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From the studies on the suicides of Polish seafarers**Keywords:** suicide, seafarer, ship, sea

*In Memory of Professor Jerzy Olszewski, PhD, Eng.,
Minister of Foreign Trade and Maritime Economy (1974–1980)*

Among the conditioning factors of suicidal thoughts and tendencies, apart from endogenous premises¹, the element of interpersonal and social reactions² is essential. Seafarers on ships at sea “form an occupational group that is considered to be a complicated and difficult object of research”³, at the same time, it is a group characterised as one of those which are most at risk of suicide⁴. The most evident causes which have a negative effect on the mental health of seafarers, such as the risk of attempting or committing suicide, include long periods of staying away from the family and friends, fatigue and exhaustion, as well as job security and working conditions⁵. Although Eligiusz Józef Sitek does not refer to the etiology of suicides in the cited work, he gives a more comprehensive list of “specific components of the seafaring profession [that affect] the conditions of life at sea”, dividing them into physical factors (e.g. microclimate in engine rooms, vibration, noise, specific conditions of alimentation), natural

1 More in: Adam Świeżyński, “«Śmierć z wyboru» – filozoficzny aspekt samobójstwa”, *Studia Philosophiae Christianae* 1 (2002): 82–98.

2 Cf. Marek Jarema, “Czy można ocenić ryzyko samobójstwa?”, *Psychiatria Polska* 1 (2018): 10.

3 Eligiusz Józef Sitek, “Problemy pracy i życia marynarzy na statkach transportowych”, *Nautologia* 4 (1980): 25.

4 See: Adam Mazurkiewicz, “Z działalności ITF – Międzynarodowej Federacji Transportowców”, *Biuletyn Morski* 3 (2017): 7.

5 See: *ibidem*, 8.

factors (e.g. rapid changes of climate, hydrometeorological conditions), and sociological and psychological factors (associated with “the inability to meet many needs of people on the ship, which in consequence (...) causes various types of psychological tensions”⁶). The quoted author aptly describes the ship as a “separate social ‘microcosm’”⁷, and its crew as a randomly integrated group, internally coherent or antagonistic, with defined interactions as well as a formal and informal structure⁸. Even if this group is composed of people who are close to each other, “a sailor must be self-sufficient and self-reliant”⁹. Bogdan Jaremin confirms that the ship is an artificial ecosystem, and a member of its crew is simultaneously affected by external factors (including water, air, but also the environment of ports), internal factors (biotic and abiotic, including physical, chemical and structural-operational factors), and finally anthropocentric factors (written and unwritten rules of life on the ship)¹⁰. The index of unfavourable factors by Roman Dolmierski and Jerzy Nitka is also significant, as they distinguish psychological factors (feeling of isolation from the home country and loved ones; isolation within a randomly selected group whose composition does not change, in a relatively small space; increasingly shorter stops of ships in ports and longer at roadsteads; single-sex isolation; monotony; problems with customs and foreign exchange; and finally, the fact that seafarers associate work on a ship with a threat to health and life, which results in a lasting feeling of mental tension), and physico-chemical factors (dynamic changes of climate, electromagnetic phenomena; neurosis-inducing disturbances of daily and longer-term circadian rhythms caused when rapidly crossing time zones; noise and vibrations – from infra- to ultra-acoustic – emitted by engines of increasingly higher power; the toxic effect on the central nervous system of exhaust gases, cargo or plastics used to make floor coverings and ceilings in crew compartments, the effect of electromagnetic radiation dependent on the operation of radar and ship radio, and of other devices emitting microwaves)¹¹. The author of an in-depth study of individual

6 Sitek, “Problemy”, 25.

7 Ibidem, 30.

8 Cf. ibidem, 28.

9 Ibidem, 30.

10 Cf. Bogdan Jaremin, *Zgony polskich marynarzy i rybaków podczas pracy na morzu w latach 1960–1999 – analiza zjawiska i wpływu środowiska pracy ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem orzecznictwa lekarskiego i możliwości prewencji* (Gdańsk: Akademia Medyczna w Gdańsku [Medical University of Gdańsk], Międzywydziałowy Instytut Medycyny Morskiej i Tropikalnej [the Interdepartmental Institute of Maritime and Tropical Medicine], Klinika Chorób Zawodowych i Wewnętrznych [the Clinic of Occupational and Internal Diseases], 2005), 15–16; see also: Józef Stankiewicz, “Choroby centralnego układu nerwowego. Choroby umysłowe. Alkoholizm nałogowy. Epilepsja. Psychonerwica. Histeria”, in: *Poradnik medyczny kapitana statku*, ed. Zdzisław Teisseyre (Warsaw: Państwowy Zakład Wydawnictw Lekarskich, 1962), 377–378.

11 See: Roman Dolmierski, Jerzy Nitka, “Ocena stanu psychofizycznego marynarzy zatrudnionych w dziale pokładowym i maszynowym”, *Technika i Gospodarka Morska* 7 (1989): 34; Władysław Ejsmont, “Problemy medyczne w aspekcie nowoczesnych statków”, *Biblioteka Nawigatora* 3 (1972): 86;

and group deviant behaviour on a seagoing ship is Robert Woźniak¹². In the context of the observations of Narcyz Klatka, we can also add to the factors indicated by the above-mentioned authors – although with certain reservations – spherical lightnings and infrasonic waves (with a frequency of 1–10 Hz) which are spread out over the sea surface¹³. However, I am more convinced by Mieczysław Plopa's indication of “additional limitations of the nature of sensory deprivation”, by which he means the narrowing of the seafarer's perceptive field to the water and the ship's area¹⁴, but also the combination of excessive formalisation of interpersonal relations on the ship with an increased susceptibility to stress during a certain phase of the voyage, which is the cause of suicide attempts¹⁵. In the course of research conducted directly on ships, Ludwik Janiszewski also noticed the symptom of *long eye*, “characterised by noticeable changes in the colour and functioning of the eye”, caused by a high and extreme degree of deprivation of needs, especially sexual and emotional needs, caused by separation¹⁶. In his earlier research into the environment of deep-sea fishermen, the same author noticed their almost pathological suspicion towards their partners on land, which can even include spying on them (and this is a service fishermen provide to one another), as well as a topic that pervades ship conversations, anecdotes and jokes – the not at all humorous so-called Dyzio's (or day man's) syndrome, named after the alleged seducer and lover of the fishermen's wives who was on the prowl on land¹⁷. Janiszewski pointed out that the stereotype of the alleged inclination of seafarers' wives towards infidelity is a myth, but he admitted *expressis verbis* that the actually committed infidelities lead seafarers to suicidal thoughts or acts¹⁸. An example of a potential suicide affected by the day man's syndrome will be discussed below.

