Rum Runners of the Baltic—The Rise of Transnational Liquor Smuggling Networks in Interwar Europe

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SUMMARY

This article analyzes the local and transnational entanglements of interwar liquor contraband operations to show how smuggling in the Baltic Sea region grew from small-scale coast-to-coast operations to a large-scale trade organized by transnational syndicates moving millions of liters. It examines transnational smuggling networks, the use of flags of convenience and large base ships to argue that the framework of the "Helsinki Convention for the Suppression of the Contraband Traffic in Alcoholic Liquors of 1925" led to professionalization and trans-nationalization of contraband operations and a significant growth in liquor smuggling. The analysis of the Free City of Danzig (Wolne Miasto Gdańsk), where the boundaries between small-scale smuggling and professional contraband operations were fluid, provides insights into the local elements of liquor smuggling operations. This part of the argument focuses on the weak governmental control and the tax-free area in the Danzig port, which provided the necessary infrastructure for large-scale smuggling and enabled the city-state to become a major hub for liquor smuggling operations.

KEYWORDS: smuggling, contraband, alcohol, spirits, Danzig, Gdańsk, prohibition, Finland, Baltic Sea

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In the early 1920s, the Estonian Eduard Krönström travelled to the Free City of Danzig from Tallinn by train, carrying a suitcase full of money and knowing only two German words: "zwei Mark" (two marks).[1] What Krönström intended to buy in Danzig was the number one contraband product of the decade—rectified spirit, which was traded in the free zone of the local port at two marks per liter. Less than one thousand kilometers northwards, the same product could be sold to Finnish smugglers for up to 20 times the price. The smugglers supplied their "dry" country yearning for illegal liquor in a prohibition era similar to that in the United States.[2] After the First World War, restrictive regimes on alcohol consumption in Scandinavia and a surplus of spirits in Central and Eastern European countries sparked a flourishing illegal liquor trade that gradually increased to millions of liters by the end of the 1920s. The Free City of Danzig was one of the trade centers. Starting in 1923, the Scandinavian prohibition countries tried to fight contraband through international treaties—an enterprise that remained unsuccessful.

This paper traces how alcohol contraband turned poor fishermen like Krönström into millionaires who managed entire fleets of liquor ships. It provides an analysis of the origin and distribution of spirits used for contraband in the interwar Baltic and offers new insights into the economic and social history of the Baltic Region in the interwar era. By analyzing the local and transnational entanglements of contraband operations, this article answers the question why the Free City of Danzig became the main hub for interwar liquor contraband. Smuggling was a daily occurrence in the city-state and surrounding area, practiced and tolerated by large parts of the population: Danzig's population, regardless of its ethnic background, can be called a *Schmugglergesellschaft* (smuggler society), where smuggling was practiced by large parts of the population and tolerated within the society.[3] In Danzig, the boundaries between small-scale smuggling and professional contraband operations became fluid. The free city provided the necessary infrastructure for large-scale smuggling and, at the same time, featured weak governmental control. Furthermore, with the focus on the "Helsinki Convention for the Suppression of the Contraband Traffic in Alcoholic Liquors of 1925" and its consequences, transnational countermeasures will be put in a global context.

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1 RAIMO PULLAT, RISTO PULLAT: Morze wódki: Przemyt spirytusu na Bałtyku w okresie międzywojennym [The Vodka Sea: Liquor Smuggling in the Baltic in the Interwar Era], Kraków 2013, p. 256.

2 Although the driving factors behind the establishment of prohibition in both countries were different, as Mark Smith has recently shown, the outcome in terms of a rapid growth of alcohol contraband were very similar. MARK C. SMITH: Questioning Similarities: Prohibition in the United States and Finland, in: American Studies in Scandinavia 49 (2017), 1, pp. 3-18.

3 MATHIAS WAGNER: Die Schmugglergesellschaft: Informelle Ökonomien an der Ostgrenze der Europäischen Union. Eine Ethnographie, Bielefeld 2014, p. 317.

The main argument of the article is that, instead of decreasing smuggling, the new transnational legal framework of the Convention in fact triggered a professionalization and trans-nationalization of contraband operations, which led to a significant growth in liquor smuggling. Using flags of convenience and large base ships, transnational smuggling networks successfully managed to bypass all imposed regulations and sanctions. Even after the end of the Scandinavian prohibition regimes, liquor contraband remained a widespread problem and negatively affected all countries in the Baltic, including the exporting countries.

State of Research and Sources

Apart from an extensive Estonian study by Raimo and Risto Pullat, which deals primarily with the Gulf of Finland, the practices of European interwar liquor contraband have not yet been the subject of academic studies. On the other hand, the many failures of alcohol prohibition projects have been well-documented by researchers in Scandinavia and abroad, from both local and transnational perspectives.[4] Baltic liquor contraband is currently studied only as a local phenomenon. The few existing studies focus mainly on the delivery part of the contraband supply chain and present smuggling largely as an isolated process.[5] Contraband, however, provides a veritable example for the study of transnational entanglements and policy-making, as recent studies on the smuggling in North America, South Asia and early modern France have shown.[6] The existing gap in scholarship on Baltic contraband seems rather

4 MARK LAWRENCE SCHRAD: The Political Power of Bad Ideas: Networks, Institutions, and the Global Prohibition Wave, Oxford 2010; PER OLE JOHANSEN: The Norwegian Alcohol Prohibition: A Failure, in: Journal of Scandinavian Studies in Criminology and Crime Prevention 14 (2013), sup. 1, pp. 46-63.

5 The comprehensive work of Raimo and Risto Pullat partly traces the origins of smuggled liquor but predominantly deals with Estonian-Finnish issues. Otherwise, interwar Baltic smuggling is largely absent from academic literature. For the Free City of Danzig Marek Andrzejewski was the first historian to cover this topic academically in a brief paper. MAREK ANDRZEJEWSKI: Przemyt alkoholu z Wolnego Miasta Gdańska do krajów skandynawskich w okresie dwudziestolecia [Liquor Smuggling from the Free City of Danzig to the Scandinavian Countries in the Interwar Era], in: Kalendarz Gdański (1986), pp. 50-56. This stands in contrast to North America where contraband during the prohibition era has moved into the focus of several recent academic studies. See for example LISA LINDQUIST DORR: A Thousand Thirsty Beaches: Smuggling Alcohol from Cuba to the South during Prohibition, Chapel Hill 2018; STEPHEN T. MOORE: Bootleggers and Borders: The Paradox of Prohibition on a Canada-U.S. Borderland, Lincoln 2014. ELLEN NICKENZIE LAWSON: Smugglers, Bootleggers, and Scofflaws: Prohibition and New York City, Albany/NY 2013.

6 ERIC TAGLIACOZZO: Secret Trades, Porous Borders: Smuggling and States along a Southeast Asian Frontier, 1865-1915, New Haven—London 2009; PETER ANDREAS: Smuggler Nation: How Illicit Trade Made America, Oxford 2013; MICHAEL KWASS: Contraband; Louis Mandrin and the Making of a Global Underground, Cambridge/

surprising as in the last two decades smuggling has become a major theme of academic research. Scholars have increasingly put their focus on the political implications of contraband and the relationship between legal frameworks and contraband practices throughout the decades.[7] However, few studies of this kind expand their scope beyond the transatlantic world.[8]

A major obstacle that all academic projects dealing with smuggling face is the lack of archival sources. George Diaz in his study on border contraband across the Rio Grande rightly calls it "an elusive subject for historical scrutiny."[9] The success of contraband operations largely depends on secrecy and the organizers were not eager to produce extensive documentation of their operations. Elaborate reports on successful smuggling can virtually never be found. Only when illicit trade failed did it become part of police and border guard files and, at times, of court papers. Moreover, the smugglers usually did not write diaries and memoirs. At best, they were interviewed by journalists or their failed smuggling operations were documented in the local media. The negotiations around the Helsinki Convention of 1925, however, involved multiple state institutions, led to an increased administrative focus on liquor contraband and had significant media coverage. This article uses reports by customs agencies, administrative documents and diplomatic correspondence, primarily on the Helsinki Convention, from archives in Poland, Germany and the United States and articles from local Danzig and international newspapers as primary sources.

