

*Marta Grzechnik*

Institute of Scandinavian Studies, University of Gdańsk (Poland)  
German Kennedy Memorial Fellow, Minda de Gunzburg Center for European Studies,  
Harvard University (USA)

**LOVE OF WIDE OPEN WATERS. THE POLISH MARITIME  
PROGRAMME ACCORDING TO THE BALTIC  
AND WESTERN INSTITUTES IN THE AFTERMATH  
OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR (1945 – ca. 1950)\***

**Abstract**

This article analyses the Polish maritime programme after the Second World War, as expressed in scholarship of two main Polish research institutions: the Baltic Institute and the Western Institute. Given the considerable border changes at the end of the war, which incorporated a long coastline and three major ports on the Baltic Sea (Danzig/Gdańsk, Stettin/Szczecin and Gdynia) into post-war Poland, the maritime programmes gained a new basis for operations in comparison to the interwar period, and thus had to be adapted accordingly. They contained both continuities and modifications: in ideological terms they were based on the prewar premises of Poland's origins as a Baltic Sea country, and had a strong anti-German dimension. On the other hand, they were more pragmatic and concentrated on the organization of the maritime economy and education. Similarly as in the interwar period, they were also seen as a modernizing project: the maritime economy and education were supposed to connect the Polish nation with the whole world, and thus assure its equal status as part of the Western world.

**Keywords:** Baltic Sea, Poland, post-Second World War, maritime policy, maritime education, Baltic Institute, Western Institute

---

\* This article was written as part of a research project carried out in the interdisciplinary International Research Training Group "Baltic Borderlands: Shifting Boundaries of Mind and Culture in the Borderlands of the Baltic Sea Region", funded by the German Research Foundation at the University of Greifswald, Germany. I would like to thank the members of the group, and especially Professor Michael North, for their support.

## I INTRODUCTION

A negligible interest in the sea was visible throughout the whole period of Poland's partitions.<sup>1</sup> Our research, journalism, and the relevant literature bear witness to this fact. The well-known poetry anthology *Polish land in song*, published shortly before the [First] World War serves as an example. Not only does it contain many fewer poems about the sea than those about, for example, the Tatra Mountains, there are also only a few more poems about the sea than about the Valley of Kościelisko or the Lake Morskie Oko. It was only in the last prewar [WWII] years that the number of youth whose love of the sea was the love of wide open waters, strong winds, and adventure – and not the love of pleasant and lazy sunrays on the warm seashore sand – began to multiply.<sup>2</sup>

The above quoted passage comes from the first post-war number of the journal *Jantar* in the summer of 1946. *Jantar*, which means 'Amber' in Polish, was a journal published by a Polish research institution called the Baltic Institute, and the author, Bolesław Srocki, was the head of the Institute's Pomeranian Department. The quoted passage reflects some of the important issues concerning Poland's relationship to the sea in the twentieth century, such as the difference between caring for the sea itself and caring for its shores, and the absence of the sea on the Polish mental maps. However, a crucial change regarding this relationship occurred at the end of the Second World War: Poland gained not only a much longer coastline on the Baltic Sea than before the war, but also control over major rivers and the seaports at their estuaries. Such an important change of Poland's position on the Baltic Sea shore could not remain without consequences for the country's maritime programme. The aim of this article is to analyse what these consequences were, using the examples of two research institutions: the Baltic Institute (*Instytut Bałtycki* in Polish) and the

---

<sup>1</sup> The term 'partitions' refers to the three partitions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1772, 1793 and 1795, carried out by and between the Russian Empire, the Kingdom of Prussia and Habsburg Austria, as a result of which Poland lost its independence until 1918. However, in the Polish tradition it is also often – as in this instance – used to refer to the whole period of 1795–1918.

<sup>2</sup> Bolesław Srocki, 'Polska a Bałtyk w przeszłości i obecnie', *Jantar. Przegląd naukowy zagadnień pomorskich i bałtyckich* [hereinafter: *Jantar*], iv, 1 (1946), 16. The Valley of Kościelisko and Lake Morskie Oko are located in the Tatra Mountains (part of the Carpathians) in southern Poland.

Western Institute (*Instytut Zachodni*). Throughout this analysis this article not only discusses a little-known aspect of the transformations taking place in Europe in the aftermath of the Second World War, but also shows the continuities with the prewar maritime programmes.

During the immediate post-war years, the Polish society attempted both to maintain some continuity with its prewar situation, and adapt to the changes – which were especially challenging in Eastern Europe, where the scale of political changes and wartime destruction was greater than in the West. It was also a period of major political and social transformations connected with the introduction of the communist system. This was a complex process which, as Padraic Kenney has argued, consisted of not one, but two revolutions. The first (1945–47) was economic and social in nature, while the second (1948–50) was political and social: the communist party fortified its positions not only politically, but also with respect to most areas of life, including education and research.<sup>3</sup> Marxism was introduced as the official research methodology; prewar intellectuals were side-lined or ousted from prominent positions; and research institutes were reorganised. For this reason, this article concentrates on the period from the end of the Second World War until the completion of this second revolution, i.e. from 1945 to ca. 1950.

As mentioned, I am especially interested in focusing on two Polish research institutions: the Baltic and the Western Institutes. The former, founded in 1925 in Toruń, aimed to promote awareness of maritime issues, support Polish access to the Baltic Sea against German revisionism and, to a lesser extent, work for a Baltic Sea region community. It did so through publications (both scholarly and popular), public lectures, and other forms of public diplomacy.<sup>4</sup> It renewed its activities in 1943, when its director and main activist, Józef Borowik, was released from the Stutthof concentration camp, and in January 1945 the Institute was re-established officially, with the approval of the communist Provisional Government. Its work was to be carried out in three research departments (Pomeranian, Maritime

---

<sup>3</sup> Padraic Kenney, *Rebuilding Poland: Workers and Communists, 1945–1950* (Ithaca and London, 2012), 4.

<sup>4</sup> For more on the activities of the Baltic Institute in the interwar period see Marta Grzechnik, *Regional histories and historical regions. The concept of the Baltic Sea region in Polish and Swedish historiography* (Frankfurt, 2012), 39–68.

and Scandinavian), and two technical ones (Publishing and Library). However, the Scandinavian Department did not develop beyond the planning stage.<sup>5</sup> The main seat of the Institute was in Gdańsk, with branches in Gdynia, Toruń, Bydgoszcz and Szczecin. Between 1946 and 1949 the Institute published the journal *Jantar*. In 1950, it was dissolved by the authorities, as they strengthened their grip on Polish research and set out to reorganize its institutions and methodologies. It was revived in 1958, however its organisation, methods and range of topics were so different from the previous version that Maria Boduszyńska, one of the Institute's active researchers in the 1940s, concluded that it was not a continuation of the earlier Institute, but a separate research institution operating under the same name.<sup>6</sup>

The Western Institute, established in February 1945, was a less direct successor of the prewar Baltic Institute, but in part of its research it continued the work of the latter. Many of its researchers, among them the Western Institute's founder and director, Zygmunt Wojciechowski, had before the war collaborated with the Baltic Institute, for example as speakers at its lectures and authors of its publications.<sup>7</sup> The interests of the two institutes intersected in the north-western territories acquired from Germany: the western part of the coastal region in Pomerania. The researchers of both institutes also sometimes engaged in discussions with each other, for example by reviewing each other's publications and reporting on each other's organisation and activities. The Western Institute published a journal called *Przegląd Zachodni* [Western Review].

In the early numbers of their journals the institutes published, after the Second World War, reports about "the scientific and cultural losses" during the war: in other words, lists of their collaborators and

---

<sup>5</sup> Stanisław Potocki, 'Działalność Instytutu Bałtyckiego przed i po II wojnie światowej', *Komunikaty Instytutu Bałtyckiego*, viii, 15 (1971), 10.

<sup>6</sup> Maria Boduszyńska-Borowikowa, *Życie jak płomień. O życiu i pracach Józefa Borowika* (Gdańsk, 1972), 313; Maria Boduszyńska-Borowikowa, 'Instytut Bałtycki. Lata 1925–1950 i dalsze perspektywy', *Pomerania. Biletyn Zarządu Głównego Zrzeszenia Kaszubsko-Pomorskiego w Gdańsku* viii, 4 (1971), 27–8. Apart from focusing on methods and organization, Boduszyńska's opinion was based on the fact that until the late 1960s the revived Baltic Institute was mostly concentrated on very local topics on one hand, and German revisionism on the other. It therefore lacked a wider Baltic and maritime outlook.

