

The Polish Club in Prague (1887–2020)¹

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Baron, R. – Madecki, R. (2021). The Polish Club in Prague (1887–2020). *Czech-Polish Historical and Pedagogical Journal*, 13/2021/1, 24–43.

<https://doi.org/10.5817/cphpj-2021-003>

The essay presents a synthesizing glimpse into the relatively long tradition of Polish associational life in Prague (on the example of the Polish Club), which was violently interrupted during the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia (1940) and restored after the Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia (1991). Today's Polish Club in Prague directly succeeds an organisation of the same name that originated under the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy (1887). It is widely regarded as the representative and speaker of all Poles permanently living in the capitol in the Czech Republic or in its immediate vicinity. It plays this role towards the state and local authorities (in particular the City of Prague Magistrate) as well as the Polish representative office in the Czech Republic, i.e. the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Prague (including its Consular Department). The activities and attitudes of the Polish Club in Prague have thus never been without significance in terms of the development of Czech-Polish relations – in particular with regard to the cultural social contacts, mutual recognition of both neighbouring nations or overcoming the negative heterostereotypes.

Key words: Polish Club in Prague; Czech-Polish cultural relations; associational life in Prague; Polish studies in Prague

State of the research

The outcomes of the existing research on the history of the Polish Club in Prague can be referred to as insufficient. Although it is not an entirely unexplored area (whether within research on the history of the Poles in the Czech Lands or history of the Czech-Polish cultural and social relations), the findings are limited to a mere factual description with numerous gaps or unanswered questions. The first

¹ The paper was prepared as part of grant funded project: *Česká univerzitní polonistika do roku 1939 (od polonofilství k systematickému bádání o dějinách polského jazyka a literatury) / Czech University Polish Studies before 1939 (from Polonophilia to systematic research on the Polish language and literature)*, Grantová agentura České republiky / The Czech Science Foundation, No. 19-09017S.

chronological reference to the Club's operation in the inter-war period is provided in an unpublished dissertation, which its author Jacek Doliwa defended in 1985 at Jan Evangelista Purkyně University in Brno. This work aims at associations of Czechoslovak-Polish mutuality.² When the newly established Polish Club in Prague (1991) drew attention to its existence by issuing the brochure *Klub Polski w Pradze* (1992), J. Doliwa described to the readers the surprisingly long and turbulent history of the club.³ In his presentation, he covered the entire operation of the club (1887–1940). The following works included valuable scientific articles by the Club female functionaries – Ewa Klosová and Alina Střížencová.⁴ A brief characteristic was provided in the form of an encyclopaedic entry in a lexicon of the Poles in the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic by Zenon Jasiński from the University of Opole (a leading Polish researcher on the history of Polish clubs in the Czech lands, Czech education in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia and Polish education in Cieszyn Silesia). Unlike Doliwa, he focused on the initial period of the Club's operation, i.e. until the beginning of World War I.⁵ Conversely, Ondřej Klipa focused his thesis on an analysis of the post-November development in the Polish Club as regards collective identity of the Prague Poles.⁶ The Polonist Roman Madecki from Masaryk University in Brno concentrated on the Club's most recent issues in a broadly conceived synoptic essay.⁷ An encyclopaedic

² Library of the Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University, Brno. Doliwa, J. (1985). *Polsko-československé kulturní vztahy v letech 1925–1934 v činnosti organizací polsko-československé vzájemnosti [Polish-Czechoslovak cultural relations between 1925 and 1934 in activities of Polish-Czechoslovak mutuality organizations]*. Brno: Jan Evangelista Purkyně University.

³ Doliwa, J. (1992). Polish Club in Prague – a historical sketch. In *Klub Polski w Pradze*. Praga: Stowarzyszenie Klub Polski w Pradze.

⁴ Klosová, E. (1997). Z dějin Klubu Polskiego w Pradze od powstania do rozwiązania (1887–1940). In *Klub Polski w Pradze 1887–1997*. Praga: Klub Polski w Pradze, p. 10–15; Střížencová, A. (2007). Klub Polski w Pradze i jego korzenie (1887–1918). In W. Adamiec, B. Kučera (Eds.), *120 lat Klubu Polskiego w Pradze*. Praha: Klub Polski w Pradze, pp. 12–16.

⁵ Jasiński, Z. (2012). Klub Polski w Pradze (1885–1940). In Z. Jasiński, B. Cimała (Eds.), *Leksykon Polaków w Republice Czeskiej i Republice Słowackiej*, vol. I. Opole: Instytut Nauk Pedagogicznych Uniwersytetu Opolskiego, pp. 125–127. Cf. Jasiński, Z. (1999/2000). Działalność organizacji polskich w Pradze na przełomie XIX i XX wieku. *Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska, Sectio F – Historia*, pp. 297–316.

⁶ Klipa, O. (2004). *Kolektivní identita Poláků v Praze a její rozdílné varianty [Collective identity of the Poles in Prague and its distinct variants]*. Prague: Institute of Ethnology, Faculty of Arts of Charles University, thesis; idem (2005). Polish ethnic minority in Prague and issues of the young generation. *Lidé města / Urban People*, no. 1, pp. 52–74.

⁷ Madecki, R. (2017). To the legacy of the Poles in Prague. In R. Baron, M. Michalska (Eds.), *Śladami Polaków w Pradze (XIX–XXI wiek). Szkice i portrety historyczno-literackie*, Praga: Klub Polski w Pradze, pp. 329–354.

entry that served as a basis for preparation of the current essay is now in print.⁸ Despite the mentioned partial attempts, the theme remains very insufficiently mapped. It lacks deeper dive into the archive materials, embedding the explored issues in broad contemporary contexts or interdisciplinary interpretation of the already obtained findings. Let us remember that up to now, there has been no work for foreign researchers to whom the Czech and Polish languages are an insurmountable barrier.

Predecessors (The Bond, Polish Association / Polish Circle, Polish Society)

The tradition of modern associational activities of the Polish community in Prague dates back to the second half of the 19th century. The adoption of the Law on Voluntary Association (Law No. 134/1867)⁹ allowed a comprehensive development of associational life in Cisleithania. Associations of Prague Poles, but also Prague Polonophile-minded or Slavophile-minded Czechs were also facilitated by a positive attitude of the liberal part of the Czech society towards the Polish nation. The so-called second wave of these sentiments arrived with the January Uprising in a territory annexed by Russia although after the Austro-Hungarian Compromise, the Czech and Polish policies began to diverge strongly within the Habsburg Monarchy.¹⁰ It is a fact that the sufficient number of Poles living in Prague and their social structure (officials, tradesmen, freelance businesses, students) fulfilled the basic conditions for development of fully-fledged associational activities.

Although the present *Klub Polski w Pradze* [Polish Club in Prague] has for a long time directly embodied the associational life of the local Polish community, it is far from being the oldest Polish organisation in the City of Prague. This primacy belongs to the *Ogniwo* [Bond] student association, which unified Polish students of Prague universities (in particular the Czech Polytechnic Institute of the Kingdom

⁸ Baron, R. (2020). Klub Polski in Prague. In J. Pánek (Ed.), *Akademická encyklopedie českých dějin* [Academic Encyclopaedia of Czech History], vol. VI (H/1–K/1). Prague: Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, pp. 439–443.

⁹ Malý, K. (2017). The 150th anniversary of the December Constitution. *Právněhistorické studie* [Legal historical studies] vol. 47, no. 2, p. 63.

