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Ludwig Noé, Shipping and the Economic Opportunities of International Zones

ABSTRACT:
In 1920, the League of Nations implemented the first modern international zones in Europe to help smooth the transition out of empire. While historians have largely presented international zones as unworkable and despised by nationalists, this article draws attention to those citizens who saw opportunities in them. It follows the case of Ludwig Noé – a preeminent industrialist in the Free City of Danzig – who was employed to make the zone's shipyard a successful international concern. Noé's transformation of the Danzig shipyard demonstrates the economic advantages that internationalisation could facilitate, and his work chimed with broader support for manufacturing free ports, which some contemporaries hoped would precipitate commercial windfalls in the 1920s. The article contributes, therefore, to a growing literature on efforts to use the international arena to experiment with new economic ideas, demonstrating how abstract international visions were realized locally and independently.

KEY WORDS: League of Nations; peacekeeping; international zone; shipping; free port; Gdańsk.

Ludwig Noé, Shipping and the Economic Opportunities of International Zones

> The principle of nationality is not and cannot be a complete solution to all the problems which are before us … [While] it applies to nine-tenths of the Continent of Europe[, t] here remain districts, small perhaps in area, but often of great importance both from historical tradition, from their geographical situation, from their mineral resources, which will not fit conveniently into any great national State…How are they to be dealt with? … [Some say] we have to make the best of a bad business ... To those who limit their historical vision to the period since the French Revolution, this may indeed seem natural and inevitable; for during the last 100 years more and more we have lost the power of conceiving any form of political union except that of the highly unified centralised national State, in which all the inhabitants and all the districts are forced into subservience to the great governing national idea … But may we not take a larger view? Is it not well to remember that the resources of civilisation have known in the past and may know in the future other forms of political associations? Is it necessary that the State of the future, national though it may be and must be in its fundamental conception, should imitate in all its details … dominant and intolerant nationalism?
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> James Headlam-Morley, 1919.[1]

At the end of the First World War the historian and British Foreign Office expert, James Headlam-Morley, drafted of one of the most intriguing spaces to emerge out of the peace talks

[1] Minutes and memoranda on the establishment of Danzig as a Free City, February 1919-July 1919, Churchill Archives Centre, GBR/0014/HDLM 6/4/79, 1-2.

– international zones.[2] Headlam-Morley had been tasked with resolving disputes over Germany's borders, where French and Polish economic interests clashed with demographic realities and Wilsonian ideals of national self-determination. His solution to this problem was to create zones of direct international territorial administration overseen by the League of Nations. An international zone was first realised in the Saar Basin, quickly followed by the Free City of Danzig (Gdańsk). Another was also formed in Memel harbour (Klaipėda), and the peacemakers deliberated on the use of international zones to secure peace in the former Austro-Hungarian Empire in Fiume (Rijeka), Zara (Zadar) and along the Dalmatian Coast. In the Ottoman Empire, internationalisation was briefly considered for Alexandretta (İskenderun).[3]

To create and legitimate international zones, Headlam-Morley drew inspiration from histories which escaped the rigid contours of the nation state. This was most evident in his design of the prototypical international zone: the Free City of Danzig. Evoking Danzig's local

[2] On Headlam-Morley see D. B. Kaufman, '"A House of Cards Which Would Not Stand": James Headlam-Morley, the Role of Experts, and the Danzig Question at the Paris Peace Conference', *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 30, 2 (2019), 228-52; Alan Sharp, 'James Headlam-Morley: Creating International History', *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 9, 3 (1998), 266-83.

[3] On international zones see Carsten Stahn, *The Law and Practice of International Territorial Administration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Ralph Wilde, *International Territorial Administration: How Trusteeship and the Civilizing Mission Never Went Away* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Meir Ydit, *Internationalised Territories* (Leiden: A. W. Sythoff, 1961); Gregory H. Fox, *Humanitarian Occupation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). On the shifting basis for justifying international rule see Anne Orford, *International Authority and the Responsibility to Protect* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

maritime history and patriotism, which stretched back well before the French Revolution, so the logic went, would ease the transition to an international status and encourage residents to resist the appeal of expansionist nationalism.[4] But international historians have since dismissed Headlam-Morley's ideas as fanciful, arguing that no such attachment to international zones ever developed.[5] Political historians too have bolstered these conclusions through their overwhelming attention to the nationalist movements that eventually tore international zones apart and undermined the viability of the League.[6] And yet, local and regional historians,

[4] Sir James Headlam-Morley, *A Memoir of the Paris Peace Conference, 1919*, ed. by Agnes Headlam-Morley, Russell Bryant and Anna Cienciala (London: Methuen, 1972), 69.

[5] Or at the very least in the case of Danzig, they emphasise that both Germany and Poland considered the city-state solution an unworkable compromise throughout the interwar period. Magaret MacMillian, *Peacemakers: The Paris Conference of 1919 and Its Attempt to End War* (London: John Murray, 2001), 228-9; John Brown Mason, *The Danzig Dilemma: A Study in Peacemaking by Compromise* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1946).

[6] See for instance Catherine Epstein, *Model Nazi: Arthur Greiser and the Occupation of Western Poland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Dieter Schenk, *Hitlers Mann in Danzig: Albert Forster und die NS-Verbrechen in Danzig-Westpreussen* (Bonn, Dietz, 2000); Christoph Pallaske, *Die Hitlerjugend der Freien Stadt Danzig: 1926-1939* (Münster: Waxmann, 1999); Herbert Levine, *Hitler's Free City: A History of the Nazi Party in Danzig, 1935-1939* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1973); Christoph M. Kimmich, *The Free City: Danzig and Germany Foreign Policy, 1919-1934* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1968). On the particular link between the integrity of zones and the viability of the League see Kaufman, '"A House of Cards Which Would Not Stand"', 234; Leonard V.

equipped with a broader set of language competencies and working more closely with resident-populated sources tell a different story. These historians show that when particular League commissioners or governments took power in the interwar years, they created political environments conductive to local patriotism.[7] This knowledge enables us, Elizabeth Morrow Clark argues, to interrupt the perceived constancy of ethnic and national conflict '*in*' international zones and separate it out from international conflict '*over*' zonal futures.[8]

This article takes its cue from studies which have sought to be more sensitive to local histories of Danzig during the transition from empire to international zone.[9] But unlike the work of historians so far, which is still focused on rethinking the politics of nationalism, it explores the industrial and commercial figures who saw opportunities in internationalisation. In particular, the article focuses on the case of Ludwig Noé, a preeminent industrialist appointed to oversee the transformation of Danzig's Imperial Shipyard into the International Shipbuilding and Engineering Company (ISEC).[10] Originally established by the Prussian state

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Smith, *Sovereignty at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 138.

[7] Elizabeth Morrow Clark, 'Poland and the Free City of Danzig, 1926-1927: Foundations for Reconciliation', PhD Thesis, University of Kansas, 1999.

[8] Elizabeth Morrow Clark, 'The Free City of Danzig: Borderland, Hansestadt or Social Democracy?', *The Polish Review*, 42, 3 (1997), 276.

[9] In addition to Clark, Peter Oliver Loew's work is essential in this regard. See Peter Oliver Loew, *Danzig. Biographie einer Stadt* (München: C. H. Beck, 2011).