Prohibition and Production–Scandinavia and the European Spirits Market

The gradual growth of the liquor trade network that spanned the Baltic Sea throughout the interwar era was spurred by several economic, social, and political factors. Historically, the Scandinavian countries levied higher taxes on alcohol than their southern neighbors and contraband of all kinds of goods had taken place in the region for centuries.[10] However, during and after the

MA. 2014; GEORGE T. DÍAZ: Border Contraband: A History of Smuggling Across the Rio Grande, Austin 2015.

7 ALAN LEONARD KARRAS: Smuggling: Contraband and Corruption in World History, Lanham 2012.

8 An exception is Charles Ambler's study on the control of drugs in Africa, which includes a study of campaigns and legal frameworks against liquor traffic. CHARLES AMBLER: The Drug Empire: Control of Drugs in Africa, a Global Perspective, in: GERNOT KLANTSCHNIG, NEIL CARRIER et al. (eds.): Drugs in Africa, New York 2014, pp. 25-47.

9 DÍAZ (as in footnote 6), p. 2.

10 For early examples of Baltic smuggling, see ANNE STALSBERG: Swords from the Carolingian Empire to the Baltic Sea and Beyond, in: JOHAN CALLMER, INGRID GUSTIN et al. (eds.): Identity Formation and Diversity in the Early Medieval Baltic and beyond:

First World War, the global temperance movement gained extraordinary success in the European north, North America, Russia and in many other regions of the world, which turned alcohol into a main commodity for smuggling. Prohibition, usually seen as an American phenomenon, only represents one facet of a strong push for government restrictions on alcohol that was global in scope, as Mark Lawrence Schrad shows in his comparative study. In fact, in many other parts of the world, new measures to fight alcohol consumption were introduced during the interwar era, from quota systems, through bans on hard liquor, to total prohibition. As a consequence, the increased demand for alcohol became a strong driving factor for alcohol contraband in all these regions, not only in Scandinavia.

The Scandinavian region became the second biggest market for contraband alcohol after the United States because the temperance movement gathered immense support in several Nordic countries in the interwar era and anti-alcohol measures were implemented on a large scale.[11] The most severe measures were taken in Finland, which was one of Europe's "driest countries", in the mid-1910s.[12] The country had already adopted restrictive measures during the First World War in 1917.[13] Later, in 1919, as one of the first acts after becoming independent from Russia and one year earlier than the United States, Finland introduced a total prohibition of all alcoholic beverages. As the result of a public vote, the consumption, production and distribution of alcoholic beverages were banned. After the prohibition law was implemented, alcohol consumption increased considerably.[14] Although beer, wine, brandy and rum were also smuggled, the main contraband product became rectified (neutral) spirit, highly concentrated ethanol, which usually contains 96 per cent alcohol by volume. Firstly, this had to do with a historical preference in Scandinavia for liquor. Secondly, rectified spirits are non-perishable and can be diluted and used as a base for virtually any alcoholic beverage. Thirdly, due to their better weight to alcohol and price ratio, spirits

Communicators and Communication, Leiden—Boston 2017, pp. 259-280, here pp. 268-269; MICHAEL NORTH: The Hanseatic League in the Early Modern Period, in: DONALD J. HARRELD (ed.): A Companion to the Hanseatic League, Leiden—Boston 2015, pp. 101-126, here pp. 121-122. There is evidence for liquor contraband between Estonia and Finland in the nineteenth century, see PULLAT/PULLAT, Morze wódki (as in footnote 1), pp. 30-35.

11 GÜNTER SCHMÖLDERS: Staatliche Bekämpfung des Alkoholismus in den nordischen Ländern, ihre Methoden und ihre Erfolge, Berlin 1926, pp. 35-39.

12 ESA ÖSTERBERG: Finland, in: JACK S. BLOCKER, DAVID M. FAHEY et al. (eds.): Alcohol and Temperance in Modern History: An International Encyclopedia, Santa Barbara 2003, pp. 240-243, here p. 241.

13 For a detailed description of Finland's policy see ESA ÖSTERBERG: From Home Distillation to the State Alcohol Monopoly, in: Contemporary Drug Problems 12 (1985), 1, pp. 31-51.

14 ÖSTERBERG, Finland (as in footnote 12).

provided the highest economic return to smugglers.[15] At the same time, liquor was traditionally seen as a particularly dangerous drink by temperance activists, due to its high alcohol by volume content.

The bad reputation of liquor was one of the reasons why Norway introduced a partial prohibition of alcohol, which banned any beverage containing more than 20 per cent alcohol by volume from store shelves in the years between 1917 and 1927.[16] In Sweden, a referendum for prohibition failed in 1922. However, Ivan Bratt, an influential Swedish physician and public figure, conceived a nationwide ration card system which heavily regulated the sale of alcohol.[17] Bratt—who "compared buying alcohol to buying dynamite: something that only adult and responsible people should be allowed to do"[18]—created a system that entirely excluded parts of the adult population,

15 JACK BLOCKER: Kaleidoscope in Motion: Drinking in the United States, 1400-2000, in: MACK P. HOLT (ed.): Alcohol: A Social and Cultural History, Oxford—New York 2006, pp. 225-240, here p. 232.

16 JOHANSEN (as in footnote 4). For a short time-period beer and wine were also banned but this ban was quickly lifted. See SCHMÖLDERS (as in footnote 11).

17 SCHRAD (as in footnote 4), p. 117.

18 Cited after SVANTE NYCANDER: Ivan Bratt: The Man who Saved Sweden from Prohibition, in: Addiction 93 (1998), 1, pp. 17-25, here p. 19.

such as convicted criminals, tax debtors, and unmarried women from the legal purchase of alcohol and restricted the quantities an individual could buy to a couple of liters a month.[19] Although to a lesser extent than Finland and Norway, the so-called "Bratt-system" and the state monopoly in the sale of alcohol made Sweden an attractive destination for liquor contraband. In addition, Denmark, the only Nordic country which never had a state monopoly on alcohol, became a destination for smugglers because of the high excise introduced in 1917 and the restrictions on the sale and serving of alcohol.[20] The Baltic countries were a minor market due to their comparatively high alcohol prices. Particularly Estonia served both as a sales market for foreign spirits and as an important hub for contraband because of its proximity to Finland.[21]

While the increased control of alcohol distribution in the European north has been well documented, the increased supply of spirits after the First World War has so far largely been neglected in the scholarship. The European market for spirits was oversaturated and supply widely exceeded demand. Two major producers of spirits, Poland and Germany, were located in the southern Baltic; both countries had national monopolies that exported large quantities of spirits that could be used for contraband. Low prices originated primarily in large production volumes, leading to an oversupply in export quantities, and were also influenced by lower domestic consumption. In Weimar Germany, for example, the consumption of alcohol per capita reached a historic low, which particularly affected the production of spirits. Beer had become the drink of choice for the majority of the population, a trend that had already started in the nineteenth century.[22] Although liquor remained the drink of choice in many other European countries, its consumption declined and there was an oversupply on the domestic markets. Germany was a major supplier of spirits but not the only country that exported large quantities.[23] In Poland, vodka consumption declined and the state monopoly could only process limited amounts of spirits for domestic use.[24] Since state monopolies committed to purchasing large amounts of spirits from the do-

19 See SCHMÖLDERS (as in footnote 11), pp. 27-30, for a detailed description of the regulations.

20 JAKOB DEMANT, TROELS MAGELUND KRARUP: The Structural Configurations of Alcohol in Denmark: Policy, Culture, and Industry, in: Contemporary Drug Problems 40 (2013), 2, pp. 259-289, here p. 265.

