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EFFORTS OF CROSSING THE GERMAN BLOCKADE OF POLISH COAST BY SEA 1 SEPT. – 2 OCT. 1939

The purpose of the article is an attempt to show the breaking through the sea through the German blockade of the Polish coast during the war in 1939. This topic has not yet been broadly elaborated by means of the accounts of the defenders of the Coast which are found in various archives such as the Archives of the Navy Museum in Gdynia or Archives of the Polish Institute and the Museum of Gen. Sikorski in London.¹

During the war in 1939, the defenders of the Polish Coast were quickly cut off by German troops from the rest of the Polish forces. The only way to get out of the coast was by sea or air. Kriegsmarine and Luftwaffe planes were to prevent attempts to break free from the area covered by the fighting by patrolling the waters and airspace around the Polish coast. Despite this, in September and October 1939 a number of attempts were made to get out by sea or air to neutral countries, as well as to return to the country.

In the last days of August 1939, several Polish yachts made training cruises on the Baltic Sea. These yachts were the first to enter Poland through the German blockade after the start of hostilities.

On September 2, 1939, the “Szkwał” yacht, which was on a training cruise on the Baltic Sea with members of the Maritime Academic Union, entered Jastarnia. The crew included Capt. Stanisław Jaxa-Bykowski and Edgar Engel and four candidates for yacht skippers: Maria Chrzanowska, Zofia Reynoldówna, Anna Wojtaśkiewicz and Danuta Żołątkowska. The yacht, sailing from Copenhagen, found itself on the morning of September 2, 1939 on the Gulf of Gdansk. Smoke over Westerplatte, flying planes, and guns were observed and heard from its deck. Because there was no radio on the yacht, no one was aware of the outbreak of the war. Suspecting that these were only exercises, the crew directed the yacht to Jastarnia, at night they sailed to Gdynia².

At the beginning of September 1939, one of the Polish yachts “Wojewoda Pomorski” (“Pomeranian Voivod”), which belonged to the Academic Maritime Association (AZM) Gdansk division, broke through the blockade of the Polish Coast. Apart from Capt. Józef Sarnowicz, there were the following people on its deck: 1st navigator officer Sławomir Peszkowski (AZM Gdańsk), 2nd food officer Jan Machnicki (AZM Kraków), 3rd

¹ The only attempt to present the topic so far is the work of R. Niczko published in the series “Zeszyty Helskie”. See. R. Niczko, *Ku wolności – ucieczki z Wybrzeża 1939 r.*, „Zeszyt Helski”, 14/2012.

² W. Głowacki, *Dzieje żeglarstwa polskiego.*, Gdańsk 1989, p. 370-371.

officer – bosun Henryk Kabat (AZM Gdańsk) and 6 sailors from AZM, including res. Jerzy Kluczkowski³.

On August 28, 1939, this yacht together with the yacht “Panna Wodna” (“Water Maiden”) was in Malmö, where both commanders – Capt. Józef Sarnowicz and Capt. Kazimierz Lech decided to return to Poland. The yachts were supposed to flow together, but on August 29, 1939, “Panna Wodna” (“Water Maiden”) disappeared from view. On September 1, 1939, Capt. Józef Sarnowicz learned from the radio about the outbreak of war, which he informed about the entire crew. The next day, the yacht sailed into the Gulf of Gdansk in the afternoon, and the crew wearing life jackets watched the raid on Hel. Because the pilot summoned from Gdynia at 20.00 did not arrive, Capt. Józef Sarnowicz tried to sail to the Orłowo pier, but after being fired with a machine gun he headed the yacht to the port of Gdynia. During this time, the wind stopped and the yacht began to drift to the outer pier. At 23.00 he reached the breakwater, and several sailors with an officer jumped on his deck, they took the yacht’s documents, personal documents and a map from the mess. After about 45 minutes, the officer returned the documents and allowed him to swim to the pool where the yacht stood on the buoy at 00.30⁴.

The “Panna Wodna” (“Water Maiden”) yacht, which also belonged to the Academic Maritime Association Gdańsk division, which together with the yacht “Wojewoda Pomorski” (“Pomeranian Voivod”) sailed from Malmö at noon on August 28, 1939 to Poland, reached the port in Władysławowo on September 1, 1939 at 5.45⁵. The crew included Capt. Kazimierz Lech, his deputy Konstanty Klimaszewski, food officer Jan Zbrożyna, bosun Bolesław Bagiński and Gabriel Holicki⁶.

One of the first successful attempts to escape by sea from the Coast was made by five people on the “Strzelec II” (“Sagittarius II”) yacht belonging to the Maritime Division of the Riflemen’s Association. There were two members of the Sailing Club “Gryf” (“Griffin”), and at the same time employees of the Naval Port Workshops in Gdynia: Edward Skrzypek and Michał Przepięczyński, two port pilots in Gdynia: master mariner Jerzy Lewandowski and master mariner Władysław Grabowski and mechanic Bruno Wyględacz⁸.

³ J. Sarnowicz, *Epitafium ku czci Wojewody Pomorskiego*, „Morze”, 9/1974, p. 22.

⁴ Ibidem, p. 23; J. Iżycki, *Na pokładzie „Wojewody”*, „Kierunki”, 35/1959, p. 7.

⁵ While entering the port of Władysławowo, the yacht hit stones with its keel while passing a floating obstacle, it moored at 5.45, and at 6.00 it was towed to a fishing pier. See. W. Głowacki, op. cit., p. 369.

⁶ W. Głowacki, op. cit., p. 369.

⁷ This yacht belonged to a series of 26 “Konik Morski” (“Seahorse”) type vessels built in 1937-1939 at the Yacht Shipyard in Gdynia. Leon Tumiłowicz designed the Seahorse in 1936, modeling it on American yacht constructions. It was 9.60 m long, 2.72 m wide, 1.53 m draught, displacement 4.5 tons, with the sail area of 40 m². See. W. Głowacki, op. cit., p. 336.

⁸ J. Lesiak, *Kronika Jacht Klubu Morskiego „Gryf” LPŻ w Gdyni* (Archiwum Jacht Klubu Morskiego „Gryf”, p. 13-14); J. Lewandowski, *Z marynarskich wspomnień kapitana ż.w. Jerzego Lewandowskiego. Dwie ucieczki*, „Morze”, 2/1984, p. 28; J. Lewandowski, *Dwie ucieczki i jedno storpedowanie*, in: *Ku chwale bandery*, ed. J. Miciński, Warszawa 1992, pp. 148-149; R. Niczko, op. cit., p. 3; T. Olchowy, *Jachtem przez blokadę hitlerowską*, „Bandera”, 2/1962, p. 12; M. Przepięczyński, *Wspomnienia żeglarza, Michała Przepięczyńskiego na Obczyźnie*, (Archiwum Jacht Klubu Morskiego „Gryf”, p. 2-3); J. Sieński, *Ucieczka pod żaglami*, „Dziennik Bałtycki”, 233/1996, p. 22; *Wspomnienia na temat pierwszych dni II wojny światowej (wrzesień 1939 r.) na terenie Gdyni. Relacja na temat ucieczki jachtu „Strzelec 2” do Szwecji* (Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe, sygn. 33-T-2651); *Al., Powrót po półwieczu. Ostatnia bandera II RP*, „Gazeta Gdańska”, 10/1990; *I segelbåt från Gdynia till svenska kusten*, „Arbetet”, 237/1939, p. 1.