¹⁰ Lehr-Splawiński, T. – Piwarski, K. – Wojciechowski, Z. (1947). *Polska Czechy. Dziesięć wieków sąsiedztwa*, Katowice – Wrocław: Instytut Śląski, pp. 242–243; Žáček, V. (1967). The 1863 Polish Uprising and second wave of Czech Polonophilia. In V. Žáček (Ed.), *Češi a Poláci v minulosti* [Czechs and Poles in the past], vol. II, Prague: Czechoslovakia Academy of Sciences, pp. 254–259; Wihoda, M. – Řezník, M. – Friedl, J. (2017). A thousand-year story of one difficult neighbourhood. In J. Friedl – T. Jurek – M. Řezník – M. Wihoda, *Dějiny Polska* [History of Poland]. Prague: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, p. 603.

of Bohemia) from 1869 until 1871. The first chairman was Dominik Zbrożek, the second Szczepan Maciejowski (both from the Czech Polytechnics), the third Zbrożek again. *Ogniwo* concentrated on lectures on historical topics. The members' interest in political events in Europe probably contributed to problems with approving new statutes and subsequently to rapid termination of the associational activities.¹¹

Another Polish association of compatriots in Prague, *Stowarzyszenie Polskie w Pradze* [Polish Association in Prague], which was established in 1880 and operated also under the name *Kółko Polskie* or *Koło Polskie* [Polish Circle] did not last very long either.¹² Unlike the previous association, the members were not primarily students but officials, self-employed persons, businessmen, engineers or tradesmen. The significance of Polish-Czech friendship and cooperation for members of the mentioned association can also be documented by the name of its first chairman. He was the well-known Young Czech politician and Polonophile Emanuel Tonner (1829–1900), author of brochures *Češi a Poláci* [The Czechs and the Poles] (1863) and *Slovo upřímné k Polákům a Rusům* [An Honest Word with the Poles and Russians] (1871).¹³ Yet, he was not the only Polonophile-oriented Czech in this organization. The other representatives included Josef Barák (1833–1883),¹⁴ the *Národní listy* editor, Edvard Jelínek (1855–1897),¹⁵ the future vice-chairman of the association, editor of *Slovanský sborník* and untiring promoter of Polish culture in the Czech milieu and Czech culture in the Polish milieu, František Hovorka (1857–1917),¹⁶ member of the committee, journalist, translator and publisher (he published *Knihovna česko-polská* [Czech-Polish Library]) and Celestýn Liposlav Frič, a publicist and translator (he translated *With Fire and Sword* by Henryk Sienkiewicz).¹⁷

¹¹ Jasiński, Z. (2017). *Ogniwo – pierwsza polska organizacja w Pradze (1869–1871)*. In *Śladami Polaków w Pradze (XIX–XXI wiek)*, pp. 137–139.

¹² Jasiński, Z. (2017). *Stowarzyszenie Polskie w Pradze (1880–1884)*. In *Śladami Polaków w Pradze (XIX–XXI wiek)*, pp. 140–144.

¹³ Baron, R. (2009). *Między Polską i Czechami. W optyce historyka z Brna*, Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, pp. 186–194.

¹⁴ Žáček, V. (1955). Czech-Polish revolutionary collaboration in the 1860s. In M. Kudělka (Ed.), *Česko-polský sborník vědeckých prací* [Czech-Polish collection of scientific works], vol. I, Prague: Státní pedagogické nakladatelství, pp. 465–466.

¹⁵ Walasek, S. (2010). Polish-Czech Dialogue in the 19th Century and at the start of the 20th Century. In *Czech-Polish Historical and Pedagogical Journal*, vol. 2, pp. 5–6.

¹⁶ Svadbová, B. (1993). František Ladislav Hovorka. In V. Forst (Ed.), *Lexikon české literatury: osobnosti, díla, instituce*, vol. 2/1 (H–J). Prague: Academia, pp. 302–303.

¹⁷ Baron, R. (2011), *Rzecz o niektórych związkach Henryka Sienkiewicza z Czechami*. I. Hofman, W. Maguś (Eds.), *Przez Kresy i historię po obrzeża polityki*. Prof. Marcelemu Kosmanowi w półwiecze pracy naukowej, Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, p. 30.

All of them also actively participated in organisation of lectures on the history or literature (the Polish January Uprising, Poland in Czech poetry, travel pictures from Poland or Polish theatre review). One of the lectures concerned Czech-Polish relations and their significance in political life of the Polish nobility in the 15th century (presented by Dr. Czesław Koryciński). Most listeners were attracted by a social evening dedicated to Adam Mickiewicz whose works (in Czech translation) were narrated by Prague actors. The programme also included music by Fryderyk Chopin, Henryk Wieniawski and Bedřich Smetana (28 November 1880). However, Polish culture in the Czech milieu was more importantly promoted by events organized by *Umělecká beseda* in Prague.¹⁸

Besides Tonner, who was elected the chairman twice, the Polish Club, or the Polish Circle was chaired by doctor Karol Chodouński, doctor Ignacy Szpadkowski and Teodor Jeske-Choiński (1854–1920), a young journalist, literary critic and writer (author of many historical novels)¹⁹ who studied philosophy at Charles-Ferdinand University in Prague. The association resided in Betlémské náměstí in the flat of the official Władysław Obertyński where regular meetings were held. Due to a significant decline in the membership base and gradual phasing-out of the activities, the remaining members decided to dissolve the Association and join their forces with the second existing Polish association of compatriots in Prague (1884).²⁰

This second organisation was *Ognisko Polskie w Pradze* [Polish Society in Prague], which was established in 1881 and provably operated until 1912. Although it was never formally cancelled, we can assume that it effectively disappeared at the beginning of World War I (most of the members came from a territory annexed by Russia, thus being expelled from Austria-Hungary at that time). The Polish Society pursued the same goals as the previous associations of Polish compatriots in Prague. This included the maintenance and spread of the Polish language, literature and history through cultural events, mutual support of the members and contributions to the Polish-Czech mutuality.²¹

The first chairman from the total of 23 was Count Zygmunt Antoni Potulicki-Skórczewski (1851–1911) who temporarily resided in Prague with his mother (he came from Greater Poland). The other chairmen included Andrzej Obrzut

¹⁸ Bečka, J. (1967). Relations in the cultural sphere in the second half of the 90th and early 20th centuries. In *Češi a Poláci v minulosti* [Czechs and Poles in the past], vol. II, p. 399.

¹⁹ Štěpán, L. (2000). Jeske-Choiński Teodor. In: Štěpán (Ed.), *Slovník polských spisovatelů*. [Dictionary of Polish writers]. Prague: Nakladatelství Libri, pp. 217–218; Markiewicz, H. (2004). *Pozytywizm*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, pp. 458–459.

²⁰ Jasiński, Z. (2017). *Stowarzyszenie Polskie w Pradze (1880–1884)*, pp. 141–144.

²¹ Jasiński, Z. (2017). *Ognisko Polskie w Pradze (1881–1915)*. In *Śladami Polaków w Pradze (XIX–XXI wiek)*, pp. 145–155.