21 PULLAT/PULLAT, Morze wódki (as in footnote 1), pp. 221, 225.

22 HASSO SPODE: Die Macht der Trunkenheit: Kultur- und Sozialgeschichte des Alkohols in Deutschland, Opladen 1993, pp. 249-251.

23 Compare PULLAT/PULLAT, Morze wódki (as in footnote 1) who state that primarily German spirits were used for export purposes. That claim was reinstated in a shorter journal article, see IDEM: The Vodka Sea: Comparative History of Spirits Smuggling in the Baltic Sea, in: Journal of Scandinavian Studies in Criminology and Crime Prevention 13 (2012), 1, pp. 64-73.

24 JACEK MOSKALEWICZ, GRAŻYNA ŚWIĄTKIEWICZ: Poland, in: BLOCKER/FAHEY (as in footnote 12), pp. 482-486, here p. 483.

mestic producers, new markets had to be developed. Poland managed to sell a part of its produce to the Turkish spirits monopoly but in the mid-1920s large amounts of unsold spirits accumulated in the monopoly warehouses.[25] Other producing countries such as Czechoslovakia, Hungary and the Netherlands also featured an overproduction and supplied the European market with spirits at low prices.[26] Consequently, cheap spirits could be obtained in high quantities and illegally shipped to the Scandinavian market from all these countries. Although contraband had taken place in the Baltic region, particularly between Estonia and Finland for many decades, in the interwar era the Baltic Sea turned into what Pullat and Pullat call the "Vodka Sea."

Fig. 1: Estonian border guard with seized spirits in cans in 1925. Meremuuseum [Maritime Museum], Tallinn, sign. MM F 2119

Spirits and Shoes in Danzig—the Free City as a Hub for Contraband

The Free City of Danzig serves as an example to, firstly, illustrate how liquor contraband in the Baltic developed and, secondly, to analyze its entanglements with local and transnational legal, social and economic frameworks. Established as a result of the Versailles treaty in 1920, the Free City played a key role in interwar liquor contraband because of its peculiar administrative, ethnic and economic nature. Prior to the First World War, Danzig had been

25 Deutsche Destillateur Zeitung from 1925-09-12 and 1925-11-17.

26 SLAVCHO ZAGOROV: The Agricultural Economy of the Danubian Countries, 1935-45, Stanford 1955, p. 208.

the capital of the German province of West Prussia and had largely served as a local administrative center. Trade still played an important role for the city, which had traditionally served as Poland's main Baltic port, but due to the partitions of Poland and the more dynamic development of other Baltic ports such as Riga, Lübeck and Stettin, the role of Danzig was reduced to a minor port in the region.[27] This changed when the city and the surrounding area were turned into a city-state under the supervision of the League of Nations in order to secure local autonomy for the predominantly German population and to provide the newly established Polish state with access to the Baltic.

Over the course of the 1920s, the Free City became the center of Baltic liquor contraband and its inhabitants played a vital role in the smuggling operations. Allegedly one of the first Danzig liquor smugglers of the decade, a former merchant navy captain with the pseudonym Johannes Weiss was interviewed by the English journalist Geoffrey Pinnock in the mid-1930s, when contraband had already declined. Pinnock made Weiss's life story part of a collection of interviews that showcased various forms of interwar smuggling.[28] Weiss's story provides an example for the emergence and modus operandi of early contraband operations from Danzig to Finland from the beginning to the late 1920s. According to the interview, Weiss grew up in a village near Danzig and was unemployed after the war. Already in 1919 he was approached by two local businessmen who had purchased a small 30 gross register tons motor ship and had already made contact with Finnish "in-running syndicates" in order to set up an alcohol smuggling scheme.[29]

The story of "Johannes Weiss" also hints at another underestimated factor in the contraband operations, namely the role of transnational networks. Finland had not been a traditional destination for Danzig traders and locals lacked language skills and contacts in the distant country. Thus the role of a contact person and translator, according to Pinnock, was taken over by a Baltic-German who spoke Finnish and Swedish.[30] Indeed, Danzig's importance as a contraband hub has roots mostly in its geographic position between Finland, the Baltic countries and the Central European spirits market which provided supply. Furthermore, the example of Weiss also illustrates that, even at an early stage of the process, smugglers had to establish transnational net-

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27 This can be said in particular for the years between 1815 and 1870. See JÓZEF STANIELEWICZ: Stagnacja w handlu i żegludze [Stagnation in Trade and Transport], in: EDMUND CIEŚLAK (ed.): Historia Gdańska. Vol. IV/1: 1815-1920, Sopot 1998, pp. 82-145. Although the trade partly recovered in the following decades, the port never reached the significance it had in pre-modern times.

28 GEOFFREY PINNOCK: Dark Paths: The Story of Modern Contraband Running in Europe, London 1938, pp. 17-98.

29 Ibidem, pp. 26-27.

30 Ibidem, p. 28.

works in order to obtain, transport and sell their goods.[31] Pinnock's story is similar to many other studies on smuggling, particularly alcohol contraband, which focus on the delivery part of the smuggling operations—the most spectacular part, at times involving wild speedboat chases and gunfights on the water.[32] Although it was usually the most dangerous part of the operation, the actual process of bringing the goods into destination countries was only the last part in the supply chain of contraband. Past and present-day smuggling should rather be analyzed, as Gautam Basu suggests, as "a logistics intensive process due to unique transportation, storage, and packaging requirements, reliance on international transportation and distribution systems, and level of coordination among various actors within the illicit supply chain."[33]

When it comes to liquor contraband, the supply chain became more complicated as it was gradually professionalized. In the first years of the smuggling operations, Pinnock describes Weiss' trips to Finland as runs of a thinly-disguised fishing boat that brought locally purchased alcohol directly to the Finnish shores.[34] This practice quickly became an exception, as profit margins became smaller due to increased supply and the growing number of smugglers. As a consequence of the professionalization, the supply chain became divided into formally legal and illicit practices. Instead of being disguised in small fishing boats, large amounts of spirits were openly traded in the Danzig port. To support trade and commerce, a part of the Danzig port had been turned into a free zone after the First World War, which meant that goods could be stored, re-packed and traded tax-free within the limits of this area. Thus, the passage between international waters and the Danzig port, but also the public and private storage houses were legally outside of the customs territory of the Free City. Under the law of the Free City of Danzig, it was legal to export tax-free alcohol from the port and goods were only taxed in Danzig if they officially entered the Danzig customs territory. Such free zones could be found in several other Baltic ports including Kiel, Stettin, Memel (Klaipeda), and Königsberg.

With the professionalization of contraband operations, the existence of such a free zone became the most important prerequisite for spirits contraband, because it allowed for the distribution of large quantities of tax-free

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31 In this light Kendra L. Koivu's claim that the Finnish alcohol trade was "largely domestic" is questionable. KENDRA L. KOIVU: Illicit Partners and Political Development: How Organized Crime Made the State, in: Studies in Comparative International Development 53 (2018), 1, pp. 47-66, here p. 59.

32 ANDRZEJEWSKI, Przemyt (as in footnote 5); HENRYK KULA: Bałtyckie harce przemytników alkoholu [Baltic Skirmishes of Alcohol Smugglers], in: Morze 1 (1992), pp. 20-21.

33 GAUTAM BASU: The Role of Transnational Smuggling Operations in Illicit Supply Chains, in: Journal of Transportation Security 6 (2013), 4, pp. 315-328, here p. 316.

