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Administration and Operation of the Commercial Seaports in Gdańsk and Gdynia During the Second World War

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The outbreak of World War II, the incorporation of the former Free City of Gdańsk (*Danzig*) into the Third Reich on 1 September 1939 and the occupation of Gdynia (*Gotenhafen*) by the German army led to considerable changes in the organisational and administrative structure and the economic functions of the seaports in Gdańsk and Gdynia. At the beginning of September 1939, the Harbour and Waterways Council (*Rada Portu i Dróg Wodnych*), which had so far administered the port in Gdańsk, was dissolved, and its powers were transferred to the State Commissioner for the Harbour and Waterways (*Staatskommissar für den Hafen und die Wasserwege*), who worked under the Reich Governor of Gdańsk, Gauleiter Albert Forster. The position of Commissioner was offered to Senator Dr. Albert Frank, and Senate Counsellor Kurt Hoffman was appointed his deputy. The Commissioner's duty was to keep the port operational and to extend its operations after the end of hostilities. He was also responsible for the administrative matters related to the functioning of the port in Gdańsk. Apart from that, the Commissioner was temporarily in charge of the Water Construction Offices (*Urzędy Budownictwa Wodnego*) in Tczew, Grudziądz and Chełmno. The former Gdańsk Delegation (*Gdańska Delegacja*) to the Harbour and Waterways Council was transformed into an advisory body at the office of the State Commissioner, and the officials of the Polish Delegation of the Harbour Council and port workers of Polish nationality were dismissed and some of them were arrested. Further changes in the administration of the port took place at the end of 1939. Pursuant to the Ordinance of 22 December, the responsibility for the management of waterways in the former Polish territories incorporated into the Reich was taken over by the Reich Waterways Administration. As a result of these transformations, the

State Commissioner now administered the waters that were part of the port in Gdańsk extending between the lock in Płonia Wielka and the entrance to the port in Wisłoujście, including the River Motława and the so-called Emperor's Harbour *Kaiserhafen* (see map of the port of Gdańsk – Fig. 1).¹

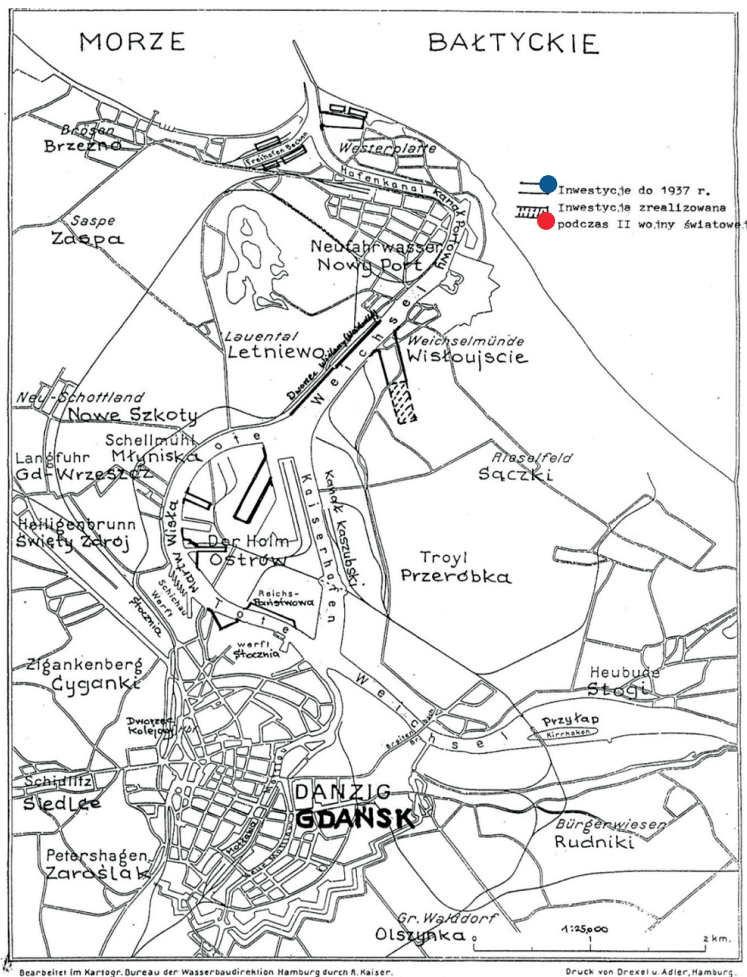


Figure 1. Map of the port of Gdańsk from 1920 showing investments planned for the years 1921–1945

Explanations to the map: ● Investments made until 1937, ● Investments made during WWII

Source: map edited by Bolesław Hajduk and drawn by Alojzy Data based on Otto Schulze's work *Danzig und sein Hafen* (Hamburg: Hafentechnische-gesellschaft, [1920]), 1.

¹ Archiwum Państwowe w Gdańsku [State Archives in Gdańsk], Danziger Hafengesellschaft GmbH (hereinafter APG, DHg), 1, 112–114: Ordinance of 22 December 1939; APG, DHg, 2, 115–116: Governor of the Waterways Directorate in Gdańsk to the Management of the Harbour and Waterways in Gdańsk, January 1940; APG, DHg, 136: Governor of the Reich Waterways to the State Commissioner for the Harbour and Waterways in Gdańsk, 15 February 1940; APG, DHg, 137–138, 148–150: Protocol draft, 19 February 1940; Reichsgesetzblatt 259 (30 December 1939): 2501.

