

UDC 329.543(438+438.98)“1918/1939”  
DOI 10.24919/2519-058X.37.346049

**Ivan ZULYAK**

*PhD hab. (History), Professor, Head of the Department of History of Ukraine, Archaeology and Special Branches of Historical Sciences, Volodymyr Hnatyuk Ternopil National Pedagogical University, 2 M. Kryvonos Street, Ternopil, Ukraine, postal code 48027 (zulyak@tnpu.edu.ua)*

**ORCID:** 0000-0003-3758-2019

**Web of Science Researcher ID** I-7574-2018

**Scopus ID:** 57214095084

**Tatyana LAVRIN**

*PhD (History), Associate Professor of the Department of History of Ukraine, Archeology and Special Branches of Historical Sciences, Volodymyr Hnatiuk Ternopil National Pedagogical University, 2 M. Kryvonos Street, Ternopil, Ukraine, postal code 48027 (lahmanjkt23@gmail.com)*

**ORCID:** 0000-0001-6171-2261

**Іван ЗУЛЯК**

*доктор історичних наук, професор, завідувач кафедри історії України, археології та спеціальних галузей історичних наук, Тернопільський національний педагогічний університет імені Володимира Гнатюка, вул. М. Кривоноса, 2, м. Тернопіль, Україна, індекс 48027 (zulyak@tnpu.edu.ua)*

**Тетяна ЛАВРІН**

*кандидатка історичних наук, доцентка кафедри історії України, археології та спеціальних галузей історичних наук, Тернопільський національний педагогічний університет імені Володимира Гнатюка, вул. М. Кривоноса, 2, м. Тернопіль, Україна, індекс 48027 (lahmanjkt23@gmail.com)*

**Bibliographic Description of the Article:** Zulyak, I., & Lavrin, T. (2025). Features and conditions of crossing the customs border between the Republic of Poland and the Free City of Gdańsk in the interwar period. *Skhidnoievropeiskyi Istorychnyi Visnyk [East European Historical Bulletin]*, 37, 86–96. doi: 10.24919/2519-058X.37.346049

**FEATURES AND CONDITIONS OF CROSSING THE CUSTOMS BORDER  
BETWEEN THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND AND THE FREE CITY OF GDAŃSK  
IN THE INTERWAR PERIOD**

**Abstract.** *In the interwar period, the customs border between the Republic of Poland and the Free City of Gdańsk was an important element of trade, economic and political relations between the two sides. The features of its crossing were determined by international treaties, economic interests and tensions in relations between Poland and Gdańsk, which had the status of a free city under the auspices of the League of Nations. The purpose is to study the features and conditions of crossing the customs border between the Republic of Poland and the Free City of Gdańsk in the interwar period. The study is aimed at identifying legal, economic and political factors that influenced the customs regime, as*

well as evaluating its role in relations between the two sides. **The research methodology** is based on a comprehensive approach, which includes the analysis of regulatory legal acts, international agreements and archival documents that regulated the customs regime between the Republic of Poland and the Free City of Gdańsk in the interwar period. The main research methods are historical and legal, comparative and systemic ones. **The scientific novelty** of the study consists in the comprehensive analysis of the features and conditions of crossing the customs border between the Republic of Poland and the Free City of Gdańsk in the interwar period, which still remains an understudied topic in historical science. The authors analyzed the specific customs procedures that operated between Poland and Gdańsk in the context of the international legal status of the free city. The influence of political and economic relations between the parties on the change in the customs regime has been studied. The role of the customs border as a factor of international tension and conflicts between Poland and the Free City of Gdańsk has been analyzed. **Conclusions.** It has been determined that the customs border between the Republic of Poland and Gdańsk in the interwar period played a key role in the trade, economic and political relations of the two sides, and was regulated by international treaties that determined the special status of the free city. Poland received certain customs privileges, in particular the right to control the port infrastructure, which caused difficult relations with local authorities. Despite the contradictions, the customs border contributed to the development of trade between Poland, Gdańsk and other countries. The regulation of border crossings had a significant impact on the residents of both sides. The Polish citizens and residents of Gdańsk had to comply with special customs regulations. The study of the customs border between Poland and Gdańsk allows us to better understand not only the peculiarities of trade and economic policy between the two sides, but also the general trends in the field of customs in the interwar period.

**Key words:** Republic of Poland, Free City of Gdańsk, interwar period, customs border, customs control, duties, excise duty.

