



Anna Szczepańska-Dudziak

Institute of History
University of Szczecin
anna.szczepanska-dudziak@usz.edu.pl
ORCID: 0000-0003-4596-0956

Szczecin as the Home Port for Inland Czechoslovakia. Czechoslovak Presence in Szczecin from 1945–1989

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“Szczecin: a city that was partly Czechoslovak for 38 years. What do we (not) know about Szczecin, the seventh largest city in Poland?” – in 2013, under this title Lidovky.pl published a short article about the capital of Western Pomerania and its relations with Czechoslovakia.¹ The author, traveller and photographer Tomáš Pigula, called the Czechoslovak region in the port of Szczecin “Czechoslovak Hong Kong.” In this way he referred to the decisions made at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, when the First Republic was granted the possibility of creating free zones in the ports of Szczecin and Hamburg for 99 years, which evokes associations with the special status of Hong Kong governed by Great Britain. The article completely ignored the ties between Czechoslovakia and Polish Szczecin after World War Two, and although its title sounded promising, the readers of “*Lidových novin*” unfortunately did not learn much about the Czechoslovak presence in Szczecin, which was so multifaceted and interesting.

In retrospect, we know that the Adolf Warski Szczecin Shipyard contributed to the expansion of Czechoslovakia’s merchant fleet, which flourished from 1948–1998, by constructing 11 ships for it. Polish–Czechoslovak cooperation in the port of Szczecin–Świnoujście also developed at a great pace and lasted longer than the

1 Tomáš Pigula, *Štětín: město, které bylo 38 let částečně československé*, Lidovky.cz, 10/10/2013, accessed 02 July 2022, https://www.lidovky.cz/cestovani/stetin-mesto-ktere-bylo-38-let-castecne-ceskoslovenske.A130109_080439_cestopisy_ape. The article is a reprint from the travel portal HedvabnaStezka.cz, which published information about the Czechoslovak presence in Szczecin in 1919–1957, see: *Štětín: Věděli jste, že byl v letech 1919–1957 částečně československý?* accessed 02 July 2022, <https://www.hedvabnastezka.cz/stetin-vedeli-jste-ze-byl-v-letech-1919-1957-castecne-ceskoslovensky>.

38 years mentioned in the article and was additionally strengthened by the activities of the Consulate General, the Centre for Culture and Information, and the presence of Czechoslovak students at the Maritime School of Higher Education in Szczecin and Bohemistics at the University of Szczecin. Czechoslovak tourists rested at the Baltic seaside and young people stayed in summer camps. Most often, such trips were mostly organised by the Čedok travel agency and, for example, in 1959, 200 tourists rested in Międzyzdroje, 1,300 in Darłówek, 1,300 in Cetniewo, 340 in Jurata, 250 in Sopot and 80 in Szczecin.² However, a question arises whether after all these years the Czechs and Slovaks know anything about this shared time in history. Do the older generations of the residents of former Czechoslovakia remember their trips to summer camps and youth camps or family holidays by the Baltic Sea?³

The analysis of border traffic from the Czech Republic to Poland shows that in recent years Czechs most often have been coming to Poland for a day to visit their families or do some shopping.⁴ Tourism, and certainly a one-day stay by the Baltic Sea, is not an option. According to a survey commissioned by the Polish Tourist Organisation, 43% of Czechs declare a desire to visit Poland but also half of Czechs associate Poland with shopping and only 28% with the sea and beaches, and over 56% have never stayed overnight during their visit to Poland.⁵ These data are corroborated by the publications of the Statistical Office of the Czech Republic, which indicate that since 2012 the list of the most frequently visited countries by Czechs for holidays include: Croatia, Slovakia, Italy, Greece, Spain and Austria with Poland nowhere to be found.⁶

Based on the 2015 report on tourism in the West Pomerania Province carried out by the Marshal's Office of that region, it can be concluded that only a small percentage

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- 2 Archiv Ministerstva zahraničních věcí, Teritoriální Odbor-Tajne Polsko (hereinafter AMZV, TO-T, Polsko) 1955–1959, carton 5, Report of the Consulate General on entries organised by Čedok, Szczecin 11 September 1959.
 - 3 Popular programmes broadcast on Czech Radio 2 in June and July 2022 featured topics related to tourism and promoting travel destinations popular among Czechs. Unfortunately, Poland was not listed among the destinations. Croatia was the most popular – 800,000 Czechs wanted to visit this country. What is more, the listeners did not mention Polish beaches in the context of their memories of their first stay at the seaside and they only associated the Baltic Sea with holiday trips to the GDR.
 - 4 In July 2021, 16,228 Czechs used Polish tourist infrastructure, while in August their number was 19,475, see: *Tourists in Tourist Accommodation Establishments* (Warszawa: GUS, August 2021), accessed 04.07.2022, <https://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/kultura-turystyka-sport/turystyka/turysci-w-bazie-noclegowej-sierpien-2021-roku,5,110.html>. For more on tourism to Poland, see: *Turystyka w 2020 r. Analizy statystyczne* (Warszawa–Rzeszów: Główny Urząd Statystyczny, 2021), 80–90, accessed 30 July 2022, <https://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/kultura-turystyka-sport/turystyka/turystyka-w-2020-roku,1,18.html>.
 - 5 *Wizerunek Polski i Polaków w Czechach*, Raport ARC Rynek i Opinia na zlecenie Polskiej Organizacji Turystycznej (Warszawa: listopad 2021), 5–27, accessed 30 July 2022, https://zarabiajnaturystyce.pl/fileadmin/user_upload/badania_analizy/RAPORT_wizerunek_Polski_w_Czechach.pdf.
 - 6 *Kam Češi v roce 2019 ve volném čase cestovali?* (Statistical Office of the Czech Republic Prague, 7 April 2020), accessed 04 July 2022, https://www.czso.cz/documents/11256/141467230/VSCR_2019.pdf.

of the surveyed tourists visiting the province were Czechs – 7 people, i.e. 1.33% of all respondents.⁷ Therefore, when developing new strategies for the promotion of the West Pomeranian Province and Szczecin, it is worth recalling the Czechoslovak presence in this region in order to encourage Poland's southern neighbours to visit the lost "Czechoslovak Hong Kong."

The aim of the article is to present the multifaceted Polish-Czechoslovak cooperation – political, economic and cultural, which took place in Szczecin over several decades – from the city's takeover by the Polish authorities, until 1989, when the process of systemic changes began in both countries the consequence of which were changes to the existing forms of cooperation. In the 1990s, contracts regulating the issues of transit and rail transport expired, the importance of Szczecin as a port for Czechoslovak goods declined as those were sent to ports on the Black Sea coastline and in Germany, so the Consulate General in Szczecin was closed and the Czechoslovak merchant fleet was slowly being sold off. It is crucial to answer the following question. What place did Szczecin take in the Polish-Czechoslovak cooperation after World War Two and on what issues was the focus of interest placed in this city?

The undertaken research topic was the subject of researchers' interest, which resulted in publications that cover the Czechoslovak presence in Szczecin after World War Two in the context of communication cooperation, transit through the port, the Czechoslovakia region in the port, the involvement of the Szczecin shipbuilding industry in the creation of the Czechoslovak sea fleet and also the activities of the Czechoslovak Consulate General.⁸ The vast majority of Polish-language studies are based on

7 *Badanie ruchu turystycznego w województwie zachodniopomorskim 2015*, accessed 4 July 2022, <https://turystyka.wzp.pl/badania-ruchu-turystycznego/badania-struktury-ruchu-turystycznego-2015>.

8 Among the studies on the Czechoslovak presence in Szczecin and the economic cooperation of the Consulate General's activities, the following works deserve attention: Alina Hutnikiewicz, *Szczecin w polskiej polityce morskiej w latach 1945–1950* (Szczecin: Polskie Pismo i Książka: 1991); eadem, "Szczecin w stosunkach polsko-czechosłowackich 1945–1950," in: *Historia lux Veritatis. Księga pamiątkowa dedykowana profesorowi Zdzisławowi Chmielewskiemu z okazji 60. rocznicy urodzin*, eds. Radosław Gaziński and Agnieszka Gut (Szczecin: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego, 2002); Ryszard Techman, "Adolf Kania – pierwszy konsul Czechosłowacji w Polsce w latach 1949–1951," *Śląskie Studia Historyczne* 11 (2004); idem, "Czechosłowacka Żegluga na Odrze w latach 1947–1957," part 1, *Przegląd Zachodniopomorski* 33 (2018); idem, "Czechosłowacka Żegluga na Odrze w latach 1947–1957," part 2, *Przegląd Zachodniopomorski* 34 (2019); idem, "Czechosłowacka sieć konsularna w Polsce w latach 1947–1992," *Polski Przegląd Dyplomatyczny* 1 (2006); idem, "Kalendarium wydarzeń Szczecin–Czechosłowacja w latach 1945–1992," in: *Polsko-czeskie kontakty dyplomatyczne, gospodarcze i kulturalne w XX–XXI wieku*, ed. Anna Szczepańska-Dudziak (Szczecin: Volumina, 2017); idem, "Szczecin w aktach polskiej służby dyplomatycznej 1945–1950," in: *50 lat Polski na Pomorzu Zachodnim. Polityka – Społeczeństwo – Kultura. Materiały z sesji naukowej (19–20 maja 1995)*, eds. Kazimierz Kozłowski and Edward Włodarczyk (Szczecin: Wydawnictwo Archiwum Państwowego w Szczecinie, 1996); idem, "Udział szczecińskiego przemysłu okrętowego w rozbudowie floty handlowej Czechosłowacji po II wojnie światowej," in: *Polsko-czeskie kontakty dyplomatyczne, gospodarcze i kulturalne w XX–XXI wieku*; idem, "Tranzyt czechosłowacki w portach ujścia Odry po II wojnie światowej," *Studia Maritima* 28 (2015); idem, "Pierwsze szkoły morskie w Szczecinie," in: *Szkolnictwo morskie Szczecina w latach 1947–1997*, eds. Izabela Dunin-Kwinta, Aleksander Walczak

Polish archival sources such as monumental publications by Ryszard Techman devoted to Czechoslovak shipping on the Oder or Czechoslovak transit in the Oder estuary ports. The archives of Czechoslovak diplomacy and materials gathered in one fonds of Úřad předsednictva vlády, the former Státní ústřední archiv, and today the National Archives in Prague, served as the basis for this author's publication on the activities of the Czechoslovak consulate in Szczecin, especially in the first years of its operation.

The deliberations in this article not only focus on the more well-known threads of economic cooperation – transit or cooperation with the Czechoslovak Ocean Shipping but go beyond these issues and are also aimed at a wider presentation of the activities of the Czechoslovak consular post in Szczecin whose presence had a very strong impact on all forms of Polish-Czechoslovak cooperation – from the economy, through politics, to cultural cooperation and social relations. The operation of this institution in Szczecin expressed the fullest interest of Prague in the presence on the Polish Baltic coast which was visible in the consulate's activities related to transport and commercial cooperation as well as in various forms of presenting the culture of Poland's southern neighbour. In the latter field, the consulate was supported by a branch of the Warsaw Centre for Culture and Information of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic (CSSR), established in 1981.

The research postulate, which was only briefly mentioned in the article, is to recreate the fate of Czechoslovak graduates of Szczecin maritime schools and to find the records of the course of their studies and professional work, which was initiated by Lenka Krátká on the basis of Czech archival sources and the oral history method.⁹ On the other hand, Zdeněk Bastl introduces the readers of his book and the enthusiasts

and Stanisław Kuszmider (Szczecin: Wyższa Szkoła Morska w Szczecinie, 1997); Radek Novák, *Námořní přeprava*, Praha: ASPI 2005); Zdeněk Bastl, *Padesát let Československé Návní Plavby* (Praha: Mare Czech 2009); Anna Szczepańska, "Rejon czechosłowacki w Porcie Szczecińskim w latach 1949–1956," *Przegląd Zachodniopomorski* 21 (2006); eadem, "Port Szczeciński w polsko-czechosłowackich stosunkach gospodarczych w świetle dokumentów Archiwum Ministerstwa Sprawy Zagranicznych w Pradze (1949–1956)," *Studia Maritima* 19 (2006); eadem, *Warszawa–Praga 1948–1969. Od nakazanej przyjaźni do kryzysu* (Szczecin: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego, 2011); Anna Szczepańska-Dudziak, "Działalność Ośrodków Kultury i Informacji PRL i CSRS w okresie kryzysu i normalizacji relacji polsko-czechosłowackich w latach osiemdziesiątych XX w.," in: *Polsko-czeskie kontakty dyplomatyczne, gospodarcze i kulturalne*; eadem, "Szczecin czechosłowackim oknem na morza i oceany." *Szczecin w stosunkach polsko-czechosłowackich 1945–1989* (Szczecin-Warszawa: IPN, 2021).