<sup>7</sup> E.g. Zygmunt Wojciechowski, 'Rozwój terytorjalny Prus w stosunku do ziem macierzystych Polski', in Józef Borowik (ed.), *Światopogląd morski* (Toruń, 1934), 93–134.

co-workers who had perished during the war, including 55 members of the Baltic Institute.<sup>8</sup> Indeed science, research, and culture, just as other domains of human activity after the end of the war, often had to rebuild their structures. This was especially true in the case of Pomeranian, Baltic Sea and Western studies, as researchers in these fields had been targeted by the Nazis.<sup>9</sup> The same went for their research, and somewhat paradoxically the considerable gaps in libraries and archives had been created partially by the researchers themselves, who had destroyed publications evidencing their involvement in the Polish-German dispute over access to the Baltic Sea.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, during the German occupation a ban on Polish science had been imposed, in accordance with the Nazi ideology proclaiming that the Slavic peoples needed only a basic education.

Given the numerous exhortations for an active maritime policy and a strong presence on the Baltic Sea shores, made first and foremost by the activists of the Baltic Institute in the interwar period, the post-war situation should have seemed like a dream fulfilled. There was now a considerably longer coastline, free of the vulnerability of being located between two parts of Germany; and Poland had full control not only over the port in Gdynia, but also the ports in Gdańsk (Danzig) and Szczecin (Stettin), together with control over the courses and estuaries of the two major rivers (and most of their tributaries) flowing through Polish territory, i.e. the Vistula and Oder. Given this confluence of circumstances, the Institutes could have expected to be able to

<sup>8</sup> Andrzej Bukowski, 'Straty kultury polskiej na Pomorzu', *Jantar*, iv, 1 (1946), 42–9; Andrzej Bukowski, 'Straty kultury polskiej na Pomorzu 1939–1945', *Jantar*, iv, 3 (1946), 42–3; Zygmunt Lisowski, 'Straty naukowe Poznania', *Przegląd Zachodni*, i, 2–3 (1945), 121–34; Stanisław Potocki, 'The Baltic Institute and Scandinavian Studies in Poland', *Komunikaty Instytutu Bałtyckiego*, xi, 20 (1974), 6.

<sup>9</sup> One example was the mass executions of Pomeranian intellectuals in Piañnica, as part of the so-called *Intelligenzaktion* (planned extermination of the Polish intelligentsia). Józef Borowik, according to his wife and biographer, narrowly escaped this fate thanks partly to luck and partly to his presence of mind. His colleague, the Baltic Institute's deputy director Józef Bieniasz was killed on 12 Sept. 1939 in the defence of Gdynia. Boduszyńska-Borowikowa, *Życie jak płomień*, 207–8; Potocki, 'Działalność Instytutu Bałtyckiego', 10.

<sup>10</sup> Boduszyńska-Borowikowa, *Życie jak płomień*, 207; Andrzej Bukowski, 'Instytut Bałtycki po wojnie', *Przegląd Zachodni*, ii, 4 (1946), 391; Potocki, 'Działalność Instytutu Bałtyckiego', 9–10; Czesław Ciesielski, 'Z dziejów Instytutu Bałtyckiego', in Czesław Ciesielski (ed.) *Osiemdziesiąt lat Instytutu Bałtyckiego. Materiały konferencji naukowej z 29 listopada 2005 r.* (Gdańsk, 2006), 10.

realize their ambitious plans of maritime policies and economy, and to have an easier task in shaping the society's maritime consciousness.

In light of the above, a number of interesting questions arise. What were the continuities and what were the new elements in the discussion of the maritime issues and Poland's relationship to the Baltic Sea in both institutions and their researchers before and directly after the Second World War? How were their arguments transformed as the result of the war and the subsequent border changes? How did they see the development of their activities, and what role did they see for themselves in the new situation?

These questions are examined in this article based on examples of the two institutes' publications, first and foremost journal articles, because the programmes, postulates, and exhortations were mostly expressed in these forms in the early post-war years, before longer monographs could be prepared.

## II

### A MARITIME NATION?

The researchers of the Baltic and Western Institutes liked to underline Poland's supposedly Baltic character. The country was, for example, described as exceptionally 'Baltic' by virtue of occupying a great proportion of the Baltic Sea's hinterland, understood as the territory connected to the sea by rivers and channels: 75 per cent of prewar Poland laid in the sea's drainage basin, a percentage which increased even more after the change of borders, as pointed out in one of the first numbers of *Przegląd Zachodni*.<sup>11</sup>

In historiography, the country's 'Balticness' was constructed by focusing first and foremost on the Middle Ages, and drawing historical parallels to support the new borders, including the maritime border. For example, Zygmunt Wojciechowski described Poland's gaining access to the Baltic Sea in 1466 as regaining "the outlet for its natural geographical and political tendencies,"<sup>12</sup> and added that "the heritage of the Piasts was regained, the hierarchy of Polish politics re-established".<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Jan Zdzitowiecki, 'Bałtyk. Szkic gospodarczy', *Przegląd Zachodni*, i, 4–5 (1945), 203.

<sup>12</sup> Zygmunt Wojciechowski, *Polska – Niemcy. Dziesięć wieków zmagania* (Poznań, 1945), 92.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*, 91.

The medieval Polish dynasty of Piasts (which ruled until 1370) was especially suited to supporting the new north-western and maritime border by providing a historical precedent: their Polish western border ran close to the post-Second World War one, and they directed their expansion towards securing the estuaries of the Vistula and Oder Rivers. Kings and dukes of this Piast dynasty, especially Bolesław the Brave (992–1025) and Bolesław the Wry-Mouthed (1107–38) garnered special attention and praise for their understanding of the importance of securing access to the sea. On this basis, Wojciechowski developed the idea of ‘the homelands of Poland’, i.e. the territories from which the Polish nation supposedly originated. These, according to Wojciechowski’s theory, corresponded very closely to post-war Poland, including the wide access to the Baltic Sea, while excluding the Eastern borderlands (*Kresy*) annexed by the USSR.<sup>14</sup>

This historiographical tradition was typical of Baltic and Western research in Poland in the 1930s and 1940s. It presented an image of the Polish state as having its origins between the rivers Oder and Vistula, ‘naturally’ gravitating towards the mouths of these rivers and the Baltic Sea. Furthermore, Polish history was supposedly only on its right track when the country’s politics were directed towards the Baltic Sea, and the south-eastern turn of the late medieval and early modern periods was viewed as an aberration. Gerard Labuda (also a medieval historian) commented that: “It was casual state interests (political and economic) that pushed Polish policy to the east; it was life necessities that pushed it towards Pomerania”.<sup>15</sup> The relationship between Poland and Pomerania – the coastal region – was conceived as a ‘biological link.’<sup>16</sup> This ‘biological link’ was broken by the expansion of the German states from the late Middle Ages until the Second World War, an expansion which had, as most contemporary Polish historians agreed, disastrous consequences.<sup>17</sup> A rather radical example of this

<sup>14</sup> Wojciechowski, ‘Rozwój terytorjalny’; Wojciechowski, *Polska – Niemcy*, 20–2. See also, e.g., Zdzisław Kaczmarczyk, ‘Polskie ziemie macierzyste’, *Przegląd Zachodni*, iii, 6 (1947), 529–31.

<sup>15</sup> Gerard Labuda, *Wielkie Pomorze w dziejach Polski* (Poznań, 1947), 32.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, 29.

