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Manchuria in Polish-Japanese Relations in the 1930s

Manchuria (in Chinese: Manzhou, in Japanese: Manshū, literally in these languages: “land of abundance”) is a region that generally encompasses the three north-east provinces of China (Heilongjiang, Jilin, Shenjing)¹. As its name suggests, it is rich in fertile soil as well as minerals (including high-grade coal and iron ore). Due to its geographic position between the mountains of Great Khingan (and a region known as Inner Mongolia), the Amur river and Siberia, Korea, the Sea of Japan and the Yellow Sea, it has been extremely important in a strategic sense. Accordingly, it drew the attention of neighbouring states, including Japan, starting at the end of the 19th century.

Manchuria also had ties with Poland dating back to the 19th century, mainly in connection with the large Polish colony residing there which consisted of deportees from the failed Polish uprisings against Tsarist Russia in 1830 (the November Insurrection) and 1863 (the January Insurrection) and their descendants, engineers, technicians and workers who helped build the Chinese Eastern Railway (1897–1903), which extended the Trans-Siberian Railway from Manzhouli to Vladivostok, soldiers who served in the Russian Army during the Russo-Japanese War and, after 1917, POWs from the Austro-Hungarian Army and refugees from Russia. At the beginning of the 1930s there were about 5,000 Poles in Manchuria, in 1934 there were 3,000 and in 1935 there were 1,250².

Because Manchuria was of interest to the Japanese as well as to the Poles, it inevitably became an issue that entered into the two countries' bilateral relations³. In the 1930s

¹ More on Manchuria see: Jerzy Tulisow, *Legendy ludów Mandżurii* (Legends of Manchuria nations), vol. 1–2, Warszawa 1998, Wydawnictwo Akademickie Dialog and also: Ludwik Bazyłow, *Historia Mongolii* (History of Mongolia), Wrocław 1981, Ossolineum.

² Entry: “Chiny. Polonia i Polacy (China. Polish Colony and Poles)” in: *Multimedialna. Nowa encyklopedia powszechna PWN* (Multimedial new encyclopaedia), disc 1, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN SA, Warszawa 1999; more on Poles in Manchuria see: Marek Cabanowski, *Tajemnice Mandżurii. Polacy w Harbinie* (Secrets of Manchuria. Poles in Harbin), Warszawa 1993, Muzeum Niepodległości.

³ For more details see: Ewa Pałasz-Rutkowska, *Polityka Japonii wobec Polski 1918–1941* (Japan's policy towards Poland), Zakład Japonistyki i Koreanistyki, Nozomi, Warszawa 1998; Ewa Pałasz-Rutkowska,

Manchuria became an important issue in the context of the Manchurian incident, the establishment of Manchukuo and the question of international recognition for this entity.

Japan first gained official grounds to enter Manchuria in 1895 thanks to its victory over China in the Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895), concluded by a peace treaty in Shimonoseki that ceded the Liaodong Peninsula to it. But the Western powers, mainly Russia, were particularly interested in this region of Asia and unable to reconcile themselves to the fact that Japan had matured to the role of a power in the Far East in less than three decades following its opening to the world after over 200 years of isolation. Russia, together with Germany and France (so-called Triple Intervention), forced Japan to give back Liaodong, and a year later it signed an agreement with China to build the Chinese Eastern Railway and then, in 1898, obtained a 25-year lease on Liaodong and permission to build a strategic rail line linking Changchun with Port Arthur. Construction of the South Manchurian Railway was completed in 1903.

Japan entered this part of Manchuria the second time thanks to its victory over Russia in 1905, when it received the rights to the Liadong peninsula, including the rights to the railroad. Japan began to exploit the territory mainly through the South Manchurian Railway Company (Minami Manshū Tetsudō Kabushiki Kaisha) and protected it with units of the Kwantung Army (Kantōgun)⁴, which had been stationed in the region since the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905).

The Japanese authorities, particularly the conquest-minded representatives of military circles, began to take an interest in Manchuria again in the early 1930s as a means of lifting the country from the severe economic crisis and ameliorating social discontent. A conquered Manchuria could become a convenient market for Japanese goods, a source of raw materials for Japanese industry and, due to its fertile land, a paradise for Japanese emigrants and solution to the problem of over-population.

The Manchurian Incident

The plan that would ultimately lead to the conquest of Manchuria was initiated on 18 September 1931, when soldiers of the Kwantung Army – exploiting an explosion on the South Manchurian Railway purportedly caused by the Chinese – attacked a nearby Chinese barracks⁵. Surprised by the events, the government ordered that hostilities be

Andrzej T. Romer, *Historia stosunków polsko-japońskich 1904–1945* (History of Polish-Japanese relations), Warszawa 1996, Wydawnictwo Bellona.

