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Bulletin of the Maritime and Colonial League of May 1939 (from the collection of the State Archives of Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast)

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Archival materials regarding the history of the Maritime and Colonial League (M&CL) have not been fully preserved for any of the pre-war districts of this organisation. The most conspicuous gap in archival records was left by war damage. When, in the early 1980s, Tadeusz Białas attempted to present the entirety of the M&CL's activities in interwar Poland, he based his investigation on an extensive search of preserved archival materials, which, for obvious reasons, he had to limit to Polish national archives¹.

At that time, access to archives located on the territory of the then USSR was severely restricted, and obtaining permission to access archival materials related to the history of the second largest social organisation with a strong paramilitary character in the Second Polish Republic verged on the impossible. The situation changed after the collapse of the communist camp and, ultimately, the USSR itself. It was then that Lithuania, Belarus and the Ukraine, all opened their archives to Polish historians.

As an effect of work undertaken in 2016 in the State Archives of Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast (Державний Архів Івано-Франківської Области) in Ivano-Frankivsk (pre-war Stanisławów), unique archival material related to the activities of the M&CL in the former Stanisławów Voivodeship was obtained. Fonds 414 contained the organisation's² statute, reports on the League's collections for the Maritime Defence Fund

1 Tadeusz Białas, *Liga Morska i Kolonialna 1930–1939* (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Morskie, 1983).

2 Державний Архів Івано-Франківської Области (hereinafter DAIFO), fonds 414, description 1, case 1, 1–24v.

(MDF) from September–October 1935³, circulars of the M&CL concerning the Festival of the Sea from 5 April–6 August, 1936⁴, and 9 August–21 September of the same year⁵, instructions for the participants of an M&CL camp organised in Eforie on the Black Sea, in Romania⁶, temporary regulations for the Maritime Defence Section of the M&CL from 1936⁷, M&CL bulletins from 1936⁸, reports of the M&CL on fundraising for the MDF for the period between January and April 1936⁹, minutes of a meeting of the Board of the M&CL Association in Halicz in May 1936¹⁰, circulars of the M&CL from 1938¹¹, speeches by guests of the M&CL on military and maritime issues¹², and a press bulletin of the M&CL from May 1939¹³.

As the list above shows, war damage did not spare the archive and its resources. The preserved funds is not particularly large and it only allows a fragmentary analysis of the activities of the M&CL¹⁴. However, it contains two very valuable documents. One of them is a collection of lectures by guests invited to M&CL meetings: Lieutenant Commander Rafał Czczott, Engineer Stanisław W. Kochanowski, Naval Captain Engineer Witold Hupert, Lieutenant Commander Artur L. Reyman, and Engineer Jerzy Sawiczewski. This material has been edited and published to make it available to the broadest possible audience¹⁵. The other is the press bulletin from May 1939, which shows the state of tension that prevailed in Poland at that time and that reflected on the increasingly aggressive maritime propaganda of the M&CL; at the same time, it

3 Ibidem, fonds 414, description 1, case 2, 1–13v.

4 Ibidem, case 3, 1–16.

5 Ibidem, case 4, 1–15.

6 Ibidem, case 5, 1–4.

7 Ibidem, case 6, 1–2v.

8 Ibidem, case 7, 1–36.

9 Ibidem, case 8, 1–28v.

10 Ibidem, case 9, 1–2.

11 Ibidem, case 10, 1–4v.

12 Ibidem, case 11, 1–31.

13 Ibidem, case 12, 1–7.

14 A larger M&CL fonds has been preserved in The Central State Historical Archives of Ukraine in Lviv (Центральный Державний Історической Архів України у Львові, CDIAU), fonds 444, description 2, cases 1–162, and fonds 444, description 3, cases 1–75. In addition to a huge amount of financial information regarding fundraising for the MDF and the construction of the Maritime Basilica in Gdynia, one can also find in it single issues of the *Bulletin* of the M&CL, but no copy of issue 50/39 has been preserved in this collection. An archival search conducted in the State Archives of Ternopil Oblast (Державній Архів Тернопільської Облaсті) in Ternopil did not lead to the acquisition of new M&CL materials. There is no separate M&CL fonds in the collections found in these archives. It is possible that individual documents can be found in provincial (voivodeship) fonds. As of today, however, they have not been tracked down.

15 Maciej Franz, Mariusz Kardas, *I wojna światowa na morzu w opiniach polskich teoretyków i praktyków* (Oświęcim: Wydawnictwo Napoleon V, 2018).

presents the actual state of knowledge about some aspects of the potential future war and discusses the tasks that the Polish Navy and merchant navy would have to face. When juxtaposed with the knowledge about the maritime aspects of the Polish campaign of 1939, this text points to an interesting conclusion that even before the war broke out, people who dealt with maritime affairs in the Second Polish Republic had already known how it would end for the Polish Navy and the Polish presence at sea.

When researchers embarked on analysing the content of the *Bulletin* itself, which is not a widely used source, and supposedly has not survived to modern times in too many copies, a decision was made to prepare the entire bulletin for publication, so that everyone could have access to this rather unique document from the times of the end of the Second Polish Republic. It is worth recalling here that Tadeusz Białas, in his discussion of the fate of the M&CL in the interwar period, devoted only a single paragraph to its *Bulletin*, without making any attempt at analysing the content of at least several issues of this periodical or outlining its subject matter¹⁶. No such studies have been undertaken by other historians dealing with the activities of the M&CL in the years 1930–1939. In this situation, it can be argued that the content of this magazine is practically unknown to researchers of the history of maritime Poland.