<sup>17</sup> For a more comprehensive discussion of the historical arguments pertaining to the territories acquired by Poland from Germany after the Second World War, see Marta Grzechnik, ““Recovering” Territories: The use of history in the integration of the new Polish western borderland after World War II”, *Europe-Asia Studies*, lxi, 4 (2017), 668–92.



interpretation was given by historian Karol Górski, who presented the Second World War as a war for control over the Baltic Sea:

The First World War started on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea, against the background of Serbs fighting for access to the sea, denied to them by the German states: Austria and Germany. For Germany, having dominated the Baltic Sea, attempted to settle on the world's second most important sea: the Mediterranean. The Second World War started on the Baltic Sea; it was about another Slavic nation's access to the sea, a nation which had won and widened this access. Germany wanted to choke Poland's development, and this is why the Second World War started in Gdańsk.<sup>18</sup>

For all their talk of access to the sea, however, these historical arguments seem in fact to be very land-based. More than a programme of access to the sea – Srocki's 'love of wide open waters' – they formed a programme of access to Pomerania itself, as a way of hampering the growth of the neighbouring German states. History could not easily serve as a repository of maritime traditions, and Tadeusz Ocioszyński, the head of the Baltic Institute's Maritime Department, concluded that: "The past, especially the distant past, has not left us any serious heritage in maritime terms. In the past, we were not a maritime nation".<sup>19</sup> Historian Alfred Wielopolski added that the historical Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth had been more interested in south-eastern expansion than overseas exploration, and in farming rather than trade, because the eastern *Kresy* simply produced more wheat than Pomerania. He remarked that: "The policies of pre-partition Poland were dictated by a farmer's, not merchant's, instincts, which followed from the fact that the country was led by a privileged stratum of landowners, and not burgers-merchants, who were pushed to the background".<sup>20</sup> This attitude was most famously summarized in a quote from a sixteenth-century poet: "Może nie wiedzieć Polak co morze / Gdy dobrze orze".<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> Karol Górski, *Polska w zlewisku Bałtyku* (Gdańsk, Bydgoszcz and Szczecin, 1947), 206–7.

<sup>19</sup> Tadeusz Ocioszyński, 'Dziedzictwo ubiegłych wieków w polskiej polityce morskiej', *Jantar*, vi, 3–4 (1948), 237.

<sup>20</sup> Alfred Wielopolski, 'Zadania nauki na Pomorzu', *Jantar*, iv, 2 (1946), 4.

<sup>21</sup> "A Pole does not have to know the sea, when he is a diligent ploughman". Sebastian Fabian Klonowic, *Flis, to jest spuszczenie statków Wisłą i inszymi rzekami do niej przypadającymi* (Chełmno, 1862), 11. Available at: <http://kpsc.umk.pl/dlibra/docmetadata?id=30720> [Accessed: 27 Feb. 2017]. See also fn. 34.



Ocioszyński sees three main reasons why Poland developed along this path: lack of access to the Atlantic Ocean, i.e. the force which prompted the development of Western European sea powers; the distribution of population in Poland, with its political and cultural centres far from the Baltic coast; and the dominance of agriculture, which in turn produced “a particular human mentality and psyche, in a way opposite to the psyche of movement, adventure, dynamic exchange, familiarity with open spaces, and international relations”.<sup>22</sup> This observation was very much in the spirit of – and in fact quotes from – an influential 1930s Baltic Institute essay by Franciszek Bujak describing and comparing sea and land cultures.<sup>23</sup> The former were supposed to possess a *światopogląd morski*: a ‘maritime outlook’ or ‘maritime worldview’. Thus Bujak’s ‘sea culture’ carried both a strong cultural and civilisational meaning. Beginning from the nineteenth century, access to the sea has often been described in Polish tradition using the metaphor of a window, through which Poland could look at the whole world. The Baltic Sea coast was the location of interwar Poland’s great modernising project, which was to serve as proof of the nation’s maturity: the construction of the port and city in Gdynia. As interpreted by Andrzej Szczerski, turning to the sea was also a way of escaping the historically problematic position between Germany and Russia/USSR: “Thanks to Gdynia, Poland could be neighbours with the whole world”.<sup>24</sup> There was also intensive maritime propaganda: promotion of maritime education, of a consistent maritime policy, and of making economic use of the sea, and even overseas expansion and acquiring colonies.<sup>25</sup>

The effectiveness of this propaganda can be questioned. It is, for example, instructive to compare this article’s opening quote with another one, outlining the Baltic Institute’s tasks but written at the very beginning of its existence, in 1926, by its first director, Stanisław Srokowski. The arguments presented in both texts are strikingly

---

<sup>22</sup> Ocioszyński, ‘Dziedzictwo ubiegłych wieków’, 242–3.

<sup>23</sup> Franciszek Bujak, ‘Kultury morskie i lądowe’, in Józef Borowik (ed.) *Światopogląd morski* (Toruń, 1934), 1–19.

<sup>24</sup> Andrzej Szczerski, *Modernizacja: sztuka i architektura w nowych państwach Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej 1918–1939* (Łódź, 2010), 231.

<sup>25</sup> See e.g.: Dariusz Konstantynów and Małgorzata Omilanowska (eds.), *Polska nad Bałtykiem: Konstruowanie identyfikacji kulturowej państwa nad morzem 1918–1939* (Gdańsk, 2012).

similar: not only do they lament that Polish national traditions lacked the aspect of identification with the sea, but both also complement this argument with a comparison between the places occupied by the Baltic Sea and the Tatra Mountains on the Polish mental maps, reaching the same pessimistic conclusion.<sup>26</sup> It seems, therefore, that not much had changed in this respect in the twenty years between the publication of these two texts.

However, the post-war geopolitical situation of Poland on the Baltic Sea coast was much better. Bolesław Srocki maintained that it offered better conditions for the creation of a Polish maritime identity, and also for the country's development in general. Despite severe human, territorial and material losses, the new shape of Poland was more compact, the population more homogenous, and in the place of the old cities which had occupied an important place in the Polish national consciousness (first and foremost L'viv and Vilnius, incorporated into the USSR), new ones were acquired "which have every right to become equally close and dear to our feelings".<sup>27</sup> Ocioszyński was also optimistic, and in his opinion thanks to thorough transformations of the economy and the nation's social structure, the geographical disadvantages traditionally pushing Poland away from the sea would be overcome.<sup>28</sup>

### III EDUCATION

It would be impossible to think about the successful creation of a maritime perspective without education. Before the war, maritime education took the form not only of the wide-spread propaganda of the sea mentioned above, but also consisted of lectures, courses and publications, as well as lobbying – unsuccessfully – for a university with a seat in Toruń or Gdynia. The incorporation of the north-western territories did not improve the situation: there was still no university in the coastal region of Pomerania, nor in either of the major incorporated cities, Gdańsk or Szczecin. At the same time, with the loss of the *Kresy*, Poland lost important academic centres in Lwów and Wilno.

---

<sup>26</sup> Srocki, 'Polska a Bałtyk', 16; Stanisław Srokowski, *Instytut Bałtycki i jego zadania* (1926), 3. See also: Grzechnik, *Regional histories*, 44–5.

<sup>27</sup> Srocki, 'Polska a Bałtyk', 7.

<sup>28</sup> Ocioszyński, 'Dziedzictwo ubiegłych wieków', 246–7.

In every number of *Jantar*, the Baltic Institute published a chronicle of scientific, research and cultural life in Pomerania. It started in 1946 (in the journal's first number) with a list of the institutions that then existed in the region, including, among others: the Research Association (resuming its prewar activities) in Toruń, several research and scientific institutes – including the Baltic Institute itself – in nearby Bydgoszcz, the Polytechnic and Medical Academy in Gdańsk, the Maritime Fishing Laboratory and Maritime Trade College in Gdynia, the Masurian Institute and College of Law and Administration in Olsztyn, and archives, libraries and museums. Szczecin, Western Pomerania's main city, was, however, summed up with a pessimistic assessment as not having, so far, good conditions for the development of any scientific or research institutions.<sup>29</sup>

The report could already at that time mention one university: the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, established in 1945 and based in great part on the teaching staff and researchers evacuated from the Stefan Batory University in Wilno.<sup>30</sup> However, the discussions about the need for higher education institutions in Pomerania continued. For example, according to the renowned linguist and historian of Slavic languages Witold Taszycki, who published in *Przegląd Zachodni*, Toruń could only temporarily serve as the seat of the Nicolaus Copernicus University, and the university should soon be moved to Gdańsk.<sup>31</sup> Others, such as the Western Institute's director Zygmunt Wojciechowski, argued for three universities in Pomerania's three major cities: Toruń, Gdańsk and Szczecin, each with a slightly different profile and tasks. Similarly as in the case of the discussion about major ports (presented in the next section), the discussion about universities was partly about the division of tasks between the different cities. One of the problems was the heavy destruction of Gdańsk.<sup>32</sup> Another one, interestingly, was a controversy over whether port cities were appropriate places for universities, and especially

---

<sup>29</sup> Andrzej Bukowski, 'Kronika życia naukowego na Pomorzu', *Jantar*, iv, 1 (1946), 67–73.