The Reich Commissioner was ordered to temporarily take over the administration of the port of Gdynia, which was to become a military port. This decision was approved by the Council of Ministers for the Reich on 29 December 1939. As part of implementing this decision, an agreement was concluded in January 1940 between the Governor of the Reich District (*Reichsgau*) of Danzig–West Prussia and the command of the German Navy, on the basis of which a part of the port of Gdynia was sectioned off for the needs of the civilian economy. The “economic sector” in the port of Gdynia included the Silesian, Danish, Dutch and Fishing Quays (*Nabrzeże Śląskie, Duńskie, Holendersie, Rybackie*) and from 1942 also part of the Polish Quay (*Nabrzeże Polskie*)² (see map of the port of Gdynia – Fig. 2).

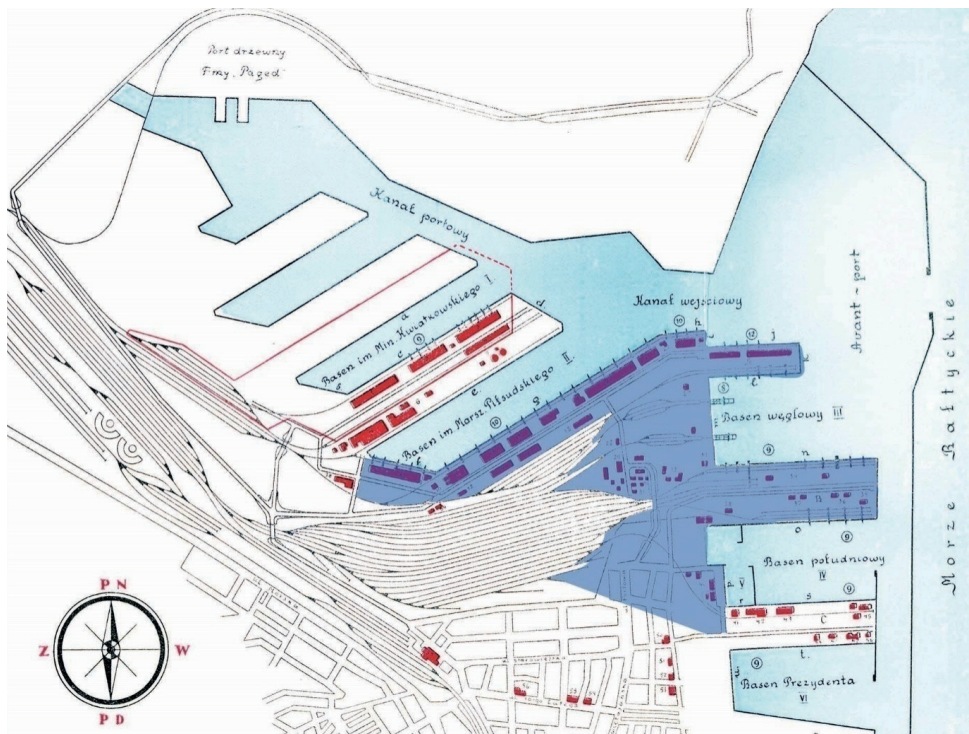


Figure 2. Map of the port in Gdynia with the civilian zone marked in navy blue

Source: Map prepared by Bolesław Hajduk based on the work *Port Gdynia* (Gdynia: Instytut Wydawniczy Państwowej Szkoły Morskiej, 1936), map 1.

² APG, DHg, Introduction to the inventory, 2–4; APG, DHg, Harbour and Waterways Council in Gdańsk (*Rada Portu i Dróg Wodnych w Gdańsku*, hereinafter RPDW), 1335, 725–727; State Commissioner for Maritime Shipping to the Port’s Naval Construction Office, 27 July 1942; *Danziger Wirtschaftszeitung* 17/18 (15/09/1939): 494; *Danziger Wirtschaftszeitung* 20 (15/10/1939): 561.

At the beginning of 1940, a decision was made to hand over the management of the port of Gdańsk and the civilian part of the port of Gdynia to a specially-established joint-stock company called “Danziger Hafengesellschaft mit beschränkter Haftung” – “Dahag” (“Gdańsk Port Company Limited”). The founding contract was signed on 15 March 1941. The founders were the Reich Governor for the District of Danzig–West Prussia and the City of Gdańsk. A separate Ordinance of the Reich Ministry of Transport of 24 March 1941 specified the organisational structure of “Dahag,” and the firm was registered in the Company Register. The company’s main tasks included the acquisition, operation and maintenance of port facilities, waterways, warehouses, granaries, yards, and similar transshipment facilities. The company’s share capital was set at 1 million marks. Each party forming the company held half of its share capital. Possible losses threatening the company’s existence were to be liquidated by both shareholders. The storage yards, buildings, warehouses and handling facilities handed over to the company for use in the founding contract remained the property of the city. The company was entitled to collect port, handling and storage fees. However, it was obliged to pay 4% of the proceeds to the city, if it generated surplus revenue.³

The company also obtained the right to use designated quays in the port of Gdynia, i.e. the Silesian, Danish, Swedish, Fishing, and Dutch Quays as well as a section of the Polish Quay. Since the company also used a part of the port of Gdynia, its name was changed accordingly to “Danziger Hafengesellschaft mbH Danzig–Gotenhafen” (“Gdańsk Port Company Ltd. Gdańsk/Gdynia”). To be able to use the civilian part of the naval port in Gdynia (*Kriegshafen Gotenhafen*), the company’s management board concluded an agreement with the command of the German Navy which allowed it to carry out trade and service activities in this zone for a period of five years. The company undertook to pay the Navy 20% of its revenue from port fees annually for the use of the quays and handling facilities. In addition, the company paid for the maintenance of the handling equipment, warehouses and storage yards. The Navy, on the other hand, was responsible for renovating the quays, maintaining the navigability of the port basins and marking the fairways. Ultimately, however, the company was not given control over the fishing port in Gdynia, which had previously been leased to “Danziger Fischzentrale GmbH,” a fish processing and trading business. The contract with the Command of the Gdynia Naval Port allowed “Danziger Fischzentrale” to use an office building, a warehouse, a yard for the storage of boxes with fish and a part of a cold