Edward Skrzypek and Michał Przepierczyński were dismissed from their work in the Navy Port Workshops before German occupation of Gdynia. They both decided not to stay in Gdynia and get out of the city by sea. Władysław Grabowski and Jerzy Lewandowski served as port officers, maintaining communication with the headquarters in Oksywie. On the night of September 12-13, 1939, the Coastal Defence troops left Gdynia retreating to Kępa Oksywska. On the morning of September 13, Władysław Grabowski and Jerzy Lewandowski were dismissed from work at the Maritime Office. A three-month salary was paid to them and *they were ordered to join the Polish army or the merchant fleet, which was partly in Swedish waters*⁹. Then they decided to get away from Gdynia by land through the forest from Szczecińska Street to the south of Poland or by sea by yacht through the Baltic Sea to Sweden. Straight from the Maritime Office, they biked to the yacht basin, where they met Edward Skrzypek and Michał Przepierczyński, who they had not known before, who were also preparing to escape by yacht. Everyone decided to meet again on the yacht “Strzelec II” (“Sagittarius II”) to try to break through to Sweden and embark on a Polish ship there. Then Władysław Grabowski and Jerzy Lewandowski returned to the apartment of the mechanic Michał Nowakowski at Szczecińska 34 Street, in which they had been living temporarily since its partial destruction during the raid of their apartment in the Pilot’s House at Chrzanowski St.. They prepared there to escape by packing underwear and food into their backpacks. In the evening, they noticed German troops from the apartment window and immediately rode bicycles to Leśna street towards the sea. After arriving at the yacht basin, they joined a group of about 20 men intending to break through to Sweden on a motorboat “Delfin” (“Dolphin”). They could not start the motorboat as there were no mechanics in the group of refugees. So they returned to the yacht “Strzelec II” (“Sagittarius II”), where together with Edward Skrzypek and Michał Przepierczyński they began to prepare for departure from the port. At that time, Bruno Wyględacz – a school friend of Jerzy Lewandowski – joined them. There was another man with them, but at the last moment he decided to give up and jumped out onto the pier¹⁰. After cutting off the stern moorings, winding through other yachts, “Strzelec II” (“Sagittarius II”) began to leave the pool heading for the north-eastern promontory of the Bay of Gdansk to Brüsterort. The weather was favourable for the fugitives, it was already night, it was raining and the south-west wind was quite strong and visibility was limited. The yacht sailed through wave splashes. First, Jerzy Lewandowski and Edward Skrzypek performed the watch at the helm almost all night, and then they were replaced by Władysław Grabowski and Michał Przepierczyński. For fear of detection, the lights were not turned on, Michał Przepierczyński smoked one cigarette after another to illuminate the compass rose. The weather finally began to improve, the wind weakened, and the yacht changed course northwest to the Swedish port of Karlskrona. Around noon, when the sun finally came out from behind the clouds, and the entire crew lay on deck and dried their clothes, there was an encounter with a German ship. Since the yacht was sailing under the Swedish flag, she was not stopped. Problems were avoided thanks to Edward Skrzypek, who took the Swedish and Finnish flags on the yacht. After two days of voyage, crew members finally saw the light of Utklippan lighthouse at night. The yacht already ran out of food, kerosene oil for a heater and

⁹ J. Lewandowski, *Z marynarskich wspomnień kapitana ż.w. Jerzego Lewandowskiego. Dwie ucieczki*, „Morze”, 2/1984, p. 28.

¹⁰ This man could have been Józef Lesiak. See. V. Olchowy, op. cit., p. 20.

matches. When the yacht was near Karlskrona in the morning, the anchor was dropped and the nearby fisherman was asked to show the exact route to the port. He refused, informing that only the pilot could enter the yacht, but offered help in calling the pilot over the phone. Jerzy Lewandowski sailed with the fisherman, who phoned to the port from the fisherman's house. He was invited by the fisherman's family for coffee and cakes, and before returning to the yacht he received a bottle of kerosene and matches. When the pilot arrived, the anchor was raised and the yacht entered Karlskrona. At that time, the crew was preparing to disembark. After mooring the yacht, everyone was detained at the local Police Station for illegal crossing of the border because they did not have visas and passports. During internment they went for a stroll in the car of the prison warden, and they always ate in a restaurant in the company of a civilian policeman. Internment lasted 30 days until receiving passports from the Polish Embassy in Stockholm. Then they were directed to Malmö, then to Lund, where they lived in a tourist hotel, and finally they found themselves in Stockholm. They were informed at the Polish Embassy that they were assigned to the "Rozewie" motorboat sailing to Bergen. After a few days of stopping in Bergen, the entire crew of "Sagittarius II" arrived on board of "Rozewie" sailing in the convoy to Great Britain¹¹.

The attempt to break through German sea blockade of the Polish coast undertaken by the officers of the Polish Navy on a fishing boat "Gdy 55" – "Albatros"¹², which set off from Babi Dół on September 13 night at about 20.00 after dark was also successful. Cdr Lt Stanisław Hryniewiecki, Navy Capt Wiktor Łomidze, former deputy commander of minelayer ORP "Gryf", Lieutenant Stanisław Pohorecki, adjutant of Hryniewiecki, Lieutenant Jerzy Koziółkowski, an officer from the spare crew of the Submarine Squadron, acting as deputy signal officer of the Fleet, Lieutenant Engineer Stanisław Radogost-Uniechowski, an officer of the technical corps employed at the Naval Port Workshops in Oksywie, two seamen of the highest rank. A. Wiśniewski and J. Jarema and the owners of the boat, brothers Karol and Paweł Kruger.¹³

The initiator of this cruise was Lt Cdr Stanisław Hryniewiecki acting as a representative of Rear-Admiral Józef Unrug at Colonel Stanisław Dąbku, commander of the Coastal Defence,

¹¹ J. Lesiak, op. cit., pp. 13-14; J. Lewandowski, *Z marynarskich wspomnień kapitana ż.w. Jerzego Lewandowskiego. Dwie ucieczki*, „Morze”, 2/1984, pp. 28-29; idem, *Dwie ucieczki i jedno storpedowanie*, in: *Ku chwale bandery*, ed. J. Miciński, Warszawa 1992, pp. 148-151; T. Olchowy, op. cit., p. 12; M. Przepierczyński, op. cit., pp. 2-5; J. Sienki, op. cit., p. 22; *Wspomnienia na temat pierwszych dni II wojny światowej (wrzesień 1939 r.) na terenie Gdyni. Relacja na temat ucieczki jachtu „Strzelec 2” do Szwecji* (Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe, sygn. 33-T-2651); Al., *Powrót po półwieczu. Ostatnia bandera II RP*, „Gazeta Gdańska”, 10/1990. According to M. Twardowski the fugitives took only a suitcase with oranges as food. cf. M. Twardowski, *Jacht Klub Morski „Gryf”*, Gdynia 2008, p. 17.

¹² „Gdy 55” – „Albatros” wooden boat built in 1935 in the Rybacka shipyard in Gdynia, length 16.45 m, width 5.03 m, registration date 05.01.1937. See B. Huras, M. Twardowski, *Księga statków polskich 1918-1945*, vol. 4, Gdańsk 2002, p. 32; W. Blady, *Polska flota rybacka w latach 1921-2001*, Gdynia 2002, p. 12.

¹³ Ę. Jękabsons, *Materiały o internowanych polskich żołnierzach na Lotwie 1939-1940 w Państwowym Archiwum Historycznym Lotwy*, „Białostocczyzna”, 2/1999, pp. 79-80; Ę. Jękabsons, *Internowanie żołnierzy polskich na Lotwie w latach 1939-1940*, <http://www.wyklady.ekpu.lublin.pl/wyklady/jekabsons/jekabsons4.htm> (15.01.2013); J. Koziółkowski, *Załącznik do zeszytu ewidencyjnego. Meldunki o znanych działaniach wojennych* (The Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum, MAR. A. II. 5/1A, p. 26); J. Pertek, *Jak przerywano blokadę na Helu*, „Morze”, 10/1959, p. 26; idem, *Mała flota wielka duchem*, Poznań 1989, pp. 95-97; S. Pohorecki, *Zerwana tajemnica*, „Nasze Sygnały”, 145/1980, p.11; J. Tuliszka, *Komandor porucznik Stanisław Hryniewiecki (1896-1943)*, „Biuletyn Historyczny”, 16/1999, p. 196; B. Wroński, *Fakt historyczny, którego nie było*, „Nasze Sygnały”, 146/1981, p. 16-19.

as an officer for special orders. Probably, realising that on the Hel Peninsula he would not receive any specific assignment, he turned to Rear-Admiral Józef Unrug for permission to attempt to break through the German blockade to Latvia in the boat¹⁴.

Even before obtaining commander admiral's Józef Unrug approval Lieutenant Commander Stanisław Hryniewiecki offered to take part in the expedition of the former deputy commander of mines deployment ORP "Gryf" Lieutenant Wiktor Łomidze, who was slightly injured on September 3 and evacuated with the other wounded from Hel to a hospital in Gdynia. Lieutenant Wiktor Łomidze learned about his intention to leave Gdynia on the night of 12-13 September by the units of the Land Coastal Defence. As he did not want to be taken prisoner, he ordered to be discharged from the hospital, and then he reported to Commander Stanisław Hryniewiecki. He did not receive any assignment because he had not recovered from his wound yet¹⁵. In his account, he recalls the decision to take part in the expedition as follows:

*The situation was hopeless. Oksywie surrendering on account of the impossibility of further defence was a matter of days, and so the prospect of being taken prisoner too. Not having any assignment, I agreed to the offer. We went to Babi Dół, where we received telephone permission from the Fleet Commander to organise this event with its purpose to take as many naval officers as possible.*¹⁶

Commander Stanisław Hryniewiecki also agreed with Sub-Lieutenant Jerzy Koziółkowski, who transported ammunition from Jastarnia to Babi Dół on 11 September in the evening for the Coastal Defence units. Transporting ammunition was already difficult at that time due to German boats patrolling in the Gulf of Gdańsk as well as the reluctance of Kashubians, and boat owners, to undertake such risky expeditions¹⁷.

