

*BOLESŁAW HAJDUK*  
Gdańsk–Szczecin

## **GREAT BRITAIN IN THE ECONOMIC LIFE OF THE FREE CITY OF GDAŃSK IN THE YEARS 1920–1939**

The end of World War I and the decisions of Central Allied and Associated Powers regarding Gdańsk included in the Peace Treaty with Germans signed on June 28, 1919 created for Gdańsk new advantageous possibilities of establishing trade contacts with England. The city was excluded from the German territory and granted big political, economic, and cultural autonomy under the control of the League of Nations. Also, being a part of Poland's customs and economic boundaries, Gdańsk could make use of the Polish hinterland, dissociated from the rest of the country due to the partitions. The concept of the Free City which its new authorities developed, namely, that of Gdańsk as, again, an agent in the sales of goods between Poland and other states reflected this geopolitical situation.<sup>1</sup>

The particular interest the British authorities took in the development of the situation in the Baltic Sea region resulted from the tendency of Great Britain's political-military and economic elites to fill the void existing in the composition of international forces in this part of the world after the fall of the two empires: German and Russian. In the first postwar years the political activity of Great Britain in the Baltic Sea zone was oriented towards gaining the domination in the field of trade. This was suggested by the fact of the British-Danish negotiations of the years 1920 and 1921 which aimed at making some Swedish ports and Co-

---

<sup>1</sup> *Traktat Pokoju pomiędzy Mocarstwami Sprzymierzonymi i Stowarzyszonymi a Niemcami i protokół podpisany w Wersalu 28 VI 1919 r.* [The Peace Treaty Signed between the Central Allied and Associated Powers and Germany and the Protocol Signed in Versailles on June 28, 1919], Warszawa 1920, p. 61; B. Hajduk: *Gospodarka Gdańska w latach 1920–1945* [The Gdańsk Economy in the Years 1920–1945], Gdańsk 1998, pp. 19, 102.

penhagen the English transit centres from which people could travel further on to the Scandinavian and Baltic countries.<sup>2</sup> In the opinion of a historian and an expert of Gdańsk issues Stanisław Mikos: “Gdańsk could be an important economic expansion base, and, after regaining the absorptive Russian outlet for industrial goods, Gdańsk and other Baltic ports were supposed to become economic bases at the sea trade artery leading to Poland, Baltic countries, and Russia. With such bases in Gdańsk, Klaipeda, and other ports, Great Britain could monopolize the Central-Eastern European trade, particularly in Russia. Therefore in September 1919 the British Mission arrived in there. Its activity in Gdańsk suggested that the English planned to use the then situation for the purpose of creating an economic base [...]”<sup>3</sup> In the context of the mentioned British political and trade intentions, Gdańsk with its port could be useful for their realization. The English government and Prime Minister David Lloyd George himself played the leading role in the establishment of the Free City.<sup>4</sup> Also, in the first years of its existence, Prime Minister Lloyd controlled, via his citizen appointed as High Commissioners of the League of Nations, the course of events within this area.

---

<sup>2</sup> Archiwum Akt Nowych w Warszawie [The Warsaw New Acts Archives – hereinafter: AAN Warszawa], Ambasada RP w Londynie [The Embassy of the Republic of Poland in London], 217. pp. 60–62, 65–67: The Warsaw Foreign Ministry to the London Legacy of the Republic of Poland, Feb. 17 and Jan. 7, 1921; *ibid.* Ambasada RP w Berlinie [The Berlin RP Embassy], 91, p. 2: A report on the situation in Gdańsk, Jan. 22, 1920; Archiwum Państwowe w Gdańsku [The Gdańsk State Archives – hereinafter: AP Gdańsk], Senat [Senate], 1167, no pag.: A press clip from “*Baltische Presse*” of Feb. 25, 1924, no. 46; M. Nurek: *Tendencje bałtyckie w polityce Wielkiej Brytanii w latach 1919–1939* [The Baltic Tendencies in the Politics of Great Britain in the Years 1919–1939], in: *Relacje polityczno-gospodarcze w rejonie Bałtyku XVII–XX w. Materiały konferencji naukowej z 5 XII 1995 r.* [The 17<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> Century Political-Economic Baltic Relations. The Conference Materials of December 5, 1995], ed. by Cz. Ciesielski, Gdańsk 1996, p. 101; J. Rzeźniowiecki: *Brytyjska polityka wobec Gdańska i regionu Morza Bałtyckiego w latach 1918–1920* [The British Policy Towards Gdańsk and the Baltic Region in the Years 1918–1920], “Komunikaty Instytutu Bałtyckiego” [The Baltic Institute Announcements – hereinafter: KIB], 44, 1998, pp. 27–29.

<sup>3</sup> S. Mikos: *Wolne Miasto Gdańsk w polityce mocarstw zachodnich (1920–1939)* [The Free City of Gdańsk and the Politics of Western Powers 1920–1939], in: *Gdańsk w gospodarce i kulturze europejskiej. Zbiór studiów* [Gdańsk in European Economy and Culture. An Anthology of Studies], ed. by M. Mroczko, Gdańsk 1997, p. 118. See A. M. Cienciała: *Wolne Miasto w polityce Wielkiej Brytanii w latach 1933–1938* [The Free City and the Politics of Great Britain in the Years 1933–1938], in: *Gdańsk – z historii stosunków polsko-niemieckich* [Gdańsk: On the History of Polish-German Relations], ed. by M. Andrzejewski, Warszawa 1998, pp. 94–95.

<sup>4</sup> A. Cienciała: *Zasada samostanowienia narodowego a pojęcie interesów żywotnych w polityce brytyjskiej wobec Gdańska i Pomorza w latach 1917–1939* [The National Self-Government Principle and the Notion of Vested Interests in the British Policy Towards Gdańsk and Pomerania in the Years 1917–1939], in: *Gdańsk i Pomorze w XX wieku. Księga ofiarowana Profesorowi Stanisławowi Mikosowi z okazji 70. rocznicy Jego urodzin* [The 20<sup>th</sup> Century Gdańsk and Pomerania. A Book Offered to Professor Stanisław Mikos on the Anniversary of His 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday], ed. by M. Andrzejewski, Gdańsk 1997, pp. 272–273.

The engagement of Great Britain in the economic life of the Free City of Gdańsk concerned various economic branches. The British financial circles participated in the cleansing of the Gdańsk currency so as to establish it anew as the gulden. With the consent of the Financial Committee of the League of Nations secured, the Gdańsk Senate established in 1923 a new bank of issue called the Bank of Gdańsk S.A. (Bank von Danzig A.G.) with the initial capital amounting to half a million of pounds sterling. This sum included the 200 thousand pounds worth of capitals of companies and persons, whereas the remaining 300 thousand pounds was allocated owing to the foreign loan the Bank of England in London granted the Senate of the Free City of Gdańsk. The new money, the Gdańsk gulden, the equivalent of 100 pfennigs was introduced by law of an act of November 20, 1923 and was based on the English pound sterling in the following relation: 1 pound sterling = 25 gulden.<sup>5</sup> The close interrelation of the Free City's currency to the British currency lasted until November 1931. Earlier this year, on September 21, one of the presidents of the Bank of England informed the head of the Bank of Gdańsk dr. Konrad Meisner of the suspension of pound exchange for gold, which prompted the board of the Gdańsk bank to submit to the Senate a proposition of basing gulden on gold. Soon the Free City's Sejm (*Volkstag*) authorized the Senate to changing the mint act and to issuing on November 20 a regulation on the establishment of the value of Gdańsk currency in gold in relation of 1 gulden = 0.29,285 grams of pure gold, what constituted 1/25 of the pound sterling according to the gold parity.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> AP Gdańsk, Komisarz Generalny RP [The RP Commissioner General – hereinafter: KGRP], 381, p. 13: A Report of the Commissioner General L. Pluciński, Sept. 4, 1923; *ibid.*, p. 65: The Gdańsk Commissioner General to the Warsaw Foreign Minister, Oct. 26, 1923; *ibid.*, p. 124: The Protocol of a Session of the Polish Group of Originators of the Gdańsk Bank, June 2, 1924; *Zbiór dokumentów urzędowych dotyczących stosunku Wolnego Miasta Gdańska do Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej* [A Collection of Official Documents on the relation of the Free City of Gdańsk and RP], Gdańsk 1926, Part 2 (1921–1923), Doc. 206, pp. 255–257; “Gesetzblatt für die Freie Stadt Danzig”, Oct. 22, 7, Dec. 22, 31, 1923, no. 79, 99, 101, 102, pos. 499, 651, 664 i 667; W. Borowski: *Bank Gdański i gulden gdański* [The Gdańsk Bank and Gulden], KIB, 1975, special edition no. 2, pp. 126–130, 134; Ch. Kimmich: *The Free City Danzig and Germany Foreign Policy 1919–1934*, New Haven and London 1968, pp. 49, 50.

<sup>6</sup> “Gesetzblatt ...”, Nov. 2, 1931, no. 47, pos. 126; W. Borowski: *Dewaluacja guldenu gdańskiego i sprawa unifikacji walutowej Wolnego Miasta Gdańska z Polską w polityce Senatu gdańskiego* [The Devaluation of the Gdańsk Gulden and the Question of the Currency Unification of the Free City of Gdańsk in the Policy of the Gdańsk Senate], “Rocznik Gdański” [The Gdańsk Annals], 29–30, 1970, pp. 125, 127; B. Hajduk: *Bankowość Gdańska w latach 1920–1945* [The Gdańsk Banking in the Years 1920–1945], in: *Bankierzy i banki w dziejach Gdańska* [A History of Gdańsk Bank and Bankers], ed. by E. Cieślak, Warszawa 1999, p. 150.

