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Westerplatte, Sweden and the League of Nations in the Early 1920s

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The Free City of Danzig (now: Gdańsk) was established after the Paris Peace Conference and the compromise reached by the Entente powers. According to the Treaty of Versailles, the city was to function under the protection and supervision of the League of Nations, whose representative was the high commissioner. He had the right to make decisions in all disputes between Danzig and Poland. Most of these were closely related to the aspirations of the Danzig authorities for the greatest possible independence from Poland. The practice of future relations between Poland and Danzig was defined in a mutual agreement signed in Paris in November 1920. The port and issues related to customs were to be administered by a mixed Port and Waterways Board. Danzig had no diplomatic relations and no army of its own. Its foreign policy was entrusted to Poland. At the same time, the Free City's authorities – the Sejm (Volkstag) and the government (Senate) – strongly emphasised its separateness.¹ Notably, the German state supported Danzig financially and politically to help “limit Poland's influence and sustain hopes for a revision of the borders, which was an unquestionable dogma of German foreign policy.”² Indeed, Danzig became an instrument of German

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- 1 Stanisław Sierpowski, *Liga Narodów w latach 1919–1926* (Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 2005), 161–173; idem, “Rola Ligi Narodów w Wolnym Mieście Gdańsku w pierwszych latach okresu międzywojennego,” in: *Międzymorze. Polska i kraje Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej XIX-XX wiek. Studia ofiarowane Piotrowi Łossowskiemu w siedemdziesiątą rocznicę urodzin*, ed. Andrzej Ajnenkiel, et al. (Warszawa: Instytut Historii PAN, 1995), 241–253.
 - 2 Peter Oliver Loew, *Danzig. Biographie einer Stadt* (München: C.H. Beck, 2011), 195.

revisionist policy. In 1922, during Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg's visit to Marienburg (East Prussia), Senate President Heinrich Sahn gave a speech in which he said: "We are waiting until we belong to the Fatherland. I have come here to announce it, Your Excellency."³ Therefore, it's no surprise that Polish-German relations were constantly strained. Disputes between the two sides were continuously the subject of negotiations at the League of Nations in Geneva. In fact, since establishing the League, it has been one of the most important topics for discussion, along with disputes over the island of Corfu, the port of Klaipėda, and the situation in Saarland.

One of the questions became Poland's right to receive and continue transporting war materials, such as arms, armaments, and ammunition, to Poland. When military equipment from France and Britain arrived in Danzig in July 1920 to support the Polish army's fight against Soviet Russia, German dockers refused to unload it. Without the help of Allied soldiers, the aid would have been stuck in the port for good. Polish authorities proposed designating a special zone in the port for unloading military goods transported to Poland. Eventually, the Paris Agreement of November 1920 granted Poland the right to import and export any goods not prohibited by Polish law through the port of Danzig. Initially, war materials were stored in the so-called free port zone, near the city. Later, for safety reasons, the location where these materials were transhipped was moved to Holm Island, further into the harbour.⁴ The Danzig authorities insisted that the transshipment site be moved out of the Free City area altogether, arguing that the transported materials carried the risk of explosion.⁵ The Polish authorities requested that the Council of the League of Nations hear the matter, ignoring British High Commissioner Richard Haking, who was reluctant towards the Polish position. Finally, on 22 June 1921, the Council of the League of Nations recognised the Polish state's right to a military material transshipment site in Danzig without specifying a permanent location. Therefore, the dispute continued. Its most crucial stage ended with the decision of the Council of the League of Nations on 14 March 1924, placing the Westerplatte peninsula at Poland's disposal, which eventually took place on 31 October 1925.

3 *Historia Gdańska*, vol. IV/2: 1920–1945, ed. Edmund Cieślak (Sopot: Wydawnictwo Lex, 1999), 46.

4 *Historia Gdańska*, 42–47; Stanisław Mikos, *Wolne Miasto Gdańsk a Liga Narodów 1920–1939* (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Morskie, 1979), 49–66.

5 On 18 December 1921, Police President Helmut Froböss did not allow the Belgian ship "Gauja," transporting explosives, to enter the port. The Port and Waterways Board stated to the Polish government and the Senate of the Free City that it could not do anything about it. The Senate issued an order to allow the ship to enter the port. However, in response, the dockers went on strike, which still prevented the transport and can be interpreted as a continuation of the obstruction from the Polish-Soviet War. Finally, the cargo was unloaded after a 10-day standstill. However, similar incidents were regularly repeated. See Henryk Stępnia, *Rada Portu i Dróg Wodnych w Wolnym Mieście Gdańsku* (Gdańsk: Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Naukowe & Ossolineum, 1971), 44–45.

The history of Westerplatte during the period of the Free City of Danzig has been featured in several publications. In particular, the construction of the depot, its development, and especially its defence in September 1939 have been described in detail.⁶ The problem of Westerplatte inevitably appeared in publications about the League of Nations and its attempts at international arbitration.⁷ Still, new findings are emerging. A few years ago, it became a sensation that the delegate of the Polish government in Danzig in 1919–1920, Mieczysław Jałowiecki, contributed to the acquisition of Westerplatte by Poland through dealing with the purchase of real estate in the city.⁸

The article aims to analyse the decision-making process, focusing on the relatively unrecognised participation of the Swedish delegation, led until early 1925 by Prime Minister, leader of social democrats, Hjalmar Branting. Sweden, elected as a non-permanent member of the League's Council in the autumn of 1922, participated in the deliberations from 1923 to 1926. The country represented the interests of smaller states, supporting the idea of collective security and international arbitration.⁹ Based on this, an attempt