⁴ For more information on the Kwantung Army see: Shimada Toshihiko, *Kantōgun*, Chūō Kōronsha, Tōkyō 1965.

⁵ For more details see: Baba Akira, *Manshū jihen* (The Manchurian Incident), [in]: *Nihon gaikōshi* (The History of Japanese Diplomacy), vol. 18, Tōkyō 1973, Kajima Kenkyūjo Shuppankai; Usui Katsumi, *Manshū jihen*, Tōkyō 1974, Chūō Kōronsha; Sadako N. Ogata, *Defiance in Manchuria. The Making of Japanese Foreign*

contained and officially stated⁶ that the incident had been caused by Chinese soldiers and the Kwantung Army had merely acted in self-defence. The Chinese, according to the Japanese account, were conducting anti-Japanese activities and threatened the security of Japanese residents in the region as well as their property. The government decided to resolve the conflict by means of direct negotiations, but that was impossible because the Kwantung Army was occupying successive Manchurian cities.

The matter of the conflict in Manchuria, at the behest of the Chinese, was addressed at the League of Nations on 21 September 1931. Poland, a semi-permanent member of the Council of the League, reacted to the military action taken by Japan in Manchuria like most other Western countries – that is, cautiously. On the one hand, it tried to take a critical position toward the aggressor, all the more so in that it had recently ratified the Treaty of Amity and Commerce with China⁷ signed in 1929 and initiated diplomatic relations with the country. On the other hand, Poland did not want to take a stance against Japan, as it was counting on Japan's intercession in the event of a Polish-German conflict. Moreover, it was necessary to keep in mind the safety of Polish ex-patriots in Manchuria. Accordingly, in his September 1931 speech at the forum of the League, August Zaleski (1883–1972), the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs (1926–1932) mainly spoke about the necessity of respecting territorial integrity and political independence, but he also spoke with satisfaction about the Japanese delegation's highly general declaration that the country did not intend to violate any basic international obligations⁸.

On 15 October, in accordance with Minister Zaleski's instructions, Franciszek Sokal (1881–1932), the Polish Delegate to the Council of the League (1926–1932), met with Yoshizawa Kenkichi (1874–1965), Japanese Ambassador in Paris (1930–1931), and Sawada Setsuzō (1884–1976), Director of Japan's Bureau at the League (1931–1933)⁹. Yoshizawa, in referring to minority affairs, emphasised that Japan “is only abiding by its obligation to impartially report these matters to the Council, though it's always a pleasure for him to agree upon them beforehand” with Minister Zaleski. Sokal then presented Poland's position in the matter of territorial integrity, to which Yoshizawa responded that “he and his government well understand the importance that this principle has for Poland. He wishes to assure us that he has full sympathy for our position in this question”.

Policy 1931–1932, University of California, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1964; James Crowley, *Japan's Quest for Autonomy. National Security and Foreign Policy 1930–1938*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1966.

⁶ *Nihon gaikō nenpyō narabi-ni shuyō bunsho* (NGN; A chronology and major documents on Japanese foreign policy), Gaimushō ed., vol. 2, Hara Shobō, Tōkyō 1976, pp. 181–183, 185–186. See also: an attachment to F. Sokal's cable No. 4139/31 to the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs (28.09.1931), *Delegacja RP przy Lidze Narodów* (*Del. RP*; Polish Delegation to the League of Nations), 226, pp. 5–7. Archiwum Akt Nowych (AAN, The Record Office of Modern Documents), Warsaw.

⁷ Maria Nowak-Kiełbikowa, *Japonia i Chiny w dyplomacji II Rzeczypospolitej* (Japan and China in the II Polish Republic foreign relations), “Dzieje Najnowsze” vol. XIII, No. 1–2/1981, p. 244.

⁸ *Del. RP*, 240, pp. 71–73, AAN.

⁹ Minister Sokal's cable No. 3969/31 to Minister Zaleski (15.10.1931), *Del. RP*, 226, pp. 103–104, AAN; see also: Stanisław Sierpowski, *Źródła do historii powszechnej okresu międzywojennego* (Sources to the world history of the interwar period), vol. 2, Poznań 1991, Wydawnictwa Naukowe UAM, pp. 246–249.

On 17 October 1931, Minister Zaleski, in response to Sokal's telephonogram¹⁰, ordered him to accept Great Britain's proposal to submit a declaration concerning the obligations set forth in the Kellogg-Briand Pact¹¹ by representatives of governments in the Council and the United States who were residing in Tokyo. Sokal was also ordered to vote in favour of resolutions condemning Japan in the event the entire Council supported them or against such resolutions if the Council was divided in the matter.

