



## Radosław Gaziński

Institute of History  
University of Szczecin  
radoslaw.gazinski@usz.edu.pl  
ORCID: 0000-0002-6734-9303

# From the History of Prussian Naval Policy: Plans to Establish a Waterway on the Dziwna Strait and Build a Seaport near Kamień Pomorski in the 18th Century

**Keywords:** Prussia, maritime policy, waterway, Dziwna Strait, 18th century

The article explores the circumstances surrounding attempts in the 18th century to improve the navigability of the Dziwna Strait and to construct a seaport at its mouth. It examines the hydrological conditions of the strait as well as the projected costs of building the waterway, including labour and the materials necessary for the investment. The analysis also highlights the economic impracticality of the planned works, particularly in light of the already operational waterway on the Świna Strait.

In contemporary terms, maritime policy is understood as the deliberate and purposeful actions of a state aimed at securing its best possible position along coasts and seas. Among such actions, the most prominent are the organisation and maintenance of a naval, merchant, and fishing fleet; the construction of ports and naval bases; support for shipbuilding; the organisation and protection of national trade and shipping; and, finally, full control over the country's coastal territories. This understanding of maritime policy is not solely a modern concept.<sup>1</sup> It was similarly perceived in the early modern period, as exemplified by Poland's maritime policy *Dominium Maris Baltici* during the reign of King Sigismund II Augustus.<sup>2</sup> A comparable approach can be

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1 Edward Włodarczyk, *Studia z dziejów pruskiej gospodarki i polityki morskiej w latach 1815–1939*, (Szczecin: Wydawnictwo Naukowe US, 2020), 41–42, 45–46.

2 Waclaw Odyniec, *Polskie dominium maris Baltici* (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1982), 245–250.

observed in Sweden's policy aimed at turning the Baltic Sea into an internal lake, as well as in Denmark's efforts to control Baltic trade, particularly through imposing tolls in the Øresund Strait.<sup>3</sup>

In this context, a fundamental question arises: did the Kingdom of Prussia pursue a maritime policy in the 18th century? In older historiography, the maritime inactivity of Frederick William I and Frederick II was often contrasted with the active approach of Elector Frederick William. Influenced by the mercantilist model of economic development and inspired by the economic success of the 17th-century Dutch Republic, Elector Frederick William believed that strengthening the Brandenburg-Prussian state required active engagement in maritime trade. Consequently, he supported the development of a merchant fleet, established a naval force, and even sought to acquire colonies in Africa, founding the African Company in Królewiec (Königsberg). During his reign, Brandenburg-Prussia pursued an active maritime and colonial policy.<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately, under his successors, Elector Frederick III and later King Frederick I, the naval fleet deteriorated. King Frederick William I deemed his predecessors' colonial policies an expensive "chimera," dissolved the African Company, and sold the rights to the already lost colonies to the Dutch. Given this historical context, can we speak of 18th-century Prussia as having a maritime policy? It seems that the economic model adopted by Prussian rulers in the 18th century, known as *Kameralismus* (a version of mercantilism adapted to Prussian conditions) necessitated maintaining a positive trade balance, which inevitably led to support for trade, including maritime commerce. Frederick William I, for instance, supported the development of fleets in Prussia's coastal cities through customs and tax policies that favoured maritime trade. His reign saw the modernisation of ports in Szczecin (Stettin), Kołobrzeg (Kolberg), and Królewiec. The king encouraged and even stimulated the establishment of trading companies by merchants in these coastal towns.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, Frederick William I engaged in persistent negotiations with Sweden to reduce excessive maritime tariffs imposed on Szczecin's trade via the Peene Strait.<sup>6</sup> When diplomacy failed, he took decisive action by initiating the construction of a new waterway through the Świna Strait to facilitate Szczecin's maritime trade.

3 Michael North, *Historia Bałtyku* (Warszawa: Neriton, 2018), 132–172.

4 Richard Schück, Paul Kayser, *Brandenburg-Preussens Kolonialpolitik unter dem Grossen Kurfürsten und seinen nachfolgern (1647–1721)* (Leipzig: FW Grunow, 1889); Otto Hintze, *Die Hohenzollern und ihr Werk 1415–1915*, (reprint), (Hamburg-Berlin: Verlag Pau Parey, 1987), 244–246; Sebastian Haffner, *Prusy bez legendy. Zarys dziejów* (Warszawa: Oficyna Historii XIX i XX wieku, 1996), 31–32.