The *Bulletin* of the M&CL No. 50/39 is divided into four thematic parts. The first part is entitled “The Navy in Peace and War”. It outlines the role and significance of navies in history, and its main task was to use propaganda to influence readers and, at the same time, to forge appropriate opinions on the development of the Polish navy in the daily press in Poland. It pointed to the necessity of possessing a strong navy and associated it with the idea that only a state which has one can be sure of peace, because no one would attack a country that is strong at sea. Without entering into a dispute with the author of that text, one should note that in 1939 the Polish Navy was significantly smaller than the navy of the Third Reich, the USSR, Sweden, Denmark or Finland. With one minelayer, four destroyers, five submarines and six minesweepers, and a few smaller auxiliary ships, it could not engage in combat with any of the above-mentioned fleets. Its potential advantage over the naval forces of the Baltic states of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia was no consolation.

The naval forces possessed by the Polish state in 1939 could in no way whatsoever carry out some of the tasks mentioned in the *Bulletin*, which, according to the author of the article, modern navies were supposed to accomplish. It was incapable of protecting its own fishing vessels, either on coastal waters, or even less so on waters away from the Baltic Sea. In this respect, the Polish naval fleet’s combat potential and the plans to use it, both in peace and at war, gave no hope of protecting our country’s own economic zones. Though the Polish Navy was capable of performing other tasks mentioned

16 Białas, *Liga Morska i Kolonialna 1930–1939*, 242.

in the article, such as hydrographic works¹⁷ or the development of meteorological and rescue services, there still remained the issue of ensuring safety in the Polish naval force's own zone of maritime influence.

Similarly, the potential of the Polish Navy should be assessed with regard to its ability to ensure free transport of strategic goods, especially natural resources or armaments to Polish ports during war. As the author of the text in the *Bulletin* wrote, any navy's duty is to "...bring safely to the country every transport ship heading towards it". This was an infeasible task, because Poland did not have a safe port on its own coast, and this was well known to a wide range of people interested in maritime affairs. It was not without reason that transports of military equipment purchased in France were directed to the Black Sea port of Constanța, so that they could then reach Poland from the south via railroads. The last military transport to the Polish city of Gdynia arrived in July 1939. The ship "Wilia" brought a shipment of French Renault R35 tanks which were intended for the 21st Light Tank Battalion¹⁸. Unfortunately, further shipments did not reach Gdynia since the route through the Baltic Sea was completely closed after the outbreak of the war¹⁹. What best illustrates how much Poland needed a safe port in September 1939, not only for ships, but also for the navy, is the history of the damaged Polish submarine ORP "Rys" entering the port of Hel during the war. Seriously battered, the ship entered the port on the night of 4/5 September against the recommendations of the Fleet Command. The camouflaged and partially submerged vessel was temporarily repaired, and the crew were allowed to disembark for a short while. On 6 September, the ship left the port, but did not have a chance to return to it in the course of that war²⁰. It was the only such case among Polish submarines. The remaining vessels, once they went to sea on the first day of the war, never managed to enter a Polish port again. And yet, as the author of the text in the *Bulletin* rightly

17 The Polish hydrographic service, established in 1923, was intensively developed in the following years. As a result, not only were hydrographic charts of Polish territorial waters prepared, but also hydrographic surveys were conducted to enable safe navigation on the waters for which the Polish state held responsibility. This was an outcome of intensive work conducted by the Hydrographic and Measurement Division of the Polish Navy, headed by Artur L. Reyman from 1927, who quickly climbed the steps of his military career. This excellent officer of the Polish fleet was also a good researcher, as evidenced by his study devoted to the old charts of the Polish coast, see Artur L. Reyman, *Dawne mapy morskie wybrzeża polskiego* (Warszawa: Służba Geograficzna, 1937).

18 It was intended to be one of the eight light tank battalions envisaged in the modernisation plan for the Polish Army approved by the Armaments and Equipment Committee, Jędrzej Korbał, "Komitet ds. Uzbrojenia i Sprzętu. Think tank Wojska Polskiego", *Historia Wojsko i Technika* 3 (2021): 93.

19 The body responsible for this was the Transport Committee at the Polish Ministry of Industry and Trade, established in April 1939

20 *Sprawozdanie z kampanii wrześnieowej 1939 r.*, ppor. mar. Jerzego Hedingera, oficera nawigacyjnego na ORP "Rys", author's own collection, published in: Maciej Franz, Krzysztof Kuska, *Z Polski do Kanady – wojennym szlakiem. Archiwum domowe porucznika Jerzego Hedinger* (Oświęcim: Wydawnictwo Napoleon V, 2013), 46–7.

claimed: “There is no country today that could wage war without assistance from the outside. Today, there are no states that are self-sufficient ...”. It is difficult to argue with such an opinion. However, one may wonder how the Polish authorities responsible for the preparation of Poland for the war, which seemed extremely probable already in May–June 1939, wanted to solve this problem. It is difficult to take seriously the idea of transporting all supplies through Romanian ports, then by railway towards the Polish borders, and finally, via Stanisławów and Lviv, towards the front²¹.