Waiting for the boat to take him back to Hel, Sub-Lieutenant Jerzy Koziółkowski spent the whole day on September 12 in the company of his colleague from his class, Sub-Lieutenant Mieczysław Kobierzycki, witnessing the evacuation of the city and the liquidation of sections defending the city¹⁸. On the night of September 12-13, he left Gdynia with the retreating troops of the Coastal Defence at Oksywie. Then he informed the Fleet Command in Hel that he could not return to the Hel Peninsula due to the lack of a fishing boat¹⁹. In his account he recalls the day of September 13, which he spent in Oksywie as follows:

In the afternoon a phone call from Babi Dół from Hryniewiecki urged Uniechowski, Siwicki and me to perform a special task (with the order to take all things). I did not have the slightest intention to perform special tasks, I wanted to return to Hel, along the way I was to take Commissioner Sokół and Infu staff to Hel – I urged Kobierzycki to go to Babi Dół, he did not want to. Because Siwicki was busy preparing the plates

¹⁴ J. Pertek, *Mala flota wielka duchem*, Poznań 1989, pp. 95-96; J. Tuliszka, op. cit., p. 196.

¹⁵ B. Wronski, op. cit., p. 18.

¹⁶ Quote after: B. Wronski, op. cit., p. 18.

¹⁷ J. Koziółkowski, op. cit., p. 26. According to J. Netzla the ammunition was delivered on fish boats from Jastarnia to Babi Dół from September 18 1939. See JNetzla, *Kutrem na wojnę (fragmenty wspomnień)*, „Rocznik Gdyński”, 10/1991, p. 342. J. Glembin also writes about ammunition deliveries from Jastarnia to Babi Dół in his accounts. Cf. J. Glembin, *Pracuję na kuterze „Arki”*, Gdańsk 1951, p. 20-21. W. Steyer in his accounts writes about the communication with Oksywie. Cf. W. Steyer, *Samotny półwysep*, Poznań 1983, p. 49.

¹⁸ J. Koziółkowski, op. cit., p. 26.

¹⁹ B. Wronski, op. cit., p. 18.

*for armoured cars, so Uniechowski remained, he got a car and persuaded me to leave earlier*²⁰.

After arriving at Babi Dół, they learned during a meeting by the sea with Commander Stanisław Hryniewiecki about the reason for their call. The officers' intention was to get over the sea to some neutral port and then back to the country to fight the enemy²¹. In Babi Dół there were already two boats requisitioned earlier and brought from Reda by Sub-Lieutenant Stanisław Pohorecki. despite German shelling.

Weather conditions prevailing on September 13, 1939 were favourable to take the expedition by boat: it was quickly falling dark, the sky was, rain was falling, quite strong wind was blowing, and there were waves. At around 20.00, the anchor of the cutter was raised, the motor started and set off to sea, heading initially to Hel and later to the north. While going to the sea, the crew of the boat watched the glow of fires arising from the burning nearby villages. The cutter swam without lights to make detection by patrolling German units difficult. To this end, bulbs were previously removed from the lights on board, and Sub-Lieutenant Jerzy Koziołkowski, after climbing the mast, hit the top light with a hammer blow²².

The course of the cruise is best reflected in the account of one of the participants of the expedition – Sub-Lieutenant Jerzy Koziołkowski:

*At around 22.00 we were near Hel – the dark outlines of the peninsula shifted next to us and disappeared in the rain. Wrapped in a rubber coat and blanket, I settled on the bow of the cutter “on the watch”. We were going to Nord with the intention of reaching Hoborg. The motor noise was impossible. From time to time, sparks were falling from the exhaust pipe. We passed through a place where [Polish] submarines were deploying mines (the boat was three meters deep, the mines were also on three meters), and the whole bay was full of pursuit boats and trawlers. We were leaving on Wednesday 13 September. I sat on watch all night until morning, soaked to the thread, frozen to the bone, straining my eyes to see if we would meet someone along the way. We were lucky. At night we met two steamers swimming with lights on, we went past them at a great distance. In the morning, tired to the last resort, I went to sleep (three nights almost without sleeping). I woke up in the afternoon. The weather was the best for us all at that time. Strong waves, poor visibility. In the meantime, we changed course: after departing several dozen miles to the Nord from Hel, Hryniewiecki decided to go not to Sweden, but to Liepaja*²³.

During the cruise, after turning back to Liepaja, the motor of the boat suddenly stopped, which at first could not even be started by the owners of the boat, brothers Karol and Paweł Krüger. Sails were raised, but after an hour Kashubs repaired the motor and we set off again. After nightfall, the crew of the boat noticed a dark strip of land, the probe showed a depth of

²⁰ Quote after: B. Wronski, op. cit., p. 19.

²¹ J. Koziołkowski, op. cit., p. 26; B. Wronski, op. cit., p. 19. According to S. Pohorecki's accounts, Rear-Admiral J. Unrug ordered Counter admiral Lt Cdr S. Hryniewiecki to swim to Tallina with the task to free the detained submarine ORP „Orzeł”. This version of the story is untrue as it was proved by B. Wronski. Cf. S. Pohorecki, op. cit., p. 11; B. Wronski, op. cit., pp. 16-20.

²² J. Koziołkowski, op. cit., p. 26; S. Pohorecki, op. cit., p. 11; B. Wronski, op. cit., pp. 18-19.

²³ Quote after: J. Pertek, op. cit., p. 97-98.

5m and finally at 22.00 the cutter “Gdy 55” – “Albatros”, entered the port of Liepaja, where it was anchored. Poles were detained, the cutter was confiscated, and two of its owners were dismissed at their own request and sent to Gdynia²⁴.

Lt Cdr Stanisław Hryniewiecki, Lieutenant Wiktor Łomidze and Sub-Lieutenant Engineer Stanisław Radogost-Uniechowski, after many trials, reached Great Britain on January 3, 1940, Sub-Lieutenant Stanisław Pohorecki and Sub-Lieutenant Jerzy Koziolkowski reached the place before them²⁵.

In the middle of the last decade of September, there was a successful escape of at least four people aboard the fishing boat that left Hel in the evening. It was a Danish fishing boat, which, due to a motor breakdown and the outbreak of war, remained abandoned by the crew at a commercial port. The initiator of the expedition was SWO Jacek Tracz, who was the motorcyclist’s liaison officer in the security platoon in Hel. He informed about the escape plan Rear-Admiral Włodzimierz Steyer who was the commander of Hel Fortified Region. The crew of the boat included SWO Jacek Tracz and Szarmach, Konka and Szyberski. During the voyage, the cutter was even stopped by a German minesweeper near Bornholm, but it had the Danish flag and documents, it also pulled the network in which there was cod. The Germans checked the documents, got fresh fish and left without suspecting anything. The boat, passing the islands of Oland and Gotland, reached the banks of Latvia in October 2, where the Danish flag was changed to Soviet, and then entered one of the Latvian ports, where the crew disembarked²⁶.

In the morning hours on October 1, 1939, there was a meeting held at Rear-Admiral Józef Unruga’s. It was attended by: Commander of the Coastal Defence Captain (N) Stefan Frankowski, commander of the Fortified Hel region, Captain (N) Włodzimierz Steyer and chief of staff of the Fleet Command Captain (N) Marian Majewski²⁷.

Rear-Admiral Józef Unruga informed the members of the meeting that he had decided to surrender due to the fact that further combat could be fought no longer than 5 to 10 days due to the lack of artillery and especially anti-aircraft ammunition and would cause large losses

²⁴ S. Pohorecki, op. cit., pp. 11-12; B. Wroński, op. cit., p. 19. According to S. Pohorecki, after sending Karol and Paweł Krüger brothers to Gdynia Seaman Wiśniewski was also sent to Gdynia at his request. See S. Pohorecki, op. cit., p. 12. As J. Pertek reports, Karol Krüger died during the occupation, and Paweł, after receiving the Polish boat from the German authorities, sailed on it until 1945. In 1945, he evacuated German soldiers from Gdynia to Hel with a boat, after which he was hanged on Hel for refusing to carry out an order. See J. Pertek, op. cit., p. 99. According to J. Jękabsons, Karol Krüger’s brother was Henryk. See J. Jękabsons, *Internment of Polish soldiers in Latvia in 1939–1940*, <http://www.wyklady.ekpu.lublin.pl/wyklady/jekabsons/jekabsonsw4.htm> (15 01 2013). According to the author, the cutter “Gdy 55” – “Albatros” is probably the boat the escape of which is mentioned by an unknown author describing fishing in 1939-1945, which is then referred to by A. Ropelewski, or this information relates to the cutter of J. Dency “Gdy 2” which according to a fisherman P. Bukowski was part of the Division of Cutters, and then was taken by Polish soldiers to Riga and returned to the Coast brought by the Germans. See B. Huras, M. Twardowski, op. cit., p. 75; *Rybolówstwo w latach 1939 – 1945*, Tygodnik Morski, 13/1962, p. 7; A. Ropelewski, *Rybolówstwo na wybrzeżu gdańskim w latach okupacji (1939-1945)*, „Studia i Materiały do Dziejów Wielkopolski i Pomorza”, vol. 9, 1966, no. 1, p. 83.

