

## POLAND

### Historical Background

The history of Poland, which began over 1 000 years ago, shows a constant tendency of Poles working to gain and hold a free access to the Baltic Sea. In the end of the ninth century Prince MIESZKO I, who is now considered to be the founder of the Polish state, incorporated Pomerania, which gave Poland the access to the Baltic Sea. In the following centuries Polish maritime affairs were determined by the history of the whole nation, so they underwent periods of success and misfortune. At the end of the eighteenth century, Poland lost her independence completely for over one hundred years. Consequently, the access to sea was also lost.



FIG. 1.- Poland.

Maritime ambitions of the Poles revived during the First World War. There were appropriate conditions for regaining independence. Owing to Polish politicians' actions, preferences of the local population and understanding of the Poles' maritime ambitions by architects of the post-war political order in Europe, Poland regained access to the Baltic, which took place during the Versailles Treaty. The Polish coast

was not long at that time; it included only the Bay of Gdańsk and Hel Peninsula without any major ports. Gdańsk, which used to belong to Poland had become a free city. Immediately after implementation of the Versailles Treaty, Poland acquired its coast. A special ceremony called Marriage of Poland and the Baltic took place in Puck, a small town by the sea on 10 February 1920. The beginnings of hydrographic services in Poland are connected with these historical facts.

### **Establishing the Hydrographic Service in Poland**

State authorities were well aware of the fact that one of the practical measures to control sea waters is ensuring a proper level of navigation safety. Therefore, on 20 February 1920 the Hydrographic Service was established. Since it was the first institution of this kind in the history of the nation, this date is considered the birthday of hydrography in Poland. The Hydrographic Service, being a part of the Polish Navy (Nov. 1919), was under the authority of the Ministry of Military Affairs. In the initial period of the Hydrographic Service organizing structures of maritime administration were continued. In 1921, the Merchant Marine Office was established, later renamed the Maritime Office, which has functioned continuously since then. The Hydrographic Office was reformed into the Hydrographic Office of the Polish Navy (HOPN). It was at that stage that the division of responsibilities and rights between HOPN and civilian maritime administration took place. Civilian institutions became responsible for building and maintaining navigational seamarks and landmarks, designing and maintaining waterways, controlling the safety of navigation in merchant ports and in the Polish area of responsibility. The Hydrographic Office of the Polish Navy, being a naval institution, took responsibility for hydrographic surveys conducted at sea and in naval ports, preparing and publishing charts and other nautical publications, maintaining the navigational warning system and training specialists in hydrography. HOPN also had separate tasks in the field of ensuring navigational safety of the Polish Navy.

### **HOPN Activities before 1939**

In the initial stage of organizing hydrographic services in Poland, efforts were made to gain a ship for hydrographic works. In the end of 1919, a coastal passenger and cargo ship was purchased. She was built in 1883 and used as a patrol ship named 'WOTAN' by the German Navy. The ship was repaired and equipped for hydrographic tasks. On 1 May 1920 the Polish naval flag was hoisted and the ship was named 'POMORZANIN'. It is remarkable that 'POMORZANIN' was the first ship to carry the naval flag. A few days after the ceremony the ship started her works surveying Polish waters.

In the beginning, the Polish Hydrographic Service was assisted by other countries in terms of training, organization and experience. The first officers from HOPN were trained in France and learned practical methods of work and various aspects of hydrographic office.

Taking into account some international experience as well as efforts to establish international co-operation in the field of hydrography, which resulted in setting up the International Hydrographic Organization 75 years ago, Poland applied

to enter the IHB shortly after it came into being. HOPN membership in IHO formally started on 27 July 1926. The Polish representative took part in the second International Hydrographic Conference in 1926.

Certainly, the war interrupted the regular course of works in HOPN. The part of Navy which was in Great Britain during the war was supplied and secured in the field of navigation by the British Admiralty.

### **Polish Hydrographic Service today, Basic Tasks**

In 1995, structural and organizational changes of Polish hydrographic services were concluded. Owing to these changes the model and functions of hydrographic services were consolidated. The Hydrographic Office of the Polish Navy remained the official state institution in the field of marine cartography and hydrography. Civilian maritime administration continued to be responsible for the system of navigational seamarks and landmarks in the Polish area of responsibility.

Nowadays HOPN is on the one hand a naval institution which carries out navigational and hydrographic tasks for the Navy. On the other hand, it is a state hydrographic and cartographic institution representing Poland in IHO and other international bodies. The Naval Academy organizes training courses for hydrographic specialists and personnel according to plans and needs of HOPN and Maritime Offices.

HOPN is directed by the Chief of HOPN (Hydrographer of the Polish Navy), who is at present Captain Władysław KIERZKOWSKI. He manages and supervises all the Hydrographic Service departments and units. All departments and units of HOPN have divisions responsible for logistics and services necessary for their daily operation.

The basic tasks facing HOPN are as follows:

- technical refinement of measuring and surveying methods
- shifting to a new chart coverage system and acting so that chart could fulfill international requirements and arrangements
- actions in order to create an electronic data base in the field of hydrography and finally to produce ENC's both for merchant and pleasure navigation and so that naval requirements could be fulfilled.