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- 6 Among the monographs: Andrzej Drzycimski, *Westerplatte. Misja specjalna* (Gdańsk: Oficyna Gdańska, 2015); idem, *Westerplatte. Reduta w budowie* (Gdańsk: Fundacja Gdańska, 2014); idem, *Westerplatte 1939. Historia i legenda. Przed szturmem* (Gdańsk: słowo/obraz terytoria, 2009); Jarosław Tuliszka, *Westerplatte 1926–1939* (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, 2011).
- 7 Stępnia, *Rada Portu*, 32; Wolfgang Ramonat, *Der Völkerbund und die Freie Stadt Danzig 1920–1934* (Osnabrück: Biblio-Verlag, 1979); Elisabeth Morrow Clark, “The Free City of Danzig: Borderland, Hansestadt or Social Democracy?”, *The Polish Review* 42 (1997), 3: 259–276; eadem, “Gdańsk, Story of a City when Diplomatic History and Personal Narrative Intersect,” *The Polish Review* 61 (2016), 1: 61–79; important remarks in the memoirs by Erik Colban, *Femti år* (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1952), 75–79.
- 8 Cf. an article on the website of the Museum of the Second World War in Gdańsk: *Polska zawdzięcza im Westerplatte – Mieczysław Jałowiecki (1876–1962)*, Muzeum II Wojny Światowej, 17.11.2022, accessed 20.03.2025, <https://muzeum1939.pl/polska-zawdzięcza-im-westerplatte-mieczyslaw-jalowiecki-18761962/aktualnosci/5775.html>. In his memoirs, Jałowiecki stressed the importance of the purchase of real estate, without specifying which properties were actually involved: “Whoever owns Westerplatte controls the entrance to the port of Danzig,” he stressed. “The German government, for reasons I did not understand, did not attach much weight to the strategic importance of Westerplatte. (...) It was only at the end of August 1919 that I was informed that the owner of the site began to hesitate, and he was ready to sell Westerplatte, but only into German hands.” According to Jałowiecki’s account: “It was a beautiful morning in the early Kashubian autumn, when I signed the deed of purchase of Westerplatte in my name in the office of attorney Bielewicz.” See Mieczysław Jałowiecki, *Wolne Miasto* (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 2002), 81–84; next extended edition: idem, *Na skrajcu imperium i inne wspomnienia* (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 2019), 497–499.
- 9 Sweden’s accession to the League of Nations was supported by the Social Democrats and Liberals, with relatively strong opposition from the right, the peasant party and the extreme left. In the first chamber of parliament, the ratio of votes on 3 March 1920 was 86 to 47, and in the second chamber: 152 to 67. On the Branting’s attitude towards the League: Nils-Olof Franzén, *Hjalmar Branting och hans tid* (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1985), 336–344. As historian Torbjörn Norman emphasised: “Branting’s League of Nations policy was motivated not only by his conviction that, after the neutrality and isolation of the war years, Sweden’s peace and security were best served by the League of Nations’ system for the peaceful settlement of international conflicts and collective security, but also by his view of democracy and socialist ideology.” Cf. Torbjörn Norman, *Hjalmar Branting, freden och Folkens förbund samt andra studier i svensk och nordisk 1900-talshistoria*, ed. Karl Molin, Alf W. Johansson (Stockholm: Hjalmarson & Högberg Bokförlag, 2014), 70.

was made to explain the role of the smaller states in the League of Nations' conciliation activities, as well as the motivations and circumstances surrounding the activities of their representatives, with accusations from the Polish side of bias in the background. The participation of Swedish expert Per Gustaf Hörnell in developing the compromise on the transshipment point also proved to be an essential topic. Analysing his role contributed to trying to answer the question of the real influence of the League of Nations Secretariat and the experts appointed by the League of Nations on the course of international disputes.¹⁰ Sources from the Riksarkivet in Stockholm, the Central Archives of Modern Records in Warsaw and the League of Nations Archives in Geneva have also helped shed more light on the potential significance of the Polish authorities' buyout of the property in 1919–1920 for the League of Nations Council's subsequent decision on the future of Westerplatte.

The Polish Opinions on the Swedish Activity in the League of Nations

Sent to Sweden in September 1920 on behalf of the Foreign Propaganda Office of the Polish Government, Karol Lutostański, after establishing contacts in Swedish legal circles (among others, Lars Birger Ekeberg¹¹) noted: “Although my interlocutors try to remain independent of the German way of thinking in their works, they represent a great veneration for German culture and science. Today's generation of scientists was mostly educated in Germany. Therefore, despite their apparent agreement with my arguments, it seems that my interlocutors were not sufficiently convinced of the validity of our claims against the Germans. Although they condemned Germany's imperialist and nationalist policies, they were also of the opinion that Germans are harmed when they are deprived of the lands on which they have deposited their cultural heritage.”¹²

10 On recent research on the history of the League of Nations Secretariat, see: Haakon A. Ikonou and Karen Gram-Skjoldager, eds., *The League of Nations. Perspectives from the Present* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2019); Karen Gram-Skjoldager, Haakon A. Ikonou and Torsten Kahlert, eds., *Organizing the 20th-Century World. International Organization and the Emergence of International Public Administration 1920–1960s* (London-New York: Bloomsbury, 2020); Karen Gram-Skjoldager and Haakon A. Ikonou, “Making Sense of the League of Nations Secretariat – Historiographical and Conceptual Reflections on Early International Public Administration,” *European History Quarterly* 49 (2019), 3: 420–444; Karen Gram-Skjoldager and Haakon A. Ikonou, “The League of Nations Secretariat: An Experiment in Liberal Internationalism?,” *Monde(s)* 19 (2021), 1: 31–50.

11 From 27 October 1920 (i.e. just after Lutostański's departure from Sweden) to 13 October 1921, then, in the years 1923–1924, the Minister of Justice; he led to the abolition of the death penalty in Sweden in 1921.

12 Marek Jabłonowski, Włodzimierz Janowski and Adam Koseski, eds., *O niepodległą i granice*, vol. 3: *Raporty i informacje Biura Propagandy Zagranicznej Prezydium Rady Ministrów 1920–1921* (Warszawa-

Similar opinions can be found in many other Polish reports on Swedish politicians and diplomats. Polish authorities typically viewed Swedish diplomats as sympathetic to the Germans. The head of the Northern Department of the Polish Foreign Ministry, Gustaw Potworowski, summarised reports from the Polish embassy in Stockholm in 1923, emphasising the Germanophilism of the Swedes. He stated: “The Germanophilism of the Swedish elite and the uncritical attitude of the entire society towards everything of German origin is well known.”¹³

The Polish envoy in Stockholm until 1924, Jan Zygmunt Michałowski, stressed in his reports that “Sweden was able to use its power in Geneva and influence many issues thanks to the personal abilities of Hjalmar Branting.” Michałowski stressed that Branting never supported the Polish delegates because he considered the Polish state a client of France. As an example, he cited the 7 July 1923, session of the League Council, which considered a Polish complaint about the completely arbitrary interpretation of signed agreements by the Senate of the Free City of Danzig and the excessive power of the high commissioners (who usually supported the Danzig side). Poland protested the arbitrariness of the British high commissioners’ decisions, which gradually reduced the Polish presence in Danzig. This attempt failed, leaving the impression in Geneva that Poland was as ready as ever to initiate new conflicts. What was Branting’s attitude to this issue? According to Michałowski: “During the dispute on 7 July [1924], Branting, as usual, was against Poland, claiming that our demands were excessive and it was right that they were rejected.”¹⁴

Michałowski’s successor in Stockholm, Alfred Wysocki, was convinced that the political and cultural background was decisive in building an unfavourable aura around Poland: “As a result, whether I met the socialist Hjalmar Branting, or the conservative Marx von Württemberg, or Bo Östen Undén, or the liberal Eliel Löfgren, as foreign minister I was almost always met with an evasive, aloof attitude, not respectfully accepting our opinions and *démarches*.” Wysocki’s remarks about the Swedish strategy in the League of Nations were surprising for a professional diplomat. He complained: “The way they talked to me was also troublesome. They never denied or simply said no, so I often hoped that I could convince them after the second or third attempt, when I presented our argument. They even seemed to agree with me. But later, when they were

Pułtusk: Wydział Dziennikarstwa i Nauk Politycznych Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego & Wyższa Szkoła Humanistyczna im. A. Gieysztor, 2002), doc. no. 86, A report by Karol Lutostański, a delegate to Stockholm of the Bureau of the Propaganda Abroad at the Polish Government, on the visit to Sweden 4.09–26.10.1920, 197.

13 Archiwum Akt Nowych [The Central Archives of Modern Records], (hereinafter AAN), Fonds: “Delegacja RP przy Lidze Narodów,” reference 513, folder 16, Report of the Northern Department, Swedish issues from 1 July to 31 December 1923, Warsaw, 22.04.1924.

