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JAPAN AND CHINA IN POLISH DIPLOMACY, 1918 - 1939 (An Attempted Outline)

Japan and China did not constitute an independent problem in the diplomacy of the Polish Republic. This was predetermined by the great geographical separation and the difference in the cultures and affairs by means of which Poland and the Far East states existed. None the less, in the foreign policy both of Poland and of Japan and China, there were levels at which the interests of each side touched. This area consisted first of all of international relations, chiefly between Japan or China and Poland's great neighbours—the USSR and Germany. Beyond this, the level of contact was determined by the existence in China—chiefly in Manchuria—of a relatively large Polish colony, and also by trade and cultural exchange.

The antecedents of modern political relations with Japan go back to the era before the rebirth of the Polish State. The Russo-Japanese War of 1904 influenced the revival of independence activity amongst the Poles. The rôle which Japan played at the time in the concepts of the two most outstanding Polish politicians of the period—J. Piłsudski and R. Dmowski—is an interesting one. A spectacular feature of these concepts were the two journeys to Tokyo made by these statesmen—independently of each other—in July, 1904, during the Russo-Japanese War, and the memoranda, whose contents differed in the extreme, lodged with official Japanese authorities.¹ The visions they contained of

¹ A. Garlicki discusses Piłsudski's journey to Tokyo in detail (*U źródeł obozu belwederskiego* [At the Sources of the Belvedere Camp], Warszawa 1979, pp. 124-131); see also W. Jędrzejewicz, *Kronika życia Józefa Piłsudskiego 1867-1935* [A Chronicle of the Life of Józef Piłsudski, 1867-1935], vol. I, Londyn 1977, pp. 173-184, idem, *Sprawa "Wieczoru". Józef Piłsudski a wojna japońsko-rosyjska 1904-1905* [The

exploiting the Far East conflict to Poland's account were diametrically opposed. Piłsudski wanted to secure aid from the Japanese in the organization of Polish military strength and of fighting, which, at the right moment, would be capable of turning into an uprising against Russia, bringing about independence. At the same time he wanted to conclude a Polish-Japanese political alliance on which Poland could base its eastern policy, both at the moment of rebirth and after the regaining of independence. Dmowski, seeing no real grounds for such an alliance, in consequence considered the bringing of Poles into the arena for immediate Japanese strategic aims as something harmful. He saw liberation of Poland from the Russian partition as a consequence of long-lasting rivalry between civilizations. The Russo-Japanese War was accelerating this process, but in the sense of the possibility of "mobilization and political organization of the majority of the nation, of leading it into the political arena, of training in the fight for national rights, and, in the face of the diverse make-up of the Russian state and the superiority of Polish civilization over Russian, of the gradual preclusion of bringing things to the absurdity of Russian government in Poland."²

The outcome of the First World War introduced circumstances of a different kind, which conditioned the effectiveness of Polish efforts to regain independence. The rebirth of the Polish State gave rise to the issue of Japan and China's attitude to this question, and to that of establishing diplomatic relations. But they had rather a formal nature.

Both Japan and China, though states of different political weight, entered the victors' coalition, whilst Japan was one of

"Wieczór" *Affair*. Józef Piłsudski and the Russo-Japanese War, 1904-1905], "Zeszyty Historyczne", Paryż 1974, No. 27; J. Piłsudski, *Pisma [Works]*, vol. II, pp. 249-258; W. Pobóg-Malinowski, *W zaraniu dyplomacji polskiej. Podróż Piłsudskiego do Tokio [At the Dawn of Polish Diplomacy, Piłsudski's Journey to Tokyo]*, "Polityka Narodów", vol. IV, 1934, p. 623 ff; A. Micewski describes Dmowski's journey and also Piłsudski's (*Roman Dmowski*, Warszawa 1971, pp. 89-109); see also R. Dmowski, *Polityka polska i odbudowanie państwa [Polish Politics and the Rebuilding of the State]*, Warszawa 1926, p. 46.