<sup>30</sup> Boduszyńska-Borowikowa, *Życie jak płomień*, 240.

<sup>31</sup> Witold Taszycki, 'Toruń czy Gdańsk? Rzecz o uniwersytecie pomorskim', *Przegląd Zachodni*, ii, 4 (1946), 376.

<sup>32</sup> E.g.: Zygmunt Wojciechowski, 'I Toruń i Gdańsk i Szczecin', *Przegląd Zachodni*, ii, 4 (1946), 378; Maria Boduszyńska, 'W sprawie uczelni pomorskich', *Jantar*, iv, 2 (1946), 74.

for studying humanities. As Marian Pelczar wrote in a report in *Przegląd Zachodni*:

Gdańsk as an academic city; Gdańsk as the centre of Polish research on the coast – these concepts have so far not gained full acceptance and understanding. The city of Gdańsk is, after all, synonymous with port and trade, with cranes, shipyards, and those intricate lifts admired over three hundred years ago by Klonowic,<sup>33</sup> which still amaze today's travellers. Can there be a place for studies, for research in this centre of commerce, filled with the hustle and bustle of trade?<sup>34</sup>

Wojciechowski was one of the sceptics. He doubted the possibility of 'pure humanities' developing in a port environment. Therefore, he saw port cities as seats for maritime academies, focusing on trade and dealing with the humanities only to a limited extent.<sup>35</sup> Both he and Maria Boduszyńska agreed on Toruń as the most appropriate place for research in the humanities, as well as law, because of its location – some 200 kilometres from the coastline and outside of the main communication routes – lending it "a calm atmosphere of sophisticated intellectual life, necessary for these kinds of studies".<sup>36</sup>

Others were more open to the idea of a university with a seat in Gdańsk. Among them was Alfred Wielopolski, who wrote in *Jantar* that at least one of the port cities needed a university, and that "arguments about unsuitability of such an environment for research [did] not sound convincing". Only closeness to the sea, he claimed, could shape an individual who truly understood and cared about matters of the sea.<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>33</sup> Pelczar refers here to the poet Sebastian Fabian Klonowic, the author of the narrative poem *Flis, to jest Spuszczanie statków Wisłą i inszymi rzekami do niej przypadającymi*, published in 1595 in Kraków, already quoted for its opinion on Poles as diligent ploughmen who did not need to know the sea (see footnote 22). The topic of the poem is the work of raftsmen transporting grain from the Polish hinterland via Vistula and other rivers to the port of Gdańsk. In verse 413 of the poem, the narrator tells the reader that after arriving in Gdańsk at the end of his journey, he will see "misterne windy" (intricate lifts, i.e. port cranes) and "dziwne rzeczy" (strange things); Klonowic, *Flis*, 100.

<sup>34</sup> Marian Pelczar, 'Ośrodek nauki polskiej na Wybrzeżu', *Przegląd Zachodni*, ii, 2 (1946), 183.

<sup>35</sup> Wojciechowski, 'I Toruń i Gdańsk', 379.

<sup>36</sup> Boduszyńska, 'W sprawie uczelni pomorskich', 76.

<sup>37</sup> Wielopolski, 'Zadania nauki', 12.

Perhaps the most adamant advocate of a university in Gdańsk was Taszycki, who wrote:

I consider the creation of university in Gdańsk a state necessity. Only a university established in Gdańsk can deal with research on a matter so important for the whole country as the sea and the Pomeranian region. If we want to become a maritime nation, we need to get close to the sea, to infiltrate its mysteries. If we want to have a firm position on the sea, we need to grow together with the coast, its nature, and its people settled on it for centuries; we need to take good care of the people who are still going to settle here, and we need to bind this coast and its inhabitants most tightly with Poland. This important task cannot be achieved without the cooperation of the academic circles.<sup>38</sup>

In the end, the University of Toruń remained the only one in the north-western territories until 1970, when the University of Gdańsk was founded (interestingly, it inherited the Baltic Institute's motto: *In Mari Via Tua*), and Szczecin did not get a university until 1984. There were, however, other institutions of higher education in both cities, first of all the Gdańsk Polytechnic, established on 24 May 1945 in place of the earlier Technische Hochschule (originally established in 1904). Gdańsk also gained a medical academy and a pedagogical college, and Gdynia – a college of maritime trade.<sup>39</sup>

As for Szczecin, creating an academic institution there was supposed to be an answer to the German university just beyond the border, in Greifswald.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, Szczecin was envisaged as becoming Central Europe's main port, with strong connections to the Danube region (as will be discussed below), and as an academic centre it was supposed to connect the north and south of Europe by conducting research not only on the Baltic Sea region countries, but also Czechoslovakia and the Danube basin.<sup>41</sup> In reality, the beginnings of higher education in Szczecin in the immediate post-war period were modest, starting with setting up a branch of Poznań's Trade Academy in November 1946.<sup>42</sup>

---

<sup>38</sup> Taszycki, 'Toruń czy Gdańsk?', 376.

<sup>39</sup> The merging of the latter two on 20 March 1970 became the foundation for the University of Gdańsk.

<sup>40</sup> Wojciechowski, 'I Toruń i Gdańsk', 378; Andrzej Grodek, 'Szczecin jako ośrodek naukowy', *Jantar*, v, 3 (1947), 191–3.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibidem*, 197.

<sup>42</sup> 'Z życia naukowego i kulturalnego Pomorza', *Jantar*, iv, 3 (1946), 81.

This branch used the same teaching programme as its mother institution in Poznań, and also employed its teaching staff, who commuted from Poznań to Szczecin. This, of course, was not an ideal solution. Still, in the first year of its functioning over 1,000 students enrolled in its programme.<sup>43</sup>

However, before universities and other institutions of higher education could be established and get up and running, smaller steps were taken, e.g. the establishment of libraries and museums, as well as rescuing existing collections. As in almost other forms of human activity after the war, the first step was to take stock of how much had survived, before programmes could be presented for the future.<sup>44</sup> The Baltic Institute had its own libraries and archives, part of which had survived from before the war (despite heavy losses), and part of which were organized anew.<sup>45</sup> The head of the Baltic Institute's Library Department was Helena Hleb-Koszańska, formerly of the Stefan Batory University in Wilno. Borowik recruited her immediately after her arrival in Toruń in a repatriation transport (according to Maria Boduszyńska literally on the platform after she stepped off the train).<sup>46</sup> In her biography of Józef Borowik, Boduszyńska also describes other aspects of the process of organising the library, as well as the attempts to rescue books left behind by the Germans: Starting from spring 1945, the Institute's employees travelled to Pomeranian towns to examine the surviving collections in libraries, to look for and secure any publications on the themes of the sea and maritime topics, Pomerania, the Baltic Sea region and the German presence in Poland, and to transport them to the Institute's headquarters in Bydgoszcz. This was not an easy task, not least because of the virtually non-existent transport connections. In Kwidzyn, for example, they loaded the volumes onto a phaeton which, for lack of horses, they had

---

<sup>43</sup> 'Z życia naukowego i kulturalnego Pomorza', *Jantar*, v, 3 (1947), 254.

<sup>44</sup> E.g.: Bukowski, 'Kronika życia naukowego'; M. Des Loges, 'Biblioteki naukowe Gdańska, Gdyni i Sopotu', *Jantar*, iv, 3 (1946), 65–71; Pelczar, 'Ośrodki nauki polskiej', 185; Stanisława M. Sawicka, 'O program muzealny dla Ziemi Odzyskanych', *Przegląd Zachodni*, ii, 10 (1946), 849; Marian Pelczar, 'Zbiory gdańskie', *Jantar*, iv, 1 (1946), 53–7; Marian Pelczar, 'Gdańskie muzeum, jego zbiory, cele i zadania', *Przegląd Zachodni*, iv, 1 (1948), 69–70.

<sup>45</sup> Helena Hleb-Koszańska, 'Z prac Instytutu Bałtyckiego', *Jantar*, iv, 2 (1946), 113–14.