34 PINNOCK (as in footnote 28), p. 32.

spirits, which were purchased directly from the producers in tank trucks.[35] In Danzig a company called Holm-Export exclusively dealt with tax-free spirits and supplied smugglers. Furthermore, re-packing facilities for spirits existed in the Danzig free zone. The alcohol from tanks was poured into sheet metal canisters, which served as the standard packaging for contraband liquor because they could easily be transferred at sea and could be stored in smaller ships. The sellers did not sail to the destination countries anymore and instead remained in exterritorial waters, transferring their canisters to small motorboats operated by local partners who brought the spirits ashore. In consequence, Danzig-based manufacturers of quality alcohols, which were also exported in large quantities, began to offer their products in such packaging for so-called "transit purposes."[36] The Danzig Holm-Export and other companies had offices and employees in many Baltic ports and in Hamburg, which served as a hub for contraband to the U.S. and Norway.

The existence of the free zone allowed the contraband networks to ship alcohol to Danzig, store it in one of the many customs warehouses and later ship it to any other port in the Baltic. Apart from that, ships could officially declare any destination for the alcohol, even the "dry" countries Finland or Norway. However, most often captains who smuggled liquor claimed to sail

35 The predominant use of tax-free spirits differentiated Baltic contraband from rum running between the Bahamas and the US, where companies purchased regular liquors such as scotch whiskey in the United Kingdom and created immense tax revenues for the Bahamian government, which eliminated public debt within a short time. See LAWRENCE SPINELLI: Dry Diplomacy: The United States, Great Britain, and Prohibition, Wilmington 1989, pp. 2-3.

36 A distinction has to be made here between liquor and rectified spirits. In 1925, the anti-alcohol activist John Scharffenberg, a specialist on alcohol smuggling in Norway, presented a broad list of international measures to be taken against alcohol smuggling at a conference organized by the International Bureau Against Alcoholism in Geneva in 1925. Scharffenberg pointed out that distilleries exist in certain free ports, which "ought to be under the same severe control as similar inland establishments." Furthermore, he argued that "the best solution would be to forbid distillation within the zone of the free ports; in any case the control ought to be made much more stringent and the compulsory declaration […] ought to be introduced also for the exportations from the free ports." JOHN SCHARFFENBERG: Alcohol Smuggling in Norway, in: RAYMOND HERCOD (ed.): Proceedings of the International Conference against Alcoholism at Geneva (1-3 September 1925), Lausanne 1925, pp. 106-113, here p. 111. However, for the case of Danzig the available archival material does not allow us to answer the question of whether a larger share of rectified spirits that came to Scandinavia was produced in the free zone as PULLAT/PULLAT, Morze wódki (as in footnote 1), p. 215, suggest. The Free City featured a large distillery in the port, the Baltische Spritwerke, but this company is never mentioned by the authorities. Spirits produced in Danzig were more expensive than products from large producing countries like Poland. The Spritwerke supplied the local market, held a monopoly on the distilling of spirits in Danzig for most of the interwar era and made high profits from legal sales. HENSEL: Brennereibetrieb in der Freien Stadt Danzig, in Zeitschrift für Spiritusindustrie 50 (1927), 5, pp. 37-38, and Gazeta Handlowa from 1928-09-30/10-01.

to another large port, such as Kiel or Hamburg, and sold their cargo on the way while constantly remaining in international waters. In 1924, a local temperance activist documented that a ship carrying spirits sailed eastwards from Kiel to Danzig without unloading its cargo at the destination and shortly afterwards sailed westwards to Hamburg in the North Sea. Obviously, the only goal of such trips was to sell alcohol on the way.[37] In the same year, official statistics of the Danzig port even included ships bringing in alcohol from Finland, which practically meant that they "imported" alcohol from a country where it was illegal. In fact, their captains were simply bringing back unsold liquor.[38]

The rise of tax-free spirits trade also opened new local markets for the smugglers, which made contraband a concern for the local Danzig authorities. They feared a flooding of the local market with cheap contraband spirits, which would cause tax losses and replace local produce. Indeed, liquor from the tax-free warehouses, instead of being shipped abroad, was illegally brought back to Danzig. On several occasions, local smugglers, who attempted to bring spirits from the port into the Free City illegally, were caught.[39] This largely ignored issue raises questions about the direct economic and social consequences of contraband on a local level.

Danzig became an attractive place for smuggling because of the very inadequate border control.[40] Firstly, the Danzig border guard and the customs agency were very ineffective due to their complicated organization.[41] Legally, Poland had the administrative control over the border guard and a couple of Polish customs officers worked in Danzig. The Poles were supposed to supervise the German employees of the border guard, who made up most the staff, but had no right to interfere and could only report irregularities to War-

37 ALFRED SEILER: Danzig und der Alkoholschmuggel in der Ostsee, in: Der Kämpfer 1 (1925), 2, pp. 7-8.

38 Ibidem.

39 Spritschmuggel in der Danziger Bucht, in: Der Kämpfer 2 (1926), 3, p. 4; Wein, der sich in Wasser verwandelt, in: Danziger Volksstimme from 1927-06-16.

40 Similar conclusions were recently drawn concerning the trafficking of women via the Free City. KEELY STAUTER-HALSTED: Prostitution in the Free City of Danzig and Warsaw, in: JEAN-MICHEL CHAUMONT, MAGALY RODRÍGUEZ GARCÍA et al. (eds.): Trafficking in Women (1924-1926): The Paul Kinsie Reports for the League of Nations, vol. 2, New York 2017, pp. 62-71.

41 For a detailed description of the Polish customs policy for the Free City of Danzig, see BOLESŁAW HAJDUK: Wolne Miasto Gdańsk w polityce celnej Polski (1922-1934) [The Free City of Danzig in Poland's Customs Policy], Wrocław et al. 1981. A description of the Polish border guard in Danzig can be found in HENRYK KULA: Gdańska "Dziura celna." Polscy inspektorzy celni w Wolnym Mieście Gdańsku 1920-1939 [Danzig's "Customs Loophole." Polish Customs Officers in the Free City of Danzig 1920-1939], Gdańsk 1999.

Fig. 2: The Danzig Customs Agency buildings in the port area. Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe [National Digital Archive], Warsaw, sign. 1-E-6153-2

saw.[42] Due to the tense political situation the Germans, however, were not very eager to restrict the traffic of goods between Germany, Danzig and Poland. Secondly, corruption was rampant in Danzig, in nearby Poland and in German East Prussia. Lawsuits against customs officers were often documented by the local newspapers.[43] Even if they wanted to crack down on contraband, the border guard did not have enough resources to supervise the sea border thoroughly. In 1926, an employee of the Danzig customs agency reported that only two motor boats were available to patrol Danzig's sea border, one of which could not be used due to financial restrictions.[44] He concluded his report stating that the customs agency was not only unable to com-

42 This was ruled through the Warsaw agreement of 1921-10-24, see OTTO LOENIG: Danzig und Polen, in: Zeitschrift für Politik 15 (1926), pp. 14-38, here p. 29.

43 Danziger Volksstimme from 1924-11-07; Danziger Neueste Nachrichten from 1924-07-31; Danziger Volksstimme from 1924-07-31. In 1927 a Social-Democratic deputy criticized in the Senate that 44 employees of the Danzig customs agency were temporarily suspended because of internal investigations against them. This number also covered an alcohol smuggling operation which involved a customs officer. Danziger Volksstimme from 1927-06-16.