² R. Dmowski, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

the five Chief Allied and Associated Powers, and thus one of the creators of the post-war political structures. However, at the Peace Conference in Paris the Japanese representative on the Supreme Council, Baron N. Makino, did not voice an opinion on Polish affairs, or on other European affairs come to that. Neither was he a member of the Council of the Big Four, which played a decisive rôle in the forming of the Polish-German border. Both at the conference and in the subsequent period, when questions arising from the resolutions of the peace treaties were being settled, both states—quite understandably—were chiefly interested in the Far East issues. In isolated cases where the delegates of both countries took part in bodies expressing opinion on Polish topics, they generally displayed friendly neutrality towards Poland. This could be seen in the activity of the Japanese delegate to the League of Nations, Count Kikujiro Ishii, during the discussions on the controversial Polish-German issues, or on the settling of Polish-Gdańsk relations. In his report of 17 November, 1920, Count Ishii took up a directly pro-Polish position when he proposed entrusting protection of the Free City to Poland. The Chinese representative on the League of Nations commission studying the Upper Silesia problem in 1921 behaved in a similar way. Again, in 1923 the Japanese ambassador to France, M. Matsuda, sitting in the Council of Ambassadors, assumed a favourable attitude towards the Council's decision in the matter of recognition of the Polish eastern border. The Japanese premier, Kato, expressed satisfaction at this decision in a special letter to the Polish premier, W. Sikorski. One can also observe the interest taken in Poland by the military circles of both countries during the Polish-Soviet war in 1920. Military missions from Japan—Gen. Jamavaki, and China—Gen. Tang Tsai-li—were staying in Poland at the time. So that both Japan and China, albeit in a limited way, came within the scope of the question of the revival of the Polish State, and especially of the forming of its borders. If only in this sense, despite the fact that the position of the Japanese and the Chinese was not of vital signi-

ficance, the best possible relations with them was a matter of concern to the Polish.⁸

In reply to Piłsudski's notification of 16 November, 1918, the Polish State was recognized *de jure* by Japan on 22 March, 1919, and by China on 27 March, 1920. Poland established diplomatic relations first with Japan. The first envoy, Toshitsune Kavakami, arrived in Warsaw at the end of 1921. Following him, the office was held in turn by Naotoke Sato, Hajime Matsuchima, Hirsyuku Kawai (who died in Warsaw in 1933), Nobubumi Ito and Shuichi Sakoh (as ambassador from October, 1937). On the Polish side Stanisław Patek went to Tokyo as envoy in September, 1921, and then in turn, Zdzisław Okęcki, Michał Mościcki and Tadeusz Romer (ambassador from October, 1937). Diplomatic relations with China were established much later, the reason being that in China the principle operated of establishing relations only with states with whom the Chinese had signed treaties. However, in view of the post-war evacuation of Polish forces from Siberia and the existence of the Polish colony in Manchuria, a need existed for representation of Polish interests in China. This task was fulfilled from 1920 by the High Commissioner of the Polish Republic for Siberia and the Far East, Józef Targowski, and then by the delegates Karol Pindor and Jerzy Barthel de Weydenthal in Shang-hai, and Michał Morgulec in Harbin. It was only in 1933 that the first exchange of envoys took place. Frank W. Ching-lun Lee became China's envoy in Warsaw, and following him, in turn, Chang Hsin-hai, Sunthou Vey and Vang King-ky. Barthel

⁸ Archiwum Akt Nowych (AAN) [Archives of Modern Records], *Konsulat Generalny RP w Charbinie* [The Consulate-General of the Republic of Poland in Harbin], vols. 26 - 28—material concerning the repatriation of Polish forces from Siberia and the Polish Military Mission in Siberia; XYZ, *Rozwój stosunków polsko-chińskich 1917 - 1936* [The Development of Polish-Chinese Relations, 1917 - 1936], "Polityka Narodów", 1937, vol. X, pp. 145 - 161; M. Nowak-Kiełbikowa, *Polska—Wielka Brytania w latach 1918 - 1923. Kształtowanie się stosunków politycznych* [Poland and Great Britain During the Years 1918 - 1923. The Development of Political Relations], Warszawa 1975, pp. 287, 343; material concerning the Japanese mission can be found in the private collections of Aleksander Mazaraki; *Chronologia stosunków międzynarodowych Polski* [Chronology of Poland's International Relations], 1918 - 1921, compiler J. Jurkiewicz, Warszawa 1955, pp. 209, 221; 1922 - 1923, compiler M. Safianowska, Warszawa 1965, pp. 123, 126.

de Weydenthal was envoy of the Polish Republic in China (Nanking) from January, 1934.⁴

Japan was the first of the states of interest to us with whom a Trade and Navigation Treaty was concluded. This document, signed on 7 December, 1922 by the then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Gabriel Narutowicz, and the Minister for Industry and Trade, Henryk Strasburger, on the Polish side, and by the envoy, Kavakami, on the Japanese side, was ratified in 1924. The exchange of documents and coming into operation of the treaty followed in January, 1925. Two years later it was extended to include the Free City of Gdańsk. In the preamble we can read that its purpose was to consolidate existing relations of friendship and concord as well as the development of trade relation. The treaty guaranteed to Polish and Japanese citizens mutual freedom of entry and residence on the territories of the signatories, on condition of observance of the laws in force in the country of stay. It recognized the right of carrying on trade and other professions, of studying, of acquisition of property, and of enjoyment of protection and safety on a par with the citizens of the given country. It ensured exemption from taxation and military service. It regulated the conditions of trade and navigation on the principle of free trade and unrestricted navigation, with the exception of state monopolies and coastal trade. It created an opportunity for the forming of joint-stock and trade companies. We can see, then, that the treaty envisaged far-reaching mutual rights, whilst reducing to a necessary minimum clauses restricting freedom. It created, then, conditions for extensive trade, cultural and economic co-operation, and, in consequence, for rapprochement between the two states and societies.⁵