## ОСОБЛИВОСТІ ТА УМОВИ ПЕРЕТИНУ МИТНОГО КОРДОНУ МІЖ РЕСПУБЛІКОЮ ПОЛЬЩА ТА ВІЛЬНИМ МІСТОМ ГДАНСЬК У МІЖВОЄННИЙ ПЕРІОД

**Анотація.** У міжвоєнний період митний кордон між Республікою Польща та вільним містом Гданськ був важливим елементом торговельно-економічних і політичних відносин між двома сторонами. Особливості його перетину визначалися міжнародними договорами, економічними інтересами та напруженістю у взаєминах між Польщею і Гданськом, який мав статус вільного міста під егідою Ліги Націй. Мета дослідження – охарактеризувати особливості та умови перетину митного кордону між Республікою Польща та вільним містом Гданськ у міжвоєнний період. Дослідження скероване на виявлення правових, економічних та політичних чинників, що впливали на митний режим, а також на оцінку його ролі у взаєминах між двома сторонами. **Методологія дослідження** базується на комплексному підході, що включає аналіз нормативно-правових актів, міжнародних угод і документів, які регулювали митний режим між Республікою Польща та вільним містом Гданськ у міжвоєнний період. Основними методами дослідження є історико-правовий, порівняльний та системний. **Наукова новизна** дослідження полягає у комплексному аналізі особливостей та умов перетину митного кордону між Республікою Польща та вільним містом Гданськ у міжвоєнний період, що досі залишається малодослідженою темою в історичній науці. Авторами проаналізовано специфічні митні процедури, що діяли між Польщею та Гданськом у контексті міжнародно-правового статусу вільного міста. Досліджено вплив політичних і економічних відносин між сторонами на зміну митного режиму. Оцінено роль митного кордону як чинника міжнародної напруги і конфліктів між Польщею та вільним містом Гданськ. **Висновки.** Встановлено, що митний кордон між Республікою Польща та Гданськом у міжвоєнний період відігравав ключову роль у торговельно-економічних і політичних відносинах двох сторін, регулювався міжнародними договорами, які визначали особливий статус вільного міста. Польща отримала певні митні привілеї, зокрема право контролювати портову інфраструктуру, що спричиняло складні стосунки з місцевою владою. Попри суперечності, митний кордон сприяв розвитку торгівлі між Польщею, Гданськом та іншими країнами. Регулювання перетину кордону мало значний

*вплив на мешканців обох сторін. Польські громадяни та жителі Гданська мали дотримуватися спеціальних митних норм. Дослідження митного кордону між Польщею та Гданськом дозволяє краще зрозуміти не лише особливості торговельно-економічної політики між двома сторонами, а й загальні тенденції у сфері митної справи міжвоєнного часу.*

**Ключові слова:** *Республіка Польща, вільне місто Гданськ, міжвоєнний період, митний кордон, митний контроль, мита, акцизний збір.*

**Problem Statement.** In the interwar period, the political and economic situation in Central and Eastern Europe was extremely difficult. One of the important issues of international relations at that time was the regulation of customs procedures between the Republic of Poland and the Free City of Gdańsk, which was under the supervision of the League of Nations. The specifics of crossing the customs border between these two administrative units were determined not only by economic interests, which had a significant impact on the Polish-Gdańsk relations. The main issue that required research was the conditions and specifics of crossing the customs border between Poland and Gdańsk, as well as their impact on economic and political ties between these territories. Poland sought to secure control over the port of Gdańsk, which was strategically important for its foreign trade. At the same time, the status of a free city implied a certain autonomy in customs policy.

**Review of Recent Research and Publications.** The issue under study is presented by the studies of the Polish authors mainly. In particular, J. Czechowski conducted a comparative description of Gdynia and the Free City of Gdańsk in the political, economic and cultural perspective of the Second Polish Republic (Czechowski, 2018.). M. Eckert wrote about the Polish-German “timber war” of 1925 – 1934 (Eckert, 2004). B. Kasprowicz covered the economic losses of Gdańsk due to its isolation from Poland in the interwar period (Kasprowicz, 1956). Z. Klimiuk studied the role of Poland in the German economic expansion of the interwar period, the development of Polish-German economic relations in 1918 – 1928 (Klimiuk, 2020; Klimiuk, 2022). R. Ruchnau described the Free City of Gdańsk in 1919 – 1939 (Ruchnau, 1979). M. Widercnik did the research on the role of the ports of Gdańsk and Gdynia in the economic life of the Second Polish Republic. (Widercnik, 1991). B. Zipper characterized the tariff policy of the Polish ports (Zipper, 1935).