The British trade companies commenced their activity in the Free City relatively early. In September 1919 R. Hankey arrived in Gdańsk. He was the originator of the association named the British Trade Corporation which was in fact a branch of the English government supporting Great Britain's initiatives as regards Gdańsk economy. In 1920 the mentioned company was converted in the bank association of the same name. The capital of the British Trade Corporation bank amounted to 2 million pounds sterling. The bank conducted its trade business within the England, Poland, and Baltic states triangle. Situating it in Gdańsk provoked the German political circles' fear of the English domination in the Free City.<sup>7</sup>

The bank financial operations supporting trade transactions between Poland, Great Britain, and other countries were carried out in the years 1923–1927 by branches of the following London companies: British Eastern Merchant Company and M. Davidson GmbH.<sup>8</sup>

Bank companies of mixed initial capital were registered in the Free City with the participation of English financial groups. One good example of such Polish-English cooperation was the establishment in November of 1926 of the bank company called the British and Polish Trade Bank A.G. Among the company's originators possessing the primary capital amounting to three millions guildens and officially mentioned in the registration document were five merchants from Gdańsk and Warsaw. Yet, actually, shares were divided among bank groups: Polish (Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego [the Bank of Domestic Property], Bank Kwilecki, Potocki S.A., and Bank Cukrownictwa S.A. [the Bank of Sugar Industry], English (the Anglo International Bank Ltd., and the British Trade Corporation), and French (Groupement Industriel pour Danzig). The English and the Polish took turns in the functions of these banks' heads. The company statute stated that its basic task was the introduction of all possible bank operations and the support for the good exchange between Poland, England and Gdańsk, and the remaining foreign countries. Soon the Bank became the most significant institu-

---

<sup>7</sup> Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz in Berlin-Dahlem, Preußische Ministerium für Handel und Gewerbe (hereinafter: GStA PK Berlin, PMHG), 120 C XIII 5, Nr. 32, Bd. 2/3, no pag.: A press clip from "Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung", April 10, 1920; *ibid.*, no pag.: Deutsche Stiftung to the Prussian Ministry of Industry and Trade, April 29, 1921.

<sup>8</sup> "Staatsanzeiger für die Freie Stadt Danzig" (Öffentlicher Anzeiger), Teil II, June 2, Aug. 11, 1923, no. 39 and 53, pos. 868, 1294; March 8, 1924, no. 14, pos. 357, Dec. 23, 1925, no. 136, pos. 2521; *Adressbuch für Danzig*, 1927, Bd. 1, p. 43.

tion functioning as both an agent for the Polish foreign trade via Gdańsk and an opinion-maker for government circles as regards Gdańsk banking.<sup>9</sup>

Furthermore, with the consent of the League of Nations and Polish authorities, the Senate of the Free City contracted external loans, for example in Great Britain so as to cover the budget deficit of the years 1925–1927. For the improvement of Gdańsk finances of importance was the 1,900,000 pounds sterling loan granted by English banks, with the annual interest amounting to 6.5%, secured with tobacco monopoly, and with the maturity date stretched to October 1, 1952, that is, granted for 20 years. The statistical data concerning the amount of the loan's indebtedness suggests that in April 1938 the volume of 1,244,200 pounds sterling was still to be repaid, whereas after a year from this latter date, in 1939, the volume decreased to 1,181,750 pounds sterling.<sup>10</sup>

Also, Gdańsk itself incurred loans in Great Britain for investment purposes and according with the standards validated by the Financial Committee of the League of Nations. The 1,500,000 pounds sterling worth of the mortgage credit taken in 1925 from the British Overseas Bank Ltd. and the Helbert Wagg & Co. Ltd. was bearing the annual interest of 7% and was destined for the development of the *Radunia* hydroelectric company, electric and water supply networks, and the slaughterhouse as well as for the construction of clarifiers in the municipal sewage treatment plant, preparing the grounds for the development of the Brzeźno (Brösen) block of apartments, and purchasing plots within the so-called *Niedere Front* (now Gdańsk-Siedlce quarter). Of this sum, 320,000 pounds were allocated to the Board of Port and Water Routes for the purpose of extending the pier in the Emperor's Haven (Kaiserhafen).<sup>11</sup> With the consent of the municipal authorities in August 1928, in the same banks, the 225,000 pounds sterling (5,625,000 guildens)

---

<sup>9</sup> Bundesarchiv, Abteilung Potsdam (now Berlin-Lichterfelde West), Auswärtiges Amt (hereinafter: BAP Berlin, AA), 67474, p. 283: The German Consulate General in Gdańsk to the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dec. 4, 1926; AP Gdańsk, KGRP, 383, pp. 153, 164–166: Letters of the British and Polish Trade Bank AG to the RP Commissioner General, Aug. 17, 1934; "Staatsanzeiger ...", Bd. II, Dec.1, 1926, no. 98, pos. 2464.

<sup>10</sup> *Haushaltsplan der Freien Stadt Danzig für das Rechnungsjahr 1938*, Danzig 1938, pp. 19, 41, 43; "Danziger Statistisches Taschenbuch", 1939, p. 93; *Zbiór dokumentów urzędowych ...* [A Collection of Official Documents ...], Part 4 (1927), Doc. 6, pp. 13–16.

<sup>11</sup> *Hauhaltspläne der Stadtgemeinde Danzig für die Jahre 1925 und 1926*, Danzig 1926, 1927; *Zbiór dokumentów urzędowych ...* [A Collection of Official Documents ...], Part 3 (1924–1926), Gdańsk 1928, Doc. 70, pp. 138–140, Doc. 92, pp. 202–204; Part 4 (1927), Doc. 5, pp. 12–13, Doc. 17 and 20, pp. 47 and 56; Part 7 (1931), Doc. 3, pp. 6–8; B. Hajduk: *Gospodarka Gdańska w latach 1920–1945* [The Gdańsk Economy in the Years 1920–1945], Gdańsk 1998, pp. 57–58.

worth of loan was granted to the Gdańsk Electric Tram Company (*Die Danziger Elektrische Strassenbahn A.G.*).<sup>12</sup>

Apart from banking, English companies also performed on the Free City's insurance market. On November 10 in the Gdańsk trade register a firm called Sun Insurance Office, Zweigniederlassung Danzig was recorded. The firm's headquarters was in London and its primary capital amounted to 2,500,000 pounds. The board of the firm's Gdańsk branch was "composed" of the Head General William Whitmore Ottler Barry and his in-charges: Harry Scott Whiting and Harry Roy Hobson. The function of the main commercial representative within the Free City was entrusted in merchant Adam Engel. The firm offered contracts as regards fire, sea, accident, and life insurances. The branch was liquidated and crossed out of the register on April 1, 1939.<sup>13</sup> A wide range of insurances with respect to the liquidation of all sorts of transport, fire, or natural elements (wind, water) damages offered a branch of an Edinburgh joint stock company recorded in Gdańsk on July 24, 1924 and with 6,000,000 pounds worth of the initial capital.<sup>14</sup> A similar range of insurances offered an English joint stock company called Alliance Assurance Company Limited registered in Gdańsk on January 7, 1931. Its initial capital amounted to 5,450,000 pounds and the company's headquarters were located in London. The firm's main proxy within the Free City was merchant Alexander Jochheim.<sup>15</sup> Also, a branch of the London insurance company Commercial Union Assurance Company, Limited, Zweigniederlassung Danzig registered in Gdańsk on December 5, 1925 dealt with insurances.<sup>16</sup>

The actions of British financial circles aimed at purchasing a part or whole of the assets of Gdańsk shipyards suggest that these circles were interested in undertaking economic activity in Gdańsk. Of particular concern to the British was the Emperor's Shipyard handed over by the German to the Gdańsk magistrate on October 13, 1919.<sup>17</sup> Being contradictory to the resolutions of the Central Allied and Associated Powers expressed in the Peace Treaty with Germans of June 29, 1919,

<sup>12</sup> „Danziger Allgemeine Zeitung”, Aug. 23, 1928, no. 191.

<sup>13</sup> “Staatsanzeiger ...”, Dec. 9, 1925, no. 134, pos. 2431; April 1, 1939, pos. 323.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., Aug. 5, 1925, no. 95, pos. 1605.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., Jan. 21, 1931, no. 4, pos. 81; Oct. 3, 1934, pos. 1695.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., Dec. 16, 1925, no. 135, pos. 2472.