<sup>46</sup> Boduszyńska-Borowikowa, *Życie jak płomień*, 240.

to pull to the train station themselves.<sup>47</sup> The recovery actions continued the following year, when three Institute employees went to libraries in Western Pomerania. The books acquired were then distributed between the Institute's branches in Bydgoszcz, Gdańsk, Sopot, Gdynia and Szczecin (with some given to other libraries).<sup>48</sup>

One of the most lasting undertakings of the Baltic Institute was the establishment of a maritime museum in Szczecin. In his report about the first stage of its organisation, published in *Jantar*, Józef Borowik presented it as his brainchild. The project gained the government's approval in 1946, and the Institute was given a building for the museum, which was one of Szczecin's most representative buildings, overlooking the river Oder, and before the war was the seat of the Stadtmuseum.<sup>49</sup> Few of the prewar collections were still in place in 1946, and the building itself, having survived bombings, fire, and looting, had to be repaired and renovated before it could be used.<sup>50</sup> Only at the next stage could a new collection be planned and assembled.

Interestingly, the Institute looked for inspiration from other maritime museums of Europe. Borowik himself had considerable experience in this matter. By his own account, before the war he had visited over twenty European museums containing sea-related collections.<sup>51</sup> However, in order to make this knowledge and experience more systematic, the Institute, using funds allocated by the government, sent oceanographer Kazimierz Demel on a two-month study trip to the museums of Amsterdam, Antwerp, Paris and Monaco. Following his return Demel presented a detailed report about them as examples of different types of maritime museums: technical, historical, and natural. He described their collections and the ways of their organisation and presentation.<sup>52</sup> His conclusion was that "a fully-fledged maritime museum should take into consideration all the problems pertaining to the phenomenon of the sea, both directly and indirectly, including its nature and its influence on people's lives and activities".<sup>53</sup>

---

<sup>47</sup> *Ibidem*, 236.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibidem*, 240.

<sup>49</sup> Józef Borowik, 'Muzeum Morskie w Szczecinie', *Jantar*, vi, 3-4 (1948), 215-16.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibidem*, 217-18.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibidem*, 221.

<sup>52</sup> Kazimierz Demel, 'Muzea morskie różnych typów', *Jantar*, vii, 1-2 (1949), 84-91.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibidem*, 91.



Based on these experiences, the Baltic Institute proposed its own vision of a maritime museum for Szczecin as a “didactical museum, which [would] become a research instrument for spreading knowledge about the national maritime economy, and about the sea’s influence on human relations, with special regard to Baltic relations and relations on the Polish coast of the Baltic Sea”.<sup>54</sup> It was an ambitious vision, for the museum was eventually to present virtually all aspects of the sea, organized vertically in three sections (nature, economy, humanities), each intersecting with three horizontal ‘circles’: local, regional, and global.<sup>55</sup> Priority was to be given to economy, and by that to the vision of the sea as the means of connecting Poland with the outside world as part of the global economy.

#### IV ECONOMY

It is ... [on the Baltic Sea coast] that the still hidden yet powerful strength lays, which can systematically be transformed into a lever of thorough reconstruction of the Polish structure and mind, which can gradually lead us from the stale backwater of today’s and yesterday’s economic and civilisational primitives, along the path of great progress to a truly modern, technical and science-based civilisation.<sup>56</sup>

These words were spoken during a Polish Economic Society Congress which took place in the seaside resort of Sopot in November 1947, and were printed the following year in *Jantar*. The speaker was Eugeniusz Kwiatkowski, one of the key figures for the development of the Polish maritime economy in the first half of the twentieth century. As the Minister of Industry and Trade during 1926–30, he had been in great part responsible for the rapid construction and development of the port in Gdynia, as well as for the development of a merchant and fishing fleet. After the war, based on his experience and knowledge in the field he became the government’s Deputy for the coastal region. Both before and after the war, Kwiatkowski published with the Baltic

---

<sup>54</sup> Borowik, ‘Muzeum Morskie’, 227.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibidem*, 231.

<sup>56</sup> Eugeniusz Kwiatkowski, ‘Powiązania funkcjonalne w polityce gospodarczego planowania na Wybrzeżu’, *Jantar*, vi, 1 (1948), 8. Kwiatkowski was deputy prime minister (1935–9), and he was the only politician of this class employed by communists, which reveals their admiration for his achievements (port of Gdynia, etc.).

Institute on themes of maritime economy and what was often described in publications as ‘cultivation of the sea’.

In the quoted Congress paper he argued for giving the maritime economy and the coast a key role in post-war Poland, in the context of the changing European economy and the introduction of a centrally planned economy in Poland. To support his argument, he gave the example of the exceptionally harsh winter of 1946/47, when the port of Gdańsk became paralysed for 70 days and the one in Gdynia for 55 days. This led to far-reaching consequences not only in the region but in the whole of Poland: raw materials such as coal accumulated, while industries that relied on the import of raw materials (textile, metallurgical) could not function; fishing and fish processing were paralysed; and as a result there was unemployment and serious food shortages throughout the whole country.<sup>57</sup>

Especially in the immediate post-war years Poland was faced with numerous challenges, connected primarily with the war destruction and the exchange of populations in the north-western territories (the expulsion of Germans and settlement of Poles from the *Kresy* and central Poland), as well as the underdeveloped transportation connections with the rest of the country.<sup>58</sup> However, for people like Kwiatkowski, and many other thinkers and activists, the sea presented a great opportunity, by which economic growth would be a matter not only of increased quantity, but also of improved quality: “Across the land border we cooperated with Europe as her raw materials colony ...,” Kwiatkowski argued, “But the sea has transformed us into an equal economic partner, the deliverer of work; it has opened outlets for human intelligence and mind, for organisation and entrepreneurship”.<sup>59</sup> The economic development opportunities offered by wide access to the sea was considered in connection with the question of the maritime outlook, and more generally with modernisation and civilisational development.

As Leopold Gluck calculated in *Przegląd Zachodni*, with the increase of the length of the maritime border from 140 km in 1939 to 550 km in 1945 (and, which he does not mention, the decrease of the country’s

<sup>57</sup> *Ibidem*, 9; Wanda Górkowa, ‘Odbudowa portów polskich po wojnie’, *Przegląd Zachodni*, iii, 6–7 (1947), 518.

<sup>58</sup> Piotr Perkowski, *Gdańsk – miasto od nowa. Kształtowanie społeczeństwa i warunki bytowe w latach 1945–1970* (Gdańsk, 2013), 228.

<sup>59</sup> Kwiatkowski, ‘Powiązania funkcjonalne’, 10.

total area due to the loss of territories to the USSR), 545 km<sup>2</sup> of the country's land area now corresponded to 1 km of its maritime border, whereas the same land area figure was 2,779 km<sup>2</sup> in 1939.<sup>60</sup> Poland also acquired two major seaports, Szczecin at the Oder estuary, and Gdańsk at the Vistula estuary, in the immediate vicinity of the only major seaport inherited from interwar Poland, Gdynia. These three ports underwent varying degrees of destruction during the war, and especially during its final stage. The port in Gdynia suffered heavy losses due to Allied bombings throughout the war (during occupation it had served as a base of the German navy, making it a target) as well as destruction and mining by the withdrawing German army, but the city itself and the warehouses in the port were in a comparatively good state. In the case of Gdańsk the situation was reversed: while the port had not suffered much, the city was heavily destroyed.<sup>61</sup> Out of the three, Szczecin was least damaged. The scale of destruction – and of necessary reconstruction – was assessed, for example, by the deputy mayor of Gdynia, Stanisław Modliński, during a congress of the Economic Association of Polish Sea Towns, held in July 1946 in Gdańsk. According to Modliński, the destruction of the port towns was as follows: “Gdańsk centre 80 per cent, suburbs 40 per cent; Elbląg in the old town 95 per cent, in the newer districts 15–30 per cent; and further: Kołobrzeg 90 per cent, Frombork 80 per cent, Kamień 65 per cent, Tolkmicko 60 per cent, Szczecin 40 per cent, Świnoujście 30 per cent, Gdynia and Sopot 18 per cent each, Puck only 10 per cent; and Darłowo, Łeba and Ustka could be regarded as not destroyed”.<sup>62</sup>

The task of reconstruction was given to a newly formed (in May 1945) Bureau for the Reconstruction of Ports (*Biuro Odbudowy Portów*). It had

---

<sup>60</sup> Leopold Gluck, ‘Gdańsk – Gdynia – Szczecin. Uwagi o trzech portach polskiego obszaru gospodarczego’, *Przegląd Zachodni*, i, 1 (1945), 39.