(professor of medicine at the Czech Charles-Ferdinand University), Władysław Florjański (1854–1911), which was a pseudonym of the Prague National Theatre soloist Florian Koman/Kohmann²² who was elected several times, Adolf Černý (1864–1952) – one of the best-known Czech Polonophiles, creator and editor of *Slovanský přehled* journal and teacher of Polish at the Czech Charles-Ferdinand University,²³ Jaroslav Rozvoda (1869–1920) – Polish belles-lettres publicist and translator, e.g. *Quo Vadis* by Sienkiewicz²⁴, Bořivoj Prusík (1872–1928) – librarian and translator of Russian, Polish and English belles-lettres and scientific literature (e.g. the *History of Polish Literature* by Aleksander Brückner²⁵) who was one of the main initiators of the establishment, then engineers Juliusz Pinkus and Władysław Królikowski and lawyer Waclaw Bielicki. In 1911 (the 30th anniversary of the establishment), Ignacy Jan Paderewski (1860–1941) was elected honorary chairman of the Polish Society. He was a renowned pianist and later a leading politician in the restored Polish state who initiated and financed the Grunwald Memorial in Krakow, which commemorated the 500th anniversary of Polish-Lithuanian victory over the German Teutonic Order in the Battle of Grunwald.²⁶ Another honorary member of the Polish Society (also of the Polish National Museum in Rapperswil, Switzerland) was František Alois Hora (1838–1916) – member of the Plzeň city council, teacher, writer, playwright, author of specialized essays and German and Polish translator (works by Eliza Orzeszkowa, Józef Ignacy Kraszewski, Bronisław Grabowski or Gabriela Zapolska). He also compiled two dictionaries: *Kapesní slovník polsko-český* (*Polsko-czeski słownik kieszonkowy* [Pocket Polish-Czech Dictionary]; Prague 1890) and *Kapesní slovník česko-polský* [Pocket Czech-Polish Dictionary] (Prague 1902).²⁷ The latter (after the author's death)

²² Raszewski, Z. et al. (1973). *Słownik biograficzny teatru polskiego (1765–1965)*. Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, p. 170.

²³ Chodějovský, J. (2014). Adolf Černý (1864–1952). In R. Baron, R. Madecki et al., *Česká polonistická studia: tradice a současnost (filologie – historie – politologie – právo)* [Polish Studies in the Czech Lands: tradition and the present (philology – history – political science – law)]. Prague: Institute of History of the CAS, pp. 392–398.

²⁴ Sobotková, M. (2003). Recepcja powieści Henryka Sienkiewicza *Quo vadis* w środowisku czeskim. In L. Ludorowski, H. Ludorowska, Z. Mokranowska (Eds.), *Sienkiewicz – pamięć i współczesność*, *Studia Sienkiewiczowskie*, vol. III. Lublin: Towarzystwo im. Henryka Sienkiewicza, pp. 82–83.

²⁵ Kardyni-Pelikánová, K. (2017). „Čechy krásné, Čechy mé...“. *Czeska i polska literatura we wzajemnych interakcjach. Miscellanea literaturoznawcze: eseje, studia, szkice*. Brno: Masaryk University, p. 105.

²⁶ Wapiński, R. (2009). *Ignacy Paderewski*. Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy imienia Ossolińskich, p. 73–78.

²⁷ Grave of F. A. Hora in Pilsen. Cf. Svatoňová, I. (1993). František Alois Hora. In *Lexikon české literatury*, vol. 2/1, pp. 258–259.

served in the teaching of basic Czech vocabulary to Prof. Marian Szykowski, creator of the Czech institutional Polish studies (immediately before his arrival at Charles University in Prague in 1923).²⁸ The honorary membership was also granted to the above-mentioned J. Rozvoda (1903).²⁹

The Polish Society membership was not very high – from 22 (in 1897) to 76 (in 1909) persons. The main activities involved lectures, literary and music evenings, trips and celebrations of selected anniversaries in the Polish history (victory of John III Sobieski over the Ottoman Turks in the Battle of Vienna 1683 or ratification of the Constitution of 3 May 1791). The Polish Society had its own library and in 1906, it initiated the creation of a separate association *Czytelnia Polska w Pradze* [Polish Reading Room in Prague]. The associational life was not exclusively a male affair. Its operation was also continuously managed by women, for example Maria Knauerová who looked after the library. In a programme dedicated to Mickiewicz's creation, the Warsaw female pianist Helena Hermanowa with Józefa and Malwina Drescler gave a performance together with Adolf Černý (1884). In 1910, students organized the Congress of Polish Student Organisations in Bohemia, which was attended by the Polish Society in Prague, Association of Polish Students in Přeborn and Association of Polish Academics in Tábor. Unfortunately, the 30th anniversary of the Polish Society was also its swan song.³⁰

The Polish Club under the Habsburg Monarchy (1887–1918)

On the one hand, the significant personal interconnection of almost all Polish associations of compatriots in Prague contributed to their mutual cooperation and support, but on the other hand, it reflected personal ambitions and efforts to enforce separate interests or schemes. The demise of the Polish Association (1884) and the initial years of the Polish Society (1881–1884) prompted the idea of establishing another Polish organisation in Prague (1885). Stanisław Ryszard Towarnicki (a financial officer), one of the founders of the Polish Association (1880) and future secretary of Polish Society (1881) was the main initiator of the establishment of *Klub Polski w Pradze* [Polish Club in Prague]. He also became its first chairman (1887–1890, 1897–1899). Together with him, the new organization was co-established

²⁸ Baron, R. (2019). *Misja życia. Praski polonista Marian Szykowski (1883–1952) a idea polsko-czeskiego zbliżenia na polu kultury*. Warszawa–Praga: Tadeusz Manteuffel Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Institute of History of the Czech Academy of Sciences, p. 51.

²⁹ Jasiński, Z. (1999/2000). *Działalność organizacji polskich w Pradze na przełomie XIX i XX*, p. 309.

³⁰ Jasiński, Z. (2017). *Ognisko Polskie w Pradze (1881–1915)*, pp. 151–154.

by Maurycy Knauer (treasurer), Oskar Echaust (committee member), Edward Scholz (vice-chairman), Juliusz Karpas (secretary), Mariusz Dembiński (librarian), Adolf Bertoth and Kazimierz Korestenski (audit committee members). The statutes were approved on 17 January 1887. The general assembly (36 persons) took place in U Bonů restaurant on 2 February the same year. The meeting was accompanied by a rich cultural programme (concert, poem recitation, Polish dinner, dance).³¹ The goals did not much differ from those set up by other Polish organizations in Prague, which might suggest that any potential differences only involved the personnel level. Yet, there was one significant difference after all: The Club had a purely Polish character, which distinguished it from its “Polish-Czech” predecessors.

One of the first events was a literary evening dedicated to the just deceased writer Józef Ignacy Kraszewski (18/04/1887). The requiem mass was served in the Church of St. Adalbert in New Town, Prague at the impulse of the Polish Club.³² We should emphasise that Kraszewski’s prose was well known to Czech readers and that it cleared the path to their spontaneous adoption of Sienkiewicz’s novels. According to Jelínek, Kraszewski’s work was a primary source of knowledge and understanding of the Polish nation in the existing Czech milieu. Another Czech Polonophile – the famous writer, journalist and politician Josef Václav Frič (1829–1890) – highlighted the importance of this novelist through literary depiction of the Polish history and emphasising systematic work for his homeland.³³ The U Libuše summer theatre (today’s Švanda Theatre in Smíchov) prepared the performance of *Mentor* by Jan Aleksander Fredro (07/05/1887), son of the renowned Polish playwright Aleksander Fredro. Translator Jiří Bittner (1846–1903), actor of the Provisional Theatre and then the National Theatre, named this comedy *Stará liška nad mladou* because one performance of the mentioned name had already been played on the Czech stages. The author accepted this change with understanding when he met J. Bittner at the Anglický dvůr Hotel in Poříčí, coincidentally on a fateful day for the National Theatre (12 August 1881).³⁴

³¹ Doliwa, J. (1992). *Polský klub v Praze – historický náčrt* [Polish Club in Prague – a historical sketch] without pagination.

