

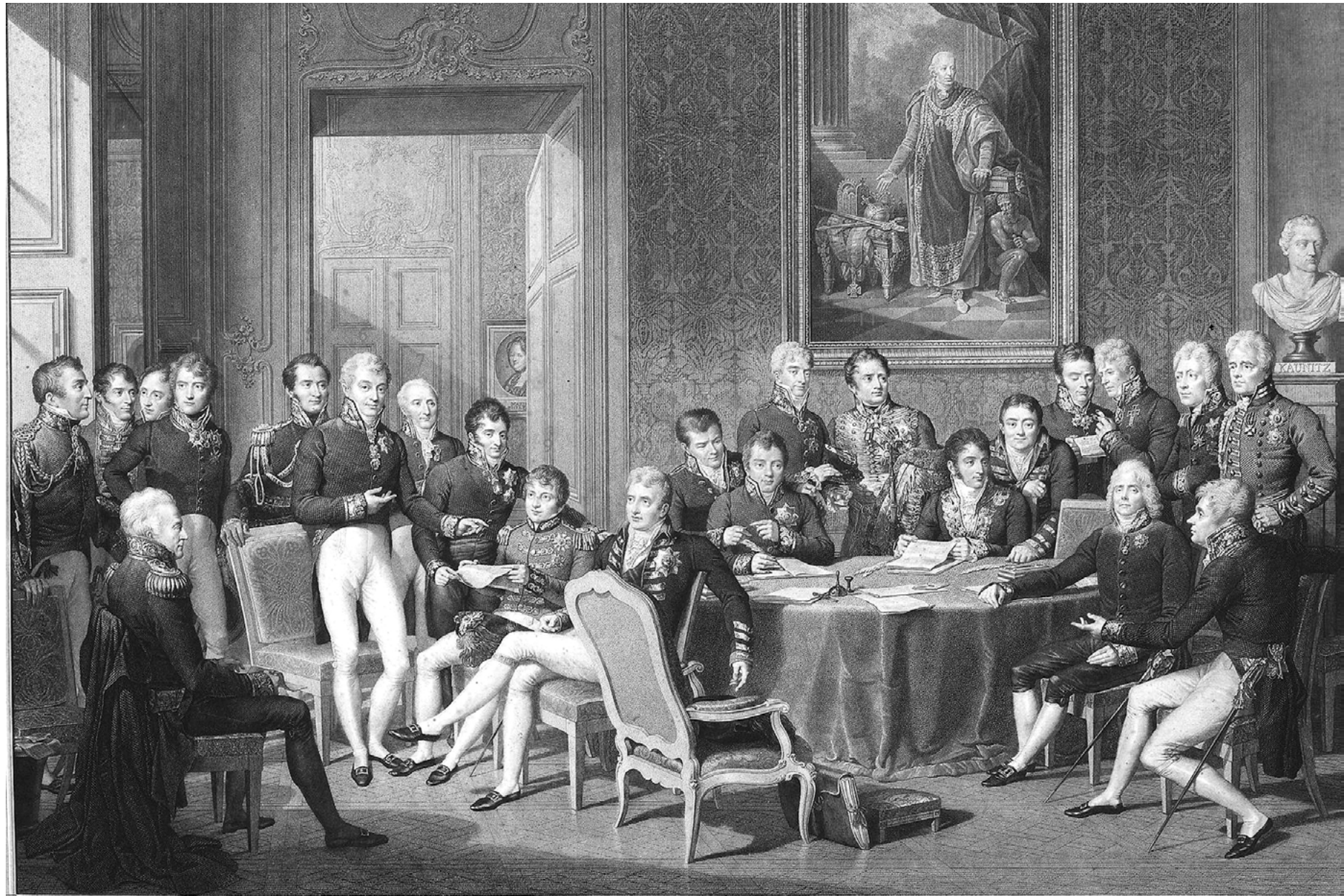
A HISTORY OF THE POLISH CONSULATE IN HARBIN

on the 100th anniversary of its establishment

THE TIMELINE

The principles of balance, legitimacy, and restoration adopted at the Congress of Vienna opened a new period and provided the foundations for a peace that lasted in Europe for almost a hundred years.

Nearly 150 participating monarchs contained their communication in the diplomatic protocol approved in Vienna, which provided new tools for foreign policy.



Delegates of the Congress of Vienna in a engraving by Jean Godefroy after the painting by Jean-Baptiste Isabey.
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Late in the 18th century, China was inhabited by around 400 million people, which made it the world's largest country and the most populous state of the contemporary world.

Convinced of their power and uniqueness, the emperors of the “Middle Country” resorted to autarky, whose symbol was the Great Wall. Intentionally rejecting the development of international cooperation and trade, they could not but lack behind Europe and its achievements.