⁴ *Chronologia...*, 1918 - 1921..., pp. 72, 125, 202, 225; *Chronologia...*, 1922 - 1923..., p. 163; *Chronologia...*, 1927 - 1929, compiler M. Safianowska, Warszawa 1959, p. 66; *Chronologia...*, 1936 - 1937, compiler M. Safianowska, Warszawa 1961, pp. 104, 140; *Chronologia...*, 1933 - 1935, compiler W. Balcerak, Warszawa 1960, pp. 50, 52, 75, 141; *Chronologia...*, 1930 - 1932, compiler D. Eitner, Warszawa 1960, p. 102; *Chronologia...*, 1939, compiler J. Chudek, Warszawa 1963, p. 4; S. Patek, *Wspomnienia ważkich okresów pracy [Recollections of Significant Periods of Work]*, Warszawa 1938, pp. 21 - 29; *Rozwój stosunków polsko-chińskich...*

⁵ J. M a k o w s k i, *Umowy międzynarodowe Polski 1919 - 1934 [Poland's International Agreements, 1919 - 1934]*, Warszawa 1935, p. 102; "Dziennik

Two treaties were concluded with China, where the situation was complicated by internal struggles. The Treaty of Friendship and Trade, signed in Peking on 19 May, 1928 by Pindor and the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Chang Tso-lin's government, Lo Ven-kan, was superseded after the taking-over of power by the Nanking government by the Treaty of Friendship, Trade and Navigation, signed on 18 September, 1929 in Nanking by de Weydenthal and the new Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs, Chengting T. Vang. Beyond this, an additional protocol was signed on 1 July, 1930. Ratification and exchange of documents followed in 1931. In the preamble eternal peace and enduring friendship were declared. And in the following articles—the mutual right to appoint diplomatic and consular services, freedom of entry to respective territories on condition of possession of a passport, the same sort of privileges for Polish citizens staying in China and Chinese citizens staying in Poland as was the case with Japan, the right of internal and coastal navigation with the exception of military vessels, and the establishing of economic relations on the basis of the principle of special privileges. In turn, the additional protocol regulated the legal status of the Polish colony—protection for Polish cultural, educational, ecclesiastical and economic institutions, as well as individual liberty for Polish citizens. At the same time, this agreement nullified Chinese administrative regulations oppressive to the Poles, such as liability to the Chinese judicial system, which applied the penalty of flogging. As can be seen, then, the treaty was conducive to the best possible relations between the Polish and the Chinese. In addition, the abolition by the Nanking government in 1929 of all discriminative privileges of foreigners, and of treaties based on the right of extraterritoriality also had a favourable effect for Poland. So that Poland was one of the states which signed a treaty with China on new egalitarian principles, immediately after China's elimination of dependences of a colonial type.⁶

Ustaw Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej" [Official Journal of the Polish Republic] (DURP), 1924, No. 36, item 378; 1952, No. 5, items 42, 43; 1927, No. 38, item 346.

⁶ T. M a k o w s k i, *op. cit.*, p. 40; DURP 1931, No. 38, item 293; No. 62, items 499, 500.

We have mentioned the significance of the additional protocol for the Polish colony in China, especially in Manchuria. Let us devote some attention to the colony. In view of the lack of statistics, it is difficult to establish its exact population. For different periods it is estimated at between 3,000 and 5,000 in Manchuria, between 200 and 600 in Shang-hai and a dozen or so persons in each of several other towns. The majority of these people consisted of merchants, craftsmen, industrialists and members of the intelligentsia (managers, teachers, engineers, doctors), generally fairly wealthy, and even rich people. Priests and monks constituted a significant group. The history of the colony went back to Russo-Chinese relations from before the First World War, and particularly to the construction of the Chinese Eastern Railway, in which many Poles—then citizens of Russia—participated. The colony, particularly in Manchuria, constituted a fairly well organized community. In Harbin there existed a school for boys, a school for girls run by the nuns of the order of St. Ursula, as well as a youth organization called the Union of Polish Youth. In 1931, the Polish Trade House opened there. An exhibition of samples and models from Polish industry was also organized, and this was left as a permanent museum display. The journals "Polish Letters from the Far East" and "Polish Weekly" were issued. A Polish Trade House also existed in Shang-hai, whilst in Nanking the Polish Cultural and Educational Society was operative from 1933. Protection of the colony in Manchuria was one of the issues in relations with China and then, from the end of 1931, with Japan, or the puppet state of Manchukuo.⁷

In the twenties', when the struggle concerning the borders of Poland had come to an end, relations between Japan and China and Poland rested on rather limited military, economic and cultural contacts. Intelligence co-operation existed. Japanese and Chinese officers visited Poland. Trade included the export from Poland of metal products, woollen goods and pharmaceuticals, and imports to Poland of tea and rice above all. At first, cultural contacts were limited to lectures chiefly. None the less, a process