- 9 Lenka Krátká, "«Byłem ciekawy, czy morze jest słone!» Czechosłowacka Žegluga Morska we wspomnieniach marynarzy czechosłowackich (1959–1989)," *Wrocławski Rocznik Historii Mówionej* 3 (2013): 187–204; eadem, *Domovský přístav Praha. Československá námořní plavba v letech 1948 až 1989* (Praha: Univerzita Karlova Nakladatelství Karolinum, 2016); eadem, "Czechoslovak Seafarers' Memories of Polish Ports as their «Second Home» during the State Socialism Period (1949–1989)," *History in Flux* 2 (2020): 31–48.

of this subject to the history, activity, state of the Czechoslovak merchant fleet and the sailors on the website *Historie námořní plavby*.¹⁰

The article uses archival materials collected in Polish and Czech archives, thus extending the scope of the research carried out by Ryszard Techman. As for the sources produced in Czechoslovakia, they are the collections of the Archiv Ministerstva zahraničních věcí in Prague, especially the following fonds: Zastupitelský úřad Polsko 1945–1955, Dokumentace teritoriálních odborů 1945–1989, Generální sekretariát a Kabinet J. Masaryka, V. Clementise, Konzulární odbor, Politické zprávy Varšava 1945–1977 and Teritoriální odbory Polsko both tajné and obyčejné, which relate to the said period. In Národní archiv České republiky the following fonds: Úřad předsednictva vlády (hereinafter ÚPV) 1917–1956–1959 (1962), ÚPV tajná spisovna, Ústřední výbor KSČ 1945–1989 (hereinafter NA ČR, ÚV KSČ), Praha-zasedání 1945–1989, KSČ ÚV 1945–1989, Kancelář generálního tajemníka Gustáva Husáka. Fonds not shared or only partially are of the Czechoslovak Ocean Shipping and the Ministry of Foreign Trade 1957–1963 to which Lenka Krátká obtained access and in her book she quotes the financial information and minutes of meetings. The research was also conducted in the Archiv bezpečnostních složek, where, among many, there is the document cited in the article from the fonds – Denní situační zprávy FMV. Informace k PLR (for the period 1980–1984).

Due to the lack of access to some of the unfinished source materials from the 1970s and 1980s collected in the Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, it was necessary to fill this gap with documents of Polish diplomacy from the resources of the Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Warsaw – Department I, Political Department, Diplomatic Protocol, Fonds Telegrams, Economic Department, Cabinet of the Minister. The collections of the National Archives of the Czech Republic and the Archives of Modern Records in Warsaw are worth noting as they house documents on the activities of divisions of foreign communist parties, minutes of government meetings, documents produced in the offices of the first secretaries and fonds of Ministries of Economy, Foreign Trade and Culture. Among the Archives of Modern Records files, the research was carried out in the following fonds of: Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR), Central Committee in Warsaw 1948–1990, Ministry of Industry and Trade, Ministry of Foreign Trade, Ministry of Foreign Trade and Maritime Economy. The research was also conducted at the State Archives in Szczecin and the resources came from the fonds of: Szczecin Maritime Office, Szczecin Provincial

10 Bastl, *Padesát let Československé*; The “Historie Námořní Plavby” website is run by Zdeňek Bastl, former economic head of Czechoslovak Ocean Shipping, author of the book *Padesát*, which was published to celebrate the company's 50th anniversary, see: <http://www.namorniplavba.cz> (currently: <http://www.bastl.cz/cnp>).

Office, the Szczecin-Świnoujście Port Complex, the City Board and the City National Council.

Czechoslovakia region – transit cooperation

Independent Czechoslovakia's interest in access to the sea and inland shipping to reach the port of Szczecin dates back to the First Republic. It was then that the Treaty of Versailles made it possible to create a duty-free zone in the port the location of which closest to the industrial centres of Czechoslovakia was an opportunity for the development of transit and trade for the reborn state. Similarly, after World War Two following the changes to the international situation and establishing Potsdam's borders, the importance of Szczecin and Poland grew as a partner for Czechoslovak foreign trade, shipping, and, in the future, also for the shipbuilding industry that would construct ships for the needs of its southern neighbour. Szczecin was the closest transit port for the Czechoslovak partner and its industrial manufacturing centres, which, however, was recovering from the war damage and had to compete for the possibility of Czechoslovak transit with Gdańsk, Gdynia and Hamburg.¹¹ Nonetheless, until the treaty settlement of Polish-Czechoslovak relations in 1947, all manifestations of economic cooperation, including the issue of Czechoslovakia's access to a transit port, were used as an instrument of pressure in the Polish-Czechoslovak territorial dispute.¹²

The Polish-Czechoslovak friendship treaty was signed on 10 March 1947 as dictated by Moscow and it did not solve the most important problems such as the issue of the border and the location of national minorities but its finalisation opened the way to the normalisation of mutual relations on the economic, commercial and cultural levels. The latter issues were formally settled by signing a number of agreements defining the principles of economic, commercial and scientific-technical cooperation in Prague on 2–4 July 1947.¹³ The transport arrangement concluded at the time allowed for extensive use of Polish ports, mainly Szczecin, and ports on the Danube, as well as the

11 Techman, "Tranzyt," 229–272.

12 Marek Kazimierz Kamiński, *Polsko-czechosłowackie stosunki polityczne 1945–1948* (Warszawa: PWN, 1990), 347–348; Techman, "Szczecin w aktach," 65–66.

13 Archives of Modern Records, Ministry of Industry and Trade, ref. no. 3489, 15–19, Konwencja o zapewnieniu współpracy gospodarczej między Polską a CSR; Sbirka Zakonu Republiky Československe 1949, č. 9; Wiesław Balcerak et al., ed., *Dokumenty i materiały do historii stosunków polsko-czechosłowackich w latach 1944–1960* vol. 1, part 1 (Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków: Ossolineum, 1985), 227–228, 232–253; Jerzy Poznański, "Polsko-czechosłowacka współpraca gospodarcza," *Sprawy Międzynarodowe* 1 (1948): 5–7; Květa Kořalková, "Dvacet let československo-polského spojení," in: *Československo-polské vztahy v nejnovějších dějinách: sborník ref. a diskusních příspěvků z vědecké konference Ústavu pro mezinárodní politiku a ekonomii v Praze (2.3.1967)*, ed. Květa Kořalková (Praha: Praha: Ústav pro mezinárodní politiku a ekonomii, 1967), 41–44; Szczepańska, *Warszawa-Praga*, 183–199.

construction of the Oder-Danube Canal and reservoirs to improve the navigability of the Oder as well as energy facilities and other canals. In the field of transport, navigation and communication, plans were drawn up for rail connections, extension of the waterway to Ostrava, creation of joint port service companies, Szczecin-Prague telecommunication connection, training and exchange of professionals, manpower and assistance in the preparation of technical staff.¹⁴

The creation of the Czechoslovakia Area in the Duty Free Zone of the Port of Szczecin became one of the most interesting forms of economic cooperation between Poland and Czechoslovakia, which does not mean that it was entirely successful and effective. The Polish side was interested in close cooperation in this port for economic and political reasons. Such an opportunity was given by the aforementioned communication system of 1947, which provided for the signing of an agreement specifying the terms of the lease of part of the port of Szczecin and the creation of a duty-free zone for Czechoslovak enterprises.¹⁵ These provisions should be considered as mutually beneficial. They opened a “window” to the Baltic Sea for Prague and allowed for the development of trade. On the other hand, they brought tangible economic and political benefits to the Polish side due to the corroboration of the Polish character of Szczecin. Czechoslovakia was also ready to send its youth brigades to participate in the reconstruction of the port of Szczecin. The contract for the exchange of youth labour brigades was signed on 5 February 1948 in Prague, and already in July a group of 150 young people from the Volunteer Brigade came to Szczecin to work on the construction of the Czechoslovak quay.¹⁶

In May 1948, Vladimír Clementis, CSR Minister of Foreign Affairs, paid a visit to Szczecin to see for himself the usefulness of the port of Szczecin. In an interview with PAP, Clementis called Szczecin an old Slavic port – a symbol of the change of the border of the entire Slavic region.¹⁷ However, despite the good atmosphere of this visit and its outcome, the sight of the “Ewa” wharf covered with grass did not fill anyone with optimism.¹⁸ On 7–10 September 1948, the representatives of the Port Committee of the Polish-Czechoslovak Commission held talks in Szczecin on a framework agreement

14 Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (hereinafter AMFA), fond 6, bundle 15, folder 215, 80–89, Sprawozdanie Wydziału Handlowego Ambasady RP w Pradze. For more on Czechoslovak shipping on the Oder, see: Techman, “Czechosłowacka żegluga,” part 1, 145–168; idem, “Czechosłowacka żegluga,” part 2, 5–28. More about the concept of building a transport connection in Central and Southern Europe in the form of the Danube-Oder-Elbe canal, which was to be transformed from a gate to three seas into a gate to the USSR, see: Jiří Janáč, *European Coasts of Bohemia: negotiating the Danube-Oder-Elbe Canal a Troubled Twentieth Century* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012).

15 Hutnikiewicz, “Szczecin w stosunkach,” 378–379.

16 *Kurier Szczeciński*, 13/02/1948, 19/07/ 1948.

17 *Głos Ludu*, 15/05/1948.

18 *Kurier Szczeciński*, 14–18/05/1948; Piotr Zaremba, *Pierwszy szczeciński rok 1945* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 1966), 90–91; Zaremba emphasised the importance of this visit for the Polish

on the lease of the Czechoslovak region in the duty-free zone of the Port of Szczecin. The talks were then continued on 9–15 October in Prague.¹⁹

Before the above-mentioned agreements were signed, however, from 2 May 1947, non-contractual Czechoslovak transit through the port of Szczecin was carried out, which constituted nearly 5% of the overall transshipment turnover with an upward trend, to reach 557,000 tonnes (10.7%) in 1950. However, in the opinion of the Polish side, it was still insufficient.²⁰ In the structure of transshipments in 1947, bulk goods and coal as well as ore from Sweden prevailed in imports, which, like general cargo, was the dominant commodity in the following years. Wood dominated in exports.

From March 1949, Szczecin had an advocate of its interests in Prague, a supporter of Polish-Czechoslovak cooperation, in the person of the new ambassador in CSR i.e. Leonard Borkowicz. As he himself mentioned, it was not without reason that he agreed to undertake such mission precisely in order to solve the problems that stood in the way of making the port of Szczecin a transit and communication base for Czechoslovakia.²¹ However, on the basis of the available sources and literature, it is difficult to say to what extent he was actually able to implement his intentions and have a real impact on the state of cooperation in these areas during the diplomatic mission lasting only one year. He was in office at a time when there were no spectacular events in mutual relations and in Czechoslovakia, Stalinist purges and repressions at the top of the government were approaching.

On 15 July 1949, an agreement was signed in Prague on the lease of land in the port of Szczecin.²² The Czechoslovak region, located at the northern end of the eastern part of the Ewa Peninsula, was the total area of 30,000 m². What is more, at the request of the lessee an area in Ostrów Grabowski was to be devoted for the construction of the wharf and buildings with facilities. The exploitation of the area included

port city of Szczecin; idem, *Wspomnienia prezydenta Szczecina 1945–1950* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 1977), 664–665, 709–719.