5 Karl Heinrich Kaufhold, "Leistungen und Grenzen der Staatswirtschaft," in: *Preussen. Politik, Kultur, Gesellschaft*, ed. Manfred Schlenke, vol. 1 (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1986), 123–133; Hugo Rachel, "Der Merkantyllismus in Brandenburg-Preussen," in: *Moderne Preussische Geschichte 1648–194: Eine Antologie*, eds. Oskar Büsch, Wolfgang Neugebauer, vol. 2 (Berlin–New York: de Gruyter, 1981), 951–993.

6 Radosław Gaziński, "Z dziejów stosunków gospodarczych między Szwecją a Prusami. Spór o handel na Pianie i Świnie w latach 1720–1763," *Przegląd Zachodniopomorski* 35 (1992), 1: 39–46.

His successor, Frederick II, continued these initiatives, completing the Świna waterway and building a seaport at its mouth, which gave rise to the town of Świnoujście (Swine-münde). Frederick II also supported the development of municipal fleets and encouraged the merchants of coastal towns to engage actively in maritime trade.<sup>7</sup> Prussia's maritime expansion was further facilitated by the establishment of trading companies and a network of consulates in key European ports.<sup>8</sup> However, due to financial constraints, Frederick II rejected the idea of building a naval fleet, considering its maintenance too costly. His priority remained the expansion of the land army, as he believed Prussia's great power status would be determined on land battlefields. This synthetic overview of the actions taken by 18th-century Prussian monarchs to support maritime trade, commerce, ports, and municipal fleets should be seen as the implementation of key elements of maritime policy.<sup>9</sup> Within this framework, efforts to create a waterway on the Dziwna Strait and to build another seaport at its mouth fit perfectly. Therefore, the core research questions that this article aims to address can be formulated as follows:

1. Who initiated the efforts to create a waterway on the Dziwna Strait, and when?
2. What was the planned course of this waterway?
3. What were the costs associated with its construction?
4. Was the proposed investment economically justified?

In both German and Polish historiography, there are virtually no publications addressing the 18th-century attempts to establish a waterway on the Dziwna Strait. This issue is overlooked in German monographs on Kamień Pomorski (Cammin in Pommern), such as those by Ludwig Kücken and Rudolf Spuhrmann.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, in the most recent monograph on the town, edited by Radosław Gaziński, the matter is dismissed in just a few sentences.<sup>11</sup> Maritime navigation on the Dziwna is also treated as insignificant in the sections on maritime trade found in monographs on Szczecin.<sup>12</sup> The situation is

7 Stanisław Salmonowicz, *Fryderyk II* (Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków-Gdańsk-Łódź: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1985), 144–150; Bogdan Wachowiak, ed., *Prusy w okresie monarchii absolutnej (1701–1806)* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2010), 519–533.

8 Radosław Gaziński, *Handel morski Szczecina w latach 1720–1805* (Szczecin: Wydawnictwo Naukowe US, 2000), 251–255.

9 Radosław Gaziński, "Polityka morska Prus w XVIII wieku," in: *Instantia est mater doctrinae. Księga jubileuszowa prof. dr hab. Władysława Filipowiaka*, eds. Eugeniusz Wilgocki, et al. (Szczecin: "Recto," 2001), 387–394.

10 Ludwig Kücken, *Geschichte der Stadt Cammin in Pommern und Beiträge zur Geschichte des Camminer Dom-Capitels* (Cammin in Pommern: Gedruckt und Commission bei H. L. Behrendt in Cammin, 1880); Rudolf Spuhrmann, *Geschichte der Stadt Cammin in Pommern und des Camminer Domkapitels* (Cammin: Druck und Verlag von Formazin & Knauff, 1924).

11 Radosław Gaziński, "Kamień Pomorski w czasach nowożytnych (ok 1523–1806)," in: *Dzieje Kamienia Pomorskiego*, vol. 1: till the year 1945, ed. Radosław Gaziński (Wrocław: Chronicon, 2024), 304–305.

12 Martin Wehrmann, *Geschichte der Stadt Stettin* (Stettin: Verlag von Leon Sauniers Buchhandlung, 1911); Jerzy Wiśniewski, "Początki układu kapitalistycznego 1713–1805," in: *Dzieje Szczecina wiek X–1805*, ed. Gerard Labuda (Warszawa-Poznań: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1985) or Tadeusz Białecki,

somewhat better in analytical works focusing specifically on Szczecin's maritime trade and the settlements along the Szczecin Lagoon in the 18th century, though even these do not provide information on the efforts to improve the navigability of the Dziwna Strait.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, neither German nor Polish historical studies on Pomerania,<sup>14</sup> nor works on 18th-century Prussia,<sup>15</sup> offer any insights into this subject. Given this lack of scholarly attention, the present article is highly source-based. Its primary foundation lies in archival materials preserved in the Secret Prussian State Archives in Berlin-Dahlem. These documents pertain to the plans for dredging the Dziwna Strait and opening it to maritime navigation. The Russian Company, established at that time in Szczecin, was particularly interested in a prospect of the new trade route. Additionally, the archival records address the proposal to build a new seaport in Dziwnów (Divenow) or to expand the small existing port in Kamień Pomorski (Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbestz, Hauptabteilung II Generaldirektorium, Abt.12 Städteverwaltung, Stadt Cammin, nr 17 Instandsetzung des Hafens in Cammin 1772–1801).