<sup>61</sup> The fact that it was the advancing Red Army that was responsible for the destruction of Gdańsk was not, however, mentioned in the studied publications and remained, for political reasons, a taboo topic in the official discourse until the end of the Cold War. The most commonly quoted figure of 90 per cent with regard to the destruction of Gdańsk's centre is questioned by Jacek Friedrich, who suggests that the number was exaggerated in order to make it easier to acquire funds for the city's reconstruction and, later, to emphasise the effort of reconstruction. Jacek Friedrich, *Odbudowa Głównego Miasta w Gdańsku w latach 1945–1960* (Gdańsk, 2015), 26–9.

<sup>62</sup> Marian Pelczar, ‘Spod znaku pomorskiego Gryfa...’, *Przegląd Zachodni*, ii, 9 (1946), 784–5.

three sections – in Gdynia, Gdańsk and Szczecin – whose work was, beginning in September 1945, coordinated by the Government's Delegation to the Coastal Region (*Delegatura Rządu do Spraw Wybrzeża*), with Eugeniusz Kwiatkowski at the helm. The new, centrally planned and steered economic system of which Kwiatkowski spoke in his Economic Society Congress paper was already at work in the process of reconstruction. It was taking place following the so-called 'Little Plan of Reconstruction' (which detailed the priorities in the first stages of reconstruction), and afterwards the Three-Year Plan (1947–9), which was a centralised plan of reconstruction of the Polish economy after the war.

As reported by Wanda Górkowa in *Przegląd Zachodni*, in the first months the priority had been clearing the ports of mines and shipwrecks,<sup>63</sup> connecting them to electricity, reconstruction of railway connections, and the repair of docks, magazines, and port cranes. The next step was to make the ports operational, at least to the extent enabling the export of coal and the receipt of UNRRA transports. This goal was achieved by the summer 1945. In the second half of that year, according to Górkowa, 887 ships with a total tonnage of 745,982 NRT from nine different countries (most of them from Sweden) entered the ports in Gdańsk and Gdynia.<sup>64</sup> A factor hindering reconstruction was the harsh winters of the mid-1940s and the consequent blockage of sea routes by ice.<sup>65</sup> The conclusions made by both quoted reports were, however, that the reconstruction was progressing quickly, despite the problems.

The next important task was the coordination of ports, which was among the premises of both the 'Little Plan' and the Three-Year Plan. The ports were supposed to complement each other rather than compete among themselves, as had been the case during the interwar period when they had been located in different, hostile to each other, countries.<sup>66</sup> According to Gluck, such coordination

---

<sup>63</sup> Some of them had been left on purpose by the withdrawing German army to block the entrance to the ports. The best known example was the battleship "Gneisenau", which had been sunk in March 1945 to block the entrance to the port of Gdynia, and, due to technical difficulties and the ship's size, was not removed until 1951. In the meantime, an additional entrance to the port was made to enable its functioning.

<sup>64</sup> Górkowa, 'Odbudowa portów polskich', 516.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibidem*, 518.

<sup>66</sup> Gluck, 'Gdańsk – Gdynia – Szczecin', 42.

and making the best use of their conditions should be supported by examining the “natural economic ties and natural tendencies of various economic regions towards the different ports”.<sup>67</sup> The discussion was, for example, about whether the three ports should be universal or each should specialise in a different type of activity, and whether Gdańsk and Gdynia should be treated as two separate ports or one unified port complex. As regards the latter, given their close proximity to each other (around 20 kilometres between their modern day centres, and less than 30 between their ports), both solutions were possible, but neither of them was ideal. Gluck was in favour of their unification, as the cities were close and shared the same waterway.<sup>68</sup> Ocioszyński, in *Jantar*, also promoted one common port complex in the Gdańsk Bay, however, with the centre either in Gdynia or between the two cities – but not in Gdańsk.<sup>69</sup> According to Ocioszyński, Gdańsk’s time was over, “both as a port and as a city,” for two reasons: Gdynia’s technological superiority and a “psychological-moral” factor. As for the former, it was a consequence of Gdynia being a new, modern port (having been built only twenty years before), with good railway connections to the hinterland, as well as the considerable destruction of Gdańsk’s centre in the final stages of the war (“The fate of war has wiped Gdańsk from the surface of the Earth,” as he put it).<sup>70</sup> The second factor had to do with Gdynia’s place on the Polish mental maps as the “banner of modern Maritime Poland”<sup>71</sup> and “the symbol of our maritime renaissance”<sup>72</sup> – it was a modern city and port built in the interwar period as a response to the hostility of the German-dominated Free City of Danzig and other German ports, accompanied by intensive propaganda throughout the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>67</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>69</sup> Tadeusz Ocioszyński, ‘Gdynia – Gdańsk: nadmorskie miasta Rzeczypospolitej’, *Jantar*, v, 4 (1947), 296.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibidem*, 296.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibidem*, 290.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibidem*, 296.

<sup>73</sup> The two ports in Gdańsk and Gdynia were merged for a short time, between 1949 and 1953, as part of the Six-Year Plan, and a joint Gdańsk-Gdynia Port Administration (*Zarząd Portu Gdańsk-Gdynia*) was established. This “experiment” did not turn out to be economically advantageous, however. Roman Wapiński (ed) *Dzieje Gdyni* (Wrocław, Warszawa, Kraków, Gdańsk 1980), 268; Perkowski, *Gdańsk – miasto od nowa*, 40.

Szczecin, in the estuary of the river Oder, was perceived in a different context. Unlike Gdańsk and Gdynia, it had no clear position either in the Polish economic system or on the Polish mental maps, even though arguments about its original Slavic character and links to the medieval Piast state were underlined in research and propaganda. The new border cut Szczecin from parts of its former hinterland, including Berlin, and the region of Western Pomerania, of which it was the capital, was of a rural and agricultural character. The area's underdevelopment was partly blamed on its former masters, the Germans, who had neglected Szczecin in favour of Hamburg,<sup>74</sup> and even its role as the port of Berlin had diminished, as was argued by Andrzej Grodek and Kazimierz Bartoszewski of the Western Institute.<sup>75</sup> Stanisław Srokowski added in *Jantar* that the development of industries in the region was hindered by a lack of natural resources, and additionally slowed down by the war destruction.<sup>76</sup> Another factor hindering reconstruction and use of the port in Szczecin – not mentioned by any of the authors presumably for political reasons – was the fact that until autumn 1947 it was mainly controlled by the Soviet army (and in 8 per cent between 1947 and 1955), which used the port for transferring goods from the Soviet occupation zone in Germany to the USSR.<sup>77</sup>

The prospects for Szczecin's future development were, however, painted in an optimistic light. This was discussed, among others, in *Monografia Odry*, a volume published by the Western Institute in 1948 and aimed at presenting a thorough – it was almost 600 pages long – study of the geography, geology, history, and economy of the river Oder. The reasons for optimism for Szczecin as a port were linked to its position at the mouth of the Oder, and especially the fact that the river had, finally, ended up in Polish lands. The Oder, it was argued, with its system of tributaries almost exclusively on its eastern side,

<sup>74</sup> Kazimierz Bartoszewski, 'Odbudowanie ujścia Odry. Porty morskie: Świnoujście i Szczecin', in Andrzej Grodek, August Zierhoffer and Maria Kielczewska-Zaleska (eds.) *Monografia Odry* (Poznań, 1948), 513.

<sup>75</sup> Andrzej Grodek, 'Handel odrzański w rozwoju historycznym', in Andrzej Grodek, August Zierhoffer and Maria Kielczewska-Zaleska (eds.) *Monografia Odry* (Poznań, 1948), 406.

<sup>76</sup> Stanisław Srokowski, 'U progu odbudowy przemysłu na Pomorzu Zachodnim', *Jantar*, v, 1 (1947), 13.