³² Jasiński, Z. (2012). *Klub Polski w Pradze (1885–1940)*, p. 125; [Jaxa-Rožen, K.] (Ed.). *Klub Polski w Pradze 1887–1997*. Praga: Klub Polski w Pradze 1997, p. 65.

³³ Kardyni-Pelikánová, K. (1975). *Kontakty literackie polsko-czeskie w dobie powstania styczniowego*. Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków–Gdańsk: Zakład Narodowy imienia Ossolińskich, p. 76.

³⁴ Jasiński, Z. (2012). Klub Polski w Pradze (1885–1940), p. 125; Švanda Theatre. In Česká divadelní encyklopedie http://encyklopedie.idu.cz/index.php/%C5%A0vandovo_divadlo (06/08/2020); Bittner, J. (1894). *Z mých paměti* [From my Memoir]. Prague: F. Šimáček, p. 293–294.

Very soon, the club Treasury of Mutual Assistance, a library counting 352 volumes and a reading room with Polish press (mainly from Galicia, but also from Chicago) were created. The most popular events involved literary evenings for the Club members and their families. Each year, events dedicated to the life and work of A. Mickiewicz took place, the most festive being related to the transport of the poet's mortal remains from Paris to Krakow (5 July 1890). Władysław Florjański (former, but also future chairman of the Polish Society) presented passages from *Master Thaddeus, or the Last Foray in Lithuania* in his mother tongue. Maria Bogucka, Florjański's colleague from the National Theatre in Prague, also took active part in many club events. However, the greatest uproar and excitement was caused by the performance of the famous Polish actress Helena Modrzejewska (29 March and 2 May 1891) who arrived in Prague from the United States and acted in six roles during 11 theatre performances at the National Theatre.³⁵

Every week, the members gathered to listen to reading from the work of Polish writers (e.g. Deluge by Sienkiewicz). They were also united in the main Catholic holidays and the inevitable Polish traditions such as "święcony" (traditional Easter breakfast), "wigilijka" (a Christmas party) of "opłatek" (a Christmas wafer). The historical memory and awareness of the individual members and the entire community were deepened by festivals commemorating Kościuszko Uprising or the Constitution of 3 May ratification. The Club also backed Poles arriving in Prague to see the beauty of the city or visit the General Land Centennial Exhibition in 1891.³⁶ It also promoted the performance of Moniuszko's *Halka* at the National Theatre (1898). While its 1868 premiere was met with relative coolness from the Czech audience in particular due to political reasons (which also applied to a repeated performance attended by Moniuszko who had arrived with a Polish delegation to participate in the ceremonious laying of the National Theatre cornerstone), at the end of the 19th century, *Halka* became popular in Prague and had 11 reruns.³⁷ The associational life systematically encountered financial

³⁵ Jasiński, Z. (2012). *Klub Polski w Pradze (1885–1940)*, p. 126; *Słownik biograficzny teatru polskiego (1765–1965)*, p. 43; Černý, F. (2000). *Kapitoly z dějin českého divadla* [Chapters from the history of the Czech theatre]. Prague: Academia, p. 155–159.

³⁶ Cf. Ďurčanský, M. – Kodera, P. (2005). Guests from Galicia. The Poles and Ruthenians at the Prague General Land Centennial Exhibition in 1891. In *Čas výstavního ruchu: studie a materiály*. České Budějovice: University of South Bohemia, Institute of History in cooperation with NTP, p. 40–74.

³⁷ Pelikán, J. (1969). From the Czech-Polish theatre relations. *Sborník prací filozofické fakulty brněnské univerzity* [Anthology of works of the Faculty of Arts, Brno University], series D, p. 10; Bečka, J. (1967). *Styky a vztahy v oblasti kultury* [Relations in the area of culture], pp. 421–422.

limits because the Club had incomes only from the membership fees and the Club events. Moreover, the Club tried to support its Prague compatriots who found themselves in financial difficulties. A kindergarten established in 1899 for twenty-two Polish children was soon closed due to the financial reasons. The association had no permanent seat. The members had meetings and general meetings in places like the Nusle Pub, U Vocolků restaurant, Platteis Hotel or in Svatováclavská záložna. Besides S. Towarnicki, the chairman's position was held by Jan Matusz, Mieczysław Twardowski, Oskar Echaust, Władysław Królikowski and Kazimierz Hofman. The number of members varied between 48 (1887) and 74 (1892), which means that the Club had its steady supporters, but did not expand in number.³⁸

During the First World War, the associational activities dramatically changed into full concentration on the charity. The Club provided facilities for a kitchen, which gave food to Polish war refugees from Galicia, collected funds for the poor and provided its books to wounded soldiers in the hospitals. After all, many Club members had served during a war in the Austro-Hungarian army.³⁹ Given the relatively large number of people who ran before the Russian army to the Czech Lands (nearly 11 thousand in 1917 in Prague alone), the assistance provided by the Polish Club was literally a drop in the sea. The responsibility in this matter was assumed by the newly established Committee for Polish Refugees (*Komitet Uchodźców Polskich*), which operated in Prague between 1916 and 1918 under the leadership of Klemens Dąbrowski (1869–1953), a Benedictine monk from the Emmaus Monastery. Most assistance to compatriots without home or resources was provided by the Poles, but there were also Czech people who were not indifferent to this suffering. To name a few, let us mention Jaroslav Rozvoda, an honorary member of the Polish Society in Prague, František Hovorka, committee member of the Polish Circle, Karel Šafránek and his wife, Jaroslav Bidlo⁴⁰, a university professor and one of the first Czech researchers on the history of Poland or the priests Antonín Petr, Ludomír Petr, Josef Švejcár and František Ohera.⁴¹

³⁸ Jasiński, Z. (2012). *Klub Polski w Pradze (1885–1940)*, p. 126.

³⁹ Ibidem, pp. 126–127.

⁴⁰ Ďurčanský, M. (2014). Jaroslav Bidlo (1868–1937). *Česká polonistická studia: tradice a současnost* [Polish Studies in the Czech Lands: tradition and the present], pp. 383–388.

⁴¹ Maziarz, A. (2014). Komitet Uchodźców Polskich (1916–1918) w Pradze. In Z. Jasiński, B. Cimała (Eds.), *Leksykon Polaków w Republice Czeskiej i Republice Słowackiej*, vol. III. Opole: Instytut Nauk Pedagogicznych Uniwersytetu Opolskiego, pp. 189–194.