²⁵ J. Pertek, op. cit., pp. 100-102; J. Tuliszka, op. cit., p. 197. Obviously, the statement in E. Juśka’s article about Sub-Lieutenant J. Koziolkowski that ... *the fishing boat “Albatros”, through the Danish Straits and the North Sea, reached Sweden, and then England* is not true. See E. Juśko, Sub-Lieutenant Jerzy Koziolkowski (1911-1990). *“Tarnowski dowódca jednego ze „Strasznych bliźniaków”*, „Tarnowskie Studia Historyczne”, vol. 1, 2009, p. 127.

²⁶ W. Steyer, op. cit., p. 111-115; J. Tetter, *Bitwy II wojny światowej. Polskie Termopile*, „Głos Wybrzeża”, 158/1969, p. 5.

²⁷ J. Unruga, Przemówienie adm. Unruga, „Nasze Sygnały”, 95/1959, p. 11.

to the RU Hel crew. In addition, the condition for further continuation of the fight was to stop the possibility of further revolts in RU Hel troops, which was related to the bloodshed he did not want to allow. During this time, Hel also lost its significance as a base for the fleet, whose ships were sunk, detained or left the Baltic²⁸.

As a result of the decision to surrender RU Hel, further attempts were made to break through the German blockade.

The attempt to escape by a fishing boat from Jastarnia, undertaken on October 1, 1939 by Navy reserve Ensign, Jędrzej Giertych, Navy reserve Ensign Andrzej Goebel, Navy reserve Ensign Henryk Borakowski, Seaman Bolesław Nowakowski and two unknown sailors failed. Each of them was part of the anti-landing company stationed in Jastarnia under the command of reserve Lieutenant Alfred Jougan²⁹. Even before the ceasefire was announced, all three officers decided that they would not go captive and would try to get through across the Baltic to Sweden in a rowing boat. They decided to flee by boat straight from the beach because taking a motorboat from the port located on the bay side would make it necessary to sail many kilometres along the shore of the Hel Peninsula, before they sail out into the open sea³⁰. After obtaining the consent of Reserve Lieutenant Alfred Jougana, they began to organise the expedition. They offered to take part in the escape of three seamen from the anti-landing company who agreed to take part in this expedition. Four people were to row, one to steer and one to sleep at the time. The small, light, flat-bottomed rowing boat used for fishing eels had been chosen for a long time, but they did not know its owner. Reserve Ensign Jędrzej Giertych handed the money to befriended Kashubian family with a request to find the owner of the boat and give him money. He bought four oars through the son of this family³¹. In his accounts Reserve Ensign Jędrzej Giertych presents preparations for escape as follows:

Water barrel, floating anchor (in case it could be used), lifejackets, some ropes – we took these items from the rescue station for sinking ships. We felt sad that we could not take a lifeboat from this station; with this wonderful boat we could not only us but a whole bunch of others cross the Baltic safely. But such a huge box would not be able to pass unnoticed through the blockade³².

Unfortunately, the crew of the boat did not have any maps and intended to navigate only with a compass 100 km north, and after making a north-west turn until reaching the shores of Sweden. Food was taken from military resources. While waiting for dusk, the crew of the boat witnessed the sinking of the German M-85 minesweeper on the mine placed by the Polish submarine ORP “Żbik”. When night fell, the crew moved the boat from the dune to the beach and put their things inside. Then, the crew after removing coats and jackets only in sweaters, pants and shoes pushed the boat which finally entered the water. A group of a dozen or more sailors from Jastarnia helped them, guiding the boat through the water and

²⁸ Ibidem, p. 11.

²⁹ H. Borakowski, *Spełnione marzenia*, in: *Ku chwale bandery*, ed. J. Miciński, Warszawa 1992, p. 51; J. Giertych, *Wrześniowcy. Opowieść*, London 1957, p. 50-51; B. Nowakowski, *Wspomnienia z okresu wojny i okupacji* (Archiwum Muzeum Marynarki Wojennej, hereinafter referred to as – AMMW, sign. 166, p. 5).

³⁰ J. Giertych, op. cit., p. 50.

³¹ Ibidem, p. 51.

³² Ibidem, p. 51.

supporting its sides³³. The boat was steered by Reserve Ensign Henryk Borakowski. Because the surf wave was very strong and thrown the boat back to shore, assisting sailors had to try again several times to lead the boat to deeper water. When the boat was far from shore, it was pushed by the wave so that it stood overboard. Consequently, because of its position, the boat turned upside down, and Navy Reserve Ensign Jędrzej Giertych, Navy Reserve Ensign Andrzej Goebel and Navy Reserve Ensign Henryk Borakowski and three sailors fell into the water. Nobody drowned and was injured. Everyone swam to the shore. The boat was washed ashore by a wave. The crew pulled it to the beach, and then began to collect things washed ashore. Some things were saved, among others Jędrzej Giertych found a wallet with photographs of his wife and children and documents. Food supplies were lost³⁴. It was late when the officers, completely soaked and cold, arrived at their quarters, where a farewell dinner was held in one of the boarding houses, which was attended by most officers from the Jastarnia garrison. After dressing up they ate dinner, and the next day after capitulation Hel Fortified Area they were taken captive³⁵.

The most famous and successful attempt to break the German blockade of Hel was the escape to Sweden of a pursuit cutter of the Border Guard "Batory"³⁶. The organizer and commander of the expedition was the head of the Radio Department of the Communications Service of the Headquarters of the Military Port of Gdynia, Lieutenant Jerzy Milisiewicz³⁷. It was he who presented the idea of getting out of Hel on the "Batory" Rear-Admiral Józef Unrug, who in the afternoon of October 1 granted general permission to all who wanted and could get out of Hel³⁸. Together with Lieutenant Jerzy Milisiewicz 6 other officers participated in the expedition: a friend of his Lieutenant Konrad Sawicz-Korsak (Signal Officer of the Fleet Commander), Lieutenant Eligiusz Ceceniowski (commander of the minesweeper "Czajka"), Sub-Lieutenant Tadeusz Męczyński (II artillery officer on the mine deploying vessel "Gryf"), Sub-Lieutenant Alfons Górski and Ensign Mieczysław Tarczyński (assistant signal officer of the Fleet Commander). Apart from the officers, on the cutter there were a Petty Officer Alfred Chęciński, Seamen Stanisław Kwiatkowski, Henryk Pull, Antoni Słomiński and reserve seaman Witold Hubert. Three sailors from the "Batory"

³³ According to B. Nowakowski's account one of the sailors who helped was Standard-Bearer Wojtkowiak. cf. B. Nowakowski, op. cit., p. 5.

³⁴ H. Borakowski, op. cit., p. 51; J. Giertych, op. cit., p. 51-53;

³⁵ J. Giertych, op. cit., p. 53; Z. Boczkowski, *Miny za burtą*, Warszawa 1975, p. 113. Z. Boczkowski erroneously states that one of the fugitives was Navy Reserve Ensign T. Pocolujew. See Z. Boczkowski, op. cit., p. 113.

³⁶ "Batory" – a pursuit cutter of the Border Guard built in Modlin Shipyard. Construction began at the end of 1930, launching on April 23, 1932, and completed on May 7, 1932. Displacement 26.5 t td., After 1933 28 t. Total length 21.2 m, width 3.6 m, height 2.25 m, draft 1.1-1.35 m. Drive 2 Maybach benzole 12-cylinder engines with 550 hp each and 1 6-cylinder Diesel engine also from Maybach with 175 hp. Armament 2 ckm Maxim 08 cal. 7.9 mm. Max speed 24.32 knots. A crew of 9 people. See. I. Bieniecki, *Jednostki pływające polskich formacji ochrony granicy morskiej w latach 1918-1939*, in: *80 rocznica powstania Straży Granicznej II Rzeczypospolitej*, ed. A. Gosławska-Hryhorczuk, Warszawa-Kętrzyn 2008, vol. 2, pp. 62-63; M. Filipowicz, *Ludzie, statki i okręty*, Gdańsk 1985, p. 39; M. Kuligiewicz, *Kuter pościgowy Batory*, Warszawa 1974, p. 7; B. Huras, M. Twardowski, op. cit., p. 240. According to B. Huras and M. Twardowski some sources say that "Batory" was armed with 3 ckms. cf. B. Huras, M. Twardowski, op. cit., p. 240.

³⁷ J. Milisiewicz mentions in his account that he first planned to escape with a 6-row boat, and on October 1, 1939, he tried to start the engine on the "Kania" fisheries protection surveillance vessel. This test, due to the release of compressed air, was unsuccessful. See. J. *Milisiewicz Pamiętnik przeprawy na kutrze „Batory” i wspomnienia z internowania w Szwecji 1939-1943*, „Biuletyn Historyczny”, 21/2006, p. 84.