<sup>77</sup> Ryszard Techman, *Armia radziecka w gospodarce morskiej Pomorza Zachodniego w latach 1945–1956* (Poznań, 2003), 112–121, 143; Jan Musekamp, *Między Stettinem a Szczecinem. Metamorfozy miasta od 1945 do 2005* (Poznań, 2013), 87.

especially in the lower course, 'naturally' sat within the new Polish borders, and connected the region of Silesia with the port in Szczecin, and thus with the outside world.<sup>78</sup> The whole stretch of the new Polish western border, a substantial part of it being the territories acquired from Germany, was thus treated as a connected system, with the Oder as its spinal cord. This system could only fulfil its economic potential when it was located wholly within one country.<sup>79</sup>

From Silesia the connection extended further south into the Danube region. According to some visions presented by both institutes, Poland was to become not only a country strongly rooted on the Baltic Sea coast, but also a nodal point in the economic network of Central Europe in its new, post-Second World War configuration, composed of a system of rivers and channels and connected to the whole world through seaports in the north and the south. Szczecin, described as Central Europe's southernmost port,<sup>80</sup> had an important role to play in this system. In the words of Eugeniusz Kwiatkowski, strong connections not only with the Baltic, but also with the Black Sea, could transform Poland from a land-based country to a truly maritime one.<sup>81</sup> The authors of *Monografia Odry* added: "Central Europe's great industries, being far from the sea, need their own port, and Szczecin naturally is this port: a Szczecin not hindered by Hamburg's influence and Germany's economic policy (which had not always been based on economic factors) should develop naturally, and fulfil its proper role: of Central Europe's port".<sup>82</sup>

## V

### COMMUNITY OF THE BALTIC SEA REGION

The Baltic Institute had always, including before the war, declared an interest in the community of the Baltic Sea region countries. One of the most important manifestations of that interest had been the publication, since 1935, of an English-language research journal entitled *Baltic and Scandinavian Countries*, in which editors and authors from the Baltic Sea region and beyond collaborated. Publication of the journal

<sup>78</sup> Zdzitowiecki, 'Bałtyk', 196–7.

<sup>79</sup> Grodek, 'Handel odrzański', 416.

<sup>80</sup> Bartoszewski, 'Odbudowanie ujścia Odry', 591.

<sup>81</sup> Quoted in Pelczar, 'Spod znaku', 785.

<sup>82</sup> Bartoszewski, 'Odbudowanie ujścia Odry', 591.



was suspended during the war, as were other Institute activities, but unlike the latter the publication of the journal was never taken up again – even though the revival of such an English-language journal would have been advantageous as a way of bypassing ‘the German intermediary’ in reaching the international audience, as pointed out by historian Karol Górski.<sup>83</sup> This argument was also inherited from prewar times, and came from an awareness that – because of language barriers and differing cultural habits – German arguments and scholarship with respect to the Baltic Sea and its problems were much better known in Europe. This had been, and continued to be, problematic because of the Polish-German disputes over the territories of Pomerania and Polish access to the Baltic Sea. In the interwar period this concern had prompted the Baltic Institute to publish in Western European languages, of which the journal *Baltic and Scandinavian Countries* was an example. After the war the continuation of these activities turned out to be very problematic.

The fate of the Institute’s planned Scandinavian Department reflected these problems. It was supposed to prepare the groundwork for Polish-Scandinavian friendship and cooperation in the fields of economy and culture.<sup>84</sup> However, despite Borowik’s numerous study trips to Denmark and Sweden, for political and financial reasons he saw no realistic possibilities of bringing the prewar collaborators of *Baltic and Scandinavia Countries* back on board, a situation which he found particularly disagreeable because “he considered the continuation of such cooperation especially sensible and advantageous in the new conditions”.<sup>85</sup> The most he managed to secure was cooperation in providing the Baltic Institute’s library with Danish and Swedish publications.<sup>86</sup> In the end, an English-language journal and the Scandinavian Department remained in the realm of plans and postulates, and the Baltic Institute never had the chance to develop its activities beyond the domestic audience before its dissolution in 1950.<sup>87</sup>

In parallel with these plans, an interest in Scandinavia appeared in publications and discussions. The journal *Jantar* included regular

---

<sup>83</sup> Zdzisław Kaczmarczyk, ‘Historycy polscy w Szczecinie’, *Przegląd Zachodni*, iv, 5 (1948), 533.

<sup>84</sup> Bukowski, ‘Instytut Bałtycki po wojnie’, 392.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibidem*, 252.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>87</sup> Potocki, ‘Działalność Instytutu Bałtyckiego’, 10.

information on the Scandinavian economy. Starting from the third number, it published a chronicle 'From the Baltic Sea countries', usually compiled by Maria Boduszyńska. The chronicle dealt with a wide range of topics, for example: Danish sea fishing and its school system; the Finnish railway system and forests; industrial works in the mountains; and Sweden's cultural life. In 1948 these issues were incorporated into the economic chronicle. Boduszyńska also focused on Scandinavia in her *Jantar* articles outside the chronicle. For example, she wrote on Finland's post-war reconstruction,<sup>88</sup> Sweden's international trade,<sup>89</sup> and Norway's maritime outlook.<sup>90</sup>

Furthermore, during a historians' congress organized on the Baltic Institute's initiative in April 1948 in Szczecin, several prominent historians (Karol Górski, Marian Małowist, Witold Kula) postulated research on the Baltic Sea littoral countries, and on Poland's economy as related and connected to this context over the course of history.<sup>91</sup> Another example was the never-realized project of *Monografia Bałtyku*, proposed at the end of 1948 and discussed by the Baltic Institute shortly before its dissolution. It was to be a comprehensive publication, similar to the Western Institute's *Monografia Odry*, containing general knowledge about the Baltic Sea. There were two visions of the monograph: a narrower one, encompassing only the sea and the coast; and a wider one, including the littoral countries and other countries of Central and Eastern Europe "insofar as they display connections to the Baltic Sea".<sup>92</sup> Both visions saw the Baltic Sea and its coasts as one unit, especially in the economic sense, and it was to be studied as such.<sup>93</sup>

The view beyond the Polish coast, into the space of the Baltic Sea and even the world oceans in general, was furthermore an element of Józef Borowik's vision of the Maritime Museum in Szczecin, discussed earlier, and more precisely his idea of three thematic circles. The second circle, the regional one, was called 'Poland on the Baltic and in the Baltic region', and it was to include, *inter alia*, information

---

<sup>88</sup> Maria Boduszyńska, 'Warunki i rezultaty powojennej odbudowy gospodarczej Finlandii', *Jantar*, vi, 3-4 (1948), 306-10.

<sup>89</sup> Maria Boduszyńska, 'Przemiany w handlu zagranicznym Szwecji', *Jantar*, vi, 3-4 (1948), 297-305.

<sup>90</sup> Maria Boduszyńska, 'Norwegia - kraj morski', *Jantar*, vi, 2 (1948).

<sup>91</sup> Kaczmarczyk, 'Historycy polscy', 532-3.

<sup>92</sup> Maria Boduszyńska, 'Monografia Bałtyku', *Jantar*, vii, 3-4 (1949), 229.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibidem*, 230.

about the greatest Baltic ports and Scandinavian culture. The third and widest circle, the global one – ‘Poland and the world: Far-away seas and lands’ – encompassed the topics of geographical discoveries, Polish explorers, information about the world’s seas, long-distance maritime trade, world ports and fleets, whaling, ethnology etc.<sup>94</sup>

However, the interest in the shores of the Baltic Sea beyond those of one’s own country was comparatively small in the case of the Baltic Institute, and almost non-existent in the Western Institute. Priority was given to the Polish coast, Polish ports, the Polish maritime economy and maritime education, even though declarations were made about how these were to connect Poland to the wider world. This, again, mirrors the prewar situation, when the Baltic Sea community only became more widely studied in the later phase, i.e. in the 1930s. This was, firstly, due to the fact that, quite naturally, it was felt that the situation in one’s own backyard should be taken care of and put in order first before looking any further – and there was a lot to take care of in Poland. Secondly, economic factors were at play, i.e. the costs of conducting research and maintaining contacts abroad. Thirdly, there was the matter of the international political situation. The Institutes did not work in isolation from the government’s policies, especially inasmuch as it was their source of funding. And, as the Cold War was developing in the second half in the 1940s, the Iron Curtain descended not only “from Stettin on the Baltic to Trieste on the Adriatic,” as Winston Churchill so memorably, albeit inaccurately, declared, but also further north, across the Baltic Sea. This, of course, also made scholarly cooperation difficult, and prompted the creation of mental maps on which the dividing lines were indeed very visible.