Equally interesting seems to be the opinion of the author of the sketch in the *Bulletin* that a navy’s task is not only to defend its own transports, but also to operate offensively against enemy transports, to deprive the adversary of supplies, and thus cut them off from the materials they need and weaken their land army. This task could have been assigned to the Polish submarine fleet in 1939. Unfortunately, Operation “Worek” (*Sack*), the operational plan prepared for that fleet, was dramatically conservative and bound Polish vessels to their own coast, restraining their movement to strictly defined areas of operation. Adoption of this most defensive of plans for the use of the Polish submarine fleet was not only a mistake²², but also a departure from everything that had been said for years, also by the M&CL, which called on citizens to raise funds for the construction of the submarine “Orzeł”. The fact that previously prepared, more offensive plans to use Polish submarines had been rejected may be surprising. The more so that even the authors of the articles prepared for the M&CL were well aware that it was crucial for any navy to move offensively towards the enemy’s ports or their shipping routes at sea. Built for a lot of money and with great effort of the whole society, submarines were perfect for such operations. Instead, a decision was made to “tie” them to the coast, which exposed the submarines to intense action of enemy anti-submarine forces, in this way marginalising this most offensive component of the Polish Navy²³. This is indeed astonishing.

21 As a matter of fact, no preparations to bring this idea to life were ever made. Stanisławów, a city which played a strategic role in this concept due its key position in the Polish railway network, was stripped of the army on the first day of the war. It did not receive any military transports, and its railway station and railway network were bombed by the German Air Force from the beginning of the war. Clearly, no air cover was provided, Maciej Franz, “Garnizon stanisławowski we wrześniu 1939 roku”, in: *Wojna zmieniła wszystko. Stanisławów i Ziemia Stanisławowska w dobie wojny, okupacji i “wyzwolenia” (1939–1945)*, vol. 1, *Polityka – Wojskowość*, edited by Adam A. Ostanek & Mariusz Kardas (Warszawa – Iwano-Frankivsk: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Wojskowej Akademii Technicznej w Warszawie, 2019), 157–170.

22 Andrzej Makowski, “Dywizjon okrętów podwodnych Polskiej Marynarki Wojennej w kampanii wrześniowej. Ocena operacyjno-taktycznego użycia”, *Studia z Dziejów Polskiej Historiografii Wojskowej* 13 (2012): 74.

23 As early as 2 September 1939, the newest Polish submarine ORP “Sęp” suffered damage which practically excluded this vessel from further military operations. The damage sustained as an effect of explosions of depth charges dropped nearby by German ships included an increased leak in the silencer pipe (the first damage in this area appeared on September 1), leak in the drainage pipeline

And finally, as the same author of the sketch for the *Bulletin* writes, a navy must "... defend its own coast and ports". However, the Polish Navy was not prepared for this task either. And there is no more dramatic argument for this claim than the fate of the destroyer ORP "Wicher" and the minelayer ORP "Gryf", which, after a successful skirmish with German destroyers on the morning of 3 September, were sunk by bombers in a German air raid in the port of Hel²⁴. The Polish Navy was neither capable of defending its coasts and ports, nor could it feel safe in any of these ports.

The second sketch found in the *Bulletin* of the M&CL No. 50/39 is devoted to naval bases in the Baltic Sea, and so, like the first text, to which it is related thematically, was of considerable propagandist importance for this organisation.

Departing, historically, from the success of the English Queen Elizabeth I's fleet in the battle against Admiral Medina Sidonia's invincible Spanish Armada in the 16th century, the author of the sketch analysed the strengths and weaknesses of each Baltic state with regard to how many naval bases they possessed or controlled. The main part of the analysis relates to the events of the First World War, which can be considered typical of that time, because it was this conflict that, being the most recent one, captured a lot of attention from the then authors²⁵.

The sketch, nevertheless, provides a starting point for an analysis of Baltic states and the condition of their naval bases in 1939. The author concluded that the USSR was practically locked up in the depths of the Gulf of Finland, and therefore, he looked for a way out of this confinement through the White Sea Canal and the ports in the Far North. At the same time, he concluded that this was only a partial solution, since the canal could only be navigated by smaller vessels²⁶. He also discussed Finnish bases,

and water leakage into the ship, deformation of manholes, and release of a watertight stern bulkhead which resulted in water leaking into the ship, Naval Museum in Gdynia – Fonds (NMG-F), *Dziennik zdarzeń ORP "Sęp" od dnia 13 lipca 1939 r.*, ref. no. 998 A, 54.

- 24 This is what Witold Hubert, one of the crew of the destroyer ORP "Wicher", noted in February 1970 in his account written in Darłowo: "Joy, restored faith in the alliance, faith in victory, and then around 2 p.m. a raid of enemy squadrons sent to sink "Wicher" and "Gryf" by the Nazi command enraged by the defeat of their destroyers. (...) bombs on "Wicher", bombs on "Gryf". "Gryf" is on fire, "Wicher" is sinking by the wharf, it falls overboard. On the yard, suspended is the body of a colleague, AB Edward Kwiatkowski, who has been blown onto the yard by an exploding bomb which hit the part of the bridge on which he was staying". NMG-F, ref. no. 231 R, Witold Hupert, *Wspomnienia z ORP "Wicher" – wrzesień 1939. Obrona Helu*, 7.
- 25 One example of a very in-depth analysis, prepared for the Publishing House of the Maritime and Colonial League, was the work of Lieutenant Commander Rafał Czeczott, which was considered to be the most valuable of its kind until the times of Edmund Kosiarz and his studies from the 1970s, see Rafał Czeczott, *Wojna morska na Bałtyku 1914–1918* (Warszawa: Liga Morska i Kolonialna, 1935).
- 26 The very idea of building a canal linking the Baltic Sea with the White Sea was not a bad solution, the more so that, owing to the enormous efforts of forced labourers and prisoners, it was constructed in less than two years and was formally navigable from the summer of 1933. Unfortunately, the fact that it was located on a tectonic plate and built using archaic construction methods placed limitations on its use, among others due to its "shallowness". The military significance of the canal was therefore

especially the significance of the Åland Islands for the maritime defence systems of Finland as well as Sweden and the Baltic states.