⁷ X Y Z, *Rozwój stosunków polsko-chińskich...*

of mutual interest and understanding gradually took place. In relation to the thirties', one can speak of the penetration to Poland of cultural patterns from the Far East, which was discernible even in fashion, and which was, after all, part of a wider phenomenon which included western Europe. The Polish-Chinese Society founded in 1923, and the Japanese-Polish Society which came about a year later, encouraged these processes. Societies of a local nature also came to life, as for instance the Lvov Society of the Friends of the Far East.⁸

Political contacts in the strict sense were negligible at first. In the twenties', Japan began to constitute a certain problem in Polish politics. The improving relations which could be observed between Japan and Germany were a source of concern. Okęcki reported that the Germans were making attempts at winning over the Japanese working in the national minorities section of the League of Nations to their side on the question of revision of the borders. But he doubted if Poland was in a position to effectively counteract German propaganda. None the less, Piłsudski endeavoured to take action in this direction. He was helped in this by his talks with Sigimura, the Japanese League of Nations representative, during the latter's stay in Warsaw, and where Piłsudski acquainted the Japanese with his views on security in Europe, including Poland's security, and on the policy of the USSR and Germany. We can, then, speak of the effecting of, or attempts to establish co-operation with Japan in the field of security. For as Patek wrote in his recollections: "Marshal Piłsudski attached a great deal of importance to Japan."⁹ However, considering the change in Japanese policy in the thirties', Polish efforts could not proceed by the path originally envisaged in Poland.

⁸ AAN MSZ 5412, 5413—material concerning Polish-Chinese relations, 5415—material on the subject of the Polish-Chinese Society; *Chronologia...*, 1922 - 1923, p. 23; *Chronologia...*, 1924 - 1926, compiler W. Balcerak, Warszawa 1958, pp. 6, 10, 31, 160; J. Grzymała-Grabowiecki, *Polityka polska w roku 1926* [*Polish Politics in 1926*], Warszawa 1928, p. 197.

⁹ AAN MSZ 5954, correspondence between H. F. Raichman and Z. Okęcki, II 1929; *ibidem*, the Delegation of the Polish Republic at the League of Nations, 23; F. Sokal to MSZ 20 May, 1930, 209; Z. Okęcki's report of 29 Nov., 1929; S. Patek, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

The Japanese and Chinese question came to a head in Polish politics in the thirties'. For the most part this was connected with the Far East conflict and the concluding of the Anti-Comintern Pact.

As we know, on 18 September, 1931, Japanese forces crossed into Manchuria, to begin the first phase of the Far East conflict between Japan and China, and, in a certain sense, between Japan and the Soviet Union, who in this case supported the Chinese side, and who were faced with the prospect of a threat to their own territories. As a result, the Japanese took possession of Manchuria, and on 18 February, 1932 called into being the state of Manchukuo. And this is how the director of the Minister of Foreign Affairs' office, Michał Łubieński, described the kind of relationship existing between that state and Japan: writing on the exchange of views on this subject with the Japanese envoy on 5 March, 1937, he states that he shares the view "that the forms of governing colonial lands must now be changed. Before, Japan would simply have annexed Manchuria. Now, considering the new forms of political life, it has created an independent state, which does not, however, essentially change Japan's relationship to that territory."¹⁰ The next stages in the development of the Far East issue were Japan's withdrawal from the League of Nations on 27 March, 1933, and the second phase of the conflict, which fell during the period from July, 1937 to mid-1938. Japan at that time controlled all the Chinese ports on the Yellow Sea, thus limiting the sovereignty of China in the most important territories for the Chinese economy. The first act of aggression was the unprecedented violation of those articles of the Treaty of Versailles, the League of Nations Covenant, the Washington treaties and the Kellogg-Briand Pact which spoke out against the determining of political conflicts by the use of armed force. The second act of aggression was the next military action of the totalitarian states following the annexation of Ethiopia by Italy. The activity of the powers attempting to resolve the conflict by a compromise solution through the aid of the League of Nations,

¹⁰ AAN MSZ 6238, M. Łubieński on his talks with envoy Ito on 5 March, 1937.

which, after all—as we know—was not sufficiently resolute, did not succeed.

The events in the Far East aroused great interest amongst Polish political circles. The attitude towards the Sino-Japanese War derived in large measure from policy on the question of security.