**The purpose** is to study the features and conditions of crossing the customs border between the Republic of Poland and the Free City of Gdańsk in the interwar period. The research is aimed at identifying legal, economic and political factors that influenced the customs regime, as well as assessing its role in relations between the two sides.

**Research Results.** The formation of the borders of the Republic of Poland was a complex and lengthy process, accompanied by armed conflicts and diplomatic negotiations. The situation was particularly tense in Pomerania, where the Polish-German territorial disputes lasted for several years. However, tensions between Poland and Germany did not disappear, and the final test of the Polish borders stability occurred in 1939, when the Wehrmacht launched the aggression against Poland. In the first days of World War II, the German troops invaded Poznań and Pomeranian Voivodeships, which marked the beginning of a large-scale occupation (Kowalski, 2011, p. 93).

After the end of World War I and the formation of a sovereign Polish state, economic ties between Poland and Germany gained particular importance, particularly in the commercial sphere. Economic relations between these countries were characterized by significant interdependence. However, from the very beginning, tensions were evident on both sides: aggressive actions on the part of Germany and defensive ones on the part of Poland.

Achieving mutually beneficial terms of trade was also complicated by a significant imbalance in demographic and economic potential, which gave Germany an advantage. The German side tried to use this factor at the initial stages of economic negotiations, as well as in the process of implementing the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles (Article 268 b), according to which Poland received the right to import certain goods duty-free into German territory. The short-term economic agreement signed in October 1919 was not respected by Germany, which forced the Polish side to denounce it in January 1920 (Eckert, 2004, p. 185).

Germany also delayed concluding a trade agreement to normalize bilateral trade, imposing a ban on exports of goods of strategic importance to Poland, including coal and investment goods, which were urgently needed by the Polish economy. In addition, an economic boycott was applied, aimed at forcing Poland to make political and territorial concessions. The German side counted on Poland's defeat in the war with Soviet Russia, which was confirmed by their actions aimed at economic isolation. The boycott and blockade, as well as the difficulties in the transit of goods from Western countries through German territory, including the supply of weapons, were aimed at weakening the Polish economy and its political stability. The German government viewed Poland as a temporary, unstable state ("seasonal country"), which, in their opinion, would not be able to maintain its independence for long. Despite the Polish initiative for trade negotiations in 1920, Germany did not show any willingness to cooperate. Only in 1922, after the victorious powers of World War I relinquished control over the Polish-German relations, did Germany agree to end the economic boycott and begin negotiations with Poland. However, the German side, relying on economic advantage, tried to link the terms of the future trade agreement with political concessions from Poland, in particular regarding the granting of the most favoured nation treatment to Germany and the resolution of the issue of the German minority rights in Poland. The negotiations lasted for 28 months with interruptions and were accompanied by significant difficulties due to fundamental differences in the interests of both sides (Eckert, 2004, p. 185).

One of the key objectives of economic policy was not only to expand the country's export potential, but also to develop the port areas, which played a strategic role in the international trade of the adjacent territories of Pomerania. The goal was to strengthen the Polish political and economic influence on Gdańsk. This influence included expanding Polish trade operations in the port, supporting national entrepreneurship, stimulating investments, and active diplomatic activities aimed at protecting the country's economic interests in this region. The economic strategy envisaged creating conditions for a sustainable development of the Polish coastal areas, increasing their role in world trade, and strengthening Poland's position as an important transit and trade centre in the Baltic region (Program zarządu, 1934, p. 14).

Given the strategic importance of Gdańsk as an important trade and industrial centre, it was necessary to develop the shipbuilding industry, which became a key element of the city's economic growth and expansion of its production potential. Strengthening the Polish economic influence in Gdańsk involved expanding the national merchant fleet, increasing cargo traffic through the port, and developing transport infrastructure that connected the city with the country's main industrial regions. The development of shipbuilding and other industries in Gdańsk became not only a factor in the economic rise of the region, but also an important step in strengthening the Polish presence in this strategic Baltic port (Program zarządu, 1934, p. 14).