3 APG, DHg, 1, 1–5: Reich Commissioner for the Harbour and Waterways in the District of Danzig–West Prussia to the Reich Ministry of Transport, 20 April 1940; idem, 14–18: Appendices to the draft agreement (15 January 1940), no. 2, 33; *Danziger Wirtschaftszeitung* 10 (15/May/1941): 248–251; *Danziger Wirtschaftszeitung* 17 (1/09/1941).

store located in the port of Gdynia for a rent of 8,000 marks. The remaining area of the fish cold store was used by “Dahag.”⁴

The company’s governing bodies included the shareholders’ assembly, the supervisory board and the management board. The shareholders’ assembly was attended by representatives of the parties forming the company, i.e. representatives of the Reich Governor’s office and Gdańsk city authorities. The use of the port was overseen by the company’s management board, which had been established by creating a separate Port Department in the State Commissioner’s Office. It consisted of the following organisational units: the Administrative Office, the Technical Directorate, the Commercial Directorate, the Financial Department, the Main Cashier’s Office, the Payment Office, Construction Offices in Nowy Port and Przegalin, as well as the Quay Management Office and the Pilots’ Office.⁵

The clerical staff of “Dahag” consisted of civil servant officers formerly employed at the Gdańsk Delegation to the Harbour Council taken over by the State Commissioner. They still remained municipal civil servant officers of the City of Gdańsk, but they were granted leave from the civil service for the duration of their employment in “Dahag.” Eighty-three civil servant officers and fifty-one retirees who were still in service were transferred to “Gdańsk Port Company.” For handling operations in the Gdańsk–Gdynia port complex, the company’s management board hired Germans and people of “foreign” origin either as free or forced workers. The hired workers recruited after 22 June 1941 in the western regions of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics occupied by the Third Reich, who were called “Eastern workers” (*Ostarbeiter*), were treated as temporary workers and were therefore paid lower wages. Among the prisoners of war working in the port of Gdańsk, the largest group were Russians. The share of *Ostarbeiters* and prisoners of war employed in freight handling operations at the ports of Gdańsk and Gdynia grew as the military situation of the Third Reich deteriorated and more and more German workers were directed to military service. Due to the rapid increase in the number of foreign workers in the port of Gdańsk, the camp in Wisłoujście they were living in was enlarged. In 1941 and 1942, two new barracks for 192 people were built there. It is worth noting that, in 1944, workers from abroad constituted the majority of the staff of skilled workers employed in the port of Gdańsk, i.e. crane operators, locksmiths, electricians and maintenance technicians. They had been trained to do these jobs already at the port with the company’s money.⁶

4 APG, Gdynia Branch, Oberfischmeisteramt (hereinafter APG, OG, Obf), 17, 14: Report on the activities of Danziger Fischzentrale GmbH for 1940.

5 *Danziger Wirtschaftszeitung* 11 (1/07/1941): 285.

6 APG, DHg, 1, 49–51: Annex no. 5 – regulation on civil service officers of the former Harbour and Waterways Council, 26 March 1940; *ibidem*, 52–56: Factsheet nos. 1 and 2 on transferred civil service officers, dated to April 1940; *idem*, 39, 25: Reich Federation of German Civil Servants to the Federation of German Civil Servants in the District of Danzig–West Prussia, 15 April 1942; *ibid.*, 23, 51:

The employment situation in the civilian zone of the port of Gdynia was slightly different, as the workforce there consisted to a greater extent of forced labourers. Labour camps were organised at ulica Polska (*Kielerstrasse*) and ulica Czechosłowacka (*Weselerstrasse*) [streets] for *Ostarbeiters* and forced labourers of French, Belgian and Polish nationalities involved in transshipment operations and working at the warehouses. Moreover, a large labour camp with 146 barracks was built for them; some of the workers were employed in a shipyard opened in Gdynia, which was a branch of “Deutsche Werke Kiel AG” (later the Gdynia shipbuilding company “Stocznia Gdynńska SA”). Prisoners of war also worked in the port of Gdynia: Russians, French, Slovaks, Italians and others, all placed in barracks in the camp located at the intersection of Polska, Czechosłowacka and Janka Wiśniewskiego (*Wikingerstrasse*) streets. In addition, prisoners of the Stutthof concentration camp confined in sub-camps located in Gdynia were forced to work in the port.⁷

The organisational structure of “Dahag” also included the company guard, which was established on 16 January 1940. It consisted of 61 people working in a three-shift system. Most of the guards were elderly people, mostly invalids, who were entrusted with auxiliary tasks. For this reason, the responsibility for the security of the commercial part of the port was devolved to the headquarters of the German Navy, which in 1942 was also put in charge of the Gdynia branch of the Pilots’ Office.⁸

Reich Commissioner for Maritime Shipping to Rear Admiral Coupette, 21 April 1944; *ibidem*, 29, 140–141: Port’s Naval Construction Office to the technical directorate of “Dahag,” 27 August 1941; *Verordnungsblatt des Reichsstatthalters in Danzig–Westpreussen* 87 (27 December 1940), items 406 and 407; APG, RPDW, 457, 717: Note for the Technical Directorate of “Dahag,” 11 September 1944.