44 Kraeft—Abschrift [Transcription of a letter to the Danzig Senate from the Customs Agency], 1926-10-19, in: Archiwum Państwowe w Gdańsku (APG) [Gdańsk State Archive], Senat Wolnego Miasta Gdańska [Senate of the Free City of Danzig], sign. 260-1397, pp. 349-353.

bat smuggling to other countries, but was "almost entirely helpless and not even sufficiently able to prevent smuggling into Danzig itself."[45]

What is more, there was little interest among the population to prevent contraband. For the inhabitants of the Free City, smuggling goods into Danzig had become a kind of sport.[46] The act of smuggling was seen as a form of protest against the unwanted statehood but, more importantly, saved the inhabitants a lot of money since prices in Germany and Poland were much lower than in Danzig. In his memoirs, the journalist and the president of the local Rotary Club, Friedrich von Wilpert, provides the example of large German shoe stores in Danzig that put their products on display, without expecting any buyers. That is, because of the price differences, Danzigers would regularly travel to the nearby German towns of Marienburg and Elbing to purchase the exact products that they have spotted in Danzig's main shopping street. The local shops of the very same companies provided their clients with soft pieces of sandpaper, which allowed them to give their new shoes a slightly used look and let them slip through the customs in Danzig without having to pay import taxes.[47]

When it came to alcohol contraband from the Free City, the general opinion was not much different, last but not least because members of the local Danzig middle class became involved in alcohol smuggling. As a trial against a master blacksmith in 1930 revealed, a part of the smaller smuggling operations was not financed by large criminal syndicates, but by local Danzig businessmen.[48] Furthermore, Danzig was everything else but a "dry" city. Government statistics from 1920s Danzig show that between three and four liters of drinkable spirits per capita were consumed every year which, on average, was three times more than in Germany.[49] According to local temperance activists, Danzig had one of the highest alcohol consumption rates per capita in

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45 Ibidem: "[…] nahezu ganz machtlos, aber auch nicht einmal in der Lage, die Einschmuggelung nach Danzig selbst zu verhindern."

46 For a detailed description of various everyday smuggling practices in the Free City of Danzig see MAREK ANDRZEJEWSKI: Zjawisko przemytu w Wolnym Mieście Gdańsku [The Phenomenon of Smuggling in the Free City of Danzig], in: MARIAN MROCZKO (ed.): Na rozstajach dróg: Gdańsk między Niemcami a Polską (1920-1939), Gdańsk 1998, pp. 119-132.

47 FRIEDRICH VON WILPERT: Einer in fünf Zeitaltern: Meilensteine an einem wechselvollen Lebenswege, Bonn 1977, pp. 91-92.

48 Hinter den Kulissen des Spritschmuggels: Wie man das Schiff Juno finanzierte—Was die Gerichtsverhandlung ergab, in: Danziger Volksstimme from 28.03.1930. A similar case was documented in 1925 when a local carpenter was on trial for purchasing a ship in Germany and smuggling alcohol to Sweden, see Danziger Volksstimme from 1925-05-05.

49 According to official government statistics, the population of the city state on average consumed 3.5 times more than the average German between 1923 and 1928. Erzeugung, Bewirtschaftung, Besteuerung und Verbrauch von Branntwein in der Freien Stadt Danzig in den Steuerjahren 1923 bis 1928, in: Danziger Statistische Mitteilungen (1929), 9/10, p. 133.

the German-speaking cities, coming second only to Vienna.[50] Reasons for this high consumption were generally seen in Danzig's character as a port and a tourist city with many bars and restaurants catering to foreigners.[51] The Danzig alcohol consumption rate becomes even more impressive when it is considered that contraband spirits sold locally were not included in the data. The famous Polish local writer Brunon Zwarra states in his memories that selling contraband tobacco and alcohol from the free zone of the port provided him a considerable additional income. According to him, smuggling boats were a regular sight on the Mottlau river, right in city-center.[52] Finally, unlike many other countries, Danzig did not have a monopoly on spirits. A monopoly would potentially have increased the level of supervision of local trade and production.

Germany, which featured a spirits monopoly, also became a destination for contraband liquor from the Free City. In 1926, an elaborate smuggling scheme of tax-free alcohol via boats from Danzig to Berlin was uncovered.[53] The customers were small factories in the Berlin area which used the illegal spirit to produce cheap liquors.[54] The case was seen as spectacular by the German media because it involved an allegedly reputable nobleman, who owned a listed stock company and a bank. Amounts were seen as huge, since the base ship used for smuggling could carry 10,000 liters and the largest motorboat of the group could deliver 2,000 liters in hidden tanks.[55] However, these were miniscule amounts compared to what was already smuggled to Scandinavia from Danzig at that time. In 1928, a German-Finnish smuggling syndicate purchased a brand new cruiser from the Stettin shipyard that could hold up to 600,000 liters of alcohol and was equipped with the latest technology and also armed with machineguns.[56] How did liquor contraband operations grow from small motor boat trips to Finnish island bays in the early 1920s into large-scale export operations that would amount to millions of liters by the end of the decade? The following section addresses this question.

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50 Wie groß ist der Verbrauch an Alkohol in Danzig?, in: Der Kämpfer 1 (1925), 14, pp. 1-3.

51 Erzeugung, Bewirtschaftung, Besteuerung und Verbrauch von Branntwein (as in footnote 49).

52 BRUNON ZWARRA: Wspomnienia gdańskiego bówki [Memories of a Danzig *Bowke*], vol. 1, Gdańsk 1984, p. 193.

53 Vossische Zeitung (Abend-Ausgabe) from 1926-10-02 and from 1926-10-04.

54 The Times from 1926-10-08; PULLAT/PULLAT, Morze wódki (as in footnote 1), pp. 215-216.

55 Vossische Zeitung (Morgen-Ausgabe) from 1926-10-07.

56 PULLAT/PULLAT, Morze wódki (as in footnote 1), pp. 226-228.

Nordic Negotiations–Fighting Contraband Through Treaty

The Scandinavian destination countries realized that contraband could not be fought sufficiently through increased border controls and anti-smuggling measures on a national level. Although new and faster boats for the border guard were bought, contraband ship registers were created and raids were increased, no major reduction of contraband was achieved. The available statistics shows that none of these measures worked.

In the first year following the introduction of the prohibition, only a couple of thousands of liters were confiscated. The small stream of spirits coming into Finland quickly grew into a river. The amount of confiscated liquor grew exponentially in the first years, from 58,000 liters in 1921 to more than 100,000 in 1922.[57] In 1923, around 200,000 liters were seized and 1924 statistics show more than 300,000 liters only for the first nine months of the year.[58] The general assumption in Finland at the time was that only ten per cent of the whole quantity of smuggled alcohol was confiscated, which means that smuggling volumes had already reached the millions at that early stage.[59]

The Nordic countries were not alone in their endeavor to fight liquor contraband. In the same time period, the United States tried to fight contraband through bi- and multilateral treaties with other countries.[60] Similarly to the United States, the Nordic countries increasingly focused on ways to interrupt the flow of alcohol supply from abroad instead of focusing solely on domestic crime-fighting initiatives. With this purpose in the mid-1920s, the affected countries, under the leadership of Finland, reached out to their Baltic neighbors to initiate legal measures against liquor contraband. In 1923, the Nordic countries made a first attempt to initiate a control of alcohol exports in ports of the Southern Baltic. Starting in Kristiania (Oslo), multilateral meetings were organized with the aim to fight alcohol contraband in the region. Proposals were made to introduce control measures for alcohol exports through declarations and registrations. Furthermore, on top of the agenda was the fight against small and nimble speedboats like the Weiss boat "Seeperle", which could easily outmaneuver the ships of the guard and escape into international waters. The main obstacle for the early negotiations was the low level of international support. Apart from the affected countries Finland, Norway, Sweden and Denmark, only Germany attended the first conference in 1923. The German government attended the conference because it was concerned that

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57 Three years of national prohibition in Finland, Report from US Vice Consul in Finland Glassey to Department of State, 1922-12-18, in: National Archives and Records Administration, Washington D.C. (NARA), sig. [microfilm] T1184, r[oll] 6, n.p.