The initial discussions regarding the creation of a waterway on the Dziwna Strait date back to 1720–1721 and 1728–1729. Following the failure of two rounds of negotiations with Sweden (1720–1722 and 1725–1729) concerning the excessive customs duties imposed on Prussian ships navigating to and from Szczecin through the Peene Strait (collected at the customs office in Wolgast), serious consideration was given in Berlin to the idea of establishing a new waterway. Two straits were under consideration: the Świna and the Dziwna. The Świna Strait's main drawback was a sandbank blocking its mouth, reducing the navigable depth to 1.5 metres. There was also a problem of the complexity of the backward delta on the northern part of the Szczecin Lagoon. The Dziwna Strait, on the other hand, was longer and passed through shallow waters of the Kamień Lagoon and the Wrzosowo Bay, squeezing through a narrow passage between two growing sandspits, one extending from the east near Dziwnów and the other from the west near Międzywodzie (Heidebrink). Given these challenges, there was even consideration of digging a canal through the island of Wolin, connecting Lake Wicko

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*Historia Szczecina. Zarys dziejów miasta od czasów najdawniejszych do 1980 r.* (Warszawa–Wrocław–Kraków: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1992).

- 13 Henryk Lesiński, "Udział Kamienia i Wolina w żegludze i handlu morskim w XVI–XVIII wieku," *Przegląd Zachodniopomorski* 24 (1981), 1: 17–25; Radosław Gaziński, "Handel morski małych portów Zalewu Szczecińskiego w XVIII wieku," *Nautologia* 32 (1997), 3–4: 7–13; eadem, *Handel morski*.
- 14 *Deutsche Geschichte im Osten Europas, Pommern*, ed. Werner Buchholz, (Berlin: Siedler Verlag, 1999); Gerard Labuda, ed., *Historia Pomorza*, vol. 2: till the year 1815, part 3: *Pomorze Zachodnie w latach 1648–1815*, comp. by Zygmunt Szultka, and Henryk Lesiński in cooperation with Dariusz Łukasiewicz, and Alfreda Wielopolskiego (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2003).
- 15 Otto Hintze, *Die Hohenzollern und ihr Werk 1415–1915* (Hamburg-Berlin: Verlag Pau Parey, 1987) reprint; Stanisław Salmonowicz, *Prusy dzieje państwa i społeczeństwa* (Warszawa: "Książka i Wiedza," 1998); Wachowiak, *Prusy w dobie*; Christopher Clark, *Prusy. Powstanie i upadek 1600–1947* (Warszawa: Bellona, 2009).

Wielkie and Lake Wicko Małe to the customs inn located in what is now Międzyzdroje (Misdroy).<sup>16</sup> However, after inspections of both straits and the area proposed for the canal, as well as lengthy discussions and financial calculations, which were of great importance to Frederick William I, it was ultimately decided that the best solution would be to establish a new waterway on the Świna Strait. The first, albeit unsuccessful, works began in 1730. However, the project officially commenced in 1739 and was successfully continued by Frederick II. As a result, by the mid-18th century, most vessels travelling to and from Szczecin used the Świna Strait or were unloaded at the newly established port at its mouth.<sup>17</sup>

Discussions about the potential creation of a waterway on the Dziwna Strait resumed only in 1772, as part of Frederick II's broader plans to improve communication with the eastern part of the Baltic Sea and to integrate newly acquired territories into the Prussian state following the First Partition of Poland. In this context, the key project, aimed at connecting the new lands with Prussia, was the Bydgoszcz Canal. It was constructed between 1773 and 1774. The issue of establishing a waterway on the Dziwna Strait was reopened by a cabinet order from Frederick II on the 21 June 1772. The order instructed for cost-estimation of the entire investment, including the construction of a port in Kamień Pomorski. The king believed that the costs should not be excessive, given that navigation on the Dziwna was already taking place. In his view, minor adjustments to the Dziwna Strait could significantly improve navigational conditions. Frederick II wanted a detailed assessment of the costs associated with deepening the strait and constructing a port in Kamień Pomorski.<sup>18</sup> The execution of the king's order was entrusted to Franz Balthasar von Brenckenhoff, a secret financial counselor. According to the king, this issue was already partially resolved, as during the reign of Frederick William I. The possibility of building seaports on both the Świna and Dziwna straits had been examined then, along with the associated costs and technical difficulties of deepening both waterways. The relevant documents and plans, according to the Frederick II, should have been stored in the archive of the Main Financial Directorate, part of the General Directory.<sup>19</sup> These records were eventually found in the mentioned archive, as confirmed by a note from von Brenckenhoff from the 8 July 1772. The records from 1720–1721

