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AP SŁUPSK

**HISTORY AND HISTORIOGRAPHY
OF THE POLISH DIASPORA IN HARBIN,
1898-1949****Introduction**

Short and oversimplified history of Harbin follows the view that between the early 1900s and the mid 1950s, Manchuria¹, the Chinese borderland, was home to thousands of Russian colonists who settled along the semi-colonial Chinese Eastern Railway², soon followed by even higher numbers of Russian émigrés fleeing from

¹ Manchuria is a historical region of northeastern China. Currently, it consists of three Chinese provinces of Liaoning, Jilin as well as Heilongjiang. Usually, however, the northeastern portion of the Inner Mongolia is also included. Lying at the juncture of the Chinese, Japanese and Russian spheres of influence, Manchuria has been a cockpit of conflict since the late nineteenth century. At the beginning of the twentieth century the above term was unknown to the Chinese or to the Manchus as a geographical expression. Often it was spoken of as the Three Eastern Provinces, namely present-day Liaoning, Jilin and Heilongjiang (W. Doležan, *Mandżurya. Opis kraju i ludzi*, Warszawa 1904, p. 7; H.A. Giles, *China and the Manchus*, Cambridge 1912, p. 8; B.L. Putnam Weale, *The Truth about China and Japan*, New York 1919, p. 188; M.C. Elliott, *The Limits of Tartary: Manchuria in Imperial and National Geographies*, "The Journal of Asian Studies" 2000, vol. 59, no. 3, p. 605). For a detailed history of Manchuria with reference to the Polish community in that area, see: W. Skóra, *Placówki MSZ Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej w Harbinie w latach 1920-1941 na tle dziejów Chin i Mandżurii (Mandżukuo). Szkic do problemu*, [in:] *Na szlakach dwóch światów. Studia ofiarowane Profesorowi Jerzemu Hauzińskiemu w 45-lecie pracy naukowej i dydaktycznej*, ed. A. Teterycz-Puzio, Słupsk 2016, pp. 677-700; M. Cabanowski, *Tajemnice Mandżurii. Polacy w Harbinie*, Warszawa 1993, pp. 5-104.

² Chinese Eastern Railway (CER) is the historical name for a railway across Manchuria. The line was built by Imperial Russia using a concession from Qing China, and linked Chita with Vladivostok in the Russian Far East. The railway and the concession, known as the Chinese Eastern Railway Zone, were administered from the city, which grew into a major rail hub. The construction of CER was financed by the Sino-Russian Bank with capital coming mainly from France. A large number of Poles, previously involved in the construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway, took part in this project. For a background to CER, see: E. Kajdański, *Korytarz. Burzliwe dzieje Kolei Wschodniochińskiej 1898-1998*, Warszawa 2000, pp. 11-58; M. Moustafine, *Secrets and Spies*.

the Bolsheviks. Subjects of the Russian Empire and Soviet Union dwelled in the city of Harbin and the villages along the railway's right of way zone. For the most part, these people preserved their pre-revolutionary lifestyle, spoke Russian, and maintained their religious beliefs. They were representatives of a Russian 'culture abroad' and were in many ways isolated from the Chinese culture by which they were surrounded³. This narration does not present a full picture of the historical events that led to the emergence of Harbin as well as the national composition of its past population. In order to provide a broader perspective on this subject, the article aims at presenting a concise account of the Polish community in Harbin and a comprehensive discussion of the latest literature relevant for the study of Polish presence in Manchuria.

Harbin emerged as a product of the century-old rivalry between China, Russia and Japan for control of Manchuria. In the short course of approximately one hundred years, Harbin has been ruled by Russia, by an international coalition of Allied powers, by Chinese warlords, by Japan, by the Soviet Union and finally by the Chinese Communists, who established their control of the city in 1946. Probably no other Chinese city has experienced such dramatic shifts and such a rapid succession of widely different regimes. Further, Harbin grew from a small "place for drying fishing nets"⁴, that is a remote fishing village among the reeds of the Songhua River, into an international urban complex of beauty and sophistication⁵ with hundreds of thousands of residents⁶. In combination with the Russian colonial initiative, Man-

The Harbin Files, London 2002, pp. 1-10; S. Urbansky, *Kolonialer Wettstreit. Russland, China, Japan und die Ostchinesische Eisenbahn*, Frankfurt am Main 2008, pp. 23-177.

³ S. Urbansky, "Vasily" of China and his Russian Friends: Smugglers and their Transcultural Identities, [in:] *Entangled Histories. The Transcultural Past of Northeast China*, eds. D. Ben-Canaan, F. Grüner, I. Prodöhl, New York 2014, p. 17.

⁴ A "place for drying fishing nets" is only one of many interpretations of the name "Harbin" (K. Grochowski, *Polacy na Dalekim Wschodzie*, Harbin 1928, p. 9; J.H. Carter, *Creating a Chinese Harbin. Nationalism in an International City*, Ithaca 2002, pp. 14-15). Other expressions include: "fishing lake", "crossing place", "poor village" or even "large grave". On the meaning and origin of Harbin's place name from a Chinese perspective, see: S. Li, *When Writing History and Gazetteers, Make a Critical Reassessment of the Sources*, [in:] *The Making of a Chinese City. History and Historiography in Harbin*, S. Clausen, S. Thøgersen, Armonk 1995, pp. 17-22.

⁵ Between the mid 1900s and the late 1920s, Harbin gained a wide array of nicknames encapsulating its dynamic growth in that period. The evaluation of the city ranged from "The Manchurian Paris", through "The Paris of the East", to "The Pearl of the Far East" or "The Pearl on the Swan's Neck", though its early twentieth-century reputation was that of an "Infectious Pit" (B.L. Putnam Weale, *The Coming Struggle in Eastern Asia*, London 1908, p. 115; Y. Liberman, *My China. Jewish Life in the Orient, 1900-1950*, Jerusalem 1998, p. 16; O. Bakich, *Russian City in China: Harbin before 1917*, "Canadian Slavonic Papers" 1985, vol. 28, no. 2, p. 131; M. Meyer, *In Manchuria. A Village Called Wasteland and the Transformation of Rural China*, New York 2015, p. 115).

⁶ By 1935, Harbin had become an established multiethnic city with over 450,000 inhabitants (J. Jaworski, *Mandżuria*, [in:] *Encyklopedia nauk politycznych*, vol. III, ed. E.J. Reyman, Warszawa 1938, pp. 866-867). However, the process of transformation into an international urban center was launched much earlier. In 1913, Harbin-owing to the construction and maintenance work on

churia as well as Harbin changed from a largely unsettled wilderness into a wealthy agricultural zone on its way to rapid industrialization.

Much credit for the successful transformation of Harbin into a bustling multiethnic urban center and its creation, should go to the Poles, many of whom were the employees of the Chinese Eastern Railway or members of the Russian army responsible for the protection of the extraterritorial rights, two and half miles on each side of the railway⁷, obtained by the Russian Empire. In 1896, China granted a construction concession through northern Inner Manchuria under the supervision of Vice Minister of Public Works Xu Jingcheng (1845-1900). In practice, work on the CER began in July 1897 along the Chita-Hailar-Harbin-Nikolsk-Ussuriysky, and accelerated drastically after Russian Empire concluded a twenty-five year lease of Liaodong from Qing China⁸ in 1898⁹. Officially, traffic on the line started in November 1901, but regular passenger traffic from Saint Petersburg to Vladivostok did not commence until July 1903¹⁰.

Polish experts, mainly architects and engineers, played a key role in the planning and construction of Harbin. Several of the city's landmark buildings and institutions have been designed or established by early representatives of the Polish community who settled in Manchuria more than one hundred years ago¹¹. The Polish diaspora in

the Chinese Eastern Railway had a total of 68,549 people, mostly of Russian as well as Chinese descent. There were a total of 53 different nationalities. Along with Russian and Chinese, there were 45 spoken languages used in Harbin at the time. Only 11.5% of all residents were born in Harbin (O. Bakich, *Émigré Identity: The Case of Harbin*, "The South Atlantic Quarterly" 2000, vol. 99, no. 1, pp. 51-73). According to the census of May 15, 1903, construction of CER had already brought a population of 83,000 to the railway zone, 44,576 of whom were recorded as residents of Harbin. But only 15,579 were Russians, and approximately a third of these were women. Chinese made up slightly more than 28,000 (O.Г. Гончаренко, *Русский Харбин*, Москва 2009, pp. 35-64).

⁷ M. Ember, C.R. Ember, I. Skoggard, *Immigrant and Refugee Cultures Around the World*, New York 2005, p. 158.

⁸ The Qing dynasty, officially the Great Qing (S. Yamamuro, *Manchuria Under Japanese Dominion*, Philadelphia 2006, p. 246), was the last imperial dynasty of China, ruling from 1644 to 1912 with a short-lived, abortive restoration in 1917. It was preceded by the Ming dynasty and succeeded by the Republic of China. The Qing multi-cultural empire lasted almost three centuries and formed the territorial base for the modern Chinese state. The dynasty was founded by the Jurchen Aisin Gioro clan in Manchuria. Puyi, the last emperor, abdicated on February 12, 1912. For further reading, see: R.J. Smith, *China's Cultural Heritage. The Qing Dynasty, 1644-1912*, Boulder 1994, pp. 11-40; D.C. Wright, *The History of China*, Westport 2001, pp. 91-142.

⁹ F. Patrikeeff, H. Shukman, *Railways and the Russo-Japanese War. Transporting War*, New York 2007, pp. 2-43.

¹⁰ E. Kajdański, *Korytarz. Burzliwe dzieje...*, p. 56.

¹¹ Perhaps the most visible sign of Polish presence in modern Harbin is the Sacred Heart Cathedral of Harbin, formerly known as St. Stanislaus Church. At present, it is officially called a Sacred Heart of Jesus Diocesan Cathedral of Harbin. The church was erected in order to satisfy the needs of Poles living in Harbin on the parcel received from the administration of the Chinese Eastern Railway. The construction of a Catholic church began in 1906. It was completed and dedicated in the following year. During the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), the church building was abolished. In 2004, the church was rebuilt (A. Winiarz, *Glównie kierunki i formy ak-*

Harbin was extremely dynamic as well as socially active, setting up a number of organizations, sports clubs, schools and even local press¹². After the Second World War and the establishment of the People's Republic of China most of the Poles living in Harbin left the city, heading towards Australia or the rest of the Western world¹³.

Despite the fact that the Polish community was not the largest group of residents in Harbin, not to mention that most of its members were dependent for their livelihood on either the CER or the Russian army¹⁴, Poles had access to the decision-making circles, which determined the main directions of development of the city, especially in the early phase of its existence. Thus, the text examines the history and origins of this unique community between 1898 and 1949. Focusing on the key contribution Poles made to Harbin's development from its early days to the late 1940s, the article explores the main aspects of Polish presence within the city limits and subsequently in other parts of Manchuria. Relying mostly on Polish archival sources¹⁵ and numerous publications dealing with historical background of the Polish diaspora in Harbin, the paper attempts to present the latest conclusions drawn by Polish scholars in relation to Harbin's past and general history of Polish settlement in Harbin. This article, however, does not strictly follow a chronological sequence of historical events that had a profound impact on the fate of the Polish community in Harbin.

Historiography

The vast majority of Poles, in a similar way to Germans, Koreans and Jews, originally came to Harbin driven mainly by the desire to improve their financial situation¹⁶.

tywności Polaków w Mandżurii w latach 1897-1949, [in:] *Polskie ślady na Dalekim Wschodzie. Polacy w Harbinie*, ed. A. Furier, Szczecin 2008, pp. 33-34; K.Y. Deog, *Kolonia polska w Mandżurii 1897-1949*, Kraków 2001, pp. 67-70).

¹² "Gospoda Polska" was a social, cultural and educational association operating in Harbin from 1907 to 1949. The association initiated the first Polish school, organized language courses for the Polish community and charity fundraising. It organized charity balls, among other cultural activities, and strived at integrating the whole community. The association was divided into several sections dedicated to education, work with youth (Polish Youth Association), culture (Theater Group), and sport (hockey, volleyball, football and yachting teams). "Gospoda Polska" was the first Polish secular association in Harbin. For further reading, see: A. Winiarz, *Główne kierunki i formy...*, p. 32-33; J. Neja, *Harbin jako przestrzeń życia i działalności Polonii mandżurskiej*, [in:] *Polskie ślady...*, pp. 58-65; K. Grochowski, *Polacy na Dalekim Wschodzie...*, pp. 54-62.

¹³ E. Kajdański, *Wspomnienia z mojej Atlantydy*, Kraków 2013, pp. 8-9; M. Kałuski, *Polacy w Chinach*, Warszawa 2001, pp. 67-68.

¹⁴ D. Wolff, *To the Harbin Station. The Liberal Alternative in Russian Manchuria, 1898-1914*, Stanford 1999, p. 97.

¹⁵ The most significant archival materials used in this article come from the Central Archives of Modern Records in Warsaw (Polish: Archiwum Akt Nowych w Warszawie), the Central Military Archives in Warsaw (Polish: Centralne Archiwum Wojskowe w Warszawie) and the Hoover Institution (available on microfilms from the Central Archives of Modern Records in Warsaw).

¹⁶ M. Kałuski, *Polska-Chiny 1246-1996. Szkice z dziejów wzajemnych kontaktów*, Warszawa 2004, p. 131.

They were not guided by imperialist motives, because their homeland was suppressed under three partitions conducted by the Russian Empire, the Kingdom of Prussia and Habsburg Austria for more than a century. Over the years, Harbin has become their hometown. Unfortunately, a multicultural metropolis described in this paper is almost completely gone. Inevitably, most of the physical city dating to the period of this text is currently being torn down to make room for the architectural product of the ongoing economic growth in the People's Republic of China. Nevertheless, the historiography of Harbin in general and its side themes in particular, such as the genesis of the city, not to mention Russian, Chinese or Jewish roots of Harbin, as well as origins of the Chinese Eastern Railway, has a relatively broad and at times contentious background.