58 Confiscation of Alcohol, American Foreign Service Report from Legation in Finland to Department of State, 1924-10-31, ibidem.

59 Ibidem.

60 EDUARDO SÁENZ ROVNER: The Cuban Connection: Drug Trafficking, Smuggling, and Gambling in Cuba from the 1920s to the Revolution, Chapel Hill 2008; SPINELLI (as in footnote 35).

sea legal trade with the Nordic countries could be hampered. More precisely, it feared German shipping companies could be punished when sailors were caught smuggling smaller amounts of alcohol on freight ships.[61] In Oslo only recommendations were made and no treaty was signed.[62] In contrast, the United States was able to sign various treaties already in 1924 with exporting countries like Germany and Great Britain, but also Panama and France.[63] Having less influence in the international system, it took the Nordic countries much longer to bring all Baltic neighbors to the table.

In 1925, Finland finally managed to get representatives of all states adjacent to the Baltic Sea to the table in Helsinki (Helsingfors). A protocol that imposed much tighter regulations on the export of alcohol on ships was introduced and the convention was signed by all states on 19 August 1925. The main point of the convention was the total ban of alcohol transport on smaller ships with sizes below 100 gross register tons. This ban was designed to end the practice of transporting spirits on speedboats. In order to allow the legal shipping of alcohol, ships larger than 100 gross register tons were allowed to carry alcohol, but only if their owners were trustworthy and had no criminal record. Furthermore, the convention required the ship's captain to sign a declaration that the cargo was not designed for smuggling and that its export would proceed without breaking the laws of the country of destination.[64] The Finns, similar to the US border guard, wished to receive the right to chase smuggler boats well beyond their territorial waters.[65] It took several years for the countries to sign and ratify the convention. In 1926, one year after the conference, Danzig had still not ratified the agreement.[66] However, many other participants had not either. Germany and Poland were also closely watching each other's steps in terms of the agreement. The geographical scope went beyond the Baltic. Belgium and France were also under scrutiny as alcohol exporting countries and Germany was not eager to ratify the convention without these countries being signatories.[67] Two years after the conference in 1927, Danzig, Poland and Germany ratified and the Finns were

61 Auswärtiges Amt an Deutsche Gesandtschaft in Kristiania, 1923-05-31: Bundesarchiv, Berlin (BArch), R 901/75478, n.p.

62 Konferenz zur Bekämpfung des Schmuggels, abgehalten in Kristiania in der Zeit vom 14. bis 17. Juni 1923, ibidem, n.p.; Schiffahrt-Zeitung from 1923-08-04.

63 DAVID P. FIDLER: The Globalization of Public Health: the First 100 Years of International Health Diplomacy, in: Bulletin of the World Health Organization 79 (2001), 9, pp. 842-849.

64 Convention text printed in: United Nations: Laws and Regulations on the Regime of the High Seas, New York 1951, pp. 137-144.

65 Übersetzung—Entwurf zum Abkommen, n.d. [around 1925], in: APG, sig. 260-1397, pp. 135-143, here p. 139.

66 Baltic Smuggling—International Agreement still unratified, in: Financial Times from 1926-07-07.

67 Hauschild, Deutsche Gesandtschaft Helsingfors an Auswärtiges Amt Berlin, 1926-11-26, in: BArch, R 901/75482, n.p.

finally able to create a framework that would make it impossible to export alcohol from Baltic ports without proper permission. At least this was what they thought.

Panama in the Baltic–Flags of Convenience

On 23 September 1927, Finnish revenue officers made a rare catch near the Soderskar lightvessel off the Finnish coast. Despite being shot at multiple times, the border guard managed to seize not only a small Finnish motor boat carrying 1,500 liters of contraband spirits—it also caught the base ship "Hvalen", manned with Estonian sailors. With the help of the coast guard, the ship was towed into Helsinki and the smugglers were taken to the police station. The triumphant victory quickly turned into a veritable failure. The Estonians had not registered their ship in Tallinn or Helsinki: the "Hvalen" was an official member of the Austrian fleet, registered far away from oceans and rocky islands. With the help of the local Austrian consul, the smuggling vessel had been registered in Vienna just a few days prior to the arrest. The Finnish government was not as delighted as the coast guard with the arrest and the police could not determine which crew member had fired the shots at all. Helsinki panicked over the arrest of a vessel belonging to a non-convention country outside of its territorial waters.[68] The Austrian consul quickly stated that the flag certificate had only been issued temporarily and that the vessel was no longer recognized as an Austrian ship. Nevertheless, the Austrian government protested against the seizure of the ship.[69] Eventually, the "Hvalen" was towed back into international waters by the coast guard. The Estonian smugglers were rather unimpressed by the Austrian-Finnish disagreement they had caused and pulled some strings in Danzig. The Greek consul in the Free City quickly issued a new ship certificate. Without leaving Baltic waters, the smuggling ship miraculously sailed from Austrian ship registers to its new official Greek home port of Poros in the Aegean Sea.[70]

Already in 1926, just a few months after the Helsinki conference, smuggler boats like the "Hvalen" started to reappear in the waters of the Baltic Sea and loaded alcohol in Danzig and other ports.[71] This time, they no longer sailed under local flags but were registered in countries which had not signed the Helsinki agreement such as Great Britain or Belgium. For two years, the

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68 Barton Hall, Legation of the U.S. in Helsingfors to U.S. State Department, 1927-10-03, in: NARA, sign. T1184, r. 6, n.p.

69 United States Legation in Vienna to United States State Department, 1927-10-21, ibidem.

70 Barton Hall, Legation of the U.S. in Helsingfors to U.S. State Department, 1927-10-24, ibidem.

71 Neue Methoden der Spritschmuggler an der finnischen Küste, in: Der Kämpfer 2 (1926), 8, p. 5; Flaggenwechsel zum Spritschmuggel, in: Der Kämpfer 3 (1927), 12, p. 11.

Danzig flag was also used as a flag of convenience by liquor smugglers.[72] The Free City ratified the Helsinki convention on 11 October 1927, two years after it was initially concluded. This made it impossible for ships to use the Danzig flag to export liquor for contraband purposes.

The signing of the convention, however, did not mean that contraband from the signatory country immediately stopped, as the case of Danzig shows. For another year Danzig did not even alter its regulations for export of alcohol in the way in which the Helsinki convention required it, which meant that smaller boats carrying spirits using non-signatory flags could still leave the Danzig port without having to obtain special permission.[73] An overview of the port traffic in Danzig for 30 April 1928 indicates that a small motorboat of only 25 gross register tons sailing under the Turkish flag left the Danzig port for Helsinki.[74] Smugglers started to register the ships in distant countries like Turkey, Panama, Czechoslovakia, Greece, and Persia. The foreign flags allowed them to load spirits in Danzig and other ports without having to obtain permissions for export.[75] These registrations could only be made at consulates or embassies of these countries. Danzig and Gdynia were two port cities in the Southern Baltic where there were a great number of such institutions. The issue of flag certificates was often initially a local affair since, for the vast majority of countries, the consuls were local businessmen.[76] Sometimes ships were not even properly registered in the countries of the flags they used: Czechoslovakia repeatedly fined people for unauthorized use of its flag for alcohol contraband in the interwar era.[77] Smugglers knew, of course, that it was hard for customs officers to check at sea if a ship used fake documents or was properly registered in a distant country or not. Flags were changed very often and sometimes used only for a single trip.[78] According to the re-

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72 With this practice liquor smugglers followed the concept of the company Standard Oil. According to RODNEY CARLISLE: Danzig: The Missing Link in the History of Flags of Convenience, in: Northern Mariner / Le Marin du Nord 23 (2013), 2, pp. 135-150, the flag of the Free City of Danzig was the first flag of convenience for tankers used in the twentieth century.