In 1981, a very interesting study was conducted among the seafarers working in the Polish Ocean Lines, concerning their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with work at sea.

Lech Milian, *Zawód marynarza floty transportowej: studium monograficzne* (Gdynia: Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Morskiej w Gdyni, 1974), 145–154; see also: Andrzej Ropelewski, *Ludzie „Dalmoru”* (Gdańsk: Marpress, 1998), 128–129, which recalls the suggestions of sociologists and psychologists as well as ship's doctors, put forward since the late 1960s and inspired by these and similar phenomena, that trawler trips should be shortened to about 90 days or that their crews should be replaced after that time.

- 12 Cf. Robert Woźniak, *Problemy socjologii wychowania morskiego (Socjologiczne studium wychowania na statku morskim)* (Szczecin: Szczecińskie Towarzystwo Naukowe, 1987), 150–182.
- 13 See: Narcyz Klatka, “Okrepty widma – tajemnica nie wyjaśniona”, *Przegląd Morski* 1 (1975): 51–56.
- 14 Cf. Mieczysław Plopa, *Stres w izolacji morskiej. Psychospołeczne uwarunkowania* (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, 1996), 76.
- 15 Cf. *ibidem*, 77.
- 16 Cf. Ludwik Janiszewski, *Rodzina marynarzy i rybaków morskich. Studium socjologiczne* (Warsaw–Poznań: PWN, 1976), 86.
- 17 Cf. *ibidem*, 214–216; Ludwik Janiszewski, *Rybaczy dalekomorscy. Studium socjologiczne* (Poznań: Instytut Zachodni, 1967), 429.
- 18 Cf. Janiszewski, *Rodzina*, 216, 255.

My attention was primarily drawn to the stressors indicated by 88 seafarers: the absence of the family (57 people), the absence of the sexual partner (48), interpersonal relations (32), the length of the voyage (30), lack of home food (19), lack of entertainment (16), working conditions (14), limited space (14), constant company of the same people (10), bad work organisation (6), disturbances in the circadian rhythm of the body (4)¹⁹. Following this, Stanisław Kozak collected the suggestions made by the respondents, and among these particularly noteworthy are, *inter alia*, extending “the possibility of taking family members to sea, which would strengthen emotional ties among seafarers’ families”, or – very current at that time – a reduction of fees “for radiotelephone calls to the home country”²⁰. According to Sitek, calling people on land “reduces the mental tension [of a seafarer – author’s note], but at the same time it allows for a momentary detachment from the environment”²¹, and Janiszewski adds that it creates “an illusory impression of direct communication”²². Kozak²³ wrote about lightening the often heavy atmosphere on the ship – this time basing on the surveys conducted among shipmasters. A sense of humour plays an important role in settling and preventing conflicts also in other closed communities, e.g. in the Armed Forces²⁴; it is not a sufficient antidote, however, in a situation when the suicides of seafarers are largely caused by separation from their relatives²⁵.

Adam Mazurkiewicz gives and interprets the results of fascinating research conducted by Stephen Roberts (Swansea University), who was interested in the deaths of seafarers on ships flying the British flag in the years 1979–1980, 1982–1983 and 2001–2005. In all these periods taken together, seafarers ranked second among the occupational groups with highest suicide rates (76 per 100,000 in the first two periods taken together, 68 per 100,000 in the third period). Independently of this, in the years 1959–2009 research was conducted in Poland, Hong Kong, Sweden, Denmark, on the Isle of Man, in Great Britain and Singapore. The results are electrifying, as it was calculated that out of 17,000 deaths as many as 1,000 were caused by suicide; in other words, as many as 6% of deaths, and since 1997 as many as 6.5% of deaths were suicidal. It can be said with full responsibility that even such intimidating results are understated,

19 See: Stanisław Kozak, “Niektóre czynniki wpływające na zadowolenie i niezadowolenie z pracy marynarzy PLO”, *Technika i Gospodarka Morska* 6 (1982): 299–300.

20 Ibidem, 300.

21 Sitek, “Problemy”, 30.

22 Janiszewski, *Rodzina*, 94.

23 Stanisław Kozak, “Problemy kierowania załogą statku”, *Technika i Gospodarka Morska* 6 (1983): 311.

24 Cf. Józef Baryła, “Kształtowanie stosunków międzyludzkich w Siłach Zbrojnych PRL”, in: *Kształtowanie stosunków międzyludzkich w pracy ZSMP w wojsku. Materiały z posiedzenia Rady Młodzieżowej WP w dn. 28.04.1977 r.* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo MON, 1977), 71–72.

25 See: Zenon Borucki, *Osobowość a przystosowanie zawodowe marynarza* (Wrocław–Warsaw–Cracow–Gdańsk–Łódź: Ossolineum, 1986), 43.

since in 2005, out of 835 deaths at sea, over 20% were the result of suicides²⁶. Another reason for lowering the statistics is the aversion to showing the relationship between disappearances of seafarers and their suicidal aetiology, while as much as 50% of disappearances of seafarers are most likely the result of suicides²⁷. Even more important are the results of Jaremin's research on the causes of 668 deaths (including disappearances at sea) on Polish seagoing ships in the years 1960–1999; this researcher included suicides and disappearances at sea as deaths due to external causes, indicating that the 121 so-called other accidents (including suicides) accounted for 22.61% of deaths in this category, with 114 disappearances at sea accounting for 20.56% of deaths (including 35 disappearances which did not involve a ship disaster, among them those caused by depression with subsequent suicidal decisions)²⁸. Out of 151 “other accidents”, as many as 51 are obvious suicides, including – according to Jaremin, Kinga Szymańska and Elżbieta Rosik – 33 on merchant ships, 17 on deep-sea fishing vessels, 1 in cutter and boat fishing, which accounts for 33.8% of deaths in this category and 7.6% of all deaths on board ships²⁹ – more than in the years 1957–1965, when it was 5.5%³⁰. This is most likely an underestimated statistic³¹ – although it was even more underestimated by Ryszard Leszczyński, who calculated that in the years 1945–2003 only 14 undisputed suicides were committed in Polish sea fishing³² – consisting of suicides committed by men, most often between the ages of 30 and 50, most often by hanging and strangling, only in the second place by throwing themselves into the water, which is puzzling, as bringing the body to asphyxia (anoxemia) by drowning is, *sit venia verbo*, easier and more effective than hanging; followed by poisoning with drugs or other chemicals; and in one case – by the use of a firearm³³. This 7.6%, although “more modest” compared to the 13.3% of fatal accidents among seafarers recorded in 1945–1954 in Sweden³⁴, is actually a very large number, considering, for example, that in 2008 in Poland suicides accounted for “only” 1.3% of all deaths³⁵. If in the decades 1960–1969, 1970–1979, 1980–1989 and 1990–1999 suicides accounted for as many as 9.4%, 6.6%, 7.9% and 8%,