Polish historians and sinologists have devoted some attention to several generations of Poles who lived in the city of Harbin, in Manchuria from approximately 1898 to the late 1950s. Generally, they have presented a decidedly positive portrayal of the Polish diaspora. All the same, accurate description of this topic is not an easy task. The main problems stem from the lack of rich archival materials dating back to the origins of the Polish community in Harbin from the years 1897 and 1898. The negligence of the local Polish community contributed greatly to this obstacle in the study of first Polish traces in Manchuria. Sadly, a large number of early Polish inhabitants of Harbin did not attach much importance to the consolidation of their presence in the new environment. At the same time, most newly arrived Poles did not care much about the history of the area in which they have chosen to stay¹⁷.

Undoubtedly, a very broad factual material as well as extremely insightful characteristics of Polish settlers in East Asia can be found in a book entitled *Polacy na Dalekim Wschodzie* (English: *Poles in the Far East*), which was published in the late 1920s in Harbin and edited by Kazimierz Grochowski¹⁸, who also gathered most of the facts useful for the compilation of this historical work. Another useful source for research into the history of Poles in Northeast China is connected with texts written by individuals who are closely related to the Polish diaspora in Harbin, namely Antoni Aleksandrowicz, Konstanty Symonolewicz¹⁹ and Adam Winiarz. These works

¹⁷ K. Grochowski, *Polacy na Dalekim Wschodzie...*, p. 18.

¹⁸ Kazimierz Grochowski (1873-1937) was a Polish mining engineer, explorer, geologist, ethnographer, archaeologist and writer specializing in studies of Siberia, Mongolia and Manchuria. Grochowski led a very active life in Harbin, both professionally and socially. Between 1923 and 1932, he taught geography and history in the Henryk Sienkiewicz Secondary School in Harbin, and even became its principal in 1927 (E. Kajdański, *Długi cień wielkiego muru. Jak Polacy odkrywali Chiny*, Warszawa 2005, pp. 277-299; E. Kajdański, *Polacy na Dalekim Wschodzie. Inżynier Kazimierz Grochowski, Czynjis-chan i złoto barona Ungerna*, Warszawa 2014, pp. 5-13; R. Niedźwiedzki, *Kazimierz Grochowski (1873-1937) – zapomniany badacz złota Syberii*, "Przełęcz Geologiczny" 2008, vol. 56, no. 6, pp. 460-464; E. Kajdański, *Jedwabne szlaki i inżynier Kazimierz Grochowski*, "Gdańskie Studia Azji Wschodniej" 2015, no. 7, pp. 15-40).

¹⁹ Konstanty Symonolewicz (1884-1952) was a Polish orientalist, sinologist, Russian and Polish consul, diplomat and publicist. Symonolewicz started his career as an employee of the Russian consular service in which he worked as an official in the Russian diplomatic mission in Beijing (1912). Between 1913 and 1920, he served as a consular official in Qiqihar. In the same year, he

were confined primarily to the Polish residents of Harbin and people fascinated with the Orient. In such a climate, it is necessary to point out, among others, the following periodicals: *Tygodnik Polski* (English: *Polish Weekly*), *Listy Harbińskie* (English: *Letters from Harbin*), later known as *Daleki Wschód* (English: *Far East*), and regularly appearing in Warsaw before the outbreak of the Second World War *Wschód* (English: *East*).

Evidently, the most extensive collection of publications related to Sino-Polish contacts in general and the emergence of the Polish community in Harbin as well as Manchuria in particular was created by Edward Kajdański²⁰, whose achievements in the field of popular science and historical literature continue to grow. The bulk of his writings represent books published since 1957. However, he is still publishing papers on the early history of Polish settlement in the Far East. Edward Kajdański initially published several of his books under the pen names Władysław Kański and Aleksander Franchetti. The most important works on China and Poles in Harbin are as follows: *Chińska Republika Ludowa. Zarys rozwoju gospodarczego 1949-1969*, Warszawa 1971; *Fort Grochowski*, Olsztyn 1982; *Architektura Chin*, Warszawa 1986; *Dzienniki syberyjskich podróży Kazimierza Grochowskiego 1910-1914*, Lublin 1986; *Perłowy Trójkąt*, Warszawa 1987; *Michał Boym. Ostatni wysłannik dynastii Ming*, Warszawa 1988; *Niezwykły rejs św. Piotra i Pawła*, Szczecin 1989; *Tajemnica Beniowskiego. Odkrycia, intrygi, fałszerstwa*, Warszawa 1994; *Michał Boym. Ambasador Państwa Środka*, Warszawa 1999; *Korytarz. Burzliwe dzieje Kolei Wschodniocchińskiej 1898-1998*, Warszawa 2000; *Chiny. Leksykon. Historia, gospodarka, kultura*, Warszawa 2005; *Długi cień wielkiego muru. Jak Polacy odkrywali Chiny*, Warszawa 2005;

began working for the Polish foreign service. He was entrusted with the following functions in Harbin (1920-1930): Secretary of the Consulate, Vice-consul, Consul, Deputy Delegate of the Polish Republic in China, based in Harbin, Head of the Polish Delegation in Harbin, de facto Head of the Consulate in Harbin (1928-1930). From 1930 to 1933, he worked as a Head of the Consulate General in Minsk and Counselor of the Polish Legation in Moscow. He also wrote two books dealing with the Polish community in China, such as *Miraże mandżurskie*, Warszawa 1932 and *Moi Chińczycy. 18 lat w Chinach*, Warszawa 1938 (S. Łoza, *Czy wiesz kto to jest?*, Warszawa 1938, p. 710; W. Skóra, *Organizacja i pierwszy okres działalności polskich konsulatów w Harbinie i Władywostoku w latach 1920-1924*, [in:] *Polskie ślady...*, pp. 84-85; idem, *Służba konsularna Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej. Organizacja, kadry i działalność*, Toruń 2006, p. 342).

²⁰ Edward Kajdański is a Polish sinologist, writer, journalist and diplomat. He was born on November 26, 1925 in Harbin. His father was a manager working in a sugar factory in Harbin. Edward Kajdański graduated from the Henryk Sienkiewicz Secondary School in December 1942. At the time Harbin was forming part of the puppet state of Manchukuo. After the Red Army occupied Harbin in 1945, he began studies related to the railway industry at the Technical University in Harbin, completing them in 1951. Immediately after the graduation he went to Poland within the process of repatriating the Polish citizens. Since 1957 he worked in the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs owing to the fact that he was fluent in Chinese. Between 1979 and 1982, he returned to China, this time as a Consul in Guangzhou. Currently, he is a Vice-Chairman of the Scientific Council of the Centre for East Asian Studies at the University of Gdańsk (E. Kajdański, *Dzienniki syberyjskich podróży Kazimierza Grochowskiego 1910-1914*, Lublin 1986, pp. 5-6; idem, *Wspomnienia z mojej Atlantydy...*, pp. 7-9).

Jedwab. Szlakami dżonek i karawan (co-author Aleksandra Kajdańska), Warszawa 2007; *Medycyna chińska dla każdego*, Kraków 2011; *Wspomnienia z mojej Atlantydy*, Kraków 2013; *Polacy na Dalekim Wschodzie. Inżynier Kazimierz Grochowski, Czngis-chan i złoto barona Ungerna*, Warszawa 2014. Undoubtedly, an impressive collection of works written by Edward Kajdański, who witnessed at least part of the historical events described in his texts, provides the basis for a closer look at the history of the Polish community in Northeast China.

The most significant scholarly literature concerning the history of the Polish diaspora in Harbin contains works of several contemporary academic researchers. As a consequence, it is beneficial to indicate selected historical texts prepared by some of the most renowned authors, such as Marek Cabanowski²¹, Marian Kałuski²², Wojciech Skóra²³, Andrzej Furier²⁴, Hiroaki Kuromiya, Andrzej Peplowski²⁵ and Kim Yong Deog²⁶. Moreover, a wide array of important articles dealing with the historical aspects of Polish presence in the Far East, especially in Harbin and Manchuria, is represented by the following authors: Andrzej Grochowski²⁷, Krzysztof Woźniakowski²⁸, Jarosław Neja²⁹ and Adam Winiarz³⁰. On the other hand, English-speaking authors constitute equally essential source of knowledge connected with modern views on the history of Harbin.

As mentioned earlier, conventional wisdom portrays Harbin's history as the creation of Russian railway tsars and Japanese militarists³¹. The standard story is told of

²¹ See: M. Cabanowski, *Tajemnice Mandżurii...*

²² See: M. Kałuski, *Polacy w Chinach*, Warszawa 2001; idem, *Polska-Chiny...*

²³ See: W. Skóra, *Sytuacja materialna Polonii mandżurskiej w 1929 roku (w świetle raportu konsula RP Konstantego Symonowicza)*, "Przegląd Orientalistyczny" 2010, no. 3-4, pp. 125-140; idem, *Organizacja i pierwszy okres...*, pp. 75-100; idem, *Placówki MSZ...*, pp. 677-717.

²⁴ See: *Polskie ślady...*

²⁵ On the issue of intelligence cooperation between Poland and Japan, with special reference to the Polish diaspora in Manchuria, see: H. Kuromiya, A. Peplowski, *Między Warszawą a Tokio. Polsko-japońska współpraca wywiadowcza 1904-1944*, Toruń 2009, in particular pp. 304-438.

²⁶ See: K.Y. Deog, *Kolonja polska w Mandżurii...*

²⁷ See: A. Grochowski, *Jeszcze o Polonii mandżurskiej*, „Nasza Rodzina” 1984, no. 11(482), pp. 32-35; and a set of consecutive papers: *Siedemdziesiąt lat harcerstwa polskiego w Chinach; Tobrukczycy z Harbina. Wspomnienie o Walentym Kuczyńskim; Pamięci profesora Zbigniewa Folejewskiego; Polonista w Mandżurii. Czesław Bobolewski (1907-1993)*, [in:] *Losy pedagogów polskich na Wschodzie*, ed. E. Walewander, Warszawa 2002, pp. 133-154.

²⁸ See: K. Woźniakowski, *Polonia chińska w latach 1897-1949 i jej życie kulturalno-literackie*, "Przegląd Polonijny" 1976, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 97-110; idem, *Polonia chińska w latach 1897-1949 i jej życie kulturalno-literackie*, "Przegląd Polonijny" 1976, vol. 2, no. 2, pp. 53-63.

²⁹ See: J. Neja, *Przyczyny i przebieg likwidacji kolonii polskiej w Harbinie (1945-1949)*, "Wrocławskie Studia Wschodnie" 1999, no. 3, pp. 103-133; *Polski król Mandżurii*, "Wprost" 2003, no. 9, pp. 68-70; *Polacy w Mandżurii*, "Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej" 2002, no. 3, pp. 34-41.

³⁰ See: A. Winiarz, *Harcerstwo polskie w Mandżurii w latach 1918-1942*, "Przegląd Polonijny" 1985, vol. 2, pp. 81-92; idem, *Udział Polaków w budowie i eksploatacji Kolei Wschodniochińskiej*, "Przegląd Polonijny" 1993, no. 2, pp. 135-156; idem, *Zarys dziejów Gimnazjum Polskiego w Harbinie (1915-1949)*, "Przegląd Polonijny" 1986, vol. 4, p. 89.

³¹ M. Moustafine, *The Harbin Connection. Russians from China*, [in:] *Beyond China. Migrating Identities*, eds. P. Edwards, S. Yuanfang, Canberra 2002, p. 83.

a cosmopolitan city in China's frozen northeast built and administered by foreign imperialists, dotted with onion-domed Orthodox churches and Ginza-style shops. Although this portrait is not entirely inaccurate, it is certainly incomplete. Two Danish sinologists, Søren Clausen and Stig Thøgersen, present a scenario in which the Chinese assume an important role in the history of what now must be viewed as equally a foreign and a Chinese city. Mixing their own analysis with translations of recent historical studies from the People's Republic of China, Clausen and Thøgersen demonstrate that the native Chinese played a crucial role in Harbin's history. This publication, entitled *The Making of a Chinese City. History and Historiography in Harbin*, Armonk 1995, constitutes an important reminder that even when examining the most imperialist of creations in the 'Middle Kingdom', China and its people should remain clearly in focus and not be reduced simply to the role of a supporting cast.

This important work is a unique departure from other studies on the history of Chinese cities in the twentieth century. While other historians admirably utilize Chinese scholarship, Clausen and Thøgersen, by placing its representatives in the foreground, reveal both the variations in accounts of Harbin's history from the differing national perspectives of the Russians as well as the Chinese, not to mention the changing nature of historical writings in the People's Republic of China. Nevertheless, focusing mainly on the Chinese roots of the city, does not provide readers with the most accurate picture of Harbin's history. Unfortunately, this book only incidentally describes the fate of the Polish diaspora in Harbin. On the contrary, David Wolff, the author of *To the Harbin Station. The Liberal Alternative in Russian Manchuria, 1898-1914*, Stanford 1999, devotes more attention to the issue of Polish presence in Harbin, especially in its early days.

Yet, early Harbin, like all pioneer towns, was not an inviting place. The railway station was built several kilometers from the Songhua River³². Further, the roads connecting the old town with the commercial district were not paved. There was no sewage system. Life in Harbin was expensive, as everything was imported at great cost³³. It was far from other Russian towns and did not have the amenities available to various nationalities of the multinational Russian Empire in well-established Siberian settlements. In 1904, Józef Gieysztor, a Polish naturalist and economist, investigating the financial importance of Manchuria and eastern Mongolia on behalf of the Chinese Eastern Railway administration, described Harbin as a lonely steppe with marshland³⁴. Wolff, however, does an excellent job of showing a tolerant urban environment, created by the Russian state, attracting large groups of Poles, Jews, Japanese, Koreans, Germans, Armenians, and Georgians to Northeast Asia.

The narrative covers a wide range of concerns from several national histories, such as Russian, Chinese, Japanese and Korean. These stories of Harbin, instead of being interlaced, are frequently parallel histories. Sadly, this point is not sufficiently

³² J. Neja, *Harbin jako przestrzeń...*, p. 52.

³³ L. Victoir, V. Zatsépine, *Harbin to Hanoi. The Colonial Built Environment in Asia, 1840-1940*, Hong Kong 2013, p. 21.