[10] To date there is no substantive analysis of Noé. He is best known as the subject of a portrait by Otto Dix, held in the *Kunstforum Ostdeutsche Galerie Regensburg*. Suggestive remarks about him can be found in: Clark, 'The Free City of Danzig', 270; Máté Rigó,

in 1844 and absorbed into the German Empire after 1871, the Imperial Shipyard engaged in both ship construction and repairs, and during the war, it was a major centre for the building of submarines. But in 1919, the peacemakers earmarked the shipyard as a sensitive piece of imperial property and after further negotiations, it was agreed to internationalise the concern under Noé's direction.[11] Internationalisation in 1922 came with attractive terms, which overseas investors quickly recognised. Indeed, there were many observers who predicted that the transformation of Danzig's harbour more generally into a manufacturing free port would provide a commercial windfall.[12]

Focusing on Noé and the Imperial Shipyard, this article stretches and connects local histories of Danzig with a much larger field that examines lived experiences at the end of empire. Historians working across the Russian, German, Habsburg and Ottoman Empires are increasingly alert to lived experience to better illuminate the socio-economic problems, which complicated post-imperial transitions.[13] Such studies have emphasised, for instance, the fact

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Capitalism in Chaos: How the Business Elites of Europe Prospered in the Era of the Great War (Ithaca New York: Cornell University Press, 2022), 207.

[11] On the history of the shipyard, see Günter Stavorinus, *Die Geschichte des Königlichen/Kaiserlichen Werft Danzig: 1844-1918* (Köln: Böhlau, 1990).

[12] See, for example, the local economist Hermann Thomsen, *Danzigs Handel und Industrie in ihren Entwicklungsmöglichkeiten* (Danzig: A. W. Kafemann, 1921).

[13] See Máté Rigó, *Capitalism in Chaos: How the Business Elites of Europe Prospered in the Era of the Great War* (Ithaca New York: Cornell University Press, 2022); Dominique Kirchner Reill, *The Fiume Crisis: Life in the Wake of the Habsburg Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2020); Gábor Egry, 'Negotiating Post-Imperial Transitions: Local Societies and Nationalizing States in East Central Europe', in Paul Miller and Claire

that continued violence and revolution meant that many societies had to deal with alarming levels of deprivation after the war.[14] Even in areas which avoided the worst of the prolonged end to the war, like in Danzig, postwar societies remined in place for much longer than previously thought, characterised by food scarcity, black markets and illicit trade.[15] Meanwhile, attempts to stabilise new national economies and implement currency conversions were

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Morelon, eds., *Embers of Empire: Continuity and Rupture in the Habsburg Successor States after 1918* (New York: Berghahn, 2019), 15-42; Gábor Egry et al., *Momentous Times and Ordinary People: Life on the Ruins of Austria-Hungary* (Budapest: Napvilág, 2023). For the German Empire, see the groundbreaking work by Sean Andrew Wempe, *Revenants of the German Empire: Colonial Germans, Imperialism, and the League of Nations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

[14] On revolution see, for example, Robert Gerwarth, *November 1918: The German Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020); Mark Jones, *Founding Weimar: Violence and the German Revolution of 1918-1919* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016). On the continuation of violence after the First World War see Robert Gerwarth, *The Vanquished: Why the First World War Failed to End* (London: Penguin, 2016); Jochen Böhler, *Civil War in Central Europe, 1918-1921: The Reconstruction of Poland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018); Jonathan Wyrtzen, *Worldmaking in the Long Great War: How Local and Colonial Struggles Shaped the Modern Middle East* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2022).

[15] Adrian Mitter, 'The Free City of Danzig: Between the Vistula and the World (1919-1933)', PhD Thesis, University of Toronto, 2021.

complex.[16] Indeed, changing borders could put a sudden end to existing imperial networks, including through the separation of port cities such as Danzig or Trieste from their hinterlands, causing many to speak of loss and decline, and processes over which they felt they had no agency.[17] In short, a focus on lived experience helps us to better see these complex environments in which empires were liquidated. But it also does more. As Adrian Mitter has written so eloquently, a focus on lived experience enables us to examine the ambivalences or surprising responses individuals made under such pressure, thereby correcting and refining our understanding of the political structures framing the transition to a new world order dominated by nation-states.[18]

Noé's experience in the Imperial Shipyard in Danzig is particularly useful for exploring unexpected responses to imperial collapse. While he made a great deal of money in the German corporate sector between 1914 and 1918, the internationalisation of the imperial shipyard afforded Noé a means by which to realise even greater wealth. He was one of the business elites, recently explored by Máté Rigó, who thrived as capitalism was in chaos across Western

[16] Máté Rigó, 'Imperial Currencies after the Fall of Empires: The Conversion of the German Paper Mark and the Austro-Hungarian Crown at the End of the First World War', *Central European History*, 53, 3 (2020), 533-563.

[17] Marco Bresciani and Klaus Richter, 'Trieste and Danzig after the Great War: Imperial Collapse, Narratives of Loss, Reconfigured Globalization', *The Journal of Modern History*, 95, 3 (2023), 557-95.

[18] Mitter, 'The Free City of Danzig', 16. Mitter is building on the work of Manfred Enssle here. Manfred J. Enssle, 'Five Theses on German Everyday Life after World War II', *Central European History*, 26, 1 (1993), 3.

and Eastern Europe.[19] But internationalisation and the adoption of international business strategies profited more than just individuals like Noé: it encouraged whole sectors with the possibility of stabilisation. This was especially the case for merchants and shipbuilding companies in Danzig, which were working significantly below capacity after the war. For them, diversification with international markets in mind was a way to regain leading roles in the city and commercial success. As Danzig's designated representative to the League on matters of commerce, particularly at the International Economic Conference in Geneva in 1927, Noé sought to push connections to international markets even further. He agitated to rationalise industry across Europe and called for more vigorous efforts at European integration in the hope of safeguarding the continent's role in global trade.

Examining Noé in conjunction with Danzig's wider commercial landscape helps us to build on studies which avoid seeing the significance of international zones purely in terms of their 'success' or 'failure' to prevent further conflict.[20] As Anne Orford has pointed out in relation to post-Second World War international zones and Susan Pedersen and Patricia Clavin have done more generally in their work on the League, discussions of success and failure might have been ever present in these spaces but adopting this historical preoccupation as an analytical framework ignores the fact that the very creation of international institutions and

[19] Rigó, *Capitalism in Chaos*.

[20] This is still the overriding conceptual framework for studies of the zone, even if they are working against the narrative of 'failure'. The revisionist shift in the historiography is chartered by Susen Pedersen in 'Back to the League of Nations,' *American Historical Review* 112, no. 4 (October 2007): 1091-1117.

norms changed peacekeeping for decades to come.[21] The technical work of the League had wide-reaching effects. In addition, as a growing body of literature is demonstrating, the League and associated institutions played a formative role in internationalising processes of imperial deconstruction.[22]

Like the figures working in the League, Noé saw internationalisation and international business strategies as a solution to help overcome economic problems in Danzig. But he was not a part of this international body and only briefly encountered it. Rather, Noé's story pushes us to consider efforts to remake postimperial Central and Eastern Europe alongside international institutions. Through the drama on the docks, this article demonstrates how abstract international visions were realized locally and independently. It shows how actors with very different backgrounds and motivations could come together around an ambitious

[21] Orford, *International Authority*; Susan Pedersen, *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Patricia Clavin, *Securing the World Economy: The Reinvention of the League of Nations, 1920-1946* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[22] Peter Becker and Natasha Wheatley, eds., *Remaking Central Europe: The League of Nations and the Former Habsburg Lands* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020). On international efforts to stabilize the postwar regional order through economic reconstruction see Jamie Martin, *The Meddlers: Sovereignty, Empire, and the Birth of Global Economic Governance* (Harvard University Press, 2022); Nathan Marcus, *Austrian Reconstruction and the Collapse of Global Finance, 1921-1931* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018); David Petruccelli, 'Banknotes from the Underground: Counterfeiting and the International Order in Interwar Europe', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 51, 3 (2015), 507-30.

experiment to reimagine the international order, offering a local perspective on how internationalism was made to work in the 1920s.