16 August Zöllner, *Die Geschichte des Misdroyer Erbkruges* (Berlin-Misdroy, 1940), 13–21, 24–27, 30–40, 48, 52, 58, 60; Radosław Gaziński, "Dzieje Międzyzdrojów do 1945 roku," in: *Słoneczne Międzyzdroje. Historia i przyroda*, eds. Kazimierz Kozłowski and Bogdan Jakuczun (Międzyzdroje: "Dokument," 2015), 19–26.

17 Robert Burkhard, *Geschichte des Hafens und der Stadt Swinemünde*, vol. 1 (Swinemünde: Verlag W. Fritzsche, 1920), 13–15, 18–19, 21–23; Radosław Gaziński, "Dzieje Świnoujścia do 1806 roku," in: *Świnoujście tradycja i współczesność*, ed. Stefan Molin (Świnoujście: "Dokument," 2007), 53–65.

18 Cabinet order Poczdam (Potsdam), June 1772: Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz (hereinafter GStA PK), II Hauptabteilung, Generaldirektorium, Abteilung 12 Städteverwaltung, Stadt Cammin, nr 17, Instandsetzung des Hafens in Cammin 1772–1801, k. 4.

19 GStA PK, II HA, Abt 12 Cammin, nr 17, k. 3.

pertained primarily to the general issue of establishing a port at the mouth of the Odra River (on the Świna or Dziwna Strait). They also referenced potential dredging works on the Świna Strait and the construction of a port at its mouth. Additionally, the documents included general concepts from 1728 and 1754 regarding the construction of a seaport in Dziwnów.<sup>20</sup>

In an analysis from the 4 August 1772, Counselor von Brenckenhoff pointed out that the land designated for the construction of the port in Dziwnów belonged to the town of Kamień Pomorski, meaning that municipal council approval would be required. This, however, did not pose a significant obstacle. A greater issue was the mouth of the Dziwna Strait, obstructed on both sides by sandspits, which made it shallow and difficult to navigate. Brenckenhoff also emphasised that storm events frequently altered the shape and depth of the Dziwna's mouth, further complicating navigation. Additionally, the mouth of the strait was very shallow, with a depth of only 5 to 6 feet (approximately 1.6 to 1.9 metres), allowing passage only for small ships and boats. To make the strait accessible for larger vessels, its mouth would need to be reinforced with stone-filled cribs and significantly deepened. Further obstacles were the shallow waters of the Wrzosowo Bay and the narrow passage through Sokolniczka (a constriction located above Żółcino (Soltin) between the Wrzosowo Bay and the Kamień Lagoon). This passage was littered with numerous stones, and the water depth ranged from 3 to 6 feet (approximately 1 to 1.9 metres). Deepening this section of the waterway and removing the stones would be extremely difficult and significantly increase the overall cost of the investment. According to Brenckenhoff's estimates, the cost of deepening the waterway to Kamień Pomorski would amount to 148.621 thalers. He argued that this considerable financial effort would benefit only Kamień Pomorski, because the primary goal of creating a water route to Szczecin would still require additional costly work. The most significant challenge was the sediment deposits (Madder Grund) on the bed of the strait between Kamień Pomorski and Wolin (Wollin). These consisted mainly of clay with minor sand content and were difficult to dredge. Additionally, the Szczecin Lagoon, particularly along the eastern shores and near Wolin Island, was very shallow due to a large sandbank extending about 600 rods (over 2 kilometres) into the lagoon's waters. This greatly impacted the water depth in the area, which rarely exceeded 5 feet (about 1.6 metres). Therefore, a navigable channel would need to be dredged through the sandbank, requiring intensive and continuous dredging efforts. Without regular maintenance, any channel created in the sand would quickly become silted and shallow again. In this situation, Brenckenhoff suggested revisiting the 1728 plan to establish a route from Szczecin through the Roztoka Odrzańska to Stepnica (Stepenitz) and then excavate a canal from Stepnica through the marshlands toward Wolin, connecting to the Dziwnów waterway. However, Brenckenhoff argued that these works would

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20 GStA PK, II HA, Abt. 12 Cammin, nr 17, k. 5–6.

