprotokoll III 1921–1927*, Report of the meeting of the management of BDS, dated 21 V 1921.

expressed by Jan Szymański is false: the idea to create 'Sarmacja' did not mature during the talks within the mission of S. Eyde.²³ The second Polish-Norwegian Herring Contract and the transports of herring were a decisive factor in rapprochement between BDS and 'Sarmacja', and also the port of Gdańsk. Besides, 'Sarmacja' was created on November 9th, 1919 in Cracow without Norwegian capital.²⁴

The final decision about the cooperation with WBT was made by the management of BDS in July 1921, when the company of *Bergenske & Walford Baltic Transports Ltd.* (B&WBT) was created.²⁵ The company functioned for almost a year and on May 15th, 1922 it finished its activity and instead another company was set up: *Bergenske Baltic Transports Ltd.* (BBT or 'Bergenske').²⁶ After a few years BBT stopped providing shipping services, the cause was setting up a new company in Gdańsk on July 1st and 27th, 1927; its name made reference to its London predecessor *Bergenske Baltic Transports Ltd. A-G*.²⁷ The development of the port of Gdynia made BDS decide to set up on October 2nd, 1928 a branch of 'Bergenske' in Gdynia, which was preceded by creating a Norwegian honorary consulate in Gdynia headed by E. Nielsen.²⁸ On May 29th, 1936 the same E. Nielsen was appointed General Consul of Norway in Gdańsk.²⁹

²³ Cf.: Szymański, *Stosunki gospodarcze*, 52.

²⁴ National Archives in Cracow, *Archiwum Narodowe w Krakowie* (henceforth: ANK), II Department (Oddział II), Files of the company (*Akta firmy spółkowej*) *Polskie Towarzystwo Żegluga Morskiej 'Sarmacja'*, RHB VI 88, Entry in the Commercial Register (*Wpis do rejestru handlowego*) of the company (*firmy spółkowej*) *Polskie Towarzystwo Żegluga Morskiej 'Sarmacja' Ltd (Spółka z o.o.)*, 23.12.1919. In literature there are false dates of setting up 'Sarmacja' (e.g. 1916). Cf.: D. Steyer, "Polish Merchant Navy", *Acta Poloniae Historica* 23 (1971): 119; Zbigniew Landau and Jerzy Tomaszewski gave a false date of setting up 'Sarmacja' – March 1922. Cf.: Z. Landau, J. Tomaszewski, *Gospodarka Polski międzywojennej 1918–1939*, vol. 2: *Od Grabskiego do Piłsudskiego. Okres kryzysu poinflacyjnego i ożywienia koniunktury 1924–1929* (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1971), 243. According to Szymański 'Sarmacja' was set up in 1920. Cf.: J. Szymański, "Kapitał norweski wobec gospodarki Polski międzywojennej (1919–1939)", *Zapiski Historyczne* 52 (1987) 2: 67.

²⁵ W. Keilhau, *Norges eldste linjerederi. Jubileumsskrift til Bergenske Dampskibsselskabs 100-års dag* (Bergen: A.S. John Griegs Boktrykkeri, 1951), 377; A. Matla, "Działalność norweskiego concernu Bergenske w portach polskiego obszaru celnego w latach 1919–1939", *Komunikaty Instytutu Bałtyckiego*, R. 29 (1992) 41: 37.

²⁶ National Archives in London, Board of Trade (henceforth: NAL, BT), Companies Registration Office, WBT, catalogue no 31/25751/6C729, Resolution of B&WBT dated 15 V 1922; *Handbok over Norske Obligationer og Aktier utgit av Carl Kierluf & Co.*, vol. 2: *Skibsselskaper, Industri og Handelsselskaper, Trafikselskaper, Grubeselskaper, Forskringselskaper* (Kristiania: Carl Kierulf & Co., 1923), 86.

²⁷ Matla, "Działalność norweskiego", 38.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, 40.

²⁹ RA, UD, Ambassaden and Warsaw, catalogue no 22, *Norske konsulater i Polen og Danzig*, 7.06.1937–25.08.1939, Letter written by R. Battagli to the Senate of the Free City of Gdańsk dated 9.07.1937;

As early as in the first year of its activity in the port of Gdynia BDS set up a maritime connection with western Norway, the Baltic (Gdańsk, Riga, Tallinn, Petersburg) and London; the Russian port was operated by four to six ships.³⁰ The potential of BDS as a shipowner in the ports of the Polish customs area was not fully exploited. And even the Polish-Norwegian Commercial and Navigational Contract signed on December 22nd, 1926 could not change the situation,³¹ because in 1927 the tariffs on ships up to 5,000 GRT³² were raised in the biggest Norwegian ports, i.e. for many units of BDS. Because of the increased cost the Bergen shipowner decided to operate only two vessels in the Baltic.³³

In 1931 BDS started a new chapter in its activity setting up – together with *Stavangerske Dampskibsselskab* (DSD), a shipowner from Stavanger – a new sea connection of *Bergenske-Stavangerske Østersjølinjen* (Baltic Line). The moment was propitious for such activities because by virtue of the Law dated February 20th, 1929 a new protocol was added to the Polish-Norwegian Commercial and Navigational Contract, thanks to which treacle containing less than 70% of sugar, imported to Norway, was duty-free; all the additional charges on rock salt were done away with, and the duty on herring imported to Poland was decreased by 66.5%.³⁴ What was more on October 1st, 1929 new tariffs were introduced, which – *inter alia* – included discounts on the exported grain at the level of 5–10%.³⁵

APG, Senate of Free City of Gdańsk (henceforth: SWMG), catalogue no. 1078, Letter written by R. Battagli dated 9.07.1936.

³⁰ *Det Bergenske Dampskibsselskabs virksomhet i aaret 1921*; RA, UD, 2765, H1–F, Danzig: Årsberetninger, Årsberetning for 1922.

³¹ Polish-Norwegian Commercial and Navigational Contract signed on December 22nd, 1926 guaranteed equal treatment of ships with their cargoes, passengers and luggage in ports, basins, territorial waters of the sides. Additionally, the contract introduced a uniform norm for all the payments. In the case of granting a profit to a third country the norm was to be automatically implemented in the commerce between Poland and Norway excluding special concessions granted to domestic fishery and cabotage. The conditions of granting tonnage certificates for ships were specified, and so were the questions concerning cargoes in ports and sea rescue. The decisions included in the Contract were in force in the territory of the Free City of Gdańsk. Cf.: Szymański, *Stosunki gospodarcze*, 146–148.

³² APG, *Rada Portu i Dróg Wodnych* (henceforth: RPiDW), microfilm no. 64213, catalogue no. 366, *Oplaty portowe*, vol. IV, Letter written by the Honorary Consul of Poland in Tønsberg to the Polish Diplomatic Mission in Oslo dated 27.06.1927.

³³ *Det Bergenske Dampskibsselskabs virksomhet i aaret 1928–1930*.

³⁴ Law dated 12.01.1929, Additional Protocol to the Commercial and Navigational Contract between the Republic of Poland and the Kingdom of Norway (*Protokół dodatkowy do Traktatu handlowego i Nawigacyjnego pomiędzy Rzeczpospolitą Polską a Królestwem Norwegii*) dated 22.12.1926, *Journal of Laws (Dziennik Ustaw)*, 1929 no. 31, position 296.

³⁵ W. Czerwińska, *Rola państwa w polskiej gospodarce morskiej 1919–1939* (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Morskie Gdańsk, 1975), 77.

Bergenske-Stavangerske Østersjølinjen operated the ports of western Norway (i.e. Stavanger, Bergen, Trondheim and others) according to the contract with Fred Olsen & Co, a shipowner from Oslo, whose ships entered the ports of eastern Norway (mainly Kristiansund, Oslo, Moss, and Drammen).³⁶ In practice it meant creating a monopoly in sea freights from the ports of the Polish customs area to Norway. Thus BDS and DSD got the guarantee on regular transports, moreover they had only two ships involved in those freights. At the beginning within the 14-day line there was one ship belonging to DSD, S/S *Jæderen*. When *Det Bergenske Dampskibsselskab* became more involved in the Baltic freights, it introduced another ship, a small S/S *Ursa*.³⁷

After the normalisation of the Polish-Lithuanian relations in 1938 the ships of the Baltic Line reached Klaipėda, which was connected overland with the Polish District of Vilnius. For the shipowners from Bergen and Stavanger the most important were the transports of grain and linen.³⁸ In due time the ships of *Bergenske-Stavangerske Østersjølinjen* reached Skudenæs,³⁹ Ventspils (Widau), Liepāja,⁴⁰ and Helsinki.⁴¹ In 1913 *Den Norske Syd-Amerikalinjen* (Norwegian Line to South America, SAL) had a much bigger range, as it included ocean freights. The South-American freights were organised by Otto Thoresen, a shipowner, and to a lesser degree by BDS, *Det Nordenfjeldske Dampskibsselskab* (NFDS)⁴² and

³⁶ *Rocznik Rady Interesantów Portu w Gdyni* (henceforth: RRIPwG), 1934, 92.