In 1931, the position adopted by Poland as a non-permanent member of the Council of the League of Nations was related to the search for new paths in Polish policy in consequence of the gradual process of breakdown in the Versailles system. The establishing of diplomatic relations with China precisely at this time was also not without its effect. The relations were thus characterized by ambivalence. Like the western powers, Poland attempted to adopt a critical stance in respect of the aggressor, but on the other hand did not want to alienate Japan. Instructions from the Minister of Foreign Affairs, August Zaleski, to Franciszek Sokal, the Republic's delegate to the Council of the League of Nations, enjoined him, in voting on the numerous resolutions and proposals condemning Japan, to vote for them in cases where the entire Council voted for them, and against them if votes in the Council were divided. Zaleski's speech at the Council's session in September, 1931 was unclear. The minister concentrated on the question of the need to respect the right to territorial integrity and political independence, which can be taken as condemnation of the aggression. At the same time, however, he bowed in Japan's direction when he stated that he welcomed the Japanese delegation's declaration that Japan did not intend to violate fundamental obligations, despite the considerable vagueness of the Japanese formulation. Moreover, the speech contained hints of criticism directed at the League of Nations. It was claimed that it had not created mechanisms which would have permitted it to operate efficiently.¹¹ Sokal clearly described the motives behind Poland's position in his report of 30 October, 1931. In it he wrote of the multi-faceted concern in the conflict in view of the Polish interests in Manchuria, rela-

¹¹ AAN, the Delegation of the Polish Republic at the League of Nations 226; A. Zaleski's instruction of 17 Oct., 1931; *ibidem*, 240; A. Zaleski's speech at Geneva.

tions with the USSR, who were becoming more disposed to finalizing the negotiations on a non-aggression pact with Poland, and of possible parallels in a case where the Council were to examine a conflict in which the opposing sides were Germany and Poland.¹² We should remember that this was a period of great tension in Polish-German relations and—leaving aside 1939—the apogee of revisionist activity. It would seem that regard for Germany was vital. It spoke in favour of respecting the principle of territorial integrity and inviolability of the *status quo*, and at the same time spoke in favour of maintaining good relations with Japan, and the more so that Germany was attempting to use the affair in order to deepen Japanese-German friendship, and to discount the Japanese aggression for her own revisionist purposes. The German ambassador in Tokyo was to suggest that Poland, together with France, was influencing the increasing severity of the League's resolutions in an anti-Japanese respect, which did not fit in with the facts, and to recommend that the Japanese delegation should establish a link between Poland's position in the Council and Japan's position in the League's minorities section.¹³ These considerations brought about a situation where Poland could not exploit the opportunity to demonstrate the great significance it attached to the principle of respecting the territorial clauses of the treaties, and to energetic action on the part of the League of Nations. It was assumed that such demonstration would not be of any gain to Poland, since she would not be in a position to press the Council for effective action. On the other hand it would offend Japan, which might redound to Poland's disadvantage in her position in the inevitable—as was correctly anticipated—Polish-German conflict. Voices unequivocally condemning the aggression, and pointing to its potentially dangerous implications, could, however, be heard on the left and in liberal circles. The resolution of the Supreme Council of the Polish Socialist Party of 5 - 6 March, 1932 protested against the

¹² AAN, the Delegation of the Polish Republic at the League of Nations 227 F. Sokal to the Minister, 30 Oct., 1931; *ibidem*, record of talks between A. Zaleski and Berthelot, 25 Nov., 1931.

¹³ AAN, The Delegation of the Polish Republic at the League of Nations, 238: note on the question of A. Zaleski's intervention in connection with German propaganda, 29 Feb., 1932.

sending of arms to Japan, whilst a circular of the CKW described the international situation as grave. A declaration from the Polish Ethical Society of 27 February of the same year expressed regret both at Japan's action and the League of Nation's weakness, and demanded the passing of rigorous sanctions against the aggressor.¹⁴

During the second phase of the Sino-Japanese War, Poland's attitude developed in a more pro-Japanese direction. This development is tied up with the general changes which came about in Polish policy in respect of the USSR and Germany between the years 1931 and 1937. We should remember that between 1932 and 1934, relations with both neighbours were settled by means of bilateral agreements, on the principle of maintaining equal distance from Moscow and Berlin. The fiasco of the League of Nation's actions in the matter of the first Sino-Japanese conflict, which demonstrated that the organization was not capable of taking effective action against an aggressor, represented a further motive favouring such a solution. As time passed, the balance was gradually disturbed in favour of Germany, causing a cooling of relations with the USSR at the same time. There is no space here for an analysis of the manoeuvres of the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Józef Beck. What interests us here is one of the side-effects of the shaken balance, in the form of Polish-Japanese rapprochement. Following are a few events by which this is marked. In 1934 in Tokyo, the Society for Studies on Poland came into being. In the following year, a Japanese consulate was established in Gdynia, and honorary Polish consulates in Osaka and Yokohama. The next year saw the birth of the Japanese-Polish Trade Association. We have already mentioned the mutual raising of the diplomatic representation of both countries to the level of embassies, which took place in 1937. In 1938, a direct passenger sea-line was opened between Gdynia and Yokohama.¹⁵ In this situation, during the debate in the League of Nations on

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, statement of the Polish Ethical Society, 27 Feb., 1932; L. Ziaja, *PPS a polska polityka zagraniczna 1926 - 1939* [*The Polish Socialist Party and Polish Foreign Policy, 1926 - 1939*], Warszawa 1974, p. 184.