A separate paragraph was devoted to German bases, with particular emphasis on the areas of Szczecin-Świnoujście, on the one hand, and Piława and Królewiec on the other. The author of the sketch pointed out that these regions were well adapted for use as posts from which to operate navy units. However, he did not venture to describe the Polish defence system and the military potential of the ports of Gdynia and Hel, which was in fact, nil, since Gdynia was naturally threatened by the proximity of Gdańsk (Free City of Danzig), which in mid-1939 was under complete control by fascist forces and was “free” in name only²⁷. At the same time, Hel, together with the extended Fortified Region, which was considered to be a safer port for the Polish fleet, did not in fact provide it with any security, given the supremacy of the German air forces²⁸. In not saying anything about Polish naval ports and their potential, the author said more than necessary.

The third sketch is pure propaganda, as it refers to the participation of the Polish rural population in the coming “Days of the Sea”, spreading of maritime propaganda in the countryside, and the role and significance of the participation of the rural population in military service, including the navy. This is a classic text when it comes to M&CL’s propaganda activity.

The fourth sketch reports facts and figures related to M&CL’s fundraising for the Maritime Defence Fund (MDF), including the amount expended towards the construction of the submarine ORP “Orzeł”, but also the amount set aside for the first two Polish torpedo chasers ordered in British shipyards²⁹.

The final element of the *Bulletin* of the M&CL No. 50/39 is a “List of the Naval Fleets of Great Maritime and Baltic Powers”, printed as the last, additional page of the

minimal from the very beginning, Wojciech Tomasiak. “Cień Jasińskiego. Przyczynek bibliograficzny”, *Pamiętnik Literacki*, CIX (2018): 3, 190.

- 27 An excellent discussion of the role of the port of Gdynia and its actual use during World War II can be found in a sketch by Kamil Hoppe, who pointed out that after the bombardment by the German air forces on 1 September, the port of Gdynia did not see Polish ships any more in the course of this campaign, Kamil, Hoppe. “Obraz i losy Gdyni w latach 1939–1945”, *Zeszyty Gdyniackie* 4 (2009): 214–215.
- 28 The construction of the port and its facilities began in 1931 but had not been completed by the outbreak of the war. Despite this fact, the port of Gdańsk was already at that time considered to be as important as Gdynia and, at the same time, safer than the latter, because it was located well away from the activities of German spies, Anna, Marek, Łukasz Marszałek, “Obiekty militarne jako element krajobrazu kulturowego Półwyspu Helskiego”, *Studia z Geografii Politycznej i Historycznej* 7 (2018): 235.
- 29 Funds for the torpedo chasers were raised all over the country during special “Chaser” campaigns organised within the framework of the MDF to further reinforce the concrete dimension of the activity of both urban and rural communities, Filip, Gończyński-Jussis. “Zbiórka na Fundusz Obrony Morskiej na terenie województwa lubelskiego (1933–1939)”, *Radzyński Rocznik Humanistyczny* 14 (2006): 206.

volume. Unfortunately, this list does not feature the Polish naval fleet, despite the fact that the author, more or less precisely, described all the other Baltic navies. The condition of the Polish Navy in 1939 was not a secret to anyone, either in Poland or abroad. Both the Third Reich and the USSR knew much more about the Polish Navy than they should have. It is also certain that neither one nor the other was particularly afraid of the Polish fleet. Anyway, The Polish Navy is missing from this list.

In mid-1939, the outbreak of World War II was not yet certain. A lot could have happened, but as we know, nobody and nothing could stop Adolf Hitler on his path towards war. The Polish campaign of 1939 ended in a crushing defeat of the Polish Navy. It is difficult to evaluate it otherwise given the loss of the destroyer "Wicher", the minelayer "Gryf", the gunboats "Komendant Piłsudski" and "General Haller", the training torpedo ship "Mazur", and the minesweepers "Jaskółka" and "Czapla", the internment of the submarines "Sęp", "Rys" and "Żbik", and the "escape" from the Baltic Sea of the destroyers "Grom", "Błyskawica", "Burza" and the submarines "Orzeł" and "Wilk". The Polish Navy did not manage to sink any of the German warships or merchant ships, and the sinking of the German minesweeper "M-85" by a mine laid by ORP "Żbik" as early as October 1939, was quite an accidental success.

The state of the Polish fleet was not spoken of loudly. Propaganda produced by the M&CL built the image of a large and strong Polish fleet, capable of stopping any enemy. At the same time, the *Bulletin* pointed to all the actual faults and deficiencies of the Polish Navy. This is not so much interesting, as symptomatic. All those who knew what fate they were preparing for the Polish ships by beating the propaganda drum, were well aware what the real situation looked like. Anyone who was able to analyse the situation calmly and rationally in isolation from the propaganda noise, could have no doubts. This notwithstanding, the propaganda raged until the outbreak of the war, and that is why the reality of the September events hurt so much.

