

MARIAN MROCKO
Gdańsk–Słupsk

FOR OBTAINING AND SOLIDIFYING POLAND'S ACCESS TO THE SEA

At the end of the 19th century, due to the radicalization of the policy of Germanization in Prussian sector of partitioned Poland, the circles of Polish political thought intensified the national endeavours and crystallized plans of achieving progress in solving the Polish cause and exhibited greater interest in Pomerania and its future. There were also noticeable attempts to strengthen Polishness in West and East Prussia which seemed to be considered, in the context of the postulate to give Poland a direct access to the sea, an indispensable condition of Poland's sovereignty and of decreasing the future German threat. The awareness of the importance of the fight for Pomerania and the rest of Polish lands in Prussian sector went together with the thesis the democratic-national camp put forward at the beginning of the 20th century: Germany and its policy of Germanization were the main threats to the Polish nation.¹ One of the chief advocates of the primacy of the fight for Pomerania, Jan Ludwik Popławski, wrote in 1903: "We can imagine the future Polish state without a huge part of it, but without West Prussia it would be a political and economic weirdo, unable to develop or even to be alive for a longer time. Because West Prussia cannot be sustained without East Prussia, this country, by all means, must be Polish."²

The fact that more Polish tourists visited the Baltic shore contributed to the increase in interest in the Pomeranian question among Poles and decrease in the

¹ The basis of this orientation is best expressed by Roman Dmowski in his work *Niemcy, Rosja i kwestia polska* [Germany, Russia, and the Polish Question], Lwów 1908.

² J. L. Popławski: *Pisma polityczne* [Political Writings], vol. 2, Kraków 1910, p. 383.

sense of loneliness among the Pomeranians. A well known historian of Polish literature at Jagiellonian University, Stanisław Tarnowski, who in 1881 spent his holidays in Sopot (Zoppot) made visiting trips to Gdańsk, Malbork (Marienburg), Pelplin, Elbląg (Elbing), Braniewo (Braunsberg) and Frombork (Frauenburg). Thrilled by the beauty and Polishness of Powiśle, Pomerania and Gdańsk, he maintained that there was still a chance of terminating or even reversing the effects of Germanization.³ A hope nourished by the conviction that “hand or leg, even when cut off, never ceases to be felt as part of the body” made him believe that the role of Gdańsk in our national history had its future. Reflecting on his holidays he said: “By the Vistula River God joined it with Poland, and this physical bond cannot be broken, and both the country and the town need to depend on each other that, instinctively, they feel they must eventually belong to each other.”⁴ Similarly, Henryk Łuczkiewicz, a doctor of medicine, who aimed at getting Poles interested in the Kashubian shore, encouraged his compatriots to visit Sopot (Zoppot). In “Tygodnik Ilustrowany”, a Warsaw weekly, he wrote: “here almost everywhere you can communicate, or at least be understood, in the Polish language because even local native Germans understand a lot of Polish although they do not admit to this.”⁵ Other correspondent of the same paper declared that: “Poles can feel here like at home because everywhere here, on strolls, in streets and restaurants, they can hear our language which takes precedence, particularly in the second season⁶ over others.”⁷ A Poznań daily “Dziennik Poznański”, while advertising the beauty of the place wrote: “And this is good that Poles come to Sopot. Apart from the merits enlisted above we find in Sopot the Polish attitude among the locals. You will talk in Polish to the folk, and the countryside towards west and north is entirely Polish.”⁸

There were also some journalists who at the beginning of the 20th century attracted attention to Polishness of Pomerania. Antoni Chołoniewski, who was not involved in any political movement, while justifying Polish rights to Gdańsk

³ S. Tarnowski: *Z Prus Królewskich* [From the Royal Prussia], Kraków 1882, p. 154.

⁴ S. Tarnowski: *Z wakacji* [From the Vacation], vol. 2: *Prusy królewskie* [The Royal Prussia], Kraków 1894, p. 134.

⁵ *Odwiedziny Gdańska w XIX wieku* [Visiting Gdańsk in the 19th Century]. From Polish reports compiled by Irena Fabiani-Madeyska, Gdańsk 1957, p. 254.

⁶ I.e. after harvest, in August.