³⁷ *Det Stavangerske Dampskibsselskabs virksomhet i aaret 1930*, Stavanger 1931; *Det Bergenske Dampskibsselskab Bergen. Beretning og Regnskap 1931*, 7; *Universitetsbiblioteket i Bergen*, (henceforth: UBB), *Manuskriptsamlingen*, consul Einar Nielsen (henceforth: Ms.), 1570/24–8, Letter between J. Ejbøla and E. Nielsen dated 3 III 1934. Within the Baltic BDS used the ship S/S Ara. Cf.: Jordan Siemianowski, „Działalność Bergenske-Stavangerske Østersjølinjen w portach polskiego obszaru celnego w latach 1931–1939”, *Nautologia*, 48 (2013) 150: 47.

³⁸ Statsarkivet and Stavanger (henceforth: SS), Pa 41 *Det Stavangerske Dampskibsselskab* (henceforth: DSD), februar 1936–mars 1939, catalogue no. 751, Letter from BDS dated 5.05.1938.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, Pa 41 DSD, November 1933–Oktober 1934, catalogue no. 748, Letter from DSD to BDS dated 2.10.1934.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, Letter from Ø. Blydt-Hansena to BBT dated 13.10.1934.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, Letter from DSD to BDS dated 31.05.1934.

⁴² NFDS was submitted on 28.01.1857 in Trondheim so as to operate the sea connection between that town and Hamburg. The composition of the management of the company was made up of three shareholders (Hans Petter Jensen, Helmer Lundgreen and Fritz Lorck), and three deputies. The first unit was the sailing ship *Nidelven*. Additionally, the company operated *hurtigruten*, and also the connection to Szczecin, sea freights between London and the Baltic ports (including Gdańsk, Klaipėda, Liepāja, Ventspils, Riga, Tallinn and Petersburg, the years 1920–1925). Cf.: *Det Nordenfjeldske Dampskibsselskab foretningsaar* (the years 1920–1926); K. Koren, J. Pedersen, *Det Nordenfjeldske Dampskibsselskab 1857–1890. Den eldste norske rutefart* (bmw, 1907), 62; Leif B. Lillegaard, *Nordenfjeldske 125 år. I storm og stille på alle hav* (Trondheim: *Det Nordenfjeldske Dampskibsselskab*, 1982), 54; P. Alm, *Det Helgelandske Dampskibsselskab gjennom 75 år 1867–1942* (Oslo: Reistad

Fred Olsen & Co. The last one, together with the Bergen shipping company, Johan Ludvig Mowinckels Rederi, took over the business of O. Thoresen and NFDS in 1924. Since 1920 SAL had had a branch in Finland, which streamlined the transports of wood,⁴³ and two years later by virtue of the contract with B & WBT SAL had an agency in the port of Gdańsk.⁴⁴ From among the BDS ships SAL was operated by M/S *Cometa* and M/S *Estrella*,⁴⁵ which sailed to Rio de Janeiro, Santos, Buenos Aires, and the Baltic ports, including the Finnish harbours.⁴⁶ In 1924 the SAL ships stopped for a while operating the port of Gdańsk. The Norwegian freights of the South-American line to the ports of the Polish customs area was resumed in 1932, but they were never to achieve a significant level.

BBT was also engaged in the activities of tiny shipping companies in Gdańsk. On April 4th, 1922 *Nord Ost-See Reederei A-G*⁴⁷ was set up, which altogether had five vessels⁴⁸ sailing under the flag of Gdańsk between that town and other Baltic ports and the harbours of the North Sea,⁴⁹ as well as between Norway and the Mediterranean ports. The company was closed down at the beginning of 1925.⁵⁰

Another company, *Standard Line Reederei A-G*, was set up on the initiative of BDS and E.B. Aaby, a shipping company from Christiania that operated a connection between the ports of southern Portugal and the western coast of France. After Spain and Portugal imposed an embargo on Norwegian exports goods, *inter alia* on klipfish,⁵¹ E.B. Aaby registered the ships under the Gdańsk flag in a newly

& Sønn Boktrykkeri, 1942), 16–17; R. Danielsen, O. Vedeld, *Det Nordenfjeldske Dampskibsselskab 1857 – 28. januar – 1957* (Trondheim: Det Nordenfjeldske Dampskibsselskab, 1957), 9, 21; F.R. Hansen, *Det Nordenfjeldske Dampskibsselskab Trondheim 1857–1985. Fartøylene og deres historie* (Trondheim, Det Nordenfjeldske Dampskibsselskab, 1999), 5, 9; G. Myhre, *Blå horisont. Det Nordenfjeldske Dampskibsselskab 150 the anniversary* (Trondheim: Trondheim Kommunikasjon Forlag, 2007), 16.

⁴³ B. Kolltveit, *Over Linjen. Den Norske Syd-Amerika Linje 1913–1973* (Oslo: Dreyers Forlag, 1976), 38, 116; L. Pettersen, *A/S J. Ludvig Mowinckels Rederi 1898–1960* (Bergen: A.S. John Griegs Boktrykkeri, 1961), 35.

⁴⁴ Kolltveit, *Over linjen*, 93.

⁴⁵ *Det Bergenske Dampskibsselskabs virksomhet i aaret 1922*.

⁴⁶ RA, UD, H2–B1, catalogueno.2506, *Norge–Polen, Spørsmålomskibsfartsforhold*, Report of N.C. Ditleff and BBT.

⁴⁷ A. Matla, “Polsko-norweskie kontakty żeglugowe w latach 1919–1926,” *Komunikaty Instytutu Baltyckiego*, 23/24 (1986/1987) 38/39, 55.

⁴⁸ *Danziger Zeitung*, 186 (21.04.1922).

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, 313 (7.07.1922).

⁵⁰ Matla, “Polsko-norweskie kontakty”, 56.

⁵¹ B. Kolltveit, *E.B. Aaby. Historien om et familierederi* (Oslo: Sævelid AS, 2013), 57–58; Egeland, *Kongeveien*, 2, 172; O.-B. Furre, *Mellomkrigstid 1920–1940* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget Oslo, 1996), 164.

created shipping company, with the help of the capital of BBT.⁵² When the restrictions were abolished in April 1923, four ships of E. B. Aaby were registered again under the Norwegian flag.⁵³ The company was closed down much later, on December 1924.⁵⁴

Another company, which cooperated with BDS, was – created on September 9th, 1922 – a partly English company, *Bellmore Reederei A-G*.⁵⁵ The company had a sailing/motor vessel *Bellmore* (248 GRT) purchased from the company Bell Lines Ltd of Hull. Regrettably, in mid-January 1923 *Bellmore* was taken in for repair at a shipyard. After the repair the ship kept losing manoeuvrability in bad weather conditions, and as a result almost all her voyages took too long and kept making a loss. That is why since October 1923 *Bellmore* was moored at a quay in the port of Gdańsk,⁵⁶ and the company was soon closed down.

At the turn of April and May 1930 still another shipping company was set up, *Norna Reederei-Gesellschaft mbH*.⁵⁷ The company had S/S *Barbara* (2,150 GRT), the name of which was changed to S/S *Norna* by virtue of the contract signed on March 26th, 1930 between BBT and Fridtjof Sundt; at the same time she was registered under the Gdańsk flag as a property of the company *Norna GmbH* with the headquarters in Gdańsk.⁵⁸ Next S/S *Norna* was made over to Fridtjof Sundt by virtue of a time charter,⁵⁹ thanks to which the shipowner took over the whole control over the ship leaving all the formalities to be done in Gdańsk by BBT.⁶⁰ Unfortunately, S/S *Norna* ran aground near Namsos. As a result of the damage

⁵² Kolltveit, E.B. Aaby, 58; Egeland, Kongeveien, 172.