³⁸ J. Unrug, op. cit., p. 11.

crew also took part in the expedition, namely the second moto-racer, Petty Officer 3 Roch Kaźmierczak, Border Guard Corporal Jan Gawlik and a radio operator Stanisław Lis and two Fleet Command contract officers: Kazimierz Sokołowski and Stanisław Nikiel. There were 16 people on the “Batory” chaser in total³⁹.

The following person also wanted to get out of Hel by the cutter: Lieutenant. Bolesław Żarczyński, commander of the 2nd Naval Gendarmerie Platoon in Hel, but when he was aboard the chaser, the gendarme serving at the pier entrance reported that he was being called to the telephone in the sentry booth. Helarch District commander Włodzimierz Steyer telephoned, who commanded Lieutenant Bolesław Żarczyński organized police and order service in Hel from his subordinate gendarmes, because he received information about robberies carried out by seamen. Then, after reaching the quarters of the platoon, he sent about 10 gendarmes there to patrol the village and returned to the port, but “Batory” had already set sail⁴⁰.

Lieutenant Jerzy Milisiewicz planned to set out at 18:00, however Sub-Lieutenant Tadeusz Męczyński did not bring petrol from the naval harbour. There was only diesel fuel on “Batory”. The petrol that they needed was pumped from a Boarder Guard motorboat “Mazur”, the cutter set out on October 1 1939 at 19:40⁴¹.

After leaving the fishing port and circumnavigating the promontory of the Hel Peninsula, “Batory” developed a optimum cruise speed of 15 knots, sailing on benzol engines, 45 degrees towards the north-east. At the helm stood Lieutenant Jerzy Milisiewicz, who had the diploma of a yachting captain and sailing on yachts, was in Sweden several times, and even knew some Swedish. The supervision in the engine room was performed by Sub-Lieutenant Tadeusz Męczyński, the other officers performed on-board observation service: Lieutenant Konrad Sawicz-Korsak in the bow, Lieutenant Eligiusz Ceceniowski, Lieutenant Alfons Górski and Sub-Lieutenant Mieczysław Tarczyński on ships sides and stern.

³⁹ J. Milisiewicz, op. cit., pp. 89-90; J. Pertek, *Jak przerywano blokadę na Helu*, „Morze”, 10/1959, p. 28; idem, *Ryzykowna eskapada. Jak ścigacz „Batory” forsował blokadę Helu*, „Litery”, 11/1964, p. 2; idem, *Wielkie dni malej floty*, Poznań 1987, p. 156-157; *Spis załogi „Batorego” sporządzony przez kpt. Milisiewicza w Klintehamn* (Izba Pamięci Jerzego Pertka w Bibliotece Raczyńskich); *Polska flyktingar från Hela till Gotland*, „Gotlands Allehanda” z 3 X 1939 r.; „Batory” i gotländska farvatten, „Gotlands Allehanda” z 6 X 1939 r. In W. Salamon’s diary under the date of November 1 1939 there is a note that among other escapees of the “Batory” pursuit cutter there was an officer named Jankisz. Cf. I. Bieniecki, op. cit., p. 76.

⁴⁰ B. Żarczyński, *Wspomnienia ze służby w 2 Morskim Plutonie Żandarmerii na Helu*, in: *Ostatnia Reduta. Sprawozdania z walk i relacje obrońców Helu*, ed. R. Witkowski, Gdańsk 1973, p. 301. As recalled by Navy observer K. Szczęsny from the Naval Aviation Squadron, who was preparing to escape on one of the fishing boats, managed to convince Sub-Lieutenant A. Górski from “Batory” to escape with him on the fishing boat “Hel 117” – “Adela”. Sub-Lieutenant Górski left him his coat lined with fur and ran to take his things from the chaser, but he sailed on “Batory”. Sub-Lieutenant observer Szczęsny stayed with his coat, which was useful in captivity. See. A. Gosk, *Zagłada Morskiego Dywizjonu Lotniczego*, „Morze”, 9/1984, p. 31. The first motorcyclist J. Lis from the permanent crew of the chaser decided not to escape on “Batory” because he did not want to leave his family. After the capitulation of Hel Fortified Area, he was shot on November 17, 1939. See T. Falba, *Rodziny kuter pościgowy. Lisowie na Batorym*, „Nasze Morze”, 10/2010, p. 36-37. Gendarmerie corporal A. Seroka also intended to escape on board of the chaser, but resigned at the last minute.. See A. Seroka, *32 dni obrony Helu*, Olsztyn 1979, pp. 160-163. A proposition to escape on “Batory” was also rejected by Capt. Antoni Kasztelan from Counter Admiral J. Unruğa’s staff on December 14 1942 he was guillotined by Germans in Królewiec. See S. Kudela, *Kapitan Antoni Kasztelan (1898-1942)*, „Biuletyn Historyczny”, 17/2001, p. 171; J. Łubkowski, *Kapitan Antoni Kasztelan – tragiczna postać września*, „Biuletyn Historyczny”, 20/2005, p. 267.

⁴¹ J. Milisiewicz, op. cit., p. 85.

Initially, “Batory” sailed along a course parallel to the Vistula Spit, somewhere outside of Brüsterort, and after two hours, when Piława was passed, Lieutenant Jerzy Milisiewicz changed course to the north-west to Hoburg. There was benzol engine fuel enough for at least 10 hours journey. At 23:00 observers on the speeder noticed lights from the port side from a distance sufficient to change course to 90° and remain unnoticed. Then, when the spotted unit – probably a warship – sailed away, “Batory” turned 180° to the left behind her stern to the previous course. Fortunately, the boat was sailing without recognition lights. At midnight the lights of an alien ship were noticed again, but they also managed to pass it. At 8:00 motorman Petty Officer 3 Roch Kaźmierczak reported that benzol remained only for two more hours of cruise, as a result of which Lieutenant Jerzy Milisiewicz gave the order to start the diesel engine. Despite some difficulties, Petty Officer 3 Roch Kaźmierczak managed to start the diesel engine. The oil supply allowed the chaser to run on this engine for 10 hours⁴².

Reserve seaman Witold Hubert mentions in his account phrased the feeling of hunger and thirst that accompanied the crew of “Batory” as follows:

We are terribly hungry, and above all, we are madly thirsty. I'm trying to make coffee on a stove. Yes, but we only have water that we swim on. It's hard to tell what came out of it, still wet, cold, thirsty we managed to get a few sips of this drink⁴³.

During this time, the weather deteriorated, wind strength and wave height increased, and “Batory”, which had been sailing for several hours, should have been in Sweden according to some crew by then. They demanded a change in the current course, which they thought was wrong. As a result of bottom sounding, it turned out that the chaser was at Hoburgs Bank, so the course was correct. Then the benzene engines stopped and “Batory” flowed only on a diesel engine. Soon the weather improved and at 12 o'clock the chaser was on the traverse of the lighthouse located on the southern Gotland headland⁴⁴. After circumnavigating the promontory, it headed for Visby on the west coast of the island. When “Batory” was near the island of Karlsö just before 15:00 a German ship was noticed from its deck, but at that moment the Swedish torpedo boat “Rangoon” arrived, which led the Polish unit to the port of Klintehamn, where it anchored at 15:30 ending its expedition across the Baltic to Sweden⁴⁵.

After disembarking, Lieutenant Jerzy Milisiewicz immediately communicated by phone with a Polish MP in Stockholm, who, however, was in no way able to help the chaser crew. Commander of the “Ragnar” torpedo boat Lieutenant Ström invited Lieutenant Jerzy Milisiewicz together with one officer of the Polish Navy for dinner, during which he translated

⁴² W. Hubert, *Mój udział w walkach obronnych na Helu 1939 r. Ucieczka do Szwecji na motorówce „Batory”* (AMMW, sygn. 449, pp. 2-3); J. Milisiewicz, op. cit., pp. 86-87; J. Pertek, *Jak przerywano blokadę na Helu, „Morze”, 10/1959, p. 26, 28; idem, Rzykowańska eskapada. Jak ścigacz „Batory” forsował blokadę Helu, „Litera”, 11/1964, pp. 2-3; idem, *Wielkie dni malej floty*, Poznań 1987, pp. 157-158.*

⁴³ W. Hubert, op. cit., p. 3.

⁴⁴ According to W. Hubert, at around 12:00 “Batory” was noticed by a German plane, which after turning over the cutter twice flew away. See. W. Hubert, op. cit., p. 3.