14 Ibidem.

in Geneva, they usually voted against us.”¹⁵ The Polish diplomat interpreted the matter in a very formulaic and simplistic way. Wysocki presented his view in these words: “Sweden between 1918 and 1928, having to choose between friendship towards Poland, which always caused dissatisfaction in Germany, or friendship with the German state, usually chose the latter.”¹⁶ Even stronger words were used by a member of the Polish delegation to the League of Nations in 1925, Kajetan Dzierżykraj-Morawski, reporting that Sweden represented “The most pro-German element in the Council.”¹⁷

Whenever persons active in Swedish public life made statements unfavourable to the interests of the Polish state, Polish politicians and diplomats primarily blamed German influence in the royal family, the media, and the economic and financial circles. Perhaps the accusations were thrown around too nonchalantly. Still, it is worth noting Branting’s nonchalant statements about Poland that were given to journalists after the Council of the League of Nations meetings. In March 1924, he expressed the opinion that “The Poles, as usual, caused trouble.”¹⁸

A British-Swedish Political Alliance in Genève?

The aforementioned Polish diplomat Gustaw Potworowski was sure that before the outbreak of World War I, “Sweden could be considered a German quasi-province.” Only after Germany’s defeat did the Swedes see that “there are other powers in the world connected to the lives of smaller countries.” According to the Polish diplomat, Swedish policy became compatible with British strategy concerning the support for Germany and the lack of reinforcement for France.¹⁹

Indeed, in the Polish view, the actions of Swedish diplomacy resembled the central tenets of British policy during and after the Paris Peace Conference. The then British Prime Minister David Lloyd George believed that: “We should do everything

15 Alfred Wysocki, *Na placówce dyplomatycznej w Sztokholmie 1924–1928. Wspomnienia*, ed. Paweł Jaworski (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, 2004), 51.

16 Ibidem. Such an explanation of the Swedish positive attitude to Germany was proposed by Östen Undén in his memoirs: “(...) Sweden was sometimes forced to intervene in the Council in a way that could and often was interpreted as characterised by special German-friendliness. But Sweden’s policy on such matters was simply dictated by the conviction that it was right and in the public interest that the League of Nations acted fairly and objectively towards Germany.” Östen Undén, *Minnesanteckningar* (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1966), 72.

17 AAN, Fonds: “Delegacja RP przy Lidze Narodów,” reference 513, folder 211, 169 [no date]. On the role played by Sweden: Stanisław Sierpowski, *Gra o Niemcy. Międzynarodowy kontekst wstąpienia Niemiec do Ligi Narodów w roku 1926* (Poznań: Instytut Historii UAM, 2015), 122.

18 “Branting om NFs sista mote,” *Göteborgs Aftonblad*, 20.03.1924.

19 AAN, Fonds: “Delegacja RP przy Lidze Narodów,” folder 16, Report of the Northern Department *Swedish issues from 1 July to 31 December 1923*, Warsaw, 22.04.1924. More on the rapprochement between Sweden and Great Britain see: Norman, *Hjalmar Branting*, 210–232.

possible to put the German people back on their feet. We cannot cripple Germany and at the same time expect them to pay us.”²⁰ Sweden fully supported this policy.²¹ It can be said that the Swedish government became involved in implementing British foreign policy after the end of World War I. Erik Boheman, a member of the Swedish delegation to the League of Nations from 1921 to 1927, described it in his memoirs: “Sweden’s policy in the League of Nations in many respects pursued affiliation with the English. Britain at the time represented a more conciliatory attitude toward Germany than France and did not hold rigidly to some of the more impossible provisions of the Treaty of Versailles. Regarding security issues, the English position was for a long time in line with the Swedish one.”²² Cooperation went so well that Lord Parmoor, representing Britain in the Council, was instructed by his government to trust the head of the Swedish delegation: “On all questions of any importance Lord Parmoor should consult with Mr. Branting.” According to Boheman, this was “more or less” the message that Parmoor was to show Branting.²³

Until the end of the war, Branting was considered Sweden’s greatest enemy of Germany. The armistice at Compiègne changed his attitude. He thought that democratic Germany, governed by Social Democrats, was to be one of the pillars of post-war Europe. Therefore, Branting supported their immediate accession to the League of Nations. At the same time, he also endorsed the idea of realistic reparations for the destruction in northern France.²⁴ He was also wary of German territorial losses in Upper Silesia, which he considered “unfortunate and dangerous.”²⁵

In January 1923, at the beginning of Sweden’s membership in the Council of the League of Nations, Branting tried to involve the League of Nations in negotiations over German reparations to the victorious Entente powers. British politicians welcomed the initiative.²⁶ Erik Lönnroth, an expert on the history of Swedish foreign policy between the wars, noted a convergence with the general British political course.

20 Stanisław Sierpowski, *Źródła do historii powszechnej okresu międzywojennego*, vol. 1 (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 1989), 79.

21 Ibidem, 41, 61, 83, 181. It concerned the following cases: a general demand for Germany’s accession to the League of Nations, contesting the restrictive policy of the Inter-Allied Control Commission towards Germany in the field of disarmament, attacking the treatment of German citizens by the Polish government (in their opinion, it was too harsh), accusations against the actions of the French administration in the Saar Basin.

22 Erik Boheman, *På vakt. Från attaché till sändebud. Minnesanteckningar* (Stockholm: Norstedts, 1963), 70.

23 Ibidem.

24 Norman, *Hjalmar Branting*, 84–85.

25 Ibidem, 96.

26 Ibidem, 223. Franzén, *Hjalmar Branting*, 344–345. See also Riksarkivet [Swedish National Archives] (hereinafter RA) RA, UD 1920 års dossiersystem, HP 1181, Excerpt from the minutes of the Cabinet meeting on 1 September 1923.

However, he stressed that “this did not mean any consistent pro-English orientation, but it did mean that a certain degree of cooperation with British foreign policy representatives became part of the habits of the Swedish delegation in Geneva.”²⁷

Holm or Westerplatte? A Diplomatic Dilemma

The issue of Poland’s authority to transship and temporarily store war materials in the port of Danzig was a recurring topic of discussion in Geneva. On 23 June 1921, the League Council confirmed these rights, adding that the site should be “sufficiently distant from the city” and that it could be guarded by “armed and uniformed” Polish guards. However, until 11 March 1922, the President of the Port Board designated the southwestern part of the port basin on Holm Island for this purpose. Both Poland and Danzig protested this location with High Commissioner Haking. Therefore, Haking decided on 7 April 1922, that Poland would temporarily use the northwestern part of the island. At the same time, he designated the estuary of the Vistula River to the sea as a permanent ammunition reloading site. Although he did not use the name Westerplatte, this was the place in question. On 19 June, the Polish government submitted a “recourse” [French: *appel*] to the League Council because: “The thinness of the [allotted] area [on Holm] does not guarantee safety when handling explosives.”²⁸ The Poles demanded a larger portion of the island for unloading (as the High Commissioner had decided) and as a transit ammunition depot. This was motivated by experiences in 1920, when some of the unloaded material could not be fully reloaded immediately into railroad cars and sent on. There were insufficient warehouses on Holm for the amount of material needed to be stored. In addition, the lack of exclusive use of the port basin was unacceptable to the Polish side. Through the League of Nations, it was requested that Poland be given the entire basin on Holm Island and that Polish warships be able to enter there. The proposal for another location was ignored. Meanwhile, the Free City authorities sought a complete ban on Poland’s transportation of ammunition through the Danzig port.