- 19 State Archives in Szczecin, Szczecin Maritime Office (hereinafter SAS SMO), ref. I/107, 7–10, Minutes of the proceedings in Szczecin; *ibid.*, 33–35, Report on a business trip to Czechoslovakia by A. Bonarski.
- 20 SAS, Szczecin-Świnoujście Port Authority (hereinafter SAS S-SPA), ref. no. 876, Confidential letter of the Director of the Operational Service of November 30 November 1950; Hutnikiewicz, “Szczecin w stosunkach,” 213–214.
- 21 For more on the circumstances of the departure of the first Szczecin provincial governor from Szczecin, see: Katarzyna Rembacka, “«Praski epizod» szczecińskiego wojewody Leonarda Borkowicza,” in: *Polsko-czeskie kontakty dyplomatyczne*, 30–43; eadem, *Komunista na peryferiach władzy. Historia Leonarda Borkowicza 1912–1989* (Szczecin-Warszawa: IPN, 2020), 365–392; Marek Kazimierz Kamiński, *Kształtowanie się stosunków polsko-czechosłowackich 1948–1960* (Warszawa: Neritorn, 2012), 42–43.
- 22 AMFA, fond 15, bundle 17, folder 150; Balcerak, *Dokumenty i materiały*, vol. 1, part 1, 103–108; Waclaw Jastrzębowski, “Rejon czechosłowacki w Szczecinie,” *Gospodarka Morska* 3 (1949): 304–310; Szczepańska, “Rejon,” 47–60; eadem, “Port,” 179–193.

the transshipment and storage of goods by the Czechoslovak side and gave rights to the use of the area by ships and other means of transport which pursued Czechoslovak interests. At the same time, the agreement imposed an obligation to comply with the provisions of the lease agreement as well as the provisions of Polish law and government orders in the duty-free zone of the Port of Szczecin. The lessee, which was specified in the contract as the Czechoslovak Freight Forwarding Joint Stock Society in Prague ("Metrans"), obtained the right to employ Czechoslovak citizens with the consent of the Polish authorities. The framework lease agreement the parties to which were the Szczecin Maritime Office and the aforementioned Forwarding Society created conditions for the implementation of detailed lease agreements. The Czechoslovak side obtained the right to use the water areas 35m wide and adjacent to the quays. The rent and payment terms were also established. All port fees due from sea-going ships and goods on those ships in the port of Szczecin were to be collected by the Polish side. The lessee, on the other hand, was entitled to set and collect fees for the use of the Czechoslovakia region by third parties. Detailed agreements were also to define the investment plans that the lessee should implement. The Polish party was responsible for the economic infrastructure i.e. road and rail communication facilities, water supply, sewage and electricity networks.²³

Meanwhile, work on the construction of the Czechoslovakia region, and thus its release to the Czechoslovak side, dragged on in time. As part of the reconstruction, the wharf, warehouses and transshipment facilities were renovated, port basins were cleaned of shipwrecks and debris, roads and flyovers as well as communication infrastructure were repaired.²⁴ On 11 August 1951, the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Poland adopted a resolution on the Regulations for the Czechoslovak Region in the Port of Szczecin.²⁵ The area was partially handed over for use in 1952, which was preceded by talks in which the Czechoslovak side was represented by consul Jan

23 SAS SMO, ref. no. 108, 16–16, Agreement on the establishment of a telephone and telegraph cable connection between the port of Szczecin and Czechoslovakia, Warsaw, 2 September 1948.

24 AMZV Zastupitelský Úřad Polsko 1945–1955 (hereinafter AMZV ZÚ Polsko) carton 129, Report of the CSR Consulate General in Szczecin, Szczecin, 11 October 1949; Ryszard Łangowski and Henryk Salmonowicz, "Gospodarka morska w estuarium Odry," in: *Dzieje Szczecina*, vol. 4: 1945–1990, eds. Tadeusz Białecki and Zygmunt Silski (Szczecin: Wydawnictwo "13 Muz," 1998), 308–309; Szczepańska, "Rejon," 50–59.

25 SAS S-SPA, ref. no. 1177, 53–58.

Stareček and the Polish side by Jan Biliński.²⁶ Ultimately, the area was released to the Czechoslovak side in 1953, while in 1952 the first ships moored to the quay.²⁷

As agreed, the administration and operation of the region was carried out by the “Mettrans” company until the end of 1955. From the beginning of its operation, there were problems with exploiting the full potential of the region. Likewise, the level of Czechoslovak trade through the port of Szczecin did not inspire optimism. A significant obstacle to the development of trade was the shortage of storage space in the port of Szczecin.²⁸ “Mettrans” also pointed out other difficulties related to transport through Poland such as high reloading costs compared to German ports, high surcharges to ocean rates, low frequency and regularity of line ships departures. Szczecin was an important port for handling bulk goods, and to a much lesser extent general cargo, and could not boast of a sufficient number of connections with other ports of the world, nor did it have the appropriate warehouses, lifting or transport equipment.²⁹

Economic cooperation in the port area, although not without difficulties, continued to develop, and Czechoslovakia was the main transit contractor for the port of Szczecin. The Czechoslovak transit in Polish ports increased from 0.8 million tonnes to 2.7 million tonnes in the first half of the 1950s and the exchange of transport services became an important element of the payment balance.³⁰ The lease of the duty-free zone in the port of Szczecin lasted until 13 January 1956 when a new communication system was signed along with the Protocol on the takeover of the Czechoslovak region (in fact, it happened on 1 January) by the Szczecin Port Authority. There was a merger into a unified communication, technological and organisational system with the constructed “Ewa” area. It was economic reasons that decided to hand over the Czechoslovakia region to Poland for financial compensation.³¹ The Polish side under-

26 SAS S-SPA, ref. no. 1177, 59, Instructions of the Undersecretary of State in the Ministry of Shipping of 18 January 1952, also, the minutes of the conference on cooperation between “Mettrans” and S-SPA April-May 1952; Ibid, ref. no. 871, Cooperation with the Czechoslovak Joint Stock Company “Mettrans” in 1952.

27 Kazimierz Czaplinski, Jan Chabowski and January Buksak, “Działalność inwestycyjna PRL w Porcie Szczecińskim,” in: *Port Szczeciński. Dzieje i rozwój do 1970 r.*, ed. Bronisław Dziedziul (Warszawa-Poznań: PWN, 1975), 160–166.

28 SAS S-SPA file ref. 876, Confidential letter of the Head of the Operational Service of 30 November 1950.

29 AMFA, fond 7, bundle 49, folder 454, 26–30, Report of the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Prague for March 1949. For more on the exploitation of the Czechoslovak region, see: Techman, “Tranzyt czechosłowacki,” 242.

30 Bohumil Lehár, “Stosunki gospodarcze PRL–CSRS w latach 1945–1975,” in: *Stosunki polsko-czechosłowackie a rewolucje ludowo-demokratyczne*, ed. Wiesław Balcerak (Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków: Ossolineum 1980), 194.

31 Národní Archiv, Úřad předsednictva vlády – tajná spisovna, tajná spisovna, 16.33.1–75, carton 2031, Information from Minister David on the agreement of 13 January 1956; *Umowy graniczne PRL*, ed. Franciszek Jarzyna (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Prawnicze, 1974), 314–321; Władysław Gnat and

took to create the best possible conditions for the use of the port by Czechoslovak sea ships. On the other hand, ships with the Czechoslovak flag could use Polish seaports as their shipping and technical base. Both sides ensured the right to use inland waterway transport for shipping companies. They also undertook to improve rail connections in transit communication.

The takeover of the Czechoslovak region did not mean the end of the cooperation between the two states in the port of Szczecin as Czechoslovak transit grew and this trend continued until 1965 making Czechoslovakia the largest transit contractor and an important factor in the development of the port and Polish-Czechoslovak economic contacts. After the modernisation of the Czechoslovak Quay in 1956, it became one of the best general cargo handling facilities in the Szczecin-Świnoujście Port Complex.

In order to improve Czechoslovak transit and encourage it to develop, new investments were announced in the port of Szczecin. It was hoped that imports of Czechoslovak transit goods would increase by 85% and exports by 15%. Unfortunately, the Czechoslovak side had numerous reservations about the shortcomings in the operation of the port such as the lack of reloading space at the quays, a small number of employees in the port, few regular shipping lines, poor connections between Szczecin and the Far East and delayed delivery of carriages by the Polish Railway.³²

The deterioration of transit cooperation was already visible in 1962. Czechoslovak transit became less attractive to the Port Authority. The Polish party terminated the agreement on the payment of fees for the transport of Czechoslovak goods by Polish ships to European ports.³³ In 1963, difficulties in agreeing on the conditions on which the transit was to take place caused serious problems in cooperation and resulted in interruption of negotiations between the Ministry of Shipping of CSSR and the Ministry of Shipping of the Polish People's Republic. The Czechoslovak side did not want to agree to any changes in the rates or terms of payment for sea freight to be made before 1 January 1964. The serious threat of lowering the balance of services in Polish ports made it impossible to settle the payments for 1963 and resulted in signing the communication protocol with a delay i.e. on 24 August due to the conditions of the Polish side demanding an increase in foreign currency fees for sea transport and an increase in fees for the use of Polish ports.³⁴ The Czechoslovak side, on the other hand, threatened to move its transit to the Yugoslav and German ports.

Stanisław Sala, "Obroty ładunkowe i ruch statków w Porcie Szczecińskim w latach 1945–1970," in: *Port Szczeciński*, 335.

32 *Kurier Szczeciński*, 27/02/1958.

33 AMZV, TO Polsko 1960–1964, carton 1, Report of the CSSR consulate in Szczecin on the fulfilment of the Czechoslovak transit plan through Polish seaports in 1962, 5 April 1963.

34 AMZV, TO Polsko 1960–1964, carton 1, Report of the CSR consulate in Szczecin on the Czechoslovak transit through Polish seaports in 1963, 20 March 1964.

In the late 1960s, the port of Szczecin handled 25% of Czechoslovak foreign trade by sea and on 28 January 1970, the transshipment of the 50th million tonne of Czechoslovak goods transported in transit through the port of Szczecin was rightly celebrated. The importance of Szczecin for the Czechoslovak merchant fleet was mentioned in the press interview given by Antonín Gregor, CSSR ambassador in Warsaw, who attended the ceremony.³⁵ Despite such symbolic gestures, the already-signalled problems that effectively hindered the transit of Czechoslovak goods through Polish ports remained unsolved also in the 1970s. The Czechoslovak side unsuccessfully pointed out the lack of railway carriages and the fact that the tonnage of the Polish sea fleet did not meet the needs of transporting Czechoslovak goods. Problems were also caused by the method of currency settlements of Polish transit through the territory of the CSSR.³⁶ The Polish side saw the need to change the transit policy towards the Czechoslovak partner, the aim of which was to increase communication and transit cooperation. The aforementioned problems and the lack of acceptance of the proposed terms by Prague led to a crisis in the early 1970s. Transport contracts and agreements were not signed, and full tariff rates and service charges were introduced. As a consequence, Polish ports were losing their position as the most important partner for Czechoslovak transit which was moved to the ports of East Germany, Yugoslavia, the USSR, Bulgaria and Hamburg. From then on, it was Hamburg and Rostock, with their technical and organisational capabilities, that were to take over the role that Szczecin had played for Czechoslovak sea transit. This situation lasted until the late 1980s, when 24.3% was handled in the Szczecin-Świnoujście Port Complex, which was due to more favourable financial conditions offered to Czechoslovak forwarders than in the case of services in other ports.³⁷ The favourable financial conditions offered to the Czechoslovak side with the low quality of the services provided, allowed the port of Szczecin to maintain Czechoslovak transit; however, no investments in the port infrastructure and, on the other hand, the construction of communication routes – road and rail from Scandinavia to southern Europe and from Rostock to Prague and Bratislava – were potential threats to the position of Szczecin as a convenient transit port.

35 *Kurier Szczeciński*, 28/01/1970; *Kurier Szczeciński* 1/03/1970; Interview with Ambassador Antonín Gregor held at the Decade of Czechoslovak Culture organised on 1–10 March. NA ČR, ÚV KSČ 1945–1989,

36 Kancelář generálního tajemníka Gustáva Husáka, carton 422, Information on the management of freight carries of the Common Freight Car Pool in the Polish railway network, appendix to the Information of the State Planning Commission on Czechoslovakia-Polish economic relations, January 1971. AMFA, Department I, 4/79, v. 2, Information materials from the party and professional meeting held at the Embassy on 26 November 1975, Prague, 4 December 1975. Current problems of trade and Polish-Czechoslovak economic and scientific-technical cooperation.

37 Techman, “Tranzyt czechosłowacki,” 258–267. As Techman notes, in 1976, Szczecin lost its place as the most important port for Czechoslovak transit. In the port of Szczecin-Świnoujście, the Czechoslovak transit in 1970 amounted to 2,131,000 tonnes and in 1979 it fell to 1,501,000 tonnes.

Czechoslovak graduates of Szczecin's maritime schools

One of the less known and researched aspects of the Czechoslovak presence in Szczecin is the training of seafarers in the maritime schools of Szczecin. Meanwhile, as Lenka Krátká, who interviewed former Czechoslovak sailors, recalls that in her conversations with them sooner or later there was a mention of sea shipping in Poland, not only because Gdynia, Gdańsk and Szczecin served as “native” ports for Czechoslovak ships but also because many seamen, especially officers and captains, were graduates of the State Maritime School and the Maritime School of Higher Education in Szczecin.³⁸

Integration of Szczecin with Poland also took place at the level of culture and education created in Western Pomerania, including maritime education providing training for seafarers for Polish shipping. The political will in this matter, already declared at the end of 1945, was realised in 1946 when Capt. Konstanty Maciejewicz was entrusted with putting together a team of people responsible for creating the infrastructure necessary to open the school located at ul. Piastów 19. In this difficult post-war reality, it was even more challenging to provide students with a qualified group of educators and administrative staff of the State Maritime School.³⁹ The first academic year at the State Maritime School in Szczecin began on 5 November 1947 and already among its first students were Czechoslovak students. Obviously, the provincial authorities supported this form of Polish-Czechoslovak cooperation and during his visit to Prague, Szczecin provincial governor, Leonard Borkowicz, promised to award five three-year-long scholarships at the Szczecin State Maritime School to Czechoslovak students.⁴⁰

38 Lenka Krátká writes more on this in an article which was written thanks to the use of the oral history method based on interviews with seventeen Czechoslovak sailors. As in the monograph published a few years later, the author in the first part of the article discussed the historical and methodological part, then presented fragments of conversations and memories of seafarers, often including personal and family threads, Lenka Krátká, “Byłem ciekawy,” 187–204; eadem, Domovský, 183–229. A new approach to the issue was presented by the author in the article “Czechoslovak Seafarers’ Memories of Polish Ports as their «Second Home» during the State Socialism Period (1949–1989)” in which she used not only the aforementioned interviews with seafarers but also, based on archival sources, showed the place of Szczecin in the official policy of the communist authorities in Prague and in the activities of the Czechoslovak secret police, see: Krátká, “Czechoslovak Seafarers’ Memories” 38–45.