26 See: Mazurkiewicz, “Z działalności”, 7.

27 See: *ibidem*.

28 See: Jaremin, *Zgony*, 85–89.

29 See: *ibidem*, 90, 122; Szymańska, Jaremin, Rosik, “Suicides”, 37.

30 See: Roman Dolmierski, Krystyna Jolanta de Walden, “Ocena kliniczna przyczyn samobójstw u marynarzy”, *Psychiatria Polska* 3 (1972): 256.

31 Cf. Jaremin, *Zgony*, 91; Szymańska, Jaremin, Rosik, “Suicides”, 38.

32 See: Ryszard Leszczyński, *Tragedie rybackiego morza*, vol. 2 (Gdańsk: Fundacja Promocji Przemysłu Okrętowego i Gospodarki Morskiej, 2005), 417–418.

33 See: Jaremin, *Zgony*, 92.

34 See: Dolmierski, de Walden, “Ocena”, 256.

35 See: Krzysztof Rosa, “(Nie)wiarygodność danych statystycznych dotyczących zachowań samobójczych. Perspektywa teoretyczna i praktyka społeczna”, *Przegląd Socjologiczny* 2 (2012): 286.

respectively, of the deaths of Polish seafarers and fishermen at sea, then in relation to the male population of Poles aged 20 and over, they amounted approximately to only 1.3%, 2.2%, 0.2% and 1.2% of deaths³⁶. Such a significant disproportion is not unrelated to the perception of a seagoing ship as a closed institution according to Erving Goffman's concept – I do not agree with it *in toto*, but I believe that its criticism by Janiszewski³⁷, or the modification of the concept of the ship by Żaneta Stasieniuk³⁸ to the level of partially closed institutions are not justified if they refer to the 1970s or 1980s (presently, shorter voyages and more frequent contact with relatives actually make the ship an institution that is closed only to a certain extent, *ad certum gradum*). If ships had not been fully or almost completely closed institutions 40–50 years ago, the number of suicides on board would not have exceeded the statistic of deaths on land by so much. As the figures for suicides on land³⁹ are unreliable, their numbers at sea will be all the more hidden. And it will get worse because the State Marine Accident Investigation Commission does not keep statistics of victims of maritime accidents and suicides at sea⁴⁰. Therefore, attention should be paid to the urgent need to undertake in-depth interdisciplinary research on the suicides of seafarers across modern Poland (especially since the vast majority of them work on ships flying foreign flags) and on a global scale, in particular in terms of the number of these acts (measured in absolute numbers and the percentage of all causes of seafarers' deaths) and their premises, which may differ from those recorded in previous decades.

I could not fail to refer to one more statistic, the more so as – based on clinical material and files produced by maritime chambers – it constitutes the basis for one of the probably only two studies devoted entirely to the suicides of seafarers that exist so far in Polish literature⁴¹. In the period between January 1958 and September 1969, 123 cases of fatal accidents and disappearances at sea were recorded on Polish seagoing ships, of which 45 cases (36.5%) were of interest to Dolmierski and de Walden, who divided them into 3 groups: proven (evident) suicides – 13, disappearance in the state of a mental disorder (a probable suicide) – 13 (in total 21.1% of fatal accidents), disappearance for unknown reasons – 19. As for the 13 proven suicides, first of all, it is necessary to indicate their methods: jumping overboard – 5, hanging – 4, poisoning – 3,

36 See: Szymańska, Jaremin, Rosik, "Suicides", 38. On the quantitative disproportion between the suicides of seafarers and the male population employed on land, see also Jaremin, *Zgony*, 122–123.

37 Cf. Ludwik Janiszewski, "Krytyka Goffmanowskiej koncepcji statku morskiego jako instytucji zamkniętej", *Ruch Prawniczy, Ekonomiczny i Socjologiczny* 1 (1987): 153–162.

38 Cf. Żaneta Stasieniuk, *Zbiorowość marynarzy w procesie zmian społecznych* (Szczecin: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego, 2009), 24–26.

39 More in: Rosa, "(Nie)wiarygodność", 265–290.

40 See: Aleksandra Pikała, "Ostatni rejs taty", *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 15.04.2019, supplement *Duży Format*, 17.

41 Dolmierski, de Walden, "Ocena". I refer to the other article in footnote 13.

gunshot – 1 case, and secondly, the psychiatric diagnosis of individual suicides: paranoid syndrome based on chronic schizophrenia – 4, mental disorders related to alcohol abuse – 3, endogenous depressive syndrome – 2, delirium and obtundation – 1, reactive depressive syndrome – 1, and finally 2 cases of undetermined mental disorders⁴². Of the 13 apparent suicides, 4 were committed under the influence of alcohol, while 6 victims had frequently abused alcohol; suicides were most common in summer (in most cases between 7 and 8 pm) and least common in spring. If suicides and disappearances are considered together, it should be noted that as many as 33 cases concerned the age group 20–40 years, 30 of whom were people with primary education; most of them (27 people) were married⁴³.