⁴⁵ Ibidem, p. 3; K. Madeja, *Ucieczka przez noc, „Panorama”, 1/1987, pp. 12-13; J. Milisiewicz, op. cit., pp. 85-86; J. Pertek, *Jak przerywano blokadę na Helu, „Morze”, 10/1959, p. 26; idem, Rzykowańska eskapada. Jak ścigacz „Batory” forsował blokadę Helu, „Litera”, 11/1964, p. 3; idem, *Wielkie dni malej floty*, Poznań 1987, pp. 158-159; W. Steyer, *Zagon kutra motorowego „Batory”, „Żołnierz Polski”, 35/1946, p. 9*. It is not known exactly whether the German ship, which was named “Grille”, opened fire and whether it was accompanied by German chasers. See W. Hubert, op. cit., p. 3; K. Madeja, op. cit., p. 13; J. Pertek, *Rzykowańska eskapada. Jak ścigacz „Batory” forsował blokadę Helu, „Litera”, 11/1964, p. 3; W. Steyer, op. cit., p. 9.***

the rules on internment. After dinner, Lieutenant Jerzy Milisiewicz returned to the board of the chaser which was to lead from the port by Lieutenant Tadeusz Męczyński. At around 18:30 while unberthing, the aft flagpole fractured and the diesel engine bolt was damaged as a result of rolling over a stone strand. Swedes gathered in the port tried to push the chaser into the deeper water using ropes thrown from the stern to the shore. When they finally succeeded, its screw stopped after two turns. As a result of this event and the inability to quickly repair after 24 hours, the chaser was detained, although it was not a warship. Earlier talks with the Swedish authorities regarding fuel for the transition of "Batory" to Visby and still had no effect. In addition, the Swedish authorities received a list of the chaser's crew with the annotation that the owner of the unit is the Polish⁴⁶ Navy and Lieutenant Jerzy Milisiewicz had to explain this misunderstanding. On October 3, 1939 at 6:00 "Batory" left Klintehamn being towed, following the torpedo boat "Ragnar" to Visby, where IT was taken on a marine railway so that the damaged screw could be repaired. Three customs officers and two civil servants and reserve seaman Witold Hubert were released. The rest of the crew was detained⁴⁷.

On November 1, 1939. "Batory" was towed by the "Snapphanen" escort vessel to Vaxholm, where all detained Polish units such as "Dar Pomorza" and submarines ORP "Sęp", ORP "Ryś" and ORP "Żbik" in Sweden were located⁴⁸.

The attempt to break the German blockade of Hel by two fishing boats which left at 20:00 failed after the departure of the "Batory" chaser. One of them was a cutter, "Hel 117" – "Adela"⁴⁹, whose co-owners were Reserve Ensign Józef Lipski and a fisherman, Szewczyk took most of the navy officers who decided on this risky expedition. Among them there were Lt Cdr Stefan de Walden, Reserve Lt Cdr Adam Mochuczy, Lt Cdr Kazimierz Szalewicz and Lt Cdr Jan Łuszczkiewicz and Lieutenant Józef Chodakowski, Lieutenant Mieczysław Jacynicz, Lieutenant pilot Aleksander Krawczyk, Lieutenant Bohdan Mańkowski⁵⁰, Lieutenant Wiktor Pstruszeński, Lieutenant Józef Puzyna and Lieutenant Kazimierz Sulisz, and also Sub-Lieutenant Zygmunt Grabowski, ensign pilot Zdzisław Juszcakiewicz, ensign Waclaw Krzywiec, ensign observer Kazimierz Szczęśny and Lieutenant Engineer Józef Bieńkiewicz. There also were: officer cadet eng. Zygmunt Kiciński, co-owner of the boat of Reserve Ensign Józef Lipski and several non-commissioned officers and sailors whose names could not be determined. The commander of the boat was Commander Stefan de Walden.

⁴⁶ *Spis załogi „Batorego” sporządzony przez kpt. Milisiewicza w Klintehamn* (Izba Pamięci Jerzego Pertka w Bibliotece Raczyńskich).

⁴⁷ J. Milisiewicz, op. cit., pp. 88-90; J. Pertek, *Jak przerywano blokadę na Helu*, „Morze”, 10/1959, p. 28; idem, *Ryzykowna eskapada. Jak ścigacz „Batory” forsował blokadę Helu*, „Litera”, 11/1964, p. 3; idem, *Wielkie dni malej floty*, Poznań 1987, p. 159-160. In a Swedish article published online, there is a note that 15 kg of diesel fuel was delivered to "Batory". In addition, the attempts to move the boat from the shoal were made in the lights of a taxi headlights standing on the wharf. See M. Lundgren, R. Wróblewski, *Polska Batorys flykt till Gotland 1939*, <http://www.tjelvar.se/flyktingar/polen-2.htm> (date of access 20 09 2013).

⁴⁸ J. Pertek, *Ryzykowna eskapada. Jak ścigacz „Batory” forsował blokadę Helu*, „Litera”, 11/1964, p. 3; idem, *Wielkie dni malej floty*, Poznań 1987, p. 160.

⁴⁹ 'Hel 117' – 'Adela' – a wooden boat built in 1938 at the Rybacka Shipyard in Gdynia, length 19.10 m, width 5.15 m, registration date 10.03.1938. See B. Huras, M. Twardowski, op. cit., p. 32.

⁵⁰ Bohdan Mańkowski's personal files (Archives of the Office for War Veterans and Victims of Oppression, reference number K-6.011.188, p. 4.7).

However, on the second cutter, which probably was named “Hel 111” – “Alexander”, there were ⁵¹Lieutenant. Józef Giertowski and Lieutenant. Józef Wierzchowski, Ensign Michał Anaszkiwicz, Ensign Julian Czerwiński, Ensign Stanisław Leszczyński, Ensign Władysław Pławski, Ensign Ludwik Zaborski, Ensign Jerzy Żytowiecki and Ensign res. Tadeusz Jasicki and Ensign res. Michał Niczko. In addition, there were about 20 NCOs and sailors on the cutter. The cutter commander was elected by the fleeing reserve Ensign Michał Niczko, an experienced officer from a merchant fleet⁵².

Sub-Lieutenant observer Kazimierz Szczęsny mentions in his account how he learned about the planned escape by cutters:

On the eve of the peninsula's surrender, a liaison officer came to us, giving me a written order to appear in Hel, as some of the officers on the fishing boats are planned to be evacuated. We were ordered to change into civilian clothes, to look like regular fishermen. I was funnily clad, but I was wearing my pilot coat and cap, I reported to Hel. Groups were already preparing for evacuation. I was assigned to a mobilised cutter, owned by Józef Lipski⁵³.

Whereas Reserve Lieutenant Mieczysław Jacynicz mentions in his account how it was intended to break through the lines of the German sea blockade of the Polish Coast:

The escape plan was as follows: in order to bypass the areas patrolled by German ships normally, we were to sail initially towards Piława, then change course north. The hours of waiting for the night dragged mercilessly. The passing of time increased excitement and made us more and more nervous. Those colleagues who did not sail with us advised against going, explaining to us that it was crazy, that we put death into our arms. They didn't do anything. We did not care, and maybe we will succeed?⁵⁴

This is confirmed by Sub-Lieutenant Kazimierz Szczęsny, who mentions that Lt Cdr Stefan de Walden “Hel 117” – “Adela” commanding the cutter decided to sail to the middle of the Gulf of Gdansk, and then headed north towards Sweden⁵⁵.

The course of the expedition until stopped by German ships is recalled by Reserve Lieutenant Mieczysław Jacynicz as follows:

⁵¹ “Hel 111” – “Alexander” – a wooden boat built in 1938 at the Rybacka Shipyard in Gdynia, length 19.10 m, width 5.15 m, registration date 10.03.1938. See. B. Huras, M. Twardowski, op. cit., p. 32.

⁵² J. Czerwiński, *Ucieczka ewazyjna z Helu. Na kutrach rybackich, dla uniknięcia niewoli* (Izba Pamięci Jerzego Pertka w Bibliotece Raczyńskich, p. 1); idem, *Marynarski podkop. (Wspomnienia wojenne oficera Marynarki Wojennej)*, „Przegląd Morski”, 1/1989, p. 59-60; J. Pertek, *Jak przerywano blokadę na Helu*, „Morze”, 10/1959, p. 26; idem, *Wielkie dni malej floty*, Poznań 1987, p. 156; idem, *Mala flota wielka duchem*, Poznań 1989, pp. 115-116. According to J. Pertka on one of the cutters there was Art. Res. Ensign. Sławosz Borowski. Zob. J. Pertek, *Mala flota wielka duchem*, Poznań 1989, p. 116.

⁵³ A. Gosk, *Zagłada Morskiego Dywizjonu Lotniczego*, „Morze”, 9/1984, p. 31.

⁵⁴ Quote after: J. Pertek, *Mala flota wielka duchem*, Poznań 1989, pp. 116-117.

⁵⁵ A. Gosk, op. cit., p. 31. Sailing with a second boat, Ensign reserve V. Jasicki claims that after sailing out of the peninsula, he immediately headed north to the island of Gotland. This version is confirmed by the minesweeper commander of “Nautilus” locating the place where the cutters were stopped north of the Hel headland. See. T. Jasicki, *Ze wspomnień, in: Ku chwale bandery*, ed. J. Miciński, Warszawa 1992, p. 102 and H. Steen, *Blaue Jungen schlagen Polen: erlebnisse von den Kämpfen unserer Truppen um die Danziger Bucht im Blitzkrieg*, Stuttgart 1940, p. 23.