Nowadays, the propaganda of Poland's strength and power at sea is not so unequivocal. Formally, no one conceals the problems of the Polish fleet, which is slowly vanishing from the Polish coast. At the same time, for years now, successive governments, regardless of their political affiliation, have been talking about reconstructing and building a strong Polish naval fleet. Apart from talking, however, they have not done anything to improve the situation. The contemporary Polish state repeats all the mistakes made in the interwar period with regard to maritime policy, the Polish presence on the Baltic Sea, and the expansion of the navy. Unfortunately, despite the passage of nearly 100 years, maritime propaganda is still the most important part of the Polish presence on the Baltic Sea. It cannot, however, replace a genuine maritime policy, and an analysis of source materials, especially those from the 1930s, best indicates how ineffective it is. It did not manage to prepare either the state or the society for the horror of the war that was to come.

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English version: Radosław Dolecki, Mark Atkinson

SUMMARY

The Maritime and Colonial League published several magazines. One of them was the "Bulletin", the object of which was to spread maritime propaganda. It is one of the forgotten magazines of the interwar period. The issue of the "Bulletin" presented in this article is a relic found in the State Archives in Ivano-Frankivsk (Ukraine), and it is completely unknown to the Polish reader. The content and opinions contained therein constitute an interesting starting point for the analysis of maritime Poland just before the outbreak of World War II.

Biuletyn Ligi Morskiej i Kolonialnej z maja 1939 roku (ze zbiorów Derżawnego Archiwa Iwano-Frankiowskiej Obszary)

Keywords: Liga Morska i Kolonialna, czasopismo, 1939, propaganda morska

STRESZCZENIE

Liga Morska i Kolonialna wydawała kilka czasopism. Jednym z nich był "Biuletyn", który miał odpowiadać za szerzenie propagandy morskiej. Jest to jedno z zapomnianych

czasopism dwudziestolecia międzywojennego. Prezentowany numer "Biuletynu" jest zabytkiem odnalezionym w archiwum w Iwano-Frankiwsku i kompletnie nieznanym polskiemu czytelnikowi. Zawarte w nim treści i opinie, stanowią ciekawy punkt wyjścia do analizy Polski morskiej tuż przed wybuchem drugiej wojny światowej.

SOURCE

1. (Press Bulletin of the M&CL) Biuletyn prasowy LMiK nr 50/39, Warszawa 23 June 1939, allocation Державній Архів Івано-Франківської Облaсті (DAIFO), fonds 414, description 1, case 12, 1-7.

Warszawa, ul. Widok 10

Telephone: 5.22-04

Warszawa, on 23rd June 1939

PRESS BULLETIN OF THE M&CL

No. 50/39

Free reprint

Articles and press releases can
be used freely by the press.

THE NAVY IN PEACE AND WAR

From time immemorial, the sea has always played a major role in the lives of nations allowing them to achieve power and prosperity. Those who ruled the sea constantly followed the path of development while those who neglected maritime affairs – collapsed, for the sea was the factor that created strong, enterprising nations, instilled a desire for continuous progress, enriched countries and turned them into powers.

Nothing has changed since then. Everything has remained as before, only the conditions have changed, the coexistence of nations has entered a new path, but the sea has remained what it was – a source of state power and national prosperity.

That being so, today there is no country that does not seek to have a sea coast, and having it, has neglected maritime affairs. All nations, then, trade by sea, create larger and larger merchant fleets, expand their ports, and, above all, do not forget that maintaining access to the sea is today a matter of a nation's economic and political life, and, therefore, that these maritime possessions must be defended at all costs. This is why we are witnessing this manic naval arms race, since every nation wants to defend its rights at sea – and this can only be done with a strong, well-organised and well-trained Navy.

We must also remember that a strong Navy is not only about defending a state's maritime interests and its coastal possessions. It has been like this for centuries, and

today it has become especially perspicuous that it is only the strong who is reckoned with, and the strong is the one who, next to an excellent land army, has a suitable navy, because it is the latter that others most often see, and from its condition, appearance and efficiency create an image of the whole nation. Thus, the navy is a visible proof of a country's military strength and, thus, a powerful political factor. For, today, it is only those who have mighty maws of warship cannons behind them that are listened to willingly.

Thus, a strong navy is nowadays a source of good neighbourly relations, favourable alliances and successful political moves. This is the tacit influence it exerts by virtue of its very existence; and there are still many other, peacekeeping tasks for this part of a state's armed forces.

By relying on its naval force, a state can develop its trade without hindrance using the merchant navy. And the development of the merchant navy depends on the naval fleet, since the emerging shipping companies must have a guarantee that their interests will be secured: otherwise no one will risk investing capital in merchant shipping.

The navy also acts as a powerful factor against the denationalisation of overseas emigrants. Warships, by constantly visiting foreign countries to which citizens of a given state emigrate, strongly reinforce the spiritual connection between the expatriates and their Motherland. In these cases, they constitute, in a manner of speaking, a part of their country, and thus evoke a national spirit in the emigrants and provide a stimulus for patriotic action.

In addition to political and commercial influences, the navy performs a number of activities related to peacekeeping on its own waters. It protects and secures the peaceful work of its country's coastal and deep-sea fishermen and guards territorial waters against foreign invasion, by which it greatly contributes to the development of the fishing industry. It carries out all kinds of hydrographic works: it conducts measurements, produces nautical charts, prepares and issues maritime pilots, establishes and maintains rescue, meteorological, warning and other types of stations. It inspects and maintains navigation instruments and, most importantly, swiftly comes to the rescue of ships calling for help from the sea, or people in various dangerous land situations (flood, fire, earthquake, etc.), and while performing all these duties, it simultaneously trains and prepares for warfare.