For the effective ordering of the conceptual apparatus used in relation to the discussed issue, one should undoubtedly refer to the phenomenon known as *calenture* (*paraphyrosyne calentura* from Latin *caleo*, *calere*), although it is both useful and risky, as there is no *opinio communis doctorum* to confirm its existence, and this term does not appear in psychiatric literature later than in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. *Calenture*, mentioned as a possible cause of suicides and disappearances at sea, is described as “a seafarer’s irresistible urge to throw himself overboard”, apparently manifesting itself “after a voyage of at least one week without contact with land”⁴⁴. The occurrence of this syndrome is favoured by the (not necessarily cumulative) presence of such conditions as cloudless skies, calm tropical days and the lack of other ships on the horizon, most often when a physically tired sailor is on board alone and leaning over the bulwark, and the deck is in motion⁴⁵. *Calenture* does not occur at night⁴⁶, so suicides committed at that time have other sources. On the basis of my knowledge, I only mention this term in passing, because I cannot confirm the existence of *calenture*, although I am not able to deny it unequivocally⁴⁷, also because this concept has recently been recalled – it is another question whether rightly so – as a synonym for heat stress⁴⁸. Without a shadow of a doubt, however, I can confirm the

42 See: Dolmierski, de Walden, “Ocena”, 256.

43 See: *ibidem*, 257.

44 Mazurkiewicz, “Z działalności”, 7; Alastair Donald Macleod, “Calenture – missing at sea?”, *Psychology and Psychotherapy: Theory, Research and Practice* 4 (1983): 347–350; cf. also Jaremin, *Zgony*, 26, who considers the occurrence of *calenture* possible only “after a long stay on a crowded ship”.

45 See: Mazurkiewicz, “Z działalności”, 7.

46 See: *ibidem*.

47 In statements given to the author on 28 June 2018 and on 17 September 2018, the specialist psychiatrist Łukasz Filipowski, MD, and a seafarer with many years of professional experience quoted many times in the present article, chief engineer Ryszard Leszczyński, PhD denied the existence of *calenture*, considering it, independently of each other, as non-existent.

48 Cf. Kathelyne E. Glisson, *The Ability of the U.S. Army Heat Strain Decision Aid (HSDA) to Predict a Limiting Heat Stress Exposure* ([Tampa]: University of South Florida Scholar Commons, 2017), 1.

existence of a fear that is characteristic of deep-sea mariners, with specific dynamics⁴⁹ and also suicidal consequences.

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It happens that officers of Polish seagoing ships die by suicide for reasons that are completely professional and at the same time related to their ambitions, for example Master Mariner Paweł Krupa⁵⁰, who on 30 November 2006, while commanding M/S Nordborg, committed suicide in an American port after hitting the quay with the stem during entry manoeuvres⁵¹. The suicide committed on 4 September 1978 by a processing technology fisherman on M/T Kalmar, Bernard Orliński⁵², by strangling and inflicting 7 stab wounds in the chest and abdominal cavity, was found to be the consequence of morbid ambitions and jealousy after his son-in-law, who was the member of the same crew, was promoted to an able fisherman⁵³. However, the reasons for many obvious suicides could not be determined – among them, the death of the captain of M/T Wierzyca, Master Mariner Włodzimierz Paszkiewicz on 25 July 1960⁵⁴; of Wiesław Gołaszeński, an able fisherman on R/V Doktor Lubecki on 20 April 1986⁵⁵; also the death of Stanisław Bohdanowicz, an engine trainee on M/T Wkra, who jumped overboard and drowned on 1 March 1971⁵⁶; the death of the ship's doctor Janusz Penderecki on 1 November 1982 on M/T Aries⁵⁷; of a junior processing technology fisherman Sławomir Januszyk on 9 September 1990 on M/T Amarel⁵⁸; or the third officer Vitaly Yegorchev

49 More in: Plopa, *Stres*, 100–123; idem, “Lęk u marynarzy dalekomorskich: dynamika, modyfikatory”, in: *Lęk. Różnorodność przeżywania*, ed. Waldemar Tłokiński (Warsaw: Arx Regia, Ośrodek Wydawniczy Zamku Królewskiego w Warszawie [the Publishing Centre of the Royal Castle in Warsaw], 1993), 131–140.

50 The personal data of the victim of a suicide are as detailed as it was provided in the source used in a given case. This also applies to names of ships and ports.

51 See: Ryszard Leszczyński, *Ginące frachtowce*, vol. 4, *Polacy pod obcymi banderami* (Gdańsk: Fundacja Promocji Przemysłu Okrętowego i Gospodarki Morskiej, 2014), 231.

52 See: Ryszard Leszczyński, *Tragedie rybackiego morza*, vol. 3 (Gdańsk: Fundacja Promocji Przemysłu Okrętowego i Gospodarki Morskiej, 2006), 305; Wiesław Błady, *Polska flota rybacka w latach 1921–2001. Kalendarium tragicznych zdarzeń na statkach rybackich w latach 1945–2000* (Gdynia: Morski Instytut Rybacki, 2002), 271.

53 See: Bogdan Czubasiewicz, *Przerwany rejs w Talcahuano* (Szczecin: KAW, 1987), 66–67.

54 See: Ropelewski, *Ludzie*, 171 (which gives the wrong name of the trawler: the Wieżyca); also: Leszczyński, *Tragedie*, vol. 3, 100, 602. Błady gives the date 20 July 1961, *Polska*, 245.

55 See: Błady, *Polska*, 282.

56 See: ibidem, 261; Leszczyński, *Tragedie*, vol. 3, 241.

57 See: Ropelewski, *Ludzie*, 172; Leszczyński, *Tragedie*, vol. 3, 340, 603; the letter of chief engineer R. Leszczyński, PhD to the author of 15 July 2020.

58 See: Błady, *Polska*, 286; Leszczyński, *Tragedie*, vol. 3, 394.

on 2 October 2003 on M/T Langusta⁵⁹. Suicide notes are uncommon, such as the one by the fisherman Franciszek Nowicki, addressed to his wife (he wrote that he was not a spy, he loved his homeland, but the crew had driven him up the wall), written just before his disappearance (most likely jumping into the sea) from S/T Kwisa on 23 January 1962⁶⁰. However, the reasons for the suicide of the sailor who jumped overboard from M/S Nowowiejski on 19 May 1975 were never explained. One of the first persons outside the crew to learn about the event was the captain of ST/S Dar Pomorza, who recorded the tragedy as follows: “At 7.30 pm I was talking to M/S Nowowiejski (...). In the vicinity of the island of Bali (near Java), a sailor jumped overboard. They saw it, they searched for him, but to no avail”⁶¹. It is significant how calmly, *aequo animo*, one sailor acknowledges the suicide of another – as if not only every tragic death (*in genere*) at sea was part and parcel of the trade, but one of its forms, suicide (*in specie*), was almost the norm. *Ait enim mare*.