39 For more on the organisation and provision of maritime education in Szczecin in the first post-war years, see Techman, “Pierwsze,” 15–40.

40 *Dziennik Zachodni*, 19/04/1948. In August 1948, provincial governor Leonard Borkowicz requested the chairman of the Provincial National Council in Brno to select five candidates for studies at the State Maritime School in Szczecin and, with some delay, he received a reply in October with an attached list of candidates, AP Szczecin, Urząd Wojewódzki Szczeciński, ref. no. 142, 31–43, letter from the chairman of the Provincial National Council in Brno to L. Borkowicz, Brno 7 October 1948.

Czechoslovak sailors and ship captains were educated at many schools of the Eastern Bloc countries, including Gdynia and Szczecin.⁴¹ One of the first Czechoslovak shipping captains educated after World War Two was Antonín Fojtů, who graduated from the State Maritime School in Szczecin.⁴² The memoirs he published describe the Szczecin School and its first head, Jerzy Maciejewicz. The author recalls his studies as a very good time for learning, working and making friends, thus he reflects the atmosphere that prevailed at the school in the first years of operation of maritime higher education in Szczecin. And literally, because Fojtů graduated from the State Maritime School in 1950, therefore he remembers how the school infrastructure was built. He recalls with nostalgia the uniforms and sailor's hats with the name of the school on; he remembers the school's duty hours, morning gymnastics and the legendary annual balls when the ballroom and other lecture halls were decorated with ornaments resembling the prow of a school sailing ship or port taverns. At the same time, two women studied at the State Maritime School i.e. Danuta Kobylińska and Halina Sobierajska, which Fojtů especially emphasises, thus reflecting the atmosphere created by head Maciejewicz who was favourable to students and who looked after young people who had experienced war in a way contrary to the ideological and political conditions of the Stalinist period.⁴³ Also Eugeniusz Daszkowski and Milan Rusňák, the captain who sailed many Czechoslovak ships, including MS "Blaník" built in Szczecin, which he commanded in the years 1969–1970 while sailing the Szczecin-Cuba line.⁴⁴ During the interview with Lenka Krátka, Rusňák admitted that during his stay in Szczecin he received a solid classic education for which he thanked the Poles very much. He found the studies

41 In addition to Polish maritime schools, the commanders of the Czechoslovak fleet graduated from universities in Varna, Odessa, Leningrad, Kaliningrad, Rostock, and also in Yugoslavia – in Bakar and Dubrovnik. In the years 1975–1989, 168 graduates from Czechoslovakia graduated from maritime schools, 153 of whom started working on ČNP ship, Bastl, *Námořní školy*, accessed 6 July 2022, <http://www.bastl.cz/cnp/2436.html>.

42 Antoni Fojtů, *Moře milované, moře proklínane*, part I i II (Praha, Mare-Czech, 2006). Parts of those memoirs devoted to studies at the State Maritime School were published at *Námořní školy*, <http://www.bastl.cz/cnp/2436.html>. Fojtů graduated from the Szczecin school in 1950. He was the captain of, among others, MS "Republika I" together with Capt. Milan Rusňák, also one of the first Czechoslovak students in Szczecin: "Absolwenci szkół morskich w Szczecinie," in: *Szkolnictwo morskie Szczecina*, Annex II, Wykazy Urzędowe.

43 For more on the teaching staff, students and the operation of the State Maritime School in its first years, see Eugeniusz A., Daszkowski, "Moja szkoła morska na Piastów," in: *Szkolnictwo morskie Szczecina*, 41–52. Daszkowski, like Fojtů, graduated from the Navigation Department of the State Maritime School in Szczecin in 1950, and what is more, they remembered similar events and the atmosphere of their student years.

44 One of the first graduates of the Szczecin school were Antoni Kantner and Jaroslav Putna, see: Captain M. Rusňák's memoirs on Captain Jan Hekel and his meeting in Szczecin with a friend from Pula, *Antoni Ledóchowski professor of the State Maritime School*, accessed 20 July 2022, www.namorniplayba.cz/cnp/363.html.

very demanding but also giving a sense of uniqueness and elitism.⁴⁵ According to the findings of the Czech researcher, Szczecin was perceived by Czechoslovak sailors as their home port, almost a second home, from which they set off on long journeys and which they called at on their way back home.⁴⁶ They experienced kindness in Szczecin, felt comfortable in that port city which was struggling with problems similar to those that Czechoslovak sailors experienced themselves as citizens of a socialist country. The feeling of closeness was facilitated by linguistic and cultural similarities.

It is difficult to determine exactly how many graduates of Szczecin maritime schools were citizens of Czechoslovakia without a query in the Archives of the Maritime University of Szczecin, where only a few personal files of students containing their CVs, personal questionnaires, secondary school-leaving certificates and final examination records have survived.⁴⁷ In the appendix to the book *Szkolnictwo morskie Szczecina*, cited in the footnote, there is a list of graduates but due to the often Polish-language spelling of surnames and their wording, it is difficult to say which of the graduates came from Czechoslovakia.⁴⁸

After the liquidation of the Czechoslovak sea fleet, which was first a victim of coupon privatisation and then a series of transformations into subsidiaries that successively sold the ČNP assets in the form of ships (the last of them, MS “Jan Želivský,” was sold in 1998), a large number of employees, including highly qualified ship captains, became unemployed and lost their main source of income.⁴⁹ After 1998, the Mare-Czech publishing house published fifteen diaries of members of Czechoslovak crews occupying various levels of the service hierarchy from the engine room, through deck personnel, doctors to ship captains, who recalled with nostalgia their professional experiences, unforgettable cruises and daily struggles on ships. Among them were the memories of one of the first graduates of the State Maritime School in Szczecin, Antoni Fojtů and Vlastislav Ringel, member of the on-board staff of several ships built at the Adolf Warski Szczecin Shipyard and Pavel Braňka, and the cook who recalled his stay in Szczecin, which, to his surprise, turned out to be a river port, not a seaport.⁵⁰

45 Krátká, “Byłem ciekawy,” 196.

46 Krátká, “Czechoslovak Seafarers’ Memories,” 38–41.

47 Such documents make up the file of Milan Rusňák, graduate of the State Maritime School from 1950. Information obtained on the basis of e-mail correspondence with employees of the Archives of the Maritime University in Szczecin in July 2022.

48 “Absolwenci szkół morskich w Szczecinie,” in: *Szkolnictwo morskie Szczecin*, Annex II.

49 See: Bastl, *Padesát*, 11–12, 149.

50 Antoni Fojtů, *Moře*; Vlastislav Ringel, *Vůně a krása okamžiku. Šťastný čtyřlístek Blaník, Sitno, Radhošť, Kriváň* (Praha; Mare-Czech, 2014); Jaroslav Pacovský, *Mořští vlci na Blaníku* (Praha: Albatros, 1976); Pavel Braňka, *Kuchařem na lodích Československé Plavby – kniha I. Od kuchtíka k šéfkuchařovi* (Praha: Mare-Czech, 2012). For more on Czechoslovak sailors’ diaries, literature on the subject and propaganda films, see Krátká, *Československý*, 183–229.

Czechoslovak sea fleet

Since granting the duty-free zone to Czechoslovakia in Hamburg and Szczecin in 1919, the country, through private entrepreneurs such as Baťa, began operating ships for which Prague was the home port. After World War Two, in 1951, shipping was taken over by “Metrans,” which, following discussions with the Greek consul in Marseille, purchased the ship manufactured in the UK called MS “Republika I,” originally named MS “Evanthia,” for 10.2 million crowns which was initially intended to develop trade with the Far East and later with Cuba. The CSR sea fleet activity certainly served the implementation of the economic interests of the country and brought profits, but in the centrally controlled economy, political and party interests as well as international conditions were also important as evidenced by the type of cargo transported e.g. arms or strong ties with the People’s Republic of China after signing in 1952–1953 agreements that allowed China to maintain a merchant fleet under the Czechoslovak flag.⁵¹ From 1959, the Czechoslovak Ocean Shipping company was engaged in the operation of ships as an international joint-stock company. The Czechoslovak side, taking advantage of the state monopoly on foreign trade by educating its citizens in socialist countries and employing its own ship’s crews and by purchasing ships mainly in socialist countries, was able to obtain a double reimbursement of the cost of their purchase within 15 years of operating the ships.⁵² Apart from Polish Ocean Lines in Gdynia, Polsteam in Szczecin was one of the shipowners providing commercial transport to Czechoslovakia. Soon, in 1962, Szczecin and the Adolf Warski Szczecin Shipyard also

51 Krátká, *Československý*, 17. The author presents new views on the operation of the Czechoslovak fleet and puts forward the thesis that its reconstruction after World War Two had strong political conditions resulting from the Czechoslovak communists’ efforts to strengthen their position in relation to Moscow and the Eastern Bloc. However, over time it turned out that Czechoslovak shipping was able to bring financial benefits. Loosening cooperation with China, establishment and operation of the ČNP enterprise, purchase of new ships and good management of the company led to record profits in the 1970s and brought the economy an inflow of convertible currencies, cf. Krátká, *Československý*, 54–55, 235–237. Until 1960, the joint Sino-Czechoslovak fleet consisted of seven ships, the crews of which were mixed Sino-Czechoslovakia and Czechofracht dealt with forwarding and transport, see: Krátká, *Československý*, 54–55. Krátká refers to materials in the unfinished fonds of the Ministry of Foreign Trade at the National Archives in Prague. After the purchase of MS “Republika I,” which, according to the author, was a cover for the development of cooperation with China; the next ship was bought by Czechoslovakia only in 1959, and the Czechoslovak Ocean Shipping, established in the same year, was a company owned by Czechoslovakia in 51% while the remaining shares belonged to Beijing. Cooperation with China was being limited from the beginning of the 1960s and officially ended in 1967. During the period of strengthening Sino-Czechoslovak cooperation in 1953, the Polish side offered Prague participation in the Chinese-Polish Enterprise of Shipbrokers but Czechoslovakia rejected such an unprofitable proposal – high shipping rates three times higher than on world markets – for fear that it would be the weaker party to the project because of an inadequate fleet at that time and it would be forced to co-finance the partners’ fleet, see: Bastl, *Padesát*, 9, 15–16.

52 *Stručný přehled vývoje námorní dopravy v Československu a České republice*, accessed 20 April 2020, www.namorniplavba.cz/cnp/121.html; Techman, “Udział,” 47.

became the place of ship production for Czechoslovakia. The first ship was flagged in March 1964 – B512 MS “Republika II,” the next was the twin “Brno,” launched in 1965 which sailed mostly to Cuba and Iraq. In 1967, MS “Blaník” was launched, which until 1990 was used to develop trade in goods with Cuba but it also sailed with general cargo and iron to India. MS “Sitno” put into service in 1969 was the last ship to be produced in the 1960s. In the next decade, the importance of the Szczecin shipbuilding industry increased with shipyards building or repairing ships for the Czechoslovak shipowner.⁵³ In 1970, the general cargo vessels MS “Radhošť” and MS “Křiváň” were put into operation. The latter, which transported bauxite from India to Poland, also sailed to Iraq with general cargo, took soybean meal from Barcelona to Tripoli and throughout its lifetime earned its fivefold value. In 1972, MS “Praha” sailed with its first transport from Newfoundland to the USA, serving both the CSSR fleet and a foreign shipowner. In 1974, a highly-automated ship MS “Bratislava” was built in the Szczecin shipyard, initially rented, sailed between Europe and South America and its Polish equipment during the ship’s lifetime had to be changed to Norwegian automation, which turned out to be more reliable. Using the experience of MS “Bratislava,” its twin ship MS “Třinec” launched in 1975 was immediately equipped, among many, with devices manufactured by a Swedish company Jengner, which lowered their failure rate compared to those installed by the Polish manufacturer in older vessels. The ship was operated for several years in South America under a three-year contract and transported iron ore and steel industry products. As the entire loading area was not used, a tennis court and a football pitch were installed in the remaining rooms. One of the last ships built at Adolf Warski Szczecin Shipyard was the MS “Danube” which sailed in the years 1989–1997 and was used to transport containers and bulk cargo. Already during the design phase, it underwent major changes to its construction such as adjusting cargo spaces, introducing changes to the split stern superstructure, installing an integrated automation system with a computer and satellite communication and four 25-tonne on-board cranes for loading and unloading containers. The sister and the last ship to be built in Szczecin for a CSSR shipowner was MS “Łaba,” put into service in 1989, which was part of the Czechoslovak sea fleet until it was sold to a Dutch shipowner in 1997.⁵⁴

53 AMZV, TO-T Polsko 1970–1974, carton 3, Embassy information about F. Vacuik and J. Pospíšil’s visit to Szczecin to celebrate hoisting the flag on the mast of the MS “Praha” ship, Szczecin, 27 June 1972. On 4 June 1972, the seventh ship for Czechoslovakia, MS “Praha,” was launched. The ceremony in Szczecin was attended by the delegation from Prague – the embassy representative and the consul. Warski’s Shipyard had been building ships since 1963/1964, when MS “Republika II” was built for the Czechoslovak Ocean Shipping. Szczecin press published reportage from every launching ceremony for ships built at the Warski Szczecin Shipyard, “Warski buduje statki dla Czechosłowacji,” *Kurier Szczeciński*, 14 June 1972. More on this topic: Techman, “Udział,” 55–58.