The League Council supported the high commissioner, but the negotiations dragged on, with neither side willing to give way.²⁹ The head of the League of Nations Military Office at the General Staff in Warsaw, Rear Admiral Jerzy Zwierkowski,

27 Erik Lönnroth, *Den svenska utrikespolitikens historia*, vol. V: 1919–1939 (Stockholm: Norstedts, 1959), 53–54.

28 AAN, Fonds: “Sztab Główny,” reference 1190, folder 1190, 405, A note: Miejsce dla wyładunku amunicji na Holmie, 4.10.1923.

29 AAN, Fonds: “Sztab Główny,” folder 1190, 431, Pro memoria by Rear Admiral Zwierkowski concerning the Polish ammunition depot on Holm, Warsaw, 25.09.1923.

analysed the situation, arguing that there had been a stalemate in Polish-German relations while asking rhetorically: "Is the boulevard on the Holm suitable for military purposes? As a landing site – yes! As a transit ammunition depot – no!" He pointed out that Poland needed a much larger area of the island for a transit depot. With the League Council giving the High Commissioner (Haking's successor from 22 February 1923, Mervyn MacDonnell) a free hand in making further decisions, Zwierkowski proposed to "demand the immediate convening of League of Nations experts for Danzig for a visual inspection."³⁰ This position was in line with the intentions of Chief of Naval Command Vice Admiral Kazimierz Porębski, who recommended adhering to the proposal for expanding Polish possessions on the island of Holm in the face of indisputable arguments related to treating Danzig as the home port of the Polish Navy (*port d'attaché*) and the spatial requirements for the transshipment and storage of war materials.³¹

Chief of the General Staff General Stanisław Haller stressed in a letter to the Polish military attaché to the Polish Legation in Paris that he could count only on French support to remain on the Holm. At the same time, he recalled that since the principle of unanimity was in force in the Council of the League, "without the consent of the French delegate, no new harm can happen to Poland, for at worst the status quo ante must be preserved."³² As he reassured, "if France's security requires maintaining a strong and well-armed Polish army, our common interest dictates that Poland secures the absolute and unlimited import of war material through Danzig as soon as possible, despite all potential pacifist and humanitarian counter-arguments on the part of the Senate of the Free City. For this purpose, it is necessary to extend the parcel of land already granted to us on the island of Holm, without which it will be impossible to supply the Polish army with weapons and ammunition."³³ Haller recommended seeking support in this matter from Marshal Foch, who would further stress the importance of maintaining a tenacious stance in the League Council. At the end of November, Polish envoy in Berne, Jan Modzelewski, took up the subject with the director of the Administrative Commissions and Minorities Section, Norwegian lawyer and diplomat Erik Colban. Modzelewski demanded that the matter be submitted to the Permanent Military Advisory Commission of the League of Nations, explaining that professionals from various countries best versed in these problems should look at the conditions on the ground and express their opinions. Colban did not object.³⁴

30 Ibidem, 432.

31 Ibidem, 437, Porębski to Zwierkowski, Warsaw, 18.10.1923.

32 Ibidem, 465, Haller to military attaché in Paris, 15.11.1923.

33 Ibidem, 465–466.

34 Ibidem, 484–486, Modzelewski to Polish Foreign Office, Geneva, 29.11.1923.

The matter was discussed in the following months. From the perspective of the League of Nations Secretariat, Danzig became a field for stabilising this new organisation's international position. The League intended to act here as an impartial mediator and advocate for the weaker side.³⁵

Prime Minister Hjalmar Branting of Sweden, having learned the essence of the Polish-German disputes, concluded that the best way to resolve them would be to let both sides speak, discuss, and only then have the League of Nations Council make decisions. The first natural instance was the League of Nations High Commissioner in the Free City, but both sides frequently questioned his choices. When they could not reach an agreement, the dispute went to Geneva. Protocols of Swedish government meetings show that the role played by Colban's section in Danzig affairs was appreciated. It was there that a compromise was worked out, which was later approved at a session of the Council.³⁶ It is worth noting that Colban kept Swedish diplomacy informed about the progress of negotiations with both the Danzig and Polish authorities and the position of the British and French authorities, with whom he consulted at the time. In June 1923, the Swedish delegation perceived a threat to the Polish-Danzig relations following the formation of a new Polish government, which was described as "more nationalist than the previous one." Dominated by Roman Dmowski's National Democracy and Wincenty Witos's (who became prime minister) Polish People's Party Piast; the government carried out an anti-Piłsudski and anti-Jewish purge among Polish diplomats. Among its victims was Szymon Askenazy, Poland's delegate to the League of Nations. Boheman predicted that someone "more uncompromising" would take his place. Colban also predicted "serious difficulties."³⁷

Presumably also considering the attitude of the Free City of Danzig's representatives, a member of the Swedish delegation to the League, Östen Undén, in his report on the 25th session of the Council, held in Geneva from 2 to 7 July 1923, began the part on Polish-Danzig relations with the sentence: "There are grounds for concern that these

35 Sierpowski, "Rola Ligi Narodów," 252.

36 RA, UD 1920 års dossiersystem, HP 1181, Erik Boheman to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Stockholm, 5.05.1923. Years later, Erik Colban summarised the nature of the compromises reached in the Danzig disputes, which had often been prepared in earlier informal discussions between a small group of representatives: typically, the Free City (usually the President of the Senate Heinrich Sahn), Poland (including General Commissioners Leon Pluciński and Henryk Strasburger, as well as Polish delegate to the League of Nations Szymon Askenazy), and the League of Nations High Commissioner in the Free City (from 1922 to 1925, the British officials Richard Haking and Mervyn S. MacDonnell, respectively). Reflecting on these meetings, Colban recalled: "Almost without exception, the projects we achieved in this way passed in the Council. But the negotiations in my office were sometimes difficult and sometimes stormy." See Colban, *Femti år*, 77.