During wartime, the navy must guarantee the delivery of war materials and food to the country, so it should, first of all, maintain sea communication lines, that is, defend and bring safely to the country every transport ship heading towards it. This requires constant surveillance of the movement of ships and keeping enemy warships at bay. Failure to complete this task will lead to unpleasant consequences for military actions on land. For there is no country today that could wage war without assistance from the outside. Today, there are no states that are self-sufficient in all branches of the arms

and food industries. One country lacks raw materials, another lacks fuels, and still another lacks food, etc. These shortages have to be replenished throughout the war, the goods have to be brought to the country and unloaded. The transport needs to be secured by the navy, which must, at the same time, operate on the enemy's communication lines to prevent the necessary materials from being delivered to the opposing belligerent's posts, and thus to weaken the enemy's land forces.

From this main task of the navy derive all its further goals and aspirations. In defending the state at sea, the navy should use all possible means to fight the enemy's navy, whether in the open sea or in its own bases, and cooperate with its own land army, if necessary, in coastal operations, and finally to defend its own coast and ports.

Summarising the navy's tasks during wartime, we see that it does not only defend the coastline, as it is often said in our country, but it fights the enemy on a par with the military – so just as the army, it defends the entire state, only it does so at sea.

O.Ż.

MARINE BASES IN THE BALTIC SEA

The sheer number of naval operational bases in the Baltic Sea demonstrates the political and strategic importance of this sea. Although geographically internal, it has always been open to those who have had a strong navy on it. Already at the dawn of history, Slavic timber ships called "komięga" accompanied Danish vessels in their raids on the Britons, fought against the Vikings, or allied with them to defend themselves against foreign invaders.

In the times of Queen Elizabeth I, the English, under the cover of their warships and using Narva as their Baltic base, conducted a lively economic exchange with Russia, which Poland could not interfere with since it had no fleet. Contrary to what is often thought, the German Empire and Prussia did not have their own fleets either, as evidenced by the fact that King Sigismund III Vasa came to the aid of the Emperor, sending him a small contingent of vessels, which later rotted away uselessly in Wismar.

Thus, Denmark and Sweden, and then – since the time of Peter the Great – also Russia – had been the only maritime powers in the Baltic Sea until the end of the 19th century. It was only later, when the German Navy League (*Der Deutscher Flottenverein*) helped to realise Tirpitz's idea, that Germany also acquired a high seas fleet. After the war with Japan, as a result of heavy losses suffered in the battles of Port Arthur and Tsushima, Russia ceased to be a great maritime power. The role of Sweden and Denmark also slowly declined as they turned into small neutral states. So, in fact, already in the first years of this century, Germany enjoyed almost complete supremacy in the Baltic Sea.

They reigned supreme, however, not because of their numerical superiority, as their fleet had a variety of long-range strategic tasks which mostly consisted in defending the North Sea on the other side of Jutland. If, nevertheless, during the last war, the

Germans, with the help of a dozen light ships /cruisers and destroyers/ managed to put the Russian Baltic fleet in check, it was only because the latter – due to some negligence, and also because its commander-in-chief had to answer to the general who commanded the army dedicated to the defence of the cities of St. Petersburg and Revel – behaved completely passively and, despite its advantage, did not undertake any major offensive operations.

The Russians excused themselves arguing that the Germans could at any time have transferred their heavy forces – modern battleships and armoured cruisers – from the North Sea to the Baltic via the Kiel Canal – but operations like that would only have been occasional and short-lasting, because the *Hochseeflotte* could not, after all, strip the North Sea of its force. Besides, the transition of the heavy battleship squadron from Wilhelmshaven to Rügen would have taken at least four days. During that time, more than one successful operation could have been mounted against the German coast.

But, as we have said, the Russian fleet was passive, and even before the war it had been unable to prepare appropriate operational bases in Liepāja and Riga. The former was not ready and was evacuated by the army at the beginning of the war. The latter was not prepared at all to defend itself from sea assaults and serve as a base for larger ships. As a result, the Russian fleet had bases in the depths of the Gulf of Finland /Helsingfors, Revel and Kronstadt/, which normally freezes for 4–5 months of the year, thus making the fleet's operations even more difficult. Despite those difficult conditions, English submarines did manage to make their way to the Baltic Sea through the Danish Straits and, based in Riga, Revel and Hangö, inflicted heavy losses on the German navy and merchant fleet.

Nowadays, the political situation in the Baltic Sea has changed fundamentally. Instead of four countries – Germany, Russia, Sweden and Denmark – there are now ten – with Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and Finland added to the count. Russia has lost most of its coast and must restrict itself to the depths of the Gulf of Finland /about 200 km of coastline/, with Kronstadt as its main, and almost only, base. It is true that the White Sea Canal connects this base today with Arkhangelsk and the Arctic Ocean (the base of Poliarnoye), but the canal can only be crossed by light vessels – destroyers and submarines /and that only in the summer/.

Finland has its bases in Helsinki and Turku /Åbo/, but the demilitarisation of the Åland Islands has deprived it of access to this intricate and impenetrable maze of several thousand islands, islets and rocks. At the moment, when the issue of the re-militarisation of these islands has been settled between Finland and Sweden, the Åland Islands are regaining their former strategic importance, just as during the last war, when the Russians hurriedly set up heavy batteries there and created ports, harbours and sea airports. That is why they are protesting today against the re-militarisation, for fear that, in foreign hands, the islands would become a dangerous post, flanking the exit from the Gulf of Finland.