There was a significant advantage of export tonnage over import: the share of imports on average did not exceed 17.5% of the total turnover of the port of Gdańsk, and in 1931 this

figure was only 9%. While the total cargo turnover of the port of Hamburg approached the pre-war level, other German ports experienced a significant decline. In contrast, the cargo turnover of the Port of Gdańsk increased fourfold. This dynamics was a consequence of the restoration of the economic union of Gdańsk with Poland, which, as in the past, remained one of the world's leading grain exporters and ranked fourth among the largest exporters of wheat (Olszewicz, 1932, p. 8).

Poland occupied one of the leading places among the countries that had their own reserves of hard coal. According to scholars, the leading positions in the world belonged to Canada and China, which occupied the second and third places respectively. If we consider the current volumes of production, China was in tenth place, and Canada – in sixteenth. Analyzing countries by coal export level, China was not included in the list of significant exporters at all, and Canada was in tenth place. If the main criterion for evaluating exports is the balance between exports and imports, then Canada ceased to be an exporter, since it imported 23 times more coal than it exported. Poland had high indicators according to the indicated parameters, ranked the ninth in the world in terms of hard coal reserves, the sixth in terms of its production, and the fourth among the largest exporters both in terms of supply volumes and the balance between exports and imports (Olszewicz, 1932, p. 9).

Coal reserves in Poland amounted to 68 billion tons. This value covered only those seams that could be developed using advanced technologies, because the deposits were located at a depth of up to 1,200 m. If we take into account the deposits lying at depths of up to 2000 m, the total reserves exceeded 155 billion tons. This volume was 12% of the total reserves of hard coal in Europe. Only the United Kingdom (32%) and Germany (28%) had larger deposits. If the rate of extraction was maintained, the Polish reserves would last for about 1800 years. In 1930, coal production in Poland reached 37.5 million tons, which was 104% of the pre-war average (36 million tons, taken as 100%). In 1929, this figure reached a record 128%, in previous years it fluctuated between 80–112%, and the average level over the past six years was 103%. In terms of production, Poland was second only to countries such as the USA, Great Britain, Germany, France, and since 1929, the USSR. In world coal trade, Poland ranked fourth among exporters, behind the USA, Great Britain, and Germany, but ahead of Belgium, the Netherlands, Japan, and other countries (Olszewicz, 1932, p. 10).

Analysis of pre-war calculations of sea transportation showed a significant economic advantage of sea transport compared to rail. In particular, the distance from Upper Silesia to Berlin was 500 km, and the cost of transporting one ton of coal by rail was 10.51 marks (hereinafter referred to as m.). At the same time, transporting the same amount of coal from British mines by sea to Hamburg, and from there by river transport to Berlin, cost only 2.96 m. per ton. The structure of the tariff policy contributed to the penetration of the British coal into the European market, allowing it to dominate the Baltic Sea region. The differences in the cost of transporting one ton of coal were significant: for Szczecin this difference was 2.53 m., for Gdańsk – 3.68 m., and for Krulewice – 4.14 m. This fact explained the high competitiveness of the British coal in the ports of the Baltic coast (Olszewicz, 1932, p. 13).

The Polish authorities facilitated the assimilation processes in Gdańsk. In particular, according to the letter of the Presidium of the Council of Ministers of November 9, 1923 (Circular Letter No. 169), Government bodies and offices in official correspondence addressed to institutions in the territory of the Free City of Gdańsk were to use Polish toponyms and corresponding local names. The above rule did not apply to the name of the free city of Gdańsk, since, in accordance with generally accepted linguistic practice, the names of large

cities, especially capitals, were adapted in accordance with the phonetic norms of each language. In addition, the official Polish name of the city was enshrined in the Polish-Gdańsk agreement of October 24, 1921. On the basis of reciprocity, the Gdańsk administration was also obliged to use the Polish toponyms in correspondence with the Polish institutions (Zbiór, 1926, p. 286).

In the convention "General Information about Convention between Poland and the Grand Duchy of Gdańsk and Germany, and about the Freedom of Transit between East Prussia and the Rest of Germany" (*in Polish* "Ogólne wiadomości o konwencji między Polską i W. M. Gdańskiem a Niemcami i w sprawie wolności tranzytu pomiędzy Prusami i Wschodnią resztą Niemiec") (JLRP, nr. 61/22, poz. 549) it was noted that, in accordance with Article 89 of the Treaty of Versailles, the Republic of Poland was obliged to ensure free transit for people, goods, ships, trains, wagons and postal transports transiting from East Prussia to other parts of Germany and in the reverse direction through the Polish territory. The Council of Ambassadors further extended the right of free transit to the Free City of Gdańsk. It is for these reasons that a corresponding provision was included in the preamble of the above mentioned Convention. Transit covered all types of land and water transport through the territory ceded to the Republic of Poland by Germany, as well as the Free City of Gdańsk. This right extended, in particular, to postal, telegraphic and telephone communications. Transit payments could be made in the form of preferential or regular transit. Passenger transportation within the scope of preferential transit was carried out in specially designated trains. Passengers on such trains were exempt from customs and passport formalities and were not required to carry passports or identity cards (Zbiór, 1926, p. 77).