⁵³ Kolltveit, E.B. Aaby, 58.

⁵⁴ APG, Files of Notary Gustaw Zander (henceforth: ANGZ), catalogue no 36, Annual report of the activity (*Sprawozdanie roczne z działalności*) of Standard Line *Reederei Aktiengesellschaft* dated 18.12.1924, 134–137.

⁵⁵ Matla, “Polsko-norweskie kontakty”, 55.

⁵⁶ APG, ANGZ, catalogue no 36, Attachment III the annual report of 1924 of the company *Bellmore Reederei A-G*, dated 4.12.1924, 167.

⁵⁷ UBB, Ms, 1570/24–5, Consul Einar Nielsen, Privat fra 1.01.1930 til 31.12.1930, Letter from E. Nielsen to A. Figenschou dated 30.11.1931.

⁵⁸ Ibidem, 570/24–4, Consul Einar Nielsen, Privat fra 1.01.1930 til 31.12.1930, Contract setting up the company *Norna GmbH* dated 26.03.1930.

⁵⁹ Time charter (*czarter na czas*) is a contract by virtue of which the shipowner commits himself to giving a ship together with her captain and crew to the lessor at his disposal for a certain period of time for a charter fee. The contractual period oscillates between one voyage to twenty years. Cf.: J. Neider, *Słownik skrótów i terminów. Transport, spedycja, logistyka* (Gdynia: Polish International Freight Forwarders, 2011), 35.

⁶⁰ UBB, Ms, 570/24–5, Konsul Einar Nielsen, Privat fra 1.01. 1930 til 31.12.1930, Letter from E. Nielsen to A. Figenschou dated 30.11.1931.

the management of BBT revoked the contract with *Norna GmbH* together with its expiration (the contract was to expire on October 20th, 1931).⁶¹

Undoubtedly, the above mentioned ‘Sarmacja’ was in the Polish historiography one of the best investigated shipping companies of the interwar, which had close relations with BDS. That fact allows me to pass over the detailed questions related with the functioning of the Polish shipowner referring the reader to the available literature.⁶² The only thing I would like to emphasise are the positive effects of the activity of ‘Sarmacja’; undoubtedly, the effect that should be regarded as positive is the fact that many sailors working for the company in question were soon employed in *Żegluga Polska* and *Gdynia – Ameryka Linie Żeglugowe SA* (GAL).

Additionally, it is worth discussing the question of the collapse of ‘Sarmacja’; in relevant publications two events of 1926 are passed over, although they should not be marginalised. In May English miners staged a strike, thanks to which Poland very quickly captured new coal markets in Scandinavia, the region that so far had been buying coal from the United Kingdom. That situation induced the Scandinavian shipowners and the ones coming from other countries to get interested in the ports of the Polish customs area; ‘Sarmacja’ with its obsolete fleet of ships certainly could not face up to the ensuing intensified competition. Additional competition was to appear in the form of a new Polish shipping company; the Norwegians had known about the plan to set up such a company at least since March 23rd, 1925.⁶³ *Żegluga Polska*, a Polish shipping company, was set up in 1926; it was subsidised by the Polish government.

The literature is silent about the circumstances in which BBT was closed down. The discussion about this topic should be started with the information that the Norwegian shipowner decided to close down the activity in Gdańsk and Gdynia because of the escalating conflict between Poland and Germany in the Free City of Gdańsk, and by the efforts of Poland to increase its influence in ‘*Bergenske*’. Finally, in place of the BBT branches a new company was set up in Gdańsk

⁶¹ Ibidem.

⁶² Cf.: D. Steyer, *Półwiecze Polski na morzu* (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Morskie Gdańsk, 1970), 108–110; W. Czerwińska, *Polska żegluga morska w latach II Rzeczypospolitej* (Gdańsk: Zakład Narodowy Imienia Ossolińskich – Oddział w Gdańsku, 1971), 33–34; Matla, “Polsko-norweskie kontakty”, 50–54; Matla, “Działalność norweskiego”, 45–52; T. Miciński, *Księga statków polskich 1918–1945*, vol. 1 (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Oskar, 1996), 134–150; J. Siemianowski, “Współpraca Polskiego Towarzystwa Żeglugi Morskiej „Sarmacja” z Bergenske Baltic Transports Ltd. i Walford Baltic Transports Ltd. w latach 1920–1926”, *Zapiski Historyczne* 78 (2013) 4: 119–143.

⁶³ RA, UD, catalogue no. 2507, H2–B2, Polen. Understöttelse av handelsflåten, Letter from T. Knudtson to UD, 23.03.1925.

(February 17th, 1937) and Gdynia (March 12th, 1937) under the name of '*Bergtrans*' *Shipping Co Ltd*, where the majority of the shares were invested by the Polish.⁶⁴ The Polish pressure had negative effects, E. Nielsen decided to renounce the post of consul and in November 1937 was replaced by Lauritz Myrebøe.

The conflict between Polish and German influences took also place in the management of BBT. E. Nielsen represented the German side and Jens Ejbøl, a Dane, the Polish one. At a moment they both negotiated on their own; the Norwegian consul not being able to reach some German circles came to an agreement with the Gdańsk Senate. The talks of E. Nielsen were to closer bind BBT to German capital when loans from *Dresdner Bank* and *Bank von Danzig* were taken out to reorganise the company. On the other hand, since the end of 1936 J. Ejbøl had been in touch with Bohdan Nagórski, the director of the Council for Ports and Water Ways, who represented the Maritime Department.⁶⁵ According to Zygmunt Jędrzejewicz, employed in '*Bergtrans*', the Norwegians who were alarmed at the prospect of taking over the capital of BBT by the Germans joined J. Ejbøl.⁶⁶

The Remaining Norwegian Shipping Lines and Tramp Fleet

As far as ocean sailing is concerned an interesting shipowner was Wilhelm Wilhelmsen from Tønsberg, who on January 1st, 1914 had taken over the Norwegian Line to the Gulf of Mexico (*Norge-Mexico Gulf Linjen*, NMGL).⁶⁷ In the years 1920–1956 the post of the NMGL director was fulfilled by Christian Strand,⁶⁸ a worker of Wilhelm Wilhelmsen. The most important merchandise that was transported by the Tønsberg shipowner was cotton. As early as in 1924 there were attempts to direct NMGL from New Orleans to Gdańsk, thanks to which it could have been possible to import American cotton and tobacco to Eastern Europe omitting the ports in Hamburg and Bremen.⁶⁹ In 1925 BBT set up an agency

⁶⁴ Matla, "Działalność norweskiego", 41.

⁶⁵ State Archives in Gdańsk, the Gdynia Branch, *Archiwum Państwowe w Gdańsku Oddział w Gdyni* (henceforth: APGOG), Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego, Firma „Bergtrans”, catalogue no. 235, Note dated 25.11.1937, addressed to the President of *Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego*, 43–44.

⁶⁶ Z. Jędrzejowicz, "Ze wspomnień o Bergtransie", *Nautologia* 9 (1974): 15.

⁶⁷ B. Kolltveit, H.Ch. Bangsmoen, *Wilhelm Wilhelmsen 150 år. Historien og historier* (Oslo: WW/ Dinamo Forlag, 2011), 93; S.A. Solberg, *Halfdan Wilhelmsen – Mannen og striden etter ham* (Oslo: Andresen & Butenschøn Utgiverforlaget, 2001), 33.

⁶⁸ A. Olsen, *Wilhelm Wilhelmsen i hundre år* (Oslo: Wilhelm Wilhelmsen, 1962), 184.

⁶⁹ *Przemysł i Handel* 9 (1924), 240; *Danziger Neueste Nachrichten* 82 (5.04.1924); *Danziger Zeitung* 136 (16.05.1924).

in Gdańsk for Wilhelm Wilhelmsen and a few Swedish shipowners, including the ones belonging to Broström.⁷⁰ In the years 1923–1925 the ships of the Tønsberg shipowner reached Gdańsk.