54 *Historie ČNP*, accessed 13 June 2021, www.namorniplavba.cz/cnp/35315.html; also namornidenik.cz website with an encyclopedia of terminology, artifacts and photos and videos from cruises by members of the ship’s crews.

The holds of Czechoslovak ships often carried weapons for the so-called third world countries whose regimes were generously supported by Moscow. Czechoslovak or Soviet weapons, through the CSSR, were sent to India, Iraq, Syria, and North Yemen. In the years 1970–1990, Czechoslovakia was one of the five largest suppliers of weapons to Iraq, while Poland was the fourth. Although the logs on board lack data or provide only partial information on this subject, one can learn that the MS “Kladno” transported explosives from the port of Szczecin to Cuba.⁵⁵

Another well-known practice was the black market trade the seafarers were engaged in. Czechoslovak sailors bought alcohol in Szczecin’s “Baltona,” which, apart from wigs, Crimplene, razor blades, perfumes and clothes bought in Germany, were smuggled on ships and sold at a profit, for example in Cuba and India. It was not always possible to smuggle goods across the border and in such cases seafarers were detained and goods were requisitioned as happened in 1975 with the crews of the MS “Blaník” sailing from Szczecin to Cuba or with the MS “Mír II.”⁵⁶

Activities of the Consulate General of Czechoslovakia in Szczecin

In order to secure the economic interests of Czechoslovakia on the Polish coast, the consulate general of this country was established in 1949 and Szczecin was chosen as its seat even though at that time it seemed more convenient to locate it in Gdańsk or Gdynia. Giving the highest rank of general representation to a consular office not inhabited by many Czechs and Slovaks seems to have a political dimension and serve to emphasise, on the one hand, the affiliation of Szczecin to Poland, and on the other hand, the importance of the city in bilateral economic relations.

On 17 January 1949, the exequatur of the President of the Republic of Poland was granted to the first Consul General of the CSR in Szczecin, Adolf Kania, a doctor of law, who spoke Polish, was familiar with Polish literature and was well versed in economic issues, which was important due to the plans to create a Czechoslovak duty-free zone and the need to protect economic interests.⁵⁷ Therefore, the Ambassador of Czechoslovakia František Pišek, visiting Szczecin on 21–22 August 1949, recommended increasing employment and allocating more funds to the needs of the consulate.⁵⁸

55 Krátká, *Československý*, 122–123. The author found the resources of unfinished archival fonds in the National Archives in Prague – Czechoslovak Ocean Shipping, logbook of MS “Kladno,” No. 15 of 1964.

56 Krátká, *Československý*, 127–128.

57 Techman, “Adolf Kania,” 147–167; idem “Czechosłowacka sieć,” 145–168.

58 AMZV, TO Polsko 1945–1959, carton 1, č. 1, Report of the Embassy CSR in Warsaw to the MZV on a business trip to Szczecin and Gdańsk.

The consulate did not focus its activities on the implementation of the protective function due to the small number of Czechs and Slovaks living in the consular district. According to the data included in the list of foreigners residing in Szczecin of 27 September 1945, only fourteen of them – nine men and five women – lived there.⁵⁹ A small group, nine people, of Czechoslovak citizens lived in the vicinity of Gorzów Wielkopolski, Drezdenko, Wałcz, Lębork, Dolice and Chojna.⁶⁰ Consulate employees looked after a growing group of fitters, “Spedrapid” or “Metrans” employees as well as holidaymakers resting at the Baltic seaside and children resting in summer camps.⁶¹

Once a month, consulate employees met with employees of Czechoslovak companies employed in the consular district, took care of their living conditions and – to an equally high degree – their ideological training and participation in cultural events.⁶² From the beginning of their work in Szczecin, the consuls underlined good contacts with the local authorities, as well as with the authorities of the provinces in the consular district: Gdańsk, Koszalin, Poznań and Zielona Góra, with whom they met during their business trips.⁶³ Permanent contacts with representatives of provincial and municipal authorities in the district, as well as with consuls of the USSR, constituted the basic source of information on the situation in Poland and the region, apart from, of course, media reports.

In 1951, commission letters were received by Jan Stareček, an employee of the Witkowice plant, party and trade union activist, and from 1950 employed with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Prague.⁶⁴ His appointment to replace the educated and economically-knowledgeable Adolf Kania was a clear manifestation of the ideologisation of the foreign policy of Czechoslovakia and the entire Eastern Bloc. Successively in the Stalinist period, the Czechoslovak consular post in Szczecin carried out more and more political, information and propaganda activities. Consulate employees organised

59 SAS, City Board and the City National Council 1945–1950 (hereinafter CBCNC in Szczecin), ref. no. 149.

60 AMZV, Konzulární odbor (hereinafter AMZV KO) 1945–1959, carton 187, Reports of the CSR Consulate General in Szczecin of 10 and 21 June 1951.

61 APS, CBCNC in Szczecin, ref. no. 149, List of foreigners residing in Szczecin of 27 September 1945; AMZV, KO 1945–1959, carton 187, Report of the Consulate General in Szczecin of 10 and 21 June 1951; ZÚ Polsko, carton 90, Letter from the Consulate General in Szczecin to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Foreign Trade in Prague of 17 April 1954 regarding flats for the heads of “Spedrapid.”

62 AMZV, Teritoriální odbor-obyčejné (hereinafter TO-O) Polsko 1945–1959, carton 2, Report of the CSR Embassy in Warsaw to the MZV of 3 July 1953.

63 AMZV, TO-O Polsko 1945–1959, carton 2, Report of the CSR CG in Szczecin on the implementation of the plan for the second quarter of 1952; AMZV, TO-O Polsko 1945–1959, carton 5, Report of the consul in Szczecin on a trip to the Gdańsk Province, 12 October 1960.

64 AMZV, DP 1945–1959, carton 14, Consular Commission for J. Stareček; AMZV, ZÚ Polsko, carton 132, Report of the CSR CG on the farewell dinner in connection with the departure and completion of the Stareček’s mission, Szczecin, 18 November 1955.

many cyclical, occasional events devoted to Polish-Czechoslovak and Polish-Soviet friendship, anniversaries of the liberation of Czechoslovakia by the Red Army or the anniversary of the creation of the Czechoslovak army. They also took part in many local celebrations organised by the authorities of Szczecin and provinces located in the consular district, theatre performances and concerts, May Day parades and events held during the Sea Days in Szczecin and Gdańsk.

However, the most important area of activity of the consulate in Szczecin were economic interests in the port and those related to shipping on the Oder River. Consulate employees watched over the proper course of the transit of goods through ports, supervised the construction and operation of the Czechoslovak region, cooperated and supported the activities of shipping and communication companies operating in the consular district and looked after Czechoslovak employees. Unfortunately, the actions taken to implement the concluded agreements were often perceived by Polish local authorities as interference in the work of the port administration. This is one of the reasons why consular officials critically assessed the work of the Port Authority and the discriminatory treatment of the Czechoslovak quay, which, in their opinion, resulted in delays in unloading goods. In 1953, a Czechoslovak consul protest in 1953 was triggered by the decision of the Minister of Finance of the People's Republic of Poland to pay the turnover tax for the use of the "Ewa" wharf. Finally, the consulate was concerned about the insufficient use of transshipment and transit capacities on the Czechoslovak quay, bureaucratic procedures and the efforts of the Polish side to limit the influence of CSR on the activities of the Czechoslovak region.⁶⁵

The hope for a solution to problems in cooperation in the port area was associated with the appointment of Václav Macura, graduate of an industrial school, former employee of the Ministry of Trade and a foreign trade enterprise, as consul in Szczecin (in September 1955), whose competences could help protect the economic interests of the CSR. Meanwhile, the consul faced completely new challenges caused by the liquidation of the Czechoslovak region and the need to secure economic interests.⁶⁶

Due to the location of the consular district covering part of the Baltic Coast, the specific nature of the care functions of the consulate in Szczecin consisted in taking care of persons temporarily staying in Poland on holiday or of Czechoslovak seafarers. Consular employees visited crews of ships anchored in Polish ports in Szczecin, Gdynia or Gdańsk, supervised the employment of ship crews, extended the validity of on-board books and assisted in the efficient customs clearance of crews departing to the

65 AMZV, TO-T Polsko 1945–1959, carton 2, Report of the Czechoslovak Embassy in Warsaw on consultations with consuls on 26 September 1953.

66 AMZV, DP 1945–1959, carton 14, Consular patent and commission letter for V. Macura; Information on the course of the reception, 9 May 1956, Szczecin, May 15, 1956; Information of the CSR CG in Szczecin on social contacts in September 1956, Szczecin, 4 October 1956.

CSSR.⁶⁷ With regard to the holidaymakers resting at the Polish seaside, support was provided to people who fell ill, were robbed or did not have proper living conditions during their vacation. What is more, consular employees oversaw people who were engaged in cultural and ministerial exchanges. The largest group of holidaymakers participated in trips organised by the Čedok travel agency, then by young people associated in the Czechoslovak Youth Union. The consulate called for detailed information about the dates of stay in order to be able to provide proper care and plan visits to places where the holidaymakers were staying.⁶⁸ Consul Macura personally welcomed the first group of holidaymakers who came to Darłowo and checked the conditions of stay and accommodation, which was an act of extraordinary dedication considering the modest staffing of the consulate, employing three people, including only one with diplomatic status.⁶⁹ The Poznań International Fair and the Sea Days celebrations were an opportunity for many meetings with Polish and foreign representatives in the district under the authority of the Szczecin facility. Especially the participation in an event such as the fair created an opportunity for the consul to meet with representatives of Western countries and not only with delegations from the USSR, Bulgaria and the GDR, and with the authorities of Poznań.⁷⁰ An important form of work were social contacts developed during annual parties on the anniversary of the liberation of Czechoslovakia and cyclical cultural events such as the Days of Culture or the Decade of Czechoslovak Culture. A festival of Czechoslovak films was organised in Świnoujście and scientific conferences devoted to Polish-Czechoslovak relations were held at the Institute for Western Affairs in Poznań.⁷¹

The challenge for the Czechoslovak foreign service in 1968 was to counteract the negative assessment of the situation during the Prague Spring, which was maintained by the PZPR management. What is more, it was necessary to take steps to change the attitude of public opinion in Poland subjected to the propaganda of the authorities and the media subordinate to them.⁷² Consul Alois Tvardík felt reserved in personal con-

67 AMZV, KO 1955–1964, carton 36, Report of the Consulate General of the CSSR in Szczecin for the first half of 1961.

68 AMZV, KO 1955–1964, carton 36, Report of the Consulate General of the CSSR in Szczecin for the second half of 1960.

69 AMZV, DP 1955–1964 – secret, carton 10, Social contacts of the CSR Consulate General in Szczecin for May 1959.

70 AMZV, DP 1955–1964 – secret, carton 10, Report of the Consulate General of the CSR in Szczecin for June 1959.

71 AMZV, TO Polsko 1960–1964, carton 3, Report on the celebration of the 16th anniversary of the liberation of Czechoslovakia, 3 June 1961; AMZV, TO Polsko 1960–1964, carton 3, Report of the Consulate General of the CSSR in Szczecin on the celebration of the anniversary of the liberation of CSSR, Szczecin, 5 May 1961.

