Features of location in urban structure of buildings of Russian-Soviet consulate in Harbin

T A Smolianinova

Department of Architecture and Urbanistics, Institute of Architecture and Design, Pacific National University, 136, Tihookeanskaya St., Khabarovsk, 680035, Russia

E-mail: design.total@yandex.ru

Abstract. The article discusses the consular buildings of Russia that have survived to our time, and later Soviet ones in the city of Harbin in the New Town area (now Nangan), during the first half of the 20th century. This topic has a historical value for Russian architecture, as an architectural heritage outside the state. The location of this type of structures in the city structure is revealed, the techniques and features of their placement were analyzed. During the study, five buildings were found in which the consulate was located, one of which was lost. After analyzing the placement of the consulates, it can be assumed that the choice of buildings was not accidental, the buildings were selected according to a number of characteristic features, such as advantageous location, representative appearance, the presence of their own site, often buildings rented from The Chinese Eastern Railway (CER).

1. Introduction

Domestic and foreign researchers actively studied the Russian architectural heritage of Harbin in the period of the first half of the 20th century, as a part of the history of Russian-Soviet architecture. Today, architecture and culture of Harbin are of interest as the building of a multinational city on Chinese territory, against which the architecture of Russian engineers and architects stands out, in particular, the architecture of the buildings of consulates and diplomatic missions, which was hardly considered by anyone and is of interest not only from the architectural point of view - stylistic features, but also town-planning position. The article reveals the location of this type of structures in the urban structure. The relevance of the topic is connected with the value of Russian architecture in the city of Harbin, which appeared on Chinese territory and is an example of the Far Eastern branch of Russian architecture of the late XIX–early XX century [1], which received autonomous development after the collapse of the Russian empire, presented as a model of Russian architecture. Despite the fact that Harbin was built by Russian engineers and architects, the study of this topic began only in the 1990s. and was largely based on the funds of the Russian State Historical Archive and State Archive of the Khabarovsk Territory, but the study of individual typologies of structures, in particular, consular buildings, is of interest to researchers. According to the order of the government of the Russian Federation No. 107-r dated March 30, 2019, the consulate general of Russia reopened in Harbin in the spring of this year [2]. The goal is to identify the location of the buildings of the Russian and Soviet consulates in the urban planning structure of the city. The object of the research is the building of the Russian-Soviet consulate, which are monuments of the cultural and architectural heritage of the city of Harbin. The subject of research is the specificity of the urban planning situation of consular offices in
the structure of the city. The theoretical basis of the study was the work of Chinese and Russian scientists describing space-planning, stylistic features of buildings, identifying their belonging to European architecture and style, for example, in a book edited by Binyang Yu, Tsingo Se [3] presents well-developed drawings of some of the remaining objects. The photographs of the 1980–1990s, the surviving and already lost buildings that form the image of the city of Harbin, are presented in the book by Chinese researcher Zhang Huaysheng [4]. Also considered the European and Russian-language literature, it discusses the graduating principles. So among the first in Russia, N. P. Kradin [5, 6] and S. S. Levoshko [7] became interested in studying and analyzing the architecture of the city of Harbin, their work examines the heritage of Russian and European architects in the cities of Manchuria, in particular in the city of Harbin. The study was based on the materials made by the author based on field surveys and photographic recording of objects, as well as collected periodic materials and archival funds of the State Archive of the Khabarovsk Territory and the Russian State Historical Archive.

2. Historical information. Opening consular offices
An extensive section of the alienation line of the CER located in China in northern Manchuria, and later on in the territory of the state of Manchu, acquired an identity not only culturally, but also architectural heritage. The construction of the CER promoted the economic flourishing of the whole of Manchuria, linking Russia and China with a common railway line. The architecture of Russian-Chinese settlements that emerged along the CER is of scientific interest, but despite this, many aspects remain unexplored.