I. 'Historical Rights' to Outlive Empire

The idea for international zones arose late in the peace-making process after the Supreme Council agreed on 30 January 1919 to the establishment of the mandates system. In March 1919, the British Prime Minister David Lloyd George pushed for a similarly novel solution to Germany's disputed borders, where French and Polish demands for security and economic compensation clashed with Wilsonian ideals of national self-determination. He instructed the budding contemporary historian, James Headlam-Morley, to draft proposals for a peaceful solution for these conflicts, which ultimately resulted in the League embarking on three major experiments in administering former German territory: the internationalisation of the Saar Basin, the establishment of the Free City of Danzig, and oversight in Memel Harbour.[23] While all three projects played important roles in the development of international territorial administration, it was the League's involvement in the city of Danzig, a port located on the Vistula with 192,000 residents in 1918, that became the most famous and most imitated project of this era.[24]

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[23] Kaufman, '"A House of Cards"', 234 and 239-41; Alan Sharp, 'James Headlam-Morley: Creating International History', *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, 9, 3 (1998), 272-3; Stahn, *The Law and Practice of International Territorial Administration*, 163.

[24] *Staatshandbuch der Freien Stadt Danzig* (Danzig: Verlag des statistischen Landesamts, 1926), 169.

The establishment of the Free City of Danzig was meant to resolve two problems. Danzig, thanks to its diminishing role as a trade hub and growing importance as a Prussian administrative centre, was overwhelmingly German-speaking by the eve of the war. Meanwhile, the surrounding countryside was heavily Polish-speaking, making it extremely difficult to apply national self-determination to this region.[25] So rather than allow annexation by Germany or Poland and the likely confrontation that would spark, the city was made a neutral, independent jurisdiction guaranteed by the League. The League's Council selected a High Commissioner to take up residence in the zone and arbitrate in disputes between the city and its Polish neighbour. Any disputes that he could not resolve were forwarded to the Council in Geneva.[26] In addition, the second reason for internationalising the city rested on the need to grant a re-established Polish state access to the Baltic Sea and thereby prop it up as an economically viable bulwark against Soviet and German expansion. Achieving this was made possible by granting Poland full access to the port in Danzig and free use of all waterways, docks, basins, wharves and other infrastructure necessary for imports and exports. In addition, the zone was to transition out of the German customs union and into the Polish customs territory.[27]

To legitimate this new arrangement and encourage its acceptance, Headlam-Morley rhetorically connected Danzig's internationalised form to the city's history as a 'free city'. Between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries, Danzig had been a free city like many other

[25] For an excellent account of the city's nineteenth-century history see Mitter, 'The Free City of Danzig', 45-54.

[26] Treaty of Versailles, Part III, Articles 102 and 103.

[27] Treaty of Versailles, Part III, Article 104.

autonomous city-states largely located in the Holy Roman Empire.[28] Free cities exercised control over their internal affairs and important aspects of their relations with foreign states, despite being subject to the political authority of an external sovereign. For Danzig, this meant that it coined its own money, levied taxes, administered shipping and customs, maintained fortifications, raised troops and possessed a fleet under its own colours, while subject to the Polish crown. In addition, Polish authority did not stop Danzig from being a member of the Hanseatic League – a union of cities along the North Sea and Baltic coasts, which pursued common trade and defence privileges. As a member of the League, Danzig enjoyed famed commercial success. It was able, when the Polish state grew in the sixteenth century, to direct large quantities of its raw goods such as grain, timber and flax from the state's interior to Western Europe. Indeed, Danzig accumulated striking wealth until the Hanseatic League was dissolved in the seventeenth century and Polish trade slowed down with the Thirty Years' War.[29] Prussian annexation in 1793 and later incorporation into the German Empire put a final end to this chapter of Danzig's history, and yet, the port regained something of its former trade privileges when it was established as a free port in 1895, that is when it was given the right to run the harbour as a tax-free zone. The creation of a free port in Danzig was part of a wider trend in the establishment of free ports in the German Empire in the 1890s, including in Emden, Bremerhaven, Brake, Cuxhaven, Altona, Flensburg, Kiel and Stettin (Szczecin). Outside

[28] Some entities also survived into the modern era on the Franco-Swiss border. James Headlam-Morley to Alec W. G. Randall, 13 January 1925, Churchill Archives Centre, GBR/0014/HDLM 6/1/5/8.

[29] Brown Mason, *The Danzig Dilemma*, 22-9.

Germany, free ports or free warehouses also developed rapidly in the decade and a half before the First World War, opening in Copenhagen, Trieste, Fiume and Genoa.[30]

For Headlam-Morley, Danzig's free-city heritage was pivotal to making internationalisation a success. It provided a powerful endorsement for autonomy in the face of nationalism. Indeed, Headlam-Morley and the American advisor to Woodrow Wilson, Sidney Edward Mezes, believed the new zone, styled after its early modern form as the 'Free Hanseatic City of Danzig' (*Freie Hansestadt Danzig*), would cultivate a local Hanse-styled patriotism. Given, Headlam-Morley argued, that 'the days of its greatest importance' and wealth were when it was a free city, the use of such terms as 'free city' and 'Hansestadt' in Danzig would evoke pride in the new international zone.[31] Indeed, such terms would, Headlam-Morley wrote, 'appeal to a certain historical sentiment amongst the people of Danzig'.[32] It would remind and encourage citizens to embrace a second Hanseatic golden age.[33]

Danzig's early-modern past was thus rhetorically woven into the political fabric of the zone. But the constant attention historians give to this Hanseatic rhetoric means that it is easy to forget that it existed alongside new international institutions, which were established to

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[30] Richard S. Thoman, *Free Ports and Foreign-Trade Zones* (Cambridge, Md.: Cornell Maritime Press, 1956), chapter 1; Koen Stapelbroek and Corey Tazzara, 'The Global History of the Free Port', *Global Intellectual History*, 8,6 (2023), 680.

[31] Minutes and memoranda on the establishment of Danzig as a Free City, February 1919-July 1919, Churchill Archives Centre, GBR/0014/HDLM 6/4/79, 1.

[32] Headlam-Morley, *A Memoir*, 69.

[33] This discourse would also be deployed by German nationalists in service of very different aims. See Peter Oliver Loew, *Danzig und seine Vergangenheit, 1793-1997: Die Geschichtskultur einer Stadt zwischen Deutschland und Polen* (Osnabrück: fibre, 2003).

administer the city's material imperial legacies, especially those created in the later phase of empire in the 1890s. In particular, the Danzig Harbour and Waterways Board (Harbour Board) was one of the most important international institutions established at this juncture.[34] The board was an organisation with no distinct nationality placed in charge of the harbour after the war. It consisted of five Danzig and five Polish commissioners chosen by their governments to advocate for their respective economic interests. Commissioners were also responsible for making sure access to port facilities were upheld for both the city of Danzig and the state of Poland in compliance with the Treaty of Versailles. Under the commissioners there were five sections led by commercial and technical directors and served by a whole array of officials, office employees, and workers in the port, on the waterways, and on the railways under its administration. A Swiss national, appointed by the League, acted as president.[35]

The Harbour Board offered significant economic advantages for those associated with it. The most important advantage was its freedom from Danzig or Polish legal jurisdiction. This meant that its employees benefited from a diplomatic-style presence in Danzig, including exemption from taxation. The same held for concerns established in the Harbour Board's jurisdiction. Shipping companies under the Board's auspices were also exempt from taxation. Furthermore, Article 18 of the Convention of Paris enabled the Board to run the harbour as a free port. That is, the port could continue to function essentially free of import or export duties and customs complications. It thus offered a continuation or imperial afterlife for the free port

[34] Convention of Paris. Treaty between Poland and the Free City of Danzig, Concluded at Paris, 9 November 1920, Article 19.

[35] Brown Mason, *The Danzig Dilemma*, chapter 7.

structures introduced in Danzig in 1895, just as the Treaty of Versailles looked to maintain all the free zones which existed in German ports on 1 August 1914.[36]

The port's new organisation produced an immediate flourish of activity in Danzig. It drew a whole range of individuals to the city to help run the new international organisation or businesses under its reach. This included the industrialist Ludwig Noé (1871-1949), who arrived in the city in late 1919 and subsequently took over the port's most important concern, the Imperial Shipyard. Noé was determined to realise the benefits of internationalisation but before he could do so the chaos wrought by the war in the port had to be resolved. Port infrastructure, previously owned by the German Empire, had to be sequestrated and repurposed in a way to suit the needs of international peacekeeping (Figures 1 and 2).