⁷ *Odwiedziny Gdańska ...* [Visiting Gdańsk ...], p. 255.

⁸ “Dziennik Poznański” [Poznań Daily], 175, 1883. Quoted after *Odwiedziny Gdańska ...* [Visiting Gdańsk ...], p. 255.

wrote that: "White eagles are still embedded in stone buildings of Gdańsk. Economic conditions attract it to the ribbon of the Vistula calling for fixing the broken ties. The language area approaches its walls, curving to Kashubian banks; it has not been lost yet, it is still able to stay live if it is not forgotten by the rest of the motherland. To look at this old city with resignation, as if it were something alien, would be a mistake. Heating up the sparks of Polishness which smoulder just outside its walls must go together with belief in the change of even the most dreadful fate, with belief in the star which shines for those who want to live and know how to fight for life."⁹ Worrying about the growing Germanization of Pomerania, the same journalist added: "The work on the Baltic borders is the work for the whole nation and should be backed up with all possible means by the whole nation. Although facing the greatest threat ever, Polish Pomerania can still be rescued."¹⁰

The same spirit is to be found in the statements of Stanisław Bełza, a well known activist, lawyer, and journalist. He believed that to restrain the growing Germanization was possible thus he objected to those who discouraged Poles from visiting Sopot (Zoppot). He prompted to combine seaside holidays with learning about the region, visiting neighbouring places, and bring the national spirit to the local people.¹¹

These reports and statements showed, apart from the Polish nature of Pomerania and Gdańsk, their integral ties to Poland's economic resources which stretched to the territory of all partitioned sectors in the Vistula estuary. However, most influential in this respect were such phenomena as the aforementioned developing policy of Germanization and, on the other hand, the attempts of the most dynamic Polish political groups in Prussian and Russian sectors to direct their concentrated efforts against Russia.

The postulate of fight for Pomerania and indispensability of its belonging to the future united state was incorporated into the programmes of some political organizations. It was displayed not only by the National League and associated democratic-national parties but also, to a degree, by political groups which

⁹ A. Chołoniewski: *Nad morzem polskim* [By the Polish Sea], Warszawa 1912, p. 53. See also M. Mroczko: *Polska myśl zachodnia 1918–1939 (kształtowanie i upowszechnianie)* [Polish Western Thought 1918–1939 (Forming and Popularizing)], Poznań 1986, p. 58.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

¹¹ A. Galos: *Stanisław Bełza o sprawach zachodnich* [Stanisław Bełza about the Western Issues], in: *Twórcy polskiej myśli zachodniej* [Originators of Polish Western Thought], ed. by W. Wrześniński, Olsztyn 1996, p. 35.

separated from the National Democratic Party¹² in 1908–1912 after it had adopted Russian orientation. The communities who centered around *Zet*¹³ and then around *Zarzewie*¹⁴ need special mentioning. They were formed by students and fresh university graduates whose awareness of the importance of western borderland became a permanent ideological element though independent from their involvement in preparations for the uprising. This attitude was proved by their significant participation not only in the fight for attaching the western territory to Polish state in 1918–1921 but also in activities aimed at strengthening Polishness of western provinces and at increasing the benefits deriving from the access to the Baltic Sea.

The break of World War I made the situation of most Polish population even worse. Only a part of it was involved in preferential arguments which led to serious dilemmas created by the necessity to choose one option and support one of the fighting sides. Beyond the political and military actions undertaken by major political parties and movements, Polish scholars (historians, geographers, linguists) and journalists worked on internationalizing the knowledge about the Polish cause, familiarize the western world with the aspirations of the Polish nation, demonstrate the international significance of the Polish cause and justify the restoration of Polish state with free access to the sea.¹⁵

As the political and military situation was developing, National Democratic politicians became more open in postulating the restoration of independent Poland with access to the sea. On August 15, 1917 Roman Dmowski chaired the newly formed National Polish Committee which assumed the function of Polish government in the field of Ministry of International Affairs and partly of Ministry of Military Affairs (the political leadership of Polish army which was being formed in France).¹⁶

¹² The best description of the National Democratic Party is presented by R. Wapiński: *Narodowa demokracja 1893–1939. Ze studiów nad dziejami myśli nacjonalistycznej* [National Democracy 1893–1939. From the Studies on History of the Nationalist Thought], Wrocław 1980.