The Polish Club in Prague in interwar Czechoslovakia (1919–1940)

After the end of the First World War and establishment of Czechoslovakia, the traditional associational activities of the Polish Club in Prague were soon restored (1919). However, the development was not completely continuous. The Club management was overtaken from the Poles in Prague by Polish diplomats operating in Prague.⁴² This new situation can be illustrated by Waclaw Łaciński, head of the Polish representative office, who headed the Club between 1922 and 1926 (in 1932–1939, he served as the Polish consul, or General Consul in Bratislava).⁴³ In this period, Aleksander Dunajecki, the first Polish consul in Prague (he held this position in 1919–1927) and his deputy Jan Pawlica took active part in the associational life. The consulate was located in a residential house at Smíchov (Štefánikova 46).⁴⁴ Count Zygmunt Lasocki (1867–1948), the Polish emissary to Czechoslovakia between 1924 and 1927, was not only an honorary member of the Club, but also an important supporter. As Lasocki was also an honorary member of the Academic Circle of the Friends of Poland, we can assume that he supported all Polish or Polish-Czech cultural and social events in Prague through public diplomacy.⁴⁵

The second important change in the Club's overall direction was the turn to Polish-Czech mutuality. This trend was represented by the translator František Vondráček (1865–1954) and other Czech Polonophiles. As a prolific translator, he translated into his mother tongue some of the most famous novels by Stefan Żeromski (*Seedtime and Ashes*) or H. Sienkiewicz (*In Desert and Wilderness*), but also works by Adam Asnyk, Maria Konopnicka, Bolesław Prus or Lucjan Rydel.⁴⁶ He was a teacher of Polish at the College of Commerce and a school inspector for the Land School Council. In 1925, he became vice-chairman of the Polish Club in Prague.⁴⁷ Yet, he was not alone in his effort to deepen Czech-Polish cultural

⁴² Doliwa, J. (1992). *Polský klub v Praze – historický náčrt* [Polish Club in Prague – a historical sketch].

⁴³ Klosová, E. (1997). *Z dziejów Klubu Polskiego w Pradze od powstania do rozwiązania (1887–1940)*, p. 160; Segeš, D., Bystrický, V. (2007). Reflection on interwar political development in Slovakia through the eyes of Warsaw, *Historický časopis* (Institute of History of the SAS), no. 2, p. 342.

⁴⁴ Bestry, J. (2005). *Služba konsularna Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej w Czechosłowacji*. Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, pp. 65–65, 68.

⁴⁵ Baron, R. (2013). Prof. Marian Szykowski and Czech-Polish mutuality I (1921–1939). *Sborník prací Pedagogické fakulty Masarykovy univerzity, řada společenských věd*, no. 1, p. 86.

⁴⁶ Krystýnek, J. (1964). Czech translations from Polish literature in 1914–1930. *Sborník prací filozofické fakulty brněnské univerzity*, D 11, pp. 80, 93–94.

⁴⁷ Doliwa, J. (1992). *Polský klub v Praze – historický náčrt* [Polish Club in Prague – a historical sketch].

and social bonds. Following the establishment of the Department of Polish Language and Literature at Charles University in Prague (1923)⁴⁸, its head Professor Marian Szykowski brought his Czech students and colleagues to the Club – most importantly Josef and Iza Šaun, but also Jaroslav Michl (chairman of the newly established Academic Circle of the Friends of Poland). The third major change compared with the prewar period was in the membership base, which was now twice as large (e.g. 127 in 1924).⁴⁹

The activities of all Polish-Czech organizations were boosted by magnificent Prague celebrations (mainly in the Pantheon of the National Museum) connected with the transport of Sienkiewicz's mortal remains from Vevey in Switzerland to Warsaw through Czechoslovakia (23–25 October 1924).⁵⁰ The same year, a branch of the Club was established in Mariánské Lázně, headed by Stanisław Sadowski, an honorary consul of the Republic of Poland. In this case, the matter concerned the music legacy of Fryderyk Chopin and commemoration of his stay in this spa town (1836).⁵¹ From 1923 to 1925, sixty meetings and eleven lectures took place there. The Polish Club closely cooperated with the Academic Circle of the Friends of Poland and the Social Czech-Polish Club, which was co-established and headed for many years by the playwright and certified translator Josef Furch (1868–1936), author of *Diferenční slovník česko-polský* (Praha 1925).⁵² The associations exchanged mass and individual visits from Poland to show the guests the beauties and historical sights of the capital of Czechoslovakia. Together they organized various events for their members and the general public.

Another change occurred in 1926. The Polish diplomats withdrew, which probably coincided with the May coup of Józef Piłsudski and arrival of the new Foreign Minister August Zaleski. Adam Skrowaczewski (a Škoda Works secretary)

⁴⁸ Benešová, M., Rusin Dybalska, R., Zakopalová, L. (2013). *90 let pražské polonistiky – dějiny a současnost / 90 lat praskiej polonistyki – historia i współczesność* [90 years of Polish studies in Prague – history and present]. Prague: Charles University, Nakladatelství Karolinum, pp. 11–25.

⁴⁹ Doliwa, J. (1992). *Polský klub v Praze – historický náčrt* [Polish Club in Prague – a historical sketch]; Jasiński, Z. (2012). *Klub Polski w Pradze (1885–1940)*, p. 127.

⁵⁰ Bečka, J. (1964). Transfer of mortal remains of Henryk Sienkiewicz from Switzerland to his homeland in 1924 and celebrations in Czechoslovakia. *Slavia Occidentalis*, pp. 25–27; Baron, R. (2011). *Rzecz o niektórych związkach Henryka Sienkiewicza z Czechami*, pp. 33–37.

⁵¹ Bednář, K. (1962). *Chopin v Mariánských Lázních* [Chopin in Mariánské Lázně]. Mariánské Lázně: Fryderyk Chopin association in the Cultural and Social Centre; Martinek L. (2013). *Fryderyk Chopin v české literatuře* [Fryderyk Chopin in Czech literature]. Opava: Silesian University in Opava.

⁵² Bartůšková, S. (1985). Josef Furch. In V. Forst (Ed.), *Lexikon české literatury: osobnosti, díla, instituce*, vol. 1 (A–G). Prague: Academia, p. 779.

was elected the Club chairman and, together with Marian Szykowski and young Czech Polonophiles, broke the existing close cooperation with the new leadership. The 40th anniversary of the Club's establishment thus proceeded in different conditions, which occurred in the milieu of Prague Poles and Czech Polonophiles in Prague. Yet, the Club still published its first jubilee publication, which summarized four decades of the history of the association (1927).⁵³ The jubilee celebrations were also attended by the Polish envoy Waclaw Grzybowski (1887–1959)⁵⁴ who had replaced Z. Lasocki in this position and managed the Polish representative office in Prague between 1927 and 1935. Chairman Skrowaczewski's closest colleagues in 1926–1933 included Józef Góral, František Holub, Wanda Klingerová, Juliusz Friedrich, Michał Niesiołowski, Wiktor Sawicki, Józef Lochschmid and Józef Heczko. Hecko's daughter Anetta Balajková-Heczko continued in this tradition when she contributed as a translator to the Czech-Polish cultural understanding.⁵⁵ Despite personal disputes – mainly between the leading personalities of the individual Polish-Czech associations – some of the events and celebrations were interconnected. This particularly concerned the Polish public holidays (3 May and 11 November) or the holiday of Marshal Józef Piłsudski (19 March, 2008). An exemplary event was the celebration of the 25th death anniversary of the Polish playwright and artist Stanisław Wyspiański. The celebration took place in an auditorium of the Faculty of Arts, Charles University with active participation of chairman Skrowaczewski and university professors M. Szykowski and J. Horák (1932).⁵⁶

The second half of the 1930s brought about a marked deterioration in Czechoslovak-Polish relations. The Polish Club in Prague continued to exist, but with less support from the local representatives of Polish diplomacy. Even a request of the last interwar chairman Jindřich Baranek to approve changes in the statutes did not meet with understanding of the Land Office in Prague (1935). In this difficult period for the Czech-Polish relations and mutuality of both nations, the female Club members started to be more intensely engaged by establishing a Ladies' Circle, which was headed by Rina Zavřelová. Surprisingly, the membership was not low (165). The vast majority were Poles (141), followed by Czechs with about 12 % (22),

⁵³ *Czterdzieści lat istnienia Klubu Polskiego w Pradze (1887–1927)*, Praga: Klub Polski 1927.