A bigger involvement of Wilhelm Wilhelmsen in Gdańsk and Gdynia resulted from a meeting that took place in October 1930 in Grand Hotel in Oslo between the representative of the Tønsberg shipowner (C. Strand) and the ones of the Broström Concern (Vidar Olburs and captain Birger Zander) who were to finally endorse the plan to create cotton transports to Gdynia.⁷¹ The talks ended with signing an agreement between the Swedish American-Mexican Line (*A/B Svenska Amerika-Mexico-Linjen*, SAML) and Wilhelm Wilhelmsen, which regulated the future transports of cotton to Gdynia. The Tønsberg shipowner wanted his ships to enter Gdynia once a month and to transport cotton and tobacco.⁷²

Undoubtedly, the cardinal factor in organising cotton transports was played by the decision of the Ministry of Communications dated January 1st, 1931, according to which cotton transported through the German-Polish border was moved from tariff class 3 to tariff class 2.⁷³ In February 1931 that propitious situation made Wilhelm Wilhelmsen together with SAML set up a new navigation line from the Gulf of Mexico to Gdynia and Gdańsk, Gulf-Gdynia Line (GGL), which actually was a branch of NMGL. In May of the same year Wilhelm Wilhelmsen's ships sailing within that line started voyages to Galveston, Houston, New Orleans,⁷⁴ and a little bit later to Tampa and Tampico; and trans-shipment to and from the islands of Middle America took place in New Orleans.⁷⁵ The GGL vessels were among the biggest ones that called in at the Polish ports, as on average they had 8,000 DWT.⁷⁶ The Norwegians wanted to streamline the cotton line by setting up a vice-consulate in Łódź on September 21st, 1932; it was headed by Arno Kindermann, the sales manager of the Pabianice company *Krusche & Ender*.⁷⁷

⁷⁰ Keilhau, *Norges eldste*, 382.

⁷¹ UBB, Ms., 1570/24–4, Letter from J. Ejbøl to E. Nielsen dated 7.12.1930.

⁷² Ibidem, Letter from E. Nielsen to T.S. Falck dated 12.12.1930.

⁷³ R. Pfeiffer, *Geneza i dzieje Izby Arbitrażowej Bawelny w Gdyni* (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Morskie, 1976), 53.

⁷⁴ *Rocznik Rady Interessantów Portu w Gdyni* (henceforth: RRIPwG) 1 (1931), 65.

⁷⁵ *Rocznik Morski i Kolonialny* 1938, (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Ligii Morskiej i Kolonialnej, 1938), 174.

⁷⁶ RRIPwG, 2/3 (1932/33), 90.

⁷⁷ RA, UD, catalogue no 4773, KG–23 Lodz, Diploma of the Vice-Consul A. Kindermann dated 24.09.1932.

The line developed quickly and in October 1933 70% of the cotton imported from America to the Polish customs area was transported by Norwegian ships.⁷⁸ As early as in 1933 it was certain that breaking the monopoly of Bremen was only the matter of time when new warehouses had been built, new contracts with the American producers of cotton signed and export duties on cotton reduced three times; the reduction was restricted only to the cotton imported through the port of Gdynia.⁷⁹

In 1937 Wilhelm Wilhelmsen became a shareholder of the company '*Bergtrans*' (he held 26 out of 1,000 shares); the company was set up in place of BBT which had been closed down.⁸⁰ At the beginning the cooperation with the new broker did not indicate a significant growth, but as early as in January 1938 Wilhelm Wilhelmsen recorded seven entries into the port of Gdynia.⁸¹

Wilhelm Wilhelmsen tried to expand his activity in the ports of the Polish customs area creating in 1933 a branch of the Norwegian Africa & Australia Line, which connected the Australian ports with Gdańsk and Gdynia. The merchandise transported to the Polish port was wool, and that time the function of broker was fulfilled by the Polish Maritime Agency (PAM).⁸² Regrettably, the line to Australia and Africa stopped functioning in 1935.⁸³ In 1933 Wilhelm Wilhelmsen together with the Swedish East Asiatic Company of Göteborg set up another short-lived sea connection between Gdynia and the ports in British India.⁸⁴

Among the Norwegian shipping companies that operated the lines to Gdańsk and Gdynia in the interwar period the shipowner from Farsund, *Gunstein Stray & Sønn*, should be mentioned; its director was Andreas Stray, who in January 1932 set up a new line (*Vore-Line*) connecting Antwerp with the ports of the Polish customs area. The line was operated by three ships, S/S *Doravore*, S/S *Bravore* and S/S *Ellavore*, for which the function of broker was fulfilled by BBT, and in

⁷⁸ UBB, Ms., 1570/24–7, Letter from E. Nielsen to N.C. Ditleff dated 9.11.1933.

⁷⁹ B. Dopierała, *Wokół polityki morskiej Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 1978), 355–356.

⁸⁰ APGOG, Sąd Grodzki w Gdyni, catalogue no. 815, '*Bergtrans*', k. 58.

⁸¹ APG, Gulf Line, Akwizycja bawełny 1936–1939, catalogue no. 1069, Import statistics of ships from the Gulf, Letter from PAM to GAL dated 11 XI 1938, k. 89.

⁸² *Ibidem*, 2/3 (1932/1933), 82, 92.

⁸³ *Ibidem*, 5 (1935) Table: Lines regularly calling at the port of Gdynia, 102–105.

⁸⁴ *Ibidem*, 2/3 (1932/1933), 82. At that time paddy rice was transported directly from Rangoon to Gdynia, then it was husked and transported to the Scandinavian countries. The rice flour and bran were exported to Norway in big quantities. Cf.: B. Koselnik, W. Zakrzewski, *Port gdyniński, jego urzędzenia i handel zamorski* (Wąbrzeźno: nakład Wiesława Zakrzewskiego, 1934), 85.

Antwerp – the *Agence Maritime Zeyen* (AMZ, since May 9th, 1935 AMZ was renamed *Société Anonyme Zeyen*, SAZ).⁸⁵ In 1933 as a result of misunderstandings BBT stopped being the broker for *Vore-Line*, and PAM occupied that post.⁸⁶ The contract with PAM included a stipulation that *Vore-Line* in cooperation with AMZ would be operating first of all the ports of Gdańsk and Antwerp, and other Belgian ports – Ghent, Brussels and Ostende – would be less important.⁸⁷

Thanks to the Rhine River navigation the merchandise transported by the ships of *Vore-Line* (in that case wood) reached Basel and Strasbourg through Antwerp. The freights were transported also to Haren,⁸⁸ Szczecin⁸⁹, and Bristol⁹⁰ with Antwerp used as a trans-shipment port.

The activity of *Vore-Line* was mainly based on complying with the conditions of the contracts concerning the transport of merchandise such as wood and corn (from Gdańsk and Gdynia) and scrap metal (return cargo from the Belgian ports). The main feature of those contracts was the interference on the part of the state authorities of the Republic of Poland through PAM. For those reasons the Norwegian shipowner could expect many financial profits and standing orders for transport of a lot of merchandise. This fact cannot be ignored while analysing the decision of *Gunstein Stray & Sønn* to go over to the Polish broker. Regrettably, *Vore-Line* kept suffering from problems concerning clearances of ships with full cargoes and the competition from the area of Finland.⁹¹ Those problems contributed to the conflict between *Gunstein Stray & Sønn*, SAZ and PAM. Judging only from documents it is difficult to say who was right in the conflict, but what may be said is that the freights were poorly organised through the fault both of the Polish side and the Belgian one. The cooperation between *Gunstein Stray & Sønn* and SAZ was finished when on June 29th, 1939 the Norwegian shipowner signed a contract with

⁸⁵ Norsk Maritimt Museum, catalogue no. 642, *Bergenske Baltic Transports Ltd. AS i korespondanse med Gunstein Stray & Sønn*, Letter from BBT to Gunstein Stray & Sønn dated 27.04.1931.

⁸⁶ Ibidem, catalogue no. 642, *Bergenske Baltic Transports Ltd. AS i korespondanse med Gunstein Stray & Sønn*, Letter from Gunstein, Stray & Sønn to BBT dated 20.04.1933.

⁸⁷ Ibidem, catalogue no 633, *Gunstein, Stray & Sønn A/S Vore Stray Korespondanse med PAM i 1933, 1934 og 1935 med gjennomparten av PAMs og Zeyen i sammen tidsrom*, Letter from PAM to Gunstein Stray & Sønn dated 2.01.1933.

⁸⁸ Ibidem, catalogue no. 642, *Bergenske Baltic Transports Ltd. AS i korespondanse med Gunstein, Stray & Sønn*, Letter from PAM to AMZ dated 17.03.1933.

⁸⁹ Ibidem, Letter from PAM to AMZ dated 1.08.1933.

⁹⁰ Ibidem, Letter from PAM to AMZ dated 20.03.1933.