³⁴ E. Kajdański, *Wspomnienia z mojej Atlantydy...*, p. 24.

expanded further. Other minorities, including Polish residents of Harbin, are left out of a detailed examination. Moreover, the book covers the role of Russian Finance Minister Sergei Witte (1849-1915), agrarian reforms instituted during the tenure of Pyotr Stolypin (1862-1911), the development of Siberia and the Russian Far East, the 1905 Revolution, Chinese nationalism, Korean nationalism in exile, and the rise of the soybean trade. In all these concerns, Harbin was a vibrant source of creative, unorthodox policy and turbulent economic and political claims. Clearly, in this area of great natural wealth³⁵, Russian, Chinese and Japanese ambitions competed as well as converged, and sometimes precipitated vicious hostilities. Primarily between the mid-nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries, Manchuria was a recurrent focus of international rivalry³⁶. Regrettably, the Polish input in the history of Harbin seems to have been marginalized.

The historiography of Harbin comprises various scholarly works which usually promote international character of the city. In most cases, these writings underline the significance of Russian, Chinese, Jewish and Japanese presence in Harbin, or all of these historical issues at the same time. On the other hand, far less emphasis has been placed on a number of traces left in the city by its alternative residents. Each of these publications deals with a major stage in the rich history of Harbin. First of all, the period involving construction of the Chinese Eastern Railway and early phase of

³⁵ Manchuria enjoys extraordinary natural endowments, far beyond those of any other region adjacent to China proper (R. Suleski, *Northeast China under Japanese Control: The Role of the Manchurian Youth Corps, 1934-1945*, "Modern China" 1981, vol. 7, no. 3, p. 351; *Gothaisches Jahrbuch für Diplomatie, Verwaltung und Wirtschaft 1928*, Gotha 1928, s. 459). The topography of Manchuria is defined by a broad central plain surrounded by a horseshoe of mountains that contain abundant and valuable timber, furs, medicinal plants, minerals as well as other natural resources. Two major river systems, the Liao in the south and the Songhua-Nenjiang in the center and north, provide access to the mountains, water and recharge the plains with their sediment, and facilitate transportation throughout the region. The soils of the plain, aeolian in the west and alluvial in the south and east, are fertile and relatively free of stone. The Manchurian summer is sufficiently warm and long to support a single crop as far north as the Amur River on the Russian border, while ample precipitation during the growing season ensures maximum plant response. Soy was Manchuria's principal crop (Y.T. Matsusaka, *The Making of Japanese Manchuria, 1904-1932*, Cambridge 2001, p. 128; G.D. Gray, *The Soya Bean in International Trade*, "Foreign Affairs" 1935, vol. 13, no. 2, pp. 340-342). By 1908, the economic upswing caused by the explosive growth of soybean exports from northern Manchuria put an end to hard times for Harbin. Its opening to foreign residents on January 7, 1907 aided international trade. Manchuria's natural resources attracted an unending stream of land-hungry neighbors (L.A. Humphreys, *The Way of the Heavenly Sword. The Japanese Army in the 1920's*, Stanford 1995, s. 128; J. Reardon-Anderson, *Reluctant Pioneers. China's Expansion Northward, 1644-1937*, Stanford 2005, p. 9; S.N. Ogata, *Defiance in Manchuria. The Making of Japanese Foreign Policy, 1931-1932*, p. 45; J.A. White, *Diplomacy of the Russo-Japanese War*, New York 1964, p. 29).

³⁶ Ch.K. Armstrong, *The North Korean Revolution, 1945-1950*, Ithaca 2003, p. 19. The concept of Manchuria as "the cradle of conflict" is derived from the title of a well-timed book by scholar and political commentator Owen Lattimore, *Manchuria. Cradle of Conflict*, New York 1932.

Harbin's existence³⁷. Secondly, the era of Russian dominance³⁸ and the Chinese struggle to regain control of the city³⁹. Thirdly, the Japanese occupation and creation of the puppet state of Manchukuo⁴⁰. Finally, the years since the Communist takeover in 1946. Each book gives a unique historical outline of all major phases in the history of Harbin.

In other words, the local history of Harbin consists of at least four histories. The Russian chapter is actually a separate history in itself, since a large Russian community survived in the city for several decades after the period of Russian rule, complete with its distinct culture and its own memories. Furthermore, the Western-dominated international community, whose businessmen and missionaries put their mark on Harbin from the internalization of the city in 1907 and well into the 1930s, have another story to tell. Similarly, there is a Chinese account of historical events

³⁷ The most notable publications include: J. Gieysztor, *Kolej syberyjska*, "Kraj" 1897, no. 18, May 14, pp. 1-6; G.E. Sokolsky, *The Story of the Chinese Eastern Railway*, Shanghai 1929; O. Bakich, *Origins of the Russian Community on the Chinese Eastern Railway*, "Canadian Slavonic Papers" 1985, vol. 27, no. 1, pp. 1-14; S. Urbansky, *Kolonialer Wettstreit...*; S.C.M. Paine, *The Chinese Eastern Railway from the First Sino-Japanese War until the Russo-Japanese War*, [in:] *Manchurian Railways and the Opening of China: An International History*, eds. B.A. Elleman, S. Kotkin, Armonk 2010, pp. 13-36.

³⁸ See: J.J. Stephan, *The Russian Fascists. Tragedy and Farce in Exile, 1925-1945*, London 1978; R.K.I. Quedstedt, "Matey" *Imperialists. The Tsarist Russians in Manchuria 1895-1917*, Hong Kong 1982; O. Bakich, *Charbin: "Rußland jenseits der Grenzen"* in Fernost, [in:] *Der große Exodus. Die russische Emigration und ihre Zentren 1917-1941*, ed. K. Schlögel, München 1994, pp. 304-328; T. Lahusen, *Harbin and Manchuria: place, space and identity*, "South Atlantic Quarterly" 2000, vol. 99, no. 1, pp. 1-280; E. Таскина, *Неизвестный Харбин*, Москва 1994; E. Таскина (ed.), *Русский Харбин*, Москва 2005; В.П. Петров, *Город на Сунгари*, Вашингтон 1984; Г.В. Мелихов, *Российская эмиграция в Китае (1917-1924 гг.)*, Москва 1997; idem, *Белый Харбин. Середина 20-х*, Москва 2003; idem, *Маньчжурия далекая и близкая*, Москва 1991.

³⁹ See: C. Lee, *Revolutionary Struggle in Manchuria. Chinese Communism and Soviet Interest, 1922-1945*, Berkeley 1983; J.H. Carter, *Creating a Chinese Harbin...*; B.R. Chiasson, *Administering the Colonizer: Manchuria's Russians under Chinese Rule, 1918-1929*, Vancouver 2010; G. Rohlf, *Building New China, Colonizing Kokonor: Resettlement to Qinghai in the 1950s*, Lanham 2016; Y. Koga, *The Atmosphere of a Foreign Country. Harbin's Architectural Inheritance*, [in:] *Consuming the Entrepreneurial City. Image, Memory, Spectacle*, New York 2008, pp. 221-254; E. Анташкевич, *Харбин*, Москва 2013.

⁴⁰ The influence of Japanese settlers on Harbin and Manchuria is taken up explicitly by a number of authors in the following texts: W. Wowczuk, *Mandżukuo*, Warszawa 1966; P. Duara, *Sovereignty and Authenticity: Manchukuo and the East Asian Modern*, Lanham 2003; P. Duara, *The New Imperialism and the Post-Colonial Development State: Manchukuo in Comparative Perspective*, "The Asia-Pacific Journal" 2006, vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 1-18; R. Mitter, *The Manchurian Myth. Nationalism, Resistance, and Collaboration in Modern China*, Los Angeles 2000; J.A. Fogel, *The Japanese and the Jews. A Comparative Look at the 'Melting Pot' of Harbin, 1900-1930*, [in:] *New Frontiers. Imperialism's New Communities in East Asia, 1842-1952*, eds. R. Bickers, Ch. Henriot, Manchester 2000, pp. 88-108; idem, *Integrating into Chinese Society. A Comparison of the Japanese Communities of Shanghai and Harbin*, [in:] *Japan's Competing Modernities. Issues in Culture and Democracy, 1900-1930*, ed. S.A. Minichiello, Honolulu 1998, pp. 45-69.

surrounding the emergence and development of Harbin with many painful thoughts of the past. And obviously there is a Japanese version with detailed surveys and statistics, but also with dark memories of harsh rule and misdeeds⁴¹.

Russian presence in Harbin as well as Manchuria drew on considerable participation of numerous nationalities who had lived within the Russian Empire⁴², such as Poles, Ukrainians, Estonians, Belarusians, Latvians, Lithuanians, Georgians, Armenians, Tatars and Jews⁴³. For that reasons, an examination of the Polish diaspora may prove to be more revealing of social conditions in Harbin, especially due to the access of Polish residents to official circles within CER administration and the Russian army. Apart from being involved in political or administrative spheres, Poles were also associated with many financial and commercial initiatives⁴⁴, taking place mainly in the early days of Harbin. Unfortunately, the Polish settlement in Harbin, not to mention Manchuria, has received minimal scholarly treatment, particularly in the English-language historical literature. Yet, Poles, among other nationalities, contrib-

⁴¹ Harbin became a major operations base for the infamous medical experimenters of Unit 731, who killed people of all ages and ethnicities. All these units were known collectively as the "Epidemic Prevention and Water Purification Department of the Kwantung Army" (Y. Tanaka, *Hidden Horrors. Japanese War Crimes in World War II*, Boulder 1996, p. 136). The main facility of the Unit 731 was built in 1935 at Pingfang District, approximately 24 km south of Harbin urban area at that time (Sh.H. Harris, *Factories of Death. Japanese Biological Warfare, 1932-1945, and the American Cover-up*, Northridge 1994, pp. 26-33). Operations and experiments continued until the end of the war in 1945. Instead of being tried for war crimes, the researchers involved in Unit 731 were given immunity by the United States in exchange for their data on human experimentation. Several others were arrested by the Red Army and tried at the Khabarovsk War Crime Trials in 1949 (H. Gold, *Unit 731 Testimony. Japan's Wartime Human Experimentation Program*, Boston 2003, p. 109; *Japan's Wartime Medical Atrocities. Comparative Inquiries in Science, History, and Ethics*, eds. J.B. Nie, N. Guo, M. Selden, A. Kleinman, New York 2010, pp. 21-78).

⁴² S. Cipko, *Ukrainians in Manchuria, China: A Concise Historical Survey*, "Past Imperfect" 1992, vol. 1, pp. 155-173.

⁴³ The most significant writings, often covering personal stories, on the dynamic history of Jewish enclave in Harbin and Manchuria include: I. Eber, *Passage through China. The Jewish Communities of Harbin, Tientsin and Shanghai*, Tel Aviv 1986; Y. Liberman, *My China...*; J. Goldstein, *The Jews Of China, Volume 2*, New York 2000; idem, *Jewish Identities in East and Southeast Asia: Singapore, Manila, Taipei, Harbin, Shanghai, Rangoon, and Surabaya*, Berlin 2015; M. Moustafine, *Secrets and Spies...*; idem, *My Family and Its City: Fifty Years in Harbin*, [in:] *International Seminar on the History and Culture of Jews in Harbin*, eds. W. Qu, T. Kaufman, Harbin 2004, pp. 364-371; M. Star, *In the Lion's Den*, Tampa 1964 (in particular pp. 144-150); B. Sitsky, *Growing Up in Tientsin*, Sydney 2015; T. Kaufman, *The Jews of Harbin Live on in My Heart*, Tel Aviv 2006; D. Ben-Canaan, *The Kaspé File: A Case Study of Harbin as an Intersection of Cultural and Ethnic Communities in Conflict 1932-1945*, Harbin 2009; J.H. Carter, *Touring Harbin's Pasts*, [in:] *Memory and the Impact of Political Transformation in Public Space*, eds. D. Walkowitz, L. Knauer, Durham 2004, pp. 149-166; idem, *Struggle for the Soul of a City: Nationalism, Imperialism, and Racial Tension in 1920s Harbin*, "Modern China" 2001, vol. 27, no. 1, pp. 91-116; E. Robbins-Hutton, *Sojourn: A Family Saga*, Vashon 1997.

⁴⁴ L. Spychalski, *Mój Harbin – wspomnienie o kraju dzieciństwa*, [in:] *Polskie ślady...*, p. 192.

uted to the unique image of Harbin. Without a detailed description of the role played by the Poles in Harbin, the historical features of this city remain incomplete.

Overview

Harbin's Polish history began in 1898 with the construction of the Chinese Eastern Railway across Manchuria, linking the Trans-Siberian Railway to Vladivostok⁴⁵. In fact, it was a deal struck in Moscow on 3 June 1896 between the governments of Qing China and Russian Empire⁴⁶, following China's defeat in the Sino-Japanese war of 1894-1895. In exchange for a secret defensive alliance against the Empire of Japan, Tsarist Russia gained an eighty-year concession to build and operate the railway. At that time, Russian dreams of eastward expansion and railway imperialism were combined into a single entity⁴⁷. Administered as an independent enterprise by a company of the same name, the Chinese Eastern Railway was Chinese in name only. Along the route of the railway, the CER secured a narrow zone of extraterritoriality, which effectively became the Russian sphere of influence in Manchuria. CER headquarters were established near the small village of Harbin on the Songhua River and the city that was built there came to be regarded as the capital of this territory. The Chinese Eastern Railway came to signify not just the railway and its administration, but the geographical location of the zone. It was synonymous with Russian enclave in Manchuria⁴⁸.

Before the Trans-Siberian Railway was built, it was quicker to travel from St. Petersburg to Vladivostok by crossing the Atlantic, North America and the Pacific than by going overland⁴⁹. For decades, however, proposals for a transcontinental railway had been quashed by frugal finance ministers. Nevertheless, that situation changed once the post was occupied by Sergei Witte⁵⁰, a dynamic and highly educated de-

⁴⁵ E.M. Wait, *Imperialism*, New York 2003, p. 81.

⁴⁶ I. Nish, *The Origins of the Russo-Japanese War*, London 1996, p. 31.

⁴⁷ M.I. Sladkovskii, *History of Economic Relations Between Russia and China. From Modernization to Maoism*, New Brunswick 2008, pp. 102-103.

⁴⁸ G.P. March, *Eastern Destiny. Russia in Asia and the North Pacific*, Westport 1996, pp. 171-172.