7 APG, Marine Hafengebäudeamt Gotenhafen (hereinafter MHG), 1091, no pagination: Situation maps of the camps, 1941; *idem*, 1082, 1: Plans for the reconstruction of the barracks, 1942; *idem*, 1092, no pagination: Invoice from the construction company Erich Tüchel, 22 April 1942; *idem*, no pagination: Zarząd Gródek S.A. do Portowego Urzędu Budowlanego Marynarki [Board of “Gródek S.A.” to the Port’s Naval Construction Office], 13 November 1942; see: *Oboz hitlerowski na ziemiach polskich 1939 – 1945: Informator encyklopedyczny*, edit. Czesław Pilichowski, et.al. (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, Warszawa 1979), 173–175; Czesław Jeryś, *Budownictwo okrętowe w Gdyni w latach 1920–1945* (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Morskie, 1980), 252–253; Jadwiga Michałowska, “Gospodarka Gdyni w okresie okupacji hitlerowskiej,” in: *Dzieje Gdyni*, ed. Roman Wapiński (Wrocław, et.al.: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1980), 234; Mirosław Gliński, “Podobozy i większe komanda zewnętrzne KL Stutthof (1939–1945),” in: *Stutthof. Hitlerowski obóz koncentracyjny*, ed. Konrad Ciechanowski (Warszawa: Interpress, 1988), 245–249; Hans Pfahmann, *Fremdarbeiter und Kriegsgefangene in der Deutschen Kriegswirtschaft 1939–1945* (Darmstadt: Wehr & Wissen Verlagsgesellschaft MBH, 1968); Gabriel Kozłowski, “Niektóre dane do statystyki zatrudnienia jeńców wojennych w gospodarce Okręgu Gdańsk – Prusy Zachodnie w latach 1939–1942,” in: *Stutthof. Zeszyty Muzeum* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1976), 191–203; Hajduk, Bolesław. “Cywilna strefa ekonomiczna w porcie wojennym w latach 1940–1945,” in: *Marynarka Wojenna w dziejach Gdyni. Materiały z sympozjum naukowego 26 czerwca 1996 r.*, eds. Jerzy Przybylski, and Bogdan Zalewski (Gdynia: Akademia Marynarki Wojennej im. Bohaterów Westerplatte, 1997), 100; Marek Orski, “Obóz jeńców słowackich (listopad 1944–marzec 1945),” *Rocznik Gdyni* 10 (1991): 129–135.

8 APG, DHg, 39, 4 and 6: Memo from a council meeting of 16 January 1940, dated to 16 January, 3 February 1940, *idem*, 45–48: State Commissioner for the Harbour and Waterways to the Pilots’ Office,

To execute the tasks imposed on it during the war by the governing structures of the German state, "Dahag" needed not only sufficient workforce but also tools and machinery. The technical equipment of the port in Gdańsk during the war was not worse than before. "Dahag" received a total of 91 pieces of various types of mechanical material handling devices, such as portal and bridge cranes, conveyor belts for ore and coal, wagon tippers, weighing containers, etc. In addition, the company had at its disposal warehouses, granaries and equipment for unloading wood. However, the machines handed over to the company were not enough to allow it to carry out in full the handling tasks imposed on the port. In particular, the port of Gdańsk suffered from a lack of 100-tonne and 50-tonne crawler cranes, 15-tonne self-propelled cranes, two-tonne general cargo handling cranes, and 200-tonne conveyor belts. There was also a shortage of all kinds of vans, lifts and electric trucks. Traffic in the port was negatively affected by the scarcity of tugs, pilot boats, ferries and other vessels. The company's authorities tried to solve these problems by purchasing or taking over material handling equipment and vessels from Western European ports occupied by Germany. Courtesy of the State Commissioner for Shipping in Hamburg, the company obtained two portal cranes from Rotterdam and Antwerp. In addition, the company bought two bridge cranes for ore handling in Le Havre, two motor boats and two coal ferries in the Netherlands, and a bunker tug with a handling capacity of 800 tonnes in Hamburg.⁹

One should also mention the technical equipment that "Dahag" received to perform its tasks in the civilian economic zone of the port of Gdynia. In total, the company was supplied with 17 different types of loading and unloading devices. Compared to the pre-war port, however, the civilian economic zone managed by "Dahag" had a lower handling capacity for materials such as coal. This was partly due to the fact that the German Navy had seized and used parts of the port's quays, handling facilities, warehouses and storage yards. It is also important to mention the damage that allied air attacks inflicted on the Gdańsk-Gdynia port complex. In Gdańsk, the crane purchased in Antwerp, the Navy's fuel depot, barracks of the emigration camp "Etap Emigracyjny" and barracks in Nowy Port were all destroyed in attacks by the American air force in October and December of 1943 and then again in 1945. In the port of Gdynia, American bombers destroyed three docks, one warehouse, thirteen merchant

13 June, July 1940; idem, 231-233: The Pilots' Office to the State Commissioner's Administrative Directorate, 9 October 1941; idem, 337: The Administrative Directorate of "Dahag" to the military headquarters of District XX - Naval Department, 14 May 1943; idem, 289: The Commercial Directorate of "Dahag" to the Pilots' Office, 19 September 1944.