The question of alarms on ships is also very problematic. The first issue is the effectiveness, or rather ineffectiveness, of the man overboard alarm in the event of suicides, quite different from situations in which the fall overboard is accidental, caused by another person’s attack or a bout of disease, where the correctly implemented Williamson-Butakov turn could save lives. The second problem results from the influence of alarms on the psyche of seafarers, who react to them in different ways depending on the time of day; the third, similar to the previous one, is the crew’s (especially in the case of younger seafarers) disregard of alarms. There is also another serious issue – the alarm is supposed to help the people present on the ship to respond to sudden and unexpected events threatening human life; a sailor unprepared for immediate and dangerous situations not only becomes distracted, but is also subject to nervous tension and anxiety⁶². Regardless of the reasons why a sailor is overboard, the greatest danger to their life is posed by two states. The first is immersion (more dangerous when a person is swimming, as unnecessary movements increase blood flow in the muscles and the skin, and lead to quick heat loss), and the second is hypothermia, resulting in a slow pulse, and in consequence, brain hypoxia (which in turn causes dizziness), disorientation, ventricular fibrillation, fatigue, drowsiness and an overwhelming desire

59 See: Leszczyński, *Tragedie*, vol. 3, 464.

60 See/after: ibidem, 124. On suicide notes, see: Krystyna Golańska, “Listy od samobójców”, in: eadem, *Proszę wstać!... reportaże sądowe* (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Łódzkie, 1968), 315–324.

61 Tadeusz Olechnowicz, *Z notatnika ostatniego komendanta* (Gdynia: Oficyna Wydawnicza Miniatura, 2004), 43.

62 Cf. Eugeniusz Jabłoński, “Alarmy na polskich statkach towarowych w teorii i w praktyce”, *Technika i Gospodarka Morska* 5 (1981): 237–239; Danuta Kilian-Surdykowska, “Charakter prawny alarmów ćwiczebnych na polskich statkach morskich”, *Technika i Gospodarka Morska* 12 (1984): 613–615.

to rest – if a person falls asleep and is unable to wake up, they die⁶³. It should be noted that such an atypical hypersomnia may give casual observers (including those rushing to help) the false impression that the person who fell overboard with no suicidal intent had in fact attempted to take their life. This is how the 37-year-old sailor Bogdan S. went missing on 25 May 1997 in unexplained circumstances during the stopover of M/S Able Forest in a Venezuelan port, and the shipowner unequivocally considered the death as a suicide⁶⁴. Situations in which shipowners (but not only them) arbitrarily rule deaths from unclear causes as obvious suicides often take a very drastic form – on 13 October 1999, during the stopover of M/S Carola (flying the flag of Antigua and Barbuda, German shipowner) in the Turkish port of Diliskelesi, the captain of the ship, 53-year-old Master Mariner Witold Filipiuk died in mysterious circumstances; this time the Turkish prosecutor hastily ruled that the cause of death was suicide, after which the ship suddenly left the port. The permit for the transportation of the body to Poland issued by the Consulate General of the Republic of Poland in Istanbul contained a clause that prohibited the opening of the coffin, but the captain's widow opened it, discovering the naked body of her husband, laid on unplanned boards and in an advanced state of decomposition. The condition of the body made it impossible to dissect it, but nevertheless, expert pathologists found that the captain had been made to consume a large amount of alcohol before his death; finally, the prosecutor of the Szczecin-Śródmieście District Public Prosecutor's Office initiated and then dropped an investigation into murder⁶⁵.

Factors conducive to suicides on board ships may include the way in which the ship's doctor and other crew members perform their duties (although they should actually prevent suicides), especially since the occurrence of mental disorders in a seafarer is an obvious reason to place him in the ship's hospital, and in the absence of such – in a separate cabin and under the care of another person. The ineffectiveness of pharmacotherapy (*inter alia* with neuroleptics) also necessitates the use of mild forms of immobilisation of the patient, e.g. the Neil-Robertson stretcher used in ship rescue⁶⁶. In the decision IMG 176/63 of 15 October 15 1963 on the death of a 42-year-old junior processing technology fisherman on a trawler crossing the North Sea, the Maritime Chamber in Gdynia ruled the cause of death as jumping over the bulwark in a state of acute delirium and obtundation followed by drowning, at the same time accusing the ship's doctor of gross negligence of duties. Since the ship left the port in Gdynia

63 See: Jaremin, *Zgony*, 25; Wiesław Renke, "Aspekty medyczne ratowania życia na morzu na tle wypadku statku «Kudowa Zdrój»", *Technika i Gospodarka Morska* 2 (1984): 75–76.

64 See: Leszczyński, *Ginące*, vol. 4, 208.

65 See: *ibidem*, 212–214.

66 See: Stankiewicz, "Choroby", 375–376; Roman Dolmierski, "Choroby nerwowe i psychiczne", in: *Morski poradnik medyczny*, eds. Roman Dolmierski, Andrzej Krynicki, Stanisław Tomaszunas (Warsaw: Państwowy Zakład Wydawnictw Lekarskich, 1987), 190.

(3 days before the above-mentioned event), the fisherman behaved in a manner indicating mental disorders, uttered ridiculous sentences, called the names of Catholic saints, knelt, prayed (including every morning on the bow and during the screening of films in the mess); nevertheless, the doctor did not examine him, did not use the Medical Radio, did not suggest that the captain should isolate the fisherman and immediately send him for treatment to the nearest port; he only considered the fisherman to be overly religious, administered 2 tablets of Fenactil to the patient and then gave him 150 mg of the same medication (he did not record the amounts and doses in the medical record). As a result, on the third day of the voyage, the fisherman again ran onto the bow and, after kneeling down and making incomprehensible gestures, jumped overboard in the presence of all those on the navigational watch. He was taken to a lifeboat, but was found dead as a result of drowning⁶⁷. It can be considered a suicide, although Wiesław Blady writes euphemistically that the fisherman “jumped overboard and drowned⁶⁸”. It should be recognised that the doctor could and should have prevented it. This was also the case in situations where seafarers who had not been subjected to any treatment jumped overboard after at least a few days of drinking alcohol and not performing their official duties, as well as in the case of a boatswain who was consulted via the Medical Radio after a head injury in the occipital region and was struggling with mental disorders (hallucinations, illusions, persecutory delusions) – Luminal and Bromural were recommended (3 x 1 tablet of both) as well as supervision over the patient, but it was enough for the boatswain to tell the able fisherman who was taking care of him that he felt better – consequently, the carer left him and the patient jumped overboard⁶⁹. An evident suicide attempt took place on another ship: after being treated in a psychiatric hospital, the chief electrician suffering from paranoid schizophrenia did not show up at meals and watches, locked himself in his cabin with his eyes sealed with paper tape; after entering the foreign port of C., at the captain’s request, the consul called the doctor from another Polish ship in C. The doctor disregarded the problem, mistakenly claiming that the patient had poisoned himself with a strong amphoteric agent used to clean electric motors, and the mental disorders occurred as a result of using an Esperal implant. He provided the patient with, among others, Codeinum, Pyralgin, Spasmophen duplex, Elenium, Luminal and vitamin C; he also recommended a psychiatric check-up after returning to the home

67 See: Eugeniusz Jabłoński, “Niektóre problemy odpowiedzialności lekarza okrętowego PMH w świetle orzecznictwa izb morskich”, part I, *Technika i Gospodarka Morska* 1 (1986): 13.