⁹¹ Ibidem, catalogue no. 638, *Gunstein Stray & Sønn i korespondanse med PAM 1935–1936*, Letter from SAZ to *Gunstein Stray & Sønn* dated 11.07.1935.

Agence Maritime Baltique (AMB) represented by Henry Fiechter and Paul Braun⁹². In Brussels AMB was represented by *J. J. Claes & Co*, and in Ghent the company *P. Best & Co SA*,⁹³ but – according to the documents – PAM still was the agent of *Vore-Line* in Gdańsk and Gdynia.

While analysing navigation lines it is worth mentioning a few facts related to the shipowner *Fred Olsen & Co*, in spite of the scarcity of sources. First of all it should be underlined that *Fred Olsen & Co* belonged to the oldest Norwegian shipowners, as it had been set up in 1848.⁹⁴ According to some sources he started operating a navigation line from the Norwegian ports to Gdańsk in 1921.⁹⁵ The ships of *Fred Olsen & Co* transported corn delivered by the Polish Union of Corn Industry.⁹⁶ The sources indicate a cooperation between *Fred Olsen & Co* and the Polish Exports of Iron plc, which by virtue of the contract signed in February 1936 enabled the Norwegian shipowner to transport scrap metal and rails to the ports of eastern Norway.⁹⁷

An important element of the activity of the Norwegian shipowners was tramp shipping, i.e. irregular shipping. As far as Gdańsk was concerned the number of arrivals of tramps at the port was higher than the number of arrivals of liners throughout the interwar period.

⁹² Ibidem, catalogue no. 641, *Gunstein Stray & Sønn A/S Vore, Stray's korespondanse med AMB i 1939 og 1940 samt AMB's med PAM i 1939 og PAM's med AMB*, Contract made between *Gunstay Stray & Sønn and AMB* dated 29.06.1939.

⁹³ Ibidem, Contract of July 1939, made between *Gunstay Stray & Sønn* and AMB.

⁹⁴ Anthony Cooke, *the Fred. Olsen Line and its Passenger Ships* (London: Carmania Press, 2007), 8.

⁹⁵ APG, RPiDW, catalogue no. 1438, *Schiffseingangs Journal vom 30 Juli 1918 bis 30 Januar 1924*.

⁹⁶ UBB, Ms, 1570/24–8, vom 1.01.1934 bis 31.12.1934, Letter from J.T. Haugen to BBT dated 13.03.1934.

⁹⁷ APK, Polski Eksport Żelaza, catalogue no. 85, Contract between *Fred Olsen & Co.* and *Polski Eksport Żelaza* dated 6.02.1936, 1.

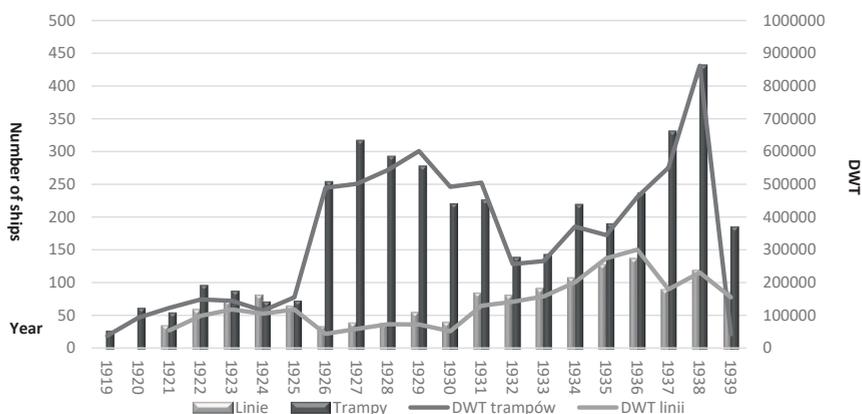


Figure 1. Share of Norwegian ships operating in Gdańsk according to tramps and liners in the years 1919–1939

Source: the author's own production based on: APG, RPiDW, catalogue no. 1438, Schiffseingangs Journal vom 30.07.1918 bis 30.01.1924; catalogue no. 1439, Schiffseingangs 1924–1926; catalogue no. 1440, Eingang. Vom 1.05.1929 bis 31.08.1931; catalogue no. 1441, Eingang vom 1.09.1931 bis 31.08.1934; catalogue no. 1442, Eingang vom 1.09.1934 bis 31.05.1937; catalogue no. 1443, Eingang vom 1.06.1937 bis 31.07.1939; catalogue no. 1444, Eingang vom 1.08.1939 bis 26.06.1944; catalogue no. 1477, Schiffsausgang Journal vom 1913 bis 1922; catalogue no. 1478, Ausgang vom 1.09.1922 bis 31.12.1926; catalogue no. 1479, Ausgang Januar 1927–1929; catalogue no. 1480, Ausgang vom 1.05.1929 bis 31.05.1930; catalogue no. 1481, Ausgang vom 1.06.1930 bis 31.10.1932; catalogue no. 1482, Ausgang vom 1.11.1932 bis 31.08.1935; catalogue no. 1483, Ausgang vom 1.09.1935 bis 31.12.1937; catalogue no. 1484, Ausgang vom 1.01.1938 bis 31.07.1940; Norges Handels- og Sjøfartstidende for the years 1919–1939.

Analysing Diagram 1 attention should be paid to the changing share of tramps in particular years in the port of Gdańsk. In the years 1921–1925 (in the years 1919–1920 the Norwegian shipping lines did not operate in Gdańsk) the degrees of the involvement of tramps and liners were almost identical, but in 1924 the number of liners was higher than the number of tramps. In turn, since 1926 the advantage of tramps over liners had been visible. What is more, that phenomenon cannot be explained by the strike of English miners and the ensuing increase of quantities of coal exported from the Polish customs area. Because of the fact that the Polish-Norwegian commercial and navigational contract was signed as late as in December 1926 the export of coal from Gdańsk on board the Norwegian ships started to the full in 1927.

The Norwegian ships were fairly engaged in operating Gdańsk up to 1931. The decrease of their involvement was parallel to the economic crisis in Poland, which dragged out till 1935. In turn, in Gdynia in the years 1934–1936 the number of departures of liners exceeded the number of departures of tramps.

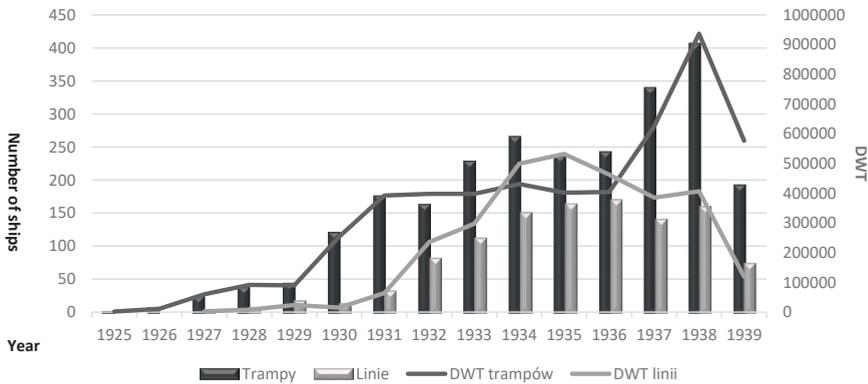


Figure 2. Share of Norwegian ships operating in Gdynia according to tramps and liners 1925–1939

Source: the author's own production based on: APGOG, catalogue no. 27, Harbour Master's Office in Gdynia, Book of pilotage, year 1930/32; catalogue no. 28, Book of pilotage, year 1932/33; catalogue no. 458, Harbour Master's Office in Gdynia, year 1934/35; catalogue no. 459, Harbour Master's Office in Gdynia, year 1935; catalogue no. 29, Harbour Master's Office in Gdynia, Book of ships' movement of foreign navigation, year 1935; catalogue no. 30, Harbour Master's Office in Gdynia, Book of ships' movement of foreign navigation, year 1936; catalogue no. 31, Harbour Master's Office in Gdynia, Book of ships' movement of foreign navigation, year 1937; catalogue no. 33, Harbour Master's Office in Gdynia, Book of ships' movement of foreign navigation, year 1938, vol. 1; catalogue no. 32, Harbour Master's Office in Gdynia, Book of ships' movement of foreign navigation, year 1938, vol. 2; *Norges Handels- og Sjøfartstidende for the*, years 1919–1939.