9 APG, RPDW, 1335, 715, 717, 719-720: State Commissioner for the Harbour and Waterways to the Technical Directorate, 9 April 1940; idem, 23, 28, 29: State Commissioner for Shipping to Director Speth, 1 June, 26 July 1943; idem, 31: Technical Directorate of "Dahag"-list of necessary handling equipment, June 1943. For more information on the handling equipment figures for the port of Gdańsk, see: Hajduk Bolesław, "Port gdański w latach II wojny światowej 1939-1945," *Zapiski Historyczne* 1 (1991), 56: 53-57.

ships and one warship in an air strike on 9 October 1943. They also damaged the submarine-building hall, three outfitting halls and the marine station.¹⁰

During the war, various investments were made in the Gdańsk–Gdynia port area managed and operated by “Dahag.” Taking into account the sources of funding and the functioning of the Third Reich’s centralised system of rationing of construction materials, one can distinguish two forms of port investments: those which the central authorities deemed essential from the point of view of the ongoing war and which were, therefore, financed from the state budget and guaranteed to receive construction materials, and those that were made with private funds without any material guarantees. The first category of investments included routine maintenance of the port facilities operated by “Dahag” in the Gdańsk–Gdynia port complex in the years 1941–1942 and the dredging of the port basins. Other investment tasks funded by the state were the reconstruction of the wharf, dredging works in the duty free zone, and the completion of the construction of the bulk-cargo basin in Wisłoujście in the port of Gdańsk.¹¹

A number of investments that did not feature in the central programme of planned works were made by municipal and military authorities and private companies. By order of the High Mayor of the city of Gdańsk, the construction of a cold store over the so-called Port Channel (*Hafenkanal*) in Nowy Port was completed. On the initiative of the municipal authorities, the marina for steamboats in the western basin was rebuilt, and the left bank of the river Martwa Wisła (*Tote Weichsel*) was reinforced with a sheet pile wall over a length of 21.9 km in order to protect the sewage collector.¹²

Expansion of the basin on Wyspa Ostrów (*Holm*) was carried out by the Navy, which also ordered the construction of a new power line with a transformer station and a sewage collector and commissioned the deepening of the fairway. More serious hydraulic engineering works were carried out with the participation of various companies. The state shipyard company “Reichswerft” built a 2.3 km long outfitting quay along the left bank of the river Martwa Wisła. Another shipyard company “Schichauwerft” repaired the damaged wharf in the outfitting base, mended and modernised four slipways and built a mooring pier for ships. Similarly, the grain trading company

10 APG, DHg, 3, 11: List of mechanical devices supplied to “Dahag,” 27 February 1943; Hajduk, “Cywilna strefa, 100–101; Aleksy Kaźmierczak, “Port gdyński w latach wojny,” *Rocznik Gdyński* 1 (1977): 111–113; Aleksy Kaźmierczak, “Samoloty nad Gotenhafen,” *Rocznik Gdyński* 10 (1991): 120–127; Bogdan Chrzanowski and Andrzej Gąsiorowski, “Port i stocznie Gdyni 1940–1944 (w świetle meldunków wywiadowczych KG AK),” *Rocznik Gdyński* 10 (1991): 119.

11 APG, DHg, 29, 73: General Plenipotentiary for the regulation of the construction economy–Reich Minister Todt to the General Plenipotentiary in the military district, part I, 22 April 1943; idem, 99: State Commissioner for the Harbour and Waterways to the Reich Ministry of Transport, 2 August, 1940; idem, 104: List no. 2 of newly-registered war investments, 2 August 1940; idem, 107: Important war investments in the second fiscal year, 8 February 1941; Hajduk, “Port gdański,” 58.

12 APG, DHg, 28, 1135: Waterways Office to “Dahag,” 25 November 1941; idem, 141, 221: building permit, 28 February 1942; 4 June 1942.

“Speicherei AG” reinforced and modernised a pier along with an unloading device. The Danish–Gdańsk company “Baltisch Amerikanische Petroleum Import GmbH” reinforced and enlarged the existing mooring pier for tankers and built an additional oil pipeline for the transshipment of Romanian oil to Scandinavia. Similarly, the oil trading company “Naphta Industrie und Handelsgesellschaft mbH” rebuilt a loading bridge with mooring dolphins on the right bank of the river Martwa Wisła. Fuel tanks were expanded and new fuel handling equipment was added by the above-mentioned companies as the Reich Ministry of Transport designated the port of Gdańsk to handle the exports of Romanian crude oil to Denmark, Sweden, Norway and later also Finland. The German import and export company “Rumänien-Mineralöl GmbH” based in Romania dealt with commercial matters and organised transports to the port of Gdańsk. The investments that large companies made in the port of Gdańsk all served the military purposes of the Third Reich. Other, smaller Gdańsk companies, whose activity was limited by financial and material constraints, e.g. the rationing of construction materials, only performed some indispensable works, such as the construction of oil tanks, office barracks, and sanitary and sewage disposal facilities or laying high-voltage cables at the bottom of the port channels.¹³

The management board of “Dahag” also tried to enhance the handling capacity of the zone of the Gdynia port it used, but due to the earlier-mentioned financial and material difficulties, the investments were limited to those commissioned to the Command of the Gdynia Naval Port. On a commission from the German Navy, investments were made in the construction of Y-booms and mooring dolphins in the newly-built shipyard – a branch of “Deutsche Werke Kiel,” and in the expansion of quays in the basin of the naval port in Oksywie. Moreover, eleven wooden piers were built, the eastern breakwater was expanded, several warehouses and storage yards were rebuilt, and residential buildings (barracks) for prisoners of war, prisoners and forced labourers were erected. However, the authorities of “Dahag” did not manage to obtain any major support to invest in the civil zone of the Gdynia port itself, apart from help in current repairs.¹⁴