68 Blady, *Polska*, 248.

69 See: Jerzy Pobocho, Andrzej Szakowski, “Problemy psychiatryczne w orzecznictwie izb morskich”, in: *Medycyna morską. Materiały sesji naukowej zorganizowanej w Szczecinie dnia 25 XI 1972 przez Szczecińskie Towarzystwo Naukowe przy współudziale pracowników naukowych Katedry Higieny Pracy Instytutu Higieny Uniwersytetu w Rostoku*, ed. Eugeniusz Miętkiewski (Warsaw–Poznań: PWN, 1975), 58–59.

country, and finally, found him fit to work on the ship (!). The next day, after leaving the port of C., the patient went up on deck and, noticing two ships travelling closely, jumped overboard; he was picked up by one of the ships. As the Maritime Chamber in Szczecin later determined in the decision WMS 28/84 of 31 August 1984, the patient had been suffering from persecution mania and fled to the sea for fear of being killed by imaginary enemies⁷⁰. A similar case occurred on the ship H., where the 39-year-old third engineer went missing. The probable cause of this incident was jumping overboard in a state of severe mental depression, which could have been caused by epilepsy and alcoholism. In the decision WMG 142/77 of 30 September 1977, the Maritime Chamber in Gdynia stated, *inter alia*, that the ship's doctor had neglected to refer the patient to a specialist and had not requested the medical history from his workplace clinic via telegraph⁷¹. As stated by the Maritime Chamber in Szczecin in the decision WMS 232/79 of 31 December 1979: "[t]he most probable, almost certain cause of the disappearance" of the mentally ill second electrician on M/S Energetyk on 28 August 1979, was his "jumping overboard in order to commit suicide"⁷², while the Maritime Chamber in Gdynia in the decision WMG 207/81 of 30 January 1982 clearly indicated "jumping (...) from the port side of the ship into the water for suicidal purposes" as the reason for the disappearance of the junior steward from TS/S Stefan Batory on 6 October 1981⁷³. Symptoms of depression on board are an indication for the isolation and/or hospitalisation of every seafarer, including the shipmaster. Master Mariner Leonid Cybulski, trying to command M/T Dalmor in such a state (in practice, it was done by the chief officer), went missing on 20 February 1975, most likely jumping overboard before the trawler entered the port where the patient was to be hospitalised⁷⁴. In this case it was too late, but in another case an oiler on M/T Neptune was prevented from committing suicide – his serious crisis was the result of the crew's unwise allusions about the conduct of his newly married wife (Dyzio's syndrome); he was hospitalised in a mental hospital in Saint John's⁷⁵. Suicides at sea are therefore planned and carried out not only due to conflicts within the crew, but also due to the complexity of (real or

70 See: Eugeniusz Jabłoński, "Niektóre problemy odpowiedzialności lekarza okrętowego PMH w świetle orzecznictwa izb morskich", part II, *Technika i Gospodarka Morska* 2 (1986): 64.

71 See: *ibidem*.

72 "Zaginięcie II elektryka m.s. Energetyk na Morzu Północnym w dniu 28 sierpnia 1979 r. (Orzeczenie Izby Morskiej w Szczecinie z dnia 31.12.1979 r. – WMS 232/79 i Odwoławczej Izby Morskiej z dnia 27.08.1980 r. – OIM 11/80)", *Prawo i Orzecznictwo Morskie* 17–18 (1990): 95–96.

73 "Zaginięcie mł. stewarda ts.s. Stefan Batory na Oceanie Atlantyckim w dniu 6 października 1981 r. (Orzeczenie Izby Morskiej w Gdyni z dnia 30.01.1982 r. – MG 207/81)", *Prawo i Orzecznictwo Morskie* 7–8 (1987): 112.

74 See: Leszczyński, *Tragedie*, vol. 3, 272; Ropelewski, *Ludzie*, 172.

75 See: Zbigniew Gach, *Leon rybak: wywiad-rzeka przeprowadzony w latach 2007/2008 z kapitanem żeglugi wielkiej rybołówstwa morskiego Leonem Skelnikiem, jednym z pionierów polskiego rybołówstwa przemysłowego po II wojnie światowej* (Gdańsk: Gdański Kantor Wydawniczy, 2008), 149.

imaginary) conflicts in the families of seafarers⁷⁶. It is also important that replacing the ship's doctor with telemedicine leads to the depersonalisation of the patient (and also of the doctor), which, above all, may lead to diagnostic and therapeutic errors (also in the case of mental illnesses)⁷⁷.

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When analysing the causes of suicides on board ships, one more issue should be kept in mind. In the face of the ship's disaster, the inevitability of a catastrophe, little chance of survival, a person on board this vessel may bring themselves *in articulo mortis* to a decision to commit suicide, dictated as much by despair as by the calculation of the situation in which they found themselves. In this case, we can also speak of a hidden number of suicides – if the suicide was committed without the presence of witnesses, and other persons on the ship are going to die (disappear at sea) soon, the fact of the suicide will not be revealed, and the body of the person who committed it may be recovered with the bodies of the victims of the sea; if it is not the case, the person will be presumed dead.