[36] Treaty of Versailles, Part XII, Article 328.

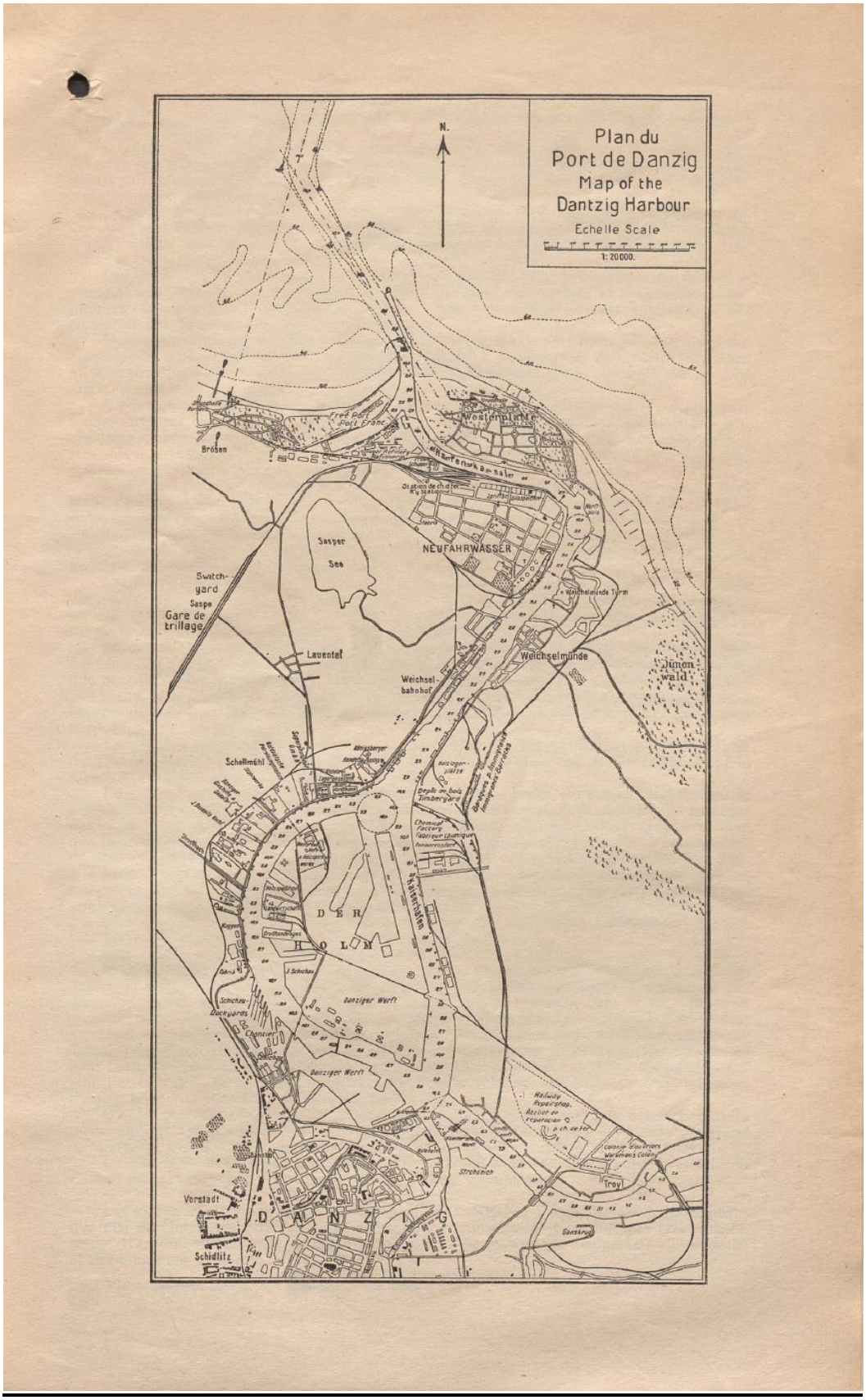

Figure 1: Map of the Danzig Harbour, 1924. United Nations Archives, Geneva, S469/59/5.

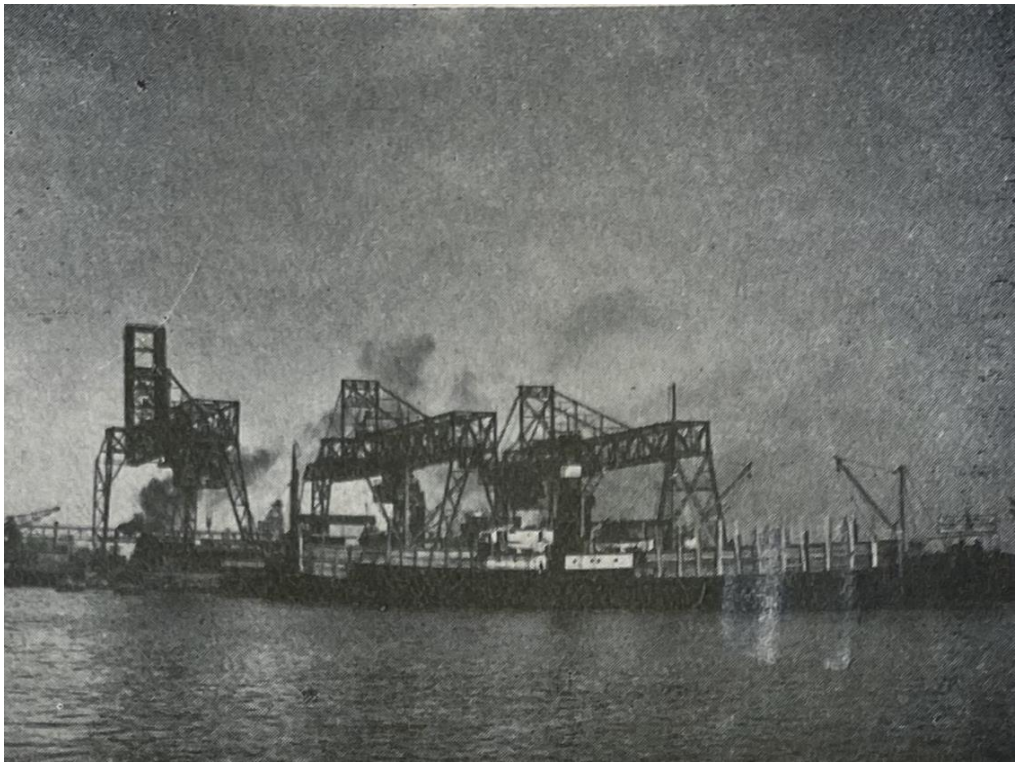

Figure 2: The Danzig Harbour. Günther Martini, *Wie Man den Danziger Hafen sehen muss* (Danzig: DVG, 1930), 3 in Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts, Berlin, RAV66/120.

II. Ludwig Noé and Making International Zones Profitable

Noé played a pivotal role in the transformation of Danzig's shipyard away from its imperial origins. Born in Zweibrücken in 1871, he worked as an engineer across the German Empire, including at the Germania shipyards in Kiel, before settling in Aschersleben on the eve of the First World War to run the Aschersleben Mechanical Engineering Company (*Aschersleben Maschinenbau-Aktien-Gesellschaft*, formerly known as W. Schmidt & Co.).[37] In Aschersleben, Noé developed widespread business contacts by sitting on the boards of various construction companies including the Portland Cement Works in Schwanebeck (*Portland-Cementwerk*

[37] Confirmation of the police president on behalf of the *Einwohnermeldeamt* in Saarbrücken, 7 Jan. 1935, United Nations Archives, Geneva (hereafter, LoN), R3728-2C-1861-15587.