A clear formulation of the Polish government's motives are presented in Sokal's report submitted to the Minister of Foreign Affairs on 30 October¹². Sokal wrote about Poland's interests in Manchuria, relations between Poland and the Soviet Union, which was about to finalise negotiations with Poland on a non-aggression pact, and the analogous situation which could arise if the Council were to address a conflict between Poland and Germany. Poland, to be sure, was very interested in ensuring that the principle of respecting territorial integrity was complied with, but it was precisely for this reason that maintaining friendly relations with Japan appeared to be more important than admonishing Japan for violating this principle. This is because Germany was trying to deepen its diplomatic relations with Japan and use these closer ties to further its revanchist designs against Poland. It even suggested to the Japanese delegation that Japan propose to link Poland's position in the Council and Japan's position in the League's department of minorities. Thus, Poland withdrew from the declaration supporting the principle of respecting treaties, as it felt that doing otherwise could undermine Polish-Japanese relations and result in Japan assuming a position detrimental to Polish interests in the event a conflict broke out about between Poland and Germany.

Sokal wrote to Minister Zaleski¹³:

"As Poland, we had a double interest in the Chinese-Japanese conflict. On account of our policy in the Far East and the position of the USSR /.../ as well as potential analogies in the event of a conflict before the Council to which Poland would be a party. /.../ I have striven to operate tactically as cautiously as possible, standing on the grounds of our fundamental principles yet not risking harm to our friendly relations with Japan. /.../

Poland's position, even though I was forced to vote against Japan whenever the entire Council besides Japan voted unanimously, was understandable to the delegation, and the good will shown by you, Minister through the mediation of our *chargé d'affaires* in Tokyo [Antoni Jazdzewski; EPR] and through my own mediation in conversations with Ambassador Yoshizawa was duly recognised and accepted with gratitude. /.../

¹⁰ Minister Sokal's cable No. 4009/31 to Minister Zaleski (17.10.1931), *Del. RP*, 226, p. 85, AAN; Minister Zaleski's answer, *ibid.*, p. 87.

¹¹ An agreement banning war signed on 27 August 1928 by Frank Kellogg, the US Secretary of State and Aristide Briand, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs; then ultimately ratified by more than 60 countries. With no means of enforcement it remained a dead letter in the face of Nazi aggression of the 1930s.

¹² Minister Sokal's cable No. 4221/31 to Minister Zaleski (30.10.1931), *Del. RP*, 227, pp. 197–214, AAN.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 211–214.

Nevertheless, surprise has been expressed in certain circles of the League that a delegate of Poland failed to take advantage of an opportunity to manifest what great importance Poland attaches to respect for treaties /.../ and how much it is interested in energetic and immediate action by the Council in removing the aggressor from foreign territory. It is not being concealed that if a Polish-German conflict occurred, we would draw considerable benefits from an initiative made currently in a matter that's not ours. /.../ We unfailingly stand on the grounds of respect for treaties /.../, but declarations of this type have already been issued by Poland's representative /.../ and repeating them in connection with the Chinese-Japanese conflict could only anger Japan without giving us anything in return."

In accordance with Great Britain's initiative, the government of Poland as well as the governments of Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Norway, Ireland and the United States (through their representatives in Tokyo), and Yugoslavia and Egypt (directly), submitted identical diplomatic notes to Japan calling upon the country to explain its position in the matter of the Kellogg-Briand Pact in the context of its attack on Manchuria¹⁴. Upon submitting Poland's note to the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 20 October, Antoni Jażdżewski (1887–1967), *chargé d'affaires* of Poland in Tokyo (1930–1933) supposedly said¹⁵ that the Polish government had always been cordially disposed to Japan and does not intend to change its stance in the current situation, and hopes that the Japanese government will understand that it had to submit the note, as it was acting in concert with other states. In response to the notes, the Japanese government stated¹⁶ that it was aware of the responsibility it bore as a signatory to the Kellogg-Briand Pact. It further explained that its actions in Manchuria were being conducted solely for the purpose of defending the South Manchurian Railway from Chinese units as well as protecting Japanese citizens and their property, and that the Japanese government was far from resorting to war for the purpose of clearing up its differences of opinion with the Chinese.

Desiring that Japan's position be properly understood, Shidehara Kijūrō (1872–1951), the Japanese Minister of Foreign Affairs (1924–1925, 1925–1926, 1926–1927, 1929–1931) ordered Sawada Setsuzō, Director of Japan's Bureau at the League of Nations, to meet with representatives of states belonging to the Council on 1 November prior to its next session¹⁷. Similar instructions were issued to Japan's representatives abroad, including Kawai Hiroyuki (1883–1933), a Minister in Warsaw (1931–1933).