37 RA, UD 1920 års dossiersystem, HP 1181, PM by Erik Boheman concerning a conversation with Colban on 5 June 1923, Geneva, 5.06.1923.

issues will prove extremely difficult to resolve and will put the impartiality and political competence of the League of Nations Council to a severe test.”³⁸

Indeed, no agreement was reached on the Westerplatte issue. In this situation, the Council of the League of Nations appointed a special commission to study Poland’s military formation issue, chaired by Spanish delegate Quiñones de León. Instead, a survey committee was established on 14 December 1923, whose four members – French Colonel A. L. Rémond, Swedish engineer Per Gustaf Hörnell, Danish Copenhagen harbour master Thorvald Borg and British Rear Admiral Aubrey Smith – were sent to Danzig to conduct an on-site inspection and recommend a suitable site for a Polish military depot.³⁹

Per Gustaf Hörnell’s Role as a League of Nations Expert

The experts were in Danzig in late January and early February 1924. There, they met with representatives of the Free City of Danzig and Poland. According to Rear Admiral Zwierkowski, the opinion of the Swedish expert became important during these talks. Hörnell, then 48 years old, an experienced engineer and professor at the Royal Technical College (Kungliga Tekniska Högskolan) in Stockholm, and an expert to the League of Nations on port matters in China and Klaipeda, “stated, that he has long been interested in the port of Danzig, that he has conferred with very competent people in Sweden on this issue, and that in his opinion only one place is possible in Danzig for ammunition transports, namely on the Westerplatte peninsula, at the very entrance to the port.” Hörnell, adding some technical and financial details, concluded his speech by asking whether the Polish government “would agree to his proposal to place ammunition on Westerplatte instead of Holm.”⁴⁰ Zwierkowski responded cautiously, hiding behind the lack of instructions that would apply to areas other than Holm, but he did not reject the proposal. Meanwhile, an English expert immediately endorsed the Swede’s idea. Zwierkowski consulted with the military authorities in Warsaw and, upon his return to Danzig, expressed a desire to study the idea further. He immediately pointed out certain drawbacks to its execution: the need for time-consuming construction work on the waterfront, the necessity of relocating residents, and the impossibility of abandoning the Holm until

38 RA, UD 1920 års dossiersystem, HP 1181, VPM by Östen Undén concerning the 25. session of the Council of the League of Nations in Geneva, 2–7 July 1923, Stockholm, 13.07.1923.

39 Mikos, *Wolne Miasto*, 118–119; cf. John Brown Mason, *The Danzig Dilemma. A Study in Peacemaking by Compromise* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1946), 202–203.

40 AAN, Fonds: “MSWojsk, Biuro Wojskowe Ligi Narodów,” reference 1192, folder 18, 38, A report by Rear Admiral Zwierkowski on negotiations with the commission of the League of Nations concerning the ammunition depot on Holm, Warsaw, 11.02.1924.

a new transit site was prepared. The British committee member argued that these obstacles are removable and believed that constructing a port basin is also rational from an economic point of view. Zwierkowski expressed doubts, giving examples of irrational decisions by the Danzig authorities that were dictated by hostility toward Poland. Hörnell, on the other hand, was hopeful, stating that “at least in the Holm case, Danzig will be guided by common sense.” After thoroughly analysing the issue, he concluded that locating the Polish depot at Westerplatte was the best solution, and consistently defended his position. Zwierkowski and other Polish delegation members believed that “The Swede was outright aggressive in his argument, which only irritated those present, instead of convincing them.” Suspicious and greatly disappointed, Zwierkowski even concluded that “Hörnell must have a personal interest in taking Holm from Poland, since he is pursuing his stated goal so fiercely and illogically,” later in his report even adding that “it was difficult to find a more overt enemy of Poland in the League of Nations than this Swede.”⁴¹ On 16 February, Poland’s delegate to the League of Nations, Konstanty Skirmunt, considered it a foregone conclusion that the only solution to the transit issue was to settle on Westerplatte. He proposed that the Foreign Ministry let go of efforts to establish a presence on Holm and focus on securing Polish exclusivity in the use of Westerplatte.⁴² However, what emerges from Zwierkowski’s report is regret that Poland eventually had to relinquish its rights to the Holm.⁴³ Also of a different opinion than Zwierkowski, including regarding Hörnell’s motivation, was the Polish envoy in Stockholm, Alfred Wysocki. Before the Swedish surveyor’s return visit to Danzig, the deputy assessed him cautiously but positively: “Based on the conversation that his legation secretary [Przemysław] Kowalewski had with him, it can be assumed that Eng. Hörnell has a good grasp of Danzig relations and is not ill-disposed toward us. Above all, he is well aware that the basis of all Polish-Danzig quarrels is political, and he is by no means concealing his opinion that the Danzigers would like to exploit all possible advantages of their geographical location in their relations with Poland, giving it as little as possible in return.”⁴⁴ The Ministry of Military Affairs also quickly realised that, with the long-unresolvable dispute between the Polish authorities and the Free City, handing over the decision to a League of Nations expert proved to be the most advantageous solution from the Polish perspective.

41 Ibidem, 44–45.

42 AAN, Fonds: “MSWojsk, Biuro Wojskowe Ligi Narodów,” folder 18, 70, Polish delegate to the Polish Foreign Office, Geneva, 16.02.1924.

43 AAN, Fonds: “MSWojsk, Biuro Wojskowe Ligi Narodów,” folder 18, 84–86, A report by Rear Admiral Zwierkowski on negotiations with the commission of the League of Nations concerning the ammunition depot on Holm, Warsaw, 25.03.1924.

44 AAN, Fonds: “MSWojsk, Biuro Wojskowe Ligi Narodów,” folder 21, 81, Wysocki to the Polish Foreign Office, Stockholm, 31.05.1924.

The commission's final report, dated 8 February 1924, was unequivocal. In its conclusions, the commission recommended Westerplatte as the best location for a military depot.⁴⁵ Experts emphasised that the best solution was to move such warehouses away from the city centre for safety reasons. The topic of debate was just a solution for the interim period, i.e. until the new site is ready for use. Only the French committee member insisted that the Poles should use Holm Island until then. At this point, it is worth quoting the opinion of the chargé d'affaires in Paris, Aleksander Szembek, who described the situation after the commission's report on 6 March 1924: "Incidentally, as we were told in confidence, Colonel Rémond [a French member of the commission] also considers Westerplatte to be the best and only reasonable solution. However, he wanted to make our tactics easier and therefore continued to insist on Holm."⁴⁶

At the same time, the Polish delegates rejected any compromise, although Polish resistance to the move to Westerplatte was weakening in the face of the commission's firm conclusion. On 14 March 1924, the commission's rapporteur proposed the most flexible solution, allowing the Polish side to unload war materials at the Holm Island site for six months. The parties eventually agreed to this compromise. Poland's representative in the discussion, Rear Admiral Jerzy Zwierkowski, wanted to weaken the firmness of the decision and proposed a provision stating that the interim period could be extended after six months "if the work could not be completed within that time." Danzig Senate President Sahm suggested dishonest intentions of the Polish authorities and refused to add such a provision to the Council's decision. Branting then joined the discussion, declaring that he would support six months of continued use of the Holm by the Polish side, if treated as a maximum. He was immediately endorsed by Lord Parmoor.⁴⁷ Thus, the commission's report became the basis for resolving the issue of the Westerplatte

45 Hörnell presented the grounds of the conclusions, signed by the committee members, in a letter to the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs in April 1924. He justified the exclusion of the island of Holm ("preferred by the Polish side"), describing the place as completely unsuitable for military transports, "without adequate equipment and railway connection." See Adam Staniszewski, *Po dwóch stronach Bałtyku. Polityczno-gospodarcze stosunki polsko-szwedzkie w latach 1918–1932* (Toruń: Europejskie Centrum Edukacji, 2013), 113.

46 AAN, Fonds: "Delegacja RP przy Lidze Narodów," folder 288, Chargé d'affaires in Paris Jan Szembek to Polish Foreign Office, 6.03.1924.