entail enormous costs without any guarantee of success. Furthermore, he deemed such efforts unnecessary, given that the Świna waterway and the port at its mouth were already functioning well. Navigation from Szczecin faced no significant obstacles, and the depths on the Świna Strait were sufficient for maritime traffic (around 10 feet, or 3.5 metres, at Lake Wicko, and 8 feet, or 2.8 metres, at the Świna mouth during normal water levels). Brenckenhoff also noted that in 1766, King Frederick II had approved plans by General Inspector Bourdet and Pomeranian Chamber Director Sprenger to deepen the port basin in Świnoujście to a depth of 9 to 10 feet (approximately 3 to 3.5 metres). He further reported that the town of Świnoujście, founded in 1765, had grown significantly, reaching over 200 houses and 1,396 residents by 1772.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, von Brenckenhoff concluded that any investment in the Dziwna Strait was economically unjustifiable.

The general memorandum was supplemented with detailed cost estimation for the planned works. Brenckenhoff proposed that the project should begin with the placement of 32 large stone blocks on the eastern spit along the mouth of the Dziwna and 30 blocks on the western spit. Each block was to be 40 feet long (approximately 13 metres), 30 feet wide (approximately 10 metres), and 12 feet high (approximately 4 metres). The 62 crates containing these stones were to be constructed from 186 wooden beams, each 40 feet long (approximately 13 metres) and 12 inches thick (approximately 30 centimetres). These materials were essential for building two breakwaters to protect the mouth of the Dziwna from the sea. Additionally, 11,532 sturdy piles were needed to secure the construction, each costing 2 thalers and 12 groschen. To reinforce the eastern breakwater, 80 rods of bundles made from fascines and branches gathered from meadow shrubs were required, while 40 rods were needed for the western breakwater. These bundles were to be 18 feet high (approximately 5.5 metres) and 6 feet wide and deep (approximately 2 metres). The total cost of the materials required for the breakwaters, excluding the stones, was estimated at 29,121 thalers. Labour costs included the sinking of the 62 massive stone blocks, with the placement of each block costing 1,250 thalers. Thus, the total labour cost for constructing both breakwaters amounted to 77,500 thalers. In addition, the breakwaters needed to be further reinforced with piles and fascines. Next, a waterway through the mouth of the Dziwna and the Wrzosowo Bay had to be marked out and deepened to 7 feet (approximately 2.5 metres). The length of the proposed channel was estimated at around 400 rods (approximately 1.5 kilometres), with a width of 5 rods (approximately 18 metres). The dredging work was to be carried out by four dredgers. The cost of marking and deepening the described waterway was calculated at 42,000 thalers. Therefore, the total cost of reinforcing the mouth of the Dziwna with breakwaters and creating a navigable waterway to the Kamień Lagoon was estimated at 148,621 thalers.<sup>22</sup>

21 GStA PK, II HA, Abt. 12 Cammin, nr 17, k. 8–8a, 15–17, 20.

22 GStA PK, II HA, Abt. 12 Cammin, nr 17, k. 9, 18.

The additional costs of building a connection between Szczecin and the mouth of the Dziwna included the deepening of the Roztoka Odrzańska to Stepnica and the excavation of a canal through the Stepnica marshlands, passing the villages of Gąsierzyno (Ganserin), Świętowie (Schwantefitz), Kopice (Köpitz), and Czarnocin (Zartenthin). This canal was to connect with the Dziwna near the village of Gogolice (Gaulitz), close to Wolin. From there, the waterway would continue along the Dziwna from Wolin to Kamień Pomorski. The proposed canal was planned to be 6 rods wide (approximately 20 metres) and 4 feet deep (approximately 1.3 metres), with a total length estimated at 3,200 rods (11 kilometres). The initial construction of the canal was expected to cost 25,600 thalers. Once the canal was completed, it would need to be deepened to 8 feet (approximately 2.8 to 3 metres), adding an additional cost of 384,000 thalers. Furthermore, the Dziwna between Wolin and Kamień would also need to be deepened. To achieve this, it was necessary to prepare timber, construct, and equip eight dredgers, which would cost an additional 11,075 thalers. Thus, including the so-called extraordinary expenses, the total cost of constructing a waterway from Stepnica to Wolin was estimated at 420,675 thalers.<sup>23</sup> Consequently, the overall expense of creating an entire water route from Szczecin through the Roztoka Odrzańska to Stepnica, digging a canal to Wolin, deepening the Dziwna to Kamień Pomorski, and establishing a navigable passage through the Kamień Lagoon, the Wrzosowo Bay, and the mouth of the Dziwna (including the construction of two breakwaters and short quays at the port) would amount to the enormous sum of 569,296 thalers.