73 Danzig und das Helsingforser Abkommen gegen den Spiritusschmuggel vom 19.08.1925—Ein Erfolg der Danziger Alkoholgegner, in: Der Kämpfer 4 (1929), 5, pp. 2-3.

74 Danziger Zeitung from 1928-05-02.

75 Der Spritschmuggel blüht wieder, in: Danziger Volksstimme from 1928-10-16.

76 Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych: Spis urzędów dyplomatycznych i konsularnych państw obcych w Polsce i W. M. Gdańsku oraz sieć polskich urzędów dyplomatycznych i konsularnych zagranicą [Ministry of Foreign Affairs: List of Diplomatic Offices and Foreign Consulates in Poland and the Free City of Danzig and Network of Polish Diplomatic and Consular Offices Abroad], Warszawa 1927.

77 LENKA KRÁTKÁ: A History of the Czechoslovak Ocean Shipping Company, 1948-1989: How a Small, Landlocked Country Ran Maritime Business during the Cold War, Stuttgart 2015, p. 14.

78 Danziger Volksstimme from 1931-01-05.

port, the crew of the "Hvalen" carried multiple other flags of countries that had not signed the Helsinki agreement, including a Chinese one.

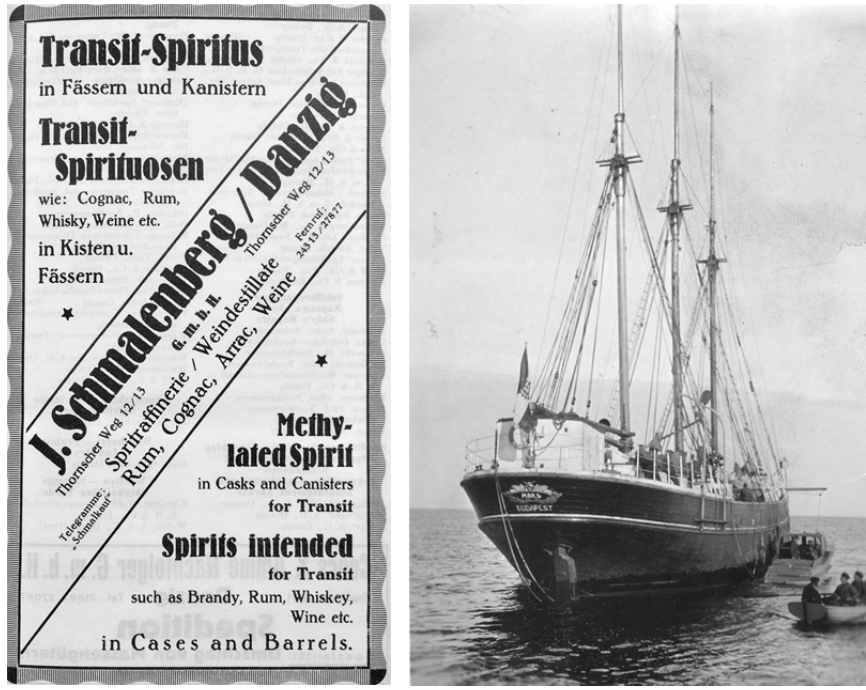

Fig. 3: Advertisement for Transit Spirits in: Karte des Danziger Hafens mit Hafenpolizei-Verordnung, Hafenabgaben-, Lagergeld- u. Krangebühren-Tarifen etc., Hamburg 1928

Fig. 4: Smuggling ship registered in Hungary, year unknown. Tullimuseo [Customs Museum], Helsinki, sign. 06-0046

Contraband Cruisers—The Rise of Transnational Smuggling Networks

Even before "exotic" flags appeared on the ships, smuggler rings were organized transnationally. Possession was often disguised and it was very hard to identify the real owner of the ships. The maritime laws of states required the captain and part of the crew to have the nationality of the country in which the ship was registered. In order to be allowed to use the Danzig or the British flag, for example, spirits merchants had to find captains with Danzig or British citizenship. But even without this requirement, the ship crews usually consisted of many different nationalities. Local sailors were hired from the countries of destination as they knew local waters best. In the case portrayed by Pinnock, a Baltic-German, a Danzig-German and a Finn organized the early

contraband trade.[79] Large-scale entrepreneurs such as Krönström had associates in many different countries to organize the supply of spirits and to deal with the registrations of ships.

The Helsinki provisions for a ban on smaller motorboats and the introduction of the 100 gross register ton limit contributed to the professionalization and increase of contraband volumes. Analyzing the ship traffic from Danzig and Kiel, Finnish authorities estimated that the amount of spirits smuggled into the country exceeded eight million liters in 1928 and eleven million liters in 1929.[80] After all Baltic countries had finally implemented the regulations of the Helsinki convention, smaller smugglers such as the Danzig-based captain Weiss disappeared from the Baltic and moguls like Krönström took over the contraband business. The convention put an end to the use of smaller motorboats for direct coast-to-coast contraband. Now smugglers exclusively used larger ships of more than 100 gross register tons, which remained outside of the territorial waters of the destination countries as so-called "base ships" for several months and sold spirits to local smugglers. The delivery part was mostly conducted by local distributors.

Thus, towards the end of the 1920s, trade became concentrated in the hands of a few transnational syndicates that moved amounts in the millions of liters.[81] Tax-free alcohol was obtained in high quantities from the Central European national monopolies and loaded in the free zones. Cheap Polish, Hungarian and Czechoslovak spirits could be brought to Danzig in tank cars via railway. Similarly, German and Dutch spirits could be obtained by the syndicates from the free zone of the Port of Kiel. Trade flows concentrated in these two ports and supply-chains became more centralized and effective. In the center of these operations was the aforementioned Danzig Holm-Export—a company managed by the Russian-Jewish émigré Lucie Wulfson and owned by two German sailors.[82] Shortly before Danzig ratified the Helsinki convention, a representative of this company approached the Senator of Finance Ernst Volkmann, urging him to rethink the ratification of the protocol because of the possible negative consequences on Danzig's economy.[83] Holm-Export was also able to place a favorable article on spirits contraband, which they presented as legitimate business, in the major local newspaper *Danziger Neueste Nachrichten*.[84] Since Holm-Export only traded tax-free spirits in large quantities within the port, the company was entirely legal under the Danzig law.

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79 PINNOCK (as in footnote 28), pp. 26-28.