The night promised to be bright, but we were under the illusion that some clouds would cover the “bald one”. The boat was full. We set out in silence for freedom. Despite the nervousness there was perfect agreement and discipline on the boat ... We sailed as planned. None of the crooked clouds came up into the sky. Somewhere around Piława we noticed war units when we turned north. They were approaching us clearly, and we understood that this was the last stage of escape. And indeed, after sailing closer it turned out that it was Germans⁵⁶.

The boats sailed at 8 knots and swam about 40 miles until they stopped. At around 1.00 on the night of October 2 they were noticed and stopped by two German minesweepers “Nautilus” and “Pelikan”, which sailed from Ustka to Piława. The Germans noticed suspicious shadows on the port side, i.e. from the high sea, suspecting that it could be a submarine. After approaching 1000 m, they stated that there were two fishing boats and launched a reconnaissance rocket. Because there was no answer, the minesweepers came closer⁵⁷.

This moment is recalled by the commander of the minesweeper “Nautilus” as follows:

It was impossible to see anything on board the cutter. It seemed like people were lying flat on board. We were so close that we could call to them. I was trying through a tube, but without an answer.

- Stoppen Sie sofort! – I was shouting to them again.

The cutters were running as fast as they could. Then I saw one man standing behind the exhaust pipe who was trying to cover the sparks that were falling from the pipe with a Polish officer’s cap. If these guys didn’t want to hear anything at all, then the machine gun had to speak up!

- Bratata!

Machine guns rattling, white threads of streak ammunition spill behind the rear cutter. They were falling far behind the mast into the waves. Now the last cutter was drifting, and the second was following its trail⁵⁸.

On the other hand, this is how the stopping of Polish cutters is seen from the “Pelikan” minesweeper’s perspective:

The commander is already turning back and is moving towards suspicious units at full speed, the companion is following him. Alarm bells are ringing terribly on both ships, fully alarmed crews waiting for their further orders on both ships. The front ship already gives both ships the order to stop. They ignore it and go on, but a few seconds later the light bullets fall so accurately just before the bow of the first unit that now they both finally go to a full stop⁵⁹.

⁵⁶ Quote after: J. Pertek, *Mala flota wielka duchem*, Poznań 1989, p. 117.

⁵⁷ T. Jasicki, op. cit., p. 102; H. Steen, op. cit., p. 23; S. de Walden, K. de Walden-Gałuszko, W. Szarski, *ORP Wicher i jego dowódca*, „Zeszyt Helski”, 18/2013, pp. 74-75. According to T. Jasicki’s account, German ships maintained 3 patrol lines. The last line was patrolled that night by the minesweepers “Nautilus” and “Pelikan”, which sailed from opposite directions. C.f. T. Jasicki, op. cit., p. 102.

⁵⁸ H. Steen, op. cit., pp. 23-24. Firing on the cutter after the order of Reserve Ensign M. Niczko confirms Reserve Ensign V. Jasicki. See: V. Jasicki, op. cit., p. 102.

⁵⁹ Quote after: J. Pertek, *Mala flota wielka duchem*, Poznań 1989, p. 119.

When German minesweepers stopped Polish fishing boats, its crew was disposing of its weapons. On the cutter “Hel 111” – “Alexander” rifles were thrown overboard, and reserve Ensign Tadeusz Jasicki threw a vis pistol into the water, which he received a few days earlier from his school friend Lieutenant Wierzbowski. However, on the second boat, Sub-Lieutenant Waław Krzywiec got rid of grenades, which he kept in a suitcase taken from Hel. Then, the “Hel 117” – “Adela” cutter was approached by the “Pelikan” minesweeper with almost all crew standing on board with weapons aimed at Poles, the “Nautilus” minesweeper approached the “Hel 111” – “Alexander”. The cutters were searched, and Polish officers, non-commissioned officers and seamen were revised after moving onto the trawlers’ decks. After taking boats in tow, the ships headed for Piława, which they arrived on October 2 in the morning⁶⁰.

The number of officers and sailors who tried to flee on both fishing boats needs clarification. According to H. Steen, a German war correspondent, there were 10 naval officers and 13 engineers on the first cutter, 17 officers and 10 engineers on the second, so 27 officers and 23 engineers were taken prisoner. Of course, the number of engineers given is not true. Whereas F.O. Busch, the second war correspondent, gives the number of 17 senior naval officers, 2 engineers and 6 NCOs and seamen detained on the first cutter. On the second, approximately *the same prey was captured*⁶¹. Reserve ensign Tadeusz Jasicki mentions that there were 37 people on the cutter in which he sailed. Second Sub-Lieutenant Julian Czerwiński reports that on the “Hel 117” – “Adela” cutter there were 17 officers, several NCOs and several sailors, and on the other 10 officers and about 20 NCOs and sailors. According to Reserve Lt Mieczysław Jacynicz on the cutter “Hel 117” – “Adela”, there were 18 people. Lt Cdr Stefan de Walden states in his statement made on January 11, 1949 that there were about 50 officers, NCOs and sailors attempted to escape with on it. On January 12, 1949, a similar statement was made by Lieutenant Jerzy Żytowiecki. According to a report recorded in the combat operations log of the battleship Schleswig-Holstein at At 6.00, two fishing boats with 52 prisoners of war were brought to Piława, including 29 officers.

In the diary of war operations, the commanders of German naval forces in the Gulf of Gdańsk Rear-Admiral Hubert Schmudt in his entry dated on October 2, 1939, states that there were 52 soldiers escaping at the night, including 29 officers. The caption under the photo of one of the cutters brought to Piława informs that 27 people were taken prisoner. Whereas, Communication No. 32 of the OKW National Defence Department about the location on the front on October 2, 1939 informs about the unsuccessful attempt to escape by 53 Polish soldiers, including 29 officers on two fishing boats⁶². It should be assumed

⁶⁰ A. Gosk, op. cit., p. 31; J. Pertek, *Porucznik z kuferkiem granatów*, „Ziemia i Morze”, 10/1957, p. 6; idem, *Mala flota wielka duchem*, Poznań 1989, pp. 123-124; T. Jasicki, op. cit., p. 102. According to T. Jasicki’s report, the minesweepers with fishing boats towed arrived in Piława at around 8:00, according to the entry in the battle log of the battleship “Schleswig-Holstein” this occurred even earlier at 6:00. See. T. Jasicki, op. cit., p. 102; J. Żebrowski, *Zanim poddał się Hel. Niemiecki dokument z 1939 roku. Dziennik działań bojowych pancernika „Schleswig-Holstein” od 24.08 do 02.10.1939 r.*, Łódź 2003, p. 150.

⁶¹ F.O. Busch, *Akten des Seekriegs*, Berlin 1940, p. 189.

⁶² F.O. Busch, op. cit., p. 189; J. Czerwiński, *Ucieczka ewazyjna z Helu. Na kutrach rybackich, dla uniknięcia niewoli* (Izba Pamięci Jerzego Pertka w Bibliotece Raczyńskich, p. 1); A. Drzewiecki, *Adam, Aleksander i Borys Mochuczwowie. W służbie Polskiej Marynarki Wojennej*, Toruń 2005, pp. 166-167; T. Jasicki, op. cit., p. 102; Z. Machaliński, *Adam Mochuczy (1891-1953), pseudonim Pirat, kontradmirał Polskiej Marynarki Wojennej, dowódca Polskiej Marynarki Wojennej, dyrektor Szkoły Morskiej w Gdyni, prezes Rady Głównej Ligi Morskiej, kapitan żegluga wielkiej*, „Nautologia”, 2/1999, pp. 26-27; R. Niczko, *Ucieczka kutrów z Helu*, „Morze Statki i Okręty”, 10/2010, p. 27; J. Pertek, *Jak przerywano blokadę na Helu*, „Morze”, 10/1959, p. 26; H. Steen, op. cit.,

that 50-52 officers, non-commissioned officers and sailors, including 29 officers, tried to escape on both boats.

Upon arrival in Piława, prisoners of both cutters were accommodated in the Skagerrak Maritime Artillery Barracks, where they were treated decently. Then the officers were separated from non-commissioned officers and seamen. Lt Bohdan Mańkowski who was fluent in German became Commander of the group of officers. After two weeks, the prisoners were transported by cars to Klein Dexen in East Prussia. They stayed in this town for about two weeks, from where they were transported to nearby Stablack, and then by rail to Riesenburg. At the beginning of November 1939, a group of officers finally found their way to Oflag XVIII and in Lienz by the Drawa⁶³.

The attempt to get out of the fishing port on Hel on a motorboat of the Border Guard "Kaszub"⁶⁴ also failed. This attempt was made on the night of October 1 – 2, 1939 by several officers, about 15 gendarmes and sailors from various units.