Before 1925 the port of Gdynia had not played a significant role in Poland's maritime commerce⁹⁸, and the Norwegian fleet was little engaged there. The proportion of arrivals of tramps and liners was different in Gdynia and Gdańsk. The advantage of tramps over liners was still visible, but in the years 1934–1936 liners gained an advantage in deadweight tonnage mainly thanks to a significant

⁹⁸ W. Stopczyk, *Handel międzynarodowy na Bałtyku* (Toruń: Instytut Bałtycki, 1928), 69.

activity of Wilhelm Wilhelmsen's ships, which conclusively contributed to granting the privilege of 'base port' to Gdynia.⁹⁹

The available documents suggest that out of all the Norwegian lines operating in Gdańsk in the years 1921–1924 BDS had the biggest share; in turn, in the years 1927–1939 – *Fred Olsen & Co*. There were other Norwegian shipping companies operating in Poland: *Bergenske-Stavangerske Østersjølinjen*, *Vore-Line*, *Gulf-Gdynia Line* and SAL; the last two had ships of the biggest capacity. In the port of Gdynia the most significant role was played by Wilhelm Wilhelmsen, next *Fred Olsen & Co* and *Bergenske-Stavangerske Østersjølinjen*. The vessels of SAL rarely called in at the Polish ports.

As far as the merchandise transported to Gdańsk in the interwar period is concerned the biggest share had package cargo (1291).¹⁰⁰ In addition to herring, of which the biggest cargoes were delivered to the port of Gdańsk in the years 1920–1926, important merchandise was scrap metal. It should be remembered that the majority of the voyages of the Norwegian ships to Gdańsk were made without cargo. The Norwegian ships took package cargoes from Gdańsk, with the exception of 1927 when wood was the dominant cargo, and the years 1928–1932 when coal was the dominant freight.

If countries are taken into consideration the most important was Norway: 1,352 arrivals at the port of Gdańsk; Great Britain – 665, Sweden – 559, Denmark – 470, and Germany – 424. Altogether from the non-Norwegian ports the Norwegian ships called in at Gdańsk 3,305 times. Norway also played a very important role in departures from the port of Gdańsk (1,739). Great Britain was the second (804);

⁹⁹ AAN, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Diplomatic Protocol, catalogue no. 724, Polish orders for Norwegian citizens. Correspondence, conclusions. 1938–1939. It was emphasised also in the Report of MPiH that the transports of cotton had had an impact on the increase of imports of Gdynia. Cf.: AAN, PRM, Minister of Industry and Trade, conclusion at KEM and a note concerning the management of the Gdynia port and streamlining the turnover of Gdynia (21.01.–17.03.1933), catalogue no. 1194, Document starting with the words: *Porty polskie odgrywają...*, 13.

¹⁰⁰ In the sources, which have been the basis for the sheets, something is missing. The registers of arrivals and departures at the port of Gdańsk do not include the quantities of cargoes, and quite often they contain false names of the shipowners and of the ships. In addition, the register of departures of ships in the years 1913–1922 does not include the short period 27.01.1922–7.03.1922. What is more, the research conducted in the State Archives in Gdańsk (APG) has demonstrated that there is no information on the arrivals of ships at the port of Gdańsk from 1.01.1927–30.04.1929. In the case of Gdynia (cf.: Table 2) the pilotage books for the years 1930–1934 that have survived do not contain the directions of arrivals and departures, or the lists of merchandise. More precise data are to be found in *Księgi ruchu statków żegluga zagranicznej* for the years 1935–1938, which contain the directions of arrivals and departures, as well as kinds and weights (in kilograms) of the merchandise.

much less significant roles were played by Sweden (480 departures), Denmark (199 departures) and Germany (152 departures).

In the years 1935–1938 the import of scrap metal to the port of Gdynia displayed an increasing tendency (altogether 259,417,792 kg). The package cargo was the second most important merchandise (91,975,675.2 kg), followed by herring (45,288,000 kg). As far as export from Gdynia is concerned the most important was coal (1,216,269,750 kg), which was the most important merchandise exported from that port. A bit less important was coke (78,769,918 kg) and package cargo (340,363,008 kg), the freights of which exceeded half of the values of the exported coal in 1937.

The analysis of the arrivals at the port of Gdynia according to the countries indicates that the main role was played by Norway (302 arrivals), Great Britain (104 arrivals), Sweden (196 arrivals), Denmark (108 arrivals) and Germany (81 arrivals). There were 851 arrivals for the non-Norwegian ports. As far as departures are concerned: 399 vessels sailed away to Norway, 110 to Great Britain, 104 to Sweden, 35 to Germany, 30 to Denmark (Diagram 58). There were altogether 1090 voyages to non-Norwegian ports.

Voyages without cargo were typical of the freights operated by the Norwegian merchant fleet. The Norwegian ships called 1,898 times at the port of Gdańsk without cargo, they sailed away from Gdańsk without cargo 577 times. In the case of the port of Gdynia the numbers were respectively 892 and 598 in the years 1935–1938.¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ APG, RPiDW, catalogue no. 1438, *Schiffseingangs Journal vom 30 Juli 1918 bis 30 Januar 1924*; catalogue no. 1439, *Schiffseingangs 1924–1926*; catalogue no. 1440, *Eingang. Vom 1 Mai 1929 bis 31 August 1931*; catalogue no. 1441, *Eingang vom 1 September 1931 bis 31 August 1934*; catalogue no. 1442, *Eingang vom 1 September 1934 bis 31 Mai 1937*; catalogue no. 1443, *Eingang vom 1 Juni 1937 bis 31 Juli 1939*; catalogue no. 1444, *Eingang vom 1 VIII 1939 bis 26 VI 1944*; catalogue no. 1477, *Schiffsausgang Journal vom 1913 bis 1922*; catalogue no. 1478, *Ausgang vom 1 IX 1922 bis 31 XII 1926*; catalogue no. 1479, *Ausgang Januar 1927–1929*; catalogue no. 1480, *Ausgang vom 1 Mai 1929 bis 31 Mai 1930*; catalogue no. 1481, *Ausgang vom 1 Juni 1930 bis 31 Oktober 1932*; catalogue no. 1482, *Ausgang vom 1 November 1932 bis 31 August 1935*; catalogue no. 1483, *Ausgang vom 1 IX 1935 bis 31 Dezember 1937*; catalogue no. 1484, *Ausgang vom 1 Januar 1938 bis 31 Juli 1940*; APGOG, catalogue no. 27, Harbour Master's Office in Gdynia, Pilotage book, year 1930/32; catalogue no. 28, Pilotage book, year 1932/33; catalogue no. 458, Harbour Master's Office in Gdynia, year 1934/35; catalogue no. 459, Harbour Master's Office in Gdynia, year 1935; catalogue no. 29, Harbour Master's Office in Gdynia, Book of ships' movement of foreign navigation, year 1935; catalogue no. 30, Harbour Master's Office in Gdynia, Book of ships' movement of foreign navigation, year 1936; catalogue no. 31, Harbour Master's Office in Gdynia, Book of ships' movement of foreign navigation, year 1937; catalogue no. 33, Harbour Master's Office in Gdynia, Book of ships' movement of foreign navigation, year 1938, vol. 1; catalogue no. 32, Harbour Master's Office in Gdynia, Book of ships'

Broking and Freight Forwarding

An essential aspect of the involvement of the Norwegian shipowners in operating Gdańsk and Gdynia was broking and freight forwarding, and BBT was the only Norwegian company that decided to undertake it. As far as broking is concerned, the most important partner of *'Bergenske'* was *Svenska Orient Linien* (SOL); on March 24th, 1933 the two companies set up the Shipping Agency 'Poland-Levant' (Limited Liability Company) *'Polska-Lewant' Agencja Okrętowa Spółka z ograniczoną poręką* with its headquarters in Gdynia.¹⁰²

In 1934 a few modern ships were added; they were equipped with the latest cooling apparatus. The Swedish line cooperated also with the Polish shipowner *Żegluga Polska SA*, whose ships participated in transports to/from the Near East since September 1st, 1935. The terms of cooperation between SOL and the Polish shipowner were set on the basis of the agreements of May 26th, 1934 and September 9th, 1935. On September 15th, 1934 a Polish-Swedish line was started.¹⁰³ The ships of that line operated Algiers, Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Turkey, Greece and the ports of the Black Sea.¹⁰⁴ Further profits were expected from the cooperation with the Polish shipping company on account of greater concentration of the trade in the ports of the Polish customs area.¹⁰⁵

According to the data depicting broking in 1936 *'Bergenske'* provided broking service to all the Norwegian shipowners who had regular connections with Gdańsk and Gdynia with the exception of *Gunstein, Stray & Sønn*, the owner of *Vore-Line*. BBT provided service to five Swedish shipping companies, three English companies and three German companies. The Finnish shipowners played a minor role. *'Bergenske'* was among the leading Gdynia brokers, just after PAM and *'Polskar'*.¹⁰⁶

movement of foreign navigation, year 1938, vol. 2; *Norges Handels- og Sjøfartstidende* for the years 1919–1939.