<sup>17</sup> B. Hajduk: *Wolne Miasto Gdańsk w handlu z Niemcami w latach 1920–1939* [The Free City of Gdańsk Trading with the German in the Years 1920–1939], in: *Tempus nostrum est. Księga pamiątkowa ofiarowana profesorowi Edwardowi Włodarczykowi w 60. rocznicę urodzin* [Tempus Nostrum Est. The Commemorative Book Offered to Professor Edward Włodarczyk on His 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary], ed. W. Stępiński, D. Szudra, R. Techman, Szczecin 2006, p. 324.

this decision was changed as a result of the ruling of the interalliance Committee for the Division of German State Property from March 9, 1922. In consequence, equal parts of the shipyard and the railway repair workshops at Przeróbka (Troyl) were granted to the state and the Free City respectively.<sup>18</sup> The value of the Gdańsk Shipyard was estimated in January 1919 for 160 million deutschmarks in gold. Its state of employment for June 1, 1914 was 4079 people, whereas for November 1, 1918 – 10,319 workers. By the end of 1918 the Gdańsk Shipyard comprised four docks, including one of the capacity of 60,000 tons.<sup>19</sup>

Efforts were made by the Polish government, Gdańsk authorities, and English and French capital groups with their governments' support to take over the property of the Gdańsk Shipyard. A project was conceived in the English financial elites of the establishment of an international consortium. Representatives of the British concern Craven's Ltd. offered their 50% share in the initial capital, whereas the remaining parties: French, and Polish and Gdańsk were each supposed to be in the possession of 25% share in the capital. In January 1922 the British concern declared the readiness to single-handedly take over the shipyard and the railway workshops, and to invest in them 100,000 pounds sterling. The proposition of the English company was rejected nevertheless so that eventually the parties accepted a concept to establish an international association. A number of negotiations were conducted regarding this topic, mainly within the frames of the Interalliance Reparation Committee in which French and British opinions dominated. The negotiations, in the course of which the conditions of the firm's functioning and the number of shareholder were discussed, took place in Warsaw in February 1922. The subsequent meetings were held in Gdańsk (March 14) and London (July 4–6). At a conference in London Gdańsk representatives demanded a compensation for the investments made in the shipyard in the years 1919–1920 and the establishment of the initial capital in deutschmarks. Eventually their demands were rejected though. Still, a compromise was reached regarding the establishment of an association whose initial capital would amount to 6,000 pounds

---

<sup>18</sup> BAP Berlin, Reichsministerium des Innern (hereinafter: RmI), 5908, f. 150: A note from the conference in the German MFA, Sept. 22, 1919; AP Gdańsk, Senate, 360, pp. 25–27: Conclusions of the conference held in the German MFA, Sept. 23, 1919; Zbiór dokumentów urzędowych ... [A Collection of Official Documents ...], Part 2 (1921–1923), Gdańsk 1924, Doc. 101, p. 114.

<sup>19</sup> AP Gdańsk, KGRP, 17, pp. 14–15: A report of a RP delegate to Gdańsk for the period from Feb. 1, 1919 to the beginning of the official career of the Commissioner General, undated; S. Mikos: *Sprawa podziału niemieckiego mienia państwowego w Gdańsku po I wojnie światowej* [The Question of the Division of German State Property in Gdańsk after WWI], KIB, 29, 1979, p. 21.

sterling. The British and French groups were each supposed to receive 30% of shares, whereas the Polish and Gdańsk – 20% each. In the course of the final meetings the parties resolved that the expected lease time of the shipyard and workshops handed over to the association was supposed to last for 50 years and its statute was accepted. This statute was patterned on British models. On November 8, 1922 the Gdańsk Shipyard was transformed in the International Shipbuilding and Engineering Company Ltd.<sup>20</sup>

Pressed by Polish and French shareholders, in March 1922 the Polish government obliged itself to locate in the Gdańsk shipyard orders for the construction of 60 steam engines a year within 15 years, that is, 900 new locomotives altogether. The same obligation was specified in an agreement signed between the Polish Railway Minister and the Board of the International Association on October 22, 1923. The mentioned agreement contracted the building and repair of steam engines and wagons. Also, the Polish treasury obliged itself to place a 2,250,000 pounds sterling worth of order for the production of ships, machines, Diesel engines, boilers, electric installations and all iron constructions. New agreement regarding this latter order was signed by the Polish Treasury and representatives of the International Company board on February 29, 1928. According to this agreement, the Polish party was released from the duty to obligatorily locate government orders in the Gdańsk Shipyard. Despite their incomplete realization, Polish orders constituted over 80% of the overall shipyard production until the mid-1930s.<sup>21</sup>

In order to cope with the orders and the growing competition, the International Company Ltd. modernized its machinery customizing it to non-shipbuilding production, too. When it comes to the construction of Diesel engines, the

<sup>20</sup> A. M. Cienciąła: *Powstanie Międzynarodowego Towarzystwa Budowy Okrętów i Maszyn w Gdańsku. Przyczynek do historii Wolnego Miasta Gdańska w latach 1919–1923* [The Establishment of the International Shipbuilding and Engineering Company Ltd. A Contribution to the History of the Free City of Gdańsk in the Years 1919–1923], in: *Z dziejów Słowiańszczyzny i Europy środkowej w XIX i XX w. Zbiór studiów* [A History of Slavdom and Central Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century. A Collection of Studies], ed. by T. Cieślak, Wrocław 1980, vol. 1, pp. 59–71; Cz. Wojewódka: *Przemysł okrętowy Wolnego Miasta Gdańska* [Shipbuilding Industry of the Free City of Gdańsk], KIB, 1975, special edition no. 2, pp. 56–59.

<sup>21</sup> AAN Warszawa, Prezydium Rady Ministrów [The Ministers' Presidium], 1192, pp. 14–19: An agreement of Feb. 28, 1928; *ibid.*, Ministerstwo Skarbu [The Ministry of Treasury], 12, p. 35–65: An expertise of experts' committee, 1928; W. Czerwińska: *Powiązania gospodarki polskiej ze Stocznią Gdańską* [The Relations of Polish Economy to the Gdansk Shipyard], KIB, 1975, special edition no. 2, pp. 85–99; S. Mikos: *Sprawa podziału niemieckiego mienia ...* [The Question of the Division ...], p. 21.



company cooperated with a well-known Danish firm Burmeister & Wain A/S. Apart from engines, the shipyard's non-shipbuilding offer included pumps, lever and bridge constructions, pipelines, rubber processing machines and vulcanization and cooling devices under the license from the Danish plant *Atlas*.<sup>22</sup> The shipyard delivered also for sugar plants, slaughterhouses, oil refineries and soap factories. It specialized in the construction of cooler and cistern wagons as well as delivery wagons of other types.

Church bell founding, initiated in 1926, comprised a new specialty in the shipyard production. Until World War I 400 church bells were founded on the whole, including 376 for Polish customers. It needs to be noted that in the inter-war period several units of various types were built in the shipyard for English customers.<sup>23</sup> The shipyard's activity as the International Shipbuilding and Engineering Company Ltd. was completed in the early September 1939 after it was taken over by the new German authorities in the form of the so-called special state property (*Staatliche Sondervermögen*). Under the German management and the rise in 1940 of the initial capital to 15 million deutschmarks and restoring the old name of the Gdańsk Shipyard S.A. to the institution (Danziger Werft A.G.) shipbuilding production was continued in it.<sup>24</sup>

English companies made themselves evident within the Free City also in the confectionary-chocolate industry. A branch of London joint stock company The Anglo-Asiatic Company Limited registered in Gdańsk as Anglass Schokoladenfabrik GmbH developed production in this industry. The English capital within the Free City was also engaged in the activity of a Swiss company Nestle und Anglo-Swiss Condensed Milk Company producing, apart from chocolate goods, condensed milk.<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> Erhvervsarkivet w Aarhus, Industrieraadet, 65. H. 1, no pag.: The Burmeister & Wain Company AS to the Board of Industry, Dec. 14, 1933; *ibid.*, no pag.: The Board of Atlas Maskinfabrik AS to the Danish MFA, Feb. 3, 1937; *ibid.*, no pag.: The Danish MFA to the Legacy in Warsaw, March 24, 1937; *ibid.*, no pag.: Letters of the Atlas Maskinfabrik Company AS to the Board of Industry, Nov. 10 and Dec. 22, 1938.

<sup>23</sup> See Cz. Wojewódka: *Ośrodki budownictwa okrętowego w Gdańsku i Elblągu* [Centres of Shipbuilding in Gdańsk and Elbląg], in: *Historia budownictwa okrętowego na Wybrzeżu Gdańskim* [The History of Shipbuilding on the Gdańsk Coast], ed. by E. Cieślak, Gdańsk 1972, pp. 275–281.

<sup>24</sup> "Amtsblatt des Reichsstatthalters in Danzig Westpreußen", Oct. 2, Nov. 6, 1940, no. 49 and 54, pos. 1121, 1304; R. Ruhna: *Der Schiffbau in Danzig und die Entwicklung der Werftindustrie*, "Danziger Berichte", Stuttgart 1983, H. 3, pp. 71–75; Cz. Wojewódka: *Ośrodki budownictwa ...* [Centres of Shipbuilding ...], pp. 306–307.

<sup>25</sup> GStA PK Berlin, PMHG, 120 C XIII 5, Nr. 32, Bd. 7/8, no pag.: The Minister of the Reich's Economy to the Prussian Minister of Industry and Trade, Oct. 27, 1931; "Staatsanzeiger ...", June 17, 1927, no. 68, pos. 1434.