Transit goods were completely exempt from customs duties. Transportation of goods under preferential transit regime was carried out by specially designated railway depots. Passenger trains or their individual parts, which followed transit under preferential regime, were under the supervision of customs officers. In this regard, the issue of transport documents was not provided for the transportation of luggage in such trains. Luggage was subject to mandatory sealing with customs seals. The transportation of military equipment and property was also allowed under a preferential regime. The convoy of goods through the territory of the Republic of Poland was carried out by its customs authorities, and within the territory of the Free City of Gdańsk by the relevant customs officials. In return, Germany, in turn, undertook to guarantee the Republic of Poland free transit along the Deutsche-Eylau-Marienburg-Gdańsk railway line in both directions. However, at that time Poland did not use this opportunity due to the low traffic intensity on the above mentioned route (Zbiór, 1926, p. 78).

Based on an extract from the Polish-German agreement on the preferential transit (JLRP, nr. 72/24, poz. 704) it was emphasized that within the framework of a privileged transit traffic, certain requirements regarding documents and identification of people crossing the border had to be met. In particular, such people had to have a passport of a citizen of Poland, Gdańsk or Germany. The document had to include the owner's full name, place of residence, and citizenship. In addition to the information listed in the passport, the owner's handwritten signature was required. If a person was illiterate, a fingerprint or other acceptable form of identification was used instead of the signature. An official seal or stamp of the relevant authority that issued the document to confirm its authenticity. The photograph of a holder had to meet the determined requirements for document identification. The certificate had to be valid for a specified period of time and presented for inspection when crossing the customs border or during transit trips (Zbiór, 1926, p. 83).

Convention between Poland and Germany on the facilitation of small border traffic, border was signed in Gdansk on December 30, 1924 (JLRP, nr. 65, poz. 383). It provided that the crossing of the Polish-German customs border would be carried out on the basis of border passes. In particular, people who permanently resided in border counties, but no further than 10 km from the Polish-German border and who had been there for at least three months, had the right to cross the border with special border passes. Border counties included administrative units that directly bordered the Polish-German border. If necessary and by mutual agreement between the governments of Poland and Germany, the status of border counties could be extended to parts of other neighbouring territories located near the border. Specific conditions and mechanisms for their implementation, including the procedure for obtaining permits, their validity period, as well as the list of permitted routes for crossing the border, were regulated by relevant administrative orders (Zbiór, 1926, p. 100).

The holder of a border pass received the right to cross the border at designated border crossing points: on foot, on horseback, by bicycle, by cart, by sleigh, and by train. The use of other modes of transport was regulated by separate regulations of the relevant authorities. The permit granted the right to remain within the area located on the opposite side of the border adjacent to the area where the permit was issued. The permitted distance of stay was no more than 10 km from the border. If the specified territory covered more than one administrative district, the residence permit extended to the other districts. In exceptional cases, by decision of the authority issuing the permits, the zone of permitted stay could be expanded, provided that the adjacent districts on the other side of the border agreed on this issue. All provisions regarding the use of permits were subject to verification by the relevant border and customs authorities of both countries (Zbiór, 1926, p. 101). Passes were divided into three main types: one-time – marked in red, permanent – in green, economic – intended for economic activity – in brown. Passes were issued on bilingual forms (in Polish and German) based on the model of April 29, 1922 (Zbiór, 1926, p. 101).