80 Exact statistics are printed in PULLAT/PULLAT, Morze wódki (as in footnote 1), pp. 401-404.

81 See ibidem, pp. 254-267 and 372-376 for income estimates of various smugglers.

82 Ibidem, p. 219-220.

83 Volkmann an Senat Abteilung für Auswärtiges—Vermerk, 1926-08-11, in APG, sign. 260-1397, p. 344.

84 Sprit Verladungen von Danzig, in: Danziger Neueste Nachrichten from 1928-11-14.

The business became less lucrative for individual smugglers and economic pressure grew in the early 1930s as the example of a Danzig-based smuggler Hans Hofmeister shows. In 1931, a former Danzig trade vessel of 180 gross register tons was purchased by smugglers who registered it under the name "Aspasia" in Greece.[85] Captain Hofmeister, however, defrauded his German and Danzig business partners, which included the notorious Holm-Export, of 80,000 Danzig Guldens. Neither the smuggling nor the theft of the money was punishable under Danzig law as the fraud occurred in combination with a sale that was itself unethical. Hofmeister was only charged for forging of documents and later arrested for arson and insurance fraud when he set his Danzig property on fire half a year later.[86]

The contraband of alcohol drastically declined after 1932, when alcohol prohibition was abolished in Finland.[87] However, it did not stop, as multiple reports on liquor smuggling in the Baltic region show. Due to the price differences between Central Europe and the Scandinavian countries, the latter remained attractive destinations for smuggling well after 1932. In Sweden, the enforcement of the Bratt-system became more severe to include home inspections based on anonymous informants.[88] Apart from Scandinavia, tax-free alcohol was also still smuggled to Germany and other countries. Eduard Krönström, the former syndicate leader, was not involved in this business. He died in July 1932 when, returning from Danzig to Estonia in search of new markets for spirits, the driver of his Ford lost control of the car on a rural Estonian road, causing a fatal accident.[89]

The Free City of Danzig remained a center for smuggling due to its favorable geographic location and existing infrastructures. The close proximity of two major ports, Danzig and Gdynia, also contributed to the popularity of the Danzig region among smugglers who could make use of both ports. In 1932, the *Sunday Times* noted that "vast quantities of vodka, schnapps and other alcoholic beverages are smuggled each week at tremendous profits" from

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85 Sprit an Bord, in: Danziger Volksstimme from 1931-01-05.

86 Ibidem: "[…] Unterschlagung in einer Sache, die an sich gegen die guten Sitten verstößt, ist eine Angelegenheit, die die Allgemeinheit und ihren Schutz nichts angeht"; Mit 400 000 Finnmark flüchtig—Danziger Firma schwer geschädigt, in: Danziger Volksstimme from 1931-01-03; Großfeuer bei Spritkapitäns, in: Danziger Volksstimme from 1931-06-22.

87 ANDRZEJEWSKI, Przemyt (as in footnote 5), p. 129, states that the "Eldorado" was closed, but alcohol contraband did take place on a comparatively large scale well after 1931.

88 SIDSEL ERIKSEN: Sweden, in: BLOCKER/FAHEY (as in footnote 12), pp. 603-606, here p. 605.

89 ILMAR PALLI: Kirjaoskamatu piiritusekuninga traagiline lõpp [The Tragic End of the Illiterate Liquor King], in: Maahleht from 2012-10-19, URL: http://maaleht.delfi.ee/news/maaleht/elu/taismahus-kirjaoskamatu-piiritusekuninga-traagiline-lopp?id=65127624 (2018-10-18).

Gdynia and Danzig to Finland, Sweden and Germany.[90] The establishment of a free zone in Gdynia in 1933 proved to be a further advantage and, in 1936, the Swedish authorities complained to Poland that alcohol contraband from Danzig and Gdynia was flourishing.[91] Providing the names of ships and individuals, the Swedish embassy in Warsaw instigated investigations on smuggling operations in Poland and the Free City. The resulting report from the Danzig Customs Agency identifies a German, a Polish and a British citizen as well as the aforementioned Holm-Export manager Wulfson as the main protagonists of contraband operations in the area. Furthermore, the report estimated that 1,600,000 liters of spirits, produced mostly in the Netherlands and partly in Poland, were smuggled from Danzig to Sweden on a yearly basis, which was far less than in the previous decade but roughly equaled the overall consumption of alcohol in the Free City.[92] Under the National Socialist government in Danzig, alcohol smuggling also became associated with anti-Semitic claims as the representative of the customs agency suspected "Jews of different nationalities" as the initiators behind the ongoing contraband schemes.[93] Sweden was able to force Poland and the Free City of Danzig to tighten up their alcohol exports in 1936 when both, at least on paper, introduced more comprehensive regulations for the export of spirits from their ports. Unlike Finland at the Helsinki Convention in 1925, Sweden directly threatened Poland with countermeasures and announced that it would close its port for the import of Polish coal from Gdynia and Danzig if alcohol smuggling from these ports would not stop.[94] However, it remains unclear whether

90 Sunday Times from 1932-01-03.

91 Although planned since the late 1920s, the free zone in Gdynia was established as late as 1933-03-11. See Wolny Obszar Celny [Tax Free Area], in: Encyklopedia Gdyni, Gdynia 2006, pp. 920-921. Focusing on the issue of Danzig German involvement in contraband, PULLAT/PULLAT, Morze wódki (as in footnote 1) underestimate its transnational nature and neglect the fact that smugglers used both ports, Danzig and Gdynia, and that a large share of the spirits came from various European countries, including Poland. Compare ibidem, p. 219. See also Schwedische Gesandtschaft—Aide-Mémoire, n.d. [around 1936], in: APG, sign. 260-2726, pp. 3-9.

92 Der Staatsrat des Landeszollamts der Freien Stadt Danzig an den Senat—Finanzabteilung—Betr. Bekämpfung des Spritschmuggels, 1936-06-02, in: APG, sign. 260-2726, pp. 55-57.

93 Ibidem.

94 Der Senat der Freien Stadt Danzig—Finanzabteilung an die Abteilung für Auswärtiges—Betr. Spritschmuggel nach Schweden, 1936-10-24, ibidem. The negotiations between Poland and Danzig in this matter were triggered by a private meeting of the National Socialist president of the Danzig Senate Arthur Greiser and the Polish General Commissioner in Danzig Kazimierz Papée. See: Arthur Greiser—Auszug über eine Besprechung mit Minister Papée am 09.04.1936, 1936-04-14, ibidem, pp. 61-62. Sweden was the fifth largest market for Polish exports among which coal played an important role. See KARL HEIDRICH: Der Außenhandel Polens im Jahre 1936, in: Die Ostwirtschaft 26 (1937), 2, pp. 22-24.

these measures worked.[95] Alcohol contraband in the Baltic continued until the outbreak of the Second World War and other commodities were increasingly smuggled towards the end of the 1930s. It is well documented that the National Socialists smuggled weapons and ammunition by sea into Danzig in order to prepare their violent takeover and destruction of the Free City in September 1939.[96] With the outbreak of the Second World War, the Baltic Sea also served as an escape route for refugees escaping the occupied territories in the Southern and Eastern Baltic by boat to Sweden.[97]

Conclusion

Alcohol contraband developed in the Baltic from small smuggling enterprises to a professional practice carried out by large transnational networks. The protagonists of these operations can be found across all ethnic groups as this study has shown. In the Free City of Danzig a local "smuggler's society" and transnational business structures like the Holm-Export, the free zone of the port and the presence of diplomatic missions where flags of convenience could be obtained provided a fertile ground for smuggling operations and turned Danzig into the main hub. Furthermore, as demonstrated, the Helsinki Convention and its provisions pertaining to large vessels further intensified liquor smuggling instead of decreasing it. The comparatively large archival documentation around the anti-liquor-trafficking conventions of the mid 1920s offers valuable material for research, which has so far been widely neglected and invites comparative study of the Baltic with other regions of the world. What is more, both contraband operations (including their supply chains) and countermeasures taken by the affected countries should be compared on a global scale. In the interwar period not only the Scandinavian shores, but also the Pacific and Atlantic coasts of the United States, the North Sea and many other parts of the world saw an increase of alcohol contraband in a global era of prohibitive regimes.

95 The available archival documentation centers around the Swedish-Polish-Danzig negotiations of 1936 and ends in this year. See APG, sign. 260-2726, passim. Liquor smuggling in Estonia continued until 1939. See the amounts of confiscated alcohol in PULLAT/PULLAT, Morze wódki (as in footnote 1), pp. 205, 338.

96 JAN DANILUK: SS w Gdańsku [The SS in Danzig], Gdańsk 2013, p. 90.

97 See for example JOHAN MATZ: Soviet Refugees to Sweden 1941-1947 and the Raoul Wallenberg Case, in: Journal of Baltic Studies 46 (2015), 4, pp. 435-457.

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