⁴⁹ P. Milewski, *Transsyberyjska. Drogą żelazną przez Rosję i dalej*, Kraków 2014, pp. 209-211.

⁵⁰ Count Sergei Yulyevich Witte (1849-1915) was a highly influential policy-maker who presided over extensive industrialization within the Russian Empire. He served under the last two emperors of Russia. Witte served as Russian Director of Railway Affairs within the Finance Ministry from 1889 to 1891 and during this period, he oversaw an ambitious program of railway construction which included the building of the Trans-Siberian Railway. In August 1892, Witte was appointed to the post of Minister of Finance, a post which he held for the next 11 years. During his tenure, he greatly accelerated the construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway. He was also the author of the October Manifesto of 1905, a precursor to Russia's first constitution, and Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Russian Empire (T. Riha, *Readings in Russian Civilization*, Vol. 2: *Imperial Russia, 1700-1917*, Chicago 1969, pp. 416-429; T.H. Von Laue, *Sergei Witte and the Industrialization of Russia*, New York 1963, pp. 36-119; W.E. Mosse, *An Economic History of Russia, 1856-1914*, New York 1996, pp. 93-148).

fender of Imperial Russia⁵¹, who preferred that Russia's territorial aggrandizement to be done in a less confrontational way. As he openly stated in his memoirs: "Given our enormous frontier with China and our exceptionally favorable situation, the absorption by Russia of a considerable portion of the Chinese Empire is only a question of time, unless China succeeds in protecting herself. But our chief aim is to see that this absorption shall take place naturally, without seizing territory, in order to avoid a premature division of China by the Powers concerned, which would deprive Russia of China's most valuable provinces"⁵².

Witte implemented a host of financial policies and maneuvering to raise the necessary funds, including issuing bonds, raising taxes and taking out foreign loans. Finally, he set off a wave of inflation by printing extra rubles to cover the soaring construction costs⁵³. The Trans-Siberian Railway also provided Witte with the opportunity to play diplomat, when he proposed to build an approximately 500 km short cut across Manchuria, rather than follow the northern bend in the Amur to Vladivostok⁵⁴. Thus, Russia entered into negotiations with China for the construction of the Chinese Eastern Railway. The Qing dynasty was represented by a 72-year-old Li Hongzhang⁵⁵. Conversations were opened in Beijing and continued in the Russian capital, where Li had been dispatched by the Chinese on the occasion of the coronation of Nicolas II in the spring 1896. Before the end of May, Li had agreed to Witte's demands in return for a Russian treaty of alliance against Japan. Allegedly, Witte paid Li a bribe of three million rubles in gold and wrote it off as part of the railroad's construction costs⁵⁶. The agreement led to the formation of the Chinese Eastern Railway Compa-

⁵¹ F.W. Weislo, *Tales of Imperial Russia. The Life and Times of Sergei Witte, 1849-1915*, New York 2011, pp. 57-89.

⁵² S.Y. Witte, *Memoirs of Count Witte*, New York 1921, p. 122.

⁵³ B.V. Ananich, R.S. Ganelin, *Nicholas II*, [in:] *The Emperors and Empresses of Russia. Rediscovering the Romanovs*, ed. D.J. Raleigh, Armonk 1996, p. 378.

⁵⁴ M. Kałuski, *Polacy w Chinach...*, p. 54.

⁵⁵ Li Hongzhang (1823-1901) entered politics during the repression of the Taiping Rebellion and was a notable politician, general as well as diplomat of the late Qing dynasty. He occupied several significant positions in the Qing imperial court, including the Viceroy of Zhili Province. Although he was best known in the West for his generally pro-modern stance and importance as a negotiator, Li antagonized the British with his support of Russia as a foil against Japanese expansionism in Manchuria and fell from favor with the Chinese after their loss in the 1894 Sino-Japanese War. He remains a controversial figure, with criticism on one hand for political and military mistakes and praise on the other for his success against the Taiping Rebellion, and his role pioneering China's industrial as well as military modernization. In 1896, he attended the coronation of Emperor Nicholas II of Russia on behalf of the Qing government and toured Europe, Canada and the United States of America (A. Little, *Li Hung Chang. His Life and Times*, London 1903, pp. 95-290; W.J. Hail, *Li Hung-chang*, [in:] *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period*, vol. II, ed. A.W. Hummel, Washington 1943, pp. 470-471; K. Liu, *The Confucian as Patriot and Pragmatist: Li Hung-Chang's Formative Years, 1823-1866*, "Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies", vol. 30, 1970, pp. 5-45; J. Polit, *Chiny*, Warszawa 2004, s. 400).

⁵⁶ W. Rodziński, *Historia Chin*, Wrocław 1992, p. 483; L. Xiang, *The Origins of the Boxer War. A Multinational Study*, London 2003, p. 53; K.Y. Deog, *Kolonia polska w Mandżurii...*, p. 41; R.K.I. Quested, *Sino-Russian Relations. A Short History*, London 1984, p. 82; K. Grochowski,

ny and the Russo-Chinese Bank, which were both in fact fronts for the Imperial Russian Ministry of Finance⁵⁷.

In 1898, Witte negotiated further territorial concessions, allowing Russian Empire to build the South Manchuria Railway to a warm-water outlet at Port Arthur, located on the southern tip of the Liaodong Peninsula. The minister of finance, in effect, became the Tsar's chief envoy to the Far East⁵⁸. Moreover, construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway, along with its Manchurian connection, marked a new era of expanded state involvement in population resettlement and managing the economy, this route brought millions of migrants to Siberia over the final decades of Tsarist rule⁵⁹. A six-member Board of Directors of the Chinese Eastern Railway Company was elected on 27 December 1896 in St. Petersburg. Stanisław Kierbedź (1845-1910), a Polish engineer responsible for the development of the project, was chosen as the Deputy-President of the railroad company. He remained in the office and carried out his duties until June 18, 1903⁶⁰. There were, of course, many other Poles involved in the works of the Chinese Eastern Railway Company. For instance, Michał Gieysztor, Józef Kondratowicz, Zenobiusz Aleksander Rugiewicz (Director of the Board in St. Petersburg since 1905), Feliks Żadwojn and Tadeusz Żarnowski occupied less exposed posts within the company⁶¹. Accordingly, Teofil Hirszman, Stefan Offenberg, Karol

Polacy na Dalekim Wschodzie..., p. 11; B.A. Romanov, *Russia in Manchuria (1892-1906)*, Ann Arbor 1952, pp. 402-403.

⁵⁷ The Russo-Chinese Bank was founded at the end of 1895. Prince Esper Ukhtomsky (1861-1921) was elected Chairman. The Board of Directors included Rotshtein, Neitslin (the Bank's representatives in St. Petersburg and Paris), Bark, Chabrier, Shipov, Davydov, Ettinger, Krupp and Pokotilov. Its capital first stood at 6 million rubles and was raised by the shareholders to 11.5 million rubles in 1897. The Chinese government also added a sum of 4.5 million rubles. Thus, the bank's total capital reached 16 million ruble. It lent money to China and issued Chinese government bond to finance China for its indemnity to Japan after First Sino-Japanese War. In 1910, the Russo-Chinese Bank was reorganized into the Russo-Asiatic Bank by merger of the joint-stock company of the Russo-Chinese Bank with the Russian Northern Bank. It was closed down after losing 5 million pounds in foreign currency speculation in Paris financial market (R. Charques, *The Twilight of Imperial Russia*, London 1958, pp. 89-90; *Asian Imperial Banking History*, eds. H. Bonin, N. Valerio, K. Yago, London 2015, pp. 36-51; *The Origins of International Banking in Asia. The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, eds. S. Nishimura, T. Suzuki, R. C. Michie, Oxford 2012, pp. 145-165; C.B. Davis, K.E. Wilburn Jr, R.E. Robinson, *Railway Imperialism*, New York 1991, pp. 137-174).

⁵⁸ J. Harter, *World Railways of the Nineteenth Century. A Pictorial History in Victorian Engravings*, Baltimore 2005, p. 174.

⁵⁹ A. Bruno, *The Nature of Soviet Power. An Arctic Environmental History*, New York 2016, p. 38. For a detailed analysis of a large-scale settlement of Siberia in this period, see: D. W. Treadgold, *The Great Siberian Migration. Government and Peasant in Resettlement from Emancipation to the First World War*, London 1957, pp. 31-34, 107-149 and S.G. Marks, *Road to Power. The Trans-Siberian Railroad and the Colonization of Asian Russia, 1850-1917*, Ithaca 1991, pp. 48-54, 141-169.

⁶⁰ M. Cabanowski, *Tajemnice Mandżurii...*, p. 8; "Inżynier Kolejowy" 1926, no. 8-9, p. 239; E. Kajdański, *Wspomnienia z mojej Atlantydy...*, p. 12; idem, *Długi cień wielkiego...*, pp. 248-253.

⁶¹ A. Winiarz, *Główne kierunki i formy...*, p. 27; "Listy Harbińskie" 1932, no. 5, p. 2.

Weber, Mikołaj Kazi-Girej, Aleksander Łętowski and Paweł Starzeniecki were among the most notable Polish engineers, experts as well as specialists accountable for the expansion of the railway infrastructure⁶².

The projected wide-gauge rail line had a major strategic, political and economic significance for the Tsarist Russia⁶³. Unquestionably, it provided the opportunity for the economic exploitation of Manchuria and northern China. Furthermore, the railway was an important factor in the controversies between Russian Empire and Imperial Japan⁶⁴. The Board of Directors considered several variants of the project. For this reason, a special geological and engineering expedition, led by a Polish engineer Adam Szydłowski, was sent on 8 March 1898, to establish the most favorable route. Finally, on April 11, 1898, members of the exploring party reached the shore of the Songhua River. During this long journey, apart from Russian technologists and Chinese workers, Adam Szydłowski was accompanied by two Polish engineers, namely Raweński and Wysocki. Moreover, the expedition was escorted by half of a Kuban Cossack squadron under the command of Yesaul (Captain) Pawlewski⁶⁵. In this way, eight kilometers from the shore, not far from a small Chinese fishing village, the expedition set up its base in the ruins of a wine and vodka distillery. This run-down building was quickly repaired and made habitable. Thus, when the steamer "Odessa" arrived on 16 May 1896, carrying a contingent of new engineers and officials on board, it was awaited by a base ready for work⁶⁶.

Inevitably, members of the technical mission, sent by the Tsarist government for the demarcation of the Chinese Eastern Railway line, initiated the construction of a present-day Harbin, which later became the main administrative center of Chinese Eastern Railway as well as cradle of the Polish diaspora in Manchuria⁶⁷. To be more precise, the first plan for the construction of Harbin was developed in the closing months of 1898 by Konstanty Jokisz, who was another Polish engineer involved in the creation of the city⁶⁸. The plan was adopted by the city magistrate⁶⁹, and subse-

⁶² E. Kajdański, *Wspomnienia z mojej Atlantydy...*, p. 16; K. Symonolewicz, *Miraże mandżurskie...*, pp. 181-182.

⁶³ G. Krahmer, *Syberia i znaczenie wielkiej kolei syberyjskiej*, Warszawa 1898, p. 115.

⁶⁴ M. Janik, *Dzieje Polaków na Syberii*, Kraków 1928, p. 35.

⁶⁵ P. Pawlewski died in 1927 in Harbin, holding a military rank of colonel. He came from the petty nobility of Podolia, which was forcibly resettled to the Caucasus and enlisted within the ranks of the Kuban Cossack Host at the behest of Tsar Nicholas I (1796-1855). During the last years of his life he was a caretaker at the Catholic cemetery in Harbin (E. Kajdański, *Wspomnienia z mojej Atlantydy...*, p. 13; K. Grochowski, *Polacy na Dalekim Wschodzie...*, p. 12).

⁶⁶ J. Neja, *Harbin jako przestrzeń życia...*, p. 51; K. Grochowski, *Polacy na Dalekim Wschodzie...*, p. 13-14.

⁶⁷ E. Kajdański, *Fort Grochowski*, Olsztyn 1982, pp. 184-186; M. Kałuski, *Polacy w Chinach...*, pp. 60-64; M. Cabanowski, *Tajemnice Mandżurii...*, p. 11; K.Y. Deog, *Kolonia polska w Mandżurii...*, p. 46; H. Kuromiya, A. Peplowski, *Między Warszawą a Tokio...*, p. 315.

⁶⁸ E. Kajdański, *Polacy na Dalekim Wschodzie...*, p. 30.

⁶⁹ Initially Harbin's town council was dominated by Poles and Germans (K. Grochowski, *Polacy na Dalekim Wschodzie...*, p. 55; "Biuletyn Polskiej Izby Handlowej w Harbinie" 1932, no. 5, p. 3; "Listy Harbińskie" 1932, no. 5, p. 2.

quently the Vice-Mayor, a Pole Eugeniusz Dynowski, was responsible for its implementation. The list of Polish technologists and skilled workforce engaged by the Tsarist government in the construction of the railway line as well as Harbin's infrastructure is considerably longer. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning only the most prominent figures. For instance, T. Zbydniowski was responsible for supervision over the construction of water supply systems, sewerage system and tramway lines. Furthermore, the rapid development of the city was under direct authority of engineer Jan Obłomiejewski, a Head of the Department of City Development, and his deputy engineer Klemens Kmita. In addition, the construction of railway and urban infrastructure was overseen by a large number of Polish technologists, including W. Ostrowski, Śmigielski, Stanisław Luro, Leon Mackiewicz as well as Teofil Jaworski. During the dynamic years involving construction works on the Chinese Eastern Railway, the number of Polish engineers, specialists, officials, physicians, clerks, railwaymen and skilled workers was gradually increasing⁷⁰. Most of them were tempted by the prospect of high wages and a chance to start a comfortable life in Manchuria⁷¹.