Schwanebeck A.-G.) and Schubert & Salzer in Chemnitz (*Schubert & Salzer, Maschinenfabrik Akt.-Ges.*), and during the war, he used his networks to make a name for himself as 'one of the most successful corporate managers of the German war industry'.[38] Indeed, Noé's wartime reputation was essential to him finding stable employment in the volatile post-war economic environment. In 1919, he took up a professorship for shipbuilding at the Danzig Technical University (*Technische Hochschule*, TU), where Noé taught students about ship construction and supplied expert advice on the future of the shipyards to the Danzig authorities.[39] In November 1919, the mayor and future Senate president Heinrich Sahm approached Noé to take over as director of the Danzig Shipyard and Ironworks corporation (DSI), a position he officially assumed in 1921 (Figure 3).

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[38] 'Handelsnachrichten', *Berliner Börsen-Zeitung, Morgen-Ausgabe*, 275 (16 June 1914), 14; 'Von den Aktien-Gesellschaften der Textil-Industrie', *Leipziger Wochenschrift für Textil-Industrie*, 25 (23 June 1920), 520; Rigó, *Capitalism in Chaos*, 207-8.

[39] 'Kunst und Wissenschaft', *Hallische Nachrichten: General-Anzeiger für Halle und die Provinz Sachsen*, 215 (20 Sept. 1919), 2; Mitter, 'The Free City of Danzig', 120.

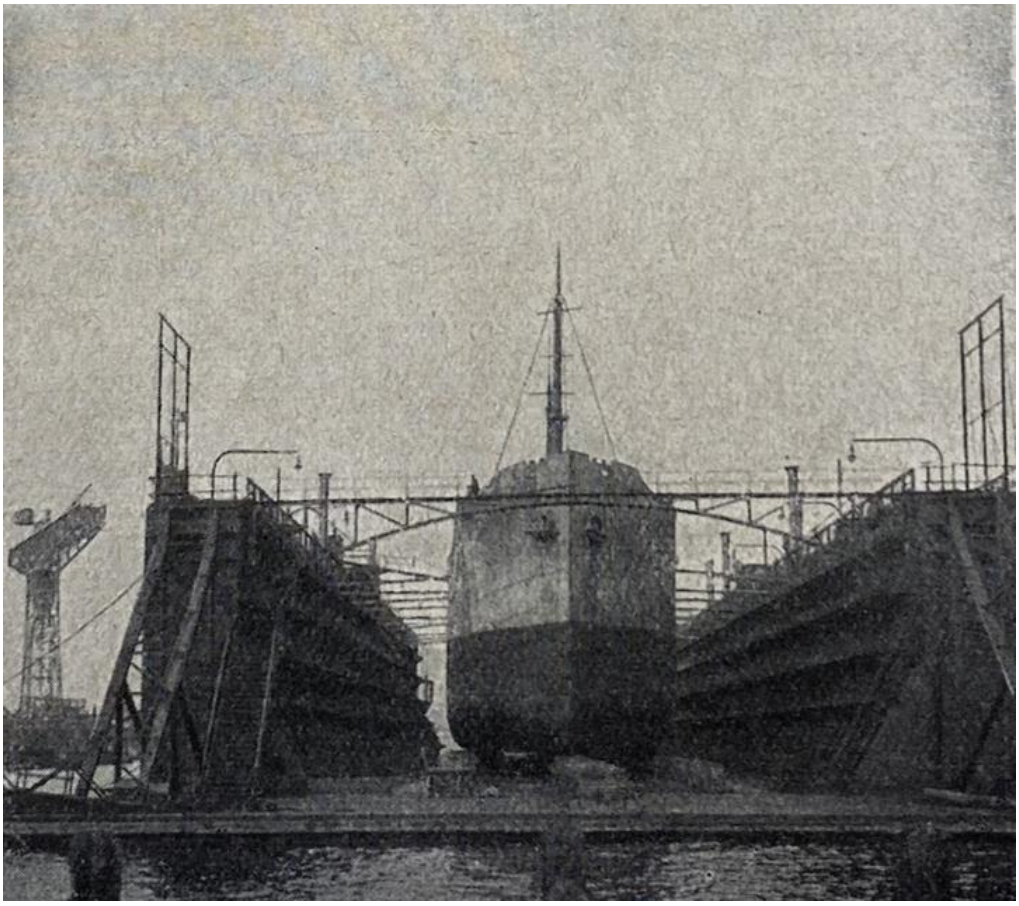

Figure 3: A floating dock in the Danzig shipyard. Günther Martini, *Wie Man den Danziger Hafen sehen muss* (Danzig: DVG, 1930), 17, in Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts, Berlin, RAV66/120.

The DSI, now under Noé's direction, was one of three imperial shipyards held by the German Empire in 1914. During the war, it had built submarines with a 10,000 strong workforce, but with the collapse of the war effort and revolution, thousands of workers were laid off in the summer of 1919. Indeed, further, though less dramatic, redundancies were made before the German government sold the concern to the city for 5 million marks in October

1919.[40] The change of ownership did nothing to alleviate job losses in the shipyard and ensuing strikes. In January 1920, workers from the shipyard took to the street demanding that wages to keep up with the rising cost of living. Even more violent boycotts and strikes broke out in July and Augus 1920 during the Polish-Soviet War (1919-21), capturing international attention.[41]

Within this volatile environment, the city's authorities sought to keep the concern running until its future ownership was confirmed in the ongoing international negotiations. Noé's role in this was central. His first task was to reorganise the shipyard away from its war footing, winding up the production of submarines, as well immediately surrendering excess quantities of war materials. This Noé did but not without first storing a number of ex-German ships and engines in his sheds.[42] In addition to ceasing production of war materials, Noé made available information about the shipyard's capacities and past manufacture of weapons and ammunition in accordance with the Treaty of Versailles and the demands of the Inter-Allied Military Control Commission.[43]

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[40] United States Department of Commerce, *Commerce Reports*, volume 2, nos. 77-153 (Washington: Government Printing Office: 1920), 1638; Stavorinus, *Die Geschichte des Königlichen/Kaiserlichen Werft Danzig*, 263.

[41] For a glimpse into the rioting in Danzig see the reports of the High Commissioner B. H. Bellero on 30 July and 5 August 1920 in LoN, R136/4/5876/5856.

[42] 'Aeronautical Material at Danzig', 28 May 1921, LoN, C-31-1921-BI, Annex Q.

[43] F. L. Carsten, *The Reichswehr and Politics, 1918-1933* (Berkeley, LA: University of California Press, 1973), 50-2.

Noé's work was in many ways no different to disarmament operations being carried out elsewhere in the former German Empire.[44] And as in Germany, progress was slow. As a member of the Inter-Allied Aeronautical Commission of Control in Berlin reported in March 1921: 'A considerable quantity of [ex-German Military aeronautical material] still exists in Danzig'. But on the upside, this was 'practically the same amount as was found here during the occupation in 1920.'[45] In other words, disarmament might have been protracted, but the problem wasn't getting any worse. This was important given the wild speculation after the war that Danzig would become a dumping ground for German war materials. These materials, it was thought, would serve revanchist aims or make their way back into Germany for a future German war. But no such eventuality appeared to be taking place. Rather, the report recommended a series of straightforward steps to ward off any future rumours of dumping. It stipulated that all owners of ex-German military aeronautical material should declare it so that the High Commission could then determine 'under what conditions any of the existing material duly declared might be released to *bona-fide* Danziger commercial enterprise engaged in Civil aerial transport.' Engines and the like would be marked so that any further importation or smuggling of ex-German war material into the Free State would be instantly recognisable.[46]

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[44] For details on disarmament more generally see Richard J. Shuster, *German Disarmament After World War I: The Diplomacy of International Arms Inspection, 1920-1931* (Oxford: Routledge, 2006), chapters 4 and 5.