Food industry was another branch in which the British were active. Several companies registered in Gdańsk and of the mixed, English-Dutch capital produced vegetable oil, margarine and other fats. They were: Amada A.G., Dagoma, Unida Werke A.G, Couronne A.G. and its extension, Olmühle Tiegenhof, and Degner & Ilgner GmbH. These oil producing enterprises processed the imported and local produce such as rape, or flax as well as they refined oils for technical and food industry purposes. Such oils served for the production of paints, lacquers and canned fruit, vegetable and fish as well as margarine. The sale of the latter was difficult though in the Polish-Gdańsk customs area due to the popularity of Polish butter and American lard. After the outbreak of World War II the Gdańsk property of the majority of mentioned companies was seized by the German authorities and consolidated in one firm called The Consolidated Oil and Margarine Company Amada A.G. (Vereinigste Öl und Margarine Werke "Amada A.G.").<sup>26</sup> On the other hand, the company producing vegetable fats and canned fruit and vegetables, Degner & Ilgner GmbH (owned by Percy Ilgner), after the 1939 ownership transformations, changed the production profile and sale directions. Namely, before the war, the company produced a wide assortment of vegetable oils and fruit and vegetable cans as well as it exported its products both to England and South American and African countries. During the war it limited itself to producing mainly marmalade and realized the orders for the army, Gdańsk, customers from Eastern and Western Prussia, from the Warta River, and from other German regions.<sup>27</sup>

The English capital was also engaged in the textile-clothing branch represented by plants producing flaxen and cotton cloths, hemp ropes, artificial silk and the firms sewing ready-made clothing, work clothes, canvas and sacks.<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>26</sup> GStA PK Berlin, PMHG, 120 C XIII 5, Nr. 32, Bd. 7/8, no. pag.: The Minister of the Reich's Economy to the Prussian Minister of Industry and Trade, Oct. 27, 1931: BAP Berlin, AA, 64480, p. 106: The German Consulate General in Gdańsk to the German MFA, Jan. 21, 1929; AP Gdańsk, KGRP, 203, p. 25: The Poznań Industrial-Trade Chamber to the RP General Committee, Feb. 4, 1931; "Staatsanzeiger ...", July 2, 1924, no. 62, pos. 112.

<sup>27</sup> AP Gdańsk, Dagoma, 8, no pag.: Notes dated for Nov. 10, 1941 and June 9, 1942; "Amtsblatt des Reichsstatthalters ...", Feb. 14, 21, June 10, Oct. 16, 1940, no. 6, 7, 17, 51, pos. 129, 154, 344, 1180.

<sup>28</sup> The Bonn Auswärtiges Amt Archives, Politisches Archiv, Abt. IV Polen, Wirtschaft 1, Danzig Geheim, 17/5, Bd. 1, no pag.: The German State Commissioner in Gdańsk to the German MFA in Berlin, Jan. 28, 1921; "Danzig Hafen und Handel", Oct. 10, 1928, no. 11/12, p. 9; "Statistische Mittelungen der Freien Stadt Danzig", Feb. 25, 1922, no. 1, p. 3; June 25, 1925, no. 13/14, p. 78; Dec. 10, 1930, no. 4, p. 72.

Relatively soon after the end of World War I citizens and companies from the United Kingdom became interested in establishing a direct communication and servicing freight transports between English ports and Gdańsk. The London company Walford Line, a property of a merchant, shipowner and shipping agent Leopold H.G. Walford was the first to do it. In December 1919 the company commenced transporting goods between Gdańsk and other Baltic ports and England. The good perspectives with regard to the development of trade by the Gdańsk port after the Free City appeared on the map and the suggestion that it can be included in Poland's customs zone prompted the company owner to increase the firm's initial capital and to broaden the scope of its activity. In March 1920 a new firm called Walford Baltic Transports Ltd. of the initial capital amounting to 37,500 pounds sterling was established. Its statute specified that the firm was supposed to "serve the shipowner's, storehouse owner's, shipping agent's and ship broker's interests."<sup>29</sup> The firm extended its activity in Gdańsk by both establishing a branch registered on September 23, 1920 and located at Ogarna Street (Hundegasse) 89 and purchasing a storehouse in the Gdańsk port.<sup>30</sup>

In 1921 the mentioned English company commenced a closer cooperation with the London branch of the Norwegian concern Bergenske (London) Limited. Soon an agreement was reached regarding the establishment of a new English-Norwegian form of 75,000 pounds worth of capital divided into two partners (50% each). The new company was given the name of Bergenske & Walford Baltic Transports Ltd. and was registered in London on October 15 with a Norwegian Kristofer Lemkuhl as its head. Also, a piece of information was entered into the register of the Gdańsk District Court on the establishment of the mentioned company in the Free City. Still, the cooperation of the two firms did not last long, for in June 1922 L. Walford left the company and commenced his own business activity. After his resignation, the Norwegians-managed London firm changed the name on June 13 for Bergenske Baltic Transports Ltd. and its branch was registered in Gdańsk in the same month. The Norwegians adopted the Walford's

---

<sup>29</sup> A. Matla: *Działalność norweskiego koncernu Bergenske w portach polskiego obszaru celnego w latach 1919–1939* [The Activity of the Norwegian Concern Bergenske in the Polish Customs Zone Ports in the Years 1919–1939], KIB, 41, 1992, p. 38.

<sup>30</sup> AP Gdańsk, Akta Notariuszy [Notaries' Acts], 693/20, no pag.: A letter of the Regional Court on the Registration of the Walford Baltic Transport Ltd. firm, Sept. 23, 1920; "Staatsanzeiger ...", Nov. 27, 1929, no. 38, pos. 772; A. Matla: *Polsko-norweskie kontakty żeglugowe w latach 1919–1926* [The Polish-Norwegian Navigation Contacts in the Years 1919–1926], KIB, 38–39, 1986–1987, pp. 48, 55.

organization structure, storehouses and investment plans. Within the Free City they continued the activity regarding sea transport, in particular, the servicing of Bergenskies ships navigating between Gdańsk and other Baltic ports and England and Norway. The broadening of the firm's activity went hand in hand with establishing its solicitor-broker offices in Riga, Reval, Windau, Pillau, Królewiec (Königsberg), Klaipeda, Petersburg, and in Warsaw (the English broker Athalstone Doelberg) and Łódź (Leon Hauenschild).<sup>31</sup>

With regard to shipping and timber trade, the company Bergenske Baltic Transport Ltd. cooperated with the firm M. Slaweit established in 1921 by the English merchant and shipping agent, Meyer Slaweit, who settled down in Gdańsk. According to A. Matla, he was an experienced exporter, well-acquainted with the market relations existing in the Baltic ports.<sup>32</sup> Intending to broaden his activity and cooperation with Norwegians, M. Slaweit took a part of his business to London thus registering there a company called M. Slaweit & Co. Ltd. on January 17, 1922. In the Free City Slaweit confirmed his trade and shipping agent-broker activity by establishing and registering (on March 24, 1923) a branch of the mentioned firm situated in a Bergenske office. M. Slaweit's firm was also a shareholder (20% of shares) of a Norwegian-Gdańsk company called Berghof. Lager und Warrant GmbH established on July 21, 1923 and having a large timber storage area in Berghof-Althof (now Stary Dwór at Sienna Grobla District) at its disposal. The heavy financial losses which the Norwegian copartner suffered due to M. Slaweit's dishonest trade transactions resolved the question of the quick liquidation of his firm. The Bergenske concern managed to repay a large part of the firm's debt by incurring a pound sterling loan at the British bank Guinness, Mahon & Co.<sup>33</sup>

Also other English firms or their Gdańsk branches organized timber export from Poland and other Eastern European counties via the Gdańsk port. On August 14, 1934 a Landon branch of the company called The British Baltic Timber Export Company Limited, Danzig Branch of 100.000 pounds sterling worth of the initial capital was recorded in the register of the Gdańsk District Court. According to

---

<sup>31</sup> A. Matla: *Działalność norweskiego koncernu ...* [The Activity of the Norwegian Concern ...], pp. 37–39; idem: *Polsko-norweskie kontakty ...* [The Polish-Norwegian Navigation Contacts ...], pp. 48–49.

<sup>32</sup> A. Matla: *Polsko-norweskie kontakty ...* [The Polish-Norwegian Navigation Contacts ...], p. 61.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 63, 65–66; A. Matla: *Działalność norweskiego koncernu ...* [The Activity of the Norwegian Concern ...], pp. 58–59.

this register, the firm's underlying aim was timber and wooden products trade and Ney Behr Karlin became its Gdańsk agent. Due to the downturn in the timber industry the company's Gdańsk branch was liquidated in March 1927.<sup>34</sup> The firm called Lower Baltic Timber Trading Co. GmbH, originated by English merchants John Osborn, William Cardiff, and Szid Males and registered in Gdańsk in March 31 with the initial capital amounting to 25,000 guildens traded in Ukrainian timber.<sup>35</sup> Also, a branch of a well-known joint stock company from Vienna called Britische Holzagentur A.G. Filiale Danzig of the initial capital amounting to 200 million Austrian crowns and registered in Gdańsk on April 20, 1926 had broker, trade and shipping interests in Gdańsk. Its basic task was organizing contact and closing transactions between timber producers from Eastern and Central Europe and timber receivers in Great Britain, Ireland and overseas countries. Also, the company intended to purchase storage areas and timber mills in the Free City as well as conduct production-servicing activity in the timber industry.<sup>36</sup>

Apart from the timber industry, the British merchants were also active in the herring trade. The reputable firm called Bloomfields Overseas GmbH, established and registered in Gdańsk in February 1924 with 25,000 guildens. Worth of the initial capital occupied a significant position on the market. Its originators were merchants Reil Mackay and Cecil Frank Mayo from Great Yarmouth and Benno Friedmann from Gdańsk. In February 1939 the English company retired from the herring market within the Gdańsk port. Yet, it continued its activity in Gdańsk and in May 1939 its shareholders resolved of the augmentation of the firm's initial capital from 225,000 guildens to 250,000 guildens, whereas Holger Schrader, Consul General of The Kingdom of Denmark and Iceland in Gdańsk was appointed chair of the company's board. After the outbreak of World War II the firm was liquidated and its property was taken over by German authorities.<sup>37</sup> A limited liability company called Berneaud Herings-Import Offene Handelsgesellschaft, Danzig established by Margaret C. Berneaud from Edinburgh, Marta Berneaud from Gdańsk and Catherine Mueller from Szczecin imported salted herring from England to Gdańsk.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>34</sup> "Staatsanzeiger ...", Aug. 25, 1923, no. 56, pos. 1370.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., March 25, 1931, no. 20, pos. 433.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., April 26, 1926, no. 36, pos. 817.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., March 15, 1924, no. 15, pos. 397; Sept. 13, 1939, no. 58, pos. 385; A. Matla: *Organizacja zbytu norweskich śledzi na rynku polskim w latach 1919–1939* [The Herring Sale Organization on the Polish Market in the Years 1919–1939], KIB, 40, 1988–1991, pp. 117, 124.