According to Adam Winiarz, the Polish contingent of various technologists, specialists and administrative assistants constituted approximately 30% of all the staff involved in the arrangement of infrastructure belonging to the Chinese Eastern Railway Company⁷². Over the years, Poles occupied important positions related to the economy, banking, medicine, administration and even the judicial system within the local structures of the Russian authorities⁷³. Once the Russia secured from China the right to extend its Trans-Siberian Railway network all the way to Vladivostok through northern Manchuria, builders set to work on the Chinese Eastern Railway only to confront a host of unexpected problems. Bubonic plague swept Manchuria in the summer of 1899⁷⁴, and physicians had to be brought in to prevent the epidemic from raging out of control. No sooner had the plague been dealt with than the Boxer Rebellion broke out in the spring of 1900, and the rebels destroyed railways and cut lines for telegraphs⁷⁵. After Imperial Russia invaded with regular troops, the railway came under Russian control again. Another epidemic of bubonic plague struck during the summer of 1901, followed by Asiatic cholera⁷⁶, which broke out in 1902 as

⁷⁰ "Pamiętnik Charbiński" 1923, vol. 1, pp. 23-24; "Listy Harbińskie" 1932, no. 5, p. 2; "Biuletyn Polskiej Izby Handlowej w Harbinie" 1932, no. 5, p. 3; A. Jabłońska, K. Krąkowski, *Z dziejów Polonii harbińskiej*, "Przegląd Orientalistyczny" 1961, no. 2, p. 161.

⁷¹ On the issue of Polish involvement in the construction of CER and Harbin, see: A. Winiarz, *Główne kierunki i formy...*, pp. 27-44; K. Grochowski, *Polacy na Dalekim Wschodzie...*, pp. 6-15; M. Cabanowski, *Tajemnice Mandżurii...*, 5-14; K.Y. Deog, *Kolonia polska w Mandżurii...*, pp. 46-49.

⁷² A. Winiarz, *Główne kierunki i formy...*, p. 28.

⁷³ W. Theiss, *Dzieci syberyjskie – dzieje polskich dzieci repatriowanych z Syberii i Mandżurii w latach 1919-1923*, Warszawa 1992, s. 28; J. Tokarski, *Przez Syberię, Mandżurię i Japonię do brzegów Oceanu Spokojnego*, Lwów 1911, s. 54.

⁷⁴ A. Hosie, *Manchuria: its people, resources and recent history*, Boston 1910, p. 58.

⁷⁵ G.A. Lensen, *The Russo-Chinese War*, Tallahassee 1967, p. 14.

⁷⁶ G.C. Kohn, *Encyclopedia of Plague and Pestilence. From Ancient Times to the Present*, New York 2008, p. 19.

the builders struggled to cut a three kilometers long tunnel through the Greater Khingan Range, the last natural obstacle between Manchuria and the Russian frontier⁷⁷. By the time the Russian authorities opened the CER to regular traffic in February 1903, it had cost them eleven million rubles more than they had spent to build all the rest of the railway put together⁷⁸. Evidently, rapid development of the Chinese Eastern Railway drew individuals from the most distant corners of the Russian Empire in their tens of thousands to the largely wild and scarcely populated steppes within the Russian right of way zone. As a result, specialists and highly qualified railroad workers came to build the CER infrastructure. On top of that clerks, guards and civil servants, driven primarily by the desire to improve their financial position, flocked in large numbers to Harbin in order to work in the administration of the Chinese Eastern Railway⁷⁹. Many of the newly arrived residents of Harbin, which was meant as the administrative and economic center for the CER, a Russian enterprise⁸⁰, wanted to improve their living conditions, and Poles were no exception. However, the Polish community was extremely diversified, and therefore it consisted of builders of the railway line, people looking for a better business environment, former soldiers of the Polish 5th Siberian Rifle Division⁸¹ and political exiles.

⁷⁷ С.В. Саблер, И.В. Сосновский, *Сибирская железная дорога в ее прошлом и настоящем*, Санкт-Петербург 1903, pp. 235-248; H. Tupper, *To the Great Ocean. Siberia and the Trans-Siberian Railway*, Boston 1965, pp. 320-331.

⁷⁸ W.B. Lincoln, *The Conquest of a Continent. Siberia and the Russians*, Ithaca 1994, p. 245.

⁷⁹ B. Patlewicz, *Tadeusz Szuszkiewicz we wspomnieniach*, [in:] *Polskie ślady...*, p. 186; J. Kil, K. Graczyk, *Kolonia polska w Mandżurii – analiza historycznoprawna*, "Z Dziejów Prawa" 2013, vol. 6(14), p. 105.

⁸⁰ M. Raeff, *Russia Abroad. A Cultural History of the Russian Emigration, 1919-1939*, New York 1990, p. 22.

⁸¹ Polish 5th Siberian Rifle Division was a Polish military unit formed in 1919 in Russia during World War I. The division fought during the Polish-Bolshevik War, but as it was attached to the White Russian formations, it is considered to have fought more in the Russian Civil War. The division was first formed in Samara. The core of the new unit was formed of POWs of the former Austro-Hungarian Army and local Poles. The latter were descendants of Poles forcibly resettled to Siberia after failed November Uprising, January Uprising and other struggles with Imperial Russia. At Taiga 22 December 1919 the Polish Legion made a stand against the Red Army but were badly beaten. A large part of the once 16,000 men strong division were taken as POWs and subsequently many of them died in the typhus epidemic or during forced labor in the mines. However, a group of about 900 led by Colonel Kazimierz Rumsza managed to evade capture and reached Irkutsk and from there escaped to Manchuria arriving at Harbin on 21 February 1920, from where they found safe passage to various ports of China and Manchuria. On June 1, 1920, the first organized group of Polish soldiers arrived to the port of Gdańsk. After three months on-board British ships, 120 officers and more than 800 soldiers and non-commissioned officers reached Poland. Some of them saw it for the first time in their lives. During the Polish-Bolshevik War, Siberian veterans managed to hold out all assaults on the Modlin Fortress organized by the Red Army in August 1920 (J. Bisher, *White Terror. Cossack Warlords of the Trans-Siberian*, New York 2005, p. 219; J.D. Smele, *Civil War in Siberia. The Anti-Bolshevik Government of Admiral Kolchak, 1918-1920*, Cambridge 1996, pp. 654-655; L.E. Vining, *Held by the Bolsheviks. The diary of a British officer in Russia, 1919-1920*, London 1924, p. 215; H. Bagiński, *Wojsko polskie na Wschodzie 1914-1920*, Warszawa 1921, pp. 536-598).

After the Russian Empire lost the Crimean war and was weakened economically as well as politically, unrest started in the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Consequently, the January Uprising began on 22 January 1863 as a spontaneous protest by young Poles against conscription into the Imperial Russian Army. It was soon joined by high-ranking Polish-Lithuanian officers and various politicians. The uprising was finally crushed by Tsarist Russia in 1864. The collapse of the uprising, which took thousands of lives, was followed by a series of harsh reprisals. According to Russian official information, 396 persons were executed and 18,672 were exiled to Siberia⁸². Large numbers of men and women were sent to the interior of Russia and to Caucasus, Urals and other sections. Altogether about 80,000 persons were imprisoned and eventually taken out of Poland and stationed in remote regions of Russia⁸³. Moreover, a large number of young Poles were conscripted to the Russian army. Since these military recruits were sent to the most distant provinces of Imperial Russia⁸⁴, many of them appeared in the Russian Far East and consequently in Manchuria, where they found themselves among the detachments of the Chinese Eastern Railway Guard⁸⁵.

The Chinese Eastern Railway Guard Force was officially established by the Board of Directors of the Chinese Eastern Railway Company in 1897. Soon, however, the unit was transformed into the Trans-Amur Region of the Border Guard Corps in January 1901. The primary objective of the newly formed unit was to defend the property and employees of the railway company along its right of way belt in Manchuria⁸⁶. After the conversion into the Trans-Amur Border Guard Corps, the force consisted of four brigades that included 55 infantry companies, 55 Cossack cavalry squadrons and six artillery batteries, altogether 25 thousand men⁸⁷. Furthermore, the officers were formally "on leave" from the regular army, while soldiers were all volunteers recruited after regular duty service. The legal status of the force was questionable, and the Boxer Rebellion, during which the Chinese Eastern Railway Guard was used as a pretext for making it a regular part of the Border Guard Corps. At that

⁸² L. Trzeciakowski, *Ziemie polskie pod panowaniem państw zaborczych (1815-1918). Powstanie styczniowe*, [in:] *Dzieje Polski*, ed. J. Topolski, Warszawa 1975, p. 498; S. Zieliński, *Bitwy i potyczki 1863-1864*, Rapperswil 1913, pp. 59-62.

⁸³ N. Davies, *Europe. A History*, Oxford 1996, p. 828.

⁸⁴ S. Ury, *Barricades and Banners. The Revolution of 1905 and the Transformation of Warsaw Jewry*, Stanford 2012, p. 29.

⁸⁵ J. Białynia-Chłodecki, *Ćwierćwiecze kolonii polskiej w Charbinie na Dalekim Wschodzie*, Lwów 1923, p. 5; H. Bagiński, *Wojsko polskie na Wschodzie...*, pp. 78-79; "Daleki Wschód" 1934, no. 7, p. 1; T. Dmochowski, *Mandżuria i Przymurze w okresie zmięchu dawnych potęg (koniec XIX w.-1917 r.)*, Toruń 1999, p. 101.

⁸⁶ Russian efforts in Manchuria were often harassed by the Honghuzi (Red Beards) bandits. They were nomads who came from China proper and roamed the area around Northern China and the Russo-Chinese border. They raided Russian settlers and plagued Russian troops, mainly during the 1870-1920 era (G. McCormack, *Chang Tso-lin in Northeast China, 1911-1928. China, Japan, and the Manchurian Idea*, Stanford 1977, p. 16; F. Patrikeeff, H. Shukman, *Railways and the Russo-Japanese...*, p. 53).

⁸⁷ E. Kajdański, *Wspomnienia z mojej Atlantydy...*, p. 21.

time, the Trans-Amur Border Guard Corps were under direct jurisdiction of Sergei Witte, the Minister of Finance and later on the Chairman of the Council's of Ministers of the Russian Empire⁸⁸. Therefore, many inhabitants of the region called them Matilda's Guard after the first name of Witte's wife⁸⁹. Most significantly, a large number of Polish officers within the Russian Army as well as the Chinese Eastern Railway Guard, and later generals of the reborn Polish Army, such as Józef Dowbór-Muśnicki, Leon Pachucki⁹⁰, Waclaw Iwazskiewicz, Aleksander Osiński and Stanisław Skrzyński⁹¹, took part in heavy fighting for the control of CER against the Chinese insurgents during the Boxer Rebellion in 1900. It is worth mentioning that roughly 15% of all the officers within the Trans-Amur Region of the Border Guard Corps were of Polish origin⁹². A special character of this unit was indicated in unique uniform insignia of the Chinese dragon and railroad wheel on a Tsarist cockade.

By the time the railway was completed in 1903, central Harbin occupied approximately eight square kilometers, while greater Harbin covered nearly twenty⁹³. At the same time, Harbin's Polish community had grown to 7,000⁹⁴. In the decade from 1903 to 1913, the first generation of Polish inhabitants of the city was mainly composed of the builders and employees of the Chinese Eastern Railway as well as numerous young men enlisted in the Russian army, both officers and low-ranking soldiers, for example Bolesław Mościcki⁹⁵ and Stanisław Ślupecki⁹⁶. Table 1, showing

⁸⁸ S. Harcave, *The Memoirs of Count Witte*, Armonk 1990, p. 181.

⁸⁹ V.I. Gurko, *Features and Figures Out of the Past*, Stanford 1939, p. 259.

⁹⁰ M. Ciepielewicz, *L. Pachucki*, [w:] *Polski Słownik Biograficzny* (PSB: Polish Biographical Dictionary), vol. XXIV, Wrocław 1979, p. 767.

⁹¹ H. Korczyk, *S. Skrzyński*, [in:] PSB, vol. XXXVIII, Wrocław 1998, p. 467; idem, *A. Osiński*, [in:] PSB, vol. XXIV, Wrocław 1979, p. 330.

⁹² K. Grochowski, *Polacy na Dalekim Wschodzie...*, pp. 15-16.

⁹³ L. Victoir, V. Zatsépine, *Harbin to Hanoi...*, p. 21.

⁹⁴ Archiwum Akt Nowych (AAN: Central Archives of Modern Records), Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych (MSZ: Ministry of Foreign Affairs), reference no. 10389, p. 5; A. Jabłońska, K. Krąkowski, *Z dziejów Polonii harbińskiej...*, p. 160; M. Cabanowski, *Tajemnice Mandżurii...*, p. 13.

⁹⁵ Bolesław Euzebiusz Mościcki (1877-1918) was a Colonel of both Imperial Russian Army and Polish Army. In 1902, after graduation from Officer School of the Russian Army and at his own request, Mościcki was sent to Manchuria, to serve in the Trans-Amur Border Guard Corps. He fought in the Russo-Japanese War and World War I. In 1917 Mościcki was promoted to polkownik, and on July 19 of the same year, at the village of Porohy near Nadworna, he was named commandant of 1st Uhlan Regiment, part of the so-called Pulawy Legion. Five days later, Mościcki fought in the Battle of Krechowce, in which his unit defeated Bavarians of the Imperial German Army. To commemorate this victory, 1st Uhlan Regiment came to be known as 1st Krechowce Uhlan Regiment. In February 1918 Mościcki wanted to secretly get in touch with the Regency Council, but the mission failed when he was captured and killed by pro-Bolshevik peasantry near Luniniec. He was posthumously awarded the Virtuti Militari by Józef Piłsudski (M. Wrzosek, *B. Mościcki*, [in:] PSB, vol. XXII, Wrocław 1977, p. 139; A. Wojciechowski, *Zarys historii wojennej 1-go Pułku Ułanów Krechowieckich*, Warszawa 1929, pp. 10-49).

⁹⁶ In 1903, Captain Stanisław Ślupecki (1865-1929), who later became general of the reborn Polish Army in 1919, was transferred to Manchuria in order to serve in the 1st Trans-Amur Railway Battalion (H. Korczyk, *S. Ślupecki*, [in:] PSB, vol. XXXIX, Wrocław 1999, p. 118).

the age structure of different nationalities in Harbin, describes this situation. However, the majority of Poles moved to Harbin so as to work on the railroad⁹⁷. At the time Harbin was not an established city. The city was almost built from scratch by the builders and early settlers. Houses were constructed, furniture and personal items were brought in from various parts of Russian Empire. After the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905)⁹⁸, while many Russians left Harbin, a lot of long-time Polish residents decided to stay. And, of course, Japan's victory had not purged Russian influence from Manchuria. The Russians retained control over the Chinese Eastern Railway, running across the north Manchurian plain from Manzhouli in the northwest to Pogranichny in the southeast. Thus, the cities and towns along the railway zone, including the headquarters city of Harbin, remained virtual Russian territory⁹⁹.