In response to Brenckenhoff's memorandum and the attached cost estimate, Frederick II stated on the 11 August 1772, that the success of the project was uncertain and that it must not interfere with the ongoing works in Świnoujście. While agreeing that Świnoujście should remain an absolute priority, the king expressed interest in reviewing the previous plans and documents prepared for Frederick William I, concerning the Dziwna Strait.<sup>24</sup> In accordance with Frederick II's order, the Department of Finance of the General Directory forwarded these plans to Minister Joachim Christian von Blumenthal, who then presented them directly to the Prussian monarch.<sup>25</sup> After analysing the documents, Frederick II sought an additional opinion from the Pomeranian War and Treasury Chamber regarding the feasibility of constructing a waterway on the Dziwna. On the 15 October 1772, the Pomeranian War and Treasury Chamber, represented by its director, Sprenger, submitted a memorandum to Minister von Blumenthal and Frederick II. In the memorandum, the Chamber fully endorsed the opinion of Financial Counselor von Brenckenhoff from the 4 August 1772. To reinforce this stance, Director Sprenger once again forwarded Brenckenhoff's report and cost calculations

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23 GStA PK, II HA, Abt. 12 Cammin, nr 17, k. 9a, 19.

24 GStA PK, II HA, Abt. 12 Cammin, nr 17, k. 10–11.

25 GStA PK, II HA, Abt. 12 Cammin, nr 17, k. 12–13.

to the ministry.<sup>26</sup> Ultimately, the arguments presented by the officials convinced Frederick II to abandon the plan to create a new waterway on the Dziwna Strait.

After the death of Frederick II, the initiative to build a waterway on the Dziwna Strait was taken up by the authorities of Kamień Pomorski. In November 1786, the town's mayors, council, and merchants submitted a petition to Frederick William II (from the 11 November 1786), requesting that the king kindly turn his attention to the town of Kamień and the Dziwnów port. The petition included drawings and a description of the proposed waterway from the mouth of the Dziwna to Kamień Pomorski, along with plans for a new port. The municipal authorities argued that the project would not only benefit their town but would also alleviate the congestion in Świnoujście caused by the high volume of ship traffic. In response, the General Directory, in a letter from the 23 November 1786, pointed out that such plans had previously been abandoned due to the substantial costs involved in the project, and that the situation had not changed in this regard.<sup>27</sup>

Another attempt to establish a waterway at the mouth of the Dziwna Strait and create a seaport in Dziwnów or the Wrzosowo Bay was undertaken in 1801, during the reign of Frederick William III. The initiative came once again from the Kamień Pomorski magistrate in early January 1801. Although the General Directory expressed approval of the town's proposal, it was unwilling to support the project with state funds. The authorities considered it a manifestation of local ambitions that should be realised through local efforts. The initiative from Kamień Pomorski was described in a memorandum from the 13 January 1801, which was sent to Berlin. The document, written in a tone of loyal submission, informed the authorities that Kamień Pomorski, located on the eastern branch of the Oder (The Dziwna Strait), about half a mile from the open sea, was well-suited for maritime trade and navigation. The memorandum further emphasised that Frederick II had previously considered the construction of a new port and waterway to the Baltic Sea and had been prepared to undertake the investment. However, the king had postponed the project at the time, deeming the costs too high. The memorandum concluded that a modern port in Kamień Pomorski was necessary because there were no significant ports between Świnoujście and Gdańsk (Danzig). The port in Kołobrzeg, mentioned in the document, was too small to accommodate large ships. The Kamień Pomorski magistrate's proposal was supported by prelate von Puttkammer, the owner of part of the Wrzosowo Bay and the nearby village of Radawka (Raddack). In a separate letter, von Puttkammer declared his willingness to participate in financing the project, though he did not specify the amount of his contribution. The Kamień Pomorski memorandum suggested that the selected port area in the Wrzosowo Bay be deepened to about 12–14 feet (approximately 4 to 4.5 metres) to allow large ships to dock.