In an excerpt from the order of the Ministry of Finance dated October 17, 1924 (JLRP, nr. 83/24, poz. 797) it was stated that people crossing the state border of the Republic of Poland had the right to export certain gold and silver items for personal use. In particular, one pocket watch with a chain or pendant or a wristwatch with a bracelet; up to four rings, including wedding rings; one bracelet (excluding the watch bracelet); two pairs of earrings; one brooch; one women's handbag; two crosses or medallions with a neck chain; one medallion with a neck chain; one cigarette case; two pairs of pince-nez or spectacles; one binoculars; three pairs of men's clothespins; two tie pins; one cup; one set of cutlery (a knife, a fork, a spoon and a teaspoon); monograms, jewellery and decorative accessories on personal items, including walking sticks, briefcases, wallets, toiletries, etc. People travelling abroad were also allowed to export additional gold and silver items, provided that their total weight did not exceed 250 grams for gold items, 2,000 grams for silver items (Zbiór, 1926, p. 34). We believe that the aforementioned provisions determined restrictions on the export of precious metals in order to control financial flows and protect the economic interests of the state.

Gold and silver in all forms, including coins, imported by tourists from abroad to the Republic of Poland could be exported outside the country provided that there was an appropriate certificate issued by the customs authorities. The certificate had to be issued within two months from the date of issue and valid at any customs point. At the customs border of the Republic of Poland with the Free City of Gdańsk, they were issued by financial authorities. In addition, in exceptional cases, permits for the export of gold and silver were

granted by tax chambers in Warsaw, Lutsk, Vilnius, Łódź, Poznań, Grudziędz, Lviv, Kraków and Katowice. In urgent situations, customs authorities, as well as responsible railway officials, could allow the export of gold and silver exceeding the maximum weight, provided that their use for personal needs did not raise doubts. It is worth noting that at the Polish-Gdańsk customs border, such a right was granted by the head of the fiscal control inspectorate and the heads of the relevant authorities (Zbiór, 1926, p. 35).

Based on the extract of the Minister of Finance dated May 27, 1925 "On Monetary Transactions with Foreign Countries" (JLRP, nr. 57/25, poz. 408) it was emphasized that the transfer of foreign currency abroad was permitted exclusively through Bank Polski, its branches or authorized banks that carried out foreign currency transactions. Instead, the export of foreign currency and assets in the Polish currency abroad was allowed without a special permit, provided that the amount did not exceed 1,000 PLN per person with a separate foreign passport or per passport. In the case of multiple border crossings, the total amount of currency exported was not to exceed 1,000 PLN per month. People who regularly travelled to the Free City of Gdańsk and had an appropriate identity card were entitled to export an amount equivalent to 250 PLN without additional permission. For people crossing the customs border with border passes, the maximum one-time export amount was 100 PLN, but the total amount per month could not exceed 500 PLN. Exporting shares and securities abroad, as well as coupons for them, required the appropriate permit from the fiscal authority (JLRP, nr. 120/25, poz. 867).

According to the government statement published on June 25, 1926 (JLRP, nr. 39, poz. 384), the exchange of instruments of ratification between the Republic of Poland and the German Reich concerning the Convention on the Facilitation of Local Border Traffic took place. This agreement was signed in Gdańsk on December 30, 1924 (JLRP, nr. 78, poz. 544) and is intended to facilitate the movement of people in border areas. The exchange of instruments of ratification took place in Warsaw on 22 June 1926. In accordance with Article 31 of the Convention, it entered into force on 7 July 1926. Starting from that time, the procedure for residents of border regions when crossing the border was simplified, new rules for issuing and using border passes were introduced, agreed between the Polish and German authorities to facilitate control and reduce bureaucratic obstacles. The ratification of the Convention and its entry into force contributed to the further development of small border traffic and mutual cooperation between Poland and the German Reich (Zbiór, 1926, p. 111).

Resolution of the Council of Ministers of August 4, 1926 (JLRP, nr. 95, poz. 555) about "State Medical Assistance" (Zbiór, 1926, p. 187) was applied to people who lived or served in the free city of Gdańsk. Citizens could count on free or subsidized treatment even outside the territory of the Republic of Poland. From the time of entry into force, the Council of Ministers' resolution of July 2, 1924, which regulated the medical care of civil servants, judges, prosecutors, their families and pensioners, became invalid (JLRP, nr. 73, poz. 725).

In the regulations to the criminal and tax norms of January 1, 1927 and on the basis of the order on liability for criminal proceedings related to fiscal actions of August 2, 1926 (JLRP, nr. 105, poz. 609) the violations subject to penalties were highlighted: evasion of customs payments, smuggling of goods, violation of trade agreements; illegal production, sale or import of tobacco products; non-payment of excise duty, illegal production or trade in alcohol-containing substances; illegal mining, sale or use of salt, without appropriate permits; production and sale of matches or lighters, without payment of state duty; organization of gambling or lotteries without state permit; evasion of excise duty on the production and sale of beer; failure to pay

taxes on alcoholic beverages, wine and honey; evasion of tax on the production and trade of sugar and sugar products; illegal circulation of petroleum products or their processing without proper taxation; tax evasion on mining, sale and export of coal; illegal production or sale of playing cards without appropriate registration and tax payment; production or sale of artificial sugar substitutes without appropriate control; violation of the rules governing the issuance of excise licenses. The ban on trade in the above-mentioned goods, without paying excise duty, also applied to the Free City of Gdańsk (Zbiór, 1926, p. 307).