At the end of the 19th century, the process of unification of the territories of the Middle Country with the colonisers continued.

At the same time, economic development accompanied by social transformations continued in a large part of the Chinese territory.

The processes of secularisation and the search for new social and economic solutions represented a difficult and complex geopolitical landscape.

The tsars' investment into railways in the late 19th and early 20th centuries was intended to connect Europe to Asia.

The Trans-Siberian Railway, including the Chinese Eastern Railway, made a powerful impact on the social and economic life of the Far East.



Polish settlers
of the early
20th century
found good
conditions to live
and develop in
Harbin.

The originally
unconsolidated
group quickly
transformed,
primarily thanks
to the mentorship
of the Roman
Catholic Church,
into a colony
functioning
perfectly in the
multicultural
society of
Manchuria.



The institution creating and promoting national heritage, the embassy of Polishness in the multicultural society of Manchuria, was the Gospoda Polska (literally “the Polish Inn”) Association.

The institution was set up in 1907 and had its headquarters in Głucha Street in Harbin. It was famous for the organisation of the annual Polish Ball, during which, following Western custom, money was collected for socially desirable purposes. Each year, local opinion leaders, physicians, lawyers, bankers, and diplomats made sure they were invited to the event.



The mechanisms of regaining independence by Poland after the First World War were complex and took place over multiple stages.

People whose identity within the Polish realm of culture was defined by the worldview, religion, and many generations of traditions were returning to the territory of the multinational Second Republic of Poland. However, manifesting Polish nationality in the Far East entailed specific and difficult choices.



The first church of the Polish diaspora was consecrated in 1909. For a long time, its parish priest was Father Władysław Ostrowski (1874–1937) who stood out through his patriotism, uncompromising nature, and enthusiasm.

It is beyond any doubt that from the moment of Father Ostrowski's arrival in Harbin, the Church of St Stanislaus was the central point for the Polish life in Manchuria.

Next to the head of the Polish diplomatic post and the president of the Gospoda Polska Association, the parish priest was among the key opinion leaders of the Polish diaspora.



Poles were the first to bake bread in the Far East and the first brewery was built by Jan Wróblewski, who introduced European brewing methods. Brothers Jan and Franciszek Wróblewski of Madiagou supplied Manchurian clients with vodka. The most popular spirits were the Krakowska and Lubelska brands.

However, the most famous Polish businessman in Manchuria was a producer of furniture – Władysław Kowalski (1870–1940) – whose fortune was counted in millions of dollars. He was not only an employer of Poles, Russians, and Chinese, but also a philanthropist who supported the Polish diaspora.



On 2 September 1926,
a Polish plane with
a crew of two: Lieutenant
Bolesław Orliński
and Mechanic Sergeant
Leonard Kubiak, who were
on a 15,000-mile Warsaw–
Tokyo–Warsaw journey,
landed in Harbin.

With its aviation
infrastructure, the capital
of the Eastern Chinese
Railway was a planned
and necessary stopover,
as this is where the
Polish crew had to obtain
permission to continue
their flight through
Asian airspace.

Consul Konstanty
Symonolewicz arranged
all the formalities
for the onward flight,
and the Gospoda Polska
Association threw
a formal dinner
for several hundred
people.



One of the teachers at the Polish Henryk Sienkiewicz Secondary School was a famous geologist, ethnographer, and anthropologist, Kazimierz Grochowski.

He was also the publisher of *Listy Polskie z Dalekiego Wschodu Azji* (literally “Polish letters from the Far East of Asia”) newsletter and *Biuletyn Handlowo-Przemysłowy*, a supplement to *The Harbin Daily*. The periodical supported Polish diplomacy by communicating the government projects all around the Far East. Grochowski’s monographic work *Polacy na Dalekim Wschodzie* (literally “Poles in the Far East”), which was published in Harbin in 1928, is highly helpful for studies of the diaspora.



The authorities of the Second Republic of Poland perceived Harbin as a hub likely to support the government's ambitions to develop commercial relationships in Asia. For that reason, the Polish Chamber of Commerce (Polska Izba Handlowa) was set up in the city in 1931 and took over the tasks fulfilled by the Association of Polish Merchants and Industrialists in Manchuria (Związek Kupców i Przemysłowców Polskich w Mandżurii) until 1928.



The Consulate of the
Republic of Poland in Harbin
operated in 1920–41.

The successive consuls
were Michał Morgulec,
Karol Pindor,
Konstanty Symonolewicz,
Edward Skowroński,
James Douglas,
Aleksander Kwiatkowski,
and Jerzy Litewski.

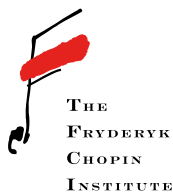


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