47 RA, UD 1920 års dossiersystem, HP 1181, VPM by Erik Boheman concerning the most important issues discussed during the 28. Session of the Council of the League of Nations, 10–16 March 1924, 20.03.1924; League of Nations Archive, R1419-27-34556-2764-Jacket2.pdf, Twenty eighth Session of the Council. Minutes, Eighth Meeting held on 14 March 1924. Heated Geneva discussions around Westerplatte were reported by the Swedish press: "Skall Polen få rätt att i Danzig upprätta ammunitionsdépå," *Svenska Dagbladet*, 28.02.1924; "Polen förvarar sin ammunition inom Danzig," *Dagens Nyheter*, 15.03.1924; "Hr Branting hemkommen från Genève," *Aftonbladet*, 19.03.1924; "Det senaste rådsötet i Genève ger gott resultat," *Jämtlandsposten*, 20.03.1924; "Branting om NFs sista möte," *Göteborgs Aftonblad*, 20.03.1924. Everywhere, quoting Branting, it was emphasised that Poland would not be allowed to use Danzig as a transit point for explosives.

depot adopted by the Council of the League of Nations. Not surprisingly, the Swedish delegation fully supported the experts' conclusion, based on Hörnell's opinion. Erik Boheman, who was involved in preparing the working materials for the Swedish delegation to the Council of the League of Nations and regularly noted the progress of the discussions on the Danzig issue, recalled before the decision was made that the Danzig authorities had complained about the possibility of transiting military material to Poland via Holm Island because "due to its location, it means a threat to the Free City."⁴⁸

Westerplatte for Poland – What Comes Next?

The Danzig authorities still tried to block the decision of the League of Nations Council. Members of the Danzig Volkstag and the Danzig press sharply attacked the League of Nations for its decision on Westerplatte, "using rather brutal and unparliamentary terms against it."⁴⁹ On the other hand, the Senate argued that it is a recreational site, a popular beach area among the city's residents, and it is difficult to accept putting a military garrison there.⁵⁰ The local structures of the Protestant Church also protested. The congregation (Landessynode) in Danzig, led by Generalsuperintendent Paul Kalweit and Superintendent Karl Polenske, passed a protest resolution against the League Council's decision to grant Westerplatte to Poland. The resolution was publicised by being sent to the president of the World Congress of Evangelicals, Archbishop Nathan Söderblom of Uppsala.⁵¹ The Foreign Ministry hoped that the Polish envoy in Stockholm Alfred Wysocki would take steps "to neutralize, as far as possible, the Danzig campaign, both by possibly preventing Archbishop Söderblom from sending the Danzig resolution to Anglo-Saxon Protestant organizations, as well as by informing the authoritative Swedish Protestant circles of the proper state of affairs, in particular of the fact that around Westerplatte, already before the war, large quantities of ammunition and war

48 RA, UD 1920 års dossiersystem, HP 1181, VPM by Erik Boheman on the agenda of the Council of the League of Nations 10 March 1924, Genewa, 18.02.1924.

49 AAN, Fonds: "MSZ," reference 322, folder 1455, 5, Polish Foreign Office to the Polish Delegation to the League of Nations, Warsaw, 05.04.1924.

50 On the history of Westerplatte as a spa resort, see: Andrzej Drzycimski, *Westerplatte. Misja specjalna* (Gdańsk: Oficyna Gdańska, 2015), 9–19. The President of the Danzig Senate, Heinrich Sahn, tried to use this argument in September 1924 in a conversation with Eric Colban, Norwegian Head of the Administrative Commissions and Minorities Section of the Secretariat of the League of Nations. He gave him a written note with photographs of sunbathers on the peninsula. See League of Nations Archive, R149-4-11429-38858.pdf, Minute by Erik Colban, 15.09.1924.

51 AAN, Fonds: "MSZ," folder 1455, 2–3, the Polish Foreign Office to the Polish Legation in Stockholm, Warsaw, 04.04.1924.

material were permanently accumulated by the Prussian government (...) The dangers projected by Danzig are thus purely political and anti-Polish in origin, all the more so because Westerplatte is not intended as a Polish arsenal, as insinuated by the Danzig authorities, but as a place for unloading ammunition and war material for transit to Poland.”⁵²

Officially, the Polish authorities were disappointed that they had failed to retain the Holm site. In the short term, the decision to stop using Holm Island complicated Polish transport activities in Danzig. However, the Polish delegate to the League of Nations, Konstanty Skirmunt, in a report to Warsaw dated 17 March, provided a positive assessment of the experts' work: “In general, I believe,” he wrote, “that the Danzig issues have been resolved relatively favorably. In particular, the issue of the military depot ended successfully.” He argued that after the Council's decision granting Poland Westerplatte, the only question was how to stay on Holm until the new site was ready to receive military transports: “We have reached a compromise and will leave Holm in six months. This compromise is undoubtedly not based on any legal or practical principles. Nevertheless, after arriving at Westerplatte, we continue to stay on Holm, and after the deadline confirmed by the Council, we will be able to ask for an extension of our stay on the island if necessary.”⁵³

On the possible extension of the stay on Holm, Skirmunt was overly optimistic, though he was aware that Poland was supported on this issue only by the French delegate. The delegates of Great Britain and Sweden were opposed. Admittedly, the Polish envoy in Stockholm, Alfred Wysocki, intended to influence Hjalmar Branting not to be so intransigent. He tried to arrange an appointment with Branting in his office to present the Polish point of view in an honest conversation. He wanted to emphasise that decisions in Danzig affairs are usually unfair because they do not consider Polish commercial and industrial interests. First, Wysocki met with Swedish Foreign Ministry Secretary General Erik Sjöborg. The Swedish diplomat refuted the allegations. He admitted attending the meeting before the League Council session, but “there was no discussion of whether or not the Swedish delegate should present an unfavorable attitude toward Poland.” The ammunition depot on Holm Island was considered “secondary”, in which Branting had “complete freedom of action.” Sjöborg asserted that Branting's “integrity and idealism in life” were well known. He emphasised: “Everything Mr. Branting does in the League is a consequence of his sense of fairness and impartiality.” When Wysocki finally met with Branting, the Swedish prime minister explained that the Polish envoy only presented a one-sided view, while different opinions should be heard.

52 Ibidem.

53 AAN, Fonds: “Delegacja RP przy Lidze Narodów,” folder 288, Delegate to the League of Nations to Polish Foreign Office, 17.03.1924.

Branting said: "I have investigated the matter very thoroughly. I have spoken to the High Commissioner many times. I have developed my own view. I very much regret that it is not the same as Poland's view."⁵⁴ Wysocki replied that it was difficult to accept such a view, since the freedom of any activity in Danzig was inevitable for the future development of the Polish state, and the slogans for the defence of human rights used by the Senate of the Free City were only a cover for its foul policy toward Poland. Branting did not discuss the issue. He only assured that he was a friend of Poland.⁵⁵ Staying on Holm beyond the allotted six-month period proved impossible. After that time, the only solution was to use the duty-free basin in the New Port for transporting ammunition and explosives.