¹³ Cf. *“Zet” w walce o niepodległość i budowę państwa. Szkice i wspomnienia* [“Zet” in the Struggle for Independence and State-Building], ed. by T. W. Nowacki, Warszawa 1996.

¹⁴ Cf. *“Zarzewie” 1909–1920. Wspomnienia i materiały* [“Zarzewie” 1909–1920. Memoirs and Materials], ed. and annotated by A. Garlicka, Foreword by A. and A. Garlicy, Warszawa 1973.

¹⁵ For more comments see M. Mroczo: op. cit., pp. 58 ff; J. Pajewski: *Budowa Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej 1918–1926* [The Building of the Second Polish Republic 1918–1926], Kraków 1995.

¹⁶ R. Dmowski: *Polityka polska i odbudowanie państwa* [Polish Policy and Rebuilding of the State], Warszawa 1925, p. 345.

However, the governments of Coalition states viewed the Polish cause differently than the Poles. In France Poland was seen as an anti-German factor; in England it was perceived as an anti-Russian factor. These differences made it difficult for the western states to take a stand. The Polish cause was still the function of German matter and Russian matter¹⁷. Only after the fall of tsarism and due to the February and October Revolutions, the states of the Coalition understood and acknowledged the international significance of the Polish cause. France had lost its ally in the east and now it was Poland which assumed the position of an allied body to hold Germany in check from the east.

Majority of Polish political circles saw Russia temporally weakened and believed that it was a good time to undertake fully offensive political actions aimed at restoring the independent Polish state out of all three sectors of partitioned Poland. In the Polish community of all three sectors the image of western districts was enhanced and fairly widespread. Evidence can be found in outlines of geography of Polish lands which were published in those times and which included Pomerania like *Geograficzno-statystyczny atlas Polski* (Geographical and Statistical Atlas of Poland) published by Eugeniusz Romer in 1916 and also in his lecturing activity much popular among the audience. After many years this outstanding Polish geographer and patriot was reminiscing on the atmosphere of those times and wrote: "Such crowds of people who gathered around, or rather mobbed lecture halls when I put forward the topics *About Polish sea, Poland's borders, Gdańsk was and will be ours* were never to be seen in Lvov before."¹⁸

Studies which appealed to sentiments and which praised the national activity of the Kashubians generously helped to disseminate knowledge about Pomerania. Zofia Przewóska-Czarnecka wrote in 1917: "Gdańsk Pomerania, spread on the left bank of our river queen Vistula is also called the land of Kashubia because Poles – the Pomeranians – who inhabit this land are also called Kashubians."¹⁹ Further she stated that: "And they all are the sons of one motherland Poland – the same songs and the same tunes they sing while working in the field, here at the seaside just like in other parts of Poland, likewise they greet each other at work with old Polish *God bless you*, likewise, though more joyfully they respond to pious Polish

¹⁷ J. Pajewski: op. cit., p. 18.

¹⁸ E. Romer: *Pamiętnik paryski (1918–1919)* [Paris Diary (1918–1919)], Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków–Gdańsk–Łódź 1989, p. 31; see also M. Mroczko: *Eugeniusz Romer (1871–1954). Biografia polityczna* [Eugeniusz Romer (1871–1954). A Political Biography], Słupsk 2008, p. 68.

¹⁹ Z. Przewóska-Czarnecka: *Morze polskie z 7-miu rycinami i mapami Pomorza Polskiego* [The Polish Sea Including 7 Figures and Maps of Polish Pomerania], Moskwa 1917, p. 6.

greeting: *Praised be Jesus Christ.*"²⁰ The Kashubians are not only dear; we know that thanks to them "when freedom dawns on us again we will have the window on the wide world, this Polish sea shore at which, with God's help, ships will roll like before, and their red banners with white eagle will please our eyes."²¹

However, there were the events of the end of 1918, i.e. the military defeat of Germany, the break of November revolution and the restoration of Polish state which made it possible for the drive towards independence of Polish population in Pomerania to be politically plausible. So far this drive and also the understanding of how significant the direct access to the sea would be in the restored Poland could have only been postulated.