[45] E. A. Masterman, Commodore d'Aviation R.A.F., Berlin, to Richard Haking, High Commissioner of the Free City of Danzig, 26 March 1921, LoN, C-31-1921-BI, Annex P.

[46] Ibid; 'General report and recommendations concerning the aeroplane situation in Danzig adopted on March 28th, 1921', LoN, C-31-1921-BI, Annex O.

Noé and the High Commissioner Richard Haking welcomed the report. Distancing the city from wartime production was essential to encouraging legitimate trade in ships, aeroplanes, engines, spare parts and commercial services. But Noé required more to make the shipyard a success. He desperately needed new contracts, which were not so easy to secure. The shipyard had relied on German government contracts up to its sale in 1919 but after the war, the German government was not interested in continuing to do business with the DSI. This was in part a legal restriction. Germany was banned from manufacturing or acquiring submarines, making the DSI's specialisation redundant in the interwar years.[47] But the German government's lack of interest in the DSI after the war was also commercially driven. The German Government deemed shipbuilding capacities within its borders to be sufficient for its peacetime needs. There was also, therefore, a slump in orders for non-submarine ships for the DSI. This left Noé, along with other private shipbuilding operations in Danzig, in a difficult position. They could appeal to the German government on political grounds to support them with subsidies, as the Schichau and Klawitter shipyards did and received, or they could strike out on their own, as the DSI would choose to do and look for new Polish and international customers.[48]

To secure new customers, Noé had to tease out what the manufacture of commercial rather than war materials might look like. As Haking noted in 1921, the DSI obtained an order from Moscow to construct fifty locomotive boilers but it was unsure whether it could fulfil it given that Danzig was forbidden to manufacture 'war material' as per the rest of Germany.[49]

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[47] Treaty of Versailles, Part II, Article 191.

[48] Mitter, 'The Free City of Danzig', 119.

[49] Haking, to the Secretary-General, League of Nations, 19 March 1921, LoN, C-31-1921-BI, Annex G.

He informed the League about the contract but as it turned out, the League deemed their involvement unnecessary given the boilers could not be considered war material.[50] As such they could be manufactured freely – a point that was not clear to all concerned and certainly a cause of confusion beyond the shipyard. As Haking noted, 'Private firms in Danzig do not know what they are allowed to do'.[51]

Establishing precedents with the League became essential to determining acceptable commercial production. For example, Noé and Hacking elicited broad statements of confidence from the League with regards to aeroplane construction in the port sheds. As one League official wrote to Hacking: 'There would seem to be no objection in existing stipulations to Danzig being allowed to manufacture aeroplanes for civil aviation.' 'It is true,' he continued, 'that the border-line between civil and military aeroplanes is not very clear. But the same consideration also applies to a great many other industrial products, as, for instance, locomotives and other railway material, telephones, motor-cars, motor-boats, and so on, and it certainly cannot be the intention of the League of Nations that the territory of Danzig shall not be allowed to manufacture any of these goods, which may serve war purposes as well as the most peaceful purposes.'[52] Such endorsements were essential for Noé to plan lines of industrial production that the DSI might pursue.

Noé's willingness to eschew subsidies and instead seek new customers and lines of production was driven by the convictions that there were substantial opportunities in the international zone. Others agreed. Many companies speculated on the fact that Danzig's

[50] 'Minute', by Erik Colban, 22 March 1921, LoN, C-31-1921-BI, Annex M.

[51] Haking, to the Secretary-General, League of Nations, 19 March 1921, LoN, C-31-1921-BI, Annex G.

[52] Eric Colban, 'Minute', 31 March 1921, LoN, C-31-1921-BI, Annex S.

repositioning outside of Germany meant that it would function as a linchpin between Germany, Poland and a vast series of interlocking markets to the east. Indeed, international concerns swarmed to Danzig from 1920 on 'expecting that [the zone] …would become a clearinghouse for exchange between eastern and western Europe'.[53] Whereas on 1 January 1920 there were only 1835 sole proprietorships and trading companies in Danzig, by 1 March 1923 there were 2876. Joint-stock companies increased in the same period from 58 to 238 and companies with limited liability grew from 277 to 976. All in all this represented an increase from 2170 to 4090.[54] The influx of firms in Danzig did not escape the notice of the city's newspapers, which spoke of an era of foundations and the establishment of businesses taking hold in the city. It also caught the attention of German regional papers which felt increasingly threatened by Danzig's new position. One Hamburg newspaper made this point about its rival port to its readers in June 1921. 'Since its establishment as a "free city", Danzig has taken on a completely different appearance. Trade and commerce appear to have increased significantly.'[55] Danzig was of course far from competing directly with a port like Hamburg and its transformation appeared, as the article made clear, to be far less due to a growth in local industry rather than the port acting as a point of transit. But nevertheless, even Hamburg's commercial sector was aware of the growing number of agencies, subsidiaries, regional offices, foreign wholesale businesses and banks flocking to Danzig.

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[53] Kimmich, *The Free City*, 46.

[54] 'Danzigs wirtschaftliche Entwicklung', *Danziger Wirtschafts-Zeitung* (25 June 1923), 117, PA AA, RAV66/112.

[55] 'Danzig als Handelsplatz des Ostens', *Hamburger Freundlichest* (1 June 1921), PA AA, RAV 66/3.

III. Internationalisation

Noé's gamble on customers and contracts being forthcoming thanks to Danzig's new political form proved right, and with the internationalisation of the shipyard, he was able to take advantage of this business climate. In September 1922, Danzig and Poland agreed to joint ownership of the DSI but passed it on to the Harbour Board. They also gave the green light to the privatisation of the concern, enabling Noé to merge the shipyard with the Danzig railway car company and convert them into the International Shipbuilding and Engineering Company (ISEC).[56]

The ISEC was fundamental to Noé pursuing an international business agenda. In the first instance, its financing severed the concern from its German networks and the need to adhere to German political agendas to maintain orders or subsidies. The company was bound to offer up to thirty per cent of its shares to French nationals, which were scooped up by the *Société Alsacienne de Constructions mécaniques*, *Société de Dietrich et Compagnie*, *Compagnie de Fives Lille pour Constructions mécaniques*, *Compagnie Française de matériel de Chemin de Fer*, *Sociéte de Loraine de Dietrich in Lunéville*, and *Société Franco-Belge de matériel de Chemin de Fer*. Thirty per cent of ISEC shares were assigned to English nationals and were purchased by the railway carriage and wagon company Cravens in Sheffield, the

[56] *Gesetzblatt für die Freie Stadt Danzig* (10 Jan. 1923), 11-12; 'Lease Agreement between the Government of the Free City of Danzig and the Government of the Republic of Poland on the one part, and the International Shipbuilding and Engineering Company, Limited, of the other part', in *Convention relative to the Cession of German Public Property situated in Danzig, and also to the Transfer of a Part of this Property to the Harbour Board of the Free City. Signed at Danzig, May 3, 1923* (London, 1924), 31-5, LoN, R181-4-61450-61450, II. Annex.

locomotive firm Nasmyth in Manchester, English General Electric, and the electric company Edison and Swan. Polish and Danzig citizens could purchase up to twenty per cent respectively.[57]

These investors backed the ISEC as a means of extending their own national interests in Eastern Europe. This fact was generally recognised, with incentives worked into portfolio offers. For example, as a sweetener, the Polish state was required to order railway carts from investors. This, the French firm de Dietrich noted, was a boon for their hopes for penetration into Eastern Europe.[58] Of course Danzig newspapers celebrated foreign investment in the shipyard as a blessing for peacekeeping. As one newspaper put it, it was of great worth that four nations had come together to form a firm that no longer laboured for wartime goals but now served peaceful ends. Indeed, it was of the 'greatest significance, that through the new joint-stock company foreign nations become interested in the honour and freedom of the Free City of Danzig.'[59] But for Noé, foreign investment meant finance for exploiting new markets in Eastern Europe and elsewhere.