<sup>38</sup> "Staatsanzeiger ...", June 19, 1929, no. 40, pos. 1000.

As regards the trade in English robber products, a firm called Anglo-Polish Rubber Company Limited, GmbH, property of merchants Siman Beloff from London, Arkady Rubin from Warsaw, and Izaak Rubinowitsch from Sopot (Zopot) functioned in Gdańsk.<sup>39</sup>

The share of firms with English capital in other wholesale branches was insignificant. Only one English firm, Hudsexway Automobil Handel GmbH participated in a highly specialized wholesale trade in cars on the Gdańsk market. Still, the export of both passenger cars and trucks from England to Gdańsk was small; far more cars were exported from the United States, Denmark, Germany, Belgium, and France.<sup>40</sup> The company M. Davidson Limited registered in Gdańsk on February 26, 1924 dealt with all sorts of wholesale trade, brokerage.<sup>41</sup> On the whole, however, few English firms had a share in the branch of brokerage. The trade turnover between the Free City and England and ships under the English colours entering the Gdańsk port were serviced either by particular agents, or navigation-sale offices of individual shipping companies. Units navigating under the English banner did not dominate in the Gdańsk port ship traffic, a fact confirmed by the data on the number and tonnage entering Gdańsk in the years: 1920 – 3 and 1, 1930 – 8 and 6, and 1937 – 9 and 6.<sup>42</sup> The engagement of English shipowners in the servicing of the Gdańsk port has been presented in Table 1.

The presented data points to a relatively big share of the British banner in servicing the Gdańsk port in the first years after the establishment of the Free City, with the biggest number of entering ships in the entire period under consideration recorded in 1927 and the biggest tonnage – in 1928. A considerable decrease in Gdańsk calls was noted in the 1930s. The smallest number of English ships as regards also the tonnage entered the Gdańsk port in 1932. The general statistics concerning the ship traffic in the Gdańsk port suggests that, when it comes to the tonnage and call number of ships sailing under various colours, the best year was 1938. When comparing the share of the British banner in servicing the Gdańsk port and the general traffic of entering ships, in 1927, the best year for this banner with regard to the number of calls made, the share in question amounted to 4,89% and, regarding the tonnage – 9,62%.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., June 1, 1932, no. 41, pos. 971.

<sup>40</sup> GStA PK Berlin, PMHG, 120 C XIII 5, Nr. 32, Bd. 7/8, no pag.: The Minister of the Reich economy to the Prussian Minister of Industry and Trade, Oct. 27, 1931; B. Hajduk: *Gospodarka Gdańska ...* [The Gdańsk Economy ...], pp. 128–129.

<sup>41</sup> “Staatsanzeiger ...”, March 8, 1924, no. 14, pos. 357.

<sup>42</sup> See “Rocznik Morski i Kolonialny” [The Sea and Colonial Yearly], 1938, p. 55.

Table 1. Ships entering the Gdańsk port under the English colours in the years 1913, 1918–1919

Year	Number of ships	Tonnage NRT	Overall in port	
			number of ships	tonnage NRT
1913	102	78,492	–	–
1918	1	4,871	–	–
1919	38	78,970	–	–
1920	215	256,464	1951	987,740
1921	210	234,215	2632	1,568,276
1922	205	199,999	2712	1,423,129
1923	196	251,739	2913	1,701,747
1924	217	233,510	3312	1,635,001
1925	269	294,244	3986	1,869,979
1926	281	322,454	5967	3,432,480
1927	340	405,000	6950	3,899,854
1928	306	416,806	6198	4,045,240
1929	176	271,261	5396	3,892,362
1930	153	215,885	6078	4,143,098
1931	136	165,519	5960	4,061,733
1932	92	116,014	4638	2,750,411
1933	126	145,316	4278	2,762,616
1934	191	216,157	4880	3,174,892
1935	179	194,265	4455	2,843,757
1936	198	236,000	5404	3,294,611
1937	230	262,612	5935	4,025,712
1938	256	333,608	6601	4,768,757

Source: AP Gdańsk, Rada Portu i Dróg Wodnych [The Board of Port and Water Routes], 383, p. 103; The traffic of entering ships according to banners in the years 1913–1923; *ibid.*, 1486, pp. 3, 16–139; Ships entering the Gdańsk port in the years 1920–1930; *ibid.*, 1522, pp. 3–43; The overall ship traffic in the Gdańsk port in the years 1920–1939; “Statistische Mitteilungen der Freien Stadt Danzig”, March 29, 1924, no. 4, p. 11; “Danziger Statistisches Taschenbuch”, 1936, Table 41, p. 47; Table 48, p. 54; *Bericht über die Lage von Handel, Industrie und Schifffahrt im Jahre 1930*, p. 72; 1931, p. 82; 1932, p. 102; 1933, p. 62; 1934, p. 68; 1935, p. 10; 1936, p. 118; 1937, p. 114; 1938, p. 106; “Rocznik Statystyki Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej” [The RP Statistical Yearly], 1925–1926, Table 2, p. 528; 1929, p. 154, 609; 1930, p. 138; “Rocznik Statystyczny Gdyni” [The Gdynia Statistical Yearly], 1937–1938, p. 134.

The Gdańsk port was serviced by its regular shipowners sailing under the English banner. Within the Free City, these shipowners registered branches of their companies. The earliest to do it was the board of the United Baltic Corporation, a company established in London in 1919 which, in December 1920 entered into the register of the Gdańsk District Court its branch called the United

Baltic Corporation Limited, Danzig Branch. The initial capital of this company amounting to 2 million pounds sterling was property of a well-known Danish shipowner Det Ostasiatisk Kompagni A.S. The Gdańsk branch provided for a regular communication between Gdańsk and English ports, performing as brokerage and shipping agents, also for other shipowners. When it comes to the transport of goods and persons (emigrants) along this latter route, the branch competed with another Danish shipowning association, the United Association for Steam Navigation (Det Forenede Dampskibsselskab AS).<sup>43</sup>

Also, a branch of the English navigation society Ellerman's Wilson Line Ltd. had a regular Gdańsk–London and Hull connection. This was possible owing to the firm's cooperation with the already mentioned Danish shipowner Det Forenede Dampskibsselskab AS. By the end of 1928 the authorities in charge of the Ellerman's Wilson Line Ltd. society resolved to sell to Polish customers both two regular lines Gdańsk–London and Hull and their entire administration, tonnage and trade rights apparatus. At the same time they established a new navigation company called the Polish-British Steamship Company *Polbryt*. Located in Gdynia, the joint venture company which resulted from this establishment and saw the light on December 21, had 13.5 million zlotys worth of the initial capital at its disposal. Of this sum, 75% was the Polish share, whereas 25% belonged to the English. Signing a separate contract, the Polish party purchased four ships for 290,000 pounds (12.6 million zlotys). In its first year, *Polbryt* attained meager exploitation results, for it transported 36,197 tons of goods from Gdynia and Gdańsk to English ports, and 10,949 tons of various cargoes back. Moreover, this shipowner's vessels took to England about 11,500 emigrants and passengers participating in sea voyages. The Great Depression, deepening from the early 1930s and felt also in sea navigation, prompted the board of *Polbryt* to commence cooperation with the association called United Baltic Corporation. By the late 1930s both shipowners signed an agreement of struggling against the competition in the market, which, for both parties engaged, turned out an advantageous move. As a result they drew up a new weekly timetable of Gdańsk/Gdynia–London voyages and came to an agreement as regards charges for them. This contract appeared to be both the first such an agreement ever signed in the history of the Baltic naviga-

---

<sup>43</sup> "Staatsanzeiger ...", Dec. 18, 1920, pos. 81; B. Hajduk: *Polsko-duńskie kontakty portowe i żeglugowe w latach 1919–1939* [The Polish-Danish Port and Navigation Contacts in the Years 1919–1939], KIB, 30, 1979, p. 34.



tion and a permanent agreement on the common servicing of goods and passenger transport from Polish ports to England.<sup>44</sup>

Also, a large English (Liverpool) shipowner of the overseas navigation line called the White Star Line registered a branch of a shipping-brokerage company. Recorded in April 1922 as “Oceanic” Steam Navigation Co. Ltd. (White Star Line) Niederlassung Danzig, GmbH had 300,000 deutschmarks worth of the initial capital at its disposal and as its head merchant Izydor Krongold was appointed.<sup>45</sup>

Furthermore, from 1933 the shipowner James Curie & Co. commenced regular freight transportation between Gdańsk/Gdynia and the English ports of Leith and Grangemouth. Simultaneously another English shipowner, the Ulster Steamship Comp. Ltd. began servicing the line Gdańsk – the Irish ports of Dublin and Belfast.<sup>46</sup>

One general characteristic of the good exchange between Great Britain and the Free City of Gdańsk was trade in Polish and made-in-Poland goods. Similarly, English goods were imported to be used by their purchasers in the Free City and Poland. The signing on November 26, 1923 of the Polish-British trade treaty based on the most favoured nation clause turned out profitable for the Gdańsk trade with Great Britain, too. The treaty regulated bilateral Gdańsk-English trade as well.<sup>47</sup>

The overall balance of goods exchange between the Free City of Gdańsk and Great Britain in the years 1920–1939 is presented in Table 2.