Accordingly, Minister Kawai visited Minister August Zaleski on 5 November¹⁸, who told him that Poland, to be sure, does not have a direct interest in the Manchurian

¹⁴ Minister Shidehara Kijūrō's cable No. 1132 to Kuriyama Shigeru, *chargé d'affaires* in Paris (22.10.1931), *Manshū jihen*, vol. 1/3 in: *Nihon gaikō bunsho* (NGB, Documents on Japanese foreign policy), Gaimushō ed., Nihon Kokusai Renmei Kyōkai, Tōkyō 1977, p. 384; the same notes were also sent by governments of Panama, Chile, Portugal, Turkey, Persia, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Peru and Afghanistan.

¹⁵ Minister Shidehara's cable No. 134 to Sawada (22.10.1931), *ibid.*, p. 383.

¹⁶ Minister Shidehara's cable No. 206 to Ambassador of Great Britain in Tokyo, F.O. Lindley (22.10.1931), *ibid.*, pp. 384–387.

¹⁷ Minister Shidehara's cable No. 140 to Sawada (01.10.1931), *ibid.*, p. 445.

¹⁸ Minister Kawai's cable No. 27 to Minister Shidehara (06.10.1931), *ibid.*, p. 473.

incident, but it wishes that world peace be maintained. He also assured the Minister that although Poland would not vote against the powers at the next session of the League Council, neither would it say anything unfavourable for Japan, as it wished to maintain friendly relations between the two countries. Moreover, he emphasised that he would do everything to ensure that the Japanese-Chinese problem was resolved as quickly as possible, adding, however, that he would not make any initiative in the matter without the agreement of the Japanese government.

On 18 November, two representatives of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Edward Raczyński (1891–1993) and Tadeusz Gwiazdoski (1889–1950), met in Paris with Sugimura Yōtarō (1884–1939), the Deputy Secretary General of the League (1927–1933), to convey Minister Zaleski's suggestions concerning resolution of the Japanese-Chinese conflict in accordance with the League Pact and without harm to Japan's interests¹⁹. Sugimura thanked him for his understanding of Japan's position, but added that "Japanese military circles are completely determined to see the plan of military operations through to its completion, the final stage of which will no doubt be the occupation of Qiqihar, absolutely ignoring any orders whatsoever from the League Council".

And in fact that day the Kwantung Army occupied Qiqihar and continued operations. In connection with this, Poland together with Norway, Spain and Yugoslavia adopted a different position from that taken by Great Britain and France and called for the withdrawal of Japanese forces from China at the 24 November session of the League Council²⁰, most likely out of the fear of similar actions that could be taken by Germany in Europe.

On 10 December, the League Council decided to appoint an international Commission of Enquiry to investigate the situation in Manchuria, to be headed by Lord Edvard Lytton. The Commission reached Tokyo on 29 February 1932. Yet the next day, 1 March 1932, the establishment of the state of Manchukuo²¹ was declared, which Japan decided to recognise as quickly as possible to prove to international opinion that it's an independent state and thereby silence criticism. This was done officially on 15 September 1932²². The declaration "legalised" Japan's intervention in Manchuria and granted Japan unlimited rights in the region. Moreover, Japan was given the right to help the new country defend its national security, and Manchukuo recognised the necessity of Japan stationing however many troops on its territory it deemed necessary. In reality, the region was made completely

¹⁹ *Rozmowa pp. Raczyńskiego i Gwiazdoskiego z p. Sugimurą* (Mr. Raczyński and Mr. Gwiazdoski talk with Mr. Sugimura) (18.11.1931), *Del. RP*, 227, pp. 100–101, AAN.

²⁰ Ambassador Debuchi's cable No. 508 to Minister Shidehara (25.11.1931), in: A.1.1.0.21-4-1, Gaimushō Gaikō Shiryōkan (GGS, The Diplomatic Record Office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), Tokyo.

²¹ This puppet state encompassed four provinces (Heilongjiang, Jilin, Shenjing, Rehe). Till March 1934 it was a republic, and then, till 1945, an empire, headed by Pu yi, the last emperor of China (1908–1912; Qing dynasty). For more details see: Yamamuro Shin'ichi, *Kimera. Manshūkoku-no shōzō* (Chimera. An image of Manchukuo), Chūō Kōronsha, Tōkyō 1993; *Manshū jihen-to niniroku* (The Manchurian Incident and February 26 Incident), Awaya Kentarō ed. in: *Dokumento Shōwashi* (The history of Shōwa period in documents), vol. 2, Heibonsha, Tōkyō 1983, pp. 107–139.

²² See: *Nichiman giteisho* (Protocol between Japan and Manchukuo) in: NGN, vol. 2, pp. 215–223.

dependent on Japan and exploited as a source of raw materials and a captive market as well as a testing ground for Japanese colonisation and an advance base for striking at China or the USSR. Japanese advisors appeared in every field of life, Japanese companies opened subsidiaries and Japanese settlers were moved in for the purpose of taking control of agriculture.