The convenient geographical position of Harbin at the intersection of the shipping r. Sungari, flowing into the r. Amur and the railway junction, uniting the CER and South Manchurian Railway, stimulated the rapid development of the city, turning it into a large administrative center and an economically developed settlement, in which three main districts of the city appeared: Old Harbin (quickly lost its attractiveness and became distant suburbs), New Town (administrative center, where the offices and houses of employees are located) and the Pier (commercial and industrial district) [8]. The development of Harbin is undoubtedly of scientific interest to Russian researchers, since, given the rapidly changing conditions, it was formed much more dynamically than the cities of the Russian Far East.

The opening of the Manchurian borders for foreign trade in 1907 caused economic growth in Harbin, which led to a large influx of people from different countries [9; 10]. By the beginning of the XX century the formation of open cities in northern China began, which largely followed a similar process that began in the southern and central provinces of the Celestial Empire in the middle of the 19th century. Following this, there was an increase in the presence of representatives of European countries and the West, whose development centers were settlements, isolated from the Chinese part of the city, or created on free sites [11, 12]. Against this background, the need arose to protect the rights and interests of citizens outside their country. The consequence of this was the signing by the Russian Empire of the law “On the approval of the states of the general consulates in Harbin and Mukden, the consulates in Tsitsirakar, Jilin and Dalniy and the vice consulates in Kuanchenzi (now Changchun)”, approved by Emperor Nikolai II in Peterhof on December 2, 1906 [13]. According to this document, from January 1, 1907, consulates general began to be established in Harbin [14].

3. Position in the city structure
According to the handbook of Manchuria from 1927, there were 16 consulates and diplomatic missions in Harbin [15]. Analyzing the location of the consulates on the master plan of the city of Harbin in 1938, revealed the largest accumulation of consular offices in the eastern part of the Novyi Gorod, from Vokzalny Avenue (Hongjun St.) to Telinskaya Street (Tieling St.). Consulates and representative offices of Russia, Japan, Great Britain, Italy, France, Germany, America, Portugal, Czechoslovakia, Belgium, Estonia and Lithuania were located in this area at different periods [16]. The first among consular offices openly Russian imperial consulate. Of all the representative offices,
the Russian, and later the Soviet consulate developed most actively. When identifying the location of these institutions, it turned out that all the consulate buildings were located exclusively in the New Town and were located on the Right Street (Jiaohua St.), Main (Yaojing St.) and Girinskaya (Jilin St.) streets. The names of the streets themselves symbolize their significance, for example, the Main Street (Yaojing St.) was built up with representative mansions, one of which housed the consulate.

In the course of the analysis, the author identified several types of the location of the consulate buildings in the city structure, mainly detached buildings with indentation from the red line, and also occupied an ordinary, angular position. Consular objects are buildings in which the consulate of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) was located on the Girinskaya and Main streets. Both of these objects have their own plot and are located in its depth, the territory of which is surrounded by a fence with front gates and a checkpoint. The buildings were built as a mansion and apartment house. There are also additional buildings and facilities on the territory. The consulate on Khorvatovskiy Avenue (Hondjun St.) occupies an angular position and emphasizes the planning axis completing the street passing into the station square. The former building of the Harbin Technical School, in part of which the consulate was located, occupied an ordinary position along Pravlenskaya Street (Jiaohua St.).

3.1. Consulate General of the Russian Empire in 1907
Due to the lack of own premises, the consulate was temporarily located in the most prestigious area, in the New City, in the building of the Yamato-Hotel (31/40 Khorvatovskiy Avenue) [17]. The building was built on the corner of Khorvatovskiy Avenue (Hondjun St.) and Bankovskaya Street (Yinhang St.) adjoining to the station square. The building was designed by the architect Denisov K. H. in 1904 ‘Figure 1’ [18]. The building, which is L-shaped in plan, occupies almost the entire block, the main entrance is facing the intersection of streets, forming the dominant corner facade emphasizing the planning axis of the avenue, completing it and turning into the station square. Opposite him were the buildings of the Netherlands and Japanese consulates. Closer to the large avenue housed the consulate of Great Britain and Italy.

3.2. The Imperial Russian Consulate General on Pravlenskaya Street (1909–1916)
The consulate was built in 1909 according to the standard design of Russian architects [19], occupied a favorable geographical position at the corner of Pravlenskaya and Sadovaya streets in the New City (Fig. 2) [20]. Here the consulate was located until 1920 [21], after which it was transferred to the Russian-Chinese technical school, which was transformed two years later to the Polytechnic Institute.