---

<sup>44</sup> GStA PK Berlin, PMHG, 120 C XIII 5, Nr. 32, Bd. 2/3, no pag.: A note – Gdańsk regular lines, June 5, 1923; AP Gdańsk, Polsko-Brytyjskie Towrzystwo Okrętowe [The Polish-British Ship Society], 8, p. 18: A minutes of the session of „Polbryt’s” Board of Supervisors, July 14, 1934; B. Hajduk: *Skandynawowie w życiu gospodarczym Wolnego Miasta Gdańska 1920–1939* [The Scandinavians in the Economic Life of the Free City], in: *Polska – Szwecja 1919–1999* [Poland – Sweden 1919–1999], ed. by J. Szymański. Gdańsk 2000, p. 155; idem: *Polsko-duńskie kontakty portowe ...* [The Polish-Danish Port Contacts ...], pp. 34, 42; J. Miciński: *Pod flagą “Polbrytu”* [Under the “Polbryt’s” Colours], in: *Księga statków polskich 1918–1945* [A Book of the Polish Ships 1918–1945], vol. 2: *1918–1945*, Gdańsk 1997, pp. 174–175, 185; “Rocznik Morski i Kolonialny” [The Sea and Colonial Yearly], 1938, pp. 138–140.

<sup>45</sup> GStA PK Berlin, PMHG, 120 C XIII 5, Nr. 32, Bd. 2/3, no pag.: The German State Commissioner in Gdańsk to the German MFA, May 9, 1921; “Staatsanzeiger ...”, April 29, 1922, no. 18, pos. 424; B. Hajduk: *Gospodarka Gdańska ...* (The Gdańsk Economy ...), p. 203.

<sup>46</sup> “Rocznik Morski i Kolonialny” [The Sea and Colonial Yearly], 1938, p. 171.

<sup>47</sup> *Rynki zbytu 1929* [The Outlets of 1929], Warszawa 1930, pp. 1173–1174.

Table 2. Trade turnover between the Free City of Gdańsk and Great Britain in the years 1920–1939<sup>a</sup>

Year	Import		Export		Total	
	thousand tons	thousand guildens <sup>b</sup>	thousand tons	thousand guildens	thousand tons	thousand guildens
1920	81.93	.	40.42	.	-41.51	.
1921	444.13	.	144.33	.	-299.80	.
1922	82.66	.	90.41	.	-73.62	.
1923	147.29	56,204.93	475.10	99,094.09	327.81	42,889.16
1924	201.96	101,537.11	658.31	173,232.63	456.35	71,695.52
1925	116.25	85,723.98	624.71	102,337.83	508.45	16,613.85
1926	87.32	59,439.47	1,115.05	128,714.19	1,027.73	69,274.72
1927	225.20	88,007.24	1,222.05	127,411.39	996.85	39,404.15
1928	287.88	110,908.35	5,968.30	88,525.66	5,680.42	-22,382.68
1929	226.30	103,598.89	453.78	108,425.65	227.48	4,826.76
1930	103.12	69,053.55	574.13	85,429.27	471.00	16,375.72
1931	94.22	70,212.00	636.45	75,896.00	542.22	5,684.00
1932	141.30	52,198.64	366.87	41,004.00	225.57	-11,194.64
1933	131.37	42,796.92	498.15	40,177.88	366.78	-2,618.63
1934	139.08	43,495.77	774.70	55,899.77	635.62	12,404.00
1935	68.31	25,522.21	649.51	60,601.85	581.20	35,079.64
1936	55.27	23,059.73	913.58	85,562.38	858.31	62,502.66
1937	97.99	33,563.97	973.61	103,857.16	875.63	70,293.20
1938	42.81	19,310.55	608.54	64,647.62	565.73	45,337.06
1939 (Jan.–Aug.)	16.95	.	465.68	.	448.72	.

<sup>a</sup> Concerns import and export by sea and land.

<sup>b</sup> Gulden rate: 1923 – 1 gld = 1.25 pound; 1931 – 1 gld = 0.292,895 g precious metal; 1935 – 1 gld = 0.1,687,923 g precious metal.

<sup>c</sup> Data lacking.

Source: "Statistische Mitteilungen der Freien Stadt Danzig" (from 1925 "Danziger Statistische Mitteilungen"), Oct. 10, 1922, no. 8/9, p. 68, April 10 and 25, 1925, no. 7/8 and 9/10, pp. 38, 39, 50; March 31, 1926, no. 3, pp. 42–43; April 5, 1927, no. 3, pp. 40–41; July 10, 1928, no. 7/8, pp. 20–21; Aug. 1, 1929, no. 4/6, pp. 58–59; March 20, 1930, no. 2, pp. 22–23; March 22, 1933, no. 1, pp. 15, 17; March 31, 1934, no. 1, pp. 20, 21; July 15, 1936, no. 2: pp. 34, 58; "Danziger Statistisches Taschenbuch", 1933, p. 38; 1939, pp. 26–29, 34–37; *Bericht über die Lage ...* 1923, p. 46; 1930, p. 55; B. Hajduk: *Bankowość Gdańska ...* [The Gdańsk Banking ...], p. 150.

The numbers from the table suggest diversified amounts of English goods imported to the Free City. The biggest import took place in 1921, whereas the smallest – in 1938. We do not possess the data on the amount of goods imported in the years 1920–1922. On the other hand, the data from the years 1923–1939 suggest the biggest amount of import to fall for 1928, and the smallest – for 1938. When it comes to export, the largest amount of goods was exported to Great Britain in 1928 and with reference to their overall value – in 1932. One characteristic occurring practically throughout the entire researched period was the advantage of export over import. As a result, the total trade exchange was balanced mostly in plus and hence advantageous for the Free City. The balance in minus occurred in the years 1920–1922 and, with reference to its value – in 1928, 1932, and in 1933.

The assortment of goods imported from England was, to a large degree, an effect of both Polish import demands and demands of inhabitants and economy of the Free City. In the first researched period, that is, in the years 1920–1929, the comestibles such as wheat flour, salted herring, animal and vegetable fats and colonial goods (cocoa, coffee, tea) prevailed. The import of hard coal, including bunker coal was of significance for the inhabitants of this area in the years 1920–1925. Also, transport vehicles (passenger cars and trucks), machines, apparatuses, engines, tools, metal ores, steel and its products, iron scrap, and weaving cotton and woollen materials were imported in big amounts to satisfy the needs of the Free City and Polish market in general. The size and value of this import are presented in Table 3.

In the subsequent period, that is, the years 1930–1938 preferences regarding the import of English goods for the use of customers from the Free City and Poland changed. The import of flour nearly stopped and the import of salted herring and animal and vegetable fats diminished. The size of the import of the colonial goods such as coffee, cocoa and tea remained unchanged. On the other hand, more snuff, cigarettes, rubber products, and passenger cars and trucks were imported from England. The import of scrap, iron products, metal ores, machines, engines, tools, cotton and woollen yarn ran on the same, yet generally lower, level (see Table 4).

Table 3. Significant goods imported from England to the Free City of Gdańsk in the years 1923–1929

Goods	1923		1924		1925		1926		1927		1928		1929	
	thousand tons	thousand guildens	thousand tons	thousand guildens	thousand tons	thousand guildens	thousand tons	thousand guildens	thousand tons	thousand guildens	thousand tons	thousand guildens	thousand tons	thousand guildens
Wheat flour	0.5	162.00	1,502.00	22.0	22.00	10,938.9	–	–	0.50	220.2	–	–	–	–
Herring (inc. salted)	45.1	9,925.40	69.70	45,189.8	39.40	16,707.6	65.200	2,2274.00	79.10	26,072.1	74.80	24,019.4	97.90	2,9715.8
Animal fats	5.9	7,082.80	2.80	2,886.7	2.00	1,996.5	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Coal and coke	53.0	1,589.20	91.40	2,2945.0	27.60	739.4	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Oils (inc. vegetable)	0.2	211.02	0.02	11.2	0.02	7.6	–	–	0.10	54.8	2.70	2,049.9	1.70	1,235.1
Scrap	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	158.04	13,750.9	87.70	7,861.6
Ore and pyrites	–	–	–	–	–	–	0.001	13.01	–	–	–	–	–	–
Tin, copper, and zink	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	0.50	2,136.6	0.70	2,958.8	0.40	9,663.9
Iron and Steel	15.4	1,235.20	9.80	2,525.8	4.70	1,702.5	0.300	100.60	0.80	378.5	1.90	747.9	88.40	8,291.1
Tools, machines, engines	1.3	381.50	1.30	2,990.5	4.60	17,577.6	1.400	3,698.80	2.80	1,4045.8	7.70	27,675.7	4.60	21,614.3
Passenger cars and trucks	–	–	–	–	–	–	0.001	36.90	0.05	215.5	0.20	649.7	0.02	86.1
Cotton and cotton yarn	2.1	4,251.20	0.30	726.9	0.50	1,208.2	0.700	181.70	0.10	242.7	0.20	651.6	0.20	2,142.6
Wool and woolen yarn	1.6	6,395.20	1.50	7,243.9	0.50	3,413.2	0.800	3,059.50	0.30	1,733.5	0.50	3,442.2	0.30	1,682.4
Rubber and its products	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	0.80	2,737.7	0.50	1,629.5
Snuff, cigarettes, cigars	–	–	–	–	–	–	0.100	260.60	–	–	–	–	0.30	1,828.7
Cocoa	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	140.3
Coffee	–	–	–	–	–	–	0.200	435.30	0.10	212.2	0.08	191.4	0.05	133.5
Tea	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	0.70	3,621.7	0.80	3,688.9