Before the Lytton Commission issued its report (2 October) and discussion of it could begin at the League of Nations, Japan made another attempt to gain Poland's support. Matsuoka Yōsuke (1880–1946), on his way to Geneva as Japan's official representative, stopped in Warsaw²³ for this purpose. He met unofficially with Józef Beck (1894–1944), the new Minister of Foreign Affairs (1932–1939), Edward Raczyński and Tadeusz Schaetzel (1891–1971), the Head of the Ministry's Eastern Department on 9 November 1932. From the message sent by the *chargé d'affaires* in Warsaw at the time, Kinoshita Takeo, we know Matsuoka said that he praised the friendly relations between Japan and Poland²⁴. He also explained that the problem of Manchuria was a natural affair of the Japanese nation. In response to the question whether Poland would support Japan in the question of Manchuria during the Assembly of the League, for which the Japanese nation would be grateful, he found out from Minister Beck that Poland had not yet specified its final position, but it would definitely not interfere in the complicated situation. This information is confirmed by the following note from a conversation held between Raczyński and Matsuoka²⁵:

"I was visited today by Ambassador Matsuoka, appointed to head the Japanese delegation in Geneva for the Manchurian conflict. He expressed his pleasure at being able to initiate contact with the Polish government, considering the past friendly relations between Poland and Japan. He expressed the hope that we will show our fondness for Japan at Geneva. I replied that we hold the friendliest possible feelings toward Japan."

In the end, however, Poland – like 41 other countries – voted to accept the resolution formulated on the basis of the Report of the Lytton Commission at the General Assembly of the League on 24 February 1933²⁶. The resolution stated that Manchuria constituted an integral part of China, and Manchukuo could not be recognised as an independent state, because it had not arisen as the result of a spontaneous independence movement and was dependent upon Japan, contrary to the principle of sovereignty. Japan was ordered to withdraw its forces to the zone adjacent to the South Manchurian Railway and to agree to Chinese sovereignty over the region of Manchuria. The Japanese delegation together with Matsuoka Yōsuke walked out of the forum and departed Geneva, and on

²³ See: "Kurier Polski" (09.11.1932), p. 2.

²⁴ Kinoshita's cable No. 34 to Minister of Foreign Affairs Uchida Kōsai (11.11.1932), in: *Manshū jihen*, vol. 3/3, NGB, op.cit., p. 35.

²⁵ Raczyński's note No. PI.4791a/106/32 to an Under-Secretary of State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (09.11.1932), *Del. RP*, 240, p. 113, AAN.

²⁶ See: *NGN*, vol. 2, pp. 236–264. Only Japan didn't accept the resolution, Siam abstained, and 12 representatives were absent.

27 March the Japanese government declared that Japan would withdraw from the League of Nations²⁷, which formally took place in 1935.

Japan tried to gain Poland's support at the League of Nations once again in 1937 when it no longer belonged to it and the organisation was examining the issue of its war with China, which the Kwantung Army had launched in July of that year. Beginning at the end of August, the Japanese made efforts, in Warsaw as well as Tokyo, to persuade representatives of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs to adopt a pro-Japanese stance in Geneva. The Japanese maintained that the cause of the conflict in China was Comintern intrigues²⁸, and because they regarded Poland as an ally in their policy toward the USSR, they asked "for any actions that Poland could take in the League of Nations to minimise the current danger". The Japanese believed that a secret clause on military co-operation lay behind the Soviet-Chinese non-aggression pact signed on 21 August 1937 in Nankin²⁹. Moreover, they hoped that Poland would use its influence in the League to ameliorate any anti-Japanese initiatives that could lead to new international difficulties³⁰ and, most importantly, not to allow third-party states to interfere in the Japanese-Chinese conflict³¹. Poland did in fact adopt a pro-Japanese stance at this time at the forum of the League. Tytus Komarnicki (1896–1967), Poland's representative in Geneva during 1934–1939, in accordance with the Minister of Foreign Affairs' instructions, consistently abstained from voting or even opposed Council resolutions condemning Japan³². He did not agree, among other things, to allow the League to be exploited as a foreign policy tool by the great powers. He also opposed the appointment of a Polish consultant in the effort to aid public health in China without the consent of the Polish government, which he recognised to be an inadmissible method of drawing Poland into the conflict in the Far East. Poland's friendly stance toward Japan was also the subject of articles in the Japanese press, which included a statement attributed to Tadeusz Romer (1894–1978), the Polish Minister to Japan (04.–10.1937) and then (1937–1941) the first Ambassador in Tokyo, who said that Poland as a member of the League could help its Japanese friends not present in it on numerous occasions³³.