26 GStA PK, II HA, Abt. 12 Cammin, nr 17, k. 14–20.

27 GStA PK, II HA, Abt. 12, Cammin, nr 17, k. 22, 23.

Despite the significant costs, the magistrate believed the investment would quickly pay off and that the port would become self-sustaining. The town proposed introducing a tonnage fee of 16 groschen per last of cargo capacity and issuing securities to raise the necessary funds for the project. The townspeople emphasised that building the port would bring prosperity not only to Kamień Pomorski but also to the surrounding region, transforming the town into a significant trading centre. Moreover, the municipal authorities reminded the Prussian government that Kamień Pomorski held old Hanseatic privileges, exempting its trade from the Sound tolls. The town's commercial connections with Szczecin and Silesia would further strengthen its trade.<sup>28</sup> However, in a letter from the 10<sup>th</sup> of February 1801, after a thorough analysis of the Kamień Pomorski memorandum, Prussian officials pointed to the enormous costs of clearing the Dziwna's mouth, a factor that had not been adequately addressed in the memorandum. The good functioning of the Świna waterway and the port of Świnoujście also played a decisive role in their decision. Investments at the mouth of the Świna had already consumed significant funds and continued to require care and substantial financial resources, leaving no room for new projects on the Dziwna. Finally, officials stressed that Szczecin did not require two routes to the Baltic Sea.<sup>29</sup>

In response to the letter from the Berlin Directory, a second memorandum was submitted on the 10<sup>th</sup> of March 1801, by prelate von Puttkammer himself. In this document, he proposed a solution to the financial challenges of the planned investment. The prelate's main recommendation was the establishment of a *Port Association* that would assume the primary costs of constructing the port. The funds would be raised through a subscription of securities, with their repayment guaranteed by tonnage fees collected from every ship docking at the port. According to von Puttkammer, the new port would not compete with Świnoujście, and its maintenance costs would be significantly lower than those of the port at the mouth of the Świna Strait. He estimated, though it is unclear on what basis, that the annual profits from the port would amount to 40,000 thalers, a sum that would easily cover its maintenance expenses. Furthermore, von Puttkammer argued that there was no need to significantly deepen the Dziwna Strait, as trade between the new port and Szczecin could be handled by *Oderkahnen*, specialised barges designed for shallow waters. This was already the case for Świnoujście, where much of the trade with Szczecin was carried out using such vessels. The prelate even suggested that profits generated by the port at the mouth of the Dziwna could be used to pay special compensation to the residents of Świnoujście, amounting to 50,000 thalers. He also emphasised that the port at the mouth of the Świna consumed enormous sums of money, while a port in Kamień Pomorski, with an open route through the Øresund,

28 GStA PK, II HA, Abt. 12 Cammin, nr 17, k. 25–27.

29 GStA PK, II HA, Abt. 12 Cammin, nr 17, k. 30–32.

would save the Prussian state 50,000 thalers annually in Sound tolls. Additionally, von Puttkammer claimed, though it is unclear where he obtained this information, that the approach to Świnoujście was difficult, leading to numerous shipwrecks and accidents. In contrast, he argued that a port on the Wrzosowo Bay would be much safer.<sup>30</sup> In response to von Puttkammer's memorandum, the Berlin authorities issued a reply on the 19 March 1801. They stated that the port in Świnoujście was the primary port facility and had been profitable for years. Moreover, the Świna waterway was sufficient to handle Szczecin's maritime trade.<sup>31</sup> Given this, the government had no intention of investing state funds in the construction of a port near Kamień Pomorski. However, they did not prohibit the construction of the port using private funds. Ultimately, the local merchant community proved financially too weak to undertake the proposed initiative.

To conclude the above considerations, it must be stated that the Dziwna Strait lost its competition with the Świna Strait as early as the 1720s due to unfavourable hydrological conditions. The Świna was deemed more suitable for the construction of a waterway by Prussian officials. Firstly, it was shorter and, secondly, its mouth to the sea was better formed. It was there, toward the end of Frederick William I's and during Frederick II's reign, that a new waterway was established, and a seaport was built at its mouth. The port's destruction by the Swedes during the Seven Years' War did not alter Berlin's approach to the two straits. After 1763, the restoration of the navigability of the Świna's mouth and the reconstruction of the port at its entrance solidified the secondary, or even tertiary, role of the Dziwna in maritime trade. A potential shift could have occurred after 1772, when Frederick II sought stronger ties between Prussia and the territories acquired during the First Partition of Poland. This ambition was accompanied by a desire to expand Prussia's influence in the eastern Baltic region. However, the king's plans clashed with financial realities presented by his officials. The high costs associated with improving the Dziwna and the lack of a clear economic justification led Frederick II to abandon the idea of making the strait navigable. In 1786, when the Kamień Pomorski authorities revisited the idea of making the Dziwna navigable, they encountered strong opposition from Berlin officials. The same outcome occurred in 1801, although in this instance, central authorities in Berlin did not entirely rule out the possibility of granting permission for work on the Dziwna, provided it was financed by local entities. However, the local merchant community in Kamień Pomorski proved too financially weak to undertake the investment, even if only to deepen the mouth section of the Dziwna.

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30 GStA PK, II HA, Abt. 12 Cammin, nr 17, k. 33–36.