Source: *Bericht über die Lage ...*, 1923, p. 56; 1924, p. 58; 1925, p. 80; 1926, p. 76; 1927, p. 83; 1928, p. 83; 1929, p. 91; 1930, p. 24; 1931, pp. 64–78; 1932, pp. 82–98; 1933, pp. 42–58; 1934, pp. 44–65; 1935, pp. 66–97; 1936, pp. 68–92; 1937, pp. 84–112; 1938, pp. 62–90; “Danziger Statistische Mitteilungen”, Oct. 10, 1922, no. 8/9, p. 68; May 25, 1927, no. 4/5, p. 60; July 10, 1928, no. 2/3, p. 22; Aug. 1, 1929, no. 4/6, p. 60; March 20, 1930, no. 2, p. 24.

Table 4. Import of more significant goods from England to the Free City of Gdańsk in the years 1931–1938<sup>a</sup>

Goods	1931		1932		1933		1934		1935		1936		1937		1938	
	thousand tons	thousand guildens	thousand tons	thousand guildens	thousand tons	thousand guildens	thousand tons	thousand guildens	thousand tons	thousand guildens	thousand tons	thousand guildens	thousand tons	thousand guildens	thousand tons	thousand guildens
Herring (inc. salted)	51.70	15.1	39.200	9,807.0	24.900	5,117.0	39.300	7,970.0	32.7	8903	35.10	10,525.0	33.2	9,805.0	31.100	9,233.0
Animal fats	1.40	734.0	21.200	852.0	0.600	189.0	0.400	121.0	0.2	83.0	0.20	125.0	0.4	245.0	0.600	361.2
Coal and coke	23.80	390.0	73.900	1,106.0	88.200	1,287.0	78.200	941.0	23.5	293.0	4.40	415.0	5.0	382.0	1.200	143.0
Oils (inc. vegetable)	1.40	734.0	–	–	0.400	203.0	0.200	99.0	0.1	53.0	0.10	62.0	0.6	70.0	0.020	17.0
Scrap	4.10	9292	1.500	55.0	0.300	12.0	0.400	18.0	–	–	6.80	475.0	10.2	1,139.0	–	–
Ore and pyrites	0.10	10.0	0.300	25.0	–	–	0.400	79.0	0.2	40.0	2.00	188.0	21.6	784.0	3.400	129.0
Tin, copper, and zink	1.00	1,253.0	0.300	184.0	0.200	338.0	0.100	158.0	0.5	355.0	0.30	365.2	0.3	763.0	1.300	197.2
Iron and steel	0.60	41.0	0.400	82.0	0.800	188.0	0.700	223.0	0.4	107.0	0.30	86.0	1.7	849.0	0.500	509.0
Tools, machines, engines	0.20	907.0	0.200	76.0	0.100	299.0	1.500	302.0	0.6	1396	0.40	1,434.0	0.4	2,602.0	0.200	1,098.0
Passenger cars and trucks	0.02	48.0	0.002	74.0	0.030	102.0	0.100	355.0	0.4	1288	0.20	1,029.0	0.3	1,365.0	0.300	679.0
Cotton and cotton yarn	0.40	750.0	6.100	2,0347	6.200	19,049.0	5.400	14,861.0	1.7	5359	0.70	2,256.0	0.9	3,088.0	0.200	458.0
Wool and woolen yarn	0.60	1079.0	1.700	3564	4.400	3,489.0	1.300	4,773.0	0.3	1134.2	0.20	748.0	0.1	718.0	0.030	571.0
Rubber and its products	1.30	5441.0	1.100	3536	1.200	2,744.0	0.800	2,390.0	0.6	2049.0	0.50	1,872.0	2.0	3,195.0	0.40	1,274.0
Snuff, cigarettes, cigars	0.30	667.0	0.005	4.0	0.001	6.0	0.002	8.0	0.003	46.0	0.02	9.0	0.001	5.0	0.001	6.0
Cocoa	0.06	60.0	0.0600	32.0	0.070	37.0	0.100	49.0	0.06	54.0	0.03	28.0	0.04	44.0	–	–
Coffee	0.10	176.0	0.080	131.0	0.040	44.0	0.005	44.0	0.03	25.0	0.02	31.0	0.04	65.0	0.040	49.0
Tea	0.70	2585.0	0.400	1074	0.200	42.4	0.100	269.0	0.1	256.0	0.06	169.0	0.1	363.0	0.100	343.0

<sup>a</sup> Data lacking for the year 1931.Source: *Bericht über die Lage ...* 1931, pp. 64–78; 1932, pp. 82–98; 1933, pp. 42–58; 1934, pp. 44–65; 1935, pp. 66–97; 1936, pp. 68–92; 1937, pp. 84–112; 1938, pp. 62–90.

Table 5: Export of more important goods from the Free City of Gdańsk to England in the Years 1923–1929

Goods	1923		1924		1925		1926		1927		1928		1929	
	thousand tons	thousand guildens	thousand tons	thousand guildens	thousand tons	thousand guildens	thousand tons	thousand guildens	thousand tons	thousand guildens	thousand tons	thousand guildens	thousand tons	thousand guildens
Barley	–	–	–	–	–	–	0.400	94.01	2.020	584.7	0.700	195.4	13.60	2,758.1
Oat	–	–	–	–	–	–	6.400	1,369.6	1.000	212.5	1.000	226.3	5.10	927.1
Wheat	–	–	–	–	–	–	20.003	6,061.5	0.006	14.0	–	–	–	–
Flour (different kinds)	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	0.002	1.0	–	–	–	–
Potato flour	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1.700	730.4	2.200	1,040.3	2.20	721.6
Sugar (also refined)	20.900	14,636.2	71.50	45,802.0	24.300	10,118.1	19.200	5,744.9	10.400	3,479.2	27.300	7,611.01	59.40	1,6845.1
Fodder	0.001	1.3	3.50	422.0	0.010	21.3	–	–	0.200	27.1	0.200	15.2	0.10	47.2
Paraffin	3.500	705.3	7.20	6,117.5	2.500	2,236.5	5.000	3,552.1	3.100	1,641.5	7.500	3,343.9	4.60	2,353.6
Animal skins	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	0.002	73.4	0.001	40.1	0.10	235.4
Timber	329.010	58,814.9	490.40	57,653.2	503.10	52,258.3	827.000	68,139.0	1,091.060	9,1837.3	472.900	41,796.2	293.50	27,463.9
Wooden products	8.400	3,799.7	11.40	17,029.7	14.5000	9,053.6	–	–	–	–	–	–	17.01	7,227.5
Coal (also bunker coal)	5.400	217.1	8.70	344.5	14.800	393.1	153.3000	3,896.2	73.200	1,639.6	38.500	769.5	17.10	345.7
Grease oils(crude oil)	11.006	14,379.7	7.40	2,233.7	5.002	883.1	42.900	5,927.3	1.000	184.9	1.900	371.1	1.60	216.6
Tar	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1.040	226.4	1.01	222.8
Potassium salt	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	7.200	232.7	–	–
Wool	0,060	247.6	0.08	506.2	0.003	133.9	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Cotton cloth	0,100	534.0	0.07	966.2	0.002	227.4	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Legumes	–	–	–	–	–	–	2.007	560.9	0.300	128.2	1.200	468.0	4.60	1,465.3
Bacon	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	14.80	22,893.6

Source: *Bericht über die Lage ... 1923*, p. 56; 1924, pp. 58; 1925, p. 80; 1926, p. 76; 1927, p. 83; 1928, p. 105; 1929, p. 107; "Danziger Statistische Mitteilungen", June 25, 1925, no. 13/14, p. 74; May 25, 1927, no. 4/5, p. 60; July 10, 1928, no. 2/3, pp. 22–23; Aug. 1, 1928, no. 4/6, p. 62; March 20, 1930, no. 2, p. 24.