²⁷ See: *Kokusai renmei dattai tsūkokubun-narabi-ni shōsho* (Imperial edict and notice relating to withdrawal from the League of Nation) (27.03.1933), in: *NGN*, vol. 2, pp. 268–270.

²⁸ See: *Note verbale doręczone min. Szembekowi przez japońskiego chargé d'affaires* (Note verbale to Minister Szembek from the Japanese chargé d'affaires), No. 138/II/8a (06.09.1937) in: *Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych* (MSZ, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), 1778, pp. 73–75, see also: pp. 85–89, AAN.

²⁹ Tadeusz Romer's cable No. 21 (P.I.b.No) to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (10.09.1937), *ibid.*, p. 89.

³⁰ *Notatka z rozmowy min. Szembeka z p. Kimurą* (Note relating Minister Szembek talk with Mr. Kimura), GMP.396/J/2 (06.09.1937), *ibid.*, p. 84.

³¹ Romer's cable No. 21 to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *ibid.*, p. 89.

³² For details see: documents in: *ibid.*, pp. 90–330.

³³ *The Policy of Poland*, in: "Japan Times and Mail" (17.07.1937), p. 8.

The matter of Poland's recognition of Manchukuo

Although the General Assembly of the League of Nations adapted the resolution declaring that Manchukuo was not an independent state and could not be recognised by any country (24 February 1933), Japan nonetheless hoped that the enticement of profitable trade with this region of Asia would eventually lead to a change of heart in the matter. The Japanese also tried to change the position held by Poland, which was interested in Manchuria primarily on account of Polish ex-patriots living there, though also for commercial reasons.

Articles appeared in the Japanese press from time to time suggesting the high probability of Poland opening diplomatic relations with Manchukuo. An excellent occasion to broach the topic came up, for example, when Michał Mościcki (1894–1961), the Polish Minister to Japan (1933–1936) paid a visit to Harbin on 3 March 1934. Although the purpose of the visit, as Mościcki officially informed the press, was to “acquaint myself with the living conditions of the Polish colony there and to visit Polish schools and social organisations”³⁴, some Japanese newspapers quoted what proved to be a fictitious interview with Mościcki (from Rengō News Agency) in which he supposedly said that “Poland will recognise Manchukuo in the near future”³⁵. Following intervention by the Polish legation in Tokyo, the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as the news agency apologised to the Polish side and rectifications appeared in the press³⁶. However, this did not prevent the Japanese press from printing articles along similar lines in the following years. An example is an editorial concerning the purported recognition of Manchukuo by Poland stemming from the conclusion of a postal convention³⁷.

The Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs denied all rumours that Poland had recognised Manchukuo, but it was worried about the fate of Polish ex-patriots in Manchuria. Thus, beginning at the end of 1936, the Ministry began to think about how it could take care of the matter formally³⁸. Because the Polish authorities were aware that Manchukuo was completely dependent upon Japan³⁹, they realised they would have to consult the matter with the Japanese as well.

Tadeusz Kobylański (1895–?), Deputy Director of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Political-Economic Department, wrote the following letter to Consul Kwiatkowski in Harbin⁴⁰:

³⁴ Minister Mościcki's cable No. 323/J/4 to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (30.03.1934), MSZ, 7038, p. 2, AAN.

³⁵ See: translation of broadcasted Rengō News Agency information (04.03.1934), and press cuttings from “Japan Advertiser”, “Japan Times”, “Tōkyō Nichinichi Shimbun”, “Hochi Shimbun”, *ibid.*, pp. 6–8.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 3–4, pp. 9–14.

³⁷ Minister Mościcki's cable Nr 329b/J/16 to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (26.04.1935), MSZ, 7054, p. 3, AAN; Consul F. Zaleski's cable No. 329-b/55 to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (20.11.1935), pp. 5–7.

³⁸ For details see documents in: MSZ, 6238, pp. 4–290 and MSZ, 1778, pp. 30–38, AAN.

³⁹ See: Minister Itō Nobumi's talk with Director Łubieński (05.03.1937), MSZ, 6238, pp. 36–37, AAN.

⁴⁰ Deputy Director Kobylański's cable No. P.III.49/Mn/2/36 to the Polish Consul in Harbin, Kwiatkowski (11.12.1936), MSZ, 6237, pp. 15–16, AAN. For more details on the Polish Consulate in Manchuria see: Marek Cabanowski, *op. cit.*, pp. 53–58.

“With reference to previous ministry instructions, the Consul is requested to continue systematically developing contacts with the local authorities of Manchukuo. Furthermore, the Ministry urges the Consul to attach special importance to the development of the friendliest possible relations with Japanese elements in the area. In particular, it’s necessary absolutely and carefully to behave in such a manner as to exclude casting any shade of unfriendliness on our part. The Minister requests that the Consul continue his reporting activities and put special emphasis on further development of Japan’s situation in Manchukuo and any difficulties created in the region by Soviet actions.”