The prevalence of the drive for freedom among Polish population of Pomerania was visible in multidirectional activities of Polish peasant councils and the founding of Organizacja Wojskowa Pomorza (Military Organization of Pomerania) however, they did not guarantee success. In comparison to Great Poland the prospects of a successful uprising in Pomerania were thinner due to its geographical position in relation to the Polish state, its strategic role, its position in the German state, quite a big number of military garrisons located on its territory, and smaller Polish population. This weakness was particularly seen in bigger town areas. Moreover, Pomerania functioned also as a bridge between central Germany and the then province of East Prussia. On the other hand Poland was not able to carry out the policy of open confrontation with Germany. This was due to uneven military potential, mostly justified sense of fear of German aggressive actions,²² and different international position. In spite of having lost the war Germany remained a stable element of European politics and overthrowing of monarchy and introducing republican system of government added to its international prestige. On the contrary, Poland was a new state which was in the process of building its structures and, what is more, from the very beginning it was in conflict with its neighbours.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 16.

²¹ Ibid., p. 11.

²² See P. Łossowski: *Między wojną a pokojem. Niemieckie zamysły wojenne na wschodzie w obliczu traktatu wersalskiego. Marzec–czerwiec 1919 roku* [Between War and Peace. German War Plans for Eastern Europe Against the Treaty of Versailles. March–June 1919], Warszawa 1976; P. Hauser: *Niemcy wobec sprawy polskiej. Październik 1918 – czerwiec 1919* [Germany and the Polish Question. October 1918 – June 1919], Poznań 1984; M. Wojciechowski: *Powrót Pomorza do Polski 1918–1920* [The Return of Pomerania to Poland 1918–1920], Warszawa–Poznań–Toruń 1981.

Taking these circumstances into consideration helps one understand how difficult the fight for the access to the sea was. This also helps one to see the positive outcomes of various actions which resulted in regaining majority of ethnically Polish Pomerania and access to the Baltic Sea.²³ This access was, however, limited by the very length of the coast and Gdańsk was left outside the territory of the sovereign Polish Republic. Granting the privileges of a free city to Gdańsk was only a compromise: it did not fulfil Polish aspiration yet it bound Gdańsk with Poland.²⁴ When in summer 1920 the anti-Polish stand of the free town of Gdańsk was revealed, Poland enforced its demands to administer the policy of strict enforcement of treaty rights and postulated to build its own port in Gdynia which would be independent from Gdańsk. In these years one could also hear voices advocating the benefits of direct access to the sea. Adam Szelański's fairly complementary treatment of maritime issues is quite noteworthy: "The axis of the whole life of contemporary Poland has moved towards the west, but not by land, which would mean towards Germany or even Czechoslovakia, but the west in the sense of the centres of international trade and destination points of main shipping routes which are located at the west coast of Europe, England, or even America. And this maritime point of view is a hundredfold more important for the economic future, and even the frontier policy of contemporary Poland than land viewpoint in which both politics and economy are seen in the context of close neighbours. Likewise the land border the sea is a frontier too, but it is not an absolute border fixed by physical configuration; it is a relative border which opens or closes depending on circumstances, however, it is always able to stretch along according to our wish. Contrary to land border which always imposes the neighbourhood, the sea border gives a free choice of neighbours in the sphere of both trade and politics."²⁵

Although this statement may seem overoptimistic as it holds the view that Poland could carry out a vigorous maritime policy and overestimates the chance of using the restricted access to the Baltic Sea as a means to adopt such policy;

²³ See *Problem polsko-niemiecki w traktacie wersalskim* [Polish-German Question in the Treaty of Versailles], ed. by J. Pajewski, J. Krasucki, G. Labuda, K. Piwarski, Poznań 1963; R. Wapiński: *Polska nad Bałtykiem 1920–1930* [Poland at the Baltic Sea], Gdańsk 1978.

²⁴ For more comments see S. Mikos: *Wolne Miasto Gdańsk a Liga Narodów 1920–1939* [The Free City of Gdańsk and the League of Nations 1920–1939], Gdańsk 1979; idem: *Działalność Komisariatu Generalnego Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej w Wolnym Mieście Gdańsku 1920–1939* [Activity of the General Consulate of the Polish Republic in the Free City of Gdańsk], Warszawa 1971; K. Skubiszewski: *Zachodnia granica Polski* [The Western Polish Border], Gdańsk 1969.