Internationalisation also meant a significant expansion of the shipyard's premises and machinery, facilitating a diversification away from shipbuilding alone.[60] Noé claimed that it had been immediately apparent when he took over the shipyard after the war that there was no longer a market for the sale of large ships. But there was much else the company could do if it

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[57] 'Danziger Werft und Eisenbahn-Hauptwerkstätte', *Danziger Neueste Nachrichten* (23 Sept. 1922), PA AA, RAV 66/118, unpaginated.

[58] Rigó, *Capitalism in Chaos*, 207-8.

[59] 'Danziger Nachrichten', *Danziger Volksstimme*, 303 (28 Dec. 1922), PA AA, RAV 66/118, unpaginated.

[60] Mitter, 'The Free City of Danzig', 122.

modernised and diversified.[61] For example, in 1921 Noé had rented out unused warehouses to a range of international firms, including a shed to Lilienthal of Berlin to establish the International Aeroplane Company (*International Luft Verkehr Co.*)(IAC). The IAC wished to use ex-German seaplanes to run an 'aerial line from Danzig to Copenhagen, and in the other direction, Danzig to Warsaw, Cracow, and possibly, Vienna'. The company also required a degree of manufacturing on site to maintain the fleet.[62] This move into aeronautical engineering in 1921 was a start but with internationalisation, Noé had even more sheds and machinery at his disposal. He successfully used this infrastructure to expand further in 1923 and 1924, establishing new lines of motos, boilers, and machinery, alongside holistic ship repairs.[63]

In the years that followed, Noé used the ISEC to sell his diversified machinery in Poland and elsewhere. The company created a 'Directorate for Poland', which was responsible for analysing the Polish market and promoting the ISEC's products at major polish trade fairs.[64] In addition, Noé made numerous trips to Poland and Eastern Europe to solicit business, and in doing so incurred vitriolic attacks in the Danzig and German media.[65] Most Danzigers were reluctant to embrace Polish trade or incorporation into the Polish customs union given their desire for close political association with Berlin. But Noé saw a lucrative future in working cordially with the Polish state, capitalising on the fact that the peace treaties directed Polish

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[61] Ludwig Noé, 'Die Umstellung der früheren Reichswerft Danzig nach dem Weltkriege,' in Statistisches Amt der Freien Stadt Danzig, ed., *Bilder aus Danzigs Handel, Industrie und Handwerk* (Danzig: der Osten, 1924), 5-7, LoN, S469/59/5.

[62] Eric Colban, 'Minute', 31 March 1921, LoN, C-31-1921-BI, Annex S.

[63] Noé, 'Die Umstellung'.

[64] Mitter, 'The Free City of Danzig', 122.

[65] See the numerous accounts and rebuttals by Noé in PA AA, RAV 66/135.

overseas trade through the port of Danzig. In addition, Noé sought to secure international contracts. He sold train carriages to the US, electric motors and cooling systems to Danish firms, and ship parts and ships to Norway.[66]

Of course, all of this helped to line Noé's pockets, whose crowning place in the commercial life of the city was famously captured by Otto Dix in 1928 (Figure 4). But others saw benefits too as trade in the port appeared to be genuinely flourishing. The number of ships entering and exiting the Danzig harbour had increased from 2992 in 1912 to 3312 in 1924 and 2974 in 1912 to 3330 in 1924 respectively.[67] Similarly, tonnage was way up in Danzig compared to pre-war figures and other German ports. Of course, German nationalists would rightly point out that the quality of goods coming from Poland had shifted to lower quality cargos such as coal. Nevertheless, this did not prevent commercial councillors like Alfred Siebeneichen from arguing that support should be lent to Noé in his endeavour to promote Polish trade through the port. 'It is evident from these figures,' Siebeneichen concluded, 'that the Danzig port's significance is growing considerably and that this port is in the process of transforming from a purely local to an international harbour.' Or otherwise put, it would not be long until: 'Danzig once again finds itself in a similar position to that which it enjoyed for so many centuries.'[68]

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[66] *Danziger Neueste Nachrichten*, 219 (18 Sept. 1922), PA AA, RAV 66/118, unpaginated.

[67] Alfred Siebeneichen, *Polen und der Hafen von Danzig* (Danzig: Danziger Zeitungsgesellschaft m. b. H. „Baltische Presse", 1926), 19, PA AA, RAV 66/120A.

[68] Ibid, 18 and 32.

Noé's business strategies chimed with a popular suggestion in business circles as to how Danzig might exploit transform more fully into an international harbour. Greater volumes of global trade, argued the economist Herman Thomsen, could be captured by developing the port into a manufacturing free port.[69] While Danzig was already a free port in the sense that it was a tax-free zone (based on its 1895 privileges), this was not a significant advantage across from other Baltic ports. Many of Danzig's competitors offered these same privileges in the interwar period.[70] But what would be different was the offer of tax-free production and processing of goods in the port with customs clearance. This, Thomsen argued, would dovetail with Danzig's exemptions from the postwar restrictions on industrial production that had been levied on Germany, encouraging a boom in shipbuilding, along with car manufacturing. The Danzig Chamber of Commerce came to support the idea, and encouraged an enlargement of the tax-free area beyond the port. So too did the agricultural expert Artur Grünspan, who argued for the application of the free zone status to the entire city.[71]

The political will for an enhanced free port was, however, lacking. Politicians devoted to economic nationalism opposed the idea and began to cause problems for the shipyard, especially from 1926 on. Having established its economic recovery, Poland embarked in 1926 on the development of the port of Gdynia – a Polish port they could trust with greater confidence than Danzig. While business continued to flourish in Danzig in 1926 and 1927, the growth of Gdynia saw contracts decline in Danzig in the second half of the 1920s. In 1929, Poland blocked the import of Danzig manufactures, critically depressing trade in the port and making clear that the political tone between Danzig and its neighbours had shifted. Global

[69] Thomsen, *Danzigs Handel*, chapter 3.

[70] Mitter, 'The Free City of Danzig', 132.

[71] Ibid., 134.

economic downturn only exacerbated the problems Danzig was experiencing and by 1933, Gdynia had outstripped Danzig in the volume of goods it was handling, producing a sudden and drastic drop from which it never recovered.[72]

Throughout the growing strain, Noé turned to the League to try and protect the ISEC. In the International Economic Conference in Geneva in 1927, he urged his fellow business men across Europe to eschew the kind of politics Danzig was suffering from: 'It would already be a great step forward', he argued, 'if we could set it on record here that the nations have no more earnest desire than to rebuild in peace and quiet what was destroyed by the terrible cataclysm which broke out 13 years ago; if we could declare here before all the world that the industrious peoples of the Continent expect more business and less politics in the future.'[73] In other words, Noé wanted to de-escalate nationalist politics not only in Danzig but also across Europe. But this was to little avail. Equally, Noé's pleas for his contemporaries to address the nationalist causes behind Europe's eclipse by the United States on the world stage landed on deaf ears. As he lamented, 'I said at the beginning that the extraordinary superiority of the United States over us comes from the fact that they have much which we painfully lack. But unhappily Europe has something else which increases its inferiority to the United States … [Europeans] are encumbered with the prejudices to which the history of centuries have given birth in the individual nations, and which poison their mutual relations.' He concluded: 'That is one of several reasons why the rationalisation of Europe as a single whole, urgently necessary though it is, cannot be carried through. Ambitious politicians and a certain class of sensation-

[72] Brown Mason, *The Danzig Dilemma*, 130-3.

[73] Speech by Noé in the sub-committee II (industry), 11 May 1927, LoN, S-C-E-II-7 EN.

loving mouth-pieces of public opinion are primarily to blame that international understanding, so much to be desired, makes such slow progress.'[74]

Despite Noé's speeches and pleas for international understanding, nothing concrete came out of the meetings. Rather, he spent the rest of the interwar years trying to protect the ISEC against intractable nationalist political pressures with ever decreasing success. These culminated in the occupation of Danzig by the Nazis, under which the ISEC returned to producing war materials. After the Second World War, the ISEC was relocated to Hamburg and shortly thereafter, liquidated.[75]

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[74] Ibid.