Table 1

Age structure of Harbin population by ethnic group, 1913

| Age group | Russians [%] | Poles [%] | Jews [%] | Chinese [%] | Japanese [%] |
|-----------|--------------|-----------|----------|-------------|--------------|
| 0-1 | 2.9 | 1.5 | 2.1 | 0.3 | 1.0 |
| 2-5 | 12.1 | 6.7 | 11.9 | 2.5 | 5.0 |
| 6-10 | 9.3 | 4.8 | 11.9 | 2.1 | 1.3 |
| 11-15 | 6.7 | 3.9 | 11.2 | 2.3 | 1.4 |
| 16-20 | 6.1 | 4.2 | 10.0 | 8.6 | 17.3 |
| 21-25 | 25.7 | 42.8 | 8.3 | 17.0 | 22.6 |
| 26-30 | 11.2 | 10.9 | 10.0 | 22.8 | 19.6 |
| 31-35 | 8.7 | 7.6 | 9.7 | 18.5 | 16.2 |
| 36-40 | 8.1 | 5.9 | 9.2 | 11.5 | 8.1 |
| 41-45 | 3.8 | 4.6 | 5.2 | 7.3 | 4.0 |
| 46+ | 5.4 | 4.1 | 10.5 | 7.1 | 3.5 |

Source: D. Wolff, *To the Harbin Station...*, p. 102

During the Russo-Japanese War, Harbin was a large base for Russian military operations in Manchuria¹⁰⁰, supplying the Tsar's 950,000-strong army with provisions and serving as a hospital and rest as well as recreation centre, with a garrison for some 100,000 troops. After demobilization, some of the soldiers, including

⁹⁷ A. Winiarz, *Udział Polaków w budowie...*, pp. 142-145.

⁹⁸ At least 84 Poles, officers of the Russian Imperial Army and future generals of the Polish Army within the Second Polish Republic, participated in battles of Liaoyang, Sandepu and Mukden next to thousands of other Polish recruits (idem, *Główne kierunki i formy...*, p. 31; J. Białynia-Chłodecki, *Ćwierćwiecze kolonii polskiej...*, p. 6; K. Grochowski, *Polacy na Dalekim Wschodzie...*, p. 114; "Biesiada Literacka" 1905, no. 12, p. 203).

⁹⁹ P.E. Dunscomb, *Japan's Siberian Intervention, 1918-1922. 'A Great Disobedience Against the People'*, Lanham 2011, p. 34.

¹⁰⁰ G. Hutchings, *Modern China. A Guide to a Century of Change*, Cambridge 2001, p. 187.

a considerable Polish contingent, returned to live in Manchuria with their families¹⁰¹. The outcome of this war did not undermine the Russian influence in the city, but it set limits to Tsarist expansion in China and inaugurated the era of Japanese control over Northern Asia.

In addition to a large number of railway workers and an endless stream soldiers of Polish origin¹⁰², Harbin hosted many dedicated Polish military as well as civilian doctors. In 1907, Tadeusz Nowkuński became the chief doctor of the Central Railway Hospital which was one of the first institutions created in the city, next to the meteorological station and post office¹⁰³. There were other notable doctors working in this hospital, who came from the territory of former Congress Poland, namely Józef Czaki, Marian Kozubowski and Waclaw Łazowski. Moreover, numerous Polish physicians, such as Jan Modrzewski¹⁰⁴, Antoni Mikulski and Czesław Czerwiński¹⁰⁵, were employed in different settlements around Harbin and smaller towns along the railway zone. A particularly important figure was doctor Wincenty Bogucki, who was engaged in fighting plague epidemic in the early days of the twentieth century¹⁰⁶. It is of interest to note that even Russian authors, who regard Harbin as an exclusively Russian enclave in China, acknowledged the fact that the Poles played a significant role in the localization, construction and development of present-day Harbin. For instance, Georgiy Vasilevich Melikhov writes that “the Poles worked on Chinese Eastern Railway in various capacities, among the technical and engineering personnel, and they were essentially the main contingent”¹⁰⁷.

Although Harbin “had a strong Polish accent”¹⁰⁸, it was not a Polish city. Unsurprisingly, the main component of the surrounding population was connected with the Chinese, who controlled the small businesses, trades and services. Second place was undoubtedly held by the Russians, who were in charge of the overall management of the railway, the administration and border security services¹⁰⁹. From the architectural and conventional point of view Harbin, despite its international character, was a distinctly Russian city in China¹¹⁰. Its building design was reminiscent of Moscow or St. Petersburg, as well as other European cities, with onion-domed cupolas, empire-

¹⁰¹ D. Wolff, *To the Harbin Station...*, pp. 121-125; M. Kałuski, *Polacy w Chinach...*, p. 77; J. Włodarski, K. Zeidler, M. Burdelski, *Chiny w oczach Polaków. Księga jubileuszowa z okazji 60-lecia nawiązania stosunków dyplomatycznych między Polską a Chińską Republiką Ludową*, Gdańsk 2010, p. 75.

¹⁰² S. Nernhejm, *Polonia harbińska (zarys historyczny)*, “Daleki Wschód” 1934, no. 7(57), p. 1.

¹⁰³ E. Таскина, *Неизвестный Харбин...*, p. 12.

¹⁰⁴ *Słownik Biograficzny miasta Lublina*, eds. T. Radzik, J. Skarbek, A.A. Witusik, Lublin 1993, pp. 186.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 61-62.

¹⁰⁶ J. Mioduszewski, *W. Bogucki*, [in:] PSB, vol. II, Kraków 1936, p. 198.

¹⁰⁷ Г.В. Мелихов, *Маньчжурия далекая и близкая...*, p. 76.

¹⁰⁸ М.И. Ефимова, А.А. Сапёлкин, *Исторические личности польской колонии Харбина (1896-1932)*, [in:] *Россияне в Азиатско-Тихоокеанском регионе. Сотрудничество на рубеже веков*, ed. Г.И. Каневская, Владивосток 2001, pp. 79-82.

¹⁰⁹ J. Neja, *Harbin jako przestrzeń...*, p. 52.

¹¹⁰ E. Таскина (ed.), *Русский Харбин...*, pp. 300-333.

style façades, wide boulevards and touches of art nouveau¹¹¹. Every level of Russian society was represented, from former royalty to unskilled labor. Russian was spoken in the streets, shops and theatres, and it was also the dominant language within administration, commerce and education¹¹². Street signs and billboards were written in Russian. The only part of Harbin where this was not so was in Fujiadian, where most of Harbin's 300,000 Chinese lived and few Russians ventured¹¹³. For almost 30 years, the Russian Harbin flourished¹¹⁴.

Interestingly, up until 1924 the Polish enclave in Harbin shared a lot of similarities with the Russian population of the city. By the mid 1920s, the number of Russians in Harbin had grown to 120,000, swelled by refugees escaping the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, not to mention the ensuing civil war. Moreover, approximately 35,000 Russians lived in other settlements in Manchuria¹¹⁵. Nonetheless, in the early 1930s, all this changed. A sequence of political events, driven by the three powers competing for hegemony in Manchuria, turned Russian Harbin upside down. First of all came the Japanese occupation and the establishment of the puppet Manchukuo regime in 1932¹¹⁶. In 1945, the Soviet Army occupied Manchuria for a number of years, driving out the Japanese and establishing a Soviet style administration. In 1949 came the Chinese Communist Revolution. These events prompted Russian residents of Harbin to seek asylum elsewhere. For this reason, most remaining Russians emigrated to the Soviet Union, Australia, Israel, Brazil as well as Argentina, and a small number to the United States. By the mid 1960s, only a few Russians remained in Harbin¹¹⁷.

Harbin's Polish history, however, took a slightly different turn between the 1930s and 1940s. In garnering support of representatives of the Russian colony for their occupation, the Japanese rekindled old dreams and prejudices. In 1934, the Japanese established the Bureau of Russian Émigré Affairs in Manchukuo (BREM)¹¹⁸ as a mechanism of controlling the Russian population in Manchuria. Nominally under Russian control, it was headed by a succession of White Army generals and run by members

¹¹¹ M. Jankowski, *Mandżuria. Wrażenia i wspomnienia*, Warszawa 1909, p. 19.

¹¹² G. Melikhov, *Glimpses of Old Harbin*, "Far Eastern Affairs" 1990, vol. 4, pp. 160-164; M. Moustafine, *The Harbin Connection...*, pp. 75-85.

¹¹³ J.J. Stephan, *The Russian Fascist...*, p. 40.

¹¹⁴ M. Moustafine, *Russians from China: Migrations and Identity*, "Cosmopolitan Civil Societies Journal" 2013, vol. 5, no. 2, p. 143.

¹¹⁵ J.J. Stephan, *The Russian Fascists...*, p. 37.

¹¹⁶ F. Kusiak, *Osadnictwo reemigrantów z Mandżurii na ziemiach Polski zachodniej i północnej w 1949 roku*, "Śląski Kwartalnik Historyczny Sobótka" 1994, vol. 49, no. 3-4, p. 242.

¹¹⁷ S. Clausen, S. Thøgersen, *The Making of a Chinese City. History and Historiography in Harbin*, New York 1995, p. 160.

¹¹⁸ Centralne Archiwum Wojskowe (CAW: Central Military Archives), Oddział II Sztabu Głównego (Generalnego) z lat 1921-1939 (The Second Department of Polish General Staff, 1921-1939), reference no. I.303.4.3145, Reports of Polish diplomatic missions, p. 549; V. Mitrokhin, *KGB Lexicon. The Soviet Intelligence Officers Handbook*, London 2004, p. 358.

of the Russian Fascist Party¹¹⁹ and their sympathizers¹²⁰. All adult émigré Russians were required to register with the BREM. Those who did not were denied employment and education for their children. In the later years of the occupation, Russian residents of Harbin were issued with identification badges. Initially, striped white, blue and red like the Tsarist flag, later, round, white aluminum disks, with numbers¹²¹. The Japanese themselves were not driven by prejudices and publicly maintained good relations with many national enclaves in Harbin, including the Polish community. However, the White Russians, with the consent of the Japanese authorities, oppressed the Poles by confiscating their passports, depriving them of well-paid posts and therefore their means of subsistence. Within Harbin, various members of the Russian fascist organizations tried to trammel the activities of the association “Gospoda Polska” and other Polish organizations¹²². By 1943, the Japanese authorities, with the help of loyal Russians, had seized most of the Polish-owned companies or enterprises for themselves¹²³.

While Russians formed the largest group among Harbin’s foreign community, the presence of Poles, Japanese, Koreans, French, Germans, Jews, Brits, Georgians, Armenians, Ukrainians, Greeks, Turks, Czechs, and a small number of Italians, Bulgarians, Americans, Swedes and Swiss, cultivating their traditions, religion as well as culture, lent the city a unique cosmopolitan air reminiscent of Shanghai and other major treaty ports¹²⁴. As mentioned earlier, there were certain similarities between

¹¹⁹ The Russian Fascist Party (RFP) was a Russian émigré movement that was based in Manchukuo during the 1930s and 1940s. Fascism had existed amongst the Manchurian Russians since the October Revolution and had been promoted by the minor Russian fascist organizations, which were first created in the mid 1920s. A secret convention of the various groups was held, leading to the foundation of the RFP, under the presidency of Major General Vladimir Dmitrievich Kozmin. Konstantin Rodzaevsky became Secretary General of the party’s central committee on May 26, 1931, becoming the actual leader of the party. By cooperating with Japan, the RFP became the most influential émigré group in Manchukuo, setting up a party school in Harbin in 1932. The party also developed close links to like-minded groups in the United States. Further, the RFP under Rodzaevsky had grown strong and claimed 20,000 activists by May 1935. When World War II was declared, the activities of the RFP outside Manchuria slowly came to an end whilst the group was restricted by the Japanese following the Soviet-Japanese Neutrality Pact of 1941. The group came to an end in 1945, when the Red Army invaded Manchukuo, with Rodzaevsky eventually surrendering before being executed the following year (A. Пронин, *Проблемы историографии российского зарубежья. Монография*, Saarbrücken 2012, p. 63; E. Oberländer, *The All-Russian Fascist Party*, “Journal of Contemporary History” 1966, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 158-173).

¹²⁰ J.J. Stephan, *The Russian Fascists...*, p. 55-78.

¹²¹ In 1943, Poles and other citizens of the former Russian Empire were issued with yellow badges (K.Y. Deog, *Kolonia polska w Mandżurii...*).

¹²² B.Z. Wojas, *Dzieje Polonii Charbińskiej*, “Zeszyty Historyczne” 1974, vol. 30(250), p. 12.

¹²³ A. Winiarz, *Działalność Polskiego Komitetu Opiekuńczego w Harbinie (1942-1945)*, “Rocznik Polonijny” 1984-1985, pp. 199-203.

¹²⁴ Н.А. Василенко, *О численном и национальном составе населения Харбина в 1898-1917 гг.*, [in:] *Дальний Восток-Северо-Восток Китая: исторический опыт взаимодействия и перспективы сотрудничества*, Хабаровск 1998, p. 63. Cited in: Е.А. Оглезнева, *О дина-*

Polish and Russian population of Harbin, especially in the period 1898-1920. Harbin, the capital of China's northernmost province of Heilongjiang, was once home to a vibrant Polish community¹²⁵, which sprang up there at the end of the nineteenth century, when the region was known as "Manchuria" to Europeans and "Dongbei"¹²⁶ to the Chinese. At its peak between 1917 and 1920, Harbin's Polish diaspora numbered around 14,000 people¹²⁷. On the other hand, a wide array of smaller towns along the railway's route encapsulated a total of 6,000 Polish settlers¹²⁸. For a time, the Polish enclave in Harbin enjoyed a relatively peaceful environment within a "Russian world" on a Chinese soil¹²⁹.