The volume and structure of cargo turnover in the Gdańsk–Gdynia port complex depended on many factors during the war. The war interrupted the ties that had linked Gdańsk and Gdynia with the ports in Western Europe and outside Europe before its outbreak. Hence, the management of “Dahag” focused on maintaining and expanding

13 Hajduk, “Port gdański,” 64–65.

14 APG, MHG, 1005, 1: Cost estimates for the construction of 2 office buildings and the reconstruction of barracks, 15 June 1941; idem, 1009, 1: Facilities erected on a commission from the Navy Arsenal (*Kriegsmarinearsenal*), 15 October 1943; idem, 1041, 405, 406: High Command of the Baltic Sea Navy to the Admiral of Submarines, 30 December 1944; Kaźmierczak, “Port gdyński,” 106–109; Bohdan Szermer, “Konsepce i struktura przestrzenna portu gdyńskiego–zarys przemian (part 2: 1939–1965),” *Rocznik Gdyński* 5 (1984), 86–90.

relations with the former Polish hinterland and ensuring that the ports participated as much as possible in the transit of goods between the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (Hungary, Romania, the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, and Ukraine) and Scandinavia. It can be observed that the company's management pursued a two-pronged policy aiming at, first, securing the position of Gdańsk and Gdynia in transit transport and, second, defending the ports' interests against competition from other German ports, especially Szczecin. To strengthen the position of the Gdańsk–Gdynia port complex in transit transport, the management of “Dahag” opened commercial agencies in Stockholm, Oslo, Copenhagen, Helsinki, Budapest and Bucharest. At the same time, the company engaged in a propaganda war with the authorities of the port of Szczecin, who had launched a hostile information campaign against the Gdańsk–Gdynia port complex. As part of this war, articles inspired by the management of the Gdańsk company were published in German magazines and brochures were distributed abroad. Also, “Dahag” participated in fairs and exhibitions and joined the German Chambers of Commerce operating in Scandinavian countries.¹⁵

The turnover of the Gdańsk–Gdynia port complex during the war was lower than the transshipment volumes handled before its outbreak (Table 1).

Table 1. Transshipment volumes in the Gdańsk–Gdynia port complex in the years 1938–1945 [in tonnes]

Year	Gdańsk–Gdynia in total	Port of Gdańsk		Port of Gdynia	
		Import	Export	Import	Export
1938	16 300 631	1 563 958	5 563 236	1 526 535	7 646 902
1939 (Jan–Aug)	10 511 821	932 108	4 590 400	792 718*	4 196 595*
1940	7 250 000	1 070 000	2 666 000	104 000	3 410 000
1941	5 861 000	1 982 000	1 186 000	271 000	2 422 000
1942	6 486 660	1 501 218	1 889 022	153 091	2 933 329
1943	7 484 000	1 426 841	2 984 974	120 740	2 951 445
1944	6 474 252	829 615	2 598 126	88 216	2 958 295
1945 (I)	208 638	**	104 705	**	103 933

* Turnover in the port of Gdynia for the first half of 1938, ** No data.

Source: APG, RPDW, 1349, pp. 588–596, 873, 882; Statistiek des Deutschen Reichs, Bd. 588 (Berlin 1942), 6; Bd. 593 (1943), 7; *Amtsblatt des Militärfehlschabers Danzig–Westpreussen* 3 (4/10/1939): 49–51; *Wiadomości Portu Gdańskiego* 7 (July 1939): 24–26, 34, 35; *Żegluga-the Navigation* 3–4 (1939): 27; *Rocznik Rady Interesantów Portu w Gdyni* 8 (1938): 35.

15 APG, DHg, 9, 1135: State Commissioner for the Harbour and Waterways to the Chamber of Industry and Commerce in Gdańsk, 23 June 1941; idem, 128: Chamber of Industry and Commerce to the State Commissioner for the Harbour and Waterways, 24 June 24 1941; idem, 47: State Commissioner for the Harbour and Waterways to the German Chambers of Commerce in Oslo and Copenhagen, 6 December 1940; idem, 11, 103–104: Chamber of Industry and Commerce to “Dahag,” 7 October 1941; idem, 111: Commercial Directorate of “Dahag” to “Deutsche Verkehrs Nachrichten,” 17 January 1942; idem, 132: Press Department of Auswartiges Amt to “Dahag,” 19 March 1942; idem, 206: “Dahag” agency in Finland to the Management Board of “Dahag,” 31 August 1942; idem, 9, 254, 257: letters from “Dahag” to the Hungarian and Romanian consulates in Gdańsk, 28 January 1942; see: Bolesław Hajduk, *Gospodarka Gdańska w latach 1920–1945* (Gdańsk: IH PAN, 1998), 233–234.