Swedish bases are located in Stockholm, Karlskrona and Gothenburg, and there are also several fortified posts in Northern Sweden /Gulf of Bothnia/ and on the islands of Gotland and Öland as well as at the outlet of the Sound. Estonia has one base in Tallinn, and Latvia two – in Riga and Liepāja (although its fleet is minuscule). These bases are remnants of the Russian navy; Lithuania does not have a single one. Denmark bases its fleet mainly in Copenhagen and Køge Bay, where a network of forts scattered over straits govern navigation.

And then there is Germany. Their main Baltic base is today both the main operational base and the entire fleet's arsenal. It is located in Kiel, at the eastern end of the Kiel Canal, and includes a wide system of coastal fortifications, stretching as far as Fehmarn and Rügen. This system is connected here with another one with the centre in Świnoujście, that is Szczecin, covered by the guns located on the islands of Uznam (Usedom) and Wolin. Then there is a gap stretching up to Piława, which, together with Królewiec, provides a comfortable base in the Vistula Lagoon. Recently, Klaipėda in the Curonian Lagoon has become another base, and the Germans are expanding Stolp /Słupsk/ between Kołobrzeg and the Polish border, at the mouth of the River Piaśnica. This last port will, of course, be adapted only to light forces – torpedo boats and speeders as well as naval aviation.

J. Grt.

APPEAL FOR THE PARTICIPATION OF THE COUNTRYSIDE IN THE "DAYS OF THE SEA"

The Polish countryside makes the largest contribution to the ranks of our heroic army. It feeds the whole nation and wants to take a fuller part in the life of the state, which it is entitled to do if only because of its large population and vitality. It is maturing politically, socially, economically and culturally, which is why it must be engaged in fruitful work in every area of national life. History has shown that the Polish peasant has marked the borders of the Republic of Poland not only with a plough, but also with a rifle, defending Poland's interests both on land and at sea.

Poland's access to the sea is the economic foundation of agriculture. The countryside should know about it. The export of agricultural products strengthens rural livelihoods and leads the countryside to prosperity.

The sea is the source of Poland's power. The peasant knows about it, and he must learn more and more. The Polish nation, aware that its existence and development are contingent on strong adherence to the sea and the development of economic possessions in the Baltic Sea, is strong enough not to allow any force to diminish our maritime heritage.

The countryside knows that Gdańsk used to be Polish and that Poland will not hand it over to the Germans at any cost. The countryside knows that the people and the state must arm themselves at sea in order to have effective means of defence and attack there.

The rural youth, who are to join the ranks of our navy and merchant navy in largest numbers, must learn the truth, which should sink deep into their hearts, that, strong at sea, connected with the world by our own shipping lines, possessing our own sources of colonial raw materials, and having our own trading apparatus, we will create, for future generations, a Poland that is even stronger politically and economically.

We will not be pushed away from the Baltic Sea!

Gdynia and Gdańsk are the path to the wide world!

Farmers, millions of whom will take part in the Festival of the Sea, in the days of the whole nation's great demonstration, should be provided with accurate and comprehensive information about the Polish Baltic Sea, about the Polish navy and merchant fleet, and encouraged to donate to the Maritime Defence Fund, so that their contributions, which are the most valuable because they come from the people, should be used to build numerous new Polish warships to guard the borders of the Polish sea and glorify the name of the Republic of Poland in the world's oceans.

The countryside will take a large part in the "Days of the Sea", as a class of dedicated citizens of the state, as soldiers who have more than once shed their blood for the Motherland and are ready to face the enemy today as well.

The Polish countryside, which grew out of a peasant's patch of land, will, if need be, go, on the orders of the Supreme Commander, to defend the borders of the Baltic Sea and will not allow Poland to be pushed away from the sea.

The people of the countryside will go where the national and state duty calls them. They will feed the army and the nation, they will cultivate the land, they will pull up weeds, and with a rifle in hand, they will curb the enemy's aspirations, because Poland is and will be the ruler of its own sea.

This year's "Days of the Sea", solemnly celebrated by the whole nation, will bind it into an unbreakable bond of unity and strength; the nation, based on a strong and heroic army, will not allow the enemy to violate the laws of the Republic of Poland on the Baltic Sea.

MARITIME DEFENCE FUND

Collection status for the Maritime Defence Fund

On 21 June, 1939, the amount collected for the MDF was PLN 9,854,232.82.

Together with the amount collected separately among the Army and Navy's Officers and NCOs' Corps, the capital was PLN 12,498,799.36.

After deducting the costs of construction of the submarine "Orzeł", there remains PLN 4,298,799.36 for the construction of torpedo chasers. Two torpedo chasers have already been ordered on account of this amount.

Contributions of the Districts of the Maritime and Colonial League to the Maritime Defence Fund

The following Districts of the Maritime and Colonial League took the leading places in the collection for the Maritime Defence Fund in the first ten days /1st-10th/ of June 1939:

- The Capital City District in Warsaw paid in PLN 13,000.
- The Łódź District in Łódź paid in PLN 12,000.
- The Radom-Kielce District in Radom paid in PLN 5,000
- The Silesian District in Katowice paid in PLN 5,000

Total contributions in the first ten days /1st-10th/ of June of this year to the Maritime Defence Fund amount to 56,000.