Despite the fact that in the decade from 1913 to 1923, Russia and its spheres of influence went through World War I, the Russian Revolution and the Russian Civil War, the Polish minority remained a close group in the multinational Harbin. Ironically, the restoration of Poland's independence in 1918, after 123 years of struggle¹³⁰, and victorious war against the Bolsheviks (1919-1921)¹³¹, created the first wave of a large-scale repatriation to Poland¹³². The situation deteriorated even further when on 8 September 1920, the Chinese Republic announced that it would no longer recognize the Russian consulates in China. Hence, on 23 September 1920 China ceased relations with representatives of the Imperial Russia and deprived Russians of extraterritorial rights¹³³. Shortly afterward, the Chinese government took over control of various institutions in Harbin, namely courts, police, prison, post office and educational institutions. In this way, the city found itself directly under Chinese rule¹³⁴. Overnight the Chinese decided to impose additional taxes on numerous Polish associations, including "Gospoda Polska". Luckily, all the associations were saved thanks to an effective intervention of Karol Pindor, a Polish consul in Harbin¹³⁵.

мике языковых ситуаций с участием славянских языков в XX в. (на материале дальнего востока России и северо-востока Китая), "Библиотека журнала «Русин»" 2015, no. 3, p. 113.

¹²⁵ M. Kałuski, *Polska-Chiny 1296-1996...*, p. 131.

¹²⁶ G. Rohlf, *Building New China...*, p. 60.

¹²⁷ A. Jabłońska, K. Krąkowski, *Z dziejów Polonii harbińskiej...*, pp. 160-162; J. Neja, *Polacy w Mandżurii*, "Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej" 2002, no. 3, pp. 34-41; idem, *Polski król Mandżurii*, "Wprost" 2003, no. 9, pp. 68-70; В.П. Петров, *Город на Сунгарии...*, pp. 8-10; В.А. Анучин, *Географические очерки Маньчжурии*, Москва 1948, p. 39.

¹²⁸ Kajdański, *Chiny. Leksykon. Historia, gospodarka, kultura*, Warszawa 2005, p. 87.

¹²⁹ L. Szychalski, *Mój Harbin...*, p. 193-194; E. Pałasz-Rutkowska, *Polska-Japonia-Mandżukuo. Sprawa uznania Mandżukuo przez Polskę*, "Przegląd Orientalistyczny" 2006, vol. 1-2, pp. 3-5; D. Radziwiłowicz, *Polskie organizacje polityczne i wojskowe we wschodniej Rosji, na Syberii i Dalekim Wschodzie (1917-1919)*, "Przegląd Historyczno-Wojskowy" 2005, vol. 6 (57), no. 2 (207), pp. 39-40.

¹³⁰ N. Davies, *Heart of Europe. The Past in Poland's Present*, Oxford 2001, pp. 95-100.

¹³¹ J.J. Lerski, *Historical Dictionary of Poland, 966-1945*, Westport 1996, p. 461.

¹³² M. Kałuski, *Polacy w Chinach...*, p. 71.

¹³³ *Do Rządu Najjaśniejszej Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej w Warszawie. Odezwa kolonii polskich z Dalekiego Wschodu i miasta Harbina*, "Tygodnik Polski" 1922, no. 19, p. 69.

¹³⁴ M. Cabanowski, *Tajemnice Mandżurii...*, pp. 48-50.

¹³⁵ K. Symonowicz, *Miraże mandżurskie...*, pp. 265-266.

On 31 May 1924, a Treaty on the General Principles for Setting Disputed Issues between the USSR and China was signed in Beijing¹³⁶. In the agreement, the Soviets agreed to renounce the rights and privileges relating to all concessions in any part of China as well as the rights of extraterritoriality of consular jurisdiction¹³⁷. In addition, the Soviet Union and China established a joint company for economic exploitation of the CER¹³⁸. After the Beijing government failed to initiate a joint management over the CER, the Soviet Union signed a supplemental agreement with Zhang Zuolin (1875-1928), a leader of the Manchurian “Autonomous Three Eastern Provinces”, on September 20, 1924 in Mukden¹³⁹. The arrangement stated that only Soviet and Chinese citizens could be employed by the CER management¹⁴⁰. This meant that many Polish residents of Harbin had to change not only their nationality, but also their political identity. Instead of changing their citizenship, the majority of Polish CER workers went back to Poland. However, there were also individual cases of Polish railway workers who took Soviet or Chinese citizenship driven by financial reasons¹⁴¹. This led to a less visible Polish presence in Harbin and Manchuria. At that time, a total of 2,000 Poles left Harbin, including intelligentsia and people with well-paid jobs¹⁴².

Beginning in 1921 the number of Poles in Harbin started to diminish dramatically. Former soldiers of the Imperial Russian army and prisoners of war were repatriated to Poland. Thus, in the mid 1920s, the number of Polish settlers in Northern China declined to approximately 5,000 people, with at least 3,000 living in Harbin¹⁴³. These numbers decreased even further in the opening years of the following decade. Poles left Harbin mainly due to declining labor market and the subsequent restrictions imposed on them by successive governments exercising control over the city. In 1930, the Polish community in Manchuria numbered around 2,000 people¹⁴⁴, and roughly half of them stayed in Harbin¹⁴⁵. However, these numbers could be

¹³⁶ E.J. Osmańczyk, A. Mango, *Encyclopedia of the United Nations and International Agreements*, vol. 4: T to Z, New York 2003, p. 2399.

¹³⁷ J.H. W. Verzijl, *International Law in Historical Perspective*, vol. 3, Leyden 1970, p. 273.

¹³⁸ J.F. Triska, R.M. Slusser, *The Theory, Law, and Policy of Soviet Treaties*, Stanford 1962, p. 466.

¹³⁹ B.A. Elleman, *Diplomacy and Deception: The Secret History of Sino-Soviet Diplomatic Relations, 1917-1927*, Armonk 1997, p. 127.

¹⁴⁰ A. Aleksandrowicz, *Mandżuria, jej przeszłość, teraźniejszość, kraj i ludzie*, Warszawa 1937, p. 153.

¹⁴¹ AAN, Kolonia Polska w Mandżurii (The Polish Colony in Manchuria), reference no. 2/198/0/-/66, History of the Polish colony in Manchuria, written by Kazimierz Krąkowski, pp. 8-9.

¹⁴² A. Aleksandrowicz, *Mandżuria, jej przeszłość...*, pp. 133-134.

¹⁴³ K.Y. Deog, *Kolonia polska w Mandżurii...*, p. 57; *Wychodźstwo polskie w poszczególnych krajach. Materiały opracowane na podstawie sprawozdań konsularnych przez referat emigracyjny w Wydziale Administracyjno-Paszportowym Departamentu Konsularnego MSZ (kwiecień 1926)*, Warszawa 1926, s. 47.

¹⁴⁴ AAN, MSZ, reference no. 10389, “The Polish colony in Harbin and Manchuria” a report of Edward Skowroński, the Polish Delegate in Harbin, prepared on 19 May 1931.

¹⁴⁵ AAN, Konsulat Generalny RP w Charbinie (The Consulate General of the Republic of Poland in Harbin), reference no. 2/455/0/-/5, The list of Polish communities abroad, correspondence, February 21, 1931.

somewhat underestimated due to the fact that some Poles possessed citizenships of other countries. Table 2, presenting the distribution of Poles in terms of their official nationality across Manchuria, describes this situation in 1931.

Table 2

Poles and their citizenship in Manchuria, 1931

| Country of citizenship | Number of passport holders | Percentage of passport holders |
|------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Poland | 1685 | 82.81 |
| Soviet Union | 70 | 3.44 |
| China | 58 | 2.85 |
| Stateless | 222 | 10.90 |
| Total | 2035 | 100 |

Source: AAN, Konsulat Generalny RP w Charbinie (The Consulate General of the Republic of Poland in Harbin), reference no. 2/455/0/-/5, The list of Polish communities abroad, correspondence, February 21, 1931

The Empire of Japan did not acquire a firm grip on the present-day Heilongjiang until it created the puppet state of Manchukuo in 1932. Until then, the city of Harbin remained an outpost of Russia, in both Tsarist and Soviet guises. Initially, the Japanese occupation of the northeast China did not have a negative impact on the Harbin's Polish community¹⁴⁶. In fact, life for the Polish settlers deteriorated seriously after 1921 and never fully recovered again. Constantly, members of the Polish diaspora were forced to deal with increasing poverty¹⁴⁷. However, for a relatively short period of time, the Poles enjoyed a fairly secure environment. In terms of cultural and social freedoms, the Poles were given more rights¹⁴⁸. Manchuria was developed as a source of raw materials and manufactured goods for Japan's domestic economy. At that time, the region was economically dominated by the Japanese. The Polish government de facto recognized Manchukuo on October 19, 1938 in an effort to gain more influence on the fate of the so-called Polish colony in Manchuria¹⁴⁹. Nevertheless, the majority of Polish businesses did not withstand the competition and passed into the hands of the Japanese¹⁵⁰. A rapidly deteriorating financial conditions caused many Poles to leave Harbin for other cities in France, Australia or the United

¹⁴⁶ J. Kil, K. Graczyk, *Kolonia polska w Mandżurii...*, p. 108.

¹⁴⁷ A. Aleksandrowicz, *Mandżuria, jej przeszłość...*, p. 107.

¹⁴⁸ "Listy Harbińskie" 1932, no. 5, p. 1.

¹⁴⁹ M. Nowak-Kiełbikowa, *Japonia i Chiny w dyplomacji II Rzeczypospolitej (Próba zarysu)*, "Dzieje Najnowsze" 1981, no. 1-2, p. 249. For a detailed analysis of diplomatic relations between Poland, Manchukuo and Japan, see: E. Pałasz-Rutkowska, *Polityka Japonii wobec Polski 1918-1941*, Warszawa 1998; W. Skóra, *Placówki MSZ...*, pp. 677-717.

¹⁵⁰ B.Z. Wojas, *Dzieje Polonii Charbińskiej...*, p. 11.

States. This crisis was aggravated by the fact that many representatives of the Polish community had long been unable, or unwilling, to adapt to new conditions¹⁵¹.

In the early 1930s, Poland and Japan maintained a close diplomatic as well as military relations resulting from a shared threat posed by the Soviet Union¹⁵². Curiously, this mutual cooperation lasted even after the outbreak of the Second World War. Since 1932, the Polish Diplomatic Mission in Harbin¹⁵³ was directly involved in the operations of Polish intelligence agents that often cooperated with the Japanese spy services. For example, Aleksander Kwiatkowski (1894-1980), a Polish consul in Harbin between 1933 and 1938¹⁵⁴, became the head of the Polish intelligence service branch established in Harbin¹⁵⁵ and operating under the code name of "Kulis" in July 1936¹⁵⁶. The bilateral cooperation was aimed at providing an effective defense against the USSR¹⁵⁷. During the years 1935-1949, the number of Polish residents of Harbin was steady, coming to approximately 1,250 persons¹⁵⁸. On the other hand, it is difficult to accurately determine the number of the Polish enclave. For instance, the president of the Polish Chamber of Commerce in Harbin, Wiktor Radwan, believed that Manchuria was a home to about 3,000 Poles, with roughly 1,500 Polish citizens living in Harbin¹⁵⁹. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the cultural creativity of the Polish enclave in the city came to a virtual standstill with the outbreak of World War II.

When the Japanese Empire entered the Second World War, following a surprise military strike by the Imperial Japanese Navy against the United States naval base at

¹⁵¹ K. Grochowski, *Przyszłość żywiołu polskiego w Chinach*, "Pamiętnik Harbiński" 1923, pp. 2-3; "Echo Dalekiego Wschodu" 1922, no. 10, p. 3.

¹⁵² E. Pałasz-Rutkowska, A.T. Romer, *Historia stosunków polsko-japońskich*, Warszawa 1996, pp. 118-154.

¹⁵³ The Polish Diplomatic Mission in Harbin was, in fact, a Polish consular office operating in the years 1920-1941. It was created for the benefit of the Polish community involved in the management of the Chinese Eastern Railway, without the formal approval of local authorities. It was referred to as a Consulate (1920-1924), the Delegation of the Republic of Poland (1924-1939) and Consulate General (1939-1941). Its territorial and factual competences and objectives also changed several times. First, it was under the supervision of the Polish Legation in Tokyo, then the Polish Legation in Shanghai, and finally, the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (W. Skóra, *Organizacja i pierwszy okres...*, pp. 75-100; idem, *Placówki MSZ...*, pp. 700-717; M. Mroczkowska, K. Szczepaniak, *Stosunki dyplomatyczne Polski. Informator*, vol. 3: *Azja, Zaukaszanie, Australia i Oceania 1918-2009*, Warszawa 2010, p. 45).

¹⁵⁴ W. Skóra, *Służba konsularna Drugiej...*, p. 105; W. Michowicz, *Organizacja polskiego aparatu dyplomatycznego w latach 1918-1939*, [in:] *Historia dyplomacji polskiej*, vol. 4: *1918-1939*, ed. P. Łossowski, Warszawa 1995, p. 46; "Biuletyn Instytutu Józefa Piłsudskiego w Ameryce" 1981, February, p. 11.

¹⁵⁵ H. Kuromiya, A. Pepłoński, *Między Warszawą a Tokio...*, p. 343.

¹⁵⁶ CAW, Oddział II Sztabu Głównego (Generalnego) z lat 1921-1939 (The Second Department of Polish General Staff, 1921-1939), reference no. I.303.4.1994, Materials of the Polish intelligence service branch "Kulis" concerning correspondence on organizational and financial matters, 1932-1936.

¹⁵⁷ H. Kuromiya, A. Pepłoński, *Między warszawą a Tokio...*, pp. 327-432.

¹⁵⁸ A. Winiarz, *Działalność Polskiego Komitetu...*, p. 196.

¹⁵⁹ "Echo z Dalekiego Wschodu" 1934, no. 3, p. 17.