¹⁵ AAN MSZ 5970, Material on the subject of the development of Polish-Japanese contacts.

the second phase of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937, the Polish delegate, Tytus Komarnicki, consistently abstained from voting on the numerous resolutions of the Council, which, after all, was what the Japanese were after. On 5 October, he came out against a plan to call a conference for states especially concerned, officially justifying his position by his aversion to the favouring of the great powers with special rights. "I cannot support the idea," he said, "of the League of Nations giving a mandate to a certain group of states. Such states could not involve the responsibility of other members of the League of Nations in the consequences of their decision."¹⁶ Similar arguments were used in relation to the joint resolution of the USSR, France and Great Britain of 1938, condemning Japan's conduct, but also avoiding voting on a resolution to give China moral support. A pro-Japanese position also emerged in the strong opposition to the participation of Poles in the medical aid proposed for China by the League of Nations.¹⁷ Komarnicki's action left no room for any doubt. Even a show of impartiality was abandoned, desirable as it was, since a Polish-Chinese treaty existed and relations should have worked out well. In a note of 6 September, 1937, we read that perhaps such impartiality should have been preserved, "but taking into account the most important thing—the fact that Japan is Poland's natural ally—such a position permits discreet support for Japan everywhere, where we could not be suspected of taking sides."¹⁸ The Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, however, was informed of Poland's position somewhat later. In talks with the Japanese Minister of Foreign Affairs on 4 October, 1938, Ambassador Romer stated that Poland did not intend to comply with the League of Nations' recommendations on the question of anti-Japanese sanctions.¹⁹ This consistently pro-Japanese stance result-

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, 1778, T. Komarnicki's declaration of 5 Oct., 1937 at the 18th General Assembly of the League of Nations, and his reports of 7 and 19 Oct., 1937. For Komarnicki's position, see also "Polityka Narodów", vol. X, pp. 443 and 451/2.

¹⁷ AAN MSZ 1178, T. Komarnicki's report of 15 Oct., 1937, Zarański's note of 23 Oct., 1937; "Polityka Narodów", vol. XI, 1938—continuation of information on the subject of the Sino-Japanese War.

¹⁸ AAN MSZ 1778, note on the question of the Sino-Japanese War, 6 Sept., 1937.

¹⁹ *Diariusz i Teki Jana Szembeka [Diary and Portfolios of Jan Szembek]*, vol. IV, Londyn 1972, p. 296, talks with Sakoh, 8 Oct., 1938.

ed first and foremost, it seems, from the calculation that in the event of conflict with Germany, Japan, who had some influence in Berlin, could act as spokesman for Polish interests, and at least as arbiter. Also of importance—as always—was the fact that Japan was an eastern neighbour of the USSR, with whom relations had cooled since the end of 1934. Vital, too, in a certain sense, was the fact that Poland had, as it were, represented Japan in the League of Nations after her withdrawal from the organization. Or at least, that is what the Japanese were after.²⁰

One more evident fact testifying to Polish-Japanese rapprochement was the recognition—indirect though it was—of the state of Manchukuo by the Polish government. Before Poland, only Italy and Spain and, indirectly, through the conclusion of a trade treaty, Germany had recognized the state. Apart from general policy, this step was decided by regard for Polish social and economic interests in the area, as well as by pressure from Manchukuo and Japan. However, the Polish government did not wish to identify its policies with those of the fascist states. For the time being, it only agreed to regulate relations in the form of an exchange of notes between the ambassadors of Poland and Manchukuo in Tokyo, anticipating the securing by the Polish side—on a mutual basis—of exequatur for the Consul of the Polish Republic in Harbin. It was understood that Manchukuo could interpret this as the establishing of relations. The exchange of three notes between Romer and Yuan took place on 19 October, 1938. The first concerned normalization of the legal position of the Consulate in Harbin, the second—the appointment of a new consul, and the third contained a special-status clause for consular officials and citizens, and provisions for economic co-operation. A confidential protocol anticipated that the notes would not be considered confidential, but that their publication would depend on prior agreement between the governments. Moreover, the Polish ambassador stated that he considered the exchange of notes to be the first step on the path towards full normalization of relations, right up to formal and final recognition of Manchukuo, as soon as that might possibly be. The Polish

²⁰ AAN MSZ 1778, J. Szembek's telegram No. 21, 10 Sept., 1937.

government was also prepared to assist in the regulation of these matters with other states. In exchange, Yuan promised to look into the numerous complaints from Polish citizens accompanying the arising of the new government, and occasioned by injustices relating to armed activity and banditry. It appears that this, too, was one of the chief concerns of the Polish government.²¹