Fines for violating the tobacco monopoly rules from June 1, 1922 (JLRP, nr. 47, poz. 409) related to the import-export or transportation of raw materials or tobacco products provided for the following conditions. For example, a person from whom tobacco raw materials or tobacco products of foreign origin were seized was fined four times the value of the products, and customs confiscated the goods. A seller, a buyer, and a person in whose possession the goods were subject to fines (Zbiór, 1926, pp. 313, 316).

Violation of the rules of trade in goods with foreign countries or the Free City of Gdańsk in connection with the import-export or transportation of alcoholic beverages provided for confiscation of the product, imposition of a fine in addition to customs and stamp duty (Zbiór, 1926, p. 319). People responsible for transportation of salt or brine from the place of production or from a monopoly warehouse in a manner associated with losses to the state treasury were subject to a fine of four times the monopoly fee for the amount of salt extracted and punishment in the form of confiscation of the salt. In addition to confiscating the goods, in case of violation of the rules of customs trade in salt with the Free City of Gdańsk, the guilty people paid an additional monopoly price for the goods in the amount of PLN 10 to PLN 300. For illegal trade in beer, the fine was PLN 10 – PLN 500 (Zbiór, 1926, pp. 322, 326).

The rules of trade with the Free City of Gdańsk regarding subjects under the jurisdiction of the Republic of Poland provided for a Polish monopoly or excise duty on imported goods on the basis of the Polish-Gdańsk agreement of December 17, 1921 (JLRP, nr. 16/22, poz. 139), on items manufactured in Gdańsk or when they were imported into the free city. For violation of the rules of trade in excisable goods or products, they were confiscated, and a fine of five times the value was imposed – from PLN 10 to PLN 400 (Zbiór, 1926, pp. 327–328).

In the second half of the 1930s, Germany increased economic pressure on Poland. Berlin demanded trade concessions, lower tariffs, and increased exports to the Reich on favourable terms. Poland, for its part, limited the German influence by imposing tariffs and developing alternative markets. These economic disputes gradually developed into a political conflict. Germany made territorial claims to Gdańsk, which further aggravated relations between the two countries. By the end of 1938, the Polish-German relations had significantly deepened, and by the spring of 1939 the situation had escalated into open confrontation. Despite significant economic interdependence, the contradictions between Poland and Germany only deepened. The German policy of economic pressure, Poland's attempts to maintain independence in foreign trade, and the Reich's territorial ambitions became the prerequisites for the final severance of diplomatic relations and the beginning of World War II in September 1939 (Ratyńska, 1930, pp. 42–56).

**Conclusions.** Customs relations between the Republic of Poland and the Free City of Gdańsk were complex and dynamic, driven by political, economic and international factors. Existing customs agreements and regulations made border crossing both easier and more difficult for citizens and trade. On the one hand, they facilitated the development of trade, and on the other hand, they created numerous customs barriers. Customs restrictions largely

determined the economic relations between the parties. Customs control was used not only as an economic instrument, but also as a means of political pressure, which further complicated bilateral relations. Studying the features and conditions of crossing the customs border between the Republic of Poland and Gdańsk in the interwar period allows not only to analyze the economic and political processes of that time, but also contributes to understanding the mechanisms of customs regulation in international relations.

Prospects for further research into this issue cover several aspects. Firstly, further analysis of sources will reveal the mechanisms of customs border regulation and its impact on the economic development of the region. Secondly, it is worth studying the experience of other European countries in the interwar period and comparing customs practices with Polish-Gdańsk relations. Thirdly, it is relevant to study the impact of customs policy of the interwar period on the development of the Polish-Gdańsk relations and the legal principles regulating customs procedures in modern Europe.

**Acknowledgement.** We express sincere gratitude to all editorial board members for the consultations provided during the preparation of the article for printing.