⁵⁴ Kornat, M. (2016). *Waclaw Grzybowski: ambasador w Moskwie (1936–1939). Biografia polityczna*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Sejmowe, pp. 45–74.

⁵⁵ Šoutová, M. (1982), *Polská krásná literatura v českých překladech 1945–1979* [Polish belles-lettres in Czech translations 1945–1979]. Prague: State Library CSR, Slavonic Library, p. 251.

⁵⁶ Doliwa, J. (1992). *Polský klub v Praze – historický náčrt* [Polish Club in Prague – a historical sketch].

while other nationalities were negligible (perhaps Slovak).⁵⁷ Perhaps the last important event was the celebration of the 50th establishment anniversary, which was held in the seat of the Car Club of the Czechoslovak Republic. As usual, the main speaker was M. Szykowski (honorary member of the Club).⁵⁸ The event was preceded by a holy mass celebrated by the Břevnov abbot Dominik Prokop (30 May 1937). The international political events such as the Munich Agreement or annexation of Cieszyn Silesia by the Polish state heralded the demise of the Polish Club in Prague. It finally occurred at the beginning of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia by the order of Reichsprotektor Konstantin von Neurath on 16 April 1940.⁵⁹

The Polish Club in Prague after the Velvet Revolution (1991–2020)

After the Second World War, the surviving female members continued to meet somehow, but the Polish Club was never formally restored at that time. This situation lasted until the Velvet Revolution after which the Prague Poles managed to pick up the threads of the interrupted tradition from the First Czechoslovak Republic. A sort of an intermediate stage arrived with the establishment of the 95th local group of the Polish Cultural Enlightenment Association in Czechoslovakia (*Polski Związek Kulturalno-Oświatowy*, PZKO) in Prague. This organisation had in fact been the only association of the Polish minority (in Cieszyn Silesia) since 1947, i.e. since the conclusion of an interstate allied agreement between Czechoslovakia and Poland until the Velvet Revolution.⁶⁰ The creation of a local association outside Cieszyn Silesia was promoted by Jerzy Gajdzica (1905–1994)⁶¹

⁵⁷ Madecki, R. (2017). *K odkazu Polaków w Praze* [To the Legacy of the Poles in Prague], p. 342.

⁵⁸ Balajková-Heczko, A. (1997). Klubowych wspomnień czar. In *Klub Polski w Pradze 1887–1997*, p. 23; Spis przedwojennych członków Klubu Polskiego. In *Ibidem*, p. 25.

⁵⁹ Doliwa, J. (1992). *Polský klub v Praze – historický náčrt* [Polish Club in Prague – a historical sketch]. Cf. Jasiński, Z. (2012). *Klub Polski w Pradze (1885–1940)*, p. 127.

⁶⁰ Josiek, W. (1997). *Společenské organizace a instituce* [Social organizations and institutions]. In K. D. Kadłubiec et al., *Polská národní menšina na Těšínsku v České republice (1920–1995)*. Ostrava: Faculty of Arts, University of Ostrava, pp. 157–161.

⁶¹ Gajdzica, J. (1991). Jerzy Gajdzica – nestor praskiej Polonii. *Głos Ludu*, no. 10 (24. 1. 1991). Cf. Borák, M. (2010). *Očima Poláků: historie a současnost československo-polských vztahů a polská menšina v Československu v zrcadle polského tisku na Těšínském Slezsku v letech 1989–1992* [Through the eyes of the Poles: the history and present of Czechoslovak-Polish relations and the Polish minority in Czechoslovakia in the mirror of the Polish press in Cieszyn Silesia in 1989–1992]. Annotated bibliography. Opava: Silesian University in Opava, pp. 23, 51.

– vice-chairman and librarian of the prewar Polish Club in Prague and newly chairman of the local PZKO group. However, the “pre-November” diplomats headed by Włodzimierz Mokrzyński, the last ambassador of the Polish People’s Republic to Czechoslovakia (in 1988–1990), also contributed with their activities. Apart from the ambassador, they included representatives of the consular department Ryszard Gacoń, Zdzisław Niewola, Józef Mróz and Mirosław Roguski, director of the Polish Cultural and Information Centre. The inauguration negotiations proceeded in the Polish Cultural and Information Centre in Wenceslas Square (symbolically on 3 May 1989). J. Gajdzica became the chairman, Bronisław Walicki the secretary, Edward Jeżowicz the treasurer and Alicja Skalska and Maria Kapiasová were elected to the committee. The local group had 25 members all of whom had to fulfil the condition of Czechoslovak citizenship according to the statutes).⁶² The vast majority of Poles residing in Prague had a Polish passport – at that time the so-called consular passport, which differed from normal passports in Poland.

During the Velvet Revolution, the Civic Forum of the Poles was established in Czechoslovakia and even an idea of separation or breaking away from the PZKO was put forward. The delegation of the Prague PZKO group was received by the Polish Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki (1927–2013) during his official visit to Prague (22 January 1990). Only a few months later, it welcomed their fellow countryman on the Papal throne John Paul II at Ruzyně Airport (21 April 1990).⁶³ The future development of Prague Poles’ associational life was fundamentally affected by Jacek Baluch (1940–2019), new ambassador of the Republic of Poland to Czechoslovakia. Shortly after his arrival, he was impressed by pictures of the Polish Club commemorating the 10th anniversary of the association (1897), which was then located in the embassy club room in Fünstenberk Palace at Malá Strana. He decided to move this rare exhibit to his study so that he could document the Polish traditions in Prague to renowned Czech and Slovak guests, but also to the colleague ambassadors. He believed that this commemoration of Polish compatriots who were united in the Polish Club at the end of the 19th century would make an impression on their successor at the end of the 20th century.⁶⁴

⁶² Walicki, B. (1997). *Jak se probudili pražští krajané* (1988–1991) [How the Prague compatriots woke up (1988–1991)]. In *Klub Polski w Pradze 1887–1997*, pp. 29–30.

⁶³ Krajewski, W. (1992). Notes of the chronicler Włodzimierz Krajewski. In *Klub Polski w Pradze*.

⁶⁴ Baluch, J. (1992). *Polskie tableau*. In *Klub Polski w Pradze*; Idem (2017). *Praga, tak bliska! Daleka?* In *Śladami Polaków w Pradze (XIX–XXI wiek)*, p. 9. At present, this relic (historical set of pictures) is located in the new Club seat in the House of National Minorities in Vocelova Street.