THE END

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LIST OF THE NAVAL FLEETS OF GREAT MARITIME
AND BALTIC POWERS

ENGLAND

Type	Current status Number	Current status Total tonnage	In construction Number	In construction Total tonnage
Ships of the line	15	473,700	9	325,000
Heavy cruisers	15	145,530	---	---
Light cruisers	46	284,965	22	152,100
Destroyers	175	229,814	24	40,560
Torpedo boats	---	----	---	---
Larger submarines	32	44,774	13	14,600
Smaller submarines	24	13,230	---	---
Aircraft carriers	7	137,950	5	115,000
Chasers	20	490	13	???
TOTAL		1,330,443		647,260

UNITED STATES

Type	Current status Number	Current status Total tonnage	In construction Number	In construction Total tonnage
Ships of the line	15	464,300	6	214,000
Heavy cruisers	17	161,200	1	10,000
Light cruisers	17	140,500	6	52,000
Destroyers	213	261,655	40	58,600
Torpedo boats	---	---	---	---
Larger submarines	63	70,775	16	23,200
Smaller submarines	27	13,910	---	---
Aircraft carriers	5	120,300	2	29,400
Chasers	13	975	4	???
TOTAL		1,233,615		387,200

JAPAN

Type	Current status Number	Current status Total tonnage	In construction Number	In construction Total tonnage
Ships of the line	9	272,070	2	???
Heavy cruisers	12	107,800	---	???
Heavy cruisers, old vessels deployed for coastal defence	5	43,090	---	---
Light cruisers	24	132,755	2	17,000
Destroyers	112	141,628	2	3,000
Torpedo boats	12	6,868	---	---
Larger submarines	37	58,657	8	???
Smaller submarines	24	20,734	---	???
Aircraft carriers	6	88,470	1	10,050
Chasers	---	???	---	???
TOTAL		870,072		30,050

FRANCE

Type	Current status Number	Current status Total tonnage	In construction Number	In construction Total tonnage
Ships of the line	7	163,945	4	140,000
Heavy cruisers	7	70,000	---	---
Light cruisers	11	79,729	3	24,000
Destroyers	60	114,683	11	19,492
Torpedo boats	12	7,320	7	7,140
Larger submarines	40	53,026	5	5,710

Type	Current status Number	Current status Total tonnage	In construction Number	In construction Total tonnage
Smaller submarines	30	17,048	15	10,500
Aircraft carriers	1	22,146	2	36,000
Chasers	8	105	4	92
TOTAL		528,002		242,934

ITALY

Type	Current status Number	Current status Total tonnage	In construction Number	In construction Total tonnage
Ships of the line	4	95,244	4	140,000
Heavy cruisers	8	79,232	---	???
Light cruisers	16	85,992	---	???
Destroyers	74	97,443	12	42,000
Torpedo boats	59	38,185	---	---
Larger submarines	8	10,809	16	???
Smaller submarines	82	55,929	5	5,130
Aircraft carriers	---	---	---	---
Chasers	44	870	---	???
TOTAL		463,704		187,130

GERMANY

Type	Current status Number	Current status Total tonnage	In construction Number	In construction Total tonnage
Ships of the line	5	82,000	3	105,000
Heavy cruisers	---	---	3	30,000
Light cruisers	6	35,400	6	58,000
Destroyers	17	28,183	13	23,540
Torpedo boats	12	9,600	30	18,000
Submarines, smaller and larger	43	16,445	28	15,577
Aircraft carriers	---	---	2	38,500
Chasers	???	???	17	???
TOTAL		164,628		288,617

USSR

Type	Current status Number	Current status Total tonnage	In construction Number	In construction Total tonnage
Ships of the line	3	69,878	3	110,000
Heavy cruisers	2	16,030	6	48,000
Light cruisers	4	25,494	---	---
Destroyers	20	30,647	8	22,400
Torpedo boats	15	10,500	---	---
Submarines	160	81,000	---	???
Aircraft carriers	1	9,000	2	24,000
Chasers	240	---	---	---
TOTAL		242,549		204,400

On all seas

DENMARK

Type	Current status Number	Current status Total tonnage	In construction Number	In construction Total tonnage
Coastal defence ships	1	3,500	---	---
Heavy cruisers	---	---	---	---
Light cruisers	---	---	---	---
Destroyers	---	---	---	---
Torpedo boats	17	3,009	2	???
Submarines	10	2,641	2	640
Aircraft carriers	---	---	---	---
Chasers	---	---	---	---
TOTAL		9,150		640

SWEDEN

Type	Current status Number	Current status Total tonnage	In construction Number	In construction Total tonnage
Coastal defence ships	8	38,830	---	---
Cruisers	2	8,940	---	---
Destroyers	14	8,958	2	2,048
Torpedo boats	2	1,480	---	---
Submarines	16	8,325	2	700
Chasers	2	82	4	???
TOTAL		66,615		2,748

FINLAND

Type	Current status Number	Current status Total tonnage	In construction Number	In construction Total tonnage
Coastal defence ships	2	7,800	---	---
Cruisers	---	---	---	---
Destroyers	---	---	---	---
Torpedo boats	---	---	---	---
Submarines	5	1,828	---	---
Chasers	7	85	---	---
TOTAL		9,713		---

ESTONIA

Type	Current status Number	Current status Total tonnage	In construction Number	In construction Total tonnage
Coastal defence ships	---	---	---	---
Cruisers	---	---	---	---
Destroyers	---	---	---	---
Torpedo boats	1	228	---	---
Submarines	2	1,240	---	---
Chasers	---	---	3	???
TOTAL		1,468		---

LATVIA

Type	Current status Number	Current status Total tonnage	In construction Number	In construction Total tonnage
Coastal defence ships	---	---	---	---
Cruisers	---	---	---	---
Destroyers	---	---	---	---
Torpedo boats	---	---	---	---
Submarines	2	790	---	---
Chasers	---	---	---	---
TOTAL		790		---

O.Ž.

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