In 1938, a total of 16,300,631 tons were transhipped at these ports, including 7,127,194 tons in Gdańsk, and 9,173,437 tons in Gdynia. To compare, in 1943, which was the best year of the war in terms of transshipment volumes, the total turnover reached 7,484,000 tonnes, of which 4,411,815 tonnes were handled in Gdańsk, and 3,072,185 tonnes in Gdynia. In the remaining years of the war, the turnover of the Gdańsk–Gdynia port complex was between 6 and 7 million tonnes. The handling capacity of the port in Gdynia and the volumes of cargo handled there were negatively affected by the fact that “Dahag” used only some of the port facilities controlled by the German Navy for commercial purposes. The turnover of the port complex managed by “Dahag” in 1940–1941 was higher than the turnover of Królewiec, but lower than the cargo volumes handled in Szczecin, Hamburg or Bremen. Overall, the total turnover of German ports in the Baltic Sea increased from the 16,879,000 tonnes handled in 1939 to 21,630,000 tonnes in 1940 and 18,552,000 tonnes in 1941. At the same time, German ports in the North Sea registered a fall from 37,681,000 tonnes in 1939 to 23,085,000 tonnes in 1940 and 21,285,000 tonnes in 1941.¹⁶ The war hostilities led to changes in the structure of goods that had been transported through the ports of Gdańsk and Gdynia until 1939 (Table 2).

Table 2. Major goods delivered to and shipped from the Gdańsk–Gdynia port complex in 1938–1945 (in tonnes)

Year	Coal and coke		Ore		Cereals and legumes		Timber and wood products		Building materials	
	Import	Export	Import	Export	Import	Export	Import	Export	Import	Export
1938 Gdańsk	103,355	4,030,318	986,767	–	–	335,292	7,066	813,410	–	547 a
1938 Gdynia	–	6,525,903	207,574	–	–	33,644	3,784	402,591	–	53,583
1939 Gdańsk					–					
(Jan–Apr)	5,830	2,303,963	336,369	–	–	418,782	1,771	423,494	–	264
Gdynia										
(I–VI)	–	3,550,433	166,605	–	–	48,219	2,725	196,289	–	31,042
1940	21,000	5,894,000	711,000		54,000	167,000	129,000	20,000	83,000	–
1941	72,000	347,000	1,155,000	–	60,000	106,000	158,000	15,000	375,000	b
1942	2,000	4,257,000	1,019,000	–	5,000	113,000	90,000	20,000	291,000	–
1943	23,000	5,473,000	925,000	–	40,000	124,000	13,000	22,000	261,000	–
1944	25,553	4,614,208	469,267	–	26,492	161,029	40,687	17,433	185,000	21,139
1945 (I)	b	208,638	–	–	b	b	b		b	b

a – Applies to cement exports in 1938–1939, b – No data.

Source: AP Gd., RPDW/1349, 587–590, 862–865, 873, 882 and 883; *Rocznik Rady Interesantów Portu w Gdyni*, 8 (1938): 36–41; *Wiadomości Portu Gdańskiego* 1/2 (1939): 27–29; 38–39; *Wiadomości Portu Gdańskiego* 7 (1939): 24–26, 34–35; *Statistik des Deutschen Reiches* (Berlin 1941–1943), Bd. 576, H. 1, 80–89; 588, H. 1, 92–101; 593, 92–98.

16 Bolesław Hajduk, “Gospodarka Gdańska w okresie drugiej wojny światowej 1939–1945,” in: *Historia Gdańska*, Vol. IV, part 2: 1920–1945, eds. Edmund Cieślak and Marek Andrzejewski (Sopot: Wydawnictwo Lex, 2000), 218–219.

From the point of view of quantity, the key goods imported to Gdańsk in the years 1937–1938 were fertilisers, metal ores and ore products, rubber, cork, colonial commodities and tannins. Exports through this port, on the other hand, were dominated by coal, timber and wood products, cereals and grain mill products, and fertilisers. Until 1939, the port of Gdynia had imported large volumes of metal ores, pig iron, scrap and textile raw materials. The most important goods shipped from Gdynia were coal, wood, petroleum products and metallurgical products.

During the war, iron ore, construction materials (stones, lime, gravel, cement, etc.) and building wood were the leading imports to the Gdańsk–Gdynia port complex. As regards the shipment of ore from abroad, “Dahag” managed, with a great deal of effort, to procure for the ports in Gdańsk and Gdynia an appropriate share in the German quota for the import of ore from Scandinavia. From 1943, the Gdańsk–Gdynia port complex received the same amount of ore import quotas as the port of Szczecin. Starting from September 1944, as a result of the Swedish government’s blockade of the territorial waters against foreign ships, the transshipment of ore through the ports of Gdańsk and Gdynia significantly decreased in favour of other German ports.¹⁷ One should also mention the large imports of sea fish to the Gdańsk port handled by the deep sea fishing union “*Norddeutsche Hochseefischerei AG*” from Wesermünde, based in the port’s free zone. In September 1942, an independent fish transport company called “*Ostdeutsche Hochseefischerei Löschung und Abfertigung GmbH*” with headquarters in Westerplatte was registered. Fresh fish were also brought to the port of Gdynia to be stored in the civil zone.¹⁸

Coal, grain, crude oil and oil products, sugar and timber were the chief materials shipped from the Gdańsk–Gdynia port complex. Fuel transports to Scandinavia, however, passed mainly through the port of Gdańsk, as this port had been earmarked by the Reich Ministry of Transport for handling the transports of Romanian oil to Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Finland.¹⁹

The efficiency with which cargo traffic was handled in the Gdańsk–Gdynia port complex managed by “Dahag” depended on the performance of the brokerage and forwarding companies operating in the ports. After the outbreak of the war, the existing brokerage and freight forwarding system was radically rebuilt. The Polish brokerage

17 Bundes Archiv Berlin, Reichsfinanzministerium, B 8735, 101, 102: German-Swedish economic protocols, 22 December 1929; idem, 107–108: A confidential additional report, 22 December 1939; idem, 123–124, 128 129: An execution report, 12 January 1940; idem, 10554, 19, 57, 59: Reich Minister of Finance to Oberpräsidenten [Prefects] for Finance in Królewiec, Hamburg, Szczecin and Gdańsk, 3 February, 29 November 1941; idem, Statistische Reichsamt, 6040, 3–6: Germany’s foreign trade in the years 1040–1944; APG, RPDW, 1349, 589–592: Trade in goods in Gdańsk and Gdynia in 1940–1945; Statistik des Deutschen Reichs (Berlin 1943), Bd 576, Heft 1, 80–89; 588, Heft 1, 92–101; 593, Heft 1, 92–93.