The matter of Manchukuo was addressed in greater detail after a visit was paid to Warsaw by Ōhashi Chūichi (1893–1975), the head of Manchukuo’s Department of Foreign Affairs – i.e. the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs. He declared that in light of Japan’s intention to withdraw from extra-territorial rights in August 1937, the government of Manchukuo would exercise the principle of reciprocity in relations with all states and agree to the continued existence of consulates on its territory only of those states which give it the right to open consulates on their territory⁴¹. He also stated that on account of budgetary limitations, Manchukuo could open only an honorary consulate in Poland. Although at Minister Beck’s request Ambassador Romer ascertained in Tokyo⁴² that representatives of Manchukuo had not raised the issue of normalising the legal situation of consulates with any other country, and that they had raised the issue with Poland in the hope of setting a precedent with a country that had shown its friendliness, the Polish side nonetheless undertook concrete negotiations concerning regulation of the situation of Poles in Manchuria.

Important information about the Japanese attitude to the matter of the official opening of consulates by Poland and Manchukuo is provided by an unpublished document from a record office of the War History Department (Senshibu) of the National Institute for Defense Studies (Bōei Kenkyūjo Toshokan) in Tokyo, which included the following statements:⁴³

“/.../ in connection with the question of the Ambassador of Poland in Tokyo about the official recognition of the Polish consulate in Harbin by Manchukuo, the Ambassador of Manchukuo has contacted the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs /.../.

2. In the course of talks between authorities of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Deputy Minister Ōhashi, who travelled to Europe for this purpose, the Polish government did not have objections concerning the opening of a consulate by Manchukuo in Poland and it was decided that this will happen on the basis of an exchange of diplomatic notes.

⁴¹ Deputy Minister Kobylański’s note on the talk with Minister Itō and Manchukuo Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Ōhashi, (04.1937), MSZ, 6238, p. 54, AAN.

⁴² Minister Beck’s cable P III/49/4 to the Polish legation in Tokyo (31.05.1937) and Minister Romer’s cable No. 5/P III to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (06.07.1937), *ibid.*, pp. 57–63.

⁴³ See: Secret cable No. 1984 (28.10.1937), in: *Mitsu Dainikki* (Confidential general files [of the Army Ministry; EPR]), 1937, vol. 6, part: *Gaikō* (Foreign relations), Bōei Kenkyūjo Senshibu, Tokyo.

Manchukuo will not open a consulate in Poland in the immediate future. Later, it will appoint an honorary consul /.../.”

Japan wanted to link the matter of the opening of consulates with Poland's official recognition of Manchukuo, particularly because Poland desired to gain most-favoured nation status. This is confirmed by the correspondence of Sakō Shūichi (1887–1949), the Ambassador in Warsaw (1937–1941) as well as of General Ueda Kenkichi (1875–1962), the Japanese Ambassador to Manchukuo (1936–1939)⁴⁴.

Sakō, citing unofficial discussions with Kobylański, believed⁴⁵ that since the League of Nations did not in the end take any action against Italy after its occupation of Ethiopia, the matter of official recognition of Manchukuo's independence could once again appear on the League's agenda. In the circumstances at that time, however, he knew that Poland would not broach the subject in Geneva.

Ueda, in a cable to Ugaki Kazushige (1868–1956), the Minister of Foreign Affairs (1938), wrote⁴⁶ that the Polish side had acquainted itself with the text of the document in which Japan officially recognised Manchukuo, but fearing the reaction of international opinion had decided not to follow in Japan's footsteps and not recognise Manchukuo *de jure*. But he assured his superior – as Sakō stated after holding another conversation with Kobylański⁴⁷ – that as soon as a convenient occasion occurs, Poland would quickly establish official relations with Manchukuo. In truth, the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs knew by the end of 1937 that this would be impossible owing to the international situation, thus that it would be necessary to negotiate an exchange of diplomatic notes concerning recognition of the consulates⁴⁸.

The first draft of three notes was submitted by Ambassador Romer to the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 6 January 1938. Very detailed negotiations lasted many months thereafter; in the end, an exchange of diplomatic notes took place in Tokyo on 19 October 1938 between the Ambassador of Poland, Tadeusz Romer, and the Ambassador of Manchukuo, Yuan Zhenduo⁴⁹. The first of the notes concerned the two parties' agreement to open consulates. The second was about the official appointment of the new Polish consul in Manchukuo, Jerzy Litewski, who had in fact assumed the post on 1 April 1938. The third note concerned the most-favoured nation status accorded to consular officials

⁴⁴ See: *Manshūkoku Pōrandokokukan ryōjikan setchi sōgo shōnin-ni kansuru kōshō keika* (Progress of negotiations between Manchukuo and Poland concerning an establishment of consulates and mutual recognition), 32 pages, and many other documents in: M.1.5.0.1-17, GGS.