²⁵ A. Szelański: *Polska Współczesna* [Present-Day Poland], Warszawa (1924?), p. 27.

yet there is no denying that the author accurately differentiates between land and sea borders. Szelągowski was not the only daydreamer. There were other Polish political and economic activists who in the first years of independence took pains to persuade the public opinion that taking advantage of the access to the sea was beneficial. These dreams were based on a sound judgment about the profits such an access to the sea could bring to Poland and its economy.

It was the pressure of the necessities of the state which changed the postulates of strengthening Polish position at the Baltic Sea from the theoretical to the practical. Because Poland had only limited rights in the Free City of Gdańsk it was indispensable to build a naval port on the part of the coast assigned to Poland, a base for the navy to guard the sea border and defend Polish rights in Gdańsk. Moreover, the experience of 1920, which proved that full access to the sea was indispensable, forced Poland to be more active and decide for building the provisional naval port and the shelter for fishermen; it also decided on the location of the port in Gdynia. Initially, the port in Gdynia was to complement the one in Gdańsk and function as an emergency port. In later years, the need to find overseas markets for Polish exports (mainly coal) developed and the building of trade port in Gdynia speeded up. Gdynia was also the first successful economic enterprise in restored Poland, enriched by the exoticism of encountering the sea. This contributed a lot to enhance the image of Pomerania in public imagination.²⁶ The statement of Czesław Klarner “Pomerania is not only a symbol of our outer trade but most of all it symbolizes economic independence of Poland”²⁷ was supported by most opinion-forming circles in the 1930s.

The worsening of the state of affairs in Europe in the late 1930s was accompanied by the heightening of tensions among both Polish population and German minority. The more this minority, feeling powerful and supported by the German Reich, demonstrated in public their anti-Polish attitude, the more the Polish population were aware of the growing threat. The sense of fear was expressed at conventions and meetings where resolutions which unmasked anti-Polish activi-

²⁶ Cf. R. Wapiński: *O miejscu Pomorza w wyobrażeniach społecznych w dobie porozbiorowej* [About the Standing of Pomerania in the Public Opinion in the Post-Partition Period], “Zapiski Historyczne” [Historical Notes], 1995, 2–3, p. 67.

²⁷ C. Klarner: *Śląsk i Pomorze jako symbole naszej niezależności* [Silesia and Pomerania as Symbols of Our Independence], Toruń 1932, p. 56. This topic was one of the subjects discussed at an academic conference held in Bytom in 1994. Cf. *Górny Śląsk i Pomorze – dwa symbole niezależności Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej* [Upper Silesia and Pomerania: Two Symbols of the Independence of the Second Polish Republic], ed. by M. Mroczo, Bytom 1996.

ties of German minority in Pomerania were adopted; a boycott of German press and publications was also encouraged.

It is hard not to appreciate the intense activity of organizations and institutions on the west front had for the popularization of the significance of Pomerania for Poland. The cardinal role was played by Związek Obrony Kresów Zachodnich (Union for Defense of the West Frontier), renamed Polski Związek Zachodni (PZZ; Polish Association of the West) in 1934. Alarmed by the tendencies which appeared among Polish establishment after 1934 to relax vigilance against Germany some people paid attention to the annexation attitudes to Pomerania (though less aggressive and less straightforward) which still existed in the German Reich.²⁸ That is why, not denying the immediate value of Polish-German declaration of restraining violence dated on January 26, 1934, some maintained that the declaration cannot “put Polish watchfulness for the future to sleep nor keep up a pretence of fraternity which would exceed good relations”.²⁹ This view reflected the true anxiety of Polish population which was produced mostly by Nazi growing penetration of Pomerania.³⁰ PZZ called for keeping guard against the western neighbour, warned against any political compromise with Germany, and suggested allocating bigger government funds for military protection of the country. Wanting to attract as many members of Pomeranian population as possible PZZ established a close cooperation with Zrzeszenie Miłośników Kaszubszczyzny “Stanica” (Association of Lovers of Kashubia “Watchtower”) in Toruń (Thorn), which resulted in united effort to propagate Kashubian folklore in whole Poland, to popularize profiles of outstanding Kashubian activists who spread the idea of Polishness, and in activities aimed at further social agitation of local population. Thanks to this, as PZZ claimed, Kashubian population became the most dynamic factor of this association in the 1930s.³¹ Taking into consideration the fact that Pomerania as such was a complex area comprised of several regions which differed culturally and economically, PZZ tried first to analyse the conditions and then to

²⁸ Report from the activity of Polski Związek Zachodni from 1st October 1934 to 30th September 1937, Warszawa, *passim*.