In the post-November circumstances, the general assembly decided to dissolve the local PZKO group and establish a separate association *Stowarzyszenie Klub Polski w Pradze* [The Polish Club Association in Prague] (29 August 1991). After ratifying the statutes of the “old-new” association by the Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic (4 September 1991), the Club immediately joined the Congress of the Poles in the Czech Republic, an umbrella association of Polish clubs in the Czech Republic (5 September 1991). The first chairman of the restored Polish Club was Bronisław Walicki (1934–2017) who connected his life career with the Cieszyn and Prague Poles (he came from Bystřice nad Olší, worked in the Prague branch of the Polish LOT airline and then as a branch manager of the Alitalia airline). When Pope John Paul II was leaving the Czechoslovak Republic at Bratislava Airport after his first official visit, B. Walicki spoke to him in Polish on board the plane also on behalf of the Polish compatriots (22/04/1990). The Club was also managed by the above-mentioned J. Gajdzica (from Cieszyn Silesia and of Evangelical faith) who became its honorary chairman.⁶⁵ This act resulted in a personal but above all symbolic interconnection of both associations with the same name and partly the same mission – to associate Polish compatriots in Prague and Czech citizens interested in Polish culture and history. The immediate connection with the tradition of the original Polish Club was explicitly stated by Art. 4 Par. 1 of the statutes: “The Club picks up the threads of the ‘Polish Club’ in Prague, which was established in 1887.”⁶⁶ Interestingly, this year of establishment was discovered during archival research carried out by Jacek Doliwa,⁶⁷ the new Polish vice-consul in Prague, who had only a few years earlier defended a dissertation on associations of Czechoslovak-Polish mutuality in the interwar period.⁶⁸

Unlike the interwar period, the Polish diplomats satisfied themselves only with a universal support of the Polish Club in the post-November circumstances. As a result, they had no ambition to control or formally manage the association. At that time, the Polish compatriots in Prague were most assisted by Witold Rybczyński, the embassy counsellor and head of the consular department and Jacek Baluch (Bohemist and literary scientist), the historically first ambassador of Poland to the Czech Republic. Ambassador Baluch also attempted to restore the tradition of the “Polish Window” in the Evropa Hotel in Wenceslas Square, which

⁶⁵ Walicki, B. (1997). Resurrection of the Polish Club in Prague. In *Klub Polski w Pradze 1887–1997*, p. 33; Idem (1994). Szanowny i drogi śp. Jurku! *Kurier Praski / Pražský kurýr*, no. 2.

⁶⁶ Cf. Statut Společnosti „Klub Polski“ v Praze. In *Klub Polski w Pradze*.

⁶⁷ Walicki, B. (2007). Bronisław Walicki. In *120 lat Klubu Polskiego w Pradze*, p. 136.

⁶⁸ Cf. footnote 2.

was initiated by M. Szyjkowski in the 1920s.⁶⁹ In 2002, a plaque commemorating this tradition was ceremonially unveiled there. It was promoted by representatives of *Kurier Praski* [Prague Courier] (Barbara Sierszuła-Pilousová), the Polish Club representatives (Władysław Adamiec), the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Prague (Anna Olszewska) and the Evropa Hotel (Emanuel Belavý). The celebration was backed by the presence of Ambassador Andrzej Krawczyk and Otto Kechner, Deputy Mayor of the City of Prague.⁷⁰ The Polish Club could also rely on moral and material assistance from J. Baluch's successors as ambassadors, i.e. Marek Pernal (1995–2000), Andrzej Krawczyk (2001–2005), Andrzej Załucki (2005–2006), Jan Pastwa (2007–2012), Grażyna Bernatowiczová (2013–2017) and Barbara Ćwioro (2018–2020), but also from representatives of the General Consulate of the Republic of Poland in Prague or the Polish Institute in Prague. Thanks to this support, the Club representatives also attended meetings with leading representatives of Poland during their visits to the Czech Republic (Presidents Lech Wałęsa, Aleksander Kwaśniewski, Lech Kaczyński, Bronisław Komorowski and Andrzej Duda).⁷¹

In 1996, chairman Walicki was replaced by Władysław Adamiec who determined the direction of the Club until 2015 when he was replaced by a long-lasting committee member Michał Chrzastowski (of Polish origin). Other functionaries who significantly contributed to the development and operation of the Club included Krzysztof Jaxa-Rożen, Krystyna and Jiří Kotýnek, Barbara Sierszuła-Pilousová, Bibiana Szulc-Achová, Ewa Klosová, Alicja and Otakar Skalský, Marzena and Włodzimierz Krajewski, Eva and Andrzej Magal, Alina Stržencová, Elżbieta Grosseová and Kazimierz Towarnicki. The Club branch in Lysá nad Labem, which is managed by Mariola Světlá (until recently strongly supported by the local priest Tadeusz Barnowski), has also been very active since its establishment in 2002. The main events include the Polish Culture Days.⁷² Last year (2019), this sole

⁶⁹ Sierszuła-Pilousová, B. (2017). Polski stolik przy oknie „Evropy“. In *Śladami Polaków w Pradze (XIX–XXI wiek)*, p. 131–134. Cf. Valenta, J. (2001). Okno czy stolik? Polski stolik w Hotelu Europejskim, *Kurier Praski / Pražský kurýr*, no. 9; Jaxa-Rożen, K. (2002). Okno i stolik. *Kurier Praski / Pražský kurýr*, no. 7–8.

⁷⁰ Olaszek-Kotýnek, K. (2007). Stowarzyszenie Klub Polski w Pradze w latach 1991–2007. In *120 lat Klubu Polskiego w Pradze*, p. 79, 91.

⁷¹ Michalska, M. (2011). Polacy w Pradze i ich związki z ojczyzną – stara i nowa emigracja. In *Polacy poza granicami kraju u progu XXI wieku. Różne oblicza polskiej tożsamości*. Wrocław: Polskie Towarzystwo Ludoznawcze, Uniwersytet Wrocławski, p. 115. Cf. Olaszek-Kotýnek, K. (2017). Stowarzyszenie Klub Polski w Pradze – reaktywacja. In *Śladami Polaków w Pradze (XIX–XXI wiek)*, p. 184–185.

⁷² Gawlik, S. (2007). Sekcja Klubu Polskiego w Lysej nad Łabą. In *120 lat Klubu Polskiego w Pradze*, p. 98; Olaszek-Kotýnek, K. (2017). *Stowarzyszenie Klub Polski w Pradze – reaktywacja*, pp. 178–180.

branch transformed into a separate association. In the early 1990s, the meetings were held in the Polish Information and Cultural Centre, at the Polish Embassy or in the Dominican Abbey. In 1998, the Club rented premises in Karlín (Víkova 13) which, however, were damaged during the 2002 floods. The books, documents, technical equipment and furniture were therefore irretrievably lost. The natural disaster and its consequences cemented the Polish Prague community and strengthened links with the hitherto less active members.⁷³ The associational life returned to the Embassy and moved to private apartments. Later, the Club managed to return to Karlín, but in 2007, it found its permanent seat in the newly opened House of National Minorities in Vocelova Street, Prague 2 (together with associations of Prague Belarussians, Bulgarians, Croats, Hungarians, Germans, the Romany, Russians, Ruthenes, Greeks, Slovaks, Serbs, Ukrainians and Vietnamese).⁷⁴

The Club members usually met once a month. The contents of these meetings were varied. There were evenings devoted to important representatives of Polish culture such as the writers (e.g. A. Mickiewicz, J. Słowacki, S. Wyspiański, Z. Krasiński, K. I. Gałczyński, M. Konopnicka, J. I. Kraszewski, the Nobel Prize Laureates in Literature Cz. Miłosz and W. Szymborska who attended the 2010 Prague Book Fair as a guest of honour;⁷⁵ she was accompanied – like in Stockholm – by the Czech translator V. Dvořáčková), but also the pianist F. Chopin, composer S. Moniuszko, actress H. Modrzejewska, painters J. Chelmoński and W. Kossak, singers Cz. Niemen and J. Kaczmarski or the sportsman and Olympic champion J. Kusociński who was murdered by the Nazis in Palmiry near Warsaw. The Club meetings also involved discussions on historical issues (Constitution of 3rd May, restoration of Poland in 1918). The guests included Bishop Vaclav Malý, the former Free Europe Radio editor Jan de Weydenthal, political scientist Alexander Tomský, seafarer and writer Andrzej Perepekzko, film director Otakar Skalski (Club member), Bohemist Zofia Tarajło-Lipowska, historian Stanisław Zahradnik, harpist Ewa Jašlarová, sculptor Elżbieta Grosseová (Club member, paternally of Czech origin) or the Dominicans Tomasz Dostatni, Piotr Krysztofiaak and Hieronim Kaczmarek (they subsequently headed the Polish parish in Prague,⁷⁶ which was established by the Archbishop of Prague Cardinal Miloslav Vlk in 2004).⁷⁷

⁷³ Klipa, O. (2004). *Kolektivní identita Poláků v Praze a její rozdílné varianty* [Collective identity of the Poles in Prague and its distinct variants], p. 25.