Pearl Harbor on the morning of December 7, 1941¹⁶⁰, the Polish Diplomatic Mission in Harbin, at the time operating as a Polish Consulate General, was closed. The former consul, Jerzy Litewski, managed to form the Polish Guardian Committee (Polski Komitet Opiekuńczy) in order to secure the material welfare of the Polish residents of Harbin, especially the Henryk Sienkiewicz Secondary School, by taxing members of the community¹⁶¹. Afterwards, Jerzy Litewski was transported to Tokyo, from where he joined the Polish government-in-exile in London. Between 1944 and 1945, he was given the post of Polish consul in Bombay¹⁶². The Polish Guardian Committee was led by Albin Czyżewski as well as its secretary Aleksander Macedoński¹⁶³. The Committee was officially recognized by the Manchukuo government on 1 January 1942¹⁶⁴. As a result of political pressure from Japan and Germany, the lives of European settlers, including the Polish diaspora, and the local Chinese became significantly more difficult. Rationing cards were introduced for local provisions. All the inhabitants of Manchukuo had to possess three so-called “residence cards”, renewed annually, and carry as well yellow cards with a number, and that same number had to appear on the doors of their residences¹⁶⁵. One of the last Polish organizations in northern China, that is the Polish Citizens’ Committee in Manchuria, was established on 23 September 1945, immediately after the successful Soviet occupation of Harbin.

In a similar way to the previous committee it was headed by Albin Czyżewski¹⁶⁶ and his assistant Aleksander Macedoński. Soon, however, they were replaced by Kazimierz Krąkowski, a Polish communist who gained the support of local Soviet administration. In the early days of Soviet presence in Harbin, Aleksander Macedoński was arrested by the People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD), taken to the USSR, accused of espionage and sentenced to many years of forced labor¹⁶⁷. The most probable cause of his detention was that he studied in Japan before the outbreak of the Second World War and his knowledge of the Japanese language¹⁶⁸. Ultimately, like many prisoners of the Kolyma forced-labor camps¹⁶⁹,

¹⁶⁰ G.W. Prange, D.M. Goldstein, K.V. Dillon, *December 7, 1941. The Day the Japanese Attacked Pearl Harbor*, New York 1988, p. 174.

¹⁶¹ A. Winiarz, *Działalność Polskiego Komitetu...*, pp. 197-198.

¹⁶² T. Komarnicki, *Polska służba zagraniczna po 1 września 1939 r.*, Londyn 1954, p. 113.

¹⁶³ B.Z. Wojas, *Dzieje Polonii Charbińskiej...*, p. 12.

¹⁶⁴ AAN, Kolonia Polska w Mandżurii (The Polish Colony in Manchuria), reference no. 2/198/0-/16 Polish Guardian Committee, Protocol no. 1, Organizational matters, January 12, 1942.

¹⁶⁵ K.Y. Deog, *Kolonia polska w Mandżurii...*, p. 64.

¹⁶⁶ A. Winiarz, *Działalność Polskiego Komitetu...*, pp. 204-205.

¹⁶⁷ AAN, Kolonia Polska w Mandżurii (The Polish Colony in Manchuria), reference no. 2/198/0-/19, A statement of the Polish Citizens’ Committee in Manchuria on the detention of Aleksander Macedoński, October 31, 1945, p. 382; idem, Letter from the mother of Aleksander Macedoński to the Military Prosecutor in Harbin, October 31, 1945, p. 383.

¹⁶⁸ AAN, Konsulat Generalny RP w Charbinie (The Consulate General of the Republic of Poland in Harbin), reference no. 2/455/0-/16, Personal files of Aleksander Macedoński, 1933-1941, p. 14.

¹⁶⁹ J. Neja, *Harbin jako przestrzeń...*, p. 71.

Macedoński came back to Poland exhausted both physically as well as mentally in 1959 and died shortly after his return¹⁷⁰.

The Polish Citizens' Committee in Manchuria, despite its early promises that it would take up the matter of emigration to Poland, did very little to fulfill its obligations. Not until the period of 1947-1948 did a branch of the Polish Citizens' Committee, called the Polish Temporary Committee in Manchuria, put in order the files of numerous Poles and individuals applying for Polish citizenship. This registration indicated that 80% of representatives of the Polish community in Harbin declared for return to Poland. On the contrary, 12% of the Poles living in Harbin did not want to leave due to an old age or illness, while 8% gave no reason¹⁷¹. Eventually, a Polish delegation, headed by Jerzy Kłosowski, came from Warsaw in 1949 with the aim of organizing the repatriation. The delegation received support from the Chinese authorities which wanted to get rid of various foreigners as fast as possible. As a result, on the 3rd and 12th day of July, 1949, rail transports headed toward Poland, each carrying around 400 passengers. The Polish government's Liquidation Group left Harbin on July 24, 1949. In December 1950 another group of 200 individuals returned, on a Polish merchant vessel¹⁷².

Many documents of the Polish community in Manchuria were turned over to UNESCO, which transferred these materials to the Polish State Archives in July 1950. By the late 1950s, turbulent political developments, including the Soviet occupation of Manchuria between 1945 and 1946, not to mention the Chinese Revolution in 1949, had driven most Poles out of China. But for many of them, their roots in China became a key aspect of their identity in emigration as well as their professional lives. When antireligious repression was at its peak in 1957, the last two priests, namely Aleksander Eysymontt and Gracjan Kołodziejczyk left Harbin for Australia. Six years later the Association of Polish Citizens in China, numbering eighteen members, was dissolved. During the Maoist Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) most traces of Polish presence in Harbin were destroyed¹⁷³.

The Polish diaspora in Harbin as well as Manchuria was characterized by traditionalism, deeply rooted patriotic values, idealization of their homeland and publicly revealed Catholicism¹⁷⁴. Therefore, members of the community were mostly in favor

¹⁷⁰ E. Kajdański, *Korytarz. Burzliwe dzieje...*, p. 173.

¹⁷¹ AAN, Kolonia Polska w Mandżurii (The Polish Colony in Manchuria), reference no. 2/198/0/-/22, Polish Temporary Committee in Manchuria, Protocols, Notices, 1947-1948; AAN, Kolonia Polska w Mandżurii (The Polish Colony in Manchuria), reference no. 2/198/0/-/23, Polish Temporary Committee in Manchuria, Protocols, Messages, Correspondence, Photographs, 1948.

¹⁷² AAN, Kolonia Polska w Mandżurii (The Polish Colony in Manchuria), reference no. 2/198/0/-/66, History of the Polish colony in Manchuria, written by Kazimierz Krąkowski, pp. 103-110.

¹⁷³ B.Z. Wojas, *Dzieje Polonii Charbińskiej...*, p. 13-15.

¹⁷⁴ The Polish Catholic Mission existed in Harbin from the beginning of the twentieth century to the demise of the Polish community in late 1950s. Between 1901 and 1907, the CER company allowed the Polish enclave to use one of its houses as a chapel and Fr. Szpiganowicz, a Polish military chaplain, was responsible for the celebration of religious services (*Historia Parafii Polsko Katolickiej w Charbinie (Chiny)*, "Pamiętnik Charbiński" 1923, vol. 1, p. 23). Poles had

of striving to shape and maintain their national identity. The defense of its national identity became one of the priorities of the whole enclave. The main determinants of the Polish presence in Harbin were the Catholic Church, religion and respect for the country, which was completely unknown to younger generations of Poles in Manchuria¹⁷⁵. This can be illustrated by the fact that after the outbreak of the Second World War a group of approximately one hundred young volunteers reported to the Polish consulate in order to fight for their country¹⁷⁶. Finally, due to financial restraints only fourteen of them, including Henryk Bujnowicz, Borys Dąbrowski, Romuald Drabiński, Stanisław Drożdż, Antoni Kajdewicz, Władysław Karncewicz, Jan Kluczyński, Walenty Kuczyński, Stanisław Lejman, Piotr Leśniewski, Wincenty Tomaszewski, Andrzej Zalewski, Olgierd Żydowicz and Jan Zanoziński, left Harbin and merged with the Polish armed forces in French Syria, where they joined a Polish Independent Carpathian Brigade in 1940 and later took part in the Siege of Tobruk¹⁷⁷.

Conclusion

Undoubtedly, the most important region encapsulating people of Polish origin in the Far East, especially between 1898 and 1949, was Manchuria. More specifically, the majority of Poles in Manchuria settled in Harbin. As headquarters of the Chinese Eastern Railway in the early 1900s, Harbin was transformed from a small fishing village on the Songhua River in the Northern China into a major administrative and economic hub. The city became a magnet for indigenous Chinese workers from the south, as well as entrepreneurs, adventurers and minorities from across the Tsarist Empire. Though holding a common citizenship, this latter group was multinational and multiethnic. The inflow of Poles into Manchuria was mainly caused by a combination of various factors. Nevertheless, economic reasons played a crucial role in the Polish presence in Harbin and smaller towns across the region. Evidently, initial wave of Polish immigration can be related to the construction of the Chinese Eastern Railway. Apart from engineers and railway workers, this vastly depopulated Chinese

two churches in Harbin, that is St. Stanislaus Church and St. Josaphat Church. The Mission managed to initiate several useful institutions, such as the St. Vincent de Paul Society (1909), a primary school (1912), a shelter for the homeless and the elderly, and a small parish library (1913). However, its greatest achievement involved a successful opening of the Polish secondary school on 3 September 1915, which was renamed to the Henryk Sienkiewicz Secondary School in the following year (AAN, *Kolonia Polska w Mandżurii* [The Polish Colony in Manchuria], reference no. 2/198/0/-/16, The Polish Guardian Committee, Documents certifying ownership of the church buildings in Harbin, 1922, p. 120; M. Cabanowski, *Tajemnice Mandżurii...*, p. 16; A. Jabłońska, K. Krąkowski, *Z dziejów Polonii...*, p. 163).

¹⁷⁵ P. Olenkowicz, *Tożsamość narodowa Polonii harbińskiej*, [in:] *Polskie ślady...*, p. 163.

¹⁷⁶ Hoover Institution (available on microfilms from the Central Archives of Modern Records in Warsaw), MSZ, reference no. 800/42/0/-/209, Letter no. 12, Consul Jerzy Litewski in Harbin, November 6, 1939 on the issue of sending volunteers to fight in the Polish Army, p. 2.

¹⁷⁷ M. Kałuski, *Polska-Chiny 1296-1996...*, p. 137.

region attracted Polish entrepreneurs, craftsmen and descendants of the Polish prisoners sent into the Tsarist Russia.

The aftermath of the Bolshevik Revolution (1917) and the civil war that followed brought a massive wave of additional immigration to the CER right of way zone, the last remaining Russian enclave outside the Soviet Union. As a result, numerous Polish officers and soldiers who fought in the Tsarist Army ended up in Harbin. Interestingly, the Polish community in Harbin was at its peak in the early 1920s. Afterwards the number of Poles in the region was constantly decreasing. The activity of the Polish diaspora of several thousand people was particularly evident in the social as well as cultural areas. The multinational Harbin hosted Polish schools, churches and associations. A special hallmark of Harbin in the first half of the twentieth century was its multinational character. Apart from the nationalities incorporated by the Russian Empire, it was inhabited by numerous Greeks, Turks, Americans, Frenchmen, Swedes, Danes, Italians and citizens of other countries¹⁷⁸. Thus, Harbin hosted a heterogeneous community. Furthermore, almost all these ethnic communities cultivated their traditions, religion and culture¹⁷⁹.

Initially, the Japanese occupation of Manchuria which occurred in the early 1930s, did not affect the Polish enclave. Later, however, the Japanese economic dominance in Manchuria weakened the financial standing of the Polish diaspora and therefore certain Polish émigrés began returning to their homeland. The fate of those who remained in Harbin lay in the hands of the controlling power—firstly the Japanese Empire, later the Soviet Union and finally the People's Republic of China¹⁸⁰.

By the mid 1950s, almost all representatives of the Polish community in Harbin had left China. To be more precise, the majority of Poles were repatriated from Manchuria in July 1949. In line with the interstate agreements and after a month-long journey in two rail transports through the Soviet Union, the Polish returnees made it to the assembly point in Biała Podlaska. From where they were sent on to urban locations in the northern and western parts of Poland which offered more superior living and working conditions. Besides Szczecin and Wrocław, Elbląg was a major settlement place for the repatriates from Manchuria¹⁸¹. Yet another group of Polish citizens emigrated to Australia, the United States, Canada, Brazil and Israel¹⁸². By the late 1960s, only a few Poles remained in Harbin.

¹⁷⁸ L. Weirather, *Fred Barton and the Warlords' Horses of China: How an American Cowboy Brought the Old West to the Far East*, Jefferson 2015, p. 90.

¹⁷⁹ E.A. Оглезнева, *О динамике языковых ситуаций...*, p. 114.

¹⁸⁰ J. Polit, *Chiny*, Warszawa 2004, pp. 192-193.

¹⁸¹ A. Welniak, *Reemigranci polscy z Mandżurii w Elblągu*, "Rocznik Elbląski" 2009, vol. XXII, pp. 175-197.

¹⁸² AAN, *Kolonia Polska w Mandżurii (The Polish Colony in Manchuria)*, reference no. 2/198/0/-/66, *History of the Polish colony in Manchuria*, written by Kazimierz Krąkowski, p. 109; A. Jabłońska, K. Krąkowski, *Z dziejów Polonii...*, p. 171; E. Kajdański, *Korytarz. Burzliwe dzieje...*, pp. 172-176; A. Winiarz, *Polska diaspora w Mandżurii*, [in:] *Polska diaspora*, ed. A. Walaszek, Kraków 2001, pp. 393-394.

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Summary

History and historiography of the Polish diaspora in Harbin, 1898-1949

The origins of Harbin date back to the late nineteenth century. In the first decades of the twentieth century, Harbin was gradually converted into an ever-expanding metropolis, owing to the railroad-driven advancement. Believing that the rapid economic development of Manchuria would require private initiative and investment, the Tsarist government actively encouraged numerous minorities of the Russian Empire to migrate to Harbin. Thus, settlers of various cultures and religions, including the Poles, flocked to Manchuria in search of a better life. Polish experts, mainly architects and engineers, played a key role in the planning and construction of Harbin as well as the Chinese Eastern Railway. The Polish community in Harbin, supported by both the Polish Catholic Mission and Polish Diplomatic Mission, was extremely dynamic and socially active, setting up a number of organizations, sports clubs, schools and even local newspapers. After the Second World War and the establishment of the People's Republic of China most of the Poles living in Harbin left the city, heading towards Australia or the rest of the Western world. Yet another group of Polish citizens returned to Poland. However, for many of them, their roots in Harbin and Manchuria became the main aspect of their identity.