**Funding.** The authors did not receive any financial assistance for the research and publication of this scientific work.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

**Czechowski, J.** (2018). *Gdynia i wolne miasto Gdańsk w politycznej, gospodarczej i kulturowej perspektywie II Rzeczypospolitej* [Gdynia and the Free City of Gdańsk in the political, economic and cultural perspective of the Second Polish Republic]. Słupsk: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Akademii Pomorskiej w Słupsku. [in Polish].

**Dziennik Ustaw Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej.** (n.d.). [Journal of Laws of the Republic of Poland – JLRP]. [in Polish].

**Eckert, M.** (2004). Polsko-niemiecka wojna drzewna w latach 1925 – 1934 [The Polish-German Timber War of 1925 – 1934]. *Studia Zachodnie*, 7, 185–189. [in Polish].

**Kasprowicz, B.** (1956). Straty gospodarcze Gdańska jako wynik jego izolowania się od Polski w latach międzywojennych [Gdańsk's economic losses as a result of its isolation from Poland in the interwar period]. *Przegląd Zachodni*, 3–4, 311–323. [in Polish].

**Klimiuk, Z.** (2020). Specyficzna rola Polski w niemieckiej ekspansji gospodarczej w okresie międzywojennym (1918 – 1939). Porównanie z czterema rolniczymi krajami Europy Południowo-Wschodniej: Bułgarią, Jugosławią, Rumunią i Węgrami [The specific role of Poland in the German economic expansion in the interwar period (1918 – 1939). Comparison with four agricultural countries of Southeastern Europe: Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Romania and Hungary]. *Historia i Polityka*, 33(40), 9–32. [in Polish].

**Klimiuk, Z.** (2022). Kształtowanie się polsko-niemieckich stosunków gospodarczych w latach 1918 – 1928 [The development of Polish-German economic relations in the years 1918 – 1928]. *Spoleczeństwo i Polityka*, 2(71), 83–105. [in Polish].

**Kowalski, P.** (2011). Etyka pracy leśnika w latach 1918 – 1939 na terenie Wielkopolski w świetle materiałów archiwalnych [The work ethics of a forester in the years 1918 – 1939 in the Wielkopolska region in the light of archival materials]. *Annales. Etyka w Życiu Gospodarczym*, 14(2), 93–99. [in Polish].

**Olszewicz, W.** (1932). *Węgiel i morze* [Coal and the sea]. Toruń: Wydawnictwa Instytutu Bałtyckiego. [in Polish].

**Program zarządu.** (1934). *Program zarządu głównego ligi morskiej i kolonjalnej na rok 1934 i 1935* [Program of the Main Board of the Maritime and Colonial League for 1934 and 1935] / Opracował Gen. Bryg. Stanisław Kwaśniewski, wiceprezes zarządu głównego L. M. K. Warszawa: Druk. B. Wójcicka. [in Polish].

**Ratyńska, B.** (1968). *Stosunki polsko-niemieckie w okresie wojny gospodarczej 1919 – 1930* [Polish-German relations during the economic war of 1919 – 1930]. Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza. [in Polish].

**Ruchnau, R.** (1979). *Die Freie Stadt Danzig 1919 – 1939* [The Free City of Danzig 1919 – 1939]. Berg am See: Vowinkel. [in German].

**Widercnik, M.** (1991). *Porty Gdańska i Gdyni w życiu gospodarczym II Rzeczypospolitej* [The ports of Gdańsk and Gdynia in the economic life of the Second Polish Republic]. Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Morskie. [in Polish].

**Zbiór.** (1926). *Zbiór ustaw, rozporządzeń i tymczasowych przepisów obowiązujących straż celną pełniącą ochronę północnych, zachodnich i południowych granic Rzeczyp. Polskiej. Wydanie drugie nieoficjalne rozszerzone i uzupełnione według stanu z dnia 1. października 1926 r.* [Collection of acts, regulations and temporary provisions binding the customs guard performing protection of the northern, western and southern borders of the Republic of Poland. Second unofficial edition expanded and supplemented as of October 1, 1926] / Opracował Krywieńczyk Ludomir, Komisarz Straży Celnej, Kierownik Komisarijatu Straży Celnej Lubliniec-północ. Lubliniec: Nakładem autora. [in Polish].

**Zipper, B.** (1935). *Polska polityka taryf portowych* [Polish Port Tariff Policy]. In *XV lat polskiej pracy na morzu*, 133–136. [in Polish].

*The article was received March 03, 2025.  
Article recommended for publishing 28/11/2025.*