An example of staging a suicide in order to divert suspicions from the actual perpetrators of the crime are the events of the spring of 1983 on M/S Łódź, which was waiting for cargo in the Cameroon port of Douala. The chief officer, Zdzisław K., went missing on 20 April, and after two days his body was found in the water. The captain and 25 crew members gave an unambiguous opinion that the only cause of death was suicide, due to the deceased's family, financial and professional problems, as well as his insomnia and Luminal use. The proceedings conducted by the Cameroon prosecutor's office and the autopsy carried out as part of it clearly indicated murder (the deceased had been choked with a rope, his ribs and spine had been broken, and a 6-kg carbon dioxide extinguisher had been attached to his right wrist with handcuffs), but the prosecutor of the Voivodeship Public Prosecutor's Office in Szczecin dropped the investigation on 20 November 1984⁷⁸. Investigations in similar cases ended in the same way. For instance, when in 1981 M/S Ziemia Lubelska was waiting for the entrance to the port in Gdańsk, its captain Władysław K. went missing, and his body was found in

76 More in: Milian, *Zawód*, 328–344; Ludwik Janiszewski, *Sukces małżeński w rodzinach marynarzy. Studium socjologiczne* (Warsaw–Poznań: PWN, 1986), 171–173; Mirosława Kaczmarczyk-Sołwa, “Konflikty w rodzinach marynarzy”, in: *W kręgu ludzi morza. Księga pamiątkowa z okazji 70. Rocznicy urodzin Prof. zw. dr. hab. Ludwika Janiszewskiego*, ed. Robert B. Woźniak (Szczecin: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego, 1997), 99–103; on the potential genesis of conflicts, cf. Krzysztof Wszeborowski, “Rodzina marynarska”, *Kalendarz Gdański* (1973): 183–188.

77 Cf. Michał Żychliński, “Etyczne problemy udzielania pomocy medycznej na morzu”, *Aequitas* 3 (2015): 105–106, 108–109.

78 See: Andrzej Studziński, *Tragiczny rejs. Głośne katastrofy statków, przemyt i tajemnicze zaginięcia na morzu* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Prawnicze, 1989), 74–81.

the water 2 weeks later, with a metal rod attached to his neck. On M/S Szymanowski, docked in 1982 in Bremerhaven, the body of its captain K. was found, hanging on a sisal cord attached to the hook of a clothes hanger in the anteroom of his cabin⁷⁹. And what about the events on M/S Jelenia Góra, whose captain, Master Mariner Julian Kowalik, went missing on 11 or 12 May 1978? In order to stage his suicide, care was even taken to place a pair of his sandals next to the ship side⁸⁰. Evidence in his cabin was not secured and the disappearance of Kowalik was not linked to the fact that a year and a half earlier, the then captain of the Jelenia Góra, Master Mariner Stanisław Łużyński, had gone missing in similar circumstances, and the chief officer had jumped out of the second floor of the house where he lived⁸¹. In this context, it is necessary to suggest that psychologists should undertake in-depth research on the reaction of family members to the tragedy of a seafarer; staging a suicide or a fatal accident to cover up a murder that is probable but hard to detect (like in the case Karol Kiżewski, who died on 26 May 2002 on M/V Tsuru⁸²) is met with an understandable lack of acceptance from relatives⁸³. A separate problem is the negation of an undisputed *suicidium*, which attests to the process of repression and is evident, for instance, in the words of the younger brother of the aforementioned doctor Penderecki, who writes about him in the following words: “[h]e died (...) in unclear circumstances. Actually, we don’t really know what happened”⁸⁴.

Another issue concerns situations in which seafarers desperately jump overboard, which may *prima facie* look like suicides, but these acts are not committed for suicidal purposes. For example, on 17 June 1949 at the roadstead in Gdańsk, the entire crew of S/T Tur left the ship by jumping overboard immediately after an explosion caused by a tugboat hitting a mine⁸⁵; or on 21 September 1952 in the North Sea, a panic-stricken able fisherman Remigiusz Barankiewicz jumped over the bulwark of the S/T Mercury, which due to a storm was heeling 34 degrees for up to 3 minutes⁸⁶. Providing that in this text I do not discuss passenger deaths, I must make an exception, recalling how, after leaving the port of Nyneshamn, a passenger jumped off M/F Rogalin, attempted to swim to an island several hundred metres away and drowned. And this time again

79 See: *ibidem*, 80.

80 See: *ibidem*, 31–40; Krzysztof Pohl, *Tak blisko życia. Pitaval morski* (Szczecin: KAW, 1988), 180–198.

81 See: Studziński, *Tragiczny*, 31, 81; Pohl, *Tak blisko*, 198.

82 See: Leszczyński, *Ginące*, vol. 4, 224–225, 253.

83 A moving account by the mother of the deceased, Irena Kiżewska, was provided by Marzena Burczycka-Woźniak, *Prawda i prawo* (Gdynia: MiT, 2008), *passim*.

84 Krzysztof Penderecki, Katarzyna Janowska, Piotr Mucharski, *Pendereccy. Saga rodzinna* (Cracow: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2014), 17.

85 See: Ryszard Leszczyński, *Katastrofy i wypadki morskie floty pomocniczej PMH (1926–2016)* (Gdańsk: Fundacja Promocji Przemysłu Okrętowego i Gospodarki Morskiej, 2017), 343–354, 546.

86 See: Leszczyński, *Tragedie*, vol. 3, 27.

the desperation was not suicidal in intent, as the man had been twice denied political asylum in Sweden, and he had threatened to settle there anyway⁸⁷. And the last exception – some passengers on luxury cruise liners – such as Thomas McElhany on 14 December 2018 on M/S Carnival Victory – reportedly like to choose “a romantic cruise” as an opportunity for suicide⁸⁸. Drastic examples of suicides committed *in extremis* are found in the history of the tragic evacuation by sea of prisoners of the Stutthof concentration camp, which began on 27 April 1945. Some of the evacuees – unable to withstand hunger, thirst, agony of fellow prisoners on barges – died by suicide⁸⁹; as an expert on the subject writes, they took their lives “out of despair”⁹⁰.

There are also suicides committed by seafarers ashore for reasons closely related to their work at sea. I have already mentioned the chief officer of the Jelenia Góra; I cannot overlook the tragedy of Master Mariner Zbigniew Kurowski, who shot himself on 21 August 1979 in his apartment in Gdańsk, shortly after hearing about the harmful decision of the Maritime Chamber in Gdynia regarding the fire on M/S Reymont he commanded⁹¹. And almost 40 years earlier, a man of the sea committed suicide on land – not a seafarer, but the commander of the National Defence Marine Brigade, the acting commander of the Land Coastal Defence, Colonel Stanisław Dąbek, who shot himself on 19 September 1939 in Kępa Oksywska in the face of imminent defeat, ordering his soldiers to cease the fight with the Nazis after his death⁹². Another example of honour suicide is the *exitus* of Professor Jerzy Olszewski, who shot himself with a rifle on 22 May 1981 in Skubianka. The solemn post-war funeral of the colonel and the choice of his resting place indicate the obviousness of honouring the meaning of his death⁹³. The tragedy of the death of Minister Olszewski, forced to take his own life in defence of his battered dignity, lies in his suicide note: “I have never taken a bribe

87 See: Zbigniew Sak, *Z Lublina na oceany* (Szczecin: Wydawnictwo Kadruk, 2015), 281–284.

88 See: (KK), “Rejs po śmierć”, *Angora* 29 (2019): 71.

89 See: Elżbieta Maria Grot, *Ewakuacja morska więźniów KL Stutthof przez Rugię do Danii w 1945 r.* (Sztutowo: Muzeum Stutthof, 2015), 71.