²⁹ “Słowo Pomorskie” [Pomeranian Word], Sept. 19, 1934, no. 214. See also R. Wapiński: *Encja na Pomorzu 1920–1939* [The National Democracy in Pomerania 1920–1939], Gdańsk 1966, p. 129.

³⁰ P. Hauser, *Mniejszość niemiecka na Pomorzu w okresie międzywojennym* [German Minority in Pomerania in the Interwar Period], Poznań 1998, pp. 254–256.

³¹ Archiwum Państwowe w Poznaniu, Polski Związek Zachodni [Poznań State Archives, Polish Association of the West], 411: PZZ Pomeranian District activity report, Jan. 1 – Oct. 31, 1937, p. 23.

adjust its activities to the characteristics of each particular region. They took into account the peculiarity not only of the aforementioned Kashubian region but also the Masurian region (in Działdowo [Soldau] district), Kociewie (Tczew [Dirschau] and Starogard [Preußisch Stargard] districts), and the so called Kosznajderia (the southern parts of Chojnice [Konitz] district and Sępólno [Zempelburg] district). They also remembered that Pomerania proper was a much bigger area and only a part of it was restored to Poland. It was pointed out that because Gdańsk, Powiśle, Warmia and West Kashubia were excluded from the restored Pomerania many problems of political, economic and cultural nature arose.

The readiness to fight for Polish rights on the Baltic Sea and retaining Polish possessions in Pomerania were also expressed by the members of Towarzystwo Gimnastyczne "Sokół" (Gymnastics Association "Falcon")³². During the "Week of the Falcon" which was held in Pomerania in 21–27 May 1939, the members manifested their attitude in a resolution which among other things said that "facing impertinent attacks of the German enemy on everything which is Polish, facing the outrageous and daring German demands for Polish rights in Gdańsk and for the ancient Pomeranian land [...] Pomeranian falcons are ready any time and without hesitation to sacrifice all their powers, blood and lives to fight for the natural rights of Poland at the Vistula estuary and the whole Polish Republic".³³ This resolution, like many other ones which were adopted in this time in Pomerania, expressed the attitude Polski Związek Zachodni (Polish Association of the West) manifested throughout its active existence. This resolution aimed at opposing all kinds of hostile propaganda and German sabotage in Pomerania and at instilling into its own members and large community the confidence in their own power which was to guarantee the integrity of the borderlines.

Związek Harcerstwa Polskiego (Polish Scouting Association) was another organization to devote much effort to disseminate the knowledge about Pomerania. Their educational programme was addressed not only to pupils of primary and secondary schools but also to the youth in senior scouting troops and to instructors.³⁴ An important role was played by special evening gatherings and other scouting events, anniversaries of regaining Pomerania and the sea coast, fund

³² A. Bogucki: *Towarzystwo Gimnastyczne "Sokół" na Pomorzu, 1893–1939* [Gymnastics Association "Falcon" in Pomerania, 1893–1939], Bydgoszcz 1997.

³³ "Słowo Pomorskie" [Pomeranian Word], May 27, 1939, no. 121.

³⁴ Archiwum Akt Nowych w Warszawie, Związek Harcerstwa Polskiego [New Acts Archives in Warsaw, Polish Scouting Association], 2088, p. 38.

raising for Fundusz Obrony Morza (Fund for Sea Defense) and “Sea Assemblies”. These events popularized the significance of Poland’s access to the sea and contributed to national pride in possessing the fleet; the youth distributed postcards carrying the message that the scouts “have their faces turned towards the sea and keep watch!”. In the education of senior scouts much attention was given to the matters of defense. The troops practiced sports and specialized in the fields of communications and in medical, gliding, air and sailing emergency service.³⁵ There were regularly organized and popularized maneuvers of civil defense troops and shooting competitions. In reference to the slogan of PZZ – “The frontier area is the armour of Polish Republic” – in 1938 Pomeranian scouts implemented a summer camp programme addressed to the inhabitants of towns and villages located along the Polish-German border under their own (though similar in its significance) banner: “Every threshold will be our stronghold.”³⁶ These activities were generally appreciated by both the authorities and Pomeranian population.

