



Shipbuilding in the region of polish Western Pomerania - historical background and some future aspects

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Abstract

Western Pomerania is the north - west province of Poland. It is situated on the Baltic Sea and borders along the Oder - River with the Federal Republic of Germany. The capital of this province is Szczecin which is one of the largest harbours of the Baltic Sea.

This paper contains a short historical outline of the shipyards situated in this port, a description of their present condition and production features of major shipbuilding enterprises.

1 Historical background

Szczecin lies in the estuary of the River Oder. The River, its affluents and large net of inland navigation waterways which was developed on the turn of 19th century creates good transportation links in to Poland, eastern provinces of Germany as well as transit connections with Western Europe. The town and port have changed hands many times. For the longest time they were under the authority of the Slavonic Dynasty of Griffits' Princes. Then they were under the rule of Brandenburg, Sweden and even for some short time during Napoleon's wars under France. Later they became a part of Prussia and finally of German Reich. After the World War II Pomerania was divided into two parts by the border running along the River Oder between Poland and Germany. Presently the eastern part with Szczecin belongs to Poland.

The boatbuilding in the Szczecin harbour has existed for many centuries but industrial shipyards, which built wooden ships, developed mostly in the late 18th



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century. At that time the biggest one was Nuescke shipyard. It has built in the beginning of 19th century up to twenty 70-ton sailboats a year. Around the middle of 19th century a number of small metal works joined their forces together in order to start building of ironships. Earlier ironships were built in England. The shipyard "Stettiner Oderwerke" and several others were established in such circumstances. The first small ironship was launched 1859 in this yard. However the turning point for Szczecin and whole shipbuilding in Germany was the initiative by two men Mr F. Fruechtenicht and Mr. F. Brock, who in the middle of 19th century established a shipyard designed especially for building ships made of iron. This yard was transformed 1857 into a joint stock company „Vulcan" and up to the World War I it was a leading ship manufacturer in Germany and in Northern Europe. With the establishment 1830 in Szczecin a polytechnical school for craftsmen there was laid down the foundation of shipbuilding educational system. The Treaty of Versailles impositions which limited the size of warships and competition on the part of business circles in the western provinces of Reich especially in Hamburg and Bremen brought in the twenties of this century the closure of the majority of Szczecin's shipyards. Until the beginning of the World War II the "Oderwerke", the riverboat - yard "Greifenwerft" and some small repair yards outlasted only. Immediately before the War the reconstruction of the former "Vulcan Werft" was commenced. Simultaneously work was carried out on a warship equipment workshop situated on an island within the port. Further development of above mentioned plants was hindered through bombing by the Allied Air Forces. At the end of the War part of the equipment was evacuated. The majority of that equipment was taken over by the Soviet Authority as war reparations. The destruction of the shipyards taken over by Polish Authority was between 40 and 80 per cent.

2 The Polish Shipyards in the Oder - Estuary

After the war the least destroyed river shipyard Greifenwerft - now Odra Shipyard - became an embryo around which the Polish shipbuilding industry grew in Szczecin. In 1947 the reconstruction and modernisation of former Oderwerke began. It is now a part of Stocznia Szczecińska (Szczecin Shipyard). The other part of this yard is the former Vulcan yard. Its reconstruction, according to a new investment idea, started in 1958. The slipway received new cranes and new assembly houses were raised, thus facilities for modern technologies were open. From the sixties to the nineties the yard had four slipways in the Odra area and two slipways in the Vulcan area building ships from 4,000 up to about 30,000 DWT. In the same period an up-to-date system



of plate processing and assembly prefabrication was created. The last years were a new stage of modernisation for the yard: the building berth were equipped with portal cranes 300 t and luffing cranes 32 - 50 t. In the Odra area on the place of four old slipways a new large slipway, width 44 m, was constructed. The Yard is now able to build ships up to 50,000 DWT.

The Szczecin Shipyard (Stocznia Szczecińska) builds a wide range of ship types but specializes particularly in construction of container ships, passenger / cargo ferries as well as product ships and chemical tankers. For about 15 years the yard played an important part in the offshore program within the Eastblock. In those years it built specialized research vessels, offshore exploration ships, seabed operation vessels and offshore supply vessels. Some of them were fitted with saturated diver system allowing to go down to the depth of 250 m. In this group over 30 research vessels and seabed operation vessels as well as about 60 drilling platform supply vessels were built. The production of those offshore vessels resulted in numerous studies carried out by the yard and different scientific institutes. One of them is Faculty of Maritime Technology in the Technical University of Szczecin. The Faculty carries out research on technology for the underwater operations, construction of unmanned underwater vehicles and methods of designing of specialized crafts for the offshore techniques.

At present the Szczecin Shipyard undergoes a wide reconstruction process due to change of property form. Greatest attention is paid to raising productivity through organisation changes and bringing in modern techniques, CAM/CAD systems as well as new product quality control. The yard holds certificate ISO 9000 and thanks to high production quality makes successful efforts to negotiate new contracts.

This year the yard plans to built 21 ships and to export most of them to the value of about \$ 440,000,000. Regarding the production volume and financial outcome the yard took the first place among all Polish yards and ranked fourth among the European ones.

There are two shiprepair yards in the Szczecin port. The Szczecin Shiprepairyard (Szczecińska Stocznia Remontowa) "Gryfia" was established in 1952. The repair yard owns five floating dry-docks of lifting capacity from 650 t up to 15,000 t and two pontoons 1,700 t each. The repair yard has an experienced staff and in the field of qualified hull and machinery regeneration/repaires applies up-to-date technology. As regards its total property value and number of employees the yard ranks second among the shiprepair yards in Poland.

Until very recently the yard experienced hard time due to the loss of Russian market because of a crisis in that country's shipping as well as of economic



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changes in Germany after the unification of its western and eastern lands. Now it revitalizes financially and productively.

Since 1964 another Shiprepairyard "Parnica" is operating in Szczecin and carries out all kinds of repairs afloat in the port Szczecin and at its own repair quays. It has no dry-docks and in the field of shipdocking cooperates with the „Gryfia” yard. „Parnica” repair yard works very operatively and thanks to its efficiency and competence has a full order book.

In the port of Świnoujście on the Baltic Sea the yard Morska Stocznia Remontowa was established in the seventies. At the beginning it served as a fishing vessel repair yard. On that stage the yard was equipped with two floating dry-docks of lifting capacity of 3,500 t and 4,500 t as well as with adequate quays and workshops. The shipyard will be developed in order to enlarge its repair capacity according to the potential of the port of Świnoujście. The shipyard will be fitted out with a large dock of about 20,000 t lifting capacity.

Szczecin is university town. There exist seven academical schools here. Those schools create an intellectual and scientific foundation for the Western Pomerania industry and economy. The University of Szczecin and the Technical University of Szczecin prepare well educated personnel for the shipyards which guarantee advanced technology and managing level.

3 Summary

The shipbuilding in the region of Western Pomerania alike the shipyards in Gdańsk and Gdynia had in this years a difficult time. It was the result of the recent political changes which enforced particularly on the centraleuropean countries completely new economical rules. The neighbouring german shipyards in Mecklemburg and Vorpommern had received considerable support of the part of the stable west economy circles. Such a support to the Polish shipyards in Western Pomerania was beyond their reach. The shipyards did not receive any essential aid in form of a subsidy or budget allocation. To win the crisis was a very hard problem to the managing staffs. However they mastered it. They have modernisad the organisation of the shipbuilding industry and brought it to the world level.