18 Hajduk, “Port gdański,” 69–71; Hajduk, *Gospodarka Gdańska*, 249–250.

19 Hajduk, “Cywilna strefa,” 106–107.

and shipping companies, which had dominated the customs clearing business in the ports before the war, and some foreign firms of this type were seized and liquidated. As a result, the number of brokerage companies dropped, with 35 brokerage firms operating in 1937/1938, 32 in 1939, 22 in 1940/1941 and 24 in 1942. A similar decrease was observed in the shipping industry, from 96 companies in 1938 to 63 companies in 1942. The well-known Gdańsk brokers, such as: "Behnke&Sieg", "F.G. Reinhold", "F. Prowe", "H. Olschewski" (Oldendorf) and "Artus A.G" increased in significance. Brokerage services were also provided by a few foreign, mainly Norwegian, companies, such as "Bergtrans Schiffahrt AG" and "Worms & Cie."²⁰

In general, the location of the port of Gdańsk and the part of the port of Gdynia connected with it was less favourable during World War II than in the interwar period, when they had been part of the Polish customs area. Though the ports had access to their natural hinterland, i.e. the territory of the Polish state and the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, which had been subordinated to the Third Reich, they made little use of it due to Germany's military economy and the restrictions it imposed on production and trade. The investments made during the war and the newly-acquired technical equipment improved the operation of these ports, increasing to some extent their handling capacity, however the actual needs were much greater. The Gdańsk-Gdynia port complex, despite the efforts on the part of "Dahag" and the local economic circles, never became a hub for transit transport services in the Baltic zone, which was partly due to the war and partly due to the competition from other German ports.

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English version: Radosław Dolecki, Mark Atkinson

SUMMARY

The study presents the functioning and operation of the port of Gdańsk and the civilian-economy zone of the port of Gdynia during World War II. After the outbreak of the war, in September 1939, the Harbour and Waterways Council, which had so far administered the port of Gdańsk, was dissolved, and its powers were entrusted to the State Commissioner for Harbours and Waterways working under the Reich Governor of Gdańsk. The State Commissioner also took over the administration of the so-called economic sector at the naval port of Gdynia. At the beginning of 1940, the management of the port of Gdańsk and the civilian part of the port of Gdynia was handed over to the joint stock company "Danziger Hafengesellschaft mit beschränkter Haftung" – "Dahag" established by the Reich Governor and the city of Gdańsk. The investments made in the two ports and the new technical equipment they received improved their operations and cargo handling capacity. However, the cargo turnover of the Gdańsk–Gdynia port complex during the war was smaller than the volumes handled before the outbreak of the war. Despite the efforts made by the authorities of "Dahag," the Gdańsk–Gdynia port complex never became a hub for transit transport from Scandinavia to Central Europe in the southern part of the Baltic Sea, which, apart from the war, was due to competition from other German ports.

Administracja oraz eksploatacja morskich portów handlowych w Gdańsku i Gdyni podczas II wojny światowej

Słowa kluczowe: wojna, gospodarka, port, administracja, eksploatacja

STRESZCZENIE

W opracowaniu przedstawiono funkcjonowanie oraz eksploatację portu gdańskiego i wydzielonej dla potrzeb gospodarki cywilnej części portu gdyńskiego w czasie II wojny światowej. Po wybuchu wojny, we wrześniu 1939 r. rozwiązano Radę Portu i Dróg Wodnych, sprawującą dotąd administrację nad portem gdańskim, a jej kompetencje powierzono komisarzowi państwowemu dla portów i dróg wodnych przy namiestniku Rzeszy Niemieckiej w Gdańsku. Komisarz państwowy przejął także administrację nad wyodrębnionym w styczniu 1940 r. dla potrzeb gospodarki cywilnej tzw. sektorem ekonomicznym w porcie wojennym Gdynia. Z początkiem 1940 r. oddano zarząd nad portem gdańskim i częścią cywilną w porcie gdyńskim utworzonemu przez namiestnika Rzeszy Niemieckiej oraz miasto Gdańsk towarzystwu akcyjnemu Gdańska Spółka Portowa z ograniczoną odpowiedzialnością (*Danziger Hafengesellschaft mit beschränkter Haftung* – „Dahag”). Realizowane podczas wojny inwestycje oraz uzupełnianie wyposażenia technicznego w obydwu portach usprawniły ich działalność oraz poprawiły zdolność przeładunkową. W sumie obroty towarowe wspólnoty portowej Gdańsk-Gdynia w okresie wojny były jednak mniejsze od wielkości przeładowywanych do momentu jej wybuchu. Pomimo wysiłków, podejmowanych przez władze spółki „Dahag,” zespół portowy Gdańsk-Gdynia nie stał się dominującym w południowej strefie Bałtyku ośrodkiem przewozów tranzytowych ze Skandynawii do państw Europy środkowej do czego, poza sytuacją wojenną, przyczyniła się także konkurencja innych portów niemieckich.

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