At subsequent negotiations on the size of the port basin at Westerplatte, the Council of the League of Nations already placed the decision solely in the hands of Hörnell, who arrived in Danzig again in June 1924. According to the chairman of the Polish delegation to the Port and Waterways Board, Adm. Michał Borowski, "Hörnell had already formed his final opinion and was only trying to bring about a compromise that would somewhat satisfy the Polish side."⁵⁶ In conclusion, Borowski emphasised: "It remains to be stated that, on the one hand, the aspirations of the Danzig side (...) have been radically overturned by the opinion of Eng. Hoernell. On the other hand, the Polish desiderata have not been considered in all their fullness." However, in practice, "The solution can be considered completely satisfactory for Polish interests." Despite this, Rear Admiral Zwierkowski decided to protest on behalf of the Ministry of the Interior to the President of the Port Board against failing to consider all the demands regarding the size of the port basin (mainly its width), citing security considerations, which the Free City authorities charged exclusively to the Polish side.⁵⁷

Only after the decision of the Council of the League of Nations, in early July 1924, did Vice Adm. Porębski take an interest in the buildings on Westerplatte purchased in 1919–1920 by Mieczysław Jałowiecki and belonging to the Polish government. Porębski asked the staff of the Polish Commissariat General about the possibility of using

54 AAN, Fonds: "Delegacja RP przy Lidze Narodów," folder 289, Wysocki to the Polish Foreign Office, 12.05.1924.

55 Interestingly, the Danish envoy in Stockholm, Herluf Zahle, expressed a different view. He was convinced that Branting regarded the Polish delegation in Geneva as a competitor in the effort to secure a stronger position among the smaller states. It was therefore not surprising to him that Sweden's attitude toward Poland could appear unfriendly.

56 AAN, Fonds: "MSWojsk, Biuro Wojskowe Ligi Narodów," folder 21, 117, M. Borowski: Report on progress of the case of summoning of Eng. Hoernell [sic!] as an arbitrator and further negotiations with him, Danzig, 08.06.1924.

57 On Hörnell's opinion, see: Drzycimski, *Westerplatte. Reduta*, 98–101. However, the author has doubts about the expert's identity.

them for military purposes.⁵⁸ After an inspection by Polish officers, it was found that “all the buildings, except the Strandhalle restaurant, are suitable for military accommodation purposes with prior moderate renovation and insulation of the buildings (...).”⁵⁹ First, there was the Bathing Facility complex and three villas. All the buildings were of light, wooden construction. In total, they made up 20 percent of the peninsula. It is therefore difficult to speak of land ownership by the Polish government on this site, and indeed, it was not the whole peninsula.⁶⁰ Nor was this ownership an argument for taking over Westerplatte, as the Polish side consistently sought to locate the reloading site permanently on Holm. Nevertheless, some of the owned buildings were later used for barracks. The problem for the next few months was the dozens of families who resided there. It is worth noting that most of the families who remained there the longest were former Polish residents of Danzig.⁶¹

There were also heated discussions between the Polish delegation and the Port Board and the High Commissioner about the demarcation of the peninsula’s area controlled by Poland. It should be noted that the Minister of Military Affairs, Gen. Sikorski, who was responsible for negotiations on these matters, and especially Rear Admiral Zwierkowski, tried to stick to the literalness of the League Council’s resolution to give the entire peninsula to Poland. As a result, he was reluctant to place the narrow coastal strip under the Port Board’s administration, especially on the Vistula side, over which a new dispute arose. Sikorski even insisted that “not wishing to set a precedent in the League of Nations of voluntarily yielding from the rights granted to us, I cannot agree to any cutting off of the Westerplatte coast from the Vistula.”⁶² The Polish military authorities did not share the opinion of Polish Commissar General Henryk Strasburger, who proposed to give up a 4–5 metre strip, which he considered a “slight concession.”⁶³ Eventually, the matter was again discussed in Geneva at a Council meeting in September 1925 when Quiñones de Leon included a sentence in his report for the next Council meeting that stated the surrender of Westerplatte only “after settling the border dispute.” With the prospect of Germany’s imminent entry into the League of Nations, Commissioner General Strasburger went to Erik Colban to protest the text amendment.

58 AAN, Fonds: “MSWojsk, Biuro Wojskowe Ligi Narodów,” folder 16, 3, Commandor Metzger (Military Department of General Commissariat) to Rear Admiral Zwierkowski, Danzig, 03.07.1924.

59 AAN, Fonds: “MSWojsk, Biuro Wojskowe Ligi Narodów,” folder 16, 9, Inspection report, Gdańsk, 18.07.1924.

60 Janusz Dargacz. “Polska własność na Westerplatte w latach 1919–1925,” *Gdański Notatnik Historyczny* 1 (2022): 41.

61 Ibidem.

62 AAN, Fonds: “Sztab Główny,” folder 1190, 532, Sikorski to the Polish Commissioner General, Warsaw, 25.08.1925.

63 Ibidem, 557, Strasburger to the Polish Foreign Office, Danzig, 07.08.1925.

Colban explained that he had nothing to do with the revision: “Quiñones de Leon had the report amended,” he said, “and it was at the request of Mr. Sahn, supported by the Swedish delegation.”⁶⁴ In the end, Drummond settled the matter. He placed the decision on the demarcation in the hands of the President of the Port Board, stipulating that he should factor in the opinion of the “experts of the League of Nations” and settle the matter “as soon as possible.” The surrender of the peninsula was in the hands of the high commissioner. However, in confidential discussions at the Secretariat, it was agreed that this should occur “no later than 1 November 1925.” This is also how the Council deliberated on 19 September. Strasburger stressed that the Polish authorities had left Holm by the deadline (within six months), so Westerplatte should already have been handed over to Poland. Sahn consistently protested against transporting Polish war materials through Danzig and demanded that decisions be withheld until the border dispute was settled. High Commissioner MacDonnell, on the other hand, following earlier conclusions of the Secretariat talks, specified 1 November as the date of surrendering the peninsula to Poland. Zwierkowski rightly considered the course of the Council a success for Poland. As he stated, “taking advantage of the favourable situation for us,” he still raised the issue of the Polish garrison’s size.⁶⁵

The issue was revisited at a Council meeting on 9 December 1925. There was no objection to placing a Polish military unit of 88 officers and soldiers on the peninsula. However, Swedish delegate Östen Undén decided to voice his opinion on the composition of the garrison. Trying to continue Branting’s policy in the Council, he adhered to the idea of compromise and the principle of defending the interests of the weaker party, and he considered the Free City of Danzig to be such.⁶⁶ The discussion of the presence of Polish soldiers at Westerplatte is a good example of this. Undén asked whether “from a practical point of view,” it would not be better “to install a civilian police force at Westerplatte instead of a military unit.” The Swedish politician and diplomat stressed that this was not a proposal, but only a question to the high commissioner, to whom he passed the initiative to act in consultation with the Polish government. However, it should be noted that the chairman of the Danzig Senate immediately expressed “deep gratitude for the proposal made by the Swedish representative.” Sahn argued that Westerplatte is not extraterritorial; it is subject to Danzig law and accepting the Swedish representative’s proposal will facilitate relations between the Danzig police and the unit located

64 AAN, Fonds: “MSWojsk, Biuro Wojskowe Ligi Narodów,” folder 13, 2–3, Report by Zwierkowski on activities at the 35. session of the Council of the League of Nations concerning Westerplatte, Geneva, 19.09.1925.