Contacts between Poland and Manchukuo gave rise to warnings from the Chinese. Even before the exchange of notes, the Chinese envoy, Sunthou Vej, asked the Polish deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jan Szembek, if the rumours circulating on this topic were true. Moreover, he pointed out that this would constitute a serious blow to Polish-Chinese relations, which—as he said—based on the deep sympathies towards the Polish people which existed in China, were developing favourably, particularly in the sphere of trade. The envoy regretted Poland's attitude within the League, however, and recalled that to date Manchukuo had been recognized only by fascist states. In reply, Szembek pointed out that the Polish government had not yet taken a decision. Justifying, as it were, eventual decisions, he added that Poland had a consulate and significant economic interests in the territory. At the same time he gave an assurance that the Republic did not intend to involve itself in the Far East conflict.²² During the course of a second conversation, which took place just after the exchange of notes, in answer to the Chinese envoy's question as to whether the exchange indicated recognition, the deputy Minister affirmed that recognition *de jure* had not taken place. "On the other hand," he said, "we cannot close our eyes to reality, which compels us to consider the facts of life. The arrangement stabilizes the position of the Consulate and the Polish citizens."²³ If only on the basis of this example, one can see that as Polish-Japanese co-operation drew closer, so the distance between Poland and China increased. This can also be seen in the

²¹ *Ibidem*, 6237—material concerning the recognition of Manchukuo, together with the text of the three notes of 19 Oct., 1938 and of the confidential protocol; supplement No. 12 "Monitor Polski", No. 280, 7 Dec., 1938, p. 2.

²² *Diariusz i Teki...*, vol. IV, pp. 178 - 179—talks with envoy Sunthou Vej, 9 June, 1938.

²³ *Ibidem*, pp. 337 - 338—talks with envoy Sunthou Vej.

deputy Minister's talks with the next Chinese envoy, Vang King-ky, who was more energetically concerned with Polish considerations. He outlined the benefits which support for China would bring to Poland when the state was liberated. But Szembek replied without change that Polish interests were limited strictly to Manchuria, and that Poland did not want to involve herself in the conflict.²⁴

However, there were limits to the Polish-Japanese rapprochement. For at the same time, the Polish government was continually rejecting offers from the Japanese, but also from the Germans, concerning Poland's joining the Anti-Comintern Pact. As we know, Japan signed the pact with Germany in Berlin on 25 November, 1936, whilst Italy joined on 6 November, 1937. Japan, who, on account of her policy towards China, was, it seemed, on the verge of war with the USSR (there were outbreaks of fighting on the border), was anxious to secure for herself the advantageous hinterland on the western borders of the Soviet Union. In view of this, the Japanese government would have given a very warm welcome to Poland's joining the Axis states. It also put out propaganda concerning Polish-German-Japanese collaboration, which went further than the state of affairs actually existing. Irrespective of this, Germany used Japan to increase pressure on Poland. As a result, the Japanese showed increased concern in Poland's policy. The information on this subject which the envoy, Mościcki, passed on, let substance to the rumours of how the Japanese Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hachiro Arita, was supposed to have inquired if Poland would be prepared to join the Anti-Comintern Pact several months before it was even signed. There is no doubt that such a question was put on 8 October, 1936.²⁵ In order to persuade the Poles, the Japanese advised Germany in 1937 to make a gesture towards Poland on national minorities issues. The Reich government rejected this advice. After Italy's entry to the pact, and even more so as Polish-German relations worsened, Japanese pressure on Poland intensified. It was accompanied by various gestures, such as

²⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 402-403—talks with envoy Vang King-ky.

²⁵ AAN MSZ 5954, M. Mościcki to MSZ 7 Aug., and 8 Oct., 1936; see also *Chronologia...*, 1936-1937, pp. 49, 61.

congratulations in respect of the diplomatic conclusion of the Polish-Lithuanian conflict and so on. In the Polish and West German literature, the affair is also discussed of the recruiting of the Japanese military attaché in Berlin, Gen. Oshima, and also of the military attaché in Warsaw, Gen. Sawada, and of Ambassador Sakoh, in December, 1938, in the campaign to draw Poland into the Anti-Comintern Pact, and in the discreet conveying to the Polish government of the conditions on which Germany would be prepared to co-operate with Poland, particularly in the area of possible expansion into the Ukraine. This was a confirmation of the demands and proposals presented on 24 October of the same year by the Reich's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Joachim von Ribbentrop, to the Polish Ambassador, Józef Lipski.²⁶ Reaction from the Polish side to all these endeavours was always unequivocally negative. In answer to the doubts of Ambassador Mościcki, Beck explained in a telegram as follows the quintessence of Polish policy: "In relation to the Soviets and Germans, we are seeking appropriate neighbourly relations, which we consider to be a basic condition for maintaining peace. We regard relations with France on the level of a bilateral alliance, counteracting the division of Europe into two large camps." One can see, then, that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was not contemplating Poland's joining the pact. On the other hand, it wanted to assure its signatories that Poland would not unite either with a grouping which would be directed against them. We read further in the same telegram that "neither can Poland ever become in international relations a tool of Soviet policy."²⁷ In talks with Gen. Waclaw Stachiewicz in January, 1938, Szembek confirmed Poland's rejection in completely unequivocal