The Baltic Institute did not return to the topic of Scandinavian research and studies until the late 1960s, after its re-establishment. In the first half of 1967 it finally employed its first person for the Scandinavian Department, and a survey was made among scholars about the state of Scandinavian studies in Poland.<sup>95</sup> At that time the Institute’s journal, *Komunikaty Instytutu Bałtyckiego* (which replaced

<sup>94</sup> Borowik, ‘Muzeum Morskie’, 231.

<sup>95</sup> ‘Z kroniki Instytutu Bałtyckiego’, *Komunikaty Instytutu Bałtyckiego*, iv, 6 (1967), 101–3; Jadwiga Wróblewska, ‘Stan i potrzeby badań skandynawistycznych w Polsce po II wojnie światowej’, *Komunikaty Instytutu Bałtyckiego*, v, 8 (1968), 32; Jadwiga Wróblewska, ‘Wyniki ankiety w sprawie badań skandynawistycznych w Polsce’, *Komunikaty Instytutu Bałtyckiego*, vi, 9 (1969), 44–7.

*Jantar* after the Institute's reestablishment), began to publish on Scandinavian topics. Finally, in November 1972 the Institute started cooperation with the Chair of Scandinavian Languages and Cultures at the newly-established – in March 1970 – University of Gdańsk.<sup>96</sup>

## VI CONCLUSIONS

The most visible conclusion from the presented analysis is that the radical territorial changes and the coming to power of the new, communist government did not signify a clean break from the past in the case of the Polish maritime programme. Scholars who survived the war endeavoured to continue their research in a similar form to that of the prewar period insofar as organisation and content were concerned. As before the war, historians discussed the state's beginnings in the drainage basins of the Vistula and Oder Rivers, and described a quasi-mythical 'original' Poland based solidly on these rivers and the Baltic Sea coast, its wellbeing dependent on holding onto the Baltic coast. The maritime discourse continued to see the sea as the window to the world and a means of both economic and civilisational development.

This lasted until the turn of the 1950s, and reflected the complex process of building a communist Poland. The second revolution, the political and social one according to Padraic Kenney's interpretation of Poland's post-war development, brought with it, among other events, the dissolution of the Baltic Institute and the ousting of such important figures as Józef Borowik, Zygmunt Wojciechowski and Eugeniusz Kwiatkowski, among others. The earlier relative freedom in terms of research came on one hand from the fact that the communists did not have their own researchers to replace the prewar ones. On the other hand there was the question of legitimisation. The ability to integrate the new Poland into its new borders was a test of the communists' hold on power, and the research about the acquired territories provided a much needed integrative narrative.<sup>97</sup> In the case of the Baltic Sea research, it was a narrative that conveniently concentrated on the north-west (Pomerania) and ignored the east (the Soviet-annexed *Kresy*), and depicted Poland's new, diminished

<sup>96</sup> 'Kronika i informacje', *Komunikaty Instytutu Bałtyckiego*, ix, 17 (1972), 105–6.

<sup>97</sup> See Grzechnik, "Recovering" Territories', 682–8.

territorial shape in positive, optimistic terms, as an opportunity and a return to the country's 'natural' path of development.

And yet this optimistic vision seems to have been in constant tension. Behind the (self-) image of a 'Baltic' country was the awareness of the limits of Poland's maritime traditions and experience, and of how much remained to be done in order to shape a true *światopogląd morski* and fully 'cultivate the sea'. There are several interesting issues connected with this. Firstly, the Polish Baltic programme was mostly a negative one: more anti-German than pro-Baltic, aware of Poland's precarious position on the sea's shores in relation to its western neighbour, at whose cost this position had been attained, and of the revisionist sentiments in (West) Germany. It was not until the 1960s and 1970s that a more positive programme began to appear, in the form of, for example, interest in Scandinavia and, later, in regional cooperation on environmental issues.<sup>98</sup> In 1977 Jerzy Zaleski and Czesław Wojewódka, researchers connected with the revived Baltic Institute, proposed the concept of a 'Baltic Europe', which envisaged an economically cooperating region transcending the ideological divisions of the Cold War.<sup>99</sup>

Secondly, an interesting feature of the education and economic programmes developed by the two discussed institutes was that they were holistic. In all their visions of the reconstruction, planning, and building of ports and of education, research, and museums, much attention was paid to coordination, interaction and to complementing each other. For example, in the discussion about the suitability of port cities as university seats recurring arguments appeared about them being better suited for technical and trade academies, which would complement the commercial and shipbuilding tasks performed by the ports and shipyards. This approach showed the hopes and ambitions connected to the sea, which offered chances for Poland that should not be wasted – chances for modernisation and catching up, through this metaphorical window, with the rest of the world. The idea of the sea as a modernising factor was, again, a continuation of the prewar programme, as expressed for example by Kwiatkowski. Developing

---

<sup>98</sup> E.g. Poland's active participation in initiatives such as the *Convention on fishing and conservation of the living resources in the Baltic Sea and the Belts*, signed in 1973 in Gdańsk, and the *Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area*, signed in 1974 in Helsinki.

<sup>99</sup> Jerzy Zaleski and Czesław Wojewódka, *Europa Bałtycka. Zarys monografii gospodarczej* (Wrocław, Warszawa, Kraków and Gdańsk, 1977).

a maritime economy and education was to help Poland transform into a maritime nation, which in turn was supposed to help her become part of the global economic community and global civilisation, i.e. an equal partner to Western Europe. The *światopogląd morski* was to be created, more successfully than in the interwar period, thanks to the more advantageous geographical conditions. Srocki's envisaged "love of wide open waters, strong wind and adventure," was eventually to prevail over "the love of pleasant and lazy sunrays on the warm seashore sand".

*proofreading James Hartzell*

#### SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Boduszyńska-Borowikowa Maria, *Życie jak płomień. O życiu i pracach Józefa Borowika* (Gdańsk, 1972).
- Borowik Józef (ed.), *Światopogląd morski* (Toruń, 1934).
- Ciesielski Czesław, 'Z dziejów Instytutu Bałtyckiego', in Czesław Ciesielski (ed.), *Osiemdziesiąt lat Instytutu Bałtyckiego. Materiały konferencji naukowej z 29 listopada 2005 r.* (Gdańsk, 2006), 7–17.
- Górski Karol, *Polska w zlewisku Bałtyku* (Gdańsk, Bydgoszcz and Szczecin, 1947).
- Grodek Andrzej et al. (eds.), *Monografia Odry* (Poznań, 1948).
- Grzechnik Marta, "Recovering" Territories: The use of history in the integration of the new Polish western borderland after World War II', *Europe-Asia Studies*, lxxix, 4 (2017), 668–92.
- Kennedy Padraic, *Rebuilding Poland: Workers and Communists, 1945–1950* (Ithaca and London, 2012).
- Konstantynów Dariusz and Małgorzata Omilanowska (eds.), *Polska nad Bałtykiem: Konstruowanie identyfikacji kulturowej państwa nad morzem 1918–1939* (Gdańsk, 2012).
- Labuda Gerard, *Wielkie Pomorze w dziejach Polski* (Poznań, 1947).
- Perkowski Piotr, *Gdańsk – miasto od nowa. Kształtowanie społeczeństwa i warunki bytowe w latach 1945–1970* (Gdańsk, 2013).
- Potocki Stanisław, 'The Baltic Institute and Scandinavian Studies in Poland', *Komunikaty Instytutu Bałtyckiego*, xi, 20 (1974), 3–14.
- Szczerski Andrzej, *Modernizacje: sztuka i architektura w nowych państwach Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej 1918–1939* (Łódź, 2010).
- Wojciechowski Zygmunt, *Polska – Niemcy. Dziesięć wieków zmagania* (Poznań, 1945).

**Marta Grzechnik** – 20th-century history of the Baltic Sea region; assistant professor at the Institute of Scandinavian Studies, University of Gdańsk, German Kennedy Memorial Fellow, Minda de Gunzburg Center for European Studies, Harvard University; e-mail: [marta.grzechnik@eui.eu](mailto:marta.grzechnik@eui.eu)