A group of seafarers, including Officer Cadet Stanisław Żochowski from the crew of ORP "General Haller", Jakub Marzec, Waław Wolny and Eugeniusz P. Gumiński, arrived before midnight on October 1, 1939 to the fishing port of Hel in search of a fishing boat on which one could try to escape. They noticed a motorboat of the Border Guard "Kashubia" manned by officers and gendarmes from the 2nd Maritime Platoon of the Gendarmerie, among which were Corporal Kazimierz Jakubowski, Corporal Alojzy Sadecki, Corporal Czesław Skowroński and Corporal Jan Gulczyński. They could not start the engine. In exchange for its launch, they agreed to take the group of sailors on board. When it was finally possible to start the engine with the help of customs officers, the "Kashubian" sailed out of the port and after circumnavigating the Hel Peninsula headed for the full sea towards Sweden. After a distance of 3 miles from the Hel Peninsula, a seafarer accidentally serving as a motor driver got scared of an oncoming seaplane and wanted to slow down to a minimum so as not to leave

pp. 24, 26; Z. Wojciechowski, *Dziennik działań wojennych kontradmirała Huberta Schmunda z 1939 r.*, „Biuletyn Historyczny”, 18/2003, p. 47; J. Zebrowski, op. cit., p. 150; *Komunikat nr 32 Oddziału Obrony Kraju OKW o położeniu na froncie na dzień 2 października 1939 r.*, in: *Wojna Obronna Polski 1939. Wybór źródeł*, ed. E.J. Kozłowski, Warszawa 1968, p. 1001; R. Niczko writes about the difference in the number of fleeing non-commissioned officers and sailors, given by J. Pertek and J. Czerwiński. The first of them says that there were 20 of them, while the second writes about 30 people. According to the author, the reason for this difference is that R. Niczko probably relied on the accounts of J. Czerwiński published in "Przegląd Morski" in 1989, in which he writes about over 30 non-commissioned officers and sailors who were captured. J. Pertek, on the other hand, used the earlier account of J. Czerwiński, whose typescript he had. In this account, J. Czerwiński writes about about 20 NCOs and sailors on the cutter "Hel 111" – "Alexander" and several NCOs and several sailors on the other cutter who were captured. See: J. Czerwiński, *Ucieczka ewazyjna z Helu. Na kutrach rybackich, dla uniknięcia niewoli* (Izba Pamięci Jerzego Pertka w Bibliotece Raczyńskich, p. 1); idem, *Marynarski podkop. (Wspomnienia wojenne oficera Marynarki Wojennej)*, „Przegląd Morski”, 1/1989, p. 60; R. Niczko, *Ucieczka kutrów z Helu*, „Morze Statki i Okręty”, 10/2010, p. 27; idem, *Ku wolności – ucieczki z Wybrzeża 1939 r.*, „Zeszyt Helski”, 14/2012, p. 11; J. Pertek, *Mała flota wielka duchem*, Poznań 1989, p. 115.

⁶³ J. Czerwiński, *Ucieczka ewazyjna z Helu. Na kutrach rybackich, dla uniknięcia niewoli* (Izba Pamięci Jerzego Pertka w Bibliotece Raczyńskich, p. 2); idem, *Marynarski podkop. (Wspomnienia wojenne oficera Marynarki Wojennej)*, „Przegląd Morski”, 1/1989, p. 60; T. Jasicki, op. cit., p. 103.

⁶⁴ "Kaszub" – a patrol motorboat of the Border Guard built in Modlin Shipyard. Construction began in the spring of 1931, and on May 7, 1932, the motorboat was ready for acceptance tests. 12.5 t displacement with lead ballast, total length 14 m, width 3.1 m, side height 1.4 m, draft 0.85 m with keel. Drive 1 Kermath 6 cylinder gasoline engine with 210/225 HP. Utilities 2 ckm Maxim 08 cal. When the lever is rotated to lift the pot the springs should compress by approximately 7.9mm. Speed 12.5-13 knots. A crew of 3-4 people. See: M. Kuligiewicz, *'Kaszub' Motorówki patrolowe typu „Kaszub”*, 4/1974, p. 37.

a track trace on the water. As a result, the motor went out, which could not be restarted. The seaplane did not notice the motorboat and flew on, and the wave drifted "Kashub" overnight towards the peninsula where it got stranded about 100 m from the shore. The water in this place reached the neck and would-be refugees had to swim to the shore.

One more escape should be mentioned, in which five sailors from the crew of the ORP minelayer "Gryf" took part. They were seaman Tadeusz Kosidło, seaman Stanisław Celejewski, seaman Kazimierz Dzirba, seaman Józef Wojda and recruit Lucjan Białobrzewski. On October 1, 1939 at 22.00 they sailed from the war port on Hel in a "six-oared boat which previously with ORP "Gryf" was equipped with. In addition to the chest of grenades and 5 rifles, each of them equipped themselves with two sets of clothes, two sweaters and a pair of new so-called shoes the so called saperki (army boots). Depending on the weather conditions, they were supposed to sail to Sweden in the west wind or to Gdynia in the east wind. After sailing, it turned out that they would sail under the sail to Gdynia. After about four hours, they reached the area of Babi Dol. Earlier a German minesweeper probably passed by them, but did not stop them. When they were close to the shore, a flare fired by the Germans illuminated the area for a moment. They left the boat and threw rifles and grenades into the water, taking only binoculars before reaching the shore. All the time they expected the Germans to open fire with machine guns. After reaching the shore and a moment of rest, disconnecting from the rest, seaman Tadeusz Kosidło and seamed Lucjan Białobrzewski marched towards Gdynia. After walking 1.5 km, dirty and soaked they knocked on the window of one of the houses, but they were not allowed inside. After several unsuccessful attempts to get into a house, they were allowed into the house of the Małkowski's family, where, after dressing up and eating a meal, seaman Małkowski drove them around by 5 a.m. to the road to Koleczkowo. Finally, they both reached Starogard Gdański, where they parted. Seaman Tadeusz Kosidło reached his hometown of Puławy. Whereas, Józef Wojda was captured and spent his captivity in the Stutthof concentration camp. Unfortunately, it is not known what happened to the other sailors⁶⁵.

Even before suspending hostilities and starting talks on the surrender of Hel Fortified Area, an attempt was made to escape by a fishing boat by six soldiers. Probably in the morning of October 1 they left the Hel Peninsula, but they were stopped by the German minesweeper "M-126". The report on this event sent by the minesweeper radio was received at 8.11 on the "Schleswig-Holstein" liner. Commander of the Naval Forces in the Gulf of Gdańsk Rear-Admiral Hubert Schmundt gave an order to deliver prisoners to Nowy Port⁶⁶.

Little is known about the attempt to escape by boat to Sweden made by several people probably on October 2 during the occupation of the Hel Peninsula by German troops. The boat was first noticed by a German plane, and then after about two hours stopped by a German ship. The fugitives were transported to Oksywie, and after about three weeks to Gdańsk. Stefan Rytczak, who was in this group, was sent to the Stutthof concentration camp in February or March 1940. It is not known what happened to the other escapees⁶⁷.

⁶⁵ Information based on fragments of T. Kosidły's accounts placed in: M. Borowiak, *ORP Gryf. Największy okręt bojowy Polskiej Marynarki Wojennej*, Warsaw 2010, pp. 224-226.

⁶⁶ Z. Wojciechowski, op. cit., p. 44-45; J. Żebrowski, op. cit., p. 144.

⁶⁷ S. Rytczak, Report (Stutthof Museum Archive, vol. XV, pp. 1-2).

In the period from September 1 to October 2, 1939, four attempts to navigate by sea through the German blockade of the Polish coast to neutral countries were successful. In total, 34 people broke through onboard the “Strzelec II” yacht, the Danish fishing cutter, the boat “55” – “Albatros” and the pursuit cutter of the Border Guard “Batory”. Some of them later joined the Polish Armed Forces in the West, continuing the fight against Germany. It should be emphasised that successful attempts to get out of the Coast were usually made during difficult weather conditions, which, however, helped to avoid encounters with German ships patrolling the waters near the Polish Coast. These attempts were made without prior planning and preparation, and yet, thanks to the courage, ingenuity and training of the people involved, they were successful.

Efforts of crossing the German blockade of Polish coast by sea 1 Sept. – 2 Oct. 1939 Summary

The article presents the attempts of Polish coast defenders’ to get through to neutral countries by sea during military operations in September and October 1939. These efforts were made in spite of the German blockade of Polish coast by Kriegsmarine ships and Luftwaffe planes. This subject hasn’t been widely featured yet using the reports of coast defenders kept in Polish and foreign archives. The goal of this article is the systematisation of knowledge about these facts, presentation of characters of sailors, soldiers and civilians, who didn’t want to go into captivity. Some of them were going to continue their struggle in Polish Armed Forces in the West.

Keywords: Escape, keelboat, Hel Peninsula, yacht, Batory

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