⁴⁵ Ambassador Sakō's cable to Minister of Foreign Affairs Hirota Kōki: No. 118 (04.05.1938) and No. 124 (06.05.1938), *ibid.*

⁴⁶ Ambasaador Ueda's cable No. 669 to Minister Ugaki (21.09.1938), *ibid.*

⁴⁷ Ambassador Sakō's cable No. 336 to Minister Konoe Fumimaro (04.10.1938), *ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Instrukcja Becka do Tokio w sprawie uznania Mandżukuo* (Beck's instruction to Tokyo on the matter of Manchukuo recognition), cable No. P III 82/tjn (27.11.1937), MSZ, 6238, p. 65, AAN; Manchukuo was recognised by Italy on 29 November 1937 and by Spain on 2 December, pp. 65, 74.

⁴⁹ On negotiations see many documents in: *ibid.*, pp. 89–228, text of the notes and the confidential protocol: *ibid.*, pp. 270–280 and pp. 281–290. See also “The Japan Times and Mail”, 20.10.1938, p. 1.

and citizens as well as economic co-operation. In a confidential protocol, it was decided that although the notes were not secret, they would be announced at an appropriate time agreed upon by the two parties, which turned out to be 7 December 1938⁵⁰. Moreover, the Ambassador of Manchukuo stated that his government was reviewing complaints lodged by Polish citizens residing on its territory. And Ambassador Romer declared that the exchange of diplomatic notes constituted the first step on the way to the full normalisation of bilateral relations, meaning Poland's formal and final recognition of Manchukuo. He added that the Polish government was inclined to help Manchukuo in regulating its relations with other states.

The Japanese government continued to hope that Poland would ultimately recognise Manchukuo, while the Polish government allayed the fears of international opinion about its warming relations with the illegitimate state by stating it had not recognised Manchukuo *de jure*. The Polish authorities emphasised that a consular exchange with Manchukuo was necessary to ensure the safety of Poles living in Manchuria⁵¹. It was for this reason that Ambassador Romer had an audience with Pu yi (1906–1967), the Emperor of Manchukuo (1934–1945) in Tokyo on 27 June 1940⁵².

Thereafter, the question of Manchuria and Manchukuo practically disappeared from official Polish-Japanese relations. Japan prepared itself for war against the United States and Great Britain which was supposed to solve the country's internal and external problems. And being an ally of Nazi Germany, which recognised its right to establish a New Order in East Asia (*Tōa shinchitsujo*) in the Tripartite Pact signed in Berlin on 27 September 1940⁵³, it was forced to agree to Hitler's policies in Europe and ultimately severed diplomatic relations with Poland on 4 October 1941. Upon initiating armed hostilities on 8 December 1941 in the Pacific, Japan officially entered World War II on the opposite side of Poland. On 11 December, Poland – in the wake of Great Britain and the United States – declared war on Japan. However, it continued unofficial contacts with Japan by exchanging military intelligence, and one of the centres of this activity was still Manchuria⁵⁴.

⁵⁰ See: "Monitor Polski" No. 280 (07.12.1938), p. 2, "The Japan Times and Mail" (08.12.1938) p. 1 and "Kurier Polski" (10.12.1938), p. 2.

⁵¹ *Diariusz i teki Jana Szembeka (1935–1945)* (Diaries and notes of Jan Szembek), Józef Zaráński ed., vol. 4, The Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum, London 1972, p. 179.

⁵² See: Romer's note (27.06.1940) in: Tadeusz Romer, *A Diplomatic Activities 1913–1975: Japan 1937–1941*, Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa (microfilm); for more details see: Ewa Pałasz-Rutkowska, Andrzej T. Romer, op. cit., pp. 137–138.

⁵³ The pact was signed by Kurusu Saburō, the Japanese Ambassador in Berlin, Joachim von Ribbentrop and Galeazzo Ciano, German and Italian Ministers of Foreign Affairs; see: *Prawo międzynarodowe i historia dyplomatyczna* (International law and history of foreign relations), Ludwik Gelberg ed., vol. 2, PWN, Warszawa 1954, pp. 17–18 and NGN, vol. 2, pp. 459–462.

⁵⁴ For more details on Polish-Japanese unofficial contacts during the war see: Ewa Pałasz-Rutkowska, Andrzej T. Romer, op. cit., pp. 177–223; see also: Ewa Pałasz-Rutkowska, *Polityka...*, op. cit., pp. 170–183.