72 AMZV, TO-T Polsko 1965–1969, carton 9, Work plan of the CSSR CG in Szczecin for the second half of 1968, Szczecin on 18 July 1968.

tacts with party officials and the editors of “Kurier Szczeciński” and “Głos Szczeciński” who, according to the consul, stopped publications on Czechoslovakia. On 23 August, a delegation of Czechoslovak workers employed in the city, accompanied by the consul general Tvardík himself, went to the PZPR Provincial Committee in Szczecin to submit a letter of protest against the unlawful intervention. Faced with the refusal to accept the letter, it was sent by post to the PZPR Provincial Committee and the Provincial National Council, but no written reply was received. When confronted with the position of the local authorities, the consul assessed the behaviour of common city-dwellers and party activists in a completely different way, who during the conversation with him, in the letters of support sent and during his visit to the consulate, showed support to the Czechs and Slovaks and condemned the intervention against the Prague Spring. Ending his information note sent to the Prague Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the consul gave another example of courage in expressing support for the CSSR, which was the inscription placed on one of Szczecin’s quays frequently visited by residents – “We demand freedom for the CSSR.”⁷³

In October 1968, the exhibition “Graphics from Prague” was opened at the National Museum in Szczecin, which also gained a political dimension precisely due to the evaluation of the processes taking place in Czechoslovakia and, in the consul’s opinion, could contribute to a change of opinion on Czechoslovakia-Polish relations. It is difficult to assess whether this actually happened but the cultural event certainly gave hope to clear the atmosphere of distrust and was a pretext for the consul’s conversation with the First Secretary of the PZPR Provincial Committee, which took place during a football match because Antoni Walaszek did not come to the opening of the exhibition.⁷⁴ The basic tasks that the embassy and consulate in Szczecin faced in the following months were to bring about a further normalisation of relations with Poland on the political, economic, social and cultural levels and to strengthen the position of Czechoslovakia in the Eastern Bloc, which was the implementation of the assumptions adopted in the autumn of 1968 by the authorities of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ) already after the suppression of the Prague Spring.⁷⁵

The events of December 1970 on the Polish coast became the subject of interest of the Czechoslovak authorities not only due to their potential influence on public opinion in the CSSR but also due to economic interests related to transit through the Baltic

73 AMZV, TO-T Polsko 1965–1969, carton 1, Information from the CSSR CG in Szczecin on the position of the Polish authorities and residents of the Szczecin Province on the situation in the CSSR on 21–28 August 1968, Szczecin, 29 August 1968.

74 AMZV, TO-O, 1965–1968, carton 2, Information from the CSSR CG in Szczecin for the MZV in Prague about the exhibition of Czechoslovak graphics in Szczecin, Szczecin, 9 October 1968.

75 AMZV, TO-T 1965–1969, carton 9, Work plan of the CSSR Embassy in the People’s Republic of Poland for the first half of 1969; *ibid.*, Work plan of the CSSR CG in Szczecin for the first half of 1969, Szczecin 22 January 1969.

ports. Based on the analysis of the collected research material, it can be concluded that the main source of information on the situation in Szczecin in December 1970 were reports and information sent by Consul General Alois Tvardík, which then served as a starting point for the preparation of brief notes by the CSSR Embassy in Warsaw and FMZV, passed on to the KSČ Central Committee.⁷⁶ Reading the source makes one reflect on the detailed record of the events that took place on the streets of Szczecin, especially on 17 and 18 December and on the following days, with the exact times, topography of the city, number of participants, time of passage of combat vehicles and tanks used against the demonstrators. The consul made his own observations while walking around the city on 20 December when he also met people calling for support for the strikers. During those days, the Czechoslovak consul was deprived of contact with representatives of the Executive Committee of Provincial National Council, while through the employees of the PZPR Provincial Committee in Szczecin he obtained only general information. However, he remained in constant contact with the USSR consul. The source of information for the consul could have been the Czechoslovak agency operating in Poland and information obtained from the KGB, which is confirmed by the note on the events in Gdańsk provided to G. Husák, the source and author of which are unfortunately unknown. Information on the situation in Poland was diligently followed through the Western media.⁷⁷ The briefing note in question, sent from Szczecin, has the character of a journalistic report and does not contain the standard diplomatic analysis or forecasts of developments. This is somewhat surprising in the context of performing consular functions but it shows the lack of independence in making judgments, especially political ones. On the other hand, the note contains terms that are not to be found in official media reports – strike, strikers' demands or price increases.

In the 1970s, the matters of the maritime economy remained an important aspect of the work of the CSSR CG in Szczecin and the standard functions of the consulate also included the implementation of reporting, propaganda, economic and cultural tasks.⁷⁸ Periodically, every year, events related to the following anniversaries of the liberation of the CSR by the Red Army, the “Victorious February” of 1948 and the presentation of Czech and Slovak cultures were celebrated. Local media were involved in the promotion of these activities – the press, radio and television, Czechoslovak propaganda

76 NA, KSČ ÚV 1945–1989, Kancelář generálního tajemníka Gustáva Husáka, carton 420, Information from the CSSR CG in Szczecin on the reaction of employees of Szczecin workplaces to price changes sent by FMZV to the First Secretary of ÚV KSČ G. Husák, Szczecin 21 December 1970. Two days later the information was passed on to G. Husák; Szczepańska-Dudziak, *Szczecin czechosłowackim oknem*, 141–144.

77 NA, KSČ ÚV 1945–1989, Kancelář generálního tajemníka Gustáva Husáka, carton 428, Note on the events in Gdańsk in December 1970; Extraordinary report of Czechoslovak Radio for G. Husák on the reaction of Western media to the events in Poland on 16–18 December 1970.

78 AMZV, TO-T Polsko 1975–1979, carton 12, Work plan of the CSSR CG in Szczecin for 1977; Szczepańska-Dudziak, *Szczecin czechosłowackim oknem*, 159–172.

materials, film screenings were used, and press conferences were organised. The consuls visited workplaces in Szczecin in person (Warski Shipyard, repair shipyard, Huta Szczecin, Port Authority, Dolna Odra Power Station) and other cities of the consular district. Consulate employees with the support of the Czechoslovak Culture and Information Centre in Warsaw and cultural institutions in Szczecin organised the Day of Culture or the Decade of Czechoslovak Culture.⁷⁹ Cultural events were accompanied by the sale of gifts and Czechoslovak jewellery and folk art as was the case in 1973 in the hall of the Pomeranian Dukes' Castle.⁸⁰ Concerts as part of the Year of Czech Music were held in the halls of the Pomeranian Dukes' Castle and the Philharmonic in Szczecin to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Bedřich Smetana's birthday and the 101st anniversary of Josef Suk's birthday. The music of Czech composers was broadcast on the Szczecin radio station.⁸¹

The activity and the manner of carrying out the tasks of the consular office in Szczecin depended on the low staffing status and support from the CSSR embassy and employees of Czechoslovak shipping and transport companies with their headquarters in Szczecin. It should be remembered that in the mid-1970s, after the administrative reform in Poland, the consular district encompassed 12 Provinces: from Szczecin, Gdańsk and Elbląg to Poznań, Gorzów, Konin, Piła, which entailed the necessity to establish contacts with new authorities, pay periodic visits to the most important city centres, conduct information activities or develop cultural cooperation, social contacts with schools and workplaces. In 1975, the activities of the consulate were almost paralysed, at which time Alois Král had terminated his mission and one of the consular staff, Consul Jan Wróbel, was injured in a car accident and could not perform his duties for over a month. At the same time, Vice-Consul Ladislav Flégr was delegated to work at the Embassy in Warsaw for several months. In January 1976, the head of the mission, Consul General Miroslav Vinš, also came.⁸² At that time, two consular

79 AMZV, TO-T Polsko 1970–1974, carton 10, Report on the meeting of diplomatic employees of the CSSR Embassy in Warsaw, devoted to, inter alia, preparations for the Decade of Czechoslovak Culture and Art, 9 February 1970. Events attended by consul Tvardík were documented by *Kurier Szczeciński* in the issues of 6–7 March and 5 May 1970.

80 AMZV, TO-T Polsko 1970–1974, carton 4, Information of the CG in Szczecin on the Days of Czechoslovak Culture in Poznań and Szczecin, 21 March 1973; AMZV, Dokumentace TO 1945–1989, carton 45, Report of the CSSR CG in Szczecin on the presence of Czechoslovakia issues in the press and regional radio and television stations in the consular district, Szczecin, 28 January 1975. Attention was drawn to 5 reports by an Interpress journalist accredited in Prague which appeared in the *Kurier Szczeciński* and *Głos Szczeciński*. Their substantive and political value was highly appreciated.

81 AMZV, Dokumentace TO 1945–1989, carton 45, Information of the CSSR CG in Szczecin on cultural events organised in the consular district as part of the Year of Czech Music, Szczecin, 17 February 1975.

82 Miroslav Vinš was a consul in Szczecin from January 1976 to April 1980. A pedagogue by education, he started working at MZV in 1956 as a teacher in schools operating at embassies including in the Hague, Moscow and Stockholm. In the years 1961–1963 he worked in the Human Resources

officials were supported by two administrative employees and two local service employees. Often, support also came from less official sources e.g. from the consuls' wives who looked after the garden at the consulate and helped organise meetings to celebrate Czechoslovakia's national holiday, which allowed to save money in the institution's budget. In connection with the drastic increase in rental fees for the consulate building, planned from April 1978, the possibility of constructing its own office with apartments for employees of the consulate and Czechoslovak enterprises – Czechofracht, ČNP, ČSPLO and phytosanitary services was considered.⁸³

The growing crisis in Poland and its manifestations were observed by Czechoslovak diplomats who reported to Prague in July 1980 on deteriorating work discipline and interruptions in manufacturing caused by electricity or raw material cuts. The blame for the decline in agricultural production was put on the private form of land ownership in Poland, the shortages in supply on the market and housing and the responsibility for this state of affairs was placed on the PZPR management with emphasis laid on the negative influence of the Church and the opposition.⁸⁴ The economic crisis and supply shortages also affected the situation of the consulate employees, and the unrest caused by the wave of strikes limited their social contacts. Nevertheless, brief notes were prepared once a week based on the local press and information obtained during meetings with provincial governors, party secretaries, journalists and Security Service (SB) officers. The opinions of people representing other circles were much less frequently referred to.⁸⁵

Consul Vasil Suchý,⁸⁶ who had been in Szczecin for only a few weeks, certainly took over the network of contacts created by his predecessors; however, a few months later

Department and the East European Department of MZV, Jindřich Dejmek, *Diplomacie Československa*, vol. II: *Biografický slovník diplomatů (1918–1992)* (Praha: Academia, 2013), 652.

- 83 AMZV, TO-T Polsko 1975–1979, carton 12, Information on the employment status and activities of the CSSR CG in Szczecin, 19 August 1976; Work plan of the CSSR CG in Szczecin for 1979. That year the budget of CG in Szczecin was 50,000 CZK for social contacts and 92,000 CZK for current expenses.
- 84 AMZV, Dokumentace TO 1945–1989, carton 50, Collection of information on the current situation in the Polish People's Republic, July 1980, August 1, 1980, 21 August. The archival unit in question contains analyses of the situation in Poland from July to October 1980. They were based on reports from the embassy, consulates, *Trybuna Ludu*, but also the West German press: *Die Zeit*, *Die Welt* and BBC broadcasts.
- 85 AMZV, TO-T Polsko 1980–1989, carton 16, Report of the CSSR CG in Szczecin on the political situation in the north-western provinces of Poland after the 7th plenary session of the PZPR Central Committee, Szczecin, 29 December 1980; AMZV, TO-T Polsko 1980–1989, carton 17, Letter from FMZV to the CSSR CG in Szczecin – Assessment of the activities of the consulate in 1980, Prague, 9 February 1981; *Szczepańska-Dudziak, Szczecin czechosłowackim oknem*, 197–223.
- 86 Consul Suchý began his mission in Szczecin in April 1980. He came from a family of Ukrainian farmers and was a teacher and an agricultural engineer by education. From March 1971, he worked at FMZV and held a diplomatic mission in North Korea. On 24 March 1983, he died of a heart attack in Szczecin, see: Dejmek, *Diplomacie*, 588.

there were changes in managerial positions in the PZPR Provincial Committees in the consular district, where nine First Secretaries and six provincial governors out of 12 provinces located within the district lost their jobs. Most of the analysed Czechoslovak sources on the situation in Szczecin and the consular district focused on two issues – the internal party situation in connection with personnel changes in PZPR, the 9th Congress of PZPR and the more widespread practice of handing over party ID cards as well as on the activities of the opposition as seen through the eyes of the security service. However, it should be emphasised that no reports or brief notes sent from Szczecin included assessments of those personnel changes. The information layer was still dominant in the institution's reporting activities. The consul passed on to Prague, among other things, information obtained from the SB deputy commander in Szczecin about possible preparations on the part of the opposition to use force and the eavesdropping techniques used by them. Noteworthy is the information on the lists of "Solidarity" activists prepared by the SB, in the event of the "X" day. As one might guess, it was about a list of opposition activists who were to be arrested. The discussed report of December 1980 includes neither analyses nor in-depth information on the activities of "Solidarity" in Poland and in the region. There was only information about the opposition magazine – "Jedność." The consular reports mentioned the names of Jacek Kuroń, Marian Jurczyk and Leszek Moczulski, but one gets the impression that it was only to discredit them and show how divided the opposition in the Polish People's Republic was. The ideological differences between Kuroń and Moczulski, who was then awaiting trial, were clearly emphasised. This way of presenting the opposition remained unchanged and after the introduction of martial law, the tendency to diminish the role of the anti-communist opposition in the People's Republic of Poland was reinforced.