[75] See the files on the 'Case of the International Shipbuilding Company in Danzig' in The National Archives, Kew, FO 371/56584.

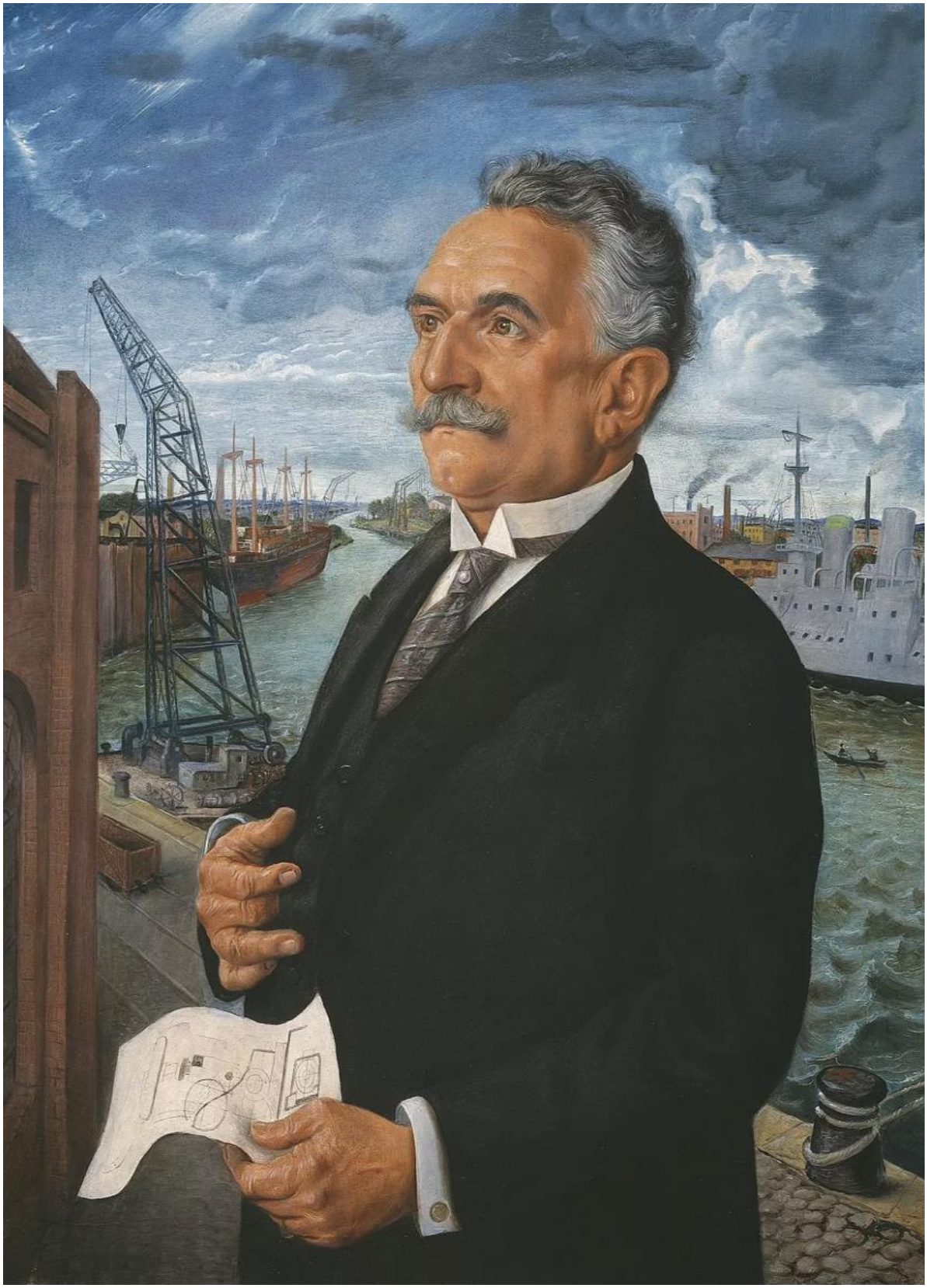

Figure 4: Otto Dix, Portrait of the Danzig Senator and General Director Prof. Dr. Ludwig Noé, 1928. *Kunstforum Ostdeutsche Galerie Regensburg*.

IV. CONCLUSION

In 1949, the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine (UNCCP) convened in Lausanne. During deliberations, the UNCCP discussed the proposal to turn Jerusalem into an international zone under the direct territorial administration of the United Nations. As part of the proceedings, the Secretariat circulated a working paper on 'Free Zones'.[76] It examined the existing free zones in Europe, as well as the history behind these zones. As it stated:

> The modern free zone must not be confused with the "*free cities*", which are of historical rather than practical interest, since cities of this kind no longer exist. The free cities which preceded the free zones were usually sea-ports which subsisted almost entirely on the trade passing through them. The earliest free cities were those created in Italy in 1547 (Leghorn, Civita Vecchia and Ancona); in France (Marseilles in 1669, Bayonne, Dunkirk); and Germany (Hamburg). In these free cities, *exemption from customs duties applied not only to the harbour installations, but to the whole town and municipal area*. There was complete freedom of entry and exit for all home and foreign goods, and the right to consume or dispose of them without payment of customs duties. These free sea-ports disappeared in France with the Revolution, and in Italy a little later.[77]

In the post-Second World War discussions of international zones, any romance around free cities had been lost. Free cities were reduced to an historical interest; they were no longer relevant to peacekeeping. This stood in stark contrast to the situation at the end of the First

[76] 'Memorandum on the 'Free Zones' of Upper Savoy and the Gex district', 20 May 1949, COM.JER/W.19, available at https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-211437/ (last visited Feb. 2025).

[77] Ibid.

World War. In those peace talks, free cities provided nothing less than a blueprint for internationalisation in Danzig. They were designed to promote local patriotism and thereby ease the transition to internationalisation. Of course, local patriotism did not live up to expectations and the zone was soon torn apart by nationalist politics, but an exploration of its manifestation, as local and regional historians have been able to demonstrate, disrupts the perceived consistency of nationalist conflict in Danzig. It shows that not all residents despised internationalisation and that some even thought it a workable solution for the end to empire.

Turning to other local histories, like that of Danzig's commercial re-establishment, helps to complicate this image even further. Here too we find individuals who not only thought that internationalisation was viable, but that it could be used to generate significant financial gain. Ludwig Noé was just one such figure. He identified economic opportunities in the zone almost as soon as he arrived in Danzig. As director of the DSI, he looked to eschew German subsidies and seek out new customers as he stabilized the concern in its transition from the production of war materials to new commercial ventures. But more than this, he embraced the internationalisation of the shipyard with the creation of the ISEC. The ISEC enabled him to explore new markets in Poland and Eastern Europe. It also gave Noé the capacity to diversify the former shipyard to manufacture new lines of motors and other types of machinery to meet the demands of international markets. In short, Noé forged a successful business strategy that played on Danzig's unique position as a linchpin between Eastern and Western Europe. And he was not alone. Hundreds of businesses were established in Danzig in the years between 1920 and 1923 in hope that the zone's new form would support a windfall of trade across Europe. Indeed, Danzig economists and the Danzig Chamber of Commerce campaigned for this vision to be taken further with the creation of a manufacturing free port in Danzig, which, they believed, would have drawn in even further global trade.

While internationalisation and international business strategies were soon plagued by trade wars and nationalist politics, businesses like the ISEC show the possibilities contemporaries saw in international zones. Business interests were willing to experiment with the city's new international form with the expectation of cashing in on the transition out of empire.