65 Ibidem.

66 The Swedish press presented a picture of the threat of Danzig from its Southern neighbour: „En fri stad med kringskuren frihet,” *Aftonbladet*, 10.02.1925; “Memel – Danzig,” *Aftonbladet*, 25.04.1924.

on the peninsula. At the end of his speech, he referred to Undén's proposal for the third time, asking that it be recorded in the meeting protocol. British Foreign Minister Austen Chamberlain responded briefly, stating that High Commissioner MacDonnell had the final say in the matter, and that the Council may not be competent to decide on this issue.⁶⁷ The Italian delegate to the League of Nations, Vittorio Scialoja, who chaired the session, concluded that Undén had expressed his opinion and recommendation, but that the issue should be resolved by the high commissioner.⁶⁸

Conclusions

From its establishment, the Free City of Danzig became an arena of conflict between the local authorities and the Polish state, defending its rights guaranteed by the Treaty of Versailles and subsequent bilateral agreements. As Polish diplomacy tried to direct its demands concerning Danzig directly to Geneva, experiencing the reluctance of British high commissioners on the ground, the Council of the League of Nations constantly had to take a position on Polish-Danzig relations, involving the staff of the Secretariat in Geneva and experts. As Stanisław Sierpowski stated, "The Free City became synonymous with an irresolvable international dispute, which came with strong emotions, especially of the parties directly involved."⁶⁹ One of the most difficult to resolve was the dispute over where to transship war materials. Danzig sought to remove the possibility of transit and storage of such materials through Poland altogether. On the other hand, the Polish side demanded a sufficiently large space for such purposes on Holm Island.

The Swedish delegation became an active participant in the Polish-Danzig negotiations, taking part in the Council of the League of Nations deliberations as a non-permanent member since 1 January 1923. On the one hand, Swedish Prime Minister Hjalmar Branting, as a supporter of British foreign policy, gained a reputation among Polish diplomats as a typical representative of Swedish Germanophilia and therefore an opponent. His friendlier attitude toward Danzig's demands was evident in Geneva. He expressed the conviction that the international order after World War I required strengthening Germany's position. Political ties between the Swedish and German Social Democrats also played an important role. Above all, however, his policies were based on his belief in the injustice of the Treaty of Versailles and its consequences.

67 League of Nations Archive [hereinafter LONA], R1423-27-48174-2764.pdf, 37. session of the Council. Verbatim report of the 6. meeting held at Geneva, 9 December 1925.

68 LONA, R1424-27-48234-2764-Jacket-1.pdf, 37. session of the Council. Minutes, Sixth Meeting held on 9 December 1925.

69 Sierpowski, *Gra o Niemcy*, 158–159.

On the other hand, the Scandinavian members of the League of Nations, in general, gained a reputation as mediators proposing “more sophisticated ways of solving problems that are the subject of negotiations and disputes.”⁷⁰ In the dispute over the transshipment site, you can see their sympathy for Danzig and their participation in attempts to find a compromise and break the impasse. Such a solution was the appointment of a group of experts who reduced a politically charged dispute to the level of a technical issue. Among them, a key role was played by a Swedish engineer, Per Gustaf Hörnell, who pointed to Westerplatte as the best place for a Polish transit depot, instead of Holm Island, which was sought by the Polish side.

The Danzig authorities and Polish representatives lodged routine protests after the Council of the League of Nations approved the experts’ proposal. However, a behind-the-scenes analysis of the Polish strategy on the choice of the landing site for war materials shows that Polish diplomacy adopted the logic of compromise as more effective than the rigid position of the Danzig authorities and was satisfied with the final decision.

On the other hand, Branting and, after his death, Undén consistently tried to indicate their favouritism toward Danzig. This occurred in connection with the effective limitation of the continued Polish presence on Holm to six months after the decision on the location of the Westerplatte transshipment site, as well as the (ultimately unsuccessful) attempt to establish a police rather than military garrison on the peninsula.

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SUMMARY

The Free City of Danzig became an arena of conflicts between the local authorities and the Polish state defending its rights assured by the Treaty of Versailles and subsequent bilateral agreements. Polish diplomacy tried to address its demands concerning their own rights in Danzig directly to Geneva, and the Council of the League of Nations actually had to constantly take a position on Polish-Gdansk relations, involving the staff of the Secretariat in Geneva and experts. One of the most difficult to resolve proved to be the dispute over where to transship war materials. Danzig authorities sought to remove the possibility of transit and storage of such materials through Poland in general. The Polish side, on the other hand, demanded a suitably large space for such purposes on Holm Island. The Swedish delegation became a participant in the negotiations in the disputes, taking part in the meetings of the Council of the League of Nations as a non-permanent member from 1 January 1923. The Swedish authorities, headed by Prime Minister Hjalmar Branting, tried to support the Danzig side in the disputes with Poland, as a result of their conviction of the injustice of the Treaty of Versailles and their cooperation with British diplomacy. On the issue of the transshipment site, the Swedish delegation contributed in trying to find a compromise and break the deadlock. Such a solution was the appointment of a group of several experts, which brought a politically charged dispute down to the level of a technical issue. Among the experts, a key role was played by the Swedish engineer Per Gustaf Hörnell, who pointed to the Westerplatte peninsula as the best place for a Polish transit depot.

Westerplatte, Szwecja i Liga Narodów w pierwszej połowie lat 20-tych XX wieku

Słowa kluczowe: historia dyplomacji, Wolne Miasto Gdańsk, polityka zagraniczna Szwecji, organizacje międzynarodowe

STRESZCZENIE

Wolne Miasto Gdańsk stało się areną konfliktów między lokalnymi władzami a państwem polskim broniącym swych praw zapewnionym traktatem wersalskim i kolejnymi umowami dwustronnymi. Polska dyplomacja starała się kierować swoje postulaty dotyczące Gdańska bezpośrednio do Genewy, Rada Ligi Narodów właściwie stale musiała zajmować stanowisko w stosunkach polsko-gdańskich, angażując personel Sekretariatu w Genewie oraz ekspertów. Jednym z najtrudniejszych do rozstrzygnięcia okazał się spór o miejsce przeładunku materiałów wojennych. Gdańsk dążył do usunięcia w ogóle możliwości tranzytu i składowania takich materiałów przez Polskę. Strona polska natomiast domagała się odpowiednio dużej przestrzeni dla takich celów na wyspie Holm. Uczestnikiem negocjacji w sporach polsko-gdańskich stała się delegacja szwedzka, która od 1 stycznia 1923 r. brała udział w obradach Rady Ligi Narodów jako jej niestały członek. Szwedzkie władze z premierem Hjalmarem Brantingiem na czele starały się popierać stronę gdańską w sporach z Polską, co wynikało z przekonania o niesprawiedliwości traktatu wersalskiego i współpracy z dyplomacją brytyjską.

W sprawie miejsca przeładunku delegacja szwedzka miała swój wkład w próbach szukania kompromisu i przełamania impasu. Takim rozwiązaniem było powołanie kilkuosobowej grupy ekspertów, co spór o dużym ładunku politycznym sprowadziło do poziomu problematyki technicznej. Wśród ekspertów kluczową rolę odegrał szwedzki inżynier Per Gustaf Hörnell, który wskazał na półwysep Westerplatte jako najlepsze miejsce na polską składnicę tranzytową.

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