In the performance of consular functions, there was a noticeable change in the previous focus of the consuls' activities, who provided less information about the economic situation in the region and limited reporting on transport and communication cooperation. Due to the deepening of the social and economic crisis in Poland, the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs was interested in up-to-date information on the activities of the PZPR authorities after the extraordinary 9th Congress and the actions of the opposition supported by the Church.⁸⁷ Looking for alternative sources of information that would allow the verification of official government reports, the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Prague pointed to the "Solidarność" weekly, government independent press and expected embassy employees and consuls to periodically

87 AMZV, TO-T Polsko 1980–1989, carton 17, Work plan of the CSSR Embassy in Warsaw for 1981, Warsaw, 4 February 1981; FMZV letter to the CSSR Embassy in Warsaw – Assessment of the activities of the Embassy and CSSR consulates in Szczecin and Katowice for the first half of 1981; AMZV, TO-T Polsko 1980–1989, carton 17, Assessment of the implementation of the activity plan of the CSSR Embassy in Warsaw and consulates general in Szczecin and Katowice, FMZV Prague, 10 February 1983.

analyse collective press materials. The source of information completely ignored by the consuls were Czechoslovak sailors and employees of Czechoslovak enterprises, who had their own contacts and private acquaintances in various environments.

At the same time, talks were being finalised on the creation of a centre popularising Czech and Slovak culture and language, second to the one in Warsaw. The choice of the place, as argued by Prague diplomats, was justified by the necessity of cultural, information and propaganda services for the tourist traffic of CSSR citizens arriving at the Baltic seaside and ship crews and young people studying at the Maritime School of Higher Education in Szczecin.⁸⁸ The official opening of the Czechoslovak Culture and Information Centre in Szczecin, which was a branch of Culture and Information Centre in Warsaw, was held on 28 April 1981 and was overshadowed by the tragedy related to the fire of the “Kaskada” restaurant, which claimed many lives. The opening of the Culture and Information Centre in Szczecin coincided with the stagnation in Polish-Czechoslovak political, cultural and scientific relations.⁸⁹ Scholarship exchanges and cultural events were few. In October 1981, as part of the Days of Czechoslovak Culture, Szczecin residents could see exhibitions of works by 30 artists from the collection of the West Bohemian Gallery in Plzeň. The works of artists and painter Pavel Maur were displayed at the National Museum. The Pomeranian Dukes’ Castle exhibited the works of such artists as Cyril Bouda and a surrealist painter, graphic artist, famous designer of postage stamps – Josef Liesler.⁹⁰

After the introduction of martial law, the Culture and Information Centre in Warsaw and Szczecin carried out some tasks only in the circle of “selected friends” and organised meetings and film screenings in cooperation with other centres of socialist countries or established new contacts. It was only on 4 February 1982 that the Polish side allowed for standard activity to be undertaken. The exhibition “Czechoslovakia through the eyes of a child” was launched, preparations for the celebration of the 35th anniversary of the signing of the Polish-Czechoslovak agreement of 1947 were made,

88 AMZV, TO-T Polsko 1980–1989, carton 9, Information from the CSSR embassy in Warsaw on the conversation between the deputy ambassador and the head of the culture department at the Department of Cultural and Scientific Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Polish People’s Republic, Warsaw, 9 January 1980.

89 Anna Szczepańska-Dudziak, “Działalność Ośrodków Kultury i Informacji PRL i CSRS w okresie kryzysu i normalizacji relacji polsko-czechosłowackich w latach osiemdziesiątych XX w.,” in: *Polsko-czeskie kontakty dyplomatyczne*, 67–86. From an interview with an employee and translator of Culture and Information Centre in Szczecin, Ms Halina Potemkowska, it appears that the managers of the Centre were: Oldřich Karas, Josef Gruber, Jaroslav Sládek, Jindřich Jirásek, the functions of economic specialists were performed by Magdaléna Hricová, Josef Kunc, Jan Bundzňak, and the cultural specialists were Joanna Czaplínska and Barbara Dąbrowska.

90 *Kurier Szczeciński*, 22, 25–26/10/1981.

a commemorative bulletin was issued and an exhibition, concerts and a seminar on cultural cooperation were organised.⁹¹

The introduction of martial law and the related travel restrictions did not prevent consul V. Suchý from taking business trips to several cities within the consular district, although it is difficult to call it a routine due to the possibility of direct social contact.⁹² In the prepared report on the situation in the district, many issues were raised, including those related to unfavourable phenomena such as the increase in crime, illegal trafficking and illegal production of alcohol. However, the analysis of internal purges in the PZRP and personnel changes, which went hand in hand with the great passivity of party activists remaining in the shadow of the Polish army, comes to the fore. Despite the slow return to normal economic and social life, the consul negatively assessed the excessively liberal actions of the party authorities, which created conditions for illegal activities of the opposition, such as leaflet campaigns in Szczecin, inciting passive resistance to the authorities and organising material aid for the families of internees. There were also far-reaching accusations against the opposition, which was credited with preparing terrorist operations.⁹³

With each month after the imposition of martial law, the social contacts of the consulate in the district gradually expanded but, due to the small workforce, they were mainly made by the Consul General, who had regular meetings with the USSR, GDR and Cuba consuls and commanders of Polish and Soviet military units in Szczecin.⁹⁴ The propaganda activities of the institution as well as the implementation of cooperation or cultural exchange still encountered obstacles due to difficulties in reaching cul-

91 AMZV, TO-T Polsko 1980–1989, carton 7, Information on Czechoslovak-Polish cultural, scientific, educational and health relations in the years 1980–1981.

92 AMZV, TO-T Polsko 1980–1989, carton 7, Information of the CSSR CG in Szczecin on the development of the current political situation in the provinces located in the consular district, Szczecin, 1 February 1982; Archiv bezpečnostních složek, Information on the situation in the People's Republic of Poland, 4/5, vol. III, Appendix to Information no. 32 on the situation in the Polish People's Republic, 1982.

93 AMZV, TO-T Polsko 1980–1989, carton 7, Information from the CG in Szczecin for the FMZV and the CSSR embassy on the situation in the consular district, the work of the consulate and the Culture and Information Centre in the third quarter of 1983. The consulate employed three consular officials and a secretary and, after the death of consul Suchý, the office was headed by consul Miroslav Vinš. Apart from the consular office in Szczecin, there was also the Culture and Information Centre headed by Miroslav Horych from 16 April 1981 and a group of employees of "Spedrapid," ČNP, ČSPL and phytosanitary services. Many activities were carried out jointly, although the centre had its own action plan; AMZV, TO-T Polsko 1980–1989, carton 17, FMZV guidelines for the work plan of the CSSR embassies and consulates in Poland for 1984; AMZV, TO-T Polsko 1980–1989, carton 7, Information from the CSSR CG in Szczecin on the political situation in the consular district on 28–31 August 1984.

94 AMZV, TO-T Polsko 1980–1989, carton 16, Information from the CSSR CG in Szczecin on the meeting of consuls of socialist countries, Szczecin, 27 June 1986; carton 7, Information from the CG in Szczecin from an interview with consul of Cuba H. G. Sepúlveda, 7 November 1988; Information from the CG in Szczecin on a conversation with the consul of the GDR Heinz Hanisch, 11 November 1988.

tural milieus who remained in internal exile during martial law while the government media were publicly boycotted.

In its activities, the Szczecin branch of the Culture and Information Centre closely cooperated with the Consulate General in Szczecin by organising press conferences, exhibitions and concerts. Like Polish missions, Czechoslovak partners also used the anniversary celebrations to present their country's achievements.⁹⁵ The centres in Warsaw and Szczecin organised film screenings and press conferences, visits to workplaces, Czech and Slovak music competitions and exhibitions. The performances of the National Theatre in Prague marking the 100th anniversary of its establishment enjoyed great popularity. The works of Jaroslav Hašek were presented on TVP and Polish Radio; his works were also exhibited. Similarly to Warsaw, also in Szczecin and the Centre's operating district, the Panorama of Culture and performances of the National Theatre from Prague were organised and cooperation with local radio and TV stations was established. As part of the trade activities of the facility, Jablonex jewellery, valued on the Polish market during the period of shortage of goods, was presented and sold. An example of cyclical cultural and propaganda events may be the Czechoslovak Day at the Pomeranian Dukes' Castle in Szczecin with the participation of not only consulate and the Culture and Information Centre employees but also Czechoslovak workers who came to Szczecin on 26 April 1987 to mark the anniversary of the Red Army's entry into the city. An exhibition entitled "Anti-War Graphics" was presented in Szczecin and Poznań, a film screening was held at the Centre's premises, and jazz concerts were organised in Gorzów and Szczecin. The cultural events were accompanied by propaganda activities, especially through radio and television. The media provided information on the internal situation in Czechoslovakia, common experience of the People's Republic of Poland and the CSSR in the construction of socialism was highlighted, meetings with party authorities as well as film screenings in military units were organised and, in an effort to maintain contact with young people and children, video cassettes were rented.⁹⁶

According to the Czechoslovak consulate, the situation in the mid-1980s was still far from normal not only because of government-imposed price increases and apparent shortages of supplies but also because of the activity of the opposition, recurring protests and demonstrations organised to mark the anniversary of the signing of the Gdańsk Agreement and the registration of Self-Governing Trade Union "Solidarity." In Szczecin, the Church and Metropolitan Kazimierz Majdański were accused of supporting the opposition for strengthening its position among the society by organising charitable package shipping. The Church was seen as one of the best organised

95 AMZV, TO-T Polsko 1980–1989, carton 57, Information on the activities of the Czechoslovak Culture and Information Centre in Warsaw and the branch in Szczecin in 1983.

96 Ibid, Report from the deliberation at the CSSR GS in Szczecin, Szczecin, 17 December 1987.

opposition forces which boycotted all activities of the authorities aimed at improving the political and economic situation and, for this reason, the information and reporting activities of the consulate clearly increased in 1987 during the pastoral visit of the Pope to Poland, when John Paul II visited Szczecin.⁹⁷

Consul Zoltán Kramec, like his successor, presented to his superiors the image of the anti-communist opposition in the People's Republic of Poland as a force losing social support, discredited by unrealistic social demands and unable to carry the masses into revolt against the government. According to the consul, the breaking of the resistance to the reaction that was attempted during the martial law did not mean that the struggle for the socialist character of the political system in Poland was over and, what is more, he believed that the fraternal help of the socialist states would still be needed.⁹⁸ The opposition was perceived as a broken environment, without the moral power of social influence and such an assessment dominated the reports of the Szczecin consular post. In 1987, Consul Kramec reported on the opposition's readiness to confrontation and direct terror during John Paul II's stay in Szczecin. To confirm his fears, Kramec could quote the words of the First Secretary of the PZPR Provincial Committee, Miśkiewicz, who warned against the threat posed by the opposition in Poland to all socialist countries.⁹⁹ Soon Kramec was recalled to Prague and, in October 1988, the post of Consul General was taken over by Imrich Sedlák, who began his term by talking to the consul of the USSR about the situation in Poland, who assessed the PZPR's activity very badly, accusing its management of revisionism and right-wing opportunism.¹⁰⁰ Perhaps such evaluation of the situation in the consular district meant that during the meeting in the CG a decision was made not to hold a party at the consulate to celebrate

97 AMZV, Dokumentace TO 1945–1989, carton 57, CSSR CG in Szczecin, Assessment of contact and reporting activities for the second half of 1987, Szczecin, 28 December 1987.

98 AMZV, TO-T, Polsko 1980–1989, carton 7, Information from the CSSR CG in Szczecin on the course of the celebrations on 1 May. The Solidarity leaflet is attached, Report of the CSSR CG in Szczecin on the assessment of the internal situation in the consular district, Szczecin, 21 November 1985; AMZV, TO-T Polsko 1980–1989, carton 16, Report on the activity of the CSSR CG in Szczecin for 1985, Szczecin 2 January 1986; Z. Kramec took over the management of the consulate in Szczecin from January 1984. A forester by profession, he worked in the State Forests and from 1983 he was employed with FMZV. As Dejmek writes, the ministry was not satisfied with its mission in Szczecin. Immediately after returning to Prague in August 1988, he left diplomacy, see: Dejmek, *Diplomacie*, 445.