¹⁰² APGOG, *Sąd Grodzki w Gdyni*, catalogue no. 646, *"Polska-Lewant" – Agencja Okrętowa, spółka z ograniczoną poręką w Gdyni, 1933–1939* [1942], *Ogłoszenie Sądu Grodzkiego w Gdyni*, 20.

¹⁰³ On the contracts dated 26.05.1934 and 9.09.1935, cf.: J. Szymański, *Polsko-skandynawska współpraca w zakresie żegluga w okresie międzywojennym (1919–1939)* (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, 1988), 147–150; idem, "Polsko-szwedzka współpraca w dziedzinie żegluga morskiej w latach 1919–1939", *Zapiski Historyczne* 44 (1979) 4, 80–81.

¹⁰⁴ RRIPwG, 1935, 113.

¹⁰⁵ APGOG, *Sąd Grodzki w Gdyni*, catalogue no. 646, *"Polska-Lewant" – Agencja Okrętowa, spółka z ograniczoną poręką w Gdyni, 1933–1939* [1942], *Sprawozdanie z działalności firmy „Polska-Lewant” Agencja Okrętowa Spółka z o.o. w Gdyni za rok operacyjny 1935, 88.*

¹⁰⁶ *Rocznik polskiego przemysłu i handlu*, 1936, position 11059.

BDS exploited the potential of the port of Gdańsk, from which huge quantities of wood were exported in the interwar period. The management of B & WBT decided to deal in freight forwarding of wood setting up the company '*Bergford*' *Holz-Speditions und Lager GmbH* between September 30th and October 10th, 1921. The name of the company was a combination of BERG-enske and Wal-FORD. The greatest credits for organising the company should be given to J. Ejbøl and Wilhelm Wirtschaft,¹⁰⁷ a Gdańsk businessman representing the wood sector; Wilhelm Wirtschaft and Otto Bühler¹⁰⁸ were directors of the company. Since May 22nd, 1932 the post of director was occupied by Ralph Johannes, who developed '*Bergford*' establishing contacts with many companies of the wood industry. He set up a branch in Amsterdam, Antwerp, Pressburg (now Bratislava), Lviv, Paris, Prague, Warsaw and also in Vienna.¹⁰⁹

A difficult situation of '*Bergford*' resulting from closing down BBT, as well as incertitude compounded by NRF, which in 1936 decided to decrease wood freights from the Baltic Sea and the White Sea, made BDS put its companies in Gdańsk and Gdynia up for sale. R. Johannes bought '*Bergford*' for 1,000,000 Gdańsk gulden on credit obtained from *Deutsche Bank*.¹¹⁰

The company '*Berghof*' *Lager und Warrant GmbH* ('*Berghof*'), functioning under the wings of BDS, had a similar profile to '*Bergford*'. The company was set up on the initiative of J. Ejbøl, M. Slaweit and S. Owren on June 23rd, 1923 in Gdańsk, where the company's headquarters were situated.¹¹¹ Because of the dependence on the economic situation of the wood market the development of '*Berghof*' was parallel to economic fluctuations. The company was closed down on January 24th, 1938.¹¹²

BBT also cooperated with companies dealing in freight forwarding of other goods than wood. In 1923 'Sarmacja' as the supplier of forwarding service was replaced by the *Polish Lloyd plc*, run by Aleksander Lednicki.¹¹³ At the beginning the activity of the company was focused on agency in freight between Poland and

¹⁰⁷ Matla, "Działalność norweskiego", 56.

¹⁰⁸ APG, ANGZ, catalogue no. 15, *Dokument przedsiębiorstwa "Bergford" Holz- Speditions und Lager Gesellschaft* dated 16.12.1921, k. 562–565, 579, 588–590.

¹⁰⁹ W. Treue, "Zur Geschichte zum Deutsche Holzhandels ein Vierteljahrhundert Bergford 1921–1945", *Zeitschrift zur Unternehmensgeschichte*, 25 (1980), 7.

¹¹⁰ Treue, *Zur Geschichte*, 7–8.

¹¹¹ APG, ANGZ, catalogue no. 29, *Dokument założenia spółki "Berghof" Lager und Warrant Gesellschaft mit beschränkter Haftung* dated 23.06.1923, 977–981.

¹¹² Matla, "Działalność norweskiego", 60.

¹¹³ *Monitor Polski* 35 (15.02.1921).

the countries such as the USA, Great Britain, Austria, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, France, Latvia, Germany, Norway, Romania, Sweden and Hungary.¹¹⁴ Undoubtedly, BBT decided to cooperate with the Polish Lloyd because the latter had numerous branches dispersed all over Poland, which streamlined the transport of goods in the whole territory of the country.¹¹⁵

In 1930 BBT broke its cooperation with the Polish Lloyd, and afterwards on August 22nd it made an agreement with *C. Hartwig plc*, a Poznań company; and – according to the agreement – it took over the Gdańsk and Gdynia forwarding branches of the Poznań company.¹¹⁶ At that time *C. Hartwig plc* was headed by Bolesław Weber and Ernest Hellwig. It was not a propitious moment to enter into agreement with the Poznań company, as the company's turnover had decreased dramatically, which was caused by an economic crisis.¹¹⁷

BBT represented the Gdańsk and Gdynia branches of *C. Hartwig* only in Poland, because they had kept independence abroad.¹¹⁸ '*Bergenske*' finished its cooperation with *C. Hartwig* in 1933. Unfortunately, it was impossible to get access to the documents revealing the name of the new forwarding company BBT started cooperating with. The fact is that since 1933 '*Bergenske*' decided to limit in Gdańsk and Gdynia its forwarding activity to the lines permanently bound to BDS.

After closing down of BBT a new broker appeared: the above mentioned '*Bergtrans*' *Towarzystwo Żeglugowe* (limited liability company); Norwegian shipowners held shares in that company: BDS – 6.5%, and Wilhelm Wilhelmsen – 2.6%. The majority of the shares were in Polish hands. The company's directors were J. Ejbøl and Bohdan Nagórski, and J. Ejbøl held 179 shares (17.9%).¹¹⁹

'*Bergtrans*' was the only company – in addition to PAM – of that type with the majority of the shareholders being Polish. The former focused its activity on

¹¹⁴ *Przemysł i Handel* 2 (1923), 314.

¹¹⁵ APGOG, *Sąd Grodzki w Gdyni, W sprawie rejestrowej firmy Polski Lloyd Spółka Akcyjna oddział w Gdyni, 1931–1936*, vol. 1, catalogue no. 730, Certified copy, 8.

¹¹⁶ AAN, Ministerstwo Skarbu, catalogue no. 6304, *Bergenske Baltic Transports Ltd. Podatek przemysłowy za lata 1932–1933, Międzynarodowi ekspedytorzy C. Hartwig S.A. Zarząd Główny, Firma Bergenske Baltic Transports Ltd.* Gdańska, Poznań dated 22.08.1930, 91.

¹¹⁷ J. Neider, *120 lat firmy C. Hartwig* (Wydawnictwo PSM C. Hartwig – 1982), 14–15.

¹¹⁸ AAN, MS, catalogue no. 6304, *Bergenske Baltic Transports Ltd. Podatek przemysłowy za lata 1932–1933, Międzynarodowi ekspedytorzy C. Hartwig S.A. Zarząd Główny, Firma Bergenske Baltic Transports Ltd.* Gdańska, Poznań dated 22.08.1930, 91.