Table 6. More important goods exported from the Free City of Gdańsk to Great Britain in the years 1931–1938

Goods	1931		1932		1933		1934		1935		1936		1937		1938	
	thousand tons	thousand guildens	thousand tons	thousand guildens	thousand tons	thousand guildens	thousand tons	thousand guildens	thousand tons	thousand guildens	thousand tons	thousand guildens	thousand tons	thousand guildens	thousand tons	thousand guildens
Barley	0.900	123	0.5	53	4.9	429	45.20	3,041	30.300	2,513	46.900	1,874	9.20	1,489	9.300	1,381
Oat	0.900	123	0.5	53	1.2	92	0.06	5	0.600	55	—	—	—	—	—	—
Wheat	2.700	376	0.5	68	3.0	61	13.40	907	45.800	4,960	47.300	6,190	4.20	878	—	—
Legumes	1.000	177	1.8	365	2.4	397	1.10	181	1.600	374	3.400	864	3.60	915	0.900	310
Corn flour	5.000	843	1.6	213	0.8	85	38.90	3,648	45.900	6,128	86.400	12,754	13.50	2,217	11.500	1,858
Potato flour	1.030	146	0.6	9	3.4	516	2.70	382	1.300	180	0.001	2	2.40	560	3.000	772
Grease oils	1.400	205	4.4	382	4.2	282	7.70	452	4.600	408	4.700	485	7.40	795	0.100	7
Sugar	97.800	13,214	46.5	5,413	1.6	178	0.05	14	0.001	1.3	—	—	—	—	—	—
Bacon	3.00	4,219	2.2	2,395	1.7	1,626	1.30	1,297	1.200	1,184	1.100	1,117	1.50	1,502	1.600	1,645
Paraffin	7.800	3,185	9.4	3,299	9.6	2,918	0.01	23	10.700	3,360	4.900	1,701	3.30	1,295	0.900	288
Animal skins	0.400	51	0.2	296	0.02	19	—	—	0.010	92	0.040	83	0.04	123	0.080	76
Timber and wooden products	462.500	42,233	266	23,138	432.7	28,141	616.90	39,508	455.600	33,508	666.200	47,827	854.10	81,083	193.800	50,252
Coal and coke	29.500	582	20.7	100	20.7	388	25.70	409	24.200	449	23.600	478	49.90	972	67.900	1,357
Tar	0.700	125	0.7	88	1.1	125	1.20	145	2.900	456	2.800	465	3.50	638	2.400	461
Chemical materials	9.900	902	0.2	17	0.2	43	5.40	414	9.900	959	8.900	1,319	8.70	1,836	6.800	1,546
Metal products	1.900	1,282	0.1	142	0.3	183	0.30	154	0.600	238	0.300	203	0.20	234	0.080	104
Cotton and yarn	0.300	1,104	0.1	337	0.04	118.4	—	—	0.002	45	—	—	0.70	2,883	0.002	8
Wool and yarn	0.004	737	0.2	49	0.03	60	0.03	25	0.001	37	0.200	245	0.20	272	—	—
Fodder	1.200	115	1.2	115	1.7	106	0.60	36	0.600	44	0.600	60	0.07	9	2.100	15,012
Eggs	—	—	0.5	353	0.6	253	0.20	83	0.002	25	0.200	185	0.03	22	0.080	77

Source: *Bericht über die Lage ...*, 1931, pp. 64–79; 1932, pp. 82–99; 1933, pp. 42–59; 1934, pp. 44–65; 1935, pp. 62–97; 1936, pp. 65–93; 1937, pp. 83–113; 1938, pp. 62–91.

The structure of export from the Free City to Great Britain ran differently. When it comes to comestibles, beginning with 1926, corn, also of Polish origin, in particular oat and barley became regular Gdańsk exports. Potatoes were, too, exported and in 1927 a purchase began on the British market of potato flour and fruit of legumes. The export of bigger amounts of fodder and sugar from Gdańsk and Polish sugar factories centralized in the Poznań Bank of Sugar Industry must also be noted. The export of Polish timber made in timber mills of the Free City of Gdańsk dominated in the Gdańsk export to England. The export of timber was on a rising trend until 1927 after which date it decreased. The export of coal, in particular bunker coal which was on the increase up till 1926 only to subside in the years to follow demonstrated as a similar value. Among other goods of importance seemed to be the export of paraffin, grease oils and crude oil as well as of wool and cotton cloth (Table 5).

In the Great Depression period and soon after the crisis ended, that is, in the 1930s, the structure of Gdańsk export to Great Britain was transformed only to a small degree. In the group of exported comestibles barley, wheat and ground products (flour) still constituted the basic goods. Also, the export of eggs, bacon, fodder, potato flour and legumes was developed. Yet, the decrease in the export of sugar appeared to be eventually terminated in 1936. With regard to the weight and value of the raw material and industrial article export, the dominating goods were timber and coal. Furthermore, Gdańsk merchants sold in England grease oils, metal products, chemical materials and paraffin as well as cotton and woolen products. The structure and size and value of the goods exported in the years 1931–1938 are presented in Table 6.

All in all, we can say that both the degree and scope of the involvement of the English and English capitals and companies in the life of the Free City of Gdańsk were differentiated. Beginning with the Middle Ages, bilateral trade, navigation and financial relations were developing between these two parties. After Gdańsk had been seized and incorporated, first into Prussia and then the German Empire, trade contacts with England became limited only to be entirely terminated during World War I. The new legal-political situation which cropped up after the end of this war and whose manifestations were the establishment of the Free City and the growth of the interest of the British in the domination in the Baltic Sea zone created new conditions for the development of bilateral economic relations between Gdańsk and Great Britain. Earlier, that is, before the establishment of the Free City, the activity of the British was channelled into the Gdańsk



banking as in November 1919 the British Trade Corporation Ltd. was established. English financial groups also participated in the institution of the new currency, the Gdańsk gulden and in the foundation of the Bank of Gdańsk S.A., the first bank of issue of the Free City of Gdańsk. The mentioned English bank was a cooriginator and main shareholder of the Polish-British Trade Bank S.A. established in Gdańsk in 1926. Furthermore, the British capital made itself visible in the field of insurances: transport, fire, sea, pertaining to natural element, accident, and life. The English capitals in question were directly engaged in the Gdańsk shipbuilding industry, too, in particular, in the International Ship- and Machine-building Association S.A. The British were present in the fat and oil branch as well as in the fruit and vegetable and sugar-chocolate processing industry.

The activity of the English and their companies was the greatest in trade, shipping and navigation. Their functioning embraced both servicing timber export and the import of herring from fishing ground near Great Britain and wholesale trade in cars. When it comes to navigation, the English entrepreneurial skills became visible in the fact of the registration in the Free City of the branches of such shipping societies as the United Baltic Corporation Ltd. (the Gdańsk branch), White Star Line Ltd., and the Polish-British Shipping Society *Polbryt* S.A. The ship which flew English colours serviced the Gdańsk port with regard to good and people transport even though their participation in the overall ship traffic amounted to 4,89% (9,69% of tonnage) in the best for them period (i.e. one in which the biggest number of calls was noted).

The total trade balance between Great Britain and the Free City turned out advantageous for Gdańsk. The balance in minus occurred, with regard to weight, in the years 1920–1922, whereas with regard to value – in 1928, 1932, and in 1933.

*Translated by Beata Zawadka*

## WIELKA BRYTANIA W ŻYCIU GOSPODARCZYM WOLNEGO MIASTA GDAŃSKA W LATACH 1920–1939

### Streszczenie

Wytworzona po zakończeniu pierwszej wojny światowej nowa sytuacja prawno-polityczna, której przejawami były utworzenie Wolnego Miasta oraz wzrost zainteresowania Brytyjczyków dominacją w strefie Morza Bałtyckiego, stworzyła nowe warunki do rozwoju dwustronnych relacji w sferze gospodarczej. Wcześniej, jeszcze przed utworzeniem Wolnego Miasta, aktywność Brytyjczyków ujawniła się w bankowości gdańskiej wraz z rozpoczęciem w listopadzie 1919 roku działalności The British Trade Corporation Ltd. Angielskie grupy finansowe uczestniczyły także w ustanowieniu nowego pieniądza, guldena gdańskiego, oraz w powołaniu Banku Gdańskiego S.A., pierwszego i podstawowego banku emisyjnego Wolnego Miasta Gdańska. Wymieniony bank angielski był również współzałożycielem i głównym udziałowcem Polsko-Brytyjskiego Banku Handlowego S.A., utworzonego w Gdańsku w 1926 roku. Ponadto kapitał brytyjski zaznaczył swoją obecność w dziedzinie ubezpieczeń: transportowych, pożarowych, morskich, dotyczących zdarzeń spowodowanych żywiołami, wypadkowych i na życie. Poza tym angielskie pieniądze bezpośrednio zaangażowane były w gdańskim przemyśle stoczniowym, mianowicie w powołanym z ich udziałem Międzynarodowym Towarzystwie Budowy Statków i Maszyn S.A. Z udziałem Brytyjczyków funkcjonowały zakłady w branży tłuszczowej i olejów jadalnych oraz w przemyśle przetwórstwa owocowo-warzywnego i cukierniczko-czekoladowym.

Stosunkowo dużą aktywność osób oraz spółek angielskich odnotować można w handlu, spedycji i żegludze. Ich działalność widoczna była szczególnie w obsłudze eksportu drewna i importu śledzi z łowisk wokół Wielkiej Brytanii oraz w handlu hurtowym pojazdami samochodowymi. W żegludze przedsiębiorczość angielska ujawniła się przez rejestrację w Wolnym Mieście oddziałów takich towarzystw okrętowych, jak Zjednoczona Korporacja Bałtycka Ltd. (Filia Gdańska), White Star Line Ltd. oraz Polsko-Brytyjskie Towarzystwo Okrętowe „Polbryt” S.A. Statki pod banderą angielską obsługiwały port gdański w zakresie przewozów towarów i osób, choć ich udział w odniesieniu do ogólnego ruchu statków w najlepszym dla niej pod względem liczby zawinięć 1927 roku wynosił 4,89%, pod względem tonażu 9,69%.

Ogólny bilans handlu pomiędzy Wielką Brytanią a Wolnym Miastem był dla Gdańska generalnie korzystny. Ujemne saldo w zakresie wagowym wystąpiło w latach 1920–1922, a pod względem wartości – w latach 1928, 1932 i 1933.