90 *Ibidem*.

91 More in: Ryszard Leszczyński, *Ginące frachtowce*, vol. 2 (Gdańsk: Fundacja Promocji Przemysłu Okrętowego i Gospodarki Morskiej, 2009), 97–202; Grażyna Murawska, “Kapitański honor”, in: *Ekspres reporterów*, part 6 (Warsaw: KAW, 1980), 3–48.

92 See: Grzegorz Piwnicki, “Bohaterski dowódca obrony Gdyni w 1939 roku – płk Stanisław Dąbek”, *Zeszyty Gdyńskie* 5 (2010): 73–74.

93 See: Mariusz Kardas, “Cisza zaklęta w nadmorskich piaskach – pamięć o tych, co odeszli, jako kamień węgielny dla tożsamości gdyńskiego obywatela”, in: *Mare Integrans. Studia nad dziejami wybrzeży Morza Bałtyckiego*, vol. XII, *Śmierć w dziejach człowieka. Współczesność. Monografia oparta na materiałach z VIII Międzynarodowej Sesji Naukowej Dziejów Ludów Morza Bałtyckiego, Wolin, 31 lipca – 2 sierpnia 2015*, eds. Maciej Franz, Karol Kościelniak, Zbigniew Pilarczyk (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, 2016), 284–286.

from anyone. I swear it in the face of death. Let my death end the witch hunt⁹⁴.” Unfortunately, it did not.

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And the conclusions? And the attempts to prevent suicides of seafarers now and in the future? I would not dare to make any *ex cathedra* conclusions, or give “good” advice from the perspective of a comfortable chair on the mainland. First of all, seafarers should as soon as possible be subjected to such thorough *sub specie suicidologiae* examination as the police are⁹⁵, and mariners should be recognised as a professional group that is at a risk of suicide no less than law enforcement officers. Secondly, work on a sea-going vessel, associated with deprivation of many needs and not conducive to maintaining homeostasis⁹⁶, is an objective suicide factor. Thirdly, although suicides have been known to occur at sea for years, what especially favours them are the phenomena of the last more or less thirty years – the commercialisation of shipping and its focus solely on profit, dehumanisation and disempowerment of seafarers’ work, internationalisation of crews, the use of the so-called flags of convenience.

With unwavering admiration, I recall the times when the seagoing ship was also assigned the role of shaping the personality of seafarers or offering them cultural and educational support⁹⁷. I know that it is only *vox clamantis in deserto*, but if the Polish fleet was able to return to such deeply humanistic aspirations (a task given to it in parallel with that of developing maritime education in society), the number of factors conducive to suicide would significantly decrease (although these will still be committed). It is therefore necessary to prevent seafarers’ suicides and to limit the range of suicidogenic factors.

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94 After: Jakub Szumski, *Rozliczenia z ekipą Gierka 1980–1984* (Warsaw: IPN, 2018), 261.

95 More in: Brunon Hołyst, *Suicydologia*, 2nd edition (Warsaw: LexisNexis, 2012), 820–835, 1339–1341.

96 More in: Zenon Borucki, “Czas wolny marynarzy na lądzie a problemy przystosowania”, in: *Czas wolny marynarzy na lądzie. Rozprawy i materiały*, ed. Ludwik Janiszewski (Szczecin: Wydawnictwo Instytutu Zachodniopomorskiego, 1973), 118–134.

97 More in: Woźniak, *Problemy*, 65–81, 183–216; Tadeusz Olechnowicz, “Czas wolny na morzu a niektóre zagadnienia szkolenia oficerów”, *Technika i Gospodarka Morska* 3 (1970): 116, 118–119; Lech Milian, *Czas wolny marynarzy na morskich statkach transportowych* (Szczecin: Wydawnictwo Instytutu Zachodniopomorskiego, 1972), 194–202, 227–241.

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SUMMARY

The work of seafarers on a seagoing ship involves numerous negative conditions which affect the physical and mental spheres of their functioning. The struggle with the environment, the inability to leave the ship, and the distance from the family and friends make sailors one of the professional groups at the highest risk of suicides. The author draws special attention to the social significance of seafarers' suicides, which is related to the circumstances of committing these acts, their total number and their alarmingly high percentage among all causes of sailors' deaths. Another advantage of the article is that it discusses the almost forgotten term “calenture”, unknown to modern scientific literature and probably related to the seafarers' inclination to suicide. The article is based on an analysis of committed suicides and of the unclear results of research into them.

Z BADAŃ NAD SAMOBÓJSTWAMI MARYNARZY NA POLSKICH STATKACH MORSKICH

Słowa kluczowe: samobójstwo, marynarz, statek, morze

STRESZCZENIE

Praca marynarza na statku morskim stanowi przesłankę licznych negatywnych uwarunkowań w sferach fizycznej i psychicznej jego funkcjonowania. Zmagania ze środowiskiem, niemożność opuszczenia statku, odległość dzieląca od rodziny czy przyjaciół czynią z ludzi morza jedną z grup zawodowych charakteryzujących się największym ryzykiem zamachów samobójczych. Autor zwraca szczególną uwagę na społeczne znaczenie samobójstw marynarzy, co powiązane jest z okolicznościami popełniania tych czynów, łączną ich liczbą i niepokojąco wysokim odsetkiem wśród wszystkich przyczyn ich zgonów. Walorem artykułu jest również przypomnienie terminu „kalentura”, niemal zapomnianego, nieznanego współczesnej literaturze naukowej, a prawdopodobnie związanego ze skłonnością marynarzy do popełniania samobójstw. Artykuł opiera się na analizie popełnionych samobójstw i niejasnych wyników badań podjętych nad nimi.