99 AMZV, TO-T Polsko 1980–1989, carton 7, Information from the CSSR CG in Szczecin about a meeting with the First Secretary of PZPR Miśkiewicz on the subject of reactionary circles in the city, 24 October 1988.

100 AMZV, Dokumentace TO 1945–1989, carton 65, Information on the conversation between I. Sedlák and Jurij Iwanow, consul of the USSR in Szczecin on 10 October 1988; Report of the CSSR CG in Szczecin for 1988. Similar meetings to discuss the situation in Poland were held by CSSR consuls with their counterparts from East Germany and Cuba, see: AMZV, Dokumentace TO 1945–1989, carton 65, Report on the conversation with the Consul General of the GDR in Szczecin H. Hanisch, Szczecin, 17 November 1988; Report on the conversation with the Consul General of Cuba, Jose Antalo Vilanueva, Szczecin, 21 November 1988.

the 70th anniversary of the founding of Czechoslovakia because, due to the explosive situation in the consular district, it was not certain whether the provincial authorities would want to attend it.¹⁰¹

The changes that took place in Poland in the second half of the 1980s, economic reforms and government policy were not understood by the hard-line circles of power in Prague. A clear example of misunderstanding of the market reforms undertaken in the People's Republic of Poland was the personal confession with which Z. Kramec ended his last report from Szczecin on the days when the city was engulfed in a wave of strikes and, on 18 August 1988, the Inter-Enterprise Strike Committee was established in the Port of Szczecin.¹⁰² The social protests that swept Poland in 1988 were considered by Z. Kramec as a well-thought-out and financed action organised by anti-socialist reaction forces. Such assessments seem to be confirmed by the information sent to the CSSR embassy and FMZV by the successor of Z. Kramec, I. Sedlák, who, in January 1989, informed the Headquarters of the negative effects of economic reforms carried out in Poland – the weakening of the Polish currency, increasing corruption and a rapidly growing number of private enterprises as well as the so-called dollar era in Poland. All such phenomena worried the consul because, as he emphasised, they took place in a member state of Comecon and the Warsaw Pact – in a country which bordered Czechoslovakia.¹⁰³

The brief note, which was written during the ongoing election campaign in Poland, before the first round of the parliamentary elections scheduled for 4 June 1989, included a faithful account of the pre-election meeting with the candidates of the Solidarity Citizens' Committee in Szczecin, which took place at the Summer Theatre on 1 May 1989.¹⁰⁴ In his commentary to the discussion, the consul emphasised that the election campaign was marked by the unilateral activity of "Solidarity" and other opposition groups which managed to distance the PZPR together with poorly-coordinated communication activities of the government media.¹⁰⁵ The June elections, called the plastic ones, were to be one of the stages of the "Solidarity" militant road, to which the PZPR management gave way.

101 AMZV, Dokumentace TO 1945–1989, carton 65, Information from the deliberation at the CSSR GS in Szczecin, 19 October 1988.

102 AMZV, TO-T Polsko 1980–1989, carton 7, Information from the CSSR CG in Szczecin on the political situation in the consular district in recent months, Szczecin, 25 August 1988.

103 AMZV, TO-T Polsko 1980–1989, carton 7, Information from the CSSR CG in Szczecin on devaluation of the national currency of the People's Republic of Poland, Szczecin, 23 January 1989.

104 AMZV, TO-T Polsko 1980–1989, carton 7, Information from the CSSR CG in Szczecin for FMZV and the embassy in Warsaw on the course of the election campaign in the consulate district in Szczecin, Szczecin, 11 May 1989.

105 AMZV, TO-T Polsko 1980–1989, carton 7, Information from the CSSR CG in Szczecin on political and economic situation in the consular district, Szczecin, 25 August 1989.

The rhetoric used by consuls in the reports sent from Szczecin completely ruled out the possibility of a gradual transformation of the system or at least an attempt to heal the economy in a way other than in accordance with the principles of communism. In line with the thick-headed wing in the KSČ, defending the old order, the concept of transforming the political system based on a compromise between the PZPR and the opposition was rejected. It is also worth considering who the consuls sent to work in Szczecin were. What substantive preparation and competence did they have? In the period in question, a total of 12 consuls held their office in Szczecin. Apart from Adolf Kania, they had always been loyal to the authorities; they were often graduates of party schools, active participants of the February 1948 coup dedicated to carrying out the tasks assigned to the foreign service by their superiors on the basis of resolutions of successive KSČ plenums. The criteria for employment in the foreign service included social origin, party affiliation as well as work at various levels of the party hierarchy. Education, its level and character did not guarantee that officials sent to the Szczecin post would be prepared to work in the foreign service. Only one of the consuls studied at the diplomatic academy in Moscow; few of them had higher education, which, however, did not interfere with their careers and work in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Among the consuls were printers, weavers, bricklayers, foresters and two teachers. Most of them were Czechs; it was only in the 1980s when three consuls from Slovakia were delegated to this service. The consulate faced many difficulties, resulting not only from the lack of substantive preparation of officials but also from the shortage of employees who were not able to properly perform their duties in such a large consular district considering the enormity of tasks to be performed by the facility with a very modest budget.

Conclusions

To sum up, it should be stated that in the discussed period, the most important areas of Polish-Czechoslovak cooperation in Szczecin covered economic and political issues. What essentially determined the place of Szczecin in Polish-Czechoslovak relations was, with varying intensity, the cooperation in the port of Szczecin consisting in the creation of a special duty-free zone or enabling Czechoslovakia to use the port of Szczecin as a shipping and transit base for commercial seagoing vessels of this country. The transit of Czechoslovak goods constituted an important part of transshipment in the port, the Szczecin Shipyard built ships at the request of the Czechoslovak shipowner, future Czechoslovak sailors were educated at the Maritime School of Higher Education, and political, social and cultural contacts were developed by the Consulate General in Szczecin and a branch of the Warsaw Czechoslovak Culture and

Information Centre. Szczecin was extremely rarely visited by high-ranking representatives of the Czechoslovak authorities and government. Scientific conferences with the participation of Polish, Czech and Slovak scientists were held here sporadically. Three years after the establishment of the school, in 1988, the University of Szczecin opened studies in the field of Bohemistics, supported by Brygida Božko and Jindřich Jirásek, and from 1991 Joanna Czaplińska.¹⁰⁶ Similarly to other cities, Szczecin participated in the cooperation of partner cities with Plzeň, which, however, was of a different nature than the cross-border contacts carried out on the Polish-Czech-Slovak borderland.

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¹⁰⁶ Klaudia Koczur-Lejk, “Bohemistyka na Uniwersytecie Szczecińskim”, *Bohemistyka* 1–4 (2008): 505–506.

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English version: Radosław Dolecki, Mark Atkinson

SUMMARY

The article presents Polish-Czechoslovak cooperation on the political, economic, and cultural levels which took place in Szczecin over several decades – from the city’s takeover by the Polish authorities in 1945 until 1989. Its aim is to answer the questions: what place Szczecin took in the Polish-Czechoslovak cooperation after World War Two and on what issues was the focus of interest placed in this city. In addition to the literature on the subject, the article uses archival materials collected in Polish and Czech archives – in Archiv Ministerstva zahraničních věcí in Prague, Národní archiv České republiky and Archiv bezpečnostních

słożeń. Among the Polish archives, the documents collected in the Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Warsaw, the Archives of Modern Records and the State Archives in Szczecin turned out to be invaluable. During the work on the article, the method of examining documents and elements of the statistical method and the press analysis were used. They proved to be helpful in analysing the archival materials of communist parties and the security apparatus which, as sources with superstructure, require specific criticism and special caution in assessing their credibility.

The interest in Szczecin on the part of the Czechoslovak authorities was high due to the economic and shipping interests in the port and it was this platform of cooperation that determined the place of Szczecin in Polish-Czechoslovak relations throughout the entire period in question. The article presents a few selected aspects of the Czechoslovak presence in Szczecin starting with the creation of a special duty-free zone which allowed Czechoslovakia to use the port as a shipping and transit base for commercial seagoing vessels of that country. A less known thread of the post-war reports, discussed in the article, is the fate of Czechoslovak sailors, graduates of Szczecin's maritime schools, emotionally connected with this home port and the place where as many as 11 ships were built at the request of the Czechoslovak shipowner. The contribution of Szczecin's shipbuilding industry to the expansion of the southern neighbour's sea fleet was analysed by researchers and was mentioned in this article, just like political, social, and cultural contacts, developed through the Consulate General and the Warsaw branch of the Culture and Information Centre. The Czechoslovak presence in Szczecin was best expressed through the wide range of activities carried out by the consular post which operated continuously until the end of 1992 and performed not only economic but also information, cultural and protective functions in relation to Czechoslovak sailors and employees of Czechoslovak enterprises whose branches operated in the consular district.

Szczecin macierzystym portem dla śródlądowej Czechosłowacji. Czechosłowacka obecność w Szczecinie w latach 1945–1989

Słowa kluczowe: stosunki polsko-czechosłowackie, polityka zagraniczna, urzędy konsularne, port w Szczecinie

STRESZCZENIE

W artykule zaprezentowano współpracę polsko-czechosłowacką realizowaną na płaszczyźnie politycznej, gospodarczej i kulturalnej w Szczecinie przez kilkadziesiąt lat – od przejęcia miasta przez polskie władze w 1945 r. aż do 1989 r. Jego celem jest odpowiedź na pytanie – jakie miejsce zajmował Szczecin w polsko-czechosłowackiej współpracy po II wojnie światowej oraz wokół jakich kwestii koncentrowało się zainteresowanie strony czechosłowackiej tym miastem? W artykule wykorzystano poza literaturą przedmiotu, materiały archiwalne zgromadzone w polskich i czeskich archiwach – w Archiwu Ministerstva zahraničních věcí w Pradze, Národním archivu České Republiky oraz Archivum bezpečnostních složek. Wśród polskich archiwów nieocenione okazały się dokumenty zgromadzone w Archiwum MSZ w Warszawie, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Archiwum Państwowym w Szczecinie. Podczas

pracy nad artykułem wykorzystano metodę badania dokumentów, elementy metody statystycznej, pomocna okazała się także analiza prasoznawcza, które posłużyły do analizy materiałów archiwalnych partii komunistycznych i aparatu bezpieczeństwa, wymagających, jako tzw. źródła z nadbudową, specyficznej krytyki źródeł i szczególnej ostrożności w ocenie ich wiarygodności.

Zainteresowanie Szczecinem ze strony władz czechosłowackich było duże z uwagi na gospodarcze i żeglugowe interesy Czechosłowacji w porcie i to właśnie ten aspekt współpracy decydował o miejscu Szczecina w polsko-czechosłowackich relacjach w całym omawianym okresie. Współpraca ta była realizowana z różnym natężeniem i polegała na utworzeniu specjalnej strefy wolnocłowej oraz umożliwieniu Czechosłowacji wykorzystania portu jako bazy żeglugowej i tranzytowej dla handlowych statków morskich tego kraju. Port w Szczecinie oraz zespół portowy Szczecin-Świnoujście realizowały przez kilkadziesiąt lat funkcje tranzytowe wobec południowego sąsiada. Czechosłowacja nie rezygnowała z obecności w Szczecinie nawet po oddaniu rejonu wolnocłowego w porcie, wręcz przeciwnie, przez kolejne lata tranzyt czechosłowackich towarów stanowił ważną część przeładunków w porcie, stocznia im. Warskiego budowała statki na zamówienie czechosłowackiego armatora, przyszli czechosłowaccy marynarze kształcili się w Wyższej Szkole Morskiej, a kontakty polityczne, społeczne i kulturalne były rozwijane za pośrednictwem konsulatu generalnego oraz filii warszawskiego Ośrodka Kultury i Informacji. Czechosłowacka obecność w Szczecinie najpełniej wyrażała się poprzez szeroki zakres działań realizowanych właśnie przez placówkę konsularną. Konsulat w Szczecinie istniał nieprzerwanie do końca 1992 r., realizując nie tylko funkcje gospodarcze, ale także informacyjne, promował czechosłowacką kulturę, otaczał opieką czechosłowackich marynarzy i pracowników czechosłowackich przedsiębiorstw, których filie znajdowały się w okręgu konsularnym. Dzięki działalności sprawozdawczej placówki, napływały do władz czechosłowackich informacje na temat bieżącej sytuacji politycznej, gospodarczej i społecznej w okręgu konsularnym. Gdyby nie sprawozdania i notatki informacyjne przesyłane przez pracowników szczecińskiego konsulatu do ambasady CSRS w Warszawie i MSZ w Pradze, Szczecin pozostałby w cieniu innych miast Polski, w których rozgrywały się tragiczne wydarzenia grudnia 1970 r., rodził się protest społeczny latem 1980 r. a w latach 1988–1989 zachodziły zmiany systemowe, których czechosłowaccy urzędnicy konsularni nie akceptowali.

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