The Russian consulate was the largest of all the consulates of that time in the city of Harbin. This is a two-story building with a pitched roof, in plan the building has a rectangular shape. The object has undergone several changes, for example, in 1927 it was expanded in the direction of Bolshoy Prospect [22]. Later in 1953, the building was completed by the project of architect P. S. Sviridov. The building began to occupy the entire area of the site along Sadovaya Street ‘Figure 2’ [23, 24].

3.3. The Consulate General of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) 1924–1927
As already noted, the consulates were located mainly in existing buildings, occupying a favorable location in the city and having a representative appearance. Thus, the USSR consulate was located in Krol’s house along Girinskaya Street ‘Figure 3’. The object is located in the commercial part of the New City, near which were the consulates of Italy, Belgium, Japan, the Netherlands, and America. The opening of the USSR General Consulate took place on October 5, 1924 [25]. The building has a rectangular plan, detached from the red line and located in the depth of the site, its territory is surrounded by a fence with a front gate and a checkpoint.

In this building along Girinskaya Street, the Consulate General of the USSR was a short time. In 1925, the consular mission moved to a new address in the building of the Central Union located on the corner of Boulevard Avenue and Strelovskaya Street [26]. It is in a dilapidated state and is entered in the list of architectural monuments of the second category.
3.4. Consulate General of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) 1927–1929, 1930–1949
Since 1927, the USSR Consulate General was housed in a mansion on Main Street, built specifically for the CER manager D. L. Horvat in 1902. In the period from 1907 to 1910s, the Railway Assembly was located in it, there was the first library with a reading room for employees and workers, which was closed after being placed in the building of the USSR consulate. In the planning structure of the city, the building stands apart from other consular offices, not far from the administration of the CER, and a quarter later there is the Harbin Polytechnic College, in which there was a Russian consulate in the period 1909–1916.

The complex of buildings on the site of the mansion, built for the manager of the CER, which became a haven for the Soviet consular office, has an L-shaped configuration with a 147 square meters ceremonial hall embedded in an open corner and a 120 square meter winter garden ‘Figure 4’.

On the territory of the consulate, in the courtyard, fenced off by a fence, there was another building where the workers of the consulate lived. They were located in the apartments on the two upper floors,
and in the basement, there was a dining room, which was served by Soviet cooks. Also on the territory was a garden and a volleyball court, a tennis court and a sports field with shells. Sports fields were poured under the ice rink in winter season [27].

From the big iron gate at the entrance to the territory where the checkpoint was located, there was an asphalt road for transport, which goes around the consulate’s territory. On the approach to the building were located well-groomed floral arrangements. In 1934, 200 seedlings were brought from the nursery-garden, which planted the consulate yard. On the territory of the USSR General Consulate was located after 1945, officially closed in 1962.

In addition to the consular buildings, the office was located in the Ozo printing house [28], as well as a section of urban land that the Soviet consulate rented in 1925. The site was located opposite the commercial schools of the road, near the Green Bazaar [29]. Here the consulate is equipped with a sports ground for the staff of the consular office.

An important feature of all the objects was the indispensable presence of a large territory fenced.

4. Conclusion
Based on the analysis of the objects, it was revealed:

- during the period of diplomatic relations between the Russian state and China, Russia opened five consular offices in Harbin.
- to date, four of them have survived.
- the choice of buildings was not random, they were selected on a number of characteristic features, such as: advantageous location, representative view, the presence of its own site
- consulates were located in the CER buildings or were rented from them.
- three types of location of the consular buildings in the city structure, mostly separately buildings with indentation from the red line, and also occupied an ordinary, angular position. Two objects have their own site and are located in its depth, territory, one angular and one row arrangement.

The consulate buildings and, in particular, the building of the CER in which they were located predetermined the modern look of historic Harbin, since at the initial stage of building the main streets, accent places were already noted and areas for significant buildings were determined, the buildings of which formed the dominants of the New Town district.

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