²⁶ *Diariusz i Teki...*, vol. IV, pp. 100 - 102—talks with Sakoh, 14 March, 1938, talks with T. Kobylański, 21 Dec., 1938, p. 402 and 27 Dec., 1938, pp. 407 - 408; for the German-Japanese-Polish aspect see: M. Wojciechowski, *Stosunki polsko-niemieckie 1933 - 1938 [Polish-German Relations, 1933 - 1938]*, Poznań 1965, pp. 324 - 325; Roos, *Polen und Europa 1931 - 1939*, Tübingen 1957, pp. 259; 293, 391 - 392; on the Soviet-Japanese-Polish aspect cf. A. Skrzypek, *Strategia pokoju. Radziecka polityka zbiorowego bezpieczeństwa w Europie, 1932 - 1939 [Peace Strategy. Soviet Policy on Collective Security in Europe, 1931 - 1939]*, Warszawa 1979, pp. 387 - 389.

²⁷ AAN MSZ 5954, J. Beck's telegram No. 13; *Diariusz i Teki...*, vol. IV, P. 13—talks between J. Szembek and W. Stachiewicz, 11 Jan., 1938.

terms. It was the same arguments which Beck used to justify refusal to join the pact in talks with the Germans, and with the aid of which the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs explained his position to the ambassadors of France, Great Britain and the United States. Though in the latter case, as in public statements, it was denied that such proposals had been steered in Poland's direction.

Despite good Polish-Japanese relations, Poland did not obtain Japanese support at the critical moment. When tension between Poland and Germany increased in 1939, in accordance with the instructions of his government, Sakoh at first had a series of talks in Berlin with the purpose of alleviating the situation. However, they did not produce the desired result. Finally, in talks with Łubieński, the Japanese Ambassador declared that Japan could not offer Poland any support.²⁸ After the conclusion of the non-aggression pact between the Third Reich and the USSR on 23 August, 1939, together with a secret protocol, which described the basis of co-operation between the two states in terms of the allocation of spheres of influence in eastern Europe, including partition and annexation of the territory of Poland, Beck—who, after all, only knew of the existence of the first of the documents mentioned—attempted to use it with the Japanese. The Minister of Foreign Affairs drew Sakoh's attention to the fact that the document was tantamount to violation of part of the German obligations towards Japan. However—as we know—the document not only did not obstruct the continuation of good Japanese-German relations, but contributed to improved Japanese-Soviet relations, which in any case were not so bad as appeared on the surface. Romer reported from Tokyo that he did not really understand what the Japanese-Soviet struggles were about.²⁹ Poland in turn, taking up the struggle with the Third Reich, ended up on the other side of the barricade.

A review of the motives behind Poland's diplomatic relations with Japan and China prompts several general conclusions. These relations came to a head in the thirties. Of the two Far Eastern

²⁸ *Chronologia...*, 1939..., pp. 73, 96.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 170; *Diariusz i Teki...*, vol. IV, pp. 632-633—talks with Sakoh, 2 June, 1939; AAN MSZ 5956, T. Romer's report, 12 July, 1939.

states which interest us, Japan, as a power which pursued an active international policy, played the greater rôle in Polish diplomacy. On account of Japan's international importance, it was difficult for Poland to maintain neutrality in relation to the Sino-Japanese War. As a result, she drew closer to Japan, which was accompanied by a cooling in relations with China. This development arose from a policy which, in the face of the breakdown in post-war political structures, tried to formulate a position which would guarantee security for Poland. However, rapprochement with Japan—as indeed in Germany's case—was limited, on account of the need to maintain national independence, and of the related principle of not wishing to associate Poland with one of her great neighbours at the expense of the other. Poland did not intend to embroil herself in any action directed against the Soviet Union. After 23 August, this consideration lost its relevance in the Japanese-German-Soviet-Polish relations. At the same time, the hopes placed in Japan as a potential mediator in the anticipated Polish-German conflict were lost. As we have seen, China played a lesser rôle in Poland's inter-war diplomacy. However, Polish political thinking saw in China great questions for the future. Dmowski saw potentially a most dangerous neighbour of the USSR in this state. He also saw a universal problem in China.³⁰ However, at the time, this question did not represent a subject for consideration within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. For the most important issue in Polish policy—the security of the Republic—depended on the attitude of her immediate neighbours.

(Translated by Phillip G. Smith)

³⁰ R. Dmowski, *Światowy pokój i Polska* [World Peace and Poland], Warszawa 1931, p. 181.