A substantial contribution to the dissemination of knowledge about Pomerania and heightening awareness of how significant Pomerania was for maintaining Poland’s independence was given by Liga Morska i Rzeczna (Naval and River League) which in 1930 was renamed Liga Morska i Kolonialna (Naval and Colonial League), veteran organizations and paramilitary organizations like “Strzelec” (The Shooter), Liga Obrony Powietrznej i Przeciwgazowej (League for Air and Anti-gas Defense), Związek Powstańców i Wojaków (Association of Insurgents and Soldiers) and Federacja Polskich Związków Obrońców Ojczyzny (Federation of Polish Associations of Defenders of the Motherland).³⁷ Apart from their own activities aimed at strengthening the state’s military potential, supporting the development of the air force and navy, and preparing the population to defend the country they actively partook in many other actions and contributed to popularize the concept of the west in Pomerania. The support Pomeranian population gave to these organizations was manifested by the generosity individuals and various organizations showed to Fundusz Obrony Narodowej (Fund for National Defense)

³⁵ Ibid., 694, p. 106.

³⁶ Cf. M. Mroczko: *Udział instytucji i stowarzyszeń pomorskich w kształtowaniu i upowszechnianiu myśli zachodniej (1920–1939)* [The Involvement of Pomeranian Institutions and Associations in the Formation and Popularization of the Western Thought (1920–1939)], “Zapiski Historyczne” [Historical Notes], 1980, 4, pp. 71–95.

³⁷ Cf. M. Mroczko: *Ziemia dzielniczy pruskiej w polskich koncepcjach i działalności politycznej 1864–1939* [The Lands of Prussian Sector in Polish Conceptions and Politics 1864–1939], Gdańsk 1994; T. Białas: *Liga Morska i Kolonialna 1930–1939* [The Naval and Colonial League 1930–1939], Gdańsk 1983.

in the years prior to German direct invasion on Poland.³⁸ The Fund spoke for free and unrestricted access to the sea to counteract the growing revisionist tendencies in Germany. By organizing protest rallies in answer to German anti-Polish actions and by celebrating anniversaries of Polish military victories and the Sea Days it helped Pomeranian population stay ready to defend their land and, at the same time, to integrate the region into the rest of Poland. It also informed the international community about Germany's anti-Polish policy and actions.

Political communities in Pomerania played an essential role in popularizing the significance of the access to the sea and in the process of building the port in Gdynia. As early as in summer 1920 Gdynia based Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Pomorza (Society of Friends of Pomerania) postulated building a fishing port, the idea being followed up two years later by Komisja Doradcza dla Spraw Wybrzeża Morskiego (Advisory Committee for Sea Coast Matters) initiated by the governor of the province. The activities of post-May Polish governments also played a big role – they acknowledged the need to expand Gdynia and the railway Gdynia–Bydgoszcz (Bromberg) which joined the coast to the transport system of central Poland and Silesia.

The attitude of Pomeranian population and its most representative socio-political groups had a beneficial influence on Poland's actions on the Baltic Sea, contributed to popularizing the significance of Pomerania and other western lands, their indispensable role in the Polish state organism and the need to protect them from German revisionism.³⁹ A tribute should be paid to Pomeranian press which, like the press of Great Poland and Silesia, devoted much space to Polish-German relations and German matters in general. The pressure of the attitude of population of Pomerania, Great Poland and Upper Silesia was so strong that the same political groups which in other parts of the country did not pay much attention to Polish-German relations, presented a clearly different standpoint in the aforementioned regions. Another manifestation of an indirect pressure is to be found in the growing interest scholars who were based in universities located far from Pomerania (like Warsaw, Krakow, Lvov, or Vilnius) showed in Pomeranian studies; the research was initiated by Towarzystwo Naukowe (Scientific Soci-

³⁸ Cf. M. Heza: *Spoleczeństwo polskie w Toruniu wobec zagrożenia niemieckiego (październik 1938 – wrzesień 1939)* [Polish Society in Toruń (Thorn) Against the German Threat], "Rocznik Toruński" [Toruń Yearbook], 9, 1974, p. 257.