¹¹⁹ APGOG, *Sąd Grodzki w Gdyni*, catalogue no. 815, *Lista wspólników firmy "Bergtrans" Towarzystwo Żeglugowe Spółka z o.o. w Gdyni*, 58.

liners, whereas the latter – on freights of package cargoes representing several lines at the same time but to a lesser degree. The activity of ‘*Berhtrans*’ was directed towards supporting Polish shipping businesses by choosing the ships of *Żegluga Polska* in transports to Finland.¹²⁰ In addition, the broker in question dealt in importing iron ores and scrap metal to Poland, exporting coal,¹²¹ selling bunker coal,¹²² organising transports of cotton;¹²³ the company also participated in the import of herring from England and Scotland and transported sugar to England.¹²⁴

In 1938 ‘*Bergtrans*’ established a close cooperation with a line belonging to *Robert Wilsen & Nyquist* from Oslo and *Maersk Antwerp-Polen Line* which was the property of A. P. Møller. The first ships of those lines called in at Gdynia at the beginning of 1939. In addition, since January 1939 a new sea connection was established organised by Knut Knutsen,¹²⁵ a Norwegian shipowner from Hauge-sund. Those lines were short-lived, still Gdynia and its increasing potential might be said to attract such enterprises.

The above mentioned facts show that the scope of activity of the Norwegian shipowners in Gdańsk and in Gdynia in the years 1919–1939 was multifaceted. On the one hand, the engagement of the shipowners is visible; they set up new navigational lines (BDS, DSD, *Wilhelm Wilhelmsen*, *Gunstein Stray & Sønn*, *Fred Olsen & Co*), ran tramp navigation or – as BDS – forwarding and broking companies. The most effective were the shipping companies whose lines created a monopoly in sea transport: GGL, *Bergenske-Stavangerske Østersjølinjen* and the sea connection of *Fred Olsen & Co*. On the other hand, *Vore-Line*, which kept facing the competition on the part of Finland’s wood market had financial problems all the time. A lack of engagement is visible for SAL ships.

¹²⁰ Ibidem.

¹²¹ Ibidem, *Sprawozdanie z działalności Zarządu Spółki "Bergtrans" Towarzystwo Żeglugowe Spółka z o.o. w Gdyni za rok operacyjny 1937*, 193.

¹²² State Archives (*Archiwum Państwowe*) in Katowice, "Skarboferm", *Sekretariat Generalny "Bergtrans" S. A. w Gdyni i Gdańsku*, catalogue no. 1159, *Sprawozdanie Zarządu Spółek "Bergtrans" w Gdańsku i w Gdyni za rok 1937*, 79.

¹²³ APGOG, *Sqd Grodzki w Gdyni*, catalogue no. 815, *Sprawozdanie z działalności Zarządu Spółki "Bergtrans" Towarzystwo Żeglugowe Spółka z o.o. w Gdyni za rok operacyjny 1937*, 193.

¹²⁴ Ibidem, *Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego Oddział w Gdyni*, catalogue no. 815, *Sprawozdanie z działalności Zarządu Spółki "Bergtrans" Towarzystwo Żeglugowe Spółka z o.o. w Gdyni za rok operacyjny 1937*, 194.

¹²⁵ Ibidem, *Sqd Grodzki w Gdyni w Gdyni*, catalogue no. 815, *Sprawozdanie z działalności Zarządu Spółki "Bergtrans" Towarzystwo Żeglugowe Spółka z o.o. w Gdyni za rok operacyjny 1938*, 277; RRIPwG, 1938, 31–32.

Talking about broking and forwarding companies in the ports of the Polish customs area first of all it should be underlined that they limited themselves to the activity of the companies bound to BDS. That is why the share of the Bergen company in the ports of the Polish customs area stood out against the background of the other Norwegian shipowners, because actually it was based on a complimentary system composed of varied (sea and land) lines of communication, and different means of transport, which mutually complemented each other. The crucial points of that system functioned in Gdańsk and Gdynia, and the delivery of merchandise by BBT might be organised so that the broking, forwarding and ship ownership would be managed by one company, BDS. It seems that in most cases the presented system changed by changing only one ring of the chain, the shipowner, which was in relation to the fact '*Bergenske*' fulfilled the role of broker for many shipping companies.

What was then the degree of engagement of the Norwegian shipowners in operating the ports of Gdańsk and Gdynia? On the one hand, the share was not meaningless for the maritime economy of the Republic of Poland and the Free City of Gdańsk/Danzig against the background of the overall economic and political relations of the two states. As far as the arrivals at the ports of Gdańsk and Gdynia are concerned the Norwegian ships might be ranked fifth or sixth, and BBT was the second – after PAM – most important broker. What is more, GGL helped to overcome the domination of Bremen and Hamburg in trans-shipment of cotton transported to Poland. On the other hand, the activity of the Norwegian shipowners in the ports of the Polish customs area did not play a prominent role in the history of the Norwegian merchant fleet, and it did not translate into a significant development of the Polish-Norwegian trade relations. Taking into account the fact that the Norwegian merchant fleet in the interwar period was ranked fourth-sixth in the world it should be concluded that the potential of the Norwegian shipowners was not fully exploited by Poland. It was caused by the profile of the Norwegian merchant fleet well adapted to ocean navigation, and by the economic weakness of the Republic of Poland.

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DZIAŁALNOŚĆ NORWESKICH ARMATORÓW W PORTACH POLSKIEGO OBSZARU CELNEGO W LATACH 1919–1939 (GŁÓWNE PROBLEMY)

Słowa kluczowe: stosunki polsko-norweskie w latach 1919–1939, norweska flota handlowa, norwescy armatorzy, gospodarka Gdańska w latach 1919–1939, gospodarka Gdyni w latach 1919–1939

Abstrakt

W okresie dwudziestolecia międzywojennego norweska flota handlowa pod względem wielkości plasowała się na 4–6 miejscu na świecie. Z tych względów Norwegia była atrakcyjnym partnerem gospodarczym dla Polski, która w 1919 roku nie miała floty handlowej. W tym samym roku norweski rząd wysłał do Polski misję gospodarczą pod kierownictwem Samuela Eydego, a także z udziałem m.in. norweskiego armatora i reprezentanta Norweskiego Związku Armatorów – Thora Thoresena. Niestety na początku lat dwudziestych ubiegłego wieku problemy finansowe Polski spowodowały brak większego zainteresowania norweskich armatorów obsługą portu gdańskiego.

W 1921 roku jeden z największych norweskich armatorów, Det Bergenske Dampskibsselskab (BDS), zaangażował się w transporty śledzi do Gdańska zakupionych w ramach tzw. drugiej polsko-norweskiej umowy śledziowej. W tym samym roku BDS utworzyło filię w Gdańsku, a w 1928 roku w Gdyni – Bergenske Baltic Transport Ltd. („Bergenske” lub BBT). W 1921 roku BDS założył linię żegludową do portów bałtyckich i Londynu, zaś w 1931 roku wraz ze Det Stavangerske Dampskibsselskab – linię do portów zachodnio-norweskich. BDS współtworzył również mniejsze przedsiębiorstwa żegludowe (Nord Ost-See Reederei A.-G., Standard Line Reederei A.-G., Bellmore Reederei A.-G., Norna Reederei-Gesellschaft m.b.H.). Statki BDS uczestniczyły także w linii południowo-amerykańskiej linii żegludowej – Den Norske Syd-Amerikalinjen (SAL).

Pośród norweskich armatorów największą linię żegludową do Gdańska i Gdyni utrzymywał Wilhelm Wilhelmsen (Gulf-Gdynia Line – GGL), dzięki której dostarczano do portów polskiego obszaru celnego duże ilości amerykańskiej bawełny. Linie żegludowe utrzymywali również Fred Olsen & CO. (linia do wschodnich portów norweskich) oraz Gunstein Stray & Sønn (Vore-Line do Antwerpii). Norwescy armatorzy w wielu przypadkach korzystali z żeglugi trampowej (nieregularnej), która dominowała w Gdańsku, natomiast w Gdyni przeważała z wyjątkiem lat 1934–1936.

Istotnym aspektem aktywności BBT była działalność maklerska oraz spedycyjna. BBT było jednym z największych maklerów w Gdańsku i Gdyni. Ponadto dzięki posiadaniu „Bergford” Holz-Speditions und Lager G.m.b.H. oraz „Berghof” Lager und Warrant G.m.b.H. eksportowało duże ilości drewna z Gdańska. „Bergenske” współpracowało

także z polskimi firmami spedycyjnymi – Polski Lloyd SA i C. Hartwig SA. Wszystkie te firmy miały filie w Polsce i zagranicą, co pozwoliło BBT prowadzić transport komplementarny, a więc z użyciem transportu morskiego i lądowego.