⁷⁴ Olaszek-Kotynek, K. (2017). *Stowarzyszenie Klub Polski w Pradze – reaktywacja*, pp. 168; <http://www.dnm-praha.eu/> (10.8.2020).

⁷⁵ Baron, R. – Madecki, R. – Malicki, J. et al. (2016). *Czeskie badania nad Polską w kontekście Europy Środkowej i Wschodniej*. Prague: Institute of History of the CAS, p. XXXV.

⁷⁶ Kaczmarek, H. (2017). *Katolicy z Polski w Pradze*. In *Śladami Polaków w Pradze (XIX–XXI wiek)*, p. 223–224.

⁷⁷ Olaszek-Kotynek, K. (2007). *Stowarzyszenie Klub Polski w Pradze w latach 1991–2007*, p. 58.

Between 1992 and 2004, the Club members published their own magazine *Kurier Praski* [the Prague Courier] (the total of 150 bilingual issues). The editorial work was shared by Ewa Klosová (nee Głowacka), Halina Bukowska, Krzysztof Jaxa-Rożen, Włodzimierz Krajewski, Barbara Sierszuła-Pilousová and Ladislav Hojný (graphic artist). The pages of this monthly reflected not only the attitudes and fates of the Prague Poles, but also the contemporary Czech-Polish relations in the context of Central Europe. When the magazine disappeared for financial reasons, the Club chairman W. Adamec tried to fill this gap. In 2006, he started to publish the non-printed periodical *Merkuriusz* [Mercury].⁷⁸

The other numerous Club activities included the establishment of the “Club theatre” *Teatr Klub-PL Praga im. Karola Wojtyły*, which was managed by the theatre director Józef Zbigniew Czernecki (2014). The first performance was *Rozbitkowie* [Castaways] based on the book *Na pełnym morzu* by Sławomir Mrożek (Divadlo Mana theatre in Prague-Vršovice, 2016), the second *Bratr naszego Boga* [Our God’s Brother] by Karol Wojtyła (the Dominican Abbey refectory, Divadlo Mana, 2018).⁷⁹ Since 2016, the choir A TO MY [IT’S US] has operated under the leadership of Eugeniusz Morgoń.

The Club does not celebrate the jubilees of its renewal in 1991 but its establishment in 1887. The jubilee events were attended by representatives of the Polish Embassy and had rich programmes in 1992, 1997, 2002, 2007, 2012 and 2017. The round anniversaries have produced jubilee prints dedicated to the history of the association and legacy of the Poles in Prague whose value is rising with time.⁸⁰ We need to point out that they were not concerned only with the period following 1991, but also with the period since the Club’s establishment in 1887.

The most recent publication – *Śladami Polaków w Pradze (XIX–XXI w.)* [Following the Poles’ Footsteps in Prague, 19th – 21st Century] – had a much wider scope. It was not intended – as it had been so far – to the relatively narrow audience of the Polish Club in Prague, but it sought to address the wider Polish public (amateur and professional).⁸¹

⁷⁸ Sierszuła-Pilousová, B. (2017). “Kurier Praski – Prague Courier (1992–2004)”. In *Śladami Polaków w Pradze (XIX–XXI wiek)*, p. 229–234; Adamec, W. (2017). „Merkuriusz“ (od 2006 do dziś). In *Śladami Polaków w Pradze (XIX–XXI wiek)*, p. 235–236.

⁷⁹ Klosová, E. (2017). Pan Reżyser. In *Śladami Polaków w Pradze (XIX–XXI wiek)*, pp. 286–287.

⁸⁰ (1992), *Klub Polski w Pradze*. Praga: Stowarzyszenie Klub Polski w Pradze; (1997), *Klub Polski w Pradze 1887–1997*. Praga: Klub Polski w Pradze; (Eds.), Adamec, W., Kučera, B. (2007). *120 lat Klubu Polskiego w Pradze*. Praha: Klub Polski w Pradze; (Eds.), Olaszek-Kotýnek, K., Kotýnek, J. (2012), *Klub Polski w Pradze (1887–2012)*, [Praga]: Praga: Klub Polski w Pradze.

The opening word was written by the Bohemist and former diplomat J. Baluch and the final summary for the Czech readers by the Polish and chairman of the former POLONUS Polish Club in Brno Roman Madecki.⁸²

As Professor Artur Patek from Krakow wrote in a review on this work: *Unlike Paris or London, Prague has never been a major centre of Polish emigration. Yet there are surprisingly many Polish traces in the Czech capital. They are not only about Poles who decided to link their destinies or associational lives with the city on the Vltava River, but also – and perhaps most importantly – about long-lasting and varied Polish-Czech contacts, the mutual Polish-Czech history.*

⁸¹ The book was also created by other researchers from the Czech Republic (Roman Baron, Krystyna Kardyni-Pelikánová, Libor Martinek) and Poland (Zenon Jasiński, Małgorzata Michalska, Zofia Tarajło-Lipowska), the Club members (Władysław Adamiec, Michał Chrzastowski, Elżbieta Grosseová, Krzysztof Jaxa-Rożen, Ewa Klosová, Włodzisław Krajewski, Andrzej Magala, Krystyna Olszak-Kotynek, Bibiana Szulc-Ach), priest of the Polish parish in Prague Hieronim Kaczmarek, writer Katarzyna Boruń-Jagodzińska, staff members of the Polish Institute in Prague (Jitka Rohanová, Pavel Trojan) or the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in the Czech Republic (Marzena Krajewska). (Eds.) Baron, R., Michalska, M. (2017). *Śladami Polaków w Pradze (XIX–XXI wiek). Szkice i portrety historyczno-literackie*, Praga: Klub Polski w Pradze.

⁸² (Ed.) Putzlacher-Buchtová, R. (2007). *Klub Polski w Brnie POLONUS Polský klub v Brně (1997–2007)*. Brno: The Polish club in Brno. Cf. Baron, R. (2011). The Czechoslovak-Polish Club in Brno (1925–1939). *Czech-Polish Historical and Pedagogical Journal*, no. 1, pp. 43–64; (Eds.), Madecki, R., Štěpán, L. (2008). *Poláci v Brně (Polacy w Brnie) a na jižní Moravě [The Poles in Brno (Polacy w Brnie) and in South Moravia]*. Brno: Středoevropské centrum slovanských studií, SvN Regiony, pp. 11–26.