³⁹ More in: M. Mroczo: *Udział instytucji i stowarzyszeń pomorskich ...* [The Involvement of Pomeranian Institutions and Associations ...], pp. 71–95.

ety) in Toruń (Thorn), Instytut Bałtycki (the Baltic Institute) and Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Nauki i Sztuki (Society of Friends of Science and Art) in Gdańsk.⁴⁰

Taking into consideration the above circumstances and a possibility of giving a simplified picture of Poland's place at the Baltic Sea in 1920–1939, one can conclude that Polish active maritime policy was triggered mainly by economic necessity which was much determined by the Polish-German conflict resulting from Germany's territorial designs on Poland and its desire to incorporate the free city of Gdańsk.

Translated by Julita Rydlewska

O UZYSKANIE I UTRWALENIE POLSKIEGO DOSTĘPU DO MORZA

Streszczenie

W atmosferze zaostżenia w zaborze pruskim w ostatnich dziesięcioleciach XIX wieku polityki germanizacyjnej, w kręgach polskiej myśli politycznej, zwłaszcza rodzącego się obozu narodowo-demokratycznego, nastąpiło nasilenie działań mających na celu intensyfikację polskich poczynań narodowych oraz krystalizację programów walki o uzyskanie postępu w rozwiązywaniu sprawy polskiej. W tym czasie nastąpił również wzrost zainteresowania Pomorzem i jego przyszłymi losami. Dostrzeżenie znaczenia walki o Pomorze oraz nieodzowność jego wejścia w skład przyszłego zjednoczonego państwa polskiego szły w parze z przyjęciem na początku XX wieku i upowszechnianiem przez obóz narodowo-demokratyczny tezy, iż główne niebezpieczeństwo zagraża narodowi polskiemu ze strony Niemiec.

Wraz z odbudową Polski po pierwszej wojnie światowej oraz uzyskaniem przez nią części Pomorza jednym z czołowych zadań, jakie stanęły przed społeczeństwem polskim, było umocnienie jej gospodarczej i militarnej pozycji na Bałtyku. Działania te realizowano między innymi poprzez budowę niezależnego od Gdańska własnego portu morskiego w Gdyni oraz tworzenie Polskiej Marynarki Wojennej. Ważną rolę w upowszechnianiu problematyki pomorskiej oraz znaczenia dla Polski dostępu do morza odegrała również

⁴⁰ Cf. M Mroczo: *Polska myśl zachodnia ...* [Polish Western Thought ...]; B. Piotrowski: *W służbie nauki i narodu. Instytut Bałtycki w latach 1925–1939* [In the Service of Science and Nation. The Baltic Institute in the Years 1925–1939], Poznań 1991; *Dzieje Towarzystwa Naukowego w Toruniu 1875–1975* [A History of the Scientific Society in Toruń (Thorn) 1875–1975], vol. 1, ed. by M. Biskup, Toruń 1977; *Pięćdziesiąt lat Gdańskiego Towarzystwa Naukowego 1922–1972. Księga pamiątkowa* [Fifty Years of Gdańsk Scientific Society 1922–1972. A Commemorative Book], Gdańsk 1972; *Siedemdziesiąt pięć lat Gdańskiego Towarzystwa Naukowego 1922–1997. Księga pamiątkowa* [Seventy Years of Gdańsk Scientific Society 1922–1997. A Commemorative Book], ed. by M. Latoszek, Gdańsk 1998.

wielokierunkowa działalność organizacji i instytucji tzw. frontu zachodniego. Wśród nich miejsce szczególne zajmowała działalność Związku Obrony Kresów Zachodnich (od 1934 r. Polskiego Związku Zachodniego), Ligi Morskiej i Rzecznej (od 1930 r. Ligi Morskiej i Kolonialnej) oraz wielu organizacji młodzieżowych (np. ZHP, kombatanckich i paramilitarnych).