31 GStA PK, II HA, Abt. 12 Cammini, nr 17, k. 36a–37.

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**SUMMARY**

The article, based on archival sources preserved in the Secret Prussian State Archives in Berlin-Dahlem, examines the attempts undertaken since 1720 to make the Dziwna Strait navigable and to build a seaport at its mouth. The hydrological analysis of the strait conducted by Prussian officials in 1720–1721 concluded that clearing the Dziwna would be extremely costly, and the expenses incurred would not guarantee success. Consequently, it was ultimately decided that the Świna Strait was better suited to become the primary waterway connecting Szczecin to the sea. The first dredging works at the mouth of the Świna began in 1730, although significant funding from the Prussian state for deepening the strait and constructing a seaport only commenced in 1739. By around 1750, most goods traveling to or from Szczecin were already passing through the Świna. Meanwhile, traffic on the Dziwna consisted solely of small, local vessels. In 1772, Frederick II initiated a new effort to deepen the Dziwna and build a seaport at its mouth. However, the king was persuaded by his officials that the investment would be exceptionally expensive and economically unviable, given the well-functioning waterway on the Świna. As a result, no works were undertaken on the Dziwna Strait. The third phase of attempts to make the Dziwna navigable occurred in 1786 and 1801, led by the Kamień Pomorski magistrate, which submitted relevant memoranda to the Berlin authorities. After reviewing the town's arguments, the Prussian government rejected the requests for large-scale dredging works on the Dziwna and the construction of a port on the Wrzosowo Bay. However, local merchant communities were not prohibited from undertaking the project on their own. Ultimately, the financially weak merchant community of Kamień Pomorski was unable to fund the planned works. Thus, until the end of the early Prussian period, making the Dziwna fully navigable remained solely in the realm of plans.

**Z dziejów pruskiej polityki morskiej. Plan wytyczenia drogi wodnej na Dziwnie i wybudowania portu morskiego pod Kamieniem Pomorskim w XVIII wieku**

**Słowa kluczowe:** Prusy, polityka morska, droga wodna, Dziwna, XVIII wiek

**STRESZCZENIE**

Artykuł opisuje na podstawie źródeł przechowywanych w Tajnym Archiwum Pruskim w Berlinie-Dahlem podejmowane od 1720 roku próby mające na celu doprowadzenie do żeglowności Cieśniny Dziwny i zbudowanie u jej ujścia portu morskiego. Analiza hydrologiczna cieśniny przeprowadzona przez urzędników pruskich w latach 1720–1721 doprowadziła jednak do stwierdzenia, że udrożnienie Dziwny jest niezwykle kosztowne, a poniesione wydatki nie gwarantują sukcesu. W tej sytuacji ostatecznie uznano, że to Świna jest bardziej predysponowana do stania się główną drogą prowadzącą ze Szczecina na morze. Pierwsze prace pogłębiarskie u ujścia Świny podjęto już w 1730 roku, chociaż dopiero od 1739 roku państwo pruskie zaczęło łożyć duże kwoty pozwalające na pogłębienie cieśniny i budowę u jej ujścia portu morskiego. Około 1750 roku większość towarów idących do lub ze Szczecina przechodziło już Świną. Tymczasem na Dziwnie ruch niewielkich statków i łodzi miał wyłącznie charakter

lokalny. Dopiero w 1772 roku Fryderyk II podjął inicjatywę pogłębienia Dziwny i zbudowania u jej ujścia portu morskiego. Jednak król dał się przekonać swoim urzędnikom, którzy uważali, że inwestycja na Dziwnie będzie wyjątkowo kosztowna i dodatkowo ekonomicznie nieopłacalna wobec dobrze funkcjonującej drogi wodnej na Świnie. Ostatecznie żadnych prac na cieśninie nie podjęto. Trzecia faza starań o udrożnienie Dziwny przypadająca na lata 1786 i 1801 wiązała się z inicjatywami magistratu Kamienia Pomorskiego, który zwracał się w tej sprawie z odpowiednimi memoriałami do władz w Berlinie. Te ostatnie po zapoznaniu się z argumentacją władz miejskich odrzucały postulaty dużych prac pogłębiarskich na Dziwnie i wybudowania portu na Zatoce Wrzosowskiej. Jednocześnie nie zabraniano miejscowym środowiskom kupieckim podjęcia planowanej inwestycji. Okazało się jednak, że słabe środowisko kupieckie Kamienia Pomorskiego nie było w stanie sfinansować planowanych prac. Zatem do końca epoki staropruskiej doprowadzenie do pełnej żeglowności Dziwny pozostało